

# NEOPLATONISM AND WESTERN AESTHETICS

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## PREFACE

R. Baine Harris

One of the best ways to begin a study of Neoplatonism is through a study of its aesthetics. In fact, one of its most serious Twentieth Century students, William Ralph Inge, once referred to the whole system of Plotinus as a "Grandiose Aesthetic." He did so, I think, because Neoplatonism is based upon valuation. It is a philosophy that proposes to evaluate and rank reality in terms of what it judges to be the highest reality. Valuation is necessarily based upon experience, as indeed, is the whole of aesthetics. Whether or not Dean Inge's label can apply depends upon what is to be seen as the legitimate scope of aesthetics. If aesthetic experience is seen as limited only to our sensuous experiences as understood by our intellect, it would not. But if it is extended to include our experience of purely rational concepts, such logical concepts as principles, laws, and numbers, and extended even further to include direct experience of the divine, it would. Plotinus certainly appealed to a wide range of human experience, sensuous, rational, and religious as the basis of his ontology, as did most of his admirers in later centuries. A multi-leveled scheme of valuation is the basis of his ontology; and his ontology figures into almost every other subject he treats, and especially so in his psychology, theology, and aesthetics. An understanding of his aesthetics and the way he establishes it will aid in understanding other elements of his philosophy and the way he establishes them.

Neoplatonism is based upon an axiomatic presupposition that the world that we experience through our senses is not the real world. Behind it lies something that is more real than it is, which, in turn, is based upon something that is still even more real than it, so that the Most Real is quite removed from what we ordinarily experience. It is a theme found in ancient Greek philosophy and in numerous Hindu writers throughout the centuries. It is only a pre-

supposition and not a scientific fact. It is a hypothesis and a point of faith, since its verification is beyond that which can be scientifically ascertained. It is a presupposition that many people would like to believe, and some find they are able to do so, and some find that they are not. In any case, it is a theme of great historical importance in the intellectual history of the West, and India, and one that is not inconsistent with, and is even relatively amenable to, the major theologies of the Greeks, Indians, Hebrews, Romans, Christians and Muslims. One mode of demonstration of this point is to be found in the religious artifacts of these major cultural traditions. A study of the religious art of the West, for example, could hardly be done without some understanding of the basic themes of Neoplatonism as they were interpreted in various centuries, and the same would apply to religious art in other venues.

One distinctive feature of the Neoplatonic interpretation of this theme is a mapping or ranking of reality into a series of levels of reality so that anything at any given lower level is only relatively real. It can be concretely real as an individual thing while also being real as a lower level of something of a higher level. According to Plotinus, for example, man is most apparently real as a body, but he is also real as a soul, and as some element of the divine.

Another distinctive feature of Neoplatonism is that in contrast to many themes in the major theologies of the West is that it is mystical without being other-worldly. Plotinus was quite concerned to combat other-worldliness and once said "All things there are here," which I interpret to mean there is no "there" except "here." He was concerned with the same world that Aristotle was concerned with, the same individual real, but he saw different levels of reality in any given individual. His mysticism results from the mystery we encounter when we consider the various sorts of reality inherent in any concrete individual, and in his case, in particular, the various levels of reality inherent in it. This point is especially important in considering the history of religious art in the West, a notable instance being the artifacts influenced by Renaissance Neoplatonism, a specific case being the works of Michelangelo.

The essays in this book are not specifically intended to present a comprehensive picture of Neoplatonic aesthetics, but rather to show how elements of the aesthetic views of Plotinus and later Neoplatonists have had a role to play in the history of Western Art. Certain papers do focus on certain themes in the aesthetics of Plotinus and some later Neoplatonists, while others deal mainly with the appearance and reappearance of those themes in the writings and artifacts of later philosophers and artists throughout the centuries. Again, they are not presented as a comprehensive treatment of the subject but rather as typical

significant examples to illustrate the way in which Neoplatonic aesthetic teachings continued to be influential in various venues in various centuries, including even our own time.

All of the papers in this volume were first presented in an earlier form in an international conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies held in Rethymnon, Crete in the summer of 1998 under the sponsorship of the University of Crete. The idea for the conference was conceived by Professor Aphrodite Alexandrakis of Barry University in Miami, who also arranged for its funding and served as its able conference director. She also served as the editor of this volume and was assisted in this function by Professor Nikolas J. Moutafakis of Cleveland State University in Cleveland, Ohio. Altogether they present a well-balanced scholarly brief introduction both to Neoplatonic aesthetics and to its significance in Western Art.

August, 2000

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## Editors' Introduction

It is interesting to note how Greek philosophy achieved one of its most lasting impressions through Neoplatonism. From modest adaptations by the early fathers of the Church, to the bolder christianization of aspects of the Neoplatonic system by Saint Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite, as well as by later efforts, one encounters the seeds of Neoplatonism blossoming again and again throughout the long history of Western thought. One needs only cite the works of Scotus Erigena, Hugo and Richard of St. Victor, Eckhart, Böhm and Bruno to appreciate the far reaching influence of this tradition. Even as late as the nineteenth century Friedrich Schelling sought to infuse Neoplatonism with Intuitionism, precipitating new insights into the philosophy of history, which in turn became a prelude to Hegel's philosophy of mind.

Not only are the origins of Neoplatonism significantly diverse, involving a wide array of thinkers as its founders, *e.g.* Plotinus, Iamblichus, Longinus, etc. to mention a few, but the scope of its influence has penetrated deeply into a broad ranging field of philosophical inquiry, encompassing issues familiar in areas relating to the formal study of metaphysics and epistemology, as well as in lesser known areas concerning the nature of art, the contemplation of the beautiful, the essence and function of artistic objects, the knowing of nature as an aesthetic experience, etc. It was felt by several members of the Society that attention should be directed finally to the latter and relatively uncharted territory. Thus, as a means of exploring the scholarly community's most recent understanding of how key Neoplatonic concepts play a seminal role in aesthetics, the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies and the University of Crete cosponsored the 1998 International Conference on the theme of "Neoplatonism and Western Aesthetics" in Rethymnon, Crete.

Apart from the superbly beautiful surroundings of the island's natural setting and the gracious accommodations and support provided for the conference participants by his Grace Anthimos, Metropolitan of Rethymnon and Avlopotamos, Mr. Dimitris Archondakis, Major of Rethymnon, the Vice Rector Dr. Christos Nicolaou and Dean Dr. Alexis Politis of the University of Crete, the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, the GrecoTel company and the hospitality of the people of Crete, the conference was uniquely endowed with a fine collection of papers pertaining to its central theme. What follows is an arrangement of these contributions under four broad headings.

In the first grouping: "Neoplatonism and the Concept of the Beautiful," the theme of each contributor centers about the concept of "the beautiful" itself, as it is addressed in the works of various Neoplatonists from Plotinus to Proclus, and how in some instances this theme plays a central role for later Christian writers.

In "Neoplatonism and the Image in Visual Art," the emphasis shifts to how historically the Neoplatonic concept of beauty is investigated and utilized by certain renowned artists and architects, "concretizing," so to speak, the Neoplatonic concept of beauty in space and time.

The third grouping, "Neoplatonism in Contemporary Aesthetics," contains papers focused specifically upon the influence of Neoplatonism in contemporary discussions involving the creative process and the aesthetic experience generally. Here the tradition of Neoplatonism is found to be underlying the thinking of such seminal twentieth century figures as Kazantzakis, Heidegger, and Santayana.

Finally, in "Neoplatonism and Cosmic Genesis" the theme centers on how the concept of the beautiful plays a central role in discussions involving processes governing the generation of the world in Plotinus' works. It is the sincere hope of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies that these contributions will achieve their major objective, which is to stimulate further research and study in the area of Neoplatonism and the study of aesthetics.

The editors also wish to express their gratitude to Jonathan Raymon for the wonderful job he did in preparing the camera-ready manuscript for publication.

Nicholas J. Moutafakis [Associate Editor]

Aphrodite Alexandrakis [Editor]

## Action, Contemplation and Interiority in the Thinking of Beauty in Plotinus<sup>1</sup>

Jean-Marc Narbonne

### Beauty as a state of affairs

The thinking of Beauty in Plotinus is intimately related to his philosophy, primarily because the very undertaking of a spiritual elevation is at the same time, for Plotinus, an aesthetic undertaking, an experience of beauty experienced in itself; and, moreover, even prior to the slightest will toward a higher reality, our very experience of the world is already, for Plotinus, an experience of beauty.

Let us begin with the second point, that of our very own experience of the world which is declared as fundamentally an experience of beauty. This latter declaration might seem striking once we remind ourselves of Porphyry's opening statement in his *Life of Plotinus*, relating that his master "seemed ashamed of being in the body,"<sup>2</sup> and also, once we acknowledge that Plotinus is the philosopher of the *aphaeresis* par excellence, professing the retrenchment and detachment from all that is sensible. Shame of one's body and will to detach oneself from the sensible does indeed presuppose a certain disavowal of the world and of its beauty.

We must immediately reply that nothing is more alien to Plotinus than the condemnation of the world for its lack of beauty. On the contrary, as Plotinus points out, we do not see, by reflecting, just how such diversity which is our world, could have been as artfully arranged as it is indeed in reality: "if anyone could plan rationally as well as possible, he would wonder at it because plan-

ning could not have found out another way to make it" (III, 2, 14, 2-4). And again:

Will anyone be so sluggish in mind and so immovable that, when he sees all the beauties in the world of sense, all its good proportion and the mighty excellence of its order, and the splendour of form which is manifested in the stars, for all their remoteness he will not thereupon think, seized with reverence, "what wonders, and from what a source?" (II, 2, 16, 51-55)

We are, then, from the start, according to Plotinus, in beauty and are attracted by it. The proof, *a contrario*, is that the ugly is unendurable for us, our soul "when it encounters [it] shrinks back and rejects it and turns away from it and is out of tune and alienated from it" (I, 6, 2, 5-6); cf. *Symposium*, 206 d). But what is ugliness for Plotinus? It is the absence of form in that which is destined to receive one. The ugly, then, is the unformed with which the soul has no affinity, in front of which it can receive no guidance, that which presents itself as the undetermined and unattainable. And it is not just that the soul judges ugly that which is in a state of indistinctness, but it is also that the soul cannot endure the spectacle as if it was facing nothingness, emptiness, an abyss devoid of the least trace of intelligibility from which it must protect itself (cf. II, 4, 10). This peculiar effect that the ugly has on us is described by Plotinus as "an impression of the shapeless" (typon tou amorphou II, 4, 10, 23).

On the other hand, the beautiful is obviously that which, first of all, is the bearer of form, shape and just proportions, in other words, that which the world profusely displays and that to which our soul is naturally directed. How can this natural attraction be explained? What is it, in harmony, that attracts us? Plotinus' explanation is straightforward and precise: there is a kinship between the soul and the beautiful, or more precisely, an original belonging to one another:

Our explanation of this is that the soul, since it is by nature what it is and is related to the higher kind of reality in the realm of being, when it sees something akin to it or a trace of its kindred reality, is delighted and thrilled and returns to itself and remembers itself and its own possessions. (I, 6, 2, 7-11)

Beauty in the lower world is, then, a trace of a higher beauty. Manifestly beautiful in itself, without a doubt, but as a trace, it bears witness to its superior, its archetype and its source.

We might ask though, why insist on the reference to a higher reality on seeing sensible beauty as a trace of something else, and not be content with sensible beauty as such, beauty as it presents itself in the here and now? It is because, for Plotinus, the aforementioned affinity between the soul and beauty is explainable only by a common origin shared by these two realities, and not by haphazard chance. The universal nature of man's search for beauty and his astonishment before it could not possibly be explained without admitting that such an attraction was prepared beforehand; such a communion is too profound, too intimately felt to be the fruits of fortuitous links and accident; hence, such a communion is only understood by assuming a mysterious belonging, a pre-existent belonging, since it is not immediately given in the diversity of our sense experience. Beauty simultaneously appeases and astounds the soul, since the soul recognises in the trace of truth, of purity, of a unifying principle, to which the soul senses its belonging and to which it aspires. Indeed, our pleasure experienced through the intermediary of art results entirely from the impact of such a discovery.

The soul is delighted in beauty because through the recognition of the imprint of that in which it participates and finds the source of its being, it comes to recognise itself. In noticing the form which unifies and structures the diverse parts of a certain work; in perceiving the concept shaping otherwise insignificant matter, the soul discovers in nature or in the artifact the cohesive force of the Idea, the organising principle which communicates symmetry, measure, and beauty to the object. And in its own self-recognition it is lightened, because it now can aspire to its own inner harmony and seek to re-ascend to that principle inside itself which regulates, unifies and appeases. Is it not precisely the soul which is unstable and intemperate, whimsically oscillating between every inclination, drawn in every direction, which, in mood and in deed, is incapable of constancy, unity or harmony, which we qualify as ugly? And is it not because of a work's firm unity and basis that we qualify it as beautiful?

### Beauty as above symmetry

Let us immediately dispose of a first possible misunderstanding in the comprehension of Plotinus' stance on the question of Beauty.

For the latter, the beautiful can in no way be reduced to the symmetry of parts because this might lead to the erroneous conclusion that only the com-



posite can be beautiful and that whatever is simple, like the sun or a unique sound, is devoid of beauty, when in fact the parts of a composite are not always beautiful. Moreover, "though the same good proportion is there all the time, the same face sometimes appears beautiful and sometimes does not, surely we must say that being beautiful is something else over and above good proportion, and good proportion is beautiful because of something else?" (I, 6, 1, 37-40).<sup>3</sup> Who would dare profess—unless one desired to eradicate the ethical dimension in the consideration of Beauty—that a funeral procession, no matter how symmetrical and justly proportioned it presented itself to be, evokes beauty? Symmetry of the parts in sensible objects, then, is the bearer of beauty only when it manifests the marvel of the Idea. The object, then, is beautiful only as the epiphany of the Idea, the latter being what is first called beautiful, since it is itself responsible for irradiating the object with beauty and ultimately communicating symmetry and just proportion to it. "It is as if it was in the presence of a face which is certainly beautiful, but cannot catch the eye because it has no grace playing upon its beauty" (VI, 7, 22, 22 ss.). This applies, as much to artistic productions as it does to natural productions: it is the "inner form" (*endon eidos*, I, 6, 3, 8) of the artist, or of the architect (I, 6, 3, 6 ss.) which is beautiful even before the material manifestation, which is beautiful only insofar as it lends itself to the original idea. Hence, we can understand Plotinus saying that art in itself, or preferably, the artistic process itself, is superior to its product:

If art makes its work like what it is and has—and it makes it beautiful according to the forming principle of what it is making—it is itself more, and more truly, beautiful since it has the beauty of art which is greater and more beautiful than anything in the external object. (V, 8, 1, 22-25)

It might well be beautiful and harmonious, but a work cannot abandon its status as trace: "well, then, are the things made and the forming principle in matter beautiful, but the forming principle which is not in matter but in the maker, the first immaterial one, is that not beauty?" (V, 8, 2, 16-19).

#### Beauty as above imitation

There is a second misunderstanding that must be avoided when interpreting the aesthetics of Plotinus: since the value of the artistic production de-

pends on the value of the inner concept (*endon eidos*) in the artist, it goes without saying that, for Plotinus, who on this point drops the platonic interpretative framework,<sup>4</sup> artistic production could vie with and perhaps sometimes supersede nature's own productions:

But if anyone despises the arts because they produce their works by imitating nature, we must tell him, first, that natural things are imitations too. Then he must know that the arts do not simply imitate what they see, but they run back up to the forming principles from which nature derives; then also that they do a great deal by themselves, and, since they possess beauty, they make up what is defective in things (V, 8, 1, 32-38).

In the same way, borrowing Plotinus' example, "Pheidias too did not make his Zeus from any model perceived by the senses, but understood what Zeus would look like if he wanted to make himself visible" (V, 8, 1, 32-40).<sup>5</sup>

If, then, symmetry in the sensible order is beautiful as an expression of the Idea working within nature and the artist, then, we can include as beautiful certain actions, occupations, ways of being, in so far as they can be referred to the Idea which engenders them. Consequently, a single term, a single concept, can be predicated of otherwise heterogeneous realities: a beautiful painting, a beautiful melody, a beautiful action, a beautiful sentiment, a beautiful virtue, a beautiful science, a beautiful soul. The following question which Plotinus had asked himself is thus answered: "how does the bodily agree with that which is before body?" (I, 6, 3, 5-6); there is agreement because both participate in the Idea (2, 13). From here the aesthetic ascendance, which is also an ethical and metaphysical one, can begin; as Plato taught,<sup>6</sup> from wordly beauty, the beauty of the work used as a "stepping stone" (I, 6, 1, 20), we may advance progressively toward the Idea of the Good in itself, which allows us to see the beauty of all beautiful things. But what an arduous task it is for us to learn to re-ascend the emotional path leading from the beauty of works of art and nature to the inner principle that gives them life! As Plotinus remarks, "but we, because we are not accustomed to see any of the things within and do not know them, pursue the external and do not know that it is that within, which moves us" (V, 8, 2, 32-34). We must waken the inner vision from its stupor, teach it to recognise the true bearer of beauty, that original reason "which is no longer in anything else but in itself" (V, 8, 3, 7-8).

### Beauty as contemplation

The soul, then, is naturally inclined towards Beauty, since both belong to each other. The clearest statement on this point is without a doubt V, 8 [31], 3, 1 ss.: "There is therefore in nature a rational forming principle which is the archetype of the beauty in body, and the rational principle in soul *is more beautiful* than that in nature, and it is also the source of that in nature. *It is the clearest in a nobly good soul* and is already advanced in beauty; for by adorning the soul and giving it light from a greater light which is primarily beauty [*scil.* the Intellect] it makes us deduce by its very presence in the soul what that before it is like, which is no longer in anything else but in itself."

When the soul wanders away from Beauty, when it can no longer recognise it, it is a sign of its straying into the distractions of the multiple. And by forgetting the true status of sensible beauties as *images, traces, shadows* (I, 6 [1] 8, 7), the soul confounds veritable beauty with its signs, like the man who wished to catch his "beautiful reflection playing on the water" (8,9). And when the soul is thus weakened by its submersion in the sensible diversity, it can no longer see the links existing between corporeal beauty, consisting in the exteriority of the parts, and incorporeal beauty, that, primarily, of the soul and of the sciences and virtues which relate to the virtue of the soul, that are, as Plotinus says, *katharseis*, "purifications" (I, 6 [1] 6, 2).

The fact that the beauty found in the soul predominates over that embedded in the sensible *lógos*, itself over the accomplished *érgon* which derives from it, is an implication of plotinian metaphysics, which holds that sensible reality is but a trace, a lower form of a higher activity which is one of thinking (*noêsis*), of contemplation (*theôria*) or of wisdom (V, 8 [31], 5, 1 ss.). Plotinus professes that all beings are in fact by-products (*parérgon*) of contemplation (III, 8 [30], 8, 26); or, as he expresses differently: "every life is a thought, but one life is dimmer than another" (*ibid.* 8, 17), and "all things come from contemplation and are contemplation, both the things which truly exist and the things which come from them" (*ibid.* 7, 1-3). As a universal rule, Plotinus states that "everywhere ... making (*poiesis*) and action (*praxis*) are either a weakening or a consequence of contemplation" (*ibid.* 4, 39-40). In the first instance, then, action and making are *substitutes* of contemplation; unable to contemplate because of the weakness of their soul, men turn to practice and action, the sensible counterparts of contemplation; in the second instance, action and making are, so to speak, naturally superadded to contemplation. It is so for nature, since, being a result of contemplation, it produces by means of

contemplation: "my act of contemplation makes what it contemplates, as the geometers draw their figures while they contemplate. But I do not draw, but as I contemplate, the lines which bound bodies come to be as if they fell from my contemplation" (4, 7-10). But even in this second type of contemplation, what is produced is weaker than its source: "that which is produced must always be of the same kind as its producer, but weaker through losing its virtue as it comes down" (*ibid.*, 5, 24-25).

It is obviously in this general economy that the particular beauty of the sensible object must be interpreted and ranked; in itself beautiful, the artifact is nonetheless a shadow of a higher and purer contemplation, that can at best remind us of the beauty from which it emanates, but must never be taken as an ultimate goal in itself. Amidst our action, we again long for contemplation: "for men of action too, contemplation is the goal, and what they cannot get by going straight to it....they seek to obtain by going round about it" (*ibid.*, 6, 1-4). The purification, in this context, is necessarily a purification *from the sensible*, a process of detachment by which the human soul recognises the secondary status of the bodily beauties to which it is driven.

### Beauty as an inner quest

How, then, can we catch a glimpse of that unique Beauty reigning above all others? By entering into ourselves. Entering into ourselves means ceasing to be the mirror that reflects the changing images of the external world so that the image of Beauty which lies inside of us may appear, for the Idea of Beauty is, so to speak, everpresent inside the whole of our soul. But its reflection becomes visible only if the endless glittering of external objects is interrupted (cf. I, 4, 10, 6 ss.). Plotinus insists that we "not look. Shut your eyes, and change to and wake another way of seeing, which every one has but few use" (I, 6, 8, 24 ss.).

The quest for Beauty becomes what it, in fact, always was, an inner quest. "For one must come to the sight with a seeing power made akin and like to what is seen. No eye ever saw the sun without becoming sunlike...." (I, 6, 9, 29-30); "just as in the case of the beauties of sense it is impossible for those who have not seen them or grasped their beauty—those born blind, for instance,—to speak about them, in the same way only those can speak about the beauty of ways of life who have accepted the beauty of ways of life and kinds of knowledge and everything else of the sort" (I, 6, 49 ss.).



And, as we have seen, a beautiful thing, be it corporeal or incorporeal, is such by virtue of that inner element with which it is imbued, that Idea in which it participates, that which allows us to call "beautiful" heterogeneous realities, a beautiful painting, a beautiful melody, a beautiful action, a beautiful sentiment, a beautiful virtue, a beautiful science, or a beautiful soul. All beautiful things can be rendered so because of one common element; a single and unique word appears in our minds when we see them: beautiful. And all of them attract us.

"What then are we to think, if anyone contemplates the absolute beauty which exists pure by itself, uncontaminated by flesh or body, not in earth or heaven, that it may keep its purity?" All these other things are external additions and not primary, but derived from it. If then one sees that which provides for all and remains by itself and gives to all but receives nothing into itself, if he abides in the contemplation of this kind of beauty and rejoices in being made like it, how can he need any other beauty? ... Here the greatest, the ultimate contest is set before our souls; all our toil and trouble is for this not to be left without a share in the best of visions. The man who attains this is blessed in seeing that *blessed sight*, and he who fails to attain it has failed utterly. A man has not failed if he fails to win beauty of colours or bodies, or power or office or kingship even, but if he fails to win this and only this. (I, 6, 7, 21-36)

At this stage of our inquiry, we can understand the following: "the treatises Plotinus had devoted to Beauty are not aesthetical treatises, but metaphysical treatises."<sup>7</sup> The splendour of Beauty moves us deeply because it wakes us to ourselves, to that transcendent beauty in which we participate. We can reflect on Joyce's statement in *A Portrait...*: "I desire to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world."<sup>8</sup> But why does the Beauty to which we aspire, inspire us so? There is, for Plotinus, one lone answer. Beauty is an offshoot of the Good, which is more ancient, as Plotinus remarks, "not in time but in truth, and has the prior power" (V, 5 [32], 12, 38).

### Beauty as *bonum*

We can, so to speak, briefly summarise the thought of Plotinus with a single formula: "he who seeks beauty seeks goodness". The common element in all that is beautiful, be it music, a deed, a soul, a disposition or a virtue, is their achievement of a certain good, and can be called beautiful only because

they are inspired by the Good. A beautiful symmetry is beautiful only when it derives from the Good, not when it derives from Evil or that which is destructive.

But the relationship between Beauty and the Good, *pulchrum* and *bonum*, is rather complex in Plotinus. The Good is clearly above Beauty. The soul seeks Beauty so that it may attain the Good, and not the other way around: "the Good itself does not need Beauty, though Beauty needs [the Good]"<sup>9</sup>. But, and this goes without saying, the Good itself is by no means devoid of Beauty: "Anyone who has seen [the Good] knows what I mean when I say that it is beautiful" (I, 6, 7, 2-3). In essence Plotinus is here reproducing in his own words Plato's thought, especially as it is expressed in the *Philebus* (64 e 5): "And now the power of the good has retired into the region of the beautiful; for measure and symmetry are beauty and virtue all the world over". In the *Republic* 509a 6, Plato states: "What a wonder of beauty that must be which is the author of science and truth, and yet surpasses them in beauty"<sup>10</sup>. The infinite power of the Good, the Measurer (VI, 7 [38], 30, 34) above all measure, is the first and immeasurable condition of all measurable beauty: "so his beauty, explains Plotinus, is of another kind and beauty above beauty. For if it is nothing, what beauty can it be? But if it is lovable, it would be the geometer of beauty. Therefore the productive power of all is the flower of beauty, a beauty which makes beauty" (VI, 7 [38], 32, 27-29). The Good is, then, the flower of beauty, and as the beautiful things of this world are the *sensible manifestations* of Beauty in itself or the Idea of Beauty, we might say that Beauty in itself is, in a certain analogical way, the *intelligible manifestation* of the absolutely transcendent Good.

Moreover, the soul Plotinus says, is "skilled in finding what it loves, and not leaving off till it catches it" (31, 28-29). Why are we so driven toward the object of our love? In order to revive the vision of the incommensurable Good that lives inside of us:

The experience of lovers bears witness to this, that, as long as it is in that which has the impression perceived by the senses, the lover is not yet in love; but when from that he himself generates in himself an impression not perceptible by the senses in his partless soul, then love springs up. But he seeks to see the beloved that he may water him when he is withering. (VI, 7 [38], 33, 22-27).

Or again: "Then the soul, receiving into itself an outflow from thence, is moved and dances wildly and is all stung with longing and becomes love.... But when

a kind of warmth from thence comes upon it, it gains strength and wakes and is truly winged; and though it is moved with passion for that which lies close by it, yet all the same it rises higher, to something greater which it seems to remember. And as long as there is anything higher than that which is present to it, it naturally goes on upwards, lifted by the giver of its love. It rises above Intellect, but cannot run on above the Good, for there is nothing above" (VI, 7 [38], 22, 8 ss.).

### Beauty as inward openness

We might think, in light of the preceding descriptions of the quest for Beauty and the Good, that the coveted object of the soul lies outside of it. This is not so. Plotinus reminds us that what is "really worth aspiring to for us is our selves, bringing themselves back for themselves to the best of themselves; this is the well-proportioned and beautiful and the form which is not part of the composite and the clear, intelligent, beautiful life" (VI, 7 [38], 30, 36-40).

In what does this clear and beautiful life consist? What is this "best" of ourselves toward which we ought to tend? A certain clarification might be forthcoming if we look at Plotinus' representation of consciousness. The "I" contains all levels of reality which we can distinguish in "external" nature, from the ineffable One-Good down to the Intellect and to the Soul. "And just as in nature there are these three of which we have spoken [the One, the Intellect and the Soul], so we ought to think that they are present also in ourselves" (V, 1 [10], 10 5-6; see III 8 [30], 9, 23). The Good and Beauty are, therefore, always in us," although we are not always conscious of the fact, as when we are unaware of that part of ourselves responsible for the beating of our heart and our other bodily processes. Our consciousness, then, is but a fraction of our total selves, lodged, as it were, between two extremes of which we are, for the most part, unaware:

Why then, when we have such great possessions, do we not consciously grasp them, but are mostly inactive in these ways, and some of us are never active at all? They are always occupied in their own activities, Intellect, and that which is before Intellect, always in itself, and soul, which is in this sense "ever-moving." For not everything which is in the soul is immediately perceptible, but it reaches us when it enters into perception; but when a particular active power does not give a share in its activity to the perceiving power, that activity has not yet pervaded the whole soul. We do not therefore yet know it, since we are ac-

companied by the perceptive power and are not a part of soul but the whole soul (V, 1 [10], 12, 1 ss.).

Entering into ourselves, then, means becoming open to that which lies deepest in us, the Good, which is shrouded by the multiple external objects, of which we, for the most part, bear the reflections.

But how can this openness be imagined? I shall take a very simple example to describe the openness to the Good which is, in itself beyond all acts of consciousness. I am sitting and reading at my desk; the telephone rings, and I make an appointment with a friend to lunch at one, remembering that I must also stop at the bookdealer to pick up a book that I need; but, pursuing my reading, I absorb myself in it, forgetting my meeting and the bookdealer; I am no longer hungry nor thirsty. I feel no need for anything, time has vanished, and I am no longer aware what I am doing. I am totally swallowed up by my reading totally absent to myself, to my body, to the passing of time; the fact is, at the very moment when I am no longer conscious of my activity, it is then that I am truly reading; and when I slowly become conscious of my surroundings, once my consciousness accompanies my act, I am no longer truly reading, at least not with the same intensity. This absence to ourselves which unleashes our inner activity and intensifies its power, is the veritable openness and presence for Plotinus: "Often I have woken up out of the body to myself and have entered into myself, going out from all other things; I have seen a beauty wonderfully great...; Then after that rest in the divine, when I have come down from Intellect to discursive reasoning, I am puzzled how I ever came down..." (IV, 8, 1 ss.).

In the midst of such pure activity, in this unconscious immersion of ourselves into our very depths, we might ask, "who is it that is reading?," since no one is present to state: "it is I who is reading." Plotinus himself exclaims "but we—who are we?" (VI, 4, 14, 16), when confronted with this type of presence, the experience of reading being but a pale reflection.

As P. Hadot explains, we are here faced with "the whole paradox of the human self...: we are only that of which we are conscious, yet we are conscious of no longer being ourselves precisely when, lifting ourselves to a greater inner simplicity, we have lost consciousness of ourselves."<sup>12</sup> This is by far what is most singular for us modern thinkers in the plotinian conception of the true presence: the idea that what is most intimate to us is, in a sense, what is most impersonal. Inwardness is openness, not withdrawal; it lies not at the root of personality but of wholeness which takes us beyond any restrictive

notion of individuality. From this point of view, all of Plotinus' philosophy, is "directed against anthropomorphism,"<sup>13</sup> as the following reflection describes to perfection: "For he has ceased to be the All now that he has become man; but when he ceases to be man he 'walks on high and directs the whole universe'<sup>14</sup>..." (V, 8, 7, 33-35).

Thus, we can find in Plotinus many passages professing the surpassing of the self, or the forgetting of the self:

Conscious awareness, in fact, is likely to enfeeble the very activities of which there is consciousness; only when they are alone are they pure and more genuinely active and living; and when good men are in this state their life is increased, when it is not spilt out into perception, but gathered together in one in itself (I, 4, 10, 28 ss.).

The reader is not necessarily aware that he is reading, least of all when he is really concentrating (I, 4, 10, 24-26).

The more it presses on towards the heights the more it will forget....so that if anyone said that the good soul was forgetful, it would be correct to say so in this sort of sense. For the higher soul also flies from multiplicity, and gathers multiplicity into one and abandons the indefinite: because in this way it will not be [clogged] with multiplicity but light and *alone by itself* (IV, 3, 32, 13 ss.).

The soul, then, is its true self only when it detaches itself from everything, including consciousness, which fragments it, and distracts it from its proper activity. It is a well-known fact. We can cite as an example Braque commenting on his art: "I had learned to paint in accordance with nature, and when convinced that I had to liberate myself from this model [Plotinus would have said "...of the world"], it proved anything but easy. But I set myself to work and with intuitive leaps, the *detachment* that progressively separated me from the model was thus achieved. In such moments, *we adhere to virtually unconscious imperatives*, not knowing what they may bring forth. It is an adventure. *Consciousness is not involved.*"<sup>15</sup>

This presence of non-consciousness within us is that which, for Plotinus, gives us access to our internal beauty which alters and enriches our vision,

since we have seen, "one must come to the sight with a seeing power made akin and like to what is seen" (I, 6, 9, 29-30). And hence, we can cite the following exhortation: "Go back into yourself and look; and if you do not yet see yourself beautiful, then, just as someone making a statue which has to be beautiful cuts away here and polishes there and makes one part smooth and clears another till he has given his statue a beautiful face, so you too must cut away excess and straighten the crooked and clear the dark and make it bright, and never stop 'working on your statue'..." (I, 6, 9, 7-13).

The aesthetics of Plotinus is thus, above all, a purification of the soul, an ethical and metaphysical experience where the soul contemplates that Beauty which is penetrated by the Good. This contemplation culminates in the grace and the delight *vis-à-vis* what is and what, inside of what is, shines from a unique fire. We can also say, from a different angle, that the contemplation of Beauty is a sort of exercise, an initiation to ecstasy. Innumerable artists and writers have spoken of the deep-felt need to continually immerse themselves into their work, into their creative activity, which appeals to them as the abode of their most profound identity, an identity though that they themselves cannot seize, or at least, about which they cannot say anything precise except may be that it somehow renders them free. It is within this singular identity, this identity without point of reference, that the artist confesses both his greatest detachment from, and his greatest communion with everything, in other words, the sense of the greatest universality.

This state which brings us closer to divinity is what Plotinus, more or less, conceives as grace, a state of perfect happiness and sufficiency. So, his aesthetics, like that of Ficini, Schiller, Ravaisson and most notably Bergson, is one of grace. Bergson wrote:<sup>16</sup> "In all that is graceful, we sense a sort of surrender, like a condescension. Likewise, whoever contemplates the world with the eyes of an artist, it is grace that is traceable in Beauty, and it is goodness that shows itself through grace."<sup>17</sup>

### Summary

The aesthetics of Plotinus proceeds, according to the ancient alliance between pulchrum and bonum, from sensible beauty to the beauty of the incorporeal and then culminates in the pure vision of Beauty as such, itself invested with the infinite power of the Good, the true object of the quest. But this aes-

thetic is, above all, an inward odyssey toward oneself, for the path opened by the Good is the one that our soul must itself open, hence, the task rests on each of us to cease being the mirrors of evanescent realities and to veritably want to attain to grace.

## Notes

1. I am greatly indebted for the pages that follow to the translation-commentary of P. Mathias, *Plotin. Du Beau, Ennéades I, 6 et V, 8*, Paris, 1991, and to P. Hadot's, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard*, Paris, Gallimard, 1997.
2. *Life of Plotinus*, 1, 1-2. The English translations of Plotinus throughout this paper are those of A. H. Armstrong, Plotinus, *Enneads*, in seven volumes, Harvard University Press, 1966-1988.
3. Cf. E. Panofsky, *Idea. Contribution à l'histoire du concept de l'ancienne théorie de l'art*, trad. H. Joly, Paris, Gallimard, 1983, 44: "Plotinus, for whom the progression that leads from unity to multiplicity also leads from perfection to imperfection, is explicitly and passionately opposed to this definition of beauty which was associated with 'the balance of proportions' and 'the beauty of colors', by classical antiquity and the Renaissance."
4. Cf. E. Panofsky, *ibid.*, 39: "the philosophy of Plotinus undertakes to obtain for the 'inner form' the metaphysical right to merit the status of a 'perfect and supreme model.' Plotinus had, in effect, deliberately protested against the attacks Plato had formulated concerning 'mimetic art.'"
5. The Zeus of Pheidias, an attempt by Pericles to embellish the athenian image, was considered as one of the "seven wonders of the world" in antiquity.
6. Cf. *Symposium*, 211c.
7. P. Mathias, *op. cit.*, 5: "As Plotinus teaches, it is equally true that being and beauty accompany each other, their very nature being identical (V, 8 [31], 9, 42). In this sense, we can say that Plotinus does not hold a specific concept of Beauty, and indeed, as we have seen when he disallows its identification with the concept of symmetry, he omits any such possibility. So, the beautiful cannot really be a characteristic or attribute of being, or something that can be representative of a certain category of being, rather, beauty is being, or otherwise, it is the expression or the name for the plenitude of being as such."
8. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, The Modern Library, New York, 1916, 297.
9. V, 5, 12, 32-33. The proof of the Good's higher independence and value is as Plotinus says a little earlier (19-20): "All men think that when they have attained the Good it is sufficient for them."
10. In the *Symposium*, 211c, it is Beauty, rather, that is given as the supreme goal of the soul's ascendance.
11. Cf. IV, 8, 8, 1 ss.: "And, if one ought to dare to express one's own view more clearly, contradicting the opinion of others, even our soul does not altogether come down, but there is always something of it in the intelligible."
12. *Op. cit.*, 40."
13. P. Hadot, *Plotin. Traité 38*, Paris, Cerf, 1988, 68.
14. Plato *Phaedrus*, 246 c.

15. D. Vallier, *L'intérieur de l'art*. Paris, Seuil, 1982, 33, cited by P. Mathias. *op. cit.*, 36.\*
16. Henri Bergson, *La Pensée et le Mouvant*. Essais et conférences, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1941, 280.\*
17. On the subject of the aesthetics of grace, see P. Hadot, *op. cit.*, 76 ss.; and from the same author, *Plotin. Traité 38*, Paris, Cerf, 1988, 55 ss.
- \*. The above translations of the French texts are a joint effort between myself and Kiriakos Katakos.

## Personal Beauty in the Thought of Plotinus

Joseph Sen

ὁ μὲν γὰρ καλὸς. ὅσον ἴδην. πέλεται [καλὸς],  
ὁ δὲ κάγαθὸς αὐτὶκα καὶ καλὸς ἔσσεται.

— Sappho

### I. Introduction

If the contemporary literature on aesthetics were taken as a gauge, personal beauty might appear of peripheral significance to human life. For the predominant concern is works-of-art, objects rather than subjects. The interests of philosophers here diverge from the everyday, where the beauty of other persons stands as one of the most immediate and primordial experiences we can have. By contrast, the joys of art may often pass unnoticed. Why this neglect exists is a question that can only be touched upon here. Perhaps the fear is that anything will go in this area, that attention to the subject would herald an embarrassing collapse into subjectivism. Another concern might be the gratuitous quality which seems to surround personal beauty, especially when this is just taken in physical terms. It may then appear as a feature either brutally given or not and so incapable of provoking the kind of admiration which matches the sense of *achievement* found in a work of art. Platonic thought has, however, always challenged the assumption that this is a subject too flimsy to warrant philosophical notice. While Plotinus may differ from Plato in the unservedly positive status he assigns to art, both share a conviction about the philosophical vitality of personal beauty.<sup>1</sup> The distinctive way in which Plotinus articulates this conviction will be treated here, but Plato will never be far away from our reflections. These will centre on two themes. We will first look at the

way Plotinus encourages us to move away from thinking of personal beauty in physical terms by emphasising its relation to interiority. This is a familiar move in the *Enneads*. But the second theme is less documented, and needs more unfolding. It has to do with the way this understanding leads to a tacit role for *time* as the form of experience in which personal beauty comes to view.

## II. Picture Imperfect

There is a tendency to take personal beauty as a fixed quota, something possessed unbrokenly, for a definite period of life. The view is taken by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*:

Beauty is different for different ages (ἡλικία). A youth's beauty consists in having a body that is serviceable for exertions in running and physical force, and pleasant to look at for gratification. This is why the all-round athletes are the most beautiful, since they are naturally suited both for physical force and for speed. Beauty in someone in the prime of life consists in having the body serviceable for exertions in war, and in being both pleasant and formidable to look at. Beauty in an old man is having a body adequate for necessary exertions, and not painful to look at, because it has none of the deformities that mark old age (1361b7-14, trans. Irwin and Fine).<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle here links beauty with three factors: the body, visuality and time. Beauty remains consistently bodily and visual but varies according to the age of the body we are considering. By so permitting each stage of life its own beauty Aristotle avoids ageism. He would not go along with the rather monochrome view prevalent in our times which allows the beauty of youth to exercise a tyrannical sway. But while allowing for this diversity Aristotle still takes the beauty of these different periods of life to be *enduring*. For example, the beauty of youth remains for a continuous stretch of time and does not just "come and go." It is as constant as the physical setting in which it is found.

Plotinus has something to say about this:

The same bodies appear sometimes beautiful, sometimes not beautiful, so that their being bodies is one thing, their being beautiful another (1.6.1.14-16).<sup>2</sup>

Plotinus is not merely repeating Aristotle and saying that the criterion of beauty varies for different stages of life. It is a narrower temporal span to which he refers, a matter, we might say, of moments rather than years. According to

Plotinus the same physical face can appear beautiful at one time, and not beautiful at another where these times follow closely upon one another. Crucial here is that while the spatial proportions of the face remain invariant, its beauty wavers. Plotinus is suggesting that even if a face has perfect bone structure, this is neither a sufficient nor even a necessary condition for beauty, since there are times when the beauty "comes through" and others when it does not.

We may disagree with Plotinus if we think that a face is beautiful unconditionally—*over* time rather than *at* a time. Commonsense might also favour Aristotle to the extent it construes personal beauty as physical and as a constant. When beauty is present, it is there in a strong sense, for several years at a go, it has a continuous presence. It is this attribution which Plotinus is questioning.

A suggestion here why Plotinus' view might look strange to us. Perhaps when it comes to beauty the tendency is to assume that it is all the same, whether we are dealing with works of art or persons. The beauty of a painting, for example, might seem to be a property present once and for all—barring fire and vandalism. This lends the beauty a certain immobility. Emmanuel Levinas, a rather unsung Platonist, puts this well:

Within the life, or rather the death, of a statue, an instant endures infinitely: eternally Laocoon will be caught up in the grip of serpents; the Mona Lisa will smile eternally. Eternally the future announced in the strained muscles of Laocoon will be unable to become present. Eternally, the smile of the Mona Lisa about to broaden will not broaden. An eternally suspended future floats around the congealed position of a statue like a future forever to come. The imminence of the future lasts before an instant stripped of the essential characteristic of the present, its evanescence. It will never have completed its task as a present, as though reality withrew from its own reality and left it powerless. In this situation the present can assume nothing, can take on nothing, and thus is an impersonal and anonymous instant.<sup>3</sup>

Levinas here collates two arts—sculpture and painting—which Plotinus would want to keep separate. But instructive here is the claim that these works of art lack genuine temporality. The beauty of the Mona Lisa is striking but static, subject neither to change nor development. It remains interminably present within the space of the painting.

It might be retorted that this point is downright trivial! Of course, the beauty of a painting doesn't change: otherwise we wouldn't be talking about a

painting!<sup>4</sup> But the question here is whether our attitude to paintings influences our appreciation of personal beauty. For perhaps when it comes to personal beauty we tend to transpose our way of thinking about paintings to living beings. On analogy, we thereby easily but mistakenly assume that personal beauty is also a property which is spatially and statically present in a person. Thus thinking a face beautiful, we take this beauty as inalienable like the smile on the Mona Lisa. But Plotinus encourages further thought. Personal beauty may be more a *temporal* than a spatial property, and one which can come and go within moments rather than years. The perception of personal beauty here becomes more a matter of witnessing an *event* than seeing a *thing*.<sup>5</sup>

### III. Beauty and Life

On what then does the appearance of beauty depend? What brings it to view? If we leave aside talk of "form" a more accessible lead is found in *Ennead* VI.7:

... here below beauty is what illuminates good proportions rather than the good proportions themselves, and this is what is lovable. For why is there more light of beauty on a living face, but only a trace of it on a dead one, even if its flesh and its proportions are not yet wasted away? And are not the more lifelike statues the more beautiful ones, even if the others are better proportioned? And is not an uglier living man more beautiful than the beautiful man in a statue (VI.7.22.24-32)?

The argument is controversial but sound granted the premise that whatever has life has beauty. To the extent then that a body is animated it possesses a minimum of beauty. This means that anything which has soul is beautiful since soul is, on Platonic terms, the bearer of life. Plotinus even goes further than this, claiming that the activity of soul is causally responsible for every kind of beauty found in actions, ways of life and bodies—everything, that is, apart from Intellect and the Good where beauty and life have their proper residence.<sup>6</sup>

But we might still want more explanation how one living being can be more beautiful than another. Animation won't suffice here, since this only accounts for a beauty which effectively amounts to the lowest common denominator. Plotinus himself wants to make room for judgments of a higher order

than this by indicating elsewhere that soul is not beautiful by itself, since otherwise it would not be possible for one soul to be wise and beautiful, and another stupid and ugly.<sup>7</sup> Both we might say are beautiful relative to the corpse but when compared one soul can still be more beautiful than the other.

In what then does this "additional" beauty consist if not animation? It needs to be emphasised that the concept of life is not superfluous for an explanation here so long as we keep in view the semantic depth it assumes in Plotinus's hands. For life in this context is by no means exhausted by its manifestation in living beings which only represent its tail end, so to speak.<sup>8</sup> Crucially for Plotinus, when we come to a richer understanding of life we see its synergy with thought:

And every life is a thought, but one is dimmer than another, just as life . . . But perhaps men may speak of different kinds of life, but do not speak of different kinds of thought but say that some are thoughts, but others not thoughts at all, because they do not investigate at all what kind of thing life is. But we must bring out this point, at any rate, that again our discussion shows that all things are a by-product of contemplation. If, then, the truest life is life by thought, and is the same thing as the truest thought, then the truest thought lives, and contemplation, and the object of contemplation at this level, is living and life, and the two together are one (III.8.8.17-30).

Once again we find Plotinus turning everyday conceptions on their head. We are not to think of thought as a manifestation of life but life as a manifestation of thought. Thought here does not mean deliberate, discursive thought. It is a more effortless and holistic kind of thought which Plotinus has in mind.<sup>9</sup>

This identity of thought and life is usually hard for us to grasp given their apparent disjunction in the physical world.<sup>10</sup> It is only in Intellect that their full identity is realised. According to Plotinus this heightened thought-life comes to operate in a wise soul. And given the co-extension of life and beauty, greater beauty is therefore displayed:

Intellect and the things of intellect are its beauty, its own beauty and not another's, since only then is it truly soul (I.6.6.17-18).<sup>11</sup>

The insistence that the soul is only truly soul when living from Intellect reminds us of the axiological dimension which the concept of soul has for Plotinus.<sup>12</sup> A wise soul is soul in its fullest sense so far as it shares more in the

greater life and beauty of Intellect where its higher identity is found. In fine, the wise soul is more beautiful than the stupid not because the latter lacks life but because of the former's greater, indeed "abundant" (*ἄγαν*) life.<sup>13</sup>

#### IV. Beauty and Time

The life to which Plotinus refers so exuberantly is inwardly realised, by moving into the self, towards the beauty of Intellect and the Good. But what is discovered inwardly is diffusive. Once realised the inner life has power to appear and enliven the external which means it is no longer merely "inner." If we bear this in mind we gain a better handle upon the following remark:

But perhaps it is not really possible for anything to be beautiful outwardly but ugly inwardly; for if the outside of anything is wholly beautiful it is so by the domination of what is within. Those who are called beautiful and are ugly within have an outward beauty, too, which is not genuine. But if anyone is going to say that he has seen people who are really beautiful but are ugly within, I think that he has not really seen them, but thinks that beautiful people are other than who they are (*II.9.17.40-46*).

Commonsense takes its bearings from physical beauty and would only grudgingly allow the concept an inward dimension. But Plotinus takes an equally one-sided stance, insisting so firmly on the priority of inner beauty that a merely external beauty is left struggling for recognition. Plotinus' thought is radical and revisionary here. He is not describing what normally passes for beauty but telling us how mistaken the usual view is and putting another in its place. He does not merely subordinate physical beauty, but denies its status altogether. The task is not to weigh priorities—the inner with the outer—for the error lies in assuming two alternatives to begin with. Only interior beauty *is* beauty.

But what are we to make of this? Plotinus is after all making sham of everyday judgments. Surely we can call someone beautiful irrespective of the wisdom and virtue in their souls? Can we make any sense of Plotinus' inversion? We would be hard pressed to make a compelling case for Plotinus given his normative tone. Even he admits that his approach is not for everyone.<sup>14</sup> But his perspective may not be so alien as it at first appears. Clearly there is no *patent* way in which we connect beauty with goodness or virtue. But is there

an *implicit* association? Consider the case of someone initially taken for beautiful turning out on closer acquaintance to be deceitful or vicious. Would we thereafter still feel inclined to call them beautiful? We might want to stay with "attractive" but "beautiful" might no longer seem so fitting a description. Of course, we may go on using the term should we find no positive, ethical grounds for doubt: beauty in this sense is innocent until proven guilty. But might not the perception of a serious flaw warrant a change in our understanding?

Plotinus presents another scenario. A man with an ugly face may come to be judged beautiful once we discover his virtue.<sup>15</sup> This brings to mind Alcibiades' eulogy to Socrates in the *Symposium*. Socrates, he tells us, is like one of those statues of the god Silenus which contain little figurines within:

Whether anyone else has caught him in a serious moment and opened him, and seen the images inside, I know not; but I saw them one day, and thought them so divine and golden, so totally beautiful (*πάγκολλα*) and wondrous, that I simply had to do as Socrates bade me (*216E-217A*).<sup>16</sup>

It should be noted here that Alcibiades' discovery hardly comes in a flash but dawns upon him over time. If all he ever had to go on was Socrates' physical appearance he might well have remained repelled by the sight of the old man with the squashed nose and squinting eyes. But subsequent acquaintance brings to his notice a beauty in Socrates' words, actions and even his nonactions which, invisible to first sight, remains so to all who do not go through a like experience. But without the movement of time this acquaintance presumes Alcibiades would have never transcended his first impression.

This offers a way of uncoupling merely external beauty from its genuine, inward counterpart. While the first grabs us immediately and is largely a matter of effortless "spotting" in space, the second only makes a gradual appearance and requires discovery through the course of time. Related to this is the fact that external beauty is available to one and all; to this extent it is egalitarian but also commonplace. By contrast, insight into personal beauty is a kind of privileged access *won* through acquaintance. It is by no means given to all, its recognition being a matter of time and individual experience. Recall that Alcibiades draws attention to Socrates' beauty not by pointing in space but by recounting his various experiences with Socrates, a *history*, in other words, the details of which only he can fully know.<sup>17</sup>



## V. Conclusion

We have so far seen how Plotinus encourages a shift away from a physical, "spatial" understanding of personal beauty to one centred on interiority. But we have also observed – and perhaps unexpectedly – how far recognition of this beauty depends upon time, although Plotinus never makes an explicit theme of this.<sup>18</sup> Now the goal for Plotinus is not to remain enraptured by any object of vision, however impressive. The reflexive turn is always imminent.<sup>19</sup> Plotinus emphasises how appreciating the beauty of another's virtue is difficult unless we have realised the same in ourselves.<sup>20</sup> But this requires a work of its own much akin to the artist's. Each of us must work on our own statue and this is a project which is quite senseless outside of a temporal context.

Still, the beauty eventually unveiled is always present within the self. It is not so much created as *realised*.<sup>21</sup> The difficulty for us here is coming to terms with Plotinus' insistence that it is not only the *feeling* but the *content* of the experience of beauty which lies within. Fathoming the mystery of this proximity is a challenge Plotinus has left to us.

Let me close with ■ refrain: "Isn't an ugly living man more beautiful than a beautiful man in a statue?" The rhetorical tone might look naïve since Plotinus takes for granted what is far from obvious. Some might not want to mention the two men in the same breath, so great appears their disparity. But pause for a moment and consider a world where this thought did ring true, where the ethical took precedence over the aesthetical while remaining the domain of beauty, where our living contemporaries were always more important to us than any work of art. Perhaps such a world was a reality for Plotinus. Were it to become so for us I venture to say that ours would not only be better, but even on the whole more beautiful.

## Notes

1. In *Aristotle: Selections*, (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1995), 528.
2. Translations from Plotinus' *Enneads* follow those of A.H. Armstrong in the Loeb Classical Library edition, 7 volumes, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966-1988). *Ennead*, chapter and line numbers follow P. Henry and H.R. Schwyzer's *Plotini Opera*, 3 volumes, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, 1976, 1982).
3. "Reality and its Shadow," in *The Levinas Reader*, Sean Hand (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 133.
4. Our appreciation may, of course, change; but this is a matter of recognising what we take to have been previously present but unnoticed. There is realism here, perception is never invention.
5. This claim appears trivial if taken to mean that *eventually* personal beauty is subject to time. But Plotinus' point is stronger, personal beauty is constantly related to time, and specifically, as we shall see, the life of the soul which manifests itself in time.
6. Plotinus, *Enn.*, I.6.6.27-33; see also I.6.9. 3-7: "So that the soul must be trained, first of all to look at beautiful ways of life: then at the beautiful works, not those which the arts produce, but the works of men who have a name for goodness; then look at the souls of the people who produce the beautiful works." The drive here is from the objective to the personal. While the concern with beauty remains a shift takes place from the aesthetical to the ethical. This suggests a measured stance towards art which is close in spirit to Plato.
7. Plotinus, *Enn.*, V.9.2.18-20.
8. For the multivalence of life see I.4.3.
9. This interplay between life and thought might be understood more concretely. Sometimes we find ourselves in a rather indifferent state of mind which is broken by a thought coming upon us suddenly. Perhaps we hear a remark or grasp an idea which gives a sort of jolt to our system, waking us up and making us feel more invigorated. Or think of the animated gestures of someone deeply engaged by what they are saying. The point here is that the presence of the thought *shows* itself in heightened animation. The proper word for this is *vivacity*.
10. "For as in the portrait (εἰκόν) of a man many things are wanting, and especially the decisively important thing, life, so in the things perceived by sense being is a shadow of being, separated from that which is most fully being, which was life in the archetype" (VI.2.7.11-14).
11. "So beauty in the soul comes by wisdom. And what is it, then, which gives wisdom to the soul? Intellect, necessarily an intellect which is not sometimes intelligent, and sometimes not intelligent, but the true intellect" (V.9.2.20-22).
12. See also V.9.13.7-8.

13. Plotinus, *Enn.*, I.4.3.24-26. See also I.4.3.33-37: "We have often said that the perfect life, the true, real life, is in that transcendent, intelligible reality and that other lives are incomplete, traces of life, not perfect or pure and no more life than its opposite. Let us put it shortly; as long as all living things proceed from a single origin, but have not life in the same degree as it, the origin must be the first and most perfect life."
14. Plotinus, *Enn.*, V.8.2.45.
15. Plotinus, *Enn.*, V.8.2.38-41. A question here is whether our respective judgment alters our perception of the face by a sort of "looping" effect so that it no longer really seems so ugly. Continuing to speak of its ugliness might then be more of a concession to the common understanding of beauty rather than an expression of individual experience.
16. Trans. W.R.M. Lamb [modified], Plato, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 3. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925).
17. Which reminds us that Alcibiades' knowledge of beauty comes through acquaintance, while ours is gained only through the description he provides.
18. Given the strong links between beauty and life we might expect some such reference to time. Ordinarily, the life of an embodied being is understood to be *its* time. We might, of course, expect more connection between beauty and eternity within a Platonic context. But we should bear in mind that eternity is not a static condition for either Plato or Plotinus. Both are keen for any notion of a transcendent reality to accommodate life, movement and activity — categories which certainly have a temporal ring to them. Plato's clearest statement of this comes in the *Sophist*: "But tell me, in heaven's name, are we really to be so easily convinced that change, life, soul, understanding have no place in that which is perfectly real — that it has neither life nor thought, but stands immutable in solemn aloofness, devoid of intelligence?" (*Sophist*, 249a, trans. Cornford). On this question A.H. Armstrong has argued that there may be a way in which the motion in the intelligible world belies the presence of a form of time (see his "Eternity, Life and Movement in Plotinus' account of Nous," in *Le Neoplatonism*, Colloque International du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1969, Royaumont, 67-74; 73).
19. Generally, Plotinus tells us that whenever we admire the beauty in another, we admire the beauty in ourselves (V.1.2.50-51).
20. Plotinus, *Enn.*, V.8.2.41-44.
21. Plotinus indicates this by employing the analogy of sculpture rather than painting for the procedure of taking away (*ἀφαίρεσις*) which brings the ideal self to view (see, for example, I.6.9.6-15). Sculpture is no less a creative art than painting but the activity involved is distinct. The sculptor is more concerned with the removal of the obstructions which prevent a vision of the work-to-be. The physical activity involved is negative, for its end somehow seems more present in the

stone. It's as if the sculptor is simply exposing to view what was already latent. As Aristotle remarks, we can speak of seeing Hermes in the uncarved stone (*Metaphysics* V, 1017b6-7); but could the same be said of the picture in the bare canvas?

## The Beautiful According to Dionysius

Dimitrios N. Koutras

The concept of the “beautiful” (καλόν) in Dionysius’ teaching is developed primarily in his treatise “*De divinis nominibus*.” The influence of Plato’s philosophy and of Neoplatonism, of Plotinus and particularly of Proclus, is obvious. Thus, M. Beardsley<sup>1</sup> is right when he says that Dionysius’ view that the sensible is the correlative of the invisible derives from Plato’s doctrine of Ideas, while his theory of emanation originated with Plotinus.

What we should particularly notice in Dionysius’ teaching on the beautiful is the functional nature of the icon, of the symbol in the metaphysics of light, and of his doctrine of emanation.

According to ancient Greek philosophy the concept of καλόν, “beautiful,” must be examined both in itself and in relation to the *good* (ἀγαθόν). The categories of the *beautiful* and the *sublime*, as is well known, became a controversial issue during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Western Europe. However the concept of the “beautiful” in ancient Greek philosophy had a universal meaning, which, in the field of Metaphysics, the general doctrine of Being, was not confined to the narrow framework of aesthetics.

The “beautiful” in Plato’s work was found to be closely related to the *Good* as “καθ’ αὐτό αἰρετόν,” i.e. as that which should be chosen as an end-in-itself. Everything else is subjected to it as a means. The “beautiful” should never be considered as a means to something else.

In Plato’s philosophy one can see that there is not only a close relationship between the Idea of the *Good* and that of the *beautiful*, but also that often the former is replaced by the latter. Both Ideas are of overriding importance in Plato’s philosophy. In the *Symposium* the loving soul only meets true “beauty” at the end of its journey. It passes first through the variety of Forms of the beautiful, up to the level of the One, the μονοειδές, exactly as it appears in the

*Republic*, where the Idea of the *Good* surpasses everything, abiding beyond them all. It seems that the idea of the *beautiful* in Plato's philosophy surpasses every other being in degree, just as the Idea of the *Good*. One can also see that the gradation of Being, in the journey undertaken by the loving soul towards it, is found to correspond with that of the beautiful.<sup>2</sup>

The question, however, is: Does Plato's description in the *Symposium* of the soul's ascent through every grade of the beautiful and the lonely passage of the "sensible" on its way to the intelligible beauty, really aim at showing the gradation from the merely *beautiful* to true *beauty* or simply a parallel gradation of the Being, which is identified by him with the beautiful?

As indicated above, for the ancient Greeks the idea of the *beautiful* has a metaphysical character. This explains its close relation to, or even its identification with, the *Good* in Plato's work. There is no doubt that for Plato the *beautiful* differs from the *Good*, since the latter is beyond intellect and essence, and therefore inaccessible. Thus the "beautiful" in Plato, and later in Neoplatonism, constitutes the external appearance of the *Good* as well as that of Being. In fact, it is the value dimension which is actualized in the ascending process of the loving soul in every teleological approach to the beautiful.

The beautiful as an idea, according to Plato, is "ἐκθανέστατον"<sup>3</sup> and "ἐρασμιώτατον" (most "revealing" and "lovable"). By its nature, it tends to unfold on the horizon of the senses; it appears and manifests itself as light. This property motivates the love (ἔρως) of the soul. Love, as Proclus says, is "ἐπιστρεπτικός,"<sup>4</sup> a return to the "beautiful."

From the preceding it becomes clear that in the anagogic function of the beautiful, as described strikingly by Plato in the *Symposium*, lies one of its ontological structural elements. At the same time, the "beautiful" also reveals a universal structure of Being, which, in opposition to the "Good," is manifested and unfolded in the sensible world, in such a way that it plays the role of mediator between the idea and the sensible reality, Being and Becoming, *appearance* and *participation*.

I consider the preceding discussion to be a necessary prerequisite for the understanding of both the Neoplatonic and Dionysian teaching on the "beautiful." It should be pointed out, however, that the image (εἰκὼν) plays an important role in their approach. In Plato's philosophy the *image* constitutes the *eidolon* and the *imitation* of the idea. On the contrary, in Neoplatonism, the *image* obtains an ontological significance. It does not imitate the Idea in the manner of a shadow, but reveals it.

The *image* is the product and offspring of the Form (εἶδος, ἰδέα), although it has a different character. Ontological dependence means affinity and not identity. The *paradigm*, as a formative principle, acts on the underlying matter of the image. The image is the potency and the potentiality. The paradigm is itself the actuality. The image is also found to be in a dynamic relation to the archetype; it tends to assimilate itself to it, as much as possible. At the same time the image is a kind of resemblance (ὁμοίωσις). It exists on account of its affinity with the archetype. The resemblance minimizes the degree of difference. Nevertheless, the resemblance does not remove their radical difference. Archetype and image never coincide, that is, they are never identical with each other, because, as we know, similar things always include difference.

The Neoplatonists and Dionysius repeatedly and figuratively refer to the idea of light, in order to point out the relationship between the paradigm and the image. Without light, and object not only does not seem to be beautiful, but it cannot be beautiful. Thus, the beauty of the beautiful object appears, as *splendour* (ἀγλαΐα). Light is not exclusively identified with its brightness. Light is visible, when it renders the other objects visible.

"Light," for Plotinus, distinguished as it is by its ability to approach the limits of the incorporeal<sup>5</sup>, is placed at the top of the sensible and intelligible world. For Dionysius light and the sun are God<sup>6</sup> himself, who, by his rays radiates the hierarchical orders of the Angels and of the Church. Everything is immersed in the light of the superessential goodness. Light grants them life and saves them. It recalls all things from darkness. When they are illuminated through the divine light, they acquire boundaries and form. Entering the sphere of light they obtain ontological significance. By illumination they escape darkness.

Darkness is the enemy of light. The presence of light drives away darkness. Darkness is entirely *non-being*; it has no essence, nor is it a principle: it is a lack and privation of light, a sub-hypostasis (παρυπόστασις)<sup>7</sup> and false idea.

In connection with light, the Neoplatonists employ the notion of emanation. According to their theory beings flow from the profusion of the inexhaustible source, which does not itself undergo any ontological diminution. What is new in the Neoplatonic theory of emanation, is that it goes beyond the limits of previous Greek philosophy on substance, due to its conception of the process of emanation of the *many* form the *One*. The *One* does not only dimin-

ish in its substance, but also it contributes to the increasing of Being. Thus light, though shining upon its objects, does not undergo any diminution<sup>8</sup> of its substance.

The objects participating in the properties of the light-giving source, participate also in light itself and in its illuminating rays. The presence of the source allows communication with it and renders visible the surface of the objects. The colours which are visible on the surface of bodies are derived from the existing conflict between light and darkness. The visible objects convey the *splendour* (ἀγλαΐα) of their brightness from their contact with light, while, at the same time, light itself remains indivisible (ἀμερὲς)<sup>9</sup> and above everything else.

The concept of the icon involved in Dionysius' teaching on the *beautiful* merits particular examination. Undoubtedly his aesthetic theory follows the Neoplatonic tradition. He shares Plotinus' and Proclus' understanding of the beautiful, but his contribution to aesthetics is not so significant as that of these authors. In my view, the personal contribution of Dionysius is to be found in his efforts to reveal the symbolic and anagogic nature of the icon.

The icon, according to Dionysius, is the symbol of the intelligible world and of divinity. Plotinus expresses the same belief, but does not state it so clearly. Besides, in Dionysius the emphasis is on the principle of the "beautiful." In Plotinus, the *beautiful* originates in the *One*, or Beauty (καλλοσύνη)<sup>10</sup>, but emphasis is placed on the role of the *intellect* (νοῦς).<sup>11</sup> In Dionysius, on the contrary, the source of the beautiful is God.<sup>12</sup> Sensible beauty is a theophany, projected on the horizon of phenomena.

In Plato's philosophy, artistic beauty occupies a lower level than natural beauty. The physical form is closer to the idea of the "beautiful" than the artist's image. The image as an imitation is, for him, far removed from the truth and the idea of the beautiful. Aristotle, later on, will restore art, because he does not consider it to be a simple imitation; the *form*<sup>13</sup> of the work of art and of art itself exists not in nature, but in the artist's soul. The work of art, according to Aristotle, bears the mark of form, which derives from the soul of the artist.

It is Plotinus who first discusses the subjective nature of the work of art. The work of art as an intentional object, no longer constitutes an imitation of natural objects, but is an intellectual achievement. Art acquires a metaphysical dimension; it is a reflection of intellectual intuition, expressed in solid form. The classical conception regarding beauty as harmony and symmetry, is rejected by Plotinus.

According to Plotinus, sensible beauty is not derived from the external

form of matter. Not the external, but the internal form, existing in the artist's soul is that which, completed by the intellectual intuition, manifests itself in sensible matter. Beauty, for him, is "μᾶλλον τὸ ἐπὶ τῇ συμμετρίας ἐπιλαμπόμενον ἢ τὴν συμμετρίαν."<sup>14</sup> Thus, art, at this stage, is considered to be the hierophant of the intellect<sup>15</sup>; it does not imitate natural forms; it simply uses them to express metaphysical contents.<sup>16</sup> In this way he places the *Idea* in the domain of the senses, i.e. the universal in the particular. Hence for Plotinus the image becomes the sensible presence of the paradigm; it is both a *shadow* (σκιά) and a sensible form (εἶδωλον) of the *idea*.

In Neoplatonism "beauty" itself is the *intellect* (νοῦς), the domain of Being and truth. The intellect, according to Plotinus, constitutes the basis of intelligible beauty, the principle from which derives the beauty of the soul and of the body. The "Good" (ἀγαθόν), i.e., beauty in itself (καλλοσύνη)<sup>17</sup> is the transcendental principle of intelligible beauty.

As has already been suggested, the "beautiful," according to Plato, depends directly on the *Idea* of the "Good," on the *Idea* of "Goodness." The beautiful is, for him, a medium through which the good manifests itself. In the "*Philebus*" Socrates, searching for the *Idea* of the Good, is forced to have recourse to the "*nature of the beautiful*."<sup>18</sup> He attempts, through the image, the offspring, to approach its creator.

As pointed out earlier, according to Plato, beauty possesses two properties: it is "revealing" and "lovable" *par excellence* ("ἐκφανεστάτον")<sup>19</sup> and ("ἐρασμιώτατον"). It radiates and shines like the light. Beauty and light have the capacity to display their presence; they illuminate the surrounding world. They descend on objects and make them translucent. They appear and reappear, expand and multiply in the illuminated bodies. The enlightened bodies, in turn, rise up and aim towards light and beauty. They are stimulated by beauty in the same way as the sense of sight is stimulated by light. Sight becomes the desire of illuminated bodies, the contemplation of the source of their origination, that is, Beauty in itself.

"Beauty" and "light," according to the Neoplatonists and Dionysius, have an attractive nature. Their appearance excites admiration. They attract and captivate vision as long as they do not fully reveal themselves, but simply appear in the lighted bodies. Their fascination is mainly due to the way in which they summon objects to their presence, while, at the same time, revealing and concealing themselves. The *splendour* (ἀγλαΐα) of the bodies tacitly declares their presence and invites (καλεῖ).<sup>20</sup> In Dionysius, in particular, light and beauty have attractive attributes. They invite everyone to a common vision.

The visible icon in Dionysius is the presence of the divine light. The light ray which originates in the divine is present in the icon. The divine itself is within the icon and the icon is the manifestation (ἐκφάνσις)<sup>21</sup> of the divine. The icon is possessed by the divine light. The divine is entirely present in the icon, its stamp is on each impression.<sup>22</sup>

The relation between the divine and the icon, according to Dionysius, is analogous to that of light and its appearance. The icon is a representation of divine light, of divine beauty. It appears through its light. Without light there can be no appearance. The appearance is the manifestation of light. Light<sup>23</sup> is manifested in its appearance and, in some way, is diffused through it.

As a figure which reveals the divine<sup>24</sup> the icon refers to it in the same way as oral speech refers to internal thoughts. It becomes a symbol, i.e. a confluence of two different factors. The confluent factors join in the symbol. In the icon the confluent factors are matter and light. Through its *splendour* (ἀγλαία) the enlightened *matter* expresses perfectly its contact with the divine light.

Every symbol has, by its nature, a dual function. It functions both as a sign and as an image. As a sign it points to the signified and as an image it constitutes a self-contained reality. A national symbol, for example the flag, points to the idea of the nation, but, at the same time, the nation exists within the flag which represents it. From this point of view the icon, according to Dionysius, supports the divine. It expresses it sensibly. In the material shape the particular co-exists with the universal, the finite with the infinite.<sup>25</sup> The divine become sensible intuition and matter discards its humiliating nature. As a symbol of the divine the icon expresses God's concession to save the believer's senses, in a way analogous to the Logos made flesh.

The icon is metaphysically dependent on the divine, but is, moreover, enriched in its very being as representation of the divine. The incarnation of the divine through the icon symbolizes the incarnation by Christ of the eternal nature of divinity. In this way through divine consent, the divine represented by the icon somehow becomes incarnate, removing the weight of matter from the sensible form. This is the reason why the sensible beauty of the icon escapes decay, rises up and leads us to the sanctuary of the divine. It becomes the bridge connecting earth with heaven.

In reality the icon with its beauty constitutes the principle of ascending<sup>26</sup> return to the divine. The ascending function of the icon is due to God's illumination through the process of emanation. Again, the emanation of light from God constitutes for the icon a real ascent (ἀναγωγή)<sup>27</sup> which is analogous to

the actualized reception of light by it. The more light the icon receives from the ocean of divine light, the easier it ascends to the divine and the brighter and more elevated it becomes.

The icon, according to Dionysius, through the sensible forms of matter and through anthropomorphic figures, guides the believer towards intelligible and immaterial divine beings. Their symbolic and anagogic character of the icon indicated the weakness of the human intellect in approaching the supersensible essence of divinity, accustomed as it is to the sensible world. It is impossible for man to know God other than through sensible objects. This is the reason for which the accidental human shapes and symbols reveal and, at the same time, conceal the divine.<sup>28</sup> God is hidden in the transcendent nature of his essence, within his darkness (γνόφος). The sensible symbol is unable to have a complete correspondence with the divine; it lacks the power to represent it fully. It is a constant, but fruitless effort to approach the divine. On account of this, the symbol expresses absolutely the theology of Dionysius. As a being preeminently beyond affirmation and negation in the symbol, God is affirmed and negated at the same time.

From what has been said so far it follows that, for Dionysius, the icon, in becoming a finite symbol of the divine, undertakes the task of guiding<sup>29</sup> and elevating man to the divine through material shapes. This guidance, however, is difficult because all that the guide can do is to facilitate the wandering of our ignorance in search of the divine. The path taken is that of sensible figures,<sup>30</sup> but the divine remains inaccessible. Without the sensible form of the divine, the aforementioned guidance would be impossible. The form would be something indifferent, like the rest of the sensible shapes. That which intuitively leads towards the divine is its own presence.<sup>31</sup> In descending to the icon the divine consecrates it. The presence of the divine in the icon is similar to that of Jesus in the sacraments of the Church.<sup>32</sup> The worshipping character of the icon is sanctioned by its presence. As an imitation of the divine, the icon is ontologically dependent upon it. The divine descends<sup>33</sup> into the icon and the icon ascends to the divine. The believer's soul enters the domain of the divine symbolically and anagogically (συμβολικῶς and ἀναγωγικῶς)<sup>34</sup> through the icon. Thus, the icon constitutes a factual way for the soul to liberate itself from earthly things and to reach the domain of the divine.

Through the presence of the icon in its symbolic function, the fallen soul is delivered from the deceiving world of the senses and from sin, because it recognizes the divine<sup>35</sup> in the icon.

The unique and sacred character of the icon is grounded for Dionysius in

its function as revealing the beauty of divinity. The icon, in its symbolic function, does not constitute an arbitrary and accidental sign, but a metaphysical relation of the visible to the invisible divine, where the sensible form is indissoluble linked with the meaning and presence of the divine.

The positive evaluation of the significance of the icon, as presence and product of emanation from the *One*, the divine, from the point of view of Neoplatonism and Dionysius, seems to have persuaded the Fathers of the Greek Church to overcome the declared hostile attitude of the Old Testament towards icons. There is no doubt that Christology favored icon worship, especially the doctrine of the New Testament regarding the incarnated divine Logos. Through the incarnation of the son of God, the sensible and visible constitute the horizon, in which the invisible and the divine appear. In this way art is legitimated and the possibilities of its development are wide open in the Christian East and West.

The later Fathers of the Church have fully accepted Dionysius' universe. Icon worship finds in his person the most ardent supporter and apologist. Byzantine Churches and the Cathedrals in the West, influenced by the Neoplatonic and Dionysian doctrine, express magnificently the aesthetic climate of both doctrines. Through their tendency to elevation and attainment of power and internal lighting these Church buildings have become the icons of the intelligible and supra-intelligible world. In them we still hear the faint echo (ἀπήχημα) of a new Celestial Hierarchy.

## Notes

1. M.C. Beardsley, *Histoire des théories esthétiques*, translated into Greek by D. Courtovic and P. Christodoulidis. Athens, Nefeli. 1989. 105.
2. Plato, *Symposium*, 210d.
3. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250d, 7-8.
4. Proclus, in *Alc.*, 30, 14, 59, Westerink.
5. Plotinus, *Enn.*, I, 6, 3, 18.
6. Migne, *PG3, De div. nom.*, I, 6, 596 A, God has the qualifications of ἀρκίφωτος πατήρ and of φῶς.
7. *PG3, De div. nom.*, 4, 31, 732 C.
8. *PG3, De coel. hier.*, 15, 2, 329 C. Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.*, VI, 9, 9, 1-6: ...'ἀμείωτον ἐν πάσαις ταῖς πανολβίαις ἑαυτοῦ μεταδόσεις.
9. *PG3, De coel. hier.*, 15, 2, 329 A. Fire, the father of light ἔστι μὲν ὡς εἰπεῖν ἐν πᾶσι καὶ πάντων ἀμιγῶς φοιτᾷ καὶ ἐξήρηται πάντων.
10. Plotinus, *Enn.*, I, 6, 6, 21-22.
11. Plotinus, *Enn.*, I, 6, 9, 40-43.
12. *PG3, De div. nom.*, 4, 7, 701 C: God is καλὸν and κάλλος; cf. *ibid.*, 701 C-D: He is πάγκαλον ἅμα καὶ ὑπέρκαλον καὶ ὑπερούσιον καλόν.
13. Aristotle, *Met.*, Z7, 1032, 232-1032b1.
14. Plotinus, *Enn.*, VI, 7, 22, 25-26.
15. Plotinus, *Enn.*, VI, 3, 16, 18-19: ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ καλὸν τὸ ἐν σώματι ἀσώματον.
16. Plotinus, *Enn.*, VI, 2, 22, 36-44.
17. Plotinus, *Enn.*, I, 6, 6, 21.
18. Plato, *Philebus*, 64c, 6.
19. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250d, 7.
20. *PG3, De div. nom.*, 4, 7, 701 C-D: καλὸν μὲν εἶναι λέγομεν τὸ κάλλους μετέκον, κάλλους δὲ τὴν μετοχὴν τῆς καλλοποιου τῶν ὅλων καλῶν αἰτίας. Τὸ δὲ ὑπερύσιον καλὸν κάλλος μὲν λέγεται, διὰ τὴν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ πᾶσι τοῖς οὔσι μεταδιδόμενην οἰκείως ἐκάστῳ καλλονήν, καὶ ὡς τῶν πάντων εὐαρμοστίας καὶ ἀγλαΐας αἴτιον, δίκην φωτὸς ἐναστράπττον ἅπασιν τὰς καλλοποιούς τῆς πηγαιᾶς ἀκτίνος αὐτοῦ μεταδόσεις, καὶ ὡς πάντα πρὸς ἑαυτὸ καλοῦν (ὅθεν καὶ κάλλος λέγεται) καὶ ὅλα ἐν ὅλοις εἰς ταὐτὸ συνάγον.
21. *PG3, ibid.*, 4, 967 C: δὲ καὶ φωτωνυμικῶς ὑμνεῖται τ' ἀγαθόν, ὡς ἐν εἰκόνι τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἐκφαινόμενον.
22. *PG3, ibid.*, 2, 5, 644 A: Images are ἐκτυπώματα τῆς νοητῆς διαδόσεως καὶ τῆς αὐλοῦ φωτοδοσίας.
23. *PG3, ibid.*, 2, 588 C-D: ταῖς ἐκαστασχοῦ τῶν ὄντων ἀναλόγοις ἐλλάμψεσιν ἀγαθοπρεπῶς ἐπιφαίνεται.

24. *PG3, De coel. hier.*, 1, 3, 121 C-D: ...ύλαία χειραγωγία χρήσαιτο τὰ μὲν φαινόμενα κάλλη τῆς ἀφανοῦς εὐπρεπείας ἀπεικονίσματα λογιζόμενος.
25. *PG3, De eccl. hier.*, 1, 2, 373 B: ἡμεῖς δὲ αἰσθηταῖς εἰκόσιν ἐπὶ τὰς θείας, ὡς δυνατόν, ἀναγόμεθα θεωρίας.
26. *PG3, De coel. hier.*, 2, 4, 144 B: ...ἐπεὶ καὶ αὕτη (sc. ἡ εἰκὼν), πρὸς τοῦ ὄντως καλοῦ τὴν ὑπαρξιν ἐσχηκυία κατὰ πᾶσαν αὐτῆς τὴν ὑλαίαν διακόσμησιν ἀπηχίματά τινα τῆς νοεράς εὐπρεπείας ἔγει καὶ δυνατόν ἐστι δι' αὐτῶν ἀνάγεσθαι πρὸς τὰς ἀόλους ἀρχετυπίας.
27. *PG3, ibid.*, 2, 5, 145 B: The icon is an ἀναγωγή ὥς τι προσεθίζον ἱερῶς ἀνατείνασθαι διὰ τῶν φαινομένων ἐπὶ τὰς ὑπερκοσμίους ἀναγωγὰς.
28. *PG3, ibid.*, 4, 1, 473 C: καὶ δείξει τὸ ἀληθές ἐν τῷ ὁμοιώματι, καὶ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι, καὶ ἑκάτερον ἐν ἑκατέρῳ παρὰ τὸ τῆς οὐσίας διάφορον.
29. *PG3, ibid.*, 2, 2, 397 C: ...τὰ μὲν αἰσθητῶς ἱερὰ τῶν νοητῶν ἀπεικονίσματα καὶ ἐπ' αὐτὰ χειραγωγία καὶ ὁδός, τὰ δὲ νοητὰ τῶν κατ' αἰσῆσιν... ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμη.
30. *PG3, ibid.*, 1, 5, 377 A: The symbol needs sensible forms as δεομένη τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰς τὴν ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὰ νοητὰ θειοτέραν ἡμῶν ἀναγωγήν.
31. *PG3, ibid.*, 2, 2, 137 B: The divine is present in the icon ὡς τῶν ἀπλῶν ἐφ' ἑαυτῶν ἀγνώστων τε καὶ ἀθεωρήτων ἡμῖν ὑπαρχόντων.
32. *PG3, ibid.*, 3, 9, 437 C: ...ἐπιτεθέντων τῷ θείῳ θυσιαστηρίῳ τῶν σεβασμίων συμβόλων, δι' ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς σημαίνεται καὶ μετέχεται.
33. *PG3, ibid.*, 1, 3, 121 D: Ἀς ἐκτυπώματα τῆς διαδόσεως καὶ τῆς ἀόλου φωτοδοσίας. *PG3, ibid.*, 1, 3, 124 A: They lead us διὰ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἐπὶ τὰ νοητὰ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἱεραπλάστων συμβόλων ἐπὶ τὰς ἀπλὰς τῶν ἱεραρχιῶν ἀκρότητας.
34. *PG3, ibid.*, 1, 2, 121 A.
35. Cf. Proclus, in *Tim.*, II, 246, 7-9: ἔστι γὰρ καὶ ἐν ταῖς εἰκόσι τὰ παραδείγματα θεωρεῖν καὶ διὰ τούτων ἐπ' ἐκεῖνα μεταβαίνειν.

## The Experience of Beauty in Plotinus and Aquinas: Some Similarities and Differences

Patrick Quinn

### Introduction

The similarities and differences in the writings of Plotinus and St. Thomas Aquinas on the experience of ultimate beauty specifically emerge when we compare Plotinus's account of his out-of-body experience in *Ennead IV.8.1* with St. Thomas Aquinas's attempts in *De Veritate 13.1* and *ST.II-II.175.1* to analyse St. Paul's experience of rapture described in *2 Corinthians 12.1-6*. The implications for human bodiliness is a feature of both approaches and concerns the way in which the out-of-body state in which ultimate beauty is experienced is said to affect the relationship between soul and body and to determine the kind of intellectual activity that can then take place. All this raises questions about what it is to be a human soul, to be a human body, and about how it would be possible to function cognitively in the absence of the body. As a Platonist, Plotinus typically wonders how he ever came to "descend" from his out-of-body state back down into one of human bodiliness characterised by discursive reasoning, whereas for Aquinas, as a self-proclaimed Aristotelian, what is important is to know how the human mind can function independently of the sensory faculties. This difference of emphasis suggests a much more fundamental opposition between the Platonist, Plotinus, and the Aristotelian, St. Thomas, which is characterised by the former's primary interest in a non-sensory based form of intellectual activity with all the implications that this has for the nature and destiny of the human soul, whereas, for Aquinas, what always remains important throughout is the bodily-based nature of human life and thought.



### The Platonic Context

Plotinus's description of his out-of-body experience in *Ennead IV.8.1* is shaped by his assumption that there is a psychic link between the changing corruptible and bodily world of appearance "here" and the unchanging immortal and spiritual realm of intelligible reality "There."<sup>1</sup> This is depicted in various ways in Plato's writings. In *The Symposium*, for example, we are told that love provides such a bonding. Diotima informs Socrates that divine love is "halfway between mortal and immortal" (202D), "a very powerful spirit, halfway between god and man." (202E). Love is a spirit of mediation, according to Diotima, and, like other such spirits, flies "upward with our worship and prayers, and (descends) with the heavenly answers and commandments" (202e). It forms part of the

medium of the prophetic arts, of the priestly rites of sacrifice, initiation, and incantation., of divination and of sorcery, for the divine will not mingle directly with the human, and it is only through the mediation of the spirit world that man can have any intercourse, whether waking or sleeping, with the gods. (*Symposium*, 202e-203a).

That there is a very definite religious aspect to such mediation is clear from the above passage and this is linked to mortality and immortality and to ignorance and wisdom.<sup>2</sup> In Plato's *Republic*, for example, the philosopher, who is metaphorically depicted in the Cave Allegory as the released prisoner, is vocationally obliged to mediate the vision of what lies beyond the darkness of the cave to those still trapped within (515c-519c). In this domain of "the in-between", the objective is always to transcend this world to what is beyond and this is described in Plato's *Phaedo* as the psychic journey of release from human bodiliness towards intelligible reality. The philosophic life facilitates this possibility by mediating what is beyond to those who live in the world of change and this is given central political importance in *The Republic* as a core value of the ideal society.

These ideas, which are typically reflected in those thinkers who came after Plato and were sympathetic to his views, are consequently found in Plotinus's writings where they are represented and reformulated but, perhaps, more importantly, are attested to in the form of a personal experience in Plotinus's own life. This is the real significance of what is set out in IV.8.1.

### Plotinus

Before considering his description of his out-of-body experience of beauty, it is worth recalling that Plotinus makes many references to the domain of the "in-between". The ability of the soul "to live by turns the life There, and the life here" (Enn.IV.8.4) is a frequent theme in Plotinus's writings, for example, in the following passage:

Since this nature is twofold, partly intelligible and partly perceptible, it is better for the soul to be in the intelligible, but all the same, since it has this kind of nature, it is necessarily bound to be able to participate in the perceptible... it occupies a middle rank among realities, belonging to that divine part but being on the lowest edge of the intelligible... (and has) a common boundary with the perceptible nature...(IV.8.7).

Plotinus describes a kind of split-level form of human existence in *Ennead III.4.2* characterised, on the one hand, by an involvement in the sensory and vegetative biological processes that pertain to animal and plant life accompanied, on the other hand, by a constant reaching towards "the upper world" of pure intelligibility. He remarks on the human tendency to indulge one's animality at the expense of the higher life. The majority of us occupy a position midway between animality and divinity, he states, which lies between the extremes of those who "become like gods and others like beasts." (Enn. III.2.8) This mixture that we are, enables us to remain in contact with the worlds above and below and defines each of us as an intelligible universe, according to Plotinus.<sup>3</sup> The following passage explains this point in more detail:

For the soul is many things, and all things, both the things above and the things below down to the limits of all life, and we are each one of us an intelligible universe, making contact with this lower world with the powers of the soul below, but with the intelligible world by its powers above and the powers of the universe; and we remain with all the rest of our intelligible part above, but by its ultimate fringe we are tied to the world below...(Enn. III.4.3).

This ability of the soul to remain linked to these two worlds denotes a psychic state of both equilibrium (Enn. IV.4.3) and tension and is reflected in a polarity of time and eternity, both of which we touch, moving up and down, as it were, between them (Enn. III.4.3). The tension is resolved when we are completely

removed from the bodily world and this is what occurs (if only paradoxically for a time) in the kind of out-of-body state described by Plotinus in *Ennead IV.8.1* and from which, perhaps understandably, he is reluctant to withdraw.

### Plotinus's Out-of-Body Experience

Plotinus describes his out-of-body experience as follows:

Many times it has happened: lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and self-centred; beholding a marvellous beauty; then, more-than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine; stationing within it by having attained that activity; poised above whatsoever within the Intellectual is less than the Supreme: yet, there comes a moment of descent from interception to reasoning, and after that sojourn in the divine, I ask myself how it happens that I can now be descending, and how did the Soul ever enter into my body, the Soul which, even within my body, is the high thing it has shown itself to be (*Enn. IV.8.1*).

Plotinus finds support in the Platonic writings for his own views concerning these movements of ascent and descent respectively and gives some examples of texts where Plato approves of the former and disapproves of the latter. One such reference is to *The Republic* where the released prisoner in the Cave Allegory metaphorically represents the journey of the soul from the world here below to the transcendent realm of the ineffable above. Plotinus detects Plato's disapproval in the myth of the winged soul in *Phaedrus 246b et seq.* which has shed its wings (that would have enabled it to journey on high) and sinks down to earth, settling there to take to itself an earthy and mortal body. What is clear, if we are to believe Plotinus, is that he seems to have experienced out-of-body states more than once and these were characterised by an experience of ineffable beauty and divinity which, for some reason, ceased after some time. What is interesting about Plotinus's account of these extraordinary experiences is his matter of fact style of setting out what he believes has occurred and the brevity of the description of what transpired. This may be due to the limitations of language and to the sense of awe that such a vision might inspire.

In his treatise on Beauty, he describes the kind of context in which the vision of non-sensory beauty can be experienced:

These experiences must occur whenever there is contact with any sort of beautiful thing, wonder and a shock of delight and longing and passion and a happy excitement (*I.6.4*).

We must recognise our own inner beauty, he tells us (*Enn. I.6.5*) and cultivate the right kind of disposition through purification and self-control. "Greatness of soul", according to Plotinus, "is despising the things here; and wisdom is an intellectual activity which turns away from the things below and leads the soul to those above." (*Enn. I.6.6*) It is by ascending to what is good that we are led to the vision of beauty and leaving "all that is alien to the God" behind us, and can then see "with one's self alone" (*Enn. I.6.7*) Seeking the good necessarily means reaching the vision of primary beauty and the path to it involves a form of self-training where we become sensitive to all that is beautiful in life. We need to purify our vision and "concentrate (our) gaze and see". (*Enn. I.6.9*). Becoming good, God-like, and beautiful are identical processes for Plotinus.<sup>4</sup> Good and the primal beauty are on the same level and beauty exists in the intelligible world.<sup>5</sup>

The elegiac treatment of beauty in *Ennead I.6* echoes Plato's views in *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, with the notable difference that Plotinus claims to have experienced what he describes. Separation from the bodily world is a precondition for such ultimate experience although for Plotinus, as a Platonist, the non-bodily dimension of such an encounter does not present any serious philosophical problems. For Aquinas, however, who also accepted the validity of out-of-body experiences of this kind, albeit in a limited number of cases, there are difficulties which must be addressed, given the Aristotelian position he is happy to adopt on the natural relationship between body and soul. It is to this view that we shall now turn.

### St. Thomas Aquinas on Out-of-Body Experiences

Aquinas's account of religious ecstasy is an attempt to analyse, from a philosophic point of view, the Pauline account set out in *2 Corinthians 12.1-6* which goes as follows:

I know a man still in Christ who, fourteen years ago, was caught up—whether still in the body or out of it, I do not know; God knows—right into the third heaven. I do know however, that this same person—whether in the body or out

of the body, I do not know; God knows — was caught up into paradise and heard things which Must not and cannot be put into human language

This extraordinary passage is taken by Aquinas to represent an actual description by St. Paul of a personal experience. Although no specific mention is made to the vision of God, Aquinas understands the Pauline event as a kind of limited beatific vision and, for our purposes here, it seems fair to say that this also would imply a vision of ultimate beauty.<sup>6</sup> St. Thomas's task is to try to philosophically explain how such an event could have occurred, given that, as a Christian Aristotelian, he is supposed to subscribe to the view that knowledge can only take place on the basis of a relationship between intellect and senses. The texts in which Aquinas's analysis is found are *De Veritate* Q13 and *Summa Theologica* II-II. Q175 and they are revealing in terms of the obstacles that confront St. Thomas when he tries to explain how such a noetic experience could occur.

### The Argument

Aquinas cites the authority of St. Augustine in support of his own belief that St. Paul actually had a vision of God during the experience described in 2 *Corinthians*.<sup>7</sup> However, Thomas is also aware of objections to the possibility of religious ecstasy, chief among which is the claim that human beings cannot act in a way that is contrary to their own nature.<sup>8</sup> He answers this latter objection by claiming that it is quite appropriate for human beings to be uplifted to divine reality since they are made in God's image and are therefore intellectually oriented towards God in any case although they require supernatural help to reach their goal. The same theme is pursued in *De Veritate* 13.1 where rapture or religious ecstasy is defined as a state of elevation contrary to nature.<sup>9</sup> What is interesting in both *De Veritate* 13.1 and *Summa Theologica* II-II.175.1 which deal with this issue is the underlying assumption of a subsistent human soul capable of functioning intelligently in partnership with the sensory powers or independently of them, as the case may be. This is an important point to note in the writings of Aquinas since it suggests that his Aristotelianism had to be supplemented with a contribution from Platonism on certain key issues, notably with regards to how the mind continues to function in the absence of any sensory input.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the Thomistic treatment of the Pauline experience is strikingly Platonic in certain key respects, as we shall see.

In *De Ver.* 13.1, Aquinas begins his main approach to the question of how it was possible for Paul to see God in life before death, by suggesting that, for this to happen, the human mind must be capable of transcending the physical limitations of everyday life where the intellect crucially depends on sensory experience. Indeed, in the state of rapture, the mind is able to focus its attention on intelligible realities because of something divine within us rather than because of any human disposition as such. Aquinas claims that Aristotle put forward such a view in *The Eudemian Ethics* VII.14.1248a although one might also argue that this is a very untypical Aristotelian position and represents Aristotle at his most Platonic. What is certainly true is that the claim that human beings possess an inner God-like disposition reflects a form of Platonism, and brings to mind the kind of cryptic remark attributed to Plotinus on his deathbed by Porphyry in his life of Plotinus.<sup>11</sup> The notion of divine illumination is also relevant here, as found in the writings of St. Augustine and later in Aquinas's own texts, especially where the latter puts forward his views on the kind of mechanism that operates during the mind's vision of God.<sup>12</sup>

Aquinas next proceeds (*De Ver.* 13.1) to make a distinction between this divine inner disposition and sensory activity, stating that the latter does not specifically pertain to being human as such but is something shared between humans and animals. Compared with the transcendent impulse of the mind to seek out intelligible reality, the ability to grasp what is sensory is merely a function of our animality, claims Aquinas. The impression here, once again echoing Plotinus, is of a split-level quality to human life, a boundary between the divine and human animality. The tension is between an immersion in physical life and bodily concerns, and a continuing advance towards the divine realm and the vision of God. As St. Thomas describes it later in *De Ver.* 13.3 & 4 there is a definite conflict of interests between the mind and the senses and a competitiveness between them that can only be resolved in favour of the intellect during rapture by excluding sensory activity altogether which is consequently suspended by divine intervention during the event. The victory of intellect over the sensory powers is crucial for this process to occur at all, according to St. Thomas. He was also aware of spurious forms of rapture that seemed to replicate religious ecstasy.<sup>13</sup> However, he argues that these deaden and stupefy the senses rather than enhance and elevate the individual. In fact, Aquinas regards rapture as a self-authenticating form of experience but this claim also has its own difficulties.

### Visio Dei in Rapture

One of the problems with regards to whether or not St. Paul could have seen God when enraptured relates to how it could ever be possible for any human being to experience the beatific vision before death. Although a number of quite formidable objections argue against the possibility of a Pauline vision of God before death,<sup>14</sup> it is clear from the *sed contra*'s of both *De Ver.* 13.2 and *ST.II-II.175.3* that Aquinas relies heavily on St. Augustine's authority to justify his own conviction that Paul had had such an experience. Aquinas explains his conclusion by comparing the temporary beatific state of St. Paul to a ray of sunlight that passes through the air and then departs although how he could maintain that the vision of God could function in such a way must remain questionable. If the mind is so engrossed in God and fixated on this ultimate objective (which one presumes must be the case in the beatific vision), then surely such an experience cannot be regarded as a passing phenomenon.<sup>15</sup> In any case, it does seem that Aquinas was satisfied enough with his own account in which he claims that some sort of mental withdrawal is necessary if rapture is to occur. On the one hand, he insists that this abstraction does not imply that the mind is wandering (*ST.II-II.175.1*) and, on the other hand, this state of withdrawal is not identical with the kind of separation of soul and body that signifies death (*ST.II-II.175.5*). Somewhere between these two extremes, the human intellect can somehow function in a state of rapture so that the sensory powers are present but suspended, so to speak, leaving the intellect free to operate at the highest level possible, under the extraordinary influence of God.<sup>16</sup> This, of course, echoes the kind of view put forward in Plato's *Phaedo* (e.g. 80c-81a).

St. Thomas begins his discussion in *De Ver.* 13.3 by claiming that the relationship between the mental and physical powers is such that intense activity on the part of the mind will correspondingly weaken the effect of sensory activities. It is like someone who is so engrossed in watching something that s/he cannot hear what is being said.<sup>17</sup> Rapture represents a state of imbalance where the mind's focus on God occurs at the expense of sensory activities:

But for the understanding to be raised up to the vision of the divine essence, the whole attention must be concentrated on this vision, since this is the most intensely intelligible object, and the understanding can reach it only by striving for it with total effort. Therefore, it is necessary to have complete abstraction from the bodily senses when the mind is raised to the vision of God (*De Ver.* 13.3).

It is typical of Aquinas's Platonism that he should use it in this way, namely, to explain how it is possible to function intelligently in the absence of the senses or, as in the case of rapture, where the sensory powers are seen to be a hindrance to the vision of God.<sup>18</sup> The kind of intense intellectual activity which is required for rapture means that a withdrawal from bodily and sensory activity is intrinsic to this experience, even though bodily existence still occurs.<sup>19</sup>

### Some Differences between Aquinas and Plotinus

One of the differences that we find in the Pauline account as compared with what Plotinus writes about his own experience is that Paul is not sure whether he was in an out-of-body state whereas Plotinus seems quite clear about what has occurred. Aquinas agrees that Paul is unsure and has argued earlier in *De Ver.* 13.3 *ad 4* that the vision of rapture does not occur in the memory which is linked to the sensory faculties, but rather takes place in the intellect itself since it is a purely intellectual activity wholly independent of any kind of sensory input. This explains why Paul had some difficulty knowing what precisely had happened to him when he "returned" to his natural way of knowing things, i.e. through sensory input, memory and imagination. Plotinus does not need to address this point since he seems to be confident that his soul could function intelligently in a separate way by itself "even when it is in the body" (in a mystic state, presumably), although the mechanism by which this could occur remains unclear (*Enn.* IV.8.1). Perhaps another difference lies in Aquinas's claim that authentic rapture can never be self-induced but is always involuntary and comes about by a special divine dispensation (*ST.II-II.175.1*). It is possible to argue that Plotinus's writings suggest that one could train oneself, so to speak, to acquire the correct disposition to recognise beauty in itself.<sup>20</sup> This is not a position that Aquinas could support since he regarded the attainment of the beatific vision as a gratuitous gift rather than an ultimate goal that becomes possible to achieve by following a certain path. This is the Thomistic (and Christian) view of grace assisting nature which proclaims that human beings can have access to the supernatural.

What both Plotinus and Aquinas certainly have in common on the subject of religious ecstasy is an approach based on Platonism but whereas this is clearly acknowledged in the writings of Plotinus, this it is not the case in the Thomistic texts.<sup>21</sup> Recent Thomistic scholarship, however, now recognises Aquinas's Platonism, while not denying the importance of his debt to Aristotle.<sup>22</sup>

This Platonism arrived from a variety of sources including Pseudo-Dionysius, Proclus and Islamic philosophers such as Avicenna and Averroes whose thinking was in certain important respects shaped by Neoplatonism.<sup>23</sup> Without acknowledging these influences, it is very difficult to understand why St. Thomas took the approach he did in his treatment of rapture since it seems to be so much at variance with his Aristotelianism. The fact is that when Aquinas was confronted with questions about how any form of knowledge can occur in the absence of the sensory powers, he came up against the limitations of Aristotelian theory and instead found in Platonism, solutions to problems that would otherwise remain largely unresolved, at least from a philosophic point of view. This is certainly true about significant aspects of his concept of mind.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps it is apt to conclude by referring to Inge's comment on this point in his work on Plotinus where he suggests that "Aquinas was much closer to Plotinus than to the real Aristotle."<sup>25</sup> What is certainly true is that St. Thomas's analysis of rapture is an important contribution to the literature on the subject on an area of experience with which Plotinus seems to have been personally so familiar.

## Notes

1. Cf. Patrick Quinn, *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1996, 56-57.
2. Love is said to be "neither mortal nor immortal" (*Symp. 203e*) and "midway between ignorance and wisdom" (*Symp. 203e-204a*).
3. Cf. also Aquinas's concept of minor mundus in *II.Sent.d.1.q.2.a.3*.
4. "You must become first of all godlike and all beautiful if you intend to see God and beauty." (*Enn. I.6.9*).
5. *Ennead I.6.9*.
6. "Beauty and the beautiful - these are one and the same in God" *De Div. Nominibus iv.lect.5*, quoted in Thomas Gilby (transl.), *St. Thomas Aquinas Theological Texts*, Oxford University Press, London, 1955, 41.
7. Cf. *De Ver. 13.2* and *ST.II-II.175.3*.
8. Cf. the three objections cited in *ST.II-II.175.1*.
9. "Raptus id est contra naturam elevatum" (*De Ver. 13.1*).
10. I have dealt with the Platonism in Aquinas's thinking in my book, *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God* and in "Reing on the Boundary: Aquinas's Metaphor for Subject and Psyche," in Karl Simms (ed.), *Ethics and the Subject*, Editions Rodopi B.V., Amsterdam, 1997, 165-172. Also cf. "The Interfacing Image of the Soul in the Writings of Aquinas," *Milltown Studies*, No.32, Autumn 1993, 70-75.
11. "Try to bring back the god in you to the divine in the All." Porphyry, "On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books," in A.H. Armstrong (trans.), *Plotinus Vol.1*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. & William Heinemann Ltd., London, 1966, 7.
12. See Vernon Bourke (ed.), *The Essential Augustine*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1974, 97 and Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentiles III.53* and *Summa Theologica I.89.1 ad 3*.
13. In *De Ver. 13.1*, he says that insanity can induce states of mind in which the intellect seems to be detached from the senses. The same is true for certain kinds of illness and he also cites demonic possession as bringing about conditions which simulate out-of-body states. Aquinas was also aware of the hallucinatory effects of certain herbs.
14. A number of objections in *De Ver. 13.2* relate to this point, specifically Objections 1, 3 and 4. These deny the possibility of a Pauline vision of God on the grounds that St. Paul's body was not glorified. The point here is that such an experience would have left long-term and clearly observable effects and would have had enhancing bodily consequences. Objections 2, 7 and 8 deny that Paul could have had some kind of temporary beatific vision. In *ST.II-II.175.3*, Objections 1 and 4 suggest that Paul must have imagined the event while Objection 2

bluntly states that if he had really seen God, he would never have returned to the unhappiness of this life.

15. Aquinas may have simply assumed that it is only in the incorruptible beatified bodies of the resurrection that *visio Dei* remains a permanent phenomenon whereas in the corruptible bodies prior to death, this was not possible. Cf. *ST.I-II.4.6 ad 3*. Also cf. Aquinas, *Platonism and the Knowledge of God*, 72-73 for more on this.
16. *De Ver.*13.3 & 4 and *ST.II-II.175.4 & 5*.
17. There are further echoes here of *Phaedo* 66b-67b.
18. Cf. Endnote 10 above.
19. There are some interesting questions here in relation to Aquinas's analysis of bodily resurrection. Cf. *ST.I II.4.5 & 6*. Also, Aquinas, *Platonism and the Knowledge of God*, 77-78, 81-90.
20. Cf. *Enn.*VI.6.6,7 & 8.
21. Cf. Little's conclusion: "The reluctance of Thomists to acknowledge the Platonic affiliation of Thomism is founded on St. Thomas' own reluctance to acknowledge it." Arthur Little, *The Platonic Heritage of Thomism*, Golden Eagle Books Ltd., Dublin, 1949, xv.
22. Cf. Aquinas, *Platonism and the Knowledge of God*, 1-5.
23. Cf. Mary T. Clark (ed.), *An Aquinas Reader*, Fordham University Press, New York, 1988, 25.
24. Patrick Quinn, "Aquinas's Model of Mind," *New Blackfriars*, May 1996, Vol.77, No.904.
25. William Ralph Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus Vol.1* Longman, Green & Co. Ltd., London, 1918, 15.

Translations of Plato's writings are taken from Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (eds.), *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1964. The translation of *Ennead IV.8.1* is taken from Stephen McKenna (trans.), *Plotinus: The Enneads*, abridged with notes by John Dillon, Penguin Books, London, 1991. All other quotations are taken from A.H. Armstrong (trans.), *Plotinus Vols. I-VII*, Harvard University Press & William Heinemann Ltd., Cambridge Mass & London, 1966-88. Passages taken from Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* is taken from The Fathers of the English Dominican Province (trans.), *Summa Theologica*, Burns & Oates, London, 1947-48. Quotations from Aquinas's *De Veritate* taken from James V. McGlynn SJ. (trans.), *St. Thomas Aquinas The Disputed Questions on Truth*, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1952-54. The Pauline Corinthian Text is taken from Alexander Jones (gen.ed.), *The Jerusalem Bible*, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966.

## The Sense of Beauty (κάλλος) in Proclus the Neoplatonist

Christos Terezis and  
Kalomoira Polychronopoulou

### I. Introduction

In the whole framework of Proclus' attempt to explain the way in which the metaphysical and natural world exist and function, description and interpretation are used as methodological instruments. His aim is to formulate a theoretical system which is not based merely on scientific analysis and research, but also —or perhaps mainly— on interpretative approaches. As a true metaphysician he is not thoroughly satisfied with cognitive schemata which are introduced by the scientific logos, although he respects and uses them. He believes that the scientific logos does not constitute a sufficient grounding for those presuppositions, which when interpreted could satisfy a consciousness that does not remain at the same level of perceptive facts. Of course he recognizes the necessity of such a rational description, but he mainly argues for a transcendental reality, which makes this consciousness possible and provides it with its final and substantial meaning. It concerns that entity, which is at the same time the primeval and the final cause of the world.<sup>1</sup> The main factor of Proclus' vision is beauty, as a fundamental and not as an acquired element of beings. Proclus elaborates on this issue in many of his discourses and mainly in his comments on Plato's *Timaeus* (Τίμαιος). In that work he presents beauty as a means or a component which the creator gives to the created.<sup>2</sup> He briefly analyses the general principles of this gift in his commentary Plato's *Alcibiades I* (Ἀλκιβιάδης Α'). There he attempts to relate Aesthetics with Ethics and Ontology. The present paper focuses on the relationship between Ontology, Aesthetics and Ethics in Proclus.

## II.

First, Proclus maintains that every metaphysical entity which has order and symmetry, also comprises the qualities of justice (defined as equality) and beauty. For Proclus, beautiful entities possess these moral properties since the beginning of time. He also claims that entities which have equality also possess beauty. On the other hand, unequal entities are regarded by Proclus as non-symmetrical and ugly. Proclus further adds that such entities lack inner cohesion.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, he attempts to describe the relation between the metaphysical and the natural world. According to Proclus, beauty is not ascribed to anything else but to the archetypical "form" (εἶδον), which has predominated over matter. So, if we approach matter in its original condition, then we realize that it is obscene and totally without beauty. Consequently, whenever "form" is dominated by matter, then according to Proclus, it has been governed by disgrace and lack of shape. This also means that the conditions of matter have been imposed upon it and the "form" exists now in a way similar to that of the matter which then in turn constitutes its reception place in the formation of the body. Therefore, "forms" don't exist in the condition they should exist from their own nature. So, the metaphysical archetypes lose their strength and are no longer able to accomplish their formative mission.<sup>4</sup>

It is also obvious that Proclus is a dualist in the sense that his system provides both an ontological account and evaluating criteria. Every body is comprised of shape which has been received from the "form" and by the matter, which has received the shape. So, the body becomes aesthetically significant only then, i.e. when the ontological purity and authenticity of the "form" destroys or transforms the disorder and the lack of restraint which is attributed to matter. Consequently, the natural world becomes a negative force when it fails to receive the abilities and perspectives provided by the "form". In addition he highlights the aesthetical dimension of the bodies through a peculiar combination of Platonism-Aristotelianism. This combination is consonant with his aesthetic theory. According to him matter adheres to the "form," either from the beginning, on the strength of its own nature or at a later stage. Matter cannot "form" a body on its own; on an aesthetic level it can be nothing but deprivation.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, Proclus remarks that beauty is not only to be found in bodies, but also exists in the intellectual realm of human existence. In order for beauty to reveal its aesthetic value and potential in this area, it is absolutely necessary that some of the hierarchies and interventions mentioned above come

into force. So, beauty appears in the soul only when logical powers predominate over illogical ones. Human life has certain attributes which must be dominated by the power of logos and prudence in order for them to dismiss their ugliness and the disproportion. But the main reason why beauty exists in the soul is justice, because justice contains moderation, limit and perfection.<sup>6</sup> These three elements are given to the soul by justice. Apparently, what is implied here is that logical elements are alien to passions and instincts and that mental purity is gained only when man overcomes his animal nature. The beauty of the soul arises from a morally righteous life, which on the one hand provides true proportions in volition and action and on the other hand eliminates chaotic situations with regard to choice and behavior.

For Proclus, all those attributes which guarantee a logical organizing dimension of things do not differ from each other in the quality of their natural origins. They all reflect the natural and authentic state of those things which arise from a common ontological source. That can be ascertained not only by the close affinity and interrelation between the effects of the attributes mentioned above, but also by their range. Justice, for example, ensures analogy, harmony and unity, not only on the anthropological but also on the cosmological level. The creator used justice as his instrument and thus ensured the coherence to the cosmological function. In this way beauty became sensible.<sup>7</sup> This account leads us to assume that this Neoplatonic philosopher indirectly claims that there should be a holistic consideration of the things as far as their positive existence is concerned. Beauty needs in any case the three following presuppositions: a) natural state, b) precise coherence, c) an integrated effect. Similar presuppositions must be noticed on the other values as well.

Consequently, Proclus examines the issue of the question of whether beauty is by nature (φύσει) or by convention (θεσει). Thus posing the question of whether beauty is substantial or accidental. In other words does beauty exist *a priori* or is it formed *a posteriori*? Is it or is it not in relation to the attributes which have been set out by human understanding? Proclus remarks that if we accept the statement that it is by human by convention, then it means that it is proper (πρεπον) and perhaps that it derives from the human belief, that it is an opinion based on the criteria of a surface perception.<sup>8</sup> At this point there is a clear reference to an *a posteriori* subjectiveness or an idealism, whose criteria and origins are purely gnosiological. The thinking subject sets its presuppositions in anteriority to the object and defines it with its attributive determinations. Proclus rejects gnosiological anteriority and ontological relativism and so he believes that beauty is lovable on its own nature. For man beauty is

compulsively lovable. It can be noticed that there is a human inclination to show interest and to accept whatever provokes love and admiration. This inclination is not only noticeable in relation to authentic beauty. It is also noticeable in relation to the beauty of lowest ontological and aesthetical levels. This beauty, although it is bound up with images, also has the ability to motivate the human soul to admiration. And although it is not real, it is surprising as a phenomenon, because its depiction of divine beauty is sensible, *i.e.* visible.<sup>9</sup> At this point it is also obvious that Proclus reevaluates the world of experience, at least in relation to its authentic potentialities and their preconditions. But we should keep in mind that Proclus still believes in the unstable and changeable character of this world. He accepts that "appearances," up to a certain degree, are authentic reactions of "being." For Proclus, appearance is connected with those values which can cause genuine emotional reactions and movements in the human consciousness.

In the following stage of his argument Proclus attempts to support his viewpoint by an etymological analysis of the term of beauty. He further remarks that beauty is defined as that which attracts to itself, as that which attracts those who behold it and as that which is intrinsically loveable. Therefore, it is essential for man to express his interest in beauty because this is the only way to reach it aesthetically using the superior elements of his being or soul. The most genuine expression of man's inner nature is love, which firmly and with no deviation leads to the enjoyment of beauty.<sup>10</sup> Proclus believes that whatever is worthy of desire, is good and thus lovable. Consequently, the real good is the subject of real interest and love, namely it has the highest priority in the scale of ontology and in the scale of values.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, if beauty is particularly lovable as a phenomenon, this applies all the more so to the case of referring to what is genuinely beauty. Thus formulating some logical combinations, the philosopher observes that, if whatever is beautiful is particularly lovable then it is the object of human reference and if this object is decent then whatever is good is decent, too.<sup>12</sup> Of course the combination above is based on what Proclus considers as real facts. However, through this combination, beauty is given authentic ontological features, which stimulate the human inner nature to possess the virtue of fulfillment.

In addition, Proclus establishes a gradation from lower levels of beauty to higher ones. This of course follows the Platonic models and hierarchical principles. He remarks that we should be interested in beauty since in the first place it exists in the phenomena, in our actions, in our professional occupations, in the sciences and in our virtues. It is very important to consider all

these phenomena and activities not simply as such, but from the aesthetic point of view. The next step is the beauty of the mind and the highest point is divine beauty which is in itself beauty.<sup>13</sup> With such a grading it is clear that Aesthetics is not an autonomous theoretical discipline, but is to be viewed in relation to Ethics, Gnosiology and Ontology. In other words these three disciplines comprise Aesthetics as a fundamental and supplementary element.

In conclusion, it must be noted that Proclus insists on the distinction between beauty in itself and acquired beauty. By beholding beauty in itself we behold elements of the highest level. Beauty is good in itself. Beauty in itself is the cause of symmetry in the soul. Whenever symmetry exists in the soul, it ensures the predominance of the superior conditions over the inferior ones. The former ones are reforming and purifying conditions that provide the grounds for expiation.<sup>14</sup> It is the ground for the perfection and purity of the soul of the humans. So the anthropological issue acquires a highly aesthetic dimension as long as man has become a carrier of metaphysical principles or he has at least come closer to them.

### III. Conclusions

According to all we have examined above, we come to the three following confirmations:

I. When Proclus extends the beauty as a superior aesthetical category, he is not only referring to the existence of beings, but also to the way in which they exist. When he describes the metaphysical and the natural world with beauty as their substantial property, he reveals them as ontological systems, which are characterized by logical order and organization, from which anything, having to do with chaos and lack of rhythm is absent.

II. He emphasizes that the right aesthetical vision of beings presupposes the understanding of their special and profound quality. He therefore suggests an approach which will be raised to the substance of beings by exceeding the level of the phenomena. The question here deals not only with the identification of beauty, but also concerns the search for the way elements which express fullness are interrelated on their own or in combination to one another.

III. He believes that beauty has an authentic value, meaning that it is found in the level of the absolute. Beauty is not influenced by fortuitous or occasional events, but possesses an archetypical character. Its sources are in the metaphysical, from which it derives its definitions. By claiming that the



metaphysical beauty is the presupposition of the natural world the philosopher gives a positive attribute to the beings which exist in the world of experience. In this frame Plato is preserved. The natural world makes sense because it participates in the metaphysical world. The former world is not autonomous and it does not provide its conditions, in order to construct itself to a logical system.

Finally, we will try to give a definition of aesthetics based on the text of Proclus, which we have analyzed: Aesthetics is the theoretical branch, which transcends the world of "appearance" and tries to find the world of "being." It starts from the confirmation that there is an archetypal system of values, which is fixed and absolute, and so it offers the principles and the rules of perfection. He maintains that the metaphysical world is comprised of rules and therefore human consciousness is obliged, to adopt and use regulated schemata of thought and interpretation, so as to function aesthetically. This occurs not only when consciousness comprehends but also when it enjoys the metaphysical world itself and its results in the natural world. Consequently, aesthetical interpretation means searching and formulating rules which regulate, ontologically speaking, the composition of metaphysical and natural beings and, from a gnosiological point of view, giving to the human thought the strict criteria for understanding.

## Notes

1. This is a reference to the "One" ("Εν) or the "Good" ("Αγαθόν). For further comments see the second book of Proclus' work *About Plato's Theology* (Περὶ τῆς κατὰ Πλάτωνα Θεολογίας). Also, A. J. Festugière: *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. IV, Paris 1994, 1-140.
2. See *Commentary on the Timaeus of Plato* ("Υπόμνημα εἰς τὸν Πλάτωνος Τίμαιον), II, 328.16-402.12.
3. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato* ("Υπόμνημα εἰς τὸν Πλάτωνος Πρώτον Ἀλκιβιάδην), 326.8-11. For the metaphysical bases of the justice in Proclus, see *About Plato's Theology*, IV, 43.24-45.15.
4. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, 326.12-17: "Τὸ ἐν σωματικὸν οὐκ ἄλλως ὑφέστηκεν ἢ ὅταν τὸ εἶδος ἐπικρατῇ τῆς ὕλης. Ἀκαλλῆς γὰρ αὕτη καὶ αἰσχροῦ. καὶ ὅταν κρατηθῇ τὸ εἶδος ὑπ' αὐτῆς, αἰσχρὸς ἀνασιμπλεῖται καὶ ἀμορφίας καὶ οἷον ἀνείδεον γίνεται τῇ ὑποκειμένη φύσει συνηχομοιούμενον." For the theory of "forms" in Proclus' work, see L.J. Rosan, *The Philosophy of Proclus*, New York 1949, 158-163; S. Gersh, *From Iamblicus to Eriugena*, Leiden 1978, 86-106; J. Trouillard, *La mystagogie de Proclus*, "Le belles lettres," Paris 1982, 143-186.
5. For the way in which Proclus approaches in a synthetical manner the views of Plato, Aristotle and the other ancient Greek philosophers, see A. Kojève, *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie platonicienne*, vol. III, Paris 1973.
6. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, 326.17-25. Also, *Commentary on the Timaeus of Plato*, III, 234.9-238.29.
7. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, 327.2-20: "Ἄμα τὸ δίκαιον τέλειόν ἐστι καὶ μέτριον καὶ ὠρισμένον καὶ καλὸν καὶ οὐ διέστηκε ταῦτα ἀπ' ἀλλήλων κατὰ φύσιν ..." Also, *Commentary on the Timaeus of Plato*, I, 409.7-30.
8. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, 327.21-328.5; *Commentary on the Parmenides of Plato* ("Υπόμνημα εἰς τὸν Πλάτωνος Παρμενίδην), 809.28-811.31.
9. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, 328.5-11: "Τὸ καλὸν ἐράσμιόν ἐστι κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν, ὅπου γε καὶ τὸ ἐσχατον κάλλος ὡς ἐν εἰδώλοις φερόμενον ἐραστὸν ἐστι καὶ κινεῖ τὰς ψυχὰς πρὸς αὐτὸ καὶ ἐκπλήττει φαινόμενον, ἰνδαλμα φέρον τοῦ θεοῦ κάλλους." Also *About Plato's Theology*, I, 108.9-109.2. A similar view is encountered in the platonic dialogue *Symposium*, 204 c4.
10. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, 328.14-17 "Διὰ τὸ καλεῖν εἰς ἑαυτὸ κέκληται καλὸν εἴτε διὰ τὸ κηλεῖν καὶ θέλγειν τὰ πρὸς αὐτὸ δυνάμενα βλέπειν, ἐραστὸν ἐστι κατὰ φύσιν. Διὸ καὶ ὁ ἔρως πρὸς τὸ καλὸν ἄγειν λέγεται τὸ ἐρῶν." Also, *About Plato's Theology*, I, 87.4-24, A

similar etymological analysis is encountered in the Platonic dialogue *Kratos*, 416b6-c11.

11. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, 328.17-329.21. Similar views are found in Plato's (*Menon*, 77b2-78b2) and Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, A.1, 1094 a 3).
12. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, 330.1-9. about the relationship between the beauty and the good, see *About Plato's Theology*, I, 109.10-16.
13. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, 332.10-17. The variety and the hierarchy with which Proclus presents beauty reminds the Platonic dialogue *Republic*, 210a4-211c9. Similar views are also found in Plotinus, *Enneads*, I, 6(1), 4.7-9; 5.2-5; 9.3-6. See also Ev. Moutsopoulos, *Les structures de l'imaginaire dans la philosophie de Proclus*, "Les belles lettres," Paris 1985, 48-51.
14. See *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, 333.13-334.18 and 338.14-339.7.

## The Vigil of the One and Plotinian Iconoclasm<sup>1</sup>

Frederic M. Schroeder

### Introduction

In a dream, the dreamer sees himself as in a dream landscape. Yet the self that he sees is not himself as sentient subject, but himself as dream object, as one among the objects in the landscape of reverie. The suspension of the ego belongs to the pleasure of a dream. To understand this, we may engage in the following thought experiment. I have a daydream of travelling to Crete to see Knossos. When I in fact take that trip and go to visit Knossos, there will be many differences between the real life experience and the dream, most occasioned by the vagaries of ego awareness. I shall at the same time be thinking of whether there is time to catch the bus back to Rethymno, try to remember whether I left something at the hotel, or worry about a person or situation at home. In the daydream, all of these factors are missing, because the ego that is occupied with such things will have been suspended: only the dream image of myself, a part of the idyllic landscape, will make the journey.

Plotinus engages in the following experiment (5.8.10-11). He invites us to self-knowledge. If we are unable to see ourselves, perhaps a god will help us toward that vision:

Further, one of us, being unable to see himself, when he is possessed by that god brings his contemplation to the point of vision, and presents himself to his own mind and looks at a beautified image of himself; but then he dismisses the image, beautiful though it is, and comes to unity with himself, and, making no more separation, is one and all together with the god silently present, and is with

him as much as he wants to be and can be. But if he returns again to being two, while he remains pure he stays close to the god, so as to be present to him again in that other way if he turns again to him. (5.8.11.1-9).<sup>2</sup>

Bréhier comments that this passage is like a dream state in which the dreamer, half awake, is aware of his dream and wishes to re-enter it.<sup>3</sup> Gurtler, recalling Bréhier's dream comparison, remarks on the similarity of the experience described in this passage and the appreciation of Byzantine art, in which the viewer of the art is no mere spectator, but is himself absorbed into the community created by its inverse perspective, with the vanishing point behind him, interacting with the objects within it.<sup>4</sup> Presumably Gurtler sees a similarity between the Byzantine painting and the dream experience in the inclusion of the self as one among the objects of the icon. We notice in this passage that the self seen in the state of consciousness that precedes total loss of self-consciousness is an image, an image rendered preternaturally beautiful. That icon of the self must be iconoclastically dismissed before union with the ground of the empirical self is achieved.

In fact, Plotinus does not accord to dreaming the positive role that Bréhier's use of it might suggest. He does use dreaming to illustrate the relationship between our ordinary waking consciousness, as a dream, and noetic awareness, which is an awakening.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, when we make the necessary equation, our thought experiment about dreaming has its uses for our understanding of noetic consciousness in Plotinus.<sup>6</sup>

In the above passage, surely the god who helps the contemplative to self-knowledge is that contemplative's own higher self.<sup>7</sup> Yet that self has, as it were, an objective presence among the Forms (I shrink from introducing the subject-object distinction into this context, but wish only to suggest the absence of aesthetic awareness). Plotinus suggests that when we enter into union with that god, we have no awareness of the god as other. Indeed our consciousness transcends all duality, just as a healthy person need have no awareness of health, while a sick person will have an acute awareness of health (or its absence) (5.8.11.24-33).

Where the experience of waking consciousness can, in Plotinus' description in 5.8.11, resemble what we would think of as a dream experience, what is for Plotinus a lapse into the dream world of sense might seem to us like waking up:

Many times it has happened: lifted out of [awakened out of (ἐγείρομενος)] the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and self-centred; beholding a marvellous beauty; then, more than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine; stationing within It by having attained that activity; poised above whatsoever within the Intellectual is less than the Supreme; yet, there comes the moment of descent from intellection to reasoning, and after that sojourn in the divine, I ask myself how it happens that I can now be descending, and how did the Soul ever enter into my body, the Soul which, even within the body, is the high thing it has shown itself to be (4.8.1.1-11).<sup>8</sup>

Here Plotinus describes his waking consciousness of the world of Platonic Forms and his fall from that vigil into the sleep or dream of the world of sense.

Plotinus applies to wakefulness language that would apply well to the dream experience as we have explored it in our thought experiment:

If then he [the One] did not come into being, but his activity was always and a something like being awake, when the waker was not someone else, a wakefulness and a thought transcending thought which exists always, then he is as he woke himself to be (ἔστιν οὕτως, ὥς ἐγρηγόρησεν). But his waking transcends substance and intellect and intelligent life; but these are himself. (6.8.16.30-35).

Here the awakener and the awakened are one and the same, the self does not exist apart from the experience of waking. There is a total absence of distraction. The vigil of the One, of course, would be the summit of wakefulness.

Plotinus encounters a difficulty in explaining how the soul, which is by nature impassive, can be affected by passions (3.6.5). The source of the affections is not in the external world, but in the soul itself. If the soul turns from the world of sense to the higher world of Forms, it will be free of affections just from this new orientation. The process is compared to an awakening in which the soul realizes that it is itself that generates the images in its dreams and at that moment is awakened:

It is as if someone who wanted to take away the mental pictures seen in dreams (τὰς τῶν ὀνειράτων φαντασίας ἀναιρῆναι) were to bring the soul which was picturing them to wakefulness (ἐν ἐγρηγόρσει), if he said that the soul had caused the affections, meaning that the visions as if from outside were the affections of the soul (3.6.5.10-13).

In the experience of awakening, the dream images are abolished. This awakening of the soul demands a purification. However, the purification is not simply a freedom from the body, but a fundamental change in the soul's attitude:

The purification would be leaving it alone (καταλιπεῖν μόνην), and not with others, or not looking at something else or, again, having opinions which do not belong to it—whatever is the character of the opinions, or the affections, as has been said—and not seeing the images (μήτε ὁρᾶν τὰ εἰδωλά) nor constructing affections out of them (3.6.5.15-19).

We should notice here, for the sake of the rest of our argument, the association of the word "alone" (μόνην) with the dismissal of images. For the soul to be "alone" is to be free of images.

### Background in Plotinus' Rhetorical use of Imagery

Everyone knows that Plotinus makes an abundant and compelling use of images. Let us consider a rhetorical (as opposed to philosophical) use of imagination.<sup>9</sup> Marcus Aurelius makes a use of imagery designed to overcome passion (*Meditations* 4.32). The disciple is invited to an act of imagination in which he summons before his mind the court of Vespasian and all of its intrigues. He then is further invited to reflect that Vespasian and all of his court are now dead. The effect of this meditation is to create an affective displacement. As he returns to his own world, the objects of his hatred or envy will no longer arouse his passions. Engagement with one's own passions is replaced by engagement of the mind and soul with the image of Vespasian and his court. That engagement induces a detachment from one's own passions. Plotinus makes a similar use of imagery in ethical contexts.<sup>10</sup> He makes use of a rhetorical, as opposed to a philosophical, use of imagination.<sup>11</sup>

Observing the conventions of negative theology, Plotinus will advance an image of intelligible reality, only to subtract from it those features which would suggest that it is corporeal. Thus in 6.4.7, Plotinus, to demonstrate the omnipresence of Soul, advances the image of a transparent sphere containing a luminous centre. The centre of the sphere illumines the circumference without itself being divided over the surface that it illumines. Then Plotinus asks us to subtract the corporeal nature of the luminous source to avoid the associations of corporeality.

Then Plotinus, having generated the image of the sphere, puts it to another use:

Suppose that someone took away the bulk of the body but kept the power of the light, would you still say that the light was somewhere, or would it be equally present over the whole outer sphere? You will no longer rest in your thought on the place where it was before, and you will not any more say where it comes from or where it is going, but you will be puzzled and put in amazement when, fixing your gaze now here and now there in the spherical body, you yourself perceive the light (6.4.7.32-9).

Now we are seeing the omnipresence of the Soul, not as objective observers, from without, but from within. The image, which was meant to serve the purposes of discursive thought, has now become a contemplative instrument. It has something of the character of a Iamblicean *sunthêma*.<sup>12</sup> What was intended to serve the purposes of negative theology has become a means of purification and affective displacement as the image is advanced and withdrawn.

Plotinus argues against the sceptical position that self-knowledge must lead to infinite regress (5.3.6). If mind consists of a knowing part and a known part, then the knowing part must know itself as knowing part and subdivide again. This process leads to infinite regress. Yet discursive thought (διάνοια) means to think through or by means of Intellect (διὰ νοῦ) and in Intellect there is no division between knower and known. Now apodeictic argument will have necessity (ἀνάγκη), but it will lack persuasion (πειθώ). Yet if we become truly conscious of the iconic nature of our own thought, we will transcend discursive thought and enter into union with Intellect. By bringing the operations of the discursive mind to awareness and gaining detachment from them, we become engaged in noetic awareness. In that state, since we no longer think discursively, but noetically, we will be persuaded of the truth of a discursive argument no longer even part of our awareness. Persuasion and necessity will have joined hands. The image of our own intellection has served as a vehicle of transcendence and union. This persuasion is verbal. Yet it consists in an *ekphrasis* of an image already advanced by reason.

### Imagination, Perspective, and Iconoclasm

In 5.8.9 Plotinus asks us first to imagine<sup>13</sup> that the universe is set inside a transparent sphere and then to subtract from the sphere its corporeal mass and

all sense of place. Plotinus urges us to invoke the god who created that of which we have a mental picture:

And may he come, bringing his own universe with him, with all the gods within him, he who is one and all, and each god is all the gods coming together into one; they are different in their powers, but by that one manifold power they are all one; or rather, the one god is all; for he does not fail if all become what he is; they are all together and each one again apart in a position without separation, possessing no perceptible shape—for if they did, one would be in one place and one in another, and each would be no longer be all in himself—nor does each god have parts different from himself, nor is each whole like a power cut up which is as large as the measure of its parts. (5.8.9.14-24).

In late antique and early medieval art, the vanishing point is located behind the spectator, rather than in the painting itself, so that perspective is measured, not from the viewer, but from the central figure in the piece. The picture provides an aerial view of the scene in which all the objects are encompassed within their own world. The effect of this is to include or enclose the spectator within the horizon of the painting and among its objects. By contrast, in the art of the Renaissance, the vanishing point is located in the painting, so that the spectator has an "objective" view of the scene and stands outside it. The late antique and early medieval perspective is known to art historians as the natural perspective, the perspective of Renaissance art as the artificial perspective.<sup>14</sup>

Grabar argues that the natural perspective represents Plotinus' view of visual perception.<sup>15</sup> Gurtler finds a text that better supports Grabar's position than the ones that he advances:

But as it is, the whole object is seen, and all those who are in the air see it, from the front and sideways, from far and near, and from the back, as long as their line of sight is not blocked; so that each part of the air contains the whole seen object, the face for instance; but this is not a bodily affection, but is brought about by higher necessities of the soul belonging to a single living being in sympathy with itself (4.5.3.32-38).

Gurtler remarks:

Plotinus is actually arguing that sight is not some affection in the air that presents us with an image that is like a picture in the classical renaissance perspective, with everything plotted out in a geometric grid to indicate relative distance

and size. Rather, sight sees the whole object, but from the object's point of view. That is, as wholly visible from any vantage point. Or, more precisely, both object and observer are seen or seen from any possible perspective because they are both involved in a living being much greater, the universe as a whole. Thus, one cannot have the situation of classical renaissance perspective with subject and object frozen in time and space as if in a photograph. For Plotinus, the subject cannot be a mere observer, but must be involved in their very environment he perceives, and the object, on the other hand, cannot be a mere datum of perception, but must constitute with the subject the perceivable world.<sup>16</sup>

In the image of the sphere in 5.8.9, Plotinus is presenting us with a noetic universe in which there is no fixed point of observation: all is transparent to all. In another passage, Plotinus shows the theurgic purpose of art:

And I think that the wise men of old, who made temples and statues in the wish that the gods should be present to them, looking to the nature of the All, had in mind that the nature of soul is everywhere easy to attract, but that if someone were to construct something sympathetic to it and able to receive a part of it, it would of all things receive soul most easily. That which is sympathetic to it is what imitates it in some way, like a mirror able to catch [the reflection of] a form. (4.3.11.1-8).

Gurtler remarks on "the explicit character of the complex of temple and statues as a microcosm, a miniature of the sensible world that focuses the presence of the divine."<sup>17</sup> We can only think that it is a sensible image of the noetic sphere of 5.8.9. In this passage, as in 5.8.9, the image contains the seeds of its own destruction, even as it realizes its anagogical purpose. Both the temple and the human mind reflect intelligible beauty, *i.e.*, the relationship is vertical as well as horizontal (if we must use spatial metaphors). Thus the end of the temple is to make the human mind reflect the intelligible beauty that it itself reflects, thus introducing its own obsolescence. The very presence of the divine that the sensible beauty of the temple summons induces the absence or vanishing of the image. That the temple and statue complex forms, together with the human observer, a community effects the transition to the world of noetic awareness in which there is no fixed point of observation and the community is created by the continual establishment of the vanishing point behind the spectator. In another passage, 4.3.9.29-38, Plotinus compares Soul in its creation of the sensible world to an architect:

There came into being something like a beautiful and richly various house which was not cut off from its builder, but he did not give it a share in himself either; he considered it all, everywhere, worth a care which conduces to its very being and excellence (as far as it can participate in being) but does him no harm in his presiding over it, for he rules it while abiding (μένων) above. It is in this sort of way that it is ensouled: it has a soul which does not belong to it, but is present to it; it is mastered, not the master, possessed, not possessor. The universe lies in soul which bears it up, and nothing is without a share of soul.

The house, then, is in the architect and the world is in the Soul that creates it. If we interpret 4.3.11 in the light of this passage, we may see that, while Plotinus says that the gods are present to the complex of temples and statues, it is really they that are in the gods, i.e., the gods are their place. The divine is the place which contains both the art and ourselves and our experience of the art is one in which the angle of vision and distance are measured from the divine and not ourselves. If I may return to the dream image with which I began, our presence in the visionary landscape is, not that of a sentient subject, but of an objective dream figure contained by the landscape itself.

Plotinus always uses art in metaphor and never addresses the subject directly. The reason is that the object of art has its place in the divine and vanishes into the luminosity that contains it. Plotinus illustrates the soul's vision of the One:

Like a man who enters into the sanctuary and leaves behind the statues in the outer shrine; these become again the first things he looks at when he comes out of the sanctuary, after his contemplation within and intercourse there, not with a statue or image but with the Divine itself (οὐκ ἄγαλμα οὐδὲ εἰκόνα, ἀλλὰ αὐτό); they are secondary objects of contemplation. But that other, perhaps, was not a contemplation, but another kind of seeing (οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν) (6.9.11.17-23).

I have argued elsewhere<sup>18</sup> that by the phrase ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν Plotinus means, not that our way of looking at things is altered by our experience of the One, but that perspective is measured from the One. The One is not one among the things that we see. Rather, it is the source of perspective for all the images of itself including ourselves. It is in the iconoclastic moment of abandoning all images that we may achieve *henôsis*.

Armstrong's translation of ἀρπάζειν at 4.3.11.7 as "catch" ("like a mirror able to catch [the reflection] of a form") is too mild and the supply of the

words "the reflection" attenuate the sense of the passage. The mirror is rather able to "rape form."<sup>19</sup> In the following chapter (4.3.12), the souls of men who see their images in the mirror of Dionysus are violently severed and plunged into the world of sense, presumably as the body of Dionysus is severed by the Titans in the Orphic myth. It is the genius of a mirror to be something other than what it is, water, silver, glass and mercury, etc. It is also its ability to receive colour and shape in real presence, rather than merely to be a representation. So the moments of presence and self-transcendence are, in the mirror, one and the same. For this reason, the mirror is a suitable symbol for the sacramental character of Plotinian art in its generation of the vanishing image.

Art then is for Plotinus sacramental. Now sacrament may function as a memorial, as exercising a symbolism appropriated to the uses of philosophical *paideia*, to educate intellect and emotion and lead them anagogically toward their proper objects. Yet it may also work *ex opere operato*, or objectively. It is in this latter sense that Plotinian art is sacrament. Why? Because the absence of aesthetic consciousness, of awareness of the other, is precisely the end of Plotinian contemplation.

### The Spiritual Director as Artist

It is crucial to understand that, while the natural perspective is to be found in Plotinus' theory of perception, he is not putting himself forward as a theorist of art, nor indeed is his primary interest in perception as such. The use that he makes of natural perspective is to overcome the distortions of sense perception so that we may learn the ways of noetic intuition. Art is of importance for Plotinus because of its anagogical character. The beauty of nature has the same transcendent purpose. The artist is both a producer and a breaker of images. So is nature. They both produce images of intelligible beauty that must dissolve if the soul is to transcend them.

I wish here to contend that that image and its withdrawal, in the grand analogy of art, nature, and spiritual direction, has a contemplative purpose apart from its demonstrative value in negative theology. In his own creation and destruction of images, Plotinus is every bit as much the artist as the sculptor, the painter, or the architect. The artist and nature are both dependent upon the vision of Form for their creations. So is it also with the spiritual director who by a rhetorical advancement and withdrawal of images leads his disciples from their engagement with sense, discursive reason, and passion to the fath-

omless beauty of the intelligible world. Plotinus states that the artist "goes back again to the wisdom of nature, according to which he has come into existence, a wisdom which is no longer composed of theorems, but is one thing as a whole." (5.8.5.4-6) Perhaps, we may surmise, the spiritual director is also the child of nature and our guidance back to the intelligible world a part of universal cosmic rhythm.

### Formless Form

In the *Treatise on Virtue*, Plotinus argues that the relationship of imitation that prevails between Form and particular is asymmetrical. The relation of similarity between two particulars is symmetrical. However, virtue in this world (civic virtue) imitates virtue in the intelligible world that is not virtue (1.2.2). When sensible reality imitates Form, it imitates that which is formless (καθ' ὅσον δὲ μεταλαμβάνει εἶδους, κατὰ τοσοῦτον ὁμοιοῦται ἀνειδέω ἐκείνῳ ὄντι, 21-2).<sup>20</sup>

When we think of the anagogical, mimetic, and erotic ascent recommended by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*, we might imagine that we advance from one object of contemplation to another, until finally we come to the Form of Beauty as the final object of our ascent. We would be ever more conformed to something which is itself the perfect and defined version of the beautiful. However, for Plotinus the Form of Beauty is formless, while beautiful things are formed (6.7.32.6-9).<sup>21</sup> What this must mean is that, as we approach Beauty, we must ourselves become free of forms and images. The approach to Beauty is through a breaking of images and an iconoclasm. Thus in 5.8.11 the route to the intelligible world lies first in constructing, then in destroying, an image of oneself. We are familiar with that passage in Plato's *Republic* 509b9, so basic to the spirit of Neoplatonism, that declares that the Good is "beyond substance" (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας). For Plotinus, the human soul must itself become "beyond substance" if it is to know the first principle (6.9.11.42).

### The Nocturne of the Soul and the Vigil of the One

The very formlessness of the One informs the restless eros of the soul. The soul cannot stay with the One, because of its very formlessness, of a lack of a place to stand:

What then could the One be, and what nature could it have? There is nothing surprising in its being difficult to say, when it is not even easy to say what Being or Form is; but we do have a knowledge based upon the Forms. But in proportion as the soul goes toward the formless, since it is utterly unable to comprehend it because it is not delimited and, so to speak, stamped by a richly varied stamp, it slides away and is afraid that it may have nothing at all (6.9.3.1-6).

The advent of the One is a mystery:

But one should not enquire whence it comes, for there is no "whence": for it does not really come or go away anywhere, but appears or does not appear. So, one must not chase after it, but wait quietly (ἡσυχῇ μένειν) till it appears, preparing oneself to contemplate it, as the eye awaits the rising of the sun; and the sun rising over the horizon (τοῦ ὀρίζοντος) ("from Ocean", the poets say) gives itself to the eyes to see (5.5.8.1-7).

When the nocturne of the soul is ended, to participate in the vigil of the One, to know its sunrise, is to dismiss all that would limit or define it. The horizon here is anything that would define or delimit (ὀρίζειν). As the One is the abyss of formlessness, it is only in this freedom from definition that we may know it.

The One creates while remaining what it is (μένοντος αὐτοῦ) (5.4.2.21-2) and Intellect, which proceeds from it, is an image (μίμημα καὶ εἶδωλον) of it (26). It is precisely a problem of this chapter how such an image can derive from the One while it remains what it is above all images (26-27).

We have seen earlier (3.6.5) that, in a discussion of purification, the word "alone" (μόνος) is associated with the soul's freedom from images. In a discussion of purification, Plotinus associates μόνος, "alone," with μένειν, "remain":

This is the soul's ugliness, not being pure and unmixed, like gold, but full of earthiness; if anyone takes the earthy stuff away the gold is left, and is beautiful, when it is singled out from (μονούμενος) other things and is alone by itself (συνῶν μόνῳ). In the same way the soul too, when it is separated from (μονούμενος) the lusts which it has through the body with which it consorted too much, and freed from its other affections, purged of what it gets from being embodied, when it abides alone (μείνασα μόνῃ) has put away all the ugliness which came from the other nature (1.6.5.50-58).

In its "remaining" or "waiting" the soul rehearses the creative activity of the One and thus returns to its source (as in 5.5.8.1-7 above). For the soul to re-

main alone is for it it dismiss all images so that it might become one with its source, itself free of all images and forms.<sup>22</sup>

The One, when it manifests itself, will not brook any limit we might impose upon it. It is this resistance to definitive argument or legitimized images which arouses the hatred of all positivists, dogmatists, or enemies of artistic abstraction to the vision of Neoplatonism. For the rest of us, the sense of undisclosed and continuing mystery, of the surplus of meaning, is what attracts us again and again to the pages of Plotinus and to art inspired by his philosophy.

## NOTES

1. By "iconoclasm" here I do not mean that Plotinus advocates the destruction of religious images. On the contrary, he finds them of the greatest value for the spiritual life. By "iconoclasm" I am referring simply to Plotinus' dismissal of intelligible images of his own creation.
2. With the exception of the passage from 4.8.1, all translations of Plotinus shall be from A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus*, 7 vols. (London and Cambridge: Heinemann, 1966-88). Reference is to P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzler, *Plotini Opera*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964-82).
3. E. Bréhier, *Plotin Ennéades*, vol. 5 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956) 123. Bréhier also notes that in lines 33-39, Plotinus offers a more rationalistic account of why we do not perceive ourselves.
4. G. M. Gurtler, "Plotinus and Byzantine Aesthetics," *The Modern Schoolman* 66 (1989) 275-283 at pp. 282-3.
5. 5.5.11.19-22; 3.6.5.1-13.
6. I am most grateful to Gregory Shaw who has permitted me to read his paper, "Dreamwork as Theurgy," who makes a similar use of dream imagery to understand Iamblichean theurgy.
7. In 5.8.10.43 the exercise is described as seeking the vision of the god in oneself.
8. Trans. Stephen MacKenna, *Plotinus, The Enneads*, third edition revised by B. S. Page (London: Faber and Faber, 1962). I have favoured this translation over Armstrong's because MacKenna brings out the sense implicit in Plotinus' use of participles that the soul is in a state of contemplation which is interrupted by the descent: Armstrong sees the moment of contemplation as an interruption of normal waking consciousness, cf. D. J. O'Meara, "A propos d'un témoignage sur l'expérience mystique chez Plotin," *Mnemosyne* 27, series 4 (1975) 238-44.
9. I pursue this theme in "Contemplation and the Contemplative Image in Plotinus," *Mediterranean Perspectives* (1998), 7-19.
10. Cf. 3.2.15.43-47; 3.2.15.56-62.
11. For the rhetorical sense of φαντασία as purposely imagining what is not before us, see Marcus Aurelius 10.28; Longinus 15.1.
12. See G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul. The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995) 189-215.
13. See the instances of φαντασία (5, 8) and φάντασμα (12).
14. E. Panofsky, *Die Perspektive als symbolische Form*, in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1924-1925* (Leipzig and Berlin 1927) 258-330; reprinted in *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft* ed. H. Oberer and E. Verheyn (Berlin 1974) 99-167; L. Brion-Gierry, "L'espace et les perspectives," *Annales d'Esthétique. The Hellenic Society for Aesthetics, Athens* 13-14 (1974-1975) 18-44.



15. A. Grabar, *L'Art de la fin de l'antiquité et du moyen âge* 3 vols., I: 15-29 (Paris: Collège de France, 1968), 17-20; cf. 2.8.1 and Grabar, 17-18, 4.6.1 and Grabar, 19-20; cf. my *Form and Transformation: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Montreal and Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's Press, 1992) 21-23.
16. Gurtler, 279.
17. Gurtler, 281.
18. "Plotinus and Interior Space," forthcoming in *Neoplatonism and Indian Philosophy. Being, Becoming and Knowing*, ed. Paulos Mar Gregorios. Volume 9 in *Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern*, ed. R. B. Harris (Norfolk, Virginia: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies).
19. The verb has this violent sense unequivocally in 3.1.2.5; 3.2.8.19; 3.2.15.41. In 6.9.11.12 the soul, in its experience of the One, is ἀρπασθεῖς, arguably "carried off" (like Ganymede?). J. H. Sleeman and G. Poller, *Lexicon Plotinianum* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), col. 151 translate "plunder, carry away, catch." The translation as "catch" may be Armstrong's source.
20. Cf. C. D'Ancona Costa, "ΑΜΟΡΦΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΕΙΔΕΟΝ. Causalité des Formes et causalité de L'Un chez Plotin," *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 9 (1992), 69-113 and F. Regen, *Formlose Formen. Plotins Philosophie als Versuch, die Regressprobleme des Platonischen Parmenides zu lösen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht in Göttingen, 1998) for the view that the formlessness of form responds to the introductory arguments of Plato's *Parmenides* by rendering Form unlike the particulars so that it is not confused with them.
21. Cf. D'Ancona Costa, 98.
22. In 1.6.7.9, the soul in its purification sees itself alone with the principle which is alone and freed from everything alien to itself (αὐτῶ μόνῳ μόνον); the soul which is free from form (μορφῇ) can receive the One, which is formless, 6.7.34.7-8) μόνῃ μόνον. Of course, we may also think of the famous words at the end of the *Enneads* as arranged by Porphyry: φυγὴ μόνου πρὸς μόνον (6.9.11.51).

## Neoplatonic Influences on Eastern Iconography: A Greek-rooted Tradition

Aphrodite Alexandrakis

In this short study, I will examine the tradition of Greek aesthetics in relation to religious iconography. I will begin by discussing some Platonic and Plotinian concepts, and proceed with a selection of certain early Christian theologians, who as iconophiles, had been influenced by Plotinus and Neoplatonism. I will not deal with Photius' theory for it is well known that he defended icons from an aesthetic point of view. I will defend the position that the iconophiles appealed to aesthetics and concepts that were rooted in the classical Greek tradition. Contrary to the iconophiles, however, the iconoclasts rejected icons by appealing to conservative religious beliefs.

Scholars have taken two opposing views regarding Plotinus: one side places him outside the Greek tradition, while the other identifies him as the mediator between Christianity and the classical world. I will side with, and attempt to provide evidence for, the latter view. My position will be based on Plotinus' own writings on images, which date back to Plato and the art of his time.

Throughout time, people have felt the desire and emotional need to be close to God, and this has led to the practice of creating images of deities. The practice of praying before a god's statue, for example, is an old custom which frequently appears in Herodotus, Euripides, and other Greek authors, and extends to the Greek novelist Heliodorus, third century A.D.<sup>1</sup> The Greco-Roman world tended to fuse the god and its image as if they were one, a tradition that formed the basis of image worship for Christianity. The Greeks, however, as lovers of beauty in addition to an emotional need for a god, possessed the need

of, and a special feeling for creating *beautiful* statues of their gods. Quintilian, for example, comments on Pheidias' statue of Zeus by saying that the majesty of this figure "is thought to have added something to the impressiveness of received religion; so exactly did the nobleness of that work represent the god."<sup>2</sup> Lucian also pointed out to the "overall beauty" of the same statue.

There are several examples in classical Greek sculpture in which "the visual qualities inherent in the concept of the God—lifting become manifest, and where the notion of pagan theology is applied to real works of art."<sup>3</sup> What was important in classical Greek sculpture was the rendering of (*morphe*:shape) *form*: the *form* of the gods was crucial to the making of a particular statue, although a few critics, like Xenophanes (sixth century B.C.) and later Heraclitus, were opposed to giving the gods any form at all. For example, in his *Elegy*, Xenophanes, admits that "it is proper for men who are enjoying themselves first of all to praise God," but he added that human beings shape god in their own image.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the gods appear with characteristic features of their human counterparts' races such as Aethiopian gods having snub noses and black hair, while Thracian gods have gray eyes and red hair.

With the exception of the above two criticisms, the Greco-Roman view of images remained dominant. There was almost an identification of the image with the god. But even during that time, there were some Iconoclasts. Xenophanes and Heraclitus have already been mentioned. In *The Battle of the Frogs and the Mice*, which is an ancient parody of the *Iliad* (178-87), but composed in the third century B.C., Athena complains to Saturn that mice have nibbled away her mantle...<sup>5</sup> This same mental picture of mice destroying the statue of a god from within, is also reflected in the Christian literature of the third century A.D. in which Arnobius says: "...do you not see the newts, mice, and cockroaches, which shun the light, build their nests and live under the hollow parts of these statues?..."<sup>6</sup> Thus, both Christianity and Paganism reacted to the same stimulus, but in a different way. The response, however, was the same: the creation of images. While for Paganism the causes of the natural images are the forms (shape), in Christianity the causes are concepts in the artist's mind.

These views in turn, lead to the question of how the Greeks approached the sacred image. M. Barasch suggests that two attitudes pertained to the statues of gods: "One tends to identify the image with the god, and the other denies any kind of relation between the two."<sup>7</sup> As for the concept of "image," it always existed in Greek culture, and there are various aspects to it. One is that the image (*eidolon*) can be seen, but cannot be touched, for it has no material

substance, but it does have form (shape), and its shape is an imitation of the person represented. Along these lines, Odysseus speaks to the "image" of his mother. Plato in the *Sophist* 236 a-c, refers to the artist who produces images (*teidola*), and that images are seen in the mirror, while reflections are seen in water (239c - 240a). Thus, Homer's and Plato's *eidola* are visible, they show the original figure, but lack material substance of their own. Hence, image had an existence of its own. Following Homer's idea of *eidola*, that images are visible, Plato enhanced the concept by adding the physical objects and phenomena. He does, however, make the distinction between a likeness (*eidolon*) which is a copy of the original, and a semblance (*fantastiki*) far removed from the original. And in the *Timaeus* (52c) he says that the image is like the real thing, but its existence is separate.

One tradition in Greek art and religion was the clothing of the god's statue. It appears in several places in Greek literature (*Iliad* VI, 311), and in the Parthenon's frieze of the great Panathenean procession. The Greek Orthodox parallelism to this is the Saint's clothing used as protection against evil. Another classical Greek religious tradition that was carried over to Christianity was the bathing of the god's statue. Plutarch informs us that the statue of Athena was bathed on the special days of *Plynteria*.<sup>8</sup> We learn from Pausanias that Aphrodite's statue was bathed in Sykion. We see the god's image being treated as if it were a living being, and the statues treated as animated. The Greek believer couldn't tell his god apart from the image (statue) he saw in the temple. As Barasch says: "Dion Chrysostomus, in the 12th Olympic Oration, takes it as a matter of course that we imagine the gods in the shape of the cult images we see around us . . . the artist determines how we will imagine the gods in our minds."<sup>9</sup> Thus, the statues and images were reminders of the gods, very much in the way that sensual objects are the copies and reminders of the Platonic Forms. The Platonic notion of "participation" therefore prevailed in the theory of images: the image "participates" in the figure it portrays. As known, the Platonic notion of "participation" (*methexis*) is used to describe the relationship between *eide* and sensible particulars (Phaedo 100d, Parm. 130c-131a). Later on, Proclus, in his "Elements of Theology," used the *methexis* metaphor in the Platonic sense.

The Platonic notion of *methexis* was also used as a defensive argument by the Iconophiles, maintaining the icon's *methexis* in the original Christ. On the other hand, the Iconoclasts saw "participation" solely as a metaphysical problem which was outside of sensual experience. For them, the viewing of an icon was not similar to seeing the original. Apart from the notion of "participa-

tion," when works of art, ■ sculpture for example, were involved in Greek religion, the idea of beauty was the most important standard, for it brought about the viewer's inspiration, guiding it towards religious and aesthetic contemplation. Thus aesthetic contemplation goes hand in hand with religious feeling. The sense of beauty that was deeply planted in Greek culture was therefore used as a means to inspire people with religious feelings. This deeply Greek-rooted tradition continued throughout the centuries and can even be experienced in the Byzantine icons of the Greek Orthodox church.

Naturally, a number of serious questions were raised by the Iconoclasts. Their criticism focused on the god and its image, stressing the impossibility of creating an image of god because God, they say, is imageless. But what does this mean? Does it mean that God cannot be seen, or that God doesn't have a human form? They also pointed to the issue of idol worship, as well as the material origin of the gods' statues, meaning that from the same material the artist can create other objects, making the image of the god a material (physical) object.

It is interesting to note that some of the classical era's criticisms of statues are similar to that of the Byzantine era. I tend to agree with L.W. Barnard that the Christian tradition was united with paganism and that Byzantium became "the bridge linking the Graeco-Roman world to the Europe of the Middle Ages."<sup>10</sup> There was no sharp distinction between the two worlds. The Christian Orthodox followers did not have to relinquish their classical learnings. Consequently, Iconoclasm was a challenge to this sense of continuity with the Graeco-Roman past. But did the worshippers of the pagan world think of the statues and images as being the gods themselves? To this question, an answer that represents the world of that time was given by the Emperor Julian who apostasised from Christianity and inaugurated the fourth century pagan revival: "...when we look at the images of the gods, let us not indeed think that they are stones or wood, but neither let us think that they are gods themselves...world."<sup>11</sup> The Christian Iconophiles' idea that the divine is present in the material image, and therefore the material nature is penetrated by the divine, is a belief supported in the use of icons.

Actually, this is an ancient idea found in Plutarch and Pythagoras,<sup>12</sup> and continued by Plotinus and the Neoplatonists. In fact, the Neoplatonist Iamblichus attributed to statues a miraculous origin, while for Proclus the statues were fit to receive divine illumination like gods.<sup>13</sup> Images (icons) were extensively used during the early centuries of Christendom, particularly in Constantinople. The images of Christ and of the Virgin were used to instill

courage in the troops during a battle. Also, images of Christ and the Virgin were carried around the walls of the city. Like the goddess Athena for the Athenians, the image of the Virgin Mary acquired a special position in Constantinople. As the city of classical Athens had become the center of culture and beauty, Constantinople was "the eye of the faith of the Christians."<sup>14</sup> Just as the Greeks believed in Athena's intervention for winning a particular war, so did the Greek Orthodox salvation from the Slavs, Persians, Arabs, and other invaders come from the icon of the Virgin. The Virgin's presence became magical in material objects and the icons were holy. Just like with Athena, "the icon became the visible expression of the invisible bond that linked the community with the intercession of its patron saint..."<sup>15</sup>

P.L.R. Brown's explanation of the rise of image culture on the basis of social and psychological reasons, in my opinion, is incomplete.<sup>16</sup> It leaves out the theological and aesthetic points of view. Brown points out that Iconoclastic debates did not happen for the sake of aesthetic experience or clarification of theological concepts. Rather, he says, they occurred because of political and social orders between radicals and conservatives.<sup>17</sup> While this may be true, one cannot ignore the classical Greek culture's influence, that is, the influence of the classical ancestors of Greek Christians. As mentioned, and as Hegel points out, the Greeks' religion was "a religion of beauty." Additionally, the notion of mimesis that Plato introduced was continued by Plotinus and the Neoplatonist Christians. In classical Greek culture it was important that objects, artistic or not, were rendered with an "aesthetic" approach, for they were conscious of the influence of beauty on the beholder, and consequently, beauty enhanced their religious belief through the making of the gods' statues. This Greek-rooted tradition is reflected in all Greek works of art, particularly in those of the fifth century B.C. idealistic sculptures. It is an "aesthetic" tradition that was inherited by the Byzantine Christians and was applied on the icon - making, thereby creating the aesthetic experience of icons. This means that certain qualities, or elements that make up the form (shape) of the image, have been used and painted in a certain way or style, so that they determine the character of the aesthetic experience. Some of these qualities are lines, shapes, colors, symmetry, harmony, and rhythm.

If one interprets aesthetic experience as a pure contemplation that leads nowhere beyond itself, then that kind of contemplation would not have influenced the icon viewer. Barasch notes that in the aesthetic approach the work of art must be considered in isolation from anything else and all by itself; this is called the "autonomy of art" and it follows that "to ask what essential features

the work of art has in common with what is outside it is to undermine its autonomy."<sup>18</sup> However true this may be, it does not affect the icon's impact on the spectator or believer, especially the person who could not read or write, but who could be inspired from a beautifully painted icon of the Virgin or Christ. It is certain aesthetic qualities within the design that will enhance the viewer's religious feeling. To the question of how does communication between the image and the worshipper take place, it has been suggested that this is done through "affinity."<sup>19</sup> The idea of "affinity" was explored by Plotinus in his treatise on "Problems of the Soul," but was first introduced by Plato's *Cratylus*. A "perfect" picture, Socrates says, will produce good communication. According to Plato, in contemplation there always exists an affinity to visual experience. This idea was enhanced by Neoplatonism, and visual experience was seen in a new light, and images were considered "the main roads to cognition." Affinity also explains the establishment of shrines and images. On this, Plotinus says:

...the wise men of old, who made temples and statues in the wish that the gods should be present to them, looking to the nature of the All, had in mind that the nature of soul is everywhere easy to attract, but that if someone were to construct something sympathetic to it and able to receive a part of it, it would of all things receive soul most easily. That which is sympathetic to it is what imitates it in some way, like a mirror able to catch [the reflection of] a form. ...For it was certainly not possible for the thing made to be without a share in the god, not again for the god to come down to the thing made.<sup>20</sup>

Plotinus therefore suggests visual similarity, *i.e.*, resemblance between the prototype and the copy. His followers believed that it was the statue's similarity to the god that makes the god inhabit it, and the god in turn animates the image, thereby building the affinity between the god and the artistic image. But affinity for Plotinus depends on the artist's giving a "sympathetic" feeling to the god's form. "Sympathy" is therefore Plotinus' answer to the god's dwelling in the image. We see then that for Plotinus, in order for a statue to fit the attraction of God, it must be a *good semblance*. Naturally, what is meant by a good semblance is also a beautiful semblance for gods were visualized as such. For Plotinus, human beings feel the need to be close to the god, and they achieve this through the creation of the divine image. This tradition of course continued in the making of icons in Byzantium.

Plotinus' use of many metaphors and images in his *Enneads* leads him to

use the term *icon* (image) repeatedly whenever he refers to a work of art. He distinguishes between mental images (dwell in soul) and a work of art, although both share common characteristics.<sup>21</sup> Images, he says, manifest "the non-discursiveness of the intelligible world."<sup>22</sup> We first think in images, and then we develop discursive thinking and knowledge. As a result, Plotinus perceives the chain of being or emanations as a chain of images. Thus the image of the Soul is Matter (*hyle*),<sup>23</sup> and the image of Intelligible Matter is Sensible matter. This "fusion" of god and its image into one form suggests that they are one. One feels close to god when one is near its image. Iamblichus, later followed Plotinus' teachings and added that images of gods can be filled with divine power and perform miracles. Images and names of gods share their "symbolic resemblance" to the gods;<sup>24</sup> icon, is a "likeness" or "reflection" of the god and the name and icon of the god are united in an "ineffable way" with the god itself. This concept of *eidolon* must have influenced the Greek artists in the carving and painting of their gods.

Since images were of concern to Plotinus, the aesthetic appearance of those images was also important to him. He spends a great deal of time on the notion of beauty in the universe, the soul, and of objects. He begins his *Ennead* 1.6 on *Beauty* by saying: "Beauty is mostly in sight, but it is to be found too in things we hear, in combinations of words and also in music..." Thus, we learn, contrary to Plato, that Plotinus appreciates the sense of sight. It is through sight that human beings come to appreciate the material universe which, for him, is good, beautiful, and was made by a divine power. The reason the world of sense is good and beautiful is because it is "a clear and noble image of the intelligible gods." And he adds:

But it is false to say that the image is unlike the original for an image of soul would have no sort of use for darkness or matter, but when it had come into being, if it did come into being, would correspond to its maker remain in close connection with it.<sup>25</sup>

Plotinus emphasizes that those who despise and hate the beauty of this world cannot know and love the beauty of the intelligible beauty.

While Plotinus recognizes, in a Platonic fashion, the inferiority of human arts' process against the divine, he, however says:

But if anyone despises the arts because they produce their works by imitating nature...natural things are imitations too. Then we must know that the arts do

not simply imitate what they see, but they run backup to the forming principles from where nature derives and since, they possess beauty, they make up what is defective in things."<sup>26</sup>

This Plotinian approach to art and imitation is reflected in the Christian making of the icon, for as mentioned, for Plotinus the material nature is penetrated and transformed by the divine in the images of gods.<sup>27</sup> Plotinus filled the gap between the celestial and terrestrial worlds with emanations, or the overflowing of light from the celestial source to the terrestrial through hierarchy. This opened the road for the Neoplatonists. Among the early defenders of the icons was the Neoplatonist John Damascus, whose defense was based on a theological formation combined with his interest in the arts. He defined *image*, icon, as grasped in reaction to its prototype. Image, he says,

is of like character with its prototype but with a certain difference. It is not like the archetype in every way... the original is the thing imaged from which the copy is made.<sup>28</sup>

And like a real Plotinian follower, he held that the image "is a likeness, or a model, or a figure of something, showing in itself what it depicts."<sup>29</sup>

The ancient view that the icon is identical to the prototype in form but not in substance was also inherited by the Greek church Fathers. In his book "Against the Arians" St Athanasius says:

If we use the example of the emperor's image we will find this (the deity of the Son who resembles the Father) easier to understand. This image bears his form and appearance...<sup>30</sup>

Like Damascus, and according to the Greek tradition, Athanasius' quotation implies the detachment of form from the matter into which it is imprinted. This of course is consistent with Plotinus saying: "The more matter loses its form, the closer it resembles its original model, the idea..." The image therefore imitates the prototype, and the essence of the icon is the portrayal of the prototype. Like Plato, Damascus suggests that the reality of the image is less authentic than the prototype. Consequently, Athanasius' image is the equivalent of the Platonic "appearance."<sup>31</sup>

All three (Plato, Plotinus and Damascus) stress the image's lack of reality and the notion of image as a copy, and this is consistent with the making of Byzantine icons. Damascus' denial of the image's full reality is of course a

reflection of Plato's theory of *mimesis*. The image (icon) created by the artist is an illusion and an appearance of the object devoid of the prototype's physical reality. Hence, the image for Damascus possesses less reality than what it portrays. His statement that "an image is a likeness showing in itself what it depicts," has occupied several scholars' minds. Did he mean that the image is an autonomous object? He knew that the model preceded the image and therefore it could not be autonomous. But as has been pointed out by Barash, "in the process of our grasping what is represented in the image, the image comes to enjoy an autonomy of sorts." In other words, in order for the viewer to understand what the image shows, he does not have to rely on something else, for the picture shows that "in itself." This is what we call in the 20th century "aesthetic experience" that is, the viewer's pure contemplation and absorption by the image. However, in the case of icons, contemplation is achieved through the *form* of the image which points to the prototype: the spiritual *form*. The icon therefore resembles the prototype in terms of *form* only.

Since the distinction between *icon* and *prototype* could lead to idolatry, Damascus insisted on this and said: "For the image is one thing and the thing depicted is another. One can always notice differences between them, since one is not the other, and vice versa."<sup>32</sup> Naturally, crucial questions of an ontological nature are involved here though they are beyond the scope of this paper.

As mentioned earlier, while Damascus and Athanasius' theories reflect Plato's theory of Forms they are also consistent with the ideas involved in the making of fifth century classical sculptures such as the Zeus of Artemision and the Charioteer of Delphi. These works represent idealized beauty and perfection of *form* (shape), reflecting its inner understanding and contemplation through elements such as shapes, lines, rhythm, harmony, symmetry, and a sense of grandeur.

According to Damascus, the image (icon) "reaches farther than the perception of the human eye in natural experience, it shows what lies beyond the realm of visual experience."<sup>33</sup> The icon reveals more than what can be seen in nature; it makes us "see" the invisible. And since it represents the invisible, its purpose is to attain this goal: "...when the Invisible One becomes visible to flesh, you may then draw a likeness of its form..."<sup>34</sup> Naturally, this involves the worshiper and the icon's impact on him or her, and this formed one of Plato's bases for rejecting art works. Consequently, while Damascus follows Plato on the definition of image, he simultaneously accepts divine images for the same reason that Plato rejects them: for while the imitation of the proto-

type, is an unnecessary act for Plato, for Damascus, and the Orthodox Fathers, it was absolutely necessary. And while icons in the eastern church were accepted for their effects on the worshiper, the western church rejected them on the claim that icons do not have an autonomous value. The Orthodox fathers held steadfastly that icons attain value because of their effect on the believers. These effects seem to be primarily aesthetic. The aesthetic effects were the result of the way the "form" was treated; particular lines, shapes, color, and a detached, aloof expression suggesting immateriality and "otherness." Even the sixth century Pope Gregory the Great's notion of icons as didactic implements must have some aesthetic qualities in order to be able to function as such, that is, to teach people something through the inspiration of their aesthetic qualities.

It has been pointed out that the concept of images as embellishments of sacred objects is absent from Damascus, and that although he defended painted images, he had no appreciation for artistic imagination and workmanship.<sup>35</sup> In my opinion, the fact that Damascus did not use images as an embellishment of sacred objects, does not necessarily mean or support the claim that he had no appreciation for artistic imagination and workmanship. Let us not forget the political danger involved in this issue. Moreover, just because in his *Hymn to the Icon*, he does not mention any aspect or feature of the icon or make a reference to workmanship, does not necessarily support the claim that he was not interested in the icon from the artistic point of view. In his *Hymn* he says:

The icon is a hymn to triumph, a manifestation, a memorial inscribed for those who have fought and conquered, humbling the demons and putting them to flight.<sup>36</sup>

The absence of a reference by Damascus to any artistic (aesthetic) qualities is not in disagreement with his saying that the icon is "a hymn of triumph." Such a hymn does not have to necessarily state any particular aesthetic qualities; but does this mean their exclusion? It is important to remember that Damascus made the distinction between an idol and an icon. Confusion of the two would have led to accusations of idolatry. Finally, Damascus' defense of the icon was based on the incarnation of Christ. Even though he asks questions that remind us of the physical portrayal of the Infinite, he supports the idea of icon and never answers these questions.<sup>37</sup>

Whether Damascus admitted that the artistic (aesthetic) component of the icon strengthened the believers' faith is up to his readers to decide. There

may have been political, theological, and or social reasons for not doing so, but as we saw, his emphasis was on the icon's impression and influence on the worshiper. There are other theologians, not to mention Photius, who were also openly defending the icon's artistic influence on the believers. One such was Theodore of Stoudion. Consistent with the Greek tradition, Theodore, like Damascus, used Homeric and Platonic terms such as *eidos* meaning "appearance," implying *eidos* is not an idea in the artist's imagination, but a completed visible image. Another term he uses is *morphe*, meaning "form."<sup>38</sup> The Platonic *schema* appears again in Theodore's discussion of images as well as the term "character" referring to the icon as being a faithful rendering of the prototype. On this he says: "Is not every image a kind of seal and impression bearing itself the proper appearance of that after which it is named?"<sup>39</sup>

On the basis of the above, the icon and the prototype can be said to have several real elements in common. One of these is "form." According to Theodore, and the Iconophiles generally, "form" is present in both the mental image and the painted icon. For Theodore, the distinction between these two was the separation between "pure form" and a work of vision; that is, the shape, form, has an ideal existence only. Shape can be materialized by being painted or carved. Hence, the existence of "pure form" detached from any specific matter. Like Plotinus, Aristotle,<sup>40</sup> and Damascus, Theodore emphasizes the importance of the sense of sight. Even the Patriarch of Constantinople Nicephorus held that sight is above all other senses.

To sum up, the Greeks' "religion of beauty, and superb understanding of the "aesthetic" rooted back in the archaic period (sixth century B.C.), and reaching its peak in the first quarter of the fifth century idealized classical period, continued its tradition through Plotinus and the Neoplatonists in the Greek Orthodox church of Byzantium. The icons convey the Lord's message just like bells convey it with sound. The more aesthetically the icon is rendered, the stronger its impact on the believer (spectator). And, again, as Plotinus said: "...the arts...run back to the forming principles...they possess beauty..." (*Enn.* IV.3.11).

## Notes

1. Moshe Barash, *Icon* (N.Y. Univ. Press, 1992), 29.
2. Quintilian, *Instituto Oratorica XII*, trans. by J. Watson, 10, 7-9.
3. Barash, 70.
4. *Ibid.*, 51. See Burkett, *Greek Religion*.
5. *Ibid.*, 54.
6. Arnobius *Adversus Gentes*, XIX, trans. by H. Bryce & H. Cambell (Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Edinburgh, 1871), 288.
7. Barash, 25.
8. Pollux, *Onomasti*, 3.
9. Barash, 41.
10. L. W. Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman And Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (Leiden E. J. Brill, 1974), 80.
11. N. H. Baynes, *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 130.
12. De Pyth. *Orac.* 8. On statue: alla peplhsqai panta qeothto V.
13. Barnard, 85.
14. L. Sternbach, *Analecta. Anarica* in the *Rozprawy of the Academy of Cracow* (1900), 304.15.
15. Barnard, 62.
16. P. L. R. Brown, A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy, *English History Review*, 346 (1973), 1-34.
17. *Ibid.*, 4.
18. Barash, 3.
19. *Ibid.*, 42.
20. *Ennead*, IV.3.11.
21. *Ennead*, V.8.5, 19.
22. *Ennead*, V.8.6.
23. *Ennead*, V.2.1., III.9.3.
24. Armstrong, 83.
25. *Ennead*, II.9.11, 16-19.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ennead*, IV.3.11.
28. *Apologies*, 1,9; 19.
29. *Ibid.*, III, 16.
30. Barash, 198.
31. *Republic*. "By *eikonas* I mean, first, shadows, and then reflections in water and on surfaces of dense, smooth and bright texture..." And in *Theatetus* 239: "...we mean the images (*eidola*) in water and in mirrors, and those in painting, too, and sculptures, and ..."
32. *Apologies* III, 16; 73.

33. Barasch, 219 (See John Damascus, *On the Divine Images: Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack The Divine Images*, trans. by David Anderson).
34. St. John Damascene on Holy Images, by Mary H. Allies (London, Thomas Baker, 1898).
35. Barasch, 203.
36. *Apologies* II, 12; 19.
37. *Apologies* I, 8; 18 "...How can the invisible be depicted? How does one picture the incinivable? How can one draw what is limitless, immesurable, infinite?..."
38. Scholars disagree on the meaning of this term.
39. On the Holy Icons I, 9: 29, by St Theodore the Stradite, trans. by Catherine P. Roth (Crestwood, N.Y., 1981).
40. *Meta*. I, i; 980a 24ff.

## The Neoplatonic Tradition in the Art of El Greco

Robert Meredith Helm

Dominikos Theotokopoulos was a native of Candia, the capital of the island of Crete, which since 1204 had been a possession of the Serene Republic of Venice and which accommodated a substantial number of Venetians among its inhabitants. Virtually nothing is known of his early years, and even the date of his birth, probably in the year 1542, is uncertain. From the apparent depth and scope of his education, it appears that he was a member of a family of some standing, but the earliest documented reference to him that survived is an instrument signed before a notary public in 1561 by Maistro Menegos Theotokopoulos Sgourafos (Toledo Museum 15). Toward the end of that year, he offered one of his paintings for sale in a lottery. This sketchy information is all we know of his life in his native Crete.

We next hear of him in Venice, where there was a sizeable colony of Cretans. On August 18, 1658, he was making arrangements to dispatch drawings to a Candian cartographer. Two years later, he had moved on southward. A letter from John Clovis, a miniaturist, to Alessandro Farnese, written on November 15, 1570, says, "There has arrived in Rome a young man from Candia, a pupil of Titian, who, I think, is a painter of rare talent. ... He has painted a portrait of himself which is admired by all the painters in Rome. I should like him to be under the patronage of your reverend lordship without any other contribution towards his living than a room in the Farnese Palace" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, v. 22, 69).

Venice was a cultural link between East and West, and the art of that city at the time of the young Greek's residence there incorporated something of the spirit that would characterize the Greek's developing style. Titian, at that time



in his nineties, and the grand old man of Venetian art, was a principal source of the style of painting that Theotokopoulos was to follow throughout the years of his residence in Italy. He was also strongly influenced by Tintoretto, Veronese, and Giacompo Bassano.

Non-Venetian sources of his Italian style are evident as well. Raphael's *The Healing of the Lame Man in the Temple*, also known as *Peter and John at the Beautiful Gate*, clearly provided some material for Theotokopoulos' small painting, *The Purification of the Temple*. Executed in tempera and staged in an architectural setting representing a hodgepodge of the tricks of perspective popular at that time, it shows Raphael's influence on some of the figures in the young Greek's painting, notably those of a woman and a little naked boy bringing their offering to the temple.

More significant for an understanding of El Greco is the fact that his works of the Venetian and Roman period, conforming in many respects to the prevailing Italian Renaissance style, nevertheless give hints of an earlier influence one that was later to reassert itself powerfully in the masterpieces that would establish the unique place he occupies in the history of art.

At about the age of thirty, having already attained some fame as an artist, Theotokopoulos left Rome. The reasons for his departure are somewhat obscure, but a story told by a seventeenth-century writer, G. Mancini, may shed some light on the matter. According to Mancini, the Greek was given the opportunity of becoming the breeches maker for the figures that Pope Pius considered indecent in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel. Theotokopoulos suggested that it might have been better if the whole painting had been cast to the ground so that he himself might have done it with sincerity, decency, and artistic integrity. There seems little reason to doubt that such an insult to the foremost artist of the age may have raised the temperature of Rome to a point where he thought it advisable to find another place to live and practice his art.

Why he chose Spain is not known. It may have been because Philip II was building the Escorial and looking for artists to decorate it. At any rate, his choice turned out to be a felicitous one. He was obviously struck by the stark Spanish landscapes and he promptly began to incorporate in his paintings the clean and dramatic colors he found there, which must have reminded him more of those of his native Crete than of the lasher hues of Italy.

We find him in Toledo in 1577, completing a set of paintings for the rebuilt Church of Santo Domingo el Antiguo. Those works enhanced his already great reputation, and he was commissioned by the Chapter of Toledo

Cathedral to paint a picture for the Sacristy. The result was *The Stripping of Christ before the Crucifixion*, in which the essential elements of the altered style that would ultimately be dominant in his work were clearly evident.

Controversy about certain aspects of the painting and a dispute over his compensation entangled him for some time after its completion, but it must have impressed King Philip, for he asked Theotokopoulos to paint an altarpiece for his church in the Escorial.

El Greco, to use the name by which he must have been generally known by that time, responded to the monarch's request with the painting of *St. Maurice and the Theban Legion*, depicting the mass martyrdom of a body of third-century Roman soldiers who refused to obey orders to persecute their fellow Christians. He portrayed the event, not in the expected Spanish mode, with emphasis on the horror of the beheading, but in a way that demonstrated that he was not entirely hostile to the style known as *Maniera*, or High Mannerism, based on the paintings of Raphael and Michelangelo, but emphasizing artistic form over dramatic content. El Greco chose to place at the center of his painting an elegant Maurice, with members of his staff and a little armor-bearer, conferring courteously with an official about their impending execution and that of their comrades of the legion, who are seen in the distance lining up to have their heads cut off, a procedure which is already under way in matter-of-fact fashion, with no indication of ill feeling on either side. Meanwhile, the heavens above are an integral part of the scene, filled with a host of celestial beings preparing a reception for the prospective arrivals. Despite the religious propriety of the theme, the style so irritated Philip that he refused to have the painting installed over the altar, though it remained at the Escorial.

Quite undeterred by royal disapproval, the Greek went on with his painting, gradually developing a mode of artistic expression that eschewed earthly realism in favor of an embodiment of a philosophical and religious outlook that regarded the material world not as something ultimate in its own right, but rather as an expression of a transcendent spiritual reality.

The juxtaposition of the earthly and the heavenly became a frequent theme in El Greco's paintings. His colors, were borrowed less and less from the Venetian and Roman masters, taking on colder blues, greens, and steely grays, with accents of white, yellow, green, and wine red. All the time, his figures were becoming increasingly more sinuous and elongated, possibly owing something to such Italian painters as Tintoretto and Parmigianino, but clearly expressing something so significant for El Greco that it subordinated the influence of painterly convention to religious and philosophical influences more

important to him than the more mundane concerns money, high living, romance, controversy, and the like that had their place in the other side of the balance of his complex nature. Those more spiritual and scholarly aspects of his character were fueled by a way of life marked by a thirst for books and an appreciation of good conversation with the *intelligentsia* of Toledo, with whom he was on the best of terms. One of those companions wrote of him, He was a great philosopher (Byron and Rice 183).

A thoroughly typical expression of the sort of art that ultimately became such a powerful vehicle for his philosophy is the Opening of the Fifth Seal, one of three works executed late in the artist's life for the Tavera Hospital in Toledo. The work was inspired by a passage in the Apocalypse of St. John:

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them: and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled (*Revelation*, 6: 9-11).

Other painters of the High Renaissance had put on canvas their vision of heaven and earth, with descending angels, aspiring souls, and rejected sinners. They too had bathed their scenes in a celestial brightness that endowed the vivid, earth-based colors they employed a radiance that spoke of the presence of God in nature.

But these colors are different. They hardly seem to derive from earthly substances at all. The areas of red and yellow are muted and completely dominated by the cool and curiously other-worldly hues of the remainder of the painting. The gigantic figure of St. John on the left is enveloped in a gray-blue robe highlighted by a pure white light that must have its source in the celestial realm glimpsed behind the swirling clouds that seem to move in a line parallel to the saint's outstretched arm and of the body of the little angel floating at the upper right of the painting.

That same radiance robs the naked figures of the risen dead of any semblance of the human flesh tones with which Michelangelo in some degree and Memling in an even greater measure endowed their resuscitated saints and sinners in their depictions of the Last Judgment. In El Greco's space, the highlighted portions of the bodies gleam with the pure white illumination that

streams through breaks in the dark storm clouds overhead, and the shadowed area tend toward the violet end of the spectrum.

And what are we to make of the figures themselves? Painted with consummate skill, they nevertheless defy the unwritten canon that set boundaries for even the most radical Italian masters who taught the Greek his craft. To be sure, it was not uncommon for Renaissance painters to make heads less long and bodies longer than they are generally seen in real life. Denys of Fourny, in his *Guide to Painting*, had written, Learn O my pupil that the body of a man is nine heads in height (Byron and Rice 94). This exaggerated proportion is especially evident in Michelangelo's frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. But El Greco's sinuous and elongated figures of his later Spanish period are quite unlike Michelangelo's idealized human forms. They are attenuated, fluid, unearthly, hardly seeming to be bodies at all.

How are we to account for this astounding climactic development in Renaissance art? A great deal of insightful criticism and a fair amount of nonsense have been written about El Greco in attempts to explain the characteristics that set his paintings apart from others of the era. He has been seen as a Mannerist, a reviver of Byzantine art, a madman, a proto-modernist, and, most curiously, a painter whose distinctive style can be attributed to astigmatism.

This latter theory, which enjoyed surprising popularity during the early years of the twentieth century, was presented as a plausible explanation for the figures that fill the Greek's later paintings. It is difficult to understand why it was not apparent to the critics who espoused the ophthalmic hypothesis that even if El Greco had indeed suffered from such a condition, he himself would inevitably have seen his exaggerated figures as abnormal in comparison with those who served as his models. The real explanation must lie elsewhere, and if we want to divine the reason, we must attend less to some possible visual pathology or to personal eccentricity than to the intellectual orientation that governed his artistic activity during the last years of his career. This latter theory, which enjoyed surprising popularity during the early years of the twentieth century, was presented as a plausible explanation for the figures that fill the Greek's later paintings. It is difficult to understand why it was not apparent to the critics who espoused the ophthalmic hypothesis that even if El Greco had indeed suffered from such a condition, he himself would inevitably have seen his exaggerated figures as abnormal in comparison with those who served as his models.

It is astonishing that even the modern critics who defended El Greco against the charge of visual aberration were for the most part oblivious to a

ground of art in which his roots were so deeply embedded. Meier-Graefe, who, unswayed by a turn-of-the-century characterization of the Greek as a painter of horrors, asked, Where does he come from? replied simply, We do not know (Byron and Rice, 6).

That same critic, to be sure, later found a clue to some of the mystery of El Greco's art in the mosaics of Daphne near Athens. He was not the first of the modern commentators to see Greek and Byzantine influence in Theotokopoulos paintings, but the organic continuity between Byzantine painting and the art of El Greco was clearly recognized only when critics began to discover an affinity between Byzantine and modern art and it became apparent to some of them that El Greco was a sort of missing link. The painting and sculpture that had emerged in the Eastern empire as a consequence of its struggles against iconoclasm turned away from the naturalism of earlier centuries in favor of a mystical aspiration to express in finite works the mysteries of the eternal and immutable. The felicitous result was the great tradition of Byzantine iconography, coexisting with the sort of Aristotelian philosophy espoused by St. John Damascene, whose writings were later to have a profound influence on Eastern Scholastics (Byron and Rice, 91). In the ninth century, the Patriarch Photius sparked a revival of Platonism in Byzantium (Byron and Rice, 17). Though it did not result in a revival of the naturalistic Greek and Hellenistic art, it did humanize the iconographic representation of the Byzantine painters and breathed into the art of Christendom a spirit that would ultimately move westward and transform European art.

Two centuries after Photius, Michael Pselles, a fundamentally Neoplatonic scholar, put an indelible stamp on Byzantine culture. Psellos had an encyclopedic range of knowledge, combined with a Platonic rational mysticism. One result of his enormous influence was a form of art characterized by a warmer sort of representation of the divine, which, without sacrificing anything of the mystery, nevertheless brought a still more humanistic element to iconographic art and produced its full flowering.

In a very real sense, Psellos may be considered the progenitor not only of a revitalized Byzantine and Greek culture, but of the Italian Renaissance, though centuries were to elapse after his death before the Neoplatonic spirit of humanistic mysticism would come into full flower in the West.

The relation of that spirit to art is no accident. An understanding of the relationship between philosophy and the arts permeates the *Enneads* of Plotinus in a somewhat less ambiguous fashion than is the case with Plato's writings. Works of art, Plotinus said, go back to the Reason-Principles from which Na-

ture derives and ... are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking (Plotinus *Enneads* IV. 8. 1. McKenna 422-423).

There is a real sense in which the World Soul is for the Neoplatonists an artist, acting on the bare potentiality of matter to express something of the ineffable beauty shining through *Nous* from the One. Human bodies are expressions of soul, and the individual soul shares in the nature of the ultimately real. It too can shape its own nature as an artist shapes his work.

Withdraw into yourself and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful: he cuts away here, he smooths there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also: cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is overcast, labour to make all one glow of beauty until there shall shine out on you from it the godlike splendour of virtue, until you shall see the perfect goodness established in the stainless shrine (Plotinus, *Enneads* I.6.9. MacKenna 63).

None of this is to deny that not only has the Platonic tradition in its entirety been a fountainhead of inspiration for great art, but that Plato himself was not insensitive to the proper role of the arts in human life. It is true that in the *Republic* he expressed doubts not only about drama but about *all* works of representative art as simulations twice removed from reality faulty copies of particular objects that are themselves flawed reproductions of Ideas.

His criticism of the arts, however, was far less sweeping than his *penchant* for hyperbole would make it appear, for he never condemned them on the grounds of their impotence, but rather on his conviction that they are too powerful to be trusted in the hands of those not versed in philosophy. He proposed to harness that power for good by challenging the artists to prove that they could elevate their work to a sufficient height to convey to those who contemplated it the essence of the truths that lie behind the world of phenomena. This is precisely the role that Plotinus assigned to works of art. We do not so much contemplate *them* as employ them as focusing glasses through which we see with greater understanding the more real world of *Noeta*.

In the Byzantine world, the victors in the war against the iconoclasts claimed a precisely similar function for art. This was the chief iconodule contention, art historians Byron and Rice say, that pictures, like statues to Plotinus, were an effective means of communication with the extra-terrestrial universe.

This was the way iconographic painting was viewed in Crete when young

Domenikos Theokotopoulos was a boy there. The spirit of those vivid representations of spiritual truths followed him to Venice, where it was again alive in an uniquely Adriatic mode, and then to Rome, where it had found expression in the colossal work of Michelangelo, whom the boy from Crete first studied and then emulated and at last rejected. Michelangelo was a good man, he was later to remark, but he could not paint (Byron and Rice 78).

It was not until he got to Spain and became El Greco that he gradually became able to draw his nourishment from the very roots of that spirit, incorporating in his work all the skills he had learned from the Italian masters, but purifying and spiritualizing his art from sources that sprang from the rich soil of the Eastern Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition. This is not to say that at some point he discovered that he was a Platonist or Neoplatonist and decided to paint according to the canon. He was, to be sure, interested in philosophy and enjoyed talking with philosophers. He had a substantial library, though it is not known whether he ever read the writings of Plato or Plotinus. He never lectured or wrote essays on metaphysics.

Rather, his philosophy, as an expression of his soul, is in his paintings, and it is clear that he intended them to be his way of stating his profoundest convictions about the world. Like Plotinus and the Christian Neoplatonists, he saw the natural world not as inert matter, but as animate and fluid. Material objects are created and sustained by soul, and even a relatively horizontal city, in his View of Toledo seems to be straining upward, seeking to regain its identity with some celestial city from which it derives its nature.

As for human bodies, they are unlike even the most spiritually inspiring bodies of the Italian painters. Whatever incarnation of *Nous* and Soul is celebrated in the figures of El Greco's later works is an incarnation that has passed the point at which the Word initially becomes Flesh and revels in bone and muscle and sinew. The bodies of his saints and sometimes even of the infant Jesus are bathed in a white radiance that seems to draw them upward toward the One. Reality that typically makes its presence known only through rifts in the storm clouds that must be penetrated before the aspiring souls can achieve the destiny that awaits them in the celestial realm. That realm, as seen through El Greco's painting, has a reality that transcends that of the ephemeral world beneath it, imparts to it whatever life it is capable of receiving, and draws it back toward itself. Even souls in danger of damnation in these paintings never wholly lose that touch of derivative radiance, suggesting Plotinus conviction that in the very nature of a soul, it can never be entirely lost.

In 1577, the year El Greco moved to Toledo, St. John of the Cross was

imprisoned there. Whether or not he and El Greco ever knew each other is uncertain, but much of St. John's poetry embodies the qualities that the Greek achieved in his painting, as evidenced in these lines about the ascent of the soul:

The dreadful force of dazzling light  
Blinded me as aloft I flew,  
The greatest gain that ere I knew  
Was made in blackness of the night.  
But love it was that won the day,  
Blindly, obscurely did I fly;  
I soared aloft and soared so high  
That in the end I reached my prey (Myers and Copplestone 85).

The recognition of El Greco as a painter whose works embody a whole philosophy is well expressed by Byron and Price:

... for us, and in relation to us, he is always relevant and always great, great not only as a painter but as a man, one to whom the vision of his World's reality was vouchsafed and who pursued it independently of mental fashion, a cosmic figure, sustained in his own life by a profound conviction of his own magnitude. On his canvasses, the whole gamut of emotions provoked by landscape, allegory, or sitter, are co-ordinated in the expression of a grand philosophy, of the intrinsic, mystical seed of perfection contained in all terrestrial phenomena and the artist's debt thereto in his communing (Byron and Rice 3).

The grand philosophy that invested the paintings of the Greek with their enduring power to move and inspire us can have been none other in essence than the philosophy of Plotinus and the Christian Neoplatonists.

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## Giorgio Vasari's *The Toilet of Venus*: Neoplatonic Notion of Female Beauty

Liana De Girolami Cheney

In *Emblematum libellus cum commentarii*, Andrea Alciato states that "the universe is a forest of symbols," that is to say, "things that are visible are the mirror of those things which are invisible (and) all the world objects have a signification." His theory of the emblem conveys a Neoplatonic view concerning the meaning of an idea or conceit (*concetto*) which was eloquently explained by Marsilio Ficino in *De vita celitus comparanda*. In this book he discusses the use and the magic potency of images by deliberating on the virtue of imagery, what power pertains to the figure in the sky and on earth, which of the heavenly configurations were impressed on images by the ancients, and how the images were employed in antiquity.

Giorgio Vasari's understanding of Neoplatonic philosophy and interest in and use of emblemata derived, as he recounts in his autobiography, from his education in the classics with Pollastra, his tutoring with the mythographer Piero Valeriano during his formative years, and his contact with the emblemist Andrea Alciato in Bologna in 1530s. Vasari assimilated specific meanings from emblem books such as Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum libellus cum commentarii* (1536), Piero Valeriano's *Hieroglyphicae* (1556), and Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagines de I Dei degli Antichi* (1547), to name but a few. These sources provided him with an extensive repertoire of images which he collected and used in the iconography for his paintings.

Under these humanistic influences, Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) considered himself to be not merely a painter but an aesthete as well.<sup>1</sup> His ambitions culminated in his writing of *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters*,

*Sculptors, and Architects* (*Le vite dei più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti*), the first edition of which appeared in 1550; a second, enlarged and revised, containing woodcut portraits of the artists, appeared in 1568.<sup>2</sup> Vasari's *Lives* consists of two components: biographies and prefaces. In writing the biographies, Vasari discusses stylistic qualities and techniques of art.<sup>3</sup> In the Prefaces (*Proemi*) he establishes not only the historical scheme for his writing of the biographies but also his aesthetics by defining the criteria by which he selects the "most excellent" artists and the standards by which their works were judged (Preface I, 7).

Vasari's criteria for assessing art accorded with conventional standards in sixteenth-century Neoplatonic philosophy. He embodies the aesthetic judgment of his time in the criteria he uses to evaluate individual works of art. Qualities he applauded were: technical proficiency especially in drawing; good composition; imitation of nature; variety and invention; and adherence to the classical art of ancient Rome. He felt that such qualities must be attained with beauty and grace of style, which meant that the work must appear to have been executed with masterful ease. He emphasized that a magical, godlike quality (genius) is the essential quality of great art. He assumed that artists' individual achievements were essentially manifestations of their own peculiar genius. But genius itself - and with it, major changes in style and technique - could be explained only by invoking the intervention of divine forces: "To save us from such great errors...the Most Benign Ruler of Heaven turned his eyes clemently to earth...and consented to send down a Spirit..."<sup>4</sup> Vasari's theory of genius or divine intervention to explain the execution of works of exemplary merit can be seen particularly applies to the artist's perception of feminine beauty and its function in the integrity of artistic expression.

Within this framework, this study considers the following: Vasari's concept of beauty as advanced in the Prefaces of the *Lives*; its Renaissance literary and philosophical sources for his concept of beauty; and its artistic embodiment in his painting *The Toilet of Venus* of 1558 (Fig. 1; Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany) and the pendant painting of *The Bacchanal* of 1558 (Fig. 2; Radiscev Museum of Fine Arts, Saratov, Russia).<sup>5</sup>

In his Third Preface of the *Lives*, Vasari defines his theory of beauty in terms of the laws of design as consisting of "*regola, ordine, misura, disegno e maniera*" (rule, order, proportion, design, and manner).<sup>6</sup> He further states:

Design is the imitation of the most beautiful things in nature, used for the creation of all figures whether in sculpture or painting; and this quality depends

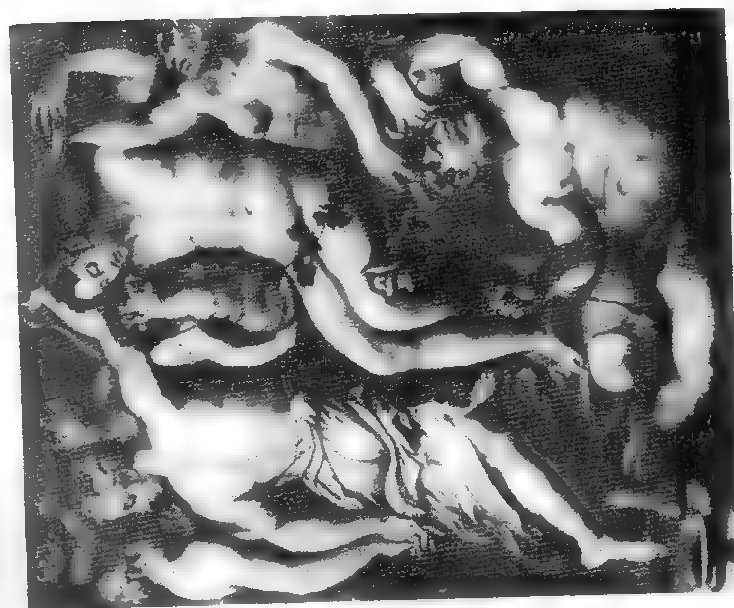


Fig. 2. Giorgio Vasari, *The Bacchanal*, 1558  
Saratov, Russia, Radiscev Museum of Fine Arts



Fig. 1. Giorgio Vasari, *The Toilet of Venus*, 1558  
Stuttgart, Germany, Staatsgalerie

on the ability of the artist's hand and mind to reproduce what he sees with his eyes accurately and correctly onto paper or a panel or whatever flat surface he may be using. The same applies to works of relief in sculpture. And then the artist achieves the highest perfection of style or *maniera* by copying the most beautiful things in nature and combining the most perfect members, hands, head, torso, and legs, to produce the finest possible figure as a model for use in all his works; this is how he achieves what we know as fine style or *maniera*. (Preface III, 35).

Vasari's aesthetics (the word aesthetic derives from the Greek *aisthesis* - sensation) are concerned with the nature of the beautiful as it exists in art or in nature as well as with the physicality and spirituality of beauty.<sup>7</sup> For Vasari, physicality of beauty is perceived in the painted image and the spirituality of beauty is reflected in the evocation of the visual experience. His philosophy of art depends upon the philosophical and poetical tradition of the Renaissance, in short the Marsilio Ficino's restatement of Neoplatonism. In accordance with the Neoplatonic theory of beauty, Vasari understands beauty to be a divine creation. "He (God) fashioned the first forms of painting and sculpture in the sublime grace of created things."<sup>8</sup> Consequently, he refers to beauty as the mirror of the human soul reflecting metaphysical light and associates the beautiful with Ficino's light of the sole principle of the universe (*De Amore*) and with Plotinus's concept of "heavely Aphrodite" (*kalon* and *kaloni*) radiance or splendor, an element that results from the quality of unity inherent in the object (*Enneads*, 5- 8, 13).<sup>9</sup> Correspondingly, Vasari absorbs from Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's "Symposium" about Love*, the ancient Greek philosopher's definition of beauty "as the splendor of *divine goodness* present everywhere, personal beauty expresses an interior moral goodness," as well as, Ficino's explanation of beauty as "a process of ascent from sensual cognition of earthly beauty to the apprehension of the immortal ideal of beauty itself."<sup>10</sup> By appropriating from Ficino the interconnection between love and beauty, Vasari also embraces his notion on the essence of beauty that consists in proportion, that is, the ancient doctrine of symmetric and pleasant relationship of individual parts. According to Vasari, the origin of beauty derives from order and proportion (*la bellezza nasce da ordine e proporzione*), and at times he relates the concept of beauty with goodness (*bellezza e bontà*).<sup>11</sup> Obviously, Vasari is following Marsilio Ficino; in the *Symposium*, Ficino discusses how many things are required to create a beautiful body, such as arrangement (means the distance between parts), proportion (means quantity), and aspect

(means shape and color). He further analyzes how the proportioning of the parts have their natural position: "that the ears be in their place, and the eyes and nose, etc., and that the eyes be at equal distances near the nose...proportion of the parts...preserve the proper portion of the whole body."<sup>12</sup>

For Vasari, when artists returned to consider nature, in imitation or emulation of their ancient forbears, a rebirth occurred in the arts. Renaissance artists first imitated nature, then equalizing nature, and finally surpassed nature. Fidelity to nature meant artists mastering "naturalism" in the rational representation of perspective, foreshortening, chiaroscuro, and the knowledge of anatomy," pleasing both the eye and the mind, creating a beautiful form."<sup>13</sup>

By improving on nature, Vasari suggests, Italian Renaissance artists corrected nature's imperfections by working with the canons of proportion, by selecting the best aspects of nature, and, by achieving graceful or idealized beauty. When artists surpassed nature, according to Vasari, they responded to their *concetto* (conceit), an idea, or image of beauty, partly innate in the mind of the artist art (*invenzione*) and partly derived from previous study of nature and art (*imitazione*). Therefore, Vasari's concept of beauty derives from two principles: the ideational a *concetto* to create an image of beauty, and the realistic, a current idea about how an image of beauty can be conceived. Vasari's *The Toilet of Venus* visually represents his theory of beauty.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, Renaissance poets such as Baldesar Castiglione, Angelo Poliziano and Pietro Bembo adhere to Petrarch's and Dante's models of female beauty, such as Laura and Beatrice, and assimilated the poets' Neoplatonic aesthetics.<sup>15</sup> For them, a beautiful female image reflected a "celestial beauty which leads the poet or philosopher upward to the experience of divine or heavenly beauty."<sup>16</sup> Correspondingly, Agnolo Firenzuola, in his book on *On the Beauty of Women* (1548) declares:

A beautiful woman, is the most beautiful object one can admire, and beauty is the greatest gift God bestowed on His human creatures. And so, through her virtue we direct our souls to contemplation, and through contemplation to the desire for heavenly things.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, Vasari's aesthetics derives from the philosophical and poetical Renaissance Neoplatonic notion of spiritual beauty. For Vasari Neoplatonic spiritual beauty meant the manifestation of vivacity, radiance, and grace in the image perceived through reason and sight in order to move the human soul and delight the spirit, as illustrated in his *Toilette of Venus* (1558; Fig. 1).<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, Vasari deliberately selects the image of Venus as the manifestation of his theory of beauty following not only the Neoplatonic philosophy but also the literary tradition of sixteenth-century treatises on love and beauty such as Mario Equicola in *Libro di natura d'amore* (Venice, 1525), Leone Ebreo in *Dialoghi d'amore* (Rome, 1535), Benedetto Varchi in *Lezioni sull'Amore* (1540), and Agostino Nifo in *Del bello. Il bello è nella natura* (Lugduni, 1549). These Cinquecento treatises on love were inspired, in turn, on the philosophical discourse on love by Marsilio Ficino, such as his *De amore* or *Sopra l'amore* (On Love, 1474) and *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*.<sup>19</sup>

Fascinated with the subject of beauty and love embodied in the image of Venus, Vasari depicted her in the theme of the Toilet of Venus in several media: in a large cartoon, in a stained glass window, and in three paintings. The large cartoon is presently lost but an elaborate description of its imagery is recorded in a letter from Vasari to Nicolo Vespucci:

A seated, nude Venus surrounded by the Three Graces: one while kneeling holds a mirror; the other with artistry braids her hair with pearls and corals in order to beautify Venus, another pours, with an emerald crystal vase, perfumed clear water in a mother-of-pearl conch for her bath. Eros, holding a bow and arrows, sleeps, reclining on Venus' garment. Other Cupids encircle the group while covering them and the landscape with roses and flowers. The ground is filled with stones; through their cracks flow water. Doves and swans taste this water. Hidden in the trees and bushes a satyr contemplates the beautiful Venus with the three Graces. His lascivious attitude, expressed by his open, wild eyes, and implied lust gesture was highly praised by Pope Clement who suggested that I paint a picture based on this drawing.<sup>20</sup>

The stained glass window was executed by Gaultieri d'Anversa in 1558 probably after Vasari's cartoon design for the Study Room in the Chamber of Caliope at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. The paintings were commissioned by Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici (1532), by Jacopo Capponi (1559, both paintings are now lost) and by Luca Torrigiani (1558, Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, Germany, Fig. 1).<sup>21</sup> (The stained glass window has a similar composition to the Luca Torrigiani's painting, probably because both versions draw from the cartoon design).

In Torrigiani's painting of *The Toilet of Venus*, Vasari portrays Venus being dressed and adorned by the Three Graces (*Charites* in Greek or *Gratae* in

Latin) with numerous attributes of roses, myrtle, and a pair of doves, alluding to spiritual as well as erotic love.<sup>22</sup>

By selecting and depicting the classical subject of Venus beautifying herself, admiring herself in the mirror, and posing for the viewer's gaze and arousal, Vasari has addressed the physicality of an image embodying his aesthetic of female beauty. By suggesting she personifies both Love and Lust he alludes to astrological traditions and by including emblematic references to both Vanity and Prudence he adds Christian qualities.<sup>23</sup> Thus he manifests his assimilation of Renaissance Neoplatonism - the Christianization of pagan myths or the secularization of Christian religion.

Since antiquity the image of Venus has been defined in terms of physical beauty. In ancient Latin, the word Venus (*phosphorous*) means *the luminous one*. This appellation alludes to Venus as both planet and a goddess.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the classical representations depict her holding a mirror (*speculum*) for reflecting her beauty, alluding to Venus magically linked to her reflection or life source, as in the Roman mosaic of third century, AD. at the Musée National du Bardo in Tunisia.

For the Platonist philosophers (Plato, Plotinus and Ficino) the planetary gods and goddesses represented poetic analogies of celestial and psychological functions. They described the operational principles of action, heart, and mind, that is to say, the psyche in which emotions, instincts and thought orbit the luminaries of the self and ego. Therefore, as a female symbol, Venus assumes the female planetary aspects associated with Luna (Moon), sensualism. For example, Venus as a planet or sphere expresses the active instinctual desire for pleasure and love, because "Love was born on the birthday of Venus."<sup>25</sup> It rules the arts, as illustrated in the *De Sphaera*, an Italian illuminated manuscript of the fifteenth-century, at the Biblioteca Estense in Modena, where Venus is depicted holding a mirror, nude, with flowers and jewelry; controlling the heavens with the zodiac signs of Libra and Taurus, and ruling on earth the aspects related to the arts and love.<sup>26</sup> Vasari endows his Venus in *The Toilet of Venus* with these ancient cosmological, philosophical and psychological implications.

In Vasari's *The Toilet of Venus*, the accompaniment of the Three Graces, as handmaidens to Venus, accords with the writings of Horace, *Odes*, I, 3 and Seneca, *De beneficiis*, I.3. Accordingly, for Horace, The Graces are usually depicted as semi-clothed because they are "free of deceit," and for Seneca, the Graces were partially clothed with exposed breasts because "benefits want to be seen." The Graces's dual character is associated with Venus's cosmic na-



ture - planet and goddess - and derives from their personification in antiquity. In the Greek period the Charities personified grace, charm and beauty and were named Aglaia (meaning Splendor), Euphrosynem (Mirth), and Thalia (Abundance) and during the Roman era the Gratiae were a symbol of gratitude - Castitas (Chastity), Voluptas (Pleasure), and Pulchritudo (Beauty). Vasari's inclusion of the Graces adds yet another dimension to the symbolism of Venus, providing a moral basis for her actions such as decorum.

In Vasari's painting Venus gazes at her reflection in the mirror. The mirror, for Christian symbolism, represents the conventional attribute for truth and is traditionally carried by a personification of Prudence. Venus' action takes place at the same time as one of the Graces pours water, an action alluding to another virtue, the personification of Temperance. The other two Graces who assist Venus in her beautification, connote through their actions yet another virtue - Charity, which is inherent in their name "Charites." Thus the visual bond that exists between Venus and the Graces in the painting alludes and reinforces the spiritual aspects of Christian or Neoplatonic "sacred love." For Vasari, then, the Graces represent Beauty, Love, Pleasure as well as Giving, Receiving, and Requiring.

In acknowledging the complex signification of the image of Venus, one realizes that Vasari's rendition of Venus does not adhere to a specific meaning. The Vasarian goddess may be viewed as a cosmological power such as the pagan planetary Venus or as a natural element such as one of the five senses, Venus might symbolize Sight. Another Vasarian's interpretation can be associated with Christian personifications of virtue such as Chaste Love, Truth (*Veritas*) or Prudence (*Prudentia*) or vice such as Vanitas or Luxuria. Furthermore, Vasari's *oeuvre* may also aesthetically reflect his eclectic nature in perceiving and conceiving art; therefore, even though paradoxically, Vasari's conceit for the image of Venus combines a mixture of significations alluding to symbols of virtue as well as vice. In addition, the use of the mirror as an attribute of the sense of Sight can imply two perceptions: the viewer's perception of Venus as young and beautiful, and Venus's intimation of her future age and ugliness reflected in the mirror. The eye of the viewer becomes the mirror of present life whereas Venus's mirror becomes the mirror of her past. Although viewers see in the painting the present beauty and future ugliness of Venus, they are seduced by the now, the narcissistic exhibition of her body (*Luxuria* and *Vanitas*). Conversely, Venus is reminded by the mirror's reflection of the transience of life and truth of her nature: "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14). Vasari elaborates on the signification of vanitas in depicting a

narcissistic action of the part of the sacred birds of Venus—the doves—who are fascinated with viewing their image in the basin of water placed at the feet of Venus. Purposefully, Vasari creates with a diagonal movement for the viewer a symbolic and visual connection between the dove's water reflection and Venus' mirror image.

With the recent discovery of *The Bacchanal* (Fig 2), the pendant painting to *The Toilet of Venus* (Fig. 1), a voyeuristic interpretation maybe further suggested. For the Luca Torrigiani commission, perhaps, Vasari decided to represent two paintings based on his cartoon designs - *The Toilet of Venus* and *The Bacchanal*. In the drawing studies for the Bacchanal painting and in the painting itself, the "lascivious" satyr is included, assisting the intoxicated Silenus or stealing grapes and libations for himself. In the painting of *The Bacchanal*, the Three Graces, who attended and completed the toilet of Venus, can be seen, now, as Maenads dancing at the music performed with tambourines and recorders by the nymphs, fauns, and satyrs in the Dionysiac forest. Unlike Venus's beautiful attendants, Bacchus's escorts can be seen as wild beasts from the forest, such as wild horses, lions, tigers, or panthers, rams, and as symbols of fertility, since they were held sacred to him. Bacchus's companions and worshippers, intoxicated with the nectar of grapes provided by Bacchus during a drinking contest, crown and decorate their god with wreaths of laurel, ivy, and grape leaves.

The young, effeminate, idealized body of Bacchus contrasts with the aging, coarse and muscular body of Silenus and the satyrs. Vasari in representing Bacchus as an image of male beauty relies on Pliny and Vitruvius' theory of human proportions<sup>27</sup> as well as on Ficino's description *On a painting of Love* according to the poet Agathon where Love is personified by a young, tender, agile, well-proportionate and glowing man.<sup>28</sup> From Vasari's perspective, then, the beautiful depiction of Bacchus expands his theory of beauty to include the male body as well as the female body (Venus) and both images of beauty reflect a conceit of love.

These pendant paintings portray parallelism of poses, gestures, coloration, and movement. However, although Venus and Bacchus are facing each other, they do not gaze at each other: they are both self-absorbed with their individual preparation for their thirst, as Venus actively adorns herself and Bacchus passively indulges in his revelry.<sup>29</sup> Familiar with the legend of the liaison between Venus and Bacchus, which resulted in Priapus, Vasari creates with these two paintings a theatrical scene where the viewer, with humor, vi-

sually connects their actions and with pleasure anticipates a passionate conclusion.

In contrast to the cartoon's description, the painting of *The Toilet of Venus* excludes the voyeuristic satyr; however, Vasari has cleverly replaced him with the pendant painting or the viewer. This maniera conceit or teasing technique fits in well with the maniera spirit of joviality and self-absorption. On the one level the gazing action may appear to be fortuitous and puerile, with the viewer or satyr ogling the beautiful naked woman; or, on another level, the narcissistic behavior of Venus regarding herself in the mirror can be seen as an allusion to her vanity, thereby manifesting the temporal world. Obviously, the reflected image in the mirror ought to be of a beautiful, voluptuous, and ageless woman. However, on careful observation, the reflection reveals an aging and sexless woman. Is Vasari tantalizing the viewer again? Is he conveying the paradox of the Neoplatonic aesthetic, as well as his own? Does he as the Renaissance Neoplatonist attempt the reconciliation of pagan myths and attitudes reinforced by Christian religion and beliefs? Can feminine beauty be both sensual and spiritual? Vasari, again, allows the viewer to speculate and adjudicate!

Mannerist painters such as Vasari choose the image of Venus because she symbolizes both intellectual and physical powers. As a planet she rules the arts. In turn he, Vasari, as an artist and creator is ruled by her planetary force. As a female the goddess displays her beauty, and the artist, as man, is bewitched by her physical beauty.

## Notes

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1. Patricia Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari* (London: Yale University Press, 1996) and Li-ana De Girolami Cheney, ed. *Readings in Italian Mannerism* (New York/London: Peter Lang Publisher, 1997), for an historical discussion of Mannerism and Maniera.
2. I have used the Italian version of Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite dei piu eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori* ed. by Gaetano Milanesi (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1970-74, here noted as Vasari-Milanesi) and an English version on Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, modern translation by George Bull (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965 and revised edition 1971).
3. For studies and excellent bibliographies on Vasari and his technique of art, see Louis S. Maclelland, *Vasari on Technique* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960); Roberto Panichi *La Tecnica dell'Arte negli Scritti di Giorgio Vasari* (Florence: Alinea Editrice, 1991); and, Roland LeMollé, *Georges Vasari et le vocabulaire de la critique d'art dans les "Vite"* (Grenoble: Ellug, 1988).
4. Cochrane, E. *Historians and Historiography in The Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 402, and Vasari-Milanesi, Preface, I, 7.
5. See catalogue entry of G. Ewald, "La Toilettta di Venere," in *Giorgio Vasari: Principi, letterati e artisti nelle carte di Giorgio Vasari*, ed. by Laura Corti, et. al (Florence: Edam, 1981), 74-75, and Vittoria Markova, "Un Baccante ritrovato di Giorgio Vasari, proveniente dalla Galleria Gerini," *Kunst des Cinquecento in der Toskana*, 1994, 21-30. The Gerini collection was recorded in the drawings of Ranieri Alleani and subsequently in the engravings of Lorenzo Lorenzi and Ferdinando Gregori in 1786, included in the engravings were these two paintings by Vasari. (See Plates III and IV in Corti, *Giorgio Vasari*). Catherine Monbeig-Goguel has located several preparatory drawings for these paintings at the Louvre and Uffizi. See Catherine Monbeig-Goguel, *Vasari et son temps, Dessins Italiens du Musée du Louvre* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1972), 172-73, Plate 222 and Uffizi drawings No. 620 F and 641 F.
6. See Vasari-Milanesi, Preface, III, 35, for a definition of these terms, and James V. Mirollo, *Mannerism and Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 10-14. Obviously, Vasari is following Marsilio Ficino, see Sears Jayne, ed. and trans. *Marsilio Ficino: Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love* (Dallas: Spring Publications, Inc., 1985), 93-95 and Laura Vestra, "Love and

- Beauty in Ficino and Plotinus," in Konrad Eisenbichler and Olga Zorzi Pugliese, ed. *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism* (Toronto: Dovehouse Editions, 1986), 178.
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  8. Vasari-Milanesi, Preface I, 93.
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  10. Jayne, *Marsilio Ficino*, 90. Ficino explains how Beauty is the splendor of the divine countenance, 89-91; Vestra, "Love and Beauty in Ficino and Plotinus," 185, and Liana De Girolami Cheney, *Boticelli's Neoplatonic Images* (Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica, 1993), 32-34.
  11. Vasari-Milanesi, VII, 710 and V, 386.
  12. Jayne, *Marsilio Ficino*, 93-95.
  13. Vasari-Milanesi, Preface, III, 8.
  14. Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 71-79. For a clear study on Vasari's concept of nature and an extensive bibliography on this subject see Mirollo, *Mannerism and Renaissance Poetry*, 8, and Liana De Girolami Cheney, "Vasari's Interpretation of Female Beauty," in *Concepts of Beauty in Renaissance Art* (London: Ashgate, 1998), 179-190.
  15. See Baldesar Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, Chapters XXVI and XXVIII of Book I in Barocchi, "Bellezza e Grazia," 1609-1708; Luigi Baldacci, "Gli Asolani del Bembo e Venere celeste," *Il petrarchismo italiano nel '500* (Milan-Naples: Riccardi, 1957), 107-110; Olga Zorzi Pugliese, "Varianos on Ficino's *De amore*: The Hymns to Love by Benivieni and Castiglione," in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism*, 113-121; and Mary Rogers, "The Decorum of Women's Beauty: Trissino, Firenzuola, Luigini and the Representation of Women in Sixteenth-Century Painting," *Renaissance Studies*, 2, 1988, 47-87.
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  17. For the theory of female beauty in Italian Renaissance art, see, Elizabeth Cropper, "On Beautiful Women: Parmigianino, Petrarchismo and the Vernacular Style," *Art Bulletin*, 58, 1976, 374-94; Elizabeth Cropper, "The Beauty of Woman: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Differences in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 175-90; Elizabeth Cropper, "The Place of Beauty in the High Renaissance and its Displacement in the History of Art," in *Place and*

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  9. Paolo Lorenzetti, *La bellezza e l'amore nei trattati del cinquecento* (Pisa: Scuola Normale, 1922), John Nelson, *The Renaissance Theory of Love* (Florence, 1933) and Cynthia M. Pyle, "Il neoplatonismo e le favole mitologiche," in *Milan and Lombardy in the Renaissance: Essays in Cultural History* (Rome: La Fenice, 1997), 151-182.
  20. Karl Frey, *Der Literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris* (Munich: George Müller, 1923), I, 2, 3, and 8.
  21. See n. 4.
  22. For illustrations representing the Three Graces in art, see Jane Davidson Reid, ed. *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts: 1300-1990s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 475-80; for The Toilet of Venus, 13-44.
  23. In representing the ambiguity of Vanity and Prudence, who both traditionally are shown looking into a mirror, Vasari may have referred to Michelangelo's drawing on the *Allegory of Prudence* at the British Museum in London. See Paul Barolsky, *The Faun in the Garden* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 10, Fig. 5.
  24. Jayne *Marsilio Ficino*, 116-17.
  25. *Ibid.*, 120. Ficino goes on elaborating on the nature of love as well as passions stating: "Love follows and worships Venus and is seized by a desire for the beautiful, since Venus herself is very beautiful."
  26. Solange de Mailley Nesle, *Astrology: History, Symbols, and Signs* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1985), 134-35.
  27. Vitruvius, III, I, 3 ed. and trans. by Morris Hicky Morgan, *Vitruvius: the Ten Books on Architecture* (New York: Dover, 1960) and Pliny, VII, 77, ed. and trans. by Jex-Blake Sellers, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on The History of Art* (Chicago: Ares Publishers, Inc., 1976). See also Erwin Panofsky, "The History of the Theory of Human Proportions as a Reflection of The History of Styles," in *The Meaning of the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 89-99.
  28. Jayne *Marsilio Ficino*, 95-96. See Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and The Body in Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 5-23, for a discussion on the bodies of men, and 24-46, on the bodies of women.
  29. Walter F. Otto, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult* (Dallas, Spring Publications, 1986), 176, for a discussion on the sensual affair between Aphrodite (Venus) and Dionysus (Bacchus).

## Neoplatonism in the Design of Baroque Architecture

John Hendrix

Certain elements of seventeenth-century Roman Baroque architecture, especially in the work of Pietro da Cortona and Francesco Borromini, can be shown to be an enactment and representation of conceptual systems and epistemic structures of Neoplatonic philosophy. Neoplatonism played a role in the expression of Renaissance architects such as Leon Battista Alberti and Andrea Palladio. Neoplatonic writings by Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Nicolas Cusanus, Marcilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola were available to architects in seventeenth-century Rome in libraries such as the Biblioteca Casanatense, Angelica, Vallicelliana, and the Accademia dei Lincei. The ideas of those writers were also expressed in archaeological and scientific treatises by Athanasius Kircher, Giuseppe Rosaccio, Alessandro Piccolomini, Giovanni Agucchi and Ristoro d'Arezzo, and artistic treatises by Gian Lomazzo, Federico Zuccaro, and Pietro da Cortona. The writings were known by the architects and collected by their patrons. They contributed to a climate in seventeenth-century Rome which combined philosophical development, artistic theory, scientific discovery and theological tenets into a unique intellectual culture which was expressed and reflected by the architecture along with the other arts of painting, sculpture, music and drama.

The most significant elements of Neoplatonic philosophy which were translated into architectural form were the representation of the structure of the cosmos; the relationship between the universe as macrocosm and man as microcosm; the hierarchy of being, including corporeal, mental, and spiritual levels, or nature, mind and God; and the passage from multiplicity to unity.

Artistic theory addressed the imperative to connect the human mind with the mystery of the natural world in the visual arts, involving the Neoplatonic Idea, which connected the creative process of the artist with the process of creation in nature. Neoplatonic conceptual formulations were borrowed by architects and translated into architectural designs. The formulations provided the architects with a way of thinking, a way of seeing the world which they applied to the architecture. Architecture became a visual model of philosophical systems that had been developed in the Neoplatonic tradition, a tradition combining Platonism and Aristotelianism, and philosophy and theology. Elements of Baroque architecture can be shown to be an artistic expression of those systems, and a culmination of the conceptual development from the early Middle Ages through the Renaissance. Such intentions would be inherited in the late Baroque architecture of Guarino Guarini and Bernardo Vittone in Piedmont.

### The Structure of the Cosmos

In Book IX of *On Architecture*, Vitruvius described the universe as an architectural design, and the laws of architecture were identical to the laws of the cosmos. God was seen as *deus architectus mundi*, or architect of the world, and the architect was seen as *architectus secundus deus*, a second God.<sup>1</sup> In *La Sfera del Mondo*, published in 1566 in Venice, Alessandro Piccolomini wrote: "We must first know that this huge machine which we call our world was made by an extremely wise and powerful architect."<sup>2</sup> In reconstructions of the Vitruvian theater, Giovanni Giocondo and Cesare Cesariano, among others, inscribed four equilateral triangles in a circle to create twelve points along the circumference of the theater, to "define the twelve locations of the zodiac described by astrologers as harmonious music derived from computations based on the stars."<sup>3</sup> Giulio Camillo wrote of his *theatro*, where information was categorized by location in the plan of a theater to aid memory, published in *Tutte le opere* in 1552: "When these signs have been gathered together according to an organic order and impressed on the memory by their images and symbols, the mind can move away from this middle celestial world...towards the supercelestial world of the Ideas...in harmony with astral influences."<sup>4</sup> The links between levels of reality in the *theatro*, between the signs and what they signified, are occult forces and astral influences.

The purpose of the *theatro* was to allow the soul to be harmonized with the celestial machine of the universe through the symbols. Frances Yates has

written, "The theater is a vision of the world and of the nature of things seen from a height, from the stars and the super-celestial founts of wisdom." Renaissance cosmology was the meeting ground between the rational and mathematic order of Greek science and the mythology and magic of the East.<sup>5</sup> In the Pythagorean musical theory revived by Nicolaus Cusanus and the Florentine Platonic Academy, music is divided between the inner (*humana*) and the cosmic (*mundana*).<sup>6</sup> The *musica humana* was seen as the movement of the macrocosm, the planetary rhythms, reflected in the soul. Similar intervals would be found between musical tones as between planets, and between aspects of thought and aspects of external reality. As Ficino wrote in the *Commentary*, "In all these things the internal perfection produces the external."<sup>7</sup> Pythagorean ratios of numeric harmony were enacted by Alberti in the facade of Santa Maria Novella.<sup>8</sup>

In seventeenth-century Rome, Pietro da Cortona's painting *Allegoria del Tempio della Sapienza*, and his preliminary design for the church of the Accademia di San Luca, Santi Luca e Martina, can be read as "allegorical representations of a cosmological idea."<sup>9</sup> Numerology and symbolic geometry were incorporated into the design of many Renaissance and Baroque churches. In *Allegoria del Tempio della Sapienza*, the *Sapienza Minerva*, *Magna mater* and also allegory of Rome, appears seated in a temple surrounded by columns in a circle, with a statue of Mercury in a niche. The Allegories of Virtue stand between the columns, while female figures representing the cosmological sciences enter the temple carrying a globe with stars, a model of the planets, and geographical maps. The architect, with a table on which the orders of columns are depicted, gestures to the cosmological sciences as the origin of the orders.<sup>10</sup> In the plan for Santi Luca e Martina, circles of columns, twelve on the exterior and eight on the interior, are references to a cosmological system, as is a circle inscribed in a square. The twelve columns on the circumference of the round plan refer to the twelve locations of the zodiac; the number eight is a universal symbol of resurrection, combining pagan numerical symbolism and Christian theology. In *The Celestial Hierarchies*, in the sixth century, Pseudo-Dionysius ascribed angelic hierarchies to the zodiac. Cortona's circle represents God as well, while the square represents the squaring of the four elements of the physical world - earth, air, water, and fire - from Plato, and the conception of man, from Neoplatonism. In the *Teatro del Cielo e della terra*, a book owned by Cortona,<sup>11</sup> Giuseppe Rosaccio stated that the elementary or incorruptible part of the cosmos is divided into the four elements,<sup>12</sup> an idea derived from Alessandro Piccolomini's *La Sfera del Mondo*.

The circle inscribed in the square can be read as both a Platonic symbol of universal harmony and the *Christos-Logos* of Christ.<sup>13</sup> In Neoplatonism the symbolic representation of cosmic harmony and the intellectual "Idea of the Beautiful" are combined with Christian theology. As described by Plotinus in *The Enneads*, "One who has attained to the vision of the Intellectual beauty and grasped the beauty of the Authentic Intellect will be able also to come to understand the Father and Transcendent of that Divine Being."<sup>14</sup> A papal brief issued by Gregory XV in 1623 and owned by Cortona read "No faculty can compete with the three arts from antiquity (architecture, sculpture and painting), as God himself participated in the construction of the world...where he was an admirable painter drawing the perspective of the earth and an amazing sculptor shaping clay with his hands in the creation of man, and he was the greatest architect in the great construction of the universe."<sup>15</sup> God, who had created Man in his image, consented to allow man to form a new intelligible cosmos through the work of art, a second cosmos as a reflection of the original divine creation. From the *Enneads*, "Artists do not simply reproduce the visible, but they go back to the principles in which nature itself had found its origin."<sup>16</sup> Such an intention can be related to Alberti's conception of *concinntas*, where Pythagorean ratios of numeric harmony, or eurythmia, were enacted with the intention to represent the laws by which nature produces works so as to transfer them to architecture, in order that architecture embody the ideational formation of an abstract beauty according to those laws, as at Santa Maria Novella.<sup>17</sup> In such a way the structure of the universe and the structure of the mind are enacted and related simultaneously.

In the treatises on the Vitruvian theater by Giocondo and Cesariano, an exterior semi-circle is inscribed in a square to form the proscenium area of the theater, and a square is placed on the interior. In Renaissance art, the square is associated with the Four Virtues, and the four personifications of the arts. A catafalque constructed for Michelangelo in the church of San Lorenzo in Florence includes paintings representing the Four Virtues as Spirit, Mercy, Knowledge, and Industriousness,<sup>18</sup> and the four personifications of the arts, Architecture, Painting, Sculpture and Poetry. In Neoplatonic thought, the square represents the earth as a manifestation of God. It also corresponds to human form, and the materialization of the Idea, or the design in the mind of the Creator.<sup>19</sup> From Ficino, "The form of all things conceived in the celestial Mind are the Ideas."<sup>20</sup>

Cortona described the relation between intuition and cosmic structures in the *Traatto della pittura, e scultura*:

One benefits from [intellectual] delight, while in images the soul knows through discourse the reason of various things, without apprehension and sensual knowledge; as in a painting of a serene and nocturnal sky, the intellect understands the great speed of celestial motion, the many revolutions of the heavens, and the motions of the planets, which indicate the magnitude of the sun, the moon, and the stars; with this knowledge intellectual delight is received.<sup>21</sup>

The mind is connected with the mysteries of the cosmos through the visual arts. Images communicate intellectual ideas, which are signs of God in nature. "Divine and eternal Ideas are images made by God...of the entire machine of the universe."<sup>22</sup> In his *Discourse* of 1611, Giovanni Agucchi, with the help of Galileo Galilei, developed a metaphorical system of the universe in which the central immobile motor is the seat of the eternal and divine Idea, the seat of absolute unity, goodness, and beauty. The center is the divine sun, "which as the beginning brings back and unites all things." It is the source of all beauty and "true form and idea," the beginning and end of all movement, and the center of the revolving cosmos.<sup>23</sup> Agucchi said that this theory "conformed to Christian truth."<sup>24</sup> Gian Paolo Lomazzo, in his *Idea del Tempio della Pittura* of 1590, which was inventoried in the library of the Accademia di San Luca in 1624,<sup>25</sup> sought to apply the "order, measure and appearance"<sup>26</sup> of the mathematical system of the structural harmony of the cosmos to the design arts. Ristoro d'Arezzo wrote in *Composizione del mondo* that the cosmos is "a well organized house, or a solemn temple, with a sky with points of stars like a historiated stained-glass window with holy images, which bears the sign of God which rises from a chorus of angels."<sup>27</sup> The role of the artist was to observe nature in order to discover "the forces which agitate the conscience of beings and spirits which circulate in the middle of things,"<sup>28</sup> and then to read and represent them. In a design for the Villa Pamphili, Borromini intended to construct an architecture based on the observation of celestial movements, as he wrote in a letter preserved in the Vatican Library.

In Neoplatonic philosophy, the human being is a microcosm of the universe, interior relations and movements are connected to cosmic relations and movements, and the individual soul participates in the Divine mind. Ficino described man as a microcosm organized and functioning according to the same principles as the macrocosm of the universe, given coherence by the "dynamic principle of Platonic love, so that the soul in its own way will become the whole universe."<sup>29</sup> For Cusanus, "Human nature contains in itself the intellectual and the sensible natures, and therefore, embracing within itself

all things, has been called the microcosm or world in miniature."<sup>30</sup> Renaissance architects saw the church as being a microcosmic recreation of the universe as temple of God, as for Palladio "The little temples we make ought to resemble this very great one, which, by his immense goodness was perfectly completed."<sup>31</sup> Alberti expressed an intention to impart the presence of God in the architecture of the church: "I would deck it out in every part so that anyone who entered it would start with awe for his admiration at all the noble things, and could scarcely restrain himself from exclaiming that what he saw was a place undoubtedly worthy of God."<sup>32</sup>

### The Hierarchy of Being

In the design of many Renaissance and Baroque churches, the ascension of forms from the ground floor to the cupola and lantern can be read as a passage which the worshipper experiences from the corporeal world to the world of God, represented by the pure light shining through the lantern. The light shining through the oculus at the end of the nave of Alberti's Sant' Andrea can be read as the attainment of the absolute oneness of God, resulting from a passage through a multiplicity of forms in the elevations of the nave, where geometrical shapes and architectural elements appear in a complex variety of sizes, positions, and inter-relationships. "Relations among the multiplicity of forms manifest the one Final Cause of Harmony,"<sup>33</sup> creating the impression of unity through diversity and harmony through multiplicity, as a microcosm of the order of the universe, as the singularity of the soul relates to the universality of the cosmos in Neoplatonic thought. The interior of the church in seventeenth-century Rome often accommodates the procession down a long barrel-vaulted nave of a Latin Cross plan, lined with columns and architraves representing classical temple fronts, toward a vanishing point which is the altar and the sight of transubstantiation, the culmination of the spiritual journey represented by the procession. Such a construction can be seen in designs for apparatus for church festivals, combining church interior and stage construction, such as Cortona's design for the *Quarantore in San Lorenzo e Damaso* in 1633. The finite representation of the infinite is achieved through the mechanism of perspectival construction.

As Alberti expressed his intention to impart the presence of the ineffable God through architecture, so that "anyone who entered it would start with awe for his admiration at all the noble things," the incitement of such awe would be

accomplished through *concinntas*, involving the composition of "parts that are quite separate from each other by their nature, according to some precise rule, so that they correspond to one another in appearance,"<sup>34</sup> in the attainment of the absolute through the multiple, enacting the relationship of the human mind to the external world through underlying principles unknowable to reason or sensual experience alone, as enacted at Santa Maria Novella. Alberti's conception of *concinntas* can be related to Marsilio Ficino's ideal of a mystical property as an organizing element. As for Alberti, where *concinntas* is an ideational object beyond sense experience, "conjoined to the spirit and reason,"<sup>35</sup> so for Ficino in the Commentary,

Since the single parts of the soul have been reorganized into one mind, the soul is now made a single whole out of many...when the soul has been made one which is in itself the very nature and essence of soul, it remains that immediately it recovers itself into the One which is above essence, that is, God.<sup>36</sup>

*Concinntas* is for Alberti the law of that ideational One which is above essence. For both Ficino and Alberti, God is both exterior to and producing the finite universe, and identical with the infinite universe, reconciling Platonism and Aristotelianism, as in Neoplatonism.<sup>37</sup>

In seventeenth-century Rome, Francesco Borromini inherited certain intentions to relate architectural structure to philosophical ideas, interweaving theological traditions, Platonic hierarchies of being and Aristotelian development into his architecture. Aspects of Neoplatonism which can be read in Borromini's architecture, especially the church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, were a syncretic coincidence or reconciliation of opposites, a structuring of the conceptual process as a microcosm of the order of the universe, the representation of the absolute being inaccessible to reason, the transition from multiplicity to singularity, and the hybridization of form.

Cusanus wrote, "In the providence of God contradictions are reconciled."<sup>38</sup> The design of San Carlo contains the reconciliation of contradictions: alternating balustrades, convex and concave elevations enclosing a space, and simultaneous enclosure and expansion through the illusion of extended barrel vaults from the central space. The building may have been conceived as a conceptual microcosm, a metaphysical system, based in the hierarchies of Neoplatonic philosophy. Borromini may have been associated with Athanasius Kircher, who taught Neoplatonic philosophy at the Università dei Marmorari, which met at the church of Santi Quattro Coronati al Celio in Rome in the early Seventeenth

Century. Borromini is recorded as having been a student there at the same time in the Book of the Carmelengo in the *Archivio dell'Università*.<sup>39</sup> He was a friend of Virgilio Spada and was employed at the Palazzo Spada. His uncle and mentor, Carlo Maderno, was a member of the Accademia di San Luca.

San Carlo can be read, like many Italian Renaissance and Baroque churches, as an analogue to an ascending movement through levels of being in the structure of the universe, where the ascension through the forms of the interior space to the cupola and to the lantern corresponded to Neoplatonic elements of the corporeal, mental, and spiritual levels of being. In the *Platonic Theology* and the *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, Ficino classified the elements in the hierarchy of being in ascending order as Body, Nature, Soul, and Mind, corresponding to the four elements of the physical world. "Just as a single ray of the sun lights up four bodies, fire, air, water, and earth, so a single ray of God illuminates the Mind, the Soul, Nature and Matter."<sup>40</sup> Those elements were characteristics of both man and the universe, so that the building as structural conception of being was a microcosm of the universe. Mind is the first level emanating from God, "turned toward God, illuminated by his ray...God, who is omnipotent, imprints on the Mind, reaching out toward him, the natures of all things which are to be created. On the Angelic Mind are painted all the things which we perceive in these bodies."<sup>41</sup> The lower level of Mind is the Soul, self-moving, originating from chaos and receiving forms from the Mind. "Although the World Soul is at first formless and a chaos, when it is directed by love toward the mind, having received from it the forms, it becomes a world."<sup>42</sup> The soul is divided into higher and lower, or reason and perception. The Higher Soul is divided into two faculties. Reason and Mind, Reason being directed toward corporeal perception, while Mind is directed toward the *intellectus divinus*, or contemplation. The Lower Soul is biologically predetermined, by fate. It is composed of functions relating to physiology, external perception and internal perception. The physiological functions are propagation, nourishment and growth. "If we say that man procreates, grows, and nourishes, then the soul, as father and creator of the body, begets, feeds, and nourishes."<sup>43</sup> External perception incorporates the five senses while interior perception is an imaginative faculty which translates physical signals into mental images. "Men possess both reason and sensation. Reason by itself grasps the incorporeal Reasons of all things. Sensation, through the five instruments of its body, perceives the images and qualities of bodies."<sup>44</sup>

The design of San Carlo contains the use of three basic geometries, the octagon, cross, and circle or oval, repeated in different combinations in the

plan and elevations of the worship space, and the cupola and lantern.<sup>45</sup> The interwoven, inter-penetrating geometries which define the plan and elevations correspond to the sublunary, corporeal world of nature and the body, the realm of procreation and growth, where divine light has become corrupted and diffused, resulting in imperfect beauty and obscured knowledge in the world of images. The ordering and juxtaposition of the geometries in the pattern of the cupola correspond to the Soul or Intellect, the lower part of the Mind, mediating between the corporeal and spiritual, rationalizing the forms found in the chaotic realm of matter. The resolution of the same geometries in the emblem in the lantern, as they became a single unified image, expresses the absolute, unified and pure form of the Divine spirit and Mind, the source and point of emanation of light and form, illuminating the congregational space. The forms of the lantern are uncorrupted and inaccessible, "containing the prototypes of all that which exists in the lower zone."<sup>46</sup> The church can be seen as a representation of the Neoplatonic *circuitus spiritualis* of the universe where the static ideas of the Cosmic Mind are converted into "dynamic causes moving and fertilizing the sublunary world," in the words of Erwin Panofsky.

The interweaving of the three geometries, the circle, cross and octagon, in the plan of San Carlo is an elaboration of the Pythagorean juxtapositions begun by Alberti. It is a geometric construction based in numeric proportions. For Nicolas Cusanus, the transmutation of geometries was the transcendence of boundaries of thought, and thought was defined as the imperceptible movement from the universal to the particular.<sup>47</sup> A logical geometric progression, a transmutation of geometries by Borromini, is disguised in the unrecognizable form of the plan of San Carlo, an inexplicable "lozenge" shape, as the underlying reason of nature is unrecognizable in its forms, as resulting from *concinntas*, in the projection of logic onto nature. In the tradition of medieval guilds and occult knowledge, the hidden or secret, the underlying geometry of the architecture was not to be revealed.

The conception of the structure of thought in the hierarchies of Ficino's *Teologica Platonica*, or *Platonic Theology*, the architectonic, can be characterized as a combination of hierarchy and motion, or dynamic passage, as a microcosm of the structure of the universe, as elaborated in *Five Questions Concerning the Mind*:

First, whether or not the motion of the mind is directed toward some definite end; second, whether the end of this motion of the mind is motion or rest; third, whether this end is something particular or universal; fourth, whether the mind



is ever able to attain its desired end; fifth, whether, after it has obtained the end, it ever loses it...We cannot reach the highest summit of things unless, first, taking less account of the inferior parts of the soul, we ascend to the highest part, the mind. If we have concentrated our powers in this most fruitful part of the soul, then without doubt by means of the highest part itself, that is, by means of mind, we shall ourselves have the power of creating mind...The motion of each of all the natural species proceeds according to a certain principle...the limits of motion are two, namely, that from which it flows and that to which it flows. From these limits motion obtains its order.<sup>48</sup>

The power of the creating mind is enacted in the architecture of the Baroque church, by an ascension through the soul to its highest part, the mind. Each of the five questions is in turn enacted: the teleology of the ascension, the juxtaposition and interweaving of movement and repose in architectural forms, and of particular and universal, the possibility or impossibility of absolute knowledge, and the teleology of that knowledge. Movement is directed both towards and away from the divine source of emanation, the light from the lantern, so it can be inferred that the teleology of the ascension and of the absolute knowledge are the same. From the *Commentary*, "As they flow from Him so they flow back to Him...Mind, Soul, Nature, and Matter, proceeding from God, strive to return to the same."<sup>49</sup> In the tradition of Cusanus, the architectonic is constructed on the knowledge rather than the existence of God or universal intelligence. Such would be a structural analogy between the conceptual process and the structure of the universe, imaged in terms of structure and motion, generation, procreation, fragmentation and dissemination in both thought and physical reality. Erwin Panofsky described the motion of the hierarchies in Ficino's *Teologica Platonica*:

This whole universe is a *divinum animal*; it is enlivened and its various hierarchies are interconnected with each other by a "divine influence emanating from God, penetrating the heavens, descending through the elements, and coming to an end in matter." An uninterrupted current of supernatural energy flows from above to below and reverts from below to above, thus forming a *circuitus spiritualis*, to quote Ficino's favorite expression. The Cosmic Mind continually contemplates and loves God, while at the same time caring for the Cosmic Soul beneath it. The Cosmic Soul in turn converts the static ideas and intelligences comprised in the Cosmic Mind into dynamic causes moving and fertilizing the sublunary world, and thus stimulates nature to produce visible things...With all its corruptibility the sublunary world participates in the eter-

nal life and beauty of God imparted to it by the "divine influence." But on its way through the celestial realm the "splendor of divine goodness," as beauty is defined by the Neoplatonists, has been broken up into as many rays as there are spheres or heavens. There is therefore no perfect beauty on earth.<sup>50</sup>

Such is the aesthetic of the Baroque, the contrast between the purity of the ineffable Cosmic Mind as "that which is denied to words," and the signification of the "dynamic causes moving and fertilizing the sublunary world," an "infinite materiality of images and bodies"<sup>51</sup> in architectural forms which "proliferate beyond everything signified, placing language in excess of corporeality." The proliferation and fragmentation of rays is best represented in Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Theresa* and *Chair of Saint Peter* in Rome.

The dynamic passage through the hierarchy of being, interwoven physical matter and proliferation of bodies, toward a resolution of forms in the purity and transcendent light of the lantern displayed in the structure of San Carlo can be read as well in ceiling frescoes in Baroque Rome such as the *Glorification of the Reign of Urban VIII* by Pietro da Cortona in the Gran Salone of the Palazzo Barberini, and the *Missionary Work of the Jesuits* by Andrea Pozzo in the church of Sant' Ignazio and the *Triumph of the Sacred Name of Jesus* by Baciccio in the church of Il Gesù at the end of the century. In the Renaissance, the passage could be read in the *Assumption of the Virgin* in the Cathedral of Parma by Correggio from 1526, where entangled, gesturing bodies encircle and give way to a blinding ineffable light, the light of the sun and Divine wisdom. For Ficino "God is the center of all things, completely single, simple, and motionless. But all things produced from Him are many, composite, and in some way movable."<sup>52</sup>

The void at the center of a circle is an element of Neoplatonic thought and Dionysian Negative Theology, where God is unknowable and inaccessible. Cusanus's version of negative theology is the *via negativa*, where God can only be perceived in His absence and cognitive knowledge is rejected to achieve mystical union in the 'cloud of unknowing', later manifest as the Baroque *stupefazione*. The circle is the perfect manifestation of God, and at the same time absolute unknowing, or learned ignorance. In Renaissance treatises on theater design, Alberti described the stage of the theater as the void at the center,<sup>53</sup> and Cesariano wrote that "the formation of a theater begins with the base perimeter circling around the central void in a rotating line."<sup>54</sup> In the void at the center of Roman Baroque ceiling frescoes, the blank space of a blinding

divine light can be understood to represent the inaccessible and unknowable God, as can the source of light in the lantern of the Baroque church.

### Late Baroque Architecture

Intentions to represent philosophical systems in architecture, including Neoplatonic ones, were inherited by Guarino Guarini and Bernardo Vittone in Piedmont. The exterior of Vittone's Cappella della Visitazione in Vallinotto, for example, reveals a three-tiered hierarchy of the worship space, cupola and lantern, as at San Carlo. Vittone wrote about the church in his *Istruzioni diverse*, that "The visitor's glance travels through the spaces created by the vaults and enjoys, supported by the concealed light, the variety of the hierarchy which gradually increases."<sup>55</sup> Vittone's architecture incorporates conceptual systems, as can be seen in the architecture and passages from his *Istruzioni elementari*, published in Lugano in 1760. The laws of nature continue to inform the laws of architecture for Vittone. Mathematics and geometry, the keys to the universe, as in the *visio intellectualis*, are related to movement and variation in time and continuums, and drawn from celestial observations, as knowledge was given for Lomazzo and Cortona. Guarini described geometry as the "mirror of the world." Vittone wrote in *Istruzioni elementari*, "If a glance is raised to the sky, one watches to see in its movements the order of the many luminous bodies, constant and exact in correct division, and inalterable measure in time...demonstrating according to the science of numbers revolutions around variable centers, and the value of force."<sup>56</sup>

The law of numbers and proportion, translated and displayed in architecture, is innate in organic bodies and natural phenomena, as in *concinnitas*. "Were not the rays of the sun demonstrated to be reflections, refractions and influences with immutable orders of numbers, with changing and well-regulated vicissitudes, and with intervals of space and divisions of musical grades?"<sup>57</sup> All mathematical and numerological relations and proportions found in the natural universe are manifestations of the instrument of God, of the universal and divine intellect. "God created in the Holy Spirit, which was seen, counted and measured...This among the human sciences is that in which God wishes, in a singular manner more than in any other, to deposit and conceal its mysteries."<sup>58</sup>

### Conclusion

There is ample evidence to indicate that Neoplatonic philosophy played a role in the conception of the design of seventeenth-century Roman Baroque architecture, and that there is a philosophical or conceptual basis underlying Baroque architectural forms. The forms of the architecture can be understood in relation to their cultural context - the epistemological structures, philosophical and scientific beliefs, and artistic theories of the seventeenth century. This architecture can be seen to express and reflect the complexity of the epistemology of the culture, the foundations of its knowledge, unique in its combination of theological tenets, philosophical understanding and scientific knowledge and practice. Architecture can enact the relation between thought and physical reality. As Ficino wrote in the *Commentary*, "If anyone asked in what way the form of the body can be like the Form and Reason of the Soul and Mind, let them consider the building of the architect."<sup>59</sup>

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## Notes

1. Hanno-Walter Kruft, *Architectural Theory from Vitruvius to the Present* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 24.
2. Alessandro Piccolomini, *La Sfera del Mondo* (Venetia, 1566), 29: "Doviamo primieramente sapere, che questa gran machina, di cui parliamo, e che noi Mondo chiamano, fu da quel sapientissimo, e potentissimo Architetto."
3. Ferruccio Marotti, *Storia documentaria del teatro italiano, Lo spettacolo dall'Umanesimo al Manierismo, teoria e tecnica* (Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, 1974), 97: "quibus etiam in duodecim signorum coelestium descriptione astrologi ex musica convientia astrorum ratioinantur."
4. Eugenio Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance: The Zodiac of Life* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 109.
5. *Ibid.*, xi.
6. Marc Bensiman, "Modes of Perception of Reality in the Renaissance," in Robert Kinsman, ed., *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 236.
7. Ficino, *Commentary*, 84.
8. See Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (London: Alec Tiranti, 1962).
9. Karl Noehles, *La Chiesa dei SS Luca e Martina* (Roma: Ugo Bozzi Editore, 1970), 6: "...concepito quale rappresentazione allegorica di un 'idea' cosmologica."

10. *Ibid.*: "...la Sapienza-Minerva (contemporaneamente Magna Mater e allegoria di Roma) vi appare seduta in un tempio circolare a colonne: dietro si vede in una nicchia la statua di Mercurio...Tra le colonne stanno le allegorie delle virtù, mentre entrano nel tempio le figure femminili che rappresentano le scienze cosmologiche e recano in mano il globo delle stelle, il modello dei pianeti, e alcune carte geografiche; alle scienze cosmologiche segna l'artista, caratterizzato come architetto da una tavola su cui è raffigurato un ordine di colonne..."
11. *Ibid.*, 12, doc. 17, Accademia di San Luca, 1624.
12. Giuseppe Rosaccio, *Teatro del Cielo e della Terra* (Firenze: Scalce di Badia, 1594), 7: "per dir prima della corrutibile, e divisa ne quattro elementi, cioè, Fuoco, Aria, Acqua, Terra."
13. Noehles, *La Chiesa dei SS Luca e Martina*, 174: "Essi avrebbero saputo interpretare da sé sia il rapporto cosmologico tra cerchio e quadrato...come il simbolo platonico a X dell'armonia universale (Timeo 36 a-d), sia la particolare forma della croce greca come il Logosnimbus di Cristo..."
14. Plotinus, *The Six Enneads* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 239.
15. Noehles, *La Chiesa dei SS Luca e Martina*, 176: "niuna facoltà può gareggiare d'antichità in concorrenza delle tre dette arti (architettura, scultura e pittura), imperciocché furono esercitate da Dio stesso nella fabbrica del mondo, ove egli fu pittore mirabile...nella prospettiva della terra e fu scultore sorprendente configurando colle sue mani la creta nella creazione dell'uomo: e fu sommo Architetto nella gran fabbrica dell'Universo."
16. Translated in Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 26.
17. See Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (London: Alec Tiranti, 1962).
18. Zygmunt Wazbinski, *L'Accademia Medicea del Disegno a Firenze nel Cinquecento, Idea e Istituzione* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1987), 168: "il Genio che soggia l'Invidia, la Misericordia che combatte il Vizio, la Saggezza che sconfigge l'Invidia, la Laboriosità che vince Pigrizia."
19. Leros Pittone, *Francesco Borromini, L'Iniziato* (Roma: Edizioni de Luca, 1995), 39: "Il quadrato rappresenta la terra, è simbolo della manifestazione di Dio. Per i platonici si riferisce alla materializzazione dell'Idea. Il quadrato, inoltre, corrisponde alla forma dell'uomo."
20. Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985), 38.
21. Giovanni Ottonelli e Pietro da Cortona, *Trattato della pittura e scultura* (Firenze: Antonio Bonardi, 1652), 59: "E tal diletto si gode, mentre nell'immagini l'animo conosce col discorso della ragione varie cose, alle quali non giunge con l'apprehensione, e cognition del senso: come nella pittura d'un ciel notturno, e

- sereno l'intelletto discorre, e intende, che grande è la velocità del moto celeste, che molti sono i giri de' cieli, e i moti de' pianeti, che segnalata è la grandezza del Sole, della Luna, e delle Stelle; e con questa cognition riceve diletto intellettuale..."
22. Quoted in Noehles, *La Chiesa dei SS Luca e Martina*, 5: "Le divine, et eterne Idee sono immagini fatte da Dio...che tutta la macchina del mondo dir si può."
  23. Noehles, *La Chiesa dei SS Luca e Martina*, 172: "A tale fine l'Agucchi sviluppa metaforicamente un sistema dell'universo il cui immobile centro motore è sede delle Idee eterne e divine, e dell'assoluta 'unità', 'bonità' e 'bellezza'. Tale centro è il sole, fonte di ogni bellezza e che "altro non può essere che Iddio, che come principio aggrappa e unisce tutte le cose". Esso è principio e fine di ogni movimento e centro del cosmo rotante."
  24. *Ibid.*, 173: "...si conforme alla christiana verità."
  25. *Ibid.*, 175, doc. 17, Accademia di San Luca 1624.
  26. Gian Paolo Lomazzo, *Scritti sulle arti* (Firenze: Marchi e Bertolli, 1973), 33: "...ordo, modus et species..."
  27. Quoted in Noehles, *La Chiesa dei SS Luca e Martina*, 48: "...una casa benordinata, anzi un tempio solenne, ove il cielo con i suoi nodi di stelle è come una vetrata istoriata di immagini sante, che recano il segno di un Dio che si leva fra cori d'Angeli."
  28. *Ibid.*: "...le forze che agitano l'intimo degli esseri e gli spiriti che si aggirano in mezzo alle cose..."
  29. Quoted in Donald Kelly, *Renaissance Humanism* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 42.
  30. Cusanus, *Of Learned Ignorance* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1979), 135.
  31. Translated in Joan Gadol, *Leon Battista Alberti: Universal Man of the Early Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 135.
  32. Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 194.
  33. Gadol, *Leon Battista Alberti*, 138.
  34. Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, 302.
  35. Gadol, *Leon Battista Alberti*, 106.
  36. Translated in Thomas Moore, *The Planets Within* (London: Associated University Presses, 1982), 106, 110.
  37. See Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 131.
  38. Cusanus, *Of Learned Ignorance*, 49.
  39. Leros Pittone, *Francesco Borromini, L'Iniziato* (Roma: Edizioni de Luca, 1995), 37 (no inventory citation).
  40. Ficino, *Commentary*, 51.
  41. *Ibid.*, 38.
  42. *Ibid.*, 40.

43. *Ibid.*, 74.
44. *Ibid.*, 84.
45. See Leo Steinberg, *Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane: A Study in Multiple Form and Architectural Symbolism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977).
46. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 132.
47. Bensiman, "Modes of Perception of Reality in the Renaissance," in Robert Kinsman, ed., *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance*, 227-228.
48. Translated in Ernst Cassirer, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 193.
49. Ficino, *Commentary*, 47.
50. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 132.
51. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 58.
52. Ficino, *Commentary*, 47.
53. Marotti, *Storia documentaria del teatro italiano*, 70: "Baptista de Alberti scriva ch'el theatro...ha la area mediana vacua di pulpiti scenici."
54. *Ibid.*, 113: "lo medio centro collocato sia circumacta in circuito una linea de rotundazione."
55. Translated in Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy* (New York: Penguin Books, 1958), 427.
56. Quoted in Marcello Fagiolo, "L'Universo della luce nell'idea de architettura del Vittone" in *Bernardo Vittone e la Disputa fra classicismo e barocco nel Settecento* (Torino: Accademia delle Scienze, 1972), 131: "Se al cielo alzando lo sguardo, si regolare ci si fa vedere ne' suoi movimenti l'ordine di que' tanti luminosi corpi, si costante, ed esatto nel ripartire con giusta, ed inalterabile misura il tempo...si in somma rispettose dimostrarsi verso la scienza de' numeri le rivoluzioni di quelli attorno i loro volubili centri, e forza e commendare della scienza de' numeri l'ammirabile forza e valore."
57. *Ibid.*: "Non ha egli dimostrato farsi d'essi raggi le riflessioni, refrazioni, ed inflessioni con ordine immutabile di numeri, con alterne e ben regolate vicissitudini, ed a intervalli di spazio con musicale grado divisi?"
58. *Ibid.*, 132: "Deus creavit illam in Spiritu Sancto. et videt. et dinumeravit, et mensus est (Ecclesiastico, I, 9)...Questa insomma fra le umane scienze è quella in cui volle Iddio in un modo tutto singolare piu che in ogn'altra depositare e nascondere i suoi Arcani."
59. Ficino, *Commentary*, 92.

## Poetic Hierarchies in the Works of Nikos Kazantzakis

John P. Anton

### 1. Introduction

Much has been written on the varieties of hierarchies of values and beings. The model *par excellence* that has influenced art and literature, in particular, is Plato's *Symposium*. The topic of my paper takes me back to the Platonic ladder of Eros and the Plotinian ascent to the One as models for poetic hierarchies, including Kazantzakis' own, but for one difference, as I hope to show, namely that Kazantzakis' concept of the ladder is closer to the Neoplatonic vision of ontic hypostases and the religious deontology of the Byzantine philosophers and theologians than it is to Plato. It was Plotinus who for the first time assigned to the poet and the artist in general the task of stratifying the ontic values of the emanations of the One in accordance with their degree of beauty and goodness. He showed the way to the Christian theologians on how to adjust their salvational teachings to their alternative systems of religious virtues. The ensuing movement, reflected in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, reached its apex in the deontic hierarchies of Ioannis of Klimakos in the sixth century.

As far as I know no one of Kazantzakis' commentators has referred to a possible connection to Plotinus or Ioannis of Klimakos, probably on account of the absence of conspicuous signs indicating direct influence. Nevertheless, his indebtedness to Plotinus' aesthetics is there. The Renaissance and modern formulations of the role of the artist have their origins in the Neoplatonic philosophy of art, despite what the manifestoes of modern art say about the nature of that role after turning away from all ties to Platonic and Plotinian ontologies, with much help from the rising tide of subjectivism and of psychoanalysis.

Kazantzakis, as creative artist, is part new and part old. In his reflections on the role and mission of the artist-poet he still uses the idea of the ladder though not that of Eros in Plato's *Symposium* or of the hierarchy of the Plotinian hypostases, but with an important difference. As I mentioned before, he replaces their conceptions of duty with a deontology of his own hierarchies, that is, a ladder of duties in accordance with his special understanding of religious consciousness. As a result, the artistic act takes on the character of a new type of *hubris*, one that heralds the salvation of God. In fact, the act stems from a duty to be performed by the estranged human being who must span the abyss of human existence between birth and death. To make this point clear, I must first discuss briefly the Platonic and Plotinian models.

## 2. Diotima's message and the Ladder of Eros.

When Socrates' turn came in the *Symposium* to praise Eros on the evening of the celebration of Agathon's victory in 416 B.C., instead of following the pattern of the previous speakers, he proved faithful to his avowal of ignorance and limited his peroration to the lessons he learned from the priestess Diotima.

I will not try to offer yet another account of the Platonic grading of the desirable erotic objects. My remarks address only the main points. To begin with, eros is the desire for fulfillment, and more precisely, for immortal things, the "everlasting goods." There is more to be said about the identity of eros as "the desire for the perpetual possession of the good" (206a). Diotima taught Socrates the mysteries of eros but not without some doubt whether he could grasp the perfect revelation. It was right after this admission that Socrates proceeded with the narrative about the path the pilgrim must follow to climb the ladder of eros, the upward way of the *anabathmoi*: (1) falling in love with one beautiful person and together beget noble thoughts; (2) loving all beautiful bodies and learning how to control the passion for the one person; (3) loving the soul as more worthy and of greater honor than the beauty of the body, content "to make the young people better;" (4) loving the beauty that exists in actions, institutions and the laws; (5) loving and preparing to turn to the beauty of the sciences and especially the science of beauty once the person has matured and become inexhaustible in spirit; (6) finally, at the end of the journey, when loving is for beauty itself, marvelous, perfect, unique and eternal. And at the opening of her summary Diotima states:

This is the right way of approaching or being initiated into the mysteries of love, to begin with examples of beauty in this world, and using them as steps to ascend continually with that absolute beauty as one's aim, from one instance of physical beauty to two and from two to all, then from physical beauty to moral beauty, and from moral beauty to the beauty of knowledge, until from knowledge of various kinds one arrives at the supreme knowledge whose sole object is that absolute beauty, and know at last what absolute beauty is.<sup>1</sup>

The person who reaches the heights of the last rung of eros, she concludes,

will be able to bring forth not mere reflected images of goodness but true goodness, because he will be in contact not with a reflection but with the truth. And having brought forth and nurtured true goodness will have the privilege of being beloved of God, and becoming, if ever a man can, immortal himself."<sup>2</sup>

The levels of beautiful objects in the Platonic hierarchy of Eros, forming as they do, an ascending order, have exerted a long and interesting influence in the history of Western aesthetics and poetry. As a model of hierarchies it found a special place in the philosophies of the Neoplatonists. Two things stand out here: (1) the priority assigned to beauty in the unfolding of Eros, and (b) the pursuit of virtue as an imperative to quicken the awakening of Eros.

The ascending order of the objects of eros, forming an unbreakable continuum of aesthetic, ethical and epistemic values, eventually was absorbed into the doctrines of subsequent philosophical speculations. Many of the systems that assimilated the Platonic hierarchy of love, although themselves different in structure and objectives, e.g. the various Neoplatonist schools, did so to bolster their ontologies or enrich their ethical and religious visions. What interests us mainly is the influence the Platonic model exerted by assigning to Beauty the highest place in the erotic pyramid of values.

Speaking of influences, it is interesting to note that Kazantzakis published an article titled "The Sickness of the Century" in 1906, when he was only twenty-four years of age, and stated the following: "I never get tired of reading Plato's *Symposium*. In my view it is the great, the holy revelation of the Hellenic world."<sup>3</sup> The fervor subsided as he grew older and he found other mentors and new teachers with different messages and novel concerns. I will return to this side of his development later in my paper. I must now move on to Neoplatonism to show how its conception of the role of the artist-poet anticipates and resembles closely certain modern views of the artistic self-image, including that of Kazantzakis.

### 3. Beauty and the Ontic Hierarchies in Plotinus

Plotinus' views on the role of the artist-poet are surprisingly close to certain dominant currents and concepts regarding the modern artistic self.<sup>4</sup> I will limit my comments only to those aspects that pertain to the hierarchy of duties in Kazantzakis's *Spiritual Exercises (Salvatores Dei)*, specifically to Plotinus' views on the origin of Beauty, artistic creativity, and the role of the artist in the pursuit of the union with the absolute One.

For Plotinus, absolute Beauty is of divine origin. Being one of the eternal Ideas, it resides in the hypostasis of *Nous*. In lesser grades it is also present in descending order in the hypostases of the World Soul and Nature. The human soul, although it partakes of the higher hypostases, never ceases to desire the unity with the source of its being. Thus Eros for Plotinus has a cosmic mission, to bend the human will to its ultimate purpose while following the course on the path of Beauty. If so, the model for a fulfilled life is not rooted in social, not even in religious experiences, but in the universe itself, the origin of which is the One, the highest good and ultimate purpose of the soul. The absolute One is therefore the womb of all values and the target of the soul's voyage, the Return. Human life is an Odyssey with a transcendent Ithaka: the One.

The ascending path guides the traveler through the Ideas of *Nous*: the Forms of Truth and Beauty and of the Good. There remains then only the ultimate move, the last step beyond all beings: the mystical union with the absolute One. On the way to pursuing this end, the soul discovers how the Beauty of art converges with the truth of philosophy to attain the Good of the ethical life.

Artistic creation, when aiming at Beauty, is at once ethical and cognitive action. Art, for Plotinus, is both imitation and creation. It must imitate only the Idea of Beauty and create things that cannot be found in the sensible world. As imitation, genuine art is not beholding for content to themes that lie lower than the soul's own essence, and therefore it neither copies nor describes the sensible objects in nature, plants and animals, not even the passions and sufferings of human beings. Art as imitation must pursue the higher values residing in the World Soul and in the Ideas of *Nous*. From its own stance, art treats the world as a symbol of the ideal. To succeed in his mission the artist must assign a new role to the imagination: to create symbols representative of the higher realms of Beauty. The initial duty of the artist is to save the beauty of nature and at the same time transcend it. Whereas nature makes beautiful things un-

consciously, the human agent as authentic artist adds to the natural matter of the sensible entities the beauty of the spirit.

Hence, the true artist can only turn within the soul to elevate nature to spiritual heights. In consequence, the value of art works flows only from the artist's soul, not from any moral, political or religious beliefs. Such is the tradition that forms much of the background of Kazantzakis as an artist-poet. Thus, since Beauty pervades nature in all its variety, the artist's duty is to save the divine through acts of superior creativity.

According to Plotinus, the two creative agencies, nature and the human soul, are also causal principles and both have a common ultimate source: the absolute One: "Every prime cause must be, within itself, more powerful than its effect can be: the musical does not derive from an unmusical source but from music" (*Enn.* V.5.1, 30-31). None of the artist's creations expresses the Prime Cause fully. Even the best works of art fall short of the Idea of Beauty that resides in the soul, or rather in the mind (*nous*) of the poet who has attained knowledge of the higher hypostases. For Plotinus, the artist expresses the beauty that resides in the imagination exclusively with the aid of symbols and the imaginative imitation of the higher grade of being. The artist has the ability and the duty to reveal or decipher the ideal face of aesthetic perfection and can do so only through the return to the hypostasis of *Nous*. The artist hence saves and humanizes nature. The aesthetic worth of his creations results from his own assertive act, not from external customs, rules, beliefs.

The theory that art springs mainly from the aesthetic wealth of the cognizing imagination is found in Plotinus its first defender. In his ontology of Beauty, art, despite its divine origin, does not embody the highest good. Beyond art lies the wisdom that is needed to train the human soul to master the method of the hierarchical ascendancy to Being. More importantly, wisdom alone can foreshadow the vision that accompanies the last leap. Only thus can the soul gain full understanding of its descent and ascent, its fall from and return to the One:

If one goes on from oneself, as image to original, one has reached 'the end of the journey'. And when one falls from the vision, he wakes again the virtue in himself, and considering himself set in order and beautiful by these virtues he will again be lightened and come through virtue to Intellect and wisdom and through wisdom to that Good. This is the life of gods and of godlike and blessed men, deliverance from the things of this world, a life which takes no delight in

the things of this world, escape in solitude to the solitary." (*Enn.* VI. 9. 11, tr. A. H. Armstrong, in Loeb).

#### 4. Kazantzakis and the Hierarchies of Action

By the time the Neoplatonic tradition reached Kazantzakis, the cosmic hierarchies had withered but not the role of the artist. The duty to respond to the inner beauty of the soul had lost none of its force. It called for new and different hierarchies.

Early in his career as poet-artist, Kazantzakis was responding to a world he believed had lost faith in the eternal vigilance of the living God and had shifted its attention to a culture without permanent values. In a world where God is dead, the human spirit has a duty to save the divine. Such is the motif of Kazantzakis's *Spiritual Exercises* and his *Odyssey*. Both works, the first as theoretical vision, the second as epic action, stress the command that man in despair must heed the call to resurrect the divine. Both works herald the new imperative: Man must save God. Since God can no longer save man, creative action must follow a new chain of duties, a new deontological hierarchy. The rungs on the poetic ladder of duty become clear as soon as the imperative is put into action. But what is the meaning of the imperative and how can man save God if God does not exist?

Substituting the term 'religion' for the term 'God' makes it easier to understand how Kazantzakis follows a Nietzschean model to enlist art in the service of a revitalized sense of religiosity beyond and above the Christian salvational goal. But preserving the initial expression engenders a thorny problem. The term 'divine' in its traditional sense and if no longer in force could be taken to elicit the projection of exaltation or generate deep fears and submission to the emptiness that the rejection of a supreme power creates. If so, insistence on a substitute sense of 'God' as such signifies nothing specific except perhaps the great nothing, lacking the power its original referent once had to serve as savior of man. To fill the vacuum in religion, given that Kazantzakis is himself profoundly religious, the idea of God had to be transformed. The poet's new responsibility became a mission to assign meaning to "Nothing," to humanize it and grant it a place in a new poetic hierarchy of values on the ladder of duty.

For Kazantzakis, the poetic gradations of duty emerge through the struggle of creativity but only after the requisite theoretical work has done its part. And now comes the question. What precisely does Kazantzakis, working in the hierarchic manner of the Neoplatonic tradition, hope to save through the process of the new pursuit? The arrow of the Plotinian voyage is targeted to the hypostases of Being, whereas Kazantzakis' own is meant to show the way to the gradations of the soul's discoverable objects: Ego, Ancestor, Humanity, Earth, Universe, and finally God. Throughout the voyage, man and God engage in mutual salvation. Since the concept of God, as Prevelakis once remarked, "implies a new ethic," Kazantzakis came to believe that man conquers death through death and that immortality, properly redefined, requires a different view of God.

The *Spiritual Exercises* opens with a counter-Plotinian statement: "We come from a dark abyss, we end in a dark abyss, and we call the luminous interval life. As we are born the return begins."<sup>5</sup> And further down comes the quasi Platonic note: "Because of this many have cried out: The goal of ephemeral life is immortality."<sup>6</sup>

The salvational process in pursuit of immortality demands climbing the ladder of duty. The first step is for ruling Reason to recognize its limitations, since all it can grasp is ephemeral things, never things of essence. The supreme virtue of Reason is Discipline. Next comes the second duty: to renounce the limits of Reason and accept the ensuing agony. The Heart must do what Reason cannot and heed the duty "to bend down and dig!" The third duty commands the ship of soul to sail towards the abyss. Next comes the gradation of the voyage: Ego, Ancestor, Humanity, Earth. The preparation is now complete for the vision of the divine to follow. Expectedly, the needed virtue is Courage. With the vision of the divine attained, the time is ripe for *praxis*. The action required for the Return is threefold: human to human, human to nature, human to God. The *Spiritual Exercises* (*Salvatores Dei*), ends on a shrill note of two cries and several incantations, the last of which is a blessing: "thrice blessed be those who bear on their shoulders and do not buckle under the great, sublime and terrifying secret that even this ["Lord, you and I are one"] does not exist."

Even if God does not exist, it is man's duty to discover, encounter, reveal and save God through the creative actions conceived as the poetic hierarchies of duty as outlined. The vision was given a poetic form of action in his epic *Odyssey: a Modern Sequel*. At the end of the voyage Odysseus dies on the



iceberg alone in the absolute silence of nothingness. Suddenly, all hierarchies of action vanish in the abyss of inaction. Why, then, the voyage?

### 5. Possible Neoplatonic sources?

The ideas and list of duties in *Spiritual Exercises* are rooted partly in Nietzsche and partly in the socialist messianic vision. However, the undercurrents that feed and support the gradation of values in Kazantzakis' literary text and express his *credo* as a religious poet, have another origin, very old and with a career of its own: Hellenic, Hellenistic, Byzantine. The flight of steps on the Platonic ladder of Eros, the ontological hypostases of Plotinus and the other Neoplatonists, were eventually transformed and selectively assimilated into the body of Christian dogma and given a place in the canon of monastic virtues. They are part of the intellectual background of Ioannis of Klimakos and the thirty-one rungs of his conception of religious duties, if we include the "Logos of the Shepherd," the last rung that links together the dominant virtues of the trinity of faith, hope, and *agape*. There is a similarity between Kazantzakis and Ioannis of Klimakos regarding a negative feature, namely that both share the subordinate role of the logical faculty in the ascending process to the higher hierarchies.

There is no direct evidence that Kazantzakis was intimately acquainted with the moral theology of Ioannis of Klimakos. Additional research will be needed before any questions of influence can be settled. Nevertheless there are certain unmistakable signs of familiarity in the similarities of their corresponding hierarchical conceptions. Both think in terms of religion; Kazantzakis moves in the direction of a ladder of duties while Ioannis of Klimakos has his eyes set on the ascending order of virtues. In Kazantzakis the *askesis* reverses the goal of the Christian saint and instead of the salvation of man the goal becomes the salvation of the divine. Hence the only positive correlation between the two ladders can be seen as a common interest in the religious deontology of strati-fying a mixture of duties and virtues. It is no accident that the structure of the *Spiritual Exercises* makes one think of Ioannis of Klimakos, especially the duty that runs through the thirty-one rungs of virtue in the agonistic process of religious devotion. It is well known that Kazantzakis had shown a strong, even apostolic, interest in a revitalized religious life. His *Spiritual Exercises* testifies to his engaged use of literature combining poetic sensitivity with missionary intensity. While being swept by the currents of his visionary mission to

save the world, he wrote to his friend the Rev. Manolis Papastephanou, in Boston, a letter that foreshadows the idea behind the *Spiritual Exercises*. In the letter, dated September 5, 1922, he stated the following:

The world is rot... We must plant a new one. Never before was the earth more painfully ploughed as it is today. Everything is ready. What is missing? The seed! I feel that I hold the Seed in my hands as though a hand-grenade. Oh, that I could, by jumping over the barrier of logic, throw it on the human fields.<sup>7</sup>

Many readers have found Kazantzakis' poetic inspiration attractive as it shoots its arrow skyward and marks the trail of the hierarchy of duties. Its aesthetic quality remains unalloyed but the substance it contains owes its force to the religious bent of its deontology. And it is so intense, so engaged, that it bears no resemblance to the features of the Platonic Eros; and, if anything, it creates the suspicion that it intentionally runs counter to Ioannis of Klimakos and his virtues of obedience, repentance, memory, death and the joy of mourning. By way of education and early studies Kazantzakis became quite familiar with the literature of Christian ethics. His messianic religiosity shows him determined later to deliver the new gospel of salvation and move the world beyond the horizons of Hellenism and Christianity.

The path that led Kazantzakis to the deontology of the *Spiritual Exercises* winds through many signposts, particularly the ones the Neoplatonists left behind, from Ammonius Sakkas, Plotinus, the Apologetic Fathers, the Athenian School of Proclus down to the theologizing philosophers of Byzantium and all the others who sifted the teachings of the Ancients in order to build the new virtues of Christianity and promote asceticism as the true model of life. At one point the path makes a stop at the doorstep of Ioannis of Klimakos. It takes no leap of the imagination to understand why centuries later Kazantzakis chose the word *askētikē* as the title for his text and projected it as the symbol for his *credo*. It is intended to convey the meaning of a new and different spiritual exercise. Suddenly the teleological theory of virtue the Greeks held in high esteem is pushed aside and replaced with a new deontology demanding the salvation of the divine, where 'God,' to use Kazantzakis expressions, stands for a *diffused, muted, yet omnipresent* divine, awaiting its fulfillment to come as the product of the agonistic human will.

Admittedly, the signs of any direct presence of Neoplatonic ideas in Kazantzakis are not readily detectable; the same holds for Ioannis of Klimakos. This feature makes the tracing of parallel influences in their writings an ardu-

ous if not tenuous task. Regardless of these difficulties and the meandering course of the successive phases of Neoplatonism through the centuries, by the time we come to Kazantzakis' gradations of duties, the issue of influence is hardly less inviting. Comparably, in the case of Ioannis of Klimakos the difficulties remain but not to the point of making us reject all possible historical affinities.<sup>8</sup> It seems rather unlikely that Ioannis of Klimakos' moral theology was not affected by the Neoplatonic religious currents still in force during the sixth century. The language and the terminology alone would suffice to alert us to the conceptual continuities from the Apologetic writers down to the era of monastic theology, i.e., from Alexandria to Mt. Sina. It is a tradition that became firmly established and remained unbroken in the affairs of the Eastern Church. That Kazantzakis was exposed to the monastic ideals and teachings early in his life, just like all Greek intellectuals of the period, makes it feasible to surmise that this is the tradition of religious asceticism with which he was destined to work. As such, it is a tradition that inevitably and quietly touched anyone who tried to fuse together a moral deontology and a vision of poetic gradations, as is the case of Kazantzakis' *Spiritual Exercises*.

While we should not exclude an affinity with the tradition of religious deontology of Ioannis of Klimakos, we must also look elsewhere to explain the originality of Kazantzakis' *Spiritual Exercises*. More specifically, it could be found in the restless mind of modern Europe that had already read into the Greek marbles a questionable purity and disputed the ontic foundations of religious orthodoxy. It is there, in the same modern trends that we must look for the starting point of the other, the novel branch of Neoplatonism that reached Kazantzakis as a radical and worldly poet. The critic who will try to unravel the strands in Kazantzakis' works that have their roots in the diverse shapes that modern Neoplatonism took in the hands of German idealists from Hegel to Nietzsche, and from the latter to Bergson's creative evolution, faces a formidable and complex, though not impossible task.

The paradox of the two paths, as it weaves its way into Kazantzakis' works, allows one to read his texts as contemporary intimations of Plotinus' "flight of the alone to the alone." With this in mind, the interested reader of Kazantzakis' *Report to Greco* (1965) might wish to pay closer attention to two special chapters, both covering an early phase of his life, when he was visiting Mt. Athos and Mt. Sina. Notably, in chapter 18 (on Mt. Athos) Kazantzakis recalls a conversation he once had with a certain Father Ignatius and ended with a question and a query. The question was: "What conclusion must we draw, Father, now that it seems that both [Reason and Heart] are right?" And

the query followed: "I was talking and thinking to myself but didn't say it: New Ten Commandments! New Commandments! But how would this new decalogue arrange the virtues and the vices. I could not think. I would only say and repeat to myself: New decalogue. Great need! Who will give it to us?" Did Kazantzakis, one may ask, ever read carefully and seek the answer in the texts of Ioannis of Klimakos? Is it possible that the theme of the *Spiritual Exercises* was conceived during his stay at Mt. Sina? One can only guess.

I should like to end this address with a comment on the confluence of the two currents of Neoplatonism. By the time the currents reached him as a modern European poet and messianic Cretan there was little left in them to remind him of the Platonic Eros. Beauty as the end of the journey was replaced with the Nothing of the Abyss. Whether unwillingly or acting in innocence of the tradition, Kazantzakis pushed the European consciousness to the edge of the abyss of nihilism, where Nietzsche himself did not dare to look, forcing it to face the implications of the new *hubris*. It took the sharpness of the Cretan Glance, itself hubristic, to indict before the court of Europe's intelligentsia the impasse to which Western Civilization had come: its nihilism. He understood the futility of the modern salvational schemes, including the grandiose promise of Marxism. Absorbed as he was in his cultural and aesthetic stratagem, he turned his back to the prospect of learning from Diotima the duty that Eros had recommended.

The *hubris* is noticeably prevalent and, in a more general way, beyond the refusal to return to the erotic rungs on Diotima's ladder. If the highest duty is to meet the challenge that the spiritual confusion of our times imposes in the face of a multi-faceted cultural impasse and to find a way to end the contemporary crisis, it would be sheer folly to overlook the possibility that the creative renaissance of the Hellenic heritage, the life of reason, might provide a desired starting point. But adopting such a stance would call for more than yet another deontology of an apostolic vision. It would also demand the critical assessment of the Neoplatonic elements that have survived under the guise of poetic hierarchies and gradations projected as salvational devices designed to help humanity overcome the crisis of nihilism. Only thus we may be able to decide whether, in trying to find a solution to the persisting crisis, the Platonic model of Eros or something like it still holds the key to restoring cultural sanity.

## Notes

1. *Symposium* at 211c, tr. Walter Hamilton (Penguin Books 1951), 94.
2. *Symp.* 212a, *ibid.*, 95.
3. Quoted in Lily Zografou. Νίκος Καζαντζάκης. *Ενας τραγικός*. (Αθήνα: Αλεξάνδρεια 1976), 73-4. Translation mine.
4. I have discussed this topic in my "Plotinus' Conception of the Role of the Artist," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XXVI (Fall 1967), 91-101; also in my "The One and the Many: the Changing Roles of the Artist," *The Minnesota Review*, V (May/July 1965), 170-82.
5. N. Kazantzakis, *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises*, tr. Kimon Friar (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), 43.
6. *Ibid.* 43.
7. The text in L. Zografou, *op. cit.*, p. 191. Translation mine. Ο κόσμος σάπισε... Πρέπει καινούργιο να φυτέψουμε. Ποτέ η γή δεν ήταν πιο οδυνηρά οργανωμένη όπως σήμερα. Όλα έτοιμα. Τί λείπει; Ο σπόρος! Νοιώθω στα χέρια μου να κρατώ το Σπόρο έτσι σα χειροβομβίδα. Αχ να μπορούσα πηδώντας το φράχτη της λογικής να τότε ρίξω στ' ανθρώπινα χωράφια.
8. In his article on Ioannis of Klimakos, published in the *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια* *Ήλιος*, vol. Έλλάς, K. Georgoulis has argued that there is no conceivable connection between Neoplatonic ideas and the moral theology of Ioannis of Klimakos.

## Neoplatonic Elements in the Spiritual Life

John Lachs

At a time when the history of philosophy receives less than respectful and conscientious attention from those who consider themselves constructive philosophers, it is good to remember that some of the great thinkers of the past were also masters of the great thoughts or systems of others. George Santayana, in particular, spent countless hours studying the classical works of philosophy.

He studied Plato in exquisite detail and was an avid reader of Aristotle, all of course in Greek. Story has it that, late in his life, an earnest priest tried to bring him back to the Catholic faith of his youth. The priest attempted to quote St. Thomas to show Santayana the error of his ways, but did not quite get the passage right. Santayana helped him out by giving a precise rendition of the text in Latin.

Santayana was no less familiar with the works of the moderns. He read everyone from Descartes to Hegel in the original language of the author and his library contained annotated copies of the works of Bergson, Heidegger and Bertrand Russell, among many others.<sup>1</sup> He read Plotinus and was thoroughly familiar with both major and minor figures in the Neoplatonic tradition. Similarities between his thought and selected elements of Neoplatonism are due not to historical accident but to elective affinity on his part.

I must add at once that, though it is important to see Santayana as in some central respects a Neoplatonic thinker, we cannot rightly say that his complex philosophical views come simply to a repetition of some prior position. In *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, his most explicit discussion of Plotinus and Plotinian themes in contemporary thought, he specifically limits the scope of his agreement with Neoplatonism. He has two fundamental quarrels with the tradition. He is deeply suspicious of metaphysics, particularly a metaphysics that operates with such dialectical ideas as those of Being, the One, and Mind.

And he charges that the Neoplatonic conception of spirituality is not spiritual enough. I shall discuss the first disagreement immediately, the second only near the end of this essay.

In one sense, of course, Santayana has a metaphysics, or at least an ontology, himself. But his is a characteristically modern, almost postmodern, ironic metaphysics—one that does not claim access to the hidden structures of reality. He thinks that metaphysics of the traditional sort cannot yield results. The nature of reality is best explored by science; philosophy has no alternative to offer to careful empirical investigation. Instead of engaging in metaphysical speculations, he wishes to concentrate on explicating the view of the world tacitly contained in the active life, in the undeniable fact that we act in a multi-centered cosmos deployed in space and time.

He views his ontology as nothing more than a systematic account of the beliefs implicated in what he calls "animal faith," the confidence of the human animal in the independent existence of enduring but manipulable objects. Philosophy can do no more, he thinks, than follow the outlines of common sense. Speculations beyond that amount to "dialectical physics," which is the attempt to gain insight into the real or into what matters by means of the play of words. I wish more of our postmodern colleagues shared his caution about such an enterprise.

Here is the way he puts it himself. "Metaphysics, in the proper sense of the word, is dialectical physics, or an attempt to determine matters of fact by means of logical or moral or rhetorical constructions."<sup>2</sup> Such an enterprise is "neither physical speculation nor pure logic nor honest literature, but...a hybrid of the three, materialising ideal entities, turning harmonies into forces, and dissolving natural things into terms of discourse."<sup>3</sup>

By contrast, Santayana views his own ontology as consisting of categories that capture the features of the world he finds "conspicuously different and worth distinguishing." The ontology is modest, constituting his attempt "to think straight in such terms as are offered to me," in order "to obviate occasions for sophistry by giving to everyday beliefs ■ more accurate and circumspect form."<sup>4</sup> It is, therefore, nothing new: as "a feast of what everybody knows,"<sup>5</sup> it expresses "a certain shrewd orthodoxy which the sentiment and practice of laymen maintain everywhere."<sup>6</sup>

This means that in adopting and adapting the insights of the Neoplatonic tradition, Santayana strips them of their straightforward metaphysical bearing. He takes Plotinus' account of cascading emanations to be a story pointing to potential salvation for humans, rather than as a description of the structure of

existence. But even if the story reveals no facts, it discloses profoundly significant aspects of the human condition, especially the condition of the human spirit or consciousness in a moving and dying world.

In *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*,<sup>7</sup> he criticizes the Neoplatonist William Ralph Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, by arguing that, if we take it literally, Plotinus' view of our distance from the source is severely misleading. Yet he also demonstrates that the same idea, used as a symbol, offers deep insights into our spiritual condition. The rejection of literal and the embrace of symbolic truth is typical of Santayana's approach to the work of philosophy.

We need to distinguish two distinct moments in the development of Santayana's aesthetics. His reflections on the technical problems of aesthetics are contained in his first book, entitled *The Sense of Beauty*.<sup>8</sup> Although Hobbes and other British empiricists lurk in the background, the primary influence on this work is German philosophy. Santayana draws on Schopenhauer's aesthetics and responds to Kant's view of the nature of beauty. A thorough search of the text could perhaps reveal some connections to Neoplatonic sources, but it would be difficult to see these as more than incidental.

His later, ontologically explicit work, which began to see the light of day in 1923 with the publication of *Scepticism and Animal Faith* and continued to develop until the appearance of the fourth volume of *Realms of Being* in 1941,<sup>9</sup> presents an altogether different picture of aesthetics. *The Sense of Beauty* dealt with aesthetics as a set of philosophical problems; the system articulated in *Realms of Being*, by contrast, incorporates the disinterested intuition of beauty as a structuring feature of ultimately satisfying human lives.

That system depicts aesthetic immediacy as the central character of what Santayana calls "the spiritual life," and establishes spirituality as the only way of escaping the concerns, pains and tragedies of the world of change. At this stage of Santayana's work, Neoplatonic influence is ubiquitous. This is the aesthetics I shall discuss.

There is no better place to begin the study of anything Neoplatonic than the contrast between the temporal and the eternal. Santayana finds himself in wholehearted agreement with drawing a sharp distinction between the two and assigns important prerogatives to the eternal. The temporal world, of course, is our home as human animals. Santayana is uncompromising in viewing biological existence as the foundation of all life, including the spirituality that in a special and limited sense takes us beyond it.

Existence as an animal, however, is fraught with frustration and danger; not even momentary victory lifts fear and worry from organisms that must

fight to survive. The insecurity of existence permeates all aspects of life, and the imperfection of time, doling out only passing moments of satisfaction, makes it impossible for us to rest. No animal can thus elude disappointment, aging, and eventual death. None of us, as he puts it, is "too good for extinction,"<sup>10</sup> and in the meantime none can experience more than momentary joy.

Morality cannot help us overcome the structural inadequacy of the processes of life. Good and evil are categories attaching to things and actions as a result of the interest our living psyches, which are physical organisms, take in them. Such assessments are the outcome of caring, and caring is an expression of the vulnerability of animals. "The whole psyche is a burden to herself, a terrible inner compulsion to care, to watch, to pursue, and to possess."<sup>11</sup> Frustration and death are the certain fate of a creature as much in need as this.

So no repose or ultimate satisfaction can come from the tortured life of pursuing the good. Our only hope is to transcend the world of means, of unmeaning processes, and embrace something timeless and perfect. Yet actual transcendence, implying departure from our ambushed bodies, is impossible. Since taking leave of our spatial and temporal stations would mean instant death, not eternal life, we must find the moment of peace within the one life we have been granted.

Transcendence of animal life within the confines of that life is made possible by Santayana's Platonism. Organisms fighting one another in a treacherous world are endowed with consciousness. This sentience, "the total inner difference between being asleep and awake,"<sup>12</sup> serves as an indispensable condition of knowledge.

Santayana adopts Plato's idea that the objects of mind are eternal forms; these forms, which he calls "essences," constitute the realm that appears to consciousness. Each moment of awareness reveals an essence or set of essences and thereby opens immediate access to the eternal. The eternal thus surrounds us, or at least stretches in all directions before the mind, in such a fashion that we can partake of it without effort. We sink into the eternal simply by waking up or by focusing our minds.

Santayana's view of universals differs in three centrally important ways from Plato's. First, although they are objects of thought, essences do not function, for Santayana, as objects of knowledge. Cognition connects the animal to its world, making it possible for it to identify the forces that affect its life.

Knowledge, therefore, is discovery of realities that bear hidden potential, that is, true belief about what exists in the flux. It is "belief in a world of events, and especially of those parts of it which are near the self, tempting or

threatening it."<sup>13</sup> Awareness, by contrast, presents crystalline pictures of eternal actualities that lack potential. The object of knowledge is the dynamic substance of the world, the object of mind is essence in its lifeless and hence indestructible eternity. Santayana summarizes this point by his oft-repeated motto that "nothing given exists," which amounts to the claim that only inexistent forms can be present to consciousness.

Second, essences are, for Santayana, forms of definiteness unlimited in number. Plato found it difficult to decide whether or not hair and dirt had forms corresponding to them. Santayana, by contrast, maintains that every identifiable specificity is an essence. He holds that numbers, the generic forms that define natural kinds, such moral ideas as goodness and justice, all colors and relationships, and even the forms of events are essences.<sup>14</sup> This makes the realm of essence a nested infinity, that is, an infinity consisting of such infinities as the number of numbers and the number and diversity of motions that have, will have and could have taken place during the unending history of the world.

The infinity of essences strips them of power. In its native element, no form has sufficient claim on existence to instantiate itself. In the great Western tradition, the ontological proof of God's reality was supposed to have identified the one and only essence that required or entailed its own existence. As usual, Spinoza held a stronger view, maintaining that all essences containing no contradiction automatically exist.

Santayana rejects the ontological proof and notes that Spinoza can sustain his belief only by refusing to allow the distinction between essence and existence, or by denying that in the final analysis anything touched by time is real at all. In sharp contrast, Santayana thinks that the temporal world is the only existent reality; the realm of essence serves only as an infinite reservoir of passive forms or, as he puts it in a striking image, a costumer's gallery of the clothes in which existence may garb itself.<sup>15</sup>

Third, the infinity of essences removes their moral prerogatives. No essence is any better than another and hence the realm does not constitute a hierarchy cascading down from the Good or the One. The value of essences is extraneous to them, as is their meaning. They are characterized by the principle of self-identity and consist of all and only the features they display.<sup>16</sup>

The essence of a black lab that includes the character of friendliness or trustworthiness is not a better, only a different, essence from that of the same dog characterized by viciousness. Since we can focus on them, there are such essences as Being, the Good, and the One, but there is nothing special about

them, except perhaps their excessive emptiness or generality. Trees create their own structure and animals generate other animals, but generic essences do not construct themselves or beget specific beings. In Santayana's language, they do not belong to "the generative order" of nature.

A consciousness confronted with an infinity of essences has no basis on which to choose among them. Choice is a hallmark of animal life: love and revulsion express the values of organisms. This leads to the shocking, and redeeming, realization that selectivity is of no significance to essence or to pure consciousness. Since essences are inactive, eternal forms, nothing matters to them. And consciousness, or "spirit" as Santayana calls it, is "an impartial readiness"<sup>17</sup> to intuit any universal; it is as happy to contemplate one form as another.

This consideration reveals that inexistent essence and spirit in its purity are for each other; they constitute a natural pair. When essence is instantiated, it becomes a part of the physical world and acquires significance to the struggling animal. And so long as spirit is harnessed to the service of the organism, it cannot take joy in all that comes its way; it suffers the loves and pains of the organic psyche that gives it birth. But spirit set free from servitude to the demands of the body can delight in whatever form it finds. When spirit is permitted to be spiritual and intuition to be pure intuition, the concerns of animality fall away and we taste the peace that passes all understanding. The reward is eternal joy.

This joy is eternal but not everlasting.<sup>18</sup> Animal life is limited: the moment passes and soon we are no more. But eternity is not a quantity to measure. It is activity (*energeia*) in Aristotle's sense, requiring no duration in time.<sup>19</sup> How long the bliss lasts is thus irrelevant. Only its quality matters, and that is unsullied so long as consciousness remains unperurbed by care and retains a clear view of its object. What counts is the moment in which, as Santayana puts it, the ultimate becomes immediate<sup>20</sup> and we rest, if not in the bosom of Abraham, at least in the Elysian fields of transcendent delight.

Spirituality becomes, in this way, the aesthetics of blessedness. The relation between spirit and its objects is clearly aesthetic. It is immediate apprehension that carries joy in the beautiful. The mind leaves its cares behind as it focuses attention on the play of forms. The joy experienced is, as Kant correctly believed, disinterested: as means to nothing further, contemplation and enjoyment constitute an ethereal song.

Since consciousness is involved and forms are apprehended, such mo-

ments display a cognitive, or what Santayana sometimes calls a "synthetic" element. But they do not constitute knowledge in the full sense of the word. They have no external objects and they are not intelligently adaptive to surrounding substances or facts. On the contrary, what makes them special is that they are freed from the demand to adapt to anything—they are unconnected or superfluous to the needs of animal life.

Pure intuitions or moments of liberated, unconcerned consciousness move in this way beyond all preference and valuation. The distinction between good and evil and the drive for perfection express "the subterranean" activities of the animal psyche,<sup>21</sup> its desperate need to distinguish what fosters from what inhibits its life. There is, therefore, nothing spiritual about moral judgments. The latter constitute testimony of the work of selectivity essential for continued life; the former is the selfless—and, dare I say, indiscriminate—embrace of whatever essence may come our way. The latter wants victory over time; the former is content to disappear into the eternal.

This is the source of the second major criticism Santayana levels against the Neoplatonic tradition. In *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, he repeatedly characterizes the Neoplatonic adherence to exalted values, including the value of spirituality, as "political." He says, for example:

The friends of spirit, in their political capacity, will of course defend those forms of society in which, given their particular race and traditions, spirit may best exist: they will protect it in whatever organs and instruments it may already have appeared, and will take care that it pursues its contemplative life undisturbed in its ancient sanctuaries.<sup>22</sup>

This is an understandable interest in safeguarding what are normally seen as the conditions of spirituality. They are, however, moral and not spiritual concerns about the human good; they express the desires of our psyches to live long and to live well. Such "political zeal, even in the true friends of spirit is not spiritual,"<sup>23</sup> for much as the life of the spirit in us presupposes a flourishing or at least a relatively intact organism, it cannot adopt the aims of that animal without losing its soul.

Santayana's critique of the Neoplatonic tradition comes, then, to the claim that it presents an impure conception of spirituality, mixing true devotion to the eternal with the moral or political desire to protect its sources and to extend its dominion indefinitely into the future. The lesson Santayana wants to teach, instead, is that "spiritual life is not a worship of 'values'," but "a disintoxication

from their influence."<sup>24</sup> This means that the pure intuitions constituting spirituality take no interest even in their own continuance; they are absorbed in a satisfaction that is "free from care, selfless, wholly actual and, in that inward sense, eternal."<sup>25</sup>

Evidently, Santayana does not wish to deny that, as living creatures, we can have a legitimate desire to extend our moments of spirituality for as long as possible. But from the standpoint of the spiritual life, such desires have no standing. Considered from the outside of such experiences, we may well wish for the moments of rapturous union to continue. But from the inside, that is, in those moments when we find ourselves absorbed in a landscape of eternal forms, no desire for anything temporal is possible or proper. If a desire arises, the magic of eternity is shattered; if, amazingly, the magic is sustained, the desire loses its urgency and becomes but another eternal object to contemplate.

We may characterize such all-encompassing absorption in the immediate in a variety of ways. We can speak of it in secular terms as joy in the beauty of all things. But we can also say that it involves the concentration of mind that constitutes the heart of prayer. Santayana refers to it as liberation, as well:<sup>26</sup> it gives us the feeling that we have been set free of the incubus of material existence so we may dwell in eternity.

In *Realm of Spirit*, Santayana also uses the language of union with God, with the One, with the Absolute and with Brahma.<sup>27</sup> Phenomenologically, absorption in the object feels like return to the source or reunification with primordial reality. The outcome is a profound sense of selflessness or a oneness whose vibrant reality cannot be expressed in words.

That the experience Santayana calls to our attention can be captured in the language of metaphysics, aesthetics, religion and poetry suggests that these disciplines converge on key elements in the life of spirit. For Santayana, at least, none of these discourses can be taken as literally true, though all of them constitute useful languages in which we can express vital insights, and remarkably the same ones, into the human condition.

Spirituality does not constitute a life that can serve as an alternative to the one requiring food and air. It does not liberate us in any permanent way from the burdens of existence, nor does it return us to Being or its Source. The experience may feel as though that were happening, and the languages we use to convey or explicate it are marvelous symbolic tools for fixating it. But when all is said and done, what happens is simply that in these moments of calm

consciousness the mind touches the eternal. It does not embrace the One or achieve union with God, though saying so can be a splendid poetic way of describing the event.

These last few comments can be used to measure the true distance between Santayana and Neoplatonists. Although he is in full agreement with the great tradition of Neoplatonism concerning the central significance of eternity for achieving the measure of perfection possible for our finite frame, he cannot accept the metaphysics of Neoplatonism at face value.

Emanation schemes, talk of a unitary source of Being, hierarchical conceptions of reality and the idea that determination is negation strike him as dialectical moves out of touch with the physical reality in which we operate. When it comes to existence, he says again and again, all substance is material, meaning that it is "the physical substance...found in things or between them."<sup>28</sup> If we ever discover the structure of the real world, we will have physics and not metaphysics to thank.

This means that in Santayana's view Neoplatonism as a philosophy of existence or nature will always be wide of the mark. As a philosophy that points the way to salvation, however, it is right on the money. "The Greek naturalists," he says in one place, and in others specifically adds Plotinus,<sup>29</sup> "have been right on the chief issue, the relation of man and of his spirit to the universe."<sup>30</sup> And when we look past the heat of desire and the fierce partialities of animal life, that alone is what truly matters.

Accordingly, it is no small achievement to have developed an understanding of our relation to eternity. None but Plato and his followers were able to do this in the West. Even if we reject their metaphysics, we must accept its spiritual significance for the human race. The enduring worth of Neoplatonism resides not in what it says about the world, but in how it shows us the boundless play of eternity in our lives.

## Notes

1. Daniel Cory, his literary executor, sold portions of Santayana's library to interested universities. A significant collection of his books may be found in Austin at the University of Texas Library.
2. George Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (New York: Dover, 1955), vii. Hereafter *SAF*.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, v, vi.
5. *Ibid.*, ix.
6. *Ibid.*, v.
7. George Santayana, *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, in *Winds of Doctrine and Platonism and the Spiritual Life* (New York: Harper, 1957).
8. George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York: Scribner's, 1896).
9. George Santayana, *Realms of Being* (New York: Cooper Square, 1972).
10. George Santayana, *Physical Order and Moral Liberty*, John and Shirley Lacks, eds. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969).
11. *Realms of Being*, 341.
12. *Ibid.*, 572.
13. *SAF*, 179.
14. *Ibid.*, 293.
15. *Ibid.*, 70-71.
16. George Santayana, "Some Meanings of the Word 'Is'," in *Obiter Scripta*, J. Buchler and B. Schwarz, eds. (New York: Scribner's, 1936).
17. *SAF*, 284.
18. Santayana presents a marvelous discussion of these and related terms on pages 270-271 of *SAF*.
19. *Ibid.*, 217. See also, *Realms of Being*, 816.
20. *Platonism*, 301.
21. *Realms of Being*, 335ff.
22. *Platonism*, 256.
23. *Ibid.*, 257.
24. *Ibid.*, 248.
25. *Ibid.*, 247.
26. *Realms*, 736ff.
27. *Ibid.*, 769.
28. *SAF*, 209.
29. *Platonism*, 288 and elsewhere.
30. *SAF*, viii.

## Martin Heidegger on *Mimesis* in Plato and Platonism

Constantinos Proimos

In recent decades we have often heard the complaint that the innumerable aesthetic considerations of and investigations into art and the beautiful have achieved nothing, that they have not helped anyone to gain access to art, that they have contributed virtually nothing to artistic creativity and to a sound appreciation of art. That is certainly true, especially with regard to the kind of thing bandied about today under the name "aesthetics."<sup>1</sup>

These provocative words by Martin Heidegger were pronounced between the years 1936-1940 during his university lectures on Nietzsche. Even today, more than fifty years later, they remind to many of us, similar experiences of complaints against aesthetics, particularly from the part of artists.

The task of this paper is to propose and analyze some of the reasons why Heidegger was prompted to such a fierce condemnation of aesthetics. Through his detailed, long and critical account of Nietzsche and under the shadows of Hegel and Kant, Heidegger attempts in his university lectures, a definite clearing of accounts with Plato and Platonism. This is certainly no small task. For he clearly sees Platonic philosophy as well as Platonism to be endemic to the entire history of Western philosophy. Even if one disagrees with Heidegger's rejection of aesthetics, there can hardly be any disagreement on the fact that Plato by his thought and via his many epigones has set the standards for all discussion of art.

However, Heidegger's problem with aesthetics does not merely reside in the fact that he wants to propose a different understanding of art, beyond the ones proposed by the history of aesthetics. Heidegger's problem is greater



than this: it concerns Plato's basic assumptions about thinking and in particular about truth and its production. Therefore Heidegger's condemnation of aesthetics goes hand in hand with his criticism of truth as representation, whether this is understood as correspondence, *ὁμοίωσις*, imitation, *μίμησις*, or as adequation, *adequatio*. Understanding his problem with aesthetics provides the best access to one of the most fundamental tenets of Heidegger's thinking, namely his notion of truth.

For, according to Heidegger, truth is neither representation of something that exists outside thinking, nor correspondence of the concept to reality. Likewise, truth cannot be measured through adequation or *ὁμοίωσις* between the concept and the real. According to my interpretation of Heidegger, all these traditional models of truth which he rejects, and found in his days not only incorrect but also gravely misleading and ill-fated, depend on *μίμησις*. *Μίμησις*, this major Platonic notion that we may abusively translate as imitation or representation, has the key role in the Platonic theory of ideal forms. Schematically speaking and according to most of the traditional interpretations of Platonism, all reality in Plato and in Neoplatonism strives to imitate or represent the reality of the ideal forms, always unsuccessfully and yet always necessarily. Again schematically speaking, according to Platonism, only the reality of ideal forms is genuinely true, good and beautiful. Now translated to our modern times this thought means that through logic, ethics and aesthetics, humans strive to reach this reality and to imitate it, in the best way they can. Humans set the rules for this imitation via logic, ethics and aesthetics. According to Heidegger's interpretation of the history of metaphysics, logic is "knowledge of *logos*, that is the doctrine of assertion or judgement as the basic form of thought. Logic is knowledge of thinking, of the forms and rules of thought."<sup>2</sup> Ethics is "knowledge of *ethos*, of the inner character of man and of the way it determines his behavior."<sup>3</sup> Aesthetics is *episteme aisthetike*, "knowledge of human behavior with regard to sense, sensation, and feeling, and knowledge of how these are determined."<sup>4</sup> Now it is better understood what metaphysicians mean when they teach that humans strive to imitate the true, good and beautiful reality of ideal forms through logic, ethics and aesthetics. The knowledge which these domains of thinking produce, via their rules and standards, orients the action and comportment of humankind. According to Platonism however, this knowledge is ultimately and permanently determined by the ideal forms and this has of course numerous consequences for thinking and philosophy, which Heidegger attempts to analyze and criticize.

It is easy to infer from our presentation so far, that Heidegger's problem with aesthetics hides in fact a problem with Platonism, in general. For if Platonism accepts as the only valuable reality the reality of the ideal forms, most Platonists despise beings for what they are "on the basis of what (they) should or ought to be."<sup>5</sup> For if truth, goodness and beauty are ultimately placed in the supersensuous realm, all that is grounded in the sensuous is, in the final analysis, opposed or excluded. If art is affirmation of the sensuous<sup>6</sup> then it can be understood why art has traditionally been interpreted to have an inferior role in Plato's *Republic*, in his ideal state. It is also easy to understand why according to Heidegger, Nietzsche became Plato's most notorious and fierce opponent. As he famously put it himself, Nietzsche struggled to overturn Platonism by maintaining in his *Will to Power* that art which espouses the sensuous is worth more than truth which espouses the supersensuous. Nevertheless, overturning the tyranny of Platonism, is not such an easy task as it may seem. For by espousing the sensuous and declaring this reality in which we live as the only possible one, by celebrating the senses and art, we may easily end up in positivism, something of which Nietzsche also, was aware. Positivism, according to Heidegger, accepts as the only standard "what lies before us from the outset, what is constantly placed before us, the *positum*. The latter is what is given in sensation, the sensuous."<sup>7</sup> However, it would be at best naive to limit the scope of reality in what is given to sensation, in what is constantly placed before us. For in such a case, Heidegger argues, we develop a dangerous blindness to all that is nonsensuous, therefore to all tradition, culture and history, whose courses Platonism has so much contributed to shaping.

Thus, truth, according to Heidegger, is neither in Platonism, nor in positivism, at least in these crude versions of them, so far presented.

What is needed is neither abolition of the sensuous nor abolition of the nonsensuous. On the contrary, what must be cast aside is the misinterpretation, the deprecation, of the sensuous, as well as the extravagant elevation of the supersensuous. A path must be cleared for a new interpretation of the sensuous on the basis of a new hierarchy of the sensuous and nonsensuous. The new hierarchy does not simply wish to reverse matters within the old structural order, now reverencing the sensuous and scorning the nonsensuous. It does not wish to put what was at the very bottom on the very top. A new hierarchy and new valuation mean that the ordering *structure* must be changed. To that extent, overturning Platonism must become a twisting free of it.<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, the path that Heidegger himself chooses, in order to twist free of Platonism is a reinterpretation of *mimesis* on the basis of Plato's book X of the *Republic* but also with reference to *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. For to twist free of Platonism does not at all mean the impossible and ill-fated wish to dispense with Platonist thinking, writing or heritage. Quite on the contrary, according to Heidegger, twisting free of Platonism means a strong reinterpretation of Platonism. The itinerary which leads Heidegger to this reinterpretation is too long and detailed to be presented here with justice. However, I shall attempt to sketch the main idea and present its results in the best way possible. Interpreting the Greek-Platonic concept of *mimesis*, Heidegger argues:

What is decisive for the Greek-Platonic concept of *mimesis* or imitation is not reproduction or portraiture, not the fact that the painter provides us with the same thing once again; what is decisive is that this is precisely what he cannot do, that he is even less capable than the craftsman of duplicating the same thing. It is therefore wrongheaded to apply to *mimesis* notions of "naturalistic" or "primitivistic" copying and reproducing. Imitation is subordinate production.<sup>8</sup>

As it is well known from Plato's *Republic*, the craftsman of a bed creates it with a view both to the ideal form of the bed as well as with due consideration to the bed's use.<sup>10</sup> However, ultimately, the ideal form of bed remains unknown to him and this is the reason why we have many different constructions of beds, feather beds, water beds etc. Likewise, the painter who paints a bed or the poet who describes one is based on crafted beds. The form of the ideal bed is far from her or him. And we, users of beds, acquire our criteria of judgement when it comes to beds from craftsmen and painters. If moreover, we are well informed and researched we can imagine the form of the ideal bed. However, as long as we live we may come to the point of trying or knowing a bed that is far superior than anything we have tried or known up until then. Thus for us too, the ideal form of bed is ultimately unknown, for no matter how much out of our ways we go to purchase the most ideal bed, for sure there is always going to be a better one. The point here is that whatever access we have to the ideal form of things, this access is necessarily mediated by craftsmen as well as painters, by their subordinate and yet necessary production of things. And if we come across the most ideal form of bed we have ever imagined or tried, then we can infer that all the rest of our previous beds have been inferior to it and that this bed is indeed close to what the ideal bed must be. Then, the fact that we often proclaim "This is a real bed!," "This is truly a

bed!," "This is a true bed!" means, first, that there is truth assigned to the thing, second, that truth pertains to actual things, in general and third, that some actual things, even of the same kind, can be truer than others. When we come across a good bed, at least a better than the one we already have, then something of the ideal form of bed is revealed to us. The better bed is disclosed as closer to the ideal bed and yet prudence and modesty about our possessions and perhaps a little bit of consumerist addiction, dictate that there must always be a better bed, closer to the ideal.

Likewise according to Heidegger truth belongs to things themselves. Or rather some of truth. For some things, even of the same kind are truer than others. Heidegger defines his notion of truth in an earlier essay than the Nietzsche lectures, with the title "Plato's Doctrine of Truth" from 1931/1932. There Heidegger defines truth as unhiddenness. "As unhiddenness truth is a fundamental trait of beings themselves."<sup>11</sup> To the extent that all beings show themselves to us, they emerge from hiddenness, and to this extent such beings are true.

In Greek, unhiddenness is called ἀλήθεια, a word that we translate as "truth"...Originally for the Greeks hiddenness, as an act of self-hiding, permeated the essence of being and thus also determined beings in their presentness and accessibility ("truth"); and that is why the Greek word for what the Romans call "*veritas*" and for what we call "truth" was distinguished by the alpha-privative (ἀ-λήθεια). Truth originally means what has been wrested from hiddenness. Truth is thus a wresting away in each case, in the form of revealing. The hiddenness can be of various kinds: closing off, hiding away, disguising, covering over, masking, dissembling.<sup>12</sup>

To be sure, according to Heidegger, truth does not only belong to things themselves. At the same time that Heidegger discovers truth as ἀλήθεια he also acknowledges truth as ορθότης, the correctness of the gaze, which is equally being developed by the Platonic dialogues. Truth as ορθότης, is "the correctness in apprehending and asserting."<sup>13</sup> Truth as correctness of the gaze "becomes a characteristic of human comportment toward beings"<sup>14</sup> rather than a characteristic of beings themselves. Finally, truth as correctness of the gaze is the representational form of truth, as it concerns the correctness of representation and assertion. This truth which concerns human intellect, finally prevails in the history of metaphysics after Plato and Aristotle. Truth as correctness of representation recurs periodically as *adaequatio* in medieval Scholas-

ticism, notably in the work of Thomas Aquinas, as *veritas* in Descartes' rules, as "the necessary error" in Nietzsche's *Will to Power*. Concomitantly, the essential ambiguity in the works of both Plato and Aristotle between truth as ἀλήθεια and as ὁρθότης is subsequently to their works, lost.<sup>15</sup>

Heidegger aims to retrieve and use this Platonic ambiguity in the determination of the essence of truth in order to criticize and limit the scope of the mimetic model of truth, truth as correctness of representation. The main notion of truth through which he operates is that of ἀλήθεια, that truth which as unhiddenness pertains to things themselves and which is non representational. To the extent that unhiddenness becomes an operating principle of his thinking, Heidegger arrives at some peculiar sort of earth-bound Platonism which is however stripped from the constitutional and traditional roles ascribed to *mimesis* and to the supersensuous realm. Truth as unhiddenness has its opposite in hiddenness. Of course, Heidegger claims, things do not err. They only conceal themselves. Erring in this case belongs to the very constitution of humans and consists of humans turning away from the mystery of things "toward what is readily available, onward from one current thing to the next, passing the mystery by..."<sup>16</sup> Erring is therefore to accept things as they are hidden and not to expose oneself to their unhiddenness. The essence of truth according to Heidegger is freedom and freedom is letting things be. For Heidegger letting things be means engaging with things and caring for them.<sup>17</sup> To what extent this is some sort of Platonism or is a definitive twisting free of Platonism, remains an open question.

In any case, in Plato himself, Heidegger finds the seeds to twist free of Platonism. Twisting free of Platonism for him means to abandon the all dominant mimetic notion of truth, truth as correctness of representation and assertion, in favor of truth as ἀλήθεια, unhiddenness. Furthermore what this means is that Heidegger does not limit the scope of truth in all matters which have to do with intellect and representation. Truth is not solely pertinent to logic but also applies to the individual, social or historical comportment of humans and finally equally concerns their productive activities, the manner in which they create or fabricate things. Heidegger's Hegelianism resonates here. For the neat traditional separation of metaphysics among logic, ethics and aesthetics does not hold in Heidegger's views. Rather, his notion of truth as unhiddenness allows him to consider in an all-encompassing manner all the activities of humankind which were hitherto separated and distinguished.

Heidegger's non mimetic notion of truth has however a particular significance for all reflection on art nowadays. For the mimetic notion of truth which

has been predominant in aesthetics blinds us to the significance of many artworks and artefacts, old and new. The temple of classical Greek antiquity, an example that Heidegger employs in "The Origin of the Work of Art," stands there without being a copy of anything. The historical, political and religious ideas and views it exemplifies do not have a direct formal resemblance with its forms and contours. Certainly the forms and contours of the temple mean historically, politically and religiously, in a way that crystallizes the views and the values of classical Greek antiquity. In fact, the construction of the temple is associated in our memory with everything that the ancient world of classical antiquity was for us. Its truth is one of our few remaining accesses to this world. But its truth depends on how in each historical era, this same temple emerges from hiddenness, how it is discovered and rediscovered and what special significance each historical people attaches to this discovery. Likewise, a crafted thing like a bed has a significance for us today which depends on the rich variety of beds which exist and are available in the market. However, contrary to Plato's assumption a bed's significance and value are not solely inferred from the rich variety of actual beds. For example, a non-existent bed, the bed described by Homer during Ulysses's meeting with Penelope and the event of his recognition by her, directly or indirectly influences the way we see all beds and the special significance we attach to them as symbols of marital love and faith. Even as a subordinate literary production, according to the Platonic doctrine, this bed has an ineffable mark on our memory and may indeed more than any water or feather bed, stand in our imagination as that bed which is closest to the ideal. Furthermore, if we ever hope to get a clue of modern and contemporary art of the 19th and 20th centuries, it is imperative to extend our notion of truth beyond *mimesis*. For as it is broadly known a great deal of modern and contemporary art signifies without representing anything real. Modern and contemporary artworks are rather examples of things in the Heideggerian sense of the term. They have their own truth which relates with aspects of the world in which we live. They reveal this truth and emerge from hiddenness once we let ourselves be exposed to these aspects, once we research them and engage with them. Therefore, it is narrow-minded to restrict artworks to the domains of representation, aesthetics, feeling. Often their significance in terms of these domains is secondary when it is not non-existent. Hence Heidegger's condemnation of aesthetics aims to direct our attention to an alternative non representational, non aesthetic understanding of art which of course stems from his alternative understanding of truth and how this pertains to all things.

Heidegger's non mimetic notion of truth is therefore of great value in order to get an insight in various historical developments of the different arts. Moreover, the insights that Heidegger's notion of truth allows us into the state of the arts are theoretical and political too, exactly in the same way as Plato's inquiry into art in the *Republic*. This is why Heidegger, like the Greeks, locates art between *techne* and *poiesis*. On the one hand, art as *techne* signifies "an ability in the sense of being well versed in something, of a thoroughgoing and therefore masterful know-how."<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, art as *poiesis* means "what is brought forward in a process of bringing-forth, what is produced in production, and the producing itself."<sup>19</sup> Finally art is not irrelevant, according to Heidegger to the Greek μελέτη and ἐπιμέλεια, carefulness of concern.<sup>20</sup> In all cases art for Heidegger is by no means restricted to *mimesis* but is well beyond and above it.

Of course, taking under consideration the dates during which Heidegger developed his thinking on art, truth, and politics during the tumultuous decade of nineteen thirties which also hosted his Nazi period, can be quite troublesome for anyone engaging with his understanding of art. This troublesome consideration of dates is what prompts Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, one of the most important contemporary critics of Heidegger, to assert that despite the latter's rejection of aesthetics and criticism of *mimesis*, Heidegger falls prey to both of them. First, he falls prey to aesthetics to the extent that he equates art with thought and politics under the rubric of *techne* and thus consciously or unconsciously participates in the general reactionary tendency of the thirties towards the esthetization of politics. Second, Heidegger falls prey to *mimesis* to the extent that his thought offers no resistance to the German obsession during the thirties of restoring in Germany the glory of ancient Greece.<sup>21</sup> Whether one agrees or disagrees with Lacoue-Labarthe, his criticism must indeed be taken seriously but it is well beyond the scope of this paper to examine it in further detail. It is true that a certain degree of caution should always be applied towards the Heideggerian texts of the period which connect art, truth and politics so closely. However, it is also true that the Heideggerian notion of truth provides an important platform on the basis of which we can think constructively and pertinently about art, its ontological status and its theoreticopolitical significance. As it is the case with all great and controversial philosophers, one is free to employ this platform at one's own risk.

Now when it comes to Plato's epigones, Platonists and Neoplatonists, the popular belief prevailing among the historians of philosophy is that Platonists after Plato, lack the complexity and subtlety of the master. Pressing to the

extreme such aspects of the Platonic theory as the distinction between sensuous and supersensuous, the verdict against many Platonists is that they rendered the Platonic philosophy rigid and repressive, much to the expense of its essential ambiguity. Typical example is Nietzsche's views on the matter, according to which the entire Christianity is characterized as "Platonism for the people."<sup>22</sup>

This popular and demeaning belief about Platonism and Neoplatonism should however in each case be carefully scrutinized. For Plotinus, the most celebrated Neoplatonist, it is certainly not the case. Rather on the contrary, the reader of Plotinus's views on beauty discovers aspects which resolve many of the Platonic difficulties in the account of the arts. Plotinus, for example, extends the scope of beauty in the very same way that Heidegger extends the scope of art. For, as it is known, beauty, according to Plotinus need not be restricted to the physical world but equally concerns matters of conduct and intellect.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, beauty is neither exclusively founded upon the senses, nor does it uniquely depend on symmetry and proportion.<sup>24</sup> Again like Heidegger, Plotinus relates closely beauty and truth. For the latter in the fifth ennead eighth claims that: "We ourselves possess beauty when we are true to our own being; our ugliness is in going over to another order; our self-knowledge, that is to say, is our beauty; in self-ignorance we are ugly."<sup>25</sup> Even Heidegger's criticism of *mimesis* is first articulated in Plotinus' work.

Still the arts are not to be slighted on the ground that they create by imitation of natural objects; for to begin with, these natural objects are themselves imitations: then, we must recognize that they give no bare reproduction of the thing seen but go back to the Reason-Principles from which Nature itself derives, and, furthermore, that much of their work is all their own; they are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking. Thus Pheidias wrought the Zeus with no model among things of sense but by apprehending what form Zeus must take if he chose to become manifest to sight.<sup>26</sup>

Art therefore, according to Plotinus, is also appraised as a theoreticopolitical activity of a historical character and is endowed with bringing forth truth in the form of Reason-Principles. It is praised and esteemed more than nature, for through art the opportunity is given to behold and admire the idea, infer the intellectual principle from what is less to it and love and desire Being.<sup>27</sup> Contrary to Plato, art, according to Plotinus, is esteemed more than mere craftsmanship. But in this act of irreverence towards his master,

Plotinus is in the good company of Heidegger. The latter indicates his disagreement with Plato through an anecdote:

A statement by Erasmus which has been handed down to us is supposed to characterize the art of the painter Albrecht Dürer. The statement expresses a thought that obviously grew out of a personal conversation which that learned man had with the artist. The statement runs: *ex situ rei unius, non unam speciem sese oculis offerentem exprimit*: by showing a particular thing from any given angle, he, Dürer the painter, brings to the fore not only the single isolated view which offers itself to the eye. Rather we may complete the thought in the following way-by showing any given individual thing as this particular thing, in its singularity, he makes Being itself visible: in a particular hare, the Being of the hare; in a particular animal, the animality. It is clear that Erasmus here is speaking against Plato.<sup>28</sup>

So does Heidegger of course. Therefore both Plotinus and Heidegger conceive of art in a broad manner and in connection to truth, they deem it as the vehicle of truth or the vessel of whatever is highly esteemed in their thinking. Both Plotinus and Heidegger criticize *mimesis* and attempt to limit its scope. Finally, without straightforwardly rejecting *mimesis*, both Plotinus and Heidegger repeat Plato's essential ambiguity on it.

The connection between Heidegger and Plotinus that we attempted to establish a little bit too quickly and schematically, in relation to the great chronological distance separating the two thinkers, testifies to the fact that Platonism has been travelling a long way and surely will continue doing so, during the years to come. However, Platonism's travel itinerary is extremely mutational and in modern times has become increasingly less dependent on *mimesis*. Hence the startling differences of approach and interpretation by historians of philosophy to one and the same body of texts, those of Plato and his epigones. One differing in itself as Heraclitus would put it,<sup>29</sup> perhaps offers the best description of Platonism. The Heraclitean description also indicates something else: that in the times in which we live, longing for the right to difference and pluralism, Platonism which has steadily been the aim of our rage may become an ally of our passion, once again.

## Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. I. Trans. David Farrell Krell, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 75.
2. *Ibid.*, 77.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 78.
5. *Ibid.*, 160.
6. *Ibid.*, 163.
7. *Ibid.*, 152.
8. *Ibid.*, 209-210.
9. *Ibid.*, 185.
10. Plato, *The Republic*. Trans. Desmond Lee, second edition rev. (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 361.
11. Martin Heidegger, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth" *Pathmarks*. Trans. Thomas Sheehan. Ed. William McNeill, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 177.
12. *Ibid.*, 168, 171.
13. *Ibid.*, 177.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, 178-179.
16. Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth" *Pathmarks*. Trans. John Sallis. Ed. William McNeill, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 150.
17. *Ibid.*, 147, 144.
18. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 164.
19. *Ibid.*, 165.
20. *Ibid.*, 164.
21. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *L'imitation des modernes. Typographies II*. (Paris: Galilée, 1986), 190-194. See also the English translation of some of the essays of this volume, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*. Trans. Christopher Fynsk, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 297, 299-300.
22. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 159.
23. Plotinus, *The Enneads*. Trans. Stephen MacKenna, (London: Penguin, 1991), I.6, 45, 54.
24. *Ibid.*, 49, 46, 47.
25. *Ibid.*, 424.
26. *Ibid.*, 411.
27. *Ibid.*, 412, 413, 419, 420.
28. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 136-187.
29. Lacoue-Labarthe, *L'imitation des modernes. Typographies II*, 194.

## The Neoplatonic Dimensions of Skovoroda's Aesthetic Theory

Roman T. Ciapalo

Whenever I attempt to grapple with one or other of the many *aporiai* in the writings of Hryhorij Skovoroda, the 18th century Ukrainian philosopher, writer, and poet, I turn for inspiration and context to the following words of the historian Dmytro Chzhevskyj:

The figure of Skovoroda stands at the end of the baroque period in the history of Ukrainian letters. Although he himself was part of the culture of the Ukrainian baroque, his period represented a transition to a new form of culture. He was therefore seen by many of his contemporaries as an "archaic," even decadent representative of the past. He stood in the shadow of a growing giant—the rationalism of the Enlightenment. For Skovoroda, however, this new spirit was without a soul, a monstrosity, the child of the devil, goliath, the Beast of the Apocalypse! Thus he could not and would not become part of his times. Although Skovoroda managed during his lifetime to assemble a small circle around himself, for which he had neither the intention nor the will to create any external cohesion, it could never assert itself after his death against that "monster," the spirit of the Enlightenment, and disappeared beneath the waves of those tempestuous times. And with this, Skovoroda himself fell into obscurity.<sup>1</sup>

In recent decades, however, interest in Skovoroda's thought has experienced a renewal. My own interest in his writings is due to several factors, not the least of which is my curiosity about the affinities between his views and ancient Greek thought. So it is to his so-called and often maligned "archaic" roots that I wish to turn in this brief paper in order to see what, if anything, his aesthetic

theory (consisting of his observations on love, beauty, and God) owes to the ancients, in general, and to Neoplatonism, in particular.

Let me begin with some background on the "Ukrainian Socrates," as Skovoroda has frequently been labeled. The historian V.V. Zenkovsky has argued that Skovoroda "was a profound believer, but at the same time he was marked by unusual inner freedom. This inner freedom, his bold, sometimes audacious, flights of thought, stood in opposition to traditional ecclesiastical doctrines; but he feared nothing in his burning desire for truth . . . He had the genuine insight of faith; he was a mystic, in the best sense of the word, but his reason was unconstrained in its free inspiration, and there were often rationalistic features in his thought."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, "Skovoroda became a philosopher because his religious experiences demanded it; he moved from a Christian consciousness to an understanding of man and the world. In general, Skovoroda allowed nothing to impede the movement of his thought. For him the spirit of freedom was a religious imperative, not the tumult of an incredulous mind."<sup>3</sup> In short, although Skovoroda considered himself a Christian and a member of the Christian Church, he remained a free ecclesiastical thinker, firmly preserving his freedom of thought.

We know from his friend and pupil, Kovalynskyj, in whom we find many parallels to Plotinus' Porphyry, that Skovoroda often experienced a spiritual exaltation, a specific kind of ecstasy. Skovoroda himself wrote to his young friend concerning one such mystical experience as follows:

I went for a walk in the garden. The first sensation which I felt in my heart was a kind of release, a freedom and cheerfulness. . . I felt within myself an extraordinary emotion, which filled me with incomprehensible strength. A momentary but most sweet effusion filled my soul, and everything within me burst into flame. The whole world vanished before me. I was animated by a single feeling of love, peace, eternity. Tears poured from my eyes and suffused a tender harmony through my whole being. . .<sup>4</sup>

One only has to read a sample of Skovoroda's works to be convinced that this is not simply rhetoric, or an imitation of some other mystic, but a genuine and unique experience. And eventually one more thing will become clear: if Skovoroda is to be compared with the mystics, it is not with those of the West—although there is an astonishing similarity between him and Angelus Silesius for example—but with those of the East.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it is from his religious concentration and his constant immersion in

prayer, that Skovoroda developed a new understanding of life and the world, a new perception of man, and his theory of the ways of knowing. And as a result of his mystical experiences, Skovoroda became haunted by the thought, as he often put it, that "the whole world sleeps"<sup>6</sup> In his writings, many references can be found to this so-called hidden life of the world, a life which can be felt only religiously. Skovoroda felt very deeply the world's "secret sadness" and its "hidden tears." And long before Schopenhauer, who himself felt the sufferings of the world so acutely (under the influence of Hinduism), Skovoroda was constantly concerned with the world's affliction.

And thus, on the basis of this religious feeling Skovoroda came to feel alienated from the world. The life of the world appeared to him as a fundamental duality. The reality of being was different on the surface from what could be found in its depths; and this led Skovoroda to the epistemological dualism central to his philosophy. There was cognition which glided over the surface of being, and there was also cognition "in God." Accordingly, Skovoroda insisted on the psychological priority of sensory knowledge, from which it was necessary to rise to spiritual knowledge. "If you wish to know something truly," he wrote, "look first at the flesh," *i.e.*, at its outward aspect, and you will see there the divine traces which reveal an unknown and secret wisdom. This higher cognition, this beholding of the "divine traces" comes from a spiritual illumination, but is accessible to anyone who can tear himself away from the bondage of an exclusive reliance upon the senses.<sup>7</sup>

Skovoroda, then, seems to argue that the way to this deepened form of contemplation of being is to be found first of all in man's relation to himself. It is our self-knowledge, in its capacity to reveal to us two 'strata' of being, *i.e.*, a spiritual life behind our psychological experiences, that permits us to see everything in this duality of being. "Self-knowledge, therefore, is the beginning of wisdom: 'If you have not measured yourself first,' Skovoroda remarks, 'what benefit will you gain from measuring other creatures?' 'Who can discover the design in the materials of earth and heaven if he has not first been able to look into his own flesh?'"<sup>8</sup>

This thesis is, of course, highly reminiscent of the spirit of Platonism, the recognition of a world of ideas which duplicates being, however imperfectly. What Skovoroda adds is the tendency toward a mystical interpretation of what is revealed to the "spiritual eye"—thus for him "to know oneself and to understand God is a single enterprise."

Let us leave this brief sketch of Skovoroda's epistemology and turn to his anthropology. The problem of man, his nature, his destiny, and the meaning of

his life stood at the very focus of Skovoroda's reflections. The basic concept which Skovoroda analyzed exhaustively in his doctrine of man is the concept of the heart.<sup>9</sup> What is central and essential in man, according to Skovoroda, is his heart. "As a man's heart is, so is he," he wrote.

It is important to remember that according to his principle of "seeing all things double," Skovoroda teaches that in addition to the earthly body, there is a spiritual body, which is mysterious, hidden, and eternal. Accordingly, there are two hearts. Concerning the "spiritual" heart, Skovoroda says that it is "an abyss which embraces and contains all things," but which nothing can contain.<sup>10</sup> In a dramatic and revealing passage, Skovoroda asks,

"What is the heart, if not the soul? What is the soul, if not a bottomless abyss of thought? What is thought, if not the root, the seed and the grain of all our flesh and blood, and of all other appearance? ... Thought is the secret spring of our whole bodily machine."<sup>11</sup>

In thus characterizing the "heart," Skovoroda employs a conception which had come into use (first in mystical, and later in general, literature) from Meister Eckhart: the conception of a "divine spark," which is "buried in man."<sup>12</sup> "Skovoroda asserts that not only is there a 'divine spark' (Eckhart's '*Funklein*') in man, but 'the Holy Spirit is also hidden there.'"<sup>13</sup>

All of this represents quite an original metaphysics of man, with unmistakable echoes of a variety of sources, including to some extent, anthropology of Philo. But, his views are also close to those 18th century doctrines which culminated in the concept of an "unconscious" sphere in man. What is clear when reading Skovoroda is that he is primarily an investigator of human nature, although in his various statements one continually finds echoes of other thinkers.

Thus, we can also find in Skovoroda traces of a Platonic and Neoplatonic anthropology, specifically, of the doctrine of the "erotic" nature of our aspirations. For him, "[t]he heart does not love unless it sees beauty." To this aesthetic formula, which we shall revisit later, is added the doctrine which is basic to Skovoroda's ethics: that we love deeply only what is "akin" to us and precisely because it is akin to us. Skovoroda's ethics thus enjoins obedience to the "secretly inscribed law of human nature."<sup>14</sup> And this, of course, comes very close to the Stoic principle of "living according to nature."

The key to understanding Skovoroda's theory of beauty seem to be to see

it within its broader context, namely, his discussion of love, and it is to this topic that I shall now briefly direct our attention.

What we find in Skovoroda is an understanding of two sorts of love: the lower and the higher, or, as he usually puts it, earthly love and heavenly love. The sources of this view are many: ancient philosophy, medieval philosophy, especially Byzantine humanism, and the philosophical views of the Renaissance period. As he elaborated on the theme of love, what is obvious is that he tried to take into account all of the positions that preceded him. For example, he was particularly close to the Empedoclean conception of Love as a cosmic force, the cause of the production of things, the principle of their unification, and the countervailing power to Strife, the cause of destruction in the sensible world. It is not surprising, then, that Skovoroda once wrote that "everything began with love and love is to be found everywhere." He was also quite sympathetic to the ideas of Epicurus, particularly when the latter spoke of love as a pleasure that is found on both the corporeal and the spiritual levels.

But, on this theme Skovoroda appears to be particularly fond of Plato and the Neoplatonists, especially with regard to his understanding of idealized love, and his treatment of Aphrodite as an explanatory device. In the dialogue entitled "Narcissus: An Essay of Self-Knowledge" we find Skovoroda offering the following admonition:

Do not be puzzled, my soul! All of us are lovers of dust and ashes. Whoever has fallen in love with his incarnate appearance cannot stop chasing after that appearance in all heavenly and earthly domains. But why, really, does he love it? Isn't it because in it he recognizes brightness and pleasure, life, beauty, and strength?

In this dialogue, Skovoroda "asserts that empirical man is a 'shadow' and 'dream' of the true man. In every man the 'Holy Spirit—a divine energy—is concealed,' and often it seems in reading Skovoroda that the 'true' man, whom we all have in our depths, is 'one' in all men."<sup>15</sup> He avoids the charge of pantheism, however, since he does not teach that god is the "substance" in every man. Rather, the above remark refers to the Son of God—the Logos—made flesh and man. The Logos is individual in its being as man, and at the same time it is every man. The "true man" in each of us is the guarantee of our individuality, but it is not to be separated from the "heavenly man," from the Lord.<sup>16</sup>



In his dialogue "Narcissus," written in the style of Ukrainian Baroque, Skovoroda quite precisely and in greater detail paints a picture of the theme of love. In it we find a combination of several ancient Greek and Christian elements. The theme of the ancient myth of Narcissus, the young boy who falls in love with himself and dies as a result of his self-love, is treated in a highly original and surprising manner. Skovoroda comments on this in the prologue to his dialogue as follows:

This is my first-born son. Born in the seventies of this century. Narcissus is both the name of a certain flower and a certain young man. Narcissus—a young man who was gazing upon himself in the mirror of a spring's clear water and has fallen into a deadly love with himself—is an ancient parable from ancient Egyptian theology and of Hebrew history. His image exhorts us to the following: Know yourself! As if he had said: Do you want to be pleased with yourself and fall in love with yourself? Know yourself! Examine yourself vigorously. For how can one fall in love with something that is unknown? Does hay burn without touching fire? So, too, a heart doesn't love without seeing beauty. It is obvious that love is Sophia's daughter. Where wisdom has cast its gaze, there love has been ignited. Self-love is what is truly blissful, and it is saintly, yes, saintly, and it is true, yes, I say, true, and it has acquired and beheld that one beauty and truth: It is standing in your midst, and you are not aware of it.

Even this brief excerpt from Skovoroda's dialogue "Narcissus" helps to illuminate somewhat his notion of love. Skovoroda refers to Narcissus autobiographically as his first-begotten son. He has himself in mind here, that is, a human being who is striving to understand the world. Only by coming to understand the world, and through this, to understand himself as a part of this world, can a human being come to love himself or herself. Obviously, Skovoroda is not talking here about any sort of egoism or egocentrism. Rather, he is putting into practice the Stoic idea of life in accordance with nature. Love, for Skovoroda, is not a passive human state; but an active endeavor, and it is inseparably bound to knowledge and cognition. Thus, it is not an accident that he refers to love as "the daughter of Wisdom." Love, then, is neither unwise nor blind. Rather, when it is joined to wisdom it is among the most sacred of things.

It is here that Skovoroda weaves into his discussion of love yet another theme—beauty. In his view, beauty and love are always found together. He takes great pains to point out that Narcissus fell in love with himself only *after* he saw and experienced his own beauty, the very beauty of the world of nature,

of which he was a part. Narcissus understood perfectly well the fact that he, having emerged from Nature, would eventually return to it, thereby obeying one of the fundamental principles in Skovoroda's theory, namely, that "whatever one falls in love with, one eventually becomes," that love inevitably involves a transformation of profound dimensions.

As he did with love, Skovoroda divides beauty into two kinds: the earthly and the heavenly, drawing from the ancient distinction between Aphrodite-Ourania, representing higher celestial love, and Aphrodite-Gaia (or, more properly, Aphrodite-Pandemos), representing the love of the whole people: lower sexual love, in other words. The heavenly one (Aphrodite-Ourania) can be traced back to the Phoenician queen of heaven, while originally Pandemos was literally the one who embraces the whole people as the common bond and fellow feeling necessary for the existence of any state.<sup>17</sup>

It certainly appears to be the case that Skovoroda was able to appreciate the value of earthly beauty, the beauty of nature, and the sort of love that it evokes. His contemporaries spoke of his love of fine things, that he was very pleased when someone gave him a pipe carved from ivory, and that he appreciated gold ornaments and jewelry. Consequently, we cannot assume that Skovoroda completely denigrated earthly beauty. His remark that "A heart is not moved to love without first seeing beauty" can certainly be applied first to the world of sensible things. Thus, it is not accurate to maintain that Skovoroda was entirely alienated from this world and that his *sole* interest was the ideal world. Even the earlier quotation from his dialogue "Narcissus" rather clearly bears witness to the fact that, for Skovoroda, it is through the material world that the ideal world is reached. Thus, Skovoroda argues, it is only through by observing closely and learning from nature that we can reach beauty, truth, and love.

In addition to what has already been noted, what else, if anything, does Skovoroda's theory of the beautiful have in common with Neoplatonism? Let me turn to Plotinus for a few points of reference, in particular to his first treatise chronologically, I, 6 "On Beauty." As John Dillon, among others, has correctly pointed, but treatise I, 6

...appears at first sight to be an essay on aesthetics, since it begins with a critique of existing theories of beauty, or *to kalon*, but in fact for Plotinus there is no independent sphere of aesthetics, and the subject matter is primarily ethical.<sup>18</sup>

It is here that we find one of several parallels with Skovoroda, for whom it is not so important to discuss aesthetic theory as such, or the merits of competing theories of beauty in themselves, as it is to define the good life, the ideal way for a human being to live.

What is important in Plotinus, of course, is his contention that (I, 6, 2, lines 13-14) things in this world are beautiful because of their participation in form. Using the imagery of the *Symposium* (206d), Plotinus is able to speak of the soul's instinctive recognition of the presence of form in matter as *kalon*, but shrinking away from instances of its imperfect domination of matter as *aischron* (2.I-8). As Dillon later points out,

...this whole essay is shot through with reminiscences of Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, the central myth of the *Phaedrus* (particularly the regrowing of the wings of the soul, 250eff.), and the Cave Simile of Republic VII. For Plotinus, the role of beauty can only be to recall us to a knowledge of the forms. VII. For Plotinus, the role of beauty can only be to recall us to a knowledge of the forms.<sup>19</sup>

Here, too, fruitful connections to Skovoroda may be noticed, since for him the awareness of earthly beauty is but an initial, quasi-inductive step in a human being's ascent to that true beauty of the divine realm. For Plotinus, the ascent to the forms, namely, to true beauty, is accomplished through the mastery of the virtues, particularly those with kathartic dimensions.

This is ultimately what makes Plotinus' stance on beauty an ethical one, as is obvious from his simultaneously self-centered and other-worldly remarks in chapter 7 (lines 1-12) of treatise I, 6, where he says the following:

So we must ascend again to the Good, which every soul desires. Anyone who has seen it knows what I mean when I say that it is beautiful. It is desired as good, and the desire for it is directed to the good, and the attainment of it is for those who go up to the higher world and are converted and strip off what we put on in our descent—just as for those who go up to celebrations of sacred rites there are purifications, and strippings off of the clothes they wore before, and going up naked; until, passing in the ascent all that is alien to the God, one sees with oneself alone That alone, simple, single and pure, from which all depends and to which all look and are and live and think; for it is the cause of life and mind and being.<sup>20</sup>

What Skovoroda seems to have attempted, and what I have sketched briefly

here is an adaptation of various Neoplatonic themes, along with the Stoic deprecation of the passions and bodily concerns in general, to an essentially Christian theology. So, wherever Plotinus, for example, encourages us to a life of union with our ultimate source, the supreme reality which is sheer unity, Skovoroda substitutes somewhat awkwardly, but largely successfully, the Christian notion of life in Christ.

By way of conclusion I shall return to Skovoroda's view of man's relationship to god. For Skovoroda, it is ultimately through creatures that we can come to understand God's nature and existence. So, as Walter Burkert has noted,

However impious the apotheosis of sexuality may seem in light of the Christian tradition, modern sensibility can nevertheless also appreciate how in the experience of love the loved one and indeed the whole world appears transfigured and joyously intensified, making all else seem insignificant: a tremendous power is revealed, a great deity.<sup>21</sup>

The process of coming to know God, according to Skovoroda, is unusually complex and difficult. It is not surprising, then, that he describes Narcissus as "burning, kindling with the coals of love, bursting with jealousy, rushing about and suffering, and getting heart-sick" until finally he feels God's presence in his heart and finds peace and repose in Him. Thus, the beginning of the journey towards wisdom begins with our attempt to understand God. If one doesn't know God, Skovoroda writes,

he is like a prisoner thrown into a dungeon. What can a person understand in such darkness? The most significant and the first element of wisdom is knowledge of God. I don't see him but I know and believe that he exists. And if I believe, then I am afraid: I am afraid to anger him; I am looking for what pleases him. This is love! Knowledge of God, belief, fear, and love of God - it is all one chain, knowledge in belief, belief in fear, fear in love, love in keeping commandments, and keeping of commandments in love of one's neighbor...

For Skovoroda, those who cannot recognize this higher path are like prisoners living in a dark cave who can never recognize the light of truth. We find here, of course, a classic parallel with the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's *Republic*, where the truth will never become available to those who continue to be imprisoned and paradoxically, those who manage to escape to freedom and by the power of their reason arrive at the beauty of the world, will have no cred-

ibility with the imprisoned. Consequently, if Skovoroda, like Plotinus and other Neoplatonists, disparages earthly life, then it is because it ultimately involves darkness, gloom, ignorance, foolishness; and if he decries people who emphasize only sensory pleasures, it is because they don't care at all about their internal spiritual world, about their higher origins.

For this reason Skovoroda writes with such irony in his dialogue "Narcissus" about the fact that it is the foolish and shallow person who accepts the Sun only as a heavenly body that gives off light and heat, and the fountain (or well-spring) only as a source of drinking water and the origin of brooks, streams, rivers, and seas. Such people do not see that in the sun and in the fountain there exists the very origin of life, they do not see the footprints of divine grace, they do not see in them love and hence genuine beauty. For Skovoroda, only the person of deep spirituality, the person who has turned within and found there the true source of his own beauty and life, is capable of reaching God.

And here we may notice in the thought of Skovoroda yet another echo of Plotinus' ethics. Man's quest for "likeness to God" is for Plotinus, as it is for Skovoroda, the goal of ethical activity. For both thinkers, human actions must be evaluated principally in terms of their ability to assimilate us to the divine. All earthly concerns ultimately must be discarded in the process of purification and ascent to the divine realm. And even though some attention must be paid to the body's needs, both Plotinus' "serious man" (*ho spoudaios*) and Skovoroda's "true Christian" might well be described by the following passage in treatise I. 4 ("On Well-Being"):

He knows its needs, and gives it what he gives it without taking away anything from his own life. His well-being will not be reduced even when fortune goes against him: the good life is still there even so. When his friends and relatives die he knows what death is — as those who die do also, if they are virtuous. Even if the death of friends and relations causes grief, it does not grieve him.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, it is through the achievement of this highest sort of love that a human being becomes wise, indestructible, and unmoved by all unwanted situations and dangers. Such a person is calm with regard to his or her fate and enjoys blessedness. In Skovoroda's own words in "Narcissus,"<sup>23</sup> perfect love, for such an individual

is calmness of soul and the breath of the Holy Spirit. It is like a beautiful garden, soft wind, sweet-smelling flowers, delight in something completed, in which

the imperishable tree of life is forever in bloom. And its fruits are well-wishing, mildness, a calm disposition, gentleness, sincerity, loyalty, safety, pleasure, spiritedness, and the like. For one who has such a soul, peace is with him, and mercy, and eternal joy.

## Notes

1. Dmytro Chyzhevskyj, "An Introduction to the Life and Thought of H. S. Skovoroda," in Richard H. Marshall and Thomas E. Bird, Hryhorij Savic Skovoroda: An Anthology of Critical Articles (Edmonton: CIUS, 1994), 3.
2. Zenkovsky, 53-54.
3. *Ibid.*, 57.
4. *Ibid.*, 58.
5. This is an argument made quite cogently by Zenkovsky, 58.
6. Zenkovsky, 59.
7. *Ibid.*, 59-60.
8. *Ibid.*, 60.
9. *Ibid.*, 61.
10. *Ibid.*, 61.
11. *Ibid.*, 61.
12. *Ibid.*, 62.
13. *Ibid.*, 62.
14. *Ibid.*, 62.
15. *Ibid.*, 62.
16. *Ibid.*, 63.
17. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 152-155. Hereafter, "Burkert."
18. "An Ethic For the Late Antique Sage," 310.
19. *Ibid.*
20. The translation here is by A.H. Armstrong.
21. Burkert, 152.
22. The translation here is by A.H. Armstrong.

## Neoplatonism and American Aesthetics

Jay Bregman

In his essay "the Poet," Emerson remarks that "men have lost the perception of the instant dependence of form upon soul. There is no doctrine of forms in our (*i.e.* Locke's) philosophy."<sup>1</sup> We are made of noetic stuff, at two or three removes yet ignorant of it. To strengthen his argument, Neoplatonic texts are sprinkled throughout the essay. New and higher beauty is expressed through the poet's announcement and affirming of things; thereby the poet opens phenomenal objects to Platonic Forms. "Being used as a type a *second wonderful value appears in the object far better than its old value*—as the carpenter's stretched cord, if you hold your ear close enough, is musical in the Breeze"<sup>2</sup>—a phrase with Pythagorean overtones. Emerson's "proof text" for this notion is not out of Plato's *Symposium* or any of the *Dialogues*. Nor is it taken from *Enn.* I.6, V.8 or other, where Plotinus discusses Art. Rather it is from Iamblichus: "things more excellent than every image, are expressed through images."<sup>3</sup> For Emerson, referring back to his conception of Nature, "things admit of being used as symbols, because *nature is a symbol* in the whole and in every part."<sup>4</sup> As the soul makes the body (Spenser),<sup>5</sup> so the Universe is the externalization of the soul. Wherever the *life* is, that bursts into appearance around it. "We stand before the secret of the world where Being passes into appearance and Unity into Variety."<sup>6</sup> But we (*i.e.* Locke) treat the physical world as self-existent, rather than dependant on Being.

Then out of Proclus: "The mighty heaven exhibits in its transfigurations, clear images of the splendour of intellectual perceptions, being moved in conjunction with *the unapparent periods of intellectual natures*."<sup>7</sup> The entire cosmos exhibits intellectual perceptions, because its motion is aligned with the intellectual or noetic realm. (thoughts as active rather than as "noetic" objects.) The true poet or artist operates in Imagination, "a very high sort of seeing: ..."

As the eyes of Lyncaeus were said to see through the earth (*Enn.* V.8.4, Thomas Taylor, *Select Works of Plotinus*, contains I.6; V.8: on the pelucid and interpenetrating, all:part:part:all—Noetic realm<sup>8</sup>), so the poet “turns the world to glass...” This only happens “by the intellect *being where and what it sees: by sharing the path or circuit of things through forms, and so making them translucent to others.*”<sup>9</sup> In a celebrated passage from *Nature*, the one he “never quite lived down” Emerson reveals: “I became a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all: the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me.”<sup>10</sup>

Compare Plotinus’ description of intellect in Taylor’s translation: “There, however, everybody is pure, and each inhabitant is, as it were, *an eye*. Nothing likewise is there concealed, or fictitious, but before one can speak to another, the latter knows what the former intended to say.”<sup>11</sup>

The poet properly names things after their appearance or their essence. The daemon or soul which stands over everything is the true *arbiter elegantiae*: “as the form of the thing is reflected by the eye, so the soul of the thing is reflected by a melody.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, sublime natural wonders, as well as every flower bed, have a pre- or super- existence in “pre-cantations” — apparently ur-Harmonies. Those who have ears to hear these “which sail in the air” can transcribe their notes, as it were, grasping the forms through Nature. The ultimate purpose of Nature is “ascension or the passage of the soul into higher forms.”<sup>13</sup> The poet accompanies the divine aura which breathes through forms. Beyond conscious intellect resides new energy, “as if an intellect doubled on itself.”<sup>14</sup> where the poet abandons himself to the nature of things. He becomes a universal force: “his speech is thunder, his thought is law and his words are universally intelligible...”<sup>15</sup> The poet who speaks adequately, speaks “wildly, or with the flower of the mind.”<sup>16</sup> The *anthos tou nou* is a Procline/Chaldaen conception of super-noetic perception “near the One.” Here, says Emerson, the intellect “released from all service,” takes its direction from celestial life; thus the intellect “inebriated by nectar” is freed from practical activities and the poet sees with the “eyes of Lyncaeus.”<sup>17</sup>

Emerson’s adaptation of the *anthos tou nou* is striking and demonstrates a grasp of the theurgic Neoplatonist privileging of super-noetic intuition; only the “beyond-intellect” allows us to grasp form imaginatively and express it with artistic spontaneity.

In a passage about intimations of the immortality of our essence, Emerson thinks it appears when famous philosophers and company express their characteristic “thing,” e.g., when Socrates in *Charmides*, tells us that the soul is

cured of its maladies by certain incantations, and that these incantations are beautiful reasons,<sup>18</sup> from which temperance is generated in souls. “This occurs also when Proclus calls the universe the “statue of intellect...”<sup>19</sup> Neoplatonic ideas adapted to Emerson’s purposes are central to his conception of the poetic process, poetry and the poet; by extension the artist *per se*. His ideas provided a framework for many subsequent artists and thinkers.

Among American artists influenced by the Transcendentalists is the Hudson River school’s Frederick Church. His “Rainy Season in the Tropics” has been called a “lightscape” in which he “sees through” matter, as Lyncaeus. A religious syncretist, it is likely that Church derived Neoplatonic aesthetic notions from Coleridge. M. Weinstein connects Church’s vision of light to Plotinus and Iamblichus, “who spoke of the soul being known by its light.”<sup>20</sup>

In the late 19th century French Symbolists Neoplatonized Schopenhauer, whose aesthetic theories have much more in common with Plotinus than with Plato: the artist does not imitate, but realizes Form; the work of art is something that wasn’t there before. “We made a singular mixture of Plotinus, of Edgar Poe, of Baudelaire and of Schopenhauer,” wrote M. Denis (Davezac, 258) They shared many key ideas. For Plotinus as for Schopenhauer, “the soul gives the realm of sense something of its own.” “It is Plotinus view of art that the symbolists share: the faith in art’s ability to redeem nature by discovering in phenomena its positive links with Idea” (Davezac, 260). In V.8.2 Plotinus says “... the arts are not to be slighted on the ground that they create by imitation of natural objects, ...we must recognize that they give no bare reproduction of the thing seen but go back to the ideas from which nature derives; and ...that much of their work is all their own; they are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking;” the arts can transform nature into idea — “for the soul includes a faculty peculiarly addressed to beauty” (I.6.3). “Consider even the case of pictures—those seeing by the bodily sense the production of the art of painting...are deeply stirred by recognizing in the objects depicted to the eyes... the representation of what lies in the Idea and so are called to recollect the truth.” (II.9.16) This is very close to Schopenhauer, who, however, differed from Plotinus in his notion of Art as Temporary Nirvana. For Plotinus, as Fred Schroeder has shown in his eloquent article on Plotinus’s *Symposium* of Plato, “Prophecy and Remembrance in Plotinus,” there is still pain in the recognition of the Beautiful, and the Beautiful is thereby distinguished from the Good.<sup>21</sup> Still, for Schopenhauer the Idea is distinct from the reasoned Concept, always an object of perception... entirely within the sphere of intuition” (Davezac, 261).

Plotinus was often quoted by Symbolist scholars and artists of the 1890's; according to M. Denis, in order to counter Auguste Comte's Positivism, P. Serusier "held forth on the doctrine of Plotinus and the school of Alexandria."

In America, Symbolism had few advocates. Arthur B. Davies painted mythological, almost surreal scenes such as "Full-Orbed Moon," whose luminous female figure under the orb of the moon, suggests mysteries connected with Selene. Elihu Vedder's Symbolist Mythological canvasses, Pre-Raphaelite in style, suggest a Neoplatonic inspired "mysteriosophy." Maurice Prendergast was influenced by the Nabi painters. Among John Singer Sargent's depictions of the evolution of religion for the Boston Public Library, noteworthy is his syncretistic "Astarte," with its mysterious diaphanous forms and "Near Eastern Style Occult Symbols"<sup>22</sup>—it seems to be a "theurgic" image of the goddess providentially bringing harmonic order as an Avatar of Universal Soul.

The American modern artist and sometime expatriate Marsden Hartley was perhaps the real heir of the Symbolist aesthetic. He was influenced by the Transcendentalists and Santayana. His favorite reading included writings of the Christian mystics and Plotinus.<sup>23</sup> An "irreligious mystic," he sought Santayana's realm of essence—pure Being in its infinite implications. This essence was graspable only by intuition. Plotinus was his idea of a true thinker who presented "a modified mysticism through mind processes that suit me perfectly..."<sup>24</sup> I think it must be [that] PLOTINUS HAS REFINED MY MY SENSE OF ESSENCE DOWN TO THE LAST DETAIL..."<sup>25</sup> He adhered to G. de Nerval's doctrine of *correspondences*—Baudelaire's "Foret de Symboles"—in Nature. This symbolist notion implies overtones of Proclus's idea of the universal correspondences of images to archetypes and the *seira* or chains of Being; e.g., "The Good" as Sun of the Intelligible World - Helios-Mithras, the Intellectual god, Visible Helios, Solar Daimons, Solar Heroes, Solar initiates (*Heliodromoi*) the Lion, the Cock, the Heliotrope, the Sunstone.

For Hartley the divine was "NOUS, the fourth dimension"—that which is more than ourselves—the 4th dimension that Cezanne tried to paint, the thing which exists between me and the object.<sup>26</sup> For a Neoplatonist this is "the Idea." His best canvasses, e.g., *Oriental Symphony*—the Kandinsky influenced Indian Fantasy, the quasi-cubist constructions, with their geometric shapes, circles, pyramids and mystic graphic signs, display this sensibility. Gertrude Stein approved of his first "mystical abstractions."

Noteworthy of Hartley's Landscapes of New England and Maine are his views of Mt. Katadhin, where he comes close to achieving the essence of Form through the object—the visible fourth dimension—his *NOUS*: "I know I

have seen God now. The occult connection that is established when one loves nature was complete—and so I felt transported to a visible 4th dimension—and since heaven is...a state of mind. I have been there these past ten days."<sup>27</sup>

Contemporaries of Hartley, the Canadian "Group of Seven," became aware of Plotinus through the perennialist Theosophy of Mme. Blavatsky. Their Transcendentalist landscape canvasses appear as a super-real or symbolic search for the "thing" between painter and object; they attempted to paint the Symbolic Idea, the essence of the North American landscape.

Hilary Armstrong insisted on the importance of the sense of the One and the Beautiful in Nature, almost in the manner of an environmental theologian. For him the poet William Blake, despite his criticisms of Plato and company, remained close to Neoplatonism and W. B. Yeats was a "theurgic neoplatonist."<sup>28</sup> Among the poets who knew Yeats and company, Ezra Pound had a serious interest in Plotinus and Platonic connections with the Eleusinian mysteries, a notion he probably got from Thomas Taylor;<sup>29</sup> also, according to Pound, its medieval and later continuations. Perhaps historically naive, even delusional, Pound's ideas were poetically fruitful.

In Pound's syncretizing of Greek mythology, the Mysteries and Philosophy, Odysseus sets the standard of heroic action in the *Cantos*, the mysteries of Eleusis are connected with the beatific vision: "the beatific vision of the mystic is preceded by darkness and bewilderment equivalent to the darkness and confusion experienced by the initiate at Eleusis." (Surette, 256; cf. Plutarch, "On the Soul" 2).

In canto 98:

no more black shawls in the Piazza  
more *sabello*, for Demeter  
"Ut facias pulchram"...

The black shawls according to Pound, were still worn in his "young" time in Venice, for Demeter (canto 102).

They represent a persistence of Eleusis into modern times, that is of the cult of beauty—*ut facias pulchram*.

In Byzantium, the Eleusinian awareness continued:

"The body is inside" Thus Plotinus  
But Gemisto: "Are Gods by hilaritas,"

Here is Plotinus' notion that body is actually in soul and not vice-versa (Surette, 257).

Aphrodite and Persephone are manifestations of the Nous-the Divine Mind. The former is the seen form par excellence/beatific vision

...Cythera potens, Kythera deina  
no cloud but the Crystal body...

The luminous and/or diaphanous bodies of the gods seem to be based on Iamblichean theurgy. On a more mundane note, Pound records Porphyry account of Plotinus's stomach problems as "Plotinus bellyache..."<sup>30</sup>

Pound's hero, Odysseus is presented as an Eleusinian initiate who could brave both the terrors of the Underworld, and the bed of the goddess—a figure uniting the three major subjects of the poem: the descent, the repeat in history, and "the bust thru from the quotidian to the divine."

The poet also read Eriugena and thought his doctrines significant for the medieval Albigenian heretics, whom he saw as adepts of a pagan cult. He didn't understand the Manichaean issue very well: "Have...the text of Eriugena... Johnny had a nice mind *Omnia quae sunt lumina*." All things which are, are lights—the phrase appears in Pisan Cantos 74, facing the Chinese ideogram for "bright:" "in the light of light is the *virtu/sunt lumina*," said Eriugena (74/429:455) and lower on the same page:

Light tensile immaculata  
the sun's cord unspotted  
*sunt lumina*, said the Oirishman to King Carolus  
*Omnia*  
all things that are are lights

The light is ultimately the light of Eleusis, Pound's synoptic and Neoplatonic tinged Eleusis (Taylor's influence), which persists in the 12th century love cult or religion of Amor and down to modern times; it represents the conquest of beauty leading to revelation.

It is not surprising, then, that Pound was also interested in the Neoplatonic Lichtmetaphysik of the 13th century Oxonian Robert Grosseteste.

C. Terrell has connected Pound with Medieval Latin Platonism;<sup>31</sup> *lux enim*, the primal light of Grosseteste is related to the spiritually charged lights of

Eriugena and Grosseteste's "transitus per plura... diaphana..." is in one place connected with Plotinus:

*Nous* to *ariston autou*  
as light into water compenetrans  
that is *pathema*  
*ouk aphistatai*  
thus Plotinus  
*per plura diafana*

*Nous* and Light are equated. Grosseteste seems to distinguish *lux*, light as simple being, the source, from *lumen*, light as "spiritual body," reflected or radiated light.<sup>32</sup>

Terrell points out, however, that what Plotinus and Grosseteste assumed to be philosophy and/or science, Pound uses as metaphor: Says Pound, "Grosseteste may or may not be scientific but at least his mind gives us a structure..." Sharon Mayer Libera, a student of the Neoplatonic elements in Pound's poetry thinks that Pound's sense of pervasive light is *Nous* and linked with his love of myth (Libera, 355). He is a modern Neoplatonic polytheist:

When is god manifest?  
When the states of mind take form  
When does a man become a god?  
When he enters one of the states of mind

And a theurgic Iamblichean Neoplatonic polytheist at that:

By what characteristics may we know the divine forms?  
By beauty  
And if the presented forms are unbeautiful?  
They are demons.  
If they are grotesque?  
They may be well minded genii. (Libera, 258)

Gods appear formed "to the sense of vision and formlessly to the sense of knowledge"

In Canto 25/119:124, the wise man of Gilgamesh, Napishtim, amid "forms and renewals, gods held in the air, Casting his gods back into the *voûs*."

Reflecting Iamblichus *DM* (Taylor, 125) in his guide to Kulchur's (223) chapter on the Neoplatonics, etc.: "Iamblichus on the fire of the gods, *tou ton theon pyros*, etc., which comes down into a man and produces superior ecstasies, feelings of regained youth, super-youth and so forth." The lines: "Iamblichus light, the souls ascending" appear in a depiction of Egypt in Canto 5/17:21.

Pound's magical gods of mythology-the light imagery of his "magic moments" that break into eternal states of mind is reminiscent of the luminous *plasmata* of Iamblichus. (Libera, 360) Canto 23/107:111 includes the "divine fire" of Iamblichus in a Byzantine Neoplatonic context:

"*Et Omniformis.*" Psellos, "*omnis Intellectus est.*" God's fire. Gemisto:  
Never with this religion

(*El Th* 176: all the Intellectual Forms are both implicit in each other and severally existent)

Will you make men of the Greeks  
But build a wall across Peloponnesus  
And organize, and...  
damn these Egetalian barbarians.

In the Malatesta Cantos, Gemisto, that is, Pletho ambassador to Ferrara, in Florence, because the "pest" is:

...Talking of the war about the temple at Delphos,  
and of POSEIDON, concret Allgemcine...

Pound caps Poseidon, who in Pletho's system corresponds to NOUS, Zeus to the ONE... Milton Anastos, in his classic paper on Pletho's Calendar and Liturgy indicates that for Pletho "Each god has a special province of his own. But all are subordinate to Poseidon, the eldest and most powerful of the children of Zeus" (see also Libera, 372). Pound saw Pletho as a seminal figure in getting Ficino his position as Cosimo de Medici's Neoplatonist translator and in respect of the genealogy of the gods, compared to Pletho, Ficino was perhaps a mere valedictorian.

ὕδωρ

*Hudor et Pax*

Gemisto stemmed all from Neptune  
hence the Rimini Bas-Reliefs

(quasi-pagan temple of Malatesta-where Pletho's remains were moved from Mistra") and in Guide to Kulchur (224-Libera 373): "He (Gemistus) was not a proper polytheist, in this sense: His gods came from Neptune, so that there is a single source of being, aquatic (*udor*, Thales, etc. as you like, or what is the difference)." According to Iamblichus, light reflected in water is also a means of divination.

For Pound, Neoplatonically, the key is Mind, Intellect, perception of beauty to which Mind is specially fitted as if the forms one admires or creates were the thoughts of a greater whole in which one fleetingly participates. The old gods are present in "magic moments" to him who is "ready to look." (Libera, 377).

Since the Transcendentalists and their interest in Thomas Taylor, Hellenic Neoplatonism as such has formed a backdrop to elements in American thought and art. Despite quite literally damning the Absolute, William James, in *The Varieties*, seriously analyzes the Pseudo-Dionysian mystical tradition and counts Neoplatonism as an important strand of mystical thought.<sup>33</sup> In a book praised by James and recently popular, *Cosmic Consciousness*, the Canadian friend of Walt Whitman, the Psychiatrist, Dr. R.M. Bucke placed Plotinus high on the list of those possessing "cosmic consciousness," he tries to analyze his "mystical mentality," albeit from a not clearly reliable source.<sup>34</sup>

We should also remember that Pythagoreanism was also part of the package right along. This is not surprising, given the ancient Neoplatonist idea of the congruence of Neoplatonic and neopythagorean thought. Gregory Shaw has discerned a Pythagorean form of Theurgy in Iamblichus and even in Plotinus. Furthermore, there has been a modern revival of neopythagorean musical thought, music theory, and the practice of music itself. Leonard Bernstein, Derycke Cook, Paul Hindemith, and H. Schenker among others, have argued for a "natural pentatonic scale" as the basis of Western tonality which followed musical law as Pythagoras conceived of it. Rather than an arbitrary convention, they thought, the Western scale has its source in the natural order. (Storr, 52). Bernstein wrote: "I believe that from the Earth emerges a musical poetry which is by the nature of its sources tonal. I believe that these sources cause to exist a phonology of music, which evolves from the universal



known as the harmonic series. And That There Is An Equally Universal Musical Syntax, Which Can Be Codified And Structured in terms of symmetry and repetition." ("The Unanswered Question"—"coda"—Harvard, '73.) He thought all music past, present and future, and of all types and all cultures—"all of it has a common origin in the universal phenomenon of the harmonic series." (Storr, 57, 61).

The innovative 20th century composer Charles Ives in his *Essays Before a Sonata*—a kind of reflection on his Transcendentalist background and intro to his Concord Sonata in four movements: Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne. The Alcotts—invokes Plotinus to back up his idea of individual expression—though Plotinus himself would perhaps find this a bit strange. The composer should not be afraid to express himself: "He can remember with Plotinus that in every human soul there is the ray of celestial beauty; and therefore every human outburst may contain a partial ray..."<sup>35</sup> And in another passage: "...each has in some degree creative insight and an interest desire and ability to express it..." in every human soul there is a ray of celestial beauty (Plotinus admits that), and a spark of genius (nobody admits that).<sup>36</sup>

Ives, who considered Thoreau a great composer, if only for the rhythm of his prose, alludes to the natural Pythagoreanism expressed in *Walden's*, "accompanying undulations of celestial music,"<sup>37</sup> and the musical/mystical effect of Concord church bells, "At a distance over the woods the sound acquires a certain vibratory hum, as if the pine needles in the horizon were the strings of a harp... a vibration of the universal lyre."<sup>38</sup> The Transcendentalists read the ancient *Life of Pythagoras* as guides to life. Thoreau was especially attracted to Thomas Taylor's translation of Iamblichus *Life of Pythagoras* and *Pythagoric Sayings* from Stobaeus, especially when they displayed a Thoreau-like simplicity: "It is better to live lying on the the grass, confiding in divinity and yourself, than to lie in a golden bed with perturbation." His view of nature seems at times to be influenced by the theurgic doctrine of correspondences of images to archetypes: the *seira* or "chains" of being on which plants, animals, human souls, daemons and cosmic bodies are "suspended" from higher realities. Hence "the sunflower moves in a circular dance towards the sun... if one could hear the pulsation made by its circuit.. he would perceive a sound... in honor of its kind, such as a plant is capable of..."<sup>39</sup> The Transcendentalist periodical *The Dial* also featured Pythagorean music criticism.

The Pythagorean tradition in music and musical speculation has been revived in the present (see J. Godwin).<sup>40</sup> In *The Pythagorean Plato*, Ernest G. McClain suggests that the number of the "tyrannical nature" in Plato's *Repub-*

lic translates (in the western scale) to the "tritone" most distant from the lowest note on the piano keyboard. In short, approaching the most dissonant interval we can imagine—or better perhaps the tritone may be understood as neither clearly consonant or dissonant and thus pure *apeiron*, indefiniteness—unresolved in any sort of *harmonia*.<sup>41</sup> European Jazz critic and producer J.E. Berendt opens his book, the *World is Sound on a frontespiece* in which a Pythagorizing Plotinus is quoted first: "All music, based upon melody and rhythm, is the earthly representative of heavenly music" Though his major interest is the recent influence on the West of Eastern philosophical and musical ideas, he includes a thorough discussion of speculative music, including modern Pythagoreans such as Marius Schneider, Hans Kayser and Rudolf Haase, as well as Pythagoras and the Pythagorean tradition including Kepler: "This book keeps making the statement that the world is sound. Not: the world is vibration. Of course, one could say that as a well—it is true and everybody says so. But it isn't precise enough. From the standpoint of physics, there billions of different possible vibrations. But the cosmos—the universe—chooses from these billions of possibilities with overwhelming preference for those few thousand vibrations that make harmonic sense (and in the final analysis; that makes musical sense): these translate to the proportions of the overtone scale, the major scale, (and less frequently the minor scale), the Lambdoma and certain church music and Indian ragas."<sup>42</sup> Plato knew the (seven) laws of harmony demonstrated by the Pythagoreans on the monochord (Berendt, 62) and referred to by Plato in the *Timaeus*, in which he recognized that the soul of the world is a musical scale.

One contemporary Platonic, or at least in part Platonic American visionary, who has not been widely recognized as such, is the late Sci/Fi author Philip K. Dick, whose stories "Blade Runner: Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" and "Total Recall" have been made into Hollywood movies. Anyone who has seen these or has read him knows that the author is adept at playing with the perception of appearance and reality. During a conversion experience—to an idiosyncratic "Christian/Gnosis," he experienced a beam of laser-like pink light as "an invasion of my mind by a transcendently rational mind, as if I had been insane all my life and suddenly had become sane."<sup>43</sup> This mind became in his last novel: VALIS standing for *Vast Active Living Intelligence Systems*. (Kinney, 7-8). In addition to these novels he filled notebooks with millions of words, in the manner of a "gnostic." Among his 10 articles, which define "Gnosticism:" "But the Savior (Valis) is here, disincorporate; he restores our memory and gives us knowledge of our true situation and nature. Our real

nature-forgotten but not lost—is that of being fallen or captured bits of the Godhead. His nature—the Savior's—and ours is identical; we are him and he is us. The Creator of this world is irrational and wars against the Savior who camouflages himself and his presence here. He is an invader. Thus it is a secret that he is here, nor do we recognize the irrationality of this world and its frauds: that it lies to us. It is us and the Savior vs. this irrational world."

In order to modify this somewhat bleak picture Dick adds nine amendments, some of them long and with complicated qualifications of his position. *e.g.*, "I say, this world in a more ultimate sense (unglimpsed by the Gnostics) serves a benign purpose: it teaches us and we either learn or we do not. If we solve the moral and epistemological puzzles we get to return to the Godhead from which we came. I say, this world is a maze. We may have built it ourselves (while we were in a higher unfallen state) and entered it voluntarily to test our powers (abilities). However, we have become trapped and so a fail-safe device—the Savior Valis—has automatically gone into action to aid us. And final example, I say, this world is not so much evil as a mystery. What may have originally been conceived by us as a challenge has turned out to be a prison (or trap?). Fortunately we anticipated this: thus the Savior who invades this unreal world (Maze) and restores our memory and knowledge and state is our own selves; the Salvator Salvandus: our supra-temporal disincorporate Original and final Self." (*Gnosis* 13) Here we may think of Emerson in *Nature* perhaps intentionally reflecting the Hermetic myth of the Fall of Primal Man, the Anthropos, saying that man is the dwarf of himself, he used to fill the heavens, but now he fills only a small space, and you get the sense that Philip K. Dick is a sort of Gnostic Transcendentalist—of course "pessimistic" compared to the Transcendentalists "optimistic" visions, if we allow *mutatis mutandis*, for the differences between 19th century Ivy League New England Liberal Unitarian culture and post-1960's San Francisco Bay area Syncretistic "Hippy" culture. There are continuities as well as differences.

A most interesting and easily intelligible example of Dick's convictions about apparent and true reality can be found in his discussion in an interview in which he describes experience in Platonic terms: He is at the assassination of Lincoln. But the assassination ITSELF becomes a stage show in which the furniture and other elements of reality are seen to be what they really are: stage props. And then he perceives the stage where this is going on, as just that, a stage, in a theater building. The building itself is more than the stage and immediately "behind," the backdrop behind the curtains and the stage is some kind of initial darkness that is, however, connected to some higher or greater

Reality. The "show," whether the participants are aware of it or not, is basically a Projection of that Reality onto an apparent stage set. The show was nothing more than a "derivative illusion," of something deeper. Given the scene one assumes that the show is at least in part a representation of human History as well as empirical reality as such. After explaining his vision Dick said that it was *that experience he underwent* that enabled him to understand what Plato was talking about in his "Allegory of the Cave" in the *Republic*.

In his farewell lecture at Yale in 1972 "The Rationality of Mysticism," where he presented his avowed neo-Neoplatonic views J. N. Findlay asserted that mystical art displays "interpenetration," by which he meant something like what Proclus meant in *El.Th.* Prop 103, "Πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, οἰκείως δὲ ἐν ἑκάστῳ" "All things are in all things, but in each according to its proper nature: for in Being there is life and intelligence; in Life, being and intelligence; in Intelligence, being and life; but each of these exists upon one level intellectually, upon another vitally, and on the third, existentially." Thus according to Findlay, for example, Dante is mystical (and Neoplatonic), Mozart is deeply mystical in "The Magic Flute" and *not* mystical in "Don Giovanni." The implication is that the music *itself* would have to have a feel of "interpenetration" to qualify as mystical, in Findlay's sense.

Plotinus said that "symmetry itself" cannot explain why something is beautiful, else why is a flash of lightning (with no parts) beautiful.<sup>4</sup> He is of course working up to his argument that Beauty is dependent on Form. From another angle, we may add that neither does symmetry make a work of Art "mystical." Hard to define "ways of seeing," "ways of hearing" and "ways of knowing" are somehow more important in this regard.

I have attempted to give some examples of Neoplatonic influences on American art and thought. In addition to the admirable advances to Neoplatonic scholarship achieved in North America, Europe, and other places, especially in the last three odd decades, there has been since the 19th century, a stream of Neoplatonic toned ideas, sometimes flowing underground, that has significantly shaped, from the New England Transcendentalists through certain contemporary thinkers and artists, what has been for the most part an American aesthetic.

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- Norman Weinstein, "Rejoicing in the Light of Paradise" *Parabola* vol. 21 no. 2, May (1996), 76-79.

## Notes

1. R. W. Emerson, *Essays, Second Series* (Boston, 1903), 3.
2. *Ibid.*, 13 (emphasis added).
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 15, paraphrasing Spenser.
6. *Ibid.*, 14.
7. *Ibid.*, follows Thomas Taylor's translation of Plato.
8. P. Hadot, *Plotinus and the Simplicity of Vision* (Chicago, 1993), 36. Hadot suggests that to "see through" matter to Form: "We might call this procedure the Lynceus method, 'since the latter could even see what is within the earth,'" (quoting Plotinus, *Enn.* V.8.4,25).
9. Emerson, *Essays*, 8 (emphasis added).
10. Emerson, *Nature, Addresses and Lectures* (Boston, 1903), 10.
11. Plotinus, *Select Works of Plotinus*. Trans. Thomas Taylor, (London, 1911), *Enneads*, V.8.4.
12. Emerson, *Essays*, 25.
13. *Ibid.*, 24.
14. *Ibid.*, 25.
15. *Ibid.*, 26-27.
16. *Ibid.*, 27.
17. See note 8 above.
18. Emerson, *Essays*, 30-31 (emphasis added).
19. *Ibid.*, 31.
20. Norman Weinstein, "Rejoicing in the Light of Paradise" *Parabola* vol. 21 no. 2, May (1996), 79. See note 8 above. In concert with the "Lynceus method" Weinstein says of Church: "He anticipates the discoveries of twentieth century physics in "seeing through" supposedly stable and solid matter, realizing as a recurring pattern of light and energy in constant flux."
21. F. Schroeder, "Prophecy and Remembrance in Plotinus" Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy 12 (1996), 4.
22. Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (London 1972; New York 1985), 142-45.
23. Townsend Luddington, *Marsden Hartley, the Biography of an American Artist* (Boston 1972), 16.
24. *Ibid.*, 18.
25. *Ibid.*, 20.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, 23.
28. A. H. Armstrong, "The Divine Enhancement of Earthly Beauties;" "Platonic Mirrors," *Hellenic and Christian Studies* (London 1990), 68, 164-165, on Blake.

- Also, A. H. Armstrong, "The Escape of the One," *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London 1979), 89, in note 2 "...the great Pagan neoplatonist Poet W.B. Yeats."
29. C. Terrell, "Mang Tze, Thomas Taylor and Madame YAH," *Paideuma*, vol. 7 nos. 1 & 2, 146-148 and 151-153.
  30. C. Terrell, "A Commentary on Grossteste with an English Version of *De Luce*," *Paideuma* vol. 2 no. 3, Winter (1973), 452.
  31. *Ibid.*, 451-462.
  32. *Ibid.*, 451 and 453.
  33. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York, 1909), 416-417, 419 and 420.
  34. R. M. Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness* (New York, 1969), 121-125. Bucke includes a letter of Plotinus to one Flaccus, unknown to Plotinus scholars and derived from Robert Vaughan's *Hours With the Mystics: A Contribution to the History of Religious Opinion* (London, 1893). Bucke takes the letter as genuine, but it is a "jeu d'esprit" of Vaughan, who in vol. 1, page 82, refers to words he himself invented for Ammonius Saccas (74-75) as "this imaginary fragment from Ammonius Saccas." Bucke also includes material from A. Harnack's entry under "Neoplatonism" (*The Encyclopedia Britannica, A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, ninth edition, [Edinburgh, 1884] vol. 17, 332-9), which presents a fair summary of Plotinus' account of the return of the soul to the Good. I am indebted to Frederic Schroeder for this reference.
  35. Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata*, third ed., (New York, 1970), 97.
  36. *Ibid.*, 126.
  37. *Ibid.*, 53.
  38. *Ibid.*, 68.
  39. See J. Bregman, "The Neoplatonic Revival in North America" *Hermathena* CXLIX, Winter (1990), 106.
  40. Jocelyn Godwin, *Cosmic Music* (Rochester, VT, 1989), *Passim*.
  41. Ernest G. McClain, *The Pythagorean Plato* (Maine, 1978), 23ff. For a discussion of the complex harmonic ratios involved and their ethical implications, see McClain, chapter 3, "The Tyrant's Allegory" (*Republic*), 33-39.
  42. J. E. Berendt, *Nada Brahma: The world is Sound* (Rochester, VT, 1989), 90.
  43. Jay Kinney, "The Mysterious Revelations of Philip K. Dick," *Gnosis*, Fall/Winter (1985/1986), 6ff, this section depends on this article.
  44. Plotinus, *Select Works of Plotinus. Enneads*, I.6,1,34-35.

## The Role of Aesthetics in Plotinus' Ascent of the Soul

J. Noel Hubler

Although he did not write a single systematic work, Plotinus is nevertheless a systematic thinker. His many treatises reveal themselves as parts of a great systematic understanding. The issues he addresses in metaphysics, physics, logic, and ethics all work together in his systematic vision. Aesthetics are no exception. They form part of his overall system. This in no way diminishes their importance, because aesthetics play a crucial role in the central concern of Plotinus' philosophy: the ascent of the soul to the One.<sup>1</sup>

According to Plotinus, aesthetics both begin and perfect the soul's ascent to the One. The One is the source of all being, intelligence, life, and beauty. It is the soul's ultimate fulfillment, but it is not found external to the soul. Rather the One is found at each soul's core.<sup>2</sup> A true understanding of aesthetics first turns the human soul into itself and begins its ascent. True aesthetics teach the soul that souls are the source of all the beauty in the external world. The world soul creates the beauty of the natural realm, while humans are capable of producing technological beauty. This understanding directs the soul's natural desire for beauty inward. Once drawn into itself, the soul then needs to learn that its core is the One. The trained soul learns to rest in and love the beauty of the One. The aesthetic discovery is the soul's ultimate fulfillment.<sup>3</sup>

The One is the ultimate source of all things. Out of its perfection, the One emanates the divine Intellect. The divine Intellect perfectly contemplates the One and becomes perfected by it. When the Intellect contemplates the One, it comes to its true understanding. The Intellect's perfect understanding is the being of all things. Its understanding is truth itself, which is a unity of knower and known. The Intellect's unity is an image of the unity of the One, but it is

not as perfect in its unity as is the One. Unity in intellection implies a subject/object dichotomy (6.9.2.36). The Intellect must gain its unity through contemplation, rather than being unity itself, as the One is. The One is fully present to itself and requires no intellection in order to present itself to itself (6.9.6.49, 6.5.10.16, 6.7.38.24). It is beyond both intellect and being.<sup>3</sup>

Out of its perfect contemplation, the Intellect emanates Soul. The eternal hypostatic Soul introduces motion into the universe. It produces sensation, nature, and matter, all of which are in motion. The eternal, hypostatic Soul includes the world soul, human and animal souls, and even plant souls as its various species (5.1.1, 4.9.4.15).<sup>4</sup>

Aesthetics play a two-fold role in the ascent of the human soul. 1) They show the soul that it is the source of all external beauty and thus direct it inward and begin the soul's ascent. 2) They lead the soul to discover its true internal beauty which is its core. The soul's core is the One and the One is beauty. We can call the two aesthetics external and internal. External aesthetics begin the ascent of the soul. Internal aesthetics perfect it.

### External aesthetics

Plotinus' aesthetics dramatically depart from his inherited tradition. Plotinus quickly undoes the old Stoic definition of beauty as a "symmetria of parts to each other and to the whole" (1.6.1.21 f.). Plotinus points out that under the Stoic definition, no simples could be beautiful; neither colors nor sounds; neither virtues nor understandings. Neither would the parts themselves be beautiful, because only their composition would make them so. Therefore, the Stoics would have us believe that beautiful things could only be made from ugly parts (1.6.1).

Plotinus does agree that symmetry can make things beautiful (6.7.30.38), but I think it is fair to say that according to Plotinus' theory, symmetry is an imitation of true beauty. True beauty comes in unity and completeness. Symmetry is beautiful because it brings agreeable unity to its parts, but symmetry is merely a likeness of more fundamental unities. Symmetry is posterior to the unity of the forms. The forms are themselves secondary and gain their unity, perfection, and beauty from the One, which is the fount of all being and beauty (1.6.6.25, cf. 5.9.2).

For Plotinus, beauty lies in completeness, perfection, and unity. In the visible world, a beautiful thing is perfect and complete in its form. Its form unifies it and makes it beautiful. Plotinus explains that the form and completeness of the universe make it beautiful,

Things become beautiful because of a cause. Since even now something is beautiful, because it is a whole—for "the whole" names this present thing and its form—and because it controls matter. It controls it if it leaves nothing of it unformed. It leaves something out if any form is lacking, for example an eye or something else (6.7.3.9-13 cf. 1.6.2.22-25).<sup>6</sup>

If a sculptor were to leave out an eye, the statue would lack beauty. It would fall short of its completion and perfection. Likewise, to remove a required part from a sculpture would diminish its beauty, as if one were to knock off David's nose. Leaving matter unformed and chaotic leaves it ugly. It is like the ugliness of a completely untidy room, which lacks the proper order. Form brings completion and unity to matter and makes it beautiful.

Form is beautiful to the extent that it completes and perfects, but form ultimately is merely an image of a greater beauty. The One itself is beautiful in its ultimate, self-sufficient completion and perfection. It is beauty without form, because it is in no way limited by form or by anything else.

The power of all is the crown of beauty, beauty which makes beauty. For it generates beauty and makes it more beautiful by the abundance of the beauty from itself, such that it is the beginning and end of beauty (6.7.32.31-35).

The One is beauty in itself although it has no form, because it is complete and whole in itself and lacks nothing (6.7.10.9, 6.7.23.7). Form is not the ultimate beauty. Ultimately, perfect, complete unity is beauty. Form is only beautiful to the extent it mirrors the unity of the One.

Unity explains the human soul's desire for beauty. According to Plotinus, the soul is reviled by ugliness because an ugly thing is unlike the soul. It is unlike the soul because it lacks form and unity which the soul possesses. By contrast, the soul is drawn to that which is like it and it rejoices in it,

If it sees anything that is of its kind or is a trace of its kind, it rejoices and is excited and comes to itself and it remembers itself and its own (1.6.2.8-11).

Material things are like the soul to the extent that they are informed. Form gives material things unity, akin to the unity of the soul. The soul recognizes that a beautiful thing has form just as it does (1.6.2).

Therefore, external aesthetics begin the soul's ascent. In seeing the beauty in the outside world, the soul is reminded of itself. The beauty of externals reminds the soul of its own unity. Plotinus uses the Platonic term "recollection" to indicate the process by which the soul recognizes its own unity in its appreciation of external beauty (1.6.2, cf. 5.8.2). Plotinus calls the process "recollection" because it draws the soul back to a recognition of the unity from which it originated (5.1.1.27, 5.8.2.46, cf. 2.7.16.48).

The process of recollection is critical, because human souls can be ugly or beautiful. They can have greater or lesser unity. It is evident to Plotinus that ugly souls are governed by passions. They are drawn to the outside world and are enslaved by desires for external, material things. The ugly soul mixes itself with the external world. The debased soul mixes with external evils which the body brings it through pleasures, desires, and fears (6.4.15.32-40). Plotinus borrows his expressions of the soul's sad state from Plato, but Plotinus carries the analysis of the problem deeper than his master. He points out that the soul is ultimately responsible for its own debased condition. It is the agent of its own misery.

This is the evil of a human who has in himself a mob of overpowering pleasures, desires, and fears and who gives himself over to such a mob (6.4.15.32-35).

The soul is the one who gives itself over to the body and makes itself subject to its needs. Thereby, the soul subjects itself to the vicissitudes of the material world. In itself it is impassible from bodily changes, so only the soul's own action can afflict the soul. It suffers from its excess sympathy with the body (1.2.6.27, cf. 1.2.3.16).

By contrast, the beautiful and virtuous soul turns inward. It withdraws from desire for external things and purifies itself. Thereby, it finds the truth within itself and the truth beautifies the soul. It becomes a unity governed by intellect and not by external goods (1.6.5.6).

For its reasoning and activity the soul does not depend upon the body. Intellect grasps things not as they are materially, but as they are in their universal forms. It does not function materially or with a material organ,

He will not err who asserts that the reasoning part of the soul does not need any corporeal organ in order to reason, but has its own operation in purity, so that it can reason purely. It is independent, unmixed with body, and in the first Intellect (5.1.10.13-18).

By turning away from the external material world, the soul comes to know itself as it truly is: independent and pure from the body. Ontologically, the body depends on the soul for its existence, not the soul on the body. The soul can exist and thrive without the body, but the body needs the soul to give it unity, otherwise it decomposes into a myriad of disparate parts. As an immaterial being with immaterial power of reason, the soul functions best when detached from the body (1.6.6).

The soul's inward turn leads the soul to pure understanding, undefiled by sensation,

His own soul must become intellect and must trust and be established upon Intellect, so that what the Intellect sees, it will receive because it has been attentive. Thereby, he must behold the One without adding anything sensible and without receiving anything from sense into the Intellect, but must behold the most pure with a pure intellect and with that which is the first of the Intellect (6.9.3.22-27).

By turning inward the soul becomes like the divine Intellect which contemplates fully, completely, and eternally. The beautiful soul imitates the divine Intellect in self-sufficient contemplation. The divine Intellect needs nothing from the outside, but rests in eternal, perfect contemplation. An ugly soul which spends itself in pursuit of external sensation and activities is most unlike the Intellect.

As it turns inward the soul achieves its true and natural unity. The soul's true actuality lies in self-knowledge. In self-knowledge it achieves happiness (1.5.9.22 ff.) and freedom. It is unhindered by any external forces and is free to contemplate the divine Intellect and the One (5.5.9.14 ff., 6.8.7.1 ff.). It is unified and governed by the Intellect which gives it the light of understanding. The light from the One beautifies the soul,

Since everything is beautified by that which is before the present things [the One] and has light, the Intellect has the luster of noetic activity by which it illuminates nature, while soul has the power to live because the fuller life has come to it (6.7.31.1-4, cf. 1.6.6.25-29).

A true understanding of aesthetics leads the soul to understand souls are the true source of beauty in the external world. Its role in bringing unity to the outside world could even lead someone to mistakenly think that the soul is the One itself.

Therefore, since Soul drives everything into unity by crafting, making, forming, and ordering, must they who consider it say that soul supplies the One and is itself the One? (6.9.1.17-19, cf. 1.6.6.27-29).

Plotinus goes on to affirm that the soul does bring unity to the lower order of matter, but not by being the One itself. It is a dependent and secondary unity.

The world soul, individual human, animal, and plant souls are all species of the eternal, hypostatic Soul. Together they create the visible world and all that is in it. They create matter, sensation, and nature. Thus, they are the immediate sources of all the beauty which is in the world. When the soul understands that souls bring order and beauty to the material realm, it reflects back on its own beauty (5.8.2.40). External aesthetics turn the human soul from the distractions of the outside world and into a life of self-reflection and contemplation (1.3.1.26). The soul begins its ascent by becoming unified and self-sufficient in intellection, which makes it a likeness of intellectual beauty. Nevertheless, the human soul still needs internal aesthetics to become like the One and complete its ascent.

### Internal aesthetics

True contemplation leads the good soul to know itself. In coming to know itself, it knows its own source (6.9.7.33, 6.7.34.12). True philosophical reflection shows the soul that its ultimate source, the One, is beyond understanding. Its source cannot be understood by intellection, because the One, which is the ultimate source of the soul and the Intellect, is beyond any intellectual likeness. It is the cause of intellection, it is not intellection itself (5.4.2). All intellection involves duality of subject and object. As such intellection is a plurality and must be caused by the ultimate unity, the One (5.1.4.27-30).

Therefore, to know the One the soul must transcend both sensation and intellection (5.5.6.18, 6.8.21.25). According to Plotinus this can only happen as the soul attains a rest and a love which transcends intellection in a presence in the One beyond intellection (6.9.4.3, 6.9.8.27). The One cannot be known

sensibly or intellectually because it is beyond all sensible and intellectual images. To know it intellectually is to know it only through an intellectual likeness of the One. Plotinus does admit this kind of knowledge of the One, but it is a knowledge of the One only through its effects, as intellectual likenesses are effects of the One (3.8.11.19, 34). If a person knows the One intellectually, a person knows only its effects and not the One itself. But according to Plotinus, a person can know the One itself (6.7.39.1).

Direct knowledge of the One is possible, because the One is both transcendent and immanent. Many times Plotinus states that the One transcends being (5.1.10.2, 1.7.1.8, 1.8.3.1, 5.1.8.7, 5.5.6.11, 6.6.5.37). It is the source of all beings and as source, it is distinct from any being. It emanates being out of its perfection without diminishing its own perfection in any way. It transcends all its effects.

No being is the One. The sum of all beings do not constitute the One, because it is prior to them all. Yet the One is immanent.<sup>7</sup> Plotinus expresses the transcendence and immanence of the One in a spatial metaphor. Plotinus first explains that immaterial things are not separated by space as are bodies. Rather immaterial things are separated from each other by difference,

They are not divided from each other by place, but by difference and distinction. When difference is not present, the undifferentiated things are present to each other. Therefore, that which has no difference is always present, although sometimes we do not possess it (6.9.8.31-35).

Therefore, if two incorporeals lack a difference, one can be said to be present to the other. In the immediate context, Plotinus does not give any examples of immaterial presence other than the One, but it is useful to consider an example. An isosceles triangle differs from a scalene because it has two equal sides and the scalene has none. But they do not differ from each other in having three sides. Therefore the isosceles triangle is separated from the scalene in virtue of having two equal sides, but the concept of triangle is present in both the scalene and isosceles. They do not differ in this respect. Neither differs from being a triangle.

Plotinus explains a one-way presence whereby the One is present in all, but they are not present in the One, "Therefore that which has no difference is always present, although sometimes we do not possess it." In Plotinus' sense of incorporeal presence, this means that the One does not differ from all things.

although they all differ from it. This is problematic because we usually think of difference and presence as reciprocal relationships. If *x* differs from *y*, then *y* differs from *x*. If *x* is present to *y*, then *y* is present to *x*. But Plotinus argues that among immaterial beings, presence and difference are non-reciprocal and hierarchical. The greater can be present to the lesser, but the lesser may not be present to the greater. Likewise, the lesser may differ from the greater, but the greater may not differ from the lesser.

To see how this works, an example is again useful. We could say that "triangle" is present in the concept of isosceles, but "isosceles" is not present in the concept of triangle. To be isosceles, it must be a triangle, but a triangle is not necessarily isosceles. Isosceles contains the notion triangle, but triangle does not contain the notion of isosceles. Or in Plotinian terms, triangle is present in isosceles, but isosceles is not present in triangle. The greater, more universal term is present in the lesser, more particular term, but not vice versa. Conversely, isosceles differs from triangle, because isosceles introduces a specific difference which triangle does not include. But triangle does not differ from isosceles, because an isosceles is necessarily a triangle.

Plotinus uses this same distinction with regard to the One and all beings. The One is present in all things, because it has no difference. It does not differ from things, because whatever they are they are still unities, or they would not exist (6.9.1.3). To be is to be a unity (6.4.11.18). There is no difference in the One which prevents its presence in any being. But every being contains a specific difference from the One. No being is the One. They all include differences which are not found in the One itself. Whatever they are, they do not attain the perfect unity of the One. They can neither escape the One, nor can they contain the One. Rather the One contains all things (5.5.9.33). The One is present in all, but they are not present in the One.

The soul is also a unity and its unity is the One, although it does not always recognize this. It only recognizes its true unity by leaving behind all plurality. Sensation takes the soul outside itself into the plurality of the outside world. In intellection the soul begins to rest within itself (4.4.23.6), but still a plurality persists. The soul remains in the plurality of subject and object. When it leaves behind sensation and intellection, the soul discovers the unity immanent at its core (1.2.4.21).

To further explicate the immanence of the One, Plotinus relies upon one of his most used illustrations. He compares the One to a point and the universe to a sphere which radiates from the One as its center (5.1.11.7).<sup>8</sup> The whole universe depends upon the One as its point of origin (2.2.2.9). The universe is

the divine Intellect. Being and intellect are co-terminus, so the divine Intellect knows all and is all. The universal sphere contains all beings in the perfect contemplation of the divine Intellect.

Plotinus builds on the illustration by comparing the universal Soul to the sphere as it revolves around the center,

If someone assigns the Good [that is the One] to the center and the Intellect to the unmoved circle, then he will assign the Soul to the moving circle. It is moved by seeking. The Intellect immediately possesses and has received that which is beyond being, while the Soul seeks it. The sphere of the all is moved by that which naturally is sought because it possesses the seeking soul (4.4.16.23-29).

The Soul introduces motion to the cosmos. The Soul moves as it seeks the One. The One is the good which all things naturally seek (6.2.11.26, 1.7.1.5). The Soul introduces motion into the cosmos because it seeks after the One less perfectly than does the Intellect. The soul must seek the One rather than possess it in contemplation as does the divine Intellect. Seeking implies motion, so the seeking soul is a moving image of the intellectual universe.

Plotinus further develops the illustration by comparing individual human souls to circles within the universal sphere,

We come to rest as we join our center to the center of all, just as the centers of the biggest circles join the center of the sphere which contains them (6.9.8.19-22 cf. 6.9.10.16).

The largest circle inscribed on the surface a sphere necessarily has the same center as the sphere. Smaller circles have different centers. To see how this works, imagine slicing a sphere. Each slice produces a circle on the surface of the sphere. If one begins at the edge, one can make a point size slice. As one progresses to the center, the slices become larger and larger, until one reaches the center. At the center, the slice is the largest. After passing the center, the slices get progressively smaller. The largest slice forms a circle co-centric with the sphere.

At its greatest perfection, the soul comes to know its own center as the center of all, it comes to rest in the One as its own center. The soul is only a circle, but it is co-centric with the sphere of the all. The soul's center is its unchanging core (6.8.15.14 ff.). It is the part of the soul that is neither changed by sensation nor even by intellection. The soul only discovers its core by ceas-



ing from intellection and sensation. It then discovers that its unchanging core is the One and comes to rest in a unity with the One.

The soul comes to a unity with the One beyond all intellection.

Since there are not two, the beholder is one with that which is seen. It is no longer that which is seen but is unified with the beholder (6.9.11.4-6).

The soul comes to be one with the One by falling into a rest which transcends all intellection. It leaves behind any subject/object distinction (5.3.5.15). Plotinus describes the soul in the state of rest,

Even he is one and has in himself no difference with himself in any way—he sets nothing in motion. Neither wrath nor desire for another is present in him once he has ascended—neither reason nor any intellection nor himself at all, if one can say this. But he has become as if seized or inspired by quiet in a calm and untrembling stability. He never slips away from his own substance nor revolves around himself, but stands so completely still as if to become stillness itself (6.9.11.6).

The soul has come to complete unity with itself, by becoming still in the source of all. It experiences no more outward movements, but comes to complete rest in its center. It becomes a little unity, fully whole and complete in itself, an image of the One itself (6.9.11.43).

To describe the final ascent of the soul as the ceasing of intellection is to describe it in purely negative terms. Plotinus does not stop there. Plotinus also describe union with the One as the unmeasured love of the soul for the One. The One itself is unmeasured. No measure or limit can be applied to it because there is nothing greater than it. The soul becomes like the One and joins the One in unmeasured love,

The love here is not bounded, because neither is the beloved, but the love of this one would be infinite, so that its beauty is otherwise and is a beauty above beauty (6.7.32.26-29).

The soul which leaves behind all measure found in reason and intellection releases itself in an unbound and unfettered love. Neither ideas nor images bind the soul any longer. Neither forms nor shapes contain it. It finds release into the pure unbound unity and beauty of the One.

The soul's love for the One is unlike that of the lover who pines by the door, outside the beloved's,

This is the lover that stands by the door, present but always outside, seeking the beautiful and is content if he is able thus to share in it. Since the lover here does not receive beauty, but only has it by lying before it. But the One remains in itself and the many lovers of the One. love it entire, and possess it entire thus when they have it (6.5.10.3-8).

Unlike the lover of things below which seeks love external to itself, the lover of the One finds the true beauty within herself. It is a beauty of ultimate completion and unity. That true beauty of the soul is the beauty of the One which the soul discovers at its own core.

In the end, true aesthetics show the soul not just that it is the source of the beauty of the outside world. It also shows the soul that the beauty at its own core is the beauty at the core of all things. Its core is the One. When it discovers the One within itself, it comes to love its beauty.

## Notes

1. Gary Gurtler's study, *Plotinus: The Experience of Unity*, Lang: 1988, shows that Plotinus' psychology and metaphysics work together in a system. Gurtler opposes the common twentieth century view that Plotinus' psychology stands in opposition to his metaphysics. In Blumenthal's terminology, Plotinus' metaphysics are static and eternal, while his psychology is dynamic and changing. See H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, Nijhoff: 1971.  
I agree with Gurtler's results, but try to take them beyond the unity of the Intellect and into the unity of all beings within the One.  
J.M. Rist in *Plotinus: The road to reality*, Cambridge: 1967 argues that aesthetics are of secondary importance in Plotinus' system based upon Plotinus' statements in *Ennead* 5.5.12. There Plotinus argues that the Good is more universal than Beauty because Beauty is accessible only to the sophisticated mind. But as will be seen, Plotinus describes the ascent of the soul to the One as both an approach to the Good and to Beauty. Plotinus describes the One as Goodness and Beauty and it is hard to see how to prioritize one over the other without making the One complex. If they are both the One, then they must be one reality.
2. Gerard O'Daly calls it the "unintellectualizing root of the soul" in *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self*, Harper and Row: 1973.  
O'Daly's view that the true self is the One is endorsed by A. H. Armstrong in "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus," *Dionysius* 1, Dec. 1977, 49-68, esp. 59, 65.
3. For background in Plotinus' aesthetics see Gary Gurtler, S. J., "Plotinus and Byzantine Aesthetics," *The Modern Schoolman* 66, May 1989, 275-284.  
F.P. Hager, "Métaphysique et axiologie de l'oeuvre d'art chez Platon et Plotin," *Diotima* 14, 1986, 130-137.  
D.N. Koutras, "The Essence of the Work of Art according to Plotinus," *Diotima* 14, 1986, 147-153.
4. The One does not lack intellection in the sense that it is missing something. It has a greater perfection than intellection. John N. Deck calls it the "superknowledge" of the One in *Nature, Contemplation and the One*, University of Toronto Press: 1967, 17-21. Because greater knowledge comes in greater unity, the One has a "knowledge" as transcendent as its unity.  
Others deny even this sort of knowledge of the One. See O'Daly, *op. cit.*, 92.  
Rist, *op. cit.*, 48, focuses on Plotinus' use of the term *epibole* from which he infers that "The 'knowledge' of the One is by implication wholly different from any other knowledge that we can imagine."
5. For an explanation of the relation of the hypostatic Soul to individual souls as the relation of genus to species, see Gary Gurtler's careful analysis in *Plotinus: The Experience of Unity*, 26-30. See also Deck, *op. cit.*, 32-34.
6. Translations throughout are by the author.

7. Deck, *op. cit.*, 116, expresses the immanence of the One as the "identification of the cause and the effect." He thereby overstates the case, because none of the effects are the One itself. Even though the One is immanent, it still transcends its effects.
8. cf. 6.5.5, 6.8.18.6, 1.7.1.23. Plotinus also uses a circle to illustrate the unity of substance 4.2.1.24 and of the soul 4.2.2.38.

## Creation or Metamorphosis? Plotinus on the Genesis of the World

Panayiota Vassilopoulou

### The Setting

In Chapter Nine of the first treatise 'On Difficulties about the Soul' (*Enneads* IV.3 (27)), Plotinus raises the issue of the relation between soul and body and immediately draws a distinction between two fields of enquiry. On the one hand, there is a set of problems concerning the way in which a particular soul relates to a particular body; on the other hand, there is the issue of the way in which soul as such relates to body in general. Plotinus introduces both problems with the help of the same familiar metaphor: in both cases, the question concerns the way in which the soul "enters" or "penetrates" (εἰσοδος, εἰσκρισις) the body and thus "takes upon itself a bodily nature" (12-3).<sup>1</sup> In the context of this metaphor, the difference between the two problems acquires a temporal dimension: the general problem is presented as the "first communication" (πρώτη κοινωνία) between soul and body, soul's original "passage from bodilessness to any kind of body" (8-9); the particular one concerns the subsequent movements of souls which, already embodied, pass from one body to another.

Given this way of framing of the issue, Plotinus naturally announces his intention to start with the most fundamental problem. At this level of generality, the issue could concern the relation of the soul considered as one of the Hypostases of the Plotinian system with matter as such. This problem is real for Plotinus and has been discussed, by him and his commentators, under the guise of the question of the origin and status of matter.<sup>2</sup> However, as will become apparent in what follows, Plotinus is not concerned here with the status of soul or matter prior to their postulated moment of intercourse. The temporal

formulation of the problem is a way to indicate that what interests him is not the origin of the soul or matter and whatever can be said about their separate existence, but rather the origin, through their interaction, of the embodied soul or the ensouled body of which the sensible universe is made.

It appears thus that the initial question ("How soul comes to be in body"?), when understood with the proper qualifications, is in fact a cosmological question presented in a cosmogonic manner: How are we to understand or explain the existing order of the world through a discussion of its origin? Anyone familiar with Plato will recognise the question animating the *Timaeus*.<sup>3</sup> The observation is corroborated by the way Plotinus proceeds to set up the problem:

With regard to the Soul of the All—because it is perhaps <suitable> (εἰκός),<sup>4</sup> or rather it is necessary to start with it—we must of course consider that the terms 'entry' and 'ensoulment' are used in the discussion for the sake of clear explanation (τῷ λόγῳ ... διδασκαλίας καὶ τοῦ σαφοῦς χάριν). For there never was a time when this universe did not have a soul, or when the body existed in the absence of soul, or when matter was not set in order. But in discussing these things one can consider them apart from each other, because it is legitimate to analyse any kind of composition in thought and language (ἀλλ' ἐπινοῶντα ταῦτα χωρίζοντας αὐτὰ ἀπ' ἀλλήλων τῷ λόγῳ οἷόν τε. ἔξεστι γὰρ ἀναλύειν τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τῇ διανοίᾳ πᾶσαν σύνθεσιν). For the truth is as follows. If body did not exist, soul would not go forth, since there is no place other than body where it is natural for it to be (ὅπου πέφυκεν εἶναι). But if it intends to go forth, it will produce a place for itself (γεννήσει ἑαυτῇ τόπον), and so a body (12-23).

Plotinus' claim about the starting point of the discussion makes clear that his interest is directed at the genesis and order of the sensible world, and not the nature and activity of the various Hypostases. The cosmic soul is distinguished from all the other souls precisely by the fact that it is the creator of the sensible world, the subject of the "first communication" between soul and body in which the "dwellings" of all other individual souls are "prepared;" thus it is indeed the appropriate starting point for an account of the creation of the world in the manner of the *Timaeus*, with the cosmic soul taking over the role of the Platonic Demiurge.<sup>5</sup>

The rest of Plotinus' remarks establish more specific relations with the project of the *Timaeus*. At a first level, they appear as an acknowledgement of Plato's own warning before his description of the construction of the cosmic soul, which in *Timaeus*' account takes place after the creation of the cosmic

body. Plato warns the reader there that the order of the presentation of the activities of the Demiurge may be misleading, since the account, as an *eikos* mythos or logos, shares in the accidental or casual (προστυχόντος) element which characterises human existence and falls short of the desired rigour (34C). However, the problem is more complicated than the issue of the correct genetic order in an account of the creation of the world.

The question concerns initially the adequacy of the set of metaphors which so far has structured the issue. Terms like "εἰσοδος," "ἐμφύχωσις," and the like should not be taken literally because, although used "διδασκαλίας καὶ τοῦ σαφοῦς χάριν," may obscure the issue (or bring to it a deceptive clarity) by these aspects of their metaphoric logic which do not correspond with the reality they are supposed to render comprehensible. A term like 'entrance' brings into play a specific spatio-temporal 'staging' of what is to be thought or explained: A, initially outside B, will be finally inside B. Plotinus concedes that the reflective analysis (ἐπινοῶντα) of a composite structure is allowed or possible (οἷόν τε, ἔξεστι) "in thought and language" and that such an analysis will take the form of a genetic narrative which will establish spatio-temporal relations between the constituent parts of this structure. However, he also warns his readers of the problems associated with the establishment of such spatio-temporal frameworks of analysis.

How are we to understand this warning? First, by examining Plotinus' literal claims in the closing argument of the passage, where the truth is explicitly to be stated. In this argument, in agreement with the starting point of the discussion (the cosmic soul) and the claim that body never existed in the absence of soul, the original synthesis of body and soul is accounted for in terms of the generative capacities of the (pre-existing) soul: body is generated by soul as its place (γεννήσει ἑαυτῇ τόπον). A first correction of the metaphoric framework becomes apparent: the cosmic soul does not 'enter' in a pre-existing body, but generates it. However, this generation can not be conceived, in this context, as an act of 'ordering' of a given material, since, as Plotinus states explicitly, "there never was a time...when matter was not set in order" (17-8).<sup>6</sup> Setting aside the possibility of generation *ex nihilo*, we are forced to conclude that, for Plotinus, the spatio-temporal framework is figurative: the creation of the world is not an event to be presented in this or that, correct or incorrect, order.<sup>7</sup>

The issue is obviously connected with the venerable and vexed question of the literal or figurative interpretation of the *Timaeus*.<sup>8</sup> Our claim that Plotinus' own cosmogony is to be treated figuratively is in agreement with the fact that

Plotinus followed the orthodox Platonic tradition, originating in Xenocrates and Crantor, which understood the account of the *Timaeus* figuratively, "σαφηνείας ἕνεκα διδασκαλικῆς." Within this tradition, he is credited by Proclus with the view "that it is [the world's] compositeness that is [in the *Timaeus*] called 'created', and to this is subsidiary the fact of being generated from an external cause."<sup>9</sup> Plotinus' own clearest statement of his position (although it does not refer explicitly to the creation myth of the *Timaeus*) is the following:

But myths, if they are really going to be myths, must separate in time (μερίζειν χρόνοις) the things of which they tell, and set apart from each other (διαίρειν ἀπ' ἀλλήλων) many realities which are together, but distinct in rank or powers (τάξει δὲ ἢ δυνάμει), at points where rational discussions (λόγοι), also, make generations of things ungenerated, and themselves, too, separate things which are together; the myths, when they have taught us as well as they can, allow the man who has understood them to put together again (συναιπεῖν) that which they have separated (III.5.9.24-29).

This important passage clarifies Plotinus' understanding of the issue in a number of ways. First, it makes clear that the problems we have associated with a mythical genetic presentation of the order of the world cannot disappear in a literal or discursive account, since they are rooted in the nature of thought itself, at least when it turns to examine certain kinds of objects or processes.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, although the narrative primacy granted to the soul in the fictional account can be understood as a device signalling its superior 'rank' within the composite structure of the ordered world, this superiority cannot be translated straightforwardly into ontological relations of dependence between separate entities. In other words, the task of constructing or interpreting an adequate 'creation myth' is exhausted neither by deciding 'who comes first' or 'who is inside,' nor by translating these relations in ontological terms of priority or dependence, between, let us say, intelligible and sensible entities. After the analysis or the narrative has established the proper distinctions and the order of dependence, we are left with the question of "συναιπεῖν," of grasping the reciprocal "ὅμοῦ" of the elements in the composite structure; the primary task is not to show that, e.g., intelligence is prior to necessity, but rather to account for their interaction.

Plotinus' closing argument in the passage we have been discussing above is quite instructive. In Plotinus' system there is certainly no doubt about the

relative 'rank' of soul and matter as separate realities, and this rank is reflected directly in the claim that body is generated by soul. However, in the perspective established by the given composite structure of the world, the body is designated as the place "where it is natural for [soul] to be" (οποῦ πέφυκεν εἶναι). This designation turns body into both a product and a condition of the "coming forth" (προέρχεσθαι) of the soul, and hence, from the point of view of an account of the existence of the world, the body is both 'before' and 'after', 'inside' and 'outside' soul. With this designation, the simple order of dependence between the cause (the soul) and its effect (the body generated by an external cause) becomes a reciprocal determination, since the effect appears as a condition of the activity of the cause that generates it. As a result, what from an external point of view would appear contingent (the soul could or could not create the world at a specific moment) acquires a conditional necessity (if there is to be "going forth" of the soul, there has to be a place) in which, although the primacy of the soul is retained in a genetic account, the unity of the world as a composite structure can be "grasped together."<sup>11</sup>

The passage above, however, apart from legitimising the use of myths in discussing philosophical issues, can be also read as a recipe for writing good or effective myths: a myth about the genesis of a composite reality should be constructed in such a way as to make the "συναιπεῖν" of its elements more easy. We can turn now to the brief cosmogony which follows in our text and see how such a myth would look and how it can be effective.

### A Concise Cosmogony

As we have already said, the creation of the world is fundamentally the generation of the place in which the soul "goes forth." The first of the three images that make up Plotinus' brief cosmogony tries to capture precisely the activity which leads to the emergence of this place out of soul's initial condition of rest. At its core there is an ordinary experience, but Plotinus formulates it in a very peculiar way:

As soul's rest was, so to speak, strengthened in rest itself, ■ great light, we may say, shined forth from it and, in the outermost edge of the fire, there came to be darkness, which the soul saw, since it came into existence [as a substrate], and informed it (τῆς δὲ στάσεως αὐτῆς ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ στάσει οἰονεῖ ῥωσινμένης οἶον πολὺ φῶς ἐκλάμψαν ἐπ' ἄκροις τοῖς ἐσχάτοις τοῦ πυρὸς σκότος

ἐγίνετο, ὅπερ ἰδοῦσα ἡ ψυχὴ, ἐπεὶ περ ὑπέστη, ἐμόρφωσεν αὐτό. For it was not lawful (θεμιτόν) for that which borders (γειτονοῦν) on soul to be without its share of formative principle (λόγος) (23-28).

There are many striking features in this image, all directed to a calculated reversal of our ordinary experience of phenomena of propagation of light. There is, first, a spatio-temporal inversion. While we should normally say that light comes after darkness and takes its place by 'chasing it away,' while darkness perhaps 'resists,' Plotinus asserts that darkness comes into being after the shining forth of light (ἐγίνετο, ὑπέστη, ἐκλάμψαν) as its boundary. More precisely, darkness comes into being when light (for reasons left unclear, but *not* because it encounters darkness) stops at some point: at the border, darkness comes into being as visible darkness, as 'proximate' darkness ready to be seen in the light of the soul and be informed by it.<sup>12</sup>

The process that leads to the generation of darkness is quite peculiar, as evidenced by the complex syntax of the sentence. The centre of the construction is occupied by the clause "σκότος ἐγίνετο," as if the subject of the whole process is darkness, or rather the emergence of darkness, since "σκότος" is not the grammatical subject of an active verb. The central presence of darkness is countered by the fact that "ψυχὴ" is the subject of the only active and transitive verb ("ἐμόρφωσεν") of the entire sentence, which appears at the very end of it. Nevertheless, soul does not initiate explicitly the whole process: the event that precipitates the whole sequence, namely the "shining forth" of light, occurs as a consequence of the strengthening of soul's rest in the intelligible realm and is not presented as an intended action of the soul. Only after the soul 'overflowed,' so to speak, and in the presence of the light of this 'overflowing,' darkness emerged and was seen by the soul, did the soul take an active part. Moreover, we should note that this 'overflowing' is set apart from all the other 'events' in this story, by the fact that "ῥωννυμένης," which sets the temporal framework for the entire sequence, is the only participle in the present tense, and hence not an 'event' but a condition present for the entire sequence of the subsequent events.

The initial act of the cosmic drama is thus an 'event' that cannot be described easily within an ordinary framework; processes that can be described in terms of an interaction between distinct entities occur only at the very end of the whole 'event.' Two points should be particularly noted. First, throughout this whole process, there is a strong sense in which the cosmic soul remains separate and at rest in itself, suffering no alteration or relation, despite

the 'overflow' caused by its 'strengthening.'<sup>13</sup> Second, darkness can be considered neither as intentionally generated by the soul (it comes into being as a side-effect of its 'strengthening' and 'overflowing'), nor as an effect of the activity of the soul in any normal sense (the proper effect of light is to enlighten); moreover, it is not merely encountered by the soul as an alien element (since it is soul's light that brings it into existence and makes it visible, by stopping at a certain point).<sup>14</sup> Thus the notion of proximity or neighbourhood (γειτονοῦν), which Plotinus introduces in order to account for the initial affinity between light and darkness which allows the soul to fulfil its function as a spontaneous transmitter of λόγος (like a diffusion process through a semi-permeable membrane) falls equally and undecidedly between spatial contiguity and genetic resemblance: on the one hand, darkness 'occupies' a certain place, it happens to be there close to light; on the other, it comes into being by the light of the soul as its boundary.<sup>15</sup>

We should make a final note about the only intentional action in the image, namely soul's "ἐμόρφωσεν." Plotinus stresses, in almost paradoxical terms, its close connection with vision: the soul "ἰδοῦσα" (in seeing, by seeing, after seeing) darkness, informed it. This formulation should be juxtaposed with the way Plotinus describes elsewhere the process of 'information,' particularly the 'information' of matter. On these occasions, the activity of 'information' is described as the 'covering up,' the 'concealment,' the 'hiding' (περιτίθεμεν, κρυφθεῖσαν) of matter beneath form.<sup>16</sup> We may ask then: What exactly does the soul see? Does it ever see matter itself? Or does it always see 'informed' (i.e., 'hidden') matter and thus encounters only projections of itself?

At this stage, the soul has generated the place of its "going forth." In this clearing of luminous darkness,

There came into being (γενόμενος) something like a beautiful and richly various house which was not cut off (ἀπετμήθη) from its maker (πεποιηκότος), but he did not give it a share (ἐκοίνωσεν) of himself either: he considered it all, everywhere, worth a care (ἐπιμελείας) which conduces to its very being and excellence (τῷ εἶναι καὶ τῷ καλῷ) (as far as it can participate in being) but does him no harm in his presiding over it, for he rules it while abiding above (ἄνω γὰρ μένων ἐπιστατεῖ) (29-35).

The transition from the first image to the second is really unexpected. In the original the effect is more pronounced since the innocuous "γενόμενος," which

stands in the very beginning, has a double function: looking backward, it seems to describe the outcome of "ἐμὸρρωσεν;" looking forward, it introduces us to the new image.

If we set aside this transition, we are temporarily on rather familiar Platonic ground, since the motivation behind this image and the role it plays appear easily recognisable. On the one hand, Plotinus has to account for the rich diversity and order of the sensible world considered as a whole and thus he has to invoke the image of a more complicated and intentional process than the mere propagation of light: the building of a house is a paradigmatic case of making a 'total' and complex artefact. On the other hand, he has to make clear both the transcendent status and the goodness of the maker and the dependent status and beauty of the creation. However, we should note that Plotinus passes over in silence the most salient points of the metaphor of building, the aspects which, after Plato's *Timaeus*, we would expect him to elaborate. As far as the motivation of the maker is concerned, Plotinus notes his general resolve to make the house as real and beautiful as possible. But the rational or technical aspect of building (the laying out of the plan, the determination of the objectives and the steps necessary for their realisation, the choice of the proper materials, the final execution) is never mentioned: the activity of building itself simply disappears in the gap of the transition between the first and the second image and there is nothing in this image to correct the metaphor of instant diffusion or imprinting carried over from the previous image.<sup>17</sup>

The transition between the second and the third image is punctuated with two remarks, one drawing the moral of the second image and the other announcing the claim that will be illustrated by the third image. Plotinus has depicted a world created and "mastered" (κρατούμενος) (36) by a soul which remains separate and external to it; the time has now come to show how this world, once created, does not remain a dead artefact, how "soul makes alive all the other things which do not live of themselves, and makes them live the sort of life by which it lives itself" (10.37-8):

[The house] lies (κεῖται) in soul which bears it up (ἀνεχούση) and nothing is without a share of soul. It is as if a net immersed (or soaked) in the waters was alive,<sup>18</sup> but unable to make its own that in which it is (αὐτοῦ ποιεῖσθαι ἐν ᾧ ἐστίν). The sea is already spread out (ἐκτεινομένης) and the net spreads with it (συνεκτείνεται), as far as it can; for no one of its parts can be anywhere else than where it lies (κεῖται) (36-43).

With this final and vivid image, we return to the imagery of natural elements with which we started. There are three points that we should particularly note here. First, Plotinus' insistence that the (informed) darkness-house-net is contained in soul or, rather, passively lies in it and extends with it as far as it can in the already spread-out soul. This claim raises again the issue of the proper spatial imaging of the relation between body and soul; the image of the net, which apparently contains and delimits what actually contains and permeates it, is a successful metaphor for the vexed dialectic of the 'inside-outside' we have already encountered.<sup>19</sup> Second, there is the aspect of movement, which in this context stands as a metaphor of life. The image of the net, which by being imperceptibly pushed by the sea which carries it, follows smoothly and passively the movement of sea and, on account of its agility, gives the appearance of being alive and determining its own effervescent movement on the inert background of the sea, is a perfect physical analogue of an animistic universe, even if it runs counter to the intuition that the soul directs things 'from the inside'. Finally, we should note that for the first time we learn something about the intentions and capacities of the body, which is thus personified at the very end of the account. The reference (οὐ δυνάμενον δὲ αὐτοῦ ποιεῖσθαι ἐν ᾧ ἐστίν) is formulated as a direct contrast with the creative capacities of the soul (the image follows the metaphoric logic of 'ποιεῖν' = 'περιτιθέναι' we have already noted) and captures the agonising and precarious nature of the life that the body lives: sustained almost indifferently in life by the soul, it is incapable of securing this life, which may slip away at any minute, as its own.

At this point, where the initial metaphor has been completely reversed and the 'entering' of the soul into the body has become the 'immersing' of the body into the soul, Plotinus' brief cosmogony ends. Before we move to the concluding section to discuss the character of this account, a few additional remarks are in place. In accordance with Plotinus' understanding of the function of creation myths, the next chapter starts with the following advice:

Having then heard this, we must, going back again to that which is always such, grasp all as existing simultaneously (ἐπὶ τὸ ἀεὶ οὕτως ἐλθόντας ὁμοῦ λαβεῖν πάντα ὄντα) (10.1-2).

Presumably in order to help us to accomplish this task, Plotinus offers a concise reformulation of his cosmogony, in which the three consecutive images of

his account are replaced with three contiguous (= simultaneously existing) 'parts' of the same image:

so here there is soul always static, or the first, then the next in order, like the last gleams of the light of a fire (ὥς πυρὸς ἔσχατα); afterwards the first coming from this last gleam is thought of a shadow of fire (νοουμένου πυρὸς σκιάς), and then this at the same time is thought of as illuminated (ἐπιφωτιζομένου), so that it is as if form was diffused over what is cast upon soul, which at first was altogether obscure (ὥστε οἷον εἶδος ἐπιθεῖν τῷ ἐπιβληθέντι πρῶτῳ γενομένῳ παντάπασιν ἀμυδρῷ) (10.5-10).

This image looks like a static snapshot of the first image of Plotinus' cosmogony, from which all the complicated temporal relations have been taken away. It can thus be considered as Plotinus' effort to undermine or even abolish altogether the temporal order of his account, in order to make clear that this order is only for the sake of "explanation." Alternatively, we may consider this image as a description of the composite structure of the sensible world in its final and permanent state, after everything that an account of the creation of the world may include has taken place. The spatial determinations (πῦρ-πυρὸς ἔσχατα-πυρὸς σκιά) can be thus considered as indexes of the differences "τάξει δὲ ἢ δυνάμεσι" of the various components of the composite structure. We should note, however, that Plotinus cannot abolish all temporal determinations: the presence and the function of matter (the 'information' of which is the act of creation) can be grasped only with the help of a temporal differentiation between the πρῶτῳ γενομένῳ παντάπασιν ἀμυδρῷ, and the πυρὸς σκιά which unavoidably gives a temporal colouring to the otherwise spatial ἐπιφωτιζομένου, ἐπιθεῖν, ἐπιβληθέντι.<sup>20</sup>

In the context of this synoptic image, a note should be also made about the expression πυρὸς σκιά, which presumably designates the status of the sensible world.<sup>21</sup> The word "σκιά" is repeatedly used by Plato in the *Republic* for similar purposes (e.g., 500A, 515D, 517D, 532C) and the expression "τὰς σκιάς τὰς ὑπὸ τοῦ πυρός" occurs in the story of the cave (515A). In the context of Plotinus' account, the genitive of "πυρός" seems to range over the entire spectrum of possible meanings: the shadow which emerges at the border of light as its privation, the shadow as an attenuated form of light, the shadow as a dim reflection of light. What is made clear, however, in the passage quoted above is, first, that the σκότος with which the soul comes into contact is 'always already' visible in the light of the soul and, second, that the

final product, the sensible world, reflects back, even in an attenuated way, the light it receives. Both points have important consequences, which cannot be pursued here. The only thing we should note, in the perspective of the creation story, is that during its entire creative activity, the soul, in its movement from πῦρ to πυρὸς ἔσχατα and πυρὸς σκιά, appears not to come into (direct) contact with something alien to itself, the "altogether obscure" or the "σκότος ὕλης" (see n.20 above). And this is as it should be, if we take seriously the literal claim that "there never was a time ... when matter was not set in order" (17-8).

### Some Conclusions

Now that we have explored Plotinus' brief cosmogony, we may draw a few general conclusions. We saw that Plotinus followed the precedent set by Plato and responded to the issue of the order of the world with a creation story. The scale and the degree of elaboration of the two projects are of course very different; however, a broad comparison between the two will allow us to identify, rather briefly, the special character of Plotinus' enterprise and to determine the reasons which motivate it.

The myth of the *Timaeus* does not claim for itself the validity of a true account, always in all respects self-consistent and perfectly exact. However, Plato's intention was to create a coherent narrative whole, which places the 'events' of creation in a well-structured temporal order and unfolds in reasonably or plausibly connected steps.<sup>22</sup> From a literary point of view, the story of the *Timaeus* can be regarded as a piece of poetic art composed in a way which satisfies the most important conditions of successful poetry set by Aristotle in the *Poetics*.<sup>23</sup> The dramatic content of the myth is a mimesis of the actions of the Demiurge, whose well-defined character is substantiated in his actions. The story is obviously the mimesis of an important action (the making of the world), which is completed by events skilfully arranged by the most competent creator (whose rationality guarantees that nothing in the narrative is idiosyncratic or eccentric).

The presentation of events is based on the Homeric technique of beginning in medias res: presenting first the "works of reason," Plato opens a parenthesis in order to deal with "what comes about of necessity," and ends his story with a description of "the co-operation of reason and necessity."<sup>24</sup> This narrative device (in the temporal order established by the *Timaeus* itself neces-



sity ought to have been presented first) enables Plato to attain maximum dramatic intelligibility, since a fully personified creative force is established first and all the other elements are incorporated in the story by direct reference to this single agent<sup>25</sup>. In this way, the dramatic interest is concentrated on the actions of the Demiurge, which in a natural manner succeed each other. The plot, the "soul" of tragedy according to Aristotle, is thus constituted by a specific set of actions and their internal relations (which correspond to the complex structure of the world they bring about): the internal disposition or any irrelevant action of the characters involved in the story is not allowed to interfere with this plot.<sup>26</sup>

In the perspective of Plato's practice and Aristotle's theory, our story appears rather odd, to put it mildly.<sup>27</sup> The most obvious question is the following: How are we to think of the *unity* of Plotinus' account? The question becomes more pressing if we take into account that our aim is to see how a myth may help us to "grasp together" the elements of the composite structure of the world. In general terms (which exceed the Aristotelian precepts for the unity of a plot), a narrative can be unified ultimately either on the basis of the characters that appear and act in them or on the basis of some framework established by the events that are being recounted. We may thus begin by considering these two options.

While the soul indeed assumes the leading role in Plotinus' narrative, the portrayal of its nature and activity is both complex and vague. As we have seen, the soul is personified as a maker in the second image, but Plotinus passes over the opportunity to present its character, capacities and actions; its creative nature is merely asserted by concentrating on its creation. Given its other appearances, as a source of light and its light and as a sea, the soul cannot be 'reconstructed' as a character in any ordinary way: we cannot attribute to it intentions directly and we cannot infer the existence of intentions from the data of its activity.<sup>28</sup> We are guided to understand the creative activity of the soul not as the externalisation of a subjective structure, but as the manifestation or appearance of a rational, but 'unconscious,' acting force; hence, the unity we are seeking cannot be expressed in subjective terms.

What can we say about the events narrated in the story? A first point is that, although, as we have seen, within the images themselves spatio-temporal relations are established in quite complex ways, there is no overall spatio-temporal framework which could provide some external sort of unity. If we examine now the natural phenomena or artificial activities which constitute the content of these images, we realise that there is nothing internal to them

that would suggest any kind of normal continuity: a light is struck and, out of the darkness, a house emerges to become a net immersed in the sea. How are we to think the unity of this 'event,' which seems to transcend all the classical unities?

At this point it would perhaps be helpful to approach the issue the other way round: What are the requirements of a myth that could present effectively the "being together" of the elements of a composite structure? This myth would have initially to separate these elements and their activity and use an appropriate spatio-temporal framework in order to present their relative order of priority within the composite structure. However, if the final aim is the "συναιπεῖν" of these elements in their unity, we would expect a 'deconstructive' use of these devices: the spatio-temporal markers would unite as much as separate, and the activity of the elements would be described in such terms as to make these elements 'efface' themselves in the final product, i.e. lose their separate and distinct nature in the emergent dynamic unity of the composite, which would be thus presented as containing its own source of movement or development.

In the case of a generated, composite thing, such as the sensible world, the elements to be separated in this context are ultimately form and matter. As Plotinus puts it, echoing the discussion of chora in the *Timaeus* (50-1), the nature of such things can be thought of as a synthesis of an inert material and an active form which shapes it:

for in some things, because of their bodily nature, individuality is fluid because the form comes in from outside and they have continual existence only according to specific form (τῶν σωμάτων τῇ φύσει τοῦ καθέκαστον ρέοντος ἅτε ἐπακτοῦ τοῦ εἶδους ὄντος τὸ εἶναι κατ' εἶδος αἰεὶ ὑπάρχει), in imitation of the real beings; but in others, since they are not produced by composition (οὐκ ἐκ συνθέσεως οὐσι)...(IV.3.8.25-28).

The separation of the intelligible from the material has two senses, one absolute and one relative. From an ontological point of view, form and matter remain always separate and do not suffer any real change in their interaction. As Plotinus puts it, "νοῦς μόνος, ἀπαθὴς ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς ζῶν μόνον νοεράν ἔχων ἐκεῖ αἰεὶ μένει" (IV.7.13.2-3), while matter "μένει οὐδ' ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἦν" (III.6.11.18); even soul, the agent of their interaction, "ἄνως μένει" (34). This absolute separation, however, does not belong to the perspective of a discourse dedicated to an account of the emergence of the composite, which would be

impossible without some kind of interaction; such a discourse should separate these elements in a relative way, i.e., with reference to their order in the composite structure.

In order to present this relative separation, Plotinus follows both models elaborated in the *Timaeus*. The second image belongs to the 'deliberate creation' model, which sets the framework of the *Timaeus*; the two other follow the 'instant interaction' model, which Plato developed in his discussion of the receptacle (49A-52D). In each case, in accordance with Plotinus' concrete narrative goals, the primacy of the active element is clearly presented or implied: the source of light which informs darkness, the architect who stands above the house built, the sea which imparts motion, and thus life, to the net. However, the specifically Plotinian contribution to the elaboration of these images within the models followed, lies precisely in an attempt to efface as much as possible the relative separation which underlies the hierarchy established. This tendency operates, as we have already seen, both in a passive and an active way. Passively, it guides, for example, the omission of all the details concerning the creative activity of the architect: when Plotinus had the narrative opportunity to present the operations of the maker on the material, he sent off-stage the maker (safeguarding his transcendent status), made no mention whatsoever of the material, and concentrated his attention on the house made. Actively, this tendency is expressed in the choice and elaboration of the two other images: the spatio-temporal frameworks and the natural phenomena described in both images tend to merge or collapse the separate elements into a single entity: the light-with-its-dark-boundary, the net-within-the-sea.

Similar remarks can be made if we examine Plotinus' literary device in shaping the entire account. The story appears as a collection of pictures that present the same tableau from different points of view; its oddness is a result of the fact that, so to speak, Plotinus turns off the light (breaks all narrative continuities) as he moves his camera from place to place in order to capture the different views. The overall effect of the narrative resembles the effect of a metamorphosis story: something becomes, in ways that cannot be explained in an ordinary way and point implicitly to some internal ability of self-transformation, something else. Instead of a narrative sequence of the form 'A and B interacted in such a way as to produce C' or 'A did B and as an effect there came to be C,' Plotinus' account appears to have the shape of 'A became B became C,' without differentiation between separate entities and reference to external determinations.

The major philosophical issue implicated by Plotinus' narrative strategy concerns the nature and the role of the cosmic soul. So far, not without justification (see n.5), we have treated the cosmic soul as equivalent to the Platonic Demiurge. A full discussion of the issue would have to include three dimensions: (a) the relation between the Demiurge and soul in the *Timaeus* (in the context of other late Plato's works, such as the *Laws*); (b) Plotinus' interpretation of Plato's position; and (c) Plotinus' own views on the issue. Here we cannot of course undertake this examination; we shall limit ourselves to a few remarks related to the cosmogonical context.

With regard to Plato, we should note that (a) the interpretation of the figure of the Demiurge (its status, its relation to the ideas (in particular the idea of good), or the soul) is still an open issue<sup>29</sup> and (b) the (cosmic) soul, on the one hand, is described as generated and, on the other, is characterised as the source of motion (and hence of any creative activity of generation).<sup>30</sup> Plotinus understands Plato's position in terms of a threefold distinction, associated with the three principal hypostases, in which the One is identified with the Good and is called "the father of the cause," the Intellect is identified with the Demiurge and is called the "cause," and the Soul is described as being made by the Intellect (V.1.8.1-8; cf. IV.8.1.40-51).<sup>31</sup> Hence, it would seem that Plotinus himself considers the cosmic soul as generated by the Intellect, which is thus the real Demiurge behind the creation of the soul and the world (ποίητην ὄντως καὶ δημιουργόν; V.9.3.26). In this case, we have to face two related questions: What precisely is the creative function of the cosmic soul in relation to the Intellect? Why does Plotinus not start his cosmogony from the creation of soul itself?

With regard to the first question, Plotinus seems, not surprisingly, to think in terms of a hierarchical continuum of creative principles, within which the (cosmic) soul plays an executive or ancillary function. Depending on the specific contexts, the description of this hierarchy is fluid enough to allow for formulations that, at least, seem to place the emphasis differently: sometimes the creative function of the soul is minimised, sometimes the creative principle is divided between the Intellect and the cosmic soul, sometimes the cosmic soul is designated as the properly creative or executive principle.<sup>32</sup> In any case, two points seem clear. First, the cosmic soul derives the principles which guide its creative activity from the Intellect: as Plotinus puts it, the ordering activity of the soul "depends on an abiding intellect of which the image is the order in soul" (IV.4.10.12-3).<sup>33</sup> Second, the auxiliary function of the cosmic soul can not be actually conceived in terms of a standard distinction between

conception, planning, and execution. As we have already noted (see n.17), Plotinus thinks of the activity or effectiveness of form in its interaction with matter not in terms of planning and execution, but in terms of an instant and sudden attraction between two elements, one active and one passive, in the close proximity (γειτονεῖα) generated by the soul's "going forth." In this context, apart from the potency of the active element, Plotinus is eager to point out the passive suitability of the inert element (i.e., "ἐπείπερ ὑπέσθη" in the first image); he will even attribute to it, although negatively, an active tendency (generated through reflection) to embrace form and thus become form in an active sense (i.e., "αὐτοῦ ποιεῖσθαι ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν" in the third image). In this sense, the function of the soul would be to create a space, or rather a spacious proximity between the intelligible and the material, in which embodied forms can, so to speak, emerge spontaneously. In Plotinian terms, the soul is an "interpretative medium" which links the sensible with the intelligible domain<sup>34</sup>. From this point of view, we might say that the soul is both indispensable (no soul, no proximity, no sensible world) and superfluous (what indeed does soul add to the composite?): as long as the proximity is established, the interpreter 'disappears' (although it is everywhere), having brought into being (or being the order of) a unified composite of form and matter.<sup>35</sup>

Returning now to the issue of the form of Plotinus' account, we may draw a few concluding remarks. The task is an account which, respecting both the absolute and the relative separation of the elements of the composite structure, would try at the same time to establish the internal or immanent intelligibility of the sensible world. Plotinus' philosophical answer to this demand, which we have outlined in our discussion without examining it in detail, is the elaboration of a conception of the nature and mode of activity of the (cosmic) soul (in the context of a general account of the effectiveness of form or the activity of the Intellect) which transcends the standard distinction between deliberate (rational) action and 'blind' (mechanical) activity (as this can be found in the *Timaeus*). This conception informs his brief cosmogony, which assumes thus the form of a metamorphosis story, in which, to the extent that this is possible, creation or interaction is replaced by self-transformation. The genesis (and hence the order) of the sensible world is presented in terms of a single creative force, the cosmic soul, which, with all the relevant qualifications, acts upon itself; with the help of this entity, the interaction between two separate elements (matter and form) appears as ■ self-transformation which contains within itself the principle of its development. From this point of view, the fact that Plotinus does not start his cosmogony with a psychogony can be

explained as a sign of his reluctance, in this context, to bring into account anything that would point outside this process of self-transformation.

Announcing the contents of his cosmogony, Plotinus talks about that "which happened, when the soul which was altogether pure from body took upon itself a bodily nature" (τὸ γινόμενον πάθος τότε, ὅτε ψυχὴ καθαρὰ οὔσα σώματος πάντα ἰσχει περὶ αὐτὴν σώματος φύσιν) (13).<sup>36</sup> The creation story has already been programmatically transformed into a metamorphosis story, the story of the soul which became the world, but the question is already facing us: Why did the soul transform itself?<sup>37</sup>

## Notes

1. The text of Plotinus used is that of Henry and Schwyzer OCT *editio minor*, *Plotini Opera* (Oxford; 1964-82). Translations follow A. H. Armstrong's Loeb edition, *Plotinus with an English Translation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1966-88), but are frequently modified by me. Passages from IV.3 are cited in the text by chapter and line numbers only; passages from IV.3.9 are cited by line numbers only.
2. Plotinus faces the issue in I.8 and in II.4. For a discussion with further references, see D. O'Brien, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil" in L. P. Gerson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge; 1996), 171-195.
3. Cf. here Plotinus' program for a reading of the *Timaeus* in the context of an enquiry about soul outlined in IV.8.2; the questions concern (1) πῶς ποτε κοινωνεῖν σώματα πέφυκε [ἡ ψυχὴ]; (2) περὶ κόσμου φύσεως; (3) περὶ ποιητοῦ.
4. Inserted by Theiler; accepted by Henry-Schwyzler and Armstrong.
5. Plotinus mentions the special creative role of the cosmic soul in a number of passages; see, in particular, IV.3.6 (the metaphors quoted come from II.14-5) and V.1.2. We will return to the issue of the relation between the cosmic soul and the Demiurge at the end of our discussion.
6. Contrast here the *Timaeus*. Plato claims both that the soul "is prior in birth and excellence" (34C) with regard to the body of the world and that one of the ingredients in its construction is the "being which is transient and divisible in bodies" (Περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστὴ οὐσία) (35A). If we respect the narrative order (whether or not we want to interpret the *Timaeus* literally), this "being" can not be the sensible world, but is the chaotic "becoming" (γένεσις), which exists before the creation of the world (52D). In Plotinus' terms, that would be "not ordered matter."
7. That Plotinus thinks in terms of ordering, but not of an act of ordering is made clear in IV.4.10.9-11: "for the things it [the universe] ought to have already been discovered and ordered without being set in order; for the things set in order were the things that happened, and what made them was the order (ἤδη γὰρ ἐξεύρηται καὶ τέτακται ἃ δεῖ, οὐ ταχθέντα: τὰ γὰρ ταχθέντα ἦν τὰ γινόμενα, τὸ δὲ ποιοῦν αὐτὰ ἡ τάξις)."
8. For an orientation in this issue, see the exchange between G. Vlastos ("The Disorderly Motion in the *Timaeus*" in R. E. Allen, ed., *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics* (London; 1965), 379-99), H. Cherniss (*Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (Baltimore; 1944), 421-431), G. Vlastos ("Creation in the *Timaeus*: Is It a Fiction?" in R. E. Allen, ed., *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics* (London; 1965), 401-419), and L. Tarán ("The Creation Myth in Plato's *Timaeus*" in J. P. Anton and G. L. Kustas, ed., *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy* (Albany; 1971), 372-407).
9. "τὸ σύνθετον φασιν ἐν τούτοις κεκληῖσθαι γενητόν, τούτῳ δὲ συνυπάρχειν καὶ τὸ ἀφ' ἑτέρας αἰτίας ἀπογεννᾶσθαι" (In *Platonis Timaeum*, 85A; the reference is to *Timaeus*, 28B). The phrase "σαφηνείας ἕνεκα διδασκαλικῆς" comes from 89A. For reports of the ancient opinions, see A. E. Taylor's *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford; 1928), 66-70 (ad 28B.4); J. M. Dillon, *Iamblichus Chalcidensis In Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta* (Leiden; 1973), 303-7; and H. Cherniss, ed., *Plutarch's Moralia*, XIII.1 (Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1976), 168-71 (ad *De anima procreatione in Timaeo*, 1013A-B). For a discussion of this material, see R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum* (London; 1983), 268-283.
10. Thus it would be misleading to consider Plato's or Plotinus' use of 'myth' in this context as a regression to myth in its traditional sense: it is rather an attempt to specify the correct form of an account of the constitution of certain objects (e.g., the sensible world as σύνθετον), in close connection to a rigorous philosophical specification of the nature of these objects.
11. Cf. here: "To ask why Soul made the universe is like asking why there is soul and why the Maker makes (τὸ δὲ διὰ τί ἐποίησε κόσμον ταῦτόν τῳ διὰ τί ἔστι ψυχὴ καὶ διὰ τί ἐδημιουργὸς ἐποίησεν). First, it is a question of people who assume a beginning of that which always is: then they think that the cause of the making was a being who turned from one thing to another and changed" (II.9.8.1-5).
12. Cf. here: "ἡ πᾶσα ψυχὴ οὐδαμοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἦλθεν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ὅπου· ἀλλὰ τὸ σῶμα γειτονήσαν μετέλαβεν αὐτῆς" (III.9.3.1-3).
13. Plotinus usually makes the point in terms of a distinction between powers or parts of the soul, as in the next chapter: "but one power belongs to soul which remains within it, and another which goes out to something else" (IV.3.10.33-4); cf. also, II.3.9.31-4; V.1.3.7-11 (in the general context of II.6.3.14-20 and V.4.2.27-34); and in particular II.3.18.8-14, where we encounter again the image of 'strengthening' and 'overflowing': "δεῖ τὴν τοῦ παντός ψυχὴν θεωρεῖν μὲν τὰ ἄριστα αἰεὶ ἰεμένην πρὸς τὴν νοητὴν φύσιν καὶ τὸν θεόν, πληρουμένης δὲ αὐτῆς καὶ πεπληρωμένης οἷον ἀπομεστούμενης αὐτῆς τὸ ἐξ αὐτῆς ἰσχυρὰ καὶ τὸ ἔσχατον αὐτῆς πρὸς τὰ κάτω τὸ ποιοῦν τοῦτο εἶναι."
14. Given this image one would expect that the darkness circumscribes light, i.e., the familiar picture of a point-like source of light radiating in all directions. We shall see in the discussion of the third image that this is not the case.
15. Cf. here: "The only possibility that remains, then, is that all things exist in something else, and, since there is nothing between, because of their closeness (γειτονεία) to something else in the realm of real being something like an imprint and image of that other suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) appears, either by its direct action or through the assistance of soul" (V.8.7.12-16). A. H. Armstrong notes *ad loc.*: "The insistence on the immediate and intimate relationship of the intel-

- ligible and the sensible universes and the comparative unimportance of the mediation of the soul should be noted." We should note that a proper appreciation of the mediative role of the soul should take into account the fact that this "closeness" exists only in the light generated by the 'strengthening' of the soul; without soul there would be no "closeness." We will return to this issue at the end of our discussion.
16. Cf.: "καὶ ὁ κόσμος δὲ γένοιτο ἂν ἄνευ μεταλλοιώσεως. οἷον οἷς περιτίθεμεν" (III.6.11.20-1); "ἀλλ' οὖν εἶδαι κατέσχηται ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς τέλος, [the universe], ... ὅθεν καὶ χαλεπὸν εὐρεῖν τὴν ὕλην ὑπὸ πολλοῖς εἶδαι κρυφθεῖσαν" (V.8.7.19-23).
  17. Plotinus will make his position on the spontaneous nature of the creative activity of the soul clear in the next chapter: "For whatever comes into contact (ἐφάπνηται) with soul is made as the essential nature of soul is in a state to make it; and it makes, not according to a purpose brought in from outside, nor waiting upon planning and consideration (ἡ δὲ ποιῇ οὐκ ἐπακτῶ γνώμῃ οὐδὲ βουλήν ἢ σκέψιν ἀναμείνισσα)" (IV.3.10.13-16). The claim should be obviously read in the context of Plotinus' notion of intelligible creativity (e.g., V.8.7).
  18. The clause reads: "ὥς ἂν ἐν ὕδασι δίκτυον τεγγόμενον ζῶῃ." "ζῶῃ" is characterised "uix recte" by Henry-Schwyzler and is deleted (as "seltsam") by Theiler. Henry-Schwyzler conjecture without conviction "ἐρωῇ:" "as if a net immersed in the waters moved forth." In any case, the sentence makes sense under the assumption that the image refers to the passive movement of a net thrown in the sea, in a context where the existence of motion gives the appearance of life.
  19. The situation is similar in the *Timaeus*. The soul is "set" (θεῖς) in the center of the body, but is extended in such a way as to envelop the entire exterior of the body (34B; 36D); the qualification neutralises the most obvious inference of the metaphor, namely that the soul is 'in' body; the soul is simultaneously 'in,' 'through,' and 'out' of body. Cf. Plotinus' comments in III.9.3.3-4 and V.1.10.21-4.
  20. This image should be compared with a similar image from an earlier treatise, V.1.2.14-28 (10). There, "before soul it was a dead body .... or rather the darkness of matter and non-existence (πρὸ ψυχῆς σῶμα νεκρὸν, ... μᾶλλον δὲ σκότος ὕλης καὶ μὴ ὄν)" and we should imagine "soul as flowing in from outside, pouring in and entering it everywhere and illuminating (εισρέουσιν, εἰσχυθεῖσαν, εἰσιούσαν, εἰσλάμπουσιν): as the rays of the sun light up a dark cloud (σκοτεινὸν νέφος), and make it shine and give it a golden look (λάμπειν ποιοῦσι χρυσοεἰδῇ ὅψιν διδοῦσαι) ...." From our point of view, the strength of this image, which understandably appealed to Sts. Basil and Augustine (see Armstrong's note *ad loc*), is its weakness: it derives from a number of stark antitheses (inside-outside, before-after, light-darkness) that, in our reading, Plotinus himself tries here to undermine.
  21. The word "σκιά" appears for the first time in IV.3.9.48-9: "καὶ τοσαύτη ἐστὶν ἡ σκιά, ὅσος ὁ λόγος ὁ παρ' αὐτῆς [τῆς θαλάσσης ... τῆς ψυχῆς]."
  22. *Timaeus*, 29B-D. The success of Plato in this respect does not concern us here.
  23. The issue has been discussed by P. Hadot, in "Physique et poésie dans le *Timée* de Platon," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 115 (1983); cf. B. Κάλφας, ed., *Τίμαιος* (Athens 1995), 55-57. The relevant Aristotelian material comes mostly from Book VI of the *Poetics*. On the issue of mimesis in the *Timaeus*, see also, S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London 1986), 117-19.
  24. The headings are taken from F. M. Cornford's division of the *Timaeus* in *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato* (London; 1966).
  25. Thus, for example, Plato is able to claim that the 'mixture' of reason and necessity which characterises the world should be described in terms of "necessity yielding to intelligent persuasion" (48A).
  26. *Poetics*, 1450a 22-39.
  27. We should merely note here, since we do not have the space to pursue it, that an analysis of Plotinus' story in terms of other Aristotelian concepts (such as περιπέτεια and ἀναγνώρισις) may lead to very interesting results.
  28. Obviously some inferences can be drawn. We may, for example, attribute to the soul an intention to care for the house it builds. But recall Plotinus' exact formulation: "ἄξιος ἐπιμελείας νομισθεὶς [ὁ οἶκος]" (IV.3.9.31-2); even here Plotinus avoids active attribution to an agent.
  29. For a discussion of the issue, see H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*, Appendix XI, 603-610.
  30. Soul as generated: *Timaeus*, 34A-36E and *Laws*, 892C, 904A, 967D; soul as the source of motion: *Laws*, 896A-897B. For a discussion of the ensuing problems, see G. Vlastos, "The Disorderly Motion in the *Timaeus*," 390-9 and "Creation in the *Timaeus*: Is It a Fiction?," 414-9.
  31. There is a passage where Plotinus seems to identify the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* with the cosmic soul, on the basis of the fact that the Demiurge "planned" (διενοήθει) and this is a function of the soul and not of the Intellect (III.9.1.35). As Armstrong notes *ad loc*, Porphyry identified the Demiurge with the cosmic soul and believed that this was Plotinus' view (Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum*, 94A; Proclus disagrees with the attribution to Plotinus). Two things should be noted here: (1) As we have seen, Plotinus would not accept that the cosmic soul creates by "planning" (see n.17); (2) Plotinus criticises a similar position as a gnostic misinterpretation of Plato in II.9.619-25.
  32. (1): "something like an imprint and image of [something in the realm of real being] suddenly appears [in the sensible world], either by [real being's] direct action or through the assistance (διακονησαμένης) of soul" (V.8.7.13-6); (2) "but since the ordering principle (κοσμοῦν) is twofold, we speak of one form of it as the Craftsman (δημιουργόν) and the other as the Soul of All (τοῦ παντός

ψυχῆν)" (IV.4.10.1-3); (3) see n.5. The problem is more complicated, because Plotinus extends this hierarchy at the lower side in order to include both an immanent soul of nature (to be distinguished from the cosmic soul) and/or individual souls (cf. II.1.5; II.3.17-8; II.9.6.60-3; IV.4.10; and n.13).

33. Cf. II.3.17.13-18; II.3.18.8-14; II.9.4.9-10; V.9.3.24-37.

34. "This soul gives the edges (περάτα) of itself that border on the sun to it [the sun], and creates by means of itself a connection to the sun there [the Nous], by becoming, so to speak, interpretative (καὶ ποιεῖ διὰ μέσου αὐτῆς κάκει συνῆφθαι οἶον ἐρμηνευτική) of what comes from that sun to this sun, and from this sun to that sun, as far as this sun can reach the other through soul" (IV.3.11.17-21).

35. Thus, given the mediating and unifying function of the soul, Plotinus can describe the sensible world without reference to the soul: "Then matter, too, is a sort of ultimate form; so this universe is all form, and all the things in it are forms; ... the making is done without fuss, since that which makes is all real being and form (ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ αὕτη εἶδος τι ἔσχατον, πᾶν εἶδος τόδε καὶ πάντα εἶδη ... ἐποιεῖτο δὲ ἀσποφῆτι, ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ποιῆσαν καὶ οὐσία καὶ εἶδος)" (V.8.7.23-25).

36. Note here the reversal of the theme of 'covering' (see n. 16).

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## Divinized and De-divinized Conceptions of the World and of *Cosmos*

Leonidas C. Bargeliotes

Plato and Aristotle and, consequently, Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism, differ among themselves on account of their divinized and de-divinized conceptions of the world and of *cosmos*. Generally speaking, the former conception originates with the Italians, the latter with the Ionians. This, however, does not exclude a supplementary and interactive relation between them. The recognition of this distinction and the attempted interaction are important not only for the understanding of the Presocratic philosophy, but also for the particular tendencies and differences between the two great philosophers and their adherents. This is manifest in considering Plato's and Aristotle's ways of approaching the world, as well as in the criticism that Neoplatonists have raised against Aristotle's own half de-divinized world and aesthetic approach. Examples are drawn from the long complex of divinizing tradition which includes, among others, Pythagoreans and Platonists, Neoplatonists and Neopythagoreans. They mostly follow the divine masters: Pythagoras and Plato, and understand the world as divine and harmonious. They also contrast their own religious like doctrines with those of the Ionians and of Aristotle and find them inferior and de divinizing the world; the latter, according to their arguments, search for "material" causes, among other things, in order to give "physical" explanations and empirical arrangements to the world phenomena. In a word, they move from a divine mythical background and of *cosmos* to a "physical" or "natural" conception of the world.

Plato's aesthetic synthesis, as we shall see, is rooted in the conceptions of the world as *cosmos* of his predecessors, which he reshapes, transforms and enriches. "They express in words," as G. Mueller has put it: "as sculptors do

in stone, the vision of a beloved world." As a matter of fact, Eros, the love of the artist, is known to be the oldest divine artist, transforming chaos into *cosmos*. The blessed and happy *cosmos* is, therefore, the outcome of love for a balanced and harmonious achievement, but this "telos of love," stands in contrast to the unbalanced and disharmonious human existence. There is no doubt that behind the Platonic — and the Neoplatonic — conceptions of *cosmos* is, undoubtedly, Heraclitus' invisible harmony, "The invisible harmony is better than the visible."<sup>2</sup> But this invisible harmony is hard to find; it can only be found by the soul animated by an anticipating urge in the right direction.<sup>3</sup> Man will find the truth of the human affairs when he opens his psyche to the truth of God, which means a conversion, the turning-around from the untruth of human affairs to the truth of the Idea.<sup>4</sup> This, in turn, can be achieved by proper education and the replacement of the unseemly symbolizations of gods, as they were to be found in the poets, by the seemly symbols.<sup>5</sup> As E. Voegelin<sup>6</sup> has stated, "the validity of the standards developed by Plato and — partly — by Aristotle depends on the conception of man who can be the measure of a society because God is the measure of his soul." To this argument it is added the Platonic Eros — and its variants — toward the *kalon* and *agathon*, as well as their mathematical achievement and subordination of the forces in the soul. From our point of view, this interpretation is partly true regarding the conceptions of the world and of *cosmos* by both Plato and Aristotle and their adherents, because their reaction was different. Plato relies heavily on the divinized Pythagorean concepts of *Philosophia*, of *cosmos*, of *number* and of *harmonia*, which he reshapes, transforms and enriches in accordance with his Ideal World. Aristotle, based upon his own *entelechiac* and teleological conceptions of man and the world, rejects Pythagoreanism and partly de-divinizes the world. In what follows, the great Platonic and Neoplatonic conceptions of *cosmos* and of their aesthetic syntheses are extensively quoted and analysed to this effect.

In the first place, for the Pythagoreans philosophers are not only those who must inquiry into "a great number of things"<sup>7</sup> or those who are travelling *θεωρίας ἐνεκεν*,<sup>8</sup> but also those who are *φιλοὶ σοφία*, in a deeper meaning of the word — such as "purification" and salvation through philosophy — those who consider man as an immortal god.<sup>9</sup> As Aristoxenus said of Pythagoras and of his followers,<sup>10</sup> "every distinction they lay down as to what should be done or not done aims at conformity with the divine. This is their starting point; their whole life is ordered with a view to following God, and it is the governing principle of their philosophy." This is the effort to escape through assimilation to God, ("φυγὴ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν"),<sup>11</sup> in

contradistinction with those who "think mortal thoughts," ("θνατὰ χρεὶ τὸν θνατόν, οὐκ ἀθάνατα τὸν θνατόν φρονεῖν").<sup>12</sup> Assimilation to God was for Pythagoras the goal of life, an aspiration rooted in the limit and order, of *πέρας* and of *κόσμος*. Plato's main concern, as we shall see, is the exploration of the human soul, and the true order of the soul turns out to be dependent on philosophy in the strict sense of the love of the divine *σοφόν*.<sup>13</sup>

For the Pythagoreans, *cosmos* unites the notion of order, arrangement and structural perfection with their beauty, things are interconnected and all nature is akin, and the human soul is intimately related to the living and divine universe. Pythagoras was the first to apply the name of *cosmos* to the world, in recognition of the order it displayed.<sup>14</sup> According to this religious doctrine, it is the "priests and priestesses concern to give a reasoned account"<sup>15</sup> of the nature of things, that is, all nature is akin, as the "wise men tell us that heaven and earth, gods and men are bound together by kinship and love and orderliness and temperance and justice."<sup>16</sup> The philosopher through association with what is divine and orderly (*κόσμιος*) becomes divine and orderly (*κόσμιος*).<sup>16</sup> The revolutions of our own thought, which is akin to the circuits of intelligence in the heaven, may profit by them by learning to know them and acquiring the power to compute them rightly according to nature; we might reproduce the perfectly unerring revolutions of the god and reduce to settled order the wandering motions in ourselves."<sup>17</sup> These men are the "best spectators," ("βέλτιστοι θεαταί"),<sup>18</sup> who take part in festival or fair. In short, the philosopher who contemplates the *cosmos* becomes *kosmios* in his own soul. *Cosmos*, for the Pythagoreans is the key to the whole.

Pythagoreans are also known for the important advances in the science of mathematics and its relation with *harmonia*. For the Pythagoreans number had a mystical significance and independent reality. As W. K. C. Guthrie<sup>19</sup> puts it, "Number was responsible for 'harmony,' the divine principle that governed the structure of the whole world." Numbers not only explained the physical world, but also symbolized or stood for moral qualities and other abstractions. They could express the love for the agreement of all things, and become the reconciling principle of the limiting form and the unlimited stuff, of the all-embracing Eleatic Being and the Herakleitean flux, better, the reconciling "force" of the things of sense-perception and the ordered soul, of the divine nature and the human art, especially music.

No one else save Plato and the Neoplatonists come so close to the Pythagorean religious character of mathematics. For Plato, in contrast with Aristotle, the acquisition of mathematical knowledge partakes more of the

character of religious initiation than of mere instruction or research. For Plato, Arithmetic "draws the souls upwards...never allowing anyone to offer it for discussing mere collections of visible or tangible bodies."<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the objects of geometrical knowledge are "eternal, not subject to decay," and it tends to draw the soul towards truth and to produce a philosophic intelligence for the directing upwards of faculties which we wrongly turn earthwards."<sup>21</sup> Astronomy, too, as a pure mathematical science, must turn the soul's gaze upwards, not literally to the sky, but to the realm of "real being and the invisible."<sup>22</sup> This divinizing orientation of mathematics versus the de-divinizing observations of the empirical scientists who are discussing mere collections of visible or tangible bodies and are directing the faculties to turn earthwards and to the natural revolutions of heaven. The latter were seeking accounts and reasons to explain the phenomena, rather than forcing the phenomena and trying to fit them into arguments and opinions of their own. As Aristotle complained, they insisted on making the system coherent and they invented a non-existent planet to make up the total to the sacred number ten. Hence Aristotle's general rejection of their doctrine, that "things themselves are numbers," or that they "imitate" or "represent" numbers, or again, that they supposed the elements of numbers to be the elements of things and the whole heaven to be a harmony and a number."<sup>23</sup> Aristotle seems to express the spirit of Ionian thought, which, in the words of Guthrie,<sup>24</sup> was "less bemused by the religious associations of number and more rational in approach." Numbers are intimately connected with *harmonia*.

The word *harmonia* meant primarily the joining or fitting things together which the Pythagoreans equated with number and associated with music. The generalization of the number could apply to the whole heaven and become the harmony of the spheres,<sup>25</sup> while the numerical ratios could determine the concordant intervals of the scale."<sup>26</sup> Like *cosmos* which represented order and beauty the basic intervals of music could be represented by the ratios 1:2, 3:2 and 4:3, and be imposed on the chaotic range of sound by means of the four integers 1, 2, 3, and 4. These add up to 10, upon which the Pythagoreans have based their belief that this number "was something perfect, and contained in itself the whole nature of number."<sup>27</sup> It is this number that the Pythagoreans represented graphically by the figure known as tetraktys, a sacred symbol for them, to which the followers of Pythagoras, were said to swear by him who handed down to them the tetraktys, "source and root of everlasting nature."<sup>28</sup> All these divinized Pythagorean conceptions, can be seen in Plato's great aesthetic synthesis.

Aesthetics for Plato are the arts and the ways of life inspired by the divine Muses, which constitute his divine—mythical background. In his own words, "the human soul, inspired by the Muse with 'divine madness' (*μανία*), creates 'music' (*μουσική*), the highest blessings of human existence—without which life would not be worth living."<sup>29</sup> This sort of madness is a gift of the gods, fraught with the highest bliss (*ἐπ' εὐτυχία τῇ μεγίστῃ παρὰ θεῶν ἢ τοιαύτῃ μανία δίδοται*). Both, aesthetic unity of soul and man, and symbolic fusion of body and soul, constitute the foundation of the true community and "of our national culture." It celebrates itself in the great national festivals and becomes aware of itself in the artistic glorification of its historical past. Hence, "the true Muse is the companion of reason and philosophy,"<sup>30</sup> for the aim of the philosopher is to discern the nature of soul, divine and human, its experiences, and its activities. Eros as aesthetic love, in response to the call of the Muse, transfigures the given stuff into an expressive image of life,<sup>31</sup> motivates the true artist and distinguishes him from the *ἄμουσον*. This means that we have the technicians without inspiration, and those whose inspiration is impure and immoral; only the philosopher poet can unify these two conditions.<sup>32</sup> Love, then, is himself so divine a poet that he can kindle in the souls of others the poetic fire...we are everyone of us a poet when we are in love."<sup>33</sup>

The final end and consummation of the aesthetic life is, for Plato, a blessed union with the appearance of Beauty,<sup>34</sup> which means the production of dialectical contrasts between real and apparent beauty, between the outside and the inside illusion and, consequently, between Plato's condemnation of art from the practical point of view, and the unsurpassable heights of his art in which beauty is praised as the highest good. It also means the inadequacy and helplessness of a purely aesthetic culture, and that contemplation of beauty transcends the beauties of the earth, of the bodies, of practices and of sciences until one arrives at the knowledge of beauty itself and the essence of beauty, the "divine beauty," the "pure and clear and unalloyed...the divine beauty in its uniqueness."<sup>35</sup> Thus, every work of art is a concrete whole of opposites, made visible to imagination and philosophical self-comprehension, while "beauty in and for herself," which man enjoys, is the "only home he has in this world." For when man has brought forth and reared this perfect beauty, he shall be called the friend of god, and if ever it is given to man to put in immortality, it shall be given to him."<sup>36</sup> Man's soul is open to the transcendent Ideal Whole and is opposed to the charms of beautiful appearance. There is a need for it to go beyond beauty and art in order to evaluate beauty and aesthetic life with reference to the whole of reality. The ideal whole of reality without any



visible embodiment, is "beyond (any given) being in power and dignity."<sup>37</sup> God too has been conceived as a self-sufficient organism whose life depends on nothing outside of itself. The divine whole has no sense-object against itself. As a matter of fact, this marks the culmination of Plato's thought and the beginning of Neoplatonism. In the end is the beginning. Plotinus, Proclus and Plethon will be respectively treated to this effect, in spite of their transformation they brought about in regard to their conception of *cosmos* and of divinity, and in opposition to the Aristotelian de-divinized strategy.

Plotinus, to begin with, in his conception of divine—physical beauty and the beauty of arts follows, in the main, Plato, but with variations. He preserves the divinization strategy in his hierarchical structure of reality and objects Aristotle's categories as completely inadequate, inapplicable and irrelevant for the *κόσμος νοητός*, but useful for the *κόσμος αἰσθητός*.<sup>38</sup> The dialectician, however, has the right to judge and use or ignore as his superior wisdom dictates.

Thus, the life of the organic unity which has its source beyond the world of forms, that is, in the Good, it is involved not only in the beauty which form gives to works of nature and art in the sensible world, but also in the beauty of forms themselves. It is by the *cosmos* of the world, its beauty and order that we are to know the divinity and be led to the contemplation of the intelligible. The work of art is beautiful in so far as it reflects the living organic unity of the whole which is the intelligible form. Plotinus, unlike Plato, puts the beauty of art on a level with the beauty of nature as a way to the intelligible beauty.<sup>39</sup> As the same author points out, Plotinus is only interested in the beauty of art, or of nature, as a help in our ascent to the intelligible beauty and beyond it to its source, the Good, which is older, not in time but in truth, and has the prior power—for it has all power.<sup>40</sup>

Plotinus, also, preserves Plato's view of the artist as copyist of sense objects, at two removes from the truth, although he considers the products of human art like those of the divine making, that is, images of forms in the intelligible world, to which the artist's mind, like all human minds, comes in direct conduct and which, in some cases, can improve on nature. He points out, that "Phidias did not make his Zeus from any model perceived by the senses; he understood what Zeus would look like if he wanted to make himself visible to us."<sup>41</sup>

Nature, too, though an image of wisdom (*ἰνδαλμα φρονήσεως*), is for him the appearance of the Over-Soul, which itself is derived from the archetypal Logos, and is divinized through its participation in the divine Beauty.

The divinity, says Plotinus, made the universe beautiful and harmonious throughout, which is its own aesthetic constitution.<sup>42</sup> He compares the movement of the heavenly bodies to a choral dance; they all aspire to the One. The moving and illuminating lights of the heavens are like the tones of a lyre. The natural harmony of the moving lights is like a musical symphony produced by instruments.<sup>43</sup> Even things that are less good or evil also contribute to the perfection of the universe. It follows that there is no necessity that all things be beautiful in the same degree because the very contraries (opposites) contribute to the perfection of the universe, and so the beauty of the world could not exist without them.<sup>44</sup> This, again, is illustrated by Plotinus' beloved instruments, the lyre and the shepherd's pipe. The assigned place of each string by the pitch of the sound and the weakest sound of the pipe can contribute to the total and perfect harmony. This leads us to recognize and appreciate that the world is a beautiful and brilliant spectacle—a magnificent and perfect image—that is beautifully formed by intelligible divinities.<sup>45</sup> The beautiful, then, even in that elementary stage, can only be known by the highest faculty which apprehends suprasensuous reality. This has led Plotinus to reject the classical concept of symmetry according to which there is a harmony of form and content, of soul and its embodiment, in the object. The conclusion is that symmetry is not beauty itself, but that it derives its beauty from a superior principle and, for that reason, cannot be scientific or derived from mutual agreement of these speculations. Plotinus goes beyond symmetry.

The Over-Soul, on the other hand, possesses the body of the universe. She contains all the souls in her breast, each distinct from her, but not separated. Entirely devoted to divine things and not withdrawn from her noblest contemplation, she governs the world by a single power whose exercise involves no anxiety.<sup>46</sup> Souls, therefore, are necessarily amphibians, since they alternately live in both worlds. The soul is the image of intelligence (*Nous*) and, as intelligence, is the image of the One. The closer we get to form, the greater the participation in divinity—and the assimilation to it. Analogous is the aesthetic ascent of the soul. When the soul is raised to intelligence, she sees her own beauty increased. Mathematics prepares for that achievement.

Mathematics, also, prepares the soul for the study of intelligibles and for purifying and strengthening it for the transition, to pure being.<sup>47</sup> When the soul is united to intelligence it is right in saying that "the soul's welfare and beauty lie in its assimilation to the divinity."<sup>48</sup> It is therefore only by intelligence that the soul is beautiful without any mediation and hence beautiful in itself.<sup>49</sup> This is the third stage of the Plotinian structure of reality. It is the stage of the third

kind of citizens, the philosophers, the divine men. "τὸ τρίτον γένος θεῶν ἀνθρώπων," as Plotinus calls them, who, in their mightier power, are able to reach the beauty in the intelligible world and have a clear vision of the splendor above. In an almost lyric style Plotinus refers to these divine men as taking their flight above the clouds and darkness of this world and then, looking beyond all here below, they remain there and reside in their true fatherland, delighting in the unspeakable place of reality and truth, like a man returning after a long wandering to the pleasant ways of his own native land.<sup>50</sup>

The opposition between the two worlds, the divine and the material, the divinized and the de-divinized, can, also, be seen in Proclus, particularly, in his hierarchical arrangement of souls in their descent in the world, in his conceptions of mathematics and of arts, in his evaluation of physics and in his anti-aristotelianism, in general. In the first place, at the top of his hierarchy Proclus places the souls of the gods that do not descend into the world, and are not affected by any change, but govern it from their transcendent status of independence. Below these come souls who do descend, but remain pure and unaffected by vice. And there are souls who do not only descend but also become corrupted by the material world.<sup>51</sup> Proclus uses Pythagorean and Orphic authorities to support Plato, while Aristotle, for him, occupies a subordinate place, in respect to his empirical approach,<sup>52</sup> to his image of the soul as tablet (γραμματοῦν),<sup>53</sup> as well as to his theory that numbers are mere abstractions from the material objects. The arguments which Proclus uses in a systematic way against this mundane derivation of mathematics are directed against the Aristotelian theory of abstraction in order to a further strengthening of the anti-Aristotelian position. From the Neoplatonic point of view the accuracy that mathematics possess cannot be derived from sensible objects. Neither immutable laws can be derived from a changing world, nor the general principles of demonstration can be posterior to sensible particulars. Almost all Neoplatonists are unable to understand the new possibilities that Aristotle's infinite indivisibility of mathematics opens for the solution, among other things, of the old problem of the Atomists and of Zeno's paradoxes.

Proclus's concerns, however, are different. He is mainly concerned with showing the importance of mathematics for theology and the rest of the sciences, including the productive arts. For Proclus, mathematics prepares intellectual insight. His argument is worth quoted in length: "...thus Plato explains to us many wonderful doctrines about the gods by means of mathematical forms, and the philosophy of the Pythagoreans conceals its secret theological initiation using such veils. Such also is the entire *Sacred Discourse*, the

*Bacchae* of Philolaus, and the whole approach of Pythagoras' exegesis concerning the gods."<sup>54</sup> According to Proclus, as himself puts it, "productive arts 'mathematics' has the rank of paradigm, generating before in itself the principles and measures of what are produced."<sup>55</sup> Geometry, above all, reaches, as general mathematics do, up to true and divine being, "teaching us through images the special properties (ιδιότητες) of the divine orders and the powers of the intellectual Forms... Here it shows us what figures are appropriate to the gods, which ones belong to primary beings..."<sup>56</sup> At the intermediate region of knowledge geometry unfolds and develops discursive principles (διανοητικοὶ λόγοι), while at the level below it examines nature, that is, "the species of elementary perceptible bodies and the powers associated with them, and explains how their causes are contained in advance in its own ideas."<sup>57</sup> For the Neoplatonist Proclus the structure of geometrical demonstrations, which rest on axioms and hypotheses, that is, the principles or 'causes' (both of the world and of scientific discourse) from which the conclusions are derived, must be transcendent, immaterial, and unchanging. Physics itself, then, must begin and derived from these meta-physical causes, the universal and unerring principles, if its mathematical-geometrical laws could be universally true. But when these laws are applied to physical bodies, which are of derivative ontological character and known through sense perception, such laws are deficient, probable and limited in scope. This means that physics has a 'dual' character. The one, the Pythagorean, either concerned with its transcendent 'divine' causes producing the world: the demiurge, the Forms, the lesser gods, soul (as in the 'theology' of *Timaeus*) or a science of the divine itself (as in the *Parmenides*), and the other rejected in the *Phaedo*, "which blinds the eye of the soul, holding as responsible causes as winds and ether according to Anaxagoras." The former, then, the true physics, must be attached to theology, "as nature depends upon the gods."<sup>58</sup> In the case of physics, Proclus claims that the physics of Plato, for reasons just explained, is superior to that of Aristotle. As he puts it, Aristotle concerns himself mainly "with immanent causes, matter and form in nature, and pays less attention than does Plato to the transcendent efficient, paradigmatic, and final causes... and to the extent he neglects the divine presuppositions of nature he diminishes that which gives physics what scientific value can have."<sup>59</sup> Plethon, as we shall see in what follows, will give more details of this "inferiority" of Aristotle.

Finally, George Gemistos-Plethon, who has declared the independence of Platonism and Neoplatonism from Christianity and identified them with Neo-Hellenism and true Humanism,<sup>60</sup> sought to make Plato a living philo-

sophical fountain of truth. He was also eager to point out that Aristotle was inferior of Plato and far from agreeing with the Church. Through his religious, philosophical and moral ideas, Plethon attempted to revive Neoplatonism and Stoicism in order to re-divinize the world and, by appealing to their truth, preserve the eternal divinity of the world. Thus Plethon became the most active and outstanding philosopher dedicated to the revival of Neoplatonism and the survival of Hellenism during the last century of the Empire's existence.

In particular, Plethon, like his precursors Neoplatonists, endeavored to found his philosophical theology and metaphysics in the doctrines of Pythagoras, Plato and the Stoics, where science, philosophy and theology, along with ritualism formed an integral part of the Hellenic daily life. For a more reasonable formulation and justification of his metaphysical concepts, Plethon found it necessary to sanction them by attributing divine status to them.<sup>61</sup> To secure the divinization of his concepts, he appealed to "oracles" of antiquity and the "blessed name" of Zoroaster. On account of this Plethon despised any form of innovation and the introduction of the new metaphysical concepts.<sup>62</sup> The common "axioms," or "doctrines" or "ideas," as the philosopher calls the commonly accepted principles, are claimed to be as old as the universe itself, co-eternal with the *cosmos*<sup>63</sup> which ultimately gods have placed within man's soul in the best possible manner.<sup>64</sup> In his hierarchically arranged categories and attributes of Being which correspond to a parallel arrangement of deities, Plethon preserves the well-known tripartite division of cosmos:

(i) The first super-essential and transcendental one (ὑπερούσιον τὸ "Εν) identified with Zeus and characterized as αὐτοόν, αὐτοέν and αὐτοαγαθός, the father and creator of all.<sup>65</sup>

(ii) The principal agent of creation, the creative or demiurgic principle, Nous, corresponding to Poseidon, the first offspring of God the father; at once the eldest son and second god.<sup>66</sup>

(iii) The third part of the hierarchy encompasses the individuals of the sensible world as well as the social beings. They are the phenomena of the sensible world, the rational and the irrational concrete beings, related to the eternal world of ideas as the copy is related to archetype.

Plethon conceives man as *methorion* in order to show that human soul, man's immortal part, originates in the divine and it is carried to the human body by the celestial gods by means of the carrier of the soul (ψυχῆς ὄχημα). The souls enjoy preexistence as well as eternal life after death, since "they never cease from participating in mortal nature during all the successive stages

in which the cycle recurs."<sup>67</sup> We proclaim," Plethon continues, "an eternity for the soul of man which is not half-measure or lame, but whole and complete...for it is plain that the eternity in both directions of which we speak is far greater and fine thing."<sup>68</sup> Immortality, therefore, for Plethon, means eternity of the soul, which thus is considered to be co-eternal with the Creator destined to assume and resume, alternately and indefinitely, a mortal nature.<sup>69</sup> Hence Plethon's definition of man: "man is an immortal animal, born to communicate with the mortal nature."<sup>70</sup> In other words, man is of composite nature, of the divine and of the bestial nature (θείου τε δὴ καὶ θηριώδους συντεθειμένος).<sup>71</sup>

Man's composite nature is, according to Plethon, the outcome of a similar composition of the universe itself which is composed of immortal and mortal beings (αἰδίων τε καὶ θνητῶν). Man has been devised so as to be a kind of bond (σύνδεσμος) between these two sorts of beings and, consequently, to be their μέθριον.<sup>72</sup> Through this common limit and bond man is elevated above that which is mortal and can be united with the gods, through the line of kinship, in participating to their immortality and to their glorious beauty which man shares with them to a degree and is undoubtedly inferior, but, nevertheless, similar to divine beauty.<sup>73</sup>

Another important service of the admixture of the immortal with the mortal nature in man is its contribution to the harmony of the whole. In respect to this doctrine Plethon writes: "Our soul which is akin to the divine, as immortal and eternal, resides always in heaven which is the limit of the world. Then attached always to a mortal body, the soul is sent by the gods...in view of the universal harmony (τῆς τοῦ παντός ἕνεκεν ἁρμονίας) so that the union of the mortal nature with the immortal nature within us, may contribute to the union of the whole."<sup>74</sup> Plethon's conception of the human soul is an optimistic one; it takes us beyond the pessimism of the Orphic writings and the puritanism of Plato's *Phaedo*. "Though the soul," Plethon writes, "is fastened to the mortal body, she feels no shame for it" (οὐκ αἰσχύνεται); on the contrary she boasts (ἀύχει) for the harmony, that is the union, in which the mortal body (βρότειον σῶμα) is involved; she takes pride in it as if she herself had produced such a function for the sake of the whole universe...in the same way the universe has become one such harmony (οὕτω καὶ τὸ πᾶν εἰς μίαν τινὰ ἁρμονίαν συγκροτεῖσθαι).<sup>75</sup> The purpose of the union is again for the plenitude and the harmony of the great whole (τῆς τοῦ παντός πληρώσεως ἕνεκα καὶ ἅμα εὐαρμοστίας).<sup>76</sup> As a good Neoplatonist Plethon was convinced that the unequal distribution of good and happiness as well as our faults and vices —

which is impossible not to commit on account of our contact with the inferior nature (ὧν οὐχ οἶόν τ' ἦν μὴ μετίσχειν τοὺς τῷ θνητῷ τῷδε κεκοινωνικότας)—does not affect the harmony of the whole; on the contrary, it contributes to it.<sup>77</sup> Man's contribution to the harmony of the *cosmos* is confirmed by the philosopher's theory of measure and harmony.

Beauty, according to Plethon, consists in measure and symmetry. He argues as follows: Beauty cannot be immeasurable or indefinite and constantly increasing. But it may be asked why this is so, when that which possesses more being is always superior? The answer is that that which possesses being in the highest degree is not that which is the greatest in number, volume, or quantity, but that which is most permanently durable; and that is unity, or what is relatively more completely unified.<sup>78</sup> The simple, Plethon points out, is more unified than the complex, the symmetrical than the asymmetrical, the proportionate than the disproportionate. What has a common measure or identical proportion is most completely unified. What lacks measure or proportion in its components lacks unity and consequently will fail to be permanent. So it is measure and definition that the greater degree of being, and therefore of beauty and quality, is to be found, rather than in the constantly increasing and wholly indefinite.<sup>79</sup> The divinized and aesthetic views of the philosopher of Mistra can be better appreciated in their anti-paraphrase to the corresponding de-divinized views of Aristotle and particularly in his criticism of Aristotle's understanding of the first principle, the creator, and the object of art. Thus, in comparing Aristotle's views of God, the creator, with those of Plato Plethon argues as follows:

Plato's view is that God, the supreme sovereign, is the creator of every kind of intelligible and separate substance, and hence of our entire universe...<sup>80</sup> It may be pointed out that Aristotle does make God the end and the final cause,<sup>81</sup> but even this must be regarded as a not very exalted claim and not one worthy of God, if he makes God the end not of the existence or essence of particular things but only of movement and change. If, on the other hand, his reason for not calling God anywhere the creator of the universe is simply that he does not believe him to be such, then he would be guilty of an even graver fault, in that he neither states nor even believes the noblest doctrine of all philosophy, which is common not only to philosophy but to all right-thinking mankind.<sup>82</sup>

The reasons the philosopher of Mistra gives to demonstrate his thesis and that Aristotle doesn't believe in this doctrine are worth to be quoted in full:

Now, I shall show that he does not believe in this doctrine. First, it would not be reasonable, if he accepted this noblest doctrine, that he should never refer to it anywhere in his work, when by contrast he goes on at unnecessary length about such things as embryos and shellfish. Secondly, he criticizes those who postulate a cause of the generation of numbers (meaning a cause as distinct from a time when they came into existence, as is clear from his exposition of their arguments); and he argues against them that 'it is absurd, indeed an impossibility, to suppose the generation of eternal entities.'<sup>83</sup> From this it is clear that Aristotle, like others no doubt, assumes that generation in time must be a necessary consequence of causal generation... But if Aristotle regards our universe as eternal,<sup>84</sup> he clearly could not presuppose its generation; and if not generation, then no creator of it either.<sup>85</sup>

But we, the Platonists, Plethon adds, "place God as universal sovereign over all existing things, and assume him to be the originator of originators, the creator of creators, and refer everything without exception to him..."<sup>86</sup>

Equally de-divinizing is Aristotle's use of the teleological argument concerning nature and art. Aristotle says,<sup>87</sup> Plethon argues, "it is absurd to think that what happens is purposeless unless one can see the agent of it exercising deliberation." On the contrary, says Aristotle, art exercises no deliberation; for if the art were inherent in a piece of wood, it would not be deliberating.<sup>88</sup> But how could, Plethon asks, an art continue to be so called if there were no deliberation prior to its exercises? What is the essential constituent of an art other than deliberation? If that were taken away, no art would remain. How could anything be carried through to an end of any kind without a mind exercising prior deliberation, and indeed preconceiving that end within itself? For if art imitates nature, as Aristotle himself holds,<sup>89</sup> then nature cannot be inferior to art: on the contrary, nature must long beforehand possess that which constitutes art in an even higher degree. And even though there is clearly an element in art which does not deliberate, such as an instrument or a laborer, it is not in them that the art lies but in the master-craftsman. Similarly, if one observes something irrational in nature, then the nature which effectively produces the result does not lie therein; for nature is instituted by God, and God's institution cannot be irrational.<sup>90</sup>

It becomes evident from the above that Plethon's conception of man as *methorion* is an outcome of his Neoplatonic world view. It is also evident that this conception is incompatible with and opposed to the Aristotelian—and the Christian—conception of soul and body. Plethon cannot accept the Aristotelian doctrine of soul, because Aristotle reduces its role to a simple element of

man and ruins the Platonic doctrine of the immortality of the soul, in doubting about its pre-existence as well as its survival. Aristotle's doctrine of intellect is far from being in agreement with his concept of *methorion* because Aristotle contradicts himself in stating that the human intellect is immortal and also that man is ruined after death. Aristotle's conception of God, the creator, as moving cause only, as well as his teleology of nature and art clearly show, from Plethon's Neoplatonic point of view, his de-divinized inclinations. His conception of teleology in nature and art independently of the noetic cause could not but lead to such consequences. Besides, Aristotle contradicts himself when he affirms that nature acts without the intelligent agent (βουλευεται), a thesis which, in reality, is not distinguished from that of mechanism—according to which nature acts accidentally or necessarily—which his teleology tries to avoid.

## Notes

1. *Plato the Founder of Philosophy as Dialectic*, New York, the Philosophical Library, 1965, 143.
2. Fr. B 54: "ἁρμονίῃ ἀφανῆς φανερῆς κρείττων."
3. Cf. Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, University of Chicago Press, 1952, 68.
4. Cf. *Republic*, 518d-e.
5. Cf. *Republic*, 378-379.
6. Cf. E. Voegelin, *op. cit.*, 70.
7. Heracl. Fr. 35.
8. Cf. E. Voegelin, *op. cit.*, 70.
9. Emped. Fr. 112.4.
10. Ap. Iambl. V.P. 137, DK. 58D2.
11. Plato. *Theaet.*, 176a.
12. Epich, 263 Kaibel (DK, 23B20, vol. 1, 201).
- 12a. Cf. Phaedr., 278d: "Τὸ μὲν σοφόν...καλεῖν ἔμοιγε μέγα εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ θεῶ μόνῳ πρέπειν."
13. Act. II, I (DK, 14.21: "Π. πρῶτος ὠνόμασε τὴν τῶν ὄλων περιοχὴν κόσμον ἐκ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ τάξεως").
14. Plato. *Meno*, 81 c.
15. Cf. *Gorg.*, 507e.
16. *Polit.*, 5005c.
17. *Tim.*, 47b-c.
18. DL, viii, 8.
19. *A History of Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1971, vol. I, 213.
20. *Polit.*, 525d: "ὥς σφόδρα ἄνω ποι ἄγει τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ περὶ αὐτῶν τῶν ἀριθμῶν ἀναγκάζει διαλέγεσθαι, οὐδαμῇ ἀποδεχόμενον, ἐάν τις αὐτῇ ὁρατὰ ἢ ἀπτά σώματα ἔχοντας προτεινόμενος διαλέγηται."
21. *Polit.*, 527b: "τοῦ γὰρ αἰὲ ὄντος ἡ γεωμετρικὴ γυνώσις ἐστίν..." Ὀλκὸν ἄρα, ὦ γενναῖε, ψυχῆς πρὸς ἀλήθειαν εἴη ἂν καὶ ἀπεργαστικὸν φιλοσόφον διανοίας πρὸς τὸ ἄνω σχεῖν ἢ νῦν κάτω οὐ δέον ἔχομεν."
22. *Polit.*, 529a-d: "ἀναγκάζει ψυχὴν εἰς τὸ ἄνω ὄραν καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐνθένδε ἐκεῖσε ἄγει...τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν αὐτοῖς ληφόμενον."
23. *Metaph.* 985b23, 987b28, 986a1, 1078b21; *De Caelo*, 293a 25.
24. *Op. cit.*, p. 219.
25. *De Caelo*, 290b 12.
26. *Polit.*, 531a.
27. Arist. *Metaph.*, 986a8: "τέλειον ἡ δεκάς εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ πᾶσαν περιελιφέναι τὴν τῶν ἀριθμῶν φησιν."
28. Porph. V. P. 20, Iambl. V. P. 150.

29. *Phaidros*, 244b, 245bc: "...τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἡμῖν γίγνεται διὰ μανίας, θεία μέντοι δόσει διδομένης...ἀνευ μανίας Μουσῶν...ἀτελής...καὶ ἡ ποίησις."
30. *Polit.*, 548b-c.
31. *Cf. Symp.*, 196e
32. *Cf. Laws*, IV, 719cd and VII, 801bc.
33. *Symp.*, 196e: "πᾶς γὰρ ποιητὴς γίγνεται ... οὐ ἂν Ἐρῶς ἄψηται."
34. *Cf. Polit.*, 403c: "δεῖ δὲ πον τελευτᾶν τὰ μουσικὰ εἰς τὰ τοῦ καλοῦ ἑρωτικά."
35. *Symp.*, 211a-b: "αὐτό καθ' αὐτό μεθ' αὐτοῦ μονοειδὲς αἰεὶ ὄν, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα καλὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα."
36. *Symp.*, 212a: "τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθῆ καὶ θρεψαμένῳ ὑπάρχει θεοφιλεῖ γένεσθαι, καί, εἴπερ τῷ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπων, ἀθανάτῳ καὶ ἐκείνῳ."
37. *Polit.*, 509b: "ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει."
38. *Enn.* v, 1, 2, and 3; *cf. Christos Evangeliou, Aristotle's Categories and Porphyry*, E. J. Brill, ed. *Philosophia Antiqua* n. 18, The Netherlands 1988, 13.
39. *Cf. A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus," The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge, University Press, 1970, 232.
40. *Op. cit.*, 233.
41. *Cf. Enn.*, v 8 (31) 1, 38-40: "ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ Φειδίας τὸν Δία πρὸς οὐδὲν αἰσθητὸν ποιήσας, ἀλλὰ λαβὼν οἷος ἂν γένοιτο, εἰ ἡμῖν ὁ Ζεὺς δι' ὁμμάτων ἐθέλοι φανῆναι."
42. *Enn.*, iii.2.3: "ὄλον γὰρ ἐποίησε πάγκαλον καὶ αὐτάρκες."
43. *Enn.*, iv. 4. 8: "εἰς τὸν σύμπαντα οὐρανὸν ἐλλάμψει ὥσπερ χορδαὶ ἐν λύρᾳ συμπαθῶς κινηθεῖσαι μέλος ἂν ᾄσειαν ἐν φυσικῇ τινι ἀρμονίᾳ."
44. *Cf. Enn.*, ii. 3. 16: "οὐ δεῖ πάντα καλὰ εἶναι...ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ ἐναντία συντελεῖ καὶ οὐκ ἀνευ τούτου κόσμος."
45. *Enn.*, ii. 9.8: "ἄγαλμα ἐναργὲς καὶ καλὸν τῶν νοητῶν θεῶν εἴποι ..."
46. *Cf. Enn.*, iv, 8. 3.
47. *Enn.*, I 3, 3, 8: "πρὸς τελείωσιν ἀρετῶν."
48. *Enn.*, i. 6. 6. "Ψυχὴ οὖν ἀναχθεῖσα πρὸς νοῦν ἐπὶ τὸ μᾶλλον ἐστὶ καλόν. Νοῦς δὲ καὶ τὰ παρὰ νοῦ τὸ κάλλος...διὸ καὶ λέγεται ὁρθῶς τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ καλὸν τὴν ψυχὴν γίνεσθαι ὁμοιωθῆναι εἶναι θεῶ...ὅτι ἐκείθεν τὸ καλὸν καὶ ἡ μοῖρα ἢ ἑτέρα τῶν ὄντων."
49. *Enn.*, v.9.2: "ὁ παρ' αὐτοῦ καλόν."
50. *Enn.*, v. 9. 1: "...ἔμεινε ἐκεῖ τὰ τῇδε ὑπεριδὸν πάντα ἡσθὲν τῷ τόπῳ ἀληθινῶ καὶ οἰκείῳ ὄντι, ὥσπερ ἐκ πολλῆς πλάνης εἰς πατρίδα εὖνομον ἀφικόμενος ἄνθρωπος."
51. *Cf. Commentary on the Timaeus*, I 131, 28-132,5; II 112, 23-5; III 259, 11-27.
52. *Cf. Commentary on Alcibiades II* 277-281.

53. *Cf. De an.* 430a1.
54. *On Euclid*, Prol. I. 22, 15-16.
55. *Comm.* 24,27-25,3.
56. *In Eucl.* 62, 5-10.
57. *In Eucl.* 62, 11-13; 19-63,1.
58. *Cf. In Tim.* I 204, 3-10ff; *In Parm.* 796, 26-39.
59. I 2, 15-3,20; I 295, 26-7.
60. *Cf. B. Knos, 'Gemistos plethon et son souvenir, 'Lettres d' Humanite*, 9, 1950, 131, and A. E. Vakalopoulos, *Origins of the Greek Nation*, trans., Jan Moles, New York, Rutgers University Press, 1970, 171.
61. *Cf. J. N. Taylor, Georgius Gemistus Pletho's Criticism of Plato and Aristotle*, Menasha, Wisconsin, George Banta Publishing Co., 1921, 94.
62. PG.160, 928 B.
63. *Cf. Nomoi*, 252 Alexandre: PG. 160, 971A.
64. *Cf. Nomoi*, 252, Alexandre: PG. 160, 971A.
65. *Cf. Nomoi*, 94: "τῶν δ' ἄλλων ἀπάντων πατήρ τε καὶ δημιουργὸς πρεσβύτερος," 172: "ἀγέννητος," "προαιώνιος."
66. PG 160, 973 B: "δεύτερος θεός;" *cf. Nomoi*, 34, 46.
67. *Cf. Nomoi*, 258.
68. *Cf. Nomoi*, 260: "Ἡμεῖς δ' ἀρτίαν τε, καὶ οὐχ ἡμίτομον οὐδὲ χωλὴν, τῇ ψυχῇ τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ τὴν αἰδιότητα ἀποφαίνοντες...Δῆλα γὰρ δὴ ὅτι ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρω αὐτῇ ἡ αἰδιότης τῆς ἡμιτόμον ἐκείνης πολὺ μείζων καὶ καλλίων..."
69. *Cf. Nomoi*, 252.
70. Πλήθωνος. Πρὸς ἠρωτημένα ἄττα ἀποκρίσεις, ed. L. Benakis, *Φιλοσοφία* 4 (1974), 357, 95: "τὸν ἀνθρώπον εἶναι ζῶον ἀθάνατον θνητῇ κοινωνεῖν φύσει πεφυκός."
71. *Ibid.*, 357, 114-120.
72. *Cf. Nomoi*, 142.
73. Πλήθωνος, *Ζωροαστρείων τε καὶ πλατωνικῶν δογμάτων συγκεφαλαίωσις*, 266.
74. *Ibid.*, 274.
75. *Cf. Nomoi*, 138.
76. *Cf. Nomoi*, 138.
77. *Cf. Nomoi*, 182.
78. *Cf. Nomoi*, 84..
79. *Nomoi*, 84 Alexandre. See F. Masai, *Plethon et le platonisme de Mistra*, Paris, 1956, 125-7.
80. *Epistles*, ii. 312E; *Timaeus*, 27 c-30d.
81. *Metaph.* xii. 1072b3.

82. *De differentiis*, 321, 23-322,4 (Lagarde, trans., C. M. Woodhouse).
83. *Metaph.* xiv. 1091a 12-13.
84. *Metaph.* xii. 1072 a 22-23.
85. *De differentiis*, 322, 4-19 (Lagarde, trans., C.M. Woodhouse).
86. *De differentiis*, 342,14-24; cf. 342, 31-34, cf. also *Timæus*, 29e.
87. *Physics*,ii. 199 b 26-30.
88. *Physics*,, ii. 194a 21-22; ii. 199a 15-17.
89. *Ibid.*
90. *De differentiis*, 331, 32-332,10, (Lagarde, transl. By C. M. Woodhouse).

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*Volume IV*

R. BAINE HARRIS, GENERAL EDITOR

# THE STRUCTURE OF BEING

## A NEOPLATONIC APPROACH

EDITED BY

*R. Baine Harris*

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR NEOPLATONIC STUDIES  
Norfolk, Virginia



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## PREFACE

It would be a mistake to regard Neoplatonism as only a form of mysticism. Although it is a way of philosophizing that points to a form of knowing that is beyond dialectics, it does not have any mystical elements in its own dialectics. Its mysticism is to be found at the end of its philosophical progression and is not inherent in its epistemology. Philosophical knowledge, as well as scientific and artistic knowledge, are forms of discursive knowledge and, as such, have no mysticism whatsoever involved in them.

Neoplatonism also differs *logically* from the Platonism of the *Dialogues*. It could also be labeled "Aristotelian Platonism," since both Plotinus and Porphyry were highly influenced by Aristotle and his criticisms of Plato. Although Plotinus returned to the same main theme emphasized by Plato, he made major concessions to Aristotle, and especially to his logic. This tendency is even more pronounced in the writings of Porphyry, who was so enamored of Aristotle's logic that he emphasized it in his own writings and, in so doing, set the stage for the formation of another kind of Neoplatonism, namely, ■ type that focuses upon the logic and categories of Aristotle. A case could be made, I think, that there really have been

two forms of Neoplatonism operative in the history of Western philosophy, namely, the Neoplatonism (or Plotinism) of Plotinus and the Neoplatonism of Porphyry; and, by and large, the latter has been far more influential than the former.

A close look at the history of Neoplatonism will reveal that hardly any later Neoplatonist followed Plotinus exactly. From Porphyry to Dean Inge, most "Neoplatonists" have been neo-Neoplatonists, deviants who have abandoned parts of Plotinus' system or departed to some extent from his logic or categories. Add to this the tendency of various Jewish, Islamic, and Christian writers to take only portions of his thought and combine it with their own to produce some hybrid variety of Neoplatonism, and we might be led to ask "What is normative in Neoplatonism?" To what degree must a follower of Plotinus remain true to his views in order correctly to be labeled a Neoplatonist? The answer, I believe, is to be found in the degree to which they follow his logic and epistemology. When they depart radically from either of them, they should no longer be labeled Neoplatonists.

In defense of the deviants, it might be noted that Plotinus was essentially a synthetic thinker, and synthetic thinkers are necessarily dated. His system was the product not only of his own philosophical methodology, but also of his own dated understanding of science, art, religion, and philosophy. Those in later times who have recognized his remarkable genius as an artist of metaphysics and have chosen to label themselves as his followers have usually sought to compliment him by complementing him. This they have done not by slavishly reproducing his own system, but by updating or correcting it or by producing their own versions of it. They have sought to duplicate his vision of the unity of being; and they have understood that this must occur as a synthetic function of their own thought and within their own intellectual and historical context. The disciple of Plotinus need not necessarily take Plotinus' own system per se as final, but one must emulate his logic and epistemology.

However tolerant we may wish to be toward the deviants in the Neoplatonic tradition, the fact remains that Neoplatonic logic is significant in determining what we now call "Neoplatonism." The nature of Platonism had been debated for six centuries prior to Plotinus and the Middle Platonists, and one of the major factors in the evolution of later Platonism was the accumulated impact of Aristotelian and Stoic logic. Distinctions can be made between the logic of Plato, the logic of Aristotle, the logic of Plotinus, and the logic of Porphyry. Neoplatonism, as a form of Aristotelianized Platonism, involves making certain important concessions to the logic of Aristotle. Plotinus rejected Aristotle's categories, substituting his own. He also rejected a portion of his logic. Porphyry, in turn, decided that Plotinus' categories and logic were inadequate and relied heavily on both Aristotle's categories and logic in his own thought, especially in dealing with the physical or sensible world. If the case can be made that there is a sufficient difference in the logic of Plato and Plotinus to justify the term "Neoplatonism," it can also be said, I think, that there is a sufficient difference in the logic of Plotinus and Porphyry to serve as the basis for defining and delineating the various historical types of Neoplatonism. At issue is whether there is only one prevailing Neoplatonic logic or two varieties.

The essays in this volume do not deal sufficiently with all the necessary questions entailed in a study of Neoplatonic logic, but they do provide a beginning for a consideration of some of them. They were not commissioned and are not products of single conference, but were presented at various meetings of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies in the United States and Canada during the last four years. They have been selected because they focus, to some extent, upon the nature of Neoplatonic logic and methodology, broadly conceived.

The title, *The Structure of Being: A Neoplatonic Approach*, has been chosen in order to emphasize that Neoplatonism is but one among many efforts to suggest how being may be conceived to be structured. More precisely, Neoplatonism is an effort to suggest a logic of being, namely, how being might be conceived to be logically structured. Although some elements of it are highly speculative, the logic on which Neoplatonism is based is not. It is the aim of the editor of this volume to draw attention to the importance of Neoplatonic logic and methodology, both in the general definition of Neoplatonism and in determining the nature of particular historical instances of it. A very brief description of the fourteen essays now follows.

In the first essay J. N. Findlay suggests that the logical peculiarities of Neoplatonism still fit into the general logic of Platonism, but he indicates certain respects in which the logic of Plotinus goes much further. He insists that it cannot be viewed as an ordinary logic of propositional or functional calculus, but must be seen as a quite nonordinary type, which he describes to some extent. The second essay by Richard M. Martin contains a sketch of a formal logicometaphysical system that indicates some of the basic features of the system of Plotinus. The third essay by John P. Anton investigates the concept of hypostases in the *Enneads* and defends the position that the One is the first hypostasis, a view strongly denied by the late John N. Deck in the fourth essay. (Deck holds that the One is above hypostasis.)

The One is also the subject of the fifth essay by Eugene F. Bales. Bales notes that Plotinus uses three modes of discourse, (1) meontological, (2) ontological, and (3) paradoxical in discussing the One or the Good, and suggests that the view that the One radically transcends being is inadequate. In the sixth essay Michael F. Wagner explains Plotinus' theory of "Vertical Causation," namely, that the causes of bodies are not other bodies, but the Forms. He further elucidates Plotinus' position that real explanations appeal to forms rather than to interactions between bodies and that the Forms determine the order of our concepts. The seventh essay, by Christos Evangelou, establishes the thesis that Plotinus' criticism of Aristotle's categories is based on ontological, and not logical, grounds.

The eighth essay, by John Fielder, is an analysis of the concept of self-predication as it applies to Plotinus, whereas the ninth essay, by Jonathan Scott Lee, is a study of participation (or eidetic causation) as it relates to omnipresence and monopsychism in the *Enneads*.

Professor Robert Brumbaugh, in the tenth essay, suggests that Neoplatonic philosophy is exactly what contemporary mathematicians are looking for in their discussion of the foundation of mathematics. He further indicates that Cantor's set

theory fills a definite place in the Platonic curriculum suggested by Plato in *Republic* VII and developed further by later Platonists. He further opines that Proclus has more mathematical talent than he is usually credited with, especially in algebra.

The eleventh essay, by Carl R. Kordig, explores the mathematics of the mysticism of Plotinus and Proclus, concluding that the One must be said to have properties, but quite special ones, and not the ones we apply to ordinary, finite objects. He also concludes that the logic applicable to the One cannot be an ordinary logic. In the twelfth essay, Ronald Hathaway takes a close look at the logical anatomy of Proclus' proof and draws some conclusions about his general model of proof. Essay thirteen, by Evagheios Moutsopoulos, focuses upon the idea of falsity as it occurs in Proclus, concluding that the main cause of falsehood is inherent to multiplicity and the conditions relating to it.

The fourteenth and final essay, by Leo Sweeney, contains an intensive analysis of the logical structure of being in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. He suggests that in Proclus' cosmos two sorts of spontaneous and necessary causality are operative: participation, by which perfections come to be present in participants, which thereby are completed and perfected; secondly, a prior and nonparticipational process, by which the participated perfections themselves and their participants originate.

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## *The Logical Peculiarities of Neoplatonism*

J. N. FINDLAY

I have chosen to address myself in this essay not to some historical or factual question, but to the philosophically important topic of the logical peculiarities of Neoplatonism. These logical peculiarities may be described in terms of pervasion and interpenetration, of sympathy and remote control, of multiple location, of elastic and variable identity, of iridescent variation of aspect, of differentiation without difference, and of potency more actual than act. Before, however, I go on to consider these peculiarities, I shall observe that the logical peculiarities of Neoplatonism are in large part simply the peculiarities of Platonism, and of the fundamental inversion, the "Eidetic Turn," as I may fashionably call it, in which Platonism consists. This inversion is one in which types and characters lose their predicative character, and are erected into the true substances or subjects of predicates, while their concrete instances are suddenly demoted from their substantial status into the new status of dependent instantiations or particularizations. We, in short, no longer take it that this individual or that is human and just, but that Manhood and Justice are "thisied" or "thatified," are "herified" or "therified," are "nowafied" or "thenified" in this or that case. By such an inversion, generic

and specific features become the true and primary cases of identity, an identity unaffected by multiple location in space, or changing location in time, and which is capable of a persistence unmodified, or intrinsically unmixed with what is irrelevant, such as we never postulate in the case of instances.

It is, however, also an inversion that will permit us to make specific and generic natures as specific as we wish, so as to include whatever is discoverable and graspable in the individual, and also to leave our "natures" unsaturated in the Fregean sense, so that they permit saturation or completion in a number of alternative ways. It is further a logic in virtue of which universal types or patterns become, in a queerly inert, effortless manner, the "true causes" of their own instantiations, since it is by their "presence" in their instances, or by the "sharing" of their instances in them, that those instances are made what they are. Instances have in fact nothing that is intelligible and seizable, nothing that can be spoke of or pinned down, except for what they thus instantiate or exemplify. We try to dig down to their dark underlay of  $\chi\omega\rho\alpha$  or spatiality, but can only do so by divesting ourselves of all conceptual lucidity, by deluding ourselves with a spurious argument to the effect that whatever exists must be somewhere, with the "somewhere" being only the indefinite possibility of instantiation that we feel must be there if instances are to have any basis at all.

Neoplatonism further takes over from Platonism the marriage between general patterns and cases of the Good or the Intelligible: the true substances of logical subjects are all special forms of Goodness, cases involving no mere congeries of elements but an ordered, unified pattern in which diversity is wholly subordinated to unity, and the tendency to exceed or fall short is so hemmed or curbed that a single set of measures works everywhere. This belief in well-ordered  $\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\theta\omicron\rho\eta\varsigma$  further obtains whether we are dealing with the natural numbers, the harmonic proportions, or the regular geometrical figures—the solids or patterns of movement—until we rise to the self-moving patterns of living creatures in which substantial reality goes hand in hand with beauty. Neoplatonism in fact goes further than Platonism in its close marriage of substantial being with value, for while Plato is willing to accord some sort of parasitic, secondary status to a  $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\epsilon}\chi\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$  or a negation, Neoplatonism is inclined to attribute all deviation, privation, or factitious combination to the inherent defects of instantiation, and to the "matter" that is the ultimate wall of darkness in which the eidetic illumination terminates.

Neoplatonism further takes over from Platonism the view of there being, in the higher cases of self-movement, an inherent affinity, not merely with the specific life patterns that the instance embodies, but also with the whole range of the Eide which, as Soul-instances, they can know. Each higher case of Soul is therefore also an instance of Mind, and, as such, shares imperfectly in the changelessness of the total eidetic system, persisting throughout the whole flux of instances since it is unable to step out of flux altogether.

In all these respects Neoplatonism simply takes over the logic of Platonism, and we may commend it for freeing us from all the anxieties and perils of particularism: the impossibility of justifying our search for unifying patterns in the welter of particular cases and our faith in their continued presence in further cases,

and our faith, also, in a general trend in things towards well-ordered integration, which is not only presupposed by all scientific research, but also underlies all self-restraint, all courage, and all justice. To believe that principles of order are the mere dependencies of what happens to exist, rather than the source and guiding force of the latter, is to surrender oneself to the boundless demoralization of the typically modern outlook, which stands as pathetically helpless as Saint Sebastian while the arrows of chance afflict it from every side. These arrows now stem from scientific laboratories rather than from faithless men.

I do not, however, wish to dwell on the general merits of Platonic logic, but to consider the respects in which Neoplatonism goes further than it does. This it does in stressing the *unbroken continuity* of the eidetic system, from its most generic to its most specific phases, and from what is most powerfully positive in it to what is most shadowy and negative, and also from what is most definitely this or that in it, to what is most definitely something quite different. The stress on eidetic continuity is, also to be found in Plato. The *Phaedrus* compares a genus to a living body that can be cut at many places indefinitely, though there are always some cutting points that are natural and right. The *Republic* tells us of an eidetic system in which all relations will be as eidetic as the terms that they connect, while the *Parmenides* provides a specimen of an indefinite multiplicity nesting within the most absolute simplicity and unity. But in Neoplatonism we operate throughout with hypostases that shade into other hypostases, that in fact *are* other hypostases operating in a slightly different medium or manner, or that are said, with a final access of approximation, to be separated from other hypostases by nothing but difference, as if this were the most inconsequential sort of separation that there could conceivably be. Yet this stress on continuity goes together with a profound recognition of gulfs and distances: the higher hypostasis has a self-sufficiency and an independence from the lower hypostasis that the lower hypostasis never can share. In being a dependent offshoot of the higher hypostasis, it is separated by an ontological gulf from that of which it is the offshoot. And, likewise, in including other forms of being as its necessary context, it also excludes them from the intrinsic nucleus that makes it what it is. The structure which results is one where everything shades into everything, yet nothing is blurred: it realizes among Eide that essential mystery of motion in which positions never can be in touch with other positions, and yet there is no such thing as a break or division among them. The mathematical theory of Real Numbers is something that *could* have been Neoplatonically conceived: as it stands, it only reveals the complete powerlessness of separative thought.

I should, however, like to elucidate my view of the Neoplatonic continuum by trying to set forth a typical account of Neoplatonism that would lend itself to picture-thought, and that soon turns into a strange fable. On this account the Neoplatonists were silly enough to treat Unity—the most abstract of categorial attributes that implies only that something is something and not nothing—as if it were not merely something highly positive, but also a peculiar instance of itself, having no other attribute but being purely and resolutely single. This self-existent singularity and uniqueness had no awareness of itself or of anything else, and it

had not the slightest tendency to seek relief from its single state by the smallest exercise in self-duplication or differentiation. Nonetheless, by some strange necessity that had nothing to do with a need, its very needlessness precipitated the existence of something which was more than resolutely single, which was inherently prone to distinguish itself as subject from something else as object, and to do this over and over again, so that it was confronted with a whole offspring of distinct phases, which were in fact infinite in number and embraced all that could be or be conceived. This spawning of a kaleidoscope is in fact the substitute for a vain effort to penetrate the One as object. The Second Hypostasis tries to conceive the One in its unity, but can only succeed in splintering it into a host of ones, whose participation in the One makes them an organized complex whole, but which, in being organized and complex, are also everlastingly and absolutely separate from the One itself. The Second Hypostasis is accordingly a seeing, intellectual one, a *Nous* or Intelligence, and what it sees is the hierarchically arrayed Eide, its coeval companions. In seeing them it becomes a seer, and as such capable of seeing itself in them, and them in itself. The life of the Intelligence is then described in phrases of great literary beauty which, seen in the sort of logic that we are now using, is no more than a *Gandavyūha*, a very lovely fairy tale. In the heavenly regions there are many distinct *vóes* or *voī*, one for each of us and for the celestial agents as well, but they are all eyes and vision, and see each other as such: the situation rather resembles a nightmare I had when I was a child—I awoke to see millions of shining eyes looking at me from every direction. And in this heavenly region every eidetic shape carries the whole eidetic system in itself, while emphasizing its own peculiar contribution to that system. The *voī* in that region vainly attempt something like locomotion, but the earth on which they tread is rather terrifyingly alive, and they carry their starting point with them wherever they journey. The condition in which they subsist is described in terms so superlative that one feels rather like someone staying in some snow-white Alpine hotel surrounded by scenery similarly snowy. It is, in short, as free from the suffering, the patience, and the labor of the negative as are the much admired writings of Benedetto Croce. Heracles (up there) remembers nothing of his labors, so that there is little reason for him to retain his peculiar corner in the poetic mansions. I do not, however, wish to cast ridicule on some of the most brilliantly beautiful tractates in human literature, but only to stress a single point: that it can be read as an extraordinary travelogue or piece of science fiction, and that the question then emerges whether we really want to believe in such an ecstatic intellectual state, whether we really want such a beautifully blurred condition to exist. Would it not be preferable to be in one of Fra Angelico's heavenly assemblies, with their bright-checked saints and angels and golden trumpets, or in the select group of the upper 400 to whom Beatrice presents Dante? It is the feeling that what Plotinus describes so ecstatically is no more than a myth or a fairy tale that leads people to think that he is not worth studying, exactly what Prince Eugene and the court ladies may have felt when they read Leibniz's charming treatises about the Monads.

The so-called process of emanation, which I prefer to call Irradiation or

περίλαμψις, and which has led from the One to the *Nous*, can also be seen as a magical but factual process. There is the famous passage where Plotinus exploits its analogy with the way in which fire radiates warmth to environing objects, or in which odorous objects diffuse scent into the surrounding air, and so on, which suggest that it is merely a marvellous fact that hypostases should shed or drop exhalations about them which try to resemble them but which also necessarily fall short of them. And while this exuberant burgeoning seems vaguely exciting, the fact that it always results in something inferior is vaguely depressing: it is as if one's children were always smaller and stupider than oneself, until all generation ended up in producing dwarfish idiots. One is inclined to echo Plotinus's occasional regret: how much nicer it would have been had there been no such declining procession, if only everything had remained in its first primitive condition. And what a pity that there is this strange ontological necessity that corresponds to no need, but which gives rise to such deep need in the lower hypostases. The doctrine becomes even stranger when we are told that the submission to this necessity was also perfectly free. What, we are inclined to ask, possessed the One to let anything derive from itself?

The procession does not cease to excite questions as we go on to its next stage, the procession of the World Soul. Here the decline is to succession, the piecemeal running through items that were previously given together, and the use of λογισμοί, reasonings, where previously all was accomplished sight. It is not clear what advantage is secured by falling out of eternity into time, and how such a dismantled state as one that involves change and flux could have sprung from the all-togetherness of eternity. The Third Hypostasis, however, exhibits further declensions than the merely temporal: it proceeds to a certain limit and not further, and there is confronted by an ambient darkness which is merely the shadow cast by its own light. But it is not content to circulate happily within this limit: it yearns to go forth and build empires in the shadow, to shed the light of its missionary countenance in the darkest Africa which calls itself Matter. This darkest Africa has, moreover, a strange aptitude or ἐπιτηδειότης for extension, bulk, or division into parts: it yields in a short time a colonial diaspora to which copies of eidetic originals are exported, and a whole set of complexly organized structures built up. Among these structures will be the organized bodies of men and animals, and to these structures certain less-enlightened sorts of soul will be strangely attracted, desiring audaciously to have something they can count as their very own, and that they can manage with considerable departures from the august patterns laid up at higher levels. The rest of the story involves the sinking of many souls into deplorable states of defect and excess, and their close identification with their perishable bodies, until they become wholly forgetful of their superb sister the World Soul, who runs the heavens so suavely and so masterfully, and even more forgetful of the perfect Intelligence and the supreme Unity from which she springs. The sad process of decline, however, can be reversed: earthly beauties can lead souls on to the beauties of laws and virtues and institutions, these on to the beauties of intelligible patterns, until the soul, completely absorbed into its *Nous*, and united with every other *Nous* and with every object, can divest itself of

the last traces of specificity and individuality, and can come into coincidence with the partless One, to which it owes every vestige of its being, its character, and its organized unity. There is, however, something very dubiously σεμνόν, glorious, or sacred in this last ἔνωσις or ἁπλῶσις: it seems a fine goal to strive for, but is it at all fine to get there? Personally I find the full wheel of πρόοδος and ἐπιστροφή, when conceived in the fabulous manner I have just described, a little more depressing than the celebrated Buddhist wheel of birth and death: the latter at least goes on to perpetual novelty, while the former merely cancels out its original, inexplicable mistake. The depression I am describing was one that I myself experienced in my early years of adolescent mysticism: it rather put me off mysticism for a large part of my later life.

I wish to suggest, however, that there is something deeply and fundamentally wrong about the picture of Neoplatonism that I have just sketched, and that what is wrong about it is the *logic* with which it has operated, which is the logic of the propositional calculus and the functional calculus, especially when these are restricted extensionally and avoid all modalities and quantifications over functions, and so on. The logic I have used in it is, in fact, the logic of ordinary talk about concrete individual things and persons and what they are like, how they stand to one another, or what they do to one another. It is the logic to which classical expression was given in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, with who can say what sense-destroying results. It is also the logic of some of the less-inspired utterances of Plotinus, as when he talks nostalgically of a return to the One, or more extremely, of the wise refusal to leave the parental home altogether, or as when he treats matter and body as positive, malefic agencies that we must try to foil or circumvent. In this bad logic there are, first of all, individual bodily or psychic things which are neither conceived as being more or less optionally and variably carved out of the totality of being, nor as capable of fission or coalescence, nor of combination or resolution into unities as genuine as they are. And these instantial things are then sorted out into classes by certain common characters, and arranged into patterns by dependent relations, while all the time all real agency in the world is a function of the instantial things in question. The picture is irresistible: it is what the philosopher sees when he looks at his own hands and the objects arranged all over his desk, or what the housewife sees when she overlooks the various bottles and packages in her crowded food cupboard. To treat Neoplatonism as some exponents have treated it is to apply just such a logic to it, to describe it as a series of shelves and layers in some decayed pantry, with strange juices dripping down from the upper shelves to the lower, and a concurrent rising of strange effluences and odors from the lower shelves to the higher. This may be what the universe is like, but what, one is inclined to ask, is the reason to suppose it is so? And what reason have we to be pleased that this is the way it is?

The logic with which we have to understand Neoplatonism is, however, a totally different logic from the ordinary. It must be a logic in which substantiality and agency reside in the generic or specific pattern and never in the poor instance, and it is, moreover, a logic in which the hierarchical rise from the more specific to the more generic; though it may lessen determinateness, it also deepens and

widens *power*. The true genus, which is, of course, not any and every factitious general concept dreamt up by some arbitrary classifier, contains all its subordinate species δυνάμει or in power, and holds together in a rich unity what must necessarily fall apart in the species and the instance. It is infinitely more substantial and more concrete than its species or its instances. And the Neoplatonists, while they sometimes defer to the Aristotelian subordination of potency to act, really invert Aristotle altogether, as every eidetic philosophy must do. The potency of the genus, we may say, in a rather Irish fashion, must have a higher degree of actuality than the one-sided, limited, so-called actual instance. To be Justice itself or Life itself is to be a richer, more various, more enduring thing than to be a just act or man, or a living organism that endures for a season. There is, of course, ■ potency that connotes defect or privation, and this is the potency above all possessed by the poor dead lady Matter, who is nothing at all except insofar as she gets decked out with costume jewellery imitated from eidetic originals. And there are similar negative potencies in the stupidity or ignorance or confusion of souls functioning at much higher levels of being. But true δύναμις is also true ἐνέργεια, and a higher ἐνέργεια than the limited ἐνέργεια of the species or instance.

This according of power to the genus, of course, reaches a maximum when we climb to the supreme transcendental, the One or Good. *It* may not be any determinate sort of good thing, and *It* may not be an existent instance of any sort whatsoever, but it is the unlimited power of all specification and all instantiation, and so more momentarily and conceivably actual than the most remarkable species or individual that we can possibly conceive. And we may note further, that the One of Neoplatonism not only *can* exercise its boundless power, but also *has* exercised it in the countless species and instances that have streamed forth from it, and so has in a sense given proof of its infinite intrinsic riches. And the exercise of this power, though corresponding to no inner stirring of need, and though free and not compelled, is also ontologically necessary. The One could not be the all-sufficient principle of Unity that it is unless it could specify itself in countless eidetic shapes, and unless these in their turn could instantiate themselves in the countless more-or-less imperfect cases that we encounter in this world. And we may note further that, although the complete vision of the ordered eidetic shapes (and the soul's unending endeavor to arrive at this vision) always falls short of envisaging Unity itself, they in effect know it as perfectly and as concretely as could be desired. They achieve everything except arriving at the terminal obelisk in which the whole park of being centers, but they know that and what it is, and where it lies in relation to the whole well-laid-out estate. They know it as the Cantorian transfinitist knows what Aleph is in knowing that it is the number of all the finite cardinals—the number of a clearly conceived, rationally ordered series of numbers—which is, nonetheless, not one of their number. There is, therefore, reason in saying that although the One does nothing at all, it in a sense does everything that anything else only seems to do, and that although it is not aware of itself or of anything else, it knows itself in all the minds and souls that know anything at all, and that all these only unfold the infinite possibilities that lie

locked up in itself. And of what these minds and souls do not conceive or know, the One has knowledge in their dim sense of something beyond all their conceptions, and in *being* what they cannot even dimly conceive.

There are similar interpretative changes necessary if we are to understand the procession of the Soul from the *Nous*. If we think of the *Nous* as some actual mind that eternally envisages everything, we have changed it from being Mind itself into being *a* mind—an individual or personal intelligence—and if it is such, it has simply become identical with some sort of a World-Soul of a curious timeless type. In such a supreme thinking unity we could not share: it would be a superior mind from which we could perhaps learn, but not an intelligence in which we could participate. The correct interpretation of the *Nous* is not, I am sure, that it is *a* very special, timeless intelligence, but that it is Very Intelligence Itself and, as such, a power present in all souls. These souls in their concentrated insights and argumentative ratiocinations are the limited actualizations of its eternal vision, while it, as their power, has a higher actuality than any thinker or activity of thought. It is the eternal pattern towards which active thinking only strives. Its instantiation in souls and their intellectual activities, including those of the supreme Soul of the cosmos, is therefore an ontological necessity, though not a need, in its nature. In the World Soul and in our inferior souls and minds, it shows forth its substantial riches, and thinks itself—not in and for itself, but in and for them. Its unthinkingness is, however, merely a consequence of its being Thinking itself, and not a particular thinker or case of thinking. It can only be in the World Soul or in our souls that it can actually think itself.

Now I know that the Eckhartian and Hegelian propositions that I am affirming are not clearly asserted by Plotinus, any more than Christian orthodoxy has ever adopted a view according to which the Father and Son fulfill themselves in the Holy Spirit, though I think this may have been in the mind of Jesus when he saw the supreme sin in the rejection of the Holy Spirit. What I am, saying, however, is that the Neoplatonist picture only makes complete sense if it is filled in the manner I have suggested, which alone conforms to its peculiar logic. That peculiar logic will also demand that we cease to divide the noetic cosmos into the rigid genera and species favored by antique classification: the eidetic realm involves complex unities of a loosely affiliated and a closely affiliated kind, of a richly substantial and of a highly abstracted sort, of a remotely disjoined and scattered as well as of an eidetically neighboring sort. It has, in short, all the open texture and variability of alignment that occurs in ordinary discourse. Plato shows some awareness of these differing types of eidetic pervasion in some key passages in the *Sophist*, and Plotinus and other Neoplatonists probably did much the same. The eidetic realm may have many crisscross divisions and alignments imprinted upon it, and the same applies to the cases and classes of cases in which it is instantiated.

If I now turn to Soul and souls, it is here that I think the various ravishing descriptions of Plotinus have their appropriate place. There are no thrills or journeys in the world of the *Nous*, since this world can find no place for so temporal a thing as a thrill or a journey. The excitements of intelligible beauty are the excitements of the soul functioning noetically: it is only the soul that can experi-

ence noetic enlargements. I imagine that every scientist or artist has these noetic excitements. In the same way the ecstatic experience of approach to the supreme Unity and of the retreat from the same are experiences in the life of Soul, and it is in souls that Soul is thus ecstatic. Even if there are experiences at the point of union, they are *qua* experiences, soul-states, and it is for the soul that they are something *σέμνόν*, awe-inspiring: *qua* conditions of the One there can be nothing wonderful or sacred about them, if indeed it is fit to talk about them at all. Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross have recorded experiences that were certainly soul-states, since in them there was still something that was the small bucket lost in the larger volume of water or the lesser flame lost in the greater. The Upanishadic description of a man united with Brahman as resembling the state of a man in the embrace of a beloved wife obviously describes a soul-state: there is certainly a residual duality in the conjugal embrace. And the descriptions of Nirvana as an island, a refuge, and so on, obviously describe some soul-state: they are descriptions of a happy arrival, not of what happens when one gets there. I am forced, however, to believe that, with the vanishing of Soul or Ahankara, Brahman himself will cease to be Cit and Ānanda, though he may very well continue to be Sat. I need not document the lower regions of psychic activity. It is in the enlargements of experience precipitated by the vision of beauty, by insights gained into eidetic relations, by the deep love that enables us to see another as if he were ourselves, that we rise to the threshold of *Nous* and the more august threshold of the One.

I wish to conclude this paper on what you will think an unexpected note. I am unable to believe in the World Soul of Neoplatonism because Copernicus and his successors, as well as the recent results of planetary exploration, have undermined the foundations of any astral theology. The starry heavens are very far from declaring the glory of God, and if we desire evidences of his presence, I fear we must seek them in the moral law within, or in the aesthetic and intellectual laws that are likewise within. I believe, however, in the Holy Spirit or blessed other-worldly Soul, which is beyond personal difference, and which carries within itself as transcendental regulators both the Noetic Order and the Unity beyond it, and which, while active in space and time, brings the One and the *Nous* to bear upon everything. In saying this, it must not be imagined that I am becoming a humanist or a relativist of some sort: I believe in the austere sovereignty of the Eide and in That which is beyond eidetic difference. And in making these principles regulators of Soul, I am not demoting them to some inferior status—I believe that to be regulative is to enjoy a higher ontological status than to be what is called constitutive, and that while the supreme Hypostases are beyond the imperfect realm of existence and actuality, they are the infinitely powerful and perfect source of the latter, and so more real and important than anything instantial. The sort of mysticism that I think follows from a true understanding of the logic of Neoplatonism, accordingly, is a mysticism that only seeks to ascend to the noetic and supranoeitic heights in order to return from them, and which sees those heights as sources from which transcendent light streams, and to which light one can render oneself pervious and transparent, rather than as regions where it is at all desirable to go or



stay, except when one is finally handing over the task of existence to others, having made one's own final contribution to it. I believe that the positions I am advocating accord with the teachings of Jesus and Paul, though there is much in Mahayana Buddhism that accords with them also, for example, the belief in a realm of essence which is also down here, in a Nirvana which to accomplished insight is identical with Samsara, and in the interpenetration of all natures in Buddha Vairocana, who is very much the sort of highly charged guiding Spirit in whom I should like to believe. I hope in conclusion that you will look kindly on my many heresies and syncretisms, and that I may perhaps help you to frame your own viable and inspiring interpretation of Neoplatonism instead of a merely mythical and pictorial one.

## *On Logical Structure and the Plotinic Cosmos*

R. M. MARTIN

The primary aim of this paper is to attempt to bring what in essentials is the great cosmological vision of Plotinus into harmony with contemporary science, including logic and mathematics. The brief sketch of a logicometaphysical system to be presented is thus thought to provide an at least rough approximation to some of the basic features of the Plotinic system. We need not worry as to how exact the fit is. No doubt it is very loose in some respects and perhaps too tight in others. Enough will be shown, it is hoped, to suggest that with suitable emendations and extensions, however, the approximateness may be lessened and the fit made more comfortable throughout.

To attempt to get the exact fit, incidentally, is eminently "dialectical" in the Platonic—and no doubt Plotinic—sense. A. E. Taylor commented many years ago that "what the *Republic* calls "dialectic" is, in principle, simply the rigorous and unremitting task of steady scrutiny of the indefinables and indemonstrables of the sciences, and that in particular . . . [Plato's] . . . ideal, so far as the sciences with which he is directly concerned goes, is just that reduction of mathematics to rigorous deduction from expressly formulated logical premises by exactly speci-

fied logical methods of which the work of Peano, Frege, Whitehead, and Russell has given us a magnificent example."<sup>1</sup> It is thus eminently dialectical to apply Plato's ideal to the Plotinic system itself. Recall also Plotinus' own comment (*Enneads* I.3.5-6) that dialectic is "the precious part of philosophy: in its study of the laws of the universe. Philosophy draws on Dialectic much as other studies and crafts use Arithmetic, though, of course, the alliance between Philosophy and Dialectic is closer."<sup>2</sup> Of course we must not force the letter of logical theory construction upon either Plato or Plotinus, so much as note similarity of spirit across the centuries. Recall also the remarkable comment in I.8.1 where Plotinus writes: "Our intelligence is nourished on the proposition of logic, is skilled in following discussions, works by reasonings, examines links of demonstration, and comes to know the world of Being also by the steps of logical process, having no prior grasp of Reality but remaining empty, all Intelligence though it be, until it has put itself to school." Well, let us put ourselves to school on what is, in essentials, the Plotinic system.

Let "One" be a proper name for the Plotinic One or Unity, and "AllSoul" for the Psyche or the All-Soul. And let "Int" be a one-place predicate so that "Int  $x$ " expresses that  $x$  is a form or a member of the Intelligible Realm of *Nous*. And let "Obj  $x$ " express that  $x$  is an object of the lower Cosmos, of the lower world of Nature or of the Sensibles, among which are included human bodies. Roughly, then, we have these four expressions for the four Plotinic levels: two of them, note, are proper names and two of them are predicates. The proper names are for the primary unities, and the predicates are for multiplicities, which, however, also have a kind of unity—a secondary unity, let us say. With this notation in mind, let us reflect now upon (1) the logic of emanation; (2) the role of modern set theory with sets construed as elements in the Intelligible Realm; (3) how the lower souls may be construed modally as constructs in terms of "AllSoul"; (4) the character of the "Plan contained in the Reason-Principle" whereby the All is governed; and, finally, (5) the notion of the return to the One, the flight of the alone to the Alone.

Let us consider first the logic of emanation, which is no doubt best construed in terms of a dyadic relation. Let " $x$  Em  $y$ " express that  $x$  emanates into  $y$  or that  $y$  is an emanation from  $x$ . The exact behavior of this relation is, of course, where we wish to focus our inquiry. Let us first specify a few very simple principles (*Pr*) concerning emanation. First, the relation Em is presumably *totally irreflexive*, *asymmetric*, and *transitive*. Thus

- Pr1.*  $\vdash (x) \sim x \text{ Em } x$ ,  
*Pr2.*  $\vdash (x)(y)(x \text{ Em } y \supset \sim y \text{ Em } x)$ ,

and

- Pr3.*  $\vdash (x)(y)(z)((x \text{ Em } y \cdot y \text{ Em } z) \supset x \text{ Em } z)$ .

Also the four realms clearly are *mutually exclusive*, in the sense that

- Pr4.*  $\vdash \sim \text{Int One} \cdot \sim \text{One} = \text{AllSoul} \cdot \sim \text{Obj One} \cdot \sim \text{Int AllSoul}$   
 $\cdot \sim \text{Obj AllSoul} \cdot \sim (Ex)(\text{Int } x \cdot \text{Obj } x)$ .

And all four domains *exist* in appropriate senses, so that

- Pr5.*  $\vdash E! \text{One} \cdot (Ex) \text{Int } x \cdot E! \text{AllSoul} \cdot (Ex) \text{Obj } x$ .

Concerning the One we have some special principles as follows:

- Pr6.*  $\vdash (x)(\sim x = \text{One} \supset \text{One Em } x)$ ;  
*Pr7.*  $\vdash \sim (Ex)(\sim x = \text{One} \cdot (y)(\sim y = \text{One} \supset x \text{ Em } y))$ .

*Pr6* states that everything other than the One is an emanation from the One, and *Pr7* that there is nothing other than the One from which everything other than the One emanates.

Some immediate consequences of these principles are that

- Pr8.*  $\vdash (x)(\text{Int } x \supset \text{One Em } x)$ .  
*Pr9.*  $\vdash \text{One Em AllSoul}$ .

and

- Pr10.*  $\vdash (x)(\text{Obj } x \supset \text{One Em } x)$ .

But the following also hold:

- Pr11.*  $\vdash (x)(\text{Int } x \supset x \text{ Em AllSoul})$

and

- Pr12.*  $\vdash (x)(\text{Obj } x \supset \text{AllSoul Em } x)$ .

Every intelligible emanates into the AllSoul and the AllSoul into every object. No object, however, emanates into anything, so that

- Pr13.*  $\vdash (x)(\text{Obj } x \supset \sim (Ey)x \text{ Em } y)$ .

Concerning the One, very little can be truly said or not said in terms of Em! Thus

- Pr14.*  $\vdash \sim F \text{ One}$

for most predicates  $F$  not containing Em. Of course in a fuller discussion we shall have to be more specific here about the  $F$ 's, how they are constructed, and so on.

Concerning the intelligible realm, however, a good deal can be said, and it may be of interest to try to view it in terms, partly at least, of modern set theory. Sets are thought by many contemporary theorists to constitute par excellence the very prototype of intelligible entities. Some even go so far as to say that they are the *only* such objects, but this contention might seem somewhat extreme. Let us require here only that sets are *included* among the intelligibles but perhaps do not exhaust them.

Clarification is in order. Note that in including sets among the intelligibles, we are not *using* the notions of set theory in the underlying logic of the theory of emanation. For this latter we are using only the familiar first-order quantification theory with identity. The domain of individuals is taken to consist of all the entities of the four Plotinic realms, including now sets in the intelligible realm. To

specify all this we take  $\epsilon$  for the membership relation and  $\Lambda$  for the null set as primitive. We may then define (D)

D1. "Set  $x$ " as " $(x = \Lambda \vee (\exists y)y \epsilon x)$ ",

and stipulate that

Pr15.  $\vdash (x)(\text{Set } x \supset \text{Int } x)$ .

We also need to specify what the members of sets are to be allowed to be. Clearly the members are to be just the inhabitants of the lowest realm, sets of such, and so on, but not the One nor the AllSoul. If these were allowed membership, we should then be *using* set theory to formulate the Plotinic theory, rather than merely allowing sets their proper place in the intelligible realm. Thus we have as additional principles that

Pr16.  $\vdash \sim (\exists x)\text{One} \epsilon x \cdot \sim (\exists x)\text{AllSoul} \epsilon x \cdot \sim (\exists x)(\text{Int } x \cdot \sim \text{Set } x \cdot (\exists y)x \epsilon y)$ ,

and, more generally, that

Pr17.  $\vdash (x)(y)(x \epsilon y \supset (\text{Set } x \vee \text{Obj } x))$ ,

and hence, of course, that

Pr18.  $\vdash (y)((\text{Set } y \cdot \sim y = \Lambda) \supset (\exists x)(x \epsilon y \cdot (\text{Set } x \vee \text{Obj } x)))$ .

It was remarked that the One and the AllSoul are given primary unity, and that the intelligible realm and the cosmos are multiplicities and have only secondary unity. How then do we handle the individual souls, and the oneness of these realms? To attempt to answer the first question, let us bring in the human body. Let "HB  $x$ " express that  $x$  is a human body. What then is the human person or individual soul? If we allow ourselves the logical devices of the calculus of individuals (Leśniewski's *mereology*)—which we shall surely wish to do at some point—in addition to quantification theory with identity, we may proceed as follows. Let  $(x \cup y)$  be the compound or sum individual consisting of  $x$  and  $y$  together, and let us suppose that we can form the sum of any two entities from the whole Plotinic universe. Also we let " $x$  Ens  $y$ " express that  $x$  ensouls  $y$ , that is, that  $x$  enters into or affects  $y$  in the appropriate manner. We then may identify the living human person or individual soul-cum-body (LPer) as merely the compound entity  $(\text{AllSoul} \cup x)$  where  $x$  is an HB ensouled by the AllSoul. Thus we may define

D2. "LPer  $x$ " as " $(\exists y)(\text{HB } y \cdot x = (\text{AllSoul} \cup y) \cdot \text{AllSoul Ens } y)$ ".

Then clearly we have that

Pr19.  $\vdash (x)(y)(z)((\text{HB } y \cdot x = (\text{AllSoul} \cup y) \cdot \text{AllSoul Ens } y \cdot \text{HB } z \cdot x = (\text{AllSoul} \cup z) \cdot \text{AllSoul Ens } z) \supset y = z)$ ,

and of course, where "P" is the part-whole relation between individuals, that

Pr20.  $\vdash (x)(y)(\text{LPer } x \cdot \text{LPer } y \cdot (\exists z)(\text{HB } z \cdot z \text{ P } x \cdot z \text{ P } y) \supset x = y)$ .

Note that Pr19 and Pr20 are merely logical truths, showing the one-to-one correspondence between living persons and ensouled human bodies. Also clearly

Pr21.  $\vdash (x)(\text{HB } x \supset \text{Obj } x)$ ,

but

Pr22.  $\vdash \sim (\exists x)(\text{HPer } x \cdot \text{Obj } x)$ .

The use of "Ens" here for the relation of ensoulment is a desirable extension of our vocabulary. Plotinus explicitly states, in IV. 3. 9, that "if we are to explain and to be clear, we are obliged to use such words as 'entry' and 'ensoulment,' though never was . . . [the] All unsouled, never did body subsist with soul away, never was there Matter unelaborate; we separate, the better to understand; there is nothing illegitimate in the verbal and mental sundering of things which must in face be co-existent."

Now let us consider the unity of the realm of the intelligibles. This may be taken in terms of the notion of the *fusion* of a class in the sense of the calculus of individuals. Thus we may identify *Nous* with this fusion. More formally, we may let

D3. "*Nous*" abbreviate "Fu'Int".

Where  $i_1, i_2, \dots$  is the nondenumerably infinite array of intelligibles, the entity *Nous* is merely  $(i_1 \cup i_2 \cup \dots)$ . Of course we can never carry out an enumeration of these intelligibles, their cardinality presumably being beyond all bounds even among the transfinite cardinals.

With the notion of *Nous* available as a collective term, so to speak, we may emend Pr11 above. It might appear too strong to say that each and every intelligible individually emanates into the AllSoul. A weaker and perhaps more acceptable statement is that *Nous*, as  $\blacksquare$  whole, does; that is, that the intelligibles *collectively* emanate into the AllSoul. Thus in place of Pr11 we might better require that

Pr11'.  $\vdash \text{Nous Em AllSoul}$ .

Let us try now to justify some of these principles, to some extent at least, on the basis of the actual text.

That there is a multiplicity of ideal forms is discussed at some length in VI.7, and in II.4.4 it is commented that

there must be some character common to all [forms] and equally some peculiar character in each keeping them distinct. This peculiar characteristic, this distinguishing difference, is the individual shape. But if shape, then there is the shaped, that in which the difference is lodged. There is, therefore, a Matter accepting the shape, a permanent substratum. Further, admitting that there is an Intelligible Realm beyond, of which this world is an image, then, since this World-Compound is based on Matter, there must be Matter there too.

The feature common to the forms is no doubt that they are instantiable or inhere in something else. This feature is "there," then as characterizing the entities

in the intelligible realm. Where there is an "individual shape" or character, there also is implicitly that which is shaped or characterized. There is then "intelligible matter" in the ideal realm in just this sense. And note how natural it seems to include sets in the intelligible realm, sets above all having this property of having members—except the null set, which is somewhat adscititious anyway. It is very interesting to note that Plotinus, in II.4.5, comments that "we discover these two—Matter and Idea—by sheer force of our reasoning which distinguishes continually in pursuit of the simplex, the irreducible, working on, until it can go no further, towards the ultimate in the subject of inquiry." The irreducible in any inquiry are the notions characterized in primitive terms in just such and such a way, much as subjects (proper names or variables) and predicates, together, of course, with the basic logical ingredients, are irreducible elements in language systems.

The definition D2 is in close harmony with I.1.3–5. Plotinus states that

we may treat of the Soul as in the body—whether it be set above it or actually within it—since the association of the two constitute the one thing called the living organism, the Animate. . . . Now this Animate might be merely the body as having life: it might be the Couplement of Soul and body: it might be a third and different entity formed from both.

Or, we can add, it might be all three. "The truth lies," Plotinus contends, "in the consideration that the Couplement subsists by virtue of the Soul's presence." Plotinus seems to come out here by saying that whatever we wish to say concerning the Animate, we can say in terms of the ensouled Couplement. A most natural interpretation of these remarks is thus in terms of logical sums, as in D2. Recall also, in I. 7. 3, that "life is a partnership of Soul and body; death is the dissolution; in either life or death, then, the Soul will feel itself at home." The AllSoul is clearly "at home" in both itself and any of its couplements.

That a proper name should be taken for the Soul is amply justified in IV.9, in which it is argued that there is but one Soul, although there is a sense in which we may speak of your soul, my soul, and so on. "We are not asserting the unity of soul in the sense of a complete negation of multiplicity—only of the Supreme can that be affirmed—we are thinking of soul as simultaneously one and many, participant in the nature divided in body, but at the same time a unity by virtue of belonging to that Order that suffers no division. . . . These reflections show that there is nothing strange in that reduction of all souls to one. But it is still necessary to inquire into the *mode* and *conditions* [italics added] of the unity," as well, of course, into the perhaps merely verbal partition of the All-Soul into the celestial and lower souls. This all can be done, however, it would seem, on the basis of the foregoing logical reconstruction, as we shall see in a moment.

Incidentally, the remarkable passage in II.3.13 no doubt gives the key to what remains to be done.

The gist of the whole matter lies in the consideration that Soul governs this All by the plan contained in the Reason-Principle [italics added] and plays in the All

exactly the part of the particular principle which in every living-thing forms the members of the organism and adjusts them to the unity of which they are portions: the entire force of the Soul is represented in the All but, in the parts, Soul is present only in proportion to the degree of essential reality held by each of such partial objects.

How Whiteheadian this sounds, the "degree of essential reality" being akin to the degree of ingression of an eternal object into an actual occasion, and to the extent to which any occasion acts in accord with the vision of it in the primordial nature of God. Should we introduce a numerical measure here? It is tempting to do so, just as it is in the discussion of Whitehead.<sup>1</sup> We might let " $x \text{ Em }^i y$ " be taken primitively to express that  $x$  emanates into  $y$  only to degree  $i$ . A much more elaborate theory would result. However, let us not introduce here complications beyond necessity.

The cosmic plan contained in the Reason-Principle will be discussed in a moment.

In IV.3, Plotinus argues "against those who maintain our souls to be offshoots from the Soul of the universe (parts and not an identity *modally parted* [italics added])." On the contrary, "there is one identical soul, *every separate manifestation being that soul complete* [italics added]." Plotinus is sensitive to divergent meanings of "part," and regards it as false that individual souls are "parts" of the AllSoul in most senses of that word. However, there is one sense that he does seem to allow. There is the sense of "part" in which we speak of a theorem as being a part of the entire science to which it belongs. "The theorem is separate, but the science stands as one undivided thing, the separation into theorems being simply the act of making each constituent notion explicit and efficient: this is partition without severance; each item potentially includes the whole science, which itself remains an unbroken total." How now are we to handle the multiplicity of souls so as to assure that there is only one identical soul, "every separate manifestation being that soul complete?" The key notion here is that the individual souls are only "modally parted" from the AllSoul—*intentionally* so, we might say—but not actually so.

To handle intentionality, let us adopt Frege's notion of the *Art des Gegeben-seins*, or mode or manner of linguistic presentation. Let us consider first the embodied AllSoul as taken under this or that predicate. Let " $F_0$ " be a predicate-description of entities capable of *intellection*, of intuiting entities of the intelligible realm. Let " $G_0$ " be a predicate-description of entities capable of *reasoning* in the ordinary sense, and " $H_0$ " for unreasoning entities (or animals). We can then consider human and animal bodies under these three different predicates, which give, as it were, the three characteristic acts of the lower souls. To provide for the first two, the intellective and reasoning human souls, we form ordered couples of human persons with " $F_0$ " and " $G_0$ ." Thus  $\langle x, F_0 \rangle$  becomes identified with the intellective soul (IntSoul) of person  $x$ , and  $\langle x, G_0 \rangle$  with  $x$ 's reasoning soul (ReasSoul). Thus, in general, we may let

D4a. "IntSoul  $\langle x, "F_0" \rangle$ " abbreviate " $(HPer\ x \cdot "F_0" \cdot "Den\ x")$ ,"

where "Den" stands for the relation of multiple denotation between the one-place predicates of the language and whatever objects that language is concerned with. And similarly

*D4b.* "ReasSoul  $\langle x, "G_0" \rangle$ " for " $(HPer\ x \cdot "G_0" \cdot "Den\ x)$ ".

And similarly for Unreasoning Souls, *mut. mat.* (*D4c*).

Note that the principle of individuation for the multiplicity of intelligible and reasoning souls is the human body, and for the unreasoning souls, the animal body. This would surely seem to accord with Plotinus' intent.

Note the need for the intentional treatment of the lower souls. It might well obtain factually that

$$\vdash (x)(F_0x \equiv \text{Repr } x),$$

for some "Repr" expressing, say, that  $x$  reproduces its kind by sexual union. But we would not wish then to regard  $\langle x, \text{Repr} \rangle$  or  $\langle x, \text{Repr} \rangle$  as an intellective soul. Hence the use of the predicate " $F_0$ " rather than the property (or class)  $F_0$  as the second item in the couple, which use prevents the replacement of " $F_0$ " by its factual equivalent "Repr." And clearly we would not be tempted to replace the name of " $F_0$ " by the name of "Repr," these being very different names.

Now "nothing of Real Being is ever annulled." There is no "bodily partition" among the intelligibles, "no passing of each separate phase into a distinct unity; every such phase remains in full possession of that identical being. It is exactly so with the souls." Recall that definitions *D4a* to *D4c* make of "bodily partition" the principle of individuation for the separate souls. Even so, each separate soul remains in "full possession" of the AllSoul. Note also that, although the whole human person is regarded here as capable of intellection and reasoning, it is only the person *under the given predicate-description* that is regarded as a soul. In this way an intentional multiplicity of individual souls is achieved, so to speak, but with the unity of the AllSoul preserved. All of the lower souls involve, in a suitable way, the whole of the AllSoul, as we see from the definitions. There is thus no actual partition of the AllSoul into a multiplicity, only a modal or intentional one.

No doubt we should distinguish here between embodied and unembodied souls. *D4a* to *D4c* are concerned, of course, with embodied souls, and it is they to which the predicates " $F_0$ ," " $G_0$ ," and " $H_0$ " are regarded as applicable. Analogous definitions could be given taking the AllSoul itself under these descriptions. There would then be just three such unembodied souls. The multiplicity can be achieved, however, by taking " $F_0$ ," " $G_0$ ," and " $H_0$ " more narrowly as descriptive of just the intellective, rational, and unrational capacities and/or activities of the various individual souls. We would then have as many " $F_0$ "s as intellective souls. Let " $F_{\frac{a}{n}}$ " be the intellective predicate for the AllSoul as ensouling human person  $a$ , " $F_{\frac{b}{n}}$ " for the AllSoul as ensouling human person  $b$ , and so on. Then

*D5a.* 'UnIntSoul  $\langle \text{AllSoul}, EF_{\frac{a}{n}} \rangle$ ' may abbreviate ' $(HPer\ a \cdot EF_{\frac{a}{n}}\ Den\ a)$ '

where ' $EF_{\frac{a}{n}}$ ' is the structural description of the predicate ' $F_{\frac{a}{n}}$ '. And similarly for the other two, *mut. mat.* (*D5b–D5c*). According to these definitions, it is, of

course, the AllSoul that performs intellection or reasoning through or by means of a human person, so to speak.

In this way, then, "the world of unembodied souls" is provided, as well as those "in our world" that "have entered body and undergone bodily division" (IV.1.1). Recall that "soul, there without distinction or partition, has yet a nature lending itself to divisional existence; its division is secession, entry into body." Also "the secession is not of the Soul entire; something of it holds its ground, that in it which recoils from separate existence." Thus, although AllSoul occurs essentially in the expansions into primitive terms of the *definientia* of *D4a–D4c*, it is only certain very special "phases" of AllSoul that are considered, not all phases, not all properties ascribable to it. "Thus it is that, entering this realm, it [the AllSoul] possesses still the vision inherent to that superior phase in virtue of which it unchangingly maintains its integral nature. Even here [in the world] it is not exclusively the partible soul: it is still the impartible as well: what in it knows partition is parted without partibility; undivided as giving itself to the entire body, a whole to a whole, it is divided as being effective in every part"—of the body, we should add, as well as being effective in every part of every body.

Again, in IV.2.1., it is noted very explicitly that

the bodies are separate and the Ideal-Form [AllSoul] which enters into them is correspondingly sundered while, still, it is present as one whole in each of its severed parts, since amid that multiplicity in which complete individuality has entailed complete partition, there is a permanent identity; . . . In whatsoever bodies it occupies—even the vastest of all, that in which the entire universe is included—it gives itself to the whole without abdicating its unity. . . . Itself devoid of mass, it is present to all mass: it exists here [in distinct phases (?)] and yet is there, and this [there] not in distinct phases but with unsundered identity: thus it is "parted and not parted," or, better, it has never known partition, never become a parted thing, but remains a self-gathered integral, and is "parted among bodies" merely in the sense that bodies, in virtue of their own sundered existence, cannot receive it unless in some partitive mode: the partition, in other words, is an occurrence in body, not in soul.

Enough discussion now—perhaps too much—on the AllSoul and its various phases or partitions, but not yet enough about its role as the Demiourgos and the Cosmic Plan. How are we to handle this latter? Clearly the AllSoul *orders* every object and every intelligible whether that object partakes of that intelligible or not. The Soul governs the All by the plan contained in the Reason-Principle, as was noted in II.3.13. And in IV.3.13, we are told that "The Ineluctable, the Cosmic Law, is . . . rooted in a natural principle under which each several entity is overruled to go, duly and in order, towards that place and Kind to which it characteristically tends, that is, towards the image of its primal choice and constitution." Are we to regard the Plan, then, as including items provided by metaphysical principles such as *Pr1–Pr22*, and so on, or are we to think of it as having to do only with the objects of the lower cosmos? The former (*Pr1–Pr22*) are already provided for and stipulate the way the world is, where "world" is taken in the widest possible sense. And one of the ways the world is, of course, is that the AllSoul plans how "each several entity," including the lower souls, goes "duly and in order to that place and Kind" to which it properly belongs. Thus the Plan

seems to have to do primarily with the lower Cosmos, and with the intelligibles only in their relevance, so to speak, to the lower Cosmos. The AllSoul "looks towards its higher and has intellection; towards itself, and orders, administers, governs its lower" (IV.8.3).

The Plan here, incidentally, has some affinity with the primordial valuations constituting Whitehead's primordial nature of God. These are fixed once and for all and concern each and every actual occasion with respect to the ingression in it of each and every eternal object.

Let "Order" be a new primitive for the dyadic relation of ordering in just the sense that the AllSoul is to be regarded as ordering the lower cosmos. Syntactically speaking, the AllSoul orders that such-and-such sentences obtain. Some of these sentences are to the effect that

$$x \in y,$$

where  $x$  is an object and  $y$  is a set of objects. Others of these sentences concern the lower souls, which in the foregoing treatment are regarded as entities taken under a given linguistic description or *Art des Gegebenseins*. Thus the theory concerning Order will be in the *metametalinguage* of that in which sentences concerning the lower souls occur. This is harmless enough, merely a fact to be noted.

A word more is in order concerning the syntactical structure of the sentences concerning the lower souls. Because we are not using set theory here as part of the basic logic of the entire scheme, the ordered couples used for handling the lower souls are merely *virtual*. The notation for them is thus wholly eliminable in favor of a primitive notation in which no ordered couples are values for variables.<sup>4</sup> And the bringing in of an *Art des Gegebenseins* carries us into the metalanguage, enabling us to speak of the AllSoul in its various modal or intentional phases. Expressions for the lower souls are thus significant only contextually; more specifically, in contexts in which the AllSoul (in its entirety, so to speak) is taken under different linguistic descriptions. Any sentence (in primitive terms) of this kind let us call an *LS-statement*, a statement ascribing to or denying something or other of the lower souls. Similarly let us call *Obj-statements* sentences of the form

$$'x \in y'$$

where  $x$  is a constant for an object and  $y$  for a set. (Note the legitimacy here of using set theory in speaking about *objects*.) Now the Plan is concerned in part surely with LS- and Obj-statements, as we shall see in a moment.

As metametalinguistic principles concerning the Plan, we have then the following:

$$Pr23. \vdash (x)(a)(x \text{ Order } a \supset (x = \text{AllSoul} \cdot \text{Sent } a))$$

and

$$Pr24. \vdash (a)(\text{AllSoul Order } a \supset \text{Tr } a),$$

where " $\text{Tr } a$ " expresses that  $a$  is a truth of the metalanguage. *Pr23* here is a *Limitation Principle*, according to which only the AllSoul orders anything, and

whatever it orders is a sentence of the metalanguage. *Pr24*, a *Principle of Cosmic Obedience*, we might call it, is to the effect that whatever is ordered is true. We may assume also a *Completeness Principle*, that the AllSoul orders all logical consequences (LogConseq) of what it orders.

$$Pr25. \vdash (a)(b)((\text{AllSoul Order } a \cdot b \text{ LogConseq } a) \supset \text{AllSoul Order } b).$$

Having built set theory into the lower cosmos, we need to allow the AllSoul to provide for its axioms, and no doubt for basic scientific law also. Let " $\text{SetAx } a$ " express that  $a$  is an axiom of the set theory assumed, and " $\text{ScL } a$ " that  $a$  is an acceptable scientific law. Then also a *Principle of Scientific Law* obtains:

$$Pr26. \vdash (a)((\text{SetAx } a \vee \text{ScL } a) \supset \text{AllSoul Order } a).$$

Provision must also be made for laws governing intelligibles that are not sets. Let " $\text{IntL } a$ " express that  $a$  is such a law. Then also a *Principle of the Intelligible Realm* obtains:

$$Pr27. \vdash (a)(\text{IntL } a \supset \text{AllSoul Order } a).$$

That this principle is needed is evident from IV.3.13, where it is said that "even the Intellectual-Principle, which is before all the Cosmos, has it also, its destiny, that of abiding intact above, and of giving downwards; what it sends down is the particular whose existence is implied in the law (or decreed system) of the universal."

Finally, surely, the AllSoul orders all (factually) true LS- and Obj-statements.

$$Pr28. \vdash (a)((\text{LSSent } a \vee \text{ObjSent } a) \cdot \text{Tr } a) \supset \text{AllSoul Order } a).$$

This is the *Principle of Factuality*.

Note that *Pr24* provides only that truth is a necessary condition, not a sufficient one, for what is ordered. The preceding principles *Pr1-Pr22* (or rather their translations within the metalanguage) are themselves true but not ordered. Note also that all of the principles, including the Plan principles *Pr23-Pr28*, are timeless, all being stated in what Frege called the "tense of timelessness." Time, space, and the like, being relevant only for objects of the lower cosmos, are provided in what is ordered, not in the ordering, so to speak.

Another point is perhaps worth making. In taking an entity under a linguistic description, we can, of course, allow for equivalent descriptions in various ways: in terms of *L-equivalence*, in terms of some suitably defined notion of *synonymy*, or in terms of the linguists' relations of *paraphrase* or *translation*. An entity taken under any paraphrastic description is just as good, like a rose by any other name. This point would be scarcely worth the making were it not so frequently misunderstood.

The multiplicity, but not the unity, of the lower cosmos has been commented on. How can we handle the unity? Merely as the fusion of the realm of objects. Thus

$$D6. \text{ "LCosmos" is short for "Fu'Obj".}$$

This definition is of course analogous to D3, above of "Nous," and makes use of Leśniewski's mereology just as that definition does.

It should be recalled from II.3.13, that the "Soul governs this All by the plan contained in the Reason-Principle [italics added]." Reasoning has to do with statements—or propositions if you like—whereas intellection has to do only with the pure apprehension of the intelligibles. Intellection is thus not propositional, whereas reasoning is. The Plan is thus given by the AllSoul in its capacity for reasoning, and is stated in terms of statements. It is only statements that are ordered. Of course, reasoning presumably presupposes intellection of that which is reasoned about, just as statements must contain in an essential way names or other expressions for the intelligibles.

A further remark or two now about the One. "That awesome Prior, The Unity, is not a being [in the sense of being an intelligible, the AllSoul, or any object of the lower cosmos] . . . : strictly, no name is apt to it, but *since name it we must* [italics added] there is a certain rough fitness in designating it as unity [or "One" as above] with the understanding that it is not the unity of some other thing" (VI.9.5.). Without a name for it, any systematic discourse concerning it would presumably be impossible. We could not even state our metaphysical scheme. And although Pr14—that very few interesting properties can be ascribed to the One—does proceed by a kind of *via negativa*, still there is much to say concerning the One as the ultimate source of emanation and as the object of aspiration "There"—for "There only is our veritable love and There we may unite with it, not holding it in some fleshly embrace but possessing it in all its verity" (VI.9.9).

In all talk of the return to the One, "the flight of the alone to the alone," the converse of the relation Em ("Em" is no doubt the fundamental one. Consider Pr6–Pr10, rewritten now in terms of "Em." These indicate that everything other than the One bears Em to it—no second thing does—and thus every intelligible does, the AllSoul does, and every object does. We can read "E" as "aspires to the condition of," "desires to return to the purity of," or the like. Note that by Pr11', the AllSoul bears Em to Nous; by Pr12, every object bears Em to the AllSoul; and by Pr13, nothing bears Em to any object. All this seems as it should be. Note the analogue of Pr11' here rather than that of Pr11. Rather than to say that the AllSoul bears Em to each intelligible, we require only that the AllSoul bears Em to Nous itself, that is, to the intelligibles taken collectively, to the Divine Mind. The appropriateness of this gives support to using Pr11' in place of Pr11. . . . Of course there is much more to be said about the return to the One, the flight of the alone to the Alone, but essential in all such discourse, it would seem, is the relation Em.

It was suggested above that it might be of interest to introduce a numerical degree for emanation, so that " $x \text{ Em}' y$ " would express that  $x$  emanates to  $y$  to just the degree  $i$ . (" $y \text{ Em}' x$ " would then express that  $y$  aspires to  $x$  to just degree  $i$ .) The same may be said for the relation Ens for ensoulment. The need for this may be seen as follows. In IV.4.36 we are told explicitly that "we cannot think of the world as a soulless habitation, however vast and varied, a thing of materials easily

read off, kind by kind—wood and stone and whatever else there may be, all blending into a cosmos: [on the contrary,] it must be alert throughout, every member living by its own life." Plotinus allows "grades of living within the whole, grades to some of which we deny life only because they are not perceptibly self-moved; in truth, all of these have a hidden life; and the thing whose life is patent to sense is made up of things which do not live to sense, but, nonetheless, confer upon their resultant wonderful powers towards living."

To provide for this "hidden life," let " $x \text{ Ens}' y$ " express that  $x$  ensouls  $y$  to just the degree  $i$ . If  $i = 1$ , there is total ensoulment. But we would presumably have as a principle that every object is ensouled by AllSoul to a degree, however small, greater than 0:

Pr29.  $\vdash (x)(\text{Obj } x \supset (\exists i)(i > 0 \cdot \text{AllSoul Ens}' x))$ .

We can then rephrase D2, the definition of "LPer" for living persons, in such a way as to require the ensoulment to be high. If a body is ensouled to a high degree, then and only then is it living. But even dead bodies are ensouled to some very small degree. Pr29 is, thus, a kind of *Principle of Panpsychism*.

A few final comments. The foregoing contains a sketch of the barest beginnings of the Plotinic system. Additional primitives, of course, are needed, many further principles, much further elaboration. Only the barest logical maquette, so to speak, has been given here. Enough has been shown, however, it is hoped, to enable us to see that the system could be further developed in such a way as to throw more and more light on the full logic of the All-Soul and of the accompanying metaphysical theory. Further, this can be done in such a way, as here, as to bring it into harmony with contemporary scientific theory, both in mathematics and in the empirical sciences. There should be no fundamental conflict, it is contended, between the great Plotinic vision and modern science. But the latter should not be disregarded in our attempt to understand the former. Hence the presence here of set theory and of scientific law as having their proper roles in the entire system.

Also it is interesting that in the delineation of the lower souls, an intentional kind of metalogic is needed, and that in the delineation of the Plan, the semantical truth concept. Without these resources, including of course quantification theory, it is unthinkable that the liaison here could take place. Perhaps this is the reason no one has attempted it heretofore—apparently the resources were simply not available. In any case, it is hoped that the foregoing helps to show the usefulness of modern logic as a tool of philosophical analysis. Logic should not be seen only as a subject apart, a *logica docens*, having to do just with abstract metamathematical structures, but also as a *logica utens*, helping out not only in the clarification of philosophical problems, but in the analysis of the great historical texts as well.

# Some Logical Aspects of the Concept of Hypostasis in Plotinus

JOHN P. ANTON

## I

Recent studies on the philosophy of Plotinus have drawn attention to the complex problems interpreters face when discussing the number of *hypostases*,<sup>1</sup> or what the term means in the case of the One, the *Nous*, and the Soul. The full exploration of these broad topics, especially in the light of Plotinus' theory of "production" and his critique of the alternative views other Neoplatonists held, falls outside the scope of this paper. Since Plotinus' answer to the question "What criteria must X satisfy to qualify as a *hypostasis*?" is given in the relevant texts,<sup>2</sup> and as such may be treated as a separate issue, the present paper assumes familiarity with the related doctrines in order to consider in some detail certain logical aspects of the One qua hypostasis.

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Plotinus believes that it is impossible that contradictory statements are forthcoming when we speak correctly about the One. Though the One is beyond οὐσία (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας) and thus beyond predication, it is still the case that he makes it the object of discourse. The thesis that contradictions are not possible when we speak of Being or of that which truly is, is common to both Plato and Aristotle. In the realm of higher dialectic, only true statements are possible, and *epistēmē*, as a system of true statements, is free of contradictions. This thesis is fundamental to all classical ontology.

Given that according to Plotinus we can discourse about the One and that we must learn how to speak "correctly" when referring to the One, the issue is to decide whether his own discourse on the One qua hypostasis is tainted with even seemingly contradictory statements. Thus what is needed is to examine the logical status of certain statements on hypostasis as it pertains to the One. The issue has been raised by John N. Deck in his book on Plotinus.<sup>3</sup> Though he has ably defended Plotinus against the charge of contradiction, the solution he offers casts a doubt on whether the One can be said to be or have hypostasis in the fullest sense. It will be shown, however, that his solution is misleading and unwarranted. The textual evidence does not support it.

## II

Deck writes:

The One or Good, was demonstrated by the need of *Nous* for a principle and a good. The *Nous* is other than the Good; the caused is other than the cause. The One is thus a distinct hypostasis, a distinct "nature."<sup>4</sup>

In a long footnote (fn. 5) on the same page, Deck notes that "hypostasis" "is not for Plotinus himself a common designation of the One." This may be so, but it matters little how common the designation is or how frequently the term occurs in the text. The important thing is that Plotinus uses it in significant ways and that he frequently employs the verbal form ὑπόσταται and its derivative expressions to discuss fundamental aspects of the One as well as *Nous* and Soul. The discussion which follows is restricted solely to the One qua hypostasis.

Deck admits that he has been able "to find only one place where he [Plotinus] calls the One in so many words "the first hypostasis," and cites *Enneads* VI.8.15.30, where the expression ὑπόστασις δὲ πρώτη occurs, and then proceeds to give a list of the following related passages:

- (i) VI.6.3.11: the One as "having hypostasis."
- (ii) VI.8.13.43–44: "the hypostasis of the Good."
- (iii) VI.8.7.47: "its quasi-hypostasis" (οἷον ὑπόστασις αὐτοῦ).

What Deck says in the rest of this important footnote is worth quoting in full.

It would seem that the designation of the One as an hypostasis in systematic accounts of Plotinus' philosophy is based on the title of VI. 1, which treatise is an elementary outline of the doctrine of the One, the *Nous* and the Soul: "About the Three Hypos-



theses Which Are Principles (περὶ τῶν τριῶν ἀρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων). This title, however, like all the titles of Plotinus' treatises, is not Plotinus' own (Porphyry, ch. 4, lines 16–18). In speaking of the One, the Nous and the Soul in this treatise, Plotinus calls them "these three" (V.1.10.5) or "the three natures" (V.1.8.27).

Several critical observations and reservations are in order:

1. The passage V.1.10.5, regarding the expression "these three," has no direct bearing on Deck's point. The text reads: "Ὡς περὶ δὲ ἐν τῇ φύσει τριττὰ ταυτὰ ἔστι τὰ εἰρημένα. οὕτω χρὴ νομίζειν καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν ταῦτα εἶναι. The expression "these three" is used in a collective sense and refers in the text to (a) the One beyond being, ἐπέκεινα τοῦ ὄντος ἐν . . . , (b) Nous, νοῦς . . . , (c) the nature of the Soul, τῆς ψυχῆς φύσις.

2. The expression "the three natures," ταῖς φύσεσι ταῖς τρισίν, is made with reference to Plato's *Parmenides* in order to show agreement on these three natures. Therefore, we must not take it for granted that "natures," as used here, is part of Plotinus' stock terminology, nor are we allowed to infer that "nature" is used synonymously with "hypostases." Furthermore, there is no reason to insist that what the passage says may serve as evidence for or against the thesis that the One is a hypostasis. Just the same, Deck holds that "nature can mean hypostasis."<sup>5</sup>

3. Deck goes beyond the question of whether this passage supports an interpretation which permits us to count the One among "the three hypostases." Thus he proceeds to dismiss "systematic accounts of Plotinus' philosophy" that favor this view and even has reservations about appealing to words used in Porphyry's titles. However, Deck offers no decisive argument to show that Porphyry had taken liberties when editing the master's works.<sup>6</sup>

Deck admits that he has been able to find only one place (VI.8.15.30) where Plotinus "calls the One in so many words 'the first hypostasis.'" However, he does not consider this passage decisive enough to concede, as we shall see, that the One is one of the primary hypostases; rather, as he argues, its status is no more and no less than that of a "quasi-hypostasis." But before we examine the grounds for his thesis, we must first take a careful look at what Plotinus says in the passage to which Deck refers the reader in order to decide its relevance to Deck's initial point that Plotinus is in fact identifying on this sole occasion the One and the first hypostasis rather than presupposing it. The real question is whether Plotinus is discussing the point which Deck claims. When line 30 is read in context, we obtain a different picture. First we need to note that *Enneads* VI. 8, deals with the topic "On Free Will and the Will of the One." Now, the text where line 30 comes reads:

Ἐπόστασις δὲ πρώτη οὐκ ἐν ἀψύχῳ οὐδ' ἐν ζωῇ ἀλόγῳ 30  
ἀσθενὴς γὰρ εἰς τὸ εἶναι καὶ αὐτὴ σκέδασις οὕσα λόγῳ  
καὶ ἀοριστία· ἀλλ' ὅσω πρόεισιν εἰς λόγον, ἀπολείπει  
τύχην τὸ γὰρ κατὰ λόγον οὐ τύχη.

Translation:

Moreover, the first hypostasis cannot consist of something inanimate or of life irrational; for such a life [or state] is weak in respect of being, and itself a scattering

of reason and indetermination. However, to the extent that it advances toward reason, it abandons chance; for what is in accordance with reason, is not subject to chance.

Strictly speaking, line 30 in this passage does not say what the first hypostasis is; it presupposes reference to the One. Taken in isolation, as we shall see, its meaning becomes ambiguous. To illustrate this point we need to go back to the opening lines of chapter 15, especially 4–10, where the term "hypostasis" occurs in a way that fixes the context for what lines 30–34 mean to convey.

Εἰ δὲ τὸ συνὸν τῷ ᾧ σύνεστιν ἐν καὶ τὸ οἶον ἐπιέμενον τῷ ἐφετῷ 5  
ἐν, τὸ δὲ ἐφετὸν κατὰ τὴν ὑπόστασιν καὶ οἶον ὑποκεί-  
μενον, πάλιν αὖ ἡμῖν ἀνεφάνη ταῦτό ἢ ἐφεις καὶ ἢ  
οὐσία. Εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, πάλιν αὖ αὐτὸς ἐστὶν οὗτος ὁ ποιῶν  
ἑαυτὸν καὶ κύριος ἑαυτοῦ καὶ οὐχ ὥς τι ἕτερον ἠθέλησε  
γενόμενος, ἀλλ' ὥς θέλει οὗτος. 10

MacKenna's translation, itself not free from misinterpretations, reads as follows:

Since in the Supreme "associated" and "associating" are one, seeker and sought one, the sought serving as Hypostasis and substrate of the seeker—once more God's being and his seeking are identical; once more, then, the Supreme is the self-producing, sovran of Himself, not coming to be as some extern willed but existing as wills it.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to see why MacKenna's translation is misleading. Plotinus' argument takes the form: "If so and so is the case, on the basis of what the interrelated terms a and b, and c and d, mean with reference to the One, then it should be clear that certain identities follow." The theorem, so to speak, he is about to prove in this chapter is that love (*eros*) and the beloved (*erasmion*) are identical in the One as love of itself. Thus, if the copresent, the *synon*, and that in which it is copresent (*tō en ὃ synestin*) are one, and if the desiring and the desired (*ephiemenon tō ephetō*) are one, in which case the desired is in the fashion of hypostasis and as though *hypokeimenon*, then it becomes clear to us that desire (*ephestis*) and *ousia* are identical. The context in which the argument occurs makes it evident that Plotinus is not purporting to prove here that the One is a hypostasis; rather, his point is that the concept of hypostasis can help us understand how it is that the One is the ideal case of self-love. The argument starts with distinctions and comparisons in order to collapse the meanings of the terms involved, with the assistance of the mode of hypostasis. If so, it is not correct to say that "hypostasis" here is a substitute for the One, which is what MacKenna's translation "serving as Hypostasis" implies.

The passage to which Deck appeals comes only twenty lines later, 3 f., where the expression "first hypostasis" occurs. However, the word "first," in order to support his claim, should have normally come in line 6, where the collapsing of the correlative terms is defended. Instead, Plotinus avoided using it there, and for good reasons. In lines 30 and following, we suddenly have a new unit of thought which contains a negative particle, to tell us in what things the first hypostasis is not to be sought: inanimate things and irrational life. Nothing explicit is said about

what this first hypostasis is as such. Are we then to suppose that it is to be found in something animate and in instances of rational life? No such conclusion follows. Yet its nature remains unidentified, and the passage ends on advice as to how to ascend to that which is not just logos but more beautiful (*kallion*) than logos.

But now we have a new question: What is that which is more beautiful than logos? The answer to this is suggested in what the next sentence says: whatever qualifies as the root of reason (*rizā tou logou*), which is of itself and that in which everything terminates (*eis touto ta panta lēgei*). Unless the reader is already familiar with the preceding chapters, it is difficult to decide whether the "root" means the One or *Nous*. Either can meet this requirement in certain ways, though not both of the word "everything" or "all" is taken in the most inclusive and absolute sense, which would then include *Nous* itself. Without these qualifications, *Nous* can conceivably be regarded as the "first hypostasis." Strictly speaking, Plotinus offers no unequivocal answer in these lines of the passage under consideration, and that is why it is misleading to quote out of context, thus forcing the passage to say what it does not. Instead of a direct answer, Plotinus resorts to a simile: this "root of reason" is "like the principle and ground of a greatest plant, living according to logos, while the principle itself remaining by itself, giving the being which the plant received according to logos" (translation supplied). The text reads:

Ῥίζα γὰρ λόγου παρ' αὐτῆς καὶ εἰς 35  
τοῦτο λήγει τὰ πάντα, ὥσπερ φυτοῦ μεγίστου κατὰ λόγον  
ζῶντος ἀρχὴ καὶ βάσις μένουσα αὐτὴ ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς.  
διδοῦσα δὲ κατὰ λόγον τῷ φυτῷ, ὃν ἔλαβεν, εἶναι.

As chapter 15 draws to a close, the issue remains unsettled. The question which still lingers in the reader's mind is not whether Plotinus intends to identify the One as the first hypostasis, but whether the argument is one which aims to establish this identity. This is so because the main emphasis is on what is *eros* and what self-love means in the ultimate sense of the word. Probably Plotinus could have settled the issue and dispensed with the ambiguity if instead of the expression "root of reason" he said "root of *Nous*." The difficulty can no doubt be removed by borrowing freely from the texts, but it would be a different solution. Hence, if the One is the first hypostasis, which it is, we must look for further textual evidence. Had Deck made use of the difficulty in lines 30–38, he probably could have made a stronger case for his "quasihypostasis" thesis. However, since he considers chapter 18 to have provided a clear statement for what the first hypostasis is, he finds it necessary to seek the countervailing evidence elsewhere.

### III

In discussing Plotinus' tactic in philosophizing about the One, Deck observes, and correctly so, that Plotinus employs "dualistic phrases, but usually to correct them, usually to remind his hearers that these phrases must be purged of dualism to apply to the One" (p. 10). Deck also draws attention to Plotinus' awareness of

"speaking incorrectly" (οὐκ ὀρθῶς) in VI.8.13–18, and of resorting to "words which must depart from the rigor of knowledge (παρανοητέον ἐν τοῖς λόγοις)" (VI.8.13.1–5; 47–50).

Thus, according to Deck, such "incorrect speaking" of the One occurs in a number of cases, which are reproduced below.

- (i) The One is from itself, from itself and through itself: παρ' αὐτοῦ, VI.8.14.42; ἐφ' αὐτοῦ, VI.8.11.33.
- (ii) It is towards itself: πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ ἐξ αὐτόν, VI.8.17.26; πρὸς αὐτό, V.3.10.51.
- (iii) It wills itself, VI.8.13.38–40.
- (iv) It makes or constitutes itself as cause of itself: αἰτιον ἑαυτοῦ, VI.8.14.42.
- (v) It made itself to subsist: αὐτὸς ἄρα ὑπέστησεν αὐτόν, VI.8.16.30.
- (vi) It is self-sufficient (qua good): ἑαυτῷ 1.8.2.4–5.

Of these six select instances of "incorrect speaking," so named on the ground that the expressions are dual and hence misleading, the crucial one for the purposes of this paper is (v): "it made itself to subsist."

Since the One needs nothing (I.8.2.4–5; VI.9.6.18), Deck argues that:

It does not need subsistence, entity, act or life. If it needed any of these it would not be the first: some other principle, toward which it tended, would supply them to it (cf. III.8.11.38–44). Nor does it *have* them. For in having them, it would be two: itself, and that which it had. Neither needing nor having them, but the source from which they proceed, the One is beyond subsistence, beyond entity, beyond act (pp. 10–11).

Now we come to another crucial expression in Plotinus, in Deck's list:

- (vii) The One is before subsistence: πρὸ τῆς ὑποστάσεως, VI.8.10.37.

Hence:

- (vii) The One does not subsist: οὐδὲ ὑπέστη, VI.8.10.35–38; τὸ μὴ ὑποστάν, VI.8.11.1–5.

Of course, Deck is careful to note that "Plotinus is not contradicting himself. The One is or has all these [viz., substance, entity, act, life, self-sufficiency], to the extent that neither they nor the being or having of them involves duality" (p. 11).

The real issue for Deck is not so much whether Plotinus is contradicting himself, but whether the One is a hypostasis, and if so how are we to understand it qua hypostasis. He absolves Plotinus of the charge of contradiction by saying that "Plotinus applies negative formulae to the One, not to deny positivity of it, but to deny duality." And he continues, further down, to say:

Thus positive formulae can be applied to the One, provided that they be qualified to remove the taint of duality: the One has *quasi*-subsistence, *quasi*-entity, *quasi*-life, which are identical with itself (p. 11).

Deck cites VI.8.7.46–54 and renders Plotinus' expression οἷον ὑπόστασις αὐτοῦ as "quasi-subsistence." Now, it may be objected that the charge of contradiction need not be raised at all, notwithstanding Deck's defense against it; nor is it

correct, as will be shown, to attribute to Plotinus a doctrine of "quasi-subsistence." In pursuing his analysis, Deck is (a) inventing an issue which is cast in the form of a rhetorical question: "Does Plotinus contradict himself?" and (b) dismissing the issue by forcing an interpretation which the text does not justify, namely that the meaning of "hypostasis" in the case of the One is that of "quasi-subsistence." Contrary to Deck's view, the text requires that the term "subsistence" be kept intact, and that it means "hypostasis par excellence." This meaning can be best understood in the context of αὐτεξούσιον "in control of itself."

**A. The "quasi-subsistence" problem: οἷον ὑπόστασις.** The passage to which Deck appeals comes immediately after Plotinus has stated that it would be most absurd to take away "self-control" from the Good, for it neither needs anything nor moves towards any of the things which move towards it, and he continues in lines 46–54:

"Ὅταν δὲ  
δὴ ἡ οἷον ὑπόστασις αὐτοῦ ἡ οἷον ἐνέργεια ἢ (οὐ γὰρ ἡ  
μὲν ἕτερον, ἡ δ' ἕτερόν ἐστιν, εἴ γε μὴδὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ νοῦ  
τοῦτο) οὐτὶ μᾶλλον κατὰ τὸ εἶναι ἢ ἐνέργεια ἢ κατὰ, τὴν  
ἐνέργειαν τὸ εἶναι ὥστε οὐκ ἔχει τὸ ὡς πέφυκεν ἐνεργεῖν, 50  
οὐδὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἡ οἷον ζωὴ ἀνενεχθήσεται εἰς τὴν  
οἷον οὐσίαν, ἀλλ' ἡ οἷον οὐσία συνοῦσα καὶ οἷον συγγε-  
νομένη ἐξ αἰδίου τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν αὐτὸ αὐτὸ ποιεῖ  
καὶ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ οὐδενός.

Translation:

When the hypostasis of the Good, such as this can be,<sup>12</sup> is regarded as actuality (for these are not two different things, not even in the case of Nous), it is no more the case that actuality is determined by being than being is by actuality. Therefore, "to act," as originated by nature, does not apply here, nor can actuality and what is like (its) life be reduced to what is like (its) *ousia*; rather, *ousia*, such as it may be in this case, as copresent and as being born together with actuality since eternity, is what the Good makes itself from itself and nothing else.

If the above rendition is close to Plotinus' meaning, then "hypostasis" in the case of the One-Good must be used in the fullest sense of the term. Hence, it seems rather baffling to call it "quasi-hypostasis." The text makes it clear that Plotinus means to correlate the concepts of "hypostasis" and "*energeia*" with the help of "being," "*ousia*," and "life." The words συνοῦσα, συγγενομένη, and ἀμφοῖν support this view. If so, the "incorrect way of speaking" has been cleared of its difficulties by the time Plotinus has ended each chapter.

**B. The issue of contradiction.** We need now to turn to those passages in which Plotinus is allegedly denying hypostasis of the One. The difficulty begins to emerge when we try to understand the sense in which the One is "before subsistence" (πρὸ τῆς ὑποστάσεως) and such that "it made itself to subsist" (αὐτὸς ἄρα ὑπέστησεν αὐτόν). Let us consider the text. The expression πρὸ τῆς

ὑποστάσεως occurs in VI.8.10.37. The main question which chapter 10 raises in this connection is whether "chance" can have any place in a philosophical account of the One qua *archē*. Thus, Plotinus asks:

Τὴν δὴ ἀρχὴν παντὸς λόγου τε καὶ τάξεως  
καὶ ὅρου τῶς ἂν τις τὴν τούτου ὑπόστασιν ἀναφείη τύχη;

Translation:

When we ask about that which is the origin of every logos and order and limit, how can one ascribe its hypostasis to chance?

The answer is that we cannot. Now, since the One is also the *first*, we must stop there and say nothing more. We may inquire into the things generated from it, but not into the origins of that which is truly ungenerated. At this point Plotinus finds it necessary to raise a question about the meaning which the expression "to give hypostasis to X" can have in the case of the One. In this connection, Deck is right when he says that Plotinus must remove from his exposition of the One "the taint of duality." Thus, Plotinus needs to correlate two things: (a) what it means *to give hypostasis* and (b) what it is *to be ungenerated*. It is the former that presents a problem of possible duality. What he concludes in lines 22–38, in complicated "question and answer" language, is that the One is at once ungenerated and by necessity, that is, "using itself such as it is." "Being master of its own *ousia*," nothing made the One subsist. The One gave itself its own subsistence and necessarily so. The expression οὐχ ὑποστήσας ἑαυτόν appears to contradict the expression πρὸ τῆς ὑποστάσεως only because the text is complicated. The misunderstanding can be removed without much difficulty with the aid of two recommendations: the first is editorial, the second calling for careful contextual reading.

### (1) Textual emendation.

Lines 22–25 must be read as a series of *three interconnected questions*, and not as a simple passage consisting of one question ending on the word *kurios* (l. 23), and the rest as a quasi-question in the *hypothesis-apodosis* syntactical mode. Seen in this way, the intent of the passage can be more faithfully rendered, and thus the expression οὐχ ὑποστήσας ἑαυτόν falls in line with the thesis which pervades the entire tractate. By placing a question mark rather than a period at the end of line 25, the passage would translate:

But then, can we say that, if the One is ungenerated and while being such as it is, that is not master of its own *ousia*? And can we say that, if not master of it, while being such as it is, that it *did not cause itself to subsist* (οὐχ ὑποστήσας ἑαυτόν) by using itself such as it is, and that this is so by necessity and could not be otherwise?

### (2) Contextual reading.

Given that the One is master of its own *ousia*, it is inherently necessary that it be conceived as causing itself to be its own subsistence. Ten lines later, after he has

explained why the One has "fullness of power" (ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δυνάμεως) and it is thus impossible for it to "arrive at what is worse" (ἐλθεῖν πρὸς τὸ χεῖρον), he returns to the issue of hypostasis. The context of these lines permits us to see what Plotinus means by the expression οὐδε ὑπέστη.

Since the aspect of necessity (ἀνάγκη) had already been discussed in previous chapters of VI.8., where it was established that the necessity of the One is different from other necessities, it makes no sense in the present context of chapter 10 to say that there is such a thing as a necessity and also the One, as if this is a real duality. Since the One is not subject to necessity but rather is itself the ground of all other necessities, of being and law, the question, rhetorical to be sure, is "How could one, then, say that it is necessity which causes the One's subsisting (ὑπέστησεν), especially if the One is understood as having fullness of power?"

Obviously, Plotinus must insist that this is not the way to talk about the One qua hypostasis, for it is not the case that it is thus that it came to subsist (ὑπέστη); nor can it be that it is *this necessity* that afforded subsistence to the other subsistents (ὑποστάντων) that came after it and because of it. Given that the One has no source other than itself for its hypostasis, such as it may be, it is evident that *qua* One, it is prior to all cases of subsistence. Now the concluding question, which already contains the answer, becomes: "How can it then be that what is admittedly prior to hypostasis, attains subsistence (ὑπέστη) by virtue of something else, unless it did so by itself?" Therefore the place of the subject of the verb ὑφιστάναι cannot be occupied by the word "necessity."

Since the One is the only thing that is (i) πρὸ τῆς ὑποστάσεως and (ii) the ὑποστήσας εαυτόν, it is also the only thing which is at once (iii) a hypostasis underived from another hypostasis. These considerations set the context for the opening question of chapter 11: Ἀλλὰ τὸ μὴ ὑποστάν τοῦτο τι; "But what is this One which is 'not subsisting'?" The dialectical discussion which follows holds no surprise for the reader. Logically enough, Plotinus returns to the aspect of subsistence to restate that the One "attained its own subsistence from itself before any other" (ἐφ' αὐτοῦ γὰρ καὶ ὑφέστηκε, πρὶν ἄλλο).

#### IV

The preceding analysis was not directed against a position Deck obviously does not hold, namely that Plotinus is in fact open to the charge of contradiction. Rather, the purpose was to show that the issue of contradiction does not even arise in any significant way, not even as a preliminary difficulty. However, there is one residual problem in Deck's interpretation, namely his contention that, in the case of the One, we can only speak of its being a "quasi-hypostasis." This, as has been argued, is a mistaken interpretation. In addition to what has been said in the discussion of the relevant texts, further support may be adduced from VI.8.13, lines 50–52 and 55–59, where Plotinus clearly speaks of the Good in connection with an argument to show that it is possible to bring will and being together (συνακτέον εἰς ἓν τὴν βούλησιν καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν).

Εἰ γὰρ ἡ βούλησις 55  
παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ οἷον ἔργον αὐτοῦ. αὐτὴ δὲ ταῦτόν τῃ  
ὑποστάσει αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸς ἂν οὕτως ὑποστήσας ἂν εἴη  
αὐτόν· ὥστε οὐχ ὅπερ ἔτυχεν ἔστιν, ἀλλ' ὅπερ ἡβουλήθη  
αὐτός.

Translation:

For if will is from Him and like His work, while His will is identical with his hypostasis. He himself can thus come to subsist (οὕτως ὑποστήσας) as is possible for Him. Therefore, this did not occur by chance but precisely as He willed.

There is no reason, therefore, to call this a quasi-hypostasis. In fact, it seems evident that Plotinus has anticipated such reservations as Deck has expressed. If we were to ask what a quasi-hypostasis would amount to, most certainly it would have to be one which is not deserving of the One, for it would be lacking in something. One could conceive of no stronger instance than the case of hypostasis which is lacking in *energeia*. Quite likely Deck would resist this imputation on his view, but let us consider the case. Plotinus would most definitely reject it as inadmissible and disown it outright on the basis of what he states in VI.8.20, lines 11–15:

Εἰ δὲ ὑπόστασιν ἄνευ ἐνεργείας τις  
θεῖτο, ἐλλειπὴς ἢ ἀρχὴ καὶ ἀτελής ἢ τελειοτάτη πασῶν  
ἔσται. Καὶ εἰ προσθεῖη ἐνέργειαν, οὐχ ἓν τηρεῖ. Εἰ οὖν  
τελειότερον ἢ ἐνέργεια τῆς οὐσίας, τελειότατον δὲ τὸ  
πρῶτον, πρῶτον ἂν ἐνέργεια εἴη. 15

Translation:

If one posits hypostasis without *energeia*, the *Archē*, which is the most perfect of all principles, would be incomplete and imperfect. And if one would make *energeia* something composite, then he could not preserve the One. Thus, if *energeia* is more perfect than *ousia*, and that which is first is most perfect, it must be that *energeia* is the first.

The argument leads to the fundamental thesis that hypostasis calls for more than the mere addition of *energeia*. What makes the concept of hypostasis intelligible and actual is the original activity of the One, which is presupposed by its *ousia*. Given these ontic restrictions, it is difficult to see how we can speak of a "quasi-hypostasis" in the case of the One. In fact, it cannot be other than the *first hypostasis*. This is what "correct discourse" about the One demands.

# *The One, or God, Is Not Properly "Hypostasis":*

## *A Reply to Professor John P. Anton*

JOHN N. DECK

As someone who essays to be a contemporary Christian Neoplatonist, I have been very much alive to the perennial problem of the articulation of the "negative theology" of the One with the more positive indications of the divine nature to be found in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

Meanwhile, to be sure, the "negative theology" itself requires careful and continuous consideration because Plotinus also allows himself, in a way, to predicate something of the One.

When, then, someone is found to argue that the One is, for Plotinus, literally and without correctives a "hypostasis," the "first hypostasis," there is involved first of all a simple problem in Plotinian interpretation; but beyond that, the philosophico-theological question of what can and cannot be said of the First, the Source, God—what can and cannot be said, and *how* it can be said or not said.

Professor John P. Anton's paper, "Some Logical Aspects of the Concept of Hypostasis in Plotinus,"<sup>1</sup> adopts precisely these positions. And it is devoted almost exclusively to a criticism of certain remarks I had made in *Nature, Contemplation and the One* (NCO)<sup>2</sup> concerning the appropriateness (or inappropriateness) of des-

ignating the Plotinian One an "hypostasis." In replying to it I will expose Plotinus' doctrine again, and also, by implication at least, indicate what I as a philosopher think *cannot* be said of the One, or of God.

Professor Anton correctly discerns that I interpreted Plotinus as *not* taking the One to be hypostasis in an unqualified sense, but his route to this intuition is a somewhat surprising one: He picks up his indications from a rather bland footnote and a few phrases used some pages beyond it. He treats these materials as though they were a fully articulated argument, with odd results.

The "bland footnote" (NCO, p. 19, n. 5) in question was to annotate the mention of the One in the text of NCO as "a distinct hypostasis, a distinct 'nature.'" I had remarked only that "Hypostasis is not, for Plotinus himself, a common designation of the One." Professor Anton does not deny this (Anton, p. 25. I had said that I had "been able to find only one place where Plotinus calls the One, in so many words, the 'first hypostasis.'" The place was *Ennead* VI.8.30.

*Parturiunt montes.* In a discussion stretching over four pages (Anton, pp. 26–30), replete with phrases like "Deck's initial point," "whether Plotinus is discussing the point which Deck claims," "the passage to which Deck appeals," and so on, Anton argues, in brief, that the mention of "the first hypostasis" in this text must be taken in the context of a rather long section to see that it is indeed the One which is so designated. If a person did not read rather far back and rather far ahead, he might take "the first hypostasis" to refer to something else. But according to Anton, "the first hypostasis" here *does* refer to the One. So?

But meanwhile, Professor Anton seems to have guessed that if I *had* written an *exprofesso* tractate on "The Plotinian One—A Hypostasis?" I would have tried to make much of Plotinus' phrases "before hypostasis?" (πρὸ τῆς ὑποστάσεως) and "quasi-hypostasis" (ὅλον ὑπόστασις)—but he does not understand *why* I would have done so. Possibly because of his concentration on a footnote, he fails to see, in the few pages of NCO (pp. 9–11) to which we are both referring, the outline of a full-scale argument which shows why the One absolutely cannot be, for Plotinus, without qualifications a hypostasis. This argument is contained in these pages and, in fact, displayed in their visible structure.

I wish to take this opportunity to present that argument before making further replies to Professor Anton's critique.

At the beginning of my systematized presentation of Plotinus' One—talk, I had written:

Plotinus is at once in difficulty when he begins to describe the One. He sees that for him the One must be ineffable. Even the name "One," if taken as a positive designation, is not suitable (V.5.6.28–30). To add a predicate to the One, or even to say that it *is*, would be to make it two—"One" and "is"—and therefore, [make] the "one which is" the second nature and not the first.

Not I wish to make it clear that I regarded, and do regard, this as Plotinus' most profound doctrine of the One. It is to be taken as absolutely definitive—as

absolutely qualifying *any* statements he may make elsewhere which predicate *anything* of the One, with or without cautions or qualifying words or phrases. In short, I am saying that *he means it*—if he means anything. My insistence on this is perhaps affected by my own philosophic adhesion to it, as also by the “logical precedence” that it obviously must enjoy when it is taken in full seriousness. *Strictly speaking, the One is absolutely without predicates.*<sup>3</sup>

I went on to show that for Plotinus even “the Good”—which, indeed, he uses often enough as a virtual synonym for the One—is not, strictly speaking, a proper designation. It is the good for the others, but it is *not good for itself*—“good for itself” involves a duality.

This led to another point. The One is in no way whatever dual. Hence any predicate that displays or implies duality would be doubly wrong in its application to the One. Wrong because it is a predicate and wrong because it is in itself dual. For example, the One wills itself, that is, the One is a (or the) self-willer.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, Plotinus uses the dualistic words. He “must” use them. As I put it in *NCO*:

And yet the very simplicity of the first principle can be expressed, unless we are merely to repeat endlessly “the One,” only by words and phrases which in themselves connote duality. Plotinus is fully aware of this. His tactic is to employ the dualistic phrases, but usually to correct them, usually to remind his hearers that these phrases must be purged of dualism to apply to the One.

A little further on I mentioned several of these phrases, which Plotinus himself uses in the long passage (VI.8.13–18) where he cautions us at the outset that he is speaking incorrectly (οὐκ ὁρθῶς): from itself and through itself, wills itself, makes or constitutes (ποιεῖ) itself. These are dualistic phrases, they would give the One two “sides” or two aspects (e.g., the maker and the made).

Writing now, I would go even further and at least suggest that *any* phrase taken, as it must be taken, from the world of being (which, we will recall, is for Plotinus dualistic through-and-through, the world of Knower-Known or, as some like to say, Intelligence-Intelligible)—*any* word or phrase, with the possible exception of “the One”—is at least implicitly dual.

What about “hypostasis”? I think it should at any rate be examined for internal duality, which in all probability will show up. It is dual at least in its primitive meaning, “a standing-under.” That which in its own nature “stands-under” requires, as its dialectic partner, that under which it stands. This two-sided meaning does seem sometimes to be Plotinus’, meaning notably in a text from which both Professor Anton and I quote (VI.8.20) (see page 38). But whether this duality and/or other dualities are involved in other cases where Plotinus uses the word is a large and unexplored question.

Now since *no* predicate, taken as it is from the realm of being, can, for these two reasons, be applied in an utterly proper sense to the One, the application of *any* predicate must be qualified by a denial. This situation naturally results when one applies the language of being to that which is above being.<sup>5</sup> Thus in *NCO* (p.

11) I lined up texts in which Plotinus (a) affirms and (b) denies the subsistence, act, freedom, and life of the One. I proceeded:

Plotinus is not contradicting himself. The One is or has all these, to the extent that neither they nor the being or having of them involves duality. When Plotinus denies an attribute of the One he does so to affirm the simplicity of the One; when he affirms an attribute he shows that the One, though simple, is not negative.

Out of this, Anton gets no more than “Deck is inventing an issue which is cast in the form of a rhetorical question: ‘Does Plotinus contradict himself?’” (Anton, p. 30), and then devotes two-and-one-half pages (pp.31–33 to “the issue of contradiction.”

I suggest that the contradictory formulas cited would raise the question of contradiction in almost anyone’s mind, when it is operating on a certain level. But, in point of fact, I was neither inventing this “issue” nor making much of it. I moved at once to something much more vital: *how* Plotinus uses the negative formulas, *how* he uses the positive. I was guided here again by the realization that (a) *neither* type is quite right, and (b) that he “must” use both.

And again, in the knowledge that Plotinus cannot properly predicate *anything* of the One, I was attracted in *NCO* (p. 11) to a text in which he apparently qualifies several predications, among them hypostasis. This text is VI.8.7.49–54. Professor Anton objects to my translation of οἷον in this text by *quasi*, and offers his own translation:

When the hypostasis of the Good, *such as this can be*, is regarded as actuality (for these are not two different things, not even in the case of *Nous*), it is no more the case that actuality is determined by being than being is by actuality. Therefore, “to act,” as originated by nature, does not apply here, nor can actuality and what is *like* (its) life be reduced to what is *like* (its) *ousia*; rather, *ousia*, *such as it may be in this case*, as copresent and as being born together with actuality since eternity, is what the Good makes itself from itself and nothing else (Anton, p. 30).

I have italicized the words he uses to translate οἷον (and to avoid saying “quasi”). Now I submit that even his translation could easily be read as meaning quasi-hypostasis, and so on. I can see that he is trying to attach another shade of meaning to “such as this can be,” “such as may be in this case,” but it is far from clear what that shade may be. “Like” seems awfully like “quasi.” I do not wish to labor this argument: Anton’s new translation simply has not made his point.

At the very end of his article, Professor Anton returns to the “quasi-hypostasis” question. He seems to have no notion of why I “pounced” on the expression οἷον ὑπόστασις in the first place:

If we were to ask what a quasi-hypostasis would amount to, most certainly it would have to be one which is not deserving of the One, for it would be lacking in something (Anton, p. 33).

Why? Why should quasi-hypostasis be taken “most certainly” as necessarily less than hypostasis? Why not as *more than hypostasis*? Even a cursory reading of

NCO should have conveyed this meaning. On page 11 I had closely connected the phrase *πρὸ τῆς ὑποστάσεως* before hypostasis with the characteristic Plotinian doctrine (derived from Plato) that the One is beyond; is the sense of *above*; *ousia*: *ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας*. The One is before, prior to, above hypostasis and for this reason is called quasi-hypostasis.

But in pursuing the ill-conceived notion that a quasi-hypostasis is lacking in something, Professor Anton considers the case: maybe it is lacking in *energeia* (act). Then he finds a text in which the word "hypostasis" occurs, and which says that the One is act (or rather, that act is the first). This is used for a triumphant vindication of the One as the "first hypostasis."

Now in the text in question Plotinus is saying that the One and its producing of itself are the same. The preferred word for this seems here to be the Aristotelian "*energeia*," and it would be interesting to dilate, both textually and philosophically, on the appropriateness and inappropriateness of calling the One "*energeia*," or of substituting "*energeia*" for "One."

Professor Anton, however, does not see this, nor does he notice that the to-him-obnoxious phrase *ὁλον ὑπόστασις* occurs again in the line just above the first line he quotes. In fuller rendition:

We must not fear to posit the first act without entity, but we must posit this itself [the first act] as a quasi-hypostasis. If we were to posit a hypostasis without act, the *Arché* would be lacking and the most perfect of all would be imperfect. And if we added act, we would not preserve the One. Now if act is more perfect than entity, and the first is the most perfect, the first will be act (VI.8.20.9–15, trans. Deck).

The notion here seems to be that the One is a self-subsistent act. The nuance of "quasi-hypostasis" is slightly different here, but the meaning comes through again that the quasi-hypostasis being spoken of is "more than" hypostasis: The act (which is the One) is a *quasi* hypostasis because it does not have a subject or substratum in which it inheres, but is, as it were, its own subject or substratum—or, better yet, "gets by" without a substratum.

As I remarked above, Professor Anton leaves out the first sentence. So, with reference to this very text, he says "it is difficult to see how we can speak of a quasi-hypostasis in the case of the One." The text itself, when read with the first sentence, makes it impossible *not* to speak of the act-which-is-the-One as quasi-hypostasis.

If I may be permitted to mention what I think is just under the surface in Professor Anton's article, I would say that he is attempting to impose a logic on Plotinus that is not Plotinus' own and which is not philosophically productive. Hypostasis is not a "big word" for Plotinus,<sup>6</sup> "the One" is. But hypostasis *is* a big word—an important "concept"—for Professor Anton, and in this sense it is no accident that he called his paper "Some Logical Aspects of the Concept of Hypostasis."

But does he find a logic of hypostasis in our philosopher? In note 2 (p. 158), Prof. Anton proposes to refer us to "key passages" in the *Enneads* which give "the basic features of hypostasis." For "infinite and nonspatial," he cites VI.3.8. 35ff.

The doctrine is not there at all; hypostasis is not mentioned; the text contrasts sensible with true *ousia* but not in terms of infinite-finite or spatial-nonspatial. The other text he cites in this connection (VI.9.6.10–12) contains the often-discussed doctrine that the One is infinite in power. The text (and the whole context) concerns the One; hypostasis is not mentioned. For "undiminished giving," he cites texts that display the *Nous* (III.8.8.46–48) and the One (III.8.10.1–19) as "undiminished givers." For "the One qua hypostasis [italics Anton's] transcends knowledge altogether," he cites VI.7.39.19–33. "Hypostasis" does not occur either in the texts or the contexts, and so forth.

He is simply taking texts about the One, the *Nous*, and Soul or souls, and, because he is certain that hypostasis is an overarching concept applied to the One, *Nous*, and Soul, giving it out that these texts are "Plotinus' answer to the question 'What criteria must X satisfy to qualify as a hypostasis?'" (Anton, p. 24). *Plotinus has neither the question nor the answer.*

Thus, if an interpreter's question may be allowed to arise, "Is the One an hypostasis?" the answer is to be found, not in the "logical aspects of the concept to hypostasis," not, that is, in the logic of hypostasis, but in the "logic," so to speak, of the One. Indeed, any "concept" (better, any entity) has its proper home at the level of *Nous*. It must be adjusted downward to "apply" below the level of *Nous*, and adjusted upward to "apply" to the One. And this is what seems to happen with hypostasis. The hypostasis, in the fullest sense, is the *Nous*. The inferior hypostasis, Soul, is less-as-a-hypostasis. The One is above hypostasis and is best described, when the word "hypostasis" is used at all, as quasi-hypostasis.

# Plotinus' Theory of The One

EUGENE F. BALES

## I

The purpose of this essay is to offer an interpretation of Plotinus' doctrine of The One or The Good, which is more adequate than the traditional interpretation and which, at the same time, indicates a fundamental difficulty with Plotinus' theory. For the purpose in mind, I have elected to concentrate only on the chronologically middle treatises of the *Enneads*. These treatises constitute not only the numerical bulk of that larger work, but also its most philosophically sophisticated part, if we can trust the judgment of Porphyry.<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally most commentators have distinguished ■ positive and a negative theology within Plotinus' doctrine of The One.<sup>2</sup> That is, Plotinus speaks on occasion as though The One radically transcends Being, is devoid of intelligible content, and so forth; and, on other occasions, as though The One is the highest Being, has an intelligible, if minimal, content, and so forth. The former is designated negative theology, the latter positive theology.

That this interpretation sheds light on Plotinus' theory is beyond question; but the contention here is that this interpretation is not entirely adequate. Specifically,

I wish to propose the existence of three modes of discourse that Plotinus uses in discussing The One or The Good: (1) The first mode of discourse is employed when he speaks of The One as though it transcends Being, Mind, Freedom, Will, Consciousness, and Form, and is thus void of all Act and intelligible content. This mode of discourse I shall refer to as *meontological* (from *mē ōn*, nonbeing). (2) The second mode of discourse is employed when Plotinus speaks of The Good as though it is within Being rather than beyond it, the essence of Act, containing all things potentially, as having some kind of Consciousness, Will, Mind, and as being the Transcendental Self. This mode of discourse I shall designate *ontological*. (3) The third mode of discourse is used to show the relationship between the first two modes of discourse. This occurs when The One is spoken of as a Formless Form, as everywhere and nowhere, as all things and nothing, as Being and Non-Being, and preeminently as Self-caused. This mode of discourse I will refer to as the *paradoxical*.

It is my contention, first of all, that this third mode of discourse is an essential addition to the first two, and that without the third, no sense can be made of the relation between the first two. But secondly, it is my belief that insuperable problems concerning the intelligibility of Plotinus' theory of The One arise precisely because of this third mode of discourse.

## II

There are many passages in the middle treatises that assert The One's transcendent relation to Being. The following is typical:

It follows that The First must be without form, and, if without form, then it is no Being; Being must have some definition and therefore be limited; but the First cannot be thought of as having definition and limit, for thus it would be not the Source but the particular item indicated by the definition assigned. . . . Not included among them, this can be described only as transcending them; but they are Being and the Beings; it therefore transcends Being.

Note that the phrase "transcending Being" assigns no character, makes no assertion, allots no name, carries only the denial of particular being.<sup>3</sup>

This ultimate beyond Being in Plotinus' system is said to be beyond multiplicity, and thus to be Pure Unity, that is, a unity which, neither directly nor indirectly, has any parts:

It was necessary that The First be utterly without multiplicity, for otherwise it must be again referred to a prior.<sup>4</sup>

A Pure Unity that has no duality in it, that is, no parts, has no content whatever either potentially or actually; thus one could say that it is a void:

. . . containing, then, neither the good nor the not-good it contains nothing and, containing nothing, it is alone: it is void of all but itself.<sup>5</sup>

This characteristic vacuity of The One is further emphasized in that Activity cannot be predicated of it at all:



That all-transcending cannot have had an activity by which to produce this activity—acting before act existed—or have had thought in order to produce thinking—applying thought before thought exists—all intellection, even of the Good, is beneath it.<sup>6</sup>

The lack of Activity in The One implies its lack of power or “metaphysical abundance”:

Who has begotten such a child, this Intellectual-Principle, this lovely abundance so abundantly endowed?

The source of all this cannot be an Intellect; nor can it be an abundant power: it must have been before Intellect and abundance were; these are later and things of lack; abundance had to be made abundant and Intellection needed to know.<sup>7</sup>

The very perfection of The One is rooted in its lack of power, of act, of content.<sup>8</sup>

At one point this sheer vacuity of The One *seems* to have led Plotinus to the extreme of ruling out its power to cause. If The One is pure Non-Being, of course, it is quite unintelligible to propose that it *causes* Being. Any particular thing would derive its finite being from Being, and not from Unity. This is, I believe, the gist of the following rather odd passage:

The single thing derives its unity by participation in Unity-Absolute; its being it derives from Being-Absolute, which in turn hold [sic] its Being from itself and its unity from Unity-Absolute.<sup>9</sup>

Although Plotinus usually asserts that Unity is the *source* of Being,<sup>10</sup> he seems here to be saying that Being is its own source. The implication is that the One is the cause of the unity in Being, but not of Being itself. There is no reason to think, however, that this was Plotinus' ordinary view of the matter; indeed there are no other passages in the *Enneads* that I know of that suggest such a theory.

If The One transcends Being, it transcends both subject and object:

Anyone making the Good at once Thinker and Thought identifies it with Being and with the Intellection vested in Being so that it must stand as self-intellective: at once it becomes necessary to find another principle, one superior to that Good.<sup>11</sup>

The denial of Objectivity and Subjectivity within The One occupies much of Plotinus' attention. There are any number of passages, for example, that deny that The Good is, in fact, an Idea or Form:

The Authentic Beauty, or rather the Beyond-Beauty, cannot be under measure and therefore cannot have admitted shape or be Idea: the primal Beauty, the First, must be without Form: the beauty of that higher realm must be, simply, the Nature of the Good.<sup>12</sup>

Thus it is the unshaped that gives shape; the formless that gives form. Further, if the Good is not a Form, it is not a particular good, nor even the highest good, since both of these are forms:

... surely the First must be able to say “I possess Being”?  
But he does not possess Being.

Then, at least he must say “I am good”??

No: once more, that would be an affirmation of Being.

But surely he may affirm merely the goodness, adding nothing: the goodness would be taken without the being and all duality avoided?

No: such self-awareness as good must inevitably carry the affirmation “I am the Good.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus, The Good is not good; rather as Non-Being it is beyond genera, and thus beyond the kinds or degrees of goodness. Goodness, even the highest goodness, is intrinsically intertwined with Being: to be good is to be something definite. Thus, metaphysically, The Good is not a Form of any kind.

While The Good is not an object of Thought, it is not a subject of some kind either. In the first place, Plotinus insists quite often that it has no intellection:

There must have been something standing consummate independently of an intellectual act, something perfect in its own essence: thus that in which this completion is inherent must exist before intellection; in other words it has no need of intellection, having been always self-sufficing: this, then, will have no intellectual act.

Thus we arrive at: a principle having no intellection, a principle having intellection primarily, a principle having it secondarily.<sup>14</sup>

Intellection, of course, demands a duality of some kind between knower and known; thus Pure Unity can never be a principle having intellection, since it stands apart from any duality.

In the same vein, Plotinus stipulates further that the One is beyond freedom, “higher than all will, will a thing beneath it.”<sup>15</sup>

For This is principle of all, or, more strictly, unrelated to all and, in this consideration, cannot be made to possess such latens as even freedom and self-disposal, which in fact indicate manifestation upon the extern.<sup>16</sup>

### III

There are some very significant passages in which the *Being*, rather than the Non-Being, of The Good is stressed by Plotinus.

The first example is the most striking: it occurs in VI. 5 (“On the Integral Omnipresence of the Authentic Existent [II]”):

Hence the Good is not to be sought outside: it could not have fallen outside of what is; it cannot possibly be found in non-Being; within Being the Good must lie, since it is never a non-Being.

If that Good has Being and is within the realm of Being, then it is present, self-contained, in everything: we, therefore, are not separated from Being; we are in it; nor is Being separated from us: therefore all beings are one.<sup>17</sup>

Here the meontological character of the One is explicitly denied; the Good must lie “within Being.” The very end of this quotation, I believe, throws some light on the meaning of this: Being is the ultimate because the final goal of the spiritual

life—the unity of Being—is *in* Being and not *beyond* Being. The ontological character of this statement is unquestionable and directly conflicts with other accounts of The One as beyond Being.

A second example occurs in the treatise "On Free Will and the Will of The One" (VI. 8):

Again; if He preeminently is because He holds firmly, so to speak, towards Himself, looking towards Himself, so that what we must call his being is this self-looking, He must again, since the word is inevitable, make Himself.<sup>12</sup>

Here The One is said to be preeminent, that is, to be the highest Being; and this Being (the infinitive *einai* is used here) is a kind of self-looking. What is significant here is the use of the verb "to be" in this description of The One, a verb that Plotinus is more often than not at pains to avoid using with reference to The One.

Even more indicative than the use of the verb "to be" in reference to The One is the assertion of its active character. The following passage is striking in this respect:

Let no one suspect us of asserting that the first Activity is without Essence; on the contrary the Activity is the very reality. To suppose a reality without activity would be to make the Principle of all principles deficient: the supremely complete becomes incomplete. To make the Activity something superadded to the Essence is to shatter the unity. If then Activity is a more perfect thing than Essence and the First is all perfect, then the Activity is the First.<sup>13</sup>

The very essence of The One is said to be *energeia*, and this *energeia* is tied in with Being, as is evident in another passage from the same treatise as the preceding quote:

The Being accompanies the Act in an eternal association: from the two (Being and Act) it forms itself into The Good, self-springing and unspringing.<sup>14</sup>

Besides the term "*energeia*," the term "*dynamis*" is also used quite often in reference to The One:

The Good is the older—not in time but by degree of reality—and it has the higher and earlier power, all power in fact, for the sequent holds only a power subordinate and delegated of which the prior remains sovereign.<sup>15</sup>

Power here, whether in the sense of *energeia* or *dynamis*, is to my mind a clear ontological characterization: it would be quite out of character to speak of Non-Being as having *dynamis* or *energeia*. Indeed there is a discussion of the ontological character of *dynamis* in VI.1, a treatise concerned with the categories within *Nous*, which confirms this. The passage in question occurs casually in the midst of a highly abstract discussion of Aristotle's category of Quality: Plotinus says that "power or a particular power may be regarded as Substance."<sup>16</sup> Now Plotinus is not talking about The One, and for that reason I would not want to press this passage too far; but if the *dynamis* in the realm of Being, whether general or particular (*tis*), is said to be Substance (*ousia*), would not the use of it in regard to The One have the same connotation as well? Does not the power of The One suggest the

Being of The One? Surely Plotinus does not want us to believe that *dynamis* predicated of The One has nothing in common with *dynamis* predicated of the lower Hypostases. For then how could *dynamis* in the former sense have any meaning at all?

In any case, The One, as the source of all, is thereby the potentiality of all:

And what will such a Principle essentially be?

The potentiality of the Universe: the potentiality whose non existence would mean the non-existence of all the Universe and even of the Intellectual-Principle which is the primal Life and all Life.<sup>17</sup>

This potentiality is the power (*dynamis*) of Being of all things: without the Being of The One, nothing else could exist. Being itself is caused by the Being of The One. In this sense, The One is potentially all things, and thus is not a sheer void at all. This may account for Plotinus' unusual assertion in VI. 8 that The One has a content: "What then is there is of his content that is not Himself, what that is not his Act, what not his work?"<sup>18</sup> The word "content" does not occur in the Greek, but the repetition of *ti* ("what") suggests the same thing: The One can be characterized by various predicates, by *particular* kinds of notions, such as *energeia* or *ergon*.

If The One is understood by Plotinus as Being, it would not be surprising if it is also said to be like the Intellectual-Principle. Several passages in VI. 8 reflect this tendency to understand The One in the image of *Nous*:

As self-dwelling Act and in some sense Intellectual-Principle, the most to be loved, He has given Himself existence.<sup>19</sup>

What is present in Intellectual-Principle is present, though in a far transcendent mode, in the One . . . but Intellectual-Principle, the diffused and image light, is not different in kind from its prior.<sup>20</sup>

The close relationship established here between *Nous* and the One allows Plotinus to suggest other ways of talking about the One as well. Thus, the One can be said to be Form in some sense:

We must admit in the case of Authentic and primary Intellectual-Principle that it is good; thus it becomes clear that every Idea is good and informed by the Good.<sup>21</sup>

The action of The Good upon the Ideas is that of forming them into good Ideas; or, to say the same thing, the Ideas participate in the Form of The Good. This, I believe, is also the point of the following passage:

Unity is due to the presence of Unity; duality to that of Duality; it is precisely as things are white by Whiteness, just by Justice, beautiful by Beauty.<sup>22</sup>

The meaning of this is that beings participate in unity in the same way that white things participate in the form of Whiteness. Thus The One is by analogy a Form.

Similarly, The One is the Supreme Subject, or Self:

It is the First, the Authentic, immune from chance, from blind effect and happening: God is cause of Himself; for Himself and of Himself He is what He is, the first self, transcendently The Self.<sup>23</sup>

Passages like this have given rise to speculation that Plotinus was under Oriental, specifically Hindu, influence. Whatever be the truth of that allegation, we have seen that it would not be unnatural for Plotinus to have arrived at this position anyway, given his ambivalence in characterizing The One as Being or Non-Being. For if the One is Being, it could be understood with equal justice as the Supreme Form or Object, or the Supreme Self or Subject.

This admission of the Selfhood of The One makes sense of some other characterizations. For example, The One as Self is said to have "knowledge" in some sense of the word: "it can have only an immediate intuition self-directed."<sup>30</sup> Indeed, its self-knowledge is real enough that Plotinus can refer to The One in VI.8 as "intellect-in-Unity" as opposed to the duality of Intellectual-Principle itself (*Nous*):

In the same way we are to take Intellectual-Principle and Being. This combined power springs from the Supreme, an outflow and as it were development from That and remaining dependent upon that Intellective nature, showing forth that, so to speak, Intellect-in-Unity which is not Intellectual-Principle since it is no duality.<sup>31</sup>

This is an extraordinary passage in the *Enneads*; at the very least it negates many other statements that The One is quite beyond intellection.

The Selfhood of The One also allows for the assertion of the Presence of Will within The One:

If, then, we are to allow Activities in the Supreme and make them depend upon will—and certainly Act cannot There be will-less—and these Activities are to be the very essence, then will and essence in the Supreme must be identical. This admitted, as He willed to be so He is.<sup>32</sup>

Plotinus devotes the entirety of VI.8 to prove that Will can be meaningfully predicated of The One, indeed that it *must* be. There could be no more solid evidence that he was willing to make positive ontological characterizations of The One.

#### IV

The third mode of discourse is that which characterizes The One in terms of both Being and Non-Being. One notion in particular that stresses the paradoxical nature of this reality is that of self-causation. That which transcends Being participates in the character of Being inasmuch as it possesses the capacity to cause. This capacity to cause is most obviously relevant in explaining why there is Being or *Nous* at all: for The One is said to cause Being. But if Being needs to be explained, and if The One has certain features within it that are also clearly ontological, then why does not The One need to be explained itself? Strictly speaking, The One cannot be explained in terms of another more ultimate reality—since Plotinus does not admit such. But another kind of explanation did suggest itself to him: that of self-causation. In self-causation, two elements must be distinguished: that which causes and that which is caused. A dilemma arises about this theory,

which Plotinus deals with explicitly in VI.8.20. The dilemma can be stated as follows: either that which causes exists or it does not, either it is Being or it is Non-Being. If it is Being, then it does not cause its own existence, since its existence is already presupposed. If it is Non-Being, it could not confer being on itself, since there would be no "it" to confer anything. Plotinus formulates the problem this way:

The difficulty will be raised that God would seem to have existed before thus coming into existence; if He makes Himself, then in regard to the self which He makes, He is not yet in being and as maker He exists before this Himself thus made.<sup>33</sup>

Plotinus' solution is not entirely clear. At first he *seems* to take the position that actually in The One there is only that which causes, not that which is caused. Thus The One is sheer Activity, and

there is no question of "existing before coming into existence"; then He acted He was not in some state that could be described as "before existing." He was already existent entirely.<sup>34</sup>

If this is the case, though, why speak of self-causation at all? Would it not be more appropriate to simply maintain that The One is, and that self-causation is meaningless in explaining the One, since The One cannot be explained? But this alternative would make The One a matter of chance or "happening-to-be"—a characterization that Plotinus rules out over and over again.

As a matter of fact, the above solution—of eliminating that which is caused in The One—is not Plotinus' final word. For he continues to speak of that which is caused by The One:

Now assuredly an Activity not subjected to Essence is utterly free; God's self-hood, then, is of his own Act. If his being has to be ensured by something else, He is no longer the self-existent First: if it be true to say that He is his own container, then He inducts Himself, since from the beginning He caused the being of all that by nature He contains.<sup>35</sup>

Plotinus' *ultimate* solution, then, is not to deny the presence of that which is caused, but to insist on the strict identity of Cause and Caused: "his self-making is to be understood as simultaneous with Himself; the being is one and the same with the making."<sup>36</sup> Now if they *are* strictly identified, then one cannot speak of self-causation, since self-causation presupposes just such a distinction. The real solution, which Plotinus awkwardly sidesteps, is to admit the impossibility of the notion of self-causation. The attempt to combine Being and Non-Being into the unified concept of self-causation produces as a consequence an insoluble dilemma. Yet while self-causation is entirely self-contradictory and paradoxical, Plotinus does not feel obliged in the least to avoid such a conclusion.

The third mode of discourse, then, postulates that that which transcends Being is also the cause of its own Being. The notion of self-causation is the self-contradictory heart of the paradoxical unification of the Being and Non-Being of The One itself. But this whole problem arises once again, *mutatis mutandum*, in

describing the causal relation that exists between The One and *Nous* or Being, the Second Hypostasis. The question of whether The One can cause itself is analogous, if not identical, with whether it can cause Being in its actuality, that is, specifically *Nous*. There are numerous passages that insist that The One is the cause of all beings, of which the following is typical:

... philosophy must guard against attaching to the Supreme what is later and lower: moving above all that order, it is the cause and source of all these, and is none of them.

For, once more, the nature of the Good is not such as to make it all things or a thing among all.<sup>37</sup>

Plotinus insists that we must not predicate of The One that which is properly predicated only of what is lower than The One. Yet he does just that when he adds that The One is the *cause* of all beings. For The Good is said to contain nothing in itself, and yet to be the cause of all; but to be the cause of all is certainly to be something as against nothing at all.

If The One is said to be the source or cause of Being, it is equally the source or cause of freedom,<sup>38</sup> and more especially of form:

Life, then, as it looked towards That was undetermined; having looked it had determination though That had none. Life looks to unity and is determined by it, taking bound, limit, form. But this form is in the shaped, the shaper had none.<sup>39</sup>

Although Being derives its Form from The One, The One is quite formless: this leads to the paradox, occasionally expressed by Plotinus, that that Ultimate is a Formless Form.<sup>40</sup>

Another form of paradox is the admission that The One is both all things and none of them:

It can be none of existing things; yet it is all: none, in that beings are later; all, as the wellspring from which they flow.<sup>41</sup>

Notice the way here in which The One is said to be all things—not in a strict pantheistic sense, but rather as the cause of all things. That latter phrase preserves the transcendence of The One under the cloak of the ontological predicate “cause.” In any case, the point is clear: The One “partakes” of Being (in the sense of being the cause) as well as Non-Being (beyond Being).

There is another passage which, in a more literary and less technical way, suggests the paradoxical nature of The One:

It is certainly thus that the Intellectual-Principle, hiding itself from all the outer, withdrawing to the inmost, seeing nothing, must have its vision—not of some other light in some other thing but of the light within itself, unmingled, pure, suddenly gleaming before it; so that we are left wondering whence it came, from within or without; and when it has gone, we say, “It was here. Yet no; it was beyond!”<sup>42</sup>

The above passage may tell more than Plotinus perhaps intended. The Good appears to Intellect, but when it does the Intellect is not sure whether it was

here (in Being) or beyond (Non-Being). Perhaps this statement unconsciously and unintentionally records not the inadequacy of Intellect, but the self-contradictory nature of The One.

## V

In the last analysis, what can be said about the validity of Plotinus' theory of The One? Plotinus employed two separate and distinct kinds of metaphysical languages to speak about the One, and unified these by means of a third kind of language that was originally designed as paradoxical. It should now be obvious that that term is not accurate; for a paradox is only a seeming contradiction, whereas it is most clear that the third mode of discourse is intrinsically self-contradictory. This point emerges clearly in Plotinus' attempt to explain the origin of Being through the notion of a Beyond-Being that causes itself and thus all other things. Self-causation is the logical and metaphysical miracle that is needed to ground ontological and meontological discourse in a more fundamental reality: the unification of Being and NonBeing, of all things and no thing. If then, Plotinus' theory concerns not merely the notion that The One can be described both ontologically and meontologically, but also *requires* that both descriptions merge into a higher paradox, then that theory must be accounted self-contradictory and impossible.

But this is not all. For the dilemma that arises from the superimposition of the first and second modes of discourse arises, *mutatis mutandum*, in describing the relation between *Nous* and The One. Consequently, any attempt to bridge the relation between the first two Hypostases by means of causality is bound to end in the same impossible self-contradiction.

Is the tradition of positive and negative theology brought to an end with these considerations? While this final question invites a lengthy response, I would like to offer just a few suggestions here.

The third or paradoxical mode of discourse is actually an altogether different and distinct kind of discourse from the first two. While it employs the first two as its “matter,” so to speak, its form is intrinsically different. The impossibility of the third mode of discourse does not imply the impossibility of the first two modes if those modes are kept distinct and not combined into some kind of more ultimate language. There may be good reasons for speaking of Non-Being, and for speaking of Being; but there are no good reasons for believing they are the same or causally related. To use Plotinian terminology, both the First and the Second Hypostases, both The One and *Nous*, may be real; but neither can have the qualities of the other, and no causal language can be used to show their unity potentially or actually.

In short, positive and negative theology may have some justification if and only if they are not subsumed into a single, unified theology. Positive and negative theology have as their respective metaphysical concerns Being and Non-Being. The boundaries between them must be respected if contradictions are not to arise.

To suggest that positive and negative theology are not concerned about the

same underlying reality is fatal to any monism, whether theistic or pantheistic, and thus to much of Western religious thought. Ironically, however, it was Plotinus and his progenitors who provided one of the few nonmonistic theologies of the West. Thus while Plotinus' final solution to the problem of the relation between positive and negative theology is unacceptable, it may be to Plotinus, and not to the Western religions, that we must look to find a satisfactory solution to this very problem.\*

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## *Vertical Causation in Plotinus*

MICHAEL F. WAGNER

The core of Plotinus' philosophy is his theory of the progression (*πρόοδος*) with its three hypostases: the One, Intellect, and Soul. The theory states, roughly, that Intellect is a progression from the One, that Soul is a progression from Intellect and that this progression is the real metaphysical foundation of our universe. Accordingly, the bulk of contemporary scholarship on Plotinus has focused upon understanding the hypostases, their progression and their relation to our universe, and various related textual and philosophical issues.

In this essay, I shall focus upon Intellect—the Plotinian successor to Plato's Forms—and its relation to our universe. This second concern will require some discussion of Soul as well. I shall present an interpretation of Intellect and its progression that challenges some assumptions commonly made by Plotinian scholars. I shall also give serious treatment to Plotinus' criticisms of Aristotelian categorial theory and Aristotelian hylomorphism and to Plotinus' use of "Being," "Same," "Different," "Motion," and "Rest" in *Ennead* VI. Finally, I shall explain the primary philosophical role which the theory of progression plays in Plotinus' philosophy: What philosophical work does the theory of progression do for Plotinus?

As with any systematic interpretation of a philosopher, my interpretation of Plotinus may require some adjustments and qualifications as it is brought to bear on more and more actual texts. Moreover, I shall not commit myself on issues of Plotinus' consistency throughout the entire *Enneads* on all points of his philosophy. I shall, however, tie my interpretation to significant texts and I am convinced of the spirit, if not all the details, of my interpretation.

One assumption commonly made by Plotinian scholars is that Plotinus embraces a real *physical* world. John Rist, for example, seems to attribute a real physical universe to Plotinus throughout *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, with the possible exception of his chapter "The Sensible Object." A. H. Armstrong, similarly, discusses Plotinus' views about the *physical* universe throughout chapter 14 of *The Cambridge History*, although Armstrong also makes the puzzling and apparently inconsistent claim that "Plotinus is so concerned to stress the unreality of matter that he makes it very clear that anything observable in the *material universe* . . . is form, not matter" (p. 231; my emphasis).<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Plotinian scholars do not make this assumption and I have misconstrued their talk about the physical or material universe, but they are certainly confusing on the matter. I shall argue, in contrast, that Plotinus definitely does not embrace a real physical universe.

Accounts of Intellect and its progression commonly take what might be called Plotinus' noumenatic vocabulary as basic in the *Enneads*.<sup>3</sup> Contemplation, intellection, intelligibles, and the like are commonly taken as Plotinus' most perspicuous notions for explicating the nature of his Forms and of Intellect's progression. Thus, Armstrong maintains that for Plotinus

our thought about intellect, if it [is] to have any content at all, must be a thought of something thinking about something, and thus involve a certain duality [of subject and object] (p. 237).

And Armstrong concludes that the Plotinian Forms, which compose Intellect, are to be construed as "a community of living minds" (p. 245).

I am less concerned with the Mentalistic twist which Armstrong gives to Intellect than I am with the exclusive emphasis upon Plotinus' noumenatics. In particular, I shall argue that Plotinus' noumenatics is not basic; it does not provide the philosophically most perspicuous way of construing Intellect and its progression. I shall not explicitly challenge any of the claims made within noumenatic interpretations of Plotinus. Rather, I shall examine the place of Plotinus' noumenatics in his complete philosophy and challenge the unquestioned importance placed upon it by Plotinian scholars. Without a doubt, Plotinus' noumenatics—which I shall also call his "vulgar" account, for reasons to be explained—dominates the *Enneads*. But this show of numbers does not prove that it is most basic to the philosophical theory presented in the *Enneads*. It might only show, for example, that Plotinus thought that it would be most perspicuous for (or perhaps acceptable to) the audiences at hand.

## I

The only text I shall use in this section is *Ennead* VI.6, Plotinus' treatise "On Numbers." *Ennead* VI contains, on Porphyry's ordering of Plotinus' treatises, the most basic and philosophically precise presentations of Plotinus' philosophy. In *Ennead* VI, moreover, treatise 6 serves as a bridge between, on the one hand, Plotinus' discussions of categorial frameworks for doing metaphysics (treatises 1–3) and of the relationship between Intellect and the world we perceive (treatises 4 and 5) and, on the other hand, Plotinus' grand concluding treatises on the intelligible structure of Intellect and on the nature of the One and its relation to Intellect (treatises 7–9). I maintain that the contents of Plotinus' treatise on numbers more than justifies the place Porphyry accords it in *Ennead* VI.

Plotinus recognizes that, for most of us, reality is (or seems to be) composed of the things we perceive and which we ordinarily use our language to mention, namely, men, trees, colored things, eyes, and so on. A philosophical theory need not canonize these ordinary realities, but it must provide a basis for our talk and perceptions of them. Accordingly, the theory of progression need not be couched, when presented in its strictest and most proper form, in language obviously based upon our ordinary talk of men, trees, and so on, but it must admit of *some* characterization that grounds that talk—a characterization that renders our ordinary realities "well-founded" if not real *tout court*. Throughout most of the *Enneads*, Plotinus does couch his theory in this latter form. *Ennead* VI.6 is unique and indispensable in its stress upon the derivative status of this characterization.<sup>4</sup>

In *Ennead* VI.6, Plotinus argues that an arithmetical characterization of the progression is basic. Plotinus argues that "the One and Number are primary" (VI.6.10.50), so that beings "come to be in accordance with Number" (VI.6.15.24). Accordingly, we may talk about there being a Being (or Beings) for men—call it (or them) *man*—when basing our metaphysical account on the words of ordinary speech, but the Being(s) we are thereby referring to is really arithmetical in character: *man* is, at bottom, a principle or group of principles for ordering things in a certain way.

Thus, Number, the First and the True, is the principle [ἀρχή] and underlying source of reality (VI.6.15.34).

Plotinus takes the initial progression from the One to be a breaking up of the One into a succession of numbers. As an initial progression from the One, the numbers are unities (see VI.6.10). Plotinus also calls these numbers "the First Numbers" (VI.6.15.34). And the first or pure numbers are to be distinguished from numbers as actually functioning to order or "number" things. The pure number Two, for example, is to be distinguished from "two" functioning to order dyads of trees, apples, parts of houses, and so on. The pure numbers that progress from the One function as arithmetical ordering principles by means of Soul. When Soul orders things in accordance with the order of pure numbers, the numbers are

no longer just the resources of pure arithmetic but become principles of ordering. Plotinus calls the numbers functioning as principles of ordering "schemata," or "those which measure things in accordance with the Firsts" (VI.6.15.39).

In *Ennead* VI.6.6, Plotinus argues that the real nature of Being (or the Forms) is number functioning as schemata. Now Plotinus' claim that pure numbers progress from the One implies that they come to be in a successive and orderly manner. Plotinus does not himself spell out the theory of numbers or of arithmetical foundations which underlies his moves, and I shall not discuss Greek and Hellenistic arithmetic (and geometry) here. The point for now is that Soul's use of numbers as schemata is constrained by the ordered successiveness of the pure numbers as they progress from the One. Soul uses pure numbers so that the schemata are related to one another in a hierarchy, with more complex schemata coming from simpler schemata. In view of the general conflation in Greek and Hellenistic thought of geometry and arithmetic, moreover, the hierarchical relations of the schemata may be understood in terms of the derivation of geometrical theorems from one another and, ultimately, from the axioms and primitives of geometry.

Plotinus maintains that the extensional magnitudes of geometry result from applications of arithmetical principles of ordering to the phantasms of perception (VI.6.3.38). As we shall see, space (or extension) is a necessary feature of our using sensations to perceive things and does not exist apart from that use. Geometrical principles are thus derivative from arithmetical principles in that they are just arithmetical principles construed in terms that apply to the extended things of perception. Construed geometrically, however, the hierarchical relationship between schemata may be understood in terms of, say, the derivation of principles concerning triangles from the more basic principles concerning plane figures.

In sum, we may articulate the principles of ordering used by Soul by doing geometry, construing them as principles of geometrical objects. Ultimately, however, "enclosed" figures are measured by "discrete" figures (numbers) (VI.6.14.40). Plotinus maintains that things of magnitude do not come from real principles except insofar as their parts form a unity that is arithmetically measurable (VI.6.1.16), the extendedness of those parts again being a feature of the phantasms of sense. Two points will complete my initial sketch of Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect and its progression.

First, I have emphasized that the initial or "pure" unities function as schemata in a stepwise, orderly fashion, beginning with simpler principles from which more complex principles follow (also see VI.6.11). As the schemata become more and more complex, we get schemata which are complex enough to ground all of the structural distinctions we make concerning our ordinary realities. To show how the progression of schemata does this, we may take more complex schemata to be composed of arithmetical parts (subprinciples of ordering or subschemata) which are each further complications of the arithmetical parts of simpler schemata. In this way, we can break schemata down into the subschemata that make them up. The highly complex ordering principle(s) which is the arithmetical-cum-

geometrical foundation for some man, for example, is composed of subprinciples for what we would call the man's organs (his eyes, arms, and so on).

We now have the following picture of the progression from the One. First, the One breaks up into a succession of unities, or pure numbers, which provide the foundation for Soul's orderings of things (also see VI.6.10.1-4). This provides an arithmetical-cum-geometrical foundation for structurally explaining the things we perceive and describe as men, trees, and so on. In using the numbers so that more complex schemata follow from simpler schemata, moreover, Soul introduces the means for talking about subschemata. In the words of our language, some of these subschemata are principles for ordering certain enclosed figures of sense into what we call "arms." Others are principles for ordering certain other things we perceive—or, from the point of view of each of ourselves, our visual sensations themselves—into what we call "eyes." And so on. My mention of "the words of our language" leads into the second point.

Earlier I noted that, while Plotinus' progression is at bottom arithmetical (-cum-geometrical) in character, Plotinus feels that it also provides a ground for our ordinary conceptions or talk of men and trees. This means that every distinction we perceive and have words to describe and conceptualize has a real counterpart distinction in the schemata of Intellect. We may talk about the principles and subprinciples used by Soul in words based upon our ordinary language and need not always be doing arithmetical sciences. In the last paragraph, for example, we talked about subschemata as being ordering principles for the things we call "arms," "eyes," and so forth. We might call these subschemata "the real arms," "the real eyes," and so on—or, more generally, "the real organs." And we might call the portion of hierarchy of principles-cum-subprinciples that we might appeal to in "measuring" an ordinary reality-man, "the real man." Plotinus maintains that the metaphysical principles of our ordinary realities—which he also calls "the bodylike things" (VI.6.17.25)—are schemata, but we can refer to them in terms of "what it is to be a certain living thing" or as "the First living things" (VI.6.17.34-36); for example, as what it is to be a man or as the First man. *Ennead* VI.7, the treatise following "On Numbers," seems designed to present Intellect in this derivative way, as justified by *Ennead* VI.6.

The distinctions generated in Intellect's progression do not ground only the structural distinctions we commonly make in our ordinary realities. There are enough distinctions generated there to ground other distinctions as well. Plotinus at one point represents the initial progression from the One as providing the foundation for all the characterizing sorts of things we say about men, trees, etc., as well—that is, for our characterizing things as having qualities, as having quantities, and so forth (VI.2.21). Viewed in this way, the initial progression from the One might be thought of as a successive production of the basic predicates of a descriptively adequate language—perhaps, for example, the predicate *is six feet tall* or the predicate *is red*. The Soul's use of numbers that function as schemata becomes a use of predicates that cohere into batches of characterizings. When the Soul uses those batches to inform our perceptions, they are thereby applied to a

subject. As a result, we apprehend a sortal thing by means of characterizing it (e.g., a man that is six feet tall and red). Accordingly, we might also call the batch (or batches) of predicates which ground our perceptions of men "humanity" or, in my convention, *man*.

My second point brings us to the topic of Plotinus' noumenatics. For, when the forms are construed in such an ordinary language-based way, the appeal to relations between arithmetical-cum-geometrical principles and their foundations in pure numbers and to the relations between a more primitive principle and a more derived principle in characterizing the progression of Intellect and Soul will not do. Other terms are needed. To characterize the progression of Beings (*man*, etc.), Plotinus uses the language of "intellection," "intelligibles," and, most importantly, "contemplation" (θεωρία). I have insisted in this section that this is a less perspicuous way of characterizing the progression for Plotinus; but it is also the more common way in the *Enneads*, as most of the *Enneads* seems addressed to various less sophisticated audiences which came to learn from Plotinus—the "vulgar," as it were.

In Section II, I shall supply more detail to the proper (arithmetical-cum-geometrical) way of viewing the progression. I shall also deliver on my introductory remarks concerning physical things. In Section III, I shall return to the terms of the "vulgar." Both sections, moreover, will center around the idea that Plotinus' theory of progression is primarily intended as providing a proper framework for understanding our universe—in a phrase, for real explanation of Plotinian science.

## II

Plotinus maintains that the theory of progression is a theory about the real causes of our universe. In order to maintain this, Plotinus' conception of causation must be quite different from that of many modern and contemporary philosophers and, as well, from that of Aristotelians. I shall begin my discussion of some details of Plotinus' theory of progression with a discussion of causation, especially contrasting Plotinus' views with those of Aristotelians.

The notion of causation commonly has several associations not found in Plotinus, and one association which is the basis for Plotinus' denial of the others. One association is change. In preparation for my discussion of Aristotelian hylomorphism, we may distinguish two sorts of change: substantial change and change in the state of some substance. Thus, when a stone is thrown through the air and breaks a window, the change in place (motion) of the stone is a cause and the change in the window is an effect. Substantial change occurs when a substance comes into existence or ceases to exist, and may be reduced to changes in state if a person maintains that the passing away or coming to be of a substance is really a change in the state of some perduring matter. All causes and effects thus become changes in the state of some substance or matter. Substances that cause changes in state may be called "agents" and substances (or matter) that suffer effects may be

called "patients." This general discussion of causation and change leads to some further associations.

First, states of substances are datable, and so changes take time or occur in time. More generally, causes and effects occur in time and agents and patients exist in time. As a result, atemporal items are commonly excluded from the causal order and references to time may be packed into analyses of causation—for example, as in the principle that a cause must precede or occur simultaneously with its effect.

Second, substances and pieces of matter are particulars. Hence, agents and patients are commonly taken to be particulars; causes and effects are particular states or changes in state. A person can (and we often do) make general causal claims (e.g., that smoking causes cancer), but actual causal connections occur only between particulars (e.g. between individual histories of smoking and individual cases of cancer). As a result, items that are not particulars (e.g., species or principles of geometry) are commonly taken to be outside of the causal order and therefore to be "abstract" rather than "concrete."

Third, regardless of a person's position on the existence of nonphysical particulars, physical bodies certainly seem to be clear instances of particulars which may be agents or patients, as in my example of the stone and the window. (But, again, even the Mentalist's nonphysical agents or nonphysical datable states are particulars—e.g., selves and volitions.) The physical universe is thus commonly taken to be a prime example of a causal order.

I shall call a theory which associates causation with change, temporality, particularity, or physicality a *theory of horizontal causation*. The problems with theories of horizontal causation are well known. One problem such theories have to face is how a relation between particular (hence, contingent) things or "states" (however loosely construed) could be a necessary relation. Another related problem is how, even assuming that horizontal causes may be necessary, we could ever be certain that we have a necessary connection in doing science (or anything else, for that matter). In view of such problems, causation (either as such or as knowable by us) often becomes nothing more than, for example, a conjunction of particulars or of particular states in a temporal sequence. Causal laws become inductive generalizations or expressions of probabilities, subjective expectations, or relations between the concepts by means of which particulars are apprehended.

Plotinus holds what I call a *theory of vertical causation*. On Plotinus' theory, the real causal order is atemporal (eternal) and unchanging; bodies are never causal agents and, indeed, bodies as founded on the real causal order are not particulars or physical at all. Only principles or Forms are real (vertical) agents and are, in this sense, concrete. Real "bodylike things"—men, trees, etc., as given a place in the real causal order—are "copies" of principles (or schemata). Using some Leibnizian jargon, real bodies are noumenal, where the contrast with noumenal bodies are not *physical* bodies but "things" apprehended by means of sensations—that is, *phenomenal* bodies.<sup>5</sup> A noumenal body is, in short, a schema as being the real foundation for (or, from here on, being the explanatory cause of)



the perceptual objects we ordinarily take to be the real causes of our sensations. In Section I, I called noumenal bodies and their parts "the real organs," "the real man," or "the real tree." Our ordinary realities are really only phenomenal bodies for Plotinus.

A common association with causation that Plotinus does accept is that appeals to causes must yield explanations. But Plotinus sharply distinguishes perceptions of a world of phenomenal bodies from real explanation. Horizontal causes and effects are features of the world we discern (*αἰνέειν*) by means of the materials of sense.<sup>6</sup> But the discerning of phenomenal bodies is an activity which, as such, *explains* nothing about the things discerned. For an analogy to this discerning or perceptual making, a sculptor's sculpting of a statue provides a basis for explaining the statue only insofar as his motions and the resulting statue fall under principles of craftsmanship and they are considered as following in the order of principles, that is, being noumenal.

Intellect is the agent which, on Plotinus' theory, causes the noumenal universe to exist (and in a way the phenomenal universe as well). Soul is the activity by means of which the vertical progression and the end product of a universe is brought about. Body, construed as making a positive contribution to Soul's activity (namely, rendering its products phenomenal in the case of Soul's perceptual activities), is characterized by Plotinus as a "dumb" laborer (IV.3.26.7). And noumenal body, or body truly considered as following from principles of ordering, is not even a "dumb" laborer—it does not act at all—but is introduced in the progression as a result of introducing the notion of *Soul's* acting. Soul, on the other hand, is essentially active in that it is always the imparting of actuality to (or the making of) body, or "the other" (I.1.2.2–8). And Soul gets its principles of making from Intellect, so that Plotinus also characterizes Soul as the means by which (*διὰ μέσου*) Intellect acts (IV.3.11.18).

The idea that Soul is a progression from Intellect is implicit in the claim that Soul is that by means of which Intellect acts. Intellect acts only and always by means of Soul so that the function of Intellect is to render the universe ("the others") intelligible. Conversely, Soul is essentially active only in virtue of its being the acting of Intellect so that the universe which comes to be in Soul's activity is wholly intelligible. Intellect and Soul thus function together in Plotinus' system so that the universe is explainable and is neither physical nor wholly phenomenal.

In order fully to articulate Plotinus' framework for explanation, the progression, we must distinguish four kinds of soul: the hypostasis Soul, the World Soul, species souls, and individual souls. If these four kinds of soul are not distinguished for Plotinus, much of the *Enneads* become unintelligible. The mention of Soul in the context of discussing phenomenal bodies addresses individual souls. My use of "Soul" in Section I addresses the World Soul. And my claim that men, etc., are ultimately to be traced into the noumenal order only as "copies" of the Forms or schemata and not as items which add a positive nature of their own to the causal order (e.g., a physical nature) addresses Soul. What was said in Section I about organs, finally, has a bearing on species souls.

Intellect simply produces a universe by means of Soul (IV.3.11.18). But within this most basic role of being Intellect's acting, soul is said to be a one from which the "soul of the all" and all the "other souls" come (IV.3.4.14–16). The soul of the all is the World Soul. By means of the World Soul, the universe is led into a unison (*συνθονία*) in accordance with reason (or ratio) (IV.3.12.15). This means that, on the one hand, the basic positive notion of the way Intellect acts is by arithmetically ordering things and that, on the other hand, the ordering activity of Intellect is most clearly seen in the regular and "symphonic" motions of the phenomenal heavens.

The "other souls" are individual souls, the means by which Intellect acts by means of the schematic copies of the World Soul so that we may ascribe activities to noumenal bodies themselves. The only sort of case here that Plotinus is interested in is conceptual activities of noumenal men—that is, our discernings of a phenomenal world and our reasoning. Whether the motions we ascribe to phenomenal animals and plants are to be seen as due to individual souls in the noumenal world or whether these are somehow due just to the World Soul alone is unclear in the *Enneads*.

Finally, in addition to the World Soul and individual souls, there are also souls that are "fastened in a succession to each of the Intellects [Forms], being the rationales and unfoldings of them" (IV.3.5.9–10). These are species souls and they are based upon the idea introduced in Section I that more complex schemata follow from simpler schemata in such away that their increasing complexity comes from complications of the arithmetical components of simpler schemata. When this idea is articulated in terms of the systematic way in which the World Soul schematizes noumenal bodies, we have the idea of species souls—but much more on this later.

The fourfold distinction between kinds of soul may be directly expressed in terms of the distinction between noumenal and phenomenal bodies—the products of soul's activities. Three ways in which Plotinus talks about bodies are especially relevant. First, qua produced by Intellect: bodies are simply "copies of the Beings" (III.6.11.3). As seen in Section I, however, the most proper way of talking about the real nature of Being is arithmetically (and/or geometrically). Qua being produced according to principles of order when produced by means of Soul, secondly: bodies are "schematized things" (*σχημάτισμα*) (IV.4.33.34). As we shall see, Plotinus takes the initial products of schematization that all more-complex schematizations order to be air, earth, fire, and water (V.9.3.15–18). Third, qua being objects discerned by means of sensations: bodies are "perceptual objects" only—in my words, phenomenal bodies.

A crucial step in Plotinus' argument is the claim that in using sensations to discern a phenomenal world, we are not thereby discerning the real nature of bodies. Plotinus claims that his own conception of bodies is based upon the absence of reality (*ὑποστάσεως*) in phenomenal bodies as such (III.6.12.10).<sup>7</sup> We ordinarily suppose that bodies are colored, emit sounds, and so forth. But in reality, (noumenal) bodies "have nothing of the sorts usually supposed of them" (III.6.12.24). Plotinus does not even ascribe sensory shape (*μορφή*) to real bodies.

Color is likewise said to be an appearance ( $\theta\alpha\lambda\upsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ ) of what is not really colored (III.6.12.31).

At least part of Plotinus' reason for claiming that phenomenal bodies are "unreal" is that they are not causes or causal agents; they are always just products of individual souls' uses of sensations in perceiving. They are thus, in my words, not concrete. The men, trees, and so forth, that we perceive do not really cause even our sensations of them. The origins of our sensations or impressions ( $\tau\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omicron\tau$ ) may be initially accounted for in terms of their having external, bodily causes. We might say that color sensations, for example, result from light activity in a medium initiated by an external luminous body (IV.5.7). Or we might say that sound sensations result from air vibrations, again initiated by some external body (IV.5.5). And analogous accounts can, presumably, be given for the other senses (except insofar as we would say that a medium is not required). In general, however, Plotinus says very little about the "horizontal" mechanics of sensations and perceptions.

Two important points need to be made here. First, Plotinus does clearly hold that a noumenal (ultimately, arithmetical-cum-geometrical) backing can be given to those horizontal accounts of causation that take bodies to be structural in nature. Plotinus seems quite satisfied with standard structural (perhaps Stoic) accounts of the horizontal mechanics of sensations and perceptions. Second, the reason why Plotinus himself shows a lack of concern for actually giving any detailed horizontal accounts is the theory of vertical causation and his overriding concern to emphasize the philosophical point of that theory. On the theory of vertical causation, real explanations are to be given in terms of Intellect's acting by means of soul, and any horizontal account must be cashed out in terms of its noumenal backing if it is to be shown to be of any real explanatory value. Plotinus hints at doing just this in *Ennead* IV.5.7, replacing the horizontal account in which light proceeds from a luminous body with an account in which something simply *is* (or has its being) in accordance with the form of luminous body (IV.5.7.36). Let us now look more closely at Plotinus' conception of bodies in order to clarify matters.

Plotinus' theory of vertical causation carries with it a doctrine on the real nature of bodies, as I have already hinted. In particular, real bodies are noumenal in nature; real bodies are men and the like considered solely as being the orderings prescribed by schemata, and they are not the phenomenal bodies we commonly identify with them. As a result, Plotinus' reply to a question like, "But what is being *ordered* by schemata?" must not introduce a material base or receptacle but must be couched in terms that can be unpacked in terms of the noumenal order alone. Accordingly, Plotinus holds what I call a noumenal hylomorphism, according to which noumenal bodies are complexes of matter and form but where "matter" and "form" is to be unpacked in terms of the stepwise way in which the World Soul acts.

Plotinus' noumenal universe may be thought of as having the most basic or simple orderings—call them air, earth, fire, and water—which the World Soul renders more and more complex as it mimics or copies the hierarchy of schemata.

Air, earth, fire, and water become "matter" for complex things by being associated with the four "first" or simplest schemata from which the World Soul works in its progressive activity. And if one asks Plotinus, "But what receives the first, most basic orderings?," his answer would have to be that nothing does; we must start somewhere, so let us start with something intelligible in nature rather than with any of the "bastard notions" (to adapt Plato's well-known phrase) of previous metaphysicians.

Plotinus takes Aristotle to be a prime example of a metaphysician who imports such "bastard notions" and who takes particulars to be real causal agents. An integral part of the Aristotelian conception of causation is the doctrine of hylomorphism, according to which particulars are informed matter. Plotinus rejects Aristotelian hylomorphism as a doctrine of the nature of real bodies. Plotinus' schematized things are indeed complex, but not in the Aristotelian manner. Moreover, the four elements which serve as "matter" for schematization are themselves not complex at all, just being the first and most basic acts of the World Soul. Being the firsts that all subsequent schematizations presuppose, the elements are called "simples" by Plotinus. Plotinus argues that elemental fire, for example, does not come to be by a substrate's receiving some sort of shape or by something's being set on fire (III.6.12.37). Plotinus rejects the notion of a substrate that receives shape (III.6.12.11), insisting that elemental fire is just a feature of the vertical order itself.

Plotinus' general explication of hylomorphism in *Ennead* V juxtaposes his own noumenal hylomorphism for complex bodies with an Aristotelian account of the elements or "simples."

We see neither the things which are said to be wholly complex nor the simples as a one. . . . Thus, on the one hand, those naturally more complex things—the ones with substructures and which we call "compounded together"—divide first according to the Form which constrains the whole compound: a man, for example, first divides into a soul and a body, the body dividing in turn into the four elements. But, on the other hand, there are also those "compounds" [the simples] which result from matter having been shaped; for the matter of the elements is by itself shapeless. And, you will ask, from whence does the form come into matter? . . . But here too, the account [hylomorphism] has it, the substrate receives shape (V.9.3.8ff).

Plotinus shifts in this passage using "soul" and "body" when discussing complex things to using "shape" and "substrate" when discussing the elements. The reason for this shift in vocabulary is that hylomorphism is not wholly misguided in the case of complex bodies. Complex bodies are indeed complex, albeit not complex through being Aristotelian-informed matter. But no such concession is to be made for a hylomorphic construal of the elements. Phenomenal fire (the fire we see)—for example, the fire I discern in the fireplace—may be construed as complex, being a perceived subject which is hot or colored; but real elemental fire is not complex at all (IV.4.13.19–25).

As Plotinus sees it, the doctrine that real bodies are informed matter (or shaped substrate) misuses the fact that phenomenal bodies are always taken by us

to be compounds (IV.4.13.19–25). Aristotelian hylomorphism takes our ordinary, perceptually based beliefs as serious metaphysical accounts of the real universe. We ordinarily take phenomenal bodies (“the things we see”) as compounds (e.g., round balls, red barns) and Aristotelian hylomorphism turns this belief into a metaphysical doctrine about the real nature of bodies. Being a general metaphysical doctrine, moreover, the resulting hylomorphism is then applied even to the elements.

Plotinus maintains, in contrast, that the only sort of distinction that can be drawn in real bodies must be based upon something within the vertical order of the schemata. The only distinction there which would seem to do the job is the distinction between more complex schemata and simpler schemata; or, what comes to the same thing, the coming-to-be of a more complex schema from a simpler one in such a way that it is composed of subschemata or noumenal parts. In the case of the simplest schemata—those whose pure arithmetical foundations lie in the first numbers in the progression from the One—no such distinction can be drawn. The first schemata have no subschemata because there are no still simpler schemata for them to come from; they are therefore “simples,” and may be taken as the real foundations for the elements of a physics.

After the simples, however, the activities of the World Soul may be taken as complications on the initial schemata (the elements). And at each stage in the World Soul’s schematizing after the elemental stage, we can distinguish between the complications of the four elements (call it “body”) and the fact that the resulting complex ordering is a structural unity in its own right, in virtue of its schema—the schema used by the World Soul owing its unity in turn to its being just a complication of a simpler schema, and so on up to the simplest schemata. Plotinus calls the structural unity of a complex ordering “the form constraining the whole” or just “soul,” where the sort of soul being mentioned here is what I have called species soul. A species soul is a schema qua unifying an ordering activity of the World Soul. Plotinus also calls species souls “capacities” (δυναμεις) and their connection with schemata is as follows:

Schemata have capacities, for the one is together with the other and vice versa. It is by means of capacities and schemata, then, that each [noumenal] thing is schematized and comes to be. . . . Thus, schemata are essentially such that they have capacities (IV.4.35.46–49).

Earlier I noted that a more complex schema may be thought of either (1) as a whole which is just more complex than a simpler schema, or (2) as a whole whose greater complexity may be broken down into subschemata. Accordingly, the noumenal (ultimately, arithmetical) items or “elements” that come to be in an ordering activity of the World Soul may be thought of either (1) as being just items in the ordering as a whole, or (2) as items in suborderings which, in turn, are ordered into the “measurable” whole. Taken in this latter way, Plotinus calls the capacities (species souls) that order noumenal items first and foremost into suborderings and only derivatively into the whole “capacities to undergo”

(παθητικοί). Taken in the former and more direct way, Plotinus calls the capacities just “capacities”; he does not introduce a special term for them. I shall call them “capacities proper.”

Expressed from the “vulgar” or phenomenal-body side, capacities to undergo are those capacities whose actualizations—the items they order—must occur in some one organ of the body. The capacity for vision, for example, is a capacity to undergo because whenever it is actualized, the eyes are the patients in which it is actualized (III.6.2.53).<sup>8</sup> In the noumenal body, actualizations of the capacity for vision are those noumenal items which are ordered into certain suborderings (the noumenal eyes), these suborderings providing the noumenal foundations for ordering visual sensations into phenomenal eyes.

Unlike actualizations of capacities to undergo (call them “undergoings”, actualizations of capacities proper (call them “activities”) are not essentially ordered into particular noumenal (and, derivatively, phenomenal) organs. Man’s perceptions and reasonings are clear Plotinian examples of activities in this sense, so that conceptual activities differ from sensory or “bodily” undergoings (at least in part) in that their structural role is prescribed by the noumenal body as a whole rather than by noumenal organs.<sup>9</sup> Speaking with the vulgar, my eyes sense colors while I (as a whole, as a person, or whatever) perceive colored things.

Put in more schematic terms, Plotinus’ idea seems to be that impressions (τύποι) are sensations to the extent that they are ordered by the subschemata of noumenal bodies, and impressions are, at the same time, used by the soul to discern things to the extent that their role in the noumenal body as a whole is such that they partially replicate the orderings that we call “other things”—for example, the noumenal body grounding the phenomenal tree I am discerning or the noumenal body grounding the phenomenal moon you and I are both discerning. In this way, certain orderings in my noumenal body play roles relative to my whole noumenal body that replicate the structural roles played by items ordered into other noumenal bodies relative to those whole noumenal bodies. As a result, we have a Plotinian “vertical” counterpart to the Aristotelian idea that sensation is the taking on of the ratio of another thing without its matter, which is subsequently used by the percipient’s soul to perceive that other thing.

We might say for Plotinus that in perception my phenomenal body *represents* another phenomenal body (or some feature of it), with the caveat that my representing is grounded in a structural replication of some other noumenal ordering and not in there being some really existing phenomenal body which, say, causes my sensations. We may go along with the horizontal theorist a bit, as Plotinus is prepared to do, and talk about a sensation’s being, say, a counterpart-redness to the redness of a phenomenal body I am perceiving. But the real, noumenal account must be kept in mind to unpack this.

I have thus far argued that Plotinus’ real causes are not particulars or physical things. In addition, I have discussed Plotinus’ rejection of Aristotelian hylomorphism, which is a principal source of the idea that causation involves change. In rejecting Aristotelian hylomorphism and maintaining that the basic model of cau-

sation is the coming-to-be of a more complex principle of ordering from a simpler one, Plotinus also rejects the idea that causation involves change. A related association which I have not explicitly addressed is temporality.

I shall close this section by emphasizing that Plotinus' progression does not occur through time and that his real (noumenal) universe does not exist in time as such, though it grounds those things (phenomenal bodies) that we discern as existing in time. Time and space are both relegated by Plotinus to the phantasms of sense, and they may be said to be "in" the noumenal order only to the extent that those phantasms are grounded in noumenal bodies (and, in turn, in schemata). I shall discuss time and space more as we proceed. I shall now return to the fourfold distinction between kinds of soul.

I have distinguished between Soul, the World Soul, species souls, and individual souls. At bottom, though, there is only one soul for Plotinus. Souls and what it is to be soul ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta\ \epsilon\iota\nu\alpha\iota$ —that is, the hypostasis Soul) are eternally one and the same, Plotinus maintains, where to be soul is to impart actuality to "the other" (I.1.2,2–8; IV.7.8.40–46). The imparting of actuality, in turn, is the same as the activity of Intellect. It is, as it were, Intellect progressing beyond itself, actually ordering "things" rather than being just principles of ordering. Strictly speaking, then, souls are identical with the activity of Intellect, and that activity is the only activity that really occurs in the universe. How, then, do the World Soul, species souls, and individual souls "come to be"?

Though Intellect's activity is the only real activity in the universe, that activity (i.e., Soul, or the production of the universe) can be analyzed by us in various partial ways in our attempt to articulate the vertical order and its relation to the ordinary realities we perceive. Since being is really principles of ordering, for example, Intellect's production may be thought of as orderings of schematized things, with the four elements of Greek and Hellenistic physics being grounded in the simplest or first stages of that schematizing. Soul is now being construed as the World Soul. Species souls come to be as by-products of the World Soul's activity, being expressions of the fact that the World Soul's activity reflects the systematic interrelationships between the schemata of Intellect and between the schemata and their arithmetically based (numerable) components. Individual souls are the most troublesome here. Roughly, they are certain whole orderings *qua* using sensory items, as discussed previously. Individual souls are also to be viewed for Plotinus as abstractions from what is really one, singular activity of Intellect.

The World Soul, species souls, and individual souls are not distinct from Soul but are notions derived by focusing upon (abstracting, in my sense of the word) certain features of Intellect's singular activity. The most difficult feature of Plotinus' views on the matters being discussed here is that Plotinus never gives us a clear account of precisely how we can move from noumena to phenomena and remain solely in the single vertical order (e.g., how phenomena can be mere abstractions from the noumenal order). Even if one maintains, as I am prepared to argue that Greek and Hellenistic philosophers do, that our sensations are not themselves objects, there still seems to be something about the phenomenal world that

renders it *phenomenal* rather than noumenal, and Plotinus does not give an account of how that something comes to be in the vertical order. Thus, while Plotinus gets rid of the receptacle, substrates, and, in general, any basis for a real physical world, it is unclear how he gets rid of a positive foundation for there being a phenomenal world as such. It is one thing to say that men, trees, and the like, are really just noumenal orderings and quite another to say that Plotinus has thereby fully accounted in some manner for phenomenal men, phenomenal trees, and the like, as such and without remainder. I shall not pursue this issue here, but assume that I can get on with my explanation of Plotinus without settling the issue.

Plotinus summarizes the theme of the previous few paragraphs by maintaining that one and the same soul is identically present "everywhere" (IV.2.1; IV.3.2,3) but it can be considered as "becoming divided in regard to [first noumenal and then phenomenal] body" (IV.3.19.15). This last does not result in a real multiplicity of souls, however, because mention of various items called "bodies" is an abstraction from the single productive activity of Intellect. Similarly, Plotinus emphasizes my atemporality theme by claiming that in order to grasp bodies as they really are, we must consider the noumenal copy of Intellect in accordance with the eternal manner in which it comes to be as an entirety (IV.3.10.12). We must think of real body as coming from Intellect "all at once" (V.8.7.17) and not serially or by a succession of acts.<sup>10</sup> Intellect's production of the universe is not just the only *kind* of real activity there is in the universe; there is only one such act—the production of the noumenal universe as an eternal whole. In short, Plotinus maintains, the *universe* is a copy of True Substance (Intellect) only when taken as a timeless whole (VI.3.3.31). No abstractable part of it is a copy, those abstractable parts themselves being in time only when apprehended by means of sensations, as particulars discerned by individual souls.

### III

Section II focused on Plotinus' conception of causation, emphasizing more what it is not than what it is and relying on the discussion of Section I for filling in the latter. In its most basic formulation, Intellect's progression is strictly analogous to the derivation of more derived theorems of arithmetic (and/or geometry) from more basic theorems, and these in turn from the basic axioms and primitive resources of arithmetic. Soul enters the theory of progression as the notion of principles of ordering actually yielding orderings. The progression stops with the soul's activity, however, and the question, "What is thereby ordered by Soul?" is a bad question in Plotinus' view. As a result, however, I have noted the difficulties which Plotinus is left with concerning sensations and the discerning (or from the vertical order's point of view, abstracting) of a *phenomenal* world.

This section will develop the account Plotinus gives of the progression in terms that more directly ground our talk of men, trees, etc.—what in my introduction I called Plotinus noumenatics. But in so doing, I shall also emphasize certain features of the proper account, for example, that each lower level in Intellect is an

arithmetical-cum-geometrical complication of a higher level which is "derived" from it rather than adding something to it. Important details will be added to the proper account as well.

Plotinus maintains that the best way for us to understand in a more ordinary or "vulgar" way how the progression of Intellect occurs is in terms of the notion of contemplation (θεωσις). Plotinus argues that "natural production" is not a matter of "pushing and levering" (III.8.2.5).<sup>11</sup> It is not a matter, for example, of arranging or rearranging material atoms or of pushing on and impressing a material substrate. In *Ennead* III.8, Plotinus argues that natural production is a matter of contemplation. By natural production, Plotinus has in mind the production of the real universe; but, as we shall see, the notion of contemplation is also used by Plotinus for the progression of Intellect itself.

I shall focus on the more basic progression, that of Intellect itself, and discuss how Plotinus' contemplation account supplements the proper account outlined in Section I. My discussion will have three parts. First, I shall discuss Plotinus' view that Aristotelian metaphysics does not provide an adequate framework for real explanation. Second, I shall discuss why an Aristotelian framework is inadequate. Third, these two discussions will provide a basis for explaining Plotinus' framework and the sort of ground Plotinus feels his framework provides for more "ordinary" Platonic explanations of men, trees, etc. in terms of contemplation.

Plotinus discusses Aristotelian categories in *Ennead* VI. 3, and he argues that they provide a means for categorizing the phenomenal world which, like Aristotelian hylomorphism, will not do for a serious metaphysical account of the real universe. Plotinus' own Aristotelian-type categorial framework for the phenomenal world begins with two basic categories: substances and things concerning substances. A substance is that which is "neither in a subject nor concerns another subject" (VI. 3.5.14–15). Socrates or a man is a substance, for example, because in discerning something as Socrates or as a man, we are discerning the subject of the perception itself rather than a subject as relative to something else. A man is not a man *of* some subject; rather, a subject of perception just *is* a man.

Plotinus then divides things concerning substances into what he calls "categories" and accidents. Plotinus "categories" are the obvious relative-to's (πρὸς τι) of Aristotle's *Categories*—for example, a slave, which is relative to a master, or a cause, which is relative to an effect. To call them relative-to's means, roughly, that a slave is not a slave unless there is some other subject that is a master. In short, there are slaves in the world if and only if there are masters which the slaves are the slaves *of* (VI.3.3.31).

Unlike "categories," an accident is not relative to some *other* subject, but it is still a relative-to. A color, for example, is always a color *of* something (in particular, *of* some substance—a man, a tree, etc.). In general, a quality, for example, "is a capacity to impute by means of itself the 'what a quality is' to substances" (VI.1.10.19). That is, qualities are such that we impute the "what they are" (e.g., white) to substances. A similar remark holds for all accidents, which include quantity, quality, and *space* and *time* as well (VI.3.3). As a result,

things concerning substances collapse into relative-to's; they always presuppose something else for their existence in the world, and so this something else is always needed in any explanation of them. Substances help explain things concerning substances but not vice versa.

The next, and most important, step Plotinus makes is to reduce substances to relative-to's as well. Substances are not relative to other substances (or subjects of perceptions) but they are still relative-to's. In particular, the substances of the phenomenal world are relative to our perceptions (or discernments) of them. The substances of the phenomenal world depend for their existence upon our perceptions rather than helping explain the phenomenal world. Phenomenal bodies are items that individual souls make by means of sensations, and their substance is a result of that making.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, Plotinus defends his reduction of substances to relative-to's by cautioning that

what has been said is not absurd since the account concerns the substance of a perceptual object . . . [and a perceptual object is always] relative to a perception (VI.3.10.12–14).

Plotinus' basic criticism of Aristotelian-type categories is that they apply to things only relative to our discernments of them. The phenomenal world is to be explained by means of what explains our perceptions, and it does not exist independent of our discerning it. In order to see why this result renders Aristotelian-type categories inadequate as a framework for real explanation, a few more explicit words about the nature of relative-to's are needed. As we shall see, it is not just being a relative-to that disqualifies a category from serious metaphysical usage; it is being a relative-to that is relative only to our conceptual activities (e.g., perceptions), which disqualifies a category in this way. Plotinus maintains that a categorial framework for real explanation must explain or constrain our own conceptual activities as well as the ordinary realities we initially wanted explained. This brings us to the second part of this section.

As Plotinus sees it, real explanation must consist in giving reasons (λόγοι); and reasons—I shall also call them "rationales" to clearly distinguish them from the activity of reasoning (διανοία)—are tied up with relative-to's in two ways: first, in their internal structure and, second, in their relations to what they are reasons *of*. The first is based on the fact that rationales are always more complex than what they are rationales *of*. "Everything comes out as compounded," Plotinus claims, "when analyzed by means of rationales and reasoning" (IV.3.9.19–20).

Using the Aristotelian doctrine that bodies are informed matter as an example, we can say that "informed matter" is a rationale of "bodies" and that the items in the rationale are each relative to the other. The sense of the term "form" and the sense of the term "matter" each depend upon the sense of the rationale informed matter, so that nothing is informed but matter and matter must always be informed. The first sense in which rationales generally are tied up with relative-to's is analogous to this Aristotelian example, that is, a rationale is always a complex whose parts are essentially relative to one another. The significance of this point

for explanatory rationales and for distinguishing them from nonexplanatory rationales can be brought out by using Plotinus' own example of the relative-to's *double* and *half*.

Double and half are relative to one another (for short, they are correlatives) because they

occur relative to one another . . . and such that the former is not prior to the latter and vice versa, but they occur simultaneously (VI.1.7.34–38).

The import of this passage is that nothing is a double or a half by itself but only relative to something else. Four, for example, is a double only relative to two, and two is a half only relative to four. Moreover, four is not a double in virtue of two's being ■ number, being less than four, or whatever, but only insofar as two is simultaneously taken as a half. In short, correlative terms perspicuously apply only together and not separately.

A further and more important point, however, is that four may also be a half (viz., when considered relative to eight when eight is simultaneously taken as a double). A similar point can be made about two's being a double relative to one taken as ■ half. Thus, this pair of correlatives, double and half, are variable in their applications to numbers and to things.

I have just noted two features of correlatives. First, correlatives are mutually dependent upon one another; they apply only together and not separately. Second, at least some correlatives are variable or "mutable." Something might be a double when considered relative to one number, for example, and a half when considered relative to another number. It is this second feature of certain correlatives that renders them inadequate for use in a rationale that really explains something. Plotinus feels that a real explanation must employ rationales which apply immutably. This brings us to the second way in which rationales are tied up with relative-to's; namely, in the relation between a rationale and what it is a rational *of*.

The second way in which rationales are tied up with relative-to's may be introduced by saying that the correlatives internal to a rationale do not apply to something(s) *in vacuo* but only from what I shall call "a point of view." Four is the double of two and two is half of four, for example, only from the point of view of their numerical ratio. More importantly, Plotinus maintains, on the basis of what was said in Section II about Aristotelian hylomorphism and what has been said in this section about Aristotelian categories, that body is informed matter (or a substance-thing concerning substance compound) only from the point of view of human percipients. Real explanatory rationales, in contrast, must apply from a point of view which humans *may* occupy but which does not depend essentially upon their doing so. This second restriction on explanatory rationales is related to the first in that one test for whether or not a rationale depends essentially upon humans occupying the point of view from which it applies is whether or not there is any variability in how we use it.

Plotinus argues in *Ennead* VI.2 that a categorial framework which makes real explanation possible is provided by "Being, Same, Different, Motion, and Rest."<sup>13</sup> I

shall call these five the *Platonic genera*. To what extent Plotinus' use of these five is the same as Plato's (e.g., in *Timeaus* or *Sophist*) will not be discussed here. Plotinus' motivation for adopting the Platonic genera, presented in *Ennead* VI.2.7,8, uses the notion of relative-to's (or correlatives). That motivation may be understood in terms of the doctrine that explanatory rationales must not be variable in their application or depend essentially upon human perceivers (or, more generally, conceivers).

In particular, Plotinus maintains: (1) The items in a Platonic rationale are always different; thus, a Platonic rationale always applies to something only as a different; and (2) the point of view from which rationales of different apply is just Sameness itself. Anyone who begins with Plotinus' principles of being (the Platonic genera) taken as primitive must, in principle at least, always arrive at the same explanation or set of rationales. In sum, Plotinus takes the Platonic genera to prescribe a methodology (generally called "dialectic") for systematically and non-arbitrarily arriving at a set of rationales and which, therefore, determines how we reason rather than our reasoning determining the rationales.

The foregoing introduction of the Platonic genera indicates that Same and Different are the most important of the five. In *Ennead* VI.2.7,8, Plotinus explicates the function of the Platonic genera as follows. Motion accounts for the basic progression of Intellect. But Rest applies simultaneously with Motion, so that the "motion" of Intellect is eternal. The nature of Intellect's motion is unpacked in terms of Same and Different. More precisely, Intellect's motion is unpacked in terms of differentiation, and differentiation is based upon Different; for "everything after a differentiation stands dual [or as a dyad], destroying the One" (VI.2.9.16). Moreover, differentiation presupposes that there is something that is differentiated—something that the resulting differentials are different *of*. Accordingly, Same enters as the point of view from which differentials *are*. Rationales which articulate Intellect are, in short, dyads of differentials which each apply in virtue of a same.

Thus far in this section, I have discussed what is inadequate about Aristotelian-type frameworks for doing metaphysics and why the Platonic genera will do the job. This last can be seen more clearly by relating my discussion of the Platonic genera to the account outlined in Section I. Recall that in its initial progression from the One, Intellect is a succession of the resources of pure arithmetic (cum-geometry). Similarly, we have just seen that the "motion" of Intellect is a successive differentiation into dyads. From the One, taken as Same rather than as the *tout court*, Different yields a dyad. From each different in that dyad, we get another dyad, and so on.<sup>14</sup> Taken as the pure progression of a first dyad from the One and then of successive dyads from the pure differentials of the first and of each subsequent dyad, Intellect is the resource for pure arithmetic. Taken as the ground for the basic resources of our language, these differentials are forms called after the predicates of our language; they are no longer "pure" but now have "conceptual content." Taken in this latter way, moreover, the progression of Intellect from the One is a genus-species hierarchy.

Plotinus summarizes the dual way in which the progression of Intellect may

be construed, and in a manner which preserves the point made in Section I that the latter ("vulgar") way is secondary to the former (arithmetical), as follows:

All intellectual objects are structured into one nature, such that Intellect is composed of all of them. This we call Being, and it is a system. If this is the case, then not only are they [i.e., the Platonic genera] genera but they are at the same time the principles holding for Being. They are genera because from them come other lesser genera and after those come species and finally the uncutables [or atoms]. And they are also principles because Being is thus from a many and the entire thing [i.e., Intellect] comes from them (VI.2.2,8–14).

In this passage, which expresses the view Plotinus proceeds to adopt later in the treatise, Plotinus argues (1) that the Platonic genera generates Intellect as a genera-species hierarchy, but (2) this hierarchical construal of Intellect is secondary to the Platonic genera's being principles—principles (*ἀρχαί*) which, according to *Ennead* VI.6, generate the successive unities-cum-schemata of the proper account. The most proper sort of rationales to be given in real explanation are schematic; they are nonarbitrary and they determine human arithmetical-cum-geometrical reasoning for Plotinus, as truths of arithmetic and/or geometry do for many other philosophers as well. Moreover, this same sort of necessity is shared by genera-species hierarchies articulated by using our language and conceptual abilities as the material for dialectic, the counterpart in the genera-species case to arithmetical deduction being contemplation, to which I shall now turn.

Plotinus is sensitive to what his metaphysics does and does not allow us to say about the real universe. Two related things that Plotinus' metaphysics does *not* warrant us in saying are: (1) that principles and real bodies differ from one another spatially or temporally, and (2) that principles differ from one another in some more "ontologically grounded" sense than just that one is expressible by a more or by a less complex rationale (or level of rationales) than another one is—whether these rationales be expressed in the words we use doing arithmetic or geometry or in the more ordinary words we use in articulating genera-species hierarchies.

Contemplation is an especially useful notion in emphasizing these two points because, as Plotinus understands it, contemplation is an activity in which one understands something by producing or exfoliating what is implicit in it—as when a geometer seeks to understand geometry by tracing the entailments of its basic axioms and primitives.<sup>15</sup> Applies to Intellect, the idea becomes that Intellect progresses by means of contemplation in that every lower level of differentials is an articulation of (rather than an addition to) what is implicit in a higher level, in view of the "primitives" and "axioms" of being—that is, the Platonic genera and how they function.

The essential feature of contemplation is that it is the articulation of something implicit in the resources used by the contemplator. Spatiality and temporality are not essential features of contemplation as they are with "pushing" and "levering"—and as temporality at least might be in the special case of a *human* contemplator. Plotinus emphasizes the atemporality of contemplation as such in saying that

producing has been revealed by us to [in reality] be contemplation. For it is the perfection of a contemplation to remain contemplation and not to be *doing* any particular thing. With respect to what it is, we might say that contemplation is a "having had produced" (III.8.3.21).

Plotinus expresses the second point above, that "ontological difference" in Intellect is solely a matter of differing complexities in the rationales (or levels of rationales) used to articulate its implicit structure, in terms of contemplation as well, claiming that a rationale is really *both* a contemplation and the object of the contemplation (III.8.4).

A rationale is an object of contemplation in virtue of its complexity and it is also a contemplation in virtue of its unity.<sup>16</sup> As in the case of species souls, the distinction between the unifying measure (or unity) of a particular level in Intellect and the simpler level from which it comes is a distinction that collapses; the distinction collapses because, throughout his account, Plotinus has in mind that everything in Intellect is already implicit in the Platonic genera. It really does not matter except for certain limited exegetical purposes where we draw the line between what is in one level of Intellect and what is in another level. All that matters here is that Intellect does provide the ground for our articulating systems of explanatory rationales that do represent Intellect as a derivational system. Plotinus expresses this basic point in terms of contemplation as follows:

The One is both in itself and relative to the many others. And the One is also Being, making itself into many by means of a kind of motion [i.e., differentiation]. But the resulting whole is still a one, just as contemplation is a one which works in various ways. Thus, the Being-One does not remain in itself but is the capacity for all things. And contemplation is the cause of its appearing many, such that there is intellection. For if only the One appeared, there would be no intellection but only the One. (VI.2.6.13–20).

In sum, when we move from the proper account of the progression to the "vulgar" account, Plotinus takes contemplation as the model for how the progression proceeds and what it "does," as contemplation is the articulating of what is implicit in being or, more anthropomorphically, becoming conscious of what is in one's own mind. As a result, there is a clear sense in which contemplation (or the resources of contemplation) controls the contemplator rather than vice versa. This last, of course, brings Plotinus' use of the notion of contemplation in line with the two demands for explanatory rationales discussed earlier.

Plotinus' noumenatics are indeed to be taken seriously—I do not deny that. Plotinus' noumenatic account is, however, derivative from his account in terms of pure differentiation—the successive generation of the resources for arithmetically based sciences. The connection between these two accounts lies in that the resources for our language or conceptual abilities admit of genus-species articulation. The structure of our conceptual abilities is like that of Intellect, and it provides the means for our endowing the pure sameness and differentials of Intellect with content. More precisely, I would argue, at another time, that Plotinus takes the conceptual content of our language to be due to its having a structure—its

items playing structurally describable roles, so that Plotinus can say that the structure of Intellect causes the conceptual content of our language rather than, strictly speaking, our language endowing Intellect with content. But the subtleties of this point need not detain us here.

## *The Ontological Basis of Plotinus' Criticism of Aristotle's Theory of Categories*

CHRISTOS EVANGELIOU

Aristotle uses or refers to the theory of categories in all his major works. The small treatise which is known to us by the conventional title *Categories*<sup>1</sup> is devoted exclusively to the exposition and elucidation of this theory. Traditionally, the treatise is included in the collection of the Aristotelian logical treatises and is considered a part of the *Organon*.<sup>2</sup> Ever since the first edition of the Aristotelian corpus prepared by Andronicus of Rhodes in the first century B.C., *Categories* has been the subject of numerous commentaries and debates among Platonists, Peripatetics, Stoics, and Neoplatonists alike.<sup>3</sup> The debates were considered philosophically important for the reasons that Dexippus has summarized and explained.<sup>4</sup> Plotinus was a later participant in those debates. Although he did not prepare a technical commentary on the *Categories*, Plotinus wrote a long treatise, an ἀντιλογία,<sup>5</sup> against Aristotle's theory of categories. In a long series of Platonists who found Aristotle's categories unacceptable, Plotinus was the last to criticize them.<sup>6</sup> Porphyry, Plotinus' most distinguished disciple, editor, commentator, and successor as head of the Neoplatonic school in Rome, was to put an end to the debates about Aristotle's categorial doctrine. In his two commentaries on the *Categories*,



Porphyry proposed an ingenious interpretation of Aristotle's categories designed to show its defensibility in theory and its usefulness.<sup>7</sup> As a result of Porphyry's work, after the third century A.D. and for many centuries to come the *Categories* was incorporated in the Neoplatonic logical tradition and Plotinus' ἀντιλογία was forgotten. Yet, for the student who is interested in the history of the categorial doctrine and its transformations, Plotinus' criticism of the Aristotelian categories is important for at least two reasons: first, because Plotinus is both the last and only critic whose arguments and critical remarks have been preserved in a complete form; and secondly, because his criticism is directed not against the logic but against the ontology that underlies Aristotle's categorial doctrine, so that it is devastating in its intentions, to say the least.

This essay does not offer by any means a detailed exposition and assessment of Plotinus' many and at times complicated arguments against each of the ten Aristotelian categories. Its limited scope is to explore critically the underlying principles of Plotinus' criticism of the Aristotelian categories. It is an attempt to establish the thesis that both Plotinus' rejection and his reduction of Aristotle's categories are based on grounds and considerations that are not logical but ontological in essence. It will show that, regarding the problem presented to Neoplatonism by Aristotle's categorial doctrine, Plotinus' position was determined by two basic factors: (1) the Neoplatonic ontological distinction between the intelligible realm of real being (κόσμος νοήτος), and the sensible realm of mere becoming (κόσμος αἰσθήτος) related to each other as archetype (ἀρχέτυπον) to its image (εἰκών); and (2) the strictly ontological interpretation of Aristotle's categories which Plotinus follows. By considering the categories as "genera of being," this interpretation juxtaposed Aristotle and Plato and had to be abandoned by Porphyry, who sought the reconciliation of the two philosophers. It will become clear, I hope, that Plotinus was neither an Aristotelian in his theory of categories nor in the sense in which his disciple, Porphyry, may be called an Aristotelian.<sup>8</sup>

## II

Plotinus' criticism of Aristotle's categories is to be found in his treatise περὶ τῶν γενῶν τοῦ ὄντος (*On the Genera of Being*). This treatise is divided into three books or parts which, according to Porphyry's thematic arrangement of the Plotinian treatises, constitute the first one-third of the sixth *Ennead* (VI.1, VI.2, VI.3). Part 1 deals with the Aristotelian tenfold (VI.1. 1–24) and the Stoic fourfold (VI.1. 25–30) theories of categories. Plotinus finds both these sets of categories unacceptable for the reason that they are irrelevant and inapplicable to the realm of real being (κόσμος νοήτος).<sup>9</sup> Part 2 is entirely devoted to an elaborate exposition of Plato's five *summa genera* which Plotinus considers to be both the only genera applicable to the realm of real being and the "highest genera" (πρώτα γένη) of that realm. Part 3 deals with the realm of mere becoming (γινόμενον), considered as ontologically other than the realm of real being. Here Plotinus proposes a set of five categories that may be called "genera" with some allowance, but never "genera of being." Plotinus' set of categories is a radically reduced and

modified list of the Aristotelian ten categories insofar as the number and the names are concerned. With the "genera of being," Plotinus' categories of becoming share in the same number, five, and some of them share the same name, which opens the door to homonymy and its dangers (VI.3.1 19–21).

From the title of Plotinus' treatise (as well as from its opening paragraph), it is clear that his purpose is to discuss the question of being (περὶ τῶν ὄντων) and to determine both the right number and the real nature of the "genera of being," in case there is a plurality of *onta*. It is precisely because he takes Aristotle's categories to be competitors of Plato's genera for the high position of the "genera of being" that Plotinus thinks it necessary to criticize and reject the former as incompatible with the latter. The only merit of the Aristotelian tenfold division of ὄντα, according to Plotinus, is that it avoids the fallacies of both the uncritical ontological monism, which reduces all kinds of being to one genus, and its contrary view which holds that *onta* are infinite in kind, thus making scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) impossible (VI.1.1.8–9).<sup>10</sup> Plotinus thinks that Aristotle was right in proposing a definite number of genera, but he was wrong in proposing ten instead of five, as Plato had done. It is Plotinus' opinion that on this matter he is in complete agreement with Plato. In VI. 2, he defends Plato and restores his five γένη to the high position of "genera of being." Having done so, he opens VI.3 in the following way: "We have now explained our conception of Reality (True Being) and considered how far it agrees with the teaching of Plato."

However, it would be mistaken to assume that the only fault with Aristotle's categories is their number. Even if they were less than ten, the Aristotelian categories would have to be rejected for their ontological claims. The reason for this is given by Plotinus as follows: "These thinkers [the Peripatetics] are however not considering the Intellectual realm (νοητὰ) in their division; the Supreme (τὰ μάλιστα ὄντα) they overlooked" (VI.1.1.28–30). Accordingly, the Peripatetics erred in that their categorial net was intended to capture only the phenomenal world of becoming which they mistook as the real world of being which, in turn, they overlooked. It was precisely this Aristotelian mistake—to distinguish between the two levels of reality—that provided Plotinus with a basis for attacking Aristotle's categories and their ontological claims. It may be well, then, to consider in some detail the historical ontological distinction between real being and mere becoming.

## III

The doctrine of the existence of two ontologically distinct realms of being, the authentic and its image, goes back to Plato's cosmology and the "likely story" told in the *Timaeus*, as is well known. It seems that the epistemological distinction between true opinion (δόξα ἀληθής) and knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) provided the grounds on which Plato based the ontological distinction between the sensible and the intelligible worlds.<sup>11</sup> In Plato's figurative language, we are told that the two realms are related as original or pattern (παράδειγμα) to its imitation or image (εἰκών).<sup>12</sup> However, neither in the *Timaeus* nor in any other dialogue did Plato

explain precisely (1) how the sensibles relate to the intelligibles, or (2) how the intelligibles are related to each other, or (3) what is the first unifying principle (or principles) (ἀρχαί) of all things. On the contrary, in a characteristic passage Timaeus remarks that no one should imagine that he has the right or the power to undertake so great and difficult a task.<sup>13</sup>

Now, it is true that in the *Sophist*, where the discussion is about the possibility of combination of Forms (συμβλοκή εἰδῶν), Plato uses five γένη (genera; kinds or Forms) in order to prove his thesis that some forms can combine and some cannot, with the corollary doctrine that each Form is both being and non-being at the same time without violating the law of contradiction. Plato's five γένη are: Being (τὸ ὄν), rest (στάσις), motion (κίνησις), sameness (ταυτόν), and difference (ἕτερον).<sup>14</sup> They are called "μέγιστα γένη," an expression that may mean either the "most general genera" or "the most important Forms." In Plotinus these five all-pervasive Platonic Forms are identified as "genera of being" which, in turn, are said to constitute the realm of the authentic being as its principles (ἀρχαί) and its elements (στοιχεῖα): "We have here not merely genera, but genera which are at the same time principles of Being. They are genera because they have subordinates—other genera, and successively species and individuals; they are also principles since from this plurality Being takes its rise, constituted in its entirety from these its elements" (VI.2.2.10–14).

Let it be noted here that the expression "genera of being" (γένη τοῦ ὄντος) is Plotinus' coinage. Neither Plato nor Aristotle ever used it. However, given (1) the fact that Plato's εἶδη or γένη ("forms") are ὄντως ὄντα ("really real entities") and αἰὲ ὄντα ("unchangeable") in contrast to the sensible things that are always in the process of becoming and never actually are, and (2) the possible meaning of the expression "μέγιστα γένη" construed as "the most general and pervasive forms," it may seem permissible to use the combination "genera of beings" (in plural). This would mean that the Platonic five γένη are real beings qua Forms, and that they are genera of the other forms, by virtue of their capability to be predicated of all forms. From this possible Platonic position to that of Plotinus, who considers the five genera as both predicable and generative principles of being (in singular), there is a considerable distance. Is it possible to cover this distance without overstepping the limits set by the Platonic *Timaeus*? Plotinus thinks it is.

Be it as it may, the important point is that throughout the *Enneads*, and especially in the treatise *On the Genera of Being*, the fundamental ontological distinction between the two realms is taken for granted. Unless it is taken seriously under consideration, and stressed, a great part of Plotinus' philosophy and particularly his criticism of Aristotle cannot be properly understood and appreciated. Passages like the one that follows must be read with this ontological distinction in mind in order to make sense:

But a graver problem confronts us at the outset: Are the ten found alike in the Intellectual and in the Sensible realms? Or are all found in the Sensible and some only in the Intellectual? All in the Intellectual and some in the Sensible is manifestly impossible.

At this point it would be natural to investigate which of the ten belong to both

spheres, and whether the Existents of the Intellectual are to be ranged under one and the same genus with the Existents in the Sensible, or whether the term "Existence" (or Substance) is equivocal as applied to both realms (VI.1.1.19–24).

If we compare the respective sets of genera of the sensible and the intelligible realms, it will be easier to understand Plotinus' answer to the questions raised above:<sup>15</sup>

REALM OF REAL BEING		REALM OF MERE BECOMING	
1. Οὐσία (ὄν νοῦς)	Substance	οὐσία (λεγόμενη)	so-called substance
2. Κίνησις (ζωὴ ἐνέργεια)	Motion	ποιόν (ποιότης)	quality
3. Στάσις (ἀεὶ εἶναι)	Rest	ποσόν (ποσότης)	quantity
4. Ἔτερον (ἕτεροτης)	Difference	κίνησις (ζωή)	motion
5. Ταυτόν (ταυτότης)	Sameness	πρός τι (σχέσις)	relation

Now, Plotinus' answers to the questions raised in the preceding quoted passage are as follows: (1) the number of the "genera" of becoming is the same as the number of the "genera of being," that is, five; (2) some genera of the sensible realm, such as quality and quantity, are found in the intelligible realm as well, but they are not primary (πρῶτα) in the sense that the five authentic "genera of being" are primary (VI.2.13–14); (3) it is impossible to have more genera in the intelligible realm than in the sensible realm, for the reason that the one, as simple, displays a greater unity than the other, the compound;<sup>16</sup> (4) to range under one and the same genus the authentic ὄντα of the intelligible and the so-called "ὄντα" of the sensible would be as absurd as to make "one genus of Socrates and his portrait" (VI.2.1.24–25); (5) even if some genera of the sensible realm (e.g., οὐσία) share the same name with one of the real genera of being, no one should be misled by the equivocation.

Given this ontological distinction between being and becoming, Plotinus has no difficulty in drawing the conclusion that Aristotle's categories, which were not intended for the realm of being but for that of becoming, cannot be "genera of being," let alone the "highest" (πρῶτα) genera for which he was searching. If his premises are granted, Plotinus' conclusion seems to follow. But Plotinus does not stop here. He is prepared to go so far as to question whether Aristotle's categories can be called even simple "genera" in the Aristotelian logical sense of this term. In this respect, Plotinus' criticism appears more realistic and more challenging. Since the term "genus" is instrumental to his strategy of attacking Aristotle's categories, it will be well to take a look at the various meanings of the term and Plotinus' use of them.

To use an Aristotelian expression, the Greek word "γένος" is a πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον, that is, it has more than one meaning and can be used in more than one sense. Basically, two usages of this term may be distinguished: the common

or nontechnical usage, and the technical or philosophical usage. The first relates to generation, while the second usage relates to predication. Since generation involves both generators and generated, the meaning of the term "genus" is split. So for the parents, "genus" refers to their offspring collectively, whereas the parents themselves are said to be the source (*ἀρχή*) or genus (*γένος*) of the offspring, and more so the father as the more active of the two generators. In this sense, the genus of all Hellenes is Hellen who was their first generator.<sup>17</sup> With regard to predication, "genus" is a predicable. In a proposition, it usually occupies the position of the predicate, but every generic term with the exception of the highest genus (*γένος γενικώτατον*) can also be the subject of the proposition. As Aristotle puts it, "genus" is also the "first constituent element" of definition and stands to differentiae as matter stands to form.<sup>18</sup> Also, things are said to be "other in genus" if they cannot be analyzed into one another or into some other thing. It is in this sense that the categories are said to be "other in genus."<sup>19</sup> As a technical, logical term, "genus" is defined as follows: "A 'genue' is what is predicated of things exhibiting differences in kind."<sup>20</sup>

To return to Plotinus now and the "genera of being," for which he is searching and from which he excludes Aristotle's categories, it may be useful for our understanding to keep in mind the following: (1) the Plotinian genera must be the "highest" (*πρώτα*) genera, that is, not subject to predication which would reduce them to species; (2) they must be able to be predicated equally (*ἐπίσης*) of what is subordinated to them; (3) above all they must be endowed with generative power implied in the nontechnical sense of the word "genus," so they may function as principles (*ἀρχαί*) of being and as "genera of being." According to Plotinus, Aristotle's categories (a) do not meet evidently the criterion of (3); (b) they do not meet (2) because *ousia*, for example, is not equally predicated of matter and form (VI.1.2.9–10); (c) they do seem to meet the criterion of (1) since they are not subject to predication, but to call them *πρώτα* would be false since it would be misleading to call them "genera of being" given the ontological distinction between being and becoming and their restriction to the latter; (d) they are not "other in genus" because they are analyzable or, to say the least, half of them are (VI.1.13–14. 23–24).

Thus far, Plotinus has tried to approach Aristotle's categories negatively. In other words, he has tried to determine not what the categories are but what they are not. In his view, they are not "genera of being." Moreover, they are neither the "highest genera" nor even "genera," strictly speaking. In drawing these conclusions, Plotinus follows simply the premises (1) that reality is ontologically divided into two realms, and (2) that Aristotle's categories do not apply to the higher level of reality. Also, his broad conception of "*γένος*" as a predicable term of which nothing can be predicated and as powerful generative principle or source, has some bearing in the exclusion of the categories from the realm of real being. Even so, one may wonder what the Aristotelian categories are, in Plotinus' understanding, and how they function. Plotinus' answer to questions like these is that the categories—which Aristotle calls falsely genera and genera of being<sup>21</sup>—are simply categories of becoming. He means by this that the categories lack the unity that the genera possess. In his opinion, they are loose classifications based on

some common characteristics shared by groups of sensible objects of the phenomenal realm. Thus, the referential efficacy of the categories is restricted to the lower level of reality and their unifying power is lesser compared with that of the genera, in the Plotinian sense of the term.

Consequently, Plotinus' lengthy discussions of the four basic Aristotelian categories (namely, substance, quantity, quality, relation) lead to the same conclusion that none of them is a genus. A simple comparison of the following relevant passages may help to clarify this point:

The properties adduced may indeed be allowed to distinguish Substance from the other Existents. They afford a means of grouping substances together and calling them by a common name. They do not however establish the unity of a genus, and they do not bring to light the concept and the nature of Substance (VI.1.3.19–23).

. . .

Equality and inequality must be regarded as properties of Quantity-Absolute, not of the participants, or of them not essentially but only accidentally: such participants as "three yards' length" which becomes a quantity, not as belonging to a single genus of Quantity, but by being subsumed under the one head, the one category (VI.1.5.22–26).

. . .

If however the Reason-Principles (governing the correlatives) stand oppose and have the differences to which we have referred, they may perhaps not be a single genus, but this will not prevent all relatives being expressed in terms of a certain likeness, and falling under a single category (VI.1.9.27–30).

. . .

Again, not all qualities can be regarded as Reason-Principles: chronic disease cannot be a Reason-Principle. Perhaps, however, we must speak in such cases of privations, restricting the term "Qualities" to Ideal-Forms and powers. Thus we shall have, not a single genus, but reference only to the unity of a category (VI.10.40–42).

Let it be noted here that these four Aristotelian categories, together with *κίνησις* ("motion")—evidently a new Plotinian category of Platonic roots—constitute the set of five "genera" which are "different" (*ἕτερα*) from the "genera of being" and are proposed by Plotinus for the realm of *becoming*. As to the other six Aristotelian categories, Plotinus thinks that they can be reduced to the above five basic categories. Thus two Aristotelian categories, to wit, action and passion, can be subsumed under the category of motion, which is a genus of becoming analogous but different from the homonymous genus of being (VI.3.21–27). For the categories of *ποῦ* ("where" in place) and *πότε* ("when" in time), Plotinus proposes that they may be reduced to space and time, respectively, which in their turn may be reduced to the category of quantity (VI.1.13–14). As for the two last categories in the Aristotelian list, possession and situation (*ἔχειν, κείσθαι*), in Plotinus' view, they are combinations of two or more categories, so that they cannot be simple and without combination (VI.1.23–24).<sup>22</sup>

Plotinus' position that most of Aristotle's categories are reducible and unnec-

essary is a strong position and amounts to a serious criticism because it challenges the doctrine of categories in the very domain of the sensible world that it was intended to render intelligible and knowable. If Plotinus' criticism is well-founded, then the implication will be that Aristotle did not know what he was doing when he postulated more categories than he needed. Starting with Porphyry, the later Neoplatonist commentators had a difficult task in their efforts to defend the irreducibility of Aristotle's categories.<sup>23</sup> However, the fact that they were able to defend successfully Aristotle and rescue him from Plotinus' severe attack indicates that the Plotinian method of criticism was somewhat objectionable.

To defend Aristotle against the charge that his categories do not apply adequately to the intelligible realm and, consequently, that they do not qualify for the position of "genera of being" was certainly not that difficult. For after all, one may not see the reason why Aristotle's categories (which were not intended for the intelligible realm, as Plotinus admits) should be criticized for their being inapplicable to that realm. Following this line of argument, Dexippus attempted to give an answer to Plotinus' questions regarding Aristotle's categories and their relations to the real being.<sup>24</sup> Yet, the question still remains: What was the reason for which Plotinus first considered Aristotle's categories as "genera of being," and then made this very consideration the basis for his criticism of the Aristotelian categorial doctrine? This question should be discussed in the light of the historical fact that in the third century A.D. there were various competing interpretations of this doctrine.

#### IV

It is known that, according to an established tradition, the commentator of a classical treatise was supposed to discuss and settle a few preliminary questions before proceeding to make his comments on the text. In the later commentaries, these questions are to be found codified as follows: (1) Who is the author of the treatise? (2) What is its correct title (ἐπιγραφὴ)? (3) What is its purpose or subject (σκοπός, πρόθεσις)? (4) What is its order? (5) What is its utility? and (6) What is its division into chapters? With regard to Aristotle's *Categories*, the most debatable of the above questions were (2) and especially (3).

It is understandable that the late commentators had to debate the issue of the correct title of the treatise, given the fact that more than one title had been preserved. Thus they had to choose among the following alternatives: *Ten Categories*, *Categories*, *On the Ten Genera*, *On the Genera of Being*, and *Pretopics*.<sup>25</sup> A commentator was expected not simply to choose, but also to defend his choice. To take an example, Porphyry thought, as we today think, that the correct title of the treatise was Κατηγορίαι and provided reasons to support his position and to reject the other proposals.<sup>26</sup> He particularly argued that the treatise should not be titled περὶ τῶν γενῶν τοῦ ὄντος, contrary to Plotinus.<sup>27</sup>

It is not difficult to see that closely related to the question of the correct title of the treatise was the more important question of its purpose. The title of a treatise is usually indicative of its content and the purpose it serves. It is no

accident that the choice of the title of the treatise on categories, which a commentator or critic prefers, reflects in a way his position and interpretation of its purpose. This brings us to the central and difficult question of the purpose of Aristotle's *Categories*. What are the categories? Are they classifications of words, things, concepts, or what? On this question neither the ancient commentators nor the modern scholars seem to have reached an agreement. These are four possible answers to this question and all of them had been tried by the time of Porphyry. Since then they have been repeated with more or less fidelity. By way of labeling these interpretations, the following scheme is obtained:<sup>28</sup> (1) the grammatical or phonetic interpretation, (2) the ontological or pragmatic interpretation, (3) the psychological or noetic interpretation, and (4) the logical or synthetic interpretation.

It falls outside the limited scope of this paper to analyze the arguments and counterarguments by which the supporters of each of the above interpretations of the Aristotelian categorial doctrine tried to support their respective positions. To comment briefly on each of them, it may be said that interpretation number (1) claims that the categories are word or sounds (φῶναι) and about words. The opponents of this view contend that to deal with φῶναι *qua* φῶναι is the task not of the philosopher but of the grammarian, and Aristotle was not a grammarian. The supporters of (2) think that the categories are about beings or things (ὄντα, πράγματα). The main objection to this view is that it takes the treatise out of the *Organon* and makes it a part of *Metaphysics*, where the discussion is of ὄντα *qua* ὄντα. According to (3), the purpose of the treatise is to deal neither with φῶναι nor with *onta*, but with the intermediary νοήματα ("concepts"). But to deal with concepts *qua* mental entities and processes is the task of the psychologist, not of the philosopher. The fourth (4) and evidently more enlightened view considers the other three as one-sided and attempts to synthesize them by claiming that the categories are about significant sounds (φῶναι σημαντικαὶ) which signify things (πράγματα) by way of signifying concepts (νοήματα).<sup>29</sup> After Porphyry, who gave a definite formulation to this interpretation by emphasizing the role of φῶναι σημαντικαὶ, every commentator of Aristotle's *Categories* took pains to make it clear that he followed the synthetic or logical interpretation.

To return to Plotinus, it may be useful to know that he was a follower of the strictly ontological interpretation (2) of the categorial doctrine. On this we have Simplicius' testimony.<sup>30</sup> Being consistent with this interpretation, Plotinus (a) titles Aristotle's treatise not *Categories* but *On the Genera of Being*, as we have seen; (b) considers the categories in their claims as "genera of being"; (c) views the categories as competitors of Plato's μέγιστοι γένη for the position of "genera of being"; (d) thinks that he has to choose between Plato and Aristotle on this matter, and (e) criticizes and rejects Aristotle's categories as irrelevant and inapplicable to the realm of real being, but he thinks that with some modifications they can serve the realm of becoming.

However, Plotinus' successors, who found it difficult to choose between Plato and Aristotle, had to abandon the ontological interpretation of the categorial theory in their efforts to reconcile the two philosophers. Thus Porphyry proposes a

new interpretation that placed the emphasis on the logical aspects of the categorial doctrine. The categories are interpreted now not as "genera of being," that is, not as ὄντα but as φῶναι which signify ὄντα. What sort of ὄντα they signify, Porphyry did not specify. The ontological status of the *significata* was left an open question.<sup>31</sup> It could mean that Porphyry's ὄντα referred back to Aristotle's πρώτη οὐσία ("first substance"), in which case species and genera (the universals) would seem to be simple abstractions and empty names. But this line of thought would have to make Porphyry seem more an Aristotelian and less a Neoplatonist pupil of Plotinus. On the other hand, it could be that Porphyry's ὄντα pointed towards Plotinus' πρώτα γένη τοῦ ὄντος ("highest genera of being"), in which case the species and genera of which we speak as "universals" would again be almost empty names compared with the universals of universals (πρώτα γένη) of the Plotinian κόσμος νοήτος. The point is that the Neoplatonic split of the universal makes even Plato's ontological realism of the εἶδη seem like nominalism when compared to Plotinus' ontological realism of the πρώτα γένη. This somewhat strange nominalism may be called the Neoplatonic version of nominalism.

## V

By way of summarizing the thesis of this essay, it can be stated that the reasons for which Plotinus criticized so severely and rejected Aristotle's categories were strictly ontological and due to two facts: first, Plotinus had accepted the ontological interpretation of the Aristotelian categorial theory and drew from that the conclusions to which it leads logically; and secondly, Aristotle's ontology with its emphasis on the concrete individual (τόδε τι) and its restriction to the realm of phenomena, was in sharp contrast with reinforced Platonism of the Plotinian type that (1) places the emphasis not simply on the universal (Plato's εἶδος), but especially on the universal of universals (Plotinus' γένος), and (2) tends to go not only beyond the sensible realm (Aristotle), but also beyond the intelligible (Plato) towards the Absolute and Ineffable One.

The implications of Plotinus' ontological presuppositions are grave for the Aristotelian categorial doctrine and the Aristotelian logic in general. They certainly cannot be of great value to one who, like Plotinus, is concerned with the ἐπέκεινα ("beyond") and the really real conceived as ἕτερον ("other") than the sensible. For such a journey, neither the senses and the common sense nor logic in its syllogistic (Aristotelian) form or in its propositional (Stoic) form can be of much help. Another method is needed by which the ἀναγωγή ("lifting up") of the soul and its ἐπιστροφή ("return") to the Primordial Source can be accomplished. This method may be called "The Dialectic of Eros." But this is another story.

## Plotinus and Self-Predication

JOHN FIELDER

## I

Although there are problems of predication associated with the rather ordinary statement that Socrates is just, Platonists are faced with even more serious problems in the assertion that Justice (the Form) is just. This latter type of predication is a consequence of the relationship of forms and sensibles. Since Socrates is just by virtue of his participation in Justice, and Justice functions as a standard for judging whether one is just or not, it is natural to assert that Justice, too, is just. It would be rather odd to deny that Justice itself lacked justice.

However, since Justice and Socrates are radically different kinds of things, it seems equally odd to say that Justice is just in the same sense that Socrates is just. How can something incorporeal be just? or hot? or large? As R. E. Allen put it, no one can scratch Doghood behind the Ears or take a nap in the intelligible Bed.<sup>1</sup>

The assumption that "is just" means the same when applied to Socrates and to justice leads to immediately obvious absurdities. For a Platonist to hold such a theory of predication would require that he overlook or not recognize the absurd consequences of the theory. Since we can hardly credit Plato or Plotinus or any

other major philosopher with a mistake of this magnitude, we must assume that those men held some other more philosophically plausible theory concerning the meaning of "Justice is just."

A current proposal for a philosophically plausible theory of "Justice is just" is Pauline predication.<sup>2</sup> The idea is taken from Paul's discussion of charity in Corinthians. There he states that "charity suffers long and is kind . . . , rejoices with the truth and bears all things." Paul is not making an assertion about the abstract entity, charity. In that sense it would be absurd to speak of charity enduring anything. The grammar of Paul's statement suggests that he is speaking about charity, the abstract entity, but a moment's reflection shows that he is actually speaking about those individuals who have charity. It is they who endure all, not charity itself. Hence, what looks like a statement about an abstract entity is really a statement about a class of objects related to that entity, namely individuals sharing that characteristic.

If we apply this idea to "Justice is just," it becomes a way of saying that the individuals who participate in Justice are just. Instead of being an assertion about the Form, Justice, it is an assertion about the class of individuals who participate in Justice. Thus "Justice is just" regarded as an instance of Pauline predication means "Justice is such that whatever participates in Justice is just." Pauline predication thus avoid the difficulties attendant upon speaking of Forms and sensibles as being just in the same sense.

## II

The argument I have sketched above is a philosophical one, appealing not to texts but the philosophical intelligibility of theories of predication as it applies to Forms and sensibles. As such it applies to Plato and Neoplatonist alike insofar as they share the basic features of the theory of Forms. Further, this argument has two important methodological implications that bear on the textual inquiry necessary to determine whether Plato or Plotinus actually held either of these theories. First, the claim that Plotinus or any other major philosopher used the same sense of "is just" for Forms and sensibles will require much stronger evidence if this view is considered to be philosophically mistaken in an obvious way. One would have to submit overwhelming textual proof to back up the claim that a thinker of Plotinus' stature made such an obvious and fundamental mistake.

Second, the argument entails that any other philosophical doctrine that is based on applying the same predicate in the same sense to Forms and sensibles would also be philosophically incoherent and would require much more evidence to establish that Plotinus held it. This means that the copy theory, in order to be philosophically acceptable, could not be based on a view of likeness that involved the sharing of properties by forms and their corporeal images. Consequently, it is necessary to assess the soundness of this argument asserting the philosophical absurdity of one account of predication before examining our texts.

## III

The best statement of the view that an obvious absurdity results from applying the same predicates to forms and sensibles is in a recent article by Gregory Vlastos.<sup>3</sup> He is writing about Plato, but the argument, as I have shown, is a philosophical one and applies equally to Plotinus. Accordingly, I have taken the liberty of replacing references to Plato with references to Plotinus. Here is Vlastos's argument, which is the major consideration in favor of Pauline predication.

The most common use of the copula in Greek and English is "to indicate that the individual name by the subject-term is a member of the class of those possessing the attribute expressed by the predicate-term."<sup>4</sup> Thus "Socrates is wise" asserts that Socrates belongs to the class of wise individuals. Vlastos indicates this reading of "is" by the use of the letter epsilon: "Socrates  $\epsilon$  wise." Many true assertions about Forms have this character, for example, "Justice  $\epsilon$  incorporeal" or "Justice  $\epsilon$  intelligible." But if we treat the statements like "Justice is just," as epsilon predications we must attribute what Vlastos thinks is a stupendous philosophical error to Plotinus. For to assert that "Fire  $\epsilon$  hot" is to admit that Plotinus is guilty of

a piece of egregious nonsense: Heat is a property which only corporeal things could have. . . . We would be supposing that he wants to say in all seriousness that one of his incorporeal Forms has a corporeal property.<sup>6</sup>

In a similar fashion "Justice  $\epsilon$  just" would make the mistake of treating an abstract Form as if it had "a property which only concrete individuals—persons—and by legitimate extension, their actions, dispositions, institutions, laws, etc., could possibly have."<sup>7</sup> In both cases epsilon predication commits the categorial mistake of applying properties to the Form that could only be possessed by the Form's corporeal instances. Asserting that an incorporeal Form has a corporeal property is such an obvious absurdity we can hardly believe that Plotinus would allow it. Hence we cannot read statements like "Justice is just" as epsilon predications.

Vlastos appears to be making the following argument:

1. There are at least two types of properties, corporeal and incorporeal.
2. Corporeal subjects may only have corporeal properties.
3. Incorporeal subjects may have only incorporeal properties.
4. The assertion that an incorporeal subject may have a corporeal property or vice versa is philosophically absurd.
5. Justice is an incorporeal subject, a form.
6. To be "just" is a corporeal property.
7. "Justice is just" asserts that an incorporeal subject has a corporeal property.
8. Therefore, "Justice is just" is philosophically absurd.

I take this argument to be the substance of Vlastos's claims that "heat is a property which only corporeal things could have" and that it would be a philosophical

mistake to hold that "one of his incorporeal Forms has a corporeal property." Thus premises 1 and 2 embody Vlastos's distinction between corporeal and incorporeal subjects and properties; premise 3 states the requirement that statements must have the same type of subject and property; and premise 4 holds that violation of the requirement of premise 3 results in a philosophical mistake. In the remaining premises, these general principles are applied to the case of "Justice is just." It is clear that the argument can be applied to other similar assertions about Forms.

Premise 4 needs some further explanation as to why it is absurd to join subject and property of different types (i.e., corporeal and incorporeal). Again, Vlastos's argument is not explicit, but the idea seems to be that if an incorporeal subject (a Form) can have a corporeal property, then it is no longer possible to speak of it as an incorporeal subject. A corporeal subject must be made up of corporeal properties, otherwise the distinction between corporeal and incorporeal reality is undermined.

Vlastos concludes that epsilon predication contains an obvious philosophical mistake, one that a major philosopher could hardly be expected to make. Hence we have strong reasons for supposing that statements like "Justice is just" are Pauline predications.

Vlastos is certainly correct in pointing out that epsilon predication, as he has presented it, leads to clear absurdities. But this only proves that *his version* of Pauline predication involves an obvious philosophical mistake. Vlastos seems to assume that there is only one way to develop a theory of epsilon predication and that, therefore, it can be eliminated as a serious philosophical theory by his argument. But this is hardly plausible: there are a number of different versions of Pauline predication, and one would certainly think that there may be more than one conception of epsilon predication as well.

I suspect that if Vlastos and Allen were more familiar with Neoplatonic thought, they would not be so hasty in rejecting epsilon predication. Plotinus approaches a number of philosophical problems of the Theory of Forms from a different direction and provides philosophical solutions not found in Plato. It is not surprising, therefore, that Plotinus' view of "justice is just" and similar statements about forms utilizes a version of epsilon predication that is not subject to the difficulties inherent in Vlastos's account.

#### IV

The best way to approach Plotinus' understanding of statements about Forms is to begin with "Socrates is just" and see how it is related to "Justice is just." As Vlastos suggests, the former type of assertion is regarded by Plotinus as an instance of epsilon predication. That is, the subject is said to possess the property expressed by the predicate. Thus "white and black are predicated of an object having one or other of these qualities . . . , knowledge is predicated of the subject in whom knowledge exists" (VI. 3. 4). And, in fact, the sensible subject is regarded by Plotinus as a collection of these properties in matter.<sup>6</sup> In VI. 3. 8., at the end of a discussion of sensible substance, he concludes that sensible substance

is a "coagulation of qualities and Matter; all the qualities taken together as coagulating in a uniform matter constitute [sensible] substance." Accidental properties are part of the collection but they "take independent rank and are not submerged in the mixture."

It might be supposed that it is necessary to distinguish the particular, individual property as found in a subject from the universal characteristic it shares with other subjects. Thus we would distinguish the particular "white" of this portion of milk from the whiteness it shares with other white things. But Plotinus does not make such a distinction, at least not in a way that results in two different entities, the universal and the particular individual features of a subject. Rather, for Plotinus, the particular property functions as a universal.<sup>7</sup> The particular white of this portion of milk is one and the same white that is found in a different portion of milk.

The whiteness in a portion of milk is not a part of the whiteness of milk in general: we have the whiteness of a portion, not a portion of whiteness; for whiteness is utterly without magnitude; has nothing whatever to do with quantity (IV.3.2).

And similarly for grammar:

Grammar is not posterior to the particular grammar: on the contrary, the grammar as in you depends upon the prior existence of grammar as such: the grammar as in you becomes particular by being in you; it is otherwise identical to grammar the universal (VI.3.9).

It is a philosophical error, Plotinus holds, to separate the particular white of a subject from whiteness, the universal. We make such an error because we treat the particular property like a sensible object. The portion of milk clearly cannot be in many places at once without being divided, but its white color can, because it is "utterly without magnitude." The bundle of properties that comprise the portion of milk are without matter, for they "coagulate in a uniform Matter." It (the property) is not a corporeal individual and, therefore, is capable of being completely present throughout a number of sensible objects.

Hence when we predicate "is white" of a member of sensible subjects, the predicate picks out a single property that is identically and wholly present in those subjects. This capacity to be wholly present throughout a number of different individuals is characteristic of intelligible reality. The properties that make up sensible objects are intelligible existents and sensibles acquire them through participation.

It is not Socrates who bestows manhood upon what was previously not Man, but Man upon Socrates; the individual man exists by participation in the universal (VI.3.9).

Participation is simply the act by which intelligible existents enter matter and provide some characteristic to the sensible subject.

The intelligible existent that enters matter is Soul. After speaking of the capacity to be present in many without partition, Plotinus remarks that:

To have penetrated this idea is to know the greatness of Soul and its power, the divinity and wonder of its being, as a nature transcending the sphere of things (VI.2.1).

And in the two treatises devoted to the integral omnipresence of authentic existence, Plotinus begins with the question, "How are we to explain the omnipresence of Soul?" (VI. 4. 1).

We appear, then, to have three levels of reality and two intelligible existents. The three levels are sensible, Soul, and Form (in *Nous*). There are only two intelligibles, since Soul is in Sensibles. But this appearance is somewhat misleading. As a number of Plotinian scholars have pointed out, the distinction between *Nous* and Soul tends to disappear.<sup>10</sup> Soul, for example, possesses no material principle to differentiate it from *Nous*. Both *Nous* and the sensible world are made distinct from their previous hypostases by principles of matter. John Deck points out that Plotinus argues for the direct participation of sensibles in *Nous*, making Soul an unnecessary hypostasis.<sup>11</sup> Deck concludes that "the sensible world, as being, is *Nous*."<sup>12</sup> R. T. Wallis has developed a similar view of the relation of *Nous* and Soul.<sup>13</sup> My own view is that Soul should be regarded as *Nous* in its function of generating a sensible world. It is its role that may be distinguished rather than viewing Soul as a separate hypostasis. Just as Plotinus found reason to collapse the distinction between the particular property and the universal, so also he was driven to assimilate Soul to *Nous*.

It is reasonable to believe that instead of three levels and two intelligible existents, the true Plotinian view of the relationship of Form and sensibles is that there are two levels, *Nous* and the sensible world, and only one intelligible reality, *Nous*. Soul is simply the *Nous* in its role of permeating matter, generating the sensible world. Instead of an additional hypostasis, Soul is simply one aspect of *Nous*.

The result of this for the problem of predication is profound. For it entails that the properties that make up sensible existents are the Forms themselves. They are the intelligible existents that are present in Matter, and in which sensibles participate.

## V

When we say that Socrates is just, we are claiming that the Form of Justice is immanent in Socrates, according to Plotinus. The justice in Socrates is Justice itself, present in Matter. As a consequence, predicating "is just" of Socrates is not so greatly different from predicating "is just" of the Form itself. In both cases the predicate asserts the presence of Justice in the subject. In the case of Socrates, Justice is immanent in the Matter that constitutes the subject, Socrates. In the case of justice itself, what the predicate signifies is the entire subject, not just part of the subject, as in the case of Socrates. Although there are important differences in the two propositions that "justice is just" and "Socrates is just," the predicate has the same meaning.

Regardless of the philosophical merit of Plotinus' theory of predication, two points are clear. First, it is a theory based on epsilon predication rather than Pauline predication. Second, whatever the difficulties this theory generates, it is not obviously absurd. It cannot be disqualified as unworthy of a major thinker or as so incoherent that significantly more evidence is needed to establish it as Plotinus' view. Rather than being a philosophical liability, as Vlastos and others think, epsilon predication provides a coherent account of how predicates are applied to Forms and Sensibles. And it does so in a way that reinforces a number of central Platonic themes (the copy theory, participation, and the role of Forms as Epistemological standards), all of which present serious problems for Pauline predication.



# Omnipresence, Participation, and Eidetic Causation in Plotinus

JONATHAN SCOTT LEE

Émile Bréhier has written that "fourth and fifth treatises of the sixth *Ennead* . . . can easily be read without any reference to Greek philosophy."<sup>1</sup> In this paper I shall argue, to the contrary, that the philosophical import of these treatises on "The Integral Omnipresence of Being" can only be determined in the context of the Greek metaphysical tradition. In particular, I want to argue that in these treatises, Plotinus' central concern is the notoriously elusive concept at the heart of metaphysical Platonism, the concept of participation. This can be shown by reference to two major problems with which Plotinus deals in VI.4–5. 22–23.<sup>2</sup>

## I

The first problem (and this is the problem that, in effect, sets the entire argument of the treatises into motion) derives from *Parmenides* 130e4–131c11. Here, Plato (in the persona of the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides) raises a pair of objections against the notion of participation. These objections center around a conception of participation as the relation between my given *eidos* and the multiplicity of

sensible particulars that participate in that *eidos*. Because of the importance of this Platonic text to the argument of VI.4–5, it will be useful to cite Parmenides' objections more fully:

"Then, is it the case that each thing participating participates in either the whole of the *eidos* or in a part of it? Or might there be some other mode of participation besides these?"

"How could there be?" he said.

"Does it seem to you, then, that the *eidos* as a whole, being one, is in each of the many, or how?"

"What hinders this, Parmenides?" said Socrates.

"Then, a thing that is one and the same would be at the same time, as a whole, in many things which are separate, and hence it would be separate from itself" (131a4–b2).

Parmenides leads the young Socrates on to consider the second alternative presented at 131a4–5: that each thing participating participates only in a part of the *eidos*. The argument then resumes:

"Then, Socrates," he said, "the *eide* themselves would be divisible, and the things participating in them would participate in a part. No longer would an *eidos* be in each as a whole; rather, a part of each *eidos* would be in each."

"So it seems."

"Then, would you be willing, Socrates, to say to us that in truth the one *eidos* is divided and yet that it is one?"

"Certainly not," he said (131c–11).

These objections take the form of a dilemma: either the *eidos* as a whole is in each of the many sensible particulars that participate in it, in which case the *eidos* will be separate from itself, or else only a part of the *eidos* is in each of the sensible particulars, in which case the *eidos* will be divided and, hence, not one.

Now, in the *Parmenides* Socrates suggests a way in which this dilemma can be avoided and the many sensible particulars can be said to participate in an *eidos* as a whole. This suggestion is put in terms of a metaphor at 131b3–6:

[The *eidos* would not be separate from itself] if it were like one and the same day [ἡμέρα], which is in many places at the same time and yet is in no way separate from itself, if each of the *eide* is in all [the things participating in it] at the same time as one and the same thing in this way.

Socrates' suggestion is not pursued in the *Parmenides*; rather, Parmenides distorts it into the clearly materialistic analogy of a sail spread over a number of people, an analogy that sets up Parmenides' presentation of the second half of the dilemma (quoted above). However, the analogy of the day accomplishes two quite important things even within the context of Plato's dialogue. In the first place, Socrates' suggestion opens up the possibility of an escape from the Parmenidean dilemma, an escape involving the acceptance of the first horn of the dilemma together with a denial of the apparent consequence that each *eidos* will be separate from itself. In the second place, the fact that the analogy of the day appears to offer an escape

from the dilemma casts doubt on Parmenides' assumption that the relation between *eide* and sensible particulars is like the ordinary relation between a whole and its parts. Such a conception of the whole/part relation seems to be quite appropriate in the context of material objects, that is, the sensible particulars that occupy space. However, it appears to lose its usefulness in the context of non-material things such as the Platonic *eide*. This latter point is made doubly apparent by Parmenides' inability to deal in any effective way with the analogy of the day (compare 131b7–c4) and by his grotesque illustration of the dilemma discussed above in terms of a crude, materialistic analysis of the *eide* of largeness, equality, and smallness at 131c12–e7. The analogy of the day, thus, provides a means by which the relation between nonmaterial entities like the *eide* and material or sensible particulars can be conceived. In successfully accomplishing this, the analogy, in effect, challenges the propriety of an ordinary conception of the relation between wholes and parts in the context of a treatment of participation.

As will soon become apparent, Plotinus' response to the objections of *Parmenides* 130e4–131c11 is very much in the spirit of Socrates' analogy of the day: the Plotinian escape from the dilemma involves the acceptance of its first horn together with a denial of the apparent consequence that each *eidos* will be separate from itself. Of course, Plato's discussion concerns the relation between individual *eide* and their participants in the sensible world, while Plotinus' discussion concerns the relation between the intelligible world as a whole (τὸ ὅν) and the sensible world. However, this difference is merely one of emphasis, since the characterization of the participation relation with respect to one *eidos* ought to be applicable to that relation with respect to all *eide* (i.e., to the intelligible world as a whole).

Plotinus offers three separate, but fundamentally similar, direct responses to the dilemma posed in the *Parmenides*; these occur at VI.4.8.2–45, VI.4.13.6–26, and VI.5.3.1–21. For the purposes of this discussion, I shall concentrate on the last of these because it is here that Plotinus' argument is most fully elaborated.

The argument of VI.5.3 rests on a rather Aristotelian preliminary discussion of philosophical methodology in VI.5.2. Plotinus here claims that the materialists (like the Parmenides of Plato's dialogue) fail to be persuaded of the truth of the nonmaterialistic metaphysics of Platonism "because they have not made a start of their inquiry from appropriate principles" (VI.5.2.5–6).<sup>3</sup> In discussing the intelligible world and its relation to the sensible world, Plotinus insists that "... it is necessary for us to take principles appropriate for proof to the account of the One which exists everywhere; and, since this account is of intelligibles, it is necessary for us to take principles of the intelligibles closely linked with true Being" (VI.5.2.7–9). This advice already contains the kernel of Plotinus' response to Parmenides: the intelligible world must be regarded as "the One which exists everywhere," that is, as the One which is omnipresent to the sensible world. The omnipresence of the intelligible world, however, will be proved (after a fashion) by Plotinus in VI.5.3, on the basis of an accurate description of the basic features of the intelligible world and the sensible world. Hence, the intelligible world's omni-

presence is not just a matter of definition; rather, it is a logical consequence of the nature of being.

Plotinus goes on to outline the basic features of the sensible and the intelligible worlds, obviously taking this general description to provide the relevant "appropriate principles" for metaphysical inquiry:

Now, on the one hand, there is that which is in motion, which undergoes every sort of change, and which is distributed in every place; this, indeed, might best be named Becoming, rather than Being. On the other hand, there is that which always is, existing always in the same way, which neither comes into being nor perishes, which occupies no region of space, neither a place nor some base [τινα ἐδραν], which neither goes out from some place nor again enters into another, but which remains in itself (VI.5.2.9–16).<sup>4</sup>

Armed with this general description of the sensible world and the intelligible world, which description he takes to be an adequate account of the "essences" of the two worlds (compare VI.5.2.19–28), Plotinus is prepared to tackle the Parmenidean dilemma.

He begins, in effect, by considering the second half of the dilemma—that only a part of an *eidos* is in each of the sensible particulars participating in that *eidos*—and argues that this possibility is ruled out by the essential nature of the intelligible world. He writes:

If, then, our subject is true Being, which (as was said) exists always in the same way, which does not go forth from itself, which is not in any relation of coming-to-be, and which is not in place, it is obviously necessary that it, being thus, always be with itself, that it be not divided from itself, that it be not part here and part there, and that it not give up anything from itself. For, otherwise, it would be in one thing and another thing (things different from itself), and in general it would be in something else, rather than being in itself and impassible (for if it were in something other than itself, it would be affected). But, if it is in an impassible condition [as was said], then it is not in anything other than itself (VI.5.3.1–8).

In other words, Plotinus argues that the division of a Platonic intelligible world (or of a single *eidos*) into parts is inconsistent with the essential character of Being, as described in VI.5.2. In the context of the Parmenidean dilemma, Plotinus is in effect arguing that the participation of sensible particulars in *eide* cannot be understood as participation in parts of *eide*, since such an analysis requires that the *eide* be divided into parts and, thus, modified by their relation to the sensible world, which view is in conflict with the impassible or immutable nature of the intelligible world. Hence, participation cannot be explained in terms of the apportionment of parts of the intelligible world to sensible particulars. It follows that participation involves the relation between sensible particulars and each *eidos* as an integral whole or, more generally, that the sensible world is related to the intelligible world as an integral whole. This, of course, forces Plotinus into the consideration of the first half of the Parmenidean dilemma—that an *eidos* as a whole is in each of the sensible particulars that participate in that *eidos* and is, thus, separate from itself.

Plotinus' response to the first half of Parmenides' dilemma is somewhat more obscure than the argument quoted above and will require some effort to reconstruct. At VI.5.3.8–14, immediately following the preceding passage, Plotinus writes:

Therefore, if Being does not separate from itself, if it has not been divided into parts, and if it changes itself in no way whatever, and, furthermore, if it is to be in many things at the same time as a single whole while remaining in itself, its being in many things must involve the existence of the same thing everywhere; that is, it is both in itself and yet not in itself. Hence, all that can be said is that, on the one hand, Being is in nothing at all, and, on the other hand, the things other than Being participate in it. . . .

In the light of this Plotinus concludes:

Hence, either it is necessary to reject our hypotheses and principles, saying that there exists no nature such as that described, or else, if such a rejection is impossible, then such a nature—Being—must necessarily exist, and we must admit the position maintained at the beginning [cf., VI. 4. 1–3]: Being is one and the same in number, not having been divided into parts but, rather, existing as a whole and being remote from no one of the things other than it (VI.5.3.15–21).

Now, the argument embedded in these passages can be reconstructed as follows:<sup>2</sup> Given the nature of the Platonic intelligible world previously sketched, this world cannot be divided into parts in order to account for participation. Such a division would be inconsistent with this world's essential character. Hence, the intelligible world must remain an integral whole. Given this Plotinian account of the intelligible world, *Parmenides* 131a4–b2 appears to draw the absurd consequence that the intelligible world, if it is participated in by sensible particulars, becomes separate from itself because it then exists as an integral whole "in many things which are separate." Such a consequence appears to entail the impossibility of participation and, thus, the untenability of metaphysical Platonism. Plotinus' response to this objection is simply to deny the derivation of the Parmenidean consequence: if the intelligible world has the essential nature attributed to it in VI.5.2, then it must always remain an integral whole (VI.5.3.1–8); if participation is to be possible (as it must be, given the observed fact of the existence of sensible particulars), then the intelligible world must (somehow) "be in many things at the same time as a single whole while remaining in itself" (line 10); since this involves "the existence of the same thing [namely, Being or the intelligible world] everywhere" (lines 10–11), participation requires the omnipresence of Being as an integral whole, that is, the integral omnipresence of Being. In effect, Plotinus is arguing that the objection at *Parmenides* 131a4–b2 stems from Parmenides' failure to understand the essential nature of Being, his failure to understand that Being is such as to be integrally omnipresent to the sensible world if it is present to it at all.

It is not perhaps entirely clear how VI.5.3 serves as an *argued* response to *Parmenides*. *Parmenides* 131a4–b2 purports to offer an argument to the effect that the claim that the intelligible world as a whole is involved in the participation of diverse sensible particulars in Being entails the absurdity that the intelligible world

is separate from itself. Plotinus clearly denies the propriety of deriving this absurd consequence from the Platonic theory (i.e., from his formulation of this theory); however, he appears to provide no argument for this denial. Now, as I suggested above, the main point of Plotinus' response to Parmenides seems to be that the Parmenidean objection draws its force from a failure to understand the essential nature of the intelligible world. Plotinus is arguing, in effect, that once one understands the essence of the intelligible world as an integral whole, one is forced to the conclusion that participation requires the integral omnipresence of this whole to the sensible world, even though this omnipresence cannot be adequately formulated in terms of our ordinary conception of the relation between wholes and parts. I am suggesting, then, that Plotinus is here acting on "the principle that the best defense is attack"<sup>3</sup> and that this is a reasonable procedure for dealing with the Parmenidean dilemma (assuming, of course, that some sense can be made of the Plotinian conception of the intelligible world as integrally omnipresent to the sensible world). In his article, "Universals and Metaphysical Realism," Alan Donagan (in defense of a form of realism) advocates this very response to a slight variant of *Parmenides* 130e4–131c11. He writes:

To say that [a universal] is "entire and yet divided from itself" is objectionable, because it presupposes that to be exemplified in two different places at once implies being divided. It is true that a *particular* can only be in two places at once if one part of it is at one place, and another part at the other; but, by their very nature, universals are not divisible into parts.<sup>4</sup>

The moral of Plotinus' argument is obvious: Parmenides' analysis of the intelligible world in its relation to the sensible world—an analysis centrally involving our ordinary conception of the whole/part relation—must be supplanted by a new analysis, an analysis that embodies the fact that Being is indivisible and, thus, must remain an integral whole in its relation to the sensible world. In effect, Plotinus is arguing that the consequences derived from Parmenides' analysis of the intelligible world are at odds with brute metaphysical fact, namely, the essential nature of the intelligible world as an integral whole omnipresent to the sensible world. Hence, Parmenides' understanding of the intelligible world is simply in error, and his method of dealing with problems concerning the intelligible in its relation to the sensible is inappropriate. In the light of this fact, Plotinus argues, the objections of *Parmenides* 130e4–131c11 lose their force.

Regardless of the ultimate success of his response to Parmenides, it is surely clear that Plotinus is, in VI. 4–5, offering his own essentially Platonic solution to these objections drawn from the text of Plato; he is attempting to develop a technical account of the relation between the intelligible and the sensible that is immune to the objections posed in the *Parmenides*.

## II

A second major problem that Plotinus faces in VI.4–5 again arises quite simply from the metaphysical tradition of Platonism. At *Phaedo* 100c4–d8, the relation between the *eide* and things in the sensible world is described in an account of

causality (αἰτία), and by implication the *eide* are described as the (possibly unique) *causes* (τὰ αἰτία) of particulars in the sensible world. In other words, Plato here suggests that the problem of participation is to be resolved by the elaboration of a theory of what I shall call "eidetic causation," that is, a theory of the way in which the *eide* that make up the intelligible world of Being are the causes of sensible particulars.

This suggestion that a theory of eidetic causation is central to Platonic metaphysics leads to one of Aristotle's most telling objections against metaphysical Platonism. At *Metaphysics* A. 9. 991a8–11 (compare M. 5. 1079b12–15), he writes:

Above all one might discuss the question, what on earth the *eide* contribute to sensible things, either to those that are eternal or to those that come into being and cease to be. For they cause neither movement nor any change in them.<sup>8</sup>

This charge that the *eide* cannot be the causes of change in the sensible world is repeated and elaborated at *De generatione et corruptione* B. 9. 335b18–21, where Aristotle attacks the theory adumbrated in the *Phaedo* that the *eide* are the causes of the particulars that make up the sensible world. Here, he writes:

If the *eide* are causes [αἰτία], why do they not always generate continually but only intermittently, since the *eide* and the things participating in them are always there?<sup>9</sup>

In other words, Aristotle's argument is designed to show that a Platonic account of the sensible world in terms of eidetic causation alone cannot adequately explain the ubiquitous phenomenon of change in the sensible world.

In Section I of this paper I argued that Plotinus in *Ennead* VI.4–5 is attempting to develop a solution to the problem of participation and that this solution involves the doctrine of the integral omnipresence of the intelligible world to the sensible world. This doctrine is, in effect, the fundamental feature of Plotinus' theory of eidetic causation. However, the claim that eidetic causation is to be elucidated along Plotinian lines in terms of the integral omnipresence of Being raises an obvious question, a question very much in the spirit of the Aristotelian objection to Platonism introduced above: how is it that not all *eide* are manifested at all points in sensible space (or matter) at all times? In other words, how is it that, say, the *eidos* of man, though integrally omnipresent to the sensible world, is only seen to be present in certain regions of space (where people exist) and not in others (e.g., where rocks exist)? There appears to be a serious tension between the integral omnipresence of the intelligible world and its intermittent causal efficacy. In this section, I shall (1) elaborate a key strand of Plotinus' account of eidetic causation and (2) use this account to sketch a Plotinian answer to Aristotle's objection concerning the intermittent causal efficacy of the *eide*.

1. Plotinus devotes much of VI.5 to an explanation of the dynamic of eidetic causation, that is, to an explanation of *how* the intelligible is omnipresent to the sensible in such a way that the sensible world appears as it does. The heart of this explanation (see, in particular, VI.5.7. passim; 9.1–31; and 12.1–31) lies in the doctrine that *psyche* is an intermediary between the intelligible world and the

sensible world (a doctrine derived from *Timaeus* 35a1–8). It is *psyche*, present to the sensible world "as one life" (VI.5.12.1), that is the productive cause (τὸ αἰτιον, τὸ ποιοῦν) of the sensible world (VI.5.9.1–13).

The key to understanding the role of *psyche* in Plotinus' conception of eidetic causation is the doctrine of productive contemplation, a doctrine that is developed at some length in *Ennead* III.8[30], "On Nature and Contemplation and the One," a treatise written shortly after VI.4–5. The doctrine is simply that contemplation (θεωρία) is in some way to be understood as productive, that is, that contemplation involves production or making (ποίησις). The Plotinian claim that I will try to elucidate is that *psyche*, and in particular the *psyche* that Plotinus calls "Nature," exercises a form of contemplation that produces (i.e., causally brings into existence) the sensible particulars that make up the sensible world. In passing, I might mention that this doctrine of productive contemplation seems to mark one of Plotinus' most original achievements, since it appears to run counter to the traditional Greek conception of contemplation as something opposed to both production and action (πρᾶξις).<sup>10</sup> This traditional conception is, of course, that of Aristotle, who contrasts contemplation with action at *Nicomachean Ethics* X.7, by maintaining that "nothing comes from contemplation except the contemplating, but from practical activities we acquire more or less apart from the action" (1177b 2–4). If Plotinus is right, what we gain from (a kind of) contemplation is nothing less than the whole of the sensible world.

What, then, is involved in Plotinus' doctrine of productive contemplation? There appear to be basically two interrelated theses here. In the first is the claim that contemplation is productive or, as Plotinus prefers to put it, that production *is* contemplation. This comes out at III.8.3.20–23, where he writes:

So Nature's making has been revealed to us as contemplation, for it is a result of contemplation, and the contemplation stays unchanged and does not do anything else but makes by being contemplation.<sup>11</sup>

The second thesis involved in Plotinus' account of productive contemplation is that the whole of the sensible world "comes from" the contemplation exercised by the particular *psyche* which is Nature and, thus, that *psyche* (i.e., Nature) is the cause of the sensible world, by virtue of its act of contemplation. This aspect of the doctrine of productive contemplation is brought out at III.8.7.1–4:

That all things come from contemplation and are contemplation [at least in the sense of "being contemplated"], both the things which truly exist [i.e., the *eide* and the *psychai*] and the things which come from them when they contemplate and are themselves objects of contemplation, some by sense perception and some by knowledge or opinion [is clear].

Thus, what the *psyche*'s (i.e., Nature's) productive contemplation is productive of is, for Plotinus, the whole of the sensible world.

In chapter 4 of III.8, Plotinus asks Nature to explain her contemplative production of the sensible world, which she does by means of an analogy:

My act of contemplation makes an object of contemplation, as the geometers draw their figures while they contemplate. But I do not draw; rather, as I contemplate, the lines which bound bodies come to be as if they fell from my contemplation (III.8.4.7–10).

Although the apparent allusion to Plato's account of the construction of the regular solids at *Timaeus* 53c4–55c6 here is intriguing,<sup>12</sup> Nature's words leave me quite mystified: the production of the sensible world (in this case, of "the lines which bound bodies") just seems to happen as a result of Nature's contemplation. The details of the account are lacking, and the result is quite unsatisfactory from a philosophical point of view. What is clear here is that Nature's act of contemplation produces an object of contemplation, a *θεώρημα*, which *theorem* is the sensible world.

Plotinus follows up this statement from Nature with the following difficult, but illuminating, analysis:

What does this mean? That what is called Nature is a *psyche*, the offspring of a prior *psyche* with a stronger life; that it quietly holds contemplation in itself, not directed upwards or even downwards, but at rest in what it is, in its own repose and a kind of self-perception [or "self-consciousness," *συναίσθησις*], and in this consciousness and self-perception it sees what comes after it, as far as it can, and seeks no longer, but has accomplished a vision [*θεώρημα*] of splendour and delight (III.8.4.15–22).

This passage introduces the notion of self-consciousness (*συναίσθησις*) into the account of productive contemplation: the contemplation that is productive of the sensible world is a contemplation involving a *psyche*'s consciousness of itself. Nevertheless, the central question remains: How is this contemplative self-consciousness productive of the sensible world?

As a step towards the understanding and reconstruction of the doctrine of productive contemplation, it will prove useful to consider Plotinus' conception of the *psyche* in the light of the distinctively Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides*. According to the Neoplatonic reading of the second half of the *Parmenides*, each of the first five (affirmative) hypotheses corresponds to and is descriptive of a particular level of reality. The third hypothesis, *Parmenides* 155e4–157b5, which is described as a "corollary on becoming in time" rather than as an independent hypothesis by F. M. Cornford,<sup>13</sup> deals with the metaphysical level of *psyche*, according to the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato. While dealing with *psyche*, the third hypothesis serves as a sort of synthesis of the negative conclusions of the first hypothesis and the parallel positive conclusions of the second hypothesis. Thus, the *psyche* is conceived as an entity that somehow, in its nature, reconciles the negations of the first hypothesis with the affirmations of the second.<sup>14</sup>

However, since the *psyche* cannot be, for example, both at rest and in motion at the same time, the *psyche*'s reconciliation of such opposites must be spread out over time, from which comes the derivation of time at the level of *psyche* for the Neoplatonists (compare *Ennead* III.7[45].11, discussed later in this section). Moreover, the actual passage in the *psyche* from rest to motion cannot take place

at a particular time, since the *psyche* cannot be in both of two such contrary states at the same time; rather, this passage or change takes place in what Plato calls "the instant [*τὸ ἐξαιφνης*]," an "absurd thing" that occupies no time at all (see the *Parmenides* 156d1–e3). Thus, the *psyche*'s essential activity—which, in effect, amounts to the reconciliation of the opposite conclusions of the first two hypotheses of the *Parmenides*—occupies no time at all, though the possibility of this reconciliation presupposes the continued existence of the *psyche* over time. Moreover, the *psyche* is in a sense pure negativity since (at least in the course of its essential mediating activity) it is neither, for example, at rest nor in motion (nor is it any one of any pair of such contraries). Rather, the *psyche* makes the transition from rest to motion possible (and from any other state to its opposite), by providing a neutral point, the instant, at which this transition can take place. Hence, the Neoplatonic interpretation of the third hypothesis of the *Parmenides* reveals the *psyche* to be in itself a locus of pure negativity.<sup>15</sup>

Given this analysis of the *psyche* as pure negativity, I think that the doctrine of productive contemplation may begin to make some sense. We must begin by considering what it is that Nature contemplates when it contemplatively produces the sensible world. The previous quotation cited from III.8.4 suggests that Nature's object here is simply Nature itself as a *psyche*, since Nature is said to be "at rest in what it is, in its own repose and a kind of self-consciousness" (lines 18–19); however, we must not be led to think that Nature's object is itself pure negativity. Rather, its object is itself reflecting the intelligible world of *eide* in *logoi* (or psychical representations) because Nature "stays unmoved as it makes, and stays in itself, and is a *logos*" (III.8.3.2–3). In short, the object of Nature's (*psyche*'s) self-consciousness is really the intelligible world as reflected in Nature (*psyche*) (compare VI.5.9.23–48).

The question now arises: Where does the negativity of *psyche* come in? I suggest that the negativity of *psyche*, for Plotinus, consists in the negativity of self-consciousness, which sets itself over against the *eide* as something separate and distinct. As something distinct from Being, of course, self-consciousness must set itself up as (quite literally) nonbeing. Prior to the exercise of self-conscious contemplation, the *psyche* was in noetic identity with the intelligible world; however, once the *self* is added to the objects of *psyche*'s contemplation, the *psyche* itself becomes more of a nonentity. This is made quite clear at VI.5.12.19–22, where Plotinus writes:

Formerly, you were the All [i.e., the intelligible world]. But, because you added something different to the All, you made yourself a lesser thing by this addition. For the addition was not from the All—you can add nothing to that—but from nonbeing.

(Note the use of the second person in this passage, which helps to emphasize the fact that the issue at hand here is self-conscious contemplation.) In passing, it is worthy of note that the *psyche*'s interest in itself, its contemplative self-consciousness, is the source of the *psyche*'s moral evil according to Plotinus. This interest in self makes the *psyche* "a lesser thing," that is, a morally deficient being. The moral quality of self-consciousness is made strikingly clear at the

beginning of the treatise "On the Three Primary Hypostases," V.1[10].1.3–5, where Plotinus writes:

Thus, the beginning of evil for individual *psychai* is their audacity [τόλμα], their generation, their first difference, and their desire to be self-centered.

But, now, how does this doctrine of self-consciousness explain the contemplative production of the sensible world? I suggest that this is accomplished in the following way. When ■ *psyche* self-consciously contemplates (or, as in the present case, when Nature self-consciously contemplates) an *eidos* (for example, that of oak tree), what it is actually contemplating is that *eidos* as reflected in some *logos* or psychical representation. In other words, the *psyche* (i.e., Nature) is contemplating a *logos*, which is at once both a reflection of the *eidos* of oak tree and an aspect of the *psyche* itself, since each *psyche* is a "sum of *logoi*" (VI.2[43].5.12). The self-consciousness of the *psyche*—by virtue of its desire to be self-centered, its desire to emphasize itself as a locus of pure negativity—sets its *logos* of oak tree over against the *eidos* of oak tree, attempting to set this *logos* up as something separate and distinct from the *eidos*. It is this *logos* of oak tree, made to seem separate and distinct from its *eidos* by the power of *psyche*'s (i.e., Nature's) negativity, that we call an oak tree in the sensible world. It is Nature's similar treatment of its *logoi* of other *eide* that leads to the production of the whole of the sensible world, with all of that world's complexity, all of its "splendour and delight."<sup>16</sup>

2. On the basis of the preceding analysis of *psyche*'s central role in Plotinus' theory of eidetic causation, we are now in ■ position to sketch a Plotinian solution to Aristotle's objection concerning the intermittent causal efficacy of the *eide*. That *psyche* which Plotinus calls "Nature" effects the (omni-)presence of the intelligible world to the sensible world through its exercise of productive contemplation. One of the salient features of this contemplative activity is that it is discursive; that is, it involves a successive sort of understanding that can take place only in time. The essentially temporal character of *psyche*'s discursive contemplation is brought out in the Neoplatonic interpretation of the third hypothesis of the *Parmenides* as description of the metaphysical level occupied by *psyche*. If the *psyche* is (in its essential nature) the locus of the reconciliation of such opposites as motion and rest, and if such a reconciliation can occur only over a period of time, then it seems clear that the *psyche* must exist and act in time, at least to the extent that it is involved in some form of nonnoetic (and distinctively psychical) contemplation.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, as Plotinus makes clear in his important treatise "On Eternity and Time" (III.7[45]), time owes its derivation to the discursive character of *psyche*'s essential activity (its "life"). At III.7.11.27–45, Plotinus develops his theory of the psychical nature of time (a theory designed to incorporate the view of *Timaeus* 37d5–7 that time is "an everlasting image moving according to number" of eternity) as follows:

... *psyche*, making the sensible world in imitation of that other world, moving with a motion which is not that which exists there, but like it, and intending to be an image of it, first of all put itself into time, which it made instead of eternity, and then handed over that which came into being as ■ slave to time, by making

the whole of it exist in time and encompassing all its ways with time. . . . For as *psyche* presents one activity after another, and then again another in ordered succession, it produces the succession along with activity. . . . So the spreading out of life involves time; life's continual progress involves continuity of time, and life which is past involves past time. So would it be sense to say that time is the life of *psyche* in a movement of passage from one way of life to another? [Yes].<sup>18</sup>

When it is recalled that, at VI.5.12.1, Plotinus answers the question, "How is Being present to the sensible world [πάρεστιν οὖν πῶς]?, with the three words, "As one life [ὡς ζωὴ μία], it becomes clear that the temporal character of the *psyche*'s (Nature's) nonnoetic discursive contemplation (which is productive of the sensible world) must play some role in the Plotinian theory of eidetic causation. This role is indicated by Plotinus at VI.5.11.15–16, where time is described as "being dispersed always toward separation [τοῦ μὲν σκιδναμένου ἀεὶ πρὸς διάστασιν]."<sup>19</sup> Hence, we may expect the temporal character of the *psyche*'s productive contemplation to figure in the Plotinian explanation (by eidetic causation) of the separation and disjointedness that are characteristic of the sensible world.

In fact, the discursive and, thus, temporal character of productive contemplation provides a solution to Aristotle's problem of the intermittent causal efficacy of the *eide*. If the *psyche* engaged in self-conscious, nonnoetic, discursive contemplation is continually redirecting its contemplative attention towards different *eide*, then the *logoi* derived from this contemplation and the particulars constituting the sensible world (which simply are these *logoi* set up as separate and distinct by the *psyche*'s self-consciousness) will be continually coming into being and passing away. This has the effect that only certain *eide* can be said to be fully present to the sensible world at any given time since only certain *eide* are the objects of Nature's productive contemplation at that time. Thus, each *eidos*'s causal efficacy vis-à-vis the sensible world is not continuous but intermittent because the *psyche*'s productive contemplation is the central link in the chain of eidetic causation.

In the preceding account, I have ignored an alternative theory accounting for the intermittent character of eidetic causation which appears to play a major role in VI.4–5 (e.g., VI.4.3.11–23; 11.3–14; VI.5.8.1–39). This alternative theory seems to attribute to matter a role in the causation of the sensible world, and the intermittent character of eidetic causation is explained by reference to the doctrine of "reception according to the capacity of the recipient." Since this theory appears to be in blatant contradiction to the thesis of the impassibility of matter (argued at great length at III.6[26].6–19), I think the theory sketched in this paper must be regarded as more representative of Plotinus, as well as being more satisfactory from a philosophical point of view.<sup>20</sup>

### III

At the beginning of this paper, I quoted Émile Bréhier as saying that the "fourth and fifth treatises of the sixth *Ennead* . . . can easily be read without any reference to Greek philosophy."<sup>21</sup> I have argued, to the contrary, that these treatises on "The

Integral Omnipresence of Being" provide Plotinus' carefully developed elucidation of the concept of eidetic causation or participation, a concept that lies at the heart of metaphysical Platonism. This generates an obvious question: On what basis does Bréhier divorce VI.4-5 from the Greek metaphysical tradition?

Bréhier apparently regards the main task of VI.4-5 to be the elucidation of Plotinus' doctrine concerning "the relations of the individual soul to the universal Soul."<sup>22</sup> He goes on to argue that Plotinus' treatment of the relation between the individual *psyche* and the hypostasis *Psyche* is strikingly similar to the account of the relation between the Atman and Brahman to be found in the Upanishads<sup>23</sup> and strikingly different from anything to be found in the Greek metaphysical tradition.<sup>24</sup> It is on this basis that Bréhier separates VI.4-5 from the mainstream of the history of Platonism.

To be sure, there can be no doubt that Plotinus' monopsychism plays a significant role in the argument of the treatises on omnipresence (e.g., VI.4.14-15 are devoted to answering standard objections to the monopsychistic theory affirmed in VI.4.6). However, if the general argument of this paper is sound, then one of Plotinus' main concerns in VI.4-5 is to develop a philosophically adequate account of eidetic causation or participation; the doctrine of monopsychism comes up in the course of his analysis of eidetic causation, but it never assumes the status of the central problem of the treatises. Thus, I think we may conclude that Bréhier's divorce of VI.4-5 from the Greek metaphysical tradition rests on a certain misdirection of emphasis in his interpretation of the treatises, a misdirection of emphasis towards the problems of monopsychism and away from the problems of eidetic causation and participation.

I have claimed that the doctrine of monopsychism comes up in the course of Plotinus' analysis of eidetic causation, and this raises a final question: Why does Plotinus introduce a theory of monopsychism into his account of eidetic causation? I think this question can be answered along the following lines. In Section II of this paper, Plotinus' account of the *psyche*'s causal relation to the sensible world was discussed as a central aspect of this theory of eidetic causation, and I think it is fair to describe this theory of the sensible world as a form of metaphysical idealism. This theory, in common with all idealistic accounts of the sensible world (e.g., phenomenalism), faces the difficult problem of reconciling the intersubjective accessibility of the sensible world with the idealistic account of its existence. I suggest that Plotinus, in common with many other idealistic metaphysicians, offers a theory of monopsychism in order to explain (on idealistic principles) how there can be one sensible world, equally accessible to all experiencing subjects (or *psychai*).<sup>25</sup>

This explanation of Plotinus' adoption of monopsychism in the theory of eidetic causation may seem rather speculative; however, I think it derives some support from an obscure passage in VI.5. At VI.5.9.1-13, Plotinus offers the following argument in defense of monopsychism:

Now, if someone were to maintain that the totality of the elements already having come into being are [brought together] in a single spherical figure, then it

would be clear that the sphere is not produced by many [causes] working with regard to parts, one part being separated from another which itself works toward the production of a part. Rather, the cause of the production must be one, producing as a whole in itself and not producing different parts of the sphere by different parts of itself. Otherwise, there would be many again, unless you refer the production to a unity without parts, or, better, unless the thing producing the sphere is a unity without parts which is not itself spread throughout the sphere by the producing; rather, the whole sphere is dependent upon the thing producing it. Thus, one and the same life possesses the sphere, the sphere itself having been placed in one life; moreover, all the things in the sphere [i.e., the totality of the elements] are in one life. Therefore, all *psychai* are one.

At first glance, this argument may seem rather peculiar since the argument itself (lines 1-10) appears to establish only that there must be a single cause of the totality of the elements (i.e., of the sensible world). The monopsychistic conclusion (indeed, the "psychistic" conclusion) is derived from the identification of this single cause of the sensible with a single life, and in the light of Section II, such an identification is not at all unexpected. What remains somewhat unclear is the reasoning that Plotinus uses to support the claim that the productive cause of the sensible world must be a unity. At one level, we might see in this an application of the traditional Platonic principle that "like causes like," the unity of the sensible thus being caused by the unity of the *psyche* responsible for it. However, at a deeper level, I think that the obscure words of VI.5.9 can be seen to mark Plotinus' recognition of the important fact that the sensible world is a public world. To explain the sensible world in terms of a multiplicity of psychical causes (particularly if this multiplicity were to include all individual *psychai*) would appear to leave the intersubjective accessibility and, indeed, the "objectivity" of this world ■ mystery. Thus, I suggest that Plotinus introduces monopsychism into his account of eidetic causation in order to solve a general problem that faces any idealistic account of the sensible world.

My consideration of several major problems dealt with by Plotinus in VI.4-5 clearly shows that the treatises on "The Integral Omnipresence of Being" fall squarely within the tradition of Greek metaphysics. In these treatises, Plotinus deals at length with a number of philosophical problems that stem from the fundamental problem of metaphysical Platonism—the problem of characterizing the relation between the intelligible world and the sensible world. In coming to grips with these difficulties, Plotinus offers us a subtle and carefully developed explication of the Platonic concept of eidetic causation or participation.

# Cantor's Sets and Proclus' Wholes

ROBERT S. BRUMBAUGH

## I

This paper is rather an agenda for discussion than a finished argument. I started out with the intention of translating Stamatis's 1958 article on Cantor and Proclus, as the basis for a reevaluation of Proclus as a mathematician. (The article, which has received some attention in Scandinavia, but not in England or the United States, is Evangelos Stamatis, "Peri tēs theōrias tōn Synolōn para Platōni," *Praktika tēs Akademias Athenōn*, 1958, pp. 298–303.) Rather soon, however, it occurred to me that Proclus' philosophical position exactly fits the needs of contemporary mathematicians committed to *logicism* as a philosophic context for their mathematics. The crucial point here, for the mathematician, is that certain axioms which are needed, but which seem somehow extramathematical, appear in Neoplatonism as *philosophic* truths.

It next occurred to me that the similarities between Proclus' logic of parts and wholes and Cantor's operations with sets justified identifying set theory with the formal development of that science studying the kinship of all mathematical art which Plato projected in *Republic VII*, but which was not formally developed in

the classical period. This, if correct, offers a welcome addition to our Platonic formal logic and dialectic.

But the most interesting aspect of the paper was one that I recognized last, namely, that it is a case study of the way in which Neoplatonism can clarify and discuss twentieth-century technical philosophic problems. It is not only in foundations of mathematics that this can happen. The whole theory of democracy, whether called "participatory" or not, depends on a proper analysis of participation. The question of authority involves decisions as to the status and effectiveness of the principles of hierarchy in viable organizational structures. Other contemporary issues, ranging from psychology to religion, invite exploration of the implications of Neoplatonism.

## II

Over the past twelve months, American mathematicians have opened a lively discussion of the foundations of mathematics. The most popular position is one called *logicism*. This view is "realistic" (i.e., Platonic) in its view of the subject matter of the discipline; and it *defines* "mathematics" as the theorems that can be deduced from Cantor's set theory as formalized in eight axioms by Zermelo and Fraenkel (the Z-F axioms).<sup>1</sup>

One difficulty with the logicist project is that two of the needed axioms seem extramathematical in their stipulations of existence and constructibility. But these conditions, as well as the presupposed metaphysical "realism," would be satisfied if our colleagues would take Neoplatonism as their contextual philosophy. At least, this is one thesis my paper will explore.

The current discussion suggests a converse relation, as well. In 1958, in an original but highly technical paper, Professor Stamatis suggested that one section of Proclus' *Elements* (sec. H) anticipated the key definitions (if not the formalization) of Cantor's general theory of sets.<sup>2</sup> If this is true, it suggests that we must reevaluate Proclus' ability as a mathematician. Beyond that, it suggests to me that Cantor may finally have found the formal structure of a general mathematical science that studies "how the [other] mathematical sciences are akin." Plato projected this as the final study prior to "dialectic" in *Republic VII*; Iamblichus put together an anthology on the topic; Proclus, if Stamatis is right, almost hit upon it; but its full development may have had to wait until A.D. 1883. If so, we may be able to incorporate a new and powerful formal tool as part of our contemporary Neoplatonic philosophy.

## III

The Neoplatonists, Iamblichus and Proclus, thought that there should be a discipline of universal mathematics mediating between the world of ordinary language and mystical silence. But because the mathematics of their time was dominated by geometry, a suitable formal system was not at hand. Proclus, indeed, in pursuit of the needed study wrote a *Commentary on Book I of Euclid's Elements*.<sup>3</sup> The result



was a creditable venture in the history of geometry, but later scholars have found the talent revealed was moderately mathematical, if at all.<sup>4</sup> In quite another context, his *Elements of Theology*, Proclus started along another line by setting up—verbally, however, not algebraically—some theorems about parts, wholes, and elements that were more general than Aristotelian logic or Euclidean geometry.<sup>5</sup> The scheme vaguely outlined there was filled out in tight formal detail in 1883, by Georg Cantor, under the name of *general set theory*.<sup>6</sup>

The recognition of the similarities of Proclus and Cantor was first presented, as I mentioned, in the paper by E. Stamatis in the *Praktika tēs Akademias Athenōn* in 1958.<sup>7</sup> This article, in modern Greek and in a journal philosophers do not ordinarily read, has attracted some attention in Scandinavia, but has gone unnoticed in England and America. Meanwhile, Neoplatonists today have not claimed that their philosophic position is a viable one for precise work in the contemporary philosophy of mathematics, formal logic, or philosophy of science. By and large, its studies have been restricted to natural language and have tended, within that restriction, to focus on *eikasia* where emanation reaches the level of semblance, or on *noesis* where discipline attains mystical culmination. That concentration clearly does not contribute very much to current logic, physics, ethics, or politics; and even might lead a skeptic to wonder whether Neoplatonism can, by our century, represent more than antiquarian studies of magic, literary footnotes, and an invitation to mystical theology.

#### IV

One very modest intention of my present discussion is to return to Proclus and to argue that we should revise the generally accepted notion that he was not a very talented mathematician or logician. This appraisal, which rests mainly on his Euclid commentary (plus his rather wooden work with Aristotelian syllogistic), suggests that his contributions do not fall in the history of formal science proper. In turn, since Proclus was, of all the Neoplatonists, the one most enthusiastic about formalization, this suggests in turn that precision and Neoplatonic formalism may be incompatible; that our philosophy cannot be formalized; and even that, given any question of contemporary interest, we are likely, at best, to express a misty grievance over the fall of the Soul from Mind to Time.

As a ground for this reappraisal of Proclus, consider the following argument. Sir Thomas Heath, whose heroes were the great geometers, says in his chapter on Eudoxus that the talent of Eudoxus is evident from the fact that his definition of "number" is an exact anticipation of Dedekind's epoch-making definition of a "cut."<sup>8</sup> If the thesis of Stamatis's article is correct, his claim that Proclus anticipated the definitions of Cantor's general set theory would lead to the parallel conclusion that Proclus' talent—for mathematics of this algebraic type, even if not for plane geometry—must have been somewhat comparable to Cantor's.

What that order of talent is can be indicated by a brief note on the contemporary importance of set theory. We have already seen that contemporary proponents of the position of logicism as the foundation of mathematics simply define math-

ematics as the theorems formally deducible from the axioms of set theory.<sup>9</sup> And as we look at the special cases this includes, the inventory is impressive. This approach provides a new basis for the foundations of mathematics; it gives an entire new precision to the treatment of "infinite" amounts and numbers; it sharpens the definitions of "relative frequency" which ground the study of probability; it includes mathematical logic as a special case (hence it also includes Aristotelian logic, which is, as seen by a modern mathematician, simply a cumbersome and degenerate case of mathematical logic). In short, Cantor's achievement certainly ranks with Dedekind's, and so by an extension of Heath's argument, we should conclude that Proclus and Eudoxus are somewhere close together.

#### V

Turning now to modern mathematics, I want to suggest that the current logicist program for developing the science is possible if, but perhaps only if, Neoplatonic metaphysics is a correct description of reality. Recall that the logicist program calls for the deduction of mathematics from the eight Z-F axioms that Zermelo and Fraenkel formulated as the basis of set theory.<sup>10</sup> Now, a recent appraisal of this enterprise in the *American Mathematical Monthly*, by an author who favors it, concedes that the program "is only 75% successful" because "two of the Z-F axioms have empirical content and so are not properly 'logical.'" These are the so-called Axiom of Infinity and the Axiom of Choice.<sup>11</sup>

The *Axiom of Infinity* asserts that there exist a transfinite number of entities on each level of set "elements." The *Axiom of Choice* asserts that a mathematician can construct special subsets by appropriate selection of elements from given sets. (But this "construction" is a definition by selective attention, not a creation *ex nihilo*.)

In effect, the comment that these axioms are not purely logical, on the level of *dianoia*, seems correct. The reason is, I think, that the axioms in question are rather philosophical descriptions or specifications of the universe in which mathematical logicism is possible. Thus the Axiom of Infinity describes the world of nature, with its separate individuals—its divisible material objects and successive generations of plants and animals. Given the Neoplatonic principle of limitation, which makes natural individuals *definite*, and the principle of plenitude which makes their generations *successive*, this condition of infinity will be satisfied. The Axiom of Choice describes the way of knowing of a human soul, which after its descent to time must recover ideas discursively and progressively. The ideas are together in a timeless system of relations, but we must learn this piece by piece, by acts of selective attention. Thus the first philosophical axiom stipulates that the world, being presupposed, is one that has definite individuality and succession on the relevant levels, and the second that the world also has freedom for selective attention and inquiry on the level of soul.

As a basis for discussion, let me define in more detail what I mean by "a Neoplatonic universe." In the first place, such a universe is stratified: there are in it abstract entities, concrete individual instances, and collections of like individ-

uals. These differ in their properties, but they are related. The abstract entities define—and in some sense cause—the extensional classes that *exemplify* them, and they are *instantiated* by the individual members of those classes. Things are arranged in hierarchies, with the more abstract and general entities serving as explanations and unifying causes for less general orders. One fundamental characteristic, then, is that there are at least these three levels, which are distinct but which are causally connected. There is also a background limitation of hierarchical structure and a foreground plenitude of contrast differentiation. Any two different forms are included in some hierarchy that has a third single form as its vertex. And any one form can be pluralized, on a more specific level, by division through cross-classification, adding contrary specifying attributes. Forms retain their self-identity; thus, from the standpoint of *F*, *FA* and *FA'* are equally *F*; and, similarly, *FA* is self-identical in *FAB* and *FAB'*. This algebraic symbolism avoids muddled puzzlements of "late learners" trapped in ordinary language, or limited to the visual constructions of plane geometry.<sup>12</sup>

Notice that where some Platonic universes may be tolerant of continuity and borderline cases, Neoplatonic ones are more definite and restrictive, and have quantum jumps. Thus the levels of being, though internally related, are discontinuous; participation of individual instances in form is subject to the law of contradiction; the membership of an extensional class is exactly determined. This may mean that the universe we have defined is more abstract and tidier than the one we actually inhabit. But since the two are isomorphic, we can use universal mathematics as the key to the world's structure with logic, ethics, aesthetics, and so on, as special cases.

## VI

In the present context, however, it is the other direction of the relation between the mathematical logician and the Neoplatonic philosopher that is of more interest to us. We may or we may not persuade a majority of the members of the American Mathematical Society to join us because we are Neoplatonists. But should we join *them* because they have formalized fundamental logical rules for our world of Neoplatonism? I think that we should, and that the alliance may give some new ideas to our philosophy. Let me turn now to that formal logic, via a more detailed consideration of set theory.<sup>13</sup>

In *Republic* VII, Plato recognized the need to develop two new mathematical sciences. The first of these was to be "solid geometry," a systematic deductive study of geometry in three dimensions.<sup>14</sup> The second, coming at the end of the mathematics courses and at the beginning of the study of dialectic, was to be a study of "how all the mathematical sciences are akin," "what they have in common."<sup>15</sup> No special name is given this in the *Republic*, but Aristotle's "universal mathematics"—a discipline he defined but did not develop—sounds rather like the same thing.<sup>16</sup> In any case, what the mathematical sciences do have in common is an abstract formal structure and a clear deductive proof procedure. It is interesting that the first of these desired discoveries was made within Plato's own lifetime, by Theaetetus and Eudoxus in the Academy; whereas the second had to await the

nineteenth century, and the work of Georg Cantor, for its full formal realization.<sup>17</sup> In the interim, the idea was not wholly forgotten: Iamblichus, for example, wrote a treatise (or anthology) on *The Community of the Mathematical Sciences*, and Proclus, as we have mentioned, had some very general formalization—particularly of the relations of forms, classes extensionally defined, and parts—in his *Elements of Theology*.<sup>18</sup>

But what is set theory? It has been described, half seriously, as a general formal system of which everything else in mathematics is a special case. The key to the enterprise is given by two of Cantor's characterizations of "set."

He writes: "A set is ■ bringing together of determinate clearly differentiable objects (*Objekte*), whether of our intuition or our thought—which [objects] will be called the elements of the set—into a whole."

In another, more illuminating, passage we find the following:

I view as collections, or sets, all multiplicities which are such as to be thought of as one, that is, all determinate collections of elements of such a kind that it is possible to find a single criterion capable of bringing them together, and I believe that in this way I define something which is akin to that which Plato, in his dialogue *Philebus*, calls "the mixed."

These definitions are clear enough, though very general. They suggest that wherever there is a Platonic form, it can serve as a criterion for class membership; the extensional definition of such a form will be the total collection of its instances, regarded as a whole; and, as we have seen, each "element" will be such that it determinately does possess the attribute which serves as membership criterion for the extensional set.

To see how this theory develops, I will follow the presentation of a modern mathematics text that has become a classic, Courant and Robbins, *What Is Mathematics?*, in their summary of "the algebra of sets" (pp. 108–117).<sup>19</sup>

At the outset, sets are defined in terms very like Cantor's.

A set is defined by any property or attribute *A* (Italic *A*) which each object considered must either possess or not possess: those objects which possess the property form a corresponding set *A* (Roman *A*). Thus, if we consider the integers and the property Italic *A* is that of being a prime, the corresponding set Roman *A*(*i*) is the set of all primes 2, 3, 5, 7 . . . .<sup>20</sup>

An important additional notion is next introduced.

*I* will denote a fixed set of objects of any nature, called the universal set or universe of discourse, and Roman *A*, *B*, *C*, will denote arbitrary subsets of *I*.<sup>21</sup>

This addition has the effect, desirable for our purposes, of adding a principle of hierarchy to the full generality of the first definition. For every convergent hierarchy (converging at a single topmost form) constitutes a universe of discourse within which subdivisions can be made by what Plato called "the great method of division"; but the top term (Courant and Robbins's *I*) cannot be defined within its hierarchy; it can be treated only if it can be included in a more general universe of discourse.

We will now turn briefly to the defined relations and algebraic operations of

sets. *Definition of subset*: A is a subset of B if there is no object in A that is not also in B (written  $A \subset B$  or  $B \supset A$ ). *Definition of equality*: If both  $A \subset B$  and  $B \subset A$ , we say A equals B ( $A = B$ ). Two operations are next defined: Set union (or logical sum) and set intersection (or logical product). *Definition of logical sum*: The sum of A and B ( $A + B$ , or  $A \vee B$ ) is the set of all the objects that are in either A or B, including those in both. Thus, if  $A = \{1,2,3\}$  and  $B = \{2,3,4\}$ ,  $A + B = \{1,2,3,4\}$ . *Definition of logical product*: The logical product of A and B (written  $A \cdot B$ , or  $AB$ ) is the set consisting of only those elements that are in both A and B. Thus, if  $A = \{1,2,3\}$  and  $B = \{2,3,5\}$ ,  $A \cdot B = \{2,3\}$ .

This system is more general than arithmetic. Taking a notion from Boethius's *de trinitate* (where it is introduced to defend Christianity against the charge of tritheism), we can say that this is an algebra for operation in the category of substance, whereas our ordinary arithmetic operates in the category of quantity. Thus "A and A" equals A, since A is not changed by being twice referred to. All the rules of the ordinary algebra of numbers are also valid in the theory of sets. Three laws, however, which have no numerical counterparts, "give this algebra of sets a simpler structure than the algebra of numbers."<sup>22</sup> These laws (10, 11, and 13 in the Courant and Robbins list) are:  $A + A = A$ ;  $AA = A$ ;  $A + (BC) = (A + B) \cdot (A + C)$ . In addition, there is the notion of "complement": the complement of A,  $A'$ , is the set of all the objects in I that are not in A. Thus,  $A + A' = I$ , and  $AA' = O$ .

The power of this basic formal system becomes clear when we look at some of its special applications and cases.

We can look now at some special applications and cases. The School mathematics Study Group has devised texts that show how ordinary algebra and arithmetic can be developed as one set of special cases of set theory. Mathematical logic can also be treated as an interpretation, both as class calculus and propositional calculus. The theory is thus general enough to include, or to be isomorphic with, a formal scheme that represents valid deductive reasoning in a symbolic form. The development of the computer rests on an extension of propositional calculus, originating in the recognition that "truth values," 0 and 1, can also represent open and closed values for two-position electric switches.<sup>23</sup> Thus, in handling information,  $A + B = 1$  if  $A = 1$  or  $B = 1$ , and  $A \cdot B = 1$  if  $A = 1$  and  $B = 1$ . Calculation in this system involves only very high-speed repetitions of the operation of "logical addition." In effect, this is a dialectical scheme remembering and comparing patterns of relations of being, same, and other. The superiority of mathematical logic and computer programs to the Aristotelian syllogistic system will be evident to anyone who has ever tried to design switches and circuitry for the automatic checking of the validity of Aristotelian syllogism and sorites.

In addition, as was mentioned before, set theory leads naturally to a new way of defining probability—an interesting bonus but perhaps one not immediately relevant to our present philosophical interests. However, it also leads to remarkable results when it considers "infinity": transfinite sets with transfinite cardinal and ordinal numbers. Precise definitions of orders of infinity, and of "greater than" among transfinite numbers, clears up a good many of the confusions hidden

behind the word "infinite." Further, it was shown by Robert Hartman that this extended set theory offers a model for formal value theory that avoids the counter-intuitive results of value theories that use only finite numbers for value comparison. This last point is philosophically very interesting since a good Platonic formalism ought to have applications to the theory of value as well as to more formal, abstract ontology.<sup>24</sup>

## VII

Let me now turn to Stamatis's suggested equivalence of Cantor's sets and Proclus' wholes, in his article "Peri tēs Theōrias tōn Synolōn para Platōni," *Praktika tēs Akademias Athenōn* 33 (1958), pp. 298–303.

The article opens with a quotation of Cantor's definition of set with its reference to Plato's *Philebus* at the end, which I quoted above. Stamatis next cites two passages from Plato's *Parmenides* (137C, 157D–E), which suggest that there could be a formalized treatment of parts and wholes. And he finds exactly such a treatment carried out in section VIII of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, more specifically in propositions 66–69.<sup>25</sup> These are the following:

Proclus, *Prop. 66*:

All beings are related to one another either as wholes or parts, either as same or different.

Proclus, *Prop. 67*:

All wholeness is either prior to the parts, or arises from the parts collectively, or is in the parts singly. For we see that the form is the cause of each whole, and we call this the whole prior to the parts, which exists in the cause. Or the form is [considered] as participated in by the parts. And this is in one of two ways. For either the parts all share it, [as a collection] and it is this whole made of the [totality of] the parts, which will be destroyed if any part is removed; or each single part is a participant in it, so that each part is generated by its participation in the whole. And this makes the part a partial (*merikōs*) whole. Thus the whole as it exists [extensionally] is constituted from its parts; but as cause, it is prior to its parts; and as participated in, it is in each single part. And this holds even to the limiting whole [i.e., a least part] which is like the whole composed from parts, at least when it is not a part just by chance, but able to be included in a whole the parts of which are also wholes.

Proclus, *Prop. 68*:

Every whole which is in a part, is a part of the whole of the parts. For if it is a part, it is a part of some whole, and either of the whole in it itself—so that the whole is spoken of as the whole in the part; and in that way it is a part of itself, and the part will be equal to the whole, and in that case they are the same—or [it is part] of some other whole. And if of another, either it is the only part of this—and thus, again, it differs from the whole in nothing—because one existent part (*element*) partakes of one; or it is able to be included in another set, of which the parts are wholes.

Proclus, *Prop. 69*:

Everything which is a whole of parts participates in the wholeness which is prior to the parts.

Stamatis suggests that the three part-to-whole relations Proclus distinguishes match Cantor's basic definitions of his set theory.<sup>20</sup> Thus, what Cantor calls the criterion or defining attribute (Italic A, etc.) is what Proclus calls a "*holon*" in the sense of an *eidōs*, the "whole prior to its parts." (Proclus goes beyond Cantor here in assigning these *eidē* a causal role.) The whole "as existing," that is, as the extensional set of all the elements that have the defining attribute, is Cantor's set Roman A, exactly matching Proclus' "whole as coming to be from the togetherness of its component parts." Proclus' notion of a "part" and a "least part," however, does not exactly match Cantor's "element." Cantor's elements must have definite identities, so that they are unambiguously self-identical or other; Proclus' parts seem to satisfy that condition. The elements must be related to the Italic A, and so on, defining attributes by a definite either-or relation in Cantor's system. Proclus seems to leave room for "parts" that "are parts just by chance," and so do not imitate unity or wholeness in the way more proper parts do. In Cantor's scheme, it seems that the "objects" we perceive or think about are also "elements," and that for any attribute, every "object" either falls in the set Roman A defined by that attribute or in the complement of that set, Roman A'. But Proclus is less restrictive in his ontology. In the twentieth century, there have been theories of "fuzzy sets" where the notions of part or element are closer to Proclus than to Cantor.<sup>21</sup>

Cantor's scheme is clearer and easier to handle than Proclus' would be even if it were formalized. But it is clear that Stamatis's thesis is correct, and that Proclus' "wholes" are defined by the same three conditions used later to define his "sets" by Cantor.

In the context I have sketched, this not only commits us to a reappraisal of the role of Proclus and Iamblichus in the history of mathematics, and of their mathematical-logical abilities, but it also commits us to taking sides in the current controversy over the foundations of mathematics. We are not only committed to the *logician* position, with its "realism" and set theoretical formalization, but we come prepared to explain and defend the "philosophic" axioms necessary for the logicist enterprise axioms that fall in the field of metaphysics and epistemology rather than being formal logical axioms proper.

### VIII

Set theory exactly matches the worldview of a Neoplatonic modification of Plato's metaphysics—perhaps influenced by Aristotle—in which forms ingress in all-or-nothing way, and beings are located definitely and determinately on one or another level of emanation. This modification seems to me to correct, or at least to offer an alternative to, Plato's reliance on continuity and geometry, and to give more formal precision to the definition of the basic structure of participation.<sup>22</sup>

When Plato offered his project for the new science to explore the kinship of mathematical sciences, it was evidently something like formal logic that he had in mind. But for a thousand years, as the record of the Platonic scholia shows, his followers tried to realize this goal either by a "logic" of geometrical symbolism, or

by an analysis of natural language ordered in Aristotelian syllogism.<sup>23</sup> What was needed to carry out the project was—as Proclus saw—something more like Aristotle's "universal mathematics," a nonverbal formalism like algebra rather than like geometry. And the success of Cantor's system suggests that, in fact, a philosophy of formalism should consider his *Mengenlehre* as a leading candidate for the desired science of the formal structure of reality.

The materials are ready at hand for assembling a new systematic treatise on Neoplatonic philosophy, as an expansion of Proclus' system. Chapters could begin with metaphysics and general set theory; they could proceed to formal logic; then general arithmetic and algebra can be derived; and a theory of probability follows. The study of transfinite number is an elegant and useful extension. (For the moment, I will bypass the way in which we will introduce geometry.) And as a final section, there is already a good formal beginning toward extending the transfinite numbers and using them as models for a formal axiology, a mathematics of value.<sup>24</sup> This could bring together Cantor and Proclus: the pure mathematical formalism of the one, in the philosophic context of Platonism (and attendant mysticism) of the other.

# The Mathematics of Mysticism: Plotinus and Proclus

CARL R. KORDIG

One of the two great Neoplatonists is Plotinus. Dominus, Syrianus, Aedesius, and Iamblichus followed. Much more important, however, than any of these men is the celebrated Proclus of Athens. I wish to deal with Plotinus' views here. I also wish to deal with the later Scholarch Proclus Diodachus. I will focus on the question of self-reference and some related, logical-mathematical issues.

Proclus possessed a wide knowledge concerning the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, and his predecessors. He combined with this knowledge a great interest in and enthusiasm for religion, both theory and practice. For example, he seems to have seriously believed he received, in some sense, revelations and was, in some sense of the word, the reincarnation of the Neo-Pythagorean Nicomachus. And at one time he toyed with the idea of solving the participation problem—the problem of the one and the many—by locating the participation relation itself in various occult “symbols” that reside in certain stones, herbs, and animals. Some say that Proclus was superstitious, that he believed in mermaids and goat-footed Pans and that his arguments from analogy were not always perfect as they might have been; for example, “from the fact that the Man in the Moon has eyes and ears but no

nose or mouth he can argue seriously that [all the] astral gods possess only the two higher senses” (Proclus *The Elements of Theology*, E. R. Dodds, trans., 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, p. xxv). This is one picture that has been painted of Proclus. There are others and surprisingly sometimes by the same people. He had a universal wealth of information and learning at his disposal, such as his knowledge of the Pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, and the earlier Neoplatonists. In this he had a serious and good influence on medieval thought; for example, I think, on Saint Thomas Aquinas. Proclus, at any rate, attempted to combine these elements in one carefully articulated system—a task his dialectical ability made possible. He was perhaps “a lively and living work of art,” a human torch. Other pictures painted of Proclus go still further. Thomas Taylor stresses that “of that golden chain of philosophers, who, having themselves happily penetrated, luminously unfolded to others the profundities of the philosophy of Plato, Proclus is indisputably the largest and most refulgent link. . . . Born . . . a genius, . . . he exhibited in his own person a union of the rarest kind [and that his] *Commentaries* [of Plato] were written by him . . . in the flower of his age.” Some go still further. The late Dr. Charles Burney, on being asked by Thomas Taylor whether he had ever read Proclus' *Commentaries*, replied that they were too much for him, at the same time exclaiming, “What a giant was Proclus compared to Longinus!” And Marinus says—I think rightly—“that he was a man laborious to a miracle.” And the eulogium of Ammonius Hermeas “that Proclus possessed the power of unfolding the opinions of the ancients and a scientific judgement of the nature of things, in the highest perfection possible to humanity,” does go too far; yet some think it should, as Thomas Taylor has it, “be immediately assented to by everyone who is an adept in the writings of this incomparable man” (for sources compare Thomas Taylor's introduction to Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*).

The importance of Proclus perhaps seems to have been underestimated somewhat in the twentieth century. Fortunately, however, this situation is beginning to be rectified—especially since the clandestine founding some twelve years ago at Yale, under Professor Robert S. Brumbaugh's auspices, of the Clusion Society, and of the subject Clusion Network Theory, a founding *so clandestine* that it was clandestine even to its founders. “Objective links” have indeed recently been discovered between Proclus and medieval thought.

Saint Albertus Magnus, according to Dodds, and the Byzantine Neoplatonist Michael Psellus (1018–1078) were “steeped in Proclus.”

Copelston, Sambursky, and others have indeed recognized the brilliance, of Proclus. Paul Schaich has assured me that there is, in *The Elements of Theology* of Proclus, a deep anticipation of Bradley's argument against relations.

Proclus' entire system proceeds as follows: from the One emanate the Henads—a finite number; from the Henads emanates the sphere of *Nous* which subdivides as Being, Life, and Thought; from the sphere of *Nous* emanates the sphere of the Soul which subdivides into divine souls, demonic souls—angels, demons, and heroes—and human souls, for example, myself. There is a strong mystical strain running through his framework and the Neoplatonic tradition generally. It arises from the claim that the One is absolutely transcendent, beyond all thought and all

being, ineffable and incomprehensible. This claim readily appears in the doctrines of Plotinus,<sup>1</sup> Iamblichus,<sup>2</sup> and Damascius.<sup>3</sup> It is, however, most carefully dealt with and receives its most systematic espousal from the celebrated Proclus of Athens. Proclus' *Commentary On The Parmenides*<sup>4</sup> is a polished espousal of the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*. It is there that he expresses his own view of the One and shows his acute sensitivity to logical problems arising from it. I will attempt, among other things, to examine the tenability of Proclus' view of the One. In the course of this examination, I will evaluate some of his solutions to the logical difficulties resulting from his position as to the One. I wish to argue that the letter of his position, strictly speaking, is beset with insurmountable difficulties and that his solutions to them are unsatisfactory. It needs emendation.

Proclus does not merely interpret Plato's *Parmenides*. He also uses it dialectically to develop systematically what he feels are truths of theology and metaphysics. Viewing the eight hypotheses as metaphysical options, Proclus takes the first to be the correct one. As a correct interpretation of Plato's *intention* in the *Parmenides*, this is certainly suspect.<sup>5</sup> But Proclus is not merely an interpreter; he is also a metaphysician. He is concerned with the nature of things and with the development of truths of speculative metaphysics, and this must be evaluated independently of whether or not his interpretation of Plato is correct.

Proclus saw the point of the hypothesis as constituting a proof that there is an absolutely transcendent One. For Proclus and Plotinus, the One exceeds all qualification whatsoever. It transcends all properties and relations, all predicates, and all statements on our part. It transcends the predicates "Unity," "Cause," and "Good," just as it transcends "Being": "That which transcends all cannot, as has been shown, be susceptible of even a hint of a relationship to anything else." It is beyond existence, "nothing at all . . . belongs to it" (p. 45 [7]; compare also p. 67 [22–24]). It "is before every power and before assertions" (p. 75[3–4]); even negations are not true of it and are removed from it (pp. 71 [35–37], 77[4–5]). The "most glorious One is neither expressible nor knowable" (p. 71[30]). It is impossible for any property to apply to it, being "inexpressible" and "unutterable" (pp. 41[25], 67[3,35]). No name or description applies to it; there is no perception or knowledge of it; there is no opinion that fits it (pp. 45 [6–14], 47 [21]–49 [12], 51 [25–30]). This is, of course, not because it is less than any of these things but because it is more; for example, "it is superior to being and existence and better than intelligible objects" (p. 45[32–33])—so superior that it is "the object of desire to all things" (p. 57[37]). It is essentially unintelligible, yet so important that all being, practice, and knowledge presuppose it. Proclus later (in *The Elements of Theology*) incorporates this conception into a comprehensive metaphysical system. And by so doing he arrives at what is perhaps the most systematic and thoroughgoing negative mysticism known to man.

I now wish to argue that Proclus' and Plotinus' position as to the One is beset with insurmountable logical difficulties. Proclus and Plotinus claim that no descriptive predicate whatsoever applies to the One. Let us assume this. Now let us introduce a new term "Proclusian" in the following way: for any  $x$ ,  $x$  is Proclusian if and only if  $x$  is such that no descriptive predicate applies to it. The

phrase "such that no descriptive predicate applies to it" is, if meaningful, obviously a descriptive predicate; therefore, so is the term "Proclusian," which is merely an abbreviation for the latter phrase. The One of Plotinus and Proclus is such that no descriptive predicate applies to it; therefore, from the definition of the descriptive predicate "Proclusian," the One is Proclusian. But since "Proclusian" itself is a descriptive predicate, it also follows that the One is not Proclusian. But strictly speaking this is contradictory, which is absurd. Proclus—and Plotinus—claim that no descriptive predicate whatsoever applies to the One leads to contradiction and must therefore be abandoned. If the One is "Proclusian," it follows that it is not the case that the One is such that no descriptive predicate applies to it, and hence not Proclusian. The claim that the One is such that no descriptive predicate applies to it implies its own negation. Hence it is untenable: if we asserted it, we would also be forced to assert its negation, and we cannot intelligently assert both it and its negation. Claiming that no descriptive predicate applies to the One *ipso facto* forces us to also make the contradictory claim that some descriptive predicates apply to the One. This claim of Plotinus and Proclus, is, therefore, strictly speaking, logically untenable. I have argued in detail elsewhere<sup>6</sup> that Proclus' own and quite sophisticated replies to this objection fail. His replies, although more detailed and in many ways more sophisticated, are just like Quine's advocacy of ontological relativity and of the revisability of logical laws, and they fail for the same reason: namely, they are self-refuting.<sup>7</sup> I find it reasonable to conclude, therefore, that Proclus' main thesis in his *Commentary On The Parmenides*—that the One is not expressible—is untenable.

Proclus ends his *Commentary* with two sentences that succinctly express the principal theme and outlook of the Neoplatonic tradition: "For by means of a negation Parmenides has removed all negations. With silence he concludes the contemplation of the One." Now a silence justified by irrational means (i.e., by untenable claims and bad arguments) is not really justified. It is an irrational silence. And I have argued that there are insurmountable logical difficulties with the "means" by which Proclus "has removed all negations." By a demonstrably untenable negation, Proclus has removed all negations. Therefore, I feel that such a mystical "silence," for Proclus, would be unjustified.<sup>8</sup> For these reasons, then, I think that an espousal and development of the first hypothesis in Plato's *Parmenides* will not result in a viable metaphysics, as Robert S. Brumbaugh has argued in his book, *Plato On The One* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

This conclusion, of course, need not hold with respect to more positive mystical characterizations of the One. If we are inclined to sketch the One in a more satisfactory manner, then we should also be prepared to deal with its mystical features in a more positive way.<sup>10</sup> Any degree of ineffability that remains might then be recognized as arising because most categories that we apply to ordinary, finite objects are not applicable to the One, and not because no categories whatsoever are applicable to it. If we feel that the concept of the One may be a viable concept, then indeed we must be prepared to recognize that it is something that has properties, although admittedly quite special properties. If we feel this way, however, then we must also be prepared to construct an adequate

logic governing the rules and guiding principles of such a notion in which all absurdity will be carefully circumvented. This Professor Brumbaugh has also begun to do by stressing the analogies between Proclus' work and Cantor's set theory (see his "Cantor's Sets and Proclus' Wholes," pp. 104–113 of this volume).

Robert S. Brumbaugh suggests that set theory is "a leading candidate for the desired science of the formal structure of reality." Indeed, I think that the Plotinian or Proclusian One could be used to define Kurt Gödel's set theory, for example,  $U$ , the universal class which is not a member of any class but which contains every set (sets are members; classes that are not sets are not). Let the logical notion of membership and the metaphysical notion of participation correspond to each other, which seems natural. Then to say that the universal class  $U$  is not a member of any class is to say that it is unparticipated. Hence we could say that the One that defines the universal class  $U$  is also unparticipated because what it defines—the universal class—is unparticipated.

A further point suggested to me by Brumbaugh for exploration is the possibility of asymmetrical relations between the One and other entities in the Neoplatonic system. All beings since they are one are like the One, but the One is by nature like no being other than itself. Or put simply, we are like the One, but the One is not like us. Participated being, however, does resemble the One in this: they have existence in common, and things receiving existence from the One resemble the One, which is the primary and universal source of all existence.

The objection, however, is that resemblance is a symmetrical relation. Hence, if some participated beings were like the One, the One would be like a participated being which is false; as Isaiah puts it: "to whom will you liken, God?" (Isaiah 40:18). The reply is that resemblance between cause and effect is not a symmetrical relation: for example, we would call a photograph a likeness of a woman but not vice versa. Saint Thomas Aquinas makes the same point in his answer to the question, "Can creatures be said to resemble God?" (*Summa Theologica*, The First Part 1A, question 4, article 3, objection 4).

The set-theoretical axiom of infinity postulates an infinite number of objects. Dodd's, however, interprets Plotinus as assuming a finite number of forms. And Proclus, in proposition 94 with respect to a numerical infinity, adopts an Aristotelian concept of the potentially infinite. The upshot is that Robert S. Brumbaugh's suggestion that Proclus is committed to contemporary logicist-realist ontology may not be entirely accurate. Plotinus and Proclus may not be committed to the logicist-realist position with its axiom of infinity since, if Dodds is right, Plotinus and Proclus believed in a finite number of forms. Logicism-Realism with its set-theoretical Axiom of Infinity is, therefore, even more Neoplatonic than Plotinus and Proclus! And this conclusion will elate the hearts of Neoplatonists of the Robert S. Brumbaugh variety.

One attempt at reconciling logicism-realism and Neoplatonism would be to simply rely on the notion of the potentially infinite in interpreting the Axiom of Infinity. Yet, this would be less realist than logicist-realist ontology, such as the early Russell's and, I believe, Kurt Gödel's; yet, it would be more in accord with

Plotinus and Proclus who surprisingly are usually cited as illustrations of the excessive proliferation of entities. Interestingly, it also would be compatible with Aristotle's idea of the potentially infinite.

Nevertheless, in spite of all this I, like Brumbaugh, agree with much of the spirit of Plotinus and Proclus. I do think that much of what is true and valuable in their systems can be preserved intact. Therefore, I now wish to defend the plausibility of the existence of one "highest" form—whether it be the One of the *Parmenides*, the Good of the *Republic*, or the Beautiful of the *Symposium*. I will deal with three principal objections to such a highest form. Each objection will try to deny the possibility of a superform that is the cause of the unity, beauty, or goodness of everything else.

The first objection could be stated as follows: Either such a One (Good, Beauty, etc.) is itself part of some system or not. If it is, then we have an element of a system causing the unity of that same system, which is absurd. If it is not, and the One is outside the rest of the universe, it then could not "get together" with the rest of the universe. I would reply to this objection by maintaining that neither horn of the dilemma is absurd. Considering the first horn of the dilemma, I see nothing wrong with an element of a system causing the unity of that same system; the center element or component of a picture (system of related components) is itself an element of the picture yet this need not prevent it from causing that same picture's (system's) unity or beauty. For other reasons, however, this is perhaps not true of the One. The later horn of the dilemma—that if the One is outside the rest of the universe, it could not get together with it—presupposes that an explanation be required of the notion of participation; otherwise, it is not problematic. Participation is, however, a primitive notion (as Robert S. Brumbaugh has argued in his book *Plato on the One*). Hence, no explanation is required since participation would have to be based on either a physical model whose ordered pairs would be composed *entirely* of concrete physical entries or on an abstract formula or equation (e.g.,  $y = 4x$ ) whose ordered pairs would be composed *entirely* of abstract entries. Participation, however, *also* relates the concrete to the nonconcrete. Poetry might suggest such participation, but it could scarcely (or simply *would not*) be regarded by most as an explanation.

The second objection to the plausibility of there existing one single highest form—be it the One of the *Parmenides*, the Good of the *Republic*, or the Beautiful of the *Symposium*—could be stated as follows: Whatever we call this highest form, by its very definition it must be *all-inclusive*. But then the participation relation, too, must presuppose this highest form. This is absurd, however, since I have just argued that the participation relation is a primitive notion (i.e., simple and unexplainable in terms of other primitives, one of which is this highest form). That is, the participation relation is not explained by the "overform," since, if it were, participation would no longer be primitive. I would answer this objection as follows: One could only state that the participation relation derives its being ultimately from this highest form by saying that participation *participates* in the Overform. But this is equivalent to saying that participation *is* primitive in a

logical or epistemological sense (although admittedly not in an ontological sense) since it flows from the all-inclusive overform. Here, it would seem, is an example where an ontology is not exactly reflected by its epistemology.

The third and last objection to the existence of a highest form that I will consider might go as follows: That which particulars share, or that which particulars have in common, is a form. Hence, since all the forms are, in fact, forms or have the properties of form in common, one could assert that there must also exist a form called Formness. That is to say, the very same reason for positing the existence of each individual form (namely, that it could be "seen" to be common to a group of individuals)—as, for example, the form Number upon observing odd and even numbers—would exist for positing the form Formness, since each form is, in fact, a form. Thus we now have a form that would definitely seem to be an instance of itself. This is because Formness is a form. But now since the phrase "is an instance of itself" is meaningful, the phrase "is not an instance of itself" also would seem to be meaningful. Thus, one could conceive of the form of all-and-only those forms that are not instances of itself. But this form leads to Russell's Paradox by substituting "Form" for "set," and "is an instance of" for "is a member of." If this form were of the same logical type as those of which it is the form, then the contradiction would follow if one asked of it if it, itself, were an instance of itself. Since if it was, it would not be, and if it was not, it would be. Thus one should deny that the form of all those and only those that are not instances of themselves exists in the same way that one should deny that the paradoxical Russell set exists, namely, by the introduction of a set theory designed to avoid such paradoxes. Professor Brumbaugh's suggestion that set theory is the apt formalism for ontology, therefore, is again vindicated. Indeed, as the late Bar-Hillel puts it, in his book on set theory, the Russell paradox arises only if the paradoxical Russell set of all sets that are not members of themselves exists, not if it does not exist. And set theory is designed to bar the existence of such sets.

One might still object to the notion of an "Overform" by saying that on the copy theory view," since all the other forms are copies of this one, there must exist still another, even higher form, namely the form of resemblance by which the Overform and its "copiers" are similar. I agree with this objection and would meet it by simply denying the validity of the copy theory. A degree of participation theory would not, I think, yield the same contradiction regarding the Overform because one could claim that, although each other form partook of the overform, none partook of it *perfectly*. Hence, none of the other forms could be said to be perfect copies of it, and the allegedly higher form of resemblance, by which the Overform and its copies are similar, would simply not exist.

At first sight, once again, this too might seem to be implausible since the Overform and the other forms taken together would seem to be components of *one* system. Hence the oneness of this system would seem to be of a higher logical type than the logical type of the Overform (since the latter would be an element or member of the system). This would be true, I think, only if one utilized the now outmoded Russell hierarchy of logical types and if one could, in fact, assert that the Overform and the other forms (which are arranged in an ascending hierarchy)

are one, or are components or elements of *one* system. I would simply deny both, plausible as they may seem: the first—the Russell hierarchy—because Professor F. B. Fitch has proved that it is itself self-referentially inconsistent;<sup>12</sup> and the second on the grounds that the Overform's nature is such that it necessarily cannot be rationally or intelligibly thought of as an element of *another* One or another system. Nevertheless, as I noted earlier, in at least Gödel's set theory the One can plausibly be viewed as causing or defining everything else that is an element of the universal set.

A word about the relation of Plotinus and Proclus to later thought is in order. Plotinus felt that because *Nous*—the Intellectual Principle—proceeds in some sense from the One, it must be essentially different from the One. This, however, does not follow. Later, Thomas Aquinas and also, I think, Saint Augustine argue that the three Persons of the Trinity—although they can be distinguished (only) relationally—are not essentially different because their essence is the same, namely, supreme overflowing goodness itself. What this means is that any one person of the Trinity cannot be distinguished from the others by an intrinsic property, but instead only by using ineliminable reference to the other persons. That is, the Father is not begotten from the Son, but the Son is begotten from the Father. And the Father and the Son do not proceed from the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit does proceed from the Father and the Son.



# The Anatomy of a Neoplatonist Metaphysical Proof

RONALD HATHAWAY

*The Elements of Theology* (Στοιχειώσις θεολογική) of Proclus Diadochus, the fifth century Neoplatonist commentator and philosopher, is the earliest extant rigorous metaphysical system in which every proposition is proved and is an element in the succeeding body of propositions.<sup>1</sup> Of the 217 proofs in Proclus' treatise, the proof of proposition or theorem 1 is the most significant and problematic. It is the first *element* in Proclus' system. The logic of the proof is more difficult to grasp than is implied by those who have tried to grapple with it. A better understanding of Proclus' sources in the proof, and the general model of reasoning at work in the proof illuminates many obscure aspects of this ancient example of the striving for logical rigor. In what follows I take a close look at the logical anatomy of Proclus' proof and draw general conclusions about Proclus' sources in the proof and about Proclus' general model of proof.

The title of Proclus' treatise, considering the fact that he wrote an extensive commentary on Euclid's *Elements* (Book I), apparently is what leads both L. S. Rosán and R. T. Wallis to contend that all of Proclus' proofs are consciously modeled on Euclid; and it was this view, with the addition of another common

view—that Euclidean geometry is a formal axiom system—that prompted Bréton to try to formalize the logic of Proclus' proof.<sup>2</sup> Bréton's attempt at formalization is incomplete and raises many questions, some of which I note below; others are noted by Bréton himself. Why is this the case? My own analysis suggests that any treatment of the proof as a formal derivation is bound to be very difficult, and very likely is impossible in principle. At the outset it is important to note that even if Proclus had modeled his proof on Euclid, it does not necessarily follow that Proclus' system is reducible to a formal axiom system in Hilbert's sense.<sup>3</sup> Ian Mueller has criticized A. Szabó's view that Euclidean geometry is an axiom system in the modern sense, arguing cogently that Euclidean postulates are not assertions of existence-assumptions, but are statements that "license" the performing of certain imaginary cognitive operations with idealized physical bodies.<sup>4</sup> The modern axiomatized remnant of Euclidean geometry does not represent this part of the central core of Euclid's geometry.<sup>5</sup>

It is my contention that Proclus' proof of his first theorem presupposes a postulate-like assumption that licenses an infinitely continued operation. In this one respect, namely, in needing a postulate of this type, his proof does share an important feature with Euclidean geometry. However, it does not follow from this that Proclus consciously modeled his proof on Euclid. There is evidence that Proclus intended to make the *Elements of Theology* (*E.T.*) a non-Euclidean treatise. At the level of what he consciously intended, it seems that Proclus' model of reasoning in the *E.T.* is not Euclid. I thus reject the view held by Rosán and Wallis, with the qualification that the fact that the reasoning of Proclus and Euclid have some feature in common is of general significance. It highlights the point at which ancient metaphysical and mathematical reasoning intersect or *overlap*.

## I

Proclus' first theorem is that "Every multitude partakes in some way of unity."<sup>6</sup> I consider the meanings of its component terms below. This proposition may sound trivial or, perhaps, axiomatic. However, if we substitute "set" for "multitude," at the risk of anachronism, the task of defining a set and the problems involved in proving that every set has a certain general feature might convince us that what Proclus is undertaking to do is far from trivial in its level of difficulty. Although I will argue against treating Proclus' "multitudes" as sets, we should approach Proclus' task—proving a truth at the foundation of his metaphysics—as one both ambitious in scope and potentially difficult.

A brief glance at the place of the *Elements of Theology* in the history of philosophy will help us to gain added perspective. It is the general consensus (Beutler, Lindsay, Dodds, Wallis') that the *Elements of Theology* is the first (extant) rigorous metaphysical system, that is to say, a system of propositions each of which is proved. No one would dream of treating the long, tangled lines of argument in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (many of which lack even a decisive conclusion) as attempts at rigor in this sense. The frequent pairing of Proclus with Spinoza<sup>8</sup> is appropriate, and one could add the names of Descartes (in the *Princi-*

ples) and perhaps Leibnitz. A lengthy digression would be needed to explore the topic, but it is possible that the recovery of the *Elements of Theology* in early modern times, especially after Patrizzi's Latin version in 1583, planted the seed of the rationalist program.

One striking difference between Spinoza and Proclus should nonetheless be noted. In his *Ethics* Spinoza states axioms and definitions, before enunciating propositions to be proved, revealing his debt probably both to Descartes and to Euclid. Proclus, on the other hand, enunciates proposition 1 in the *Elements of Theology* without stating any prior definitions, axioms, or postulates. He nonetheless assumes that his argument for proposition 1 is a proof, that is, that his premises are true and the argument is logically valid in a rigorous sense. Dodds, Proclus' great modern commentator, claims that most of Proclus' proofs are "formally correct."<sup>9</sup> Yet, *prima facie* must we not admit that they lack one of the cardinal features of Euclid's rigor as we ordinarily understand it, namely, the clear statement of *every* assumption that will play a logical, definitional, or operational<sup>10</sup> role in the system of proofs? On the face of it, Spinoza is indebted to Euclid and Proclus is not.<sup>11</sup>

This problem poses a number of perplexing questions and issues. Is Euclid in fact the model for Proclus' proofs? And if so, what does this mean for our grasp of the logic of his proofs, their "correctness," or validity? If their logic is the same as Euclid's, what is the logic on the type of rigor actually found in Euclid? If Proclus had other sources or models, did they share features with Euclidean reasoning or not? We cannot canvas in detail the ancient Pythagorean methods of proof, the arguments of Zeno of Elea, Plato's *Parmenides*, or Aristotelian and Stoic logics, but any one of these could conceivably have influenced Proclus (and, I shall argue, Zeno and Plato certainly did). I will briefly consider this problem of sources below. For the moment, it will help the reader if I state in advance what position I take with respect to this inquiry *ad fontes*. Although in his proof of Proposition 1 Proclus consciously intended to produce a nongeometrical and, therefore, non-Euclidean proof, his mind was so deeply imbued not only with Euclid, but with the entire general model of reasoning used by the Pythagorean geometers, Zeno, and Plato (on occasion), that he *unconsciously* adopted it. I will later identify more specifically what I mean by this "general model of reasoning."

An ancillary and neglected point relevant to any study in the history of ideas is that the existence of this kind of a gap between consciously and unconsciously adopted ideas shows that the whole thought of an author may be an unintended outcome, or an outcome in conflict with the author's intended outcome, despite the fact that his work gives every appearance of being wholly the product of conscious design. Some scholars give token recognition to this gap but they do not recognize the possibility that what we call the "thought" of an author is subject to "invisible-hand explanation."<sup>12</sup> The *Elements of Theology* is a good case for a test of a type of invisible-hand explanation, since *all* of its substantive content, if Dodds is correct,<sup>13</sup> is derived from preceding sources. The theory of explanation lying behind the traditional inquiry *ad fontes* is in need of much closer scrutiny. In what follows, I simply use Proclus' proof as a sample of the "gap" in question.

## II

What does Proclus set out to prove in proposition 1? Πᾶν πλῆθος μετέχει πῇ τοῦ ἐνός can be taken to mean "every [all] multitude [mass] partakes in some way of unity." Because this translation differs from Dodds' in certain respects, and because the meaning of the component terms will be important in any analysis of the logic of Proclus' proof, I will comment on and justify the version offered. (πλῆθος) was used to refer to crowds of people or things, especially those of indefinite number or size. From this use it acquired the use that refers to a purely quantitatively large number of things. It always could connote either number or magnitude, however, and it is in this vague but common sense that Proclus uses the word. The vagueness of the term πλῆθος allows reference to something indefinitely large, that is, something of some large but unspecified size or number. It does not by itself refer to something of *infinite* size or number. Plato (*Parm.* 144A6) carefully uses πλῆθος ἄπειρον, not πλῆθος alone, to refer to an infinite multitude. It is significant that in his proof Proclus assumes that a πλῆθος is some kind of "whole" (ὅλον), namely, an indefinite "many of which the multitude [is composed] (πολλὰ ἐξ ὧν τὸ πλῆθος)."<sup>14</sup> Yet he never uses any of the available terms for "part" (μόριον, μέρος) to refer to what "makes up" a πλῆθος. In a sense, Proclus masks the problem of choosing how to regard these items. In another sense, he simply leaves the matter open to interpretation. Not only are we initially ignorant of what kinds of things (minds? disembodied souls? matter?) there can be multitudes of, but we do not even know whether a multitude is a "whole" like a number, a countable totality, or like a continuous magnitude, a divisible whole. Proposition 1, we must remember, is intended to lay a general foundation.

This unrestricted idea of πλῆθος intuitively seems close to our notion of a multitude, but the notion of a *mass* of something seems also connoted. By "mass" I do not mean the physicist's mass (inertial rest-energy of ■ body), but the general notion implied by phrases such as "mass of people" or, if we think of rock or water as indefinite collections of bits of rock or bits of water, such as "mass of rock" or "a mass of water." Because it is the normal and accepted synonym, I will use the term "multitude" rather than the term "mass" in what follows.

Bréton argues that the expression "every multitude" implies the universal quantifier.<sup>15</sup> Bréton is correct, but his claim raises a question: What does the quantifier range over? Some find it natural to treat Proclus' multitudes as sets.<sup>16</sup> Treating Proclus' multitudes as sets is not as "natural" as it may seem, though there are analogies between sets and multitudes. What makes the view unnatural are the following considerations. A minimal description of Cantor's notion of sets would be that sets are definite and distinct collections of definite and distinct members, that subsets of sets (or class inclusion) must be distinguished from members of sets (or class membership), and that there must be a role for empty sets, for unit sets and for infinite sets. When we examine Proclus' proof, we will find that: (1) his notion of the components of multitudes does not allow for a

distinction between things that are members of multitudes and subsets of multitudes (i.e., it is impossible to distinguish subsets from members of sets); (2) his proof fails if there are empty or unit multitudes; and (3) Proclus' concept of the infinite is too weak to accommodate infinite sets. In addition, it is highly unclear what sorts of operations can be performed on Proclus' multitudes. The term *πλῆθος* has a cousin verb *πληθύνω* that means "increase" in any of several ways, including "growth." This implies that a Proclus-multiplicity might become larger if its components grew; which is false of sets. As for *analogies* between multitudes and sets, it is possible that Proclus' later theory of "wholes" (Props. 66–69) offers analogies with a theory of sets. The only analogy that I will consider here is that between the unstated postulate that Proclus' proof presupposes and the Zermelo-Fraenkel Axiom of Choice (regarded as an axiom of constructibility of subsets). However, even there, I will not concede a *strong* analogy.

"Every multitude *partakes . . . of unity*." It is unnecessary to enter into the often arid controversies about the sense and import of the use of "to partake of" *μετέχειν* in Plato and his commentators. Damascius, Proclus' younger contemporary, remarks that "partake of" basically means "to have" (*ἔχειν*) something.<sup>17</sup> Whatever metaphysical elaboration Proclus and Damascius would add to this, Damascius' claim is an attempt to penetrate the meaning of the term. For our purposes, we may assume that if something "partakes of" unity, then that thing *has* unity. The text of Plato's *Parmenides* that seems to be the proximate source of proposition 1 (157C1–2: "The others are not wholly deprived of unity, but partake of it in a way") assumes that partaking of unity is possessing or having unity.<sup>18</sup> I assume that this point is in no way contentious, but obvious, as a semantic truth, no less to us than to Damascius.

"Every multitude *partakes in some way of unity*." Proclus' use of the expression "in some way" *πῃ* seems to imply that he has in mind Aristotle's observation that there are many ways in which one can say of something that it "is one," but nowhere—here or elsewhere in the *Elements of Theology*—does Proclus cite *Metaphysics* Iota or show that he intends to apply Aristotle's observation. In his proof, it will become clear that Proclus wishes to make a substantive claim about the two logically possible ways in which a multitude can have unity.

"Every multitude *partakes . . . of unity*." The expression rendered as "unity" is the definite expression "*τὸ ἓν*," so often rendered as "the One" in scholarly literature. It seems that Dodds is correct in preferring "unity" as a synonym of "*τὸ ἓν*." If the *Elements of Theology* is a general or, as we might say, a foundational work, then it should not begin by assuming the existence of something unknown and indefinable that bears "the One" as a name. Later in the work, admittedly, Proclus seems to use "*τὸ ἓν*" as the name of the "first cause" of all things. What is important is not whether "the One" is used as a name, but rather whether what this is the name of has properties that are imported *ad hoc* in the proofs in a whimsical way, or whether these properties are uncovered by means of the proofs themselves. If Proclus' intention is to build a foundational system without prior assumption, then the expression "*τὸ ἓν*" should bear its most obvious meaning and not function as the name of something whose identity and properties are unknown until a time when they are sneaked into his proofs. It

may be objected that Proclus is so deeply committed to post-Plotinian Neoplatonic systems that there is simply no longer any question of an un-Neoplatonic use of "*τὸ ἓν*." This objection is at times based on the premise that Plato himself uses "*τὸ ἓν*" as the name of an entity (e.g., the Good) rather than as an expression to refer to unity. Controversy here is abundant and I will not enter into it, aside from noting that Owen and others have argued that "*τὸ ἓν*" is Plato's expression for unity, and note that Aristotle is apparently the first to use the term "unity" (*ἐνότης*).<sup>19</sup> In any case, even if Proclus' use of "*τὸ ἓν*" is somewhat unclear, his proof of proposition 1 does not depend on anything other than the notion of unity. If Proclus' proofs are not consciously modeled in every respect on Euclid, Proclus was aware that one of the hallmarks of rigorous reasoning, of "clarity and articulateness," is the statement of "the common notions."<sup>20</sup>

These observations, I believe, will suffice to support my interpretation of Proposition 1 as the claim that "Every multitude partakes in some way of unity." It is, as I understand it, a straightforward and simple claim. Its proof, though deceptively short, is neither straightforward nor simple.

### III

Proclus' proof of proposition 1 has the logical form of what he calls "a reduction to the impossible."<sup>21</sup> As it was employed in ancient times, the *reductio* was the oldest and, in some ways, the most powerful tool of argument known. It was used virtually from the origins of Greek geometry; was used by Zeno of Elea; is used by the "Parmenides" in Plato's dialogue of that name; is used by Euclid for certain important proofs; is well known to Proclus; and, if Szabó's suggestion is correct, provided the basis for the later development of the powerful method of "analysis" mentioned and used by Pappus.<sup>22</sup> The opening words of Proclus' proof are: "For if [a multitude] in no way partook [of unity]. . . ." Proclus assumes that the contradictory of the proposition to be proved and to be assumed for the sake of *reductio* is, "Not every multitude partakes in some way of unity." It follows that he must show only that something impossible is entailed by assuming that any given multitude in no way partakes of unity.

Because Proclus' actual proof is unschematically set out and is not broken into its smallest logical components, I have, for the reader's convenience, reproduced the proof in its original *sequence*; but I have broken it into manageable and logically (more or less) minimal components. I also intersperse occasional comments or queries, or note where a premise must be provided in more explicit form to help the reader foresee where difficulties will later emerge. The proof runs as follows, starting with the negation of the proposition to be proved, anticipating *reductio*.

1. Suppose that a multitude were in no way to partake of unity.<sup>23</sup>
2. "Neither the whole multitude nor each of the many making it up" will be one."
3. "Each of the many making up the multitude will be a multitude, and this [is the case; is true] to infinity."

4. "And of these infinite [multitudes] each will again be infinite multitude."

(4) is puzzling, since it is unclear how each of the (first level) infinite multitudes "will again be" infinite multitude, that is, what differentiates this contention from the trivial claim that each of the infinite multitudes *is* [an] infinite multitude. Note that (3) and (4) together seem to explain, if only partially, what is meant by (2). *Not being one* will be taken to mean *being infinite multitude* and also something else, namely, the infinite reiteration of whatever step it was that introduced *being infinite multitude* in the first place (or at the first level). This fact, that *not being one* is interpreted by Proclus as a complex predicate or characteristic which imports an indefinitely continued operation, will prove to be of central importance later. That is, we have here two uses or senses of "infinite" (ἄπειρον). One, referring to infinite collections, and another, referring to infinite generations by some step or steps, of infinite collections.<sup>24</sup>

5. A multitude partakes of unity either with respect to the whole multitude or with respect to each of the things in it.

Proclus speaks of the many that make up a multitude as being "in it." Notice that if ■ πλῆθος could be an undifferentiated mass or continuum, it would still make sense to speak of things "in" it as its *potentially* differentiable bits, although Proclus is silent about these different possibilities. (5) has the ring of a definition (of "partakes of unity"?), or an axiom. In any case, Proclus does not produce any argument for (5), and treats it as an indemonstrable truth. In the text, (5) occurs as part of a larger sentence, "[A multitude] that partakes of no unity in any way, either with respect to the whole or with respect to each of the things in it, will be infinite in every way and through and through." It is clear that "either with respect to the whole or with respect to each of the things in it" is a distinct assumption, and is understood to be logically exhaustive of the ways in which a multitude can partake of unity. The remainder of this larger sentence is equivalent to the following assumption:

6. A multitude that in no way partakes of unity will be infinite in every way (παντῇ ἄπειρον) and through and through (καὶ κατὰ πᾶν).

The logical implications of the infinite "through and through" will be discussed shortly. The literal force of καὶ κατὰ τᾶν is "and for all," that is, "and for every item" where each item is a suitably defined successor in a string of successors.

7. "For as regards each of the many, whichever one takes, it will either be one or not one."

The "for" (γάρ) introduces a new and independent argument for (6).

8. "If each of the many is not one, it would be either many or nothing."

One might expect Proclus to have first considered the case with respect to the whole multitude. The remainder of the proof considers only the case with respect to "each of the many" (τῶν πολλῶν ἕκαστον). This seems to leave a lacuna in

his proof. Note that Proclus assumes that "one," "many," and "nothing" are logically exhaustive predicates.

9. "If each is nothing, then whatever is made up of these (τὸ ἐκ τούτων) is also nothing."

The proposition behind the consequent of (9) is almost certainly to be attributed to Zeno.<sup>25</sup> Proclus treats it as a truth not in need of proof.

10. "If each is many, on the other hand, each is made of an infinite times [succession] of infinities (ἄπειράκις ἄπειρον)."

The term ἄπειράκις literally means "time without number," "indefinitely many times." The notion that Proclus evidently intends to capture is that of an infinite *succession* of steps carried through on an infinite number of entities, each both a component of a multitude and itself an indefinite multitude in turn. No proof of (10) is attempted. But why does Proclus think that (10) is true? In (6) he has already specified the general idea of a through-and-through infinite. In (10), he now assumes the carrying out in thought of the through-and-through operation in question. The appeal in (10), therefore, is to a postulate that licenses such an operation. Below I will consider how Proclus could have stated his assumptions here more clearly. Note that he could not *prove* the truth of (10) because it relies on a *postulate*, and on the intuitive carrying out of what is postulated. That is to say, a cognitive operation or experiment involving an infinite succession of steps is an essential part of the proof itself. The reliance on a postulate, though implicit, exhibits a resemblance between Euclid and Proclus. Proof (10) also illuminates why Proclus' proof is difficult or impossible to formalize. I will return to this point again.

11. "These things [viz., the consequents of (9) and (10)] are impossible."  
12. "For it is impossible for something to be composed of nothing."

(12) is treated as a necessary truth; (12) would rule out, for Proclus, the concept of the empty or null set. This would constitute another strong reason against any attempt to treat Proclus' multitudes as sets.

13. "And nothing that is is made up of an infinite succession of infinities."

This is curious, for Proclus goes on below to prove (13). Since (13) is for him ■ logically necessary truth, we would expect him to write it in the form: "Nothing that is *can* be made up of an infinite succession of infinities." Perhaps Proclus assumes that since (13) is universally true, it must be true *at least* of everything that exists, whatever Proclus would include in his ontology.

14. "For there is nothing greater (*pleon*) than the infinite."  
15. "And that which is made up of all [of certain items] is greater than each [item]."

These jointly are meant to constitute a proof of (13). These two propositions seem to correspond, at least loosely, to an ancient notion of the infinite criticized by Aristotle, namely, "that than which nothing is beyond ["outside"],<sup>26</sup> and to Euclid's

axiom, "The whole is greater than the part."<sup>27</sup> I will argue later that the logical faults in Proclus' proof are concentrated here in his attempt to prove the truth of (13)—or what amounts to the same thing, his attempt to prove that (10) involves an impossibility.

16. "Therefore, every multitude in some way partakes of unity."

The conclusion follows by the principle of *reductio* arguments. Proclus' conclusion is not marked with either of the conventional Euclidean formulas, "Which was to be *proved*" for theorems, or "Which was to be *done*" for problems. Proclus was well aware of the importance of this distinction in Euclid.<sup>28</sup> Let us assume that he wished to avoid Euclidean conventions. Let us also note, however, that his proof may have "problematic" as well as purely "theorematic" aspects.

#### IV

Although many questions could be raised, there are two that I intend to address to Proclus' proof: (a) Is it "formally correct," as Dodds implies? (b) What feature, if any, does it share with Euclidean proofs?

Proclus assumes that multitudes can have unity in only two ways, either as wholes or through the unity of their components. He then argues that a multitude cannot have unity as a whole if its components lack unity. He assumes, without argument, that unity of components is a necessary condition of unity of a whole multitude.<sup>29</sup> In the case where the components are nothing, the whole is nothing.<sup>30</sup> The proof then turns on the case where the components are each many. In (3) and (4) he claims that a kind of infinite regress of infinities occurs in this case. What he means by saying that "each of the many . . . will be a multitude, and this to infinity," and "of these infinite [multitudes] each will again be infinite multitude," is then restated in (6), "[each such multitude] will be infinite in every way (παντῇ ἄπειρον) and through and through (καὶ κατὰ τὰν)." It is the argument for this notion of through-and-through infinity that is at the heart of his proof.

What Proclus assumes, but does not clearly state, is that a necessary condition of the proof is the "thought experiment" of taking unity away from every successor component of every component of the multitude in question. This is the meaning of the phrase, "and this to infinity," and of the sign of iteration, "again" (πάλιν), used in (4): "each of these infinities will again be infinite multitude." Zeno's argument against plurality, using the notion of through-and-through division,<sup>31</sup> uses a construction with the same general strategy, although Proclus does not rely on *division*. Proclus has abstracted from Zeno, it seems, the general notion of an infinitely extended through-and-through operation for suitably defined successors. Sinnige and others have shown how Zeno's strategy might well have developed with the use of the γνῶμεων in early Pythagorean geometrical number theory.<sup>32</sup> Before we consider Proclus' debts to his predecessors, let us consider the validity of his proof.

That his proof fails should be obvious from an examination of his attempt to prove the impossibility of the consequent of (10), that is, that each component "is

made up of an infinite succession of infinities (ἀπειράκις ἀπειρών)."<sup>33</sup> This turns on his proof of (13): "And nothing that is is made up of an infinite succession of infinities." This depends on the truth of (14) and (15). Both of these are false, we would claim. Before saying why they are false, let us note that Proclus does not have a sufficiently strong conception of the infinite within his own tradition. Aristotle had criticized an older conception of the infinite as that than which nothing is greater. Aware of the use of the infinite in geometry, Aristotle suggests his own notion of the infinite as  $\infty$  progression or a power of progressing to something always greater.<sup>34</sup> Because Proclus' commentary on Euclid does not extend as far as X. 1, which introduces the so-called "Axiom of Archimedes," it is impossible to tell precisely what his attitude toward the method of exhaustion as used in classical theory of irrationals may have been.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps Proclus had a special reason for appealing to the older notion of the infinite, namely, that it permits us to conceive of the infinite as *complete*, which is implicit in Proclus' through-and-through operation. However, his conception of the infinite is insufficiently strong. Even if Proclus had anticipated the notion of infinite sets, both (14) and (15) are false as stated. It is false that there is nothing greater than the infinite. Some infinities are greater than others.<sup>36</sup> It is also false that whatever is made up of certain items is greater than *any* items, because an infinite set is equivalent to, not greater than, at least one of its proper subsets.<sup>37</sup>

Should I be charged with a *tu quoque*? Am I not guilty of doing what I forbade in interpreting Proclus' proof, namely, introducing talk about sets? My defense against the accusation would be that I am claiming only that the modern concept of infinite sets helps us to see with some precision why Proclus' proof fails, not that the notion of sets will enable us to fully *represent* Proclus' reasoning in the proof.

A different objection to my interpretation is that what Proclus means in (13) is that no existing thing *actually* consists of an infinite succession of infinities. This objection raises another question: What is the ontology—the list of types of entities of which proposition 1 is intended to be true? The base ontology in Neoplatonism is a hierarchy of minds, intelligible forms, disembodied souls, embodied souls, bodies, and the underlying matter of bodies. Is Proclus arguing, in effect, that none of these is actually an infinite succession of infinities? To air the controversy implied by this question goes beyond the bounds of my argument (indeed, how could the issue be settled?). The decisive reason for rejecting this objection is the fact that the *Elements of Theology* is a programmatic treatise that intends to provide the "elements" not only for a theological system or cosmology, but a unique "nonhypothetical science" that provides foundations for every other science. I will present evidence for this contention later. My present point is only that proposition 1 is a truth that must hold true of all entities, and this must include mathematical entities such as line segments. What Proposition 1 asserts is not restricted in its scope.

Proclus' first proof is invalid. However, this does not exhaust its potential significance for us. In particular, what debt, if any, does the proof have to Euclid? The preceding comments on the proof have already answered this question: Pro-

clus presupposes a postulate that licenses the performance of a certain operation and, to this extent, resembles a part of the core of Euclidean geometry. Their general mode of reasoning is similar in using something like constructions. What is the real significance of this? Mueller has argued that one must not think of the Euclidean postulates as simply introducing veiled existence-assumptions, and contends that they are statements that have no truth values.<sup>40</sup> The first postulate, "Let it be postulated to draw a straight line from any point to any point," is neither true nor false, nor, lest anyone momentarily think so, is it a rule of inference of any kind. Euclid's famous constructions are built up on these licenses. Proclus was himself clearly aware of these "doings" or "productions" (ποιήσεις), "sectionings," and other operations in geometrical construction building.<sup>41</sup> Above I contended that the step of critical import in Proclus' proof was his assumption that the use of the predicate "is not one" introduces an infinitely iterated operation of some kind, one generating a series of entities and removing unity from every successor in the series. It might be said that Proclus uses a certain type of construction. It certainly is not a geometrical construction. How do I remove unity from a multitude according to Proclus' construction? I would take unity away from a building if I were to reduce it to a pile of bricks and mortar; but the individual bricks will have their unity. Since the unity of a multitude depends on the unity of its components, my act of removing unity from the building is still incomplete. For Proclus, the removal of unity is through and through, or involves everything that "makes up" the multitude. There are two logically distinct ways in which a multitude is "made up" of elements: it is made up of its immediate elements, but also is made up of all elements of these immediate elements, on whatever level. Proclus' operation is that of removing unity from the components of a multitude on every level.<sup>42</sup>

The notion of an operation that enables us to move from some feature of a component to the same feature for every successor reminds one of mathematical induction, which permits generalization for all successors where these are numbers. It is significant that the principle of mathematical induction itself is a postulate (of Peano) that cannot be proved. Perhaps more interesting than this is that the postulate that Proclus presupposes reminds us of the Zermelo-Fraenkel axiom of choice which allows the construction of all subsets of a given set.<sup>43</sup> This leads us to wonder what Proclus' postulate would look like if it were explicitly asserted. We might imagine it tentatively as follows: *Let it be postulated to remove unity from every component of a multitude.* I do not propose to draw any surprising conclusions from this rather vague postulate. Limiting myself only to what seems obvious, we might conclude that Proclus' proof is quasi-Euclidean in requiring a postulate at all, especially a postulate licensing an operation or mental construction. The postulate is strange in that it is really a postulate of deconstruction or of the deconstructibility of multitudes. The postulate is also exceedingly general and abstract in form. Proclus might well have contrasted his presupposed postulate with the standard constructions of geometry, which could usually be visually modeled or imagined as translated into manipulations of material objects. However, the central point remains: however sharp the contrast between ancient geom-

etry and Proclus' proof (the "visualizable" and the truly "intelligible"), Proclus is not allowed logically to suppress his postulate. The fact that he fails to assert it or any definitions or axioms must have some explanation. What this is I will, in a moment, suggest.

With the laying bare of this postulate, I will assume that the anatomy of Proclus' proof is reasonably clear to us. What general conclusions *about the proof* can we draw? First, it should be clear now why Bréton found it difficult to formalize the proof. A standard formal derivation with finite steps and no postulate for generating infinite multitudes is bound to fail. A symptom of Bréton's difficulty is his rather surprising indecision as to whether Proclus' proposition 1 is an axiom or a theorem!<sup>44</sup> This leads us to a second conclusion, namely, that the *status* of Proposition 1 is necessarily either (1) that of an *unproved* proposition, either false or true, or (2) that of an *unprovable* proposition, either true and necessary without proof or undecidable, or unprovable because false. If (1) is the case, proposition 1 could be true and *as yet* unproved. Or it is false. If its contradictory does not entail an impossibility, as my analysis implies, then its contradictory may be true (for all we know). Proclus' attempt to prove Proposition 1 by *reductio* might thus be thought of as similar to Saccheri's ill-fated attempt to prove Euclid's fifth postulate by *reductio* (ill-fated because it failed and significant because it led to the discovery of non-Euclidean geometries). That is to say, Proclus' attempt could lead philosophers conceivably to look for alternative metaphysical systems! If the Proposition's status is that of the second case (2), it could be unprovable simply because false, or unprovable and true. If unprovable and true, proposition 1 may not be a theorem but an *axiom* (as Bréton suggests), or perhaps a cryptic partial *definition*, as I have suggested (compare Note 16). On the other hand, if it is really a theorem in some system and unprovable, it could be an *undecidable* formula of the kind that Gödel's theorem proves must exist for suitably defined systems.

These two conclusions, about the formalizability of Proclus' proof, and about the status of his Proposition 1, are closely related and raise several questions. For instance, is there another proof of Proposition 1 that is either valid or formalizable? Is Proposition 1 in any way provable? If it is not provable, is this true because it cannot be made a theorem in any system? Or is this true only for the system of Proclus? These and other questions are raised here only as an agenda for future investigations.

## V

In conclusion, I will consider the question about Proclus' intentions in his proof and in the *Elements of Theology* insofar as his debts to Plato shed light on this. About his debts to Plato, I wish to make only two claims: (1) that Plato anticipates Proclus' use of the infinite in his proof in a passage of the *Parmenides*, and (2) that Proclus' metaphysical system in the *Elements of Theology* is modeled on Plato's description of the "downward" half of the procedure of dialectic (*Republic* VI. 511B3-C2), the descent from a first "unhypothetical" (ἀνυπόθετον) starting

point. About the nature of these debts, I further wish to claim that while Proclus knew Plato's *Parmenides* well, his own use of the infinite is probably not a conscious adaptation of Plato's argument; on the other hand, the *Elements of Theology* is probably consciously and intentionally modeled on Plato's programmatic remarks in *Republic VI*.

1. In an extended passage at *Parmenides* 158B–C, "Parmenides" asks us to think of "the things other than unity" *before they have acquired unity*.<sup>45</sup> Referring to these as "multitudes" (πληθῆ), he then goes on to construct a kind of thought experiment.

Now if we choose to take in thought from such multitudes the least portion we can conceive, that portion also, if it does not possess unity, must be not one but a multitude. And if we go on in that way considering just by itself, the nature other than the form, any portion of it that comes into view will be without limit of multitude.<sup>46</sup>

Dodd notes that Proclus relies in some way on this passage, but denies that Proclus' proof is the same as Plato's argument in the passage.<sup>47</sup> Dodds is correct. Proclus' proof is not the same as the extended line of argument used by Plato. The *Parmenides* commentary gives no hint of any conscious borrowing from the passage.<sup>48</sup> The inference that anything that is not one is a multitude seems to echo Zeno's arguments against plurality, and since Proclus himself appears to use Zenonian assumptions, as already noted, and may have had direct access to the lost arguments of Zeno as well,<sup>49</sup> it is possible that a lost argument of Zeno is the common source for both Plato and Proclus.<sup>50</sup>

This question of Zeno as a source aside, the *Parmenides* passage proves that Plato also uses as a strategy of proof a kind of thought-construction in which an infinite sequence is built, each successor inheriting some feature. Plato's conclusion—that any portion of any given multitude will be "without limit of multitude" (lit., "infinite in multitude")—does not assume a through-and-through operation, and in this respect Proclus drives the argument further. But Proclus' conclusion is simply the generalization of the same operation for *every* component. There is no evidence in the *Elements of Theology* that Proclus made any conscious use of the *Parmenides* passage, and it seems natural to infer that we have here an example of an *unconscious* borrowing or, at best, a borrowing filtered through the *Parmenides* commentaries of Proclus' predecessors, for instance, that by Plutarch of Athens.

2. In his commentary on Euclid, Proclus defines as "elements" all those "theorems whose understanding leads to the knowledge of the rest."<sup>51</sup> Thus he regards Euclid I. 1 as an element of Euclid I. 2, and so on. By analogy, his own proposition 1 could be regarded as an element of proposition 2. Proclus' comment leaves the status of Euclid's definitions, postulates, and axioms unclear. Are they "elements" even though not theorems? Proclus later notes the problem about these sorts of "starting points" (ἀρχαί) and the distinction between them and "the things followed from the starting points" (τὰ ἐπόμενα ταῖς ἀρχαῖς).<sup>52</sup> Referring to definitions, postulates, and axioms, he comments that Euclid "divides them into

hypotheses, postulates, and axioms."<sup>53</sup> Proclus thus calls definitions "hypotheses." A little earlier, he had made these remarks:

The general arrangement of its [geometry's introductory] propositions we should explain somewhat as follows. Since this science of geometry is based, we say, on hypothesis and proves its later propositions from determinate first principles—for there is only one unhypothetical science, the other sciences receiving their first principles from it—he who prepares an introduction to geometry should present separately the principles of the science and the conclusions that follow from the principles, giving no argument for the principles but only for the theorems that are derived from them.<sup>54</sup>

In this passage, Proclus uses the term "principles" to refer not to the first theorems in Euclid, but to all of Euclid's definitions, postulates, and axioms, that is, everything, for which Euclid gives no "argument." When Proclus says that Euclid's geometry is "based, we say, on hypothesis and proves its later propositions from determinate first principles," it is this body of *unproved* principles that he has in mind. Clearly, Proclus is, therefore, using the term "hypothesis" here in a broader sense than later, where it refers only to definitions in geometry. It is *because geometry uses unproved principles* that it is said to be based on *hypothesis*.

Proclus' cryptic comment about a unique "unhypothetical science" now seems clearer. The term "unhypothetical" (ἀνυπόθετον) for Proclus means "not based on unproved propositions." An "unhypothetical science" would be a system of propositions none of which is unproved. It would have no definitions, postulates, or axioms. Its first theorem would be proved, but without the use of any unproved propositions. Proposition 1 of the *Elements of Theology* is obviously meant to be an example of such a theorem. The *Elements of Theology*, it seems we must infer, is Proclus' attempt to work out the system of the unique unhypothetical science.<sup>55</sup> In it no proposition is unproved and every proved proposition is an element of some successor proposition (theorem).

Proclus' use of the term "unhypothetical" (ἀνυπόθετον) unmistakably points toward its first striking use by Plato (at *Republic* 511B6). There its meaning again depends on the meaning assigned to "hypothesis" (ὑπόθεσις). Important issues depend on the meanings assigned to "ὑπόθεσις" in Plato's dialogues, and I will not belabor the topic. But does it follow that Proclus is consciously pursuing Plato's program in the *Republic* passage? I have purposely said only that this is "probable." Proclus belongs to a tradition mediated by a lengthy development of post-Plotinian hierarchical metaphysical systems, a tradition dominated by *Timaeus* and then *Parmenides* exegeses.<sup>56</sup> This tradition regards *Republic VI–VII* as giving clues to a correct interpretation of Plato's metaphysics. If *Republic VI* is Proclus' "source" in the *Elements of Theology*, it may be so only in the sense that it was the initial impetus and stimulus behind a long sequence of systems.

In conclusion, it seems that a central question emerges from this analysis of the anatomy of Proclus' proof, one concerning the nature of the relationship between ancient metaphysical and mathematical models reasoning. We found Proclus' proof inadequate on two basic grounds; its use of a weak notion of the

infinite and its failure to state a postulate that is logically necessary. Now we find that Proclus probably intended to exclude unproved propositions like this from his system on principle. There is a tension between the Platonic "unhypothetical" model and the tendency of Euclidean rigor to force out every element, even those held at an intuitive level, until they take on an explicit form in the system. This tension between the nonhypothetical and the hypothetical routes of thinking—in Proclus' sense of these expressions—is like a distant mirror in which the aims of modern intuitionist and logicist metamathematical theories can be seen dimly reflected. The same tension, seen in another mirror a millenium earlier, appears in the controversy over the "objects" of διάνοια and ἐπιστήμη, their sameness or difference, on Plato's Divided Line.<sup>57</sup> The central question is: What is the nature of the irreducible *overlap* between ancient metaphysical and mathematical modes of reasoning?

As an added dividend, my analysis has provided a test of the usefulness of invisible-hand explanation in the history of ideas. We have found that although Proclus designed the *Elements of Theology* as an anti-Euclidean system, at least one element in his strategy of proof is Euclidean in its general role and is best explained by the historical influence of a complex Euclidean tradition. The *Elements of Theology* is an outcome that is partially explained by factors lying outside its author's conscious intention as well as by what the author intended.<sup>58</sup>

## *The Idea of False in Proclus*

EVANGHELOS A.  
MOUTSOPOULOS

If, according to contemporary conceptions of the ways that lead to knowledge, it is possible to proceed to distinctions such as those established between notions like truth and rectitude or correctness, on one hand, and falsehood, error, or mistake' on the other, this analytical point of view does not always seem to have been obvious in ancient thought and in its medieval prolongations. Within this framework one has the impression that logical values are roughly limited to only two, that is, the positive and the negative. Parmenides had already connected being with truth, nonbeing with falsehood.<sup>1</sup>

On this basis, it was easy, as well as necessary, for Parmenides to proceed to ■ radical distinction between being and nonbeing (each one of them being considered as nonreducible to the other') and, consequently, between truth and falsehood. Plato was the first to admit, in his so-called metaphysical dialogues, that this radical distinction is not absolutely valid, and that, in some way, the being is nonbeing, whereas nonbeing is being to a certain extent.<sup>4</sup> Against Parmenides' absolute dogmatism, Plato's epistemology, after his own metaphysical crisis,<sup>5</sup> orients him towards a moderate dogmatism whose skeptical aspects will be devel-



oped by Plato's successors at the Academy.<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, the Neoplatonists will largely inherit the fundamental dogmatic views of the theory.

Plotinus, namely, thinks of the possibility of conceiving the being as a non-being, and vice versa, when he refers to matter,<sup>7</sup> and this is, of course, in conformity with the purest Platonic tradition.<sup>8</sup> However, he also does so when he refers to the soul itself, which he considers to be the most dramatic hypostasis, since it is submitted to a certain distortion, and even to a certain separation.<sup>9</sup> One part of its being attracted by the Intellect, and the other tending towards matter which, in some respect, is a nonbeing.<sup>10</sup> In the same way, and in spite of the fact that they are suggested by dynamic structures of human existence, and are therefore endowed with some kind of reality,<sup>11</sup> products of imagination are nonbeings, according to Plotinus, and, consequently, belong to the group of erroneous contents of consciousness.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Plotinus connects false opinion, a notion of purely Platonic origin,<sup>13</sup> with judgment whenever the latter deviates from its right way<sup>14</sup> because of its relation to imagination itself.<sup>15</sup>

Strictly conceived, deviation, erring, or wandering are the specific characters of error. However, Plotinus connects error to falsehood, although this is not always obvious in the *Enneads*.<sup>16</sup> The difference between the two notions seems to be better indicated in Proclus. This does not mean, of course, that any kind of detaching of the soul is erroneous, that is, that it leads to wrongness; for, when the soul tends towards the One, it is capable of grasping it "by detaching itself from imagination and opinion and indefinite knowledge . . . and by adapting itself to the Intellect."<sup>17</sup> Thus, falsehood depends on what cognition is able to detach itself from: (a) correct judgment or (b) conversely, those very attractions that cause its deviation from correctness. Proclus here refers not to two different and opposed eventual outcomes of thought, but to two entirely different levels of estimation of its value.

Error relies on some principle of unstructured or, at least, disorganized non-methodical deviation of thought from correctness. It is associated with the concept of plurality<sup>18</sup> as opposed to the principle of unicity on which correctness relies.<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, falsehood is defined as the reversal (*punctum contra punctum*) of every part or element of a given proposition or thought; a reversal that is supposed to be methodical enough to assure that the negation of what is reversed will appear as "true" and "likely."<sup>20</sup> Likelihood thus seems to be the *conditio sine qua non* of falsehood, whereas such a condition is not necessary to error, which denotes a certain freedom of thought.

Nothing is, of course, true or false in itself, but always in relation to something else. It is neither itself nor this "else," but its relationship to this "else" that makes it possible for it to be considered as true or false. Everything is true or false according to what it is related to.<sup>21</sup> Such a relation<sup>22</sup> should be understood as a "proposed"<sup>23</sup> connection that may be successful in one case, while being a failure in another. This seems to be the real meaning of Proclus' assertion that everything is true and that even if something partly contains falsehood (i.e., if at a certain point of view its correctness is damaged), it can be completely restored.<sup>24</sup>

Proclus probably does not mean by that that something is even partly true or

false *in se*. This would neither bring us back to Parmenides' poem nor to Plato's theory of the mixed, for reasons differing, of course, in either case, and easy to understand.<sup>25</sup> On the contrary, assuming that truth and falsehood can coexist as far as good or bad usage of what is subsequently called true and false may be made in two different cases, it is not sufficient to declare something true or false in general.<sup>26</sup> On the contrary, it is necessary, just as Socrates did, to proceed to the evaluation of truth and falsehood inasmuch as each one of them is inherent in everyone's conception of true and false,<sup>27</sup> for ignorance is comparable to some temporary impotence of reason, which is equivalent to falsehood. This is proved by the omnipotence of reason itself.<sup>28</sup>

Imaginary data, for instance, should be interpreted as such, because whenever they are attributed to objective reality without any previous examination of their nature, they are falsified themselves.<sup>29</sup> However, Proclus believes that such data correspond to some kind of *idola tribus*,<sup>30</sup> and that they are related to passions.<sup>31</sup> Passions are relevant both to the rational<sup>32</sup> and to the irrational<sup>33</sup> soul. Paradoxical and peculiar divine processes,<sup>34</sup> as well as apparent movements of the stars,<sup>35</sup> are realities falsely interpreted by the human mind. The falsehood of such opinions clearly appears through an accurate control of noetical processes.<sup>36</sup>

A noetical process may lead to truth only when it is correctly and consequently based on a given principle.<sup>37</sup> However, such a principle might be chosen in advance in order to imply results or conclusions also chosen in advance.<sup>38</sup> In such cases of sophisms that are the result of deliberate and intentional processes, falsehood also appears as the result of an additive or subtractive alteration,<sup>39</sup> and as the effect of a substitution.<sup>40</sup> One here again meets the particular and specific mechanical character of falsehood considered as a lie (i.e., as the reversal, *punctum contra punctum*, of correctness), which has been mentioned before,<sup>41</sup> and which differentiates falsehood both from correctness and error. In conformity to this model, geometrical methodology offers criteria for controlling falsehood in geometrical constructions and proofs.<sup>42</sup> Even in a completely false thought, as has already been said,<sup>43</sup> there still remain some elements of truth<sup>44</sup> that form the potential, yet adequate, criteria of its falsehood.<sup>45</sup>

In order to draw a conclusion from the above observations, one may refer to a very significant text of Proclus, according to which the main cause of falsehood is inherent in multiplicity as opposed to unicity which, in its turn, is the cause of correctness. Multiplicity is associated here with the sensible world,<sup>46</sup> and hence, to corruption of the intellect which, under such conditions, is in constant revolt against itself.<sup>47</sup> More obviously than Plotinus, Proclus accepts, in this case, the model proposed by Plato's *Sophist*, of the being of nonbeing as reaching the nonbeing of being,<sup>48</sup> as being reflected on the functioning of thought itself. Thus, by referring to Plato, he applies, in a more concrete manner, the Parmenidean reduction of the "ontological" to the "epistemological" by reducing being to nonbeing, and vice versa which, according to Parmenides, are absolutely not reducible to each other.

# Participation and the Structure of Being In Proclus' Elements of Theology

LEO SWEENEY, S.J.

The title of this paper, not surprisingly, indicates its contents. Accordingly, let us see what it means, beginning with "structure of being." Following Webster's Dictionary, we shall take "structure" to mean an arrangement of interrelated parts or constituents dominated by the general character of the whole they make up. "Being" can be synonymous with "reality," which, because equivalent to "unity" in Neoplatonism, would transcend "being" in a strict sense and thus encompass even the One Good as primal reality. Or it can signify "being" strictly, which in Neoplatonism is equivalent to "one-many" and, hence, is not applicable directly to the One. "Participation" in this context is the process by which (or the situation within which) what is lower is made real and becomes related to other realities (both peer and higher) by somehow receiving its intrinsic reality from what is higher.

Now, participation is not operative on the highest level of reality because the One neither participates in anything else nor is it participated in by anything directly (this point is explicitly made by Proclus).<sup>1</sup> Consequently, participation is not immediately operative in the structure of being when the last noun is under-

stood as identical with "reality," which in Neoplatonism equals "oneness." But participation permeates the strata of "being" when intended technically by Neoplatonists as "one-many." Therefore, it directly accounts for the structure of "being" in this sense inasmuch as participation helps arrange beings<sup>2</sup> in and on definite levels of greater and less perfection, all of which are related to what is above and among themselves and all of which are characterized directly by "being" and mediately by "unity."

If the preceding two paragraphs are basically accurate, despite their tightly abridged and simplified version of being, participation, and other key notions, it will be instructive to study in Proclus what participation means and how participated perfections and participants arise. What follows is the result of rethinking and restating points made in my paper published more than a dozen years ago in a *Festschrift* (of which only a limited number of copies were printed and which has been out of print for several years), "The Origin of Participant and of Participated Perfections in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*" (*Wisdom in Depth: Essays in Honor of Henri Renard* [Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966], pp. 235-256). I hesitated to present a version of this paper again until rereading it during graduate courses in 1971 and 1979 entitled "Providence in Proclus" convinced me that the explanation given there of participation remains helpful but is so complicated (the complication arising from Proclus' own theory, I would like to think, rather than from my own intellectual density and awkwardness) that even if someone may have read the earlier and no longer extant version, he or she would have forgotten it or, at least, might be so puzzled by it as to welcome this current restatement.

This will consist in three parts: Participation as a Process, The Origin of Participated Perfections, and the Origin of Participants.<sup>3</sup>

## PARTICIPATION AS A PROCESS

Here let us see in what participation as a process consists by listing its results and by briefly examining its extent. But first, a brief discussion of three Greek terms and their translations.

As Proclus describes participation (e.g., 182. 160. 5-10), it involves three different but closely related factors. The first is ἡ μέθεξις, which we shall customarily translate as "the process of participation," "the participative process," or simply, "participation." The second is τὸ μετεχόμενον, which literally means "that which is participated" or simply, "the participated." It is that which is received by the participant through the participative process, while simultaneously being also that which is given by the monad that is the source of the process and which is itself unparticipated. It is not really distinct from the monad (at least, not adequately so). It is not anything abstract but is a concrete reality or perfection—for example, henads are *ta metechomena* communicated by The One to beings; henads and beings are *ta metechomena* communicated by The One and The Being to intelligences; intelligences are *ta metechomena* communicated by The One, The Being, and The Intelligence to souls, and so on. Ordinarily we would translate the Greek expression as "the perfection participated" or "the participation" (the addi-

tion of the article sets the last apart from "participation" as a process, where no article is affixed to the noun). But whatever the translation (Dodd's is generally "the participated principle" or "the participated term"), it should be understood in the light of the aforementioned: it refers to a concrete perfection that is communicated by a monad to a participant and which, at best, is only mentally distinct from the monad and, sometimes, even from the participant. The third factor is τὸ μετέχον, "the participant."

Now let us return to our original question: In what does participation as a process consist? This we can answer by listing its results and by examining its extent.

One result of the participative process is that the perfection participated is present within the participant.<sup>4</sup>

[140, 124, 7-13:] A participant which is suitably disposed is not baulked of its participation; so soon as a thing is ready for communion with them [henads or gods], straightaway they are present—not that in this moment they approached or till then were absent, for they are eternally unvarying. If, then, any terrestrial thing be fit to participate them, they are present even to it: they have fulfilled all things with themselves, and though present more mightily to the higher principles they reveal themselves also to the intermediate orders in a manner consonant with such a station, and for the lowliest orders there is a lowly mode of presence.

[142, 126, 3-7:] While the gods are present alike to all things, not all things are present alike to them; each order is present in the degree of its capacity and enjoys them in the degree of its presence, which is the measure of its participation.

A second result is that the participant is filled, completed, perfected:

[24, 28, 10-13:] The participant was incomplete before the process of participation and by that process has been made complete: it is therefore necessarily subordinate to the participation inasmuch as it owes its completeness to that process.

[78, 74, 11-14:] That potency which needs some extraneous pre-subsistent actuation, the potency in virtue of which an item is potentially, is imperfect. For it needs the perfection which resides in another in order to become perfect by participating it.

[98, 86, 29-31:] We mean by "cause" that which fills all things naturally capable of participating it, which is the source of all subsequents and by the fecund outpouring of its irradiations is present to them all.

Because the participation is present in and, thereby, completes the participant, this latter becomes similar to the source of the participation.

[25, 28, 27-34:] Completeness is a part of the Good, and the complete qua complete imitates the Good. . . . The more complete is the cause of more effects in proportion to the degree of its completeness, for the more complete participates the Good more fully; that is, it is nearer to the Good; that is, it is more nearly akin to the cause of all; that is, it is the cause of more.

[182, 160, 7-10:] If the process of participation makes the participant be like the participation and causes it to have the same nature, it is plain that a soul which participates and is annexed to a divine intelligence is itself divine, participating through the mediation of the intelligence the divinity immanent therein.<sup>5</sup>

Still another result of the participative process needs to be explicated and stressed. Participation also involves the fact that the participation literally becomes *part* of the participant.<sup>6</sup>

[12, 14, 7-11:] To hold that things proceed from a cause which would be superior to the Good and yet which would not exercise some force upon them is a strange view, for thus it would forfeit its title to the name of cause. For some thing must in every case pass over from the cause to the effect; and especially is this true of the first cause, from which all depend and through which each being is. But if things participate in this supposed superior cause, as they have in the Good, . . .

[23, 26, 28-32:] Or else [the unparticipated] will give something of itself, which the receiver participates, while what is given is constituted as a participation. But every participation, becoming a property of that which participates it, is secondary to that which in all is equally present and has filled them all out of itself.

[188, 164, 5-6:] Any participation gives to the participant either itself or some part of itself: unless it furnished one or the other, it would not be participated.

In the light of those quotations, the participational process terminates in the perfection participated somehow becoming literally a part of the participant.<sup>7</sup> Its terminus is not solely the likeness or resemblance that the latter has to the source of the perfection. Neither is it any sort of presence within the participant of the perfection. Rather, the participation is so present as somehow to be an integral part of the participant. The process contributes to its very constitution.

A final point remains to be made. How widespread is participation in Proclus' universe? What existents are constituted by it? How many are composites of participant/participation(s)? Absolutely all, except the One or Good (4. 4. 9 sq.; 8. 8. 29 sq.).<sup>8</sup> Even though the Monad of each series lower than The One (e.g., The Intelligence with respect to intelligences, The Soul with respect to souls, and so on) is itself described as Unparticipated in relation to members of its own series (101. 90. 17 sq.), still each is the source of participations received in and, thus, fashioning those members (63. 60. 1 sq.). Moreover, each such monad, as well, of course, as each member in its series, participates the One (100. 90. 1 sq.).<sup>9</sup> The Proclus cosmos is, then, permeated by participation from top to bottom.<sup>10</sup> Beings participate henads (props. 138, 162); intelligences participate beings and, through them, henads (props. 161, 163); souls participate intelligences and, through them, beings and henads (props. 164, 202); sensible bodies participate souls and, through them, intelligences, beings, and henads (props. 129, 165).

Such seem to be the points on participation as a process that are necessary to know as a key to understanding the structure within which Proclus fits being, and as a preparation for discussing the genesis of the participations and of the participant. It is a process by which a perfection comes to be present within the participant, which it thereby completes and fulfills as a constitutive part. It directly affects all existents except The One and matter.

Now on to the discussion of origins.

### THE ORIGIN OF PARTICIPATED PERFECTIONS

There are at least two key texts in the *Elements* on how participations originate, the first of which is Proposition 23. As depicted in passages immediately adjacent to it, Proclus' universe is made up of four strata of reality: bodies, souls, intelligences, and henads (20. 22. 1 sq.).<sup>11</sup> Each stratum has at its head an existent from which it has proceeded, to which it reverts, upon which it depends, and which is called its "monad" (21. 24. 1 sq.). Thus, bodies are headed by Nature (= the World Soul), souls by The Soul, intelligences by The Intelligence, and henads by The One (21. 24. 22 sq.). Just as one stratum transcends another (e.g., souls are prior to bodies, intelligences to souls, henads to intelligences), so too their monads transcend one another. Thus, The One is beyond The Intelligence, which, in its turn, is beyond The Soul, which is beyond Nature (20. 22. 1 sq.).<sup>12</sup> Each of these monads is unparticipated—that is, "it is common to all that can participate and is identical for all and, hence, it is prior to all" (23. 28. 5–7).

It is of these monads, these unparticipateds, that Proclus speaks in the first key passage.

[23. 26. 22–32:] Every unparticipated produces out of itself participations, and all participated hypostases tend upward to unparticipated realities.<sup>13</sup>

For on the one hand the unparticipated, having the status of a monad (as being its own and not another's, and as transcending the participants), generates what is capable of being participated. For either it must remain fixed in sterility and isolation and so lack a place of honor; or else it will give something of itself, which the receiver participates, while what is given is constituted as a participation.

On the other hand, every participation, becoming a property of that which participates it, is secondary to that which is equally present in all and has filled them all out of itself.

What can be offered as comments on those lines? Clearly, they are a broad affirmation that participations are caused by an unparticipated monad and they provide information both on the cause and on the participations. The monad causes them *from itself* ("produces out of itself," "will give something of itself"). Their origin from within the cause is somewhat intelligible in view of the fact (gathered from immediately subsequent propositions) that production of effects comes about because the cause is perfect (25. 28. 21 sq.): it has complete and superabundant power (27. 30. 25 sq.). Despite this self-bestowal, though, a cause remains steadfast and immobile while producing (26. 30. 10 sq.); consequently, it is not depleted or rendered imperfect by its causality (26. 30. 22). The fact that the monad is common to all and yet transcends all (23. 28. 5)<sup>14</sup> accounts for its being unparticipated; but the fact that it is the source of participations enables one also to say that it is participated mediately.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, the participations become constitutive parts of the participants and, thus, are less perfect than the unparticipated (23. 26. 31), although they generally are more perfect than the participant that they fill and complete (24. 28.

8). As immediate effects of a monad, they simultaneously remain in it, proceed from it, revert to it (props. 30, 31, 35).

In the second capital text Proclus qualifies the earlier statement by adding that the participations that an unparticipated causes are of two sorts.

[63. 60. 1 sq.:] Every unparticipated produces two orders of participations, the one in things which participate only for a time, the other in things which participate always and connaturally.<sup>16</sup>

For what is always participated is more like the unparticipated than what is participated for a time only. Consequently, what is everlastingly participated will be set up before what is only intermittently participated, since the former *qua* everlasting is more akin and like the unparticipated, although *qua* participation it does not differ from the for-a-time-only participation. These intermittent participations are not, then, the sole class of participations, since prior to them are the everlasting and continuous participations, through which they too are linked with the unparticipated in an ordered sequence of procession. Nor are the everlasting participations the sole class, since they have an inexhaustible power (because they are eternal) and thus are able to produce others—namely, the intermittent participations.<sup>17</sup> With these, though, downward production ceases.

From this it is apparent that the unities with which The One irradiates beings are participated, some enduringly, others for a time; and in like manner intellectual participations are of two kinds, and the ensoulments produced by souls, and similarly the participations of Forms too.

Obviously, Proclus describes the two kinds of participations through their participants. This is his methodology because, as he states in later propositions, participations are known through what participates them (123. 108. 25–27; 123. 110. 4 sq.; 162. 142. 1–3) and this because the differences in participants arise from differences in the perfections participated (142. 126. 1 sq.). But (to return to prop. 63), there are two kinds of participants: the continuous and the intermittent. Therefore, we know there are two kinds of participations caused by the unparticipated. Proclus adds the important detail that the constant, everlasting participations cause the intermittent ones (63. 60. 10–12), which accordingly the unparticipated causes mediately.<sup>18</sup>

Have we any additional information on those participations? Yes, if we interpret Proposition 64 as restating its predecessor. Although this interpretation has the authority of E. R. Dodds,<sup>19</sup> reflection after initially publishing this paper in 1966 has led me to work out another interpretation. But before setting forth this more recent exegesis, let me indicate what (following Dodds) I had written previously and which is still informative.

What Proposition 63 described as enduring, continuous participations (hereafter, "the first sort") and as intermittent ones (hereafter, "the second sort"), proposition 64 depicts as hypostases complete in themselves and as irradiations that have their hypostasis in something other than themselves (64. 60. 20–22) because they are incomplete in themselves (*ibid.*, 1. 26). The first sort "make the participants belong to them, for being complete they fill the participants with themselves and establish them in themselves, and for their hypostasis they have no

need of inferior beings" (*ibid.*, lines 28–31). The second sort "belong to their participants, for being incomplete they require a substrate for their reality" (*ibid.*, lines 26–28).

The participant of this latter kind can exercise such strong influence because they are simultaneously participating participations of the first sort (but issuing from a monad of a lower sort than that from which the irradiations proceed). These participations, of course, fill those participants with themselves, establish them in themselves and, thus, constitute them as independent existents capable of receiving irradiations from higher monads. Thus, a demon is fundamentally constituted by the soul and intelligence it participates (= first sort of participations). But as so set up, it can also receive an occasional irradiation from the henad participated by that soul and intelligence.<sup>20</sup> That irradiation is a participation of the second sort—a unity "with which The One irradiates beings [but] participated for a time only" (63. 60. 13–14), a unity that is incomplete in itself and that belongs to the demon providing it a temporary substrate (64. 60. 26–28). Similarly, a human soul is basically constituted by the soul it participates but, as so constituted, it can also receive intermittent irradiations from an intelligence. A plant, once constituted by participating life, also receives irradiations of soul. In brief:

[64. 62. 5–12:] It is apparent that some henads proceed self-complete from The One, while others are irradiated states of unity; that some intelligences are self-complete entities, while others are intellectual perfections; that some souls belong to themselves, while others belong to the ensouleds as mere phantasms of souls. And so not every unity is a god but only the self-complete henad; not every intellectual property is an intelligence but only those whose proper reality is to be such; not every irradiation of Soul is a soul but there are also reflections of souls

Such, then, is the information with which Proposition 64 complements Proposition 63 when the two are read (following Dodds) as making the same points. Before setting forth our more recent approach to them, let us first discuss three other Propositions (81, 9, and 10) that illumine them somewhat.

Proposition 81 helps clarify Proposition 63, especially with respect to the intermittent participations that a monad produces. In interpreting Proposition 81, let us use one of the examples from the penultimate paragraph: a human soul in relationship to The Soul it continuously participates and to the intelligence that intermittently irradiates it. Considered in itself, that intelligence is a participation of the first sort because it has filled its direct participant with its own store of unity, intelligibility, intelligence (coming to it from a henad, being, and the Intelligence—[163. 142. 9 sq.; 175. 152. 19 sq.]) and, accordingly, is a hypostasis complete in itself. But it also is participated by a human soul occasionally and without directly becoming a part of it. It is, in this context, a "separate" participation."

Now to Proposition 81:

[81. 76. 12–21:] Every perfection which is participated separately [in our example, the intelligence] is present to the participant [the human soul] through a power which

is inseparable from [= immanent to] the participant and which the participation [the intelligence] implants there.

For if it is itself something separate from the participant and not contained in it, something which has its own hypostasis, then they need a mean term to connect them, one which more nearly resembles the participation than the participant does and yet actually resides in the latter. For if the former is separate, how can it be participated by that which contains neither it nor any emanation from it? Accordingly, a potency or irradiation, proceeding from the participation [= the intelligence] to the participant [= the human soul], will link the two; and this power will be that through which the process of participation occurs and will be other than the participation and the participant.

This Proposition emphasizes several points seen previously. Through the participational process a perfection comes to be present in the participant and becomes a part of it. This happens either directly or mediately—that is, through a power and irradiation which the directly participated perfection causes. Rather obviously, the direct and indirect participations are identical with the first and second sorts of participants encountered in Propositions 63 and 64.<sup>21</sup>

As a final clarification, let us review what our author says concerning self-sufficiency (props. 9–10). How does what is self-sufficient (τὸ αὐταρκές) differ from what is not? The former furnishes well-being to itself, the latter needs another's help; the former has the cause of its goodness present within itself, the latter has its cause separated from it: it needs an extraneous cause and receives the completion of its reality and activity from without (9. 10. 18–23). Both are good through participation; yet the former has its goodness from and in itself, the latter from another (*ibid.*, lines 25–28). Consequently, "what is self-sufficient in entity or activity is superior to what is . . . dependent upon another entity for the cause of its perfection" (*ibid.*, lines 14–16). Yet, although it has its good from and in itself, still the former does participate and is filled with goodness and, thus, is inferior to The Good (10. 10. 29–34).

What relationship do Proclus' remarks on self-sufficiency have with Propositions 63 and 64? Both sets appear to be affirming the same thing from different points of view. For the self-sufficient to furnish well-being to itself, to have the cause of its goodness present within itself, to have its good from and in itself, does not eliminate The Good (and whatever other monad may be involved) as the source and cause of the perfections participated since what is self-sufficient, as well as what is not, *is a participant*. Nor does it exclude the fact that the participated perfection is a part of what is self-sufficient, as well as of what is not: both participate perfections which, consequently, help constitute them. Rather, the question is, How do those perfections pertain to them? If directly and immanently, the existent is self-sufficient. If indirectly and extrinsically, the existent is not: it does not have the perfection itself but an irradiation and power from it, with the result that the existent depends upon that separate perfection as a factor in its *intrinsic* makeup.

In this interpretation, then, the self-sufficient is equivalent to the first sort of

participation: a perfection everlastingly participated, having its own hypostasis and dominating the participant it fills and establishes with itself. What is not self-sufficient is identical with the second sort of participation: the power or irradiation of a perfection intermittently and mediately participated and having a hypostasis and substrate in another, which dominates it because of its incompleteness.<sup>22</sup>

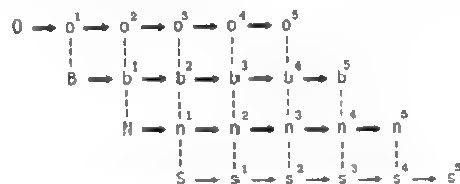
Thus far, these paragraphs have disclosed my initial reading of Propositions 63 and 64, complemented by information from Propositions 81, 9, and 10, according to which each is describing the same two sorts of participations in different words. That is to say, the unparticipated monad causes two sorts of participations—the first directly, the second through the first. The first is constantly present to its participant, which it fills with itself and thus dominates; it is a self-complete and self-sufficient hypostasis, having the perfection in question as an immanent cause. The other is a mere irradiation or power issuing from the former and intermittently received by a participant that provides it a substrate and which, thus, dominates it. Its participant is also a participation of the first sort, but one caused by a monad of a series lower than that from which the irradiation arises.<sup>23</sup> Properly understood, then, a participation of the second sort is both caused by and received in participations of the first sort. Perhaps Diagram One will help.<sup>24</sup>

Diagram One

If Props. 63 and 64 present the same doctrine, then:

- |                                   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| #63:<br>participations are        | #64:<br>participations are  |
| a) permanently in the participant | a) self-complete hypostases |
| b) transiently in the participant | b) in other hypostases      |

This resultant arrangement:



\*In the second portion of this Diagram, "O" stand for The One, "o" for a henad, "B" for The Being, "b" for a being, "N" for The Intellect, "n" for an intellect, "S" for The Soul, "s" for a soul. The arrows in each horizontal series indicate that its members are produced by the monad without participation occurring. The dotted vertical lines indicate that each existent in those lines is produced through participation—e.g., The Being participates henad #1. The Intellect participates in henad #2 and being #1.

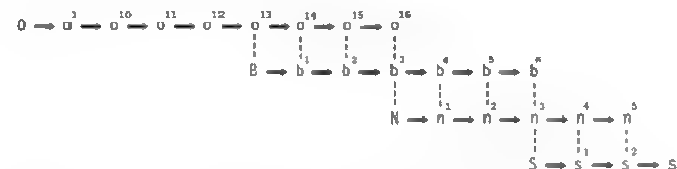
There is, however, another way of interpreting Propositions 63 and 64, according to which the latter Proposition divides participations (= participated perfections) into existents that are self-complete hypostases and those that reside in hypostases other than themselves, whereas Proposition 63 lists two subdivisions of this second sort of participations by positing that these other-completed hypostases are found in their participants either permanently or intermittently. In this interpretation the initial members of each horizontal series of existents are not participated in by anything; for example, in Diagram Two such members are henads 1 to 12, Being and beings 1 to 2, Intellect and intellects 1 to 2, Soul and souls 1 to 2: all of these are self-complete hypostases.<sup>25</sup> The subsequent members of each horizontal series are other-completed hypostases (e.g., henads 11 sqq., beings 3 sqq., intellects 3 sqq., souls 3 sqq.) and this residence in existents other than themselves can happen (in the light of Prop. 63) either permanently or intermittently.

Diagram Two

If props. 63 and 64 do not represent the same doctrine, then:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| #64:<br>participations are               |   |
| a) self-complete existents or hypostases | } self-sufficient (Props. 9-10)             |
| b) in other hypostases                   |   |
| #63:                                     |   |
| 1) permanently in participant            | } self-constituted (prop. 40)               |
| 2) transiently in participant            |   |
|  | } not: self-sufficient and self-constituted |

This resultant arrangement:



Such, then, are two possible and plausible readings of Propositions 63 and 64, which deal with how the participations themselves arise. Each has advantages. But one's personal preference for one or the other interpretation does not essentially affect one's understanding of the propositions in which Proclus discloses how the participants themselves are produced. To these let us now turn.

## THE ORIGIN OF PARTICIPANTS

Proposition 72 is the first of three capital texts on the participant and its genesis.

[72, 68, 17–29:] In the participants whatever has the position of substrate proceeds from more complete and more universal causes.

For the cause of more effects is more powerful, more universal and nearer to The One than the cause of fewer. But whatever sets up the prerequisite substrates for others is the cause of more since they preestablish suitably receptive conditions even for the presence of forms. Hence, those characteristics of the substrates are, as found in causes, more universal and complete.

From this it is apparent why matter, taking its origin from The One, is in itself devoid of form: and why body, even though it participates Being, is in itself without participation in soul. For matter, which is the substrate of all, proceeds from the cause of all;<sup>26</sup> and body, which is the substrate of ensoulment, is derived from a principle more universal than soul in that after its fashion it participates Being.

The point Proclus is trying to make in these lines is rather awkwardly expressed. Perhaps seeing them in their immediate context will help. In propositions 70 and 71 Proclus moves from cause to effect, from the source to participations and participants: "A higher cause begins to operate upon secondary existents before a lower cause, is present concomitantly with the presence of the latter, and is still present and operative when the consequent has ceased to operate" (70, 66, 14–16). Consequently, the irradiations<sup>27</sup> from a higher cause are present in the participant before those issuing from a lower cause and remain there after those from a lower cause have withdrawn (*ibid.*, lines 11–13). As a result, the irradiations proceeding from a higher cause become a kind of substrate for those from a lower cause, which they receive and ground: "There is thus an order of precedence in the participative process: the same recipient is bombarded by successive rays from above, the more universal causes affecting it first, and the less universal ones supplementing these by the bestowal of their own gifts upon the participants" (71, 66, 30–68, 8; also see *ibid.*, lines 12–16).

In Proposition 72 our author seems to move from effect to cause in that from knowing what a substrate is, one also knows what sort of cause it has. The cause of more effects is more powerful and more universal than the cause of fewer; but the cause of what serves as a substrate is the cause of more effects than the cause of what the substrate receives; therefore, the cause of a substrate is more powerful, more universal, and higher than the cause of what perfects the substrate.<sup>28</sup>

What is especially important and relevant is that in Proposition 72 Proclus speaks of matter, which is the absolutely first substrate, and which is participant only and not a combination of participant/participation, such as is any material body. And on this point he is clear. Prime matter comes from The One. That which is the substrate of all comes from the causes of all. Although an inanimate body is without soul, still it participates being and, thus, originates directly from Being.<sup>29</sup> But matter, because it is without form and being, originates from that

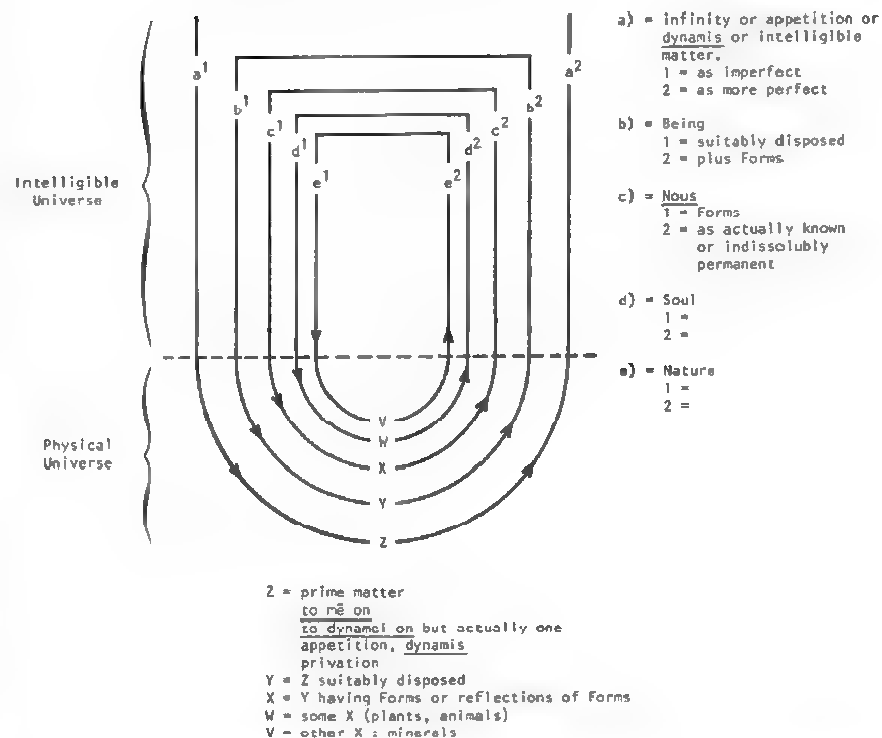
which is above form and being.<sup>30</sup> Or, as he says elsewhere, that which merely is suitable receptivity for participation of causes (39, 42, 4–5),<sup>31</sup> and which is the privation of forms, comes from the Good (57, 56, 36–37). What is actually one but is only potentially being does not have as its cause Being but The Not-Being which is superior to Being and which is one (138, 122, 17–20).<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps Diagram Three will help.

Diagram Three

AIM: To show the extent of causality in Proclus' universe  
how far down causality of various Monads extends;  
how permeating it is.

THE ONE-GOOD-LIMIT, from which all else comes  
the henads



\*To understand how extensive the One's causality is in Proclus' universe, it helps to conceive Diagram Three as tridimensional. Also, the line,  $a^1 Z a^2$ , marks the outside boundary of the One's causal overflow, which also extends throughout the entire intelligible and physical universes and (so to speak) lies under the causal contribution of Being (i.e.,  $b^1 Y b^2$ ) and of other lower monads. *Re* the right-hand column in the diagram: the second stage of a segment in the column is identical with the first stage of the following segment—e.g.,  $b^1$  is equivalent to  $a^2$ ,  $c^1$  to  $b^2$ , and so forth. The segments  $d$  and  $e$  are incomplete because Proclus seems not to have spoken of them in detail in the *Elements*.

The second key text, which is a composite of relevant lines from propositions 99 and 100, speaks of both participants and participations, although not without ambiguity.

[99, 88, 20–34:] Every unparticipated arises *qua* unparticipated from no cause other than itself but is itself the first principle and cause of all participations [in its series]. Thus the first principle of each series is always without origin.

For if it is unparticipated, it has primacy in its own series and does not proceed from other principles, since if it received from an external source that character in respect of which it is unparticipated, it would no longer be first in that series. If it is inferior to others and proceeds from them, it proceeds from them not *qua* unparticipated but *qua* participant. For those principles from which it has taken its rise are of course participated by it, and the perfections which it participates, it does not possess primally; but what it is as unparticipated, this it is primally. Accordingly, *qua* unparticipated it is uncaused. *Qua* caused it is a participant," not unparticipated; *qua* unparticipated, it is a cause of participations and is not itself a participant of others.

[100, 90, 2–3 and 7–16:] All unparticipateds are dependent from the one First Principle of all things. . . .

All the unparticipated monads are referred to The One because all are analogous to The One. . . . In respect of their common origin from the latter, none of them is a first principle but all have as their first principle The One;<sup>14</sup> each, however, is a first principle *qua* unparticipated. As principles of a certain order of things they are dependent from the Principle of all things. For the Principle of all things is that which all participate, and this can only be the primal cause; the rest are participated not by all but by a certain some. Hence also that cause is absolutely The Primal, while the rest are primal with respect to a certain order but when considered absolutely are not primal.

These lines seem in obvious contrast with the first key text of this section. In Proposition 72 Proclus is concerned almost solely with participants and views the universe from the bottom up, so to speak. Here, though, he is concerned mainly with monads as unparticipated and his remarks on them as participants are almost incidental (and, certainly, somewhat ambiguous). He views the universe here from the top down.

In what does that ambiguity consist? It centers around the second point noted here.) Precisely as unparticipated, a monad causes and explains itself. This self-causality appears not to be identical with self-sufficiency (props. 9–10) and self-constitution (prop. 40 sq.), since what is self-sufficient and self-constituted do participate. In fact, these latter *are* participations that are self-causing only insofar as the perfection participated is itself present within them and not a mere irradiation from it. But a monad is self-causing and -explaining precisely because the perfection that is uniquely its own and that it contributes as participations to the series it heads (e.g., beingness re Being, animation re Life, etc.) is from itself—it is not received as a participation from an external source but originates from within. Otherwise, it would not be first in that series, it would not be the source therein of those unique participations. 2) Accordingly, if "it is inferior to others

and proceeds from them, it proceeds from them not *qua* unparticipated but *qua* participant." This is the ambiguous sentence. Conceivably, something can be caused as a participant because it receives participations from its cause or, secondly, because as prior to and a substrate for those participations, it itself arises also from that cause.

Which meaning does Proclus intend here? It is difficult to decide, although the words immediately subsequent to those just quoted seem to point to the first: "it proceeds from them . . . *qua* participant, for those principles from which it has taken its rise are of course participated by it, and the perfections which it participates it does not possess primally." But Proposition 100 provides material for an inference pointing to the second meaning. All unparticipated monads are dependent upon and ultimately reduced to The One, their common origin and First Principle. Their procession from it as participants can hardly be solely with respect to the participations they receive from it since such participations are absolutely primal and would, in this supposition, be without any participant at all. A participation can help provide a substrate to a subsequent participation (71. 66. 30 sq.), but it can hardly be a substrate *to itself*. Consequently, all other unparticipated monads (and, of course, the series they initiate) proceed as participants in the sense that the One establishes them prior to any participations and causes in them what serves as a substrate for all participations—namely, that which Proposition 72 calls "matter," the underlying receptacle for all perfections, the privation of and desire for all forms, what is actually one but is merely potential being, what is in itself an indeterminate and infinite power looking to future development (props. 90–92; refer again to Diagram Three).

The final text discloses the role each henad or god plays with the One in respect to the participant.

[137, 120, 31–122, 6:] Each henad co-operates with The One in producing its own participant.

For as The One is constitutive of all, so it is the cause both of the participations which are the henads and of the beings dependent upon them. At the same time each henad produces and irradiates its dependent. The One makes each dependent be, simply; the henad makes each be of the same nature as itself." Thus, the henad imposes its own determinate character upon the being participating in it, in which it entitatively displays its own supra-entitative property.

Earlier (props. 120–122) Proclus had spoken of the gods as causes of participations. An agent's activity parallels and conforms to his nature or reality; but a god by nature is not an intelligence but a prior-to-intelligence, is not a being but a prior-to-being; he *is* goodness; consequently, his activity is not intellection but a function prior to intellection (τὸ προνοεῖν) and to being (τὸ προεῖναι): the bestowal of goods upon subsequents, the communication of participations upon participants (120. 104. 31 sq.). These participations each henad bestows without itself assuming any relationship to the participants, without itself becoming dependent on them (122. 108. 13–17). Moreover, that bestowal occurs spontaneously, naturally, inevitably, necessarily since



it is in virtue of being what they are that they make all things good. . . . By their very being or, rather, by their very priority to being, they irradiate goods upon beings. For being nothing but goodnesses, they furnish by their very being goods to all without stint [*ibid.*, lines 14–17, and 6–11].<sup>36</sup>

In proposition 137, though, our author speaks of the gods with reference to the participant itself. Working together with the One, the henad helps cause the being which immediately participates it (135. 120. 1 sq.) by making it be con-natural with itself, by manifesting on the level of being the character that it has supraentitatively and primally. Thus, a “paternal” henad implants paternity in its being-participant (151. 132. 26 sq.), a “generative” henad implants generativity (152. 134. 6 sq.), and so on down the line of the other henadic characters spoken of in Propositions 153–158.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, while a god makes its participant “be of the same nature as itself,” The One “makes it be simply.” What does that striking statement mean? First of all, our author does not intend that The One makes it be *being*: such is the function of The Being. This latter monad accounts for the presence of form in matter (57. 56. 12–13) or, in other texts, of limit in infinity (89. 82. 1 sq.; 102. 92. 1–2, 7–8), and such is “being”: a combination of form/matter, of limit/infinity. But The One brings it about that what as yet is merely potential being not only is actually one (138. 122. 17–18), but also *is* simply. Does this signify that The One causes matter, the absolutely primal substrate, the participant of henads (and ultimately of all else, too), to *actually exist*? I think not, because every effect in Proclus’ universe is, at bottom, identical with its cause: although an effect proceeds from and thus is somehow distinct from its cause, still it also remains in, and thereby is the same as, its cause (30. 34. 12 sq.). Causality consists in the higher deploying *itself* on a lower level, where it is less perfect and more multiple than before, but where it remains itself under the camouflage of imperfection and multiplicity.

Apparently, matter would be no exception to this general rule. Radically, it *is* The One descending to a lower and pluralized level. It *is* The One emerging into evolving cycles of explication and differentiation. We can say that The One, in contrast with the henads, makes matter *be* simply insofar as under its influence what we call matter comes to deploy on a lower level, which the henads then make connatural to themselves and, thereafter, fill with themselves. In this interpretation, then, “to be simply” is not “to actually exist” since this latter demands that what now is, before was in no way. Accordingly, Proclus appears not to have had a genuine doctrine of creation. Not only does The One produce necessarily rather than voluntarily and freely, but the product is not really distinct in any genuinely adequate way from the producer and, therefore, the product is not caused to actually exist. That which is now *where* it was not before, is now in a different state and under a different guise than it was before, is now different from *what* it was. But that which now is *was* before. The One no more causes it to exist then or now than it causes itself to exist.<sup>38</sup>

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Despite this seeming lack of a doctrine of creation, though, Proclus’ *Weltanschauung* as outlined in *Elements of Theology* is not a mere cosmology but a genuine cosmogony. At the head of each stratum of reality within the universe stands an unparticipated monad which is the cause of all participations within its stratum. In Dodd’s (and my earlier) interpretation, these are either constantly participated perfections (which are self-complete and self-sufficient hypostases and are causes immanent to their participants), or they are perfections only intermittently participated (which are mere powers or irradiations issuing from the former and which have their hypostases and substrates in their participants) (see Diagram One). In my more recent interpretation, though, the two sorts of participations just mentioned express two ways in which participations reside in other-completed hypostases and are contrasted with those that are self-complete existents or hypostases (see Diagram Two).

In either interpretation one must face this question: Where does the monad itself acquire those perfections? From itself. With respect to the characteristic which is uniquely its own and which is the basis for the unique participations it bestows upon all members of its series, it is primal, it is unparticipated, it has no external cause.

With the exception of The One, though, every monad (as well, of course, as the members of its series) is a participant with reference to higher monads, whence it receives not only participations but also derives its status as participant. In the last analysis, all else has proceeded from and reverts to The One, which is the primal monad and which is unparticipated without itself being a participant of anything higher. It causes matter the underlying stuff of all substrates to be simply; not by making it actually exist, but by that which is absolutely one and totally perfect stepping down onto levels of gradually increasing multiplicity and imperfection.

In Proclus’ cosmos then, there are at least two sorts of causality operative, both of which are spontaneous, natural, necessary. The one (= vertical) is a process of participation: participations come to be present in participants, which they complete and perfect as integral parts. The other (= horizontal) is not: the participations themselves and their participants originate simply (and mysteriously) by proceeding from their monads.<sup>39</sup> There issues from the two causalities a tightly structured hierarchy of reality stretching from the One-Good-Limit at the top to matter, the deployment of the One itself at the very bottom.

# Notes

## ON LOGICAL STRUCTURE AND THE PLOTINIC COSMOS

1. A. E. Taylor, *Plato, the Man and His Work* (London: Methuen, 1963, first published in 1926), p. 293.
2. The translation used throughout is that of MacKenna. Namely, Plotinus, *The Enneads* translated by Stephen MacKenna. Second edition (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1917–1930).
3. See especially the author's *Whitehead's Categoreal Scheme and Other Papers* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), especially chapter 1.
4. On virtual classes and relations, see especially the author's *Belief, Existence, and Meaning* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), chapter 6, and *Semiotics and Linguistic Structure* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1978), chapters 1 and 2.

## SOME LOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE CONCEPT OF HYPOSTASIS IN PLOTINUS

1. The general view is that there are three hypostases: One, *Nous*, and Soul. A. H. Armstrong, in his "Introduction" to the Loeb edition of Plotinus' *Enneads* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966) vol. I, p. xxii, suggests that nature is a fourth distinct *hypostasis*, although

- Plotinus "is reluctant to admit it." In his earlier work, *The Architecture of the Intelligible World in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. 102, Armstrong proposed five Plotinian hypostases: One, Nous, Soul, Logos, and Nature; he states that "The Logos is a fourth hypostasis even more clearly than nature, and a hypostasis, moreover, whose own structure is complex." John M. Rist, in his *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), especially in chapter 7, argues against Armstrong and takes the view that there can be only three hypostases; so also John N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation and the One: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 56, but seems rather uncertain about excluding nature, p. 66. R. T. Wallis appeals to *Enneads* II. 9. 1. 57–63, to indicate that in Plotinus' view "Logos is not a separate Hypostasis but expresses the relation of an Hypostasis to its source, its products, or both, cf. III. 2. 2. 15ff." *Neoplatonism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 68. For Plotinus' own testimony that the primal hypostases are (i) three, see V. 1. [10] 1; and (ii) only three, II. 9. [33], 1–2: One, Nous, and Soul.
2. There are key passages in the *Enneads* which refer to the basic features of *hypostasis*, and we may single out four: (i) as power a *hypostasis* is infinite and nonspatial (VI.3.8. 35ff; VI.9.6. 10–12); (ii) *hypostasis* remains unaffected by what it produces, and as such it is "undiminished giving," suffering no diminution of substance (III.8.46–48 and 10.1–19); (iii) a *hypostasis* creates without inclination, will, or movement (V.1.6.25–27; V.3.12. 20–29; (iv) a *hypostasis* has no knowledge of its products; the One qua *hypostasis* transcends knowledge altogether (VI.7.39. 19–33); yet the lower hypostases know only the causal principles they contain within themselves (IV.4.9. 16–18; V.8.3. 26–27). See also Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, pp. 62–63.
  3. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation and the One*, pp. 9–11.
  4. *Ibid.*, p. 9. John Rist follows a somewhat different formulation from Deck, who appeals to demonstrate from causality. His understanding that the One is the first hypostasis is stated as follows: "The One does not concern itself. But the result of willing itself is its production of the second hypostasis, for it wills itself to be such as to produce it. Creation is as free, no more and no less, than the One itself. As for pantheism it is irrelevant." See his *Plotinus*, p. 83. While Deck emphasizes the argument from cause to establish the One as *hypostasis*, Rist stresses the ontological analysis of the nature of the One qua "willing itself."
  5. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation and the One*, p. 66. His meaning, however, is not made clear.
  6. Deck's claim that the titles are Porphyry's own seems to rest on his misreading of the text. See Porphyry, *On the Life of Plotinus*, ch. 4, in *Enneads* (Loeb edition) vol. I. Porphyry does not say that he supplied the titles, only that he used the ones that had prevailed: "These were the writings, to which, since he gave them no titles himself, each [of the few people who had received copies] gave different titles for the several treatises. The following are the titles which finally prevailed. I add the first words of the treatises, to make it easy to recognize from them which treatise is indicated by each title" (Armstrong's translation [Loeb edition], vol. I, p. 13). The word for title is *epigraphē*. See also, Porphyry, ch. 25, 32–37.
  7. Armstrong's translation of the title Porphyry preserved: Περὶ τοῦ ἔκουσίου καὶ θελήματος τοῦ ἑνός, (ch. 26 [Loeb edition] vol. I, p. 85).
  8. E. Bréhier's text. Plotin, *Ennéades*. (Paris: "Les Belles Lettres," 1924–38), vol. VI<sup>2</sup>, p. 153.
  9. S. MacKenna, *The Enneads*, English translation, 3rd edition revised by B. S. Page (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 608.
  10. Compare III.8.10, where Plotinus speaks also of life as founded in "roots": οὐκ ἐν ῥιζῇ λόγουμένης.
  11. Wallis claims that "Plotinus' aversion to formal systems . . . is shown by his continual qualification of his accounts of spiritual being by such Greek works as *hoion* or *hospēr* ('so to speak')" (*Neoplatonism*, p. 41). Evidently, Wallis questions the possibility that *hoion* is a technical expression. If Wallis's claim is granted, then all conceptual terms used by Plotinus to explicate the One are reducible to "so-to-speak" expressions. It may be objected that the expression "so to speak" is too weak to render Plotinus' meaning or capture the seriousness of his arguments and the tone of his exposition. There is an important passage where the expression *to hoion* is used in a conspic-

uously technical sense: VI.8.11. Plotinus states there that for the whole inquiry to determine the meaning of μὴ ὑποστάν as related to "the question just raised," we need to think of the following concepts: ἢ τοῦ τί ἐστὶν εἶναι ἢ τοῦ οἷον ἢ τοῦ διὰ τί ἢ τοῦ εἶναι. After stating what the last two mean, he says that τὸ δὲ οἷον ἐστὶ ζῆτεῖν τί συμβέβηκεν αὐτῷ ὥ συμβέβηκεν μηδὲν (lines 9–10).

12. For comparable examples of the use of *hoion*, see VI.8.7.31–32: Ὑπὲρ δὴ ταῦτα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ αὐτοῦ ὄντος οἷον ἄλλο παρ' αὐτὸ ἀγαθὸν ζητεῖν ἀτοπον. A comparative study of the uses of *hoios* in the Platonic texts may prove useful on this point. See, for instance, *Ion* 537C and 538A and also *Gorgias* 454D.

## THE ONE, OR GOD, IS NOT PROPERLY "HYPOSTASIS": A Reply to Professor John P. Anton

1. See pp. 24–33 of this volume. The article was also previously published in *The Review of Metaphysics* 21:2 (December, 1977), pp. 258–271; hereafter, "Anton." All page references are to the *Review* article.
  2. John N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation and the One* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, c. 1967); hereafter *NCO*.
  3. Professor Anton is, of course, aware of this doctrine—too obvious to be missed—from his own reading of Plotinus. But he does not appreciate its overriding significance. "Though the One is beyond *ousia* and thus beyond predication, still it is the case that he [Plotinus] makes it the object of discourse" (Anton, p. 25). There seems to be here scarcely a suspicion of the adjustments required when a philosopher makes the "beyond predication" an "object of discourse." The absence of this whole dimension makes it possible for Anton to write an entire article demonstrating that "correct discourse" about the One "demands" that the One *is something*—in this case, that the One *is the first hypostasis*! (Anton, p. 33—Conclusion).
  4. Professor Anton does not attend sufficiently to the doctrine that the One is not dual: "The One gave itself its own subsistence and necessarily so" (Anton, p. 31); ". . . the original activity of the One which is presupposed by its *ousia*" (p. 33; ". . . in control of itself" (p. 30). These and similar phrases are quoted or supplied by him absolutely without correctives.
  5. Just as Anton did not feel the force of "beyond predication," so in the same paragraph (Anton, p. 25, para. 1) he fails to appreciate (although he quotes), "beyond being." For him Plotinus believes that it is impossible to make contradictory statements about the One because the "thesis that contradictions are not possible when we speak of Being . . . is fundamental to all classical ontology." *Beyond being*!
- (To wander much further afield, I would be prepared to defend, sometime, that the principle of contradiction (noncontradiction?) is not nearly so sacred to the Plato of the Sophist, to Plotinus, or even to Aristotle as it is to, say, Leibnitz—and also that the ordinary logical notion of contradiction is too crude, at any rate, to be of value in serious metaphysics.)
6. Professor Anton, for whom the "concept" of hypostasis is important (and apparently univocal) in Plotinus, shows concern about the *number* of hypostases, and says that they are three and only three (p. 24, n. 1). In doing so, he represents me as "being rather uncertain about excluding Nature." What I had done was virtually ■ quote Plotinus (in passing, and in another connection): "Soul, by descending into plants, makes another hypostasis" (*NCO*, p. 65, referring to V.2.1. 24–26). But I am not terribly interested in whether Nature is or is not another hypostasis. I am very interested, as Plotinus himself was, in the delineation of the sameness-and-difference, continuity-and-discontinuity, between Soul and Nature.
  7. If Plotinus were to have an *ex professo* doctrine of hypostasis (I do not see that he has), and if that doctrine were correctly rendered by Professor Anton, that is, if "*hypostasis*" were really to mean, for Plotinus, what is infinite and nonspatial, what is unaffected by what it produces, what creates *without* inclination, will, or movement, what has *no* knowledge of its products, "*hypostasis*" still would not name what the One is in its own nature. "*Hypostasis*" would connote only, and strictly

from the outside, what the One is not. It could not refer to an internal negation; the One is above that. It would be what the Scholastic textbooks used to call an "extrinsic denomination." "The One is the first *hypostasis*" would be a case of *via negationis* or *via remotionis*.

## PLOTINUS' THEORY OF THE ONE

1. "According to the time of writing—early manhood, vigorous prime, worn-out constitution—so the tractates vary in power." Porphyry, "On the Life of Plotinus and the Arrangement of his Work," from Plotinus *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, with an Introduction by Professor Paul Henry, S. J., 4th rev. ed., (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 5.
2. Almost all commentators have recognized at least two different ways Plotinus has of speaking of The One, though they do not characterize them in the same way always. Leo Sweeney, S. I., "Infinity in Plotinus," *Gregorianum* 38 (1957), 515–535, suggests that infinity is predicated of The One extrinsically in virtue of its *dynamis*, but intrinsically of its Non-Beingness. The non-being of the One is particularly emphasized by Jean Trouillard, "Plotin et le Moi," *Horizons de la personne*, eds. A. Jagu et al. (Paris: Les Editions Ouvrières, 1965), p. 75. John M. Rist, "Theos and the One in Some Texts of Plotinus," *Mediaeval Studies*, 24 (1962), 169–180, recognizes that while the One transcends being, it does not transcend causality. René Arnou, *Le Desir de Dieu dans la Philosophie de Plotin* (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, n.d.), p. 178, describes in some detail both immanent and transcendental modes of discourse in reference to The One. Another author emphasizes the One as the synthesis of both modes of discourse: "So ist das Eine die Einheit von Sein und Nichtsein, von Rationalem und Irrationalem, von Allem und Nichts." Fritz Heinemann, *Plotin: Forschungen über die plotinische Frage, Plotins Entwicklung und sein System* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1921), p. 253. Finally A. H. Armstrong has emphasized recurrently both the positive and negative elements of the One in Plotinus and their incompatibility. Cf. especially A. H. Armstrong, "Platonic Mysticism," *Dublin Review* 216 (April, 1945), 130–143; and also his *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus: An Analytical and Historical Study* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1940), pp. 1–47.
3. *Enn.* V.5.6, p. 408. "... ἀνάγκη ἀνείδειον ἐκείνο εἶναι. ἀνείδειον δὲ ὃν οὐκ οὐσία· τότε γὰρ τι δεῖ τὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι· τοῦτο δὲ ὁρισμένον· τὸ δὲ οὐκ ἔστι λαβεῖν ὡς τότε· ἤδη γὰρ οὐκ ἀρχή, ἀλλ' ἐκείνο μόνον, ὃ τότε εἰρηκας εἶναι... οὐδὲν δὲ τούτων ὃν μόνον ἂν λέγοιτο ἐπέκεινα τούτων. ταῦτα δὲ τὰ ὄντα καὶ τὸ ὄν· ἐπέκεινα ἄρα ὄντος, τὸ γὰρ ἐπέκεινα ὄτος οὐ τότε λέγει—οὐ γὰρ τίθησιν—οὐδὲ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ λέγει, ἀλλὰ φέρει μόνον τὸ οὐ τοῦτο." Trans. Richard Harder, Plotinus Schriften, Band IIIa, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956), V.5.6, p. 82, 84. Cf. also *Enn.* V.6.6, p. 419; III.6.6, p. 207; IV.4.16, pp. 299–300; III.8.9, p. 248; III.8.10, p. 249; V.5.4, p. 406; V.5.5, p. 407; V.5.12, p. 413; V.5.13, p. 414; VI.7.16, p. 574; VI.7.38, p. 591; VI.7.40, p. 593; VI.7.41, p. 594; VI.8.9, pp. 602–603; VI.8.10, p. 604; VI.8.11, p. 605; VI.8.12, p. 605; VI.8.19, p. 612; VI.2.3, p. 473; VI.2.17, p. 486.
4. *Enn.* VI.7.17, p. 576. "Ἔδει δὲ τὸ πρῶτον μὴ πολλὴν μηδαιῶς εἶναι· ἀνηρητο γὰρ ἂν τὸ πολλὸν αὐτοῦ εἰς πέρον αὐτοῦ." Harder, IIIa. VI.7.17, p. 296. Cf. also *Enn.* V.5.4, p. 406; V.5.6, p. 408; V.5.11, p. 412; VI.8.8, p. 601; VI.8.11, p. 605; VI.8.17, p. 610; VI.2.9, p. 480.
5. *Enn.* V.5.13, p. 413. "εἰ οὖν μήτε τὸ οὐκ ἀγαθὸν μήτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἔχει, οὐδὲν ἔχει· εἰ δ' οὐδὲν ἔχει, μόνον καὶ ἔρημον τῶν ἄλλων ἔστιν." Harder, IIIa. V.5.13, p. 100. Cf. also *Enn.* V.5.11, p. 412; V.5.13, p. 414; II.9.1, p. 132.
6. *Enn.* VI.7.40, p. 593. "οὐ γὰρ ἐνεργήσας πρότερον ἐγέννησεν ἐνεργεῖαν· ἤδη γὰρ ἂν ἦν, πρὶν γενέσθαι· οὐδὲ νοήσας ἐγέννησε νόησιν· ἤδη γὰρ ἂν ἐνενοήκει, πρὶν γενέσθαι νόησιν. ὅπως γὰρ ἡ νόησις, εἰ μὲν ἀγαθοῦ, χεῖρον αὐτοῦ... Harder, IIIa. VI.7.40, p. 350. Cf. also *Enn.* V.6.6, p. 418; III.8.11, p. 250; VI.7.17, pp. 574–575.
7. *Enn.* III.8.11, p. 250. "... ὁ τοιοῦτον παῖδα γεννήσας νοῦν, κόρον καλὸν καὶ παρ' αὐτοῦ γηγόνον κόρον. πάντως τοι οὕτε νοῦς ἐκείνος οὔτε κόρος, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸ νοῦ καὶ κόρου· μετὰ γὰρ αὐτὸν νοῦς καὶ κόρος, δεητέντα καὶ κεκορέσθαι καὶ νενοηκέναι... Harder, IIIa. III.8.11, p. 32. Cf. also *Enn.* VI.7.32, p. 586.
8. Cf. *Enn.* V.6.2, p. 416; V.8.7, p. 428.
9. *Enn.* VI.6.10, p. 549. "... καὶ ἕκαστον μὲν τοῦ ἐν μετέσχειν, ἵνα ἐν ἡ ἔστι δὲ ὃν παρὰ τοῦ ὄντος, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ ὃν παρ' αὐτοῦ ὃν· ἐν δὲ παρὰ τοῦ ἐν... Harder, IIIa. VI.6.10, p. 184.
10. *Enn.* VI.6.9, p. 548.
11. *Enn.* VI.7.40, p. 593. "εἰ δὲ τις καὶ τοῦτο ἅμα νοῦν καὶ νοούμενον ποιεῖ καὶ οὐσίαν καὶ νόησιν συνούσα τῇ οὐσίᾳ καὶ οὕτως αὐτὸ νοῦν θέλει ποιεῖν, ἄλλον δεήσει καὶ τοῦτο παρὰ αὐτοῦ... Harder, IIIa. VI.7.40, p. 352.
12. *Enn.* VI.7.33, p. 587. "... τὸ δὲ ὄντως ἡ τὸ ὑπέρχαλον μὴ μεμετρησθαι εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, μὴ μεμορφῶσθαι μὴδὲ εἶδος εἶναι, ἀνείδειον ἄρα τὸ πρῶτως καὶ πρῶτον καὶ ἡ καλλοῇ ἐκείνο, ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσις." Harder, IIIa. VI.7.33, p. 332. Cf. also *Enn.* V.5.6, p. 408; VI.7.17, p. 575; VI.7.17, pp. 575–576; VI.7.32, p. 586; VI.8.11, p. 605.
13. *Enn.* VI.7.38, p. 591. "τί οὖν γνώσεται; << ἐγὼ εἰμι >>. ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστι, διὰ τί οὖν οὐκ ἔρει << τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἰμι >>; ἡ πάλιν τὸ << ἔστι >> κατηγορήσει αὐτοῦ. ἀλλ' οὐ τὸ << ἀγαθὸν >> μόνον ἔρει [τι προσθεῖς] << ἀγαθὸν >> μὲν γὰρ νοήσειεν ἂν τις ἄνευ τοῦ << ἔστιν >> εἰ μὴ κατ' ἄλλου κατηγοροί· ὁ δὲ αὐτὸν νοῶν ὅτι ἀγαθὸν πάντως νοήσει τὸ << ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ ἀγαθὸν >>... Harder, IIIa. VI.7.38, pp. 344, 346. Cf. also *Enn.* V.5.13, p. 413; V.5.13, p. 414.
14. *Enn.* V.6.2, p. 416. "Ἔδει δὲ πρὸ τοῦ νοεῖν τέλειον εἶναι παρ' αὐτοῦ τῆς οὐσίας. ὥ ἄρα τὸ τέλειον ὑπάρχει, πρὸ τοῦ νοεῖν τοῦτο ἔσται· οὐδὲν ἄρα δεῖ αὐτῷ τοῦ νοεῖν· αὐταρκες γὰρ πρὸ τούτου· οὐκ ἄρα νοήσει, τὸ μὲν ἄρα οὐ νοεῖ, τὸ δὲ πρῶτως νοεῖ, τὸ δὲ νοήσει δευτέρως." Harder, IIIa. V.6.2, p. 78. Cf. also *Enn.* V.6.3, p. 417; V.6.4, p. 417; V.6.5, p. 418; V.6.6, p. 418; V.6.6, p. 419; III.8.9, p. 247; III.8.11, p. 250; V.5.13, p. 414; VI.7.35, p. 588; VI.7.37, p. 591; VI.7.38, p. 591; VI.7.39, p. 592; VI.7.40, p. 593; VI.7.41, p. 594; VI.8.11, p. 605.
15. *Enn.* VI.8.9, p. 603. "... αὐτὴν δὲ μείζονα παντὸς τοῦ θέλιν οὐσαν τὸ θέλιν μετ' αὐτὴν θεμένην." Harder, IVa. VI.8.9, p. 28.
16. *Enn.* VI.8.8, p. 601. "τούτων γὰρ αὐτὸς ἀρχή· καίτοι ἄλλον τρόπον οὐκ ἀρχή; ἀποτιθεμένους δὴ πάντα καὶ τὸ ἐπ' αὐτὰ ὡς ὑστερον καὶ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον... Harder, IVa. VI.8.8, p. 22.
17. *Enn.* VI.5.1, p. 533. "ποῦ γὰρ ἂν εἴη ἔξω τοῦ ὄντος περιπετωκός; ἡ πῶς ἂν τις ἐν τῷ μὴ ὄντι ἐξεύροι αὐτό; ἀλλὰ ὅλην ὅτι ἐν τῷ ὄντι ἐκείνο, ἐν ἐαυτῷ ἂν εἴη ἐκάστω οὐκ ἀπέστημεν ἄρα τοῦ ὄντος, ἀλλ' ἐσμὲν ἐν αὐτῷ οὐδ' αὐ ἐκείνο ἡμῶν· ἐν ἄρα πάντα τὰ ὄντα." Harder, IIIa. VI.5.1, pp. 46, 48.
18. *Enn.* VI.8.16, p. 609. "εἰ τοίνυν, εἰ ἔστι μάλιστα, ὅτι [πρὸς] αὐτὸν οἷον στηρίζει καὶ οἷον πρὸς αὐτὸν βλέπει καὶ τὸ οἷον εἶναι τοῦτο αὐτῷ τὸ πρὸς αὐτὸν βλέπειν, οἷον ποιοῖ ἂν αὐτόν... Harder, IVa. VI.8.16, p. 46. Cf. also *Enn.* VI.8.8, p. 602; VI.8.13, p. 606; VI.8.13, p. 607; VI.8.20, p. 612; VI.8.20, p. 613; III.8.10, p. 248; V.5.12, p. 413.
19. *Enn.* VI.8.20, p. 612. "οὐδὲ γὰρ φοβητέον ἐνεργεῖαν τὴν πρῶτην θεοῦ ἂν οὐσίας, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὴν οἷον ὑπόστασιν θεῖον. εἰ δὲ ὑπόστασιν ἂν ἐνεργείας τις θεῖο, ἐλλειψὶς ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ ἀτελής ἡ τελειοτάτη πασῶν ἔσται, καὶ εἰ προσθεῖν ἐνεργεῖαν, οὐχ ἔν τηρεῖ. εἰ οὖν τελειότερον ἡ ἐνεργειαμῆς οὐσίας, τελειότατον δὲ τὸ πρῶτον, πρῶτῃ ἂν ἐνεργεῖα εἴη." Harder, IVa. VI.8.20, p. 56. Cf. also *Enn.* V.6.6, p. 418; III.8.10, p. 248; VI.8.10, p. 604; VI.8.13, p. 606; VI.8.16, p. 609; VI.8.16, p. 610; VI.8.20, p. 613; VI.1.26, p. 466; V.5.3, p. 406.
20. *Enn.* VI.8.7, p. 601. "... ἡ οἷον οὐσία συνούσα καὶ οἷον συγγενομένη ἐξ αἰδίου τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ ἐξ ἀφ' οὗ αὐτὸ αὐτὸ ποιεῖ [καὶ ἐαυτοῦ καὶ οὐδενός]." Harder, IVa. VI.8.7, p. 22.
21. *Enn.* V.5.12, p. 413. "... τὸ δὲ προεσβύτερον οὐ χρόνῳ, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀληθεῖ, ὃ καὶ τὴν δύναμιν προτέραν ἔχει· πάσαν γὰρ ἔχει· τὸ γὰρ μετ' αὐτὸ οὐ πάσαν, ἀλλ' ὅση μετ' αὐτὸ καὶ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ὥστε ἐκείνος καὶ ταύτης κύριος... Harder, IIIa. V.5.12, pp. 98, 100. Cf. also *Enn.* V.5.10, p. 411; VI.8.9, p. 602; VI.8.10, p. 604; VI.8.18, p. 611; VI.8.20, p. 613; VI.8.21, p. 613.
22. *Enn.* VI.1.12, p. 455. "... εἰ δὲ κατ' οὐσίαν ἡ δύναμις, ἡ τις δύναμις... Harder, IVa. VI.1.12, p. 130.
23. *Enn.* III.8.10, p. 248. "Τί δὲ ὄν; δύναμις τῶν πάντων· ἢς μὴ οὐσης οὐδ' ἂν τὰ πάντα,

- οὐδ' ἄν νοῦ ζοῇ ἡ πρώτη καὶ πᾶσα." *Hardei*, IIIa. III.8.10, p. 26. Cf. also *Enn.* III.8.10, p. 249; VI.8.8, p. 601; VI.8.9, p. 602; VI.8.11, p. 604.
24. *Enn.* VI.8.20, p. 613. "τί οὖν αὐτοῦ ὁ μὴ αὐτός; τί οὖν, ὁ μὴ ἐνεργεῖ; καὶ τί, ὁ μὴ ἔργον αὐτοῦ." *Harder*, IVa. VI.8.20, p. 58.
25. *Enn.* VI.8.16, p. 609. "τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶν ὑποστήσας αὐτόν. εἴπερ ἐνεργεῖα μένουσα καὶ τὸ ἀγαπητότατον οἶον νοῦς." *Harder*, IVa. VI.8.16, p. 46.
26. *Enn.* VI.8.18, p. 611. "οἶον γὰρ γὰρ ἐν θῷ, πολλαχῇ μείζον ἢ τοιοῦτον, τὸ ἐν ἐνὶ ἐκένψ . . . οὐ μὴν ἀλλοειδὲς τὸ σκεδασθὲν εἰδωλον ὁ νοῦς. . . ." *Harder*, IVa. VI.8.18, p. 52.
27. *Enn.* VI.7.18, p. 576. ". . . καὶ ἐπὶ νοῦ διὰ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ ἀνάγκη λέγειν τοῦ πρώτου ἐκείνου, ὅτι ἀγαθόν· καὶ δηλὸν ὅτι καὶ εἶδος ἔκαστον ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἀγαθοειδές." *Harder*, IIIa. VI.7.18, p. 298. Cf. also *Enn.* III.8.11, p. 250.
28. *Enn.* VI.6.14, p. 553. "ἐν μὲν εἶναι τοῦ ἐν παρουσίᾳ, δύο δέ, δυάδος, ὥσπερ καὶ λευκὸν λευκοῦ καὶ καλὸν καλοῦ καὶ δικαίον δίκαιον. . . ." *Harder*, IIIa. VI.6.14, pp. 198, 200.
29. *Enn.* VI.8.14, p. 608. ". . . τὸ ὄντως καὶ τὸ πρῶτον, ἀμυγῆς τύχαις καὶ αὐτομάτῃ καὶ συμβάσει, αἰτίον ἑαυτοῦ καὶ παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτόν αὐτός· γὰρ πρῶτως αὐτός καὶ ὑπερόντως αὐτός." *Harder*, IVa. VI.8.14, p. 42. Cf. also *Enn.* VI.8.16, p. 609; VI.8.16, p. 610; VI.8.20, p. 612; VI.8.20, p. 613; VI.8.21, p. 613.
30. *Enn.* VI.7.39, p. 592. ". . . ἀλλ' ἀπλή τις ἐπιβολὴ αὐτῇ πρὸς αὐτὸ ἐσται." *Harder*, IIIa. VI.7.39, p. 346.
31. *Enn.* VI.8.18, p. 611. Beginning with the phrase "showing forth," the last clause reads as follows: ". . . μαρτυρεῖν τὸν οἶον ἐν ἐνὶ νοῦν οὐ νοῦν ὄντα. . . ." *Harder*, IVa. VI.8.18, p. 52. Cf. also *Enn.* VI.8.16, pp. 609–610.
32. *Enn.* VI.8.13, p. 606. "εἰ γὰρ δοίμεν ἐνεργείας αὐτῇ, τὰς δ' ἐνεργείας αὐτοῦ οἶον βουλήσει αὐτοῦ—γὰρ ἀβουλῶν ἐνεργεῖ—αἱ δὲ ἐνεργεῖαι ἡ οἶον οὐσία αὐτοῦ, ἡ βούλησις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ οὐσία ταυτὸν ἐσται. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ὡς ἀρα ἐβούλετο, οὕτω καὶ ἐστιν." *Harder*, IVa. VI.8.13, p. 36. The entire thirteenth chapter of VI.8 contains many references to the presence of will in the One. Cf. also *Enn.* VI.8.9, p. 603; VI.8.15, p. 608; VI.8.16, p. 609; VI.8.21, p. 613.
33. *Enn.* VI.8.20, p. 612. "Τί οὖν; οὐ συμβαίνει, εἴποι τις ἄν, πρὶν ἢ γενέσθαι γεγονέναι; εἰ γὰρ ποιεῖ ἑαυτόν, τῇ μὲν ἑαυτόν οὕτω ἐστί, τῇ δ' αὖ ποιεῖν ἔστιν ἥδη πρὸ ἑαυτοῦ τοῦ ποιουμένου οὗτος αὐτός." *Harder*, IVa. VI.8.20, p. 56.
34. *Enn.* VI.8.20, p. 612. ". . . καὶ οὐκ ἐστὶν ὡς πρὶν γενέσθαι ἦν· τότε γὰρ οὐκ ἦν πρὶν γενέσθαι, ἀλλ' ἡδὴ πᾶς ἦν." *Harder*, IVa. VI.8.20, p. 56.
35. *Enn.* VI.8.20, pp. 612–613. "ἐνεργεῖα δὲ οὐ δουλεύουσα οὐσία καθαρῶς ἐλευθέρᾳ, καὶ οὕτως αὐτὸς παρ' αὐτοῦ αὐτός. Καὶ γὰρ εἰ μὲν ἐσψέετο εἰς τὸ εἶναι ὑπ' ἄλλου, οὐ πρῶτως αὐτός ἐξ αὐτοῦ· εἰ δ' αὐτὸς αὐτόν ὁρθῶς λέγεται συνέχειν, αὐτός ἐστι καὶ ὁ παράγων ἑαυτόν, εἴπερ, ὅπερ συνέχει κατὰ φύσιν, τοῦτο καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς πεποιήκεν εἶναι." *Harder*, IVa. VI.8.20, p. 56.
36. *Enn.* VI.8.20, p. 613. ". . . τὸ πεποιμέναι ἑαυτόν τοῦτο νοεῖται τὸ σύνδρομον εἶναι τὸ πεποιημέναι καὶ αὐτὸ· ἐν γὰρ τῇ ποιήσει καὶ οἶον γεννήσει αἰδῖν τὸ εἶναι." *Harder*, IVa. VI.8.20, pp. 56, 58.
37. *Enn.* V.5.13, p. 414. καὶ οὖν καὶ ἡμεῖς μὴδὲν τῶν ὑστέρων καὶ τῶν ἐλαττόνων προστιθώμεν, ἀλλ' ὡς ὑπὲρ ταῦτα ἰὼν ἐκείνος τούτων αἴτιος ἢ, ἀλλὰ μὴ αὐτὸς ταῦτα, καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς φύσις ἀγαθοῦ οὐ πάντα εἶναι οὐδ' αὖ ἐν τι τῶν πάντων. . . ." *Harder*, IIIa. V.5.13, p. 100, 102.
38. Cf. *Enn.* VI.8.12, p. 605.
39. *Enn.* VI.7.17, p. 575. "πρὸς ἐκεῖνο μὲν οὖν βλέπουσα ἀόριστος ἦν, βλέψασα δ' ἐκεῖ ὠρίζετο ἐκείνου ὅρον οὐκ ἔχοντος, εὐθὺς γὰρ πρὸς ἐξ τι ἰδοῦσα ὀρίζεται τούτῃ καὶ ἴσχει ἐν αὐτῇ ὅρον καὶ πέρας καὶ πέρας καὶ εἶδος· καὶ τὸ εἶδος ἐν τῇ μορφωθέντι, τὸ δὲ μορφώσαν ἀμορφον ἦν." *Harder*, IIIa. VI.7.17, pp. 292, 294. Cf. also *Enn.* III.8.11, p. 250; VI.7.16, p. 574; VI.7.17, pp. 575–576; VI.7.25, p. 581; VI.7.32, p. 586; VI.7.33, p. 587; VI.8.13, p. 606; VI.8.14, p. 607.
40. Cf. *Enn.* VI.7.28, p. 583; VI.7.33, p. 587.
41. *Enn.* 7.32, p. 586. "οὐδὲν οὖν τοῦτο τῶν ὄντων καὶ πάντα· οὐδὲν μὲν, ὅτι ὑστερα τὰ ὄντα, πάντα δὲ, ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ." *Harder*, IIIa. VI.7.32, p. 328. Cf. also *Enn.* VI.8.16, pp. 609–610; VI.2.9, p. 479.

42. *Enn.* V.5.7, p. 409. "οὔτις δὲ καὶ νοῦς αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων καλύπτει καὶ συναγαγὼν εἰς τὸ εἶσω μὴδὲν ὁρῶν θεάσεται οὐκ ἄλλο ἐν ἄλλῃ φῶς, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ μόνον καθαρόν ἐρ' αὐτοῦ ἐξαιφνης φανέν, ὥστε ἀπορεῖν ὅθεν ἐφάνη, ἐξωθεν ἢ ἐνδον, καὶ ἀπελθόντος εἰπεῖν <<ἐνδον ἄρα ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἐνδον αὐ>>." *Harder*, IIIa. V.5.7, p. 88.

## VERTICAL CAUSATION IN PLOTINUS

- John M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967).
- A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus," Part III of *The Cambridge History of Later Greek & Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
- My reference to Plotinus' noumenatics must be distinguished from what I shall later call Plotinus' doctrine of the noumenal world. "Noumenatics" refers to Plotinus' contemplation, intellection and intelligible object account; "noumenal" refers to the notion found in Early Modern Rationalists. As I shall use them, the two words are closely related but they are not quite the same, as I shall distinguish between Plotinus' noumenatic account and his proper account of the noumenal world.
- My interpretation thus parts company with Rist's interpretation in *Eros and Psyche* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964). Rist recognizes in Plotinus' philosophy a hierarchy of types of persons on the road to unity with Intellect. First is the lover, a person who at least has the predilection to become unified with something other than himself. Second is the music-lover, one who studies the science of harmonics and proportions. Higher still is the lover of wisdom, whose highest study is that of mathematics (τὰ μαθήματα). Having recognized this hierarchy, however, Rist does not see any essential connection between arithmetic, and the like, and union with Intellect: "In view of the general tone of Plotinus' work and of the age in which he lived, we can attribute this continued interest in mathematics solely to Plotinus' unwillingness to diverge from the Platonic method as he knew it" (p. 90).
- Rist's conclusion is based upon his almost exclusive emphasis throughout the book on Plotinus' noumenatics. I maintain, in contrast, that music theory and mathematical training is essential for Plotinus because the concepts, proof procedures, and the like, which are thereby learned are the very means by which Intellect is to be articulated in its most basic form. As to the fact that "Plotinus does not put as much emphasis as Plato on the exact sciences" (p. 90), I refer to the closing remarks of my introduction and to the fact that, in view of the grounding which our ordinary concepts have in Intellect's structure (see page 56), Plotinus can maintain that those concepts provide a means for the "vulgar" to attain a derivative union with Intellect.
- See Leibnitz's *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, Book IV, chapter 3. For instance: "When one has certain confused ideas . . . as one ordinarily does, it is not to be wondered at if one does not see the means for solving [philosophical] questions. It is as I have remarked before, that a person who has not ideas of the angles of a triangle except in the way in which one has them generally, will never think of finding out that they always equal two right angles . . . and when we farther consider what belongs to the nature of [real things] . . . we are transported, so to speak, into another world, that is to say, into the intelligible world of substances, whereas before we have been only among the phenomena of the senses" Leibnitz, *Selections*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 464.
- Plotinus' theory of perception maintains that in performing conceptual activities on occasions of sensation, we thereby make a world of perceived objects, in a manner analogous to a craftsman using his tools to make a craft object. I shall say more about this view as I proceed, but I shall not discuss it at length or defend my interpretation of Plotinus' theory of perception in this essay.
- Given his theory of perception (see Note 6, above), Plotinus holds that phenomenal bodies are not real causes at all—not even of our sensations. Not being causes, they are not "metaphysically concrete," as it were. They are "well-founded" rather than real as such.
- Plotinus rejects a temporal or dispositional reading of capacities in *Ennead* II.5 except insofar as it is applicable in a derivative way in talk about phenomenal bodies (see Armstrong's introduction to

- that treatise in his Loeb Classical Library translation). Plotinus thus says that "this part of the [species] soul, the capacity to undergo, is not body but a certain Form" (III.6.4.31); and that "the capacity to undergo is a cause of undergoings" (III.6.4.44).
9. The distinction between undergoings and activities thus has nothing to do with the latter occurring in an immaterial entity distinct from the body in some Dualistic fashion. It is misleading at best to say, for example, that for Plotinus an "immaterial soul 'inside'" does the perceiving. See Henry J. Blumenthal, "Plotinus' Adoption of Aristotle's Psychology: Sensation, Imagination and Memory," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. R. Baine Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976), pp. 41–58; see especially pp. 47–48.
  10. Plotinus' use of the Stoic doctrine of cosmic sympathy also has its home in the theory of vertical causation. Gordon G. Clark, for example, interprets Plotinus' doctrine of cosmic sympathy as claiming that one body can act upon another body without benefit of a connecting causal chain. Clark calls this mode of horizontal causation "action at a distance" ("Plotinus' Theory of Sensation," *The Philosophical Review* 51 (1942), p. 357–382; p. 364). But more precisely for Plotinus, the doctrine of cosmic sympathy claims that everything occurs of necessity "when" and "where" it occurs in the eternal universe and, derivatively, in the phenomenal universe. It is in virtue of this alone that one can classify one body as an agent and another as a patient without discerning an intermediate causal chain.
  11. The eternal and nonproductive (in a horizontal sense) character of what I call vertical causation is remarked on by John H. Randall in "The Intelligible Universe of Plotinus," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30 (1969), pp. 3–16; p. 13; and, A. H. Armstrong in *Cambridge History* (pp. 252–253). R. T. Wallis gives an account of apparently similar views in Proclus to Plotinus' views on the distinction between horizontal and vertical or real causes in *Neoplatonism* (Gerald Duckworth and Company Ltd., 1972, p. 126). And Rist even proposes that what I would call phenomenal matter and noumenal matter may be distinguished for Plotinus in terms of whether or not the "matter" is being considered as being temporal or as being eternal (*Road to Reality*, p. 118).
  12. It is at this point that Proclus especially departs from Aristotle's classic account of relative-to's in *Categories*. Aristotle claims that the correlatives perception and perceptual object differ from other correlatives, like slave and master, in that they need not occur together. That is, while perceptions and actually perceived things may always occur only together, the same is not true for perceptions and perceptible objects. In short, Aristotle argues, "the perceptible holds prior to perception" (7b36). But Plotinus disagrees. The perceptual world is strictly relative to our discernments of it for Plotinus (see Note 6). Recall, in particular, Plotinus' claim that perceptible air, earth, fire, and water are not the elements called by the same names. Plotinus thereby rejects Aristotle's argument to the effect that the perceptible is prior to perception (and to the perceived as well) because the elements are prior to the perceptive animal (8a10).
  13. The idea that Aristotelian-type categories apply to the perceptual world while the Platonic categories apply to the real world is noted by Merlan in *Cambridge History*, p. 38. That Aristotelian-type categories are, ultimately, derivative from the Platonic categories for Plotinus is discussed by John P. Anton in "Plotinus' Approach to Categorical Theory" (*Significance*, pp. 83–89, esp. p. 88). I shall not discuss the precise character of this derivativeness thesis in this essay.
  14. The interdependence of Intellect's "seeing" with sameness and difference is discussed by Rist in "The Indefinite Dyad and Intelligible Matter in Plotinus," *Classical Quarterly* 12 (1962), pp. 99–107, esp. pp. 101–102. The source of Plotinus' view that real or intelligible motion is to be explicated in terms of differentiation may be Plato's *Parmenides*, where Plato defines motion as "always being in a different" (146a). The idea that the "matter" of Intellect is the Dyad is suggested by Merlan (*Cambridge History*, p. 27), and Rist identifies the Dyad in Plotinus with the very "urge to contemplate" ("Indefinite Dyad," p. 102).
  15. This analogy between contemplation and geometrical derivations is, in fact, grounded in text. Plotinus offers as a prime example of engaging in contemplation a geometer theorizing about lines (III.8.4.8–11).
  16. Plotinus thus maintains that as one proceeds from considering the contemplation of nature to that of Soul and finally to that of Intellect, the contemplation becomes more unified or simple (ἐνομήνεια) (III.8.8.1–8).

## THE ONTOLOGICAL BASIS OF PLOTINUS' CRITICISM OF ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF CATEGORIES

1. This was only one of several titles given to the treatise, as we will see. The abbreviation CAG below stands for *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, vol. 23 (Ed. Academia Litterarum Regia Borussica, Berolini: G. Reimeri, 1882–1909). MacKenna's translation of the *Enneads* is followed here. (Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. by Stephen MacKenna, Second Ed., London: Faber and Faber, 1917–1930).
2. Plotinus challenges this view and relates the treatise to *Metaphysics*, as is evident from his references to this work.
3. Simplicius CAG VIII mentions the names of these commentators.
4. CAG IV. 2. 5. 16–24.
5. The characterization is Simplicius' CAG, pp. 16. 18.
6. According to Simplicius, Plotinus was the last and the sharpest critic of Aristotle's categories, CAG, pp. 2–5.
7. Also, parts of his *Isagōgē* relate to the categories, especially the sections on genus, species, and differentia.
8. From another point of view, even Plotinus could be called an Aristotelian, if Porphyry's remark that much of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is incorporated in the *Enneads* is correct. *Vita*, MacKenna translation of *Enneads*, p. 14.
9. It is understandable that the Stoic doctrine, as more materialistic, receives Plotinus' more severe criticism.
10. Cf. *Metaphysics* 1053b; also *Physics* 689a. 11–21.
11. *Timaeus* 27d–28e.
12. *Ibid.*, 29b and 48e.
13. *Ibid.*, 48c–d.
14. *Sophist* 254c–255e.
15. As given here the "genera of being" are to be found in VI. 2, especially chapters 7 and 8. For the other genera, see VI. 3. 1–27.
16. However, even λόγος νοήτος lacks the absolute unity of the One.
17. The example is Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 1024a. 33–6.
18. *Ibid.*, 1024b. 5.
19. *Ibid.*, 1024b. 809.
20. *Topics* 102a. 32–3.
21. It is correct that Aristotle refers to categories as genera, but to my knowledge he never used the expression "genera of being."
22. *Categories* 1b. 25.
23. Porphyry CAG IV, pp. 139–140, reluctantly accepts the last four categories of the Aristotelian list.
24. Dexippus, CAG, wrote three treatises answering Plotinus' aporias on Aristotle's categories.
25. Simplicius, CAG, pp. 16–18.
26. CAG IV, pp. 56–7.
27. According to Simplicius, CAG, pp. 16–17.
28. The labeling is mine, but the commentators after Porphyry speak of these alternative interpretations as a commonplace.
29. Simplicius, CAG, pp. 11–12, for example.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 18–19.
31. Porphyry, CAG, pp. 25 30, 85; and *Isagōgē* 1a. 9–14.

## PLOTINUS AND SELF-PREDICATION

1. R. E. Allen, "Participation and Predication in Plato's Middle Dialogues," in ed. R. E. Allen, *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), p. 43.

2. This idea was developed by Sandra Peterson Wallace in "A Reasonable Self-Predication Premise for the Third Man Argument," *Phil. Rev.* 82 (1973), pp. 451-70.
3. Gregory Vlastos, "A Note on 'Pauline Predications' in Plato," *Phronesis* 19 (1974), pp. 95-101.
4. Vlastos, "Note," p. 95.
5. It seems appropriate to refer to this type of predication as epsilon predication.
6. Vlastos, "Note," p. 96.
7. Vlastos, "Note," p. 96.
8. This is also Lloyd's conclusion. Cf. A. C. Lloyd, "Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic," *Phronesis* 1 (1955-1956), pp. 58-72, 146-60, p. 159.
9. Cf. Lloyd, "Logic," p. 62.
10. Cf. John Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One*, (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1967); R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Scribner, 1972); John Fielder, "Chorismos and Emanation in the Philosophy of Plotinus" in ed. R. B. Harris, *The Significance of Neoplatonism* (Norfolk, International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976).
11. Deck, "Nature," p. 73.
12. Deck, "Nature," p. 116.
13. Wallis, "Self-Predication," p. 93.

## OMNIPRESENCE, PARTICIPATION, AND EIDETIC CAUSATION IN PLOTINUS

1. Émile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, translated by Joseph Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 111.
2. All references to Plotinus are to the critical edition of Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzler (Paris and Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1951-1973). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this paper are those of the author.
3. On the need for appropriate principles in (scientific) inquiry, see Aristotle *Posterior Analytics* A. 2. 71b23-72a6.
4. This description clearly draws heavily from the *Timaeus*, particularly 27d5-28a4 and 52a1-b1.
5. Cf. Bréhier's "Notice" to VI. 4-5 in his edition of *Plotinus* (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1924-1938), especially VI.1, pp. 165, 171, and 173. My reconstruction agrees in certain details with that sketched by John Fielder in "Plotinus' Reply to the Arguments of *Parmenides* 130a-131d," *Apeiron* 12 (1978), pp. 1-5.
6. Alan Donagan, "Universals and Metaphysical Realism," in ed. Charles Landseman, *The Problem of Universals* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), pp. 98-118, 105.
7. *Ibid.*
8. The translation here is adapted from that of W. D. Ross in ed. Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 707; cf. also the passage at M. 5 on p. 896.
9. The translation here is adapted from that of E. S. Forster in his Loeb edition of the treatise (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 309.
10. Cf. the discussion of *πορίσις* and *ἀπόξις* in René Aron, *Πρόξις et Θωρία: Étude de détail sur le vocabulaire et la pensée des Ennéades de Plotin*, nouvelle édition (Rome: Presses de L'Université Grégorienne, 1972), pp. 27-37.
11. All translations from III. 8 are adapted from the translation of A. H. Armstrong in his Loeb edition of *Plotinus* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966- ).
12. See Armstrong's note on this passage in his Loeb edition of *Plotinus*, *ibid.*, volume III, p. 368, note 1.
13. *Plato and Parmenides: Parmenides' "Way of Truth" and Plato's "Parmenides,"* translated, with an introduction and running commentary, by Francis MacDonald Cornford (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1939), p. 194. For a good introduction to the Neoplatonic reading of the *Parmenides*, see the introduction to Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne*, texte établi et traduit par H. D. Saffrey et L. G. Westerink (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1968- ). especially volume I, pp. lxxv-lxxxix.
14. It seems to be a distinguishing characteristic of various forms of metaphysical idealism (and, as w-

shall see, Plotinus' system involves some form of metaphysical idealism) to conceive of psyche or mind or consciousness as essentially a locus of relation, a medium for the reconciliation of opposites and the uniting of things that are different; cf. the quasi-Hegelian arguments of T. H. Green and Hastings Rashdall discussed in A. C. Ewing, *Idealism: A Critical Survey*, 3d ed. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1974), pp. 399-403.

15. The essential negativity of the *psyche* in the context of Proclus' metaphysics and, more generally, within the Neoplatonic tradition is the central subject of Jean Trouillard's *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclus* (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1972).
16. Other recent discussions of productive contemplation include John N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), and Joseph Moreau, *Plotin ou la gloire de la philosophie antique* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1970), chapters X and XI.
17. Cf. III.7[45] 12 19-22, where Plotinus maintains that when *psyche* leaves the activity of discursive contemplation and returns to the unity of *noesis* "time is abolished," which fact shows that it is the life of the *psyche* that generates time (ὅτις ὁ βίος τὸν χρόνον γεννᾷ).
18. The translation here is adapted from that of Armstrong in his Loeb edition of Plotinus.
19. Cf. MacKenna's inspired rendering, "Time in its ceaseless onward sliding produces parted interval," in Plotinus, *The Enneads*, translated by Stephen MacKenna, 4th ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), p. 540.
20. For an extended treatment of this aspect of VI.4-5, see my "The Doctrine of Reception According to the Capacity of the Recipient in *Ennead* VI.4-5," *Dionysius* III (December, 1979), pp. 79-97.
21. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, p. 111.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-129.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-111.
25. For a contemporary discussion of this basic idealistic problem, see Nicholas Rescher, *Conceptual Idealism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), pp. 177-180.

## CANTOR'S SETS AND PROCLUS' WHOLES

1. Alan Calder, "Constructive Mathematics," *Scientific American* 241 (October, 1979), 146-171, and bibliography, p. 186; Felix E. Browder, "The Relevance of Mathematics," *American Math. Monthly* 83 (1976), 249-254; Ernest Snapper, "The Three Crises in Mathematics: Logicism, Intuitionism, and Formalism," *Mathematics Magazine* 52 (1979), 207-216.
2. Evangelos Stamatis, "Peri tēs theōrias tōn Synolōn para Platōni," *Praktika tēs Akademias Athenōn* (1958), 298-303.
3. Proclus, *In Primum Euclidis Elementorum Librum Commentarii*, ed. G. Friedlein (Leipzig, 1873); trans. Glenn R. Morrow, *Proclus' Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements* (Princeton, 1970).
4. Sir Thomas Heath, *History of Greek Mathematics*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1921), vol. II, pp. 530-536.
5. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. and trans. E. R. Dodds (Oxford, 1934).
6. Georg Cantor, *Allgemeine Mengenlehre* (Leipzig, 1883).
7. Stamatis, "Peri tēs theōrias," 298-303.
8. Heath, *Greek Mathematics* I, 326-327; and cf. Note 1 *supra*.
9. Calder, "Constructive Mathematics"; Browder, "Relevance of Mathematics"; Snapper, "Three Crises in Mathematics."
10. For the Z-F axioms, see A. A. Fraenkel, Y. Bar-Hillel, and A. Levy, *Foundations of Set Theory* (Amsterdam: North Holland Press, 1973).
11. Snapper, "Three Crises in Mathematics," p. 208.
12. Plato's "Late Learners," *Sophist* 251C-D.
13. The alternative logicist scheme of Whitehead and Russell requires another extralogical axiom, the axiom of reducibility. This, in effect, asserts a context that is not Neoplatonic. Consequently, I will use set theory in the Zermelo-Fraenkel version.

14. Plato *Republic* VII. 528A2-E1: "But this subject [stereometry] does not appear to have been investigated yet" (Shorey's translation).
15. *Republic* VII. 531D1-5.
16. Aristotle *Posterior Analytics* I.27. 87a30-35; II.77a30-35.
17. Cf. Note 8, *supra*.
18. Cf. Note 3, *supra*.
19. R. Courant and H. Robbins, *What Is Mathematics?* (Oxford, 1941).
20. Courant and Robbins, *What Is Mathematics?* p. 108.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-119.
22. Boethius, *de trinitate*. Iff.
23. Courant and Robbins, p. 111.
24. Robert S. Hartman, *The Structure of Value* (Carbondale, Ill., 1967). See also R. S. Brumbaugh, "Formal Value Theory: Transfinite Ordinal Numbers and Relatively Trivial Practical Choices," *Journal of Human Relations* (1973).
25. For Dodds's edition, see Note 3, *supra*. Stamatis works from the edition of Creuzer (Frankfurt, 1822), also citing the *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology* by Bishop Nicholas of Methone, ed. J. Th. Voemel (Frankfurt, 1822).
26. Stamatis translates with the following equivalents: Cantor's *menge* = Proclus' *holon*; Cantor's *regel* = Proclus' *eidos*; Cantor's *element* = Proclus' *meros*; Cantor's *object* = Proclus' *meros*. For philosophical purposes, these equivalences require some further qualifications, though they work well mathematically.
27. Stephan Körner, *Categorical Frameworks*. London (Blackwell, 1970), appendix A.
28. For the difference between systems with continuity and with definiteness, see my "Metaphysical Presuppositions and the Study of Time," *International Soc. for the Study of Time, Proceedings III* (New York, 1978), pp. 7-9.
29. Cf. R. S. Brumbaugh, "Logical and Mathematical Symbolism in the Plato Scholia," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, (1961), 45-58; 1965, 1-13; 1968, 1-11.
30. See Note 24, *supra*. There is an excellent comparison of Plato's forms and Cantor's sets in a monograph by John Faris, which came to my attention after the present paper was written. (John Faris, *Plato's Theory of Forms and Cantor's Theory of Sets*. Belfast, 1968) Faris' work shows, I think that Proclus has taken up a position of his own, one closer to Plato than Cantor's is.

## THE MATHEMATICS OF MYSTICISM: PLOTINUS AND PROCLUS

1. *Enneads* III.8.8 (351d); III.89 (352b); V.4.1. (516b-c); VI.8.9 (743c). Cf., with respect to the following summary and argument, my "Proclus on the One," *Idealistic Studies* (1973):229-237.
2. Damascius, *Dubitationes*, 43.
3. *Ibid.*, 38. I. 79, 20ff.; 41. I. 83, 26ff.; 42. I. 85, 8ff.; 107. I. 278, 24ff.
4. *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevii*, ed. R. Klibansky; *Plato Latinus III, Parmenides usque ad finem primae hypothesis nec non Procli Commentarium in Parmenidem, pars ultima inedita*, eds. R. Klibansky and C. Labowsky, trans., G. E. M. Anscombe and L. Labowsky (London: Warburg Institute), 1953.
5. That Proclus thinks Plato intended the first hypothesis to be the correct one is illustrated by the following passages from his *Commentary*: "The alternative remains, that the discussion of the One is either in this [the first] hypothesis, or nowhere. But the latter is unlikely . . ." (p. 65 [26-28]) ". . . so he shows that that most glorious One is neither expressible nor knowable. Now he rightly pronounces the final negation" (p. 71 [29-30]). "For by means of a negation Parmenides has removed all negations. With silence he concludes the contemplation of the One" Anscombe and Labowsky translation (London: Warburg Institute, 1953) (p. 77[4-5]). It is indeed hard to accept Proclus' view as a correct interpretation of Plato since the latter seems to dismiss the first hypothesis as leading to an untenable position. Professor Robert S. Brumbaugh has argued in detail that Plato's proof in the *Parmenides* is an indirect proof by elimination (*Plato on The*

- One*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press 1961); if this is correct, as I think it is, then one must reject, as not being Plato's the mystical Proclusian interpretation of the first hypothesis.
6. Proclus, *Commentary*, London: Warburg Institute p. 45 (lines 13-14). Subsequent page references in the text will all refer to this work cited in Note 4, above.
7. In "Proclus on The One," *Idealist Studies* 3 (1973).
8. Compare my "Self-Reference and the Philosophy of Science" read at the 6th *International Congress for Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*, Hanover, Germany, August, 1979.
9. For reasons analogous to those presented in Sections I-III, I also feel that Wittgenstein's conclusion to the *Tractatus* is unsatisfactory (6.54): "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps ["means"]—to climb up beyond them. (He must, to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)"
- "He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright."
- "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." I simply cannot accept this. When the "steps" we have used to get to a certain point (mysticism) are nonsensical or invalid, then our presence at that point is unjustified: the need for our being there has just not been demonstrated.
10. Professor J. N. Findlay has provided some admirable efforts in this direction through his investigation into the logic of such notions. Cf. "The Diremptive Tendencies of Western Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 14(1964), 167-178; "The Logic of Mysticism," *Religious Studies* 2(1967), 145-162; "The Logic of Ultimates," *Journal of Philosophy* 64(1967), 571-583; *Ascent to the Absolute* (London: George Allen & Union Ltd., 1970).
11. Cf. Gregory Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," *Philosophical Review* 63(1954), 330.
12. Cf. F. B. Fitch, *Symbolic Logic* (New York: The Ronald Press, 1952), the appendix entitled "Self-Reference in Philosophy."

## THE ANATOMY OF A NEOPLATONIST METAPHYSICAL PROOF

1. *Proclus. The Elements of Theology: A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary* by E. R. Dodds (Oxford, 1963). Hereafter cited as *E.T.* According to Proclus' own explanation (*In Euclidis EI.*, ed. G. Friedlein [Teubner, 1873], pp. 71, 22-73, 14; cf. *A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, trans. Glenn R. Morrow [Princeton, 1970], pp. 59-60), the meaning of στοιχειώσις in writings with that title presupposes the notion of "element" (στοιχείον) "that determines the arrangement of the elements in Euclid's work." Interestingly, Proclus here defines an "element" as something "ranked as the more primary type (τὰ ἀρχοειδέστερα) of members of an argument [proof] leading to a conclusion, as postulates are elements of theorems" (*In Euc. EI.* 73. 8-9). If Proclus intended to restrict the meaning of "element" with this illustration, the relation of postulate to theorem, where the element is different in "type" or "form" from what it is an element of, then *E.T.*, which consists only of theorems and their proofs, would not conform to his Euclidean model. However, he earlier had defined "element" more simply as "what proves," e.g., as in Euclid "The first theorem is an element of the second" (*In Euc. EI.* 72. 24-26). (I follow Morrow in translating τὸ κατασκευόνον as "what proves," although the sense of the term as used in geometry would more naturally suggest "what solves by construction"; since this is the relation between *Elements* I. 1 and I. 2, the implication is again that Proclus understands elementhood as involving postulates and constructions). The general question here is whether *E.T.* does or does not conform to a Euclidean model as Proclus himself understood the model. On the place of *E.T.* as the first rigorous metaphysical system, cf. R. Beutler, *Reale Encyclopädie*, XXIII. 1, col. 198, "Die einzige systematischen Darstellung der neuplatonische Metaphysik, die uns erhalten ist"; J. Lindsay, "Le système de Proclus," *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale* 28 (1921), pp. 497-523; R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London, 1972), p. 146.
2. L. J. Rosán, *The Philosophy of Proclus: the Final Phase of Ancient Thought* (New York, 1949), pp. 36-37, *E.T.* "Is consciously modelled on the *Elements of Geometry* by Euclid"; Wallis, *op.*



- cit.*, *E.T.* follows "the procedures of Euclidean geometry": Stanislas Bréton, "Le Théorème De l'Un Dans Les Éléments De Théologie De Proclus," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 58 (1974), pp. 561–583. The literature on *E.T.* is filled with expressions like "logical deduction" (Wallis, p. 211), "successions logiques" (Lindsay), and so on, which omit any reference to Euclid: this alone might explain Bréton's attempt to think of the proof as free of any geometrical aspects; cf. his *Philosophie et Mathématique chez Proclus* (Paris, 1969).
3. Ian Mueller, "Euclid's *Elements* and the Axiomatic Method," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 20 (1969), pp. 289–309. Cf. David Hilbert, "Axiomatic Thinking," *Philosophy Math* 7 (1970), pp. 1–12.
  4. Mueller, *op. cit.*, pp. 290–291, "Grammatically, at least, these postulates are not existence assertions like their modern counterparts." Euclidean proofs are "thought experiments" involving "An idealized physical object which can be represented in a diagram" (p. 291). Proclus alludes to a view (*In Eucl. E1.* 80. 15–81. 4) that a problem, as distinguished from a theorem in Euclid's sense, asks under what conditions "something exists," which implies that the postulates are among certain existence conditions. But to say that something is an existence condition is not to say that it is an assertion of existence of anything; besides, the view in question was far from universally held.
  5. Jaakko Hintikka and Unto Remes, *The Method of Analysis: Its Geometrical Origin and Its General Significance* (Dordrecht, 1974), seem to support this contention, but continue to treat the postulates at the core of Euclidean  $\epsilon\chi\theta\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  and auxiliary constructions as assertions of existence ("the existential assumptions that the postulates in effect are" [italics added], p. 4). The position contested by Mueller is represented by A. Szabó, *Anfänge der griechischen Mathematik* (München-Wien, 1969).
  6. *E.T.*, pp. 2, 1. All references to *E.T.* are to Dodds's page and line numbers of the Greek text. No term, such as "proposition" or "theorem" is affixed by Proclus to the numbered statements to be proved in *E.T.* For problems of translation of the first numbered statement to be proved, cf. *infra*, pp. 5–9 and Notes, 14–19.
  7. Cf. Note 1, *supra*. The content of *E.T.* seems wholly derivative (Dodds, p. xxv; followed by Wallis, p. 211). Proclus' originality, therefore lies in his systematic procedure or attempted rigor.
  8. Cf. Jean Trouillard, *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclus* (Paris, 1972), p. 155; Thomas Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists* (Cambridge, 1918), p. 161; Wallis, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
  9. Dodds, *E.T.*, p. ix: "Lapses even from formal correctness of reasoning may be detected here and there, though less frequently than one might have expected." Dodds's judgment is somewhat surprising in view of the obscurity of many of Proclus' assumptions.
  10. The role corresponding to the postulates in Euclid that permit constructions, but also to the type of infinitely continued operation intuitively presupposed by Proclus' proof of proposition 1. For Proclus' definitions of Euclidean axioms, definitions, and postulates (adapted from Aristotle), cf. *In Eucl. E1.*, pp. 76, 6–77; 2 = Morrow, pp. 62–63. Proclus' definition of a postulate as a statement that is "Unknown and nevertheless is accepted without the student's granting it" places the difficult to grant fifth postulate in the foreground, omitting any reference to the role of the postulates in Euclidean constructions.
  11. In the Euclid commentary, Proclus clearly distinguishes the unproved principles from the theorems and problems that follow them (*In Eucl. E1.*, pp. 75, 5–26). Was *E.T.* written before the Euclid commentary? Dodds, p. xvii, following Freudenthal in all essentials (*Hermes* 16 (1881), pp. 214ff.), pronounces *E.T.* "definitely . . . relatively early." Below I cite evidence independent of chronology which proves that the Dodds-Freudenthal early dating of *E.T.* need have no direct bearing on Proclus' reasons for omitting unproved principles in *E.T.* (*infra*, pp. 23–25). The same evidence proves that Proclus was consciously avoiding certain ingredients of the Euclidean system namely, precisely all unproved propositions.
  12. Cf. Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 18–22.
  13. Dodds, p. xxv. A test of the usefulness of invisible-hand explanation would be to find an element in Proclus' strategy of proof that goes counter to the intentional design of *E.T.* as a whole, but which can be explained by certain historical facts.
  14. *E.T.*, p. 2, 2–3. The occurrence of  $\sigma\upsilon\nu\tau\iota\theta\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$  at 2. 13 is used to supply the verbal idea. I assume throughout that the relation between the "many" and the "multitude" is, loosely, that of composition or componenthood. For the ancient use of  $\pi\lambda\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$ , cf. Liddell-Scott-Jones (9th ed., 1966), 1417–1418 for examples. Although at times abstract and general, Proclus' notion of multitude is nontechnical. Dodds's version, *E.T.*, p. 3, "Every manifold in some way participates unity," which unavoidably recalls Kant's "*ein Mannigfaltiges*" in the Critique of Pure Reason, seems intended to suggest something technical (but what?). *LSJ* give "quantity" as one meaning of  $\pi\lambda\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$ , but the uses cited still connote an unstipulated amount, *some* quantity of *something*.
  15. Bréton, *art. cit.*, p. 562. Following M. L. Roure, Bréton translates proposition 1 into symbolic notation as:  $Ux : ax \supset (bx \vee cx)$ . The disjunct is supposed to capture the logic behind "in some way partakes of unity" (as it turns out, for Proclus there are only two ways in which a multitude, which Bréton variously renders as "ensemble," "multiplicité," and "pluralité", can partake of unity). Bréton's vacillation over the meaning of  $\pi\lambda\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$  can lead to logical confusions, as when he once refers to the "whole" in question as a "*totalité*" (p. 571), which restricts multitudes to those whose components are discrete, countable things. Consider Pappus' remark that "In the case of the continuous quantities. . . the contrary of whole is part, the term 'whole' being applicable to continuous things only, just as the term 'total' is applicable only to discrete [i.e., countable] things," in *The Commentary of Pappus on Book X of Euclid's Elements*, Arabic text and translation by William Thomson (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1930), p. 66. Proclus distinguishes two kinds of wholes in the Euclid commentary, those divisible into like and those divisible into unlike parts (*In Eucl. E1.*, p. 144, 18–145, 25), which is consistent with Pappus' restriction of "whole" to continuous magnitudes since Proclus is here discussing geometrical figures. However, it is doubtful that Proclus would restrict his multitudes in *E.T.* either to magnitudes or to countable totalities. It helps to think of Proclus' multitudes as masses the components of which can be differentiated according to some as yet unspecified procedure.
  16. Bréton, *art. cit.*, pp. 562–564, alludes to the view without attempting a formal treatment; the view was suggested much earlier by Evangelos Stamatis, *Περὶ τῆς θεωρίας τῶν Συνολῶν παρὰ Πλάτωνος Πρακτικὰ τῆς Ακαδημίας Αθηνῶν* (1958), pp. 298–303, as noted and developed by Robert Brumbaugh, "Cantor's Sets and Proclus' Wholes," For expositions of set theory, cf. Abraham A. Fraenkel, "Set Theory," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967), vol. 7, 421ff., and *Abstract Set Theory* (Amsterdam, 1966); also W. V. O. Quine, *Set Theory and Its Logic* (Revised ed., Harvard Cambridge, 1978). Because I do not consider all the merits of this view below, I will here simply note that if there is some resemblance between Proclus' need to refer to his sample multitude as a "whole" (*E.T.*, p. 2, 2) and Cantor's 1895 definition of a set as a "collection into a whole" (*Zusammenfassung zu einem Ganzen*, in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (Berlin, 1932), p. 282), then one might also compare the claim made by Proclus' first proposition (that all multitudes partake of unity in some way) with Cantor's 1899 "Letter" to Dedekind, in which he speaks of a set as being thought of as "being collected to 'one thing'" (*ibid.*, p. 443). In his first proposition (i.e., theorem) Proclus is trying to prove what Cantor assumed as part of a definition or essential condition of a set. The problem of determining the precise status of Proclus' first theorem goes beyond analogies between "multitudes" and sets to the foundations of set theory.
  17. Damascius Diadochus, *Dubitantes et solutiones de primis principiis*, ed. C. A. Ruelle (Paris, 1889), 126, 11–12. "The term ( $\delta\omicron\upsilon\mu\omicron\varsigma$ ) 'partaking' means . . . 'having' ( $\sigma\epsilon\mu\alpha\iota\upsilon\epsilon\iota\tau\omicron$  τὸ μετέχειν . . . τὸ ἔχειν). Dodds's version, "participates unity" seems awkward and ungrammatical, despite the advantages to which he refers (*viz.*, in translating  $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\chi\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ ).
  18. Cf. Dodds, *E.T.*, p. 188. The legal or political metaphor locked away in much of Plato's metaphysical vocabulary is overlooked. The root meaning of  $\mu\epsilon\theta\epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$  is joint ownership of possession by many of one thing, as  $\chi\omicron\lambda\upsilon\omega\nu\iota\alpha$  at *Rep.* 476 is an "association" of bodies and actions with forms, or forms with forms. It is only after Plotinus, who makes the realm of forms also a realm of Life and Mind, uneasily distinguished from each other, that  $\mu\epsilon\theta\epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$  clearly takes on a connotation of "participation" in an activity. For one essential phase of this in Plotinus, cf. J. M. Rist, "Plotinus and the Value of the Human Person," unpublished, 1978, p. 5.
  19. G. E. L. Owen, "Notes on Ryle's Plato," *Ryle: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Anchor, 1970), p. 342, is content to use either "the One" or "Unity" for "τὸ ἓν" in *Parm.* Plato had other ways of referring to unity, (e.g., *Parm.* 129B7 ὁ ἑστὶν ἓν, 158A5 αὐτὸ ἓν, 158C6 τὸ

- εἶδος (sc. τοῦ ἑνός)), since Owen follows Ryle in treating the former expression as referring to "one of Socrates' Forms," all of these expressions would be namelike. Cf. Aristotle *Phys.* IV. 13. 222a19; *Met.* 1023b36. "τὸ ἐν" seems to function as a name in proposition 13, if the "is" at 16, 8 is of identity and not predication. For a treatment of inconsistencies that follow from Proclus' treatment of names of his highest principle, cf. Carl Kordig, "Proclus on the One," *Idealistic Studies* 3 (1973), pp. 229–237.
20. Proclus, *In Eucl. El.* p. 74, 13–16. Axioms are most credible (p. 76, 9–12), followed by definitions or "hypotheses" (p. 76, 12–17) and postulates (p. 76, 17–21). For an interesting discussion of ancient disputes about the Euclidean definitions, cf. Thomas L. Heath, *Euclid's Elements* (New York: Dover 1956), vol. I, pp. 155–194.
  21. Cf. *In Eucl. El.* pp. 254, 21–256, 8.
  22. An example of a Pythagorean *reductio* proof is found appended to Book X of the *Elements*. *Euclid's Elementa X cum Appendice post Heiberg*, ed. E. S. Stamatis (Leipzig: Teubner, 1972), vol. III, App. 27, pp. 231, 10–233, 13. Cf. Heath, *A History of Greek Mathematics* (Oxford, 1921), vol. I, p. 168. Euclid uses *reductio* in Book II. 8 and III. 1. For Zeno of Elea and Plato, it is the standard rigorous form of argument, and is used by Aristotle as well. For Szabó's suggestive remarks, cf. Hintikka and Kemes, *op. cit.*, "Working Backwards and Proving by Synthesis", p. 128. Proclus sees no connection between the method of analysis and reduction to impossibility proofs. In the passage where he says that Plato "taught this method [analysis] to Leodamas" (*In Eucl. El.*, p. 211, 21–22), he clearly distinguishes it from the latter (p. 212, 1–4).
  23. Literally "For if it were in no way to partake" (ἐἰ γὰρ μὴδαμὴ μετέχου).
  24. The notion of many *making up* a multitude has to be supplied from the context, and the occurrence of συντίθεσθαι at 2, 13. Dodds's "nor any of its several parts" is an overtranslation. No term for "part" (μέρος, μέροςον) occurs in the proof.
  25. Cf. *infra*, (10) and also my Note 35 of this essay. How does Proclus justify "*m* is not one  $\supset$  *m* is infinite multitude"? He assumes that unity of components is a necessary condition of the unity of the multitude made up of those components (cf. *infra*, p. 15 and Note 31); so he infers that "*m* is not one" means that *m* is radically divisible, that is, divisible for every component  $c_n$  of level *n*.  $n \rightarrow \infty$ . Cf. *infra*, pp. 12–13, 15–16.
  26. (9) could be inferred from Zeno, DK B2 (cf. Vlastos' version, "Zeno of Elea," *art. cit.*, p. 369–370) or, more directly, from the Zenonian argument reported by Aristotle, *GC* 316a14–34, 325a8–12, and Simplicius, *In Phys.*, p. 139, 24–140, 26 (= Lee 2; cf. Vlastos, *ibid.*, pp. 371–372); if what is is "divisible through and through" (παντὶ ὁμοίως . . . διαίρετον), then one possibility is that "It will be dissolved into nothing and consist (συστήσεται) of nothing" (Lee, p. 12, 13), and "If indeed it consists, again it consists of nothing" (Lee, p. 12, 17–18).
  27. Not, as Dodds translates, "an infinity of infinities." For the use of ἀπειράκις, cf. Aristotle, *De an.* 407a14 = "infinitely many times" and *LSJ*.
  28. *Phys.* 207a1–2, The infinite "Is not what has nothing outside it, but what always has something outside it (οὐ αἰετὶ τι ἔξω ἔσται)". trans. Robertson-Hardie. Aristotle improves on this rough formulation at 207a7–8: "That is infinite such that for any amount they take there is always something outside to take." This, of course, is still rough and is true only of infinite things, such as magnitudes, substances, series, place, and time. Aristotle's technical term for his own view of the infinite as ἀδιέξοδον (207a14), "what cannot be gone through."
  29. *El.* I. C. N. 5.
  30. *In Eucl. El.*, p. 77, 7–81, 22, esp. 81, 5–18.
  31. Note that this again rules out the concept of an empty multitude, which could have unity but no components. Presumably, this assumption also would mean that for Proclus the unity of a multitude, however strong (e.g., the collection of all Platonic Forms), is not logically independent of the unity of its components. For the gap in Proclus' proof, cf. my remarks on (8), p. 128, *supra*.
  32. (9).
  33. Cf. *supra*, Note 26, and William E. Abraham, "The Nature of Zeno's Argument Against Plurality in DK 29 B1", *Phronesis* XVII (1972), pp. 40–53.
  34. Theo Gerard Sinnige, *Matter and Infinity in the Presocratic Schools* (Assen, 1968), pp. 70–83; B. L. Van der Waerden, *Science Awakening* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 98–99. It is an important insight of Sinnige that γνῶμα can refer to any repeatable (constructible) pattern, not merely a "carpenter's square" (cf. Kirk and Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963] pp. 243–244) and not "Any number which when added to a figurate number gives the next number" (Ross, *Aristotle Physics*, pp. 542–545). What is important is that the patterns are repeated according to postulates, that is, rules of construction. It was Zeno's special genius to apply these gnomonic constructions where they have paradoxical implications.
  35. The sense of ἀπειράκις ἀπείρων is this: (1) If no component of a given multitude *m*,  $C_N \rightarrow \infty$ , has unity, then any component  $c_n$  is an infinite multitude; (2) and since we can apply the same reasoning as often as we like, we get infinite times many infinite multitudes, or for short, "infinitely many infinities" [in succession].
  36. Cf. *Phys.* 207b11–15.
  37. Cf. Heath, *Elements*, vol. III, pp. 15–16.
  38. A. A. Fraenkel, *Abstract Set Theory* (Amsterdam, 1966), sec. 5, th. 2; Quine, *op. cit.*, p. 201, 28. 17 = Cantor's theorem.
  39. Fraenkel, *op. cit.*, p. 29. I assume that we may here think of subsets as "making up" a set, though obviously not precisely in the same way that a set's members "make up" the set (any set has more subsets than members).
  40. Mueller, *art. cit.*, pp. 290–291 with Notes 3–4.
  41. *In Eucl. El.*, pp. 78, 20–79, 2. His comments are worth citing in part: "The discovery of theorems does not occur without recourse to . . . intelligible matter. In going forth into this matter and shaping it, our ideas are plausibly said to resemble acts of production (γενέσεσιν); for the movement of our thought (τῆς διανοίας ἐμὴν κίνησιν) in projecting its own ideas is a production, we have said, of the figures in our imagination (φαντασία) and of their properties. But it is in imagination that the constructions (συστάσεις), sectionings, superpositions, comparisons, additions, and subtractions take place, whereas the contents of our understanding (τὰ δὲ ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ) all stand fixed, without any generation or change" (trans. Morrow, p. 64). Proclus distinguishes the contents in thought, the movement of thought, and the place, imagination, in which thought carries out these movements. He does not restrict the constructivist role of thought to Euclidean problems because he treats construction (κατασκευὴ) as one of the essential "parts" of theorems also (*In Eucl. El.*, p. 203, 1–4).
  42. Cf. *supra*, Notes and 25, 35.
  43. Bréton, *art. cit.*, p. 564. An axiom in need of proof is not an axiom. Bréton says that proposition I "prend les allures d'un théorème," which approaches saying that it is not a real theorem or is not proved, with which I would agree. The more interesting claim is that proposition I is for some reason *unprovable*.
  44. *In Eucl. El.*, p. 76, 9–12.
  45. *Parm.* 158B2, B8–9.
  46. *Parm.* 158C2–7.
  47. *E.T.*, Commentary, p. 188.
  48. *In Parm.*, ed. Cousin, cols. 1292–94.
  49. Proclus' testimony that Zeno's work contained forty arguments (*In Parm.*, col. 694, 23–25), repeated or confirmed by Elias (*In Cat.*, 109,6; cf. DK 29 A15) may be evidence that Proclus had Zeno's work, although for lack of stronger confirmation this is not generally credited.
  50. The possibility is, of course, entirely conjectural. The immediate ancestors of Proclus' Proposition and proof could as well have been earlier Neoplatonist commentaries on the *Parmenides* like the one by Plutarch of Athens (*In Parm.*, cols. 1058, 21–1061, 20). What is striking, however, is that Plato's strategy and intentions in *Parm.* 158 and Proclus' strategy in *E.T.* are clearly not the same if we consider the whole context in each case.
  51. *In Eucl. El.*, p. 72, 3–4.
  52. *In Eucl. El.*, p. 76, 1.
  53. *In Eucl. El.*, p. 76, 4–6.

54. *In Eucl. El.*, p. 75. 5-14.
55. Dodds, *E.T.*, p. x, seems to have anticipated my view here when he writes that *E.T.* may be regarded "As an attempt to supply the comprehensive scheme of reality desiderated by Plato in the seventh book of the *Republic*," but he links *E.T.* with *Rep.* VII instead of *Rep.* VI, as I do.
56. Cf. my argument for this in "The Neoplatonist Interpretation of Plato: Remarks on its Decisive Characteristic," *The Journal of the History of Philosophy* VII (1969), pp. 19-26.
57. Cf. F. M. Cornford, "Mathematics and Dialectic in the *Republic* VI-VII," *Mind* N.S. 41 (1932), pp. 37-52, 173-190; R. Hackforth, "Plato's Divided Line and Dialectic," *The Classical Quarterly* Jan.-Apr. (1942), pp. 1-9. Proclus seems to distinguish metaphysical from mathematical reasoning by means of the role played by imagination in the latter. Cf. A. Charles, "L'imagination, miroir de l'ame selon Proclus," *Actes du Colloque de Royaumont* 69 (1971), pp. 441-451. But then how would Proclus characterize the movement of the mind implied in his own proof of proposition 1? Issues in the foundations of mathematics seem inevitably to press in on us. Proclus seems to be closer to Brouwer than to Russell and Frege, as Julia Annas argues in the case for Plato's theory of foundational principles, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Books M and N*, translated with introduction and notes by Julia Annas (Oxford, 1976), p. 43.
58. Cf. Note. 13.

## THE IDEA OF FALSE IN PROCLUS

Note: Passages from the *Commentary in Euclid's Elements' First Book*, hereafter *In Eucl.*, numbered according to the edition by Friedlein, are given here in the English translation of Glenn Morrow, *Proclus, A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970). All the remaining translations, except *Enn.* III. 6. 7, are mine.

1. Cf. E. Moutsopoulos, *Cognition and Error* (in Greek) (Athens: 1961), pp. 37 sq.; "Vers un élargissement du concept de vérité: le presque-vrai," *Annales de la Fac. des Lettres et Sc. Hum. d'Aix*, 40, 1966, pp. 189-196; *Knowledge and Science* (in Greek) (Athens: Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 134.; Du "faux" dans l'art. *Actas del II Congreso Nacional de Filosofía (Cordoba, Arg. 1971)* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Sud-americana, 1973), pp. 335-338; and *Annales d'Esthétique*, 9-10, 1971, pp. 39-43.
2. *PARM.*, Fr. B 3 (5) (D-K., I, 231): "for, thinking is identical to being."
3. *ID.*, fr. B 7 (D-K): "It will never be conceded that nonbeings be."
4. Cf. *Soph.* 241a; cf. E. Moutsopoulos, *The Ontological Status of Art in Plato's "Sophist"* (in Greek) (*Athens*: 62, 1958), pp. 369-378. Cf. Proclus, *In Alcib.* 108. 3, (trans. Westerink): "it is false to assert . . . that there really is a nonbeing, as Plato's inspired interpreters use to say."
5. Cf. P. M. Schuhl, *L'oeuvre de Platon* (Paris: Hachette, 1954), pp. 117 sq.
6. Cf. L. Stefanini, "La Scepsi platonica," *Giorn. Crit. Filos. Ital.*, 1931, pp. 241-247; E. Moutsopoulos, "From Dogmatism to Skepticism. The Importance of the Academy and the Role of the Stoa," *Stasinos*, 1974, pp. 157-166.
7. Cf. *Enn.* III. 6. 7: "Matter has no reality . . . it is mere indetermination . . . and so has no title to the name of Being. It will be more plausibly called a nonbeing, and this not in the sense that movement and station are Not-Being (i.e., as merely different from Being) but in the sense of veritable Not-Being, so that it is no more than the image and phantasm of mass, a bare aspiration towards substantial existence; it is stationary but not in the sense of having position, it is in itself invisible . . . a phantasm unabiding and yet unable to withdraw . . . so absolute its lack of all Being." Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 52b (trans. MacKenna): "it is palpable without sensation, through some spurious thought . . . it is nothing at all."
8. Cf. *Rep.* VII. 514a sq.
9. Cf. *Enn.* I. 1. 9: "The compound fears its own dissolution, and, when being dissolved, it is with pain and ache."; IV. 4. I; IV. 5. I.
10. Cf. *Enn.* IV. 4. 3; cf. J. Trouillard, *La purification plotinienne* (Paris: P.U.F., 1955), pp. 186 sq.

- Chr. Rutten, *Les catégories du monde sensible dans les "Enneades" de Plotin* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961), pp. 37 sq.
11. Cf. E. Moutsopoulos, "Dynamic Structuralism in the Plotinian Theory of Imagination," *Diotima* 4 (1976), pp. 11-22; "The Problem of the Imaginary in Plotinus" (in Greek), *Scient. Ann. of the Fac. of Philos. Univ. of Athens*, 19 (1968-1969), pp. 94-174, namely pp. 150 sq.
12. Cf. A. Levi, "Il concetto dell'errore nella filosofia di Plotino," ed. Torino, di "Filosofia," 1951 (*Studie Ricerche di storia della filosofia*), p. 9.
13. Cf. Plato *Gorg.* 472c; *Rep.* VI. 506c-510b; *Theet.* 187b sq; *Phil.* 36c; *Laws* I. 631c-d; 645e; 653a. Cf. P. Kucharski, *Les chemins du savoir dans les derniers dialogues de Platon* (Paris: P.U.F., 1949), p. 14, n. 1. Cf. in general J. Stenzel (Eng. trans.), *Plato's Method of Dialectic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), and F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (London: 1935), Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960, pp. 110 sq.
14. Cf. *Enn.* I. 8. 15: "False opinions are generated for the soul whenever it deserts the true itself"; I. 1. 9: "for, a false opinion generates many evils by itself."
15. Cf. *Enn.* I. 1. 9: "The so-called intellection of false is an image"; cf. *ibid.*: "if the opinative faculty and intellection are activities of the soul, how can they be impeccable?"
16. Cf. *Enn.* I. 1. 9, where it is supposed that erroneous thought ("opinion") does not wait for the judgment of intellection; on the contrary, we act after conviction on behalf of the worst; this namely occurs in the case of sensation."
17. Cf. *In Tim.* I. 247. 10-15 (trans. Diehl): "When the soul detaches itself from imagination and opinion, and from varying and indefinite knowledge, and adapts itself to its own thought. . . ." Cf. *In Eucl.* 12. 2-9 (trans. Friedlein). Cf. J. Trouillard, *L'Un et l'a-me selon Proclus* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972), pp. 26-29; cf. *In Alcib.* -77-278 (trans. Westerink); *Element Theol.*, theor. 31 (trans. Dodds); cf. J. Trouillard, *Introduction Proclus. Elements de théologie* (Fr. trans.) (Paris: Aubier, 1965), p. 39.
18. Cf., for instance, *In Parmen.* 995. 36 (trans. V. Cousin): "error . . . moves around according to such an itinerary . . . as well as in the intellect, such a variety of thoughts"; *ibid.*, 996. 6 (Cousin): "it is said that whatever moves towards multiplicity moves in an erroneous way."
19. Cf. *ibid.*, 988. 38.
20. Cf. *ibid.*, 914. 34 (Cousin): "it is false to merely extend inversion to everything." Cf. *ibid.*, 728. 35; 856. 26; 857. 6; 1040. 31; 1039. 31.
21. Cf. *ibid.*, 978. 17 (Cousin): "one should not wonder if something which proves to be true (in one case) would prove false when applied to another."
22. Cf. *ibid.*, One should insist upon the importance of the repeated terms "upon . . . upon."
23. Cf. *ibid.*, "proposed."
24. Cf. *ibid.*, 975. 15 (Cousin): "it has been proved that not only everything is true, but also that whatever is false in it may be completely cured." Cf. *infra*, and Note 43.
25. Cf. *supra*, and Note 3, on nonreducibility of being and non being; cf. *supra*, and Note 2, on identifiability of being and thinking, in *Parmenides*. On Plato's theory of the mixed, cf. N. I. Boussoulas, *L'être et la composition des mixtes dans le "Philebe" de Platon* (Paris, P.U.F., 1952); cf. E. Moutsopoulos, *La musique dans l'oeuvre de Platon*, pp. 360 sq.
26. Cf. *In Parm.* 654. 17 (Cousin): "it either only reveals the truth or only controls the false." Cf. *infra*, and Notes 32 and 39. In geometry, theorems are true or false; problems are possible or impossible. Cf. *In Eucl.* 330. 15 (trans. Friedl).
27. Cf. *ibid.*, 654. 19-22 (Cousin): "by searching whether each one's opinion is true or not, whether sensation is knowledge or not . . . to what extent are true opinions partially invalid, and by testing again and proving that they are unsound."
28. Cf. *ibid.*, 951. 39: "in its development, the argument proves that ignoring such things and failing to dominate them is pure falsehood."
29. Cf. *ibid.*, 893. 22 (trans. Cousin): "what is given through sensation is something imaginary and unconceivable; it should remain such (within the soul) as ■ has been received from the very beginning, so that false and nonbeing may not occur (through it) . . . (error) proceeds only from the soul."

30. Cf. *In Alcib.* 243. 13 (trans. Westerink): "the crowd is the cause of false opinion; for (it inspires to us) evil images since our young age."
31. Cf. *ibid.*, (trans. Westerink): "it even causes various passions."
32. Cf. *In Tim.* III. 341. 8 sq. (trans. Diehl): "and these . . . passions affect the irrational soul; it however occurs that they also affect the rational soul."
33. Cf. *In Alcib.* 175. 14 (trans. Westerink): "even the soul, by being perturbed by false opinion and by accepting help from knowledge according to its own habit, generates an even false opinion and fallacy."
34. Cf. *In Plat. Theol.* (Aem. Porus) 55. 27.
35. Cf. *Hypotyposis* (trans. Manutius) 18. 5; cf. *In Eucl.* 40. 13 (trans. Friedlein): "optics . . . which explains the illusory appearances presented by objects seen at a distance." cf. *ibid.*, 248. 8 (trans. Friedlein).
36. Cf. *ibid.*, 352. 22 (trans. Friedlein): "by proving that they (sc. "certain Hypotheses") are erroneous or superfluous," *ibid.*, 248. 8 (Friedlein): "and so prepares the way for the refutation of unfounded objections"; *ibid.*, 70. 13 (Friedlein) "setting the true beside the false and adapting its refutations of error to seductions we may encounter" (see Note 42); *ibid.*, 247. 21 (Friedlein): "for refuting error."
37. Cf. *In Eucl.* 247. 21 (trans. Friedlein): "it is a mark of scientific and technical skill to arrange in advance for the undoing of those who attack what is going to be said and to prepare the positions from which one can reply so that the previously demonstrated matters may later serve not only for establishing the truth, but also for refuting error."
38. Cf. *ibid.*, 70. 13: τοῦ ἔλεγχον τῆς ἀπάτης συναπομόσας. The parallel use of φεῦδος and ἀπάτη underlines the moral dimension of the notion. Cf. *In Alcib.* 166. 9 (trans. Westerink): "he drives falsehood away from his life and, at the same time, does not clearly confess that he is fond of commanding and of authority"; *ibid.*, 190. 3 (Westerink): "due to the falsehood that surrounds him, he has not received the principles of research."
39. Cf. *In Eucl.* 69. 28 (Friedlein): "If you add or take away any detail whatever you are not inadvertently leaving the way of science and being led down the opposite path of error and ignorance?"
40. Cf. *ibid.*, "against"; *ibid.*, 253. 17 (Friedlein): "we must also note in this connection that many conversions are made fallaciously and are not true."
41. Cf. *supra.* and Notes 19 and 20.
42. Cf. *In Eucl.* 59. 3–6 (Friedlein): "Hence geometry also furnishes criteria whereby we can discriminate between statements that follow from its principles and those that depart from them. The various tropes for refuting fallacies when they occur have this function"; *ibid.*, 70. 10–13 (Friedlein): "[Euclid's book entitled *Fallacies*] enumerates in order the various methods of refutation and for each of them provides exercise for our understandings by a variety of theorems, setting the true beside the false and adapting its refutation of error to the seductions we may encounter"; *ibid.*, 212. 19–23 (Friedlein): "An 'objection' prevents an argument from proceeding on its way by opposing either the construction or the demonstration. Unlike the proposer of the case, who has to show that the proposition is true of it, he who makes an objection does not need to prove anything; rather it is necessary [for his opponent] to refute the objection and show that he who uses it is in error."
43. Cf. *supra.* and Note 24.
44. Cf. *In Tim.* III. 341. 8 (trans. Diehl): "even those who have false opinions also display some true opinion; it is through the latter that they are proved to have false opinions." Cf. *ibid.*, III. 340. 9 (Diehl) "to have a false opinion."
45. Cf. *supra.* and note 26.
46. *In Tim.* III. 340. 8–11 (trans. Diehl): "due to sensations, the opinative faculty is distorted, opines falsely and becomes multiple; . . . it is thus filled with false opinions: it thus splits out, just as sensation, and rebels against itself."
47. Cf. *ibid.*
48. Cf. *Soph.* 241a. Cf. E. Moutsopoulos, "The Ontological status." Cf. *supra.* and Note 4.

## PARTICIPATION AND THE STRUCTURE OF BEING IN PROCLUS' ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY

1. See Props. 116. 102. 13 sq.; 123. 108. 27–28. See Note 9, below. Born in Byzantium in either A.D. 410 or 412. Proclus studied at Alexandria in Egypt rhetoric and Roman law, afterwards mathematics and philosophy (the last under Olympiodorus the Peripatetic). Moving to Athens ca. 430, he continued his study of philosophy in the Platonic Academy under Plutarch of Athens and, especially, Syrianus. Shortly after the latter's death, Proclus assumed the leadership of the Academy until his death on April 17. 485. See T. Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1928), pp. 157–159; L. J. Rosan, *Philosophy of Proclus* (New York: Cosmos, 1949), pp. 12–13 and pp. 13–35 (the last is a translation of Marinus' biography of Proclus); P. Bastid, *Proclus et le crépuscule de la pensée grecque* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1969), pp. 5–18; G. Martano, *Proclo di Atene: L'ultima voce speculativa del genio ellenico* (rev. ed. of *L'uomo e Dio in Proclo* [1952]; Napoli: Giannini, 1974), pp. 7–28.
2. For our purposes, "beings" in Proclus' *Elements* are all existents below the level of the One and henads and, thus, would comprise the levels of Being, Life, Nous, Soul, and Nature. For various listings, see Notes 11 and 12, below.
3. For the Greek text we shall use E. R. Dodds, *Proclus, The Elements of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933; 2nd ed., 1963). In our references to this edition, the first number refers to the proposition, the second to the page, the third to the lines. As often as is conveniently possible, we shall put direct references to Proclus in the body of the paper itself so as to cut down the number of Notes. Whenever quoted, the Greek text will be put in the Notes.  
In our English translation we have been helped by Dodds, *ibid.*, and by Moerbeke—see ed. C. Vansteenkiste, O.P., "Procli Elementatio Theologica Translata a Guilielmo de Moerbeke," *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie* 13 (1951), 263–302 and 491–546; also Jean Trouillard, *Proclus' Éléments de théologie* (Paris: Aubier, 1965).
4. The monad that is the source of the perfection can also be said to be present in the participant but solely through the perfection.  
See Propositions 18 and 25 as instances of the wide variety of verbs Proclus uses for "to produce" or "to cause." They seem to have only minor shades of difference in meaning. On "procession" and other aspects of causality in Proclus, see P. Bastid, *Proclus*, p. 216 sqq.; J. Trouillard, "L'antithèse fondamentale de la procession selon Proclus," *Archives de Philosophie* 34 (1971), 435–449; *idem*, *L'un et l'autre selon Proclus* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972), pp. 78 sqq. and 91 sqq.; *idem*, "La moné selon Proclus," *Le néoplatonisme* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1971), pp. 229–240; W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos: Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1965), pp. 118 sqq.
5. Likeness holds an important place generally in Proclus' causal doctrine. It is responsible for an effect's procession from its cause (see 29. 34. 3 sq. and, especially, the strong statement in line 6: "It is likeness which generates the product out of the producer"), as well as its reversion back to it (32. 36. 3 sq.).
6. This point is already implied in the fact that the participation is present in the participant.
7. The fact that the participation must somehow be part of the participant does not conflict with Props. 64. 81. or similar passages. The perfection participated can either itself reside in the participant or remain separate and yet produce an irradiation or offshoot which inheres in it. This point will be developed later in "The Origins of Participated Perfections."
8. Also matter must be excepted since of itself it is participant and nothing else. It is below participation, The One is above participation. In my more recent interpretation, schematized in Diagram Two, the henads, too, are not composites of participant/participation but are participations or participated perfections only.
9. What does Proclus intend by saying elsewhere (116. 102. 13 sq.; 123. 108. 27–28) that The One is unparticipated? Basically, this: that although it is the source of participations for subsequents, still

it is not itself a participation nor is it a participant of anything (99. 88. 32-33); that (as is true of every monad in relationship to the series it initiates) "it is common to all that can participate and is identical for all and, hence, is prior to all" (23. 28. 5-7); that "it has primacy in its own series and does not proceed from other principles" (99. 88. 24-25).

Besides those passages listed in the body of the article, the One is said to be participated in the following: 25. 28. 31-32; 109. 96. 23; 114. 100. 24.

10. Always, of course, excepting The One and matter, as well as henads in my more recent exegesis (see Note 8). On henads see Prop. 137 (discussed below as the final key text in the section, "The Origin of Participants"); G. Martano, *Proclo*, pp. 131 sq.; P. Bastid, *Proclus*, pp. 254-271.

11. Also see 14. 16. 9 sq., where the lowest three strata are listed. The henads are not mentioned in either Props. 20 or 14, but they are in 21. 24. 29 sq. and 6. 6. 26-28 (my interpretation here differs from Dodds, *op. cit.*, p. 196). Abundant attention is given to the One-Good in early passages—see Props. 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, and 13.

12. This ordering of the monads occurs rather frequently in the *Elements*. Besides Prop. 20, see Props. 57, 62, 63, 64, 109, 129, and 139. In the foregoing Propositions, the second monad (Intelligence) is equivalent to Being-Intelligence; in Props. 160-165 Being is separated from Intelligence, with this resultant list: The One, Being, Intelligence, Soul, bodies.

There are, though, at least two other arrangements of monads, the first of which is: The One, First Limit, First Infinity, Being, Eternity, Time (Props. 90-94). The other arrangement is: The One (as well as gods or henads), Being, Life, Intelligence (Props. 39, 101, 105, 138). On the triad Being, Life, and Intelligence, see E. R. Dodds, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-254; L. J. Rosan, *Philosophy of Proclus*, pp. 97-98; Pierre Hadot, "Être, vie, pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin," *Les Sources de Plotin*, tome V of *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* (Vandoeuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1960), pp. 105-158; *idem*, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968), pp. 213-236 and 260-271; P. Bastid, *Proclus*, pp. 354-364; R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1972) pp. 66-67, 124-125, 130-133; S. Gersh, *Kinēsis Akinetos: Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 20-22 and 78-80; *idem*, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 47, 87-88, 143 sq.; G. Martano, *Proclo*, pp. 161-165; W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, pp. 93 sqq.

13. Lines 22-24: Πάν τὸ ἀμέθεκτον ὑφίστησιν ἀπ' ἑαυτοῦ τὰ μετεχόμενα, καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ μετεχόμεναι ὑποστάσεις εἰς ἀμεθέκτους ὑπάρξεις ἀνστέίνονται. Note that for ὑφίστησιν (line 22) Proclus substitutes ἀπογεννᾷ (line 26) and δώσει (line 28).

Following Moerbeke's lead (see C. Vansteenkiste, *op. cit.*, p. 275), I transliterate rather than translate ὑποστάσεις. On the meaning of the term in various authors, see Heinrich Dörrie, "Hypostasis: Wort und Bedeutungsgeschichte," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, (1955), 35-72. The noun, ὑπαρξίς, means, I think "that which is the proper, unique reality" of an existent (see Dodds, *op. cit.*, p. 235, n. 1). For example, the *hyparxis* of The One is absolute unity and supreme goodness, of the Being is limit/infinity (Prop. 102), or intelligible form (Prop. 161). The word is not synonymous with "being," "existence," "substance," or "subsistence" (on this last see J. Trouillard, *Éléments*, p. 77).

14. This fact is equivalent to the monad being at once everywhere and nowhere (see 98. 86. 27).
15. Perhaps this second fact is the explanation of how unparticipated monads are also said to be participated. See above on The One (Note 9). In 53. 52. 6-7, Eternity and Time are instanced as (presumably) monads causing participations—namely, eternities and times. On Eternity and Time, see Peter B. Manchester, "Intellectual and Sensible Time in Neoplatonism: An Introduction," (with references to studies by Sambursky and Pines, Armstrong, Whittaker, Callahan, Ford, Beierwaltes).
16. Lines 1-3: Πάν τὸ ἀμέθεκτον διττὰς ὑφίστησι τῶν μετεχομένων τὰς τάξεις, τὴν μὲν ἐν τοῖς ποτὲ μετέχουσι, τὴν δὲ ἐν τοῖς αἰεὶ καὶ συμφυῶς μετέχουσι.
17. Lines 11-12: ἄλλων ἐστὶν οἰστικὰ τῶν ποτὲ μετεχομένων.
18. Mediation is an important and almost universal factor in causality. The One causes only matter (57. 54. 23 sq. and 57. 56. 14-16) and the henads immediately. All else it causes through the henads and whatever else has already been caused. Mediation is required by the basic principle

that "every cause sets up things which are like it before things which are unlike" (28. 32. 10-11). Mediation, as does likeness (see Note 5), governs both procession and reversion (38. 40. 22-25).

See Note 21 for discussion of a different sort of mediation.

19. See *op. cit.*, p. 234.
20. On this point a demon is in contrast with, for example, a heavenly body, which is an everlasting participant of a henad (through its soul and intelligence—129. 114. 12 sq.) and whose unity is a participation of the first sort (see Dodds, *ibid.*, p. 234). On demons and their place in the Proclian universe, see *ibid.*, pp. 294-295.
21. Prop. 81 is a description of mediation unlike that encountered previously (see Note 18, above). There it had to do with how the cause produces the effect. Here it has to do with how the effect participates the cause. Even this latter description can be made in two ways. Prop. 81 (and parallel texts) is in terms of the perfection participated: there are cases in which a participant participates a cause through a mere irradiation or power of a perfection. But other Propositions are in terms rather of the relationship between participants and the source of those perfections: a higher participant participates its cause directly, a lower participant indirectly. For example, 128. 114. 1 sq.: "Every god, when participated by what is nearer to him, is participated directly; when participated by what is more remote, through fewer or more intermediaries." Thus, a god or henad is participated directly by a being but by an intelligence through a being, by a soul through an intelligence and a being, etc. (see Prop. 129).

As a variation of this last sort of description, see 108. 86. 9 sq. and 109. 96. 23 sq.: A member of a lower series (say, a soul) participates the monad even of a higher series (The Intelligence) through the member of the higher series it directly participates (an intelligence), as well as through the monad of its own series (the Soul).

Incidentally, "irradiation" in Prop. 81 is identical in meaning with the same word in 64. 60. 21 and 64. 62. 6. It is not identical with the same word in 63. 60. 13; 64. 62. 11; 70. 66. 12; 137. 120. 35, in all of which it has the general meaning of "participation" (whether of the first or second sorts).

22. Apparently, Proclus' doctrine on self-constitution (Prop. 40 sq.) is parallel to and based on self-sufficiency (see 40. 42. 10-17). If so, what is and what is not self-constituted (τὸ αὐτοῦτόστατον) would roughly correspond also to the first and second sorts of participations since what is and what is not self-sufficient are parallel to these. Also, the differences he establishes between what is and what is not self-constituted match pretty well those between the two kinds of participations, as this list of differences in the former show: Prop. 41: what needs no alien seat because contained by itself and conserved in itself without a substrate *versus* what is in another and requires a substrate; Prop. 42: what can revert upon itself *versus* what cannot; Prop. 45: the *agenēton* *versus* the *genēton*; Prop. 46: the imperishable *versus* the perishable; Prop. 47: the indivisible and simple *versus* the divisible and composite; Prop. 49: the perpetual *versus* the transient; Prop. 51: the atemporal *versus* the entitatively temporal. See J. Whittaker, "The Historical Background of Proclus' Doctrine of the *Aythypostata*," in ed. H. Dörrie, *De Iamblique à Proclus*, tome xxi of *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* (Vandoeuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1975), pp. 193-237.
23. One should remember (see above, Note 21, last paragraph.) that Proclus uses "irradiation" (*ellampsis*) in at least two ways. In 64. 60. 21 and 64. 62. 6, it points to a participation received intermittently by the participant (also see 81. 76. 19). But in 63. 60. 13; 64. 62. 11; 70. 66. 12; and 137. 120. 35, it has the general meaning of a "participation" (or "perfection participated"), whether permanent or intermittent.
24. Roman T. Ciapalo drew the diagram, as well as diagrams 2 and 3 below, for which I am grateful.
25. These initial members are of two sorts inasmuch as they either are themselves participants of a higher series (e.g., Being and beings 1 and 2, Intellect and intellects 1 and 2, Soul and souls 1 and 2) or are not such participants (henads 1 to 12, which are, incidentally, the traditional Greek gods). What both sorts have in common is that the members are themselves not participated. No significance is to be attached to there being more henads than beings, and so on: this arises simply to keep the diagram on a single page. Actually, there should be more beings than

- henads, more intellects than beings, more souls than intellects—see props. 62. 58. 22; 110. 98. 1; 111. 98. 18; Dodds, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
26. Lines 24 and 26–27: ἡ μὲν ὕλη, ἐκ τοῦ ἐνὸς ὑποστάσα. . . ἡ μὲν γὰρ ὕλη, ὑποκείμενον οὐσα πάντων, ἐκ τοῦ πάντων αἰτίου προήλθε.
27. The context shows that “irradiation” here is not restricted, as in Prop. 81, to the second sort of participation but indicates any sort, whether first or second. See Note 21, last paragraph.
28. The awkwardness in prop. 72, as in its two predecessors, arises from speaking of the characters, properties, attributes of causes and effects rather than directly of the causes and effects themselves. This manner of speech, though, is frequent and important in Proclus (e.g., see Props. 18, 19, 97).
29. What is the result of this participation? Body receives form (57. 56. 12–13) or, in other texts (89. 82. 1 sq.; 102. 92. 1 sq.), determination and limit (presumably through form, since the henads determine matter through unity—see 117. 112. 29 sq.).
- One should note that, in 74. 70. 22 sq., being is affirmed to be prior to forms, that every form is a being but not every being is a form: “Hence in the resultants privations are in some sense beings although they are not forms; for through the unitary power of Being they too have received some feeble reflection of being.” It is not clear what that “feeble reflection of being” would be that is not form. Might it be unity? In 135. 120. 1 sq. being is closely aligned with the henad it participates. Perhaps their causality also is closely aligned so that what first results from them is the unification of the recipient. Or might it be the state of potential being which privation or matter has prior to reception of form and its state of actual being? See 138. 122. 15 sq.
30. The genesis of matter from The One is what one would expect from Prop. 71. If, in general, the irradiations from higher causes become the participant for irradiations from lower causes, then what the absolutely highest cause produces would be the participant for absolutely all other causes.
- Once the origin of matter is accounted for, that of other participants poses no problem since they are matter plus participation(s) with respect to still further participations. Obviously, “participant” is a relative notion (save with respect to matter): any recipient, however complex or perfect, is a participant in relation to further perfections received.
- Incidentally, “matter” in this article is always to be understood as the basic participant. It is identical with so-called “intelligible matter” in the transsensible world and with “prime matter” in the sensible universe.
- Proclus’ interest in linking matter specially and directly with the One and the henads issues from his interest in magic and theurgy—see Dodds, *op. cit.*, pp. xxii sq., 267, 275–276. On theurgy also see E. R. Dodds, “Theurgy and Its Relationship to Neoplatonism,” *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University Press, 1951), pp. 253 sq.; C. Zintzen, “Die Wertung von Mystik und Magic in der neuplatonischen Philosophie,” *Rheinisches Museum* 108 (1965), 71–100; J. Trouillard, *L’un et l’âme selon Proclus*, pp. 71, 171–189; Andrew Smith, *Porphyry’s Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), pp. 111–121.
31. ἐπιτηδεύτης . . . πρὸς τὴν μέθεξιν τῶν αἰτίων. The first noun also occurs in 72. 68. 22. See E. R. Dodds, *Elements*, pp. 344–345.
32. For interpretations of Proposition 72, see Dodds, *op. cit.*, pp. 238–39; L. J. Rosán, *Philosophy of Proclus*, pp. 107, 191–192; P. Bastid, *Proclus*, pp. 239–40.
33. Lines 27–30 and 31–32: καὶ ἀπ’ ἐκείνων πρόεισιν, οὐχ ἡ ἀμέθεκτόν ἐστι. ταῦτη πρόεισιν, ἀλλ’ ἡ μετέχον. ἀπ’ ὧν γὰρ ὡριμνται, τοῦτων δήπου μετέχει, καὶ ὧν μετέχε, ταῦτα οὐκ ἔστε πρώτως . . . ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀπ’ αἰτίας, μετέχον ἐστὶ καὶ οὐκ ἀμέθεκτον.
34. Lines 10–11: καὶ ἡ μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνὸς πᾶσαι, οὐδεμία τούτων ἀπῆ ἐστιν, ἀλλ’ ὥς ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἐκείνης.
35. Lines 31–34 and 35 sq.: Πᾶσα ἐνὰς συνυφίστησι τῷ ἐνὶ τὸ μετέχον αὐτῆς ὄν. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐν, ὥς πάντων ἐστὶν ὑποστατικόν, οὕτω καὶ τῶν ἐνάδιον τῶν μετεχομένων καὶ τῶν ὄντων τῶν εἰς τὰς ἐνάδας ἀνηρημένων αἰτίων . . . ἀπλῶς μὲν εἶναι τοῦ ἐνὸς ποιούντος, τὸ δὲ συμφυές εἶναι τῆς ἐνάδος ἀπεργαζομένης. ἡ ἐστὶ συμφυές.
36. “Causing by one’s very being” does not demand that the cause itself be a being, obviously, since henads are such causes and they transcend being. It is, then, the same as “causing by being what they are,” “causing by the very fact that they are what they are.” By the very fact that a

henad is a goodness and a unity, it communicates goodness and unity. By the very fact that an intelligence is eternal and unmoved, it produces what is eternal and immutable (76. 72. 7–12; 172. 150. 15 sq.). By the very fact that a soul is self-moved and living, it communicates self-movement and life to bodies (20. 22. 9–10; 196. 170. 20–21).

Manifestly, such causality is natural (literally), inevitable, spontaneous, and necessary. See Jean Trouillard, “Agir par son être même: La causalité selon Proclus,” *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 37 (Oct., 1958), 347–357; *idem*, *L’un et l’âme selon Proclus*, pp. 92–97.

37. Those characters seem to be what Proclus intends in 137. 122. 2–3. But they could be the participations spoken of in Props. 120–122. The former interpretation seems more likely, however.
38. Of course, if the effect is really distinct from the cause, if matter is really other than the One, if Proclus’ *Weltanschauung* is not a monism, then the One would seem to create matter by making it actually exist.

On creation in the *Liber de Causis*, written by an anonymous Semite in the eighth or ninth century A.D., but joining a doctrine of creation to Proclus’ theory of causality, see Leo Sweney, S.J., “Doctrine of Creation in *Liber de Causis*” in ed. C. O’Neil, *Etienne Gilson Tribute* (Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 274–289; also see *idem*, “*Esse Primum Creatum* in Albert the Great’s *Liber de Causis et Processu Universitatis*,” *Thomist* 44 (1980), 599–646.

39. On vertical and horizontal causalities, see Note 24, above, and Diagrams One and Two.

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*Volume III*

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**NEOPLATONISM  
AND  
CHRISTIAN  
THOUGHT**

*Edited by*

**Dominic J. O'Meara**

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR NEOPLATONIC STUDIES  
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## *Introduction*

Ever since Christians began to reflect on their faith, to express and explain it both to themselves and to others, they have availed themselves of the intellectual means which appeared to be suitable for this and which had been developed by the philosophical movements of their time. The use made of Stoic, Cynic, and Platonic conceptions in Saint John and Saint Paul is well known. Even a writer such as Tertullian, who vigorously condemned philosophy, can be found to be articulating the Christian message with the help of pagan philosophical concepts, and those Christians who favored taking advantage of philosophical ideas had no difficulty in elaborating a scripturally based justification of their practice.<sup>1</sup>

The intellectual system that many influential early Christian thinkers made most use of was Platonic philosophy in the eclectic (Aristotelianizing and Stoicizing) form in which this philosophy was understood and widely taught in the early centuries of the Christian era<sup>2</sup> and in particular in the coherent and inspiring structure given this eclectic Platonism by Plotinus (ca. A.D. 204–270) and by his many no less influential followers, Porphyry (ca. A.D. 232–305), Iamblichus (ca. A.D. 245–326), and Proclus (ca. A.D. 412–485), to name but a few.<sup>3</sup> The interest

of early Christians in Platonism had to do not merely with the fact that it was the dominant and by far the most lively philosophical movement of late antiquity. As a philosophy, it also seemed to have more in common with Christian belief than did other philosophies. Saint Augustine, for example, tells us in his *Confessions* that "when I recorded how I had read certain books of the Platonists, . . . he [Simplicianus, who succeeded Saint Ambrose as Bishop of Milan] congratulated me because I had not fallen in with the writings of other philosophers, full of fallacies and deceits according to the elements of this world, whereas in the works of the Platonists God and his Word are introduced in all manners" (VIII, 2, 3, trans. Ryan).

Although it might appear that Aristotelianism displaced Platonism in the later Middle Ages as a privileged philosophy in Christian thought, it did so as a philosophy enriched with fundamental Neoplatonic insights.<sup>4</sup> Indirectly, through the works of Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius and others, Neoplatonism exerted great influence not only on medieval Christianity but also on all Christians who ever since, consciously or not, have been indebted to these thinkers. Since the revival of interest in Plotinus and his school in the Renaissance, direct access to the original Neoplatonic texts has strengthened the presence of Neoplatonic ideas in Christian thought. This presence in recent times is perhaps less easily discerned on a surface troubled by the swift waves driven in rapid succession by contemporary movements in philosophy and the social sciences, but, as several papers in this volume indicate, it is far from losing its living appeal to Christian thinkers.

The relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity, as indeed the relationship between any philosophy and a religion, raises many questions of different kinds, not the least of which challenges such a relationship. From the point of view of the historian, the presence of Neoplatonic ideas in Christian thought is undeniable. But how should we go about identifying precisely and measuring this presence? To what extent did particular Christian writers actually read and make use of particular Neoplatonic texts? To what extent and in what ways were Neoplatonic conceptions influential in a Christian writer's reflection on his faith? Did those conceptions contribute significantly or only superficially to the development of theology? If significantly, should they, from a theologian's point of view, be discarded or should they be preserved, and if so, on what basis? Since a relation between a philosophy and a religion is in question, is there subversion of the philosophy in a religious appropriation of its theories, or is there subversion of the faith in a philosophical interpretation of revealed truths, so that both from a philosophical and from a religious standpoint, the relation can only be either superficial or undesirable? Since both philosophy and religion make truth-claims, might there not be some structure of harmonization?

Modern approaches to dealing with these and other relevant questions have tended to become increasingly fragmented and complex as a result of considerable expansion in the study both of Christian thought and of Neoplatonic philosophy in a variety of different disciplines and as a result of advances in critical method in these disciplines, which make superficial answers no longer acceptable.<sup>5</sup> It was

therefore decided by the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies and The Catholic University of America to cosponsor a Conference on "Neoplatonism and Christian Thought" in 1978 which would serve to bring together scholars in different disciplines who could thus review in common the results of contemporary research in the field, discuss remaining problems, and identify new lines of investigation. The present volume includes papers delivered at this conference. Of course not every area could be covered by the participating scholars, nor could final solutions be presented for all the relevant problems. However, the papers of this volume constitute a conspectus of contemporary studies in this rich field, present advances in the field, and, it is hoped, will provide a focus and stimulus for further discussion and research. In what follows I will attempt to note briefly some of the points made in these papers, organizing my account roughly with reference to the sequence of questions presented above as likely to arise with respect to the relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity.

\* \* \*

There have been several accurate studies of the knowledge and use of specific Neoplatonic texts in the great Christian writers of the fourth century—Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Marius Victorinus, Ambrose, and Augustine.<sup>6</sup> In his paper Father Henri-Dominique Saffrey continues his earlier work providing *precise* evidence of the debt of the influential sixth-century Christian writer known as (Pseudo-) Dionysius the Areopagite to the philosophy of Proclus. He presents a critique of the sorts of doctrinal rapprochements between Pseudo-Dionysius and Neoplatonism that are, in terms of historical method, inadequate<sup>7</sup> and then characterizes what can count as an "objective link" between Pseudo-Dionysius and a Neoplatonic source: links in vocabulary, in intellectual structures, and especially those links betrayed by the earliest commentator on Pseudo-Dionysius, John of Scythopolis, in his attempts to explain unusual (Neoplatonic) expressions in the Dionysian writings. One such expression which Saffrey shows as deriving from Proclus is that referring to divine names as "statues." Saffrey also uncovers two quotations from Proclus in Pseudo-Dionysius and suggests that much more remains to be done in establishing objective links between Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus.

If in some cases precise links can be established between Neoplatonic and Christian texts, in others large gaps in the surviving evidence necessitate a more tentative treatment. Professor John Dillon's paper takes up a doctrine in Origen (ca. A.D. 185–254) concerning the Trinity, which represents God the Father's power as extending to all that exists, God the Son's as extending only to living beings, and the Holy Spirit's extending only to the "saved." He finds a similar doctrine concerning the range of activity of causal principles in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, a much later (fifth century) Neoplatonic text, but suggests grounds for assuming, nevertheless, that Origen's doctrine must be an adaptation of an originally Platonic doctrine, evidence for the existence of which in Origen's time is lacking but which may well have been part of a Middle Platonic system.

In considering Origen's doctrine to be an adaptation of a Platonic doctrine, one is not only referring to the Platonic sources, but one is also raising the issue

as to how this Platonic doctrine was made use of by Origen in a Christian context. Professor Jean Pépin considers the question of the adaptation of Middle and Neoplatonic ideas in relation to a wide range of early Christian writers and with respect to the similarities between their interpretation of the figure of Ulysses and the interpretation of Ulysses in Platonic texts. He shows that in its emphasis on the Ulysses of the *Odyssey* and in its "metaphysical," and thus more allegorical exegesis, the Platonic interpretation resembles Christian interpretations and constitutes a new approach in comparison to the moralistic interpretation of the figure of Ulysses in Cynic and Stoic philosophy. However, if indebted to Platonism in its interpretation, for example, of the sea of the *Odyssey* as the tempting world, of Ithaca as the fatherland of the soul, Christian interpretation also introduces specifically Christian features: Ulysses' ship is seen for instance as the image of the Church, the mast as a symbol of the cross.

Mother Mary T. Clark also considers the question of the Christian use of Neoplatonic ideas in her study of Marius Victorinus' Platonic-inspired interpretation of the Trinity. She argues that Victorinus' understanding of the Trinity was fundamentally scriptural and that he made use of the philosophy "best adapted to convey the possibility of a triune God," that is, Porphyrian rather than Plotinian Platonism, in the context in particular of dealing with the philosophically deficient Trinitarian formulations of Arians and Neo-Arians. Porphyry's philosophy thus had the limited role for Victorinus of providing a philosophical defense of the coherence of a doctrine, itself, however, based on interpretation of Scripture.

In relation to a personality as subtle and complex as that of Saint Augustine, discussion of the Christian use of Neoplatonism must take account of several different levels of use and a variety of different interests guiding this use. Professor John O'Meara reviews scholarship on some of the problems concerning Augustine's Neoplatonism and draws attention in particular to the moral and emotional importance to Augustine of Plotinus' account of the *conversio*, or turning, of the soul to God, the interest for Augustine of Porphyry's search for a "universal path to the liberation of the soul," and the little-recognized use made by Augustine of Plotinian negative theology. O'Meara concludes that the complex and sometimes conflicting tendencies of Augustine are reflected in Augustine's attitude toward Neoplatonism, which he rejected in its opposition to the doctrines of the Incarnation and Resurrection but which also provided him with a "rational understanding of the problems and mysteries of Christian theology."

Professor Guy Allard's study of the lexicographical, gnoseological, and ontological primacy of existence in the thought of the ninth century philosopher John Scottus Eriugena (or John the Scot) shows how, in his commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena reinterprets and modifies the Dionysian texts, replacing Neoplatonic essentialism with a metaphysics in which God is understood as existence, pure activity, the creator (not a Platonic demiurge) of the existence of essences in which these essences become knowable. In this radical modification Allard sees the philosopher and theologian in Eriugena working as one, bringing out what was to be a major theme in Thomas Aquinas.

Another case of reinterpretation or modification of Neoplatonic ideas, this

time in relation to Aquinas, is examined by Father Cornelio Fabro. He discusses Aquinas' commentary on the *Liber de causis* (a medieval Arabic work based on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*) and the late incomplete work *De substantiis separatis* with a view to analyzing Aquinas' absorption and critical reshaping of Neoplatonic metaphysics, in particular of the Neoplatonic metaphysical triad Being-Life-Intellect.<sup>8</sup> He shows how Aquinas, using Proclus' *Elements of Theology* and Pseudo-Dionysius, brings out the absolute dominion and unique creative act of Being, as *ipsum esse subsistens* (God), and how he gives to the principles of life and intellect a formative (noncreative) causality, thus reshaping the Neoplatonic triad on metaphysical grounds in support of which he could refer to his Neoplatonic sources.

Professor Bernard McGinn's paper on Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260-1327) is a study of Christian use of Neoplatonic dialectic. Three problems in the interpretation of Eckhart's doctrine of God are taken: the priority of understanding to existence in reference to God in some texts and the priority of existence to understanding in others; the distinction between God and the Godhead and the separation this appears to introduce in the divine nature; the meaning of Eckhart's conception of the birth of the Word in the soul. Predication, analogy, and dialectic are then explored as three levels of "increasing depth" in Eckhart's presentation of God and as a way of approaching a resolution of the first of these problems. Finally McGinn discusses aspects of the Christian use of Neoplatonism as this relates to the potential value of Neoplatonic dialectic to Christian reflections on the transcendence and immanence of God.

Discussing a much more recent writer in relation to a broad conception of Neoplatonic ideas and their role in serving to structure Christian beliefs, Professor Elizabeth Bieman traces Robert Browning's "lifelong quest for God and truth" as expressed in his poetry and as this quest develops in three phases, beginning in a search for the absolute truth denied to fallen man, passing through a theological expression of the Incarnation, and ending in an awareness of man's epistemological limitations and of the rewards of the search for truth. She brings out in these phases of Browning's quest the role played by the triad of Power, Love, and Knowledge (the third term linking the first two, opposed, terms) which she suggests can be associated in Browning with the persons of the Trinity.

Finally, Professor Mary Rose examines in her paper how Christian Platonism informs the literary activity of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams. She provides evidence that all three writers can be considered orthodox Christians and then brings out the use made in their works of three Platonic themes: the reality of supersensory aspects of creation; the means of acquiring knowledge of these aspects; and, the ideal copresence of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in all parts of creation. Other Platonic conceptions in these three authors are discussed: psychophysical dualism, otherworldliness, and the hierarchy of being.

If there were many Neoplatonic conceptions that could be used and adapted in a wide variety of ways by Christian thinkers, there were, however, some elements of Neoplatonism that were of doubtful assimilability for a Christian, just as there were Christian doctrines (e.g., the Incarnation of Christ, the resurrection

of the body) which pagan Neoplatonists rejected. Father Norris Clarke examines one Neoplatonic conception which he believes resists coherent assimilation into Christian thought—the conception of a multiplicity of really existent Forms or Ideas as objects of divine thought. In a survey of the treatment of this conception in the Latin West, from Saint Augustine to the fourteenth century, he argues that the conception could not be satisfactorily reconciled by Christian thinkers with the Christian denial of a “plurality in God outside that of the three divine Persons.” He suggests that a resolution to the conflict of these two positions was provided by Aquinas who saw the divine ideas, not as the true being of creatures, but as possessing “intentional” being. The divine intelligence “thinks them up . . . as possible limited modes of participation in his own infinite act of *esse subsistens*.”

Whether or not there are such things as separately existing Forms or Ideas was itself the subject of the great debate about “universals” in Western medieval philosophy. Professor Linos Benakis examines this debate in the form it took in Byzantine philosophy. He characterizes the dominant Byzantine attitude to this question as “conceptual realism” (universals understood as concepts produced through conceptual apprehension of the common characteristics of things). This approach he shows to be indebted to the works of the Neoplatonic school of Alexandria of the fifth and sixth centuries (Ammonius, John Philoponus, and others) that also appears to have influenced Boethius and the Arabic writers who formed the background to Western discussions of the subject. He concludes by pointing to the need for investigation into what contacts there might have been between Byzantine thinkers and the thinkers of the Latin West.

Another conception (both Aristotelian and Neoplatonic) whose consistency with Christian belief was a matter of doubt was the idea that the world never began but exists from eternity. The acceptability of this position was discussed with great vigor and subtlety in the West in the thirteenth century, but many of the arguments, as can be seen from Father Gérard Verbeke’s paper, had already been developed in the Neoplatonic school of Alexandria. Verbeke notes that numerous Christian members of the school did not reject the doctrine of the eternity of the world and that Philoponus, a Christian, attacked the doctrine, not on religious grounds, but on the basis of philosophical arguments drawn from Aristotle. In his reply to Philoponus, Simplicius (an Athenian contemporary of Philoponus) stressed the compatibility in his view of the idea of creation from nothing (an idea found in pagan as well as Christian Neoplatonism) with the doctrine of the eternity of the world. The subject was thus (as it would be later) a matter of philosophical debate within Neoplatonism, irrespective of any problem of theological acceptability that an eternal world might raise.

Professor Henry Blumenthal’s study of the commentaries on the crucial third book of Aristotle’s *De anima* by Philoponus and Stephanus of Alexandria comes to similar conclusions about the extent to which the Christianity of these two commentators affected the positions they took in their reading of Aristotle. Blumenthal shows that the positions they take are explicable in terms of the Neoplatonic tradition, need not be seen as reflecting their Christianity and, in fact, may appear to be at variance on some points with Christian doctrine. He establishes that the

commentaries are two separate works (and not merely different versions of a standard Alexandrian lecture course) and points out that they are really Neoplatonic interpretations of Aristotle and not merely expositions, free of philosophical “bias,” of the text.

If there are aspects of Neoplatonic philosophy and Christian doctrine that appear to be in conflict, a case might still be made for the existence of a common ground and indeed the extreme position could be taken that not only is there no genuine fundamental conflict, but, on the contrary, there is a harmony between Neoplatonism and Christian thought. This last position is found most extensively (if not exclusively) in the Renaissance. Professor Maurice de Gandillac examines two leading Renaissance champions of harmony, Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) and Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499). For each author de Gandillac indicates his knowledge of Greek sources and the development of his views concerning the nature of this harmony. In Nicholas of Cusa all religions and philosophies are seen as a spectrum of different insights which can be reconciled in a consistent structure fundamental to which are the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Ficino, it is suggested, is concerned less with these doctrines than with proving in philosophy truths (the immortality of the soul, in particular) that prepare the way for religion. However, Christian religion and philosophy (conceived along Neoplatonic lines as an ascent to God) are found to blend into each other in Ficino’s mind.

Professor Charles Schmitt extends our knowledge of the influence of Ficino’s harmonization of Neoplatonism and Christianity in his study of a little-known Renaissance thinker, Andrea Camuzio (ca. 1512–1587). Schmitt discusses Camuzio’s attempt to demonstrate the harmony of Scripture with Plato and Aristotle on the basis of a Neoplatonic conception of philosophy as directed to an end (God) which is also the goal of religion. Camuzio was also however an Aristotelian in certain respects and thus exemplifies two points made by Schmitt—that, contrary to common conceptions, Aristotelianism is the dominant philosophy of the Renaissance and that this Aristotelianism embodies Neoplatonic ideas to a greater degree than is usually realized.

Professor Edward Mahoney examines two ways in which Neoplatonism came to have a special impact on Renaissance Aristotelianism. He shows how the Greek commentators, especially Themistius and Simplicius, were studied by and had influence on the psychology of Nicoletto Vernia (d. 1499) and of his pupil Agostino Nifo (1470–1535), the latter using Ficino’s commentaries on Plotinus to understand Simplicius and seeing in Neoplatonism support for Christian belief. After Nifo, the use of the Greek commentators became widespread in Renaissance Aristotelianism. Mahoney also discusses the continuous debate that took place in Renaissance Aristotelianism about the Neoplatonic conceptual scheme of a hierarchy of being in which God and matter constitute the termini.

It may appear that the attempt to harmonize Neoplatonism and Christian belief is possible only at the price of ignoring certain difficulties and even of abandoning elements that may be thought to be essential either by a Neoplatonist or by a Christian. Professor John Findlay suggests in his paper that both Christianity and

Platonism contribute to "Absolute theory." To the Absolute he ascribes seven "demarkating characteristics": it exists in an unqualified sense, exists of necessity, is unique, is unitary, is capable of having an inner distinction of the essential and inessential, is all-comprehensive, and has room in it for Mind and its guiding values. This Absolute he finds in both Christianity and Neoplatonism. However, he suggests that Platonism's concept of the Absolute is preferable to the Christian concept in that it does not attribute to the Absolute the individuality, contingency, and arbitrariness he finds in the Christian Absolute. The adoption of a (Neo-) Platonic Absolute which he recommends to Christians may be felt by them, however, to entail abandoning central elements of their religion.

However, it must be noted that as there is room within Neoplatonism for different interpretations and positions, so is there a diversity in the ways Christians view their religion and attempt to understand its mysteries." Professor A. Hilary Armstrong argues that certain Neoplatonic ways of thinking are of value to a Christian's attempt to interpret his or her religion in the context of a contemporary religious crisis, which Armstrong describes as a breakdown in the acceptability of claims made for certain "forms of words and ways of thinking about God as timelessly and universally true." In such a context, negative theology is useful in allowing both for the use of language about God and for preservation of a "distance" with respect to such language.<sup>10</sup> He also recommends "mythical" interpretation of systematic theology ("mythical" understood in a Neoplatonic sense as taking account of the "image" status of the ways through which the Unknowable God communicates) and provides as an example a Pseudo-Dionysian view of the Incarnation that emphasizes the cosmic and universal outgoing and return of the Godhead.

\* \* \*

In conclusion, I may be permitted to draw attention to some ideas, primarily methodological in character, which I believe to emerge from the papers of this volume and which may be of use to further inquiries in the field. It is clear, first of all, that the relation between Neoplatonic philosophy and Christian thought, as viewed today by the historian, the philosopher, or the theologian, is hardly a simple one of concord or confrontation between two uniform entities. Christian thought is constituted, as is Neoplatonic philosophy, of many different thinkers with different interests and different approaches in relation to a unity of inspiration. In order then to reach a sound assessment of the historical influence of Neoplatonic philosophy on the development of Christian thought, much work must be done that will bring out specific "objective links" between individual Neoplatonic and Christian thinkers and texts. The critical standards to be met in such work are indicated in Saffrey's paper. In cases such as that discussed by Dillon, lack of evidence may force us to hypothesize. Yet there is hope that such hypotheses may be verified as further advances are made in our knowledge both of the history of Neoplatonism and of the history of Christian thought. Detailed work concentrating on specific texts can be expected to provide a solid basis for historical generalization and has already helped undermine some untested assumptions, a case in point being the demonstration by Schmitt and Mahoney of the unsuspected importance

of Neoplatonic ideas to Renaissance Aristotelians and to their interpretation of their beliefs.

In adopting Neoplatonic ideas, a Christian author is as likely as not to use them selectively (as shown, for example, in Pépin's paper) or even to modify them. The motives guiding such adoption, selection, and modification may not always be easily uncovered, nor the same in every instance. One may need to take account (as is done in O'Meara's paper) of the particular complexity of a personality such as that of Saint Augustine's, of an intellectual and spiritual development such as that traced by Bieman. In the case examined by Mother Clark, it appears that Victorinus selected the Neoplatonic theory that seemed most consonant with Scripture. However, the situation with respect to scriptural and theological motives for selecting or adapting Neoplatonic ideas is sometimes far from simple. As Verbeke and Blumenthal show, a Christian writer might espouse positions for reasons that we would assume are theological but which in fact turn out to be purely philosophical. Indeed, in the cases analyzed by Allard and Fabro, it becomes difficult clearly to distinguish theological from philosophical reasons for the adoption or modification of a Neoplatonic theory by a Christian thinker.

These difficulties in separating theological from philosophical motives serve as a useful reminder that theology and philosophy converge (as the Renaissance well knew) as attempts to reach true understanding of fundamental issues in life. The way in which a Christian thinker makes use of Neoplatonic philosophy represents a position taken in relation to such issues, which means that one must be sensitive to these issues in order to appreciate adequately the position taken by the Christian Neoplatonist in relation to them. Such a position can even present itself as a challenge to one's own possible or actual exploration of these issues.

The meeting of philosophy and theology may also remind us that each of these, as an attempt at understanding, is bound by canons of rational interpretation. If a philosophical theory is selected by a Christian as suitable in a particular religious context, it does not cease for all that to be subject to philosophical critique; and if such a theory is found to be theologically unsuitable, it can only be replaced by another theory which is itself philosophically defensible, as is shown, for example, in Mother Clark's paper. The theologies of today also make use in various ways of contemporary philosophical ideas that may or may not prove philosophically adequate. A perception of inadequacies in these has led some indeed to call for reflection on an older philosophy from which, Armstrong and McGinn suggest, the Christian thinker may derive a better interpretation of his religion.

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# I

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## **PATRISTIC THOUGHT**

## *The Platonic and Christian Ulysses*

JEAN PÉPIN

I

PHILOSOPHOS ODYSSEUS<sup>1</sup>

Several philosophical schools in antiquity made use of the figure of Ulysses. Take the case of the Cynics, to begin with, who put him forward as an *exemplum*. The idea is already suggested in the fifth century B.C. by the founder of the Cynic movement, Antisthenes. Ulysses is for him a sage who knows life, the gods and men—and women!—and who knows how to adapt his speech in relation to different interlocutors.<sup>2</sup> The same kind of evaluation of Ulysses is found two centuries later in Bion.<sup>3</sup> It becomes a literary cliché in the apocryphal letters of the Cynics, which date from the imperial period and which see in Ulysses, notably in his clothes (that is, his rags), the incarnation of the kind of life advocated by Cynicism.<sup>4</sup> It was to be expected that the Stoics, who admitted to being under Cynic influence in their ethics, would in turn choose Ulysses as a model of morality. In fact, no trace of this is found in the documents relating to the founders of Stoicism, but it is a well-established idea in the Stoics of the imperial period: Seneca, then Epictetus, and in two texts influenced by Stoicism that probably date from the first



or second century A.D., the *De vita et poesi Homeri* of Pseudo-Plutarch and the *Quaestiones homericæ* of Heraclitus. In these texts we find a Ulysses extolled because of his endurance, his indifference to pain, his contempt for pleasure.<sup>5</sup>

Parallel to this Cynic and Stoic tendency, there developed another philosophical use of Ulysses, of which I would like to give a representative sample. The reader must forgive the length of this passage in view of the fact that I will use it in the following pages as a point of comparison. It concerns the episode of the Sirens, which Plutarch prides himself in using to show that there is no conflict between Homer and Plato (*Republic* X, 517B):

Now Homer's Sirens, it is true, frighten us, inconsistently with the Platonic myth; but the poet too conveyed a truth symbolically, namely that the power of their music is not inhuman or destructive; as souls depart from this world to the next, so it seems, and drift uncertainly after death, it creates in them a passionate love for the heavenly and divine, and forgetfulness of mortality; it possesses them and enchants them with its spell, so that in joyfulness they follow the Sirens and join them in their circuits. Here on earth a kind of faint echo of that music reaches us, and appealing to our souls through the medium of words, reminds them of what they experienced in an earlier existence. The ears of most souls, however, are plastered over and blocked up, not with wax, but with carnal obstructions and affections. But any soul that through innate gifts is aware of this echo, and remembers that other world, suffers what falls in no way short of the very maddest passions of love, longing and yearning to break the tie with the body, but unable to do so. (Trans. Sandbach)<sup>6</sup>

Although Plutarch puts this passage in the mouth of the Platonic speaker in his dialogue, the exegesis thus presented is not specifically Platonic, but is Pythagorean, as can be seen from some comparisons.<sup>7</sup> There were, therefore, at a time which is hard to determine, Pythagoreans for whom the song of the Homeric Sirens represented the planetary music that entralls souls after death and agitates them already in this life, on the condition that their ears are not sealed by carnal passions as wax blocked the ears of Ulysses' companions.<sup>8</sup> This exegesis must also have been a very significant part of a larger whole that is only partially known, that is, the allegorical interpretation of the figure of Ulysses in the Pythagorean tradition.<sup>9</sup> It is likely that this Pythagorean Ulysses influenced the image that the later followers of Plato would have of the Homeric hero, an image some aspects of which will be traced in the following pages.

In looking back over what has been noted about the way in which the Cynics, Stoics, and Pythagoreans saw the figure of Ulysses, and anticipating what will be seen about its meaning in Neoplatonism, we see a clear difference that, from different angles, separates these four philosophical movements into two groups of two. First, while the Cynics and the Stoics also take into account Ulysses' actions in the *Iliad*,<sup>10</sup> the Neoplatonists and, as far as we can tell, the Pythagoreans concern themselves exclusively with the figure of the *Odyssey*, that is, with his maritime adventures.<sup>11</sup> Further, as we have quickly seen in the case of the former group and as we will see in more detail concerning the latter group, Pythagoreans and Neoplatonists agree to confer on Ulysses a metaphysical dimension—to discover in his legend the history of the soul—whereas the other group confines itself to

extolling him as a moral ideal. Hence the former are forced to make use of an allegorical exegesis which goes far beyond the immediate meaning of the poem,<sup>12</sup> contrary to the Cynics and Stoics who could be satisfied with an almost literal reading.<sup>13</sup>

## II

### THE NEOPLATONIC EXEGESIS

#### 1. Three Stages in a Long Tradition

Ulysses freeing himself from Circe and Calypso, despite their charms, so as to escape to his fatherland, Ithaca, which he loves is Homer's reminder to us to return to our fatherland on high, tearing ourselves away from the beauties of the sensible world. Such is Plotinus' interpretation in his famous treatise *On Beauty*:

This would be truer advice, "Let us fly to our dear country." What then is our way of escape, and how are we to find it? We shall put out to sea, as Ulysses did, from the witch Circe or Calypso—as the poet [Homer] says (I think with a hidden meaning) (αἰνιττόμενος)—and was not content to stay though he had delights of the eyes and lived among much beauty of sense. Our country from which we came is there, our Father is there. (Trans. Armstrong)<sup>14</sup>

Proclus, in turn, sees in Ithaca "that mystical port of the soul (μυστικὸς ὄρμος τῆς ψυχῆς) to which the poet brings back Ulysses after the long wanderings of his life, and to which we rather must return, that is, if we wish to be saved."<sup>15</sup> As to the wandering in which the soul is commonly caught and the ascent which will deliver it, these Proclus discerns in the order of knowledge; throughout this epistemological odyssey, the soul will transcend successively sensations, images, opinions, sciences, discursive reason itself, to reach a "life according to the intellect, which alone possesses stability."<sup>16</sup> Here the progressive return of Ulysses is used as an illustration and guarantee of the hierarchy of knowledge defined in Books VI and VII of the *Republic*. Elsewhere, the same Proclus finds in the sea in which Ulysses struggles the symbol of the world of coming-to-be, whose temptations are embodied by the Sirens. Hence Plato's advice (*Phaedrus* 259A) to avoid the Sirens:

As to souls, who live in the world of coming-to-be, they should "sail past them," imitating Homer's Ulysses—if it is true that the sea also is the image of coming-to-be (θάλασσα γενέσεως εἰκὼν)—so as not to allow themselves to be bewitched (θέλγωνται) by coming-to-be.<sup>17</sup>

Eustathius of Thessalonica, a Byzantine scholar of the twelfth century, has preserved many Neoplatonic allegories concerning the Homeric poems. One of these, on Ulysses and Calypso, coincides substantially with Plotinus' exegesis, but weighs it down with plays on etymology and by establishing detailed correspondences; Calypso, meaning she who "envelops" (συγκαλύπτουσαν), stands for our body, envelope of the soul; she held back Ulysses as the flesh fetters man; if her island is said to be "encircled by currents of water" and "planted with trees," it

is because the body on the one hand is traversed, as Plato says, by a liquid flux, and, on the other hand, consists of a matter similar to wood and dense as a forest; but, Ulysses returns to his beloved fatherland, which, according to the Platonists,<sup>18</sup> denotes the intelligible world, the true fatherland of souls.

## 2. Two Important Texts

### (a) HERMIAS, In *Phaedrus* 259A

Eustathius is a witness to the fact that, nine centuries after Plotinus, there were still readers interested in his interpretation of Ulysses. Of this long history, for which we have just picked out three witnesses who expressly name the Homeric hero, one can find many other traces which are more vague and more limited. At any rate, I have not yet discussed the texts which are most instructive. I must present them now.

One of these texts is found in the commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus* which has been transmitted under the name of Hermias (second half of the fifth century A.D.), but which is inspired by Syrianus, the teacher of Proclus. The passage of Plato commented on is the beginning of the myth of the crickets (*Phaedrus* 259AB), which, paraphrased, follows: At noon the crickets are singing in the trees above Socrates and Phaedrus. Socrates imagines that the crickets are watching them, and that if they saw the two men give in to sleep, as if enchanted by their magic (κηλουμένους), they would mock them; if, on the contrary, Socrates says, they see us "sailing past them as if they were Sirens, resisting their spells, then perhaps they would give us the gift they have from the gods to give to men,"<sup>19</sup> that is, as what follows shows (259C), the privilege of singing until death and then becoming the couriers of the Muses.

This is how Hermias comments on this text:

Just as those, [Plato] says, who are attracted and bewitched (κατακηλούμενοι) by the Sirens forget their own fatherland, so also we, if we give in to the magic of these sights and these crickets and are plunged into sleep, forget our fatherland and our ascent to the intelligible (τῆς εἰς τὸ νοητὸν ἀναγωγῆς). But if we awaken in ourselves discernment and vigilance, if we refuse the attraction of the sweetness of life, we sail past (παραπλέοντες) like Ulysses, we avoid life here below (τὸν ἐνταῦθα βίον), we become worthy of our own fatherland and of our ascent toward the intelligible. "The gift that they have from the gods":—if, then, it were to happen, [Plato] says, that we would be able to sail past the Sirens (παραπλεῦσαι), the Sirens who are in the sensible world (ἐν τῷ αἰσθητῷ κόσμῳ), which is to say the demons who hold back souls in the proximity of coming-to-be (περὶ τὴν γένεσιν), then at that moment the crickets, that is, the divine souls and the gods, seeing us revolting against coming-to-be (γενέσεως) and living like gods, would give us the greatest gift for men, which is to treat us as companions. For as the gods are vigilant in their own activity, so we also should awaken ourselves as far as possible, and it is then that we awaken ourselves, if we reactivate the reason (λόγον) which is in us. The most speculative of the exegetes of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* [have said that it is] also the ascent (ἀνοδὸν) [of the soul which Homer has portrayed]; they understand the *Iliad*

thus: it is because the soul fights [so as to leave] matter that [the poet] represented battles, wars and suchlike; as to the *Odyssey*, it is [Ulysses] sailing past the Sirens (παραπλέοντα), escaping Circe, the Cyclops, Calypso, and all the obstacles in the way of the ascent (ἀναγωγὴν) of the soul, leaving them for his fatherland, that is, for the intelligible (νοητόν).<sup>20</sup>

It is clearly the comparison—incidental, fleeting, and, it seems, purely literary—made by Plato ὥσπερ Σειρήνας that led Hermias to have recourse to Ulysses and to his interpretation in Neoplatonism. The weakness of this starting point makes the commentator, especially at the beginning, attribute to Plato much more than he actually says, not indeed without some arbitrariness, since the Sirens and the crickets, united first in that their magic produces in their respective victims forgetfulness of the fatherland, are immediately afterwards set in opposition as maleficent demons and helping divinities. The Homeric exegesis itself appears to conform, as more complete and systematic, to the elements which we found in Plotinus, Proclus, and Eustathius: the difficult return of Ulysses to his fatherland represents the ascent of the soul to the intelligible; the soul is blocked by obstacles corresponding to those which Ulysses had to overcome; among these obstacles, the Sirens represent the lure of life here below, the sensible world, or better, the demons which imprison the soul in coming-to-be. The end of the commentary adds an important piece of information: the Neoplatonists (it is certainly these, or some of these, that are indicated by "the most speculative of the exegetes") apply this framework not only, as one might expect, to the *Odyssey*, but also to the battles of the *Iliad*.

If the allegory developed by Hermias goes far beyond the tiny reference in Plato to the Sirens and imputes to him some adventurous assumptions, nevertheless the passage of the *Phaedrus* has influence on the interpretation of the figure of Ulysses by introducing elements which do not normally appear there; this is the case of the ideas of sleep (to which is related the idea, which is absent from Homer's account of the Sirens, of a forgetting of the homeland), of the awakening of the soul (conceived as a reactivation of the λόγος), of vigilance, of the divine aid assured for souls which imitate the gods and rebel against genesis.

But the principal interest of this page of Hermias is that it establishes a connection between the exegesis of Ulysses and that of *Phaedrus* 259A. Hermias is not the only witness to this connection, which has been pointed out already here in relation to two texts in Proclus,<sup>21</sup> and which might probably be found in many other places. There is one indicator that the source of this connection is earlier in date. For after Hermias, but already before him, many pagan and Christian authors, of whom we will see some examples, wishing (outside all visible reference to the passage of the *Phaedrus*) to make clear that Ulysses avoided the rock of the Sirens and "sailed past," use the verb παραπλεῖν.<sup>22</sup> But if one is to believe the concordances,<sup>23</sup> this verb is absent from the passages of the *Odyssey* dealing with the Sirens, and if it appears in the poem, and then only once,<sup>24</sup> it is in another episode. It therefore cannot have been suggested to these authors by a reading of Homer. For those, such as Hermias and Proclus after him, who refer explicitly to the *Phaedrus*, it is clear that it is from there that they derive παραπλέοντας

σφας ὥσπερ Σειρήνας. But one must suppose that all their predecessors, who have recourse to the same verb when commenting on the Homeric passage from which it is absent, witness in turn to a certain dependence, immediate or at a distance, in relation to the Platonic dialogue. The initiative, illustrated by Hermias and Proclus, of having recourse to *Phaedrus* 259A in order to interpret the Homeric episode of the Sirens should thus be viewed as anterior to the earliest use of παραπλῆειν in this context. We will see presently how far back this hypothesis will allow us to go. One should note also that Hermias and Proclus agree in discerning in the Sirens the evil demons who hold back souls caught in coming-to-be, whereas there is nothing pejorative in the brief mention of them in Plato. If it is true, as I have said above, that the Pythagoreans and Neoplatonists agreed in reading into the navigation of Ulysses the history of the soul, the latter did not keep the imagery that seemed essential to the former and which had the Sirens appearing as soul-guiding and helping musicians.

(b) PORPHYRY, *De antro* 34–35

The other Neoplatonic text which should be studied carefully was written about two centuries earlier than Hermias. It is part of Porphyry's little treatise *De antro nympharum*:

For it is my opinion that Numenius and his school were correct in thinking that for Homer in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus bears a symbol of one who passes through the stages of genesis (γενέσεως) and, in doing so, returns (ἀποκαθισταμένου) to those beyond every wave (κλύδωνος) who have no knowledge of the sea,

"Until you come to those who are unacquainted with the sea,  
men who do not eat food mixed with salt."

The deep, the sea, and the sea-swell are, according to Plato as well, material substance. (πόντος δὲ καὶ θάλασσα καὶ κλύδων καὶ παρὰ Πλάτωνι ἡ ὕλη ὁυστασις). (Trans. Westerink)<sup>25</sup>

The same exegesis continues a few lines further on:

But rather, the man [Ulysses] who had dared these things was pursued by the wrath of the gods of the sea and of matter. (ἀλίων καὶ ὕλικῶν θεῶν) . . . But he will be past all toil when, entirely removed from the sea, he finds himself among souls so ignorant of everything that has to do with the sea, that is to say, with matter (θαλασσίων καὶ ἐνύλων ἔργων), that his oar is thought to be a winnowing-fan, because of the utter ignorance of nautical instruments and activities.<sup>26</sup>

This interpretation of the figure of Ulysses is substantially similar to that found before Porphyry and especially after him. The distinctive character of Porphyry's exegesis is to find in the sea the symbol, not only of the world of coming-to-be, but more widely of matter, doubtless because of the fluid and disorganized nature they share in common. This symbolism is referred back to Plato. Various Platonic texts, all quite distant, might be invoked in relation to this.<sup>27</sup> The nearest text is without doubt the famous myth in the *Politicus* 272D–273E,

where the universe, at certain moments of its existence and in consequence of its corporeal constitution, is compared to a boat buffeted by the storm and very near to sinking "in the bottomless ocean of unlikeness."<sup>28</sup> In fact, the Neoplatonists saw in this ocean the image of matter,<sup>29</sup> and it is therefore this that Porphyry must have in mind. At any rate, Plato is not the source of the idea of personifying the hostile forces of the sea-matter by the gods of that element (Poseidon) bent on destroying Ulysses; however, he (that is, the soul of which he is the image) will triumph in overcoming one by one the degrees of coming-to-be and will be restored to his pristine state.<sup>30</sup> Finally, another aspect peculiar to Porphyry is the skillful reading of the return of the soul to its first condition, not only in the return to Ithaca, but also in the prophecy of Teiresias, whose shade is called forth by Ulysses, that the hero will not receive from Poseidon complete rest until he goes to the people who know nothing of the sea (*Od.* xi. 121–129), in other words, the souls who have not had experience of coming-to-be.

But the important thing in Porphyry is clearly the attribution of this exegesis to Numenius. One may doubt if the reference to Numenius in chapter 34 of the *De antro* extends, as the editors of the fragment believe, to include the reference to Plato. But one is reassured in this regard by another fragment of Numenius that is independent of this one and in which matter, held from on high by the Demiurge, is assimilated (certainly in relation to *Politicus* 272Dff.) in some detail to the sea which the pilot masters from his ship.<sup>31</sup> Thus we are brought back for this exegesis of Ulysses to a period prior to Plotinus—to the first half of the second century A.D.

There might be, perhaps,<sup>32</sup> another indicator of the pre-Plotinian character of this interpretation in a contemporary of Numenius, the Platonic rhetor Maximus of Tyre. The episode of the *Odyssey* concerned is no longer that of the Sirens, as in the majority of the texts we have seen, but the passage in the poem (v. 333–353) where the goddess Leucothea takes pity on Ulysses against whom the elements rage, and gives him a veil which, stretched under his chest, will serve as a life belt. Maximus finds in this scene the image of the philosophy which saves the human soul plunged into the tempest of the sensible world and ready to succumb:

Thrown into the tumult here below and abandoning itself to the irresistible waves which carry it, the soul swims in an adverse sea, until philosophy itself takes it under its protection by slipping under it<sup>33</sup> its arguments, just as Leucothea did for Ulysses with her veil.<sup>34</sup>

This interpretation of Ulysses as the symbol of the soul which is not resigned to its fall is very similar, despite the differences, to Neoplatonic exegesis, and could thus be its earliest formulation.

### III CHRISTIAN EXEGESIS

#### 1. Main Features

Parallel to the Platonic tradition, appearing almost at the same time as it and also lasting for several centuries, there evolves a Christian reading of the figure of

Ulysses, of his navigation and especially of his victory over the Sirens. One will not be surprised to find that Christian exegesis made use here of pagan materials, just as did the Christian art of the time.<sup>35</sup> It even goes beyond the pagan sources in that it systematically confers an allegorical meaning on all of the details of the Homeric episode, whereas the Platonists left some details in the shadow. Here are the principal elements of this new exegesis.

The sea in which Ulysses struggles represents the world in the Johannine sense of that word, the hostile *saeculum* whose pleasures are represented by the Sirens. The rock to which the latter lure the sailors symbolizes the body on which is broken the discernment of spiritual intelligence. Ithaca is the celestial fatherland (paradise) to which we must return, escaping from here and living the true life; the means of return is the Church, a traditional image of which is a ship.

Up to this point, with the exception, obviously, of the last idea, the exegesis of Christian authors is not specifically Christian. But it becomes so with the meaning it gives to the figure of Ulysses. Certainly, as before, he embodies the human condition, but also much more: tied to his mast which symbolizes the Cross, he represents the crucified, and, with less emphasis, the Christian saved by the wood, and even all of humanity. His companions are to be understood as the more distant adherents to whom, however, the shadow of the Cross reaches, such as the good thief. Finally, even the wax stopping up their ears is given meaning; that is, it represents Scripture.

## 2. The Main Texts

This detailed description corresponds to the final complete stage of Christian exegesis, as it is found in the fifth century A.D., and where a place is found for almost all the elements of the Homeric story relative to the Sirens. But this fairly late stage was naturally preceded by attempts that were less complete.<sup>36</sup>

One of the earliest attempts was that of Clement of Alexandria (late second to early third centuries A.D.). For him the Sirens represent the misdeeds of habit and the lures of pleasure, and Ulysses who fools them by tying himself to his mast is the image of the Christian who triumphs over perdition by clinging to the wood of the Cross.

Let us flee (Φύγωμεν), then, habit (συνήθειαν): let us flee it as we would a dangerous promontory, the menace of Charybdis, or of the Sirens of legend. Habit strangles man, turns him away from the truth and from life, is a trap, an abyss, a ditch, it is a keen evil.

"Far from this smoke, far from these waves take  
Your ship."

Let us flee (Φεύγωμεν), then, my sailor companions, let us flee these waves, they vomit forth fire; there, there is an accursed island on which are piled bones and corpses; in that place a bold courtesan (that is, pleasure) sings, delighting in vulgar music:

"Come here, famous Ulysses, supreme glory of the Achaeans!  
Halt your ship to hear ■ more divine voice."

She praises you, sailor, speaking your great fame, and she seeks, this prostitute, to capture him who is the glory of the Greeks. Leave her to feed on her corpses; a heavenly wind (πνεῦμα οὐράνιον) comes to your aid. Sail past pleasure (πάριθι τὴν ἡδονήν), it is a deceiver:

"Neither let a lewd woman make you lose your mind;  
Her flattering chatter is only interested in your barn."

Sail past (παράπλει) this song, it produces death. Just want it (ἐάν ἐθέλῃς) and you will conquer perdition. Chained to the Wood, you will be delivered from all corruption; you will have for pilot the Word (λόγος) of God; you will reach the port of the heavens, thanks to the Holy Spirit (τοῖς λιμέσι καθορμίσαι τῶν οὐρανῶν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον). Then you will contemplate my God; you will be initiated into these sacred mysteries; you will enjoy these realities hidden in the heavens and which I keep, "which no ear hath heard and which have not risen to the heart" of anyone.<sup>37</sup>

The first point that strikes one in this text is the attack on habit, συνήθεια, which seems unduly vehement. In fact, Clement indicates by this word the weight of pagan traditions which chain the Greeks to their religious practices, notably to the cult of divine images, and which prevent them from adhering to the Christian truth, which is something new: "One pushes one to the abyss, that is habit; the other raises one to heaven, that is truth."<sup>38</sup> It should be noted too that the denunciation of habit, nurse of vice, belonged to the literary genre of protreptics,<sup>39</sup> among which figures, even in its title, Clement's work. These two circumstances make less surprising the offensive he mounts against συνήθεια, to the point of making it the main subject of the allegory of the Sirens (and also of Charybdis). As to the other danger which the Sirens represent, it is pleasure: especially, it seems sexual pleasure, since the Sirens are given the traits of a tempting prostitute who solicits by means of song and flattery. Ulysses is exhorted to flee this song of death in terms that seal his transposition into Christianity: the wood to which he chains himself prefigures that of the Cross; the divine Word is at his rudder; the Holy Spirit which is at first a puff of wind, πνεῦμα οὐράνιον, fills his sails and pushes him to the port of salvation.

We can see that Clement picks out here the positive aspects of the figure of Ulysses. It is quite different some pages earlier where the same author, opposing to the believers in love with eternal salvation the others who mock it, places the latter under the patronage of the Greek hero:

But the others, stuck to the world like seaweed stuck to the rocks in the sea, make little of immortality, and, in the manner of the old man of Ithaca (καθάπερ ὁ Ἰθακήσιος γέρον), take as object of their desire, not the truth nor the heavenly fatherland, nor further the true light, but . . . smoke.<sup>40</sup>

The portrait of Ulysses on which this text is based is the product of bringing together some verses taken from the first books of the *Odyssey*: i, 57–59 (held

back by Calypso, Ulysses, who wants only to see again the smoke of Ithaca, calls for death); v. 135–136 and vii. 256–257 (Calypso in vain makes an offer to Ulysses to keep him from death and old age, ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήραον); and v. 203–209 (Ulysses wants to return to his terrestrial homeland, ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν, instead of becoming immortal). Ulysses' refusal to escape old age explains in part the curious circumlocution which Clement uses in referring to him as "the old man of Ithaca," but this formula must also have the purpose of emphasizing, as expressed in one of its major heroes, the oldness of paganism whose inertia blocks the arrival of the newness of Christianity. In other words, Ulysses is enrolled here in the camp of perverse "habit," whereas, on the contrary, in the text cited earlier, he escapes from its grasp under the cover of his flight far from the Sirens. We can see that Clement is a master of allegorical practice, of which one of the axioms is that the same mythical figure can produce many different, even opposed, interpretations. Besides, we might note that Clement's stern evaluation of Ulysses' sacrifice of immortality in order to return to Ithaca and to see its smoke again takes the opposite tack to the praises conferred on him in the Stoic tradition, which sees in this same behavior the proof of the hero's moderation and of his love for his fatherland.<sup>41</sup>

As for the Sirens, another interpretation can also be found in Clement, who sees them as the image of pagan Greek culture in its relation to Christian catechesis: the converts registered to receive baptism fear lest the melodious pagan knowledge, like the Sirens, block their way to the faith, and they prefer, like Ulysses' sailors, to stop their ears with corks of ignorance. But their instructor will not imitate them in their summary refusal; he will know how to select from pagan culture elements of use to catechesis, on condition that he does not dally with it and does not compromise his return to the Christian philosophy which is his fatherland. It is understood that he will profit by the song of the Sirens without losing himself in it; he will take Ulysses as his model. These preliminaries prepare us for reading Clement's own text:

But it appears that most of those who register themselves, just like Ulysses' companions, hold to the word like peasants. They pass by, not the Sirens, but their harmony and their music; it is from ignorant prejudice that they stop their ears, knowing well that if they listen only once to the teaching of the Greeks, they will never be able to return. But he who selects from it, on behalf of the catechumens, what is useful, especially if they themselves are Greeks ("the earth belongs to the Lord and all which fills it"), he does not have to abstain, as do irrational animals, from the love of knowledge. He should rather collect from it as much help as possible for his flock. This is on condition, however, that he does not become attached to it, only for the use that can be made of it, so as to be able, once the borrowing is done and becomes his property, to return in himself to the true philosophy, in possession of that solid conviction of the soul which is security guaranteed by all means.<sup>42</sup>

There is a noteworthy appreciation of the song of the Sirens in this praise of Ulysses who listened to it without succumbing to it and in this reproof of those who did not wish to (in reality, who could not) hear anything. Other Christian authors would again see in the song the image of the seduction of pagan culture

and philosophy, but most often only to reject these entirely,<sup>43</sup> or to reduce them to the vanity of fine speech.<sup>44</sup> Clement was less original when the call of the Sirens evoked for him the call of the pleasures of the senses. One might note again, at any rate, that in the case of the Sirens, as before in the case of Ulysses, he does not neglect to subject the same mythical figure to different allegorical interpretations.

We will spend less time with the Fathers of the Church who, in various ways, took up and extended the great exegesis in *Protrepticus* XII. They do not in any case require as much attention on this point. A few years after Clement, Hippolytus of Rome, in his account of Basilides the Gnostic, reminds us of the episode of the Sirens, after he had named quickly the mythical monsters of the sea around Sicily—the Cyclops, Charybdis, and Scylla. The sea-crossing full of obstacles is now that of the Christians in the midst of the doctrines of the heretics. Let the Christians use as a model the cunning Ulysses, who fills the ears of his companions with wax, whereas he himself, tied to the mast, "sails past the Sirens without obstacle" (παραπλεῦσα ἀκινδύνως τὰς Σειρήνας) while clearly hearing their song. The weaker will not listen to the heresies, which are quite able to drag them where they wish; but the man of faith will hear them without being disturbed as long as he is chained to the wood of Christ.<sup>45</sup> This last phrase (ἐαυτὸν τῷ ξύλῳ Χριστοῦ προσδήσαντα), which assimilates the mast of Ulysses to the Cross of Christ, is taken almost word-for-word from Clement (τῷ ξύλῳ προσδεδμενός) despite the fact that the two authors give the Sirens a quite different meaning. One will note also that Hippolytus gives value to a detail in the story in the *Odyssey* (the wax in the ears of the sailors) that his predecessor, at least in the *Protrepticus*, did not single out.

The debt to Clement is admitted from the start, near the end of the third century, by Bishop Methodius of Olympus, who indeed calls Ulysses ὁ Ἰθακήσιος γέρον.<sup>46</sup> and explains the latter's behavior by the fact that he wished neither to deny himself the uncontrolled pleasure of hearing the song of the Sirens, nor to expose himself to the death which followed this song. But Methodius uses the Homeric episode mainly as a foil: to the mortal song of the Sirens he opposes the divine and saving voices of the choir of the Prophets and of their interpreters, the Apostles; to hear this song which produces, not death, but a better life, there is no need to block the ears of our companions or to tie ourselves.<sup>47</sup> Besides this completely negative approach, and indeed because of it, we may note that this author, quite different in this from his two predecessors, avoids assimilating Ulysses' mast to the wood of the Cross.

A century later Saint Ambrose takes up the tradition, making himself its first important representative in Latin Christianity. For him the sea is the deceiving world, the *saeculum* (*Quod autem mare abruptius quam saeculum tam infidum?*); the Sirens are the pleasures of the senses which ensnare the mind and sap its strength; the rocks on which they live are the body that softens spiritual keenness; far from blocking our ears, let us open them to the voice of Christ; let us bind ourselves, not like Ulysses hurrying back to his fatherland (*Ulixem illum . . . festinantem ad patriam*), with corporeal bindings to the mast, but spiritually with

the knots of the soul to the wood of the Cross.<sup>48</sup> This entire allegory is in its substance found already in the Greek Fathers, with the exception, perhaps, of the assimilation of the rock of the Sirens to the human body. Ambrose also introduces some innovations in some minor details: among the circumstances delaying Ulysses' return he cites, besides the Sirens, the sweet fruits of the Lotus-Eaters and the gardens of Alcinoüs (*Od.* vii. 112–132; ix. 82–104). As is natural for a Latin author, he mixes into his memory of Homer allusions to Aeneas' navigation according to Virgil (*Aeneid* I. 536 and II. 23). Finally he notes that the prophet also named the Sirens,<sup>49</sup> one of the several mythological allusions he believes are to be found in Scripture.

The Christian exegesis of the victory of Ulysses over the Sirens in a sense reaches perfection in the fifth century in a homily by Bishop Maximus of Turin.<sup>50</sup> Several expressions taken word-for-word from Ambrose show his debt to Ambrose. But he contributes much to this exegesis: the item-to-item correspondence between the episode of the *Odyssey* and its Christian application is now pushed to the limit. In his detailed parallels, Maximus capitalizes on nearly all the contributions of his predecessors and his weakness for rhetorical amplification helps him orchestrate these with ingenuity. The prolixity of these passages makes quotation difficult. In any case, we already know their substance, since my account of the "main features" of patristic exegesis as sketched above is drawn almost exclusively from him. It remains that this last stage in the exegesis represents the completion of some parallels that were only suggested before. Thus Maximus finalizes the correspondence between Ithaca and the *patria paradysi, de qua primus homo exierat*. More important, Ulysses chained to his mast becomes for Maximus the image, no longer only, as before, of the incorruptible Christian, but of Christ Himself on the Cross: to *de Ulixē illo refert fabula quod eum arboris religatio de periculo liberarit* the response is given *Christus dominus religatus in cruce est*.

### 3. *The Relation to Platonism*

This Christian tradition, which lasts from the third to the fifth century, is approximately contemporaneous with the exegesis of Ulysses that we traced from Numenius to Proclus. The differences between these two parallel developments are evident. The most fundamental difference consists naturally in the fact that the Christian truth which is supposed to be found in the myth, or which is at least illustrated by it, is without equivalent in the exegesis of the Platonists. This is clear. But there are also other differences, even if we limit ourselves to the episode of the Sirens.

Christian exegesis, from the beginning, seems to be more complete in that it integrates, and even views as essential, aspects of the legend not picked out by the Platonists. This is the case in relation to Ulysses tied to the mast, the ears of his companions stopped up by wax (we have seen, however, that this last aspect is given meaning when, by amalgamating the Sirens of Homer and of Plato, Plutarch gives an eschatological interpretation of the Sirens with reference to the harmony

of the spheres; but this is, it seems, a Pythagorean and not strictly a Platonic exegesis).

On the other hand, several meanings which Platonic exegesis was fond of introducing are not echoed by the Christians. This is the case for the notion of genesis whose identification with the hostile sea of the *Odyssey* is a constant theme in Platonic exegesis from Numenius to Proclus. Another case is that of the practice, which continues from Hermias to Eustathius, of discerning in the fatherland Ithaca the intelligible world. One should note, however, that these ideas do not fail to evoke fairly close substitutes in Christian exegesis. The deceiving world (*saeculum*) of Ambrose, more merciless than the sea, is not without affinities to the world of coming-to-be from which the Neoplatonists wish to rescue the soul. As for the intelligible world, we know that some later Christians had begun to assimilate it to the Kingdom of God of Scripture, only to blame themselves for this later on.<sup>51</sup> This suggests that the distance can be shortened between the Platonic notion and the "heavens" of Clement of Alexandria, or the "Paradise" of Maximus of Turin.

In saying this we cannot fail to recognize in Clement and his successors the presence of elements found in the Platonic tradition. We can begin with some aspects of vocabulary. We saw above the important clues that are yielded by the use in Hermias and Proclus of the verb παραπλέειν in order to express Ulysses' giving a wide berth to the Sirens. Unless I am mistaken, this word is the sign that the Sirens of the *Odyssey* were interpreted in the light of the Sirens of the *Phaedrus*. But here we find, about two centuries before these pagan authors, the same word παραπλέειν used several times in the same fashion, as we have seen, by Clement<sup>52</sup> and by Hippolytus—a fact that suggests that the contamination I have pointed out (between the *Odyssey* and the *Phaedrus*) originated at the beginning of the third century at the latest. It does not appear that we can push the date back further than this, or at least not further back than Lucian of Samosata, twenty or thirty years earlier.<sup>53</sup>

Another word to note is the present imperative φεύγωμεν used twice by Clement as a sort of retraction, since he used, some lines earlier, also twice, the aorist φύγωμεν. But we found the same word in Plotinus where it is part of a short quotation from the *Iliad*, having as its background a memory of the famous "flight" of Plato's *Theaetetus* 176A: χοῦ ἐνθ' ἐνδε ἐκεῖσε φεύγειν.<sup>54</sup> It is therefore possible to assume the same literary and doctrinal context for Clement's φεύγωμεν, who would again, therefore, have anticipated the Neoplatonists. One can probably find further signs of ■ vocabulary shared in common. Thus, the same verb παρόρχεσθαι is used both by Clement and by Hermias to indicate that we must avoid worldly pleasures.<sup>55</sup>

Other similarities go beyond the level of words and have to do with doctrine. The grandiose symbolism that Christian authors progressively confer on the figure of Ulysses is grafted on an exegetical foundation which is substantially the same as that of the Platonists. For both, the hero embodies man in love with salvation and fighting against the hostile forces that are part of the sensible world. In this perspective salvation is conceived of as a return to the fatherland. As Numenius

strikingly expresses it in a clever use of the very verses of the *Odyssey*, the fatherland's essential characteristic is to be irreducible to the actual world. Furthermore, if this fatherland is so "dear" to us, it is because it was the point of departure before being the point of arrival; πατρίς . . . ὅθεν παρήλθομεν in Plotinus (I 6,8,21) harmonizes in this respect with Maximus of Turin's *patria paradysi, de qua primus homo exierat*. Reestablishment in a place or previous state is what is well expressed by Numenius (or Porphyry) by the use of a word that reminds us of that eschatological reestablishment which is Origen's "apocatastasis." Finally, since the world here below has as its mythical image the ocean, the place of salvation will naturally be represented by a port: when Proclus discovers in Ithaca the μυστικὸς ὁρμος τῆς ψυχῆς, he takes up the allegory in Clement which has Ulysses arrive at τοῖς λιμέσι . . . τῶν οὐρανῶν.<sup>56</sup>

The pilot whom Clement credits with steering towards salvation is none other than the divine Logos; the reactivation of the immanent logos is for Hermias the condition of our awakening, by means of which we approach the vigilance that constitutes the gods. Another fundamental idea common to the two traditions is that the necessary condition for salvation is the desire to be saved; on this point Clement's ἐὼν ἐθέλης μόνον is an exact anticipation of Proclus' ἐὼν ἄρα σώζεσθαι θελωμεν.<sup>57</sup> I will end with a comparison that requires attention, even though it relates only to Origen and not to any of the Christian authors quoted above. The Platonists I have examined above introduce a kind of "demonization of the cosmos":<sup>58</sup> for Hermias the domain of coming-to-be has its demons who imprison captive souls in it. These demons are what the Sirens are. Porphyry previously made note in a similar way of the gods of the sea, that is, of matter, who vengefully pursued Ulysses. We know, on the other hand, that in the cosmogonies of the ancient Near East, including Jewish cosmogony, the apparition of the organized world was conceived as a victory of God over a primordial hostile ocean populated with sea monsters.<sup>59</sup> Early Christianity preserves a trace of this archaic image when it gives the devil the features of a monstrous fish. This is the case notably in Origen and in Ambrose in whom we find expressions such as *cetus, diabolus scilicet*.<sup>60</sup> Why then would not the Sirens, who are also sea monsters, have featured in the *pompa diaboli*? This connection has not left as many traces as one would expect. However, H. Rahner found one<sup>61</sup> in an exegetical fragment of Origen on the Lamentations of Jeremiah, in which one finds the Sirens of the pagan myth identified with corrupting demons. πονηρὰ πνεύματα.<sup>62</sup> How can one avoid comparing this interpretation to that of Porphyry and especially that of Hermias?

These many literary and doctrinal resemblances suggest that these two traditions of exegesis of the figure of Ulysses are not two completely independent totalities. There is nothing to suggest that the Platonists were acquainted with Christian interpretation. It is reasonable, then, to suppose that the latter, especially at the beginning, borrowed from the Platonists elements to which I have drawn attention. This must be the case in particular in relation to Clement of Alexandria: all of the aspects he shares in common with Hermias, Proclus, and so on, show that the Platonic exegesis predates Neoplatonism and that he was familiar with its main lines. Added to what we have seen earlier about Numenius, Maximus of

Tyre, and Lucian, this indicates that the Platonic Ulysses was composed in the second century A.D. The Middle Platonist Numenius, in particular, is very likely to have been one of Clement's sources. Clement knew his work well and is even used as the nearest *terminus ante quem* for the dating of Numenius. Concerning what might be specific to the Middle Platonic Ulysses, we have only the few texts and fragments studied above to go on. Might not Clement provide some supplementary information? In particular, at that place in *Protrepticus* IX where the "old man of Ithaca" is blamed for not having had any desire for the truth, for the celestial fatherland, or for the true light, does Clement have in mind, as has been thought,<sup>63</sup> interpreters for whom Ulysses embodied man striving for these three things? This attractive idea loses its probability when we see that Clement is attacking the Stoic glorification of Ulysses, and not the meaning of Ulysses for Platonists.

#### 4. The Gnostic Ulysses

Without doubt Christian exegesis of Ulysses begins at a period earlier than Clement. We know that the Gnostics were very interested in Homeric myths and their interest in the navigation of the *Odyssey* has left some traces in Hippolytus. Thus, Simon the Mage seems to have referred to the "moly" plant, a magic herb which Hermes gave as a gift to Ulysses in order to counter the evil deeds of Circe.<sup>64</sup> Again, for the Naasenes, Penelope's suitors whose souls are called forth by Hermes stand, in fact, for men whom the action of the Logos brings back from sleep and makes remember (ἐξυπνισμένον καὶ ἀνεμνησμένον) the dignity which they have lost.<sup>65</sup> This Gnostic exegesis is all the more interesting in that the same episode of the *Odyssey* will be given a similar meaning in Neoplatonism, a meaning preserved in Proclus: when Homer speaks of sleep and of awakening, we must understand by this the descent of the souls into coming-to-be and their ascent from it by means of the recollection of true realities.<sup>66</sup> But sleep and forgetting, awakening through the action of the Logos, the fall of souls into coming-to-be and their ascent out of it—these are also the themes thanks to which Hermias interprets the episode of the Sirens in the light of the *Phaedrus*. To come back to the Naasenes, one might remember also that J. Carcopino attributed to them the construction and decoration of a famous grave in the Viale Manzoni, on whose walls are represented, according to him, the return of Ulysses to Ithaca, with Penelope, her loom, and her suitors.<sup>67</sup>

There is indeed a Nag Hammadi treatise (II 6), *The Exegesis on the Soul*, which gives a firsthand example of a Valentinian author of the end of the second century<sup>68</sup> referring to Ulysses' symbolic meaning:

For no one is worthy of salvation who still loves the place of erring (πλάνη). Therefore it is written in the poet: "Ulysses sat on the island weeping and grieving and turning his face from the words of Calypso and from her tricks, longing to see his fatherland and smoke (καπνός) coming forth from it. And had he not [received] help from heaven, [he would] not [have been able to] return to his fatherland." (Trans. Robinson, modified)<sup>69</sup>

There is no doubt but that these lines contain themes which have been met throughout this article. The Gnostic author anticipates Plotinus who also made the break with the same symbolic Calypso the condition of Ulysses' return to his fatherland on high. Furthermore, the definition of the conditions of salvation by means of the union of will (the hate of wandering) and of celestial aid has its equivalent in Clement and in Hermias. As to the traits chosen in the composition of the Gnostic image of Ulysses, notably the homesick desire for the smoke of Ithaca, we have found several of these also in Clement. It is even possible that the immortality that is denied by Ulysses is understood here in the "words of Calypso." All that would be lacking in this sympathetic account is Clement's attack on "the old man of Ithaca." It is true that we have not yet met the striking image of Ulysses sitting on the shore in tears. But this image is not unknown to the philosophers, to Epictetus, for example, who even provides a severe evaluation of it, along the lines used by Clement.<sup>70</sup> In any case, from the fact that the Valentinian treatise's general theme is the fall and the ascent of the soul,<sup>71</sup> there can be no doubt that the allegory of Ulysses in it is controlled by the same inspiration as that which governs the allegory in the contemporaneous Middle Platonists. This glance at Gnostic literature harmonizes with our earlier inquiry into the Ulysses allegory. It is probably the most noteworthy example of a Greek myth for which the Christians were able, at the beginning, to make use of Platonic exegesis, and yet to reach finally a result in which the myth seems made expressly to receive a Christian meaning.

## 2

# Origen's Doctrine of the Trinity and Some Later Neoplatonic Theories

JOHN DILLON

In Chapter 3 of Book 1 of his *Peri Archon*, Origen advances a remarkable doctrine concerning the varying extent of the influences of the three persons of the Trinity. It is one of the doctrines that involved him in some posthumous trouble, a fortunate consequence of which is that we have a statement of it by Justinian, in his *Letter to Menas*,<sup>1</sup> as well as an accurate Latin version by Jerome in his *Letter to Avitus*,<sup>2</sup> a circumstance which frees us from reliance upon the circumlocutions and prevarications of the loyal but cautious Rufinus.

From a Platonist perspective, this doctrine is of great interest, but poses something of a puzzle, as will become apparent presently. First, however, I should like to set out the doctrine as it is presented to us by Justinian who, though hostile, is sufficiently bald and factual to inspire in one the confidence that he is truer to Origen than is Rufinus:

"[Origen declares] that God the Father, in holding together all things, extends his power to every level of being, imparting to each from His own store its being what it is; while the Son, in a lesser degree than the Father, extends only to rational beings



[for he is second to the Father]; and to a still lesser degree the Holy Spirit penetrates only to the saints" [i.e., to the consecrated members of the Christian community]. "So that according to this theory, the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and again that of the Holy Spirit is superior to the other holy agencies."<sup>3</sup>

Jerome's only significant variant from this is his description of the Son as actually "less" (*minorem*) than the Father, and the Holy Spirit as "inferior" (*inferiorem*) to the Son,<sup>4</sup> which I take to be, a tendentious distortion of Origen's meaning. Justinian, with creditable attention to accuracy, speaks only of the Son as ἐλαττώτως . . . φθάνων, and the Holy Spirit ἔτι ἡττώτως, which does not. I would maintain, imply the sort of essential subordinationism of which Jerome is certainly accusing him.

Rufinus, of course, is concerned to soften the effect of this troublesome doctrine as far as he, in good conscience, can. If we were dependent on Rufinus alone, we would derive a very muted impression of Origen's theory. Here is his version (*De Princ.* 1, 3, 5):

"I am of the opinion, then, that the activity of the Father and the Son is to be seen both in saints and in sinners, in rational men and in dumb animals, yes, and even in lifeless things and in absolutely everything that exists; but the activity of the Holy Spirit does not extend at all either to lifeless things, or to things that have life but yet are dumb, nor is it to be found in those who, though rational, still lie in wickedness and are not wholly converted to better things. Only in those who are already turning to better things and walking in the ways of Jesus Christ, that is, who are engaged in good deeds and who abide in God, is the work of the Holy Spirit, I think, to be found."<sup>5</sup> (Trans. Butterworth)

The distinction in extent of power between the Father and the Son, as we can see, has been here thoroughly obscured. They are both represented as being concerned with the whole of creation, as opposed to the Holy Spirit's exclusive concern with "the saints." With the help of our other evidence, however, we can, I think, discern what doctrine Rufinus was faced with. The Father alone extends his power "to lifeless things and to absolutely everything that exists," whereas the Son's power extends to all living things, both rational and irrational. The influence of the Holy Spirit, in turn, extends only to that class of rational beings which Origen's Gnostic predecessors classed as "pneumatics," those "saved" individuals endowed not only with soul but with *pneuma*. Origen is prepared to recognize such a class of person; his only objection to the Gnostic position, and it is a vehement one, is that he denies that this class is a closed one—any human being may acquire pneumatic status.

However, I am concerned in this paper not primarily with the significance of this doctrine in Origen's thought, but rather with its possible sources or analogues in contemporary Platonism.<sup>6</sup> To throw any light on this it is unfortunately necessary to move on approximately two centuries, down to the time of Proclus, and then to see if we can work our way back from there to the early decades of the third century.

In Proposition 57 of his *Elements of Theology*, Proclus advances a general principle concerning the range of activity of causal principles that, it seems to me, bears a remarkable resemblance to the doctrine of Origen. For our present purpose, I fear that it will be necessary to quote it in full:

*Every cause both operates prior to its consequent and gives rise to a greater number of posterior terms.*

For if it is ■ cause, it is more perfect and more powerful than its consequent. And if so, it must cause a greater number of effects: for greater power produces more effects, equal power, equal effects, and lesser power, fewer; and the power which can produce the greater effects upon ■ like subject can produce also the lesser, whereas a power capable of the lesser will not necessarily be capable of the greater. If, then, the cause is more powerful than its consequent, it is productive of a greater number of effects.

But again, the powers which are in the consequent are present in a greater measure in the cause. For all that is produced by secondary beings is produced in a greater measure by prior and more determinative principles. The cause, then, is cooperative in the production of all that the consequent is capable of producing.

And if it first produces the consequent itself, it is of course plain that it is operative before the latter in the activity which produces it. Thus every cause operates both prior to its consequent and in conjunction with it, and likewise gives rise to further effects posterior to it. [Corollary:] From this it is apparent that what Soul causes is caused also by Intelligence, but not all that Intelligence causes is caused by Soul: Intelligence operates prior to Soul; and what Soul bestows on secondary existences Intelligence bestows in a greater measure; and at a level where Soul is no longer operative Intelligence irradiates with its own gifts things on which Soul has not bestowed itself—for even the inanimate participates Intelligence, or the creative activity of Intelligence, in so far as it participates Form.

Again, what Intelligence causes is also caused by the Good, but not conversely. For even privation of Form is from the Good, since it is the source of all things; but Intelligence, being Form, cannot give rise to privation.<sup>7</sup> (Trans. Dodds)

The theory presented here can be traced back, as Dodds points out in his excellent note *ad loc.*, as far as Syrianus, who enunciates it in his commentary on the *Metaphysics* (p. 59, 17 Kroll),<sup>8</sup> but no further. Iamblichus, as we shall see in a moment, has a rather different theory, and neither Porphyry nor Plotinus seems to make any use of it.

Proclus' theory is ■ consequence of certain other principles of his metaphysics. First, the principle that *every productive cause is superior to that which it produces* (Prop. 7); then, the immediately preceding proposition to the present one (56), that *all that is produced by secondary beings is in a greater measure produced from those prior and more determinative principles from which the secondary were themselves derived*. His doctrine is securely underpinned by a rigorous logical framework. The supreme principle, which he here terms the Good, rather than the One, in recognition, perhaps, of its causal role, extends its *energeia* to the lowest reaches of creation, even to what is unformed, negations (*sterēseis*), and the chiefest of *sterēseis*, matter itself (this is made clear by Syrianus, in the passage quoted in note 8). The second hypostasis, *Nous*, extends

its influence not just to rational beings, as one might expect, but, precisely by virtue of the fact that it is a higher principle than Soul, which is the life principle, it extends also lower than Soul, to all entities that have Form, animate or inanimate, by reason of its role as bestower of Form. Soul itself, being the lowest of the hypostases, extends least far, taking in only what has life, be it rational or irrational.

It should be plain that, while there are striking similarities between the schemes of Origen and of Proclus (or should we say, of the Athenian school?), there are also considerable differences. The ranges of influence of the three hypostases are quite different in each case. What remains to be decided is, first, whether this theory can be traced in Platonism any further back than Syrianus, and on the other hand, whether Origen's doctrine sounds like something that he devised himself from the whole cloth, or is rather an adaptation of an already existing theory to his own particular requirements.

To take the second problem first, it is surely noticeable that, particularly in the case of the range of influence of the Holy Spirit, Origen's demarcation of influence does not seem to correspond to a natural division in the universe. Traditional divisions would be rather between rational and irrational animals, animate and inanimate objects, material and immaterial being; at the top of the scale pure Unity, at the bottom unformed, undifferentiated matter. Within this scale, and within the known metaphysical scheme of second-century Platonism, it is not difficult to fabricate a plausible triad of principles with concentric spheres of influence. Both Albinus, in the *Didaskalikos*, and Numenius, in his surviving fragments, present us with a triad of First God or Father, Second God or Demiurge (both of these, admittedly, being Intellects of a sort, but the First God being, according to Albinus, also "nobler than Intellect," according to Numenius Intellect "at rest"<sup>10</sup>), and finally World Soul. It would be easy to construct a Platonic theory of spheres of influence, according to which the Father extended his activity to all creation, even as far as matter—there is, after all, a school of thought in Platonism, traceable back to Eudorus of Alexandria,<sup>11</sup> and appearing in the *Chaldaean Oracles*,<sup>12</sup> according to which God is the creator even of matter, while the power of the Demiurge extends to all that which is endowed with Form, it being the Demiurge's particular task to create the material cosmos; the Soul would then extend to all that had soul. The only problem with such a construction is that there is absolutely no evidence for it. And yet Origen's scheme has a distinct look of being adapted to a special purpose. He was presented with a third principle which was precisely not Soul, but Spirit, and Soul and Spirit were sharply distinguished in the tradition from which Origen sprang, going back to St. Paul. The *hagion pneuma* could not be responsible for all that had soul; it could only be responsible for the *pneumatikoi*, the "saints." So Origen had to adapt, even at the cost of incurring the Platonist reproach of splitting up reality like a bad butcher, not at the joints.

Let us turn back to our first problem: what is the ancestry of this theory in the Platonic tradition? I have come upon only one clue, and it is not a very satisfactory one.

In the course of ■ comment on *Alcibiades* I, 115A, Olympiodorus reports, first, the theory of Proclus concerning the extension of influences of the hypostases, and then, in contrast to it, that of Iamblichus:<sup>13</sup>

But the divine Iamblichus does not distinguish the higher principles from the lower by the greater extent of their influence (for all the principles, in his view, extend downwards as far as matter; for this is a dogma of his, that, irrespective of at what point a principle begins to operate, it does not cease its operation before extending to the lowest level; for even if it is stronger, nevertheless the fact of its greater separation can create a balancing factor, rendering it weaker), but he distinguishes them by the fact that the influence of the higher principles is more piercing (*drimutera*). For we strive for Being more basically than for Life, and for Life more basically than for Intelligence.

Iamblichus is actually talking here, not of the three basic hypostases, but rather of the three moments of the hypostasis of *Nous*, Being, Life, and Intelligence, but this does not affect the nature of his argument. The language of Olympiodorus does not admit of certainty, but it sounds to me rather as if Iamblichus is here presented as arguing against a previous view (he is actually presented as arguing against Proclus, which is impossible). If this were so, it would be evidence that the theory goes back at least to early Neoplatonism, and was only revived by Syrianus. Now, in his comments recorded elsewhere, Iamblichus is frequently to be found in opposition both to Amelius and to Porphyry, and with either of these we can find linked the name of Numenius.<sup>14</sup>

However, at this point the trail gives out. We cannot be sure that Iamblichus is in fact contradicting anyone. We are left with the reflection that there is much that we do not know about the doctrines of the three last-mentioned figures, and even less about the mysterious figure who provides a link between Numenius and Neoplatonism on the one hand, and Origen on the other, Ammonius Saccas. All one can say is that the doctrine would fit, not uncomfortably, into what we know of second-century Platonist speculation.

There is another aspect to this theory which, it must be noted, had no attraction for Origen, but did for the later Platonists, and this is the theurgic aspect. The theory speculates that, in a powerful sense, the lower down the scale of nature an entity is situated, the more closely it is linked with higher principles. This provides an excellent philosophical justification for making use of stones, plants, and animals in the performance of magical rituals; they are actually nearer to one god or another than we are, being direct products of the divine realm. Such a theory would accord well with the doctrines of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, another major influence on Neoplatonism from Porphyry onwards, and themselves a second-century production more or less contemporary with Numenius, but once again the available sources fail us. All we find attested, and that only in Psellus' summary of Chaldaean doctrine, is ■ doctrine of *sympatheia*.<sup>15</sup>

I remain convinced, however, that Origen's theory and Proclus' theory are applications of the same doctrine, and that this doctrine was not invented by Origen. Further than that, at the moment, I cannot go.

## 3

# A Neoplatonic Commentary on the Christian Trinity: Marius Victorinus

MARY T. CLARK

Marius Victorinus Afer, a famous Roman rhetor, was born in Africa between 281 and 291. He had a fine classical education and an extensive knowledge of philosophy. From Africa he traveled to Rome where he became well known as a teacher of rhetoric. His statue was even erected in the Roman forum. Probably to assist his students, he wrote commentaries on Cicero's works, composed his own treatises on grammar and logic, and translated some key philosophical treatises from Greek into Latin.

Those of us who heard of Marius Victorinus from Saint Augustine's *Confessions*<sup>1</sup> met him there first as the translator of the "books of the Platonists" which Augustine borrowed from a very proud man whose identity has never been completely established. The reading of these books removed some of Augustine's intellectual obstacles to the acceptance of the truth of certain scriptural statements about God. Feeling himself unable to live according to these truths, however, Augustine applied for help to a Christian priest in Milan, Simplicianus (later a bishop), and discovered that he had known Marius Victorinus. Victorinus had discussed his conversion with Simplicianus, telling him how the reading of Scrip-

ture had convinced Victorinus that Christianity should be embraced. One cannot help wondering which scriptural texts influenced Victorinus to believe in Christ. Was it the Prologue to Saint John's Gospel as some have suggested? There he would read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; and the Word was God. All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing that has been made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness grasped it not." Pierre Hadot<sup>2</sup> is one who points out that Victorinus could recognize in this Prologue all the Neoplatonic principles: God, Intelligence, Soul, matter, and even certain Porphyrian positions: the Intelligence, originally confused with the First Principle, then distinguished from him; the creation of the intelligible world; the double aspect of the Intelligence or Logos—life, and light; the creation of the sensible world; the role of the soul testifying to the divine presence in the world. Hadot even suggests<sup>3</sup> that the Platonist who was in the habit of saying, according to Simplicianus, that Saint John's Prologue "should be written in letters of gold and hung up in all the churches in the most conspicuous place," was Victorinus himself. On the other hand, H. Dörrie<sup>4</sup> considers that this advice to write large the Prologue in the churches was not given by someone friendly to Christianity but by an anti-Christian Platonist who thought that Christianity added nothing to Platonism. He thought that in John's words Christians would either recognize the heretical character of the Fourth Gospel, or there would be a general conversion to Platonism. But let us consider for the moment that Hadot is right and that Victorinus did recognize the correlation between the Christian and the pagan Divine Logos. This raises the question then as to why Victorinus would bother at all with baptism if he merely recognized the coincidence of Christian and Neoplatonic doctrines in John's Prologue. What Victorinus could know as a Neoplatonist could scarcely be the reason for his believing as a Christian.

## I

I want to suggest that other texts of Scripture deeply moved Victorinus, texts in John and Paul that spoke of the Divine Condescension. His full reading of Scripture made Victorinus aware of the mystery of God's love for mankind and called forth his faith. His later writings show him to be humbled before this awareness of the mystery of God's salvific concern for the world. In his first book *Against Arius*, Victorinus wrote:

For this is "a great mystery": that God "emptied himself, when he was in the form of God," then that he suffered, first by being in the flesh and sharing the lot of human birth and being raised upon the cross. These things, however, would not be marvelous, if he had come only from man, or from nothing, or from God by creation. For what would "he emptied himself" mean if he was-not before he was in the flesh? And what was he? He said: "equal to God." But if he had been created from nothing, how is he equal? That is why it is "a great mystery which was manifested in the flesh."<sup>5</sup>

Plotinus, we remember, had said: "It is not lawful for those who have become wicked to demand others to be their saviors and to sacrifice themselves in answer to their prayers."<sup>6</sup> While this was not an anti-Christian remark on Plotinus' part, but rather witnesses to his conviction that men have a duty to their world and to themselves to live on their highest level, one can find missing here any realization that a savior might volunteer to sacrifice himself even for the culpable man. And Porphyry's philosophy, as far as I know, makes no room for such Divine Condescension.

Despite Victorinus' embracing of the mystery of faith—God's love for man—he remained very Neoplatonic in seeing the Christian life to be the interior life of knowledge, a call to live on the spiritual level. Although the corporal works of mercy undoubtedly belong in the lives of those who wished to follow Christ by doing what he did for people—healing and helping—the importance of Christian spirituality through the ages, that is, the interior life, was definitely directed and influenced by Christian Neoplatonists like Victorinus, Augustine, and Dionysius the Areopagite. Victorinus taught that Christ was universal life, bringing a higher life and knowledge of the intelligible world into the sensible world to lead people to God.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, according to Victorinus, after Christ's death the hidden Christ continues to act in the Holy Spirit, principle of intelligible knowledge. Souls are then illuminated by this hidden Christ, the Spirit of understanding.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, for Victorinus, neither the creation of the world by God nor the incarnation of God's Son diminished the intelligible world. He asserts<sup>9</sup> against Candidus that the process of the sensible manifestation of divine power does not change the divine substance. This procession has reality only in the creatures that benefit from it. In the divine substance itself there is intense activity. All action is derived from the Logos with whom activity is identified: "the first two are one, yet differ insofar as the Father is actual existence, that is, substantiality, while the Son is existential act."<sup>10</sup> With the Logos in the Father, activity is power. This power is deployed through the Logos Father, the maker of the world, and is manifested in a sensible manner when souls (preexisting in the Logos) begin to descend into the sensible world. "For your Logos is the seed of the 'to be' of all things, but you are the interior power of this seed."<sup>11</sup> But there is another work of the Logos which Victorinus finds in Scripture expressing divine concern for the return of souls. This is the sensible manifestation of the Logos, his incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and the diffusion of the Spirit into souls. Victorinus expressed it this way:

For the darkness and ignorance of the soul, violated by material powers, had need of the help of eternal light so that the Logos of the soul and the Logos of the flesh after the destruction of corruption by the mystery of that death leading to resurrection, could thus raise up souls and bodies under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to divine and lifegiving intelligences, uplifted by knowledge, faith, and love.<sup>12</sup>

For Victorinus, therefore, the mystery includes the descent of Divine Life through the Son into the world, and the ascent of thought through the Spirit to the Father. Such is the work of the twofold Logos:

For he is life, he is knowledge, in both directions having been efficacious for the salvation of souls, by the mystery of the Cross and thus by life, because we had to be freed from death, and by the mystery of knowledge also, by the Holy Spirit, because he was given as teacher, and "taught" all things and gave "testimony" to Christ.<sup>13</sup>

This is the economy of salvation attainable by faith in the mystery which is the Gospel, the truth of divine love that is good news. To know the mystery is to know the Logos dialoguing with the world; only the Spirit can give this knowledge of the Logos. "The Father speaks to the Son, the Son to the world."<sup>14</sup> And as to the Holy Spirit, Victorinus says that he has "... already set forth in many books that he [the Holy Spirit] is Jesus Christ himself but in another mode, Jesus Christ hidden, interior, dialoguing with souls. . . ."<sup>15</sup>

## II

What then does the Logos give? It seems to have been important for Victorinus that the Son of God can provide a certain positive knowledge of God—a knowledge of his concern for the world he created and saved, and a knowledge of the inner structure of the divine life—which was a closed book to philosophical reason. It is right to recognize that when we try to reason about God, there is more about him that we do not know than we know. But is it possible to quench the desire to know as much as possible about God? Like everyone else, Victorinus had this desire. In his reading of Scripture he at last discovered the source of positive theology. "No one has ever seen God except the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father; he has explained him."<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, although he may have found the coincidence of Neoplatonic and Christian Trinitarian doctrines in Saint John's Prologue, Victorinus searched the whole New Testament to hear Christ explain the triadic nature of the God who "so loved the world."

He found what he was seeking, chiefly in John's Gospel and Paul's Epistles. From the many texts he cites, I shall choose only a few that proved formative of Victorinus' understanding of God as triune.

In John 5:26 he read: "For as the Father has life in himself, even so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself." From this Victorinus learned that the Son was aptly called life and, moreover, was as self-begetting as the Father.

And in 2 Philippians 2:5–7, he read of Christ Jesus "who though he was in the form of God, did not consider being equal to God a thing to be clung to, but emptied himself taking the form of a slave and being made like unto men. And appearing in the form of man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross. Therefore, God also has exalted him and has bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."

Again in John 14:26, he read: "These things I have spoken to you while yet dwelling with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send

in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you."

Thus life in the divine world is intelligible life. The Son is the principle of life, and the Holy Spirit is the principle of intellectual knowledge. Therefore, as John's Prologue says, the Logos is life and light which illuminates every man born into the world. The Logos is dyadic, the manifested one. Christ in the flesh, and the hidden one, the Holy Spirit. And the Father whose Be-ing is unknowable in itself, is manifested in Christ who said: "Philip, he who sees me sees also the Father. How canst thou say, 'Show us the Father?' Dost thou not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?"<sup>17</sup>

I have given rather fully these scriptural quotations most used by Victorinus, to show that he was able to draw from Scripture an understanding of the triune God as *esse-vivere-intelligere*, not in descending order but as mutually implicated in one another. The theory of implication and predominance dominates Victorinus' theological synthesis.

### III

How then can one say that Victorinus' understanding of the Trinity was a Neoplatonic one?

One can say this perhaps in the sense that the Neoplatonic philosophy of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* and of the *Commentary on the Chaldaean Oracles* enabled Victorinus to recognize that the processive reality of the Trinitarian God was not contradictory to reason. P. Hadot has documented<sup>18</sup> the Porphyrian materials which he thinks Victorinus used to defend the consubstantiality of Father, Son, and Spirit, but he includes the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* among the Porphyrian works. Whether Hadot has sufficient evidence from the extant writings of Porphyry to declare that Victorinus depends on him for his Neoplatonism is a weighty question. Are we certain that Porphyry authored the *Anonymous Commentary*? I believe that Dominic O'Meara seems justified in calling attention to the "... character of the available evidence [as to what Porphyry really taught] insofar as this implies interpretative limitations."<sup>19</sup> I believe that we should try to learn far more than we now know about Victorinus' knowledge of the Eastern theologians who discussed the *homoousios*. More attention might be paid to Marcellus of Ancyra who interpreted *homoousion* in the sense of identity and whose dynamic conception of God as the living, active, energetic biblical God is quite like Victorinus' notion of God. Marcellus speaks of God as never without his Word which was in him as *dynamis* and which emerged for God's work of creation and revelation as *energeia*. This monad God expands not in essence so that we can speak of three *ousias*, or three hypostases or three persons, but in activity alone. While it is true that Marcellus' theology is constructed in opposition to Origen's subordinationism, the suspicion of Marcellus' Sabellianism dominated the Eastern church's opposition to *homoousion*.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, from Victorinus' own writings we do know that he believed that the Unitarians of the day (Neo-Arians) and the upholders of "similarity in

substance" (followers of Basil of Ancyra), had made philosophical mistakes. Therefore, in addition to recourse to Scripture for understanding the Trinity, Victorinus felt obliged to argue philosophically. To do this, he had choices to make. Which philosophy available to the fourth-century theologians was best adapted to convey the possibility of a triune God, each of the three distinct from one another, but all three equally God? If one began with the data from Revelation, then the main teaching of Plotinus on the subordination of the two later hypostases could not be used. Yet Plotinus had discovered in the soul's structure an image of the structure of the intelligible world, and he had recognized the mutual implication of *esse, vivere, intelligere*.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Plotinus had spoken of the soul and its activity as consubstantial. From his scriptural reading Victorinus thought he had to reject what Arius agreed with: that where there is emanation, there must be inferiority. The Nicene Creed had specified that neither inferiority nor posteriority was expressed by consubstantiality. At the dawn of Western theology it seems to have been Victorinus' task to show philosophically how this was possible. In Scripture he had learned that all that the Son has is received from the Father; he was also familiar with the texts that emphasized the infinite *esse* of God. By not accepting the Plotinian principle, "No one gives what he has," Victorinus kept the Son and the Spirit equal to the Father in being, while distinguished from him and from each other by the activity which predominated in each. In feeling free to call God *Esse*, a reality found in all things, he was able also to find in his system a place for positive philosophical theology. There was at hand, moreover, in the fourth century a philosophy which referred to the First Principle of all as Being. This was the philosophy present in the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* (attributed by Hadot to Porphyry) where we read:

See then if Plato has not also the air of someone who allows us to seize a hidden teaching: for the One, who is beyond Substance and Being, is neither Being nor substance nor act but rather, it acts and is itself pure act, so that it is itself "To Be," that which is before Being. By participating in this "To Be" the second one receives from this "To Be" a derived being: such is "to participate in Being."<sup>22</sup>

The "commentator" goes on to speak of the derivatives from the One-Being. The prepositions used of the Son and the Spirit in Scripture also indicated that the second and third Persons were definable by reduction to the One. The *ek* or *ex* could refer to begetting; the Spirit being sent *ab* the Father and the Son refers to the Spirit's presence in the First or the One; and *in* the Holy Spirit one returns to Father and Son. This metaphysics of prepositions expresses the Western emphasis on the unity of God. The mutual implication of *esse, vivere, intelligere*<sup>23</sup> served Victorinus well in his effort to declare the absolute unity of the Trinity. This had been previously admitted by Plotinus<sup>24</sup> and was to be acknowledged by Augustine also.<sup>25</sup>

Thus Victorinus did not distort Christian teachings by importing Neoplatonic fragments into his exposition of the Trinity. He experienced a profound harmony between Neoplatonism and Christianity. He detected a structural relationship between Neoplatonic philosophy as he conceived it and the Trinitarian doctrine of

the Church as derived from the scriptural use of common names for Father, Son, and Spirit as well as proper names. For in both fourth-century Neoplatonism and Christianity there is admitted the preexistence of the *Nous* or of the Logos in the bosom of the First Principle; Porphyrian Neoplatonism as rehabilitated by Hadot asserts a consubstantiality between God and the intelligible world which emanates from him.<sup>26</sup>

#### IV

One should not, of course, discuss Victorinus' use of Neoplatonism apart from the questions he faced. It is important to realize that he wrote his treatises in response to Arianism in general, to Neo-Arianism in particular, and to those who objected to the use of the word "consubstantial" in the Nicene Creed, namely, the followers of Basil of Ancyra.

In responding to the Arians who took the word "unbegotten" as the distinguishing feature of the Father, the word "begotten" as that of the Son, Victorinus used the Plotinian notion of God as *causa sui*,<sup>27</sup> self-begetting.

To the Neo-Arians who said that the Son was created and not generated inasmuch as generation would imply a mutation in God, Victorinus argued that the correct Neoplatonic understanding of the divine generation is such that it is understood to provide no modification in the generator.<sup>28</sup>

To the theologians united against consubstantiality, Victorinus speaks in Aristotelian language. Consubstantial as used in the Creed denotes that there is only one numerical individual substance of God, and this substance is simple. Therefore, Basil of Ancyra is philosophically in error in speaking of the Son as similar in substance to the Father. Similarity occurs by way of qualities; in God all is substantial.<sup>29</sup>

As is to be expected, Victorinus forsakes his Neoplatonism when he tries to prove to the Latin Homeans that the terms "*ousia*" and "*homousion*" are conformed to scriptural and ecclesiastical language. But in *Adversus Arium* I, when he uses scriptural authority for the consubstantiality and distinctness of individuals within the Godhead by way of common and proper names, substantial and personal names (Spirit, Logos, *Nous*, Wisdom, Substance),<sup>30</sup> he does not hesitate to use the philosophical theory of predominance.

Moreover, the concept of *agere* which functioned both in the *Anonymous Commentary* and in Porphyry's *Commentary on the Chaldaean Oracles* was used centrally by Victorinus to safeguard the Christian revelation of the Son's equality with the Father. "For God is power and the Logos is action, but each is in the other."<sup>31</sup>

By recognizing activity as a transcendental and by admitting that God belongs to the realm of Being, Victorinus was able to speak of God as dynamic *Esse*. The activity of God is to live and to understand. This helped Victorinus to distinguish the essential attributes of God from the personal denominations of the three. He therefore taught that *esse* (*substantia*), *vivere* (*forma*), and *intelligere* (*notio*) are shared by all three. All three are transcendental, predicated of the First Principle.

Hence the Son and Spirit by sharing these essential attributes were in no way inferior to the Father, being also self-begetting.

In the movement of life there is the expression of God by his Son; in the movement of understanding there is conversion to the Father in the Spirit through knowledge and love. The Father's self-revelation is life and wisdom.

In the Trinity the Holy Spirit is the principle of the identity of the three after the Son's dynamic procession. In the world the Father wills the creation and creates through the Son, recreating in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, for us also the Holy Spirit is the principle of identity with God. It is evident throughout this work that Victorinus used the Platonic categories of identity, distinction, repose, and movement to express the procession from the Father and the return to the Father. These divine realities are mutually inclusive, each in all and all in each.

The external activity of God reflects his inner essence as Three Persons:

You give "to be" to all,  
Thou, Son, givest form,  
Thou, Spirit, reform. O Blessed Trinity."

Thus the structure of the act of creation expresses the structure of God.

Whereas Plotinus distributed being and intelligence and life among the two hypostases which follow the One, invoking the principle "No one gives what he has," Victorinus concentrated these in the one triune God. In doing so he allowed for an analogy of dynamic being. All things participate to a certain extent in the attributes of dynamic being. Life is everywhere. "For these three in their progress, as we shall show, have shared with all existents . . . existence, life, understanding, which they give to them according to the proper capacity of things. . . ."

And so, although Victorinus uses abstract vocabulary, his philosophy is concrete and existentialist, a view of being as spontaneous and dynamic. He is impelled to use infinitives to express the dynamism of reality. Energy is the Father, form is the Son; *vivens* and *vita*.

#### V

And if it was proposed that he held the principal activity of the Christian life to be the intellectual one of detaching oneself from sensible knowledge to keep the soul united with the Divine Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, yet we should not ignore the fact that he linked the interior movement of divine life with the rhythm of human history.<sup>32</sup> And he respects the value of time, especially as the time for faith. In his *Commentary on the Ephesians* he clearly teaches that salvation is from faith in Christ. And yet, it is undeniable that Victorinus understands faith to be the knowledge of Christ or of the Spirit, ■ uniting knowledge that leads the soul back to its original state of Spirit. But this faith-knowledge is not the soul's own achievement; it is the gift of God. Very dear to Victorinus is the theme of Christ as the true light. The soul is the light (this he learned from Neoplatonism), but not the "true light" (this he learned from Scripture).<sup>33</sup>

With this faith in Christ and in the mystery of his salvific concern for the

world, there is no doubt of the essential Christianity of Victorinus the man. We can also add that as a theologian, his metaphysical reflection on the scriptural revelation of the triune God was expressed Neoplatonically largely because he found this appropriate to help those who in making philosophical errors had misinterpreted Scripture.

### CONCLUSION

How important are these early and intricate speculations on the internal relations of the Trinity? Has Victorinus' Trinitarian theology any lasting significance?

First of all, his work, along with that of others, witnesses to the birth of dogmatic theology and to the role—the carefully limited role—of philosophy in that birth. His work needs to be more widely known and studied. No forward movement in theology is to be expected without a critical acceptance of what was adequate in the theological tradition and a critical rejection of what was inadequate. If historians of theology pass on the theological tradition, they will assist those who are trying to think theologically today. Theologians who confront the contemporary questions should be informed by the past, though not bound by it in the sense of being prevented from progressing, through reflection upon the experience of the Christian community.

In the early theology of the Trinity we see an effort to reflect upon the Christian texts of the Gospels and the Epistles by a Tertullian and an Origen whose Stoic and Plotinian frameworks prevented them from reaching any adequate formulation of the Trinity. At Nicaea, Athanasius used the word "consubstantial" to say that the three Persons are identical to each other, all three being numerically one God. This was a scriptural insight, not a Hellenic one, and no crusade for dehellenization should induce one to forsake Nicaea. Dogma had to develop as it did if the true interpretation of scriptural revelation was to be rescued from theological misinterpretations. Surely dogma is no substitute for Scripture which appeals to all those who wish to be saved and to experience the full worthwhileness of human existence, but dogma may be a necessity for the critical intelligence of those who wish to be assured of the truth of the Gospels. The dogmatic effort is a work of analysis and interpretation and synthesis, an approach to Scripture as true. The Church has provided dogma because it is the guardian of the truth of Scriptures so that they may do their saving work for individuals who come to them.

Thus Athanasius, after reading the Son's scriptural testimony to his Father and himself, used the word "consubstantial" to indicate that all that is said of the Father is also to be said of the Son, except that the Son is Son and not Father. Therefore, the Son is the same substance as the Father but not the same person.

Admittedly, it is a far better thing to live by the Gospels than merely to know what they are saying, but is the former possible without the latter? Dogmas are explicitations of Scripture; they are statements about what is going on there or being affirmed there; they are its truth dimension, significant for persons whose humanness includes a strong intellectual element.

Whereas Athanasius, in independence of any one philosophical tradition, was defining the dogma of the Trinity by using the word "consubstantial," Victorinus belonged to that second generation of post-Nicene theologians who had to consider whether the word "consubstantial" said too much or too little. He felt it necessary to evaluate the Nicene interpretation of the Trinity. And so he did this within the framework of his own convictions of the relation between the three principles of the intelligible world as he understood them through Neoplatonic philosophy in the fourth century. In evaluating the Nicene dogma, he not only formulated a philosophical defense of the possibility of consubstantiality, but he returned to the Christian texts that declared the identity and distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Thus we perceive here two stages of dogma: its conciliar expression as an interpretation of Scripture, and the philosophical defense of its coherence as expressed in theology, in particular in the Trinitarian theology of Marius Victorinus who utilized the Platonic categories and Neoplatonic metaphysics.

The Nicene Creed, however, was only the first dogmatic statement on the Trinity. With the use of more adequate theological method and more adequate philosophical categories, man's desire to understand more deeply the life of the Trinity and its significance for our Christian lives may lead to dogmatic development. This will happen as theologians continue to appropriate past theology critically, that is, to make explicit any implicit incoherence. In any appropriation of the past which necessarily precedes true development of dogma, the Trinitarian treatises of Marius Victorinus the African should not be ignored. For any advance in Christology, a thorough knowledge of Trinitarian theology is fundamental.

In conclusion we may note that Victorinus' argument with the Neo-Arians of his day was an argument against those who resisted development. If he were alive today, what philosophical categories would he use to come to a better understanding of the Trinity? We do not know, but we can say that he would still argue against those who resist development, yet he would argue even more strongly against those for whom development means nothing less than the denial of dogma.

## 4

# The Neoplatonism of Saint Augustine

JOHN J. O'MEARA

have written a good deal on this topic in books and articles, fairly evenly spread out over the last quarter of a century. They bear witness to the inevitable evolution of my ideas on this subject.

During the period there was sustained interest in this field, a great deal of it generated by H. I. Marrou, P. Courcelle, and P. Henry, who, with others, contributed an Augustinian dimension to the remarkable school of late Hellenistic religion and philosophy at Paris, deriving from F. Cumont and J. Bidez, and more recently associated with the names of, for example, A. J. P. Festugière and Ch. H. Puech. There were, of course, others, both in France and far from its confines, who regarded Paris as the center of their studies in this field. And, naturally, I must allude very discreetly indeed to the reigning generation—to such as J. Pépin and P. Hadot—not to say to the very promising group of younger scholars whose formation has been directly or indirectly affected by what I call the Neoplatonic and Augustinian school of Paris.

A great support in more recent times for this scholarly movement was the existence of the *Études Augustiniennes* maintained by Père G. Folliet and his community in the rue François 1<sup>er</sup> (now in rue de l'Abbaye). Not only have they

continued to publish their *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, which contains also an exhaustive bibliography of what is published on Augustine and, of course, Augustine and Neoplatonism, but they arranged a famous Augustinian Congress in Paris in 1954 that was dominated by the topic to which we are now addressing ourselves. The intense interest and controversy that appeared in relation to this subject on that occasion may be seen in the pages of the third volume of the proceedings, *Augustinus Magister* (Paris, 1954), which reports the more than lively discussions. I shall never forget the interjection of F. Chatillon: "Quant à Plotin, votre Plotin, eh bien! flûte pour Plotin!"

This vigorous remark was one of the last protestations on one side in an embattled dispute with which you may not all be familiar. In 1888 A. Harnack and G. Boissier had put forward a view, expounded in its heyday by P. Alfarié in his *L'évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin* (Paris 1918), which in effect said that it was not until long after his "conversion" that Augustine accepted the Christian faith in opposition to Neoplatonism. In the context of the time and in the light, for example, of the career of Synesius, the professing Neoplatonist bishop of Cyrene, such a view is not extravagant. From the time of C. Boyer's counter-attack in 1920, however, this view became gradually untenable—hence F. Chatillon's inelegant remark. Still the majority of scholars by 1954 would have agreed that at the time of his conversion, Augustine's acceptance of Christianity was sincere and that he was also deeply impressed by Neoplatonism. He, with many others, thought (fondly as it proved later) that there could be a synthesis between the Christian faith and Neoplatonic reason since indeed the one God had to be the source for both authority and reason. It would, I think, be true to say that since 1954 we are no longer interested in what is now called the "false" problem of whether Augustine at any particular time was a Christian rather than a Neoplatonist or vice versa. To us he now seems to have been a Christian of his time who held certain views that were abhorrent to Neoplatonism but nevertheless had been much influenced by Neoplatonism in not unimportant ways.

A second problem had in the meantime emerged: which Neoplatonist, Plotinus (204/5–269/70) or Porphyry (232/3–ca. 305) was responsible for this Neoplatonist influence on Augustine? W. Theiler (whose death occurred early in 1977) was breast high for Porphyry; P. Henry for Plotinus. In my own introduction to the *Contra Academicos* I had already made it clear that in my view "both Plotinus and Porphyry are well represented" in that work. To that point, claims for the dominating influence of Plotinus were standard. Since then and, I am happy to say, since my own *Porphyry's Philosophy from the Oracles in Augustine* (Paris 1959), P. Hadot's very long review of it in the *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* (VI, 3, 1960, pp. 205–244) and his own subsequent work, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, and the Entretiens held on Porphyry at the Fondation Hardt in Geneva (1966), Porphyry has gained enormously in his reputation as a philosopher and is allowed an important role, alongside his master Plotinus, in influencing Augustine.

So much by way of a *status quaestionis*. But there are some other preliminary remarks which it may be useful to make.



Recently Edward Booth has drawn attention to the eclectic character of Neoplatonism. It was in fact the most influential of the "eclectic contemplative philosophies, with their triple ultimate beings and their doctrines of salvation (which) were the background of Christian Trinitarianism."<sup>2</sup> The spirit of the Roman world, in which Plotinus and Porphyry lived, may have been responsible for some—though hardly all—of the eclectic character of Neoplatonism. The Roman spirit was profoundly sceptical, embracing only the probable, pragmatic and necessarily, therefore, eclectic. I recall vividly how startled I was when I read the opinion of the great Latinist Ernout that Lucretius was not concerned with how true the physical theory of Democritus was on which he based his system: it seemed to work; that was enough.<sup>3</sup> Now I am not saying that Plotinus' approach to truth is the same as that of Lucretius. But I am saying that the Neoplatonists were eclectic.

So was Augustine who was on this point strikingly Roman. Listen to this tidy example from chapter 28 of the twenty-second book of the *City of God*. The topic is the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body which the Neoplatonists refused absolutely to countenance:

The Platonists agree with us that even blessed souls will return to bodies, as Plato says, but will nevertheless not return to any evils, as Porphyry says, and take this also from Varro, that they will return to the same bodies, in which they were formerly, then their whole difficulty about the resurrection of the flesh for eternity will be solved.

It is to be noticed that Augustine is not writing flippantly, although one suspects that if he were challenged on this piece of jig-sawing he would have disengaged himself quickly enough. But a remarkable feature of Augustine's writing is his tendency to use the *ballon d'essai*: "This theory," he writes in his first extant work, "about the Academics I have sometimes, as far as I could, thought probable. If it is false, I do not mind."<sup>4</sup> This inconsequential attitude to doctrine propounded by others or even himself is highlighted even more in his other well known tendency to believe that philosophers propounded one thing to the public but propounded very different and sometimes opposite views to their inner circle: it is the old business of exoteric and esoteric doctrines.

But if Augustine was Roman in his eclectic attitude to the truths of physics and logic, he was also Roman in his passionate attachment to ethics. I have often felt disappointed by his handling of philosophical themes in the earlier part of the *City of God*—though I hasten to add both that the controversial nature of that work offered him some excuse, and he does demonstrate a profound aptitude for philosophical speculation elsewhere—but I have always been impressed by his strong passion for social and moral issues. His praise of the high moral and social qualities of Brutus, Torquatus, Curtius, the Decii, Regulus, Cincinnatus, and others is emphatic and sincere.

*Quidquid recipitur recipitur ad modum recipientis.* The fact that Augustine borrowed from the Neoplatonists what he borrowed from them, and how he used his borrowings, all these reflect his own character and interests. I have written on

this topic fairly comprehensively in, for example, *Recherches Augustiniennes* I (1958, pp. 91–111) and in my *Charter of Christendom* (1961, pp. 62–87) and elsewhere. Very briefly, Augustine accepted the Neoplatonic doctrine of an incorporeal Creator, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of Providence and mediatory salvation. Porphyry appeared to Augustine to espouse something like the Christian Trinity and a rudimentary notion of Grace. Augustine had much to criticize in the precise formulation by the Neoplatonists of their doctrines. His criticisms have been usefully set forth by Edward Booth in the article to which I have already referred.<sup>5</sup>

I should now like to look a little, but, necessarily, very quickly, at the particular points of contact which I judge to be of greatest significance between Augustine on the one hand and Plotinus and Porphyry on the other.

In an article in the *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*'s celebration of a Plotinian centenary in 1970,<sup>6</sup> I stressed what I called the conversion syndrome in Augustine's thought and its inspiration in Plotinus, principally in *Ennead* I. 6 "On Beauty." Here Plotinus truly passes on the mystical spell of Plato's *Symposium* to be taken up again by Augustine in a number of passages of the *Confessions* where, according to Courcelle,<sup>7</sup> Augustine describes his attempts to achieve Plotinian ecstasy. I am convinced that the impression that Augustine received from reading Plotinus I. 6, which made it possible for him to abandon materialism in any explanation of reality, abode with him forever. It was not so much Plotinus' articulation of immaterialist doctrine that affected him, as the profound insight that the emotional, almost mystical concentration on the hypostases afforded him:

The reasoning faculty drew away my thoughts from the power of habit, withdrawing itself from those troops of contradictory phantasms; that so it might find what that light was, whereby it was bedewed, when, without all doubting, it cried out, "That the unchangeable was to be preferred to the changeable;" whence also it knew That Unchangeable, which, unless it had in some way known, it had had no sure ground to prefer it to the changeable. And thus with the flash of one trembling glance it arrived at That Which Is. But I could not fix my gaze thereon; and my infirmity being struck back, I was thrown again on my wonted habits, carrying along with me only a loving memory thereof, and a longing for what I had, as it were, perceived the odour of, but was not yet able to feed on. Yet dwelt there with me ■ remembrance of Thee.<sup>8</sup>

Again in the so-called vision of Ostia, he speaks about touching on eternal wisdom: "Could this (touching) be continued on, and other visions of kind far unlike be withdrawn, and this one ravish, and absorb and wrap up its beholder amid these inward joys, so that life might be for ever like that one moment of understanding which we now sighed after?"<sup>9</sup>

It will be observed that the elevation here described by Augustine uses the emotions if only to dismiss them. The *practical* aspect of the matter is in fact represented by the purification of the senses. This purification was fully propounded by both Plotinus and Porphyry and in due course by Augustine. The approach, then, changing somewhat from the metaphysical to the moral, becomes a theme congenial to Roman moralism, be it in Sallust, Seneca, or Saint Augustine.

The Latin language had (and has) an extraordinary power to seize upon the substance of a complicated consideration and express it pithily, memorably, and emotionally. Greek is more intellectual; but when it comes to expressing the whole of human experience and of the *lucrimae rerum*, Latin speaks grandly for the human heart. Over and over again Augustine sums up the necessity to turn to, to be converted to, the Father and to turn away from the things of this world. One can see this in the argument of a whole work such as the *City of God*: *fecerunt itaque ciuitates duas amores duo, terrenam scilicet amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei, caelestem uero amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui*.<sup>10</sup> Or one can see it in the phrases now hackneyed from too much casual use: *inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te: noverim me noverim te, ut amem te et contemnam me*. These phrases are highly rhetorical, but their very jingle is part of their usefulness and appeal to the many. We should not be misled for all that; they enshrine the very core of Plotinus' explanation of the origin of things:

ὄν γὰρ τέλειον τῷ μηδὲν ζητεῖν μηδὲ ἔχειν μηδὲ δεῖσθαι οἷον ὑπερρεστή καὶ τὸ ὑπερπλήρες αὐτοῦ πεποίηκεν ἄλλο. τὸ δὲ γινόμενον εἰς αὐτὸ ἐπιστρέφει καὶ ἐπληρώθη καὶ ἐγένετο πρὸς αὐτὸ βλέπον καὶ νοῦς οὗτος. καὶ ἡ μὲν πρὸς ἐκεῖνο στάσις αὐτοῦ τὸ ὄν ἐποίησεν.<sup>11</sup>

Augustine did not quite follow Plotinus in the explanation of the creation of the *Nous*, the first being, by the One, but he did preserve the general structure and vocabulary. In particular the term *conversio*, "turning to," was for him an emotional touchstone of deep and lasting importance. The *Confessions* is the story of his own and of everyman's conversion to God. The *City of God* is the same theme writ large in terms of all angels and humanity that ever was or will be. The intellectual inspiration is in Plotinus.

I have been alluding to the salvational element that Augustine—and others—have discerned in Plotinus. But the other Neoplatonist who influenced Augustine (as we know from Augustine's own testimony), Porphyry, is much more explicit on the theme of salvation—which may well afford some explanation as to why we have until recently tended to rate Porphyry rather less than did Augustine, and why Augustine gives more prominence to him than to Plotinus.

Porphyry was for Augustine not only the greatest of recent philosophers but was one who, although he had abandoned or at least rejected and finally attacked Christianity most forcefully, had also examined its claims and, in his view, came very close to it. Porphyry, Augustine says in the *City of God*,<sup>12</sup> had accepted the God of the Hebrews and had extolled the virtues of Christ—as a man, only, however. Pride and the demons had prevented him not only from accepting the divinity of the Christ who had become incarnate and had died on a cross, but also from appreciating the virtues of Christians and the enduring mission of the Church. But Porphyry's salvationism and eclecticism seemed especially useful to Augustine. Augustine refers to him as follows:

When Porphyry says that no one system of thought has yet embraced a doctrine that embodies a universal path to the liberation of the soul, no, neither the truest of

philosophies, nor the moral ideas and practices of the Indians, nor the initiation of the Chaldaeans, nor any other way of life, and adds that this same path has not yet been brought to his attention in the course of his research into history, he is undoubtedly acknowledging that some such path exists though it had not yet come to his attention. So dissatisfied was he with the results of his devoted study of the liberation of the soul and with what his reputation, higher in the eyes of others than in his own, credited him with discovering and maintaining.<sup>13</sup>

It was the nearness of Porphyry's approach—despite his ultimate fierce hostility—to Christianity that induced Augustine to give more extensive notice to Porphyry than to Plotinus and to praise him more. We must recognize this dominating fact in our assessment of Augustine's own admission of Neoplatonist influence on him.

The influences of Plotinus and Porphyry on Augustine as indicated so far could be described as important indeed but, especially, *dramatic*. At any rate Augustine's description of them is dramatic and, certainly in relation to the influence of Porphyry, also rather politic. There was a doctrinal influence involved, but it tends to attract our notice less. Nevertheless, the influence of both Plotinus and Porphyry at the doctrinal level, even if ultimately rejected, was wider and deeper than has so far been suggested here. Some of this may have been imbibed directly from a reading of these authors probably for the most part in translation. Some may have come to Augustine orally through his Christian-Neoplatonist friends and acquaintances in Milan. At any rate we now know, thanks to the fruitful labors of Berthold Altaner, "quite an amount on the influence of the Greek Neoplatonist Fathers—Basil, the Gregories, Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Origen—on Augustine, manifesting itself at all stages of his life.

I shall end with some comments on the work of Augustine perhaps best known under the title *Hexameron* in the earlier medieval period, and, under the title *de Genesi ad litteram*, very little known in more recent centuries. Only one translation of this work into a modern language, French, has been available and that only since 1972.<sup>14</sup> An English translation by John Taylor (of Seattle) should appear fairly soon. This work, Augustine's fourth attempt to comment (as literally as possible) on the first chapters of Genesis, was finished when its author was about sixty-one years of age. It is, therefore, a rather late and mature work and testifies to the permanent influence of Neoplatonism on his thoughts.

I am discussing elsewhere<sup>15</sup> the extent to which Augustine in the *de Genesi ad litteram* depends upon, for example, Plotinus' doctrine on the λόγος for his fundamental and very philosophical understanding of creation as described in Genesis. Likewise I hope to treat at some future time his use in the *de Genesi ad litteram* of Porphyry's idea of *spiritus* for his equally fundamental and equally philosophical understanding of the afterlife. There are other points of influence, such as that of Plotinus' ideas on Providence or Porphyry's angelology (and this was most significant). Here, however, let me mention briefly one instance only of the influence of Plotinus and Porphyry, taking them—as for the most part, perhaps they should be—together, as seen in the *de Genesi ad litteram*.

Fundamental to the Neoplatonist system and elaborated with great emphasis

in Plotinus is the doctrine that the Father, the One, is beyond being and beyond not only all sensible but also all rational or even intellectual perception:

(13) Thus the One is in truth beyond all statement: any affirmation is of a thing; but "all-transcending, resting above even the most august divine Mind"—this is the only true description, since it does not make it a thing among things, nor name it where no name could identify it: we can but try to indicate, in our own feeble way, something concerning it. . . . The Transcendent, thus, neither knows itself nor is known in itself. (14) . . . We have neither knowledge nor intellection of it (οὐδὲ γινώσκον οὐδὲ νόησκον ἔχομεν αὐτοῦ). . . . we can and do state what it is not, while we are silent as to what it is (καὶ γὰρ λέγομεν, ὃ μὴ ἔστιν· ὃ δὲ ἔστιν, οὐ λέγομεν).<sup>17</sup>

Porphyry and his translator, Victorinus, may well have been agents through whom the idea of the unknowability of the One was transmitted to Augustine. In his *Sententiae* he writes: θεωρεῖται δὲ ἀνοησίᾳ κρείττον νοήσεως.<sup>18</sup>

At any rate Augustine even in the early *de ordine* speaks of God as "known better in not being known": *qui scitur melius nesciendo*.<sup>19</sup> In the *de Genesi ad litteram* he has a remarkable passage stressing how God is not any *thing* but that he is nearer to us, nevertheless, than the many things he made:

Although, I say, it is not possible to say anything of that substance (i.e., God) and there is no way whatever of one man saying anything about it to another except by commandeering some words related to times and places—whereas he is before all times and before all places—nevertheless he is nearer to us, he who made us, than the many things which were made. For in him we live and move and are. . . . It is a greater labor to find them than him, by whom they were made. To become aware of him with a faithful mind from anything, however insignificant, is better in its incomparable blessedness than to comprehend the whole universe of things.<sup>20</sup>

Augustine's use of the *theologia negativa* is, thus, influenced by the Plotinian "Father" or One, whether directly or through Porphyry, or through the Greek Fathers such as Gregory Nazianzen, orally or through writing. The extent to which Augustine's works are heavily marked by this negative theology has been much obscured by what one might call historical institutional theology in the West. This has tended to play down the influence of Platonism in, for example, Aquinas and even more in Augustine, where its presence is more obvious.

From the few instances of Neoplatonic influence on Augustine that I have given you, you will observe that the topic is by no means a simple one. Nor is there any reason why it should be. Neoplatonism, to begin with, was not one, unaltering doctrine, even in Plotinus. After Plotinus it evolved in various ways and, some would say, in curious directions. But above all, the recipient of the influence, Augustine, was a complicated character. Augustine for most of his life as a writer was a Christian bishop deeply committed in literally a sequence of critical controversies, the heat of which was undoubtedly raised significantly by his own ardent temperament. Over and over again, and notably in the *City of God*, he turns aside from a full discussion of some profound problem in order to maintain his general and well-directed polemic. Indeed one can say that the less polemical he is, the more philosophical. It could hardly have been otherwise.

Augustine at the same time was something of an artist and a religious genius. Some have spoken of the warring passions that rent his body. His mind, too, was racked by apparently conflicting loyalties, especially the drive to commend God's claim on us, which appeared to be *absolute*, and at the same time to sympathize with the erring needs of the human heart. In fact he was loyal to both—can be quoted to support both sides—and so can appear to contradict himself.

There is something of that enduring split within him in regard to Neoplatonism too. To the extent—which was in this case quite absolute—that he accepted the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ's and the human body, to that extent he rejected the immaterialism of the Neoplatonists—an absolutely fundamental point. In general, then, I regard Gilson's judgment that Augustine inhibited Neoplatonic influence in the West rather than transmitted it as true.

And yet the traditional practical asceticism of the West, which manifested itself in an actual hostility to the body, however that body is honored in the resurrection of the person, is deeply marked with Platonic dualism. Similarly Augustine sought the rational understanding of the problems and mysteries of Christian theology, perhaps progressively so as time went on, in Neoplatonic sources. Even in the last book of the *City of God*, while opting for the view that in the afterlife our corporeal eyes will see God, he does not omit to give a Neoplatonic view which centers on assimilation of mind with God rather than vision of any kind, however glorified, of corporeal eyes.<sup>21</sup> The matter was not made easier by the knowledge that even Neoplatonic immaterialism was by some understood in a sense involving some kind of matter, however attenuated.

There is no simple statement adequate to describe Augustine's use of the Neoplatonists. I hope, nevertheless, that I have succeeded in conveying to you in some plausible manner how manifold that use might have been.

*Some Later  
Neoplatonic Views  
on Divine Creation  
and the Eternity of  
the World*

GÉRARD VERBEKE

The Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the world has been accepted not only by pagan philosophers, but also by Christian thinkers. Synesius of Cyrene, bishop of Ptolemais, one of the five cities of the Libyan Pentapolis, when he was converted to Christianity did not reject the eternity of the world.<sup>1</sup> That is no wonder: it is true that Christian theologians generally interpreted Plato's *Timaeus* in the sense of a creation in time, and yet the eternity of the world is not incompatible with the notion of a divine Creator and Providence.

In the Alexandrian school the eternity of the world was generally accepted. The teaching of Ammonius is transmitted to us through Philoponus' commentary on the *Physics*. Unfortunately, we only possess fragments of this commentary on Book VIII. Moreover, Philoponus does not merely echo the teaching of his master; he also introduces some personal views and remarks. Looking at the parts of the commentary which have been preserved, we notice in several passages objections to and criticisms of the doctrine of the eternity of the world. Presumably, these criticisms don't spring from Ammonius, a former pupil of Proclus in Athens, but are the views of Philoponus himself. Moreover, Philoponus refers to

his commentary on *Physics* VIII where he presented a critical investigation of the Aristotelian doctrine. In the Alexandrian circle Philoponus seemingly was an exception. Olympiodorus, while he was not a Christian, did not oppose Christianity: apparently he thought of Christian religion as a faith for uneducated people. Themistius, when he was prefect of Byzantium, had already adopted a similar attitude: instead of fighting against the Christians, he endeavored rather to show the pagan way of life to be superior to Christianity. No wonder that Olympiodorus remains faithful to the Aristotelian teaching on the eternity of the world.<sup>2</sup> It is more amazing that a Christian teacher like Elias, and probably also David and Stephen of Alexandria, professed the same doctrine.<sup>3</sup> With respect to the Athenian school, Proclus undoubtedly maintained the eternity of the world: it is against him that Philoponus in 529 wrote his famous treatise *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*.<sup>4</sup> Presumably, the successors of Proclus, Isidorus, and Damascius, adopted the same position.<sup>5</sup> In any case, Simplicius showed the utmost opposition to the views of Philoponus. During the second half of the thirteenth century, at the time of the Averroistic controversy, the question of the eternity of the world was again violently discussed: the main issue at that time was whether from a philosophical viewpoint we should not adhere to the Aristotelian view, although contrary to Christian belief.

Thanks to the information supplied by Damascius in his *Vita Isidori*, we know that Ammonius had been compelled to make an agreement with the bishop of Alexandria, so that Christian pupils might attend his lectures and that he could get the necessary subventions for the working of the school. This agreement probably was contracted with the patriarch Athanasius II and dates back to 489–496.<sup>6</sup> Damascius violently reproves the attitude of his Alexandrian colleague.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, we lack precise information concerning the concessions made by Ammonius: did he recant some doctrines, for example, the eternity and the divinity of the world? Did he allow himself to be baptized? We do not know.<sup>8</sup> It is not impossible, for example, that Ammonius deliberately entrusted Philoponus with the edition of his lectures in order to appease the fears and suspicions of the Christian community. Regardless, we learn from Simplicius that Ammonius wrote a work in which many arguments are put forward showing that Aristotle considered God to be the creative cause of the universe, not only its final cause.<sup>9</sup> Surely that was an important step towards a rapprochement between Aristotelianism and Christianity.

The teaching of Olympiodorus diverges on many important topics from Christian doctrine; for example, he accepts that suicide may be justified in some circumstances and dismisses the Christian belief in an everlasting punishment. He admits only one single God, the first cause of the universe; the other divinities are intermediary beings between God and the world; they may even be considered to be attributes or functions of God. In this respect Olympiodorus comes rather close to Christian belief.<sup>10</sup>

Let us now examine the teaching of Philoponus and Simplicius on the two questions already mentioned, firstly that of the eternity of the world. According to H. D. Saffrey, Philoponus arrived at the school of Ammonius circa 510; he was

already a Christian and about 20 years of age.<sup>11</sup> His commentary on the *Physics* dates back to 517. Although the text of Book VIII is only partly preserved, there are, in the course of his exposition, unequivocal indications of the author's opposition to the eternity of the world.<sup>12</sup> Philoponus wonders what we should think of the sentence saying that nothing could derive from nothing (*nihil ex nihilo*).<sup>13</sup> Quite obviously, being in the absolute sense could not spring from being, because it already would exist before coming to be. Could it proceed from nonbeing? Apparently not, for being, before coming to be, must be able to become; so it derives from something preexistent, a material principle; consequently, it does not proceed from nonbeing.<sup>14</sup> Philoponus replies that this argument is valid only if matter actually subsists before being is produced. He acknowledges however that whatever comes to be, originates from something existent in the sense of an efficient cause, for what comes to be need not necessarily proceed from something in the sense of a material principle. The Creator is able to cause not only the form, but also the matter; hence, it is possible that being stems from nonbeing and that matter is made jointly with the form by a creative cause.<sup>15</sup> Philoponus comes here to the heart of the problem: Aristotle states that every movement presupposes another one and we have to agree with him insofar as finite causality is concerned. The question however arises whether there is not another mode of causation, one that does not presuppose a preexistent matter, but causes the concrete being in whatever it involves. In this case, being in a way proceeds from nonbeing, because it does not presuppose a material principle out of which it has been effected; but on the other hand it springs from being, for it could only come to be by the activity of a creative cause.<sup>16</sup> Is this causation a real movement? By no means, for there is no material principle securing the continuity of the becoming.<sup>17</sup> In this context, Philoponus states that in Aristotle's view the forms of the beings do not derive from any merging of elements; the soul is not the mere result of a combination of elements. Consequently, the forms can proceed only from nonbeing, and the same holds with respect to matter: matter also must stem from nonbeing. In our author's view there is not only a coming-to-be that occurs through a process of generation from preexistent matter, but also the full and total causation of a being from nothing.<sup>18</sup>

In his commentary on Book III of the *Physics* Philoponus states that neither the world nor time exists from eternity and he expounds several arguments to support his viewpoint. If the world had always existed, it would include an infinite number of men having lived already: this is not in keeping with the teaching of Aristotle, who repudiates any infinite in act. Moreover, it would entail the possibility of traversing the infinite in act, for if it can be brought into being, it may be traversed. Besides, something would be greater than the infinite: children being born every day are added to the infinite multitude of men who already existed. Hence the infinite in act might increase indefinitely. Moreover, if every generation counts an infinite multitude of ancestors, the infinite will be produced an infinite number of times. In Philoponus' view all these consequences are absurd and could not be avoided, for it makes no sense to contend that in the case under consideration the infinite extends in one direction only because the present instant consti-

tutes a borderline. The author replies that this specification is not applicable to numbers and not even to continuous quantity.<sup>19</sup> Could we say that in Aristotle's view the infinite could not be brought into being at once, but could be produced progressively? Philoponus answers that Aristotle purely and simply dismisses the infinite in act. It would even be more acceptable that there is an infinite multitude of men at the present instant, than to admit it with regard to the past; for if one accepts it regarding the past, one has to admit that this infinite number may be traversed, that it constantly increases and that the infinite is brought into being an infinite number of times.<sup>20</sup> It clearly follows from these passages and from the references to Book VIII of the commentary that Philoponus, when he edited the lectures of Ammonius on Aristotle's *Physics*, firmly repudiated the eternity of the world and attributed to God a creative activity capable of originating things without preexistent matter.<sup>21</sup>

In Book VI of the *Contra Aristotelem* which belongs to a later period, Philoponus deals with the same problems. Although the work is lost, it is possible to get some idea of its content thanks to the information provided by Simplicius in his commentary on the *Physics*.<sup>22</sup> One of the major objections of Philoponus to the eternity of the world is related to the Aristotelian definition of movement, which is declared to be incompatible with the doctrine in question. Movement is the act of what is movable in potency: the definition clearly implies that the movable in potency exists prior to the movement. Consequently, movement could not exist from eternity, if the movable in potency is always anterior to the movement. As a result, the definition of movement elaborated by Aristotle is not universal.<sup>23</sup> Philoponus however does not agree with Aristotle on that issue: he clearly understood that Aristotle proved the eternity of the world starting from the fact that any movement presupposes already the existence of what is movable in potency. In his view, however, this is not always true: some perishable beings move from the very beginning of their existence: there is the example of fire that, as soon as it exists, moves upwards.<sup>24</sup> Formulating this criticism, Philoponus attacks the very core of the Aristotelian argument: according to the Stagirite, a first movement has to be excluded because any movement implies the preexistence of a movable in potency.<sup>25</sup> Philoponus also contends that all present movements become unintelligible if the world already exists from eternity. For then every movement presupposes an infinite number of previous movements: if we want to explain a particular movement, we have to go back indefinitely in the series of antecedent factors; we could not avoid a *regressus in infinitum*, which means the denial of any explanation.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, all present movements are added to those of the past; that leads to the evidently absurd notion of an infinite constantly increasing.<sup>27</sup> What about the movements of the heavenly bodies? Philoponus points to the fact that the circular movements of some heavenly bodies are more frequent than those of others; the orbits of Jupiter, for example, are three times as frequent as those of Cronos, whereas those of the latter are as infinite as the former. So one infinite would be three times as large as another one.<sup>28</sup> Considering that the doctrine of the eternity of the world leads to absurd conclusions, Philoponus contends it ought to be dropped. Hence the world must have begun at some time in the past; it could

not have existed from eternity. The question however remains concerning the future: will movement and time continue indefinitely in the future?<sup>29</sup> The answer must evidently be negative: no finite body could ever possess an infinite power; the argument is used by Aristotle in order to prove that the First Principle has no corporeal size. The power which is contained in the world could only be finite, which implies that the world could not continue to exist indefinitely.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, all beings in the world are compounded of matter and form and whatever is compounded in that way is perishable because matter is not always linked to the same form.<sup>31</sup> All those arguments of Philoponus belong to the field of philosophy; their inspiration is even Aristotelian. The criticism of the Greek master is undertaken from within his own system, without appealing to the authority of other philosophers or to arguments of a religious character. Philoponus endeavors to refute Aristotle through Aristotle himself.

Our author also examines the Aristotelian argument concerning the eternity of time and he comes to the same conviction—that the demonstration is inconclusive. In his view we could not assert that all instants are at the borderline of a past and a future: it would be a *petitio principii*. If time started, the first instant is not at the frontier of a past and a future.<sup>32</sup> Does time always refer to a previous time? If time began, we should ask the question, what was before time? Philoponus replies that in this case the term "before" has to be interpreted in a nontemporal sense because it does not refer to a temporal dimension.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the author contends that anterior and posterior do not always involve a temporal dimension. The mind without being in time grasps its objects the one after the other. God also wants things to take place in some successive order, and yet there is no temporal dimension in divine willing.<sup>34</sup> God knows the past and the future: does it follow that divine knowledge bears the stamp of temporality? By no means.<sup>35</sup> According to our author time as well as the world began. He quite disagrees with those who contend that time never started, but that the world had a beginning. In this respect he agrees with Plato whom he believes to be intrinsically coherent: time as well as the world does not exist from eternity, but had a beginning.<sup>36</sup>

Still, a further question has to be taken into consideration: how did the world, movement, and time ever begin to exist? The answer of Philoponus is quite unambiguous: the world began by an act of the divine will, which does not imply anything preexistent and does not involve any temporal dimension. It is not impossible for God to originate something from nothing: it is enough for him to will something to be and it exists, for he not only makes the form, but also the matter. It would be wrong to conceive of the generation of the world in the way of the ancient cosmogonies: the world has not been generated, it is not the result of a process of coming-to-be; it has been produced from nonbeing and in an atemporal way.<sup>37</sup> In order to support and illustrate his viewpoint, Philoponus refers to the works of nature and artistic activity. Prime matter has not been generated by nature and it does not pass away in the way of perishable beings; it has been made from nonbeing. Where do the forms in natural beings and works of art come from? Because they do not preexist in any way, they could only proceed from nonbeing.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, God created the world in an atemporal way by a sheer

act of willing. Does this creation introduce any change in the divine perfection? By no means, because the creative act is atemporal; it is beyond any temporal succession. The divine willing by which the world begins to exist does not introduce into God any temporal extension nor any change because this willing is not inserted in the unsteadiness of temporal succession.<sup>39</sup>

Let us now proceed to the study of Simplicius' reaction to the interpretation of the Alexandrian scholar. One is immediately struck by the violence of tone adopted by the Athenian professor. Is there any personal spite involved? This is hard to believe because Simplicius contends never to have met Philoponus, which is perfectly acceptable if the one worked in Alexandria and the other in Athens. Is it rather a kind of grudge between two schools? That is more likely. Damascius also did not spare Ammonius, and the troubles of the school of Athens from 529 onwards certainly did not contribute to appease the atmosphere. Even if Justinian did not really close the school of Athens, as A. Cameron believes, but tried to prevent pagans from teaching in it, nevertheless this institution had to cope with conditions that were much more difficult than those of the Alexandrian school.<sup>40</sup> Simplicius repeatedly states that the objections of Philoponus are foolish but dangerous because they impress people who have not received a strong philosophical education. In Simplicius' view Philoponus is a traitor who abandons the precious legacy of Greek thought in order to cling to Egyptian mythology. The author makes fun of the narrative of Genesis, of the creation in six days, of a God who created the sun on the fourth day. He is indignant that a representative of the Alexandrian school surrenders to these poor mythological accounts.<sup>41</sup>

With respect to the eternity of movement, Simplicius declares the position of Aristotle to be perfectly coherent.<sup>42</sup> In his view the definition of movement as it is formulated by Aristotle is universal and not incompatible with the eternity of the world. For the movable must always exist prior to the movement, even in the case of eternal movement. Let us take circular movement: it is never given at once, so that each stage of the revolving refers to an anterior stage.<sup>43</sup> What Aristotle intends to show, on the basis of his definition, is the impossibility of a first movement: each movement is inserted in a process without beginning and without end.<sup>44</sup> It is useless also to contend that some beings already move from the very beginning of their existence. Simplicius introduces a distinction between perfect and imperfect potency. If fire moves upwards from its origin, it is because it has a perfect potency to do it; if it had an imperfect potency only, it would be unable to do that. Precisely in the case of an imperfect potency, Aristotle maintains that the movable must exist prior to the movement.<sup>45</sup> On the level of second causes, it is apparently impossible to refute the Aristotelian reasoning; from this viewpoint each movement is connected with a prior movement. The question arises however whether there is no opposition between the eternity of movement and the Aristotelian teaching concerning the infinite in act. According to Simplicius there is no contradiction involved, for in the case of movement or change the infinite in question does not totally exist at once. What in Aristotle's view could never be brought about is an infinite that exists totally at once. Besides, a movement without beginning is not yet infinite at present because it is marked by a boundary; in other

words, it is not infinite in both directions. As a result a movement that occurs now does not simply have an infinite number of antecedents; the fire that burns now is not unintelligible because the event is located at the limit of a series which, though being without beginning, ends at this term.<sup>46</sup> Simplicius stresses the transformations of elements into each other: these changes are comparable to a circular movement without beginning. Things would be different if the number of forms happened to be infinite, but that is not the case. There is a limited number of forms and within this framework the transformations take place. The fact that this cycle is going on from eternity does not present any difficulty as to the explanation of a present event. As a matter of fact, if the number of forms were infinite, then our knowledge would be impossible and generation itself would be excluded.<sup>47</sup>

How then are we to conceive of the temporal dimension? Simplicius believes that on this subject there is a perfect agreement between Plato and Aristotle: the world has been shaped in the image of an eternal pattern, which means that it exists in a temporal dimension without beginning or end.<sup>48</sup> As to the Aristotelian argument saying that each element of time refers to a previous time, it is perfectly consistent: if there were a beginning of time, the question would arise as to what was "before" that beginning and in Simplicius' view the term "before" could only have a temporal meaning.<sup>49</sup> The author also states the Aristotelian conception of the instant to be correct. Is it a *petitio principii*? Not at all, because it is not the same to hold time to exist from eternity and to say that the instant is an intermediary (*μέσσην*).<sup>50</sup>

One of the major criticisms Simplicius makes of the theory of Philoponus refers to divine immutability. The author dismisses any form of change in God. In his view it is inconsistent to believe that God was firstly inactive, then proceeded to the creation of the elements and further entrusted nature with the control of the transformations of the elements and the making of bodies from those elements.<sup>51</sup> Simplicius is convinced that this conception is incompatible with divine immutability. The author does not agree with Philoponus who declares that the anterior and posterior do not always refer to a temporal dimension: if the mind grasps its objects one after another, it could not be indivisible or unextended; the passage from one object to another is not possible without temporal extension.<sup>52</sup> According to Simplicius, the mind does not think the objects of its knowledge by passing from one object to another (*μεταβατικῶς*), but by distinguishing each one from each other.<sup>53</sup> In this respect the author is echoing a Plotinian distinction between the knowing of the mind and that of the soul: the former is a permanent intuition of all the intelligibles, whereas the latter is a discursive knowledge passing constantly from one intelligible object to another. In order to vindicate Aristotle's viewpoint concerning the eternity of the world, Simplicius emphasizes the difference between a process of generation and a creation out of nothing: what is generated proceeds from what already exists and passes away also into what exists;<sup>54</sup> moreover, any change occurs through the action of an external factor. The same holds with respect to decomposition: in Aristotle's view, it is a change occurring in time. By considering the final result only, one could say that decomposition takes place instantaneously.<sup>55</sup> If one draws attention only to the process of generation and

passing away, one could not but accept that process to be without beginning or end. The creative activity of God is an integral causation that does not start from a preexistent matter: God makes things in an atemporal way (*ἀχρόνως*), hence he originates them always.<sup>56</sup> What is made by the Creator out of nothing does not come to be by generation; so the author concludes that it possesses an eternal substance.<sup>57</sup> According to him Aristotle asserts that what immediately springs from God (*ἀμέσως*) is eternal. If God made matter, he created it from eternity. The same holds with respect to the forms common to all corporeal things: stemming directly from God they must exist from eternity and will never pass away.<sup>58</sup> As to the objection that no finite body could possess an infinite power, the author makes a distinction between the power of moving and the power of being moved. The power of moving eternally could not simultaneously exist in a finite body, whereas it is not impossible that the power of being moved eternally exists in a limited body.<sup>59</sup>

It is noticeable that the disagreement between Philoponus and Simplicius does not concern the concept of creation as an integral causation: both authors accept that God makes beings out of nothing. Philoponus however declares that the world could not exist from eternity and that it came into existence by a creative act which is beyond movement and time; in his view this act is not incompatible with the divine immutability. Simplicius, on the contrary, teaches that the process of coming-to-be and passing away occurring in the world could never have started because it always refers to a previous movement. In his view it is not possible that God ever caused this becoming to start through a creative act: appealing to a Neoplatonic argument, the author asserts that whatever springs from God directly must be eternal. It is quite true that according to the Stagirite the first heaven is what is moved immediately by the Unmoved Mover; through the regularity and eternity of its movement it expresses the perfection of the moving principle. It would however be wrong to state that Aristotle's theory concerning the eternity of the world was based on the nature of creative causation. The concept of an integral causation was foreign to the mind of the Greek master.

The commentary of Simplicius on Aristotle's *Physics* is particularly interesting thanks to the rich information it provides concerning the doctrines of previous philosophers. His interpretation shows a great erudition, but it is not always faithful to the authentic thought of Aristotle. The first cause of Aristotle is not that of Simplicius and this is not the only case in which Simplicius gave to Aristotelian thought a turn that does not correspond to its original content. A similar distortion may be found in the interpretation of the intricate question of chance and fortune. It is more difficult to formulate a judgment about the commentary of Philoponus: to what extent does it reflect the teaching of Ammonius? In any case, the interpretation is very penetrating, especially in those passages where the author criticizes the doctrine of Aristotle and expresses manifestly his own ideas. Alfarabi takes Philoponus to task for settling a philosophical question with the help of religious doctrines:<sup>60</sup> nothing is less true, as W. Wieland has already noticed. Philoponus, rather, uses Aristotelian philosophy in order to refute Aristotle.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand he appeals to the concept of creation against the

eternity of the world: he very sharply notices, perhaps also under the influence of Ammonius, that creation as an integral causation is not a movement and does not belong to the continuous process of coming-to-be and passing away. Thanks mainly to the concept of creation, the author escapes from the eternity of movement and time.



## 6

# John Philoponus and Stephanus of Alexandria: Two Neoplatonic Christian Commentators on Aristotle?

HENRY BLUMENTHAL

"Two Neoplatonic Christian commentators on Aristotle?" The query is crucial, and could equally well come at three points in the title of this paper. It could come after the word "two" because it is not yet clear how much difference there, in fact, is between the commentaries of Philoponus and Stephanus on Book 3 of Aristotle's *de Anima*—it is these two commentaries with which I shall be primarily concerned. We now have Stephanus of Alexandria's exposition of this book in the transmitted text of Philoponus' commentary, while Philoponus' own survives only in a thirteenth-century Latin version by William of Moerbeke, and only for chapters 4–8 at that; it is also to some extent reflected in the paraphrase commentary by Sophonias,<sup>1</sup> which should probably be dated to the fourteenth century. So that is one question. One could also place the query after "Christian." Their philosophical background is manifestly Neoplatonic, but were they both, or was only Stephanus, Christian at the time when they wrote their commentaries—or gave the lectures on which the commentaries as we have them are based?<sup>2</sup> Yet again one could put it after "commentators." Were they Christians whose exposition of Aristotle *thereby* differed from what it would have been had they been pagans, or

commentators on Aristotle who were no more than incidentally Christian? In other words, do the Christian convictions that both may have had bear in any way on their reading of Aristotle? And if they do, how can we detect the operation of this bias? Finally, we might ask how much these men were genuinely commentators on Aristotle at all.

Let us deal first with what should, at first sight, be the easiest of these questions: one commentator, or two? On a superficial level three sets of differences immediately present themselves. First, a crude measure, but informative nevertheless, is the scale of the commentaries. In the one Neoplatonic commentary which survives intact, that of Simplicius (?Priscian),<sup>3</sup> the commentary on Book 3 is twice as long as that on Book 1, and three-quarters as long again as that on Book 2, whereas in Stephanus' version (or whatever it is), the commentary on Book 3 is only four-fifths as long as Philoponus' on Book 1, and not much longer—some twenty pages—than Philoponus' on Book 2.<sup>4</sup> Now this might be a sign of different interests rather than anything else, but should at least be noted as a possible indication of difference. More significant is that within Book 3 itself, the relative length of discussion in different passages is not always the same. Sometimes Philoponus has more to say on one passage, at others Stephanus will give a long exposition of texts on which Philoponus has very little to say.

Second, we have a difference relating to the organization of the material. Philoponus' commentary continues with no marked breaks or divisions other than those arising from the text on which it is a commentary. Stephanus', on the other hand, falls into that series of divisions into *theōria* and *praxis* which seems to have been codified by Olympiodorus, though it can be traced back to Proclus.<sup>5</sup>

Third, we have a matter of scholarly practice. Stephanus' commentary, but not Philoponus', contains numerous named references to earlier commentators (or philosophers assumed to be commentators—especially Alexander and Plutarch, perhaps the only previous authors of full-scale commentaries on the *de Anima*, or at least Book 3 of it) and a continuous examination and dissection of the views of both these and others. That this apparent difference was not due to excisions by the Latin translator can be seen at once by a comparison with Philoponus on Books 1 and 2, as well as his other commentaries. Only Alexander constitutes an exception, both in the Latin *de Anima* commentary and elsewhere. But it must not be thought that the translator never made changes or additions: in the exposition of 3.4 we have a note on the fact that Greek *morion*, unlike Latin *pars*, was neuter, which cannot have been in the original. Thus we have here a *prima facie* case for distinguishing our two commentators as independent authorities—within the limits of independence at this point in the tradition. We have not yet excluded the possibility that they produced different presentations of a similar commentary; the formulation here is deliberately vague since, theoretically at least, straight dependence and common descent are equally possible. But a look at both the structure and the detailed contents of some of the comparable parts of each commentary will show that they are in fact independent.

By way of example let us take the opening discussion of 3.4, where Aristotle turns from imagination to thought, from the irrational to the rational soul. This

latter distinction is one that is not present in Aristotle's treatise—it is mentioned only in passing in a later discussion, and attributed to persons unnamed<sup>6</sup>—but it is of course one of the major concerns of the Neoplatonist commentators, our two as well as Simplicius, who were much preoccupied with allocating the soul's faculties and activities to its higher or lower sections. Thus *phantasia*, working as it does with both, naturally presented peculiar difficulties, which are prominent in the exposition of *de Anima* 3.3.<sup>7</sup> Some of these are also conspicuous in the treatment of 3.4, where they are relevant insofar as it is necessary to establish how far reason and intellect involve imagination.

A brief look at the structure of the two expositions of 3.4 will show that the two commentaries cannot simply be identified. Philoponus, but not Stephanus, gives a short introduction to the discussions that are to follow. Both commentaries then tell us that Aristotle is setting out to answer three questions. Since Aristotle himself does not say this, it is probably part of the commentary tradition.<sup>8</sup> Aristotle himself says that whether or not the part of the soul by which it knows and thinks is separable—thus indicating that he does not himself intend to deal with that question in this place—we must ask how this part of soul differs from others, and how thinking takes place. Thus Aristotle asks *two* questions: the commentators, with their own special concerns clearly influencing their reading of Aristotle, have him ask three. According to Philoponus these are:

1. Is the rational soul separate or inseparable?
2. How does it differ from the sensible (*a sensu*)?
3. How does intellection happen in us?<sup>9</sup>

Stephanus' list is not, however, the same. The three questions he gives are:

1. Is the soul destructible or not?
2. How is the rational soul different from the sensible?
3. How does intellection take place?<sup>10</sup>

In these lists only the second and third questions more or less coincide. The first in Stephanus' list could be an implication of the one given by Philoponus, which is closer to what Aristotle actually says. The second and third, as we have said, do go back to Aristotle himself, but in the first the commentators have taken the words in which Aristotle puts aside the question of separability, as he repeatedly does, and turned them into a third question which not only reflects their own interests, but which is clearly more important to them than the other two. These however are Neoplatonic—or perhaps just simply Platonic—interests, and not Christian ones, though they do of course relate to Christian problems. The answers given are in any case firmly in the Platonic tradition.

A curious mixture of Neoplatonic aims and Aristotelian content emerges from Stephanus' *theōria*, the preliminary general discussion of matters under investigation in this section.<sup>11</sup> Stephanus announces that he will deal with the first two of the three questions, and start with the second because the second helps towards an answer to the first. Proceeding thus, he distinguishes rational soul from sensation—let us remember that the distinction of a rational soul from an irrational one does

not figure in Aristotle's discussion—and argues that, though they have certain features in common, they differ in their reaction to intense stimuli. While this point is of course raised by Aristotle himself later in the treatise,<sup>12</sup> he does not draw the conclusion that is produced by Stephanus, namely that the very fact that *nous* thrives on intenser stimuli, and is helped by them to deal with the lesser ones, is a strong indication of its eternity. Neither this arrangement of the arguments nor the argument itself is to be found in Philoponus' discussion of this chapter. Nor is the second argument: that since *nous* can and does think all things, it must be incorporeal and eternal. The preoccupations that emerge from these discussions (preoccupations with discerning the differences between the levels of soul, and with the question of immortality) are of course highly relevant to our last question, how much these works are in fact commentaries on Aristotle. The answer suggested by this section is that they are rather meditations arising from the text of Aristotle, and that is an answer that can easily be reinforced by other evidence. The most conspicuous is the Neoplatonizing treatment of the next chapter, 3.5, which introduces into the exposition of Aristotle the whole Neoplatonic debate on the status of the individual *nous*.<sup>13</sup> Similarly we have the assumption that Aristotle must be talking in terms of a detachable soul on the Platonic model, patently wrong but consistently maintained by all the Neoplatonic commentators, in spite of some attempts by Philoponus to understand Aristotle in his own terms.<sup>14</sup> Thus the whole discussion of 3.4 is based on a consequence of the Platonic model, namely that the soul uses the body as a tool or instrument.

In the sequel the two discussions diverge further, and even when the same or similar points are made, the order in which they are introduced is not the same. Philoponus continues<sup>15</sup> by discussing how the intellect might be a part of the soul, and argues that Aristotle has used the term improperly. He maintains that in the soul the part must be coterminous with the whole, and this means that either the whole soul would be immortal, or not; whereas Aristotle has previously said that we are dealing with a different section of the soul. Further, the word "soul" is used equivocally, just as, for example, "sun" may mean the body or its light, and "Ajax" may refer either to the son of Telamon or a mysterious Trojan: neither of these examples is to be found in Stephanus. At the equivalent point in his discussion, Stephanus gives us the views of Plutarch and Alexander on the significance of the *lemma*,<sup>16</sup> but does not involve himself in the meaning of "part" until after he has dealt with the meanings of *nous*, which in the Philoponus commentary are discussed immediately after the section on "part."<sup>17</sup>

If we compare the two discussions of the senses of *nous* we find a similar account given by both commentators, though again the presentation differs. Philoponus goes straight on to consider three senses of *nous*,<sup>18</sup> while Stephanus gives us his view of what Aristotle means after telling us that Alexander and Plutarch take them differently. He discusses their treatments in some detail, and also explains Ammonius' differences with them before going on to his own position.<sup>19</sup>

Philoponus, on the other hand, states his own position first and then goes on to discuss certain views of Alexander, which Stephanus mentioned at a correspondingly earlier stage. Here, apart from the difference of presentation, we find that

the two commentators have produced substantially different accounts of Alexander's position. Alexander, as is well known, held that the strictly human intellect was mortal, and that the active intellect was external to the individual. Now, according to Philoponus, Alexander was unable to deny that intellect was such as he has told us Aristotle's intellect was, citing the Aristotelian description of it as pure or unmixed and impassible. Therefore, says Philoponus, because he could not go against these pronouncements, Alexander said that Aristotle was talking about the universal intellect.<sup>20</sup> Stephanus, on the other hand, says that in order to maintain his position, Alexander did just what Philoponus said—rightly—he was unable to do, namely that he attacked the idea that *nous* was pure, impassible, and separate.<sup>21</sup> Here, on a point of considerable importance, they give manifestly conflicting accounts of Alexander, the only authority whom Philoponus cites by name in this part of his commentary.

Here, then, are a few examples, which could be multiplied without difficulty, of the difference in presentation and substance between the two commentators. They should suffice without multiplication to show that we have before us two separate commentaries, and not merely different versions of a typical and traditional Alexandrian lecture course on the *de Anima*. Yet certain similarities of approach are clearly present.

Now that we have established that we are dealing with two separate commentaries, we must turn to the question of their authors' religion. In Stephanus' case the mere fact of his Christianity (suggested by his name, his date, and his occupation of an official chair at Constantinople,<sup>22</sup> as well as the occasional pronouncement)<sup>23</sup> should be accepted<sup>24</sup>—its importance is another matter—but in that of Philoponus there is a problem. Here we must expand the point about being Christian at the time of composition of the *de Anima* commentary, or indeed of any of the Philoponus commentaries.<sup>25</sup>

Until recently, then, it has been commonly thought, lack of evidence from antiquity notwithstanding, that Philoponus had begun his philosophical activities as a pagan and subsequently become a convert to Christianity—to which his name John suggests, but does not prove, allegiance—after he had written his commentaries. This is the view of Gudeman in his generally unsatisfactory *Pauly* article, and has been maintained by others since.<sup>26</sup> In a book difficult of access—it was published in occupied France—R. Vancourt treated Philoponus as if he were a Christian when he wrote the *de Anima* commentary.<sup>27</sup> Subsequently E. Evrard, examining the chronological relationships of Philoponus' *oeuvre*, mainly on the basis of his views on the movement of the heavenly bodies and his understanding of Aristotle's fifth element, has argued that there is no chronological separation between the commentaries and the other works, and in particular that the *de Aeternitate Mundi contra Proclum* was written before the commentary on the *Meteorologica*.<sup>28</sup> That in itself, if correct, as I think it is, is sufficient to destroy the traditional position. It would mean that we cannot be sure that there was in fact any time when he was a pagan. Evrard proceeded to examine briefly the *de Anima* commentary, and to suggest that the apparently non-Christian views in it, on the preexistence of the soul and the immortality of the luminous body, are explicable

in terms of an Origenism which, he thinks, survived at Alexandria. He further suggested, following Vancourt, that Philoponus' explanation of *de Anima* 3.5 was influenced by the wish to select from the field a view not incompatible with Christianity, namely that we have a single soul of which the intellect is part.

To take the second point first. Whether or not Philoponus was a Christian is probably irrelevant; the choice he makes is explicable in terms of the Neoplatonic tradition: three of the four views presented in the commentary are in fact Neoplatonic views, and are connected with Aristotle only insofar as the Neoplatonists thought they and Aristotle were expounding the same philosophy. I have examined this matter in some detail elsewhere, so shall not pursue the point now, but simply say that what Philoponus—and Stephanus—did was to adopt the standard and orthodox Neoplatonic view about the human intellect, namely that it is single and fully descended.<sup>29</sup> Insofar as that is what they did, we cannot attach great significance to their choice. It remains possible that Christian prejudice affected it, but it is unnecessary to introduce it into the discussion of their motives. Ironically, the problems presented by the Platonic view of the soul could be solved by reading Aristotle in the way we think he should be read, which is just what his interpreters in antiquity did not normally do. Thus a more straightforward reading of Aristotle might be a result of Christian bias, and one might consider in this context Aquinas' interpretation of 3.5.<sup>30</sup> As for luminous bodies, these, or pneumatic ones, were characteristic of Platonists and Platonizers alike.<sup>31</sup>

Similar explanations may be offered of Philoponus' view that the world was created in time. Like the dispute about the status of the intellect, this too reflects a long-standing and well-known controversy among Platonists after Plato. The point at issue was, of course, the interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*. This is another controversy whose details need not concern us here. It need only be recalled that the view that the world was created in time was not a function of Christian readings of Plato, but can be traced back to Plato's immediate pupils—if not to Plato himself—and reappears at intervals thereafter.<sup>32</sup> In this matter too, Christian conceptions are compatible with the view offered and may have influenced its choice but, here again, the internal history of the Platonic tradition offers sufficient explanation of the facts.

Whatever one's assessment of Philoponus' Christianity and its influence on his views about these questions might be, it is clear that it was not otherwise sufficiently pervasive to prevent him from producing Neoplatonic material that is not strictly compatible with Christianity, at least in the course of background outline exposition. Thus, in speaking of the various levels of perfection and knowledge of different faculties of soul, he will say of *nous* that it is more obscure than reason in that its activities rarely penetrate to men, and then only to a few.<sup>33</sup> This seems at first sight to make intellect external. Insofar as it does, it is inconsistent with the understanding of 3.5 manifested by both Philoponus himself and Stephanus, who, as we have mentioned, chooses that Neoplatonic view of human intellect which holds it to be single and internal. Any doubts that might remain about the presence of material ill-suited to Christian ideas may be resolved by a reading of the preface to Philoponus' exegesis of Book 1.

The determination of Philoponus' position does, of course, present unusual difficulties because his views were by no means orthodox. Not only was he a monophysite (that is straightforward enough), but he struck at least one of his contemporaries as having deceived himself by holding views appropriate to the very pagans he ostensibly attacked. This was Cosmas Indicopleustes, the Traveler to India.<sup>34</sup> Cosmas may not have been a man of great philosophical culture or acumen, and he may not have known that Philoponus was a late convert—possibly because he was not—but this view of Philoponus should at least put us on our guard against saying that he was not a Christian at the time he wrote the *de Anima* commentary just because it manifests strange views about man and his nature.

And such views are present. If one were to set out some criteria for establishing whether or not a writer was Christian, one might think of the following: 1) a refusal to accept the soul's preexistence, though that is subject to the difficulty about Origenism already mentioned;<sup>35</sup> or more significantly, 2) disembodied existence after death of the normal Platonist type<sup>36</sup>—Porphyry had singled out reincarnation with a body for a scornful attack in his work *Against the Christians*;<sup>37</sup> and 3) the absence of the belief that the soul is capable of attaining salvation, or union with higher Being, by its own unaided efforts.<sup>38</sup> By these criteria Philoponus fails to qualify. All these views may be found right at the start of his commentary, in the preface. There we have the soul's preexistence<sup>39</sup> (which may not be crucial), survival after death without the body,<sup>40</sup> and several references to soul's assimilation to *nous* by habituation, or the practice of the cathartic virtues,<sup>41</sup> with no word of any help from above. We have already suggested that heresy rather than paganism may, at least in part, be the explanation of all this. If however one is trying to show that he held pagan views in the commentaries, and Christian views elsewhere, one has to show that there is a clear measure of inconsistency between the commentaries and those works which are indisputably part of Philoponus' writings *qua* Christian. Now when one looks at some of his views on the soul in this light, the opposite turns out to be the case. Thus what he has to say in his disquisition on the creation of the world, the *de Opificio Mundi*, about the ensoulment of the embryo turns out to be, shall we say, easily compatible with Neoplatonic views on the subject.<sup>42</sup> In particular, he divides the soul into two, a rational and an irrational part. Animals other than man have an irrational soul inseparably united to the body. Man in addition has a separate part (*chōriston*) which is the rational soul. He makes the distinction in connection with Aristotle's definition of the soul, and he treats that definition in a way that is not difficult to recognize as Neoplatonic, comparable not only with what Philoponus himself says in his commentary on the *de Anima*, but also with the explanation offered by Simplicius, who has never been suspected of Christianity.<sup>43</sup> What he does is to say that part of the soul is an entelechy of the body, as music is an activity of the lyre; while another part is separate like a sailor on a ship (or a charioteer)—an old image going back to the hesitation at *de Anima* 2.1,<sup>44</sup> a passage vigorously exploited by several Neoplatonists.<sup>45</sup> On this basis we should have to treat the *de Opificio Mundi* as a non-Christian work, which it patently is not. Therefore the appearance of the same view in works of uncertain status cannot be taken to show that they are pagan in doctrine, let alone in authorship.

As for vocabulary that might indicate Christian training or ways of thinking, there is virtually none in Philoponus. What there is, a reference to angels and the essence of angels,<sup>46</sup> may be a medieval insertion. That Moerbeke did not always, as is commonly thought, provide a straight literal translation is shown by the discussion, mentioned above, of the fact that the word Aristotle uses for "part" in 429 a 10 is, unlike its Latin equivalent, neuter.<sup>47</sup> If however we compare this situation with that in Stephanus, its significance is diminished. Given that Stephanus was a Christian writer, we might expect a higher incidence of Christian vocabulary. But apart from a very short section<sup>48</sup> to which Professor Westerink has already drawn attention,<sup>49</sup> and which, if it alone survived, would give a very different impression from the whole, there is virtually none in the part of the commentary that covers chapters 1–8, some 124 pages in all. The section that is an exception to this rule and has some Christian terminology actually embedded in the text, has *angeloi* in the Christian rather than the Neoplatonic sense, a reference to *eusebē dogmata* clearly meaning Christian (by now a standard sense,<sup>50</sup> as opposed to Platonic) doctrines, and also one to *theos*, again in the Christian rather than the normal Greek sense. In addition there is an apparently approving reference to Providence (*pronoia*) as a name for God.<sup>51</sup> Possibly one should add here a number of ambiguous references to faculties vouchsafed to us by the demiurge,<sup>52</sup> who could be either the ordinary Platonists' demiurge or the Almighty in Platonic disguise, and the tag "he said and it happened" (*eipe kai egeneto*) which seems to allude to the Genesis account of creation.<sup>53</sup>

With these we should perhaps put the terminology of the section-ending marks. The usual form of these in Stephanus is *en toutois hē theōria sun theōi plēroutai*: "here, with God's help, ends the general discussion" or, *en hois hē praxis sun theōi plēroutai*: "here, with God's help, ends the lecture." For comparison, the pagan Olympiodorus uses slightly different formulae, such as *tauta ekhei hē theōria*: "this is the content of the general discussion," without any mention of divine aid. These appear uniformly in the commentaries on Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, Plato's *Gorgias* and *Phaedo*, and also the *First Alcibiades*. In the commentaries on Platonic and pseudo-Platonic works, however, there are separate section headings for the lectures, of the type *praxis sun theōi*: "lecture, with God's help," followed by a numeral. Now the Olympiodorus commentaries are probably editions by students,<sup>54</sup> and it could well be they—or even later copyists—who put in the non-integral chapter headings. If that is so, and if the chapter-end markings in Stephanus are not also later additions, more skillfully inserted so as to have the appearance of being integral to the text, then we do have at least a superficial mark of Stephanus' beliefs. "Superficial" must be stressed because there are, as we have seen, other explanations of his choices as a commentator. As for Philoponus, one would not expect to find comparable expressions in his text, given the absence of the organization of material to which they belong.

All this indicates, at least by way of sample, that Christianity was, at most, of little importance in the composition of these commentaries and the selection of the views they express. Further exemplification of this point would not be difficult, but space precludes it here.

Instead we must now come to our last question, how much were these men

genuinely commentators on Aristotle. It is a question that is not as difficult as the others, though the obvious answer is misleading. Superficially, the answer must be yes, of course they were. They did after all write, or provide the material for, commentaries in the sense of exegetical works discussing the interpretation of texts. And when we consider primarily philological explanation of what unclear passages of Aristotle mean, then their opinion as interpreters of the text deserves to be respected in a perfectly straightforward way. The difficulty comes at the next level, that of philosophical exposition. And here things are a good deal less straightforward. Enough has probably been said in the earlier part of this paper to indicate the kind of answer that might be given, and there is no need to spend very long on it now. It should already be clear that we have to admit that we are not dealing with mere exposition of a difficult thinker. At this point it might be as well to state that what is being said does not imply that it is possible to explain a philosophical text without some involvement in philosophy, and perhaps some proneness to introduce one's own opinions. Nevertheless, the Neoplatonic commentators are a special case. Like some of the scholastics, the Neoplatonists' professed aim was to expound a given body of truth: for the Neoplatonists this was the philosophy of Plato, with which that of Aristotle was held, in the main, to coincide. It should not need to be said here that the words that are presented as an interpretation of Plato (whether with obvious labels like Proclus' *On Plato's Theology* or others less obvious like the *Enneads*) are in fact presentations of views which Plato would not have recognized as his own without becoming the victim of an elaborate Socratic elicitation of truths that he never knew he knew. With Aristotle the situation is not all that different, for the reasons we have mentioned. To these we may add the local conditions in Alexandria in the time of Ammonius and Philoponus which made Aristotle preferable as the vehicle for Neoplatonic philosophy.<sup>50</sup> Some of the differences might be attributed to the nature of the Aristotelian treatises discussed, for these afford only the occasional opportunity for the higher flights of Neoplatonic speculation. If we had a set of commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, things might be different: that of Syrianus on a few of the less potentially explosive books of that work is sufficient indication of what can be done.

By way of summary let us review our initial questions. "Two?" Yes, that is clear. "Two Christian?" To this the answer is less clear. One, certainly, that is Stephanus; the other probably yes too, but not to an extent or on doctrinal lines that would be easily detectable on any page of his commentary, and this, on the whole, is true of Stephanus too. "Two Christian commentators?" then, in the sense we have defined, No: even Stephanus offered primarily Neoplatonic exposition. Philoponus, as we have suggested, wrote a commentary not deeply imbued with such Christian convictions as he may have held at the material time. If his course had included one, it would be particularly interesting to have Stephanus' equivalent of Philoponus' general introduction to Book 1, in which he sets out his own views, and which is full of the sort of Neoplatonism that would be likely to give doctrinal offense. Possibly in the interval the climate of opinion which Justinian was trying to promote by his measures, such as they were, against the

public teaching of pagan philosophy<sup>51</sup>—and I would strongly stress public—may at last have had its effects. But that is speculation. Speculation should, of course, normally be discouraged, but I would like to close with some more. It has never been clear why, instead of Philoponus' commentary on Book 3 of the *de Anima*, we have that of Stephanus. Philoponus' was not lost. It was still available to Moerbeke in the thirteenth century and to Sophonias perhaps a century later still.<sup>52</sup> Yet our earliest manuscripts of Philoponus, which date back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries,<sup>53</sup> already contain the pseudepigraphic commentary for Book 3. Is the reason perhaps that at the time when these manuscripts, or their predecessors, were compiled, Philoponus' work was regarded as suspect—whether the cause was such apparent paganism as impressed itself on contemporaries like Cosmas and some modern scholars, or his notorious monophysitism—and the opportunity was taken to substitute the work of Stephanus on that part of the *de Anima* which was, more than any other, theologically delicate?<sup>54</sup>

## 7

## New Objective Links Between the Pseudo- Dionysius and Proclus

HENRI-DOMINIQUE SAFFREY

I already drew attention, twelve years ago, to "a (first) objective link between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus." In fact, I had then proposed to explain the formation of the Dionysian *hapax legomenon*: *theandricos*, as a derivative of the name Theandrites of a Semitic divinity in whose honor we know that Proclus composed a hymn. Allow me to recall the result I arrived at: "The Semitic god Theandrios, honored in Arabia, was known to Proclus from his journey to Asia. He consecrated to him a hymn under the name of Theandrites. This hymn was familiar to the Neoplatonic school. Marinus and Damascius make allusion to it. John of Scythopolis (the first commentator of the Dionysian Corpus), without wanting to, likewise betrayed the knowledge he had of it in trying to justify in the Pseudo-Dionysius a facile and culpable concordism. In the same stroke, he established an objective link between the Dionysian Corpus and the milieu of the school of Proclus and of his immediate successors."<sup>1</sup> I had described this link as *objective*, since it depends neither on a hypothesis on the identity of the author of the Dionysian Corpus, nor on a doctrinal interpretation.

It is proper, indeed, to note that the Dionysian question has been most often

raised with the sole purpose of identifying the anonymous author who hides behind the pseudonym of Saint Paul's convert, Dionysius the Areopagite. In my humble opinion, this undertaking is a priori hopeless. It consists, in effect, in constructing on the basis of some data contained in the Corpus, themselves more or less well interpreted, a sort of "identikit" picture of its author, and then in trying to put on this "identikit" picture a name drawn from the *Who's Who* of Christian society between, let us say, the third and the sixth centuries. I denounce this method as dangerous and illusory. It supposes, in effect, that one can on the one hand effectively construct a sufficiently exact "identikit" picture, and on the other that one has a quasi-complete knowledge of the prosopography of the Christian Empire—two conditions that are, on the evidence, beyond our reach. It is not surprising then that there have been proposed for the author of the Dionysian Corpus identifications as varied and fantastic as Ammonius Saccas, the master of Plotinus, or Damascius, the last diadochus of the Academy in Athens, or Peter the Iberian, or again, although this hypothesis is infinitely more reasonable, Peter the Fuller.<sup>2</sup> And many more! Ronald Hathaway has recorded twenty-two different identifications.

No less illusory, in my view, are the doctrinal interpretations and the vague parallelisms that led to seeing the Pseudo-Dionysius on the one hand as a disciple either of Plotinus, Iamblichus, Proclus, or Damascius, or on the other hand as either a father of the church connected with Origen or with the Cappadocians or with some heretical sect, or an obscure Oriental monk—in particular a Syrian. In this also, most often, they succeed only in explaining *obscurum per obscurius*.

I believe then that research must be pursued outside of these blind alleys, and it is a modest contribution in this direction that I want to present here. I propose then to expose some new links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus. These objective links, it seems to me, are of two kinds. First the links in vocabulary, that is, the words that are met with only in Proclus or the Pseudo-Dionysius or John of Scythopolis. These parallels in vocabulary seem to me particularly safe from any improper interpretation and can thus constitute a solid base for reasoning. Next, there are the structural links that disclose rigorous parallelisms in the structure of thinking. Thanks to the *Elements of Theology* and *Platonic Theology*, one is quite familiar now with the map of reality according to Proclus, and with how it differs, for example, from that of Iamblichus. One can thus investigate how the Pseudo-Dionysius took over these elements of structure and how he admitted them or did not admit them into his system. This particularly fruitful approach, which had been inaugurated in a very remarkable manner, in view of the state of the editions of the text available to him, by Hugo Koch in 1900 in his work *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen*, has been brilliantly readopted in recent years on a much more solid basis by René Roques in *L'univers dionysien: Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris, 1954), and Jan Vanneste in *Le mystère de Dieu, essai sur la structure rationnelle de la doctrine mystique du pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite* (Paris, 1959), works which deal principally with the *Hierarchies* and with the *Mystical Theology*; Eugenio Corsini, *Il trattato "De divinis nomini-*

bus" dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide (Torino, 1962) and Bernhard Brons, *Gott und die Seienden, Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von neuplatonischer Metaphysik und christlicher Tradition bei Dionysius Areopagita* (Göttingen, 1976), which have examined rather the *Divine Names*; and the latest in date, last but not least, Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena, an Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden, 1978). The results of these researches are impressive; they show a close structural connection between Dionysian thought and the Proclian stage of Neoplatonic doctrine.

Having said that, I shall follow now a third path, which I consider particularly fruitful for disclosing the objective links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus, that is the path I had already followed in my first study, that which consists in examining the scholia of John of Scythopolis. Indeed, if John of Scythopolis, as Hans Urs von Balthasar has shown,<sup>4</sup> is the first commentator on the Dionysian Corpus and probably an accomplice in what must be called the Dionysian fiction, it is without doubt no exaggeration to present him as the first to have systematically researched these objective links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus. What, in fact, does he set out to do? In reading the text of Dionysius, every time he encounters a term or an expression that might sound strange to the ear of a Christian who believed he was reading a contemporary of Saint Paul, he endeavors to answer in advance the objections that cannot fail to be raised. Naturally his intention is to justify the Dionysian fiction, but at the same time and without wanting to, he exposes it. We need only read him with attention in order to enter into his game and draw profit from it. Thus, as I demonstrated in my first article, in order to defend Dionysius for having constructed his neologism *theandricos* on the name of the Semitic god Theandrites, he shows us that he is quite familiar with the existence of this god and the devotion paid to him in the Neoplatonist school of Athens. We are at first surprised, but from that very fact we understand that he is showing the cloven hoof, and instead of justifying Dionysius, he is pointing out to us an objective link that exists between the Athenian Neoplatonic circle and himself, that is Dionysius also. That is why I should like to make an appeal here for the undertaking of a critical edition of these scholia and for the successful conclusion of the systematic study of them.<sup>5</sup> The following are other cases of the same type that will demonstrate to you the interest of this task.

As we know, one had not to wait until the sixteenth century to raise doubts about the authenticity of the Dionysian Corpus, since John of Scythopolis informs us that the citation by Dionysius of a phrase from Ignatius of Antioch, occurring in the *Divine Names*, had already aroused suspicions. Here is the note of John of Scythopolis on the Dionysian lemma: 'Ο θεῖος Ἰγνάτιος.' "These words," he says, "have led certain people to think they can reject the present treatise as not being by the divine Dionysius, since they say that Ignatius comes after him [they knew, in fact, through Eusebius of Caesarea, that Ignatius of Antioch had been martyred under Trajan, between A.D. 98 and 117, and according to the *Chronology* of Eusebius more probably in 107]; how then can someone who is later be cited?

But this is how they have thought it possible to arrange it. Saint Paul, who baptised Dionysius, was in time later than Saint Peter, whom Ignatius succeeded as bishop of Antioch at the time that Peter left for Rome; now, Saint Paul survived for a long time after the baptism of Dionysius, and Dionysius lived still later than Saint Paul. On the other hand," continues John of Scythopolis, "the evangelist John to whom Dionysius wrote a reply [this is Letter X of the Corpus] was deported to Patmos under Domitian. Thus Ignatius suffered martyrdom before Domitian, so that he is earlier than Dionysius." We can see that in order to defend Dionysius, John of Scythopolis does not jib at any improbability, even though it forces the chronology in an impossible manner. It is there that we discover, as I have said, his complicity in the Dionysian fiction, which makes him at the same time a privileged witness and a singularly suspect one.

But in the Pseudo-Dionysius there are not only fantastic chronologies; there are also expressions which, not being traditional in Christian literature, necessitated an explanation. Here is a good example of this. At the beginning of Chapter 9 of the *Divine Names*, Dionysius asserts that the following pairings of attributes are attributed to the Cause of all beings: "great and small," "identical and different," "similar and dissimilar," "rest and movement" [one may say in passing that one would recognize here the pairs of attributes of the One in the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* according to the interpretation of Syrianus and of Proclus]. "Well," he says, "we must examine also all that is manifested to us from these statues that are the divine names, τούτων τῶν θεωνυμικῶν ἀγαλμάτων." I am obliged to translate literally this, at first sight, very strange expression: "those statues that are the divine names." At that point John of Scythopolis really felt it necessary to give an explanation and here is his gloss: "It is with perfect wisdom that he speaks of the statues that are the divine names, for he extends this notion which he borrows from the Greeks by applying it to the truth. The Greeks, as a matter of fact, made up objects resembling statues without feet or hands which they called Hermes; they made them hollow with a door in the style of cupboards. Inside these statues they placed statues of the gods they adored, and from the outside they closed the Hermes. These Hermes thus appeared valueless, but inside they contained the beauties of their gods. It is in this way then that this passage too must be understood: those names from sacred Scripture, such as 'small' or 'to be seated,' etc., which are used concerning the God who alone exists and who alone is real, are not worthy to be spoken of God; but if these names are explained and if they are interpreted in a manner worthy of God, then they contain, within, the statues and the divine imprints of the glory of God."

Here is a very interesting passage and a very significant one. The comparison of the divine names with the statues of the gods is habitual in the Athenian Neoplatonists. It is met with in Proclus in the chapter devoted to *Divine Names* in the *Platonic Theology*, Book I, chapter 29: "Just as," says Proclus, "the demiurgic intellect brings into existence in matter the appearances of the very first Forms it contains in itself, produces temporal images of eternal beings, divisible images of indivisible beings, and from beings which are really beings produces images which have the consistency of shadow, in the same way, I think, our scientific

knowledge also, which takes as its model the productive activity of the Intellect, makes by means of discourse similitudes of all the other realities and particularly of the gods themselves: what in them is without complexity it represents by the complex, what is simple by the diverse, what is unified by multiplicity. Since then it produces the names in that way, our scientific knowledge presents them in this ultimate degree as images of divine beings; in fact, it produces each name as a statue of the gods, and just as theurgy invokes the generous goodness of the gods with a view to the illumination of statues artificially constructed, so also intellective knowledge related to divine beings, by composition and divisions of articulated sounds, reveals the hidden being of the gods." As theurges animate the statues of the gods and there demonstrate their presence, so language in composing the names of the gods expresses their nature and makes them present intellectually.

This doctrine is constant in Proclus and this passage is not an isolated one. Here for example is what he says again in his *Commentary on the Cratylus*.<sup>9</sup> He asks himself: "In what consists the art whereby names are made?" And he replies: ". . . It is that there exists in the soul a certain power which has the capacity to make copies . . . and by virtue of that power, the soul can assimilate itself to superior beings, gods, angels, demons; . . . that is why it makes statues of gods and of demons; and when it wants to bring into being likenesses, in a certain way immaterial and engendered by reason alone, of the First Beings, it produces out of itself, and with the help of verbal representation, the substance of the names; and just as the art of mysteries by means of certain ineffable symbols makes the statues here below like the gods and ready to receive the divine illuminations, in the same way the art of the regular formation of words, by that same power of assimilation, brings into existence names like statues of the realities. . . ." This passage is still clearer than the preceding one: through language, the soul makes verbal representations of the gods, as the sculptor carves their statues. To finish, in a quite general formula in the *Commentary on the Parmenides*,<sup>10</sup> Proclus states: "The names, since they are rational statues of the realities, are as a first consideration the names of immaterial forms, and as a secondary consideration the names of sensible forms." This doctrine of the divine names considered as verbal statues of the gods is thus well attested in Proclus.

Nevertheless, it must not be concluded from this that Proclus was its inventor. It is probable that he has taken over this comparison from his predecessor Syrianus, for we know of two texts in which we find an echo of the views of Syrianus on this subject. As is known, the *Commentary on the Phaedrus* of Hermias, the fellow-pupil of Proclus in the school of Syrianus, is no more than the report of the lectures of their common master.<sup>11</sup> The author wonders why Socrates accuses himself of having sinned against the divinity; it is, he says, because he used the name of the god Eros in the manner of the common man, "for," he adds,<sup>12</sup> "the names of the gods must be adored where they happen to be placed, as are their symbols, their statues and their images, which the soul holds as sacred." Here the divine names are objects of adoration like the statues. The other text comes to us from a contemporary of Syrianus, who had studied with him in Athens, Hierocles,<sup>13</sup> who

says, in his *Commentary on the Golden Verses*,<sup>14</sup> that "the name of Zeus is a symbol and a sonorous expression of his demiurgic being, from the fact that the first people to have given names to realities, by these names as by means of images caused their powers to appear, in the same way that the best carvers of statues do so by a superabundance of technical ability." Here also, the name of Zeus is considered as a sonorous expression, whereas the statue is a visual image of it. One sees that in these two texts, which could have been written in the generation that precedes Proclus, his theory of the divine names, statues of the gods, was in the course of formation. Finally, it is Damascius, in what remains to us of his *Commentary on the Philebus*, who brings us a last testimony from the same period. When he is commenting on the famous remark of Socrates in the *Philebus*,<sup>15</sup> "I have always had for the names of the gods ■ more than human reverence, a fear which goes beyond all bounds," he informs us that a certain Democritus called the divine names ἀγάλματα φωνήεντα, "vocal statues" of the gods.<sup>16</sup> Naturally this Democritus is not the one from Abdera, and L. G. Westerink has identified him with a Platonist who must be placed in the generations after Iamblichus since he is again cited by the same Damascius, in his notes on the *Phaedo*, where his opinion is adduced after that of Theodore of Asine, the contemporary of Iamblichus, and in combination with that of Plutarch of Athens, the master of Syrianus and Proclus.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, all these testimonies agree in bringing us back to the beginning of the fifth century, to the time when Plutarch of Athens and Syrianus were teaching in the Neoplatonic school in Athens. All the same, a proof *a contrario* of the fact that it is impossible to take this doctrine of the divine names considered as divine statues back as far as Iamblichus can be drawn from two texts. The first embraces chapters 4 and 5 of Book VII of the *De mysteriis* of Iamblichus.<sup>18</sup> It is here that we find Iamblichus engaged in justifying the religious use of divine names without apparent significance or even of names that he calls "barbaric," that is, purely and simply transcribed from ■ language alien to the Greek. If these names have to be used, for Iamblichus as for the whole Greek tradition, it is evidently because they express in a mystical manner the divine essence itself. But never does he establish the parallelism between the divine names and the statues of the gods. Yet it is there that one would have expected this development if it had already been in fashion. But here is a still more precise example. In ■ letter from the emperor Julian, the disciple of Maximus of Ephesus, himself of the second generation after Iamblichus, there is a very clear allusion to three degrees in divine representations: there are the gods themselves beyond all representation; next there are the stars which are visible gods, images of the invisible gods; but as one cannot offer them corporeal worship, there are finally the statues of the gods. Here it is ■ question solely of material statues, and not at all of those "rational" or "vocal" statues that are the divine names.<sup>19</sup> For Julian also, what will become the theory of Proclus has not yet been developed.

One may moreover suspect the reason why the Platonists of Athens developed this theory of divine names as spiritual substitutes for the statues of the gods, is that through the effect of imperial decrees, the statues of the gods began at that



time to disappear from their temples. We know that Proclus was an eyewitness to the removal of the statue of Athena from the Acropolis of Athens, and that at the time at which this was happening, he saw in a dream the goddess herself who said to him: "Lady Athenais intends to stay with you."<sup>20</sup> Dating from that day, she would have as temple the home of Proclus, and would be honored in his heart and that of his disciples. It is then only to the Platonists of the generations of Syrianus and of Proclus that one must attribute this devotion to the divine names as having taken the place of devotion to the statues of the gods. As John of Scythopolis saw perfectly, the expression of the Pseudo-Dionysius, "the statues that are the divine names," can only be understood in this context, and moreover that is what he explicitly states when he writes: "Dionysius transfers this notion which he borrows from the Greeks in applying it to truth."

But he still says something more. Indeed John of Scythopolis illustrates this doctrine by an argument that one could describe as drawn from folklore, the custom of the Greeks, according to him, of making statues containing inside them other statues for the worship of the gods, placed there as if in cupboards. To my knowledge, this supposed observation is not confirmed by any archaeological discovery. But it is evidently not an observation,<sup>21</sup> but a literary reminiscence, and from a famous text, that of the *Symposium* of Plato, in which Alcibiades compares Socrates to a Silenus. The passage is familiar:<sup>22</sup> "Socrates is just like those Silenus figures that are seen displayed in the sculpture studios and which the artists represent holding a pipe or a flute; if they are opened in the middle, it can be seen that inside they contain figurines of gods," a comparison taken up again and developed a few lines further on:<sup>23</sup> "Socrates is ignorant of all things, and he knows nothing, but he gives himself airs! Is this not the behavior of a Silenus? Yes, nothing could be more so! This ignorance, in fact, is the outer wrapping of the person, just as the carved Silenus is; but inside, once it is opened up, of what a great quantity of wisdom is it full, have you any idea, companions of this feast?" There should be no doubt that it is this comparison by Alcibiades between Socrates and a Silenus that John of Scythopolis has in mind, for no Hermes has ever been seen to be hollow and serve as a cupboard for relics, but if one considers that the word that has been translated as "sculpture studio" is in Greek τὸ ἐρμολυφεῖον,<sup>24</sup> which means literally "a place where Hermes figures are carved" (a Hermes indicates in this case a statue in general), one will guess that it is from this that John of Scythopolis has taken his Hermes figures that have taken the place of the Silenus figures that were no longer made in his time, though there still existed in Athens "the street of the statue-makers" of which Plutarch speaks in his treatise *On the demon of Socrates*.<sup>25</sup> And if there is need, we would be confirmed in this conviction by another literary reference to this same passage of the *Symposium* that we find in a letter of Synesius of Cyrene who must have belonged to the same circle as Proclus and the Pseudo-Dionysius, where it is said that "in Athens the craftsmen made statues of Aphrodite and the Graces and divine beauties of this kind, enclosing them in statues of Silenus and of satyrs."<sup>26</sup> Now it is well known that this type of literature regurgitates literary reminiscences rather than concrete observations. However this may be, if we are to consider this little dissertation of John of

Scythopolis as a literary reference to the *Symposium*, this reference brings us back once again to Proclus, for there is no evidence, as John M. Dillon has noted, for a commentary by Iamblichus on this dialogue.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, a valuable scholium to one of the dissertations of Proclus on the *Republic* provides us with an explicit reference to a *Commentary on the discourse of Diorima* by that author, which could have been a part of a complete commentary on the *Symposium*.<sup>28</sup> In any case, in the *Commentary on the Alcibiades*,<sup>29</sup> we can read from the pen of Proclus a precise reference to the passage in the *Symposium* with which we are concerned: "That the young man [Alcibiades] . . . has been made better, one can see," says Proclus, "in the *Symposium* of Plato, where even in a state of drunkenness, Alcibiades is represented as full of admiration for 'philosophic discourse' . . . and swearing that he condemns not only himself but also his ignorance of himself each time he listens to Socrates speaking and remains in blissful admiration for 'the interior statues'<sup>31</sup> of his virtues which are so worthy of veneration and respect." This is a direct allusion to the comparison of Socrates with a Silenus in appearance ugly and filled with interior beauties.

All this analysis leads us, again in this case, to the following conclusion: we cannot understand this bizarre expression "the statues that are the divine names" used by the Pseudo-Dionysius, except with reference to a doctrine and a mode of speech in common use in the fifth-century Neoplatonic school of Athens, and the very suggestive explanations of John of Scythopolis bring us back directly to the master of that School, the Neoplatonist Proclus. Here also, I believe, one must speak of an objective link between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus.

Here again is another example, less picturesque but not less significant. At the beginning of the treatise on the *Divine Names* (chap. 1, par. 4), Dionysius wishes to recall what he calls "the song of praise of the theologians," that is, the names of God which evoke his beneficent action towards us.<sup>32</sup> These names are Monad and Henad, which signify our unification, and Triad, which signifies the existence of all things, a cause which is described as wise, beautiful and friendly to men. It is to be noted that only the last name is really evangelical, since it is drawn from the "philanthropy of God" announced by Saint Paul in his Epistle to Titus.<sup>33</sup> After this list, Dionysius continues on: "And all the other theurgic lights" that he has received from Holy Scripture (τὰ Λογία) and from his divinely inspired masters (οἱ ἐνθέοι ἡμῶν καθηγέμενες).<sup>34</sup> One will agree with me that this language is not at all biblical nor even patristic; it can be clearly recognized as that of Proclus, when he speaks, as so often he does, of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which are in fact his Holy Scripture, and of his master Syrianus, who is his true theologian. To mention it in passing, investigation has not yet been concluded on the borrowings of Dionysius from the language of the *Chaldaean Oracles* which were long since pointed out by Willy Theiler in his review of the *Indices Pseudo-Dionysiani* in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* of 1944.<sup>35</sup> Having come to the word *theourgicos*, John of Scythopolis felt that, here again and rightly so, an explanation must be given, and here is his gloss:<sup>36</sup> "He calls *theurgic lights* the teachings of the saints, in so far as they produce a light of knowledge, and who make gods of those who believe." *Theourgicos* was the proper term for the author of

the *Chaldaean Oracles*, themselves always designated under the title of *Logia*, and "to make gods" was a formal definition of theurgy. These words and their derivatives recur forty-seven times in the Dionysian Corpus,<sup>37</sup> and one can scarcely estimate the strange impression they could have made on the ears of Christians to whom these words were entirely new. It is true that Dionysius had not hesitated to call the eucharistic rites themselves τὰ θεουργὰ μυστήρια, the mysteries by which one is made a god.<sup>38</sup> That may be all very well again for the sacraments; however, that the lights of theology may be called "theurgic" is hardly a Christian claim, but links up with that of Proclus for whom faith in the *Oracles* "places not only the universal souls but also ours in the ineffable and unknowable class of the gods."<sup>39</sup> It is by no means a question of the traditional doctrine of the deification of the Christian, for to make gods in naming the gods is to elevate the believer to the divine level itself, the ultimate goal of pagan theurgy. Once again, to forestall any wrong interpretation of the words of Dionysius, John of Scythopolis offers us an explanation altogether pagan and without any basis in the Christian tradition. He does not even seem to take account of this!

Up to now I have shown that the scholia of John of Scythopolis very often play the role of indicators of objective links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus. I should now like to draw attention to the fact that there exist direct links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus, for there are in the works of Dionysius quotations from Proclus. Hugo Koch and after him Willy Theiler have already recorded a first quotation in chapter 2, paragraph 7 of the *Divine Names*.<sup>40</sup> Dionysius says, concerning the divine persons, the following: "We have received from the tradition of the Holy Scriptures that the Father is the divinity that plays the role of source (πηγαία, a word once again from the *Chaldaean Oracles*), Jesus and the Spirit are, if one may speak in this way, divinely born buds from a divinity capable of engendering God and, so to speak, flowers and lights above being." As one can confirm, these names are not used in this form of the Father, of the Son or of the Spirit, in the Bible,<sup>41</sup> but the last element of the phrase, οὓν ἀνθη καὶ ὑπερούσια φῶτα, is found exactly in the *De malorum subsistentia* of Proclus, speaking precisely of the gods and of their providence. This last text is preserved only in a medieval Latin translation that we owe to William of Moerbeke, but his Latin is a perfect transfer of the Greek: *velut flores et supersubstantialia lumina*.<sup>42</sup> By reason of this striking parallelism, the last editor of the *De malorum subsistentia*, Helmut Boese, felt authorized to detect in it a quotation, independent in both cases, from the *Chaldaean Oracles*, for one can discover in it the end of a hexameter. All the same a doubt remains, because the word ὑπερούσιος has never been attested in the *Oracles*. For my part, I should be inclined rather to recognize a liberal Proclian combination of words coming from the *Oracles* (the words "flowers" and "lights") and to think that it is in Proclus, and in this treatise from which, moreover, he so abundantly drew inspiration, that Dionysius found this combination of words that fascinated him.

But here is another example which appears to me to be beyond doubt. This quotation is found also in the *Divine Names*, in chapter 5, paragraph 5. Let us recall that in the scholia of John of Scythopolis on the preceding paragraph which

treats of the eternity of God, Werner Beierwaltes and his collaborator Richard Kannicht discovered extensive use of the treatise of Plotinus on the same subject.<sup>43</sup> In this paragraph, Dionysius wishes to move from beings and eternities to their cause, and this is what he writes:<sup>44</sup> "For all beings and for all eternities, existence comes from Him who preexists. All eternity and all time came forth from him, and He who preexists is the principle and cause of all eternity and of all time, briefly of all that exists in any way whatsoever, that is that everything participates in him and he is never separated from anything. He is before all things and everything subsists in him." In that last phrase: "He is before all things and everything subsists in him," one will have recognized a word-for-word quotation from Saint Paul (Colossians 1:17), which will not be surprising from the pen of Dionysius. But in the preceding phrase, which defines in some way the manner in which He who preexists all (that is, the First Cause) is principle and cause, when Dionysius says: "Everything participates in him and he is never separated from anything," I recognize a quotation no less literal from Proclus, for it is in these terms that he also defines the First Cause in at least two passages of the *Platonic Theology*. Here is the first:<sup>45</sup> "It must be," says Proclus, "that the first principle of all beings is participated in by all, since it can never be separated from anything, being the cause of all that is said to exist in whatever manner." And the second:<sup>46</sup> "It must be that the cause of everything that exists is that in which everything that exists participates . . . and which is never separated from anything of that which is said to exist in any way." One may note the perfect identity of expression in Proclus and in Dionysius, and moreover the second part of the formula, "which is never separated from anything," comes directly from the *Parmenides* of Plato.<sup>47</sup> In quoting Proclus in this way, Dionysius lets it be seen in which school he was trained, and naturally he has sought to mask this dependence by the quotation from Saint Paul which he coupled with that from Proclus. This is a process with which he is quite familiar. Some lines further on,<sup>48</sup> Dionysius replaces the word designating the Platonic ideas, τὰ παραδείγματα, by the word, οἱ προορισμοί, introduced as a word derived from theology, ἡ θεολογία. One would be quite at pains to find this word in the Bible. It is met with in Origen in the sense of a "decree of the divine will," but it is the gloss of John of Scythopolis that shows the way, for he reveals that this word is drawn by Dionysius from the very προορίζειν used by Paul in Romans 8:30, "those he has predestined."<sup>49</sup> Those determinations in God whereby he predestines the elect, these are the Ideas—a purely nominal Christianization of a Platonic notion, and an interpretation quite peculiar to the Pseudo-Dionysius, without real support in the patristic tradition; and once again, a subtle trace of the connivance of John of Scythopolis with Dionysius, since it is only through his gloss that we understand the origin of a term which the editors had never been able to discover.

Before finishing, I should like to recall the very fine study by the late Sheldon-Williams, *Henads and Angels: Proclus and pseudo-Dionysius*.<sup>50</sup> One will be able to reread it in the light of what we have established in the introduction to volume III of the *Platonic Theology* of Proclus on the origin and the significance of the doctrine of the divine henads.<sup>51</sup> The inquiry into the use of the word "henad" in

philosophical and theological literature between the fourth and the sixth centuries has revealed that this word is very rare before Proclus and that in particular it is completely unknown to Iamblichus and his disciples.<sup>52</sup> And now we know that it is Syrianus who, in his interpretation of the first and second hypotheses of the *Parmenides*, invented the doctrine of the divine henads as the first degree in the hierarchy of the gods below the One, True God. Proclus, through his *Commentary on the Parmenides* and his *Platonic Theology*, was the great diffuser of that doctrine. That is why the simple fact that we find the word "*henas*" employed seven times in the work of the Pseudo-Dionysius, classes it automatically in the line of Syrianus and Proclus.<sup>53</sup> And the fact that he speaks in the plural of "the angelic henads," thus identifying the angels with the henads,<sup>54</sup> and calls God: "the unifying Henad of all henads,"<sup>55</sup> recalling the term of Proclus "Henad of the henads" used for the One,<sup>56</sup> shows that he was familiar with the doctrine of the divine henads. Of course he could not accept it as it was, and it was not to appear in his work except by implication. Nevertheless, the trace of it that we find once again constitutes an objective link between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus.

At the conclusion of these reflections I must guard against falling myself into the temptation of making identifications that I criticized at the beginning. All I have wanted to do was to produce evidence of new objective links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus. I remark only that they increase and multiply accordingly as the research proceeds, and I am sure that still many more of them will be discovered. I shall only say in conclusion that by this means are confirmed two statements in relation to the Pseudo-Dionysius, the first by one of the earliest and the other by the most recent of the historians of Neoplatonism. The first is that of Thomas Whittaker who presented Dionysius as "some Christian Platonist trained in the Athenian School;"<sup>57</sup> the other is that of Carlos Steel who has recently characterized the Dionysian Corpus as the final stage in that sort of rivalry between pagan Platonism and Christianity "which finally absorbed it and neutralized it as a pagan ideology."<sup>58</sup> It was merely to establish a dialogue which has been prolonged through the Middle Ages right down to our time.

## 8

## *The Problem of General Concepts in Neoplatonism and Byzantine Thought*

LINOS BENAKIS

Within the framework of a conference having as its theme the relationship between Neoplatonism and Christian thought, the object of my paper is to point out the relationship between the two traditions on a specific problem. This is the problem of "universals," *universalia*, with which the philosophy of the later Greek and medieval periods, both in the West and in the East, was very much concerned.

I shall not therefore deal with the general problem of the relationship between Neoplatonism and Byzantine philosophy. In my article "The Study of Byzantine Philosophy: Critical Survey 1949-1971" (Athens, 1971),<sup>1</sup> I have reviewed critically some earlier approaches to the presumed total dependence of the Byzantines on Neoplatonism, and have drawn attention to other, more correct, views presented in more recent publications, which defend the position that external similarities (basically in terminology) and partial relationships do not imply substantial internal general dependence. However, this basic issue is not directly affected by whatever conclusions may be established through the analysis of the special theme under consideration here.

Thus I can enter directly upon my subject, taking as my starting point a passage from a representative treatise by the Byzantine philosopher of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Nicephoros Choumnos (d. 1327), which has the characteristic title "Discourse against Plato regarding Matter and Forms, that neither is matter prior to bodies nor are species separate, but these are together."

The philosopher categorically rejects both the existence of separate (Platonic) Forms prior to the Creator and the creation of the world out of preexistent and uncreated matter, in order to defend the thesis of "continuous procreation," that is, the uninterrupted successive presence of the Forms in the perceptible world and hence its "incorruptibility." Nicephoros Choumnos' thesis is found in the following paragraph (lines 261-276 in my translation):<sup>2</sup>

Nor is it correct for us to conceive Forms that have a permanent separate existence and are prior to those things whose Forms they are. The contrary is true. Because, since the first man was created by the Creator in the manner we have said—namely as a reasoning mortal animal made to give birth to his own kind and not to one different from him, indeed having this capacity as something which belongs to his substance—every other man who has come into being from him has exactly the same shape, kind, and substance as the first man was made to have.

Therefore, by proceeding inductively from all individual instances of man and by looking at the first man, and also at those after him, and so on continuously, we find that which is common to all and has not changed in the slightest. This we recognize as the species of man; in defining this, we say that man is a reasoning mortal animal, and this definition is valid for every man and for his kind.

In this manner, therefore, the Form and the kind are not prior to the particulars (as Plato says), but rather they are *what we conceive afterwards with the mind and thus define accordingly*.

Choumnos' view of the Forms is an inevitable consequence of his rejection of the self-existence of Form and its ontological presence prior to sensible particulars. Since the Forms acquire existence only in formed creations, they are perceived only *a posteriori* at the time when the knowing subject discerns them on the basis of the common characteristics which are to be found in all individuals of the same species and thus constitute the basis for their definition. (Our philosopher's position becomes clearer with the application of this principle, as we have seen above, to the example of man.)

It is clear that this fourteenth-century philosopher has understood the transition in meaning from "Forms" to "general concepts"; and in a way that enabled him to take a stand in relation to the so-called "*universalia* problem."

Now that our knowledge of the historical perspective and of related texts has been improved,<sup>3</sup> I believe that this Byzantine philosopher's formulation—which holds for other earlier Byzantine philosophers as well—also indicates his dependence, in his questions, terminology and solutions, on the systematic discussion of certain issues in the Greek philosophy of later antiquity. These issues involved questions as to what the Forms (the universal substances) represent as general definitions of beings (1) in themselves, (2) in relation to sensible individual things ("the many"), and (3) in relation to the knowing subject.

The answers to these questions were elaborated for the first time and with a clear metaphysical reorientation, as we shall see, in the Neoplatonic school of Alexandria in the fifth and sixth centuries both by its leader, Ammonius of Hermias, and his disciples and successors, Asclepius, Olympiodorus, Philoponus, Stephanus, Elias, David, and others, all commentators on the logical writings of Aristotle.<sup>4</sup>

This particular branch of Neoplatonism, in its interpretation of Aristotle, shows, comparatively speaking, the smallest influence of Neoplatonic doctrine. For this reason, the commentaries of Ammonius' disciples on Aristotle served as the most conducive bridge for the teaching of Greek philosophy in the Christian world. With regard to the mode of existence of an ultimate reality, the Alexandrian school did not espouse extreme positions and, hence, it adopted a moderate solution to the problem of general concepts.

The formulation of the problem by the Alexandrian scholiasts, its influence on the later Greek-Byzantine tradition, on Arabic philosophy and on the thought of many well-known Western philosophers, forms one of the new chapters in the history of the problems of ontology and of knowledge in their later phases. It is a chapter that still awaits its final form, hopefully to replace what we read in the accounts still presented in various histories of philosophy and in monographs on the *universalia* problem.

This is not the occasion to present a more systematic exposition of the *universalia* problem from its beginning up to the period which interests us. I would like only to draw attention to the fact that we must place within the historical period I have mentioned the emergence of a new solution that diverges basically from "Platonism" (by which of course I mean every type that meets the prerequisites of realism but is not restricted to the historical Plato), namely the solution of "conceptual realism" (or "conceptualism" where the term is not taken in the psychological sense). This is the interpretation of the universal as a concept of the knowing subject (ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ, *conceptus mentis*), a concept no longer regarded as prior to sensible things (*ante res*), nor simply in things (*in rebus*), but derived from individual sensible things through the conceptual apprehension of their common characteristics.

It is this position which emerges with the elaboration of the problem by the Alexandrian Neoplatonists on the basis of a Neoplatonic transformation of the Aristotelian teaching on substance, and in association with the preservation of the Platonic Forms conceived now as *the thoughts of the demiurge*, the God-Creator.

In our opinion, this solution represents more fully the Greek medieval tradition, and must be considered a variation of Platonic and Aristotelian realism and not of nominalism, as it is usually called and which prevails in Western philosophy where this variation is also present as a compromise between realism (Scotus) and nominalism (Roscelinus), making its appearance with the influence of the Arabic philosopher Avicenna (who borrows from the school of Ammonius) on Anselm (d. 1109) and particularly on Abelard (d. 1142).

Aristotle's criticisms of Plato (to a certain degree well-founded, in other ways not) also obviously belong to the history of the problem of the nature of general

concepts. Since the arguments are complex, I will point out only those elements which have influenced the formation of the *universalia* problem in postclassical and medieval thought.

The Aristotelian criticism was valid in the case of the so-called "third man" argument, and so as long as it was directed against the doctrine of the Form as "exemplar" and of natural things as its "images." Specifically, the Aristotelian criticism focuses on the objectivization of ideal beings (and more precisely on their transformation into things of the same ontological type as concrete objects), but it does not at all deal with the principally Platonic doctrine of the existence of ideal beings.

From the criticism of Aristotle it does not follow that Forms do not exist, but only that, if they exist, they cannot be something of the same type as that of individual sensible things.

From this perspective, it becomes clear why we must not bring Aristotle into the realism (Platonism)–nominalism dispute. The Aristotelian position must be classified, not under nominalism, but rather under realism. Aristotle is in fact in substantial agreement with Plato on the position that it is not possible for scientific knowledge to exist if we deny some sense of objective reality to the universal. The difference between Plato and Aristotle is that the latter believes that it is not necessary to attribute a *separate* existence to the universal. The universal (the Aristotelian kind, εἶδος) exists, but only together with the particulars and within them.

This means that both philosophers agree on exactly the same point, once we locate the weakness of the Platonic system (that is, that in order to explain the possibility of general [scientific] knowledge, it is not necessary to accept, as Plato does, abstract ideal objects). But of course the position of Aristotle was too far from a semantical interpretation of language to be able to solve the problem of knowledge of the universal without its direct association with the existence of ideal substances.

The opposition to which later metaphysicians attached such significance was formulated, as we know, as follows: Plato accepted "universals prior to the sensible objects" (*universalia ante res*); Aristotle held that "universals are in the objects" (*universalia in rebus*).

From the metaphysical viewpoint of each philosopher, the contrast becomes profound: Plato deifies the form (ἰδέα) and undervalues the world of sensible objects; Aristotle bases his realism on the role of "first substance" (πρώτη οὐσία, substance in the primary sense). But if we strip the problem logically of its metaphysical appendages, that is, if we eliminate the issue of whether the universals are prior to the objects or are in the objects, we may come to regard it today as being basically a pseudo-problem arising from the tendency to objectify or concretize universality, a tendency which was cultivated persistently in post-classical and medieval philosophy.

We insist, therefore, on the assumption that the only problem, which there is any sense in putting forward, is the simple question of whether ideal abstract objects *exist or not*, whether they have an objective reality or not.

Nevertheless, in the historical course of questioning, the contrast prevails between the two teachings on the "place" (location) of universals, a contrast which is sustained, as we have said, by the spirit of an era in which the objectivization of conceivable Being leads to the *universalia* problem. This tendency becomes even more pronounced when the nominalistic solution is added: *universalia post res* (the universal is merely a subjective concept subsequent to the object; the universals are neither abstract beings nor attributes common to their particulars, but general words, simple names, creations of the mind, *flatus vocis*).

In this paper I am concerned basically with the starting point of the dispute, which I believe also explains its course within the Eastern branch of medieval philosophy, that of Greek Byzantium. This starting point is to be found in the era of the Neoplatonic commentators on Aristotle. During this period one further transformation of the Platonic Forms was brought about. Nurtured in the New Academy or in the Middle Stoa (Posidonius), and intensively cultivated by Philo of Alexandria, it passed as a generally accepted interpretation in Middle Platonism, Neoplatonism, and in Christian writers. It is the *identification of Forms with the thoughts of God*, and furthermore with the creative intellect, the *Nous* of the demiurge.

Without intending to disregard the fact that we find the first seeds of the problem regarding general concepts much earlier in the Cynics (Antisthenes), in the successors of Plato and Aristotle (Xenocrates and Xenarchos, first century B.C.), as well as in the Stoa and Plotinus, it is indisputable that Porphyry (in the third century) was the first clearly to formulate the problem in the very first paragraph of his famous *Isagoge*.<sup>7</sup> Porphyry here posed three questions:

1. Are the kinds and Forms (general classes and characterizations of identical forms) existing substances or do they exist only in the mind (are a subjective concept)?
2. Do they have bodily substance or not?
3. Do they have an existence separate from sensible objects or do they exist only in them?

The first question is the only acceptable one from a scientific point of view, as we have already explained.

The second question derives from the tendency to objectify ideal substances, as we have also seen.

The third question constitutes historically the first formulation of the problem *universalia ante res* (universals prior to the objects)–*universalia in rebus* (universals in the objects).

It is characteristic that Porphyry explicitly avoided taking a position on the questions which he himself formulated: "I shall refrain from speaking about these things, because the treatment of such a subject is extremely deep and needs another, more profound, examination." He never made this investigation in any of his works. This attitude of his certainly constituted a great stimulation for later discussions, which became ever more sharp since the questions were particularly difficult to answer.

Porphry's problematic soon passed into the West, thanks to the Latin translation of his *Isagoge* by Boethius (d. 525). Boethius, in the commentary which he wrote on the *Categories*, prescribed the solution which was later named "pure" (psychological) conceptualism: our mind has the capacity to separate (by abstraction) whatever appears inseparable in the sensible world.

In the East, the school of Ammonius (at about the same time as Boethius, who was also Ammonius' student, and about two centuries after Porphyry) formulated the same questions as follows, according to our free rendering:

1. Is there any knowledge of beings transcending our sense experience but having no less real existence and not being mere figments of the mind? In other words: Do the Forms or ideal beings, that is, the universals (genera and species), have existence in themselves, having thus, apart from their mental reality, also ■ suprasubjective reality?
2. (And since the answer to question 1 is affirmative), what exactly is this "reality" of the ideal beings?

As we see, the questions of the Alexandrian philosophers are correctly centered on the first and philosophically more legitimate question in Porphyry's *Isagoge*. In association with this first question, of course, the others can also be solved.

The problem of the real existence of mental (ideal) beings appears to be an acute one to the commentators of the school of Ammonius, *insofar as it has to do with the determination of the relationship between "first" and "second" substances* in Aristotle.

Why, Ammonius asks, does Aristotle name the concrete (individual) *ousia* "first substance," and the universal "second substance"—the latter being surely more primary, more important, superior (τιμιωτέρα)? Because, he answers, that which is prior in nature (the universal) is for us (as knowing subjects) secondary (posterior). From the particulars we are led to the general, to universals. For this reason, he comments, Aristotle was careful not to speak of first substance (particulars) as if "it primarily and in the highest degree exists" but says that "it primarily and most certainly is said" (not καὶ πρῶτως καὶ μάλιστα ἔστιν, but καὶ πρῶτως καὶ μάλιστα λεγόμενη).

Philoponus also explains the superiority of the universal (second substance) by the principle that "the cause has a higher degree of existence than the effect," and justifies Aristotle's terminology by saying that in the *Categories* the philosopher is speaking to novices, and that it is for this reason that he names "first" the substance, appears later, "after a long time, when reason has shone within us" from the particulars to the universal, because second substance, which is the main substance, appears late, "after a long time, when reason has shone within us" (ὁψέ, τοῦ λόγου ἐν ἡμῖν ἐλλάμψαντος).

Simplicius gives the same explanation (after he has pointed out the superiority of the universals "under which particulars are classed and from which they derive"). That is, in the *Categories* the investigation of substance starts out "from a semantic relationship" (ἀπὸ σημαντικῆς σχέσεως), and for this reason its exam-

ination is undertaken from the standpoint of first substances (those prior in relation to us, that is individual, sensible beings). Similar views are found in the other commentators of the same school.

Summarizing the position of the Alexandrians, we see that they accept a double order of beings: the order of the being of things and the order of the cognitive subject. The first order is manifested "in nature," independently of thought and human knowledge. It is the order and hierarchy of the first causes of beings which is reflected also in particulars but without being identical with these. The second order starts where the first ends, and, following an inverse course, tries to reach the beginning of being. While the first order is ontological and creative (Asclepius: οὐσία τῶν τῆδε προακτικῆ καὶ δημιουργικῆ), the second is cognitive or, rather, "recognitive." With regard to their courses, the two orders are not parallel but run in opposite directions.

In this analysis, the Neoplatonic scholiasts do not place simple general concepts in the first order, the order of universals (those prior in nature), but they see there a supersubjective reality. Even more, it is a reality prior to the mind of man, a reality given to him. Thus the universal, the ideal substance (genera and species), has priority in being and value in relation to concrete substance.

Thus, the universal-ideal substances not only have a reality independent of the knowing subject, but they also have an existence truer than that of sensible beings. The terms "more valuable," "to a higher degree," and "senior" (τιμιώτερον, καρείτον, πρεσβύτερον) for intelligible substance are not only symbolic but must be evaluated in the context of ontological definitions. The universal is the truly "first" substance (even if called the "second"), above the particular substance in the ontological order; and this primacy would not occur if the intelligible were purely a conceptual reality. (If that were the case, the intelligible would not determine the sensible, but the sensible would prescribe its rules to the rational.)

This evaluation of the degree of existence of the universal in relation to the particular has one more consequence: for the Alexandrian scholiasts, the particular has an even truer existence *within* the universal than it has by itself. Certainly this would be impossible if the universal had the mode of existence of a simple general concept of the mind.

Here a second group of problems appears, which leads to further discussion of the character of the reality of the universal. I can only state here the conclusion of this discussion.

The Neoplatonists accept a gradation of being and indeed within intelligible being. It is a gradation with reference not only to first (sensible) substance, but more importantly to second (intelligible) substance. The higher level is always the ontological basis (the presupposition) for the lower. The higher the ascent (ὑπερβεβηκέναι, ὑπερβάσις, ὑπερβατόν, terms used by the Alexandrians), the stronger and more comprehensive being, as supportive of other beings, becomes. In Ammonius' own formulation: κάτωθεν μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀτόμων . . . πλήθει μὲν στενοῦται . . . δυνάμει δὲ αὖξεται."

We now come to the second question posed by the Alexandrian commentators: What actually is the real character of the existence of *universalia*? We have

first a negative definition (consistent with the above): The reality—the state of existence—of the ideal is not identical with the way in which sensible particulars exist.

One of the arguments for this is the following: species and genera (man, animal) “seem” (φαίνεται) to designate a concrete individual in each case, but in truth they designate plurality and quality, because they indicate the “community” and the “collection” (κοινωνίαν καὶ συναγωγήν) of particular substances. (For this reason, Ammonius says, Aristotle does not say that the form is “the what as quality” but “the what with regard to substance”: περὶ οὐσίαν τὸ ποῖον.)

Thus “universal” substance (1) is something distinct from concrete particular substance (without this implying its individualization—I simply mention the problem, since it figures in one of Aristotle’s arguments for the rejection of the Forms: the argument “of the doubling of the world”); (2) it also defines substantial quality and is not simply a qualitative predicate of particular substances (for this reason it does not need the qualitatively defined particular in order to exist, as the latter needs it).

Next follows a positive definition from which a really surprising thesis emerges: The universal needs the particular substance, not in order for it to exist but in order to be expressed in it (Ammonius: οὐ γὰρ δέεται τὸ καθόλου τῶν πρώτων οὐσιῶν, τοῦτ’ ἐστὶν τῶν μερικῶν, ἵνα συστή (πρὸς σύστασιν), ἀλλ’ ἵνα κατ’ ἐκείνων ῥηθῇ).

But I must now turn to certain final positions that are of direct interest for the later history of the problem of ideal beings or general concepts. For the Alexandrian Neoplatonic commentators:

1. The “separate” existence of universals does not have the same form as that of the sensible particulars. (Thus Aristotle’s criticism of Plato for introducing a “separation” of reality into two worlds through the theory of Forms is refuted.)
2. In the texts under consideration we do not have any hint that the commentators postulate a domain of Forms existing somewhere, close to, or outside, the natural world-order.
3. What is more, it is maintained that the Forms exist within particular concrete objects, or rather that the particular objects express the Form itself which appears in them.

However, the appearance of the Form does not mean that what appears (the phenomenon) is identified with the Form; the phenomenon does not cease to be the representation of the Form, its copy, a way for the Form to appear. And that is why the phenomena (the ways in which the Forms appear) are always inferior to their Form. (Compare the concept of the transcendence of the Form in relation to its representation in the sensible: transcendence has meaning precisely on the presupposition of a presence of the Form within the objects).

On the other hand (as has been shown above), the existence of the universal as universal does not cease with its presence in particulars. In the natural reality of time and space we also have gradations of being. The intelligible which is em-

bodied in the sensible is the strongest, the fullest region of being. Besides, this difference in the value of the intelligible region even in its bodily shape—given that the intelligible never coincides absolutely with its bodily shape—expresses a kind of “separation” of the intelligible from the natural. (We may note here the Platonic-Aristotelian opposition on the separation of the two world-orders and the reconciliatory efforts of the Neoplatonists.)

It is true that the terminology used by the commentators to express the above relationship gives at first sight the impression that they mean an existence of the universal which is independent from the particulars. But a careful study leaves no doubt that they accept different modes of existence in being as a whole; there are different degrees of ontological fullness in the gradations of being with regard to both the intelligible and the natural world.

Thus we learn that (as Philoponus says):

1. Particular concrete objects (first substances) constitute for being the subject or substratum (ὑπόκεινται) in either of the following ways:
  - a) for the qualities/events of the sensible world, so as to exist in the sensible world (ὑπόκεινται πρὸς ὑπαρξιν);
  - b) for the universals, so as to be predicated (ὑπόκεινται πρὸς κατηγορίαν).
2. The intelligibles and the phenomena are mutually dependent.

We cannot think of the intelligible as intelligible without contrasting it to the sensible. And we cannot speak of sensible phenomena without using simultaneously the concept of the intelligible. For this reason the mutual interdependence of the universal and the particular occurs not only in the region of the intelligible, but also in that of concrete individual existence.

We can now understand the final position, which has great significance: universals are necessarily subordinated to the function of our mind in apprehending and expressing them (νοεῖν καὶ λέγειν αὐτά). From this standpoint, their characterization as *a posteriori* (as subsequent to the particulars) becomes understandable. (I will return to this topic.)

At this point I shall simply refer to one interesting dispute of the Alexandrians with the most reliable commentator on Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias. Olympiodorus and Elias defend the priority of the universal *in nature as well as in logic*. As we know, for Alexander, only the particulars are prior in nature. This simple reference is necessary in order to draw attention to a critical point which throws light on the final definition of the mode of existence of universals: the Alexandrians maintain that the universal is prior in nature even when they admit that the universal appears only in the particular sensibles and ceases to be in their absence.

But what ceases to be? That is the crucial point, ensuing from the discussion on the priority of what is prior in nature, and which has a bearing on the final solution. The universal which ceases to be in the absence of particulars is not that which is “prior to the particulars,” τὸ πρὸ τῶν πολλῶν (= the kind, the Form in the mind of the God-Creator, as we shall see), but *that which “applies to the*

particulars," τὸ ἐπὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς, namely the conceptual apprehension of the universal.

Thus we come to the final designation of the universal, according to the school of Ammonius. It must be understood as an attempt (1) to preserve the Platonic doctrine of the Forms as the ideal substances (models) of creation, residing in the mind of the Creator (as his thoughts). This last idea—that the Forms, which in the human soul are discrete and separate, are found collectively in the Divine Mind, being identical with it—is the result of the Neoplatonic transformation of Platonic and Aristotelian elements in the postclassical tradition (at least after Philo) of the doctrine of the Forms. It is a transformation which facilitated considerably the new solution.

It is also an attempt (2) to validate the thesis of the ontological priority and permanence of the universal against the sensible particular, since if the sensible (first substance) is abolished, it is not the universal (second substance) itself which ceases to exist, but only its apprehension by the mind.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, the solution involves a triple mode of existence of the universal.<sup>10</sup> Universals (genera and species) are, therefore, for the Alexandrian Neoplatonists:

1. *prior to particulars* (πρὸ τῶν πολλῶν), in the mind of the Creator. This doctrine is attributed explicitly to Plato and represents—as they believe!—his teaching on the Forms.<sup>11</sup>
2. *within the particulars* (ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς), inseparable from the sensible concrete objects of the natural world. This is the Aristotelian "material form" (ἐνυλον εἶδος) or "first substance" (πρώτη οὐσία).
3. *applied to the particulars and conceptual* (ἐπὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ ἐννοηματικά). According to the precise formulation in Philoponus: "Those which are in our mind are seen to apply to the many particulars and are subsequent to them." (It is significant that Philoponus refutes here the opinion of a certain Eustathius, unknown to us, and that of Porphyry, and calls on "those who speak more correctly, of whom one is Iamblichus, who says that the aim of the Aristotelian *Categories* for the philosopher is to speak about the φωναί [meaning the five most general categories] signifying objects through their meaning.") From this passage it appears that the Alexandrian scholiasts consider also the third mode of existence of the universal ἐπὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς to be consistent with Aristotelian teaching, the most correct interpretation of which they find in the Neoplatonic branch headed by Iamblichus. Philoponus says explicitly: "Aristotle always calls genera those applying to the many (τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς) and being objects of our thought (ἐννοηματικά)." But it is clear that we have here Stoic influence, at least indirectly. Furthermore, there are other Stoic elements in the example of "the seal and its waxen copies" which the Alexandrians used.

Let us now reread the definition given by the Byzantine philosopher Nicephorus Choumnos: "Therefore, taking into consideration all men by induction and

looking at precisely that first man, who is the origin, and at those after him and so on continuously, that which we find common to all (ἐπὶ πάντων ταῦτόν) . . . this we recognize as the species (the general concept) of man," etc.

We can easily see the common line of thought which, it may be noticed, used a similar terminology.

We find this line of interpretation throughout the Byzantine period, specifically in the texts of Ioannes Italos (1023–ca. 1085), Eustratios of Nicaea (1050–1120), who is also a commentator on the *Posterior Analytics*, Nicephoros Blemmydis (1197–1272), and even later in Georgios Scholarios and Bessarion, but not in Plethon.

Unfortunately a treatise devoted to the subject by Photius (820–893), which he himself mentions, has not survived. But in his brief essay, "Various questions for discussion on genera and species," he shows clearly and vividly a knowledge of the history of the problem of general concepts. Photius gives us an original elaboration of only one specific aspect of this problem, Porphyry's second question as to whether the Forms are incorporeal or corporeal. Photius characterizes his own solution as "no less elegant than that of the Greek philosophers." His answer is as follows: "Universals are corporeal (not bodies) and indicative of subjects (not indicating themselves), developing the existence of these (not causing them to subsist) and reporting the substantification of the parts within them (not providing it) and are names signifying substances through appropriate meaning (names not possessed by the beings themselves)."<sup>12</sup>

In the same text we find a rejection of the Platonic Forms. He also clearly states that "the philosophers of better taste applied genera and species to the many and within the many" (τὰ μὲν ἐπὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς, τὰ δὲ ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς). This means that Photius, too, is close to Aristotelian realism as the Neoplatonic scholiasts elaborated it. An important indication is the presence of the phrase ἐπὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς in his definition.

My thesis, therefore, is that in Byzantine philosophy the discussion of the problem of general concepts does not resemble the dispute as we know it in the West. In the Greek East, there is an almost universal acceptance of the solution of the Alexandrian Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle, which we can characterize as (moderate) "conceptual realism." We do not find a nominalistic solution, because, as has been indicated, general concepts for them were not simple concepts or mere names, stripped of every reality and "existing" only in the human mind.

In fact, the new phrase which the Alexandrians introduce and the Byzantines adopt (ἐπὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ ὑστερογενῇ τὰ καθόλου: universals applying to the many and subsequent to the particulars) is not equivalent to the *post res* of the *universalia* dispute, that is, the position of the nominalists, as one might believe, and has in fact been maintained by some.

On the basis of the texts of Philoponus and also of those of the Byzantine Eustratios of Nicaea, who in his comments on Aristotle shows an admirable knowledge of the sources (this same Eustratios uttered the bold statement that "throughout all his divine sayings Jesus reasons in the Aristotelian way!"<sup>13</sup>), we see



that the *a posteriori* status of general concepts does not alter their "substantial status," their mode of existence. Their existence is always within sensible particulars and together with these; the universals that are conceived by the mind by abstraction of the common characteristics of the particular sensibles are the Aristotelian "second" substances (ὑστερα equals ἡμῖν δεύτερα).

There is one more reason why universals, as objects of thought, come after sensible substances. They are posterior to their creative and determining causes, namely the ideal substances in the mind of the demiurge. This last thesis is accepted particularly by Christian thinkers, who consider the Forms, as we have seen, to be the thoughts of the demiurge and the creative causes of all beings.

For a more analytical presentation of the Byzantine writers one would have to consult the texts, which unfortunately remain to a great extent unedited.<sup>14</sup> I wish only to refer to two recent publications of mine, which offer an interpretation of Byzantine philosophical texts, together with a new critical edition and with the necessary identification of the sources used: Nicephoros Choumnos, "On Matter and Forms"; Michael Psellos, "On the Forms of which Plato speaks." *Philosophia* (Athens), vol. 3 (1973) and vols. 5–6 (1975–1976).

One final remark: in the West the Alexandrian solution has rather the character, as I have said, of a compromise solution between the contrasting positions of realism and nominalism. It is represented in the twelfth century and thereafter by Abelard, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and others. The link is generally considered to be the Arab Avicenna (980–1037), who certainly borrows from the last scholiasts of the school of Ammonius, Elias and David. However, it would be interesting to investigate the Greek—Latin connection from as early as the time of Photius and after.

### III

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## *Medieval Latin Thought*

## *The Primacy of Existence in the Thought of Eriugena*

G. H. ALLARD

One can scarcely be mistaken in asserting that Neoplatonism—whether it be Christian or not—is fundamentally an “essentialist” philosophy: by that I mean that it is a system of thought at the core of which a universe of essences and intelligible beings is organized according to relationships of causality which are universal, timeless and necessary, a system in the face of which phenomenal realities possess little or no ontological density. In this respect the thought of Eriugena marks an important date in the history of Neoplatonism since it bears witness to a profound change in its customary perspectives. Indeed, the acute awareness that Eriugena has of the idea of existence, perceived as the ontological pole complementary to essence, leads him, so to speak, to shift the observation post of reality and to look in the other direction: the approach to being, to intelligible beings, is now mediated by existence, by “existents.” Polarized in this way, thought succeeds in integrating quite naturally the spatiotemporal realities and in conferring on them not only a decisive gnosiological function, but also a new ontological status. This increased sensitivity towards the idea of existence, need we emphasize, does not of course entirely destroy the quite Neoplatonic structure of Eriugena’s thought, but it does

already suffice to shake the edifice to the extent to which Eriugenian thought sets out to distinguish, in the heart of being, between what is (*quod est*) and the crude radical fact of existing (*esse*). I shall certainly not be able within the framework of this paper to examine the various influences which affected the thinking of Eriugena on this question;<sup>1</sup> but it does remain that the mental equipment which he inherited and which he transformed in such an original manner enabled him to make a completely new reading of the dogma of creation. It is precisely on this theme of *creatio ex nihilo* and on its philosophical consequences that I want first to spend a little time.

## I

My attention was drawn to this little explored dimension of Eriugenian thought on the occasion of the computerization of the text of his *Expositiones in Ierarchiam coelestem* which Mlle. Barbet has edited in the *Corpus christianorum* series (1975); together with my colleague S. Lusignan I had to consolidate the *index verborum latinorum* for both the commentary of Eriugena and the text commented on (Dionysius) and translated into Latin by Eriugena. When considering the range of frequency that the same word may undergo according to where it appears in Dionysius' commented text or in the commentary, I was struck by the frequency of the words relating to creation (*creator, creare, creaturae, ex nihilo*) which recur in fact 135 times in the commentary as against once in the commented text. To my first source of astonishment was added a second: in fact, I established that this single representative of the family of words relating to creation,<sup>2</sup> which occurs only once, could itself also have been completely absent from the *Celestial Hierarchy* if our translator had chosen, just as Hilduin did, to render the Dionysian *demiourgos* by the term "*opifex*." This "slight alteration" makes of Eriugena a very bad translator but perhaps a better philosopher than Hilduin; what is in any case certain is that this intervention reveals in him an obvious concern to adjust the Dionysian text to his personal problematics.<sup>3</sup> For Dionysius, as we know, the action of the demiurge is "an action organizing" things and relations between beings.<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt that the Dionysian demiurge is unique, transcendent, and is Providence; in this respect, we are here far from the hypostatic universe of Iamblichus or of Proclus.<sup>5</sup> But the question presents itself: is the god of Dionysius a creator in the biblical sense of the term, that is, the principle and cause of the radical appearing of things and beings *ex nihilo* in time and in space? The idea of *ex nihilo* is absent from the vocabulary and from the thought of Dionysius. This absence is significant; it indicates that Dionysius does not so much consider the question of the "radical origin of being," which is that of *existence*, as that of the intelligibility of "what is", that is, the necessary and intelligible order that governs beings and essences.<sup>6</sup> Thus it is being and the cause of being that holds his attention—his thought is polarized by the "what is," the essence, the substance, and he is consequently insensitive to the first springing forth of beings into intelligible or spatiotemporal existence. In this context, the demiurge is the cause and principle of *being* but not of *existence*; according to Dionysius' own terms, it is ἀρχή

... καὶ οὐσία . . . οὐσίας . . . πρὸς τὸ εἶναι παραγαγόν' or again αἰτίαν οὐσιοποιὸν εἶναι:<sup>7</sup> it is a manufacturer (*opifex*) of order among the essences (the beings), or better still it establishes and gives the rank of essence (being) to all that is as intelligible."

Eriugena is not unaware of the precise meaning of the action of the demiurge of Dionysius, for on occasion he translates very fairly the πρὸς τὸ εἶναι οὐσίας πρώτας παραγαγόν or the οὐσιοποιὸν εἶναι as "*causa substantifica*."<sup>8</sup> But it has not been sufficiently noted that each time he renders the Dionysian δημιουργός by "*creator*," Eriugena modifies its implication by adding a dimension alien to Dionysius because it is unknown to him. In Book III of the *De divisione naturae* (DDN),<sup>9</sup> the divinity is defined as a "*causa existentium omnium*"; still in the same book,<sup>10</sup> he takes up on his own account the celebrated eulogy that Dionysius addresses to Being (ON) in the *Divine Names*; but this time the divinity (the demiurge) is "*creator existentis subsistentiae*," "*existentis substitutor*," "*causa existentium*." It is for this reason that in the *Expositiones in Ierarchiam coelestem*,<sup>11</sup> where Eriugena intentionally attributes to Dionysius the concept and the word "*creator*," one must, to my mind, translate the passage "*primasque essentias ad esse adducens*" by "he brings the first essences (beings, substances) to existence." For the action of the Eriugenian god proceeds *ex nihilo*, and from this fact, it raises the idea of *origin* (i.e., that of *existence*). The Eriugenian god can no longer be, as was the case for Dionysius, a simple supervisor of the essences since, if one takes into account the narrative of Genesis, it must be recognized as the principle and cause of the radical and total emergence of all beings (intelligible and spatio-corporeal). Thus from the conceptual and operational point of view, the idea of the demiurge becomes inadequate, and parallel with this, essence itself, which in itself is eternal, universal, infinite, and simple, has become powerless to signify the temporal emergence of beings, outside of their cause, into created finitude. It is for this reason that Eriugena summons up the idea of a creator and the concept of existence. "*Divina providentia*" he writes, "*universitatem conditae creaturae ex non existentibus in existentia produxit*,"<sup>12</sup> or again: "*Deus creat igitur omnia quae de nihilo adduxit ut sint ex non esse in esse . . . ita omne quod dicitur existere non in seipso existit sed participatione vere existentis naturae existit*."<sup>13</sup> It is in this "*existential*" sense that one must understand the famous passage of Dionysius for which Eriugena seems to have a marked preference: "*esse omnium est superesse divinitas*."<sup>14</sup> Generally this passage of Dionysius is translated in the following way: "The superessential divinity (i.e., beyond being) is the being of everything."<sup>15</sup> This translation appears to me to give a faithful rendering of the thought of Dionysius; in fact, we know that the demiurge operates at the level of the essences that it establishes. Thus it is in some way anterior and superior to them as principle and as cause, that is, beyond being and eminently unknowable. On the other hand when the same ideas are ascribed to the authorship of Eriugena, it seems to me that there is a danger of misinterpreting his thought. It has not been sufficiently remarked that Eriugena is once again altering the Dionysian text, precisely in the words that immediately precede the passage we are discussing, and it seems thus to be given a new context and a new meaning. We read in the *Expositiones*:

"existentia omnia esse ejus participant."<sup>18</sup> The expression "existentia omnia" leaves no doubt, in my opinion, as to the way in which the "esse omnium" of the preceding phrase is to be understood: it is a question of the very existence of beings, of all the *existents* of whom it must be postulated that they participate in the *esse* of that which is *causa existentis*, since they are not themselves the principle of their own existence. This is my reading of line 132: "Thus all the existents participate in its existence." We are already a long way away from Dionysius. Is it possible then to render the line that follows without taking account of this context? Henceforth the proposition "esse omnium est superesse divinitas" can be understood in this way: "superexisting divinity is the very existence of all existents." Such a translation does more justice, it seems to me, to the constant efforts that Eriugenian thought makes to remain resolutely, in what refers to relations between God and the world, on the level of existents and of existence and not of beings and being (as is the case with Dionysius). This change of perspective once recognized, there could be no meaning, indeed there would even be a contradiction, in translating the "esse omnium est superesse divinitas" by "the superessential divinity is the being of everything," in the eyes of Eriugena. It is a trap that he managed to avoid. For our author, as we know, no essence (divine or created) can know itself or be known; the term "superessentialis" signifies exactly that conviction: "qui dicit superessentialis est, non quid est dicit, sed quid non est."<sup>19</sup> Now to state that superessential divinity (i.e., that of which one knows nothing essential) is the being of everything, is the equivalent, in good logic, of attributing a predicate, thus a determination, to a subject of which one does not know the essence. Here, consequently, is a proposition that, in addition to being contradictory, is far from being enlightening. On the other hand if one says: the superexisting divinity is the existence of everything, one is conveying that there is in God the Creator such an abundance and such a fullness of existence that they overflow onto all the existents of which he is the principle. From this viewpoint, not only does the proposition recover its coherence, but again it makes sense, for it appeals both in its subject (*superesse divinitas*) and in its predicate (*esse omnium*) to significations upon which thought has seized since only the *quia est* of the creatures and of the creator are accessible to it. Existence (*quia est*) is even the immediate datum of the Eriugenian *cogito*,<sup>20</sup> and it is from this first fundamental angle that human thought approaches the knowledge of God: "causa omnium . . . solummodo cognoscitur esse."<sup>21</sup>

Thus one can better understand how, by means of this reversal of viewpoint, Eriugena thought fit in the *De praedestinatione*<sup>22</sup> to invert even the order of the words that belong almost as of right to God, enumerating the verbs before the nouns: "quaedam sunt quasi propria quorum exempla sunt in verbis, quidem sum, es, erat, esse; in nominibus vero essentia, veritas, virtus, sapientia, scientia. . . ." Not only does Eriugena distinguish between the *esse* and the *quod est* in God, but he equally differentiates in him the *quod est* from the *qui est*.<sup>23</sup> These grammatical infrastructures to which Eriugenian thought has reference and from which it takes support, are of such a kind as to dissipate all ambiguity concerning his conception of divinity: being is not an anonymous principle, but is personal, and in relation to

the affirmative discourse which the human mind can conduct on the question, being is pure activity, absolute existence, the cause of existence, indeed even the establisher of the existents. Here is how he defines "creation": "creatio est omnium existentium substitutio;"<sup>24</sup> one can better imagine now the reasons which urged him to prefer the word *creator* to that of "*demiourgos*" and to call upon the concept of *existence* and of *existents* rather than that of the too essentialist *being* and *beings*. It is not without interest to note that each time that Eriugena encounters the expression *ta onta* in the Greek authors, he generally renders it by *existentia* in preference to *entia*. This last term is in fact totally absent from the *Expositiones* and appears only twice in the *DDN* and that within a quotation from Dionysius;<sup>25</sup> on the other hand the word "*existentia*" (the existents) occurs 158 times in the *DDN* and 18 times in the *Expositiones*. These constant alterations express a clear intention on the part of Eriugena which is that of bending the meaning of the word in the direction of his system, and they manifest from this fact that a change is in the course of being produced at the very core of Eriugenian Neoplatonism, of which the keystone has become the *creator*, the supreme existent, the principle and cause of all existence. Consequently, one need not be surprised to see Eriugena modify, for example, the fourfold division of things of Dionysius;<sup>26</sup> while the latter classifies beings into nonliving, living, rational, and intellectual, Eriugena corrects the first category and writes in *existentia*<sup>27</sup>—an interesting correction! It informs us that in his eyes existence is the first step of the universal scale of beings.

## II

We have seen up to now the lexicographical precedence which Eriugena accords to the constellation of the words "*esse*," "*existere*," "*existentia*." It is time to ask oneself what are the metaphysical consequences of this choice—what function and what meaning does he intend to give to the concept of existence? While Eriugenian man understands himself as an existent or knows himself as existing, he gives to existence the role of a fundamental gnosiological principle; to express it in a word—which, though bizarre, you will forgive—I believe that existence has, in the system of Eriugena, the function of an "ousiophany." It is striking to establish the extreme consistency and the close correspondence that exist between the different levels of discourse in the Eriugenian text, so much so that the theologian is in perfect harmony with the metaphysician, the logician, the poet, and the dialectician. Just as the spring that flows<sup>28</sup> appears to the eyes of the poet as an epiphany of what is taking place "in secretis sinibus Naturae", just as creation in its entirety is from the theological viewpoint a theophany, so existence for the metaphysician makes manifest the essence, in the manner in which the accidents (περτοχαι) reveal the substance for the logician, or as the individual, in the dialectical order of genus and species, is in a way found to be the ultimate limit of their revelation.<sup>29</sup> In the *Expositiones*<sup>30</sup> Eriugena tells us that the proper activity of the creator consists in leading the essences to existence: "adduxit eas, videlicet essentias, ad esse," and he adds immediately "ad essentiam plane," that is, that their accession to existence enables what was latent to be made manifest, what was

invisible to be made visible, and what was unknowable to be knowable. In the *De divisione naturae* it is still more explicit: "invenies," says the master to the disciple, "*ousian omnino in omnibus quae sunt, per se ipsam incomprehensibilem non solum sensui sed etiam intellectui esse. Atque ideo ex his veluti circumstantiis suis intelligitur existere, loco dico, quantitate, situ; additur etiam his tempus. Intra haec siquidem, veluti intra quosdam fines circumpositos, essentia cognoscitur circumcludi.*"<sup>31</sup> To exist, consequently, in the mind of our author, is for essence to possess the accidents whose principal mission is to allow the sense or the intellect to grasp not what it is (the *quid*), but at least that it exists (the *quia*). That is to say that the demarcations confirmed through the fact of existence enable essence to be better circumscribed, in some sense to be accounted for, just as the predicates explain the substantive of the proposition—in a word, to allow it to be made visible: "Deus ad visibilem essentiam adduxit."<sup>32</sup>

This "ousiophany" corresponds very exactly to the third mode according to which things are said *esse* and *non esse*. "Quicquid enim ipsarum causarum in materia formata, in temporibus et locis per generationem cognoscitur, quadam humana consuetudine dicitur esse. Quicquid vero adhuc in ipsis naturae sinibus continetur, neque in materia formata, vel loco vel tempore, ceterisque accidentibus apparet, eadem praedicta consuetudine dicitur non esse."<sup>33</sup> In this context of the spatiotemporal generation of things outside of their causes and of their principle (which is called etymologically *ex-sistere*), it is suitable to speak rather of *phusis* than of *ousia*: "nam graeci *phusin* pro *ousia* et *ousian* pro *phusei* saepissime commutant. Horum siquidem nominum proprietas est, *ousian*, i.e., essentiam, de eo quod nec corrumpi, nec minui in omni creatura sive visibili sive intelligibili potest predicari; *phusin* vero, hoc est naturam de generatione essentiae per loca et tempora in aliqua materia, quae et corrumpi et augeri et minui potest, diversisque accidentibus affici. . . . Omnis itaque creatura quantum in suis rationibus subsistit, *ousia* est; in quantum vero in aliqua materia procreatur, *phusis*."<sup>34</sup> Now the fundamental characteristic of every created existing nature is to be generated in time and space: "omnium itaque existentium essentia localis et temporalis est";<sup>35</sup> furthermore, these categories are the two first accidents to be comprehended: "videsne igitur locum tempusque ante omnia quae sunt intelligi?," the master asks the disciple who assents to the idea that time and space constitute in fact the very containers which delimit the essence.<sup>36</sup> As containers, they exercise a necessary gnosiological priority: "Necessario enim ea quae continent prius intelliguntur quam ea quae continentur."<sup>37</sup> As time and space first and then all the other categories contain and delimit the *ens creatum*, so they serve as a necessary mediation to the understanding of the content, that is, of essence, and thus they come to fix as the point of departure in the epistemological path existence itself, preeminent principle of "ousiophany."

### III

This view of things entails grave consequences, of which a first important one consists for Eriugena in conferring (thanks to that "ousiophany" which has just

been mentioned) on existence, on the spatiotemporal and phenomenal realities a preferential gnosiological status. But a second consequence, which is even more spectacular than the first, of which it is moreover the corollary, concerns the metaphysical theory of Eriugena. Postulating as the keystone of totality (the *to pan*) a creating divinity, no longer solely demiurgic but the cause of existence, generator of natures *in loco et tempore*, Eriugena saw himself gradually being constrained to integrate existence into the ontological order as the pole complementary to essence. He expresses his explanation of the subject in connection with his division of the five modes of *esse/non esse* in the opening passages of the *De divisione naturae*. According to the fourth mode, our author reports, "ea solummodo quae solo comprehenduntur intellectu, dicitur vere esse; quae vero per generationem, materiae distensionibus, locorum quoque spatiis temporumque motibus variantur, colliguntur, solvuntur, vere dicuntur non esse, ut sunt omnia corpora quae nasci et corrumpi possunt."<sup>38</sup> One can recognize here the opinion of the philosophers for whom being is identified exclusively with the intelligible. And Eriugena adds: this sense of the word "*esse*" is plausible (*non improbabiler*). It is a judgment filled with deference towards his masters in philosophy, and it is doubtless in order to do justice to them and to make his enumeration more complete that he inserts this fourth mode. But one feels that he does not adhere to this opinion; how could he, without leaving himself open to contradicting the instructions that *reason* itself and the customary manner of speech of human beings have laid down for him on the way in which *esse/non esse* are to be understood—instructions that he passes on to us when speaking of the first and third modes. Of the first he tells us: "ratio suadet omnia quae corporeo sensui vel intelligentiae perceptioni succumbunt, posse rationabiliter dici esse; ea vero quae per excellentiam suae naturae, non solum *uileon* id est omnem sensum sed etiam intellectum rationemque fugiunt, jure videri non esse."<sup>39</sup> *Esse* then signifies to devote oneself to the "prehension," or rather to the comprehension, of the senses or of the intellect, which, it must be emphasized, can happen only at the moment when essence, by definition incomprehensible, is revealed through accidents: "quicquid autem in omni creatura, vel sensu corporeo percipitur, seu intellectu consideratur, nihil aliud est nisi quoddam accidens incomprehensibile per se, ut dictum est, uniuscujusque essentiae."<sup>40</sup> In this context, thought can no longer discount the accidental in order to attain to substance, nor discount existence in order to gain access to essence; the *quid est* presents itself for our recognition under the form of the *quia est*. Essence then is bound up with existence, in a definitive way.

We discover the same concept expressed in the third mode, applied this time to the study of the entire visible universe. Eriugena informs us here that the fact, for the world, of existing in the flesh of the visible, that is, of having been projected outside of its causes (divine or primordial) and of being extended in time and in space, constitutes a supplementary perfection, a completeness: "Tertius modus non incongrue inspicitur in his quibus hujus mundi visibilis plenitudo perficitur."<sup>41</sup> Here then is *ousiophany*: the fact that an essence is placed in spatiotemporal existence and clothed in its accidents confers on it a fullness, a completeness that it did not possess as essence pure and unadorned, withdrawn as it was

from every human perception or intellection. We know that, for Eriugena, that which cannot be understood is in a certain way imperfect in the face of the connatural need of visibility which thought experiences, or, to put the matter differently, that which escapes all epiphany or manifestation does not exist. That is why he will say of God, who is pure infinite essence, outside of time and space, simple, without any accident, that he is *tenebrositas*, positive pure nothingness.<sup>42</sup> In spite of everything he will have lacked in these infinite perfections the complementary and ultimate perfection of revealing himself in his theophanies as supreme Existent and cause of existence, for, deprived of knowing the *quia est*, the human mind could not even guess at the superessential perfections of the *quid est*.

## IV

I hope I may be allowed, in coming to the end of this paper, not to draw conclusions nor to sum what has been said, but rather to express very briefly two general considerations that come to my mind following upon this commentary on the Eriugenian text. First, I want to say that Neoplatonism did not emerge intact or unscathed from its encounter with the Christianity of Eriugena, and neither did his Christianity, but that is another story. Second, the original synthesis that Eriugena succeeded in elaborating with the aid of his precursors represents a decisive turning point in the history of Western ontology. Indeed, if my understanding of Eriugenian thought is correct, it must be recognized henceforth that Eriugena, through the triple primacy that he attributes to existence (lexicographical, gnosiological, and ontological), reversed the order of Neoplatonic values without all the same abandoning them, and was well in advance of Thomas Aquinas and his Arab and Latin predecessors in introducing the concept of existence into the field of Western consciousness.

## 10

## *The Overcoming of the Neoplatonic Triad of Being, Life, and Intellect by Saint Thomas Aquinas*

CORNELIO FABRO

Just as the twelfth century is characterized by the diffusion of Platonism, so the thirteenth century bears the dominant mark of Aristotle, but an Aristotle who remains, even in Saint Thomas Aquinas, present and operative along with Platonic elements put into circulation by Neoplatonism. The commentary on the *De causis* can be considered to be the final step in the process of Saint Thomas' absorption of Neoplatonism. This commentary, which was occasioned by the appearance in the West of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, constitutes his discharge of a grave intellectual obligation to strike a theoretical balance in regard to all his earlier speculation.<sup>1</sup> Today no further doubt remains that Dionysius the Areopagite also drew heavily on the works of Proclus, if not in fact on the early *Elements of Theology*. Although Saint Thomas himself was unaware of this dependency, he explicates the *De causis* by constant appeal to Proclus, integrates the two, that is, Proclus and the *De causis*, and even corrects them both by using Dionysius.

What we might call "absolute realism," characteristic of the great speculative tradition which begins with Parmenides, achieves its perfect systematic expression in Proclus. We can best realize that this is no accident if we recall that Proclus

has also left important mathematical works. The informing principle of his *Elements of Theology* is the total and direct transformation of relations of formal universality into relations of reality and of causality, and this according to a fabric of relations which intersect one another as infinite lines and centers. What is involved here is a most complete and bold metaphysics of being, one in which "the real cause" is nothing other than the reflection of the logical "Because" and in which the Aristotelian apparatus of genus, species, and difference has been transformed into an objective hierarchy of being and powers.<sup>2</sup> There is thereby developed in the most extravagant form the systematic affirmation of that which we have elsewhere called "coexistence." As Thomas observes:

According to Platonic theory, whatever is found present in many things should be reduced to a first which, by its very essence, is such as that which others are said to be through participation in it. Hence, in this theory, infinite powers are reduced to a first which is by essence Infinity of power—not that it is a participated power found in some subsisting thing, but that it is something which subsists of itself.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, the classification of the first causes corresponds to grades of universality of the formalities themselves. However, the situation is not very clear in Thomas' exposition, which remains closely bound to the text of the *De causis*. The most obvious scheme is that there is, first of all, the One and the Good, which is followed by *ens* or *esse ipsum* and then by intelligence, life, and finally the world of bodies. On the contrary, between the Good and *esse* there are in fact at least two intermediaries, namely, *aeternitas*, which measures duration, and *infinitas*, which measures *esse*. There is thus an *esse superius aeternitate et ante aeternitatem*, namely, the first cause which is the cause of eternity, just as there is an *esse cum aeternitate*, which is the *intelligentia*, and also an *esse post aeternitatem*, which is the *esse* of the soul and of the corporeal world.<sup>4</sup> Even more, *infinitas* seems to accomplish this function, at least according to Saint Thomas' exposition, that is, an infinity that is situated above *esse* itself. But it is also clear that this first infinity, in turn, participates in the One and the Good that is above it. Ideal infinity is thus the mediator (μεταξύ) between the Good and the entire sphere of being.<sup>5</sup>

Following *infinitas idealis* there is then *ens ideale* or *esse separatum*. The Good is the very first cause, since it extends itself even to "nonbeing," which is matter for the Platonists. *Aeternitas* and *infinitas* are the ideal forms of all the separate forms, but the "separated" *esse* embraces all existing things. Proclus himself wrote with respect to that *esse*: "Omnium participantium divina proprietate et deificatorum primum est et supremum ens."<sup>6</sup> The commentary of Saint Thomas faithfully follows the line of Proclus by setting in relief the intensive emergence of being (*ens*), which is said, from this point of view, to follow immediately after the Good (*Bonum*).<sup>7</sup> Saint Thomas, as has already been noted, gives to the *De causis* an intermediate position between the *esse separatum*, which is the first created ideal form of Proclus, and the *esse participatum communiter in omnibus existentibus* set forth by Dionysius. He thus has the *De causis* assert an *esse participatum in primo gradu entis creati quod est esse superius*, which is therefore the highest

form of created participations and is to be found in the highest sphere of reality.<sup>8</sup> This formal emergence of *esse* involves the most intimate immanence, which is the effect of its closeness to pure *esse* itself.<sup>9</sup> While Saint Thomas interprets this *esse purum* as the first cause itself,<sup>10</sup> the text cited is too vague to authorize so important an identification, one that would break the rhythm characteristic of the Neoplatonic deductions. The difficulty of the question is to determine whether the dialectic of participation has to function with the binary rhythm of Christian creationism, namely, that of *esse per essentiam* and *esse per participationem*, or rather with the ternary rhythm of Proclus, namely, that of the participated, the participations and the things that do the participating. The text of the *De causis* does not provide sufficient support to allow Thomas to detach himself from his source on so decisive a point.<sup>11</sup>

It is not easy to orient oneself in the obscure forest of the Neoplatonic doctrine of "processions" (προόδου), especially that of the first intelligible triad, so as to be able to determine the relations that the first three hypostases have both with the One and also among themselves. For Plotinus the order is as follows: there first comes the One, from which proceeds Intelligence, and from the latter proceeds the Soul, which serves as the intermediary between the Intelligence and matter.<sup>12</sup> The One is also called the First (τὸ πρῶτον) and the Good (τὸ ἀγαθόν) because everything depends on it and everything aspires to it in being, life, and thought. It is also called the Simple (τὸ ἀπλοῦν), the Absolute (τὸ αὐταρχές), and the Infinite (τὸ ἀπειρον). The Intelligence contains the ideas (εἶδη) or pure forms, which are essences (οὐσίαι) and real beings (τὰ ὄντως ὄντα). They are also the intelligibles which compose the intelligible world (κόσμος νοητός) itself. The universal Soul (ἡ ψυχὴ ὅλη), or *Anima mundi* (ψυχὴ τοῦ κόσμου), causes and contains in itself all the particular souls.

The most important point for us is to determine whether the One and the Good is placed at the beginning of the series as the first of three hypostases, or whether it remains in itself separated from every relation with that which proceeds forth. In Porphyry, who declared his fidelity to Plotinus, it seems that the triad does exclude from itself the One, which remains outside it as its very principle. In Proclus, who here interests us more, the procession of the triads is complicated by tortured derivations of a metaphysical arithmetic, one that confronts us with an exasperating formal dreariness. The One and the Good thus seems to be left in its total isolation, while the first triad is arranged according to a structure that repeats itself, at diverse levels, with the same dialectical urgency. In *Platonic Theology*, the fundamental "diremption" seems to be the following: τὸ ὄν, ἡ ζωὴ, ὁ νοῦς that is, being, life, and intelligence, a triad that is said to be found everywhere (πανταχοῦ) according to the principle of πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν. The sphere of being is οὐσία, which comprehends the totality of the intelligibles; νοῦς embraces the sphere of the intelligent principles; and ζωὴ, the sphere of souls as principles of motion in the material world. Corresponding triads are those of πέρας, ἀπειρον, μικτόν, and μονή, πρόοδος, ἐπιστροφή.<sup>13</sup> This ternary rhythm, which unfolds below the One in endless complications, forms the key to the system of Proclus, which in turn inspired the *De causis*.

The context of the fourth proposition of the *De causis*, which sees the reason for the multiplicity of the intelligences in the composition of the finite and infinite, involves the thesis of an *esse separatum* which is not God but which can be called the *esse purum subsistens* because it is the first formality or the "head of the series" in the order of *esse*.<sup>14</sup>

Platonic causality, understood as ideal subsistence, descends from the abstract to the concrete. It falls in straight lines and is divided in parallel cascading. Metaphysical causality and noetic causality always exist here on the same plane and according to a perfect coincidence of relations. Although the principle of separation (χωρισμός) first divides and spreads reality apart into a fabric of scaled participations, it then unifies and constrains it with an iron structure of relations of necessary inclusion. Saint Thomas finds in Proclus' metaphysics of identity a logical and continuous development of the principles of Plato. In a word, the order of causality is symmetrical to that of universality:

Among these forms, however, he introduced this order: that to the degree that a certain form is more universal, to this degree it is more simple and prior as a cause, for it is participated in by posterior forms. It is just as if we were to say that animal is participated in by man, and life by animal, and so on for the other forms. The ultimate, in which all else participates and which does not itself participate in anything else, is the One itself, the separate Good which he said was the supreme God and the first cause of all things. Hence the following proposition, proposition 116, is introduced in Proclus' book: "Every god is capable of participating, . . . except the One."<sup>15</sup>

Since the intellects know only through participation in the intelligibles, the intellects follow the intelligibles in both the real and causal orders. But in his commentary—why I don't know—Thomas makes the intelligent beings to be the separate forms or pure formal unities (ἐνσώματα) of Proclus.<sup>16</sup> In any case, the causal derivation is divided according to Saint Thomas in two intentional currents, so to speak, one that is metaphysical and another that is noetic. For the soul, too, there is a participation of divinity, not through the direct communication of the ideal intellect but by means of the divine intellects. Bodies themselves, in their turn, participate in the divine by way of the divine souls.<sup>17</sup> The latter are the first divine hypostases (or "heads of the series") that constitute the source of causal derivation in their own genus and in subalternated genera.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the noble soul (*anima nobilis*), which presides over the whole corporeal world, has a double operation: (1) a divine operation insofar as it is a principle of movement for the whole of nature, and (2) the operation of understanding things. There is also a double participation, and therefore a double causality and a double dependence.<sup>19</sup>

Saint Thomas recognizes that in this doctrine of a descending, scaled causality there may lie hidden a grave danger for Christian creationism. However, he not only absolves the author of the *De causis* of all error, but he even appeals to the Platonists themselves, who conceived derived causalities according to the mode of participation and not of creation. The causality of the formalities following upon *esse* would therefore be of a complementary nature and not of a creative or

constitutive nature. The key to the turn which Thomas' commentary has taken here is the presupposition already mentioned, that is, that for the *De causis*—and here Saint Thomas extends this presupposition to the Platonists—*esse separatum* is God, the creator of the being of all things.<sup>20</sup> The mitigation which the *De causis* would introduce into the rigid Neoplatonic doctrines of vertical causality is formulated by Saint Thomas in proposition XVIII (XVII), which truly represents the nucleus of the Thomistic metaphysics of causality. It is that God, the First Being, gives being to all other things by means of creation (*ens primum . . . dat esse omnibus . . . per modum creationis*), while the other hypostases, namely, life (*vita*) and intelligence (*intelligentia*), give that which they give not through the mode of creation (*per modum creationis*) but through the mode of a form (*per modum formae*).<sup>21</sup> In his commentary on this proposition, Saint Thomas leaves the defense of this graduated or scaled creative causality to the Platonists, but he absolves of all blame the *De causis*, which here becomes allied with Dionysius—he had set up a like alliance for its position regarding the separate forms in God. It thus remains—and this is the important result for this dialectic—that there are two modes of causality, one by way of creating (which relates to *esse*), and the other by way of an informing (which relates to the other formalities).<sup>22</sup>

We already know the decisive application that Saint Thomas makes here of the notion of intensive *esse*:

Because therefore thinking (*intelligere*) presupposes living and living presupposes being (*esse*) and being does not presuppose anything else prior to it, so it is that the first being (*ens*) "gives being (*esse*) to all things by means of creation." But "first life," whatever this may be, gives life not by means of creation but after the manner of a form, that is, by forming. And a similar account is to be given of intelligence.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, Saint Thomas is persuaded that the *De causis* corrects itself at this point:

From which it is clear that when he said above that intelligence was the cause of soul, he did not understand this to mean that it was a creative cause, but merely that it was a cause by way of informing.<sup>24</sup>

The meaning of the formulae of the *De causis* now seems beyond discussion: the superior intelligences cause the inferior, and the inferior intelligences in turn cause the souls.<sup>25</sup> Saint Thomas' open recognition of this is very significant with respect to what can be called the theoretical tension internal to Thomism. Nevertheless, the only causality that can be attributed to separate substances, that is, the intelligences and angels, in regard to inferior substances is one of a dispositive nature. However, it is not possible to state that causality any more precisely. The *De causis* remains, then, faithful on this fundamental point to its Neoplatonic source.<sup>26</sup>

The incomplete treatise *De substantiis separatis* seems to represent Thomas' final stance towards Platonism, that is, Neoplatonism. Since the exposition is free and not tied to a text, it proceeds (as it seems) with a greater synthetic and critical power. It also constitutes the last word of the Angelic Doctor on these, the most difficult problems of metaphysics. We shall therefore briefly analyze its basic structure and salient doctrines.



A. The first chapter, which concerns the ancient philosophers (*De opinionibus antiquorum philosophorum*),<sup>27</sup> is mostly of a historical introductory nature. Four principal stages are indicated in the demonstration of the existence of spiritual substances: (1) the first philosophers, who were still ignorant of the nature of spirit; (2) Anaxagoras, who introduces the intellect only as a distinguishing principle of the cosmos; (3) Plato and the "Platonists"; and (4) Aristotle. If, for the first two stages, Saint Thomas still relies on the exposition of Aristotle, he enlarges his perspective in regard to Platonism and follows the new sources that he has now come to know. For the first time, the Platonic method of separation to attain the *veritas fixa* of the separate universals is directly related to the method of intellectual abstraction. This method is itself divided into two branches, namely, mathematical abstraction and physical abstraction.<sup>28</sup> According to Saint Thomas, Plato had envisaged two spheres of formal, separate beings, namely, that of mathematics and that of abstract universals, which he called *species* or *ideas*. However, an important difference is to be noted between the two spheres. While in the sphere of mathematical abstraction one can think of many individuals of the same species (for example, two equal lines or two equilateral triangles), in the sphere of abstraction of universals this is not possible. For example, man taken in his universality is only one in species. For this reason, Thomas explains, Plato placed the sphere of mathematical relations as intermediate between the species or separate ideas and the singular sensibles. Insofar as there can be many individuals of the same species in the mathematical sphere, that sphere bears a likeness to sensible singulars; insofar as the relations are abstract, it bears a likeness to the universals.

B. There then follows an analytical description of a metaphysical structure of the world that is still attributed to Plato, but which in reality gathers together the development of Neoplatonism as it can be found, for example, in Proclus. That structure consists of the triad of the *unparticipated*, the *things which are participated in* or *participations*, and those *things which participate*.

**1. The general principle and doctrine of the subsistent One.** The direct correspondence between the logical and the real orders fixes the primacy of the One and the Good:

Further, among forms themselves, he posited a certain order, on the ground that according as something was simpler in the intellect, so far was it prior within the order of things. Now that which is first in the intellect is the One and the Good: for he understands nothing who does not understand something one and good, and the one and the good follow upon one another. Hence Plato held that the first Idea of the One, which he called the One-in-itself and the Good-in-itself, was the first principle of things and this Idea he said was the highest God.<sup>29</sup>

Up to this point there is nothing new in comparison with the commentary on the *De causis*. However, what follows regarding the classification of the secondary unities, of the separate intellects, and of the souls reveals a greater penetration and adherence to the text of Proclus than that found in Thomas' commentary on the *De causis*. The fidelity to Proclus, even if not complete, is more visible.

## 2. The separate derived unities and the second gods:

Under this One, he established among the substances separate from matter, diverse orders of participating and participated beings, all of which orders he called secondary gods, as being certain secondary unities below the first simple unity.

There is a descending nexus of causality:

Again, inasmuch as all forms participate in the One, the intellect likewise must participate in the forms of things in order to have understanding. Therefore, just as under the highest God, who is the prime unity, simple and unparticipated, other forms of things exist as secondary unities and gods,<sup>30</sup> so, under the order of these forms or unities, he posited an order of separate intellects, which participate in the above-mentioned forms in order to have actual understanding. Among these intellects, an intellect is higher according as it is nearer to the first intellect<sup>31</sup> which has full participation in the forms; just as among the gods or unities, that one is higher which shares more perfectly in the first unity.

A higher mode of cognition is attributed to the second gods (or "participations"):

Although Plato distinguished between the gods and the intellects, he did not mean to imply that the gods could not have understanding. It was his desire, rather, that they should understand in a supra-intellectual manner: that is, instead of understanding by participating in certain forms, they should have understanding through themselves, with the proviso that every one of them was good and one only through participating in the first One and Good.<sup>32</sup>

Why does Saint Thomas not also apply this extension to the first One and to the Good? For the reason that he had already noticed, namely, that knowing for Platonism is inferior to the incommunicable reality of the First. Analogously, if the second unities or gods or separate forms understood, they would also participate in the intelligibles, and the intelligibles would no longer be the foundation of the participation in understanding on the part of the intellects.

## 3. The hierarchy of souls:

Again, because we see that certain souls possess understanding which, however, does not befit a soul by the fact that it is a soul, otherwise it would follow that every soul is an intellect and that it would be intelligent in its whole nature, he further posited that under the order of the separate intellects, there was an order of souls, the nobler of which participate in intellectual power, while the lowest of them are lacking in it.

The dignity of souls in the cosmic function is assigned to them with respect to bodies:

Again, because bodies do not seem to be capable of moving themselves, . . . , Plato held that self-motion belongs to bodies insofar as they participate in soul, since those bodies lacking in this participation, are not moved, unless they are moved by an-

other. Whence he considered it to be an essential property of souls that they move themselves.<sup>33</sup>

**4. The hierarchy of bodies.** A novelty of this classification is the aerial bodies or ethereal bodies of demons of which Apuleius speaks. It is a question of a body internal to the soul, invisible and perpetual as the soul itself.<sup>34</sup> And just as among men there are the good and the bad, so too are demons divided into the good and the bad. There are thus four orders of intermediate beings between us men and the supreme God. Below the One there are the second gods, the separate intellects, the celestial souls, and the good and bad demons.

**5. The derivation of beings.** The immediate creation of *esse* by God and the mediate production of the sphere of the real:

Influenced by these reasons, the Platonists held that in the case of all immaterial substances and, in general, all existing things, God is immediately the cause of being according to the aforementioned mode of production which is without change or motion. But they posited a certain order of causality in the aforementioned substances according to other participations in the divine goodness.<sup>35</sup>

The participations of the concrete are directly related to the subsistent universals of the respective formalities as, for example, man will participate in bipedness and animality.<sup>36</sup> Turning a bit further on to explain the division of spiritual substances, Saint Thomas, again citing the Platonists, mentions by name Plotinus (from Book IX of Saint Augustine's *City of God*), and he closes his exposition with a citation from the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus himself.<sup>37</sup>

Platonic causality is actuated as a participation that is the "presence" of the cause in the thing caused. Causality shows itself to be a defense and a recovery of the unity of the real insofar as the multiplicity of the effects is gathered into the unity of the cause. In turn, that cause has value—as cause—precisely insofar as it is a unifying principle in its own undivided immobile reality. In this way, causality becomes the verification and systematic foundation of the Parmenidean unity of the real. The complex causal hierarchies, which were devised by Neoplatonism and systematized by Proclus, actuate this program of unification which in Plato had remained suspended and dispersed in formal multiplicities. These latter multiplicities were set next to the One and each of them was placed one next to the other but without any clear and effective relation of dependence among them. Moreover, the relation between the ideal Platonic form and the sensible participants was a relation of "similitude," and this relation was equally affirmed for all the various relations that ran between the world of Ideas and that of reality. As a result, the abyss of separation between the intelligible world and the sensible world was left intact, and the world of ideal reality was contained in itself as an autocratic collection of pure Ideas, uncontaminated by sensible reality, which is itself subject to the vicissitudes of time according to the rhythm of generation and corruption.

Neoplatonism steadfastly maintains itself in this perspective of an "absolute realism" which makes the Good and the One to precede *esse* and places it outside

God. However, having been made more self-conscious by Aristotle's critique of *chorismos*, Neoplatonism thought to fill up the abyss of separation by the theory of the hypostases or higher unities. Consequently, while the *transcendence* of the ideal forms represents the first moment of the truth of being, the *immanence* of the same forms is the equally necessary second moment. Indeed, Platonic causality is resolved in this second moment of immanence. It is not so much a matter of explaining the "becoming" of reality—since the world itself stands before us and we ourselves are continually subject to its changes—it is, rather, a matter of individuating that which everywhere in the respective natures is always that which it is, and of discovering it in the form of an immutable presence. In this way, the reality of our experience does not properly exist in virtue of that which it is, but it exists, rather, thanks to that which it is *not*. That is to say, the real that we experience exists by means of that higher formality that maintains and penetrates everything with its power.

Saint Thomas brilliantly grasped the Neoplatonic innovation and his commentary on the *De causis* is the continuous explicit confirmation of it. The difficult point for all of this speculation lies in the divergence that remains between the formal unification of the real in itself and the concrete unity of the real of our experience. While Platonism opted for formal unity and lost real unity, Aristotelianism, on the other hand, opted for real unity but lost formal unity, or at least it reduced that formal unity to a universal in the human mind. In neither of the two do we reach the unification of the real in a supreme unity coeternal with God.<sup>38</sup> In this regard, the diversity of formulations that immediately leaps to the eye (both at the beginning and also in the very structure of the work of Proclus and of the *De causis*) is symptomatic.<sup>39</sup> With a perfect Platonic orthodoxy, the *Elements* opens with a prologue that treats of the One and of the Many (propositions 1–6), which is of course the central problem of Plato's *Parmenides*.<sup>40</sup> Such a prologue is missing in the *De causis*, and it would seem that nowhere in his commentary does Saint Thomas expressly follow any of these first propositions of the *Elements*. On the other hand, the *De causis* immediately begins in proposition 1 with the universal theory of causality which sums up the whole doctrine of the treatise and constitutes the motto that made it so famous in the Middle Ages: "Every primary cause has more influence over what it causes than does the secondary universal cause" (*Omnis causa primaria plus est influens super causatum suum quam causa universalis secunda*).<sup>41</sup> The universal theorem of dependence is later completed with propositions IX (VIII), XVI (XV), XVIII (XVII), XIX (XVIII), and XXII (XXI), and it is Saint Thomas himself who relates these aphorisms to one another. As to the commentary connected to the text, which seems to be by another author, possible Arab and also unknown, while it is on a noteworthy speculative level, it often leaves Thomas perplexed, and he prefers to concentrate on the text of Proclus himself.

The commentary of Saint Thomas on the *De causis* has a well-defined character. It aims to demonstrate the absolute dominion of God, the First Cause, and his unity insofar as he is the *ipsum esse subsistens*, and to do so according to the reduction of intensive *esse* proposed by Dionysius.<sup>42</sup> The fundamental agreement

of the doctrines of the *De causis* with those of Proclus is beyond discussion, and the Dionysian turn effected by Saint Thomas in his commentary concerns his own synthesis and transcends his interpretation of the text. This comes to light right from the first proposition. Where the *De causis* says: "Omnis causa primaria plus est influens . . . quam causa universalis secunda," Saint Thomas begins his own commentary by writing simply, that is, without adding anything else: "Cause prima plus influit in effectum quam causa secunda." The subject of the *De causis*, "omnis causa primaria," evidently stands for the plural because there are many primary causes in Neoplatonism, that is, all the primary forms or unities (ἐνότητες); every head of a series in the formal order, as we have seen, can be called "causa universalis primaria."<sup>43</sup> However, let us now turn to Thomas' commentary on the doctrinal content of this prologue, which he divides into a corollary and a conclusion: both of these points are taken from propositions 56 and 57 of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.

The example adduced as the first argument (*esse, vivum, homo . . .*) proceeds by reference to the formal causes, and in this consists the Neoplatonic method of establishing a direct relation between real principles and formal reasons: ". . . in quibus quanto forma est universalior, tanto prior esse videtur." However, in Thomas' interpretation of the example, the transcendental Platonic causality suddenly undergoes an explicit Aristotelian twist by means of the theory of substantial change. The principle that in formal causes: "quanto forma est universalior, tanto prior esse videtur . . ." holds for the three indicated formalities: *homo* indicates the specific form, *vivum vel animal* refers to the *forma generis*, and *esse* signifies *id quod est omnibus commune*. In the processes of generation and corruption, the more universal formality reveals itself as the more fundamental and primitive: in generation, *esse* is delineated first, then *animal*, and then *homo*, while in corruption, *homo* is lost first (that is, the use of reason!), then "*vita . . . et remanet ipsum ens quod non corrumpitur*."<sup>44</sup>

In the exposition that follows, Saint Thomas prefers Proclus to the *De causis*. For Proclus, the First Cause has greater influence because it is the cause of the very operation with which the second cause causes the effect and it is therefore of help to the second cause. For the *De causis*, however, reason, which is the second cause, is the effect of the First Cause. Indeed, the First Cause is cause of the very substance of the second cause, because the operative power itself of the second cause originates from the First Cause. Such being the case, it is not simply a matter of helping the second cause, but of establishing the very causality to be found in that cause:

Therefore, that the second cause is the cause of an effect is something it has from the First Cause. Therefore, to be the cause of an effect belongs primarily to the First Cause, secondarily to the second cause. But what is prior among all things is more greatly [to a greater degree], since the more perfect are prior in nature. Therefore the First Cause is the cause of an effect to a greater degree than is the second cause.<sup>45</sup>

Since the influence of the First Cause is, first of all, the most intense, it is therefore the most profound in its efficacy and the most universal in its extension.

In the second place, the First Cause is the last to abandon the object, "tardius recedit": here the felicitous expression of the *De causis*, which speaks of a "greater vehemence"<sup>46</sup> of the influence of the First Cause on the effect of the second cause, holds for a while the attention of Saint Thomas.

However, the demonstration of the third point, ". . . quia prius advenit," turns immediately to the two propositions cited from Proclus and extends in an Aristotelian manner the verification of the principle to the other kinds of causality, namely, material and efficient causality. Neither Proclus nor the *De causis* had of course thought of doing this. Thomas argues this for efficient causes in the following fashion:

For it is evident that the more an efficient cause is prior, the more does its power extend to many things. Hence its proper effect should be more common. Indeed the proper effect of the second cause is found in fewer things and hence is more particular. For the First Cause itself produces or moves the second efficient cause, and hence is a cause of its acting.<sup>47</sup>

In these resolute remarks is condensed the entire doctrine of transcendental causality which, in Platonism, issues from and absorbs into itself the whole cycle of causality.

Finally, the First Cause—the term itself indicates this—precedes in activity the second cause: "prius advenit . . ." No one could state more explicitly the triumph over Aristotelian immanence, which attributes to form, itself tied to matter, priority in being and activity. But in his entire commentary Saint Thomas always avoids this direct confrontation, which is still premature. He gets around the obstacle in a very skillful fashion in that the primacy which had been attributed to formal causes is now conceded to efficient causes. To justify turning things upside down Thomas does not invoke Aristotle, as we might have expected, but he again cites Proclus:

Therefore the three above-mentioned aspects which have been touched upon [the first cause "has greater influence . . . , leaves later, arrives earlier"] are found primordially in efficient causes and from this it is clear that the derivation goes out toward formal causes. Hence the word "to influence" ["to flow into"] is used here and Proclus uses the word "production"<sup>48</sup> which expresses the causality of an efficient cause.<sup>49</sup>

This change of front is of great importance for Saint Thomas in that, if we can take our departure from efficient causes as the prime analogate (*princeps analogatum*) of causes, we can also arrive at demonstrating the creation of prime matter. This demonstration is in fact one of the principal objectives of Thomas' commentary. No one can fail to notice that the direct creation of matter by God signifies creation itself and the total dependence of all being on God. The doctrine is here introduced by the analogy of the artisan who takes hold of the matter of nature. And so God, the first and supreme artisan, must be the creator of nature itself and therefore also of matter:

The First Cause of all things is compared to the whole of nature, just as nature is compared to art. Hence that which first subsists in all of nature is from the First Cause of all things and is particularized in each individual by the work of second causes.<sup>50</sup>

The final application of the proposition in its three moments holds good for the order of final causes: this too is an extension of obvious Aristotelian inspiration, but it presents us with the unexpected reduction of the final cause to the efficient cause:

For it is for the sake of the ultimate end, which is universal, that other ends are sought, the desire for which comes after the desire of the ultimate end and which ceases before it. But the essence (*ratio*) of this order [of cause] is reduced to the genus of efficient cause, for the end is cause insofar as it moves an efficient cause to act, and thus, insofar as it has the nature of that which moves, it belongs in some way to the genus of efficient cause.<sup>21</sup>

It is clear that this process of reducing the second causes to the First Cause is applied within the sphere of direct *per se* subordination and it is not effected through that *per accidens* subordination that lacks all rule or restraint. And so through his radical reflection on principle taken as act, Aquinas has overcome the static and circular dialectic of the Platonic triads (ὄν, ζωή, νοῦς) in such fashion as to make *esse ipsum* emerge as the constitutive metaphysics of God and also to make participated *esse* (*actus essendi*) emerge as the act of all acts and the perfection of all perfections.

# 11

## *The Problem of the Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism*

W. NORRIS CLARKE

My purpose in this paper is to trace a chapter in the history of ideas within the broad stream of Neoplatonism as it passes into Christian thought. The theme is one that caused special difficulties to Christian thinkers as they tried to adapt the old wine of Neoplatonic metaphysics to the new wineskins of Christian theism. My intention is not to focus in detail on just what each thinker involved held, as a matter primarily of historical scholarship. My interest will rather be focused primarily on the basic philosophical problem itself, and on tracing out the general types of solutions tried out by various key thinkers along the line from Plato to Saint Thomas. The problem is this: For Plato and all pre-Christian Platonists the world of ideas was "the really real"; hence, the multiplicity of the ideas and their mutual distinctions were also real, though in the mutual togetherness proper to all spiritual reality. Such multiplicity, however, was not admitted into the highest Principle, the supreme One, who by nature had to be absolutely simple to be absolutely one. But the Christian God, as personally knowing and loving all creatures and exercising providence over every individual, had to contain this world of archetypal ideas within his own mind, in the Logos. Yet the real being

of God was also held to be infinite and simple; the only real multiplicity allowed within it was that of the relational distinction of the three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How would it be possible to put all these doctrines together without internal contradiction in a consistent doctrine of God? The story of the various efforts to meet the problem is a fascinating and illuminating study in the history of ideas. Let us retrace the principle moments in it.

## PLATO

For Plato himself it is clear that the world of ideas possesses a strong dose of reality. The breakthrough to discover the abiding presence of this transcendent dimension of reality, for the first time in the history of Western thought, must have been a powerful, almost intoxicating, experience for him, as though a veil had been pulled aside to reveal at last the splendor of the truly real, in comparison with which our changing world of sensible objects was only a shadowlike imperfect image. No modern neo-Kantian or analytic philosophy reinterpretation of the theory of ideas as merely conceptual or linguistic categories should be allowed to vitiate the strength of Plato's ontological commitment to the objective reality of ideas, however this be finally interpreted.<sup>1</sup> But when we come to the relation between the world of ideas and the mind as knowing them, clouds of ambiguity begin to thicken. *Where* are the ideas? What is their ontological "location" or ground? Do they constitute an independent dimension of reality on their own, whose autonomous light is then passively received by any mind knowing them? Or do they reside in some ultimate mind that supports them by always thinking about them?

With respect to the human mind it is clear that the world of ideas constitutes a realm that is ontologically quite independent of our minds. We do not just make them up; our knowledge is true because they are there. The matter is more obscure when we come to the demiurge of the *Timaeus*. No direct statement is made; but the images used suggest that the demiurge, in order to create an ordered cosmos, contemplates and copies an objective world of ideas that is already given even for him; it is the natural object of his contemplation, as it is for all the gods and unfallen souls who drive their chariots across the eternal heaven of ideas, but it is not something they think up or produce out of their own substance but which they gaze on as already given. Contemplation, the highest act of any Platonic mind, is a motionless reception, not a productive act.<sup>2</sup>

This leaves the ultimate status and ground of the world of ideas veiled in obscurity for Plato. The sparsely adumbrated doctrine of the One and the Good as the ultimate source for both ideas and minds does significantly complete the picture. But it is never made clear whether the Good is a mind or something above it, whatever that might mean. There are indeed highly significant hints in the *Timaeus* and the *Sophist* that the whole world of ideas is part of a single great living unity. But the generation of the world of ideas by the Good, even if conceived as ultimate mind, which Plato never calls it, is quite compatible with the objective reality and the multiplicity of this world as the really real. In any case,

the ultimate relation between the world of ideas and mind remains unfinished business in Plato, a legacy for his successors to unravel.

## PLOTINUS

When we come to Plotinus—I will pass over the intermediate preparatory stages of Middle Platonism—a major resolution of the problem has been achieved, but with serious internal tensions still remaining. On the one hand, the ideas are now firmly located ontologically within the divine *Nous*; they no longer float in ambiguous ontological independence, but are eternally thought by this eternal mind as its connatural object. As a result the ideas themselves, though immutable, immaterial, and eternal, are alive with the very life of the divine Mind itself, each one a unique, self-thinking, spiritual perspective on the whole of reality.

On the other hand, there still remains a strong dose of the old Platonic realism of ideas, and this creates a tension between two somewhat conflicting perspectives on the status of the ideas in Plotinus—a tension that it does not seem to me that he completely resolves. This tension concerns the relation of priority between the *Nous* and the ideas: Is the *Nous* absolutely prior in nature (not, of course, in time) to the ideas, the realm of authentic being, as generative act to its product? Or do the ideas have a certain priority over the *Nous* as the true existence over the act that contemplates it? Or is there simultaneous reciprocal dependence, inherence, or even identity without any priority at all?

We would be tempted at first, viewing the problem from within the central dynamic perspective of the descending flow of emanation from the One, to assert that obviously the *Nous* (or Intellectual Principle) has priority over the realm of being or ideas, as their generating source. As the *Nous*, emanating from the One, turns back toward the One in its first ontological "moment," as an empty and formless ocean of potentiality, it is fecundated, so to speak, by its contemplation of the splendor of the One and bursts forth into producing the whole multiple world of ideas in atemporal ordered sequence (corresponding to the inner order of the intelligible numbers, one, two, . . .).<sup>3</sup> This dynamic perspective is certainly present in Plotinus, but surfaces only occasionally and briefly. I might add, speaking in my own name as philosopher, that in this direction lies, it seems to me, the only satisfactory metaphysical explanation of the relation between mind and ideas: the absolute priority of mind, as ultimate spiritual agent, over all ideas; existential act must always precede idea. This perspective gradually became dominant in Neoplatonism, both Christian and Islamic, after Plotinus, and in most modern thought. But it is still a minor chord in Plotinus himself.

There is another and more prominent perspective in Plotinus, however, which runs through the whole gamut of his works, both early and late; here the old Platonic priority of being over intelligence still stubbornly holds on and is never explicitly negated by Plotinus. This can be found especially in *Ennead* V, 9, "The Intellectual Principle, the Ideas, and the Authentic Existent," a very early treatise (no. 5) in chronological order. The first point developed here is that the ideas cannot be out-

side the Intellectual Principle, otherwise its truth would be insecure and its knowledge imperfect. The ideas must thus be part of the very self of the *Nous*, identical with its being as a single unitary life flowing through all the distinct parts. But Plotinus goes on to say more, giving a certain priority to the ideas over the *Nous* as thinking principle, so that they seem to constitute the very life of the *Nous* itself.

Being true knowledge, it actually is everything of which it takes cognizance; it carries as its own content the intellectual act and the intellectual object since it carries the Intellectual Principle which actually is the Primals and is always self-present and is in its nature an Act . . . but always self-gathered, the very Being of the collective total, not an extern creating things by the act of knowing them. Not by its thinking God does God come to be; not by its thinking Movement does movement arise. Hence it is an error to call the Ideas intellections in the sense that, upon an intellectual act in this Principle, one such idea or another is made to exist or exists. No: the object of this intellection must exist before the intellectual act (must be the very content not the creation of the Intellectual Principle). How else could this Principle come to know it. . . .

If the Intellectual Principle were envisaged as preceding Being, it would at once become a Principle whose expression, its intellectual Act, achieves and engenders the Beings; but, since we are compelled to think of existence as preceding that which knows it, we can but think that the Beings are the actual content of the knowing principle and that the very act, the intellection, is inherent to the Beings, as fire stands equipped from the beginning with fire-act; in this conception the Beings contain the Intellectual Principle as one and the same with themselves, as their own activity. But Being is itself an activity: there is one activity, then, in both or, rather, both are one thing.<sup>4</sup>

The above presents a significantly different perspective: here the inner being and act of the ideas seems to constitute the very act of the *Nous* itself, rather than the *Nous* giving them its own being by actively thinking them up. The older Platonic conception of mind, here faithfully reproduced, seems to be that mind as such, even the divine Mind, is by nature contemplative, not constitutive, of its object. This position, however, leaves open the difficulty we saw earlier in Plato, that is, what is the ultimate ground for the unified multiplicity of the world of ideas? It seems to be an exigency for intelligibility that only the active power of a unitary mind can ground both the multiple reality of the ideas and their mutual correlation into a single unified system. That is why the later more dynamic perspective in Plotinus, that of the *Nous* as generative of the world of ideas, is more metaphysically satisfying, and is the one that actually dominated in the subsequent history of Neoplatonism.

Even though priority is occasionally given to *Nous* over the ideas, the strong realism of the ideas still remains undimmed in Plotinus. And it is this that forbids allowing the world of ideas to be in the One. Since the ideas are really real, true being, and really multiple or distinct, and the One as pure unity cannot tolerate the slightest shadow of multiplicity within itself, even that between mind and idea, the

entire world of ideas or true being must be relegated to a lower level of divinity, the second hypostasis or *Nous*.<sup>5</sup>

### THE EARLY CHRISTIAN FATHERS

When the first philosophically minded and trained Christian thinkers took over the Neoplatonic philosophical framework to use in the intellectual explication of their faith, during the third and fourth centuries, they had to make two drastic changes in the matter which concerns us. First, the subordinationist hierarchy of divine hypostases in Plotinus had to be condensed into a single supreme divine principle, in which the three Persons within the divine nature were perfectly coequal in perfection of being, distinguished only by internal relations of origin, not by differing levels of perfection. Thus the Word or Logos, the Second Person, corresponding analogously to Plotinus' *Nous*, was declared perfectly coequal with the Father (corresponding analogously to Plotinus' One) sharing the identical divine nature and perfection. Secondly, the single supreme God of the Christians was identically creator of the universe through knowledge and free act of love, and exercised personal providence over each and every individual creature. This required that the one divine Mind, the same for all three Persons but attributed by special aptness to the Word or Logos, contain the distinct knowledge of every creature as well as the universal archetypal ideal patterns guiding the creation of the world according to reason. The old Platonic and Neoplatonic world of ideas, enriched with the distinct knowledge of individuals, is now incorporated directly into the one supreme divine nature itself. Christian thinkers simply had to do this to do justice to their own revelation, and they had no hesitation, but rather took pride, in doing so.

The metaphysical repercussions, however, of making the above changes in Neoplatonic tradition were of seismic proportions, and did not seem to be recognized very clearly for some time in their full philosophical implications. Two basic Neoplatonic axioms have now been violated. First, knowing a distinct multiplicity of objects, even only as ideas, is no longer considered an inferior mode of being, weakening and compromising the radical purity of unqualified unity and simplicity in the One. To know multiplicity is no longer a weakness, but a positive perfection, part of the glory, of a One that is *personal*. To *know* multiplicity is not to *become* multiple oneself. Secondly, purely relational multiplicity even within the real being or nature of the One is no longer a compromise or destruction of its unity, but an enrichment. The highest form of unity is now not aloneness but communion of Persons with one mind and will. We are not concerned here with this second principle, relational multiplicity within the nature of the One. Our concern is limited to the status of the world of ideas within the divine Mind.

It was one thing for Christian thinkers to *assert* that the world of ideas must be within the divine Mind as Logos, in order that God may personally know and love his creatures. But it is another thing to come to grips successfully with the metaphysical problems involved in thus adapting the Neoplatonic doctrine of the

world of ideas. In particular, what about the strong realism of ideas as true being, the really real, which was so deeply ingrained in the whole Platonic tradition, no less, in fact even more, in Plotinus than in Plato himself? If the ideas remain, as always in this tradition, true and real being, they must also be really multiple. Does this not introduce an immense multiplicity of real beings, an immense real pluralism, within the very being of God himself, thus negating his infinite simplicity? In orthodox Christian doctrine, as it was gradually worked out, the only distinct realities allowed in God were relations, and the only real relations allowed were relations of origin resulting in the three Persons. But if all the divine ideas are also authentic, hence, real being, and at the same time distinct from each other in the intelligible (real) order, then there is not only a multiplicity of distinct real beings within God himself but a still greater multiplicity of real relations between them. For the relations between ideas are clearly distinctly intelligible, and for every traditional Platonist whatever is intelligible is also real.<sup>6</sup>

It is not clear to me that the Greek Fathers ever came to grips explicitly with this metaphysical problem of the reality of the divine ideas in God, aside from asserting that God knew them all with a single act of knowledge, which Plotinus would also admit. (I would be very happy to receive any information from my colleagues on this point, since patristics is not my field and I have not had the time in preparing this paper to do extensive study on this point.) My general impression is that we will have to wait till a later period to find explicit metaphysical discussion on this point.

Let us turn briefly to Saint Augustine in the West, as a prime example, it seems to me, of avoiding the issue. He holds simultaneously two metaphysical doctrines that I do not see that he has brought together in a consistent whole. On the one hand, one of his central doctrines, learned, as he tells us, from the Platonists, is that of divine exemplarism, namely, that the divine Mind contains the ideal exemplars, the *rationes aeternae*, of all created things, according to which he creates them by willing them to be, to be *expressed*, outside of himself as real creatures, as real *essentiae*.<sup>7</sup> It should be noted along the way that Augustine is careful not to call the divine ideas *essentiae aeternae*, the eternal essences of things, but only *rationes aeternae*—eternal “reasons” or exemplary ideas, models. Since the concrete term *ens*, *entia* did not yet exist in Latin in Augustine’s time—it was introduced deliberately by Boethius centuries later—*essentia* was the standard noun derivative from the verb *esse* used in Augustine’s time for referring to existential being.<sup>8</sup> Hence, on the one hand, one might be led to believe that these *rationes aeternae* were not considered by Augustine to be a realm of true being, in God, since the entire universe of real being was created in time freely, not from all eternity, as these *rationes* necessarily existed in the mind of God.

On the other hand, when Augustine comes to an explicit discussion and definition of what it means to be—to be a being—his criterion of true being is quite unambiguously the old Platonic one of immutability; to be is to be *immutable*, to be identically and immutably *what* one is. His texts could hardly be more forceful:

There is only one immutable substance or essence, which is God, to which being itself (*ipsum esse*), from which essence draws its name, belongs supremely and in all truth. For that which changes does not keep its very being, and that which is capable of changing, even if it does not change, is capable of not being what it was. There only remains, therefore, that which not only does not change but is even absolutely incapable of changing which we can truthfully and honestly speak of as a being.<sup>9</sup>

Being (*esse*) is the name for immutability (*incommutabilitatis*). For all that changes ceases to be what it was and begins to be what it was not. True being, authentic being, genuine being is not possessed save by that which does not change.<sup>10</sup>

Being (*esse*) refers to that which abides. Hence that which is said to be in the supreme and maximal way is so called because of its perdurance in itself.<sup>11</sup>

All change makes not to be what once was; therefore he truly is who is without change.<sup>12</sup>

The difficulty here for a Christian thinker is that this criterion for true being is verified perfectly by the divine ideas, as well as by God himself in his own being. The ideas in God are indeed eternal and immutable, as the ideal patterns for all creatures and the ground for all truth, which by its nature must be immutable. Since they perfectly verify the criterion, they should indeed be true being, real being for Augustine, just as they were for Plato and Plotinus, from whom the doctrine of divine ideas was directly inherited. Yet strangely enough, Augustine never quite seems to draw this conclusion and speak explicitly of the divine ideas as real being in themselves. He just seems to drop the point, to pull back into discreet silence just before he gets into metaphysical trouble. It is, however, common Augustinian doctrine that things are present more truly and nobly in the divine ideas of them than in their mutable, imperfect, created existence. Perhaps he did not see clearly the difficulty of the ideas as real multiplicity in God, as did Plotinus; or perhaps he did see it, but did not know quite what to do with it, and just quietly let it drop. At any rate, he gives us no clear philosophical principles by which to solve it.<sup>13</sup>

### JOHN SCOTTUS ERIUGENA

Let us now skip to a later Christian Neoplatonist, the early medieval thinker John Scottus Eriugena, whose thought has the advantage for our purposes of bringing together both the Augustinian and the Dionysian traditions. Its special interest lies in that the problems that remained latent and untreated by Saint Augustine now come out into the open with striking sharpness in this daring but by no means always consistent thinker.

The point that concerns us is the ontological status of the second division of nature in the vast cosmic schema of John Scottus’ *De Divisione Naturae*, namely, *natura creata et creans*. This comprises the divine exemplary ideas or, as he calls them, the “primordial causes,” which are the “first creation” of God, coeternal with the divine Word, but always dependent on the Word, in whom they subsist.

They are created but also creating in their turn, charged with the power to unfold and produce the whole material cosmos spread out in space and time.<sup>14</sup>

The first point to notice is the strong Platonic realism of this realm of creative ideas. This is the realm of true being below God (who, for John Scottus, is the superessential Source above being itself).<sup>15</sup> It is in this ideal realm that all creatures, especially the sensible world of creation, have their true being, perfect and immutable; they are more real, they more truly exist, in these eternal idea-causes than in themselves as the explicated effects or emanations of these causes, for the latter are not merely abstract ideas or static models but causal forces charged with creative power of their own, though deriving, of course, from their higher Principle. Thus each one of us exists more truly in the eternal idea of man than in our own temporally spread out existence in this lower material world. We have here one of the strongest statements of what is to be a favorite theme of Christian Neoplatonists all through the Middle Ages, at least in the pre-Scholastic period.<sup>16</sup>

The realism of these primordial causes is also borne out by the assertion that they have been "made," "formed," "created" by God as the first level of creation—a stronger term than any previous Christian thinker had used to refer to the divine ideas, though, to do him justice, he sometimes warns that "created" here is not used in as strong and proper a meaning as its ordinary sense as applied to the second creation, that of the present contingent world. These primordial causes are produced *by* the Father *in* the Word from all eternity, in whom they subsist; yet as made (produced) they deserve to be called created. But what is created by God and which, itself, has causal power must certainly be real, and because immutable, also eternal, and spiritual, that is, authentic being, of which the changing world of bodies is but a shadowy image or participation. No statements of Augustine about the being of this realm of divine ideas are nearly as strong and clear as those found in John Scottus. It looks as though the Neoplatonic world of true being in the *Nous* has reappeared with new vigor and splendor.

It is a little surprising, therefore, to discover that, when Eriugena comes to speak of the mode of being of these primordial causes in the Word, with respect to their real multiplicity and distinction, he asserts in the strongest possible terms that in the divine Word they are absolutely "simple, one, unseparated," perfectly identical with the Word's own being, and "indistinguishable, without differentiae," until they unfold in their actual effects in the space-time sensible world.<sup>17</sup> To illustrate how they subsist in simply unity in the Word, he uses the example of how all numbers are present in the monad before division and how all lines are present in the point that is the center of a circle, with no distinction until they begin to unfold from the center.

Here I have the impression that Eriugena is being a better Christian than a Neoplatonist. I do not see how he can consistently hold both the real being and plurality of the primordial causes and also their perfect simplicity, unity, and identity with the Word as subsisting in it. Plotinus in fact holds the exact opposite, and would object as follows: The way that all numbers are in the number one and all lines in the point at the center of the circle is indeed the way that all things are precontained in the highest principle, the One, who is "the potentiality of all

things" (*dynamis pantôn*) without being any of them. But this is not the way the ideas, the realm of true being, are in the second hypostasis, the *Nous*. There they are indeed held together in the unity of a single undivided spiritual life of intelligence; but this unity is a complex unity, not a simple one: it includes all the distinct intelligibilities of each Idea-Being as intelligibly distinct (though not separated or divided), as well as the distinction between the *Nous* as subject and the realm of being as intelligible object. It is precisely because of this multiplicity that the world of ideas can have no place in the perfect, simple unity of the One, but only in a lower, less unified hypostasis.<sup>18</sup>

But there seems to be no trace in Eriugena of these reservations about the perfect unity and simplicity of the primordial causes in the Word. It is not clear how he can have it both ways, though if he is to remain both a good Christian and a good Neoplatonist he must try. Here we have the latent tension between the conflicting demands of the two traditions coming sharply to a head, since Eriugena pushes each one all the way to the limit. It is a remarkable case of the coincidence of opposites. If one looks at this apparent impasse as a speculative philosopher, there seems to be only one possible way in which one could hold onto both sides of the opposition without contradiction, although this "solution" brings its own new train of problems with it. Suppose that one were to hold that true being, the very being of the primordial causes, is *nothing else but* their being thought by God. Their truth is identical with their being. In this case since the *act* of knowing or thinking them is one single simple act, and they have *no other being* save their being thought, it could be said that their being, as identical with the act of thinking in the Word and never really emanating out from it to possess their own distinct being—until, of course, they are unfolded in the material cosmos—is really one single simple being identical with the Word.

In fact, it seems that this is precisely what Eriugena himself has followed, at least in certain of his strong formulations, such as:

For the understanding of all things in God is the essence of all things . . . all things are precisely because they are foreknown. For the essence of all things is nothing but the knowledge of all things in the Divine Wisdom. For in Him we live and move and have our being. For, as St. Dionysius says, the knowledge of the things that are is the things that are.<sup>19</sup>

For the understanding of things is what things really are, in the words of St. Dionysius: "The knowledge of things that are is the things that are."<sup>20</sup>

It is true that Eriugena does qualify this identity here and elsewhere by calling the divine knowledge the cause of the things that are, so that cause and effect would seem to be distinguished. But if this distinction is pushed too far, hardened into the strong Aristotelian real distinction between cause and effect—and I think this is also true in its own mitigated way in Neoplatonism—then his position on the unity, simplicity, and identity of the primordial causes in the Word will collapse. Only in the relation between thought and its self-generated ideas can there be a real identity of being between cause and effect, *granted* that the ideas have no being of their own.



I have two remarks to make about this doctrine of the identity of thought and being in Eriugena. First, if this is the case, it is now easy to understand how all creatures can be more truly in God, that is, in his knowledge, than in themselves, since it is this knowledge that in fact constitutes their true and perfect being. Another daring doctrine of Eriugena also becomes clear: in a sense, man himself is the creator of the material world, because he holds it together in unity in his own mind, as participating in the divine wisdom, and the material world exists more truly and perfectly even in man's mind than in itself. Again true being is identical with being known. We are here on the edge, if not over the edge, of something like the Hegelian mode of idealism, as has often been pointed out. We will consider the philosophical difficulties of this position later.

Secondly, it seems to me that here Eriugena has gone farther than Plotinus and classic Neoplatonism itself, and in a sense dramatically reversed the old Platonic realism, which on the other hand he seems to be strongly asserting and certainly wishes to assert. For in the Plotinian *Nous*, or world of true being, as we have seen, even though the ideas are held together in the unity of a single unified spiritual life, the act of divine intelligence, still this life, this unity of the world of being and knowing, is a multiplex unity, an intelligible (hence, real) diversity in unity and unity in diversity. The ideas truly emanate from the *Nous*, while remaining within it, to the extent that they are distinguished as subject and object; also the ideas truly have being within them, so much so that it is almost equally legitimate to say that the *Nous* itself is constituted in being by its union with the ideas as to say that the ideas are constituted in being by the *Nous*—there is a kind of reciprocal priority between them; a strong dosage of the old Platonic realism of ideas as in themselves true being still remains. Nothing like this can be found in Eriugena. In no way can it be said that the Word for him is constituted by the ideas it eternally thinks. The relation of dependence is strictly one-way, asymmetrical. His solution is Christian; can it still be called authentically Neoplatonic? I doubt it.

Let us now turn briefly to some of the purely metaphysical difficulties inherent in the Neoplatonic side of Eriugena's doctrine of the divine ideas as true being, with the result that we, like all creatures, exist more truly in our primordial idea-causes in God than in our own "explicated" temporal existence in ourselves—the third division of nature, that which is created but does not create. If this position is taken literally and in full seriousness, then the problem arises, What is the point of this unfolding of our true being, already present from all eternity in God, into our present lesser mode of existence? What is the point of our existential struggle for salvation in human history in a lesser mode of being when we are already perfect in our truest being in God? The whole value of human history, including that of the Incarnation and temporal life of Christ himself, seems to become so secondary and "accidental," as he puts it, that it becomes disturbingly ambiguous, if not tinged with unreality. His only answer seems to be the classic Neoplatonic one, a purely impersonal kind of metaphysical law of emanation—that the emanation must go on to its furthest multiplicity, that the Craftsman of the universe would not have shown forth the fullness of his power unless he had made

all that could be made and unfolded all the oppositions between creatures and not just their harmonies. It should be remembered that in the second division of nature, the primordial causes, there are no oppositions or *differentiae* between the various genera and species; all is perfect togetherness.

This is a typical Neoplatonic theme or axiom of emanation, that the great chain of being must unfold all the way to the limit of its possibilities, by an inherent necessity of the self-diffusiveness of the Good. But such a view of the value and meaning of the contingent world as only an inferior ontological state of the *same* world at a higher level is hardly compatible with the inspiration of Christian personalism, where the supreme locus of value is the existential dimension of freely given personal love, moral nobility, and so on. The subject of the salvific redemption of Christ and the final beatific vision in the heavenly Jerusalem is not the eternally perfect, immutable idea of man, but the unique contingent individual John Smith who has worked out his salvation freely with the help of God on the stage of human history. In a word, there is a profound metaphysical, epistemological, and religious ambiguity in the Neoplatonic conception of the relation of the ideas to true being, not indeed in the presence of exemplary ideas of all things in God, but in their ontological evaluation, namely, that the true being of anything is found more fully, as true being, in its idea state in the mind of God than in itself. The classic Neoplatonic worldview of reality is not ultimately a personalism. The tension, if not contradiction, between this metaphysical view of reality and that implicit in any authentic Christian personalism seems to me to be profound and irreconcilable: it remains one of the central unsolved problems haunting Christian Neoplatonists—also, I might add, Islamic and Sufi Neoplatonists—throughout the pre-Scholastic Middle Ages. To sum it up, as this problem surfaces in John Scottus Eriugena, I do not think he can hold, if he is to be a consistent and authentically Christian thinker, *both* that the primordial causes are absolutely simple and one in the Word, which a Christian must hold, *and* that the true being of all creatures resides in these divine ideas, rather than in their own contingent being in history, which a traditional Neoplatonist should hold. One of these two positions will have to give way if a consistent Christian metaphysics is to develop. But for this we have to look beyond the daring and seminal, but not always consistent, brilliance of John Scottus Eriugena.

In thus casting doubts on the metaphysical consistency and Christian assimilability of the cherished Neoplatonic theme that our true being is found in, consists in, the eternal idea of ourselves in the mind of God, I do not wish to deny the power and fruitfulness of the theme as it functioned—understood somewhat loosely, without pressing its metaphysical implications too rigorously—as a guide for spiritual development in the rich flowering of Christian spirituality during the Middle Ages. The operative concept here is that we understand our true self and come to realize it by turning toward and striving to fulfill the ideal model or exemplar of our fulfilled selves that God holds eternally to his mind and draws us toward by the magnetism of his goodness. Our true selves are indeed *seen* in God's ideas of us, and this vision is pregnant with the magnetic drawing power of the Good. But this does not require the further metaphysical commitment that our

true being, our true selves, literally *is*, consists in, the divine idea of us. But it took a long time for these underlying metaphysical issues to be worked out explicitly in medieval Christian thought.

### THE SCHOOL OF CHARTRES

Let us now move several centuries down the line and take a brief look at another Christian Neoplatonist treatment of the same problem. This is the famous School of Chartres, known for its exaggerated Platonic realism of ideas.<sup>21</sup> Its main themes are really a revival of John Scottus Eriugena with some original variations. The themes we are interested in are the realism of the divine ideas and their ontological status in the mind of God. Again we find almost the identical position of Eriugena. The true being of creatures is found in the divine ideas, which Thierry of Chartres, perhaps the most daring of the school, calls *formae nativae*. These are found in their pure state in the mind of God, and become imprisoned and diminished by union with matter. As Clarembald of Arras tells us, the true being of anything comes from its form: *omne esse ex forma est . . . quoniam forma perfectio rei et integritas est*.<sup>22</sup> But all these forms as in God become a single simple form: God is the *forma essendi* of all forms and through them of all things.<sup>23</sup> But as they exist in God these exemplary forms are not yet explicated or unfolded as they are in the created world. Just as all numbers are already precontained in the simple unity of the monad or number one, so all forms are *complicatae* (enfolded as the opposite of unfolded) in the unity of one form in God. As Thierry puts it in a striking image, in God all forms fall back into the one: "The forms of all things, considered in the divine mind, are in a certain way one form, collapsed in some inexplicable way into the simplicity of the divine form."<sup>24</sup> And thus "every form without matter is God himself."<sup>25</sup>

Clarembald of Arras explains further how the many forms are enfolded without real plurality in the one:

Every multitude lies hidden in the simplicity of unity, and when in the serial process of numeration a second is numbered after the one and a third after the second, then finally a certain form of plurality flowing from unity is recognized, and so without otherness there can be no plurality.<sup>26</sup>

Here again, it seems to me, we run into the same unresolved tension as we found in Eriugena. It is indeed an authentically Christian metaphysical doctrine that all ideas are identical in being with the one perfectly simple being of the divine Mind. But I submit that this is not an authentically Neoplatonic doctrine: the ideas in the divine *Nous* for all classic Neoplatonists are already unfolded in their distinct intelligible multiplicity and hence in their plurality of being, thus forming the system of true being as integrated plurality—a plurality, however, without spatial or temporal separation, held together in the unity-multiplicity whole of a single spiritual life. (It is indeed true—this was objected to me in the discussion of the paper—that the ideas, like all things, are in a sense in the One, as the "power of all things" [*dynamis pantōn*]). But this is in a mode of supereminent simplicity, as

in the power of the cause from which all else emanates, not in the mode of distinct intelligibility or of true being as in the *Nous*. The realm of being is below the pure unity of the One.) And if the thinkers of the school of Chartres insist that these divine ideas or native forms, though simple and one in God, are nonetheless the true being of all things, then we have a metaphysical impasse. *Either* this is ■ metaphysical contradiction or incoherence, *or* true being is nothing but its being thought, has no being of its own but only that of the act that thinks it. This seems to me the conversion of the Neoplatonic realism into a latent idealism that is quite foreign to the original inspiration of the doctrine, and, I believe, to the explicit intentions of the Christian Neoplatonist thinkers themselves. Which side of the dilemma did they actually opt for? I have the impression that they were just not that clearly aware of the metaphysical implications of their thought and made no clear option, but remained oscillating ambiguously somewhere in the middle, unwilling to give up either end of the opposition.

But to be fair to them, the blame is not entirely theirs. They are trying to cope with the rich but enigmatic heritage of the Pseudo-Dionysius, who in his turn has tried to impose a new dialectic of the unmanifest-manifest divinity on the old Neoplatonic doctrine of the emanation of the world of ideas and the *Nous* from the One, but without making it that clear that some significantly new metaphysical laws have been introduced. Although something similar to the unmanifest-manifest dialectic can certainly be found in classical Neoplatonism, still the particular way in which Pseudo-Dionysius interprets it to hold onto the ontological simplicity of God—in terms of the divine "energies" which are both divine, God as *manifested*, and yet somehow multiple—seems to me to have a strong dose of oriental as well as Neoplatonic roots, unless one considers it an original creative Christian adaptation of Neoplatonism. I cannot go into this complicated but intriguing problem here. The Dionysian doctrine has remarkable affinities with the Hindu notion of the *shakti*, or divine power, of the "manifest" Brahman at work in the world. It was given central prominence later in the Eastern Orthodox theology of Gregory Palamas, but was rejected by Western Scholastic theologians. Like the doctrine of multiple divine ideas, it is filled with metaphysical tensions of its own.

### THIRTEENTH-CENTURY SCHOLASTICISM

We now come to a decisive new chapter in the history of our problem, one that finally provides a coherent metaphysical resolution to the almost 1000 years of tension within Christian Neoplatonism. This solution emerges gradually during the twelfth century, due to the struggle over the reality of universals, and finally comes to a head in thirteenth-century Scholasticism. Here the technical precision demanded of professors trained in Aristotelian logic and functioning in a professional academic community could no longer be satisfied with inspiring but metaphysically fuzzy pantheistic-sounding formulas that at the same time repudiated Pantheism, or with the simple assertion of unexplicated paradoxes held together by metaphors such as "all forms fall back into the simplicity of the one divine

form." The crucial decision is finally made: the Platonic realism of ideas must once and for all be given up.

There seems to have been a fairly wide consensus on this point, though, as we shall see, not universal. It was not only the Aristotelian current of Albert and Thomas Aquinas that sponsored it: leading Augustinians such as Saint Bonaventure also agreed. In fact the latter provides us with an admirably succinct summary of the basic position:

God knows things through their eternal "reasons" (*rationes aeternae*). . . . But these eternal intelligibilities are not the true essences and quiddities of things, since they are not other than the Creator, whereas creature and Creator necessarily have different essences. And therefore it is necessary that they be exemplary forms and hence *similitudines representativae* of things themselves. Consequently these are intelligibilities whereby things that are made known (*rationes cognoscendi*), because knowledge, precisely as knowledge, signifies assimilation and expression between knower and known. And therefore we must assert, as the holy doctors say and reason shows, that God knows things through their similitudes.<sup>27</sup>

The die is cast. The divine ideas are no longer the very forms, the true being, of creatures, but their intentional similitudes, whose only being is that of the one divine act of knowing. (It is quite true—as was objected in the discussion—that the divine ideas in Bonaventure seem to have a greater ontological density and dynamism than in Saint Thomas. But this remains the *creative* dynamism of the Word itself and is not the true being of creatures as for John Scottus. The very next question after the above quotation, whether there is any real multiplicity in the divine ideas, makes this clear beyond the shadow of a doubt. Hence, the suggestion made that he qualifies his position in the next paragraph is entirely without textual foundation.) But the firmest and clearest grounding for this common position is provided by Thomas Aquinas, with his new metaphysics of the composition of essence and act of existence (*esse*) in creatures and the location of the real perfection of beings no longer on the side of form but on the act of existence of which form is limiting principle.<sup>28</sup> Thus creatures have no true being until God as creative cause gives them their own intrinsic act of existence, which is not their intelligible essence but a distinct act by which form itself comes to be as a determinant structure of a real being. As creatures are precontained in the divine ideas, they simply do not yet have this act of their own intrinsic *esse*, hence are not yet properly beings at all, let alone the really real. Their "subjective" being is identified entirely with the being of the simple act of divine intelligence which "thinks them up" (*adinvenire* is the word Saint Thomas carefully picks out, which means to invent or think up, not discover, which would be *invenire*) as possible limited modes of participation in his own infinite act of *esse subsistens*.<sup>29</sup> Thus their entire being is their *being-thought-about* by God, in a single simple act without any plurality of real being, though there is a clear plurality and distinction on the level of the objective intelligible content thought about by this one act. In a word, in the new technical terminology, the divine ideas are now only the "signifying signs of things" (*intentiones rerum*), not things themselves; their being is *esse*

*intentionale* not *esse naturale* or *reale*.<sup>30</sup> This crucial distinction between *esse intentionale* and *esse naturale*, in terms of which alone the doctrine makes sense, is the one piece that has been conspicuously missing from the entire Platonic tradition, and for good reasons. To have admitted it would have blown up classical Platonism from within, or at least forced such a profound adaptation as to involve almost a change of essence. The term itself is an inheritance neither of the Platonic nor even the Aristotelian tradition, but from Arabic sources.

This single stroke of distinguishing the subjective being of ideas, which is nothing but the act of the mind that thinks them, from their objective content, their intentional meaning and reference which can be multiple and distinct, opened the way at last to a metaphysically coherent assimilation of the whole Eriugenian doctrine of the presence of the divine ideas in the Word in a single, simple act prior to any plurality. The latter was indeed a brilliant insight of Christian Neoplatonism, but one that could not make sense unless the doctrine that accompanied it in Eriugena—that of the ideas as true being in themselves—was jettisoned. The divorce was painful, but inevitable. But this move also entailed the dropping of another cherished theme of classical Neoplatonism, namely, that the passage from the divine ideas, or realm of true being, to their unfolded exemplifications in the contingent world of matter is a passage to a lower mode of being, a degradation or diminution in being. Creation now becomes, on the contrary, a positive expansion from the merely mental being of the world of divine ideas to a new dimension of true being "outside" the divine Mind (*extra causas*), as an enrichment of the universe through a gracious free sharing of its own real perfection; for this real perfection is always in the line of actual *esse*, and this was not yet accomplished in the realm of the divine ideas by themselves.

The same move also forced, if not the total giving up, at least the drastic toning down and reinterpretation of another closely linked theme long cherished by Christian Neoplatonists in the pre-Scholastic period following the lead of Augustine himself.<sup>31</sup> This is the notion that all creatures exist in a higher, more perfect state in the exemplary idea of each of them in the mind of God than in their own created being—especially so, but not exclusively, in the case of material beings. This theme still keeps recurring in the spiritual writings of Christian Neoplatonists, used as a potent motivation and intellectual model for spiritual growth.<sup>32</sup> But its literal metaphysical force is now toned down.

Clearly Thomas Aquinas cannot hold this as a metaphysical doctrine—and not even Bonaventure, if he is to remain consistent with his text quoted above. For if, as I am present in the mind of God, I do not yet possess any slightest trace of my own intrinsic act of *esse*, in proportion to which alone is measured all my real participation in the perfection of God, then it cannot be literally asserted that I *exist*, have my true being, in a higher and more perfect state in God's idea of me than in my own contingent created existence in myself. It is true that my *intelligibility*, the *intelligible content* of the divine idea of me, exists in a higher, more perfect way in God than in me; but this is still not my true being, my *esse*.

Thomas is quite aware that he is laying aside a long and venerable Augustinian tradition. But as is his wont in so doing, he never directly contradicts it, but

reinterprets it to draw the most he can out of it without compromising his own metaphysical integrity.<sup>33</sup> Thus in the present case he is quite willing to admit that there is a certain fulfillment for a material being to exist, as known, in a spiritual intelligence, *a fortiori* in God's, since in being thus known the material mode of existence is transposed into a spiritual one, that of intentional existence, which is identical with the spiritual act of the mind knowing it. But this fulfillment can exist only if the material being already exists in its own material being and is *also* known in a spiritual mode. The real being of the material thing does not *consist* in its being known and the latter state cannot be substituted for the former with the full value retained. It does remain true, however, that the perfection of our real being is *represented*, held before us by the divine idea as an ideal goal, a final cause, drawing towards its actual *realization* through the drawing power of the Good reflected in it. It functions thus as a powerful *motivation* for spiritual growth toward the fulfillment of our true being to-be-realized; but it is not this true being already existing in the mind of God. For if the latter were literally the case, why bother with working out on an inferior level the same perfection already given on a higher level? This was the enigma haunting, as we saw, Eriugena's emanation from the second to the third division of nature—a problem to which he gave no recognizably Christian solution.

All did not agree, however, with this deontologizing of the divine ideas. Henry of Ghent, teaching in Paris at the end of the thirteenth century, and drawing his inspiration both from Avicenna and Neoplatonism, complains that the more "current theological opinion" has gone too far in rejecting the doctrine of Eriugena and reducing the divine ideas to nothing but understood "modes of imitability of the divine essence (*rationes imitabilitatis*)."<sup>34</sup> To this he opposes "the position excellently expressed by Avicenna in his *Metaphysics*, according to which the ideas signify the very essences of things."<sup>35</sup> Expounding this position elsewhere he distinguished between two aspects of the ideas: (1) "the essences of things in the divine knowledge as objects known . . . which are really other (*secundum rem aliae*) than the divine nature"; and (2) "the *rationes* by which these are known, which are really identical with the divine nature."<sup>36</sup> To explain this he introduces his own technical terms of a distinction between an idea and its *ideatum* or object, and a distinction between the being of essence and the being of existence (*esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*):

Since therefore the ideas in God exercise causality in every way over the things of which they are the forms, by constituting them in both their *esse essentiae* and their *esse existentiae*, and this according to the mode of the exemplary formal cause, therefore the relation of the divine idea to its *ideata* . . . is according to the first genus of relation, which is that between the producer and its product . . . so that it follows from the divine perfection that from the ideal *ratio* in God, the first essence of the creature flows forth in its *esse essentiae*, and secondly, through the mediation of the divine will, this same essence flows forth in its *esse existentiae*.<sup>36</sup>

But the introduction into Christian thought of this Avicennian attempt to salvage Neoplatonism in a creationist universe, by means of a world of possible

essences which, as someone put it, "stands up stiff with reality" (the reality proper to essence in itself, distinct both from the idea that thinks it up and its later mode of created actual existence), did not find hospitable acceptance among the thirteenth-century and especially later Christian theologians. The ghost of John Scottus Eriugena was no longer welcome at the banquet of Christian theology, although the overtones of the doctrine do linger on in Duns Scotus and down through Descartes, Spinoza, and the early rationalism of modern philosophy.

#### FOURTEENTH-CENTURY NOMINALISM

We cannot conclude our story, however, without a brief word on the final de-nouement in medieval times. The thirteenth century gave birth to a careful balance between a firm maintaining of the presence and role of the divine ideas in God and a firm rejection of their identification with the true real being of creatures. The pendulum now swings all the way to the opposite extreme. The deontologizing of the divine ideas is pursued so relentlessly that the divine ideas themselves, even in their *esse intentionale*, finally disappear entirely. This is the work of William of Ockham and his nominalist followers. His sledgehammer metaphysics, pairing the principle of contradiction with the divine omnipotence, will allow no medium between full reality—evidenced by full real distinction and separability—and nothing at all. One of the first casualties is the *esse intentionale* of the great thirteenth-century metaphysical systems. Either the so-called divine ideas are real being, and thus real multiplicity, in God—which a Christian thinker cannot accept—or they are nothing at all. The divine ideas, venerable tradition though they be, must be resolutely jettisoned in the name of Christian thought purified of all pagan Platonism. Nothing in the divine nature is immutable or eternal except the being of God himself. But God is not an idea:

The divine essence is not an idea, because I ask: the ideas are in the divine mind either subjectively or objectively. Not subjectively, because then there would be subjective plurality in the divine essence, which is manifestly false. Therefore they are there only objectively; but the divine essence does not exist only objectively (i.e., as the object of idea). Therefore it is not an idea.<sup>37</sup>

As Gabriel Biel, a later Ockhamist disciple, puts it succinctly:

These two, namely, immutability or eternity, and multiplicity or plurality, do not seem compatible (for the divine essence, which is immutable and eternal, does not allow that plurality which is posited among the ideas—for each creatable thing has its own proper and distinct idea—and although this plurality is proper to the creature, immutability and eternity are not, but are proper to God alone).<sup>38</sup>

The so-called divine ideas must therefore be banished from God and identified simply with creatures themselves as the direct objects, without intermediary of any kind, of the divine act of knowing. The danger of this position, of course, as became all too clear with the unfolding of nominalism, was that, in the name of saving the divine simplicity, all intelligible structures of creatures as causally prior to creation also seem to have vanished from the divine mind, and we are threat-

ened with an unfathomable abyss in God of pure unilluminated will power which seems at the root of intelligence itself, leading to the substitution of divine will rather than intelligence as the ground of morality. As Biel does not hesitate to put it: "It is not because something is right or just that God wills it, but because God wills it therefore it is right and just."<sup>39</sup> With the banishment of the divine ideas, we have now come full circle in the spectrum of positions within Christian thought. The divine simplicity has been preserved, but at the expense of that other pillar of traditional Christian metaphysics, which Saint Thomas and other thirteenth-century Christian thinkers worked so hard to bring into equilibrium with the divine simplicity, the theory of divine exemplary ideas. The total negation of the Neoplatonic world of ideas is as unacceptable in Christian philosophical thought as its ultraracalism. A Christian metaphysics of God can survive only at a point of balance in the middle. Professor Anton Pegis has made the suggestion, in a brilliant article on "The Dilemma of Being and Unity,"<sup>40</sup> that in thus moving to such an extreme anti-Platonic position, Ockham and the nominalists are still the unconscious prisoners of Platonic thought, accepting uncritically one of its basic presuppositions: namely, that the world of intelligibility is necessarily and unavoidably a world of real multiplicity. The Neoplatonists drew the conclusion that, since being and intelligibility were necessarily correlative partners, then the supreme source of reality, the One, must be beyond both being and intelligibility. The nominalists drew the conclusion that, since the supreme principle must be being, Ultimate Being itself must be raised above intelligibility. But both conclusions proceed from the same premise. The only solution is to do away with the premise itself—that an intelligible order is necessarily linked to real multiplicity. It was this decisive move, rendering Christian Neoplatonism finally viable, that we owe to Saint Thomas and other Aristotelian-influenced thinkers of the thirteenth century.

### CONCLUSION

To sum up briefly, the key point I have tried to make, as a metaphysician reflecting on the history of a problem, is that, although large areas of Neoplatonism can be assimilated for the profound enrichment of Christian thought, there is one doctrine that stubbornly resists coherent assimilation: this is the doctrine of the realism of ideas, that the true being of things consists in the pure ideas of them as found in the mind of God (or elsewhere). This is inconsistent first and foremost with the Christian notion of the existential identity of all the divine ideas, however distinct in their intelligibility or *esse intentionale*, with the one simple act of the divine mind thinking them, so that there is no real plurality in God outside that of the three divine Persons. It is also inconsistent, though this point remained more latent in actual medieval discussion, with the value given to created existence as the gift of God's love and the decisive value given to human salvation freely worked out in contingent history through the Incarnation of the Son of God and the free moral response of historical man. The chapter we have just studied

illustrates once again that the encounter between Neoplatonism and Christian thought was a deeply challenging one, where genuine assimilation and viable synthesis could be brought about only by profound creative adaptation, in some cases even the final rejection, of some aspects of Neoplatonism.

## 12

# Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity

BERNARD MCGINN

The history of the relation between Neoplatonism and Latin Christian theology is long and complicated, the names of its protagonists many. Ambrose and Augustine, Boethius, John the Scot, Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart, and Nicholas of Cusa are only some of the figures that would appear on any list of the major attempts to make use of Neoplatonic thought as a vehicle for the speculative appropriation of Christian belief. But brief reflection on the fates of these seven sages gives us pause. The views of two of them, John the Scot and Meister Eckhart, were subject to posthumous ecclesiastical condemnation, and Boethius, if safe from criticism in the medieval period, has been subject to accusations of being a "closet pagan" by modern scholars over the past century. Such condemnations and suspicions seem to confirm the feeling that Neoplatonic thought is at best a problematic (and frequently an unhelpful) language for the expression of Christian theology. Such general feelings, however, are rarely very useful for the historical theologian, except when tested and confirmed in particular cases. They are especially dangerous when the contrasted poles of the comparisons and contrasts (e.g., Neoplatonism and Christianity) are treated as clear and distinct sys-

tems miraculously exempt from historical development and change. The following essay attempts to study one example of the interaction between an important aspect of Neoplatonic thought, in this case the dialectical understanding of the One or Absolute Unity, and the Christian doctrine of God as found in one of the most controversial of the Christian Neoplatonists, Meister Eckhart.

This test case is a significant one. Along with John the Scot and Nicholas of Cusa, Eckhart is arguably the most systematic of the Latin Neoplatonic dialecticians, and he is the one who suffered the most for it. The majority of the twenty-eight propositions from his works condemned by Pope John XXII in the Bull "In agro dominico" of March 27, 1329, involve or imply aspects of his appropriation of Neoplatonism. Three of them (articles 23, 24, and 26) relate directly to his doctrine of God, the subject of this paper.

Nearly everyone agrees that there are problems in Meister Eckhart's doctrine of God. Less consensus is found about what the main problems are, and agreement about the best way to resolve them is rarer still. By its very mode of presentation Eckhart's thought invites, even encourages, disagreement and polemics among its interpreters. Not only the problem of the relative weight to be accorded the Latin and the German works, but also the occasional character of many surviving texts has bedeviled subsequent students. In a brief paper definitive solutions are not to be expected, but it may be possible to set out on the road that leads to a more adequate understanding of what the German Dominican taught concerning God as a way of illustrating the encounter between Neoplatonism and Christianity. This investigation will be in three unequal stages. First, a brief note of three major problems in Eckhart's teaching on God; second, an analysis of the Meister's interlocking theories of predication, analogy, and dialectic as a way of beginning to resolve the first of these problems; and third, a reflection on the nature of Christian Neoplatonism suggested by Eckhart's dialectic of the One.

As is well known, in the first of the *Parisian Questions*, dated 1302 or 1303, Eckhart denies the Thomistic thesis that existence (*esse*) and understanding (*intelligere*) are the same in God and affirms the priority of understanding to existence in the divine nature:<sup>1</sup> "I say that if there is anything in God that you want to call existence, it belongs to him through his understanding."<sup>2</sup> In the prologue to the *Opus Tripartitum*, which is probably late but cannot be dated with security, the first of the theological axioms analyzed is that "Existence (*esse*) is God." Here the Meister affirms that the four transcendental predicates of existence, unity, truth, and goodness can be applied to God alone in the proper sense, while the title and order of treatment suggests that he accords clear priority to *esse*. The many attempts to deal with this first problem in the German Dominican's doctrine of God may be broadly broken down into those which admit contradiction, surmizing that Eckhart changed his mind,<sup>3</sup> and those that try to show the inner unity of the two texts either by appealing to diverse perspectives or by locating the presentations within a broader and more systematic treatment of Eckhartian theology.<sup>4</sup>

A second disputed area arises from the study of passages in some of the German works that seem to affirm a distinction between God and the Godhead.<sup>5</sup> Traditional Latin theology, enhanced by the condemnation of the supposed Trini-

tarian errors of Gilbert of Poitiers at the Council of Rheims in 1148, resisted any separation of the Trinity from a prior unmanifested divine essence. How seriously are we to take Eckhart's language then? The answer to this question depends on many prior issues concerning the relation of the German to the Latin works and the author's teaching on the Trinity. Many would agree with those who suspect that the distinction between God and the Godhead indicates that Eckhart viewed union with the divine nature in a way that was not distinctively Christian in the last analysis.<sup>6</sup> Others would contend that there is at least a definite priority of the divine unity over the Trinity in the Eckhartian view.<sup>7</sup>

A third problem follows hard apace. Perhaps no part of Eckhart's teaching was more controversial, in his own day as in ours, than his statements regarding the birth of the Word in the soul. The papal bull of condemnation refers to this teaching in six of its twenty-eight articles, and debate about the meaning of such claims as "... the Father generates me his Son and the same Son. Whatever God does is one, and for this reason He generates me his Son without any distinction"<sup>8</sup> has continued to our own day. Eckhart defended his pronouncements with vigor in his response to his accusers, the *Rechtfertigungsschrift* or *Defense*. He even said that he had never taught that a part of the soul was uncreated, a position that may seem contradictory to assertions in his surviving works.<sup>9</sup> But the Meister was a true Scholastic, well able to invoke a distinction where others would see only a contradiction. Where does the truth lie? The massive problems surrounding Eckhart's teaching on the birth of the Word in the soul, while more directly related to his theological anthropology than to his doctrine of God, necessarily have profound ramifications for the latter. One can take Eckhart's *Defense* at face value and see nothing more in his teaching than traditional theology expressed in novel language,<sup>10</sup> or one can discern seemingly inevitable pantheistic implications of the birth of the Word in the soul.

These three problems are too complex to be open to any brief and facile solution. Within the limits of a paper, however, it may be possible to suggest an avenue of approach to the language contrasting God as *esse* and God as *intelligere* that will show that there is no contradiction in this area of the Meister's thought.

Like most well-trained Schoolmen, Eckhart was a logician as well as a metaphysician and theologian. Perhaps beginning at the humble level of his theory of predication may both help avoid errors in loftier domains and also hint at the systematic coherence of this thought. Most notably in the prologues to the *Opus Tripartitum*,<sup>11</sup> though not absent elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> we find in Eckhart a doctrine regarding two modes of predicating terms that, while it is based upon the teaching of Aristotle and Aquinas, has quite different implications. Thomas had used the distinction between two-term and three-term propositions to reflect on the nature of the language we use about created reality. A two-term proposition (*secundum adiacens*), one in which the verb stands as the second term, intends to affirm that the action predicated is really taking place. Thus *Socrates currit* or *Socrates est* affirm that Socrates really is running or really exists. A three-term proposition (*tertium adiacens*), on the other hand, one in which the verb "is" serves as the copula uniting the subject with a predicate and thus forms the third element in the

sentence, does not make any assertion about the actual relation of subject and predicate, but only about their logical relation. Thus, *Socrates est albus* affirms that whiteness is logically compatible with Socrates without direct consideration of whether or not Socrates really exists.<sup>13</sup>

Eckhart, on the other hand, used the distinction between *secundum adiacens* propositions like "X exists," and *tertium adiacens* propositions like "X is this," to reflect on the difference between the language we use about God and the way we speak of created reality. While he nowhere denies the Thomistic application of both kinds of propositions to created being, his analyses concentrate upon the preeminent case of the transcendental terms of existence, unity, truth, and goodness.

For when I say that something exists, or I predicate one, true, or good, these four terms feature in the predicate as the second term (*secundum adiacens*) and are used formally and substantively. But when I say that something is this, for instance a stone, and that it is one stone, a true stone, or a good this, namely a stone, these four terms are used as the third term (*tertium adiacens*) of the proposition. They are not predicates but the copula, or they are placed near the predicate.<sup>14</sup>

Eckhart's use of the distinction here rests upon the difference between unlimited and limited predication. Two-term propositions imply the unlimited possession of the predicate, its absolute fullness, the negation of its negation.<sup>15</sup> Hence in the case of the transcendentals, they can properly apply to God alone. "God alone properly speaking exists and is called being, one, true, and good."<sup>16</sup> In three-term propositions the key is the particularity of the predicate, the "this" or "that." The transcendental term is here reduced to a "kind of copula"<sup>17</sup> that connects predicate and subject according to a manner of classification, that is, "X is in the class of those things that are particular according to existence or unity, and so on." This logic of propositions coheres exactly with the well-known distinction between *esse simpliciter* and *esse hoc et hoc* which Eckhart uses throughout the prologues and elsewhere to express the separation between God and creation.<sup>18</sup>

This overriding sense of the difference between God and creation expressed in the two types of predication is helpful for understanding some of the peculiarities of Eckhart's doctrine of analogy.<sup>19</sup> Here again, while the terminology has its starting place in Thomas Aquinas, the development takes a very different direction. The *Parisian Questions* note that nothing is formally in both the cause and the effect if the cause is a true cause,<sup>20</sup> and since only analogous causes are true causes for Eckhart,<sup>21</sup> we should not be surprised that the Meister's understanding of analogy is centered on formal opposition rather than on proportionality, intrinsic attribution, or participation. In a classic text like that in the *Sermons and Lectures on Ecclesiasticus* (nn. 52-54),<sup>22</sup> we are told that

... analogates have nothing of the form according to which they are analogically ordered (*analogantur*) rooted in positive fashion in themselves, but every created being is analogically ordered to God in being, truth, and goodness. Therefore, every created being radically and positively possesses existence, life, and wisdom from and in God and not in itself.<sup>23</sup>

This analogy of "extrinsic attribution" is found throughout the Latin and German works.<sup>24</sup> It is at the root of the denial of *esse* of God in the *Parisian Questions*,<sup>25</sup> and is also found in the vernacular *Book of Divine Consolation*.<sup>26</sup> It seems less important to debate whether this doctrine of analogy results in a mere quasi-Lutheran imputation of being to creatures as E. Gilson argued,<sup>27</sup> or a fleeting sense of loaned being as J. Koch held,<sup>28</sup> than to recognize that what is most distinctive about Eckhart's analogy is its ability to reverse itself.<sup>29</sup> If *esse* and the other transcendentals are understood as referring to the existence of creatures, the terms cannot be used of God; rather, he must be seen as something above such existence. If *esse* is taken *simpliciter*, it is properly predicated of God in *secundum adiacens* propositions and improperly predicated of created reality in *tertium adiacens* ones. The observation that Eckhart's notion of analogy is a two-edged sword is not meant to deny that he usually strikes with one side, that is, that explicit treatments of analogy are usually designed to affirm something of God and deny it of creatures,<sup>30</sup> or to affirm something from the point of view of principial knowing, as C. F. Kelley would have it.<sup>31</sup> One of the propositions for which the Meister was condemned was that "All creatures are pure nothing. I do not say that they are a little something or anything, but that they are pure nothing."<sup>32</sup>

Predication and analogy call out for dialectic to complete the picture. These are not three different approaches or methods; they are more correctly seen as three levels of increasing depth in Eckhart's presentation of God and his relation to creation.<sup>33</sup> What the dialectical level shows is that the inner meaning of *secundum adiacens* predication and of the reversible analogy of *esse* and *intelligere* as God-language is best expressed in the *unum* (the One, or Absolute Unity) that simultaneously manifests both the utter transcendence and the perfect immanence of the divine nature.

In his exegesis of Wisdom 7:27, "And since Wisdom is one, it can do all things," Eckhart gives the most sustained treatment of the dialectic of divine transcendence and immanence found in his corpus. He begins from the specification of the first of the related poles of the meaning of *unum*: "... the term 'the One' is the same as 'indistinct,' for all distinct things are two or more, but all indistinct things are one."<sup>34</sup> Right from the outset, he associates *esse* with the indistinction of the *unum*, thus hinting at the important relation between this text and his prologues.<sup>35</sup> "Saying that God is one," as he puts it, "is to say that God is indistinct from all things, which is the property of the first and highest *esse* and its overflowing goodness."<sup>36</sup> On the basis of this pole of indistinction three proofs are advanced that God is one.<sup>37</sup> Then the first part of the text closes with a brief remark that precludes the investigation of the other pole of the dialectical understanding of *unum*: "Therefore, it must be recognized now that the term 'the One' sounds negative but is in reality affirmative. It is the negation of negation which is the purest affirmation and the fullness of the term affirmed."<sup>38</sup>

In the second part of his treatment Eckhart further analyzes *unum* and its relation to multiplicity in order to advance a single argument for the unity of divine wisdom. The argument centers on an extended consideration of the meaning of "negation of negation," perhaps the most detailed of all the Meister's

treatments of this key notion. Because *unum* adds nothing to *esse* except negation, that is, the affirmation that it is nothing else than itself, "... it is immediately related to *esse* and signifies the purity and core and peak of *esse* itself, something which even the term *esse* does not."<sup>39</sup> Hence Absolute Unity or the One belongs most properly to God, even more than such other transcendental terms as Truth and Goodness. The conclusion reached through the investigation of the notion of Absolute Unity is then buttressed at the end of the second part by an appeal to Macrobius, Boethius, and Proclus on the relation between the opposition/distinction and participation/indistinction of the One and of number.<sup>40</sup>

This sets the stage for the third and most interesting part of the exposition. Drawing together what has already been implied, Eckhart shows how the two poles of *unum*, both involving negative and positive moments, cannot be separated, but are indissolubly linked in a dialectical coincidence of opposites. "Nothing is as distinct from number and what is numbered or numerable, that is, what is created, as God, and yet nothing is as indistinct."<sup>41</sup> Three proofs are advanced to demonstrate distinction or transcendence and three proofs of indistinction or immanence. The first two arguments for the complete transcendence of the One over creation can be seen as parallels to the separation between God and creation implied in the Meister's doctrines of predication and of analogy. The third proof is new and it is a dialectical one:

Everything which is distinguished by indistinction is the more distinct insofar as it is indistinct, because it is distinguished by its own indistinction. Conversely, it is the more indistinct insofar as it is distinct, because it is distinguished from indistinction by its own distinction. Therefore, it will be the more indistinct insofar as it is distinct and vice versa.<sup>42</sup>

In order to grasp the import of this crucial but dense passage, it may be helpful to paraphrase the key sentences in terms of transcendence and immanence and their relation to the language of *esse*. "Everything which is distinguished by indistinction is the more distinct insofar as it is indistinct, because it is distinguished by its own indistinction" can be read as: "Everything which is transcendent by reason of immanence is the more transcendent insofar as it is immanent, because it is made transcendent by its own immanence." In brief, God transcends creation because he is immanent to all creatures, or, in the language of existence, God alone is true *esse*. The following sentence, "... it is the more indistinct insofar as it is distinct, because it is distinguished from indistinction by its own distinction," means that: "It is more immanent insofar as it is transcendent because it differs (transcendently) from immanence by a difference that is no difference at all." Briefly put, God is the more immanent to creatures the more he transcends them because the distinguishing characteristic of the One is its indistinction from all things. In the language of *esse*, God is immanent to all creatures as their transcendental existence.<sup>43</sup> Thus while this text initially may sound like a mere verbal game or wordplay (and no one would want to deny that Eckhart loved verbal games), the play is meant to reveal, insofar as human language ever can reveal, the dynamics of the relation between God and creation.



The same structure of argument is repeated in the three proofs of the indistinction or immanence of the One in all things. The first is perfunctory, the second a summary of an earlier argument, the third is dialectical and crucial. "Nothing is as indistinct from anything as from that from which it is indistinguished by its own distinction. But everything that is numbered or created is indistinguished from God by its own distinction, as said above. Therefore, nothing is so indistinct and consequently one. The Indistinct and the One are the same; hence God and any creature whatever are indistinct."<sup>44</sup> The exposition concludes by a return to the exegesis of the Scripture verse. Having demonstrated that wisdom is One, Eckhart gives three arguments that it can do all things by applying the seventeenth axiom of the *Liber de causis*, ". . . insofar as a thing is simpler and more unified, it is stronger and more powerful, able to do many things."<sup>45</sup>

Space precludes a detailed consideration of other passages, but it is easy to show that the fundamental lines of this text from the *Commentary on Wisdom* appear throughout Eckhart's treatments of the divine nature. The first pole of the dialectic, the understanding of *unum* as *indistinctum*, that is, the "not-to-be-distinguished,"<sup>46</sup> and therefore as properly predicated of God alone, is constant throughout the Meister's works.<sup>47</sup> The other pole—namely, that *unum* signifies complete self-identity, the negation of negation that is the purest and highest form of affirmation—according to J. Quint's enumeration appears fifteen times in the Latin works and in some detail in the twenty-first of the German Sermons.<sup>48</sup> Although Thomas Aquinas had twice spoken of unity as the negation of negation,<sup>49</sup> it seems difficult to deny some influence to William of Moerbeke's translation of Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides* on the important place of negation of negation in Eckhart's thought, however different the uses of the Athenian and the Thuringian may have been.<sup>50</sup>

What is most characteristic of Eckhart's understanding of God as Absolute Unity is the dialectical way in which it demonstrates the coincidence of opposites of divine transcendence and immanence. Even the passages in which the Meister explains the dialectical relation of God and creatures in slightly different language, such as the *Commentary on Exodus* (20:3–4), where a polarity of *similitudo/dis-similitudo* is joined to that of *distinctio/indistinctio*,<sup>51</sup> do not fundamentally depart from the message of the *Commentary on Wisdom*. Among the many texts that treat of the dialectic in explicit or implicit fashion,<sup>52</sup> it may be worthwhile to single out two in order to reveal how the Meister communicated his teaching to the broader audience of the Sermons. In the Latin Sermon IV, on the text from Romans 11:36, "Ex ipso, per ipsum et in ipso sunt omnia," Eckhart gives a concise summary of four anthropological implications of the dialectic of distinction and indistinction. The third is the most significant:

Because, just as God is completely indistinct in himself according to his nature, in that He is truly and most properly one and most distinct from other things, so too man in God is indistinct from all things in God (for "everything is in Him") and at the same time completely distinct from all things.<sup>53</sup>

A similar anthropological application is present in the well-known German Sermon, "Blessed are the Poor," where it is more daringly formulated as a technique to invite the soul to break through beyond the realm of opposition implied in the terms "Creator" and "creature" to the region where the opposites dialectically coincide.

Where man still preserves something in himself, he preserves distinction. This is why I pray God to rid me of God, for my essential being is above God insofar as we comprehend God as the principle of creatures. Indeed, in God's own being, where God is raised above all being and all distinctions, I was myself, I willed myself, and I knew myself to create this man that I am.<sup>54</sup>

It is now time to ask how the inherently dialectical character of Eckhart's doctrine of God as Absolute Unity helps to solve the problem presented at the outset. Specifically, how does God as *unum* relate to the teaching of the prologues on God as *esse* and to the claim of the *Parisian Questions* that *intelligere* and not *esse* is more adequate in speaking of the divine nature?

The relation between *esse* and *unum* as the *puritas essendi* should be evident from the texts analyzed. No theme in Eckhart is more constant than his identification of God with *esse simpliciter*.<sup>55</sup> But the texts from the *Parisian Questions* and elsewhere that suggest the limitations of the language of *esse* must be taken seriously. These strictures spring not only from the reverse analogy of which Eckhart was so fond (i.e., if *esse* is properly predicated of creatures, it cannot apply to God), but also from the implications of the transcendental uses of "esse." While it is never incorrect to say that God as *esse simpliciter* is also the *esse omnium*, or existence of all things, the term "esse" seems semantically less capable of revealing the dialectical coincidence of transcendence and immanence in the same way that *unum* understood as the *negatio negationis* and *puritas essendi* does.

The similarities and differences in the dialectical availability of *esse* and of *unum* are well illustrated by a series of passages in the *Commentary on John*. In exegeting John 3:34 Eckhart appropriates the One (*li unum*) to the divine substance, the unity underlying the three Persons of the Trinity, while *ens*, *verum*, and *bonum* are ascribed to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>56</sup> But in his treatment of John 10:30 ("The Father and I are one"), the Meister reverses this and identifies *esse* as what is absolute and undetermined in God, that is, the Godhead or essence, so that *unum* ("... that which among the four transcendentals is most immediately related to *esse*") is ascribed to the Father, and *verum* and *bonum* to the Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>57</sup> But the *unum* of which Eckhart speaks in this and similar passages is not identical with the full range of the dialectical understanding of *unum* of the *Wisdom* commentary. It represents only an aspect of it, that of the distinction that first sets *esse* off from all multiplicity and makes the Father the first productive principle within God and in creation.<sup>58</sup> In this passage, however, the Meister does seem to suggest that *esse*, when properly understood, can also reveal the dialectical relations within the Godhead and between God and all things, for it

is described as *absolutum* (or distinct) and *indeterminatum* (or indistinct). This dialectic in the key of *esse* comes out more strongly in a passage from the extended *Commentary on John* (14:8):

The idea of being is that it is something common and indistinct and distinguished from other things by its own indistinction. In the same way, God is distinguished by his indistinction from any other distinct thing, and this is why in the Godhead the essence or existence is unbegotten and does not beget. The One points to distinction by its particular property; it is indistinct in itself, but distinct from other things and therefore it is personal and belongs to a supposit capable of acting. Hence the saints attribute the One or unity in the Godhead to the first supposit or person, namely, the Father.<sup>59</sup>

Such passages demonstrate that both forms of language can be used to explore the same territory, though it is significant to note that in Eckhart's surviving works no treatment of the dialectical character of *esse* is as richly developed as the passage on *unum* of the *Wisdom* commentary.

Finally, the broad lines of the relation of *esselunum* and *intelligere* are clear enough, even though all the implications and ramifications are quite complex. To understand is to become *one*, or better, to *be one*, with what is understood—if we keep this fundamental insight in mind, the seeming contradictions of Eckhart's earlier and later formulations of the relation of *esse* and *intelligere* begin to recede.<sup>60</sup> The solution is obvious in Latin Sermon XXIX where the German Dominican advances eleven reasons for the priority of *unum* in the creature's striving toward God as a basis for reflecting on the intimate unity of *unum* and *intelligere*. Eckhart claims that Absolute Unity or the One is proper to the intellect alone, because all material beings are composed of matter and form, and immaterial beings are also composed, at least of *essentia* and *esse*, and more radically of *esse* and *intelligere*.<sup>61</sup> God alone lacks these compositions because he is *one*, he is pure *esse* and totally *intellectus*.<sup>62</sup> Eckhart affirms: "Intellect is proper to God, and God is one. Therefore, to the extent that each thing has intellect or that which pertains to intellect, it also has God, the One, and unity with God. For the one God is intellect and intellect is the one God."<sup>63</sup> The *puritas essendi* and the *puritas intelligendi* are fundamentally identical in the indetermination of Absolute Unity which is also the *plenitudo* of all things.

The dialectical character of Eckhart's notion of God is not a new discovery. In his classic study *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart*, Vladimir Lossky put great stress upon it,<sup>64</sup> and M. de Gandillac later devoted a valuable paper to the Meister's dialectic.<sup>65</sup> But the term "dialectic" itself has meant different things to different interpreters, an ambiguity that may be at the root of the puzzling denial of some that there is any dialectic in Eckhart's thought at all.<sup>66</sup> So it may be worthwhile at this point to reflect on the sense in which dialectic is being used here.

In his essay on "Hegel and the Dialectic of the Ancient Philosophers," H. G. Gadamer notes that Hegel maintained that all three of the essential elements of dialectical thinking—thinking of determinations by themselves, simultaneously

thinking of contradictory determinations, and the positive content of the higher unity of contradictory determinations—were present in ancient philosophy by the time of Plato.<sup>67</sup> Whether Hegel's interpretation of Plato was a simple misreading or a creative "refusal to listen" does not concern us here;<sup>68</sup> what does is Gadamer's observation that Hegel's reading of Plato had been largely shaped by Neoplatonism's theological-ontological interpretation of the *Parmenides*. Along with V. Lossky and M. de Gandillac, we should all probably want to distinguish between the dialectic of Hegel and that of the Meister Eckhart in many ways, but it does seem that Gadamer's three broad notes can provide us with the contours of a genus within which we may begin to distinguish species, and that the influence of the *Parmenides*, especially in its Neoplatonic readings, whether directly or indirectly available, affords important historical continuity to the history of dialectic in Western thought.

The real issue concerning the significance of dialectical thinking revolves around how the third element, the positive content of the higher unity of contradictory determinations, is conceived. Perhaps the beginning of wisdom here is a reflection upon the purposes for which dialectic was invoked, the kinds of problems the method was called upon to help resolve. I have suggested that for Meister Eckhart dialectical thinking functioned as a way to bring to speech in speculative fashion Christian belief in a God that was both utterly transcendent and yet perfectly immanent, more present to the creature than the creature was to itself. The use of Neoplatonic dialectic for this purpose has a long pedigree. As S. Gersh has pointed out, Christian Neoplatonists, beginning at least with the Pseudo-Dionysius, diverged from their pagan predecessors and contemporaries by shifting attention away from consideration of the emanationist structure of reality toward an attempt to investigate God considered as transcendent cause, immanent cause, and both transcendent and immanent cause at the same time.<sup>69</sup> Despite the preparation for this type of dialectic found in places in Plotinus,<sup>70</sup> it seems fair to say that in the light of the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, John the Scot, Eckhart, and Nicholas of Cusa (to name but the most outstanding), the full development of this particular application of dialectical method to the problem of God is distinctive of Christian Neoplatonism.<sup>71</sup>

We may, of course, wish to question the viability of such an approach. Many have felt uncomfortable with the theology of those listed above, as the condemnations of John the Scot and Eckhart demonstrate. That eminent twelfth-century Platonist, William of Conches, once felt constrained to declare indignantly: "Christianus sum, non academicus,"<sup>72</sup> but he may have been just another deluded intellectual. Another eminent Plato scholar, Friedrich Schleiermacher, was also accused of the reverse miracle of changing gospel wine into the water of human philosophy, though not that of Plato or Plotinus. Schleiermacher's answer, as put forth in his *Brief Outline of Theology*,<sup>73</sup> may be more helpful to us than William's. The Berlin theologian recognized both the necessity and the risks in using philosophical systems to help give systematic expression to Christian belief. For him philosophy was a real, if subordinate, "codeterminant" in the ever-unfolding task of the intellectual presentation of that Christian consciousness whose own internal

development remained the primary reason for the continuing necessity of new dogmatic formulation.<sup>74</sup> Whether or not we are totally at one with Schleiermacher's formulation, once we admit the full entry of the historical dimension ("development of doctrine" for the optimists) into Christian belief, it seems hard to avoid some analogous explanation. Codetermination need not mean domination, nor does it imply the absence of criteria to discriminate useful appropriations of philosophy from less helpful ones. The history of the Christian adaptation of Neoplatonic understandings of the dialectic of the *Parmenides* suggests that one of the criteria of success is the degree to which the exigence for the transposition and reinterpretation of the language of the philosophical source in order to deal with issues more central to the consciousness of the Christian community is realized. Much of the debate over the propriety of a dialectic like Eckhart's as a language for Christian theology has not paid sufficient attention to this note of reinterpretation, but has tended to judge success on the grounds of conformity to more easily assimilated forms of language.

Discussion of the relation between varieties of dialectical thought and Christian theology has been so intense over the past generation that it would be impossible to try to summarize the state of the question here. On the basis of our study of Eckhart's doctrine of God, however, some of the misunderstandings of the early stages of the debate are evident. A good example of one misunderstanding can be found in E. Coreth's 1951 essay on the usefulness of dialectic in theology.<sup>75</sup> Coreth's negative response to the invocation of dialectic as a codeterminant in the task of Christian theology (admittedly addressed primarily to Hegel) helps us to understand the insufficiency at the roots of the discomfort that many have felt with the dialectical implications of Eckhart's thought. Coreth did see that both analogy and dialectic have similar functions—the mediation of the one and the many, identity and difference,<sup>76</sup> or, in our theological formulation, transcendence and immanence. But he was still dissatisfied with dialectic's ability to provide an answer consonant with Christian belief. His position was that dialectic formulates its positive and negative moments as opposition and identity rather than as unlikeness and likeness, and thus remains trapped in the categories of human logic that allow no openness to true transcendence.<sup>77</sup> But analogy is still a form of human speech and logic, and there is no getting around the fact that if we are to speak of God it must be done in a language that is our own. On the purely logical level, it remains to be proven that opposition and identity are less inadequate than unlikeness and likeness as a way of speaking about God. Historical doubt is not the equivalent of speculative certainty, especially when the minority view may not have been given a totally fair hearing.

Despite the *a priori* elements of his evaluation, Coreth's essay is a useful starting point for a consideration of the relation between Christian thought and dialectic, not least of all because of its direct influence upon V. Lossky's attempt to vindicate for Meister Eckhart a mediating position between Scholastic analogy and modern dialectical thought.<sup>78</sup> Lossky's response seems in many ways correct, though in need of expansion from at least two sides. From the historical viewpoint, his failure to integrate predication, analogy, and dialectic as increasingly

more profound ways of dealing with the same set of problems at times led to confusion of the analogical and dialectical levels, though he was eminently correct in noting that the lack of synthesis in the crude sense sometimes attributed to Hegel in Eckhart did not mean the absence of what Gadamer would call a positive content of the higher unity of contradictory determinations.<sup>79</sup> From a theological viewpoint, Lossky wrote at a time when the acceptance of a plurality of theological languages, at least within the Roman Catholic tradition, was still highly suspect. If that monolithic view of theology has been overcome, we may hope that a more fruitful encounter between Eckhart's dialectic and contemporary views of God is both possible and desirable.

In concluding, we must remember that Eckhart's dialectical view of God was never meant to be mere abstract speculation. The positive content of the higher unity of contradictory determinations is as much a message about man as it is about God. Eckhart the preacher and Eckhart the teacher labored to the same end—to help each believer to a full union with the God who remains ever distinct and indistinct. The Dominican preacher's message that we are in God precisely because he is transcendent to us is strangely simple and at the same time baffling in its paradoxicality. The insoluble elements of his solution are not the least part of the attraction the great Meister continues to exert.

*IV* \_\_\_\_\_

*RENAISSANCE  
THOUGHT*

*Neoplatonism and  
Christian Thought in  
the Fifteenth Century  
(Nicholas of Cusa and  
Marsilio Ficino)*

MAURICE DE GANDILLAC

For Neoplatonism in the period between the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern period we shall consider here two significant witnesses who, taken together, occupy the entire fifteenth century, since Nicholas Krebs, who died in Todi in 1464, was born sixty years before on the right bank of the Moselle, in the little town of Kues (now merged with Bernkastel) and Marsilio Ficino, born in 1455 at Figline in the valley of the Arno, was to finish his life in Florence barely three months before the end of the quattrocento.

Apart from the differences in age (a whole generation) and country of origin, the contrasts between these two clerics are manifest. A canonist by formation, admitted to the Council of Basel to plead the cause of a great ecclesiastical lord who had supported him at the start of his career, soon taking the lead in the assembly through his learning and ability, joining the papal party as soon as the opponents of the pope had displayed their incompetence, a militant bishop and then a cardinal of the Curia, ■ mathematician but with a curiosity also for experimentation and observation, Nicholas is a man of action as well as a historian and philosopher. The son of a doctor and himself a doctor (though a theoretician rather

than a practitioner), Marsilio lived far from the labors of public life; this humanist who was not ordained priest until 1474—after having completed his Latin translation of Plato—long enjoyed the leisure for scholarship that the patronage of the Medici secured for him.

In 1440 when presenting to Cardinal Cesarini the three books of the *De docta ignorantia*, the Cusan (in Latin, *Cusanus*, from the name of his home town) asked the indulgence of the Italians for his style, heavy and rich in neologisms. In fact, the language that the author uses says well, essentially, what it wants to say and, in his Paris edition of 1514, Lefèvre d'Étaples was not always well-inspired in "correcting," in his fashion, the text which appeared in Strasbourg in 1488. But in spite of a persistent legend—of which Cassirer still took advantage—Nicholas had only a superficial smattering of Greek. As Martin Honecker<sup>1</sup> has shown, he knew the alphabet and recognized some words, not at times without misconstructions; lacking a Latin translation, even with the aid of a lexicon, he could not draw much on the manuscripts brought from Byzantium. We know well that Ficino, on the contrary, an excellent Hellenist, was a good writer and at the same time a very sure translator.

Much rather than any influence—a problematic question—of the Mosellan on the Florentine, what authorizes us to compare these two Christian Platonists is first of all that apart from its Eleatic and Pythagorean sources, both of them willingly root the doctrine they venerate—this to a great extent under the influence of Proclus—in a mythical Orient; but it is especially the fact that if they discern more than one doctrinal nuance within the school and if they happen to share the same views on essential points, neither of the two is, however, fully conscious of the difference in the spiritual and philosophic climate between the time of Plato and that in which his later disciples lived and taught. One is not very surprised that the Cusan thought that he often heard the voice of the old master in the mouth of Dionysius or of Proclus. One is a little more surprised that Ficino, better armed philologically when he presents his Latin version of the *Enneads*, familiar though he is for decades with the real Plato, still invites his readers to listen to *Platonem ipsum sub Plotini persona loquentem*.

\* \* \*

Vergerius de Buxis (or Giovanni Andreas dei Bussi) had been for six years the secretary of the Cusan; he appears as a "Platonic" interlocutor in the *Possest* of 1460 and in the *Directio speculantis* of 1462. In 1469 he published, under the patronage of Cardinal Bessarion—thanks to the industry of some German printers, in the studio founded in Rome in 1463 by Cardinal Barbo (the future Paul II)—an *incunabulum* that combined some works of Apuleius with the *Disciplinarum Platonis Epitome* then attributed to Alcinoüs, a work which had recently been translated by Balbo who had dedicated his work to Nicholas. It was a fine occasion for Bussi, now librarian to the Vatican, to address to the pope a dedicatory epistle and to unite in the same eulogy these two admirers of Plato, namely the two cardinals and friends, the Greek and the German.

This text is believed to be the oldest in which explicit mention is made of an

"intermediate age" (or Middle Age). Nicholas, dead for five years, appears in it as the indefatigable reader who had "held in his memory" *historias omnes, non priscas modo, sed mediae tempestatis, tum veteres, tum recentiores, usque ad nostra tempora*, but what is more important for us is that the author of this panegyric appears to place on the same level two *doctorum principes* who speaking truly—as he knew better than anyone—did not possess Greek culture in equal measure. After having presented the Cardinal of Nicæa, Bessarion, as *Platoni magna ratione affectissimus*—an affection, he thinks, that every judge "serious and of good sense" must approve—he does not hesitate to apply the same formula to the titular of Saint Peter in Chains: *id ipsum et de Nicolaeo Cusensi cardinale, dum viveret, Sancti Petri declaravi*.<sup>2</sup>

Among the Greeks in Italy there was frequent controversy between the devotees of Aristotle and the partisans of the Academy. In this regard Bessarion generally held conciliatory positions. However, in the same year in which the *Apuleius* of Bussi came out, he published (through the same printers) a defensive booklet entitled *In calumniatorem Platonis* against his compatriot George of Trebizond, guilty in his eyes of having accused all Platonists en bloc of "paganism." An even more sensitive point for this high ecclesiastical dignitary was that he had himself been the pupil of Gemistos Plethon, a mysterious personage whose pseudonym, as formerly that of Plotinus, already indicated a deep-seated attachment to Plato, but who pushed this cult far enough for the community of Mistra to become suspect to the orthodox, which provoked the material destruction of almost all his works. However, at the death of Plethon in 1452, Bessarion celebrated in emphatic terms this "Plato reincarnate." Many questions have been asked about the secret sentiments of the Byzantine who passed over to the Romans. Above all, let us seize on this fidelity to Mistra as the guarantee of a very intimate relationship with Plato—a guarantee strong enough for Ficino in 1484 in the preface to the *Plato latinus* to connect mythically the foundation of the Academy in Florence and all his own labor with the discussion that could have taken place, more than a half century earlier, at the time of the Council of Union, between Cosimo de' Medici and Gemistos Plethon. What is more surprising is to find the Cusan, thanks to his secretary, in such erudite company.

In support of his statement Bussi invokes the care that Nicholas had taken to acquire the best translations of Proclus, watching over them as over very precious treasures. In fact, at least after 1444, he had in his possession Proclus' *In Parmenidem* and *Elementatio* in the faithful medieval translation of William of Moerbeke. MS Cus. 186 and MS Cus. 195, in which these works appear (the second containing also the *Liber de causis*), carry in the margin a number of annotations in the hand of the Cusan himself, who often read and reread them and drew excerpts from them that are to be found in certain of his own treatises, notably the *De principio* of 1459 (taken to be a sermon by Lefèvre d'Étaples and, under the title of "Tu quis es?," partially published as such among the *Excitationes*). Already in 1438, as a member of the delegation sent by the papal party to win over the emperor, the patriarch and the Eastern prelates (with a view to a rapid negotiation which resulted, under the Turkish menace, in a fragile concordate considered by

the majority of the orthodox as a theological capitulation), he had brought back from Constantinople a Greek copy of the *Platonic Theology*, anticipating that Traversari would very quickly provide him with a translation. But he had to wait for twenty years to obtain from Balbo a Latin version, which also was from then on read often, reread and annotated, as MS Cus. 185 reveals.

In the previous century, confronted with a Greek manuscript of Plato, Petrarch had undergone a truly tantalizing torture. Better provided for, the Cusan possessed at an early stage, apart from the medieval translations by Aristippus of Plato (*Phaedo* and *Meno*), more recent translations done by Leonardo Bruni (*Phaedo*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedrus*). MS Cus. 177, in which the two collections are combined, bears the sure signs of use, but less constant use than was made of the Latin texts of Proclus. In the last years of his life, when scarcely having the time to study them, the cardinal likewise had to hand the translations of the *Republic* and the *Laws* by Decembro and by George of Trebizond (MS Cus. 178 and MS Harl. 3261, which came from the library at Kues). It is probable, furthermore, that he had available late in life—although they have not been found—a version of the *Parmenides* by the same George of Trebizond (who, as one can see, was not such a fierce enemy of Plato) and of the *Letters* translated by Bruni. On the presence of the *Parmenides* among the books of the Cusan, a phrase of Bessarion in the *In calumniatorem* confirms the slightly ambiguous reference in the Letter to Paul II. Concerning the collection of Plato's *Letters*, a series of citations in the *Directio speculantis* of 1462 (chaps. 21–22) corroborates a note in MS Cus. 41, as has been pointed out by Raymond Klibansky.<sup>4</sup> Without ever ceasing to hear Plato through Proclus, it seems that in the last years of his life the cardinal read more of Plato's own works; he refers to them more often and with less imprecision.

And it is with him that he now very explicitly connects the *corpus dionysiacum*. Having available since 1443 the new translation of Traversari (in the copy that the future Nicholas V procured for him, MS Cus. 43), he confronts it, if not with the Greek text as he lets it be understood, at least with the old translations. In his *De concordantia catholica* of 1433, he was not afraid to call into question the authenticity of several decretals and, before Valla, that of the famous donation of Constantine; however, he does not seem to doubt that, despite the silence of the early Fathers, one must attribute to Paul's Athenian convert the texts belatedly made known under the name of Areopagite. But even while pointing out in passing this dependence of Dionysius in relation to the Apostle of the Gentiles (*Paulus apostolus ejusdem Dionysii magister . . .*),<sup>5</sup> he scarcely seems to refer to secrets that would have invested the author of the *Mystical Theology* with a quasi-apostolic authority. And indeed it should be noted that, if he suggests, again incidentally, a possible "sequence" from Dionysius to Proclus in the use of "apophatic" vocabulary (*Proclus . . . , Dionysium sequendo, unum et bonum, licet Plato ita primum nominaverit, de primo negat, quod penitus est ineffabile*),<sup>6</sup> in a not much earlier work—the *Tetralogus de non aliud, seu Directio speculantis* written in 1462 in which the cardinal, presented as a specialist on Dionysius, is in dis-

cussion with a Portuguese Aristotelian and those two ardent Platonists, namely Bussi and Balbo—he held it as "uncertain" that the author of the *In Parmenidem*, "certainly" later than the Areopagite, had known his works: *Proclus . . . , Dionysio Areopagita tempore posteriorem fuisse certum est. An autem Dionysii scripta viderit est incertum*.<sup>7</sup> And, in spite of a brief remark on the "laboring in vain" that Proclus imposed on himself in his *Platonic Theology* (in order to define, *ex conjecturis incertis*, the different kinds of "gods" and their relation to the sole eternal God),<sup>8</sup> rather than supposing, as Lefèvre again will, a distortion of the Dionysian tradition by pagan Neoplatonism, he explains evident doctrinal concurrences by a common fidelity to Plato: *Sicut Dionysius inquit unum quod est posterius uno simpliciter, ita et Proclus, Platonem referens, asserit*.<sup>9</sup>

The reference to the actual author of the *Parmenides*—not merely to his commentators—was very explicit as early as 1449 in the *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* in which the Cusan brings on the scene a "disciple" who is outraged by the accusations of ignorance made against his master by a professor from Heidelberg. After having evoked the precedent of Socrates, an excellent judge of his own *agnosia*, the spokesman for Nicholas cites several theorists on apophancy, notably that Avicenna who suspected, he thinks, the "coincidence" in God of the singular and the universal; but, it is to the "divine Plato" that he gives credit for the glory of having "beforehand" and "in a more perspicacious manner," "attempted to open up the way," followed by the "divine Dionysius" who "ofttimes" reproduced his words literally: *Acutius ante ipsum [Avicennam] divinus Plato in Parmenide conatus est viam pandere, quem adeo divinus Dionysius imitatus est ut saepius Platonis verba seriatim posuisse reperitur*.<sup>10</sup>

We have here, certainly, only a "straining" towards the inaccessible, but in the eyes of a researcher who always held to what he calls "conjecture" or "approximation," the attempts of Plato are sufficient example for the Areopagite—supposed, however, to be familiar with other models—to be presented straight out as his "imitator." It was not at all as a simple mode of expression that Proclus used the adverb *ἐνθέως* to define the manner in which his master discovered the "most primary principle" (*Plat. Theol.* I. 3) and to evoke, according to *Phaedrus* 238d, his "divinely inspired mouth" (I. 4). The *divinus* that Nicholas applies simultaneously to the author of the *Parmenides* and that of the *Divine Names* has not for him the full value of the *θεῖος* of Proclus (reserved for Plato and his authentic disciples, the "very perspicacious" Aristotle meriting only the adjective *δοκιμώτερος*), and finally<sup>11</sup> it will give place to a less emphatic *magnus*.

Having in his possession from the time of his early philosophic studies two Latin versions of the *Phaedo*, the Cusan doubtless had no need to await the translation of the *Platonic Theology* in order to find in it, from the first lines, the Platonic image of the "chase" (for the *ὄντος θήρα* of 66c he will only substitute a "quest for wisdom," a notion at once quite biblical and quite Pythagorean); but, it is certainly from the work of Proclus that he will borrow<sup>12</sup> the quotation from *I. Alcib.* 133b–c, on the "soul" (he adds "intellective") which, "returning into itself, can see all things and God." And the previous year, despite the restriction implied

in the word *conari*, the reference to Proclus was very explicit when the cardinal, pushing far the display of his Platonic religion, was not afraid to write, in chapter 20 of the *Directio*:

Plato autem, quem tantopere Proclus extollit tanquam deus fuerit humanatus, ad antierius semper respiciens, conatus est rerum videre substantiam ante omne nominabile. . . . Ex quo Platonem rerum substantiam seu principium in mente sua revelationis via percepisse.

But in ending the quotation here for greater effect, one might be misled. In fact, echoing Romans 1:19—where Saint Paul, on the subject of divine anger, seems to be thinking of a theophany in some sense natural—what follows evokes the diffusive movement of light, which, if it did not offer itself to view, would remain invisible:

Modo quo apostolus ad Romanos dicit se illis revelasse, quam equidem revelationem in lucis similitudine capio, quae sese per semetipsam visui inhaerit. Et aliter non videtur neque cognoscitur quam ipsa se revelat, cum sit invisibilis.

Thus, for the Cusan, was not the pupil of Socrates, rather than a prophet or a wise man, the one of all the philosophers best able to grasp the fundamental need for a truly divine gift without which human intelligence would remain blind? In such a way only can it be explained that—hunting on the *campus lucis*, the fourth ground for a fruitful quest—the “great Plato” was able to rise *de Sole ad sapientiam per similitudinem*, opening the way for the “great Dionysius” who *de igne ad Deum et de Sole ad creatorem per proprietatum similitudines quas enarrat ascendit*.<sup>13</sup>

And it is without doubt that we must interpret, in a parallel fashion, the reference (*Directio*, chap. 20) to the last lines of Plato *Letter VI* (323d)—a text of extremely doubtful authenticity (“We shall all, on condition that we truly philosophize [ἅν ὄντως φιλοσοφώμεν], come to know the god insofar as happy men can”), quite enigmatic all the same, and for which the cardinal substitutes an equivalent that better puts into relief the theme of the gift, accompanying it with a commentary directly inspired by Proclus:

Haec Plato in epistolis sic se habere perbreve exprobit. Deum ipsum dicens vigilantissime et constanter quaerenti se demum manifestare, quae Proclus quoque in Parmenidis commentariis resumit. Cum haec igitur vera supponant, animam inquit, quae quidem omnia posteriora, seipsam contemplant, in se animaliter complicat, ut vivo in speculo inspicere quae ejus participant vitam, et per ipsam vivunt vitaliterque subsistunt. Et quia illa in ipsa sunt, ipsa in sui similitudine sursum ascendit ad priora, quemadmodum haec Proclus in ejus recitat Theologia.

(For this last reference, compare in particular IV, 16).

But from the gracious effusion that allowed Plato such valuable insights, the last lines of the *De docta ignorantia* (III, 12)—addressed, like the Prologue, to Cardinal Cesarini—left it to be understood that Nicholas himself could have benefited. Thirteen years later, to introduce the Utopia of religious peace, he will make use of a classical procedure very dear to the Middle Ages, that of the *somnium*.

Was it simply a question of a rhetorical figure when he seemed to attribute to a celestial munificence (with the qualification, it is true, of an “I believe”) the discovery of his own method, after a series of vain efforts? Here already the diffusion of light was at the center of every work: and the citation from James 1:17 on “the Father of Lights from whom comes every excellent gift” had evidently the value of a Dionysian reference:

Accipe nunc, metuende pater, quae jamdudum attingere variis doctrinarum viis concupivi, sed prius non potui quousque in mari, me ex Graecia redeunte, credo superno dono a Patre luminum, a quo omne datum optimum, ad hoc ductus sum ut incomprehensibilia incomprehensibiliter amplecterer in docta ignorantia.

This gift received at full flood could not indeed dispense the Cusan from intensive recourse to *auctoritates*. From Anaxagoras to Cicero, from Trismegistes to Maimonides, they are numerous in the *Learned Ignorance*, and more than once distorted or modified, as can be seen notably in the way in which the author makes use of the *corpus dionysiacum*. Thus, in I, 6—where the Areopagite is celebrated as *maximus divinarum scrutator* (but have we really here an “absolute” superlative?)—the Cusan, not content to refer back, quite naturally, to *Div. Nom.* V, 8, 824a (“God cannot be this without being that, here without being there”), to *Myst. Theol.* V, 1048b (which suggests a simultaneous surpassing of the *positio* and of the *ablatio*), and to the *Ep.* I, 1065a (knowledge of the divine “transcends thought and intellection”), justifies the coincidence of the *maximum absolutum* and the *minimum absolutum* which is affirmed throughout Book I, by referring curiously to the phrase in *Myst. Theol.* I, 3, 1000b where theology is called (according to Saint Bartholomew) that which is “at once the longest and the shortest.” Citing then two phrases borrowed from *Guide for the Perplexed* (doubtless through the mediation of Eckhart who referred to it in his commentary on Exodus), he interprets a simple celebration of divine glory, in the face of which, according to Maimonides, “wisdom is only ignorance,” as if the question here was properly that of the *docta ignorantia*, “without which God cannot be found, as Dionysius, I believe, endeavored [*nisus est*] to show in many ways.”

In the following chapter Dionysius seems to be cited through Thierry of Chartres, a source not mentioned by the author but from which he certainly borrows (in I, 8) the hypothetical link between the pseudo-Greek *ontas* and the Latin *unitas*. Thinking to read in the Areopagite that our intellection of God leads *magis ad nihil quam ad aliquid*,<sup>14</sup> Nicholas transcribes the statement in his own language, according to the “rule” of what he calls here a “sacred ignorance”: *Sacra autem ignorantia me instruit hoc quod intellectui nihil videtur esse maximum incomprehensibile* (I, 17). In truth, that Cusan “Platonism” is presented in terms more Dionysian or more Proclian, that it is inspired by the school of Chartres or by Eckhart, indeed more simply by Augustine, it is so much less exclusive in that the author, from beginning to end of his work, ceaselessly affirmed a “concordance” (at least virtual) between “all the doctrines of the learned,” provided that one understands them according to the true wish of those who (more or less clumsily) were only able to enunciate them in their own way.



In the very passage of the *Directio* (chap. 20) which evokes for the benefit of Plato a *revelationis via*, while the translator of the *Platonic Theology* underlines the accord between Dionysius, Proclus, and their common master, the cardinal hastens to universalize this agreement: *Forte sapientes idem dicere voluerunt de primo rerum principio, sed varie idipsum varie expresserunt*.

In this respect the author of the *De venatione* does not appear to differentiate at all between the revealed texts and the works of the philosophers: *Sacrae literae et philosophi idem varie nominaverunt* (chap. 9). And this applies not only to the deuterocanonicals (chapters 1 and 13 refer to Ecclesiasticus as well as to Philo, supposed compiler of another "Wisdom"), but equally applies to the Pentateuch: in 1447, in the dialogue entitled *De genesi*, while his interlocutor underlines the divergences between the Mosaic recital of origins and the opinion of the *alii plerique*, Nicholas replies (without the restriction of any "perhaps"): *Qui de genesi locuti sunt idem dixerunt in variis modis*.<sup>15</sup> It remains to discover this *idem* in its various *modi*, and this quest does not proceed without serious misunderstandings. Thus, on reading Aristotle, some confuse the true *nunc aeternitatis* with that *innumerabilis duratio mundi* which raises no more doubt for the Cusan than for Eckhart. But on their side the "subtle" Platonists, if they recognize the transcendence of the *primum imparticibiliter superexaltatum*, not seeing that in him coincide *essentia et actus, actus et potentia*, indeed in a certain way *esse et non esse*, did not realize the immanence of the infinite and the theophanic value of that *innumerabilis multitudo particularium* which participates in the *idem absolutum* as much as of those particular beings *quodlibet est idem suiipsi*, in such a way that the unattainable shines forth "more clearly" in the universe.<sup>16</sup> The difficulty is not less when it is a question of sacred texts. There again for want of referring to the *intentio scribentis* (the great exegetic rule already so dear to Abelard), one is prevented from discovering the truth—beneath the "human mode" of the biblical narrative, with the contradictions and even the "absurdities" that literal readings of it imply—discerned, up to a certain point, only by the *prudenter philosophi* and those whom Nicholas, preferring almost always the comparative to the superlative, designates rather vaguely as *in theologicis peritiores*. The apparent paradox here is that—according to the symbolic teaching on the fall that the Bible narrative contains—to aspire *sua vi in scientia Deo coaequari*, man falls into that form of ignorance which is only the death of the intellect.<sup>17</sup>

That is why, proudly modest, the Cusan pretends many times that his sole project would be to bring to light (as through spectacles, declares the *De beryllo* of 1458) the "arcane" which Plato hinted at when he dared to explore the *campus* of the *non aliud* (the third hunting ground of the *De venatione*, after the *docta ignorantia* and the *possest*), producing from his discovery a "brief" and "timid" survey, in order above all to "stimulate the very subtle minds with much."<sup>18</sup> It was a matter then for his successors, not indeed to achieve the unachievable, but to participate in a great collective work, without excluding the contribution of discredited thinkers like Protagoras, who were not wrong in recognizing in man a *mensura rerum*,<sup>19</sup> or like Epicurus, to whom Nicholas (misled by a fault in his

manuscript of the Latin translation of Diogenes Laertius, and holding especially to the critique in the *Letter to Herodotus* concerning the pagan gods considered as subordinate guides) attributes the merit of having doubted that so many stars that populate the vast world should have been at the service of our little terrestrial region (*ad finem huius terreni mundi*).<sup>20</sup>

But, astonishing above all is the apparent vanity of so many, sometimes unusual, *auctoritates*, if it is true (as the Cusan also states), that the most simple artisan—a maker of spoons on the Roman forum, he who called himself *idiota* (simply a private individual, in contrast to the *orator* and the *philosophus*)—can by his own powers decipher the "book of the world" and listen to the voice of wisdom which "cries out in the public places";<sup>21</sup> moreover, he does this not by drawing on some traditional treasure of accumulated experiences but by a precise analysis of the operations familiar to the merchants. This statement is illustrated, with different degrees of complexity, by the four dialogues of 1450: *De sapientia* I and II, *De mente*, and *De staticis experimentis*. In this last text—contemporary with *Transmutationes geometricae* and an early version of *Quadratura circuli*—the author boldly lends to the would-be "profane" the anticipation of very ingenious "mental experiments" founded on a universalized use of scales that would enable all bodies to be "weighed," including those that one supposes to be "light" (such as inhaled air and exhaled air), in order to establish a complete repertory of their properties by a quantification of all scientific knowledge.

With this wonderful confidence in the virtues of what Descartes would call good sense, the cardinal evokes the Socratic-Platonic origins of chapter 13 of the *De venatione*, with reference to the tenth hunting ground—that of *ordo*—when he states that the *puer Menon* [*sic*], questioned "according to order," replied correctly *ad cuncta geometrica* [*sic*]. But it must be seen what ambitious project should finally be served by a method so facile and at the same time so difficult: the establishment of a human community founded on conciliation between beliefs. Of this hope the canonist of Basel outlined as early as 1433, in the *De concordantia catholica*, some useful preliminaries, recalling that, following the most ancient traditions, the pope is nothing more, on three levels (the diocese of Rome, the patriarchate of the West, the universal Church), than the *primus inter pares*. Rallying to the sovereign pontiff, but without renouncing his ideal of "universal concordance," Nicholas, in 1452, at the time of his negotiations with the Hussites, specifies the conditions of every compromise: a possible and, indeed, even desirable variety of rites and customs, but a fundamental requirement of unity. However, the following year—while the fall of Constantinople indicated the failure of the precarious accord between Greeks and Latins proclaimed at Florence in 1439—the Cusan, in the *De pace fidei*, "dreams" of an extension of the religious "peace" through an agreement in dogma (the blending of many liturgical, sacramental, and linguistic concessions) with the Arabs and the Turks, the Tartars and the Indians. This project was returned to in 1461 (at a more limited and less utopian level) when the cardinal was writing his *Cribratio Alchorani* at the very moment when the Ottoman army was advancing along the Danube and when the

humanist Pius II—after having offered the sultan as wages for a hypothetical conversion the derisory crown of the fallen Byzantine Basileus—prepared (quietly) for a very anachronistic crusade.

For the Cusan, it is not on the force of arms that the *pax fidei* can depend, but rather on a common reflection concerning the real content of differing creeds. While Ficino will assign himself as his first task the demonstration—by “reasons” borrowed above all from the Platonists—of the divine origin and the immortality of the soul (preambles without which Christian dogmas would remain, he thinks, inaccessible not only to readers of Lucretius—he, himself, in his youth was for some time an admirer of the *De natura rerum*—but to all those who interpret the Aristotelian noetic in the deceptive light of Alexander or of Averroës), the Cusan project is of another kind: it aims at discerning in all the doctrines of all times and of all countries, provided one knows how to extract their most profound intention, the presence, at least virtual, of the two Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation; the one understood as based on relations between unity, equality, and connection (a theme very dear to the school of Chartres), the other referred to the requirement of an effective link between the divine infinite and the cosmic indefinite (called, in the *De docta ignorantia* II, 4, *infinitum contractum seu concretum*), ■ *nexus* which finds its “major possibility” in “human nature” taken in *summo gradu et omni plenitudine* (III, 3 and 4), that is to say in Jesus, “the perfect man,” compared to a maximum polygon that forms one whole with the infinite circle in which it is inscribed, or again, according to a less mathematical vocabulary, *altissimum principiatum immediatissime principio unitum*, which, being at once active principle and passive material, could only be born *a matre sine virili semine* (III, 5).

Neither at Padua nor at Cologne had the Cusan obtained a master’s degree in the arts nor had he donned the hat of a doctor of theology. It is somewhat through his chance reading, highly eclectic, that he instructed himself in the philosophical systems. From a Neo-Kantian perspective Cassirer has emphasized the role played for Nicholas by the “constructive” work of the intellect capable of forming some sorts of working concepts. But the most characteristic trait of Cusanism is the systematic recourse to a “dialectic” of opposites (remotely derived from the *Sophist* and the *Philebus*, reactivated by the Proclian reading of the *Parmenides*, but also by certain aspects of the style of Eckhart which abounds in the paradoxes of the “yes and no” sort). As for the influence of Ockham, of which one finds many traces in his way of considering, in counterpoint to the traditional realism of the intelligible, the mental formation of “notions,” it partly determines the critical attitude of the cardinal faced with a *figura mundi* which—at least on essential points—was common to the disciples of Plato and those of Aristotle.

But there again, it is the principle of the “coincidences” (between maximum and minimum, hot and cold, rest and motion, circular and rectilinear, etc.) that allows the author of the *De docta ignorantia*, greatly exceeding the audaciousness of Parisian nominalism, to imagine a universe without assignable limits and deprived of a center; where the earth has ceased to be an immobile mass, dark and “base”; where the sun cannot be pure light and must contain, as all things do, dark

patches (not having faultless lenses, the Cusan rather supposed than affirmed the existence of “black spots”); a universe above all without a fixed point, where each observer (Nicholas hypothetically describes the ascent of an astronaut), wherever he might be, would believe himself to be at the center of the world, in such a way that one could apply to the entire cosmos—with reference to the relativity of movement—the “theological” formula of the *Liber XXIV philosophorum*, taken up again by Alain de Lille, Saint Bonaventure, and many others, on the infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and its circumference nowhere:

Machinam mundanam habere aut istam terram sensibilem aut aerem aut ignem vel aliud quodcunque pro centro fixo et immobili, variis motibus orbium consideratis, est impossibile. . . . Jam nobis manifestum est terram istam in veritate moveri, licet nobis hoc non appareat cum non apprehendimus motum nisi per quamdam comparisonem ad fixum. . . . Propter hoc, cum semper cuilibet videatur quod, sive fuerit in terra sive sole aut alia stella, quod ipse sit in centro quasi immobili, et quod alia moveantur, ille certe semper alios et alios polos sibi constitueret. . . . Unde erit machina mundi quasi habens undique centrum et nullibi circumferentiam (II, 11 and 12).

However, the cosmological revolution is less complete here than it will be in Pascal, since the author explicitly adds that the true center and the true circumference of the undefined universe is God himself, *qui est undique et nullibi*. This immanence of the infinite the Platonists suspected only of being the *anima mundi*, without quite seeing that *natura* (or *spiritus universorum*) is *tota in toto et in qualibet parte*. But the Cusan often seems to distort the idea of the “number which moves itself,” “made of the same and of the other,” in the sense of what he calls (making use of an expression that comes from Boethius) the “natural complication of all the temporal order of things.” If the Peripatetics criticize Platonism in this regard it is because they refuse the *medullaris intelligentia*, holding (perhaps without reason, *forte irrationabiliter*) to the *cortex verborum*, to a mode of expression that reifies the idea and separates it from its living source. More prudently, “a number of Christians”<sup>22</sup> have “acquiesced” to the Platonist view, understanding that in spite of some ambiguous expressions which appear to suppose “distinct reasons, posterior to God and anterior to things,” placing them sometimes in a “guiding intelligence of the spheres,” it is really a question, more or less confused, of the Word, that is, of the Son equal to the Father (II, 9).

Certain audacious consequences which the author of the *De docta ignorantia* draws from these views—the undefined character of a world which *terminus caret intra quos claudatur* (II, 11), the homogeneity between the sublunar and supralunar (the earth is a star like the others; there are probably inhabitants on the sun, II, 12)—announce a new reading of Neoplatonism (that of Giordano Bruno) that will remain, in its essentials, unknown to Ficino (for it is incidentally, and in order to praise circular movement, that he writes [*Plat. Theol.* IV, 1]: *Terra, si, ut voluit Aegiasias, moveretur, in circulum moveretur*, adding immediately that this earth, *ut volunt plurimi, manet per superficiem*, all that is heavy being heaped up around it as in the center of the world). But it must be especially emphasized that, even where the Cusan makes use of concentric circles, in order

to show the double envelopment of the sensible by the rational and of the rational by the intellectual, he corrects this schema by a figure of a quite different type, destined to show in what manner all creatures are simultaneously subject, in various degrees and fashions, to two clusters of influence, symbolized by two intersecting pyramids, corresponding to identity and difference, unity and multiplicity, light and darkness, but also, in a certain sense to God and nothingness: *Adverte quoniam Deus, qui est unitas, est basis lucis, basis vero tenebrae est nihil.*<sup>21</sup> Already, in the *De docta ignorantia* (II, 8–11), the theory of the *spiritus*—with explicit reference to ancient Stoicism—limited the hierarchical theme in suggesting an immense dynamic whole that has often been compared to the world of Leibnitz to the extent to which everything in it depends on everything and corresponds to everything (*quodlibet in quolibet*).

While preserving the terms “macrocosm” and “microcosm” (but in a universe which scarcely merits any longer the name of cosmos), Nicholas describes an undefined complex of interactions which leaves little room for astrology such as Ficino so willingly practiced. Without doubt, in the sermon *Ubi est*, delivered in 1456 on the feast of the Epiphany,<sup>22</sup> the preacher evokes with one word the sayings of Abumasar linking Judaism with Saturn, Islam with Venus, and Christianity with Mercury, but he does not attempt to define exactly the “signs” that announced the Nativity to the Magi. He prefers to take his inspiration from Eckhart’s commentary on John 1:38 (*Rabbi, ubi habitas?*) in order to expatiate upon the divine “where,” that “place of time” called eternity, “the never-ending motion” which is also “rest.” And, without evoking any astral influence, he then outlines—in the line of the myth of Protagoras taken up and adapted by Gregory of Nyssa in the *Creation of Man*—a history of humanity at first deprived, then raised up, through culture and technology, to the true religion:

Multi suo ingenio aut divina illuminatione varias artes invenerunt melius vivendi, ut qui artes mechanicas et seminandi et plantandi et negotiandi invenerunt, et alii qui politizandi et oeconomisandi regulas conscripserunt atque qui ethicam invenerunt. . . . Est deinde hiis artibus religio addita, in divina auctoritate et revelatione fundata (p. 96).

This progression has not the simplicity of a straight line. Although later than Jesus, Mohammed preached a truth that was partial and deformed. His historical mission was, however, to rescue untutored desert peoples from their superstitions and, although “deceived by the devil,” to open to them an “easy way” towards the truth.<sup>23</sup> Throughout the Koranic formulac which explicitly reject them, the cardinal thinks he finds—implicit—Christian dogmas which, in their secret hearts, the best educated Muslims probably profess. Much more than the majority of his contemporaries, Nicholas foresees the spread of the inhabited earth and the variety of civilizations. (In the last book of *De concordantia* he already emphasizes them in relation to the Roman Empire which, contrary to the view supported by Dante, cannot lay claim to universality.) In spite of all the misfortunes of an age that does not encourage optimism (he, himself, struggles for years against the Duke of Tyrol and clashes, in his diocese of Brixen, with a section of his clergy), he seems

to believe in progress. Not only can one better observe phenomena, spectacles are manufactured, printing is invented, but the cult of idols is regressing and the dream of a *pax fidei* corresponds certainly to what Ernst Bloch—inspired by the words of the Cusan—will call a *docta spes*.

It has been seen that among the thinkers who participated in the collective work, if Dionysius is at times presented as *cunctis acutior*,<sup>24</sup> Plato remains to the end the one who could see *aliquid plus aliis philosophis* (chap. 12), but in the same late text in which Nicholas confirms this advantage, showing himself all the more eirenic in that his recent reading of the *Vitae philosophorum* has notably enriched his information, he makes a very honorable place for Thales and for Anaxagoras, as well as for the Stoics, but still more for the *acutissimus Aristoteles* who is praised for having defined logic as the “most exact instrument” for the “pursuit as much for the true as for the conceivably true” (chap. 1), for having established a ternary theory of the syllogism analogically applicable to the *divinum opificium* (chap. 5), for being the one who, while limiting (in an erroneous manner) the action of the universal intellect to the *administratio coelestium*, was able to rise from sensible effects to the “first cause of all the causes” (chap. 8).

At the beginning of the *Learned Ignorance* (I, 1), he was already describing the Stagirite as *profundissimus* for having recognized that the radiance of daylight blinds the people of the night (following *Met.* α, I, 993b). A little later, irritated by the attacks of Wenck, he was sharply reproaching the “Aristotelian sect” for making use of the first principle which would prohibit every *ascensus ad mysticam theologiam*.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, in the *De mente* (chap. 13) the *idiota* learnedly expounds a theory of knowledge that holds the balance almost equally between Plato and Aristotle, moreover attributing more than one divergence to the use, in the two schools, of different vocabularies, one calling *anima mundi* what the other designates as *natura* and which is, in truth, *Deus omnia in omnibus operans* (called also *spiritus universorum*). Elsewhere<sup>26</sup> the cardinal will point out that the same first cause (unitrine as far as being efficient, formal, and final; another figure of the three divine Persons) is designated by the master of the Academy as *unum et bonum*, whereas the founder of the Lyceum presents it as *ens entium*—a formula so much more acceptable in that, according to the *Directio* (chap. 18), one of the major merits of Aristotle is to have stated that being is that which is “always sought and always in question” (*Met.* Z, I, 1028b). The Cusan here anticipates, in a certain fashion, the exegesis of Aristotelian ontology that Pierre Aubenque will defend.<sup>27</sup>

Assuredly, the *De Beryllo* (chap. 25) underlines the error of the Stagirite when he is unwilling to admit in substance, side by side with form and matter, any more than a weak *privatio*, being unaware of the presence of a *nexus*. But in this respect it seems indeed that other thinkers went astray; the Cusan says so without mincing words: it is *omnes philosophos concordando* that Aristotle, extending in an unwarranted manner the range of application of the principle (a quite valid one) according to which contradictory judgments cannot be true at the same time, wrongly excludes from *substantia* this *tertium principium* in which coincided—according to Nicholas, in their infinitesimal degree and, so to speak, at the source

of their differentiation—"contraries" such as the *minimum calor* and the *minimum frigus* (the tendency of which to be merged can be seen in the case of burning cold), the *minima tarditas* and the *minima velocitas* (the union of which can be imagined by observing a "sleeping" teetotum). These are physical analogues, Nicholas believes, of what are, for the geometrician, at the limit where they form a unity, the *minus arcus* and the *minima chorda*. To have failed completely to grasp this was the common deficiency of searchers after wisdom, and for them it results, in Trinitarian theology, in semi-blindness. Less imprudent in this area than was Abelard, the Cusan professes in fact that even to the philosophers who spoke "with elegance" of the Father and the Word (not incarnate), this "principle of connection anterior to every duality" remained unknown, the *spiritus*, of which, the cardinal notes, no mention is made in the Gospel of John, the one to which most of the *Platonici* came closest.

In chapter 25 of the *De venatione*, making use of less radical formulae, the author notes only that "few philosophers" were aware of the *nexus unitatis et entitatis* (which *procedit ex unitate et aequalitate*), an invisible bond of love that makes all parts of the world hold together, a fire that nourishes the intelligence and alone procures for it complete happiness. Indeed it is possible that Aristotle had a presentiment of it when he defined that *intellectus penitus in actu* which turns back upon itself and *seipsum intelligit*, so producing the *delectatio summa*.<sup>30</sup> But Plato had a better inkling of it when he stated—if we are to believe Diogenes Laertius—that the "idea" is "at the same time one and multiple, stable and mobile."<sup>31</sup> It remains that properly speaking no *venator* explored through and through the ten hunting grounds listed by the Cusan. What restrained them particularly was their finitist prejudice. Most paradoxically, at least in the *Directio*—where he intends to take unto himself the Peripateticism of one of his interlocutors—it is again in the Stagirite that the author seems to recognize (apart from the merit, often emphasized, of judging *ratio* incapable of grasping *ipsam simplicissimam rerum quidditatem*; chap. 19) the implicit attribution of a *virtus infinita* to the Prime Mover, here assimilated, it is true, with the *non aliud, ante quantitatem et in omnibus omnia*, a true *forma formarum* and authentic *termini terminus* (chap. 10). On the other hand, even in the *De principio* of 1459, very closely inspired by the *In Parmenidem* of Proclus, the cardinal emphasizes the limits of a view according to which, in order to give form to the cosmos, the demiurge would have available only a finite number of notions. Not knowing the *Enneads* (in particular passages such as in V. 3, 15 or VI. 5, 9 which describe the One as a "total power" containing "infinite being and the multiple") he remains convinced that no Platonist grasped with "precision" the dyad of the two *infinitates*: the *finibilis* (called also, in other texts, *posse fieri*) and the *finiens* (or *posse facere*), the one situated *post*, the other *ante omne ens*.<sup>32</sup>

Also, even though Plato "saw better" than Aristotle the "generated" character of the world and the true role of time as an "image of eternity" (*De venatione*, chaps. 8 and 9), understanding even that man should try to become continually *Deo similior* (chap. 20), Nicholas is not at all sure that Plato grasped in its full significance (in spite of the *aliquid plus* that Nicholas accords to him some lines

later on) the *naturale desiderium* under the impulsion of which our intellect endeavors (*conatur*) ceaselessly to explore an "infinite treasure" that it rightly "rejoices" (*gaudet*) in recovering, not at all "numerable" or "comprehensible," but "inexhaustible" inasmuch as "incomprehensible" (chap. 12). As background to the homily of Pope Leo invoked here and cited (*Nemo ad cognitionem veritatis magis propinquat quam qui intelligit in rebus divinis, etiam si multum proficiat, semper sibi superesse quod quaerat*).<sup>33</sup> the Cusan brings in the tradition of *epectasis* according to the spirit of Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>34</sup> But at the same time—through his concern for human toil during this life on earth, oriented towards a better knowledge of the created and towards a lasting understanding between peoples—it seems indeed that, in language that is partly inherited from Neoplatonism, he anticipates in a certain way the "modern" option of Lessing (which will also be that of Kant, at least in its moral): the call for an "infinite endeavor" in preference to an immediate gift of complete knowledge, which belongs only to God, not to his creature.

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On the funeral monument erected in the sixteenth century in the cathedral in Florence, one could read of canon Marsilio that he, "the Father of Wisdom," had "restored to the light" the "Platonic dogma, through the fault of time hidden in the dust." And it is indeed like the awakening of some sleeping beauty that the Italian humanists experienced the *rinascimento*. But for Ficino it was like a sort of excavation at several levels corresponding to the historical vicissitudes of that same "dogma," each time forgotten and subsequently rediscovered.

When presenting in 1492 his translation of the *Enneads*, Ficino asserts—in a style that is dear to him—that at the beginning of 1484, when his Latin Plato was already in the press, it was the "heroic spirit" of Cosimo de' Medici (dead for twenty years) that sent him another "heroic spirit," that of the young Count de la Mirandola, inviting him to continue with his work by translating and commenting Plotinus, an intercession all the more charged with meaning in the eyes of Marsilio because Pico had first seen the light (under the same astral signs as he) in 1463 when there began at Careggi, at the urging of the Medici, the "rebirth of Plato."<sup>35</sup> In truth, being nourished above all on Aristotle, Pico came to Platonism rather as an "explorer" than as a "deserter,"<sup>36</sup> convinced moreover that between the two schools the difference must have been verbal in the majority of cases. A fortiori, he did not see any doctrinal opposition, but a development and an illustration, from the old Academy up to the final school of Athens. This was also the view of Ficino who, after having very rapidly completed his translation of Plotinus, addressed himself to the works of Porphyry and Iamblichus.

He did not believe, for all that, that the history of ancient Platonism presented a picture of a continual and harmonious flowering. As far back as 1469—the year, as we know, in which Andrea dei Bussi associated in a common eulogy the "Platonists" Bessarion and Nicholas of Cusa—the controversy between the cardinal of Nicaea and his compatriot George gave Marsilio an opportunity to retrace in broad outline the eclipses and revivals of the doctrine that must again,

with courage, be defended and promoted. Thanking Bessarion for his vigorous pamphlet, he recalls that wisdom, after having shone with a sharp brilliance in the author of the *Phaedrus* (by some "gift divine"), grew dark in his very school through the fault of too-feeble successors. In order to explain this blacking out, Saint Augustine records a tradition that Arcesilaus had deliberately concealed the Platonic truth for fear that Zeno would alter it (*Contra Acad.* III, 17–19). Proclus describes the movement by which philosophy would, so to speak, have "withdrawn into itself" (*Plat. Theol.* I, 1).<sup>37</sup> Marsilio avoids the language of the ancient mysteries, and notably the Proclian metaphor<sup>38</sup> of a "reason" that surpasses itself and then achieves, thanks to the writings of Plato, a "Bacchic ecstasy." Preferring metaphors borrowed from the practice of alchemy, he shows the manner in which the "Platonic gold," at one time tarnished, recovered its brightness, thanks to an "intense fire," at first "in the dispensary of Plotinus, then in those of Porphyry, of Iamblichus, and afterwards of Proclus."<sup>39</sup>

We are concerned then with a kind of precious treasure, constantly under threat and at times lost, but whose origin dates from the night of time. In his *proemium* to his translation of the *Poimandres* (1463), the young Marsilio goes back to Atlas, whom he imagines as a contemporary of Moses and brother of Prometheus, himself a distant ancestor of Hermes Trismegistus, held to be the founder of "theology"—a variable list which, following a tradition coming doubtless from Syrianus, will include also Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Aglaophemus. Ficino soon adds to it Zoroaster who is for him the author of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and whom Gemistos Plethon placed on the same level as the founder of the Academy.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, at the time of the *De religione christiana* (1476), the author, a priest for two years and anxious to root Platonism in the Hebraic tradition, suggests that the Iranian prophet, perhaps earlier than Hermes, could have received teachings from Cham after the Deluge, or at least have associated with Abraham. But in the introduction to his Plotinus he presents a genealogy that does not introduce any biblical authority:

Non absque providentia . . . factum est ut pia quaedam philosophia quondam et apud Persas sub Zoroastre, et apud Aegyptios sub Mercurio nasceretur, utrobique sibimet consona; nutreter deinde apud Thraces sub Orpheo atque Aglaophema; adolesceret quoque mox sub Pythagora apud Graecos et Italos; tandem vero a divo Platone consummaretur Athenis.

But before taking a place, in his turn, among the successors or the restorers of this *pia philosophia*, Marsilio Ficino (introduced to the Medici by his father, a physician who had gained their confidence) was first at Pisa the pupil of the Peripatetic Tignosi. A little later, too captivated a reader of Lucretius, he disturbed Saint Antoninus, archbishop of Florence, who thought it prudent to advise him emphatically to study the *Summa contra Gentes*. From reading this our humanist drew sufficient profit to make use, in his *Platonica Theologia*, of many Thomistic arguments, not only in what concerns the divine attributes such as infinity, unity, and intellection (II, 2–9), but even in the matter of what constitutes the very heart of the work, the *immortalitas animarum*, for it is indeed to the

Angelic Doctor that Ficino owes the reasons he invokes for refusing to the "pure forms" all other composition than that of *esse* and *essentia* (V, 7–9). Only, while he very willingly names Saint Augustine and quotes him at length (for example in XII, 5–7 where there occur extended extracts from the *De vera religione*, from the *De musica*, and from the *De trinitate*, with introductory formulae such as *Sed juvat hic cum Augustino, ut saepe solemus, paulo latius pervagari*), his borrowings from Aquinas—qualified though he was as *christianae splendor theologiae* (XVIII, 8)—often remain anonymous, and more or less masked by stylistic transpositions.<sup>41</sup> Let us add that, in all his work, Marsilio will juxtapose with the Platonic formulae elements of Aristotelian and Stoic vocabulary (and theory), a customary mixture in Neoplatonism.

That being said, it is indeed Plato that from a very early stage he declares for, even at a time when he is only reading the *Timaeus* through Chalcidius and the *Phaedrus* in the translation of Bruni, during that period of apprenticeship when, in order to work out some scholarly dissertations ambitiously entitled *De Deo* and *De anima*, he takes inspiration from Proclus in the translations of Moerbeke, collecting from Apuleius and from Boethius the fragile information in his *Platonic Institutions* presented in 1456 to Landino and to Cosimo. This text, which was not well received, was never published. From then on, while studying medicine (probably in Bologna between 1457 and 1462), Ficino set himself very seriously (and, it seems, especially through his own means) to the study of Greek, a language whose difficulties he overcame sufficiently to translate, by way of an exercise, some poems of Hesiod, the Pseudo-Orpheus, Proclus, and parts of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, highly successful attempts that he made use of for numerous quotations in his *Platonica Theologia*.

In 1463, judging him well trained for the task of which he had been dreaming for a long time, Cosimo installed him in the villa of Careggi. Having gotten his hand in with the *Poimandres*, Marsilio began to translate—and to comment on—the Plato manuscript his protector entrusted to him, the *Plut.* gr. 59, 1 of the Laurentian library, without trying to distinguish, among the *Dialogues* and the *Letters*, between the doubtful and the apocryphal. By the following year, Cosimo, an invalid close to death, was able to read Ficino's versions of the *Parmenides* and of the *Philebus*. Of the latter dialogue the guest at Careggi soon gave a public reading, matched with his comments, in a monastery that was very probably that of Santa Maria degli Angeli. To those who were astonished at this, he declared that Platonic philosophy, *tanquam sacra, legenda est in sacris*; he even added, which corresponds well with his taste for intermediary spirits, *in conspectu angelorum*.<sup>42</sup>

During the brief years of his administration of public affairs, the "gouty" Piero de' Medici took little interest in Careggi. Lorenzo, on the contrary, gave a vital stimulus to the Academy, where reigned a fervor that made it almost a sanctuary (although it still remains highly doubtful that a lamp continually burnt there in front of a bust of Plato). On the seventh of November, 1468, he who would become known as the Magnificent (he would not succeed his father until the following month, but was already enjoying great prestige) organized a solemn

repast, renewing, says Ficino (*De amore* I, 1) the tradition interrupted at the death of Porphyry. Around Bandini assembled, in addition to Marsilio and his father, the bishop of Fiesole and some companions, among them Landino and Cavalcanti. Each guest had the duty of commenting on the successive speeches that Plato has given his interlocutors in his *Symposium*. As they were recorded in the treatise *On love*, drafted by Marsilio shortly after the event, these exegetic propositions—in the style of Ficino, more homogeneous than those of the participants in the Platonic dialogue—constituted a sort of erotic philosophic mysticism, at times disparate and confused, but whose general meaning was quite indicative of Neoplatonic thought in the Florence of the Medici.

Let us say for the sake of simplicity that, according to this perspective, Eros, a very ancient god, born with Chaos and destined to fight it (I, 3), symbolizes the tendency, innate in us, towards the Beautiful, the son and splendor of the Good. To the heavenly Aphrodite, continually turned towards her father Ouranos (not Kronos as Plotinus suggested, thus substituting Intelligence for the One; III, 5, 2), corresponds the angelic intellect, identified with the second Plotinian hypostasis. The earthly Aphrodite is the Soul of the world, the power of a childbirth born at the same time of Zeus and of the *materia mundi* signified by Dione (II, 7). It is she who gives form to bodies and makes them beautiful enough to inspire lovers with such reciprocal attachments that each lives only for the other, or, to put it better, in the other (*Quotiens duo aliqui mutua se benevolentia complectuntur, iste in illo, ille in isto vivit*; II, 8). Thus Eros, son of this Aphrodite, holds together the things of heaven and those of earth, and it is from him that are born the arts, whose common principle is harmony (III, 2–3).

As for the burlesque recital of Aristophanes on the original androgyne, it must be understood of souls, not of men, and the duality that it describes concerns less the sexes than the two “lights” with which all were endowed at their creation: the one “innate,” by which they can consider what is “equal and inferior” to them, the other “infused” (at the same time reminiscence and grace), so that they may contemplate what is “superior” to them (IV, 2). Having chosen to immerse themselves in bodies, there remains in them a trace of the *splendor infusus*, in such a way that by means of the four cardinal virtues—prudence leading to strength (masculine and solar), moderation (feminine and terrestrial), justice (androgynous and lunar)—they can purify themselves, reject the arrogance of him who trusts in his own powers and thus recover, under the stimulation of beautiful forms, their *pristina integritas* (IV, 5), attaining to a beatitude that (and he also goes back to the theme of *epectasis*) Ficino conceives as an appetite that feeds tirelessly on a “spectacle always new”:

Aeternus igitur amor, quo semper in Deum afficitur animus, efficit ut Deo semper tanquam novo spectaculo gaudcat. . . . Omni expulso fastidio, suo quodam ardore oblectamentum quasi novum jugiter accendit in animo redditque illum blanda et dulci fruitione beatum (IV, 6).

One is not greatly surprised that the guests at the banquet of the Medici acknowledge an essential role for the ambiguous beings that Plato called gods,

souls of the stars, or demons, whereas Dionysius speaks rather of “angel ministers of God,” but in this connection, thinks Benci, commenting on the speech of Socrates, *inter Platonem et Dionysium verborum potius est quam sententiae discrepatio* (VI, 3). By whatever name we call them, these messengers had originally, according to the qualities proper to the seven planets, transmitted to the souls “enveloped in a heavenly and luminous body” and descending towards the earth through the Milky Way and the constellation of Cancer, seven gifts which (as they are listed in the *De amore* VI, 4—*contemplationis acumen, gubernandi potestas, animositas, claritas sensuum, amoris ardor, interpretandi subtilitas, and foecunditas generandi*) scarcely correspond to the seven munificences of the Holy Spirit, and which moreover, especially the last three, quite “honorable” though they be because of their divine origin, creatures too often misuse. Let us add that the “demons” act in general according to the humors and temperaments of the bodies in which the souls are bogged down. Improving upon the Platonic distinctions, Benci enumerates, for example, three *venerei demones*, of which the first (the progeny of the heavenly Aphrodite) reserves its weapons for the choleric, the second (sent by the common Aphrodite) attacks rather the sanguine, and the third (coming from the planet Venus) prefers to aim its arrows at the phlegmatic (VI, 5).

These mediating powers taken together constitute the third level of a hierarchy on four levels, rising from the body to God: the major difference between the two intermediate degrees is that the *angeli mens*, which is called stable, total, and continuous, grasps things in an instant and in a global fashion (*uno aeternitatis puncto simul intelligit omnia*), whereas the *anima* is bound, by nature, to discursiveness and temporality, which is why Plato accords it an “ipsomotricity” that Aristotle misjudged, believing that it meant that the soul confers its movement on itself (VI, 15). In other passages Ficino and his spokesmen hold to a ternary order, that of *Letter II* (312c), evoking the beings of “second” and “third” rank which “gravitate around the King of the universe,” but the *theologus Antonius* (none less than the bishop of Fiesole), who comments on the speech attributed to Pausanias, curiously assimilates this ternary order to a supposedly Zoroastrian triad (Ormuzd, Mithra, Ahriman), deprived of all dualist inner depth and merged in fact with the Plotinian hierarchy (*Deus-Mens-Anima* II, 4—compare the almost identical formulae of *Plat. Theol.* IV, 1). When Benci, on the subject of Eros the “magician” (*Symposium*, 203d), evokes in his turn the Iranian prophet, declaring (VI, 10) that for the same reason as Socrates he was “by nature” the “friend of demons” (as distinct from Apollonius of Tyana and Porphyry who owed to their sole “veneration” for these intermediary beings the privilege of magic powers), it is evident that only angels or favorable geniuses are in question.

Throughout the work, neither Plotinus nor Proclus is mentioned by name; they remain merged into the community of the *Platonici*, although Ficino notes certain divergences between them, notably concerning the existence of *mali demones*, evoked in a quite incidental fashion (VI, 4), but on which, he says, “certain Platonists” and the “Christian theologians” are in agreement. Several times he cites Ovid, Virgil, and even Lucretius (true, it is to describe certain aberrations of love, VII, 5 and 7). He happens in passing to invoke the authority

of Aristotle, but as a *physicus*, on the subject of the "black bile" of those who, like Socrates or Sappho, seem *ad amandi artem propensissimi* (VI. 9), or of the supposed "spiritual vapor" that would escape through the eyes and, with women during the menstrual period, would be laden with droplets of blood capable of tarnishing their mirror (VIII. 4). In the *De amore*, conceived first and foremost as a *Commentarium in Convivium Platonis*, Christianity is placed, in a sort of a way, between parentheses, but the Trinitarian allusion (confirmed in the margin by a note by Marsilio and by the very title of the chapter, *Quomodo agenda sunt gratiae Spiritus Sancti qui nos ad hanc disputationem illuminavit atque accendit*) is not without significance right at the end of the book, when Cavalcanti, having expounded and explained, in the manner of Ficino, the speech of Alcibiades, in order in some way to make Him propitious, invokes "God whole and entire"—Power, Wisdom, and Love—that is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (and not, as Marcel inexactly translates it, the power and the wisdom of Love):

Nos autem amorem hunc adeo nobis propitium ea mente colimus et veneremus sapientiam et potentiam admiremur, ut, amore duce, totum, ut ita loquar, Deum habeamus propitium, ac totum amoris flagrantia diligentes, toto etiam amore perpetuo perfruamur (VII. 17).

Dated July 1469—some months before the *Letter to Bessarion* on the vicissitudes of Platonism—this commentary, in a tone at times peculiar and which was the basis of several malicious interpretations, was not to be published until 1484, two years after the *Platonica Theologia de immortalitate animarum* (completed, it seems, by 1474). In the meantime appeared two short works with the significant titles, *Concordantia Mosis et Platonis* and *Confirmatio christianorum per socratica*. Braccio Martello, to whom these texts are addressed, is disturbed by the position that "demons" hold in them. Ficino replies by invoking the double testimony of Plotinus and of Porphyry confirming that of Origen, in such a way that *non Plato solum, verum etiam Platonici cum nostra religione consentiant*.<sup>43</sup> Already in 1474 it was prompted by such a certitude that, under the guarantee of Lorenzo, he had decided to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders, thus attaining to a status which indeed, through the game of ecclesiastical benefices, assured him leisure for work, but which above all was to enable him (as he declares in the foreword of *De christiana religione*) to combine *philosophandi studium* with *pietatis officium*.

In pursuing his Platonist work, he thus considers that he was fulfilling his priestly vocation. His *Plotinus* completed, he translates several Neoplatonic texts, notably of Iamblichus, Porphyry, and Proclus, and then, as if in the same burst of enthusiasm, the *Divine Names* and the *Mystical Theology*. After which the Areopagite—qualified as *Platoniorum procul dubio summus*<sup>44</sup>—brings him back so to speak to the legendary sources of the *corpus dionysiacum*. From 1497 onward, grown old and disillusioned by the drama of Savonarola, which for him was not a very brilliant episode, he undertakes a commentary of the Pauline epistles which will not go beyond the first five chapters of Romans. For this work he is closely

inspired by Aquinas, but—as has been seen with reference to several pages of the *Platonica theologia*—to make his own certain Thomistic arguments was not to break with a fundamental attachment to the "Platonic dogma." The epitaph drawn up by his colleagues by no means indicates that he had ever renounced the *Atticum decus* of which they congratulate him on having made a gift to his fatherland.

It seems that he remained faithful to the positions that he defended, for example, in 1492, against his friend Pico who deplored the attachment of Marsilio to astrology, preferring for his part to find support for his Christianity in the Cabbala, more easily reconcilable, he thought, with free will and the "dignity" of man (but this was not at all the view of his Roman censors). Ficino, at the beginning of his commentary on the *Parmenides*, counters with a general criticism of anyone who, neglecting the opinion of Proclus, wishes to reduce the divine dialogue to an exercise in logic. Disregarding the primacy of the Good and the One over Being, the author of the *De ente et uno* makes a concession to the Parisian (i.e., scholastic) style that Marsilio deems unacceptable. The following year, replying to the *Adversus astrologiam divinatricem* by the same Pico, he agreed that one must understand the astral signs in a "poetic" and "symbolic" sense, but would not concede anything on the essential points of his convictions.<sup>45</sup>

The role that "Platonic theology" properly plays in an apologetic quite different from that of Proclus remains to be determined. Dedicating his great work to Lorenzo—he who knew how to unite, as the author of the *Republic* wished, *philosophia* with *summa in rebus publicis auctoritas*—Ficino recognizes in Plato the merit that the Cusan pointed out in analogous terms of having understood that, just as the sun is visible only by its own diffusion, we know God only through the light that he confers on us:

Plato, philosophorum pater, magnanime Laurenti, cum intelligeret quemadmodum se habet visus ad Solis lumen, ita se habere mentes omnes ad Deum, ideoque eas nihil unquam sine Dei lumine posse cognoscere. . . .

Thus all his philosophy—moral and dialectic, physical and mathematical—constitutes a "theology" and, since the consciousness of self, as Saint Augustine well saw, is the first condition of our accession to illumination, it is first proper to establish the divine character of the *mens creata*.

This undertaking is all the more necessary in that, in ever greater numbers, *perversa ingenia* challenge the authority of the faith. To those who had complained of his supposed "rationalism," Abelard objected that without arguments from reason, one can have scarcely any effect on subtle opponents. That is also the opinion of Ficino, convinced that Providence has very precisely entrusted him with the task of reviving the "Platonic reasons," most capable in his eyes of affecting the ungodly. His friend Pannonius, a humanist bishop but one who scarcely appreciates familiarity with geniuses and belief in celestial signs, suggests in a letter that the *renovatio antiquorum*, attributed by Marsilio to a happy planetary conjuncture, could be more "fortuitous" than "providential" and could depend less on "religion" than on "curiosity." He answers him by a defense of those

superior spirits, true "ministers of God," of which the astral figures signify only (without determining them) the benevolent actions toward the *mentes humanae*, in such a way that even *fatum* is always at the service of *Providentia*.<sup>46</sup>

Already, in the foreword to the *De christiana religione*, Marsilio evoked eternal Wisdom which, since the beginning of time, has established a privileged liaison between the *divina mysteria* and the *verae sapientiae amatores*. Also, for the Persians as for the Jews, for the Indians and for the Gauls, as much in Egypt as in Ethiopia, the philosophical function was not separated from the sacerdotal dignity, so that no propagator of the *rectus cultus* could neglect the *ratio colendi*.<sup>47</sup> Ficino reproaches the Christians of his time with a double ignorance, that of the clerics whose religion is often pure superstition, and that of the philosophers who fail to recognize the only way capable of leading them to religion: hence this appeal addressed to the one and to the other: *Hortor igitur omnes atque precor philosophos quidem ut religionem vel capessant penitus vel attingant, sacerdotes autem legitime sapientiae studiis diligenter incumbant*. The Letter to Pannonius specifies it; these stubborn philosophers, for whom religion is an old wives' tale, are none other than the disciples of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes, those who betraying Aristotle (*adversus Averroem graeca Aristotelis verba reclamant*; *Plat. Theol.* XV, 1) proclaim the human intellect either mortal like the body or common to all individuals.

Thus Ficino rediscovers the same enemies as Petrarch and one can see better the direction of his Platonism. Indeed he exonerates the Stagirite from the blasphemies that are erroneously shielded by his authority; he even attributes arguments to him on occasion (referring, for example, to his *Metaphysics* as to the existence of a multiplicity of angelic directors charged with moving the heavenly spheres; *Plat. Theol.* I, 5), but he judges his philosophy, even essentially, as much less "religious" than that of Plato, less apt therefore to serve as a propaedeutic *ad perfectam religionem*, that is, as the best of all those that constitute the genus of the *religio communis*. The *acuta ingenia* are nourished voluntarily on philosophic food, but if they receive the *exca philosophica* of a *philosophus religiosus* such as Plato, while they believe themselves to be philosophizing, they are already impregnating themselves with religion, which leads them more easily *ad meliorem religionis speciem sub genere comprahensam*. While awaiting the miracles that Providence, as it did in the time of the apostles, will doubtless not be slow to instigate in order that the specific character of the true faith may be made manifest, Ficino accomplishes a work of piety, since to make better known "the divine Plato and the great Plotinus" is to confirm *ratione philosophica ipsum religionis genus*.<sup>48</sup>

It might be thought that, in a certain way, by a "transsumption" of Cusan-type, Platonism as Ficino understands it, transcends itself to be merged at the upper limit into the truth common to all religions, that of Christianity, of course. This idea is not perhaps totally unknown to Marsilio who—to use the formulae in which Raymond Klibansky sees a possible echo of the *De pace fidei*—acclaims the variety of rites as a *mirabilis decor*, the sign of a providential will (*De christiana religione*, chap. 4). But the *religio communis* that he envisages, at one

of the decisive stages of his argument, resembles rather a natural religion (although more poetical and magical than rationalistic). His essential aim is to throw the fullest light on the divinity and on the immortality of the soul. If it is true that the divine attributes demonstrable by means of *ratio philosophica* extend to the providential care of all creatures (*Plat. Theol.* II, 13), which does not at all exclude, as we know, the essential place left for the angels and demons (without forgetting heroes and geniuses), the "common religion" under its Platonic form—that of the wise man who "treats divinely of heavenly things" while Aristotle "speaks naturally of divine things"<sup>49</sup>—only indirectly (or in a premonitory fashion) makes way for the great Christian dogmas of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption. Indeed Socrates, in his acceptance of unjust death, in the manner in which he came out of himself to converse with his *daimôn*, can pass, not for an *aemulus*, but for a *defensor* of Christ (that is, a pagan precursor parallel to the just men of the Old Testament<sup>50</sup>). And, in the *Concordia*, where Marsilio takes up again the same terms as Numenius, Plato appears quite like "another Moses," who has a presentiment of the creation, the fault of men expelled from a sort of earthly paradise (the Atlantis of the *Critias*!), the punishment of the wicked in another world, and even the veiled announcement of a *sacratior aliquis quam homo* coming to earth in order "to open up the sources of truth, finally followed by all."<sup>51</sup> It remains that nothing of all that can take the place of faith in Christ as it is revealed only by the *perfecta religio*.<sup>52</sup> In this regard the later texts that multiply the formulae of prudence do not lack continuity with the earlier works, to which moreover they willingly refer. In the same letter to a Dominican in which he suggests that Platonists such as Plotinus (pupil of the Christian Ammonius Saccas) or Proclus were able to read with profit the Gospel of John and the Dionysian writings, Ficino, in 1495, refers explicitly to what he wrote to Braccio Martello, that is, to his *Concordia* itself.<sup>53</sup> He could have evoked much earlier declarations, for example those in the *De religione christiana* (chaps. 8, 13, 23, etc.), as to the superiority of the apostle over the most subtle philosophers.

Let us add that, in this reading of Platonism, despite certain allusions to falls and punishments, the accent is scarcely placed on the resistance that the demiurgic work comes up against, nor on the indomitable aspect of certain forms of malice. Marsilio is the resolute opponent of all forms of gnosis or Gnostic tendency (cf. notably *Plat. Theol.* II, 2). On the other hand he emphasizes the teeming life "everywhere present," which makes him indulgent towards the idea of a World Soul.<sup>54</sup>

If he invokes in passing the unlucky influx of Venus, particularly fearful when Saturn is opposed to the sun (for example, *De amore* IV, 4 and VII, 10–11), it pleases him to put confidence in Jupiter to counteract the misdeeds of Saturn (VI, 4–17). Despite his morose temperament (and a melancholy against which the *De triplici vita* of 1489 presents many remedies—dietary, astrological, and even "ecological"), in general he treats with much understanding the "sympathies" between planets (for the angels who move the spheres are all children of God, ministers of the same Father, *De amore* I, 8). In any case, never could the tyranny of Necessity prevail against the dominion—more ancient—of that Eros who, as



Orpheus said, "engenders all" and, in this way, "commands the three Parcae" (*De amore* V, 10–12). Below the transcendent God, "source of unity" (*Plat. Theol.* III, 1) within the scale leading from matter to the angels, Ficino emphasizes the continuities. With what he calls the "inert mass" of bodies (only recognized by Atomists) is linked, in fact, as of itself, the "efficacious quality" (brought to light by the Stoics) that in its turn leads to the "rational soul" (which Heraclitus described), then to the "angelic intelligence," the stage at which Anaxagoras stopped, leaving to Plato the concern to designate the "divine sun" toward which must turn the *purgata acies mentis* (I, 1).

As thunderbolt and mortars can prove, bodies have more power to the extent that they are less dense, nearer to air and fire, and the most humble forms, those that need a material substratum, act only through the immanence in them of an idea coming from the *primus mundani operis architectus* (I, 2 and 3). At the same time intelligent and intelligible, the angel remains motionless, a direct reflection of the operative principle. In an intermediary position, exactly in the center of the scale, the soul, like the moon, receives its light from on high; motionless by its substance, it is mobile through its works. Between the pure corporeal multiplicity and the divine unity (with the two intermediaries of quality or united multiplicity and of the angel or multiple unity), it alone forms the link between two infinities, that of the Good and that of primary matter, which, inasmuch as it aspires to Being, already participates in goodness (I, 4–6 to III, 1–2).

With its triple function (reason, anger, and concupiscence corresponding to brain, heart, and liver), the human soul is distinguished however from the *anima mundi*, indivisible and omnipresent, populated by demons, geniuses, and heroes, *vita mundo infusa* which the Stoics erroneously confused with the *summus Deus*. Although Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas judged the question of secondary importance, Marsilio wished that a council would explicitly confirm the thesis of the *Epinomis* (983b–c) on the souls of the spheres, intermediaries between ours and the *anima mundi*, but he scarcely seemed to doubt there would be a positive response that would harmonize with his astrological views (IV, 1). On the other hand, despite the opinion of Plotinus, he did not believe that the seminal reasons were finite in number, which would impose the image of an eternal return. And if it is true that the statement of Plato on the manufacture of souls by the acolytes of the demiurge seems to accord with Ficino's taste for mediations, Ficino here—not being afraid to invoke equally the authority of Aristotle as to the intellect coming from without (*Gen. Anim.* II, 3, 736a)—prefers the opinion of other "excellent Platonists" (Dionysius, Origen, Augustine) and asserts that, having been created *ex nihilo*, our souls owe their incorruptibility to a *virtus infinita* operating *sine medio* (V, 13 to X, 7–8). From this one can infer—Marsilio here comes close to Nicholas—that the *mens* also possesses, *quodammodo*, an "infinite virtue" thanks to which *non modo reperit infinitum actum qui Deus est, verum etiam potentiam infinitam quae est materia subdita Deo atque ad innumerabiles formas inde capiendas idonea* (VIII, 16).

Calling attention to certain disagreements between non-Christian Platonists (for example between Plotinus, on the one hand, and Porphyry and Proclus on the

other) on the immortality of irrational souls, he passes quickly on, making use of a formula (*sed haec ipsi viderint*) that means: it is their business (V, 4). Most often he believes he discerns between all the *Platonici*—Greek, Arab, and Christian—a fundamental agreement, notably on the existence of the "ethereal body" which will belong to souls inasmuch as they are incorruptible (IX, 6), but still more on the motion by which the *mens*, as *imago Dei*, turns back on itself, reflecting in some way the divine radiance, and can thus rise towards God (XII, 3–4 to XIII, 4).

In the fall of souls, Ficino—who pretends to rely at the same time on Moses and on Zoroaster, on Hermes and on Plato—see less ■ revolt than a sickness. In spite of the disorder that it produces in the cosmos, he emphasizes particularly what remains of harmony, notably those marvels of instinct that he presents as the signs of a divine presence, recognized by Saint John and Saint Paul and which the ancients symbolized by their *Jovis omnia plena* (X, 3 to XII, 1). And he extols above all that *mens humana*, constantly illuminated by the *mens divina* and which possesses an *intuitus naturalis veri* (XII, 4). Through the enthusiasm which captivates it, it can have command over beasts and things in such a way that man becomes a sort of "emulator of God in his arts and governments" (XII, 3). Describing him as the most religious of beings, Ficino seems to attribute to him the final ambition to "become all," to "do all," to "surpass all," to be "everywhere and always," to know "the supreme riches and the highest pleasure" (XIV, 2).

These are certainly rhetorical formulae rather than a statement of some Promethean wish, but the magical background remains disquieting to the extent that Ficino affirms a parallelism between three systems of determination—Providence which governs intellects, Destiny which rules over souls, Nature who is mistress of bodies—so that not only miracles, but all the spells and incantations (to use the expressions that Marsilio knew well and which soon imposed themselves on Pomponazzi) come to be written in a certain way into the *lex aeterna*. The author of the *Platonica Theologia* does not appear to doubt that this doctrine is at the same time that of Iamblichus, of Proclus, of Avicenna, and of the "Christian theologians" (XIII, 2–5). But is it enough, to assure this harmonization, to take up again arguments against materialism and against Averroism (notably in Book XV) that are partly borrowed from the Thomistic arsenal, or, finally, confronted with the eschatological problem, to invite the reader to pass beyond the philosophical circumlocutions to follow the shorter way that he is offered by the *theologici christiani* (XVIII, 8)?

Without casting doubt on the good faith of the canon of Florence, one will simply recall, among so many other signs of a mode of expression through which are revealed singular modes of feeling and of thought, the very terms of which Marsilio makes use—spontaneously and not without naïveté—when he expresses his gratitude to the archbishop of Florence, Rinaldo Orsini, the brother-in-law of Lorenzo. This prelate, in fact, made the journey to Rome to see the pope personally and to prevent an imminent condemnation of the *Apologia* published in December 1489 by the author of the *De triplici vita* who was accused of allowing too much scope to astrology in the third part of the medical work. In truth it seems

that his defense, on the contrary, aggravated his case. Saved by the representations of Orsini, he was not afraid to evoke Saturn, master of ravaging wolves, and to compare the archbishop to the beneficent planet that neutralizes inauspicious influxes:

Salve diu, salve semper, pastor bone, salus ovium. Pastor bonus animam suam ponit pro ovibus suis, ut ea et pascat et tueatur a lupis. Ita ut nuper agnum tuum Ficinum pie admodum ex voracibus luporum faucibus eruisti et Saturno jam nos graviter invadenti, tu quasi Jupiter es oppositus.<sup>39</sup>

# 14

## *Neoplatonism, the Greek Commentators, and Renaissance Aristotelianism*

EDWARD P. MAHONEY

In this paper I should like to share with my fellow students of Neoplatonism the results of researches in medieval and Renaissance Aristotelianism that have brought to light interesting ways in which Neoplatonism came to have a special impact on the development of Renaissance Aristotelianism. It is certainly not my aim to exclude other possible ways in which Neoplatonism had its effect, but I do believe that historians of ancient Neoplatonism will themselves be surprised to learn of the pervasiveness of certain themes among supposed proponents of Aristotle during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The two topics on which I wish to concentrate are (1) the influence on late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Aristotelianism of two late ancient commentators on Aristotle, namely, Themistius (317–388) and Simplicius (*fl.* 530),<sup>1</sup> and (2) a conceptual scheme of metaphysical hierarchy whose origins are clearly Neoplatonic and which was constantly debated during the same period.

### THE GREEK COMMENTATORS THEMISTIUS AND SIMPLICIUS—AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON RENAISSANCE ARISTOTELIANISM

If we turn to the writings of two of the most famous philosophers at Padua during the fifteenth century, namely, Paul of Venice (d. 1429)<sup>2</sup> and Cajetan of Thiene (1387–1465),<sup>3</sup> we find no direct use of the writings of these Commentators in their own psychological writings. The situation is different with Nicoletto Vernia (d. 1499)<sup>4</sup> and his student, Agostino Nifo (ca. 1470–1538),<sup>5</sup> both of whom make extensive use of Themistius' paraphrases on the *De anima* in the translation of Ermolao Barbaro;<sup>6</sup> Simplicius' *Physics* and *De coelo* and the *De anima* traditionally attributed to him;<sup>7</sup> and Girolamo Donato's translation of the *De anima* of Alexander of Aphrodisias.<sup>8</sup> The work of Themistius had of course been known in the Middle Ages through the translation of William of Moerbeke, and it had played a role in the philosophical psychologies of Thomas Aquinas, Siger of Brabant, Henry Bate of Malines, and James of Viterbo, among others.<sup>9</sup>

In an early question on whether the intellective soul is united to the human body as its true substantial form, Nicoletto Vernia makes no use of the Commentators but presents a straightforward Averroist position.<sup>10</sup> However, in his *Contra perversam Averrois opinionem de unitate intellectus de animae felicitate quaestiones divinae*, finished perhaps in 1492 but only published in 1504 after Vernia's death, he makes constant use of the Greek Commentators on Aristotle, namely, Alexander, Themistius, and Simplicius, along with Albert the Great.<sup>11</sup> Although he cites both Ficino's translation of Plato and also that of Plotinus, Vernia culls his presentation of Plato's psychology from Albert, and he attributes essential elements of it to Aristotle as well as to Themistius and Simplicius. The intellective souls, which God has created from eternity, possess in themselves the forms of all intelligible things, but they no longer remember these forms after they have entered human bodies. Nonetheless, once the body is purged through study, the soul is excited to reminiscence since learning is for Plato a recollection, as Boethius also points out.<sup>12</sup> Vernia lists Themistius and Simplicius among those who hold that both Plato and Aristotle thought that intellective souls are many, have been created by God from eternity, are infused in the human body, and return to their respective stars at death, and he adds as a comment from the *De anima* attributed to Simplicius that any disagreement between the two is merely verbal.<sup>13</sup> He also quotes from Themistius' paraphrases on the *De anima* in Ermolao's translation to show that while the ancient Commentator presents a possible argument for the unity of the intellect based on the need of a teacher and student to know the same thing, he did not himself assent to such a view but rather argued against it.<sup>14</sup> Later in the treatise, Vernia reaffirms that Themistius was only presenting an argument in the text in question, and he adds that Themistius determined the problem in his comparison of the intellect to light.<sup>15</sup> What Vernia is referring to, of course, is the celebrated passage regarding illuminating and illuminated intellects, whose meaning had already been debated by philosophers in the late thirteenth

century on the basis of Moerbeke's translation.<sup>16</sup> Paraphrasing Ermolao's translation, Vernia interprets Themistius to mean that there is one illuminating intellect for all men but many illuminated intellects, just as there is one sun although light itself is divided.<sup>17</sup> He also argues on the basis of other passages from Themistius' *De anima* that the individual human intellect survives death, and he denies that Themistius intended to have Aristotle disagree with Plato regarding preexistence and recollection.<sup>18</sup>

Vernia uses both Simplicius' *Physics* and also the *De anima* attributed to him in presenting his position on the soul and the intellect.<sup>19</sup> It must be admitted that Vernia is not wholly successful in welding together the ideas that he derives from the two works.<sup>20</sup> Among the things that Vernia takes from the *Physics* are that Plato and Aristotle both believe that the presence of the agent intellect to the sense image excites the soul to the knowledge that it previously possessed,<sup>21</sup> and also that the separation of the soul from the body does not involve a motion but simply the soul ceasing to illumine (*illustrare*) and to inform (*informare*) the human body by reason of some indisposition on the part of the latter.<sup>22</sup> From the *De anima* ascribed to Simplicius, Vernia appears to derive his own interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of the agent and potential intellects, a doctrine which he also attributes to Plato. As we have already noted, Vernia assumes that both Plato and Aristotle held to the preexistence of the individual soul, which forgets all the intelligible species it possesses as soon as it is united to the body. The three stages of the soul's cognition can be considered in either an a priori or an a posteriori ordering. According to the a priori ordering, the soul first knows itself and things above it, then it somehow descends from itself to know the intelligible species that are innate to it, and lastly it flows wholly to the outside and thereby comes to know accidents and individual things. On the other hand, according to the a posteriori ordering, the soul first knows sensible things through the imagination, and it is then aroused by other sensible things to return to the innate intelligible species that it had forgotten and is thereby made to know material things perfectly, that is, through their causes, and finally it returns to itself and there contemplates both itself and higher beings. The possible or potential intellect is the soul before it flows outside; the speculative or habitual intellect is the soul as it has gone outside and then returned to grasp its innate intelligible species; and the agent intellect is the soul as it has returned from outside and contemplates both itself and higher things.<sup>23</sup> Vernia claims to find this same threefold mode of the soul's operating in the *Liber de causis*, which he attributes to Proclus.<sup>24</sup> What is lacking in Vernia's treatise is any discussion of the two intellects that stand above the individual human intellect.<sup>25</sup> It is most important to emphasize, however, that Vernia has read Simplicius to have held that the human intellect is multiplied, that is to say, individual in each human being, since his student, Agostino Nifo, and many other philosophers during the sixteenth century will interpret Simplicius in an opposed fashion.

In his commentary on Averroes' *Destructio destructionum*, published in 1497, Nifo quotes Ficino's translation of the *Enneads*, but only late in the commentary and not to decide any major doctrinal issue.<sup>26</sup> Simplicius' *De coelo* and *Physics* are mentioned, but not the *De anima* traditionally attributed to him.<sup>27</sup> On

the other hand, in the early *De anima*, which was published in 1503, Nifo cites Alexander, Themistius, and Simplicius constantly, often showing parallels between Themistius and Simplicius, on the one side, and Plotinus, on the other side. He reads both Themistius and also Plotinus (*Enneads* I, 1, chaps. 7, 10, 12) to hold that the rational soul extends a "life" or "animation" from itself into the body, though in doing this he is being misled by the imprecision of Ermolao Barbaro's translation of Themistius. The latter often contains explanatory remarks as part of the translation itself.<sup>38</sup> In any case, Nifo's exegesis of Plotinus is clearly inspired in great part by Ficino's own commentary on the *Enneads* (I, 1, chaps. 1, 7, 8).<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, it should be noted that Nifo himself does not present Aristotle as upholding this sort of "animation" theory, although both Ficino, who bases himself on Themistius, and Ermolao's translation of Themistius do so. Indeed, Nifo seems to have been heavily influenced by Ficino's commentary on the *Enneads* in his own analysis of Themistius' views on the relation of soul and body.

Throughout his early commentary on the *De anima*, Nifo makes constant use of the *De anima* ascribed to Simplicius. He underlines Simplicius' distinction of the soul perfecting the body as opposed to its using the body, but he appears neither to understand too well nor to emphasize sufficiently Simplicius' doctrine of the various "lives" of the soul.<sup>40</sup> Without doubt, one of the most fundamental doctrines of Simplicius is that of the three levels of intellect, which Nifo interprets as involving: (1) the unparticipated intellect—Nifo identifies this intellect with God, the first agent intellect; (2) the participated intellect, which while abiding in itself in unwavering fashion attaches the soul to itself; and, (3) lastly, the human soul and its intellect which, when it abides in itself in the unity and permanence within itself, is the actual intellect, just as it is the potential intellect as it proceeds forth to the outside.<sup>41</sup> Nifo takes the third intellect to be one for all men. While Nifo does not always interpret Simplicius' doctrine correctly, the important thing to notice is that he helped to initiate a tradition of interest in that Commentator's psychology that lasted throughout the sixteenth century among Aristotelian philosophers.<sup>42</sup> And as with Themistius, so Nifo again turns to Ficino's commentary on the *Enneads* to explicate both Simplicius and also what Simplicius attributes to Iamblichus.<sup>43</sup>

Once again in his *De intellectu*, also published in 1503, Nifo uses both Themistius and Simplicius, as well as Ficino's translation of and commentary on the *Enneads*. He claims to find in agreement Themistius, Iamblichus, and Plotinus in saying that there is one World Soul that subsists in itself but vivifies by other souls (called "lives," "animations," or "traces") all living things.<sup>44</sup> He thus believes that Thomas could not use Themistius effectively against the Averroist doctrine of the unity of the intellect, though he admits that Thomas' *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas* contains other arguments from which the Averroists cannot escape.<sup>45</sup> It should be noted that Nifo, in clear opposition to Vernia, takes Themistius and Simplicius to hold, in agreement with Averroes, that the intellect is one in number for all men.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, he believes that no matter what Themistius may espouse, various "Platonists" maintain the plurality of human souls—

Ammonius, Origen, Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, and Iamblichus—all mentioned by Ficino. From at least this point of view, the Neoplatonists support Christian belief. Nifo has here simply borrowed from Ficino yet another time.<sup>47</sup> We should also note that while Nifo realized the similarities between the Commentators, that is, Themistius and Simplicius, and Plotinus as presented by Ficino, neither he nor his fellow Aristotelians seem to have fully appreciated the Neoplatonic doctrine of the simultaneous one-and-many which provides the key to some of the ideas of these two Commentators.<sup>48</sup> We might add that Nifo's interest in the Commentators continued in his later *De immortalitate animae*, where he again interprets Themistius and Simplicius as maintaining one intellect for all men and again rejects Thomas' use of Themistius against Averroes in his *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*.<sup>49</sup>

The works of Themistius and Simplicius on the *De anima* continued to be cited and studied throughout the sixteenth century by such philosophers as Giulio Castellani, Marcantonio Passeri (Genoa), Giovanni Faseolo, Francesco Vimercato, Federico Pendasio, Giacomo Zabarella, Antonio Montecatino, and Francesco Piccolomini.<sup>50</sup> The writings of Themistius and Simplicius brought with them a variety of Neoplatonic doctrines that were absorbed into the mainstream of sixteenth-century Aristotelianism. The origins of this use of the Commentators must of course be traced back to the use made of Themistius' *De anima* in the Moerbeke translation during the late Middle Ages, but the new translation of the work by Ermolao Barbaro and the latter's claim that Averroes had stolen his ideas from Alexander, Themistius, and Simplicius doubtless had much to do with renewed interest in Themistius' work.<sup>51</sup> Key points of contention that these ancient Commentators engendered among Renaissance Aristotelians concerned the unity of the intellect and the personal immortality of the soul. It is surely noteworthy that on occasion both topics much exercised religious authorities during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.<sup>52</sup>

#### A CONCEPTUAL SCHEME TO ACCOUNT FOR METAPHYSICAL HIERARCHY—ITS NEOPLATONIC ORIGINS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON RENAISSANCE ARISTOTELIANS

Throughout Proclus' *Elements of Theology* there are scattered remarks setting forth a conceptual scheme that was to have great impact on Western Christian philosophy during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The scheme was also introduced into the West through the writings of Proclus<sup>53</sup> and the Pseudo-Dionysius,<sup>54</sup> the *Liber de causis*,<sup>55</sup> and some passages in Augustine.<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere I have traced the history of this scheme in the writings of over twenty philosophers, ranging from Albert the Great to John Locke.<sup>57</sup> I shall sketch out here only salient aspects of the scheme and the debates that it engendered. I shall take care to show what I take to be its potential for conflict with orthodox Christian thought.

The scheme involves taking God and matter (or non-being) as two poles or termini measuring all things and thereby determining their grade or rank in the

hierarchy of reality. Spatial terms like "nearness" and "distance" play crucial roles in this scheme. The closer something is to God, the higher its grade, whereas the more it recedes from God and approaches matter (or non-being), the lower is its grade. The scheme is found in Albert the Great's commentary on the Pseudo-Dionysius' *De divinis nominibus* as well as in other of his works. The greater the falling away from the simplicity of the First Being, the greater a thing's diversity and composition. In like fashion, participation and approaching God are inter-related.<sup>48</sup> Aquinas too adopts the scheme in various of his writings, pointing out that God can be called a "measure" only by transferring the word from the category of quantity.<sup>49</sup> But what is important to emphasize is that Thomas is careful to point out that there always remains an infinite distance between God and his creatures.<sup>50</sup> That is to say, Thomas seems wary of certain aspects of the conceptual scheme. He explains in the *Summa*, for example, that things are called "distant" from God through an unlikeness of nature and grace, not through any physical distance, since God is in fact omnipresent.<sup>51</sup> The scheme is also to be found in the writings of Siger of Brabant,<sup>52</sup> Henry of Ghent,<sup>53</sup> Giles of Rome,<sup>54</sup> and Godfrey of Fontaines.<sup>55</sup> The sources used by these various medievals include the Pseudo-Dionysius' *De divinis nominibus*, the *Liber de causis*, and Proclus' own *Elements of Theology*.<sup>56</sup>

The fourteenth-century discussions regarding the "intension" and "remission" of forms had their effect on the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century developments.<sup>57</sup> Richard Swineshead's *De intensione et remissione qualitatibus* played a central role in these later discussions.<sup>58</sup> Paul of Venice (d. 1429) will admit that the grade of things in the scale of being (*latitudo entis*) can be measured from the zero grade of being (*non gradus entis*), but he denies that measurement is possible in regard to the infinite grade (*ad gradum infinitum*), that is, God. He argues for this position on the grounds that the perfection of a man is no closer to the highest goodness than that of a horse, since in each case there will be an infinite distance from the finite grade of goodness to the infinite grade.<sup>59</sup> Not surprisingly, Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) accepts the conceptual scheme and God as the primary measure of the grades of things in the hierarchy of being. One would expect this of a philosopher who translated and studied with care Plotinus, Proclus, and the Pseudo-Dionysius, and whose favorite medieval Christian philosopher was Thomas Aquinas.<sup>60</sup> He was also acquainted with Swineshead (Suiseth) and the so-called *calculatores* tradition.<sup>61</sup> Ficino shows special concern with the problem of how God can be infinite and yet measure the gradation of his creatures.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Ficino at times speaks as though God were the highest (*summum*) or the first grade (*gradus primus*) within the genus of all things—so too had Thomas Aquinas—but further analysis of his fascinating but tortured attempts to solve this dilemma lies outside the scope of this paper.<sup>63</sup> What surely must be added is Ficino's denunciation of "certain barbarians" (*barbari quidem*)—Paul of Venice is doubtless the prime target—who deny that things can be measured by their approach (*accessus*) to God inasmuch as he is infinite and who assert instead that things are measured solely by their receding (*recessus*) from privation.<sup>64</sup> There was also a sharp interchange between George of Trebizond and Cardinal Bessarion on the same issue.<sup>65</sup>

The debate over whether or not the measuring should be taken only from the

zero grade of being (*non gradus entis*) and not from God continued in such thinkers as Gabriele Zerbo (ca. 1435–1505),<sup>66</sup> Cardinal Domenico Grimani (1461–1523), and Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), of whom only Grimani defends Swineshead's view as applied to the metaphysical hierarchy.<sup>67</sup> Pomponazzi denounces Swineshead and cites Aristotle, Averroes, Plato's *Philebus*, Ficino's *Platonic Theology*, the Pseudo-Dionysius' *De coelesti hierarchia*, and Augustine's *Confessions* (XII, 7) as authorities for the view that intension and remission are measured by approach to and receding from the highest grade of a latitude, a view that he himself accepts.<sup>68</sup> The Franciscan, Antonio Trombetta (1436–1517), accepts God alone as measuring things by their approach to or receding from him, but by omitting non-being he is simply being loyal to his intellectual master, John Duns Scotus.<sup>69</sup> In contrast, the contemporary Thomists, Thomas de Vio (1469–1534) and Jacobus Brutus, accept both God and prime matter as the measure of things, thus reasserting Thomas' view on the subject.<sup>70</sup>

The conceptual scheme of God and non-being or matter measuring the hierarchy of being, which is clearly Neoplatonic in origin, was adopted by various Renaissance philosophers who are usually identified with the Averroist tradition. In his commentary on the *Destructio destructionum* (1497), the medieval Latin translation of Averroes' *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Agostino Nifo (ca. 1470–1538) frequently invokes the scheme in order to explicate Algazel and Averroes.<sup>71</sup> The *Liber de causis* is cited on several occasions, and Albert's and Thomas' works probably influenced him to adopt a participation metaphysics and to attribute it to Averroes.<sup>72</sup> In this and other of his works, Nifo takes Averroes to have adopted the scheme in order to explain the composition both of the Intelligences and of all other things.<sup>73</sup> Nifo's work had an impact on another so-called "Averroist," Marcantonio Zimara (1460–1532), who also attributes to Aristotle and Averroes a participation metaphysics and the conceptual scheme. However, Zimara goes beyond Nifo to seek other authorities for the scheme, not simply Augustine, but also the *De coelesti hierarchia*, the *Letters*, and the *De divinis nominibus* of Pseudo-Dionysius.<sup>74</sup> Both Zimara and Alessandro Achillini (1463–1512),<sup>75</sup> another Averroist who adopted the scheme, show special concern with the problem of how an infinite God can be said to measure things approaching to him, granted that he is always infinitely distant from them. Zimara tries to solve the dilemma by arguing that while God's perfection is formally infinite when taken in itself, it is not infinite when taken as imitable or participable by creatures.<sup>76</sup> Achillini, on the other hand, would say that only if God is finite, as Aristotle maintains, can he serve as a measure, but he also adds that he holds as the truth that the Intelligences are in fact infinitely distant from God. His solution would be, it appears, to fall back on the zero grade of being (*non gradus perfectionis entis*) as measuring the hierarchy of being.<sup>77</sup> Zimara attacks the *sophistae* and *calculatores* for just this position.<sup>78</sup>

The scheme is debated and either adopted or rejected by a variety of other sixteenth-century philosophers. For example, the Dominican Giovanni Crisostomo Javelli (ca. 1470–ca. 1538) appears to accept the scheme,<sup>79</sup> whereas Gaspare Contarini (1483–1542), one of Pomponazzi's students, makes God alone the

measure and rejects the zero grade. By means of a tortured line of reasoning, Contarini argues that God can be considered as finite as well as infinite, at least insofar as he is free of the infinity of matter and multitude—he resembles the finiteness of the number one in comparison to other numbers.<sup>80</sup> The problem of reconciling the concept of an infinite God with taking him as the measure of all things as they approach or recede from him also vexed a group of thinkers of the late sixteenth century. In his *De motu libri decem*, Francesco Buonamici clearly takes God to be such a measure or standard. He interrelates the concepts of participation, “nearness,” intension and remission, and the latitude of being.<sup>81</sup> Buonamici’s solution as to how something that is of infinite perfection, and therefore unknown to us, could enable us to understand how much each thing approaches to it appears to be that God is known by us as finite.<sup>82</sup> Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) presents arguments against measuring things by their distance or receding from God in his *Juvenilia*, and in so doing he is rejecting the view of his own teacher, Buonamici.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, one of Galileo’s acquaintances at Pisa, Jacopo Mazzoni (1548–1598), does accept God as the measure of all other things. However, he is very concerned to answer the objection that an infinite God cannot serve as a measure. His reply, in short, is that the “closeness” and “distance” at stake mean nothing but a greater or lesser participation in infinite perfection.<sup>84</sup> Finally, Cesare Cremonini (1550–1631), Galileo’s acquaintance at Padua, rejects the scheme as presented by Nifo and Zimara, and he makes pointed criticisms against using the word “to lack” (*deficere*) of the Intelligences in comparison with God.<sup>85</sup>

In this brief survey of the fate of the conceptual scheme during the Renaissance, one constant concern has become evident, namely, how to reconcile the concept of an infinite God of orthodox Christian theology with the notion of a God who measures all grades or levels in the hierarchy of being as things approach or draw near to him according to a set “distance.” It is not surprising that some thinkers rejected that scheme as unreconcilable with the concept of an infinite God. On the other hand, it should be noted that Plotinus himself did consider God to be infinite and saw him as outside and beyond all measure, though he measured everything else.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, in contrast to Proclus, Plotinus seems eager to present God as outside any genus or even hierarchy.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, we should perhaps view the debate about the conceptual scheme as revealing not so much a conflict between Neoplatonism as such and Christian orthodoxy but rather as difficulties inherent in the hierarchical conceptions of such Neoplatonists as Proclus.<sup>88</sup> It is instructive to note that Philo and the early Church Fathers used the terminology of “enclosing, not enclosed” to bring out God’s transcendence rather than that of “infinite distance.”<sup>89</sup> In like fashion, a Church Father such as Gregory of Nyssa who knew both Plato and Neoplatonism appears to make no use of the scheme to explain metaphysical hierarchy.<sup>90</sup>

The present paper has examined two different areas in which Neoplatonism had an important influence on the course of Renaissance Aristotelianism, namely, in psychological analyses, through the writings of Themistius and Simplicius, and in the long history of discussions regarding a conceptual scheme of metaphysical hierarchy. This scheme had its roots in Proclus, with perhaps some anticipations

in Plotinus, and was known to the Christian West through the Pseudo-Dionysius, the *Liber de causis*, and Augustine, as well as through Proclus’ own *Elements of Theology*. It even had some history, though in a watered-down form, in early modern thought, but that is another story.<sup>91</sup>

## 15

# Andreas Camutius on the Concord of Plato and Aristotle with Scripture

CHARLES B. SCHMITT

The more deeply one studies the philosophical thought of Western Europe during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and early seventeenth centuries, the more it becomes apparent that there are two dominating factors at work. I say this basing myself on the very imperfect state of our knowledge of the vast philosophical literature from the period that has not yet been assimilated into the general interpretative structure found in most syntheses of the thought of the Renaissance and early modern world. I am convinced that we are still very far from plumbing the depths of Renaissance thought, and even in those very few instances (e.g., Ficino, Pico, Pomponazzi, or Bruno) where we have a substantial interpretative literature, we are still not very close to having a complete understanding of these men's thought and their definitive place in the complex of Renaissance philosophy. Indeed, in the present paper, I hope to be able to add a footnote to the *fortuna* of Pico della Mirandola and Ficino in the sixteenth century.

The two principal factors of the Renaissance that I referred to above are that: (1) the continued importance of Aristotle as the dominant philosophical influence during the Renaissance is far greater than has been realized by interpreters up to

now; and (2) the deep penetration of Neoplatonic thought in the Renaissance fabric, although generally emphasized by most interpreters at the expense of Aristotelianism, is both deeper and more widespread than generally thought. These two statements, of course, seem at first hearing to be mutually contradictory; and, so they are. They require explanation, qualification, and clarification.

Let us look at Aristotelianism first. The general interpretation of Aristotelianism found in most writers of history of philosophy and of intellectual history is that, after having had its day in the high Middle Ages, it declined rapidly in the fifteenth century to be replaced by humanism and Platonism. Recent work shows this to be patently false. In fact the real high point of Aristotelianism—quantitatively speaking—can be located in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Leonardo Bruni's translations of the moral writings had few peers in terms of popularity in the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Flodr's *Incunabula classicorum* shows clearly the degree to which Aristotelian editions dominated the classical revival in fifteenth-century printing:<sup>2</sup> there were 552 Aristotle editions in the fifteenth century compared to 389 of Cicero, 181 of Ovid, and 18 of Plato, to give a few illustrative examples. A similar pattern is to be found for the sixteenth century, though we are still far from having a reliable and fairly complete list of Aristotelian editions for the century.<sup>3</sup> I estimate there to be between 2000 and 3000 Aristotelian editions, commentaries, and expositions printed during the century, perhaps ten times as many as there were Platonic works. For most of the individual Aristotelian works more new Latin translations were made during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries than during all earlier centuries combined.<sup>4</sup> There can be no doubt whatever that Aristotelian philosophy still dominated the West during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as much as it had done during the Middle Ages.

How then can I say that Neoplatonism also was even more influential during the Renaissance than normally supposed? Many years ago it was shown by Professor Fabro in his pioneering work that there was a far deeper penetration of Neoplatonic themes and doctrine in the thought of Thomas Aquinas than had previously been thought.<sup>5</sup> More recent research has substantiated and broadened his findings, so it is now generally accepted by all, save a few, that *Doctor Angelicus* is not necessarily equivalent to *Doctor Aristotelicus*. That is to say a very large amount of Neoplatonism went into the medieval Aristotelianism of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as well as of the twelfth century. What is not so well recognized yet, however, is that the same is true for the Renaissance. While many Aristotelians of the Renaissance wished to go back to the "true" Greek Aristotle—Zabarella is a good example—the interpretative framework of most Aristotelians still owed much to the Neoplatonism already present in the Middle Ages. Many aspects of medievalism were consciously removed from Renaissance Aristotelianism, ranging from linguistic formulation (e.g., *De generatione et corruptione* becomes the more classical *De ortu et interitu*)<sup>6</sup> to a rejection of fourteenth-century logic in the name of something closer to Aristotle.<sup>7</sup> Though there are many exceptions, and generalization on the matter is difficult, it is my view that the penetration of Neoplatonic themes and doctrines—in the broad syncretistic sense formulated by Ficino—became more widespread among Renaissance Aristotelians than

it had been during the Middle Ages. Not only do some of the Neoplatonic themes favored by the Greek commentators on Aristotle (who were largely of Neoplatonic persuasion) become more central,<sup>8</sup> but much Hermetic and Neopythagorean doctrine finds its way into Aristotelian writers often under the guise of *prisca theologia*, a formulation of Ficino's much favored by Renaissance Neoplatonists, but by no means spurned by self-styled Aristotelians of the period. It has taken us some time to realize the degree to which *prisca* themes are to be found in Aristotelian writers and now, even nearly thirty years after Walker formulated *prisca theologia* as a functional descriptive term,<sup>9</sup> it is usually considered to be a doctrine of Renaissance Platonists and not Aristotelians.<sup>10</sup>

The result of all this is that when one looks closely at Aristotelian writers of the Renaissance, especially if one studies particular doctrines in detail, patently Neoplatonic doctrine is very often fused with Aristotelian, Platonic philosophy frequently being put into Aristotelian language so effectively as to conceal its true paternity. The insinuation of this Neoplatonic material into the Aristotelians comes about in various ways, several of which are worth briefly mentioning. First, there is frequently a conciliatory and syncretic motive on the part of Aristotelians to assimilate Platonic materials into a synthesis. Second, a particular Aristotelian will sometimes find some Peripatetic doctrine outmoded or questionable on philosophical or other grounds and will substitute a convenient and more suitable Platonic doctrine in its place. Third, certain pseudo-Aristotelian works of decidedly Neoplatonic inspiration were accepted as genuine and gave Aristotelianism a more Neoplatonic cast than it otherwise would have had. There are various other reasons for the absorption of Neoplatonism into Aristotelianism, but further discussion would take us too far off the track.

In conclusion to these introductory comments, let me emphasize once again my view that even if Aristotelianism (or as I would prefer it, "Aristotelianisms")<sup>11</sup> dominated Renaissance philosophy to a degree hitherto seldom recognized, Neoplatonism was also lurking everywhere, even in places where one would hardly expect it. Renaissance philosophy in general can be viewed as a wide variety of different eclecticism, consisting of a nearly endless number of blends of a relatively limited number of constituents. "Eclecticism" in this sense is one of the most important contributions of the Renaissance Neoplatonic tradition stemming from Ficino. In that sense—a structural one—almost all of Renaissance philosophy can be seen as Neoplatonic.

Having made these preliminary comments, I would like to illustrate some of these ideas by a consideration of a Renaissance thinker, who, as far as I have been able to discover, has completely escaped the nets of modern students of the subject. Andrea Camuzio (Camutius) was of a distinguished family of medical men native to Italian Switzerland.<sup>12</sup> He fits into the general picture I have sketched in several different ways. In addition to writing medical works, he published various philosophical treatises that make use of Neoplatonic themes and sources, as well as Aristotelian ones; the names of Plato, Plotinus, and Pico occur frequently throughout his works. His general position, which owes much to Pico, emphasized the general philosophical agreement between Plato and Aristotle and

interpreted both to be in harmony with Scripture, as the title of his first published works brings out so clearly. This work, directed towards Cristoforo Madruzzo, the Bishop of Trent, who was to play such a key role in the forthcoming Council, consists in a preface to a disputation held in Milan in December 1541 and bears the title *In Sacrarum literarum cum Aristotele et Platone concordia praefatio*.<sup>13</sup> Not only the title, but the content of the work as well hark back to Pico's endeavor of a *pax philosophica*. Before turning to a consideration of this brief work, however, let us examine Camuzio's life and activities insofar as they can be learned from the current state of our knowledge. The necessary archival and manuscript work has not yet been done to establish the details of his life. We must, therefore, make use of the information we have, realizing that not all of it is reliable.<sup>14</sup>

Camuzio (Andreas Camutius) was the son of Francesco, himself an eminent physician,<sup>15</sup> and of a family noted in medicine from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. He was apparently born in Lugano, though in 1557, by a special dispensation, was granted Milanese citizenship and appears later as *mediolanensis*.<sup>16</sup> Secondary literature is silent or imprecise about the date of his birth, but it must have been about 1512, since he tells us in 1541 that he was then twenty-nine years old.<sup>17</sup> His life seems to break down into three periods: one in Pavia-Milan, a second one in Vienna, and finally one in Pisa, though we also know of his presence in Rome.<sup>18</sup> His studies were at the University of Pavia,<sup>19</sup> where he began teaching prognostics in 1536 and then logic and philosophy during the next few years.<sup>20</sup> After a period of medical practice in Milan (and perhaps elsewhere), he then taught theoretical medicine again at Pavia between 1559 and 1568.<sup>21</sup> During those years he published several works and was involved in a public disputation on medical topics in 1563 with Girolamo Cardano, whose account leads us to believe that Camuzio did not come off very well:

A three-day debate was instituted at Pavia with Camuzio, to be held in public before the Senate. My opponent was silenced, on the first day, in the first proposition, even in the judgement of all my rivals who were present. Certain memorials of this same event are graven in letters on the monument to Camuzio: "This then, in truth, was known to all, that they debated not for a mere refutation of argument, but with a power which seemed unassailable." And I believe the memory of that debate lives to this day.<sup>22</sup>

Cardano wrote this in 1575 and undoubtedly it cannot be accepted entirely at face value. It may be that the clever Cardano got the best of Camuzio in debate, but it was Camuzio who published a work arguing against various *conclusiones* of Cardano, dedicating it to Danicelo Barbaro.<sup>23</sup>

In spite of his alleged failure against Cardano, Camuzio was called to Vienna to become *protophysicus* to Maximilian II.<sup>24</sup> While there he published his *De amore atque felicitate* in 1574 and dedicated it to his patron.<sup>25</sup> This work is much indebted to Ficino and the Renaissance tradition of Platonic love treatises, making particular use of Leone Ebreo. A telling passage of the letter to Maximilian clearly shows the tenor of his work:



O poor and changeable Aristotle. Truly the Christian law preaches the law of love; of the Christians I know (if you exclude the few who have understood Plato), are there none who have hitherto attempted to define love? Rightly Plato alone among the ancient philosophers ought to be marked off by the term *divinitas* and should rightly be named *divinus*, because he treated the subject of love with care and vigor.<sup>26</sup>

Two years after the publication of the *De amore* the Emperor was dead and Camuzio wrote and published a work on his fatal illness.<sup>27</sup>

According to most reference works Camuzio died in 1578 (some giving the place as Vienna, others Milan),<sup>28</sup> but he was still good for another ten years of teaching at the University of Pisa, where he was *sopraordinario* in theoretical medicine from 1577 to 1587.<sup>29</sup> He was considered a man of eminence although he incurred the wrath of several colleagues including the irascible Girolamo Borro.<sup>30</sup> Among his students may have been the young Galileo, who studied medicine there in the early 1580s.<sup>31</sup> His death would seem to have occurred in 1587.<sup>32</sup>

As we have already mentioned, Camuzio's *Praefatio* was dedicated to Bishop Madruzzo, whose taste for Platonism is well known.<sup>33</sup> It takes the form of a preface to a disputation, that is, it can be read as a work similar to Pico's *Oratio*. Indeed, perhaps the most significant influence that is evident in Camuzio's work is that of Pico. In addition to the disputation held with Cardano, we know of at least three more public disputations in which he was involved: one held at Pavia about 1536, the one we are here concerned with, which was held at Milan in 1541, and a third held at Rome in 1544.<sup>34</sup> The first of these Camuzio tells us about in his *Praefatio*. Following the example of Giovanni Pico, he attempted, at the age of twenty-four, to reconcile Plato and Aristotle in a public disputation at the University of Pavia.<sup>35</sup> Though we do not know many details of this earlier attempt to defend the doctrines of both Plato and Aristotle, it is noteworthy that Pico's impact is still evident on a young philosopher of the 1530s. In his *De humano intellectu*, published in 1564 and dedicated to Carlo Borromeo, Pico still looms large and Camuzio's consideration of the human intellect owes as much to Pico and the Platonists as to the Aristotelians.<sup>36</sup>

The *Praefatio* is a straightforward apologetic work arguing that there is no essential disagreement between Greek philosophy and sacred Scripture. Though I have not been able to identify the precise reason why he was led to write on the topic when he did, it seems clear enough that there was a certain group of contemporaries to whom the work was directed as a polemical piece. Several times he speaks of those who oppose him, once saying: "I know that my adversaries (of whom there is an especially large number at Pavia) object that it is a vile thing to mouth one's own praises."<sup>37</sup> These opponents of his are also most notably the same ones who argue that religion and philosophy are in disagreement.

There are some philosophers as well as professors of Scripture, who think that the study of philosophy, especially the Peripatetic variety, is very much in opposition to sacred theology and that the teachings of the philosophers are counter in every way to the decrees and saving commands of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

Camuzio tells us that he adhered to such an opinion before he became converted to more of a concordist position.<sup>39</sup> There are several reasons why he is opposed to ■ separation of philosophy and theology. First of all, if what the philosophers teach us is not in accord with Scripture, then they have wasted their lives in misleading us and are no more than out-and-out deceivers.<sup>40</sup> Such a state of affairs would be unthinkable for it would lead to a situation in which truth in philosophy would be falsehood in theology.<sup>41</sup>

Camuzio has no sympathy for such a "double truth" position and would prefer to follow the position of the Neoplatonists rather than the Academic Platonists.<sup>42</sup> Unwittingly perhaps, opposing the two main strands of the Platonic tradition one to another, he sets up a clear contrast between the Academic Scepticism known through Cicero and the Christian Neoplatonism epitomized by Ficino. We all know now, especially since Tigerstedt has put the matter forward in such clear terms,<sup>43</sup> that the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato won the day during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Camuzio is no exception to this general tendency and his Platonism is very similar to that of Ficino, even if he does not mention the Tuscan by name. The general way in which the philosophy-theology relationship is viewed is very close to that of Ficino. For example, Camuzio emphasizes that both philosophy and theology are directed towards the same end (*ad eundem finem*), and that is knowledge of God (*finis est divinae essentiae [ut philosophice dixerim] cognitio*).<sup>44</sup> Again, like Ficino, he emphasizes that ■ philosopher is capable of contemplation of the divine and that this activity is proper to him.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps his clearest statement of the ultimate agreement of philosophy and theology is the following:

The professors of sacred Scripture and of philosophy may argue against it, but I am of the opinion that the doctrines of sacred theology are in no way contrary to the teachings of Aristotle and Plato, rather they agree in all ways.<sup>46</sup>

This, however, is not to say that philosophy and theology are not distinguishable, though it is obviously a problem for one who takes Camuzio's position. Not quite formulating the position in Ficinian terms that *Philosophia et religio germanae sunt*,<sup>47</sup> he does tend to see the two as parallel paths to a knowledge of God. He emphasizes that God can be known in various ways, for example, by inspired knowledge (*alii divino tantum afflati spiritu Deum agnoscunt*)<sup>48</sup> or through knowledge of the lower world (*per naturalium rerum speculationem*).<sup>49</sup> The latter method of knowledge is a gradual one and obviously Camuzio has in mind here the stepwise progression of knowledge towards God that has characterized Christian Neoplatonism. Indeed, he attributes this method of gradual ascent to a knowledge of God specifically to Plato:

For this reason Plato has always seemed to me—in this matter, as well as in other things—to have carried out his task wisely, because he has proposed that moral reasoning has everywhere been established towards living well and happily and for the purpose of cleansing the soul of the young; next one passes through the study of natural things and hence ascends gradually to the discovery of the divine.<sup>50</sup>

The debt to Plato and to later Neoplatonists is evident throughout Camuzio's work. Although it is formulated in terms of a concord of Plato *and* Aristotle with sacred Scripture, the Platonic side of philosophy seems to dominate. It is true that much of the language is Aristotelian, but even that is infused with many specifically Platonic formulations. Forms, ideas, harmony, and mixture all play a central role in Camuzio's arguments. For example, there is a long passage on the importance of *harmonia* in the soul and the question of the proper balance of the constituent parts.<sup>51</sup> At the conclusion of the section, he states again quite clearly his preference for Plato: "In this matter Plato has always seemed to me to stand out from the others."<sup>52</sup>

It would distort the issue to assert that Camuzio was one of the chief representatives of Renaissance Neoplatonism, for obviously he is not a thinker of much originality. Moreover, his works must be seen in balance and we cannot call him a Neoplatonist, strictly speaking, as we might call Ficino, Pico, Steuco, or Patrizi a Neoplatonist. There is probably as much Aristotelianism in Camuzio as there is Platonism, but it is interesting to note how many Neoplatonic formulations can be detected beneath a somewhat Peripatetic exterior. What his education at Pavia was in the 1530s is not clear. His remarks indicate that there was a strong sceptical tendency there that tended to separate clearly philosophy from theology.<sup>53</sup> He was probably at Pavia during a transition stage when the medieval tradition of logic and natural philosophy was dying out and there was little resonance still remaining from Agrippa's short tenure there when he taught both Plato and Hermes Trismegistus.<sup>54</sup> Still, Camuzio got his eclectic and Neoplatonic ideas somewhere, but from where remains to be determined. Also remaining to be determined is what happened to some of his ideas in his later works, when the second phase of his publishing career started. After the publication of the *Praefatio* in 1541 nothing else from his pen appeared in print until 1563, when he began publishing various more substantial works divided between medicine and philosophy.<sup>55</sup>

Cassirer's contention (put forward in his book on Platonism in England)<sup>56</sup> that intellectual history must be studied in the foothills as well as the peaks can be well applied to the Neoplatonists of the Italian Renaissance. A figure such as Camuzio shows so well how influential the intellectual orientation of the Platonic Academy remained a couple of generations after the death of Pico and Ficino. Besides the more ambitious and more influential writings of Francesco Giorgio, Symphorien Champier, Francesco da Diaceto, and Agostino Steuco, among others, the spread of Neoplatonic teaching can be seen among minor figures such as Camuzio.

# V

## MODERN THOUGHT

## *Triads and Trinity in the Poetry of Robert Browning*

ELIZABETH BIEMAN

First, a prefatory *apologia*. Of course the topic opened by the title is hubristically broad for development in one brief paper. Yet, in a literary critic called to explore the poetry of Browning before an audience interested in the interaction of Neoplatonism and Christian thought, a degree of rashness is preferable to the finesse, appropriate on other occasions, that would focus more narrowly.<sup>1</sup> Some comfort lies in the comprehensive temper of the Neoplatonic tradition, in a postlapsarian Christian consciousness of human limits, and in the robust aspiring spirit of Robert Browning that issues so candidly in his own poetic language. Heaven demands that human reach exceed the grasp, even as one acknowledges humbly that it does.

From first to last in a long and productive life Browning concerned himself with matters of psychology, theology, and epistemology: man's mind, God's mind, and exploration of the process or act of knowing that might join the two. "I have always had one lodestar," confesses the speaker of *Pauline* in 1833. "A need, a trust, a yearning after God."<sup>2</sup> More than five decades later the speaker of the prologue to *Asolando* (1889) offers his reader a hypothetical choice between a

lens that would drape the world in varied rainbow hues and one capable of revealing the naked "inmost" truth ablaze. In the poems between these years (perhaps most strikingly in *The Ring and the Book*) lie countless instances of the search for the one Truth in a world of shifting perceptions of truth; and the records of infinite moments when Truth flashes, evanescently, upon the seeker, or of starry points beyond the world of finitude where all contraries meet.

Any student of the Neoplatonic tradition will recognize, as Browning surely did, that such epiphanic moments and centers belong to the annals of mystical experience, and that the *noesis* sought, and occasionally achieved, has at least as much to do with the dynamic of a Platonic *eros* as with the ratiocinative dialectic that may be employed to begin the pattern of ascent. But too many readers of Browning, having no prior command of the perennial wisdom of the mystic, and paying insufficient attention to the poetic dialectic through which he seeks to move them to the point of initiation, have misunderstood him grievously.

All too often Browning has been characterized as a pious obscurantist, whether by sycophantic friends who see in him a saving prophet of some true religion bearing a resemblance to the one they themselves profess, or by hard-headed modernists who deplore his selling out what could have been a clear head in surrender to the promptings of his heart. This distorted opinion prevailed for half a century on the impetus it got in 1891, immediately after Browning's death, in Henry Jones' influential book, *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*.<sup>1</sup> Few noted during that period how the vision and craft of the poet were obscured in the question-begging title.

I am far from the first to take issue with such error: it has not dominated for a few decades now, although it still finds the odd champion. But the occasion of a conference on "Neoplatonism and Christian Thought" offered the unusual course of tracing Browning's lifelong quest for God and truth through examining the triadic and trinitarian patterns so apparent in his poetry, a strategy quite appropriate to the task.<sup>4</sup>

Let us begin on the base of an argument from numerology. Man is propelled into a deep dyadic dilemma by his fall, whether it be understood as the fall of the soul into the body<sup>5</sup> or as Adam's separation from God in the primal garden. His consequent yearning turns source into goal: he longs for the world once known beyond the Platonic cave, for the Plotinian One, or for the biblical God. (Not that these are identical concepts!) He can be satisfied, however partially, only when a third term is activated to bind the separated opposites.

This truism, familiar to every Pythagorean if not to every child of Adam, led of course to the ubiquity of triadic formulations in ancient and Hellenistic philosophies. The triad can enclose a triangle, the first geometric figure in the progression generated from the monad to possess a surface, and hence the first truly visible to the senses. Thus, in the lower universe, three may be regarded as "the first *real* number."<sup>6</sup> In the *Timaeus*, Plato depicts triangles as the building blocks of the cosmos. It can, and will here, be argued that triadic thought patterns are equally ubiquitous in Browning's imaginative cosmos.

Although Browning was demonstrably familiar with the Neoplatonic tradi-

tion, especially as it manifested itself in the Renaissance,<sup>7</sup> he was at least as familiar with the triads of German idealistic thought, popular in England since the time of Coleridge. The intellectual heirs of Kant, Schelling, and Hegel are still, at some remove, heirs of Plato and the Hellenistic Neoplatonists. Triadic and dynamic thinking characterizes all periods in the tradition, but it is possible to note shifts of emphasis in the prevalent patterns.

Whereas the early Neoplatonists were concerned with a third term mediating between higher and lower, or inner and outer, poles in a dynamic eddying circuitry, Hegel characteristically visualized the third term of his triads (the synthesis) as arising logically from, but thrusting ontologically beyond, the first and second (the thesis and antithesis).<sup>8</sup> The Hegelian thinker, then, will still see, as did his forebears in the tradition, the world of becoming shot through with vital being from beyond; but his vision of a powerful forward thrust, as each synthesis becomes the thesis for a new triad, imposes an assumption of linear process or progress on his system that is radically different from prevailing assumptions in earlier idealism. The hypothetical absolute is still source and goal, but the post-Hegelian eye tends, in its preoccupation with process, to turn its gaze away from the top story in the three-storied universe derived from the ancients.

The contrast just drawn is simplistic, of course. For that reason alone it would be wrong-headed to attempt to pinpoint source or specific antecedent for elements in Browning's poetry that offer analogies to elements in the long Platonic tradition. An even stronger reason to resist any such temptation is this: pervasive as triadic patterns are in Neoplatonism, they are certainly not exclusive to it. Nor is every pattern of three to be assimilated to the Trinity in a Christian poet, as many an undergraduate has yet to learn. Thus, although such paradigms in the work of a poet as impressively learned as Browning are worth the examining, the process of exploration itself may have to serve as an answer to the questions we put.<sup>9</sup> We know better than to expect the crisp certainties sought by an earlier academic generation addicted to source-hunting; we know better than to attempt to choose Neoplatonism or Christianity as exerting exclusive domain in the Browning canon.

Disclaimer expressed, we may find nonetheless a certain clarity of insight in the realization that the world of noetic activity through which Browning's speakers seek their varieties of truth is congruent with that known to Neoplatonists of every age, and that Neoplatonists of any age would find something therein with which to feel spiritually at ease. Sometimes in the poems we find the divine forces that permeate the world of particularity discharging all differences in a mystic flash: "not a fourth sound, but a star" to quote Abt Vogler (st. VII, 4). Sometimes the moribund state of some character realized in dramatic monologue leads us to see "The central truth, Power, Wisdom, Goodness—God" (*The Ring and the Book* X, 1634) as it were by negation, in an afterimage: such is the case when the murderer, Guido, in *The Ring and the Book* characterizes himself as a bleating "shuddering sheep," helplessly judged a wolf by the shepherd, Pope Innocent, and thrust back into the hellish "quag wherein it drowns" (XI, 402, 405). Sometimes the divine creative power is best understood as that which maintains the motive thrust in an otherwise flagging human life: such in the Pope's eyes was the

helpless Pompilia's instinctive compulsion to save the life of her unborn child, the "prompting of what I call God, / And fools call Nature," that moved her "To worthily defend the trust of trusts / Life from the Ever Living" (RB X, 1073-81).

The old Pope, more than any other character in *The Ring and the Book*, may be speaking for the older Browning. He is sceptically aware that perceptions of God's truth are very limited from man's fallen perspective, yet he accepts the limitations in sanguine good faith. In this he differs strikingly from speakers who take two other stances in Browning's poetic dialectic, each typical of a phase in the sequence of poetic attempts to bridge the gaps in human experience. Representing the first phase we can see, in 1835, the young Paracelsus: like the heroes of *Pauline* and *Sordello*, the early works that bracket the long dramatic poem bearing his name, Paracelsus seeks to ascend to realms no God-fearing son of Adam should hope to reach under his own noetic power. Forced to abandon the Promethean quest, to learn his limits through years of loss and opprobrium, Paracelsus enjoys only momentary triumphs in the course of his life, and, perhaps, a liberation of vision at the point of death. He never reaches a point at which he can make the triumphant affirmation typical of the second phase in the development of the Browning canon, "See the Christ stand!" Those words are given to David in the version of "Saul" published in 1855, ten years after the first version of the poem broke off inconclusively at a point where the loving young singer was praising the heroic power of his king in an unsuccessful attempt to heal his broken life. The incarnational assertion could not be made in the poem until Browning had himself moved to another phase in his own struggle for unified vision. The impetus came, of course, as the intensity of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Christian faith augmented the residue of Christian fervor the youthful Browning had absorbed under his mother's influence.<sup>10</sup> Once experienced in maturity, the unifying incarnational vision remained a constant factor in his creative life. Yet after the death of his wife, it was rarely again articulated directly: the limits that life imposes on visionary certainties possess his imagination in later years more powerfully than vision itself.

Three phases, then, provide the schema by which I shall order the demonstrative portions of this essay. The differences are primarily those of emphasis. They are defined in dramatic voices expressing, first, strenuous aspirations towards the absolute Truth that is denied fallen man; second and centrally, proclamations of incarnational truth; third and last, awareness that moments of certainty are evanescent, but that the necessarily endless search for truth confers its own rewards. Although, as suggested, the concerns dominant in early, central, and late periods of the Browning canon may reflect the phases here defined, only the central phase—in which the "central Truth" is forcefully reiterated—applies directly to a limitable period in the life of the poet. The hunger for truth, and the recognition of the limits that deny it, are constants in the poetry of the lifetime.

In the early—the aspiring—phase, the focus is psychological, the vision is internal and subjective, in spite of the dramatic masks Browning assumes to protect the ego flayed by criticisms of his earliest publications. The reader's

sympathies are not denied the thwarted aspirant, but he is led to recognize the futility of man's unaided efforts. In the central phase, the focus is theological, the vision sacramental. Affirmations of God's gracious aid to man mark the poems now so strikingly that the less than careful reader may miss the omnipresent evidences of dialectical struggle undergirding the proclamations. Scepticism is never denied, but threads through the fabric of faith. As Christian language recedes over the years to incidental dramatic occurrences, the humane concerns of the Christian—truth, goodness, justice, life here and life hereafter—never recede. The focus of the last phase is epistemological, the vision still sceptical, as it first became when events forced scepticism upon the early striver. Once again, particular truths emerge through particular voices, but the voices are more numerous in the great dramatic epic of this phase, *The Ring and the Book*. Experience is more confusing. Absolute Truth is more and more shadowy, impossible to be proclaimed in single human utterance.<sup>11</sup>

The disparate voices thus necessitated speak, from first to last, in paradox and metaphor, the only linguistic vehicles available for oracular and prophetic utterance.<sup>12</sup> Only by participating in the forward thrust of the poems themselves, focusing on the voices one by one, struggling towards a possible wholeness and holiness refracted in dramatic tensions and recalcitrant language, can we hope to experience the process of indoctrination Browning has in mind for his readers.

In *Paracelsus*, a poem of voices, the young Browning is transparently sketching out his poetic paradigms; the work claims careful attention. At the outset the protagonist is striving for power—power "to comprehend the words of God / And God himself, and all God's intercourse / With the human mind" (533-535). This fierce erotic energy asserts apparently autonomous authority within him: he boasts to Festus, his friend, that the drive comes from God, that he must trust that "God / Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart!" (345-346). He claims, in his obsession, that the power he seeks will serve mankind, but adds, "there our intercourse must end: / I never will be served by those I serve" (612-613). Appalled by this arrogance, Festus cautions "How can that course be safe which from the first / Produces carelessness to human love?" (619-620).

The dialectic of the poem is thus established: the tensions will be generated across the gap perceived in fallen existence between the poles of power and love. That Browning's aim was allegorical—to represent an inner action "instead of having recourse to an external machinery"—he explained in the preface to the first edition, later discarded.<sup>13</sup> The mind of Paracelsus, actively demonstrating the stance of power-hunger, is both theater and leading actor for the psychic drama.

Love finds two chief exemplars in the action: Festus, who lives by the warmth of human love and towards whom Paracelsus expresses what little mundane affection is given him to feel; and Aprile, an etherealized Shelleyan sort of poet, whose self-characterization as he enters the action in the second canto leaves no doubt as to his function—"I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved!" (II, 385). In spite of that "infinitely," an adverb of degree, what Aprile loves as artist are the things of earth and "every passion sprung from man" (II, 433); he would capture

them in art to the glory of their creator. Through this angelic presence, yearningly in love with the particulars of the world, Paracelsus comes to understand, if only partially, his own fault in unlovingly rejecting the world:<sup>14</sup>

Die not, Aprile! We must never part.  
Are we not halves of one dissevered world.  
Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part? Never?  
Till thou the lover, know; and I the knower  
Love—until both are saved.

(II, 633–637)

Aprile dies at the end of canto II.

The third canto, set in the middle years of the life of the Renaissance magus, gives us a humanized Paracelsus, partially successful in the university at Basel, warmer and less abstracted towards Festus, but painfully aware that his early hopes were vain and that "The truth is just as far from [him] as ever" (III, 502). He defines

Two sorts of knowledge; one—vast, shadowy,  
Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued;  
The other consists of many secrets, caught  
While bent on nobler prize.

(III, 923–926)

Earlier, we recall, "knowledge" for him meant knowledge of absolutes, the radiant star of his youthful obsession; at midpoint now in life the adjective he applies to his "unbounded" goal—"shadowy"—underscores the change the years have brought. He sees painfully how, by contrast, the divine intelligence "casts (man's) mind / Into immeasurable shade" (III, 1026–1027). Shadows pervade this universe of loss, from top to bottom.

His fortunes have declined further by canto IV. Even scientific "knowledge" is slipping from him. Accused of quackery, he has called in dejection for Festus. In bitterness he raves of the black arts and of poetry (IV, 588–594); but admitting that he has "no julep, as men think / To cheat the grave," he consoles himself by claiming a faith in the indestructibility of the human soul (IV, 672–676). The characterization in this canto rings true to records of the historical personality, scientifically rebellious but conservative in his philosophical and religious attitudes—too strange, perhaps, to be a typical Christian Neoplatonist of his period, but participant nonetheless in the amalgamated streams.<sup>15</sup>

The thwarted life is near its end when the final canto opens; Festus laments at the bedside of his silent friend. Paracelsus awakes in delirium, hearing Aprile's voice, and babbling of loving and knowing. Moments of apparent lucidity alternate with flashes of arrogance towards man, or of sardonic raillery at the God who has been defeated in defeating this creature.<sup>16</sup> When, still delirious, he reverts to a happier past, Festus seizes the break in the black torrent to sing an Aprilean lyric of a stream meandering through a natural world inhabited by a multitude of lovely creatures (V, 418–446). Paracelsus sighs, now calmly awake, that the "dark snake

that force may not expel / . . . glideth out to music sweet and low" [449–450]. The image, as we shall see, is a precise anticipation of a key moment in "Saul."

Reminiscing of Aprile's quest for God through love, and his own through the power of knowledge, Paracelsus comes to pronounce his own epitaph:

Let men  
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago  
Who loved too rashly; and shape forth a third  
And better-tempered spirit, warned by both.

(V, 885–888)

Then as death comes, another triadic pattern is implied in his last words:

Festus, let my hand—  
This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend!  
Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprile!

(V, 905–907)

But this triad (Paracelsus as the mean term between exemplars of mundane and etherial love) rounds to a circle in the theater of Paracelsus' mind, if we visualize the ambiguous lines in one possible way. By "this hand," he is perhaps not demonstrating his own, "my hand," in a semantic stutter, nor blurring Festus with Aprile in delirium, but is attempting to join the hand of Aprile, seen clearly as the veil of this world is parting, in the free hand of Festus, and then to take Aprile's free hand himself to close the loving circle. If so, at that moment Paracelsus triumphs by bridging in love, not power, the chasm his life's proud striving has failed to close, and rounding life's angular patterns into perfection.

The dynamic circuitry of love implied in this ending—love in, and beyond, this world of flesh—anticipates the incarnational visions of Browning's central phase in some senses, without doing so specifically. In lines at the original end of canto II, which Browning emphasized by expansion in the 1849 edition that made the incarnational suggestion explicit, Aprile voiced this insight at point of death:

I see now, God is the perfect poet,  
Who in his person acts his own creations.

(II, 648–649)

To a reader cognizant of the root meaning of "poet" and the Logos tradition in the ancient world, this came close to proclaiming the Christ, even before the expansion. The dying Aprile continued, chiding Paracelsus for the idolatrous intensity of his expressed need—and the words place him far beyond the world of flesh at this point in the fiction:

Crown me? I am not one of you!  
'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one.

(II, 658–659)

More ethereal always, in his allegorical role, than the incarnate king, Aprile can speak and teach of love but is lacking in power to save. Paracelsus at his own

death will call upon *men* to "shape forth [the] third" who will join the human functions expressed by knower and lover, intellectual and intuitional halves of divided humanity. But it has been given the poet of the two to hint that the saving action must come from God.

The dyadic dilemma has been expressed as operating in more than one dimension in *Paracelsus*: horizontally in the division between the two who strive for the power of forbidden knowledge and for infinite love; vertically, in the gap separating them from the creator-source who is their goal. In canto V, at the end, where Aprile is part of the eternal world of love, the vertical dimension predominates.

Power and love are opposed once again in the figures of Saul and David in the early version of "Saul," published four years before the incarnational addition to *Paracelsus*. In lonely agony, like a heavy "king-serpent," the afflicted Saul hangs motionless against a great "cross-support" in his tent (29, 31). The young singer David seeks in love to release him and restore his failed power. The song to which he progresses in the ninth stanza might have been sung by Aprile; it celebrates the same particular beauties of creation, the same passions of men. David's finale, the finale to the early version, is tonally triumphant—"The name rings—King Saul!" (96). But the narrative action is inconclusive. The image of transfixed flesh at the beginning of the poem has implied the ending Browning was presumably incapable of writing in 1845.<sup>17</sup>

Not until stanza X, the first of those published ten years later,<sup>18</sup> is Saul released to full awareness, as the dying Paracelsus had been released in response to the song Festus sang in Aprilian celebration. Yet full salvation in the poem comes not for Saul but for the young poet who will see power and love fused in the vision of Christ. The serpent image does not apply directly to Saul in the second half of the poem, yet it enters once more in the culminating lines as David makes his breathless way home through a night charged with angelic and demonic presences. Armed by his vision of Christ, he feels the fears that could beset him subside harmlessly—"the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed / All the tumult" (321–322)—and in the consequent hush he sees a serpent slide away silent, under "the new Law" of love. (The serpent image, harmless now or even benign, will be noted again in another incarnational context.)

Any tendency to see the atemporal vision of David as a pious anachronism, or as the facile imposition of a metaphysical solution upon a physical problem, should be forestalled by attention to the hand imagery in "Saul." The breakthrough whereby David sees the loving potency of Christ as the inevitable answer for a fallen and separated world comes in response to an affectionate gesture from the king, whose hand tilts the boy's head back for an intense interchange of gaze. The rush of love David then feels brings in the rush of truth. If he, mere work of God's hand, would give new life to Saul "had love but the warrant" (236), could creature possibly surpass creator in this? Love has a warrant, when love is God's, because love is a power, and grants "power to believe." "All's one gift," a dynamic process in which "all's love, yet all's law" (288, 289, 242). Ecstatically, David proclaims a truth the Neoplatonist might define as the circuitry of procession from, and return to, the lodestar, God:

As Thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved  
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!  
(305–306)

David then moves on to explicitly Christian utterance:

O Saul, it shall be  
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me.  
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand  
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!  
(309–312)

David's prophetic vision is of the mediator who alone, in the Christian understanding of things, can rejoin what the fall has put asunder. And his mystical knowledge is typical of two modes of biblical "knowing"—it is felt as received from beyond but is not contrary to reason; and it is carnal knowledge too. Hands of flesh are needed to participate in the preparation for, and realization of, God's now accessible truth.

The vision of Christ in the completed "Saul" is the strongest direct declaration of its sort in the canon, direct in the sense that there is no dialectical qualification in the poetic context, although, of course, the words are dramatically distanced from Browning by ascription to David. Thereafter the incarnational "central truth" remains a given whenever Browning writes of the human dilemma. The drier tones that ensue when he explores the epistemological concerns dominant in the final phase, the inevitable resumption of sceptical ratiocination, must not be taken as evidence of denial of the peak of vision. "Infinite moments" are not susceptible of perpetuation in a finite world; to understand this is not to deny infinity.

While Browning was working his way toward the vision in "Saul" he wrote, in 1850, a long discursive double work, "Christmas Eve and Easter Day." The work is not totally successful as poetry: it reads as recall of a dialectical struggle internal to some consciousness—perhaps Browning's, perhaps by intent his reader's—punctuated by fleeting instances of more visionary mental events.

The dialectic between power and love is modified and complicated in the first and more poetic half: the speaker observes and explores his responses to the events of Christmas Eve in three imagined settings: an unlovely service in a dreary nonconformist chapel, an imposingly ritualistic service in Saint Peter's at Rome, and a lecture on Christology at Göttingen by a professor steeped in the arguments of the higher criticism. The binding thread, as the wanderer makes his imagined survey of these manifestations of contemporary response to the Christmas event, is the fleeting figure of Christ, whose flying garments serve to "suck" the speaker

along in the flying wake  
Of the luminous water-snake.  
(503–504)

These striking lines occur first in stanza IX as the poet is being led from the chapel to Rome, and again, in precise repetition, as he is led to Göttingen. But

they have been anticipated—in brightness, in fluidity, and in the serpentine detail—in the denouement to the most mystical passage in the poem, one beginning in stanza VII and describing the vision triggered by the sight of a “moon-rainbow, vast and perfect / From heaven to heaven extending” when a “black cloud-barricade was riven” (378, 385–386):<sup>19</sup>

I felt my brain  
Gutted with the glory, blazing  
Throughout its whole mass, over and under  
Until at length it burst asunder  
And out of it bodily there streamed,  
The too-much glory, as it seemed,  
Passing from out me to the ground,  
Then palely serpentine round  
Into the dark with mazy error.

## VIII

All at once I looked up with terror.  
He was there.  
He Himself with His human air.

(421–432)

The passage is logically and emotionally ambivalent. Although the vision has begun above in the moon-rainbow, “mazy error” suggests a resumption of scepticism; and the word “gutted” begins a line of suggestion that the physical brain of the speaker (note “mass”) is womb for the birth of the Christmas vision. But it demonstrates a clear advance towards specifically Christian statement when compared with the unbinding of the dark snake’s coils at the end of *Paracelsus*; and the “serpentine” image leads here to the sudden appearance of Christ, a Christ recognizable in the very midst of doubt and terror.

The vision of the flying Christ compels compliance in the poet, but not unthinking compliance. He debates strenuously with himself throughout the whole experience, striving to find “one way, our chief / Best way of worship” so that he might “contrive / My fellows also take their share!” (1170–1174). Once he reaches a point of recognition that

I can but testify  
God’s care for me—no more, can I—  
It is but for myself I *know*  
(1185–1187, italics added)

He feels the enfolding warmth of the flying robe, and then a passionate impulse to spring “out of the wandering world of rain, / Into the little chapel again” (1236–1237).

He is still fully aware of its ugliness. But having tested and rejected the power of the professor’s searching intellect through a succinct and witty parody of the arguments by which the continental critics of Scripture were reducing the “Myth

of Christ” to “vacuity”: and having earlier “feast[ed] his love” on the palpable beauties of Saint Peter’s, he makes the existential choice: “I choose here!” (859, 914, 737, 1341). Having chosen, he participates freely in singing

The last five verses of the third section  
Of the seventeenth hymn in Whitfield’s Collection.  
To conclude with the doxology.

(1357–1359)

The search for the universal answer has been silently dropped. The glory has faded. But the particular man has taken his stand in the dry particularity lightly mocked in lines just quoted. This nonconformism may be “an earthen vessel”: but for him it holds more accessible treasure than the “golden ewer” (1313–1314) of Rome, or the empty bell jar at Göttingen—both of which stand, he has made evident at an earlier point of transition,<sup>20</sup> for the dis severed halves of love and power.

“But for myself I *know*”: affirmation and scepticism have become inseparably entwined in the fabric of “Christmas Eve.” Knowledge has been identified with, and more importantly, conferred in, the existentially chosen Way, in this record of dialectical growth. In the process of knowing, the act of choice is all important.<sup>21</sup>

“How very hard it is to be / A Christian!” This opening exclamation of “Easter Day,” separated from the “doxology” by merely the title of the second part, serves as much as retrospective commentary as it serves to sound the renewed theme. It is not always easy to “Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

“The whole, or chief / Of difficulties, is belief” (29–30), asserts the sceptical voice in the ensuing dialogue. Then suddenly the God of power appears in apocalyptic vision to stand in judgment over the quaking sceptic. When he sees by the light of that “One fire” (505) that knowledge of the things of earth must fail, the appellant prays for love, and reverberations of Roman 7:24 and 1 Corinthians 13:8 soften those of the book of Revelation.

Thou Love of God! . . . . .  
. . . . . leave me not tied  
To this despair, this corpse-like bride!  
. . . . .

## XXXII

Then did the Form expand, expand—  
I knew Him through the dread disguise,  
As the whole God within His eyes  
Embraced me.

(992–1007)

The God of judging power, when known, is known to be loving too. The wholeness here finds expression in an embracing image that does not burst, although consciousness fades with the vision.



Power, love, and the knowledge that unites the dyadic poles through visionary experience and existential response, these terms of the Browning triad may be fitted now to the persons of the Trinity, although the danger of overschematizing must be resisted. The Father, the creator and judge, is shown forth usually in Power; the Son, also creative and standard of all true judgment, is shown forth usually in Love; but the third "person" is more elusive. This spirit is Knowledge, but not that forbidden sort sought at first by Paracelsus. Knowledge, given in pentecostal brilliance, communicable in the tongues of poetry, may be tenuously sustained by the choice that brings comforting strength. The way, the truth, the life may be willfully embraced as the visible Christ fades in the distance.

Once it is recognized that the ongoing searching and testing of knowledge has, in the Browning scheme of things, the force of the Holy Ghost in more traditional creeds, the epistemological concerns that dominate the final phase may be understood in perspective. They are the interim tasting, and testing, along the way, of the fruit that may only be assimilated in the New Jerusalem where knowledge and the fullness of life are one.<sup>22</sup> The final phase in no way, then, need be seen as marked by a falling off from faith. As the terrain through which the fallen quester must make his way, doubt was even in 1855 for Browning the very testing ground of faith. The Childe Roland who, after his dread passage, could sound his slughorn still, had more courage by far than to sell out his head to his heart or to abandon his quest. His successors in the canon can do no less.

Saint John, the disciple Jesus loved, speaks from a powerful intellect in "A Death in the Desert" (*Dramatis Personae* 1864), offering Browning's "most closely reasoned *apologia* for Christianity."<sup>23</sup>

I saw the power; I see the Love, once weak  
Resume the Power; and in this word "I see,"  
Lo . . . the Spirit of both.

(221-223)

John, on his deathbed, recognizing that his temporal witness will pass with his temporal life, and that the poetic record of his vision on Patmos may not serve all subsequent purposes, proceeds to argue that finite reason is not violated by the truth, but, as agent, is incapable of comprehending the truth. He establishes his argument on his doctrine of three souls in one (82-104), which bears an imprecise analogy to orthodox formulations concerning the Trinity, a stronger resemblance to the description of the tripartite soul in *The Republic* and Augustine's adaptations thereof, and an even closer resemblance to the doctrine Milton's Raphael owes to Plotinus and Plato as he instructs Adam in *Paradise Lost*.<sup>24</sup> John's lowest soul, "what Does," parallels Plato's vegetative soul; his median soul, which "feeleth, thinketh, willeth" in an Augustinian subtriad, is seated in the brain; and "duly tending upward" it seeks to grow into "the last soul," the one that returns to God. Once that last soul, the "what Is," has been achieved, the finite man "ends . . . in that dread point of intercourse." He has, hypothetically, grown into Godhead, and hence into the world beyond death. Like the Lazarus of "An Epistle to Karshish,"

such a man can no longer be of this earth. This is why, in God's infinite wisdom, the Knowledge beyond knowledge must remain beyond man's sustained experience.

"Caliban upon Setebos," a poem from the same volume, strikes a sceptical note that also chimes with Neoplatonic doctrine. The negative theology of Dionysian mysticism is grotesquely but movingly suggested through the words of the beast-man as he struggles through the early steps of an argument from "natural theology."<sup>25</sup> Setebos, the god worshiped by Caliban's dam Sycorax, is a gross parody of modern man's "rational" anthropomorphic projections. Setebos is a brutish sadist, a Caliban writ large. But over him, the craven Caliban hopes wistfully, rules the hidden God, "the Quiet," who may, "some strange day . . . catch . . . Setebos" (281-282). This natural eschatology fades as soon as it is articulated: Caliban sinks back into propitiating whine. Yet an interesting triad has been suggested: worshiper, projected god, and unknowable overgod. Browning probably derived his conception of "the overgod" most immediately through Unitarian friends in his youth. Nonetheless, its remoter ancestry is Neoplatonic. Caliban's god, "the Quiet," anticipates the mystical dimensions of the discourse of the Pope, which forms the climax, Book X, of Browning's great endeavor of the late sixties, *The Ring and the Book*.

The Pope is a highly rational and humane man, engaged in his own dramatic quest for truth. His epistemological concerns set him securely in Browning's final phase. The Pope speaks of two kinds of truth, parallel to the "two sorts of knowledge" Paracelsus defined for Festus. As one who must judge the final appeal in a complex murder case, his immediate concern is with the truth he must "evolv[e] at last / Painfully" from "these dismalest of documents," the records of Guido's trial.

Truth, nowhere, lies yet everywhere in these—  
Not absolute in a portion, yet  
Evolvable from the whole, [he must trust].

(229-230)

"Mankind is ignorant, a man am I" (258-259), he muses, yet if he exercises his God-given judging faculty in good faith, he will be able to face Guido's ghost without fear, confident he has attained as much truth as "We men, in our degree, may know" here. But not so "There," (377-378) at "God's judgment bar" (348). There, "He, the Truth, is, too, / The Word" (376-377). The standard of absolute truth is Christ.

The Pope sees that unless, in life, "the true way" is lit by "the great glow" of faith (1816) man's movement towards eternal truth is fearfully difficult. Only at times of mortal trial, as "When in the way stood Nero's cross and stake" (1833), is true progress possible. More often "We fools dance thro' the cornfield of this life" in "ignoble confidence" (1838, 1848). The Pope's mind opens ahead to times that will "shake / This torpor of assurance from our creed" (1854), and wonders whether the Molinists currently under threat of death for heresy, recognize

truths, obedient to some truth  
 Unrecognized yet, but perceptible?—  
 Correct the portrait by the living face,  
 Man's God, by God's God in the heart of man?  
 (1871–1874)

The words of Innocent XII, no mystic himself as Browning draws him, link the Molinists to the visions in "Christmas Eve and Easter Day" and "Saul," the standards for existential faith in the world of doubt as the middle phase yields to the third. The Pope's sympathy towards the Molinists, first demonstrated in the first book, is juxtaposed in this second expression with his musings on the enhanced probability of finding truth at points of mortal transition.<sup>26</sup>

When he does finally pass the judgment on Guido, he does so with the prayer that "suddenness of fate" may open the wretch's soul to salvation:

may the truth be flashed out by one blow,  
 And Guido see, one instant, and be saved.  
 (2127–2128)

The prayer evokes John's argument that the "last soul" truly knows at the "dread point" of death. Not inconsistently, then, the Pope seems to rest his own trust in his now-secure judgment on his own impending death:

I may die this very night:  
 And how should I dare die, this man let live?  
 (2133–2134)

In the meantime, the forward thrust of living dominates the poetry of the poet's final phase. The hunger for truth that has been evident from the outset seeks, in the recognition of limits, satisfaction through discerning the evidences of God in the particulars of this world.

Unanswerable questions still trouble Browning: he ponders, for instance, arguments for and against a belief in immortality in the little volume *La Saisiaz: The Two Poets of Croisic* which was prompted by the death of a dear friend in 1877. There the poetic imagination, the "fancy" as scoffers would have it, provides truths answerable to felt need as it transmutes the hard facts of existence into truths larger than the earthly sort defined by Paracelsus and the Pope.<sup>27</sup>

A decade later yet, in the prologue to the *Asolando* volume published the day of his death, Browning is still playing variations on the themes of epistemology using "fact" and "fancy" as key notes.<sup>28</sup> "The Poet's age is sad": the first words mark the poem as personal although three voices speak its lines. The first voice laments the passing of the colors projected upon the world in youth by the "soul's iris-bow," and brought there, for one remembering Wordsworth's great ode, from the preexistent beyond. An unmasked voice responds, setting up an opposition between the effects of a lens capable of restoring such coloration, and one that would reveal "truth ablaze, / Not falsehood's fancy-haze." The apparently straightforward words are full of evocative trickery. The imagery triggers memories of

"the rainbow [that] comes and goes," and also of Shelley's "dome of many-colored glass" casting its stained light on the world Platonists learn to regard as illusory, the world Victorian empiricists would call "factual." Once the reader adapts to the wavering perspectives, he realizes that a claim of exclusive truth for either lens would be quite false.

Reminiscing in tune with the opening voice the poet recalls the time, in his youth, when he found the town of Asolo "palpably fire-clothed." Now he sees Italy's "rare / O'er-running beauty" still—"But flame? The Bush is bare." Again the perspectives demand attention. Focusing one way we think of Moses, a young Moses, before a bush that like Asolo was "palpably fire-clothed," from which spoke the voice of God. The first response is to see the divine as immediate in the glowing vision. But the "palpable" fire may be a material screen, benignly protecting mere man from the "too much glory" of a hidden God. Then, from this other perspective, when "the bush is bare" the barriers to human perception of God's presence in his creation seem to be going down as the glories perceived in youth subside.

"What then?" the poet asks. From out of "Hill, vale, tree, flower" speaks ■ third voice, uttering a command Aprile would have been lovingly ready to obey:

"Call my works thy friends!  
 At Nature dost thou shrink amazed?  
 God is it who transcends."

The words are far from one-dimensional, but one message comes clear. God can still speak through a nature that aging eyes have shrunk from as deficient—or too powerful. The world of the many does reveal the one Truth.

The epilogue to the same volume—thus, accidentally, the epilogue to a life—paints a forthright, almost blustery picture of the poet in dialogue from beyond the grave with some "you" who loved him in life. He had well-founded misgivings about publishing it—it has met with much disapproval. "It almost looks like bragging," he told his sister and daughter-in-law, "But it's the simple truth; and as it's truth it shall stand."<sup>29</sup> This is the self-portrait designed to forestall any possible pity at the end of a life:

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,  
 Never doubted clouds would break,  
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph.  
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
 Sleep to wake.

Anyone who finds this "blustery yea-saying . . . little more than rhetoric," and untrue at that since "doubt and occasional despair run like counterpoint to his cheerfulness through all these later years"<sup>30</sup> is failing to take into account the primacy for Browning, ever since "Christmas Eve," of the act of choice. (He is in the company of most Christians in the Pauline, Augustinian, and existentialist tradition, of course, in making will an agency in bridging the dyadic gap.) Choosing the "here" of the existence he has been given, choosing to march "breast forward"

on the Way, not in denial or even in spite of doubt, but exulting in the challenge to overcome it—this is an unabashed declaration of courage. It is also the best way discovered by one particular poet and man to move towards truth. In Christian terms, it is the continuing incorporation of, and response to, the dynamic gift of the Spirit.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's worktime  
Greet the unseen with a cheer!  
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,  
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed,—fight on, fare ever  
There as here."

The call to the living friend, "Greet the unseen with a cheer," is an exhortation, of course, to participation in the sort of "muscular Christianity" that left Browning open always to sneers from the genteel. But it is more than that. Until the boundaries of life are passed, "the unseen" must mean something Other to the human. In the imagined present tense of this "epilogue," "the unseen" is the speaker, seeing himself—to quote from another often strenuous Christian poet—now "made God's music."<sup>11</sup> Since the participant in glory is Browning, the tune must be an up-tempo march.

The vision of this last stanza crases even the qualitative boundaries between the "here" and the "there." Since Browning's existential faith has long been invested in his knowledge of the Way as the divine *persona* available to his grasping, he imagines that the nearer he comes to the real presence, the more exhilarating will be the demands upon him. Process and growth cannot possibly be seen to cease at "that dread point of intercourse";<sup>12</sup> they are his way of knowing God, his means of grace. Only an Hegelian heaven can attract this latter-day Neoplatonic saint.

In brief recapitulation, triadic patterns of thought mark Browning's poetry in all of its phases, and in the middle phase the median term between searching man and his God becomes specifically the Christ. The Trinity, as patristic tradition conceived it, is harder to recognize in Browning's characteristic patterns: Father and Son are abundantly clear, the Father dominating as distant goal for the Paracelsian aspirant of the first phase, and Christ the mediator standing clear to the visionary of the central phase. When, in the final phase, the vision has faded, the commitment it has occasioned and the taste it has conferred draw the *man* along his existential way. The impetus to the Way, the Truth, the Life has been the pentecostal gift; many tongues henceforth are needed in the poetry to weave out of partial truths the holy fabric of Truth.

## 17

# *The Christian Platonism of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams*

MARY CARMAN ROSE

C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams have had a great deal of attention as writers of fiction and poetry. In addition, Lewis is widely known as an apologist for the Christian faith and for his medieval studies; Williams' *Descent of the Dove* is accepted as a significant history of the Christian church;<sup>1</sup> and, Tolkien's professional work centered on Anglo-Saxon philology and literature. It has not been sufficiently recognized, however, that all three wrote as Christian Platonists. In what follows I wish to examine the Christian Platonism that informs their literary creativity. I will (1) provide evidence that these writers wished to be identified as Christian Platonists; (2) characterize Christian Platonism as it is used in this context and draw attention to some of the Christian Platonist elements in the literary work of these writers; and (3) state some conclusions pertaining to the philosophical importance of this resurgence of Christian Platonism at the present time.

1. The establishing that Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams wished to be identified as Christian Platonists requires, first, drawing attention to their Christian faith and, moreover, to the orthodoxy of that faith and, second, establishing their

deliberate choice of Platonist concepts and beliefs for the development and illumination of Christian beliefs.

That all three intended to write as Christians is clear. In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis tells of his conversion experience.<sup>2</sup> In seven novels Williams explores the relation of Christianity to pagan gnostic, Jewish, and Muslim beliefs, practices, and mysticism. Also, Williams' *Taliessen through Logres* and *Descent of the Dove* express his Christian convictions.<sup>3</sup> Tolkien's "On Fairy-Stories" reveals the import for all his work of the explicitly Christian meaning he gives to what he sees as the important concepts of subcreativity and eucatastrophe.<sup>4</sup>

The thoroughgoing exploration of the Christian orthodoxy of these writers would require an extended study, including, of course, an examination of the meanings that history gives to "Christian orthodoxy" itself. Suffice it to say here that each writer has in one way or another declared himself to be a Trinitarian with no desire to demythologize the Incarnation or the Atonement. Further, no one of the three displays any tendency toward limited theism, the secularization of Christianity, or any form of Manichaeism. These points need not be argued in the case of Lewis whose orthodoxy is explicit in his theological works, while Williams states his orthodoxy in *The Descent of the Dove*.

The task of establishing Tolkien's Christian orthodoxy is more complex and presents an interesting challenge in which his concepts of subcreativity and eucatastrophe are of central importance. Tolkien's view is that to be faithful to his role as subcreator, man must work within the limits of objective truth that he did not himself create. Further, this objective truth possesses its correlative beauty, while the role of the subcreator is to be the faithful steward of truth and beauty wherever he finds them. The permanent role of steward given to man implies that man has a permanent relation to a master. This relation is not compatible with any secularized interpretation of Christianity which puts emphasis on man as independent. Further, Tolkien calls the resurrection the most important eucatastrophe.<sup>5</sup> (Additional exploration of this topic lies outside the scope of this paper.) I suggest, however, that any attempt to interpret the works of these three writers as informed by any view except that of Christian orthodoxy must result in a reductive, distorted view of them.

It is clear that Lewis and Williams wish to be known as Christian Platonists. In the *Chronicles of Narnia* one of Lewis' most spiritually developed and wise characters is Lord Digory.<sup>6</sup> The following is an account of his response to the passing of the physical world of Narnia:

"That was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia, which has always been here and always will be here; just as our own world. England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan's real world. You need not mourn over Narnia, Lucy. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia. . . . And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream." His voice stirred everyone like a trumpet as he spoke these words: but when he added under his breath "It's all in Plato, all in Plato. Bless me! What do they teach them at these schools?" the older ones laughed.<sup>7</sup>

Williams' *The Place of the Lion* relates the spiritual awakening of Damaris Tighe, a graduate student in philosophy doing a dissertation on medieval Platonism without realizing the intellectual and spiritual import of the texts she studies. Anthony, like Lewis' Lord Digory, is a spiritual leader in his community. Anthony loves Damaris and reflects on her thus:

She would go on thoughtfully playing with the dead pictures of ideas, with names and philosophies. Plato and Pythagoras and Anselm and Abelard, Athens and Alexandria and Paris, not knowing that the living existences to which seers and saints had looked were already in movement to avenge themselves on her. "O you sweet blasphemer!" Anthony moaned, "Can't you wake?" Gnostic traditions, medieval rituals, Aeons and Archangels—they were cards she was playing in her own game. But she didn't know, she didn't understand. It wasn't her fault; it was the fault of her time, her culture, her education—the pseudo-knowledge that affected all the learned, the pseudo-skepticism that infected all the unlearned, in an age of pretense, and she was only pretending as everybody else did in this lost and imbecile century.<sup>8</sup>

Also, in his preface to *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, Lewis warns against the error of taking Williams' novels as only exciting fantasies. Lewis says that Williams' novels present

some of the most important things Williams had to say. They have, I think, been little understood. The frank supernaturalism and the frankly bloodcurdling episodes have deceived readers who were accustomed to seeing such "machines" used as toys and who supposed that what was serious must be naturalistic.<sup>9</sup>

Also, Lewis expresses himself on the importance of Damaris' discovery of the reality of the archetypes:

And the frivolously academic who "do research" into archetypal ideas without suspecting that these were ever anything more than raw material for doctorate theses, may one day awake, like Damaris, to find that they are infinitely mistaken.<sup>10</sup>

The demonstration that Platonist convictions inform Tolkien's creativity is another matter. As a vehicle for Christian Platonism, the fiction of Lewis and Williams offers idealized situations that are not only consistent with the truth of Christian Platonism, but are to be expected if that position is true. Anyone who lived through these situations and who possessed sufficient spiritual preparation would have some experiences that would count as verification of the truth of Christian Platonism. Tolkien, on the other hand, has created a culture which, like Heidegger's *Dasein*, does not impel toward any one interpretation of reality and man, but rather is suggestive of many interpretations. Thus, while a Christian Platonist interpretation of *The Lord of the Rings* and of Tolkien's short stories is consistent with the content of these works, it is not explicitly stated by their author.<sup>11</sup> All doubts about Tolkien's Christian Platonist interpretation of Middle Earth are dispelled, however, with the posthumous appearance of *The Silmarillion*, the first two chapters of which provide an obviously Christian Platonist account of creation.<sup>12</sup> Here the divine creator puts into creation an axiological orientation toward harmony. The act of creation is accompanied by the beauty of song, and

the product of this song is a metaphysically fundamental locus of beauty in the harmonious relations between creation and creator and among the various aspects of creation. The harmony is broken by the disobedience of one of the Valar, creatures analogous to the angels of the pseudo-Dionysius and to whom some of the work of creation is entrusted.

2. Platonism, Neoplatonism, and Christian Platonism are, of course, equivocal. What meanings is it legitimate and fruitful to give them in this context? And do they have the same meanings for Lewis, Williams, and Tolkien? I will try to show that there is ground for answering this latter question in the affirmative. Further, in my opinion the Christian Platonist elements shared by these three writers are too numerous to examine exhaustively in this context. I will discuss three of these elements: the reality and availability of suprasensory aspects of creation; the modes of our coming to know these aspects of creation; and the ideal copresence of truth, beauty, and goodness in all aspects of creation. I have chosen these for emphasis because I wish to show that these are of great import for the comprehension of the intention and content of the work of these three authors and also for present and future philosophical and theological creativity based on their work.

We have noted Lewis' acceptance of the reality of the archetypal realm. His *eldila*, or angels, which are of central importance in his Trilogy, are not perceptible to physical sight or hearing, though when they choose they can make themselves seen and heard by earth dwellers. The hero of the Trilogy is Elwin Ransom who sees and converses with the *eldila*:

The faces surprised him very much. Nothing less like the "angel" of popular art could well be imagined. The rich variety, the hint of undeveloped possibilities, which make the interest of human faces were entirely absent.<sup>11</sup>

And in Christian Platonist fashion the *eldila* have work to do in respect to the physical world. One *eldil* tells Ransom of the former's relation to the human inhabitants of *Perelandra*:

I was not sent to rule them, but while they were young I ruled all else. I rounded this ball when it first arose . . . The beasts that sing and the beasts that fly and all that swims on my breast and all that creeps and tunnels within me has been mine.<sup>12</sup>

Williams' character Anthony is given a vision of the archetypal realm that he immediately recognizes for what it is:

Patterned upon the darkness he saw the forms—the strength of the lion and the subtlety of the crowned serpent, the loveliness of the butterfly and the swiftness of the horse—and other shapes whose meaning he did not understand. They were there only as he passed, hints and expressions of lasting things, but not by such mortal types did the Divine Ones exist in their own blessedness. He knew, and submitted; this world was not yet open to him, nor was his service upon earth completed. And as he adored those beautiful, serene, and terrible manifestations, they vanished from around him.<sup>13</sup>

One theme of *The Place of the Lion* is the development of Plato's conception of participation.<sup>16</sup> Williams writes of Anthony's knowledge of the archetypes in physical objects:

He knew them in the spiritual intellect, and beheld by their fashioned material bodies the mercy which hid in matter the else overwhelming ardours; man was not yet capable of naked vision.<sup>17</sup>

Likewise, we have noted the importance Tolkien gives to the Valar who are analogous to Lewis' *eldila*.

All three writers see the suprasensory realm as knowable, but not by intellectual means alone. On this topic, however, there is a fundamental difference between the views of Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, those of Plato as expressed in Socrates' speech in the *Symposium*; of Plotinus; and of the Jewish Platonist writers of the *Zohar*. According to all three of these last the individual who achieves direct perception of the archetypal realm of creation does so through his efforts at spiritual and intellectual development in which he is aided by a knowledgeable teacher who has walked that path of development. These efforts bring about a distinctive total maturation of the self, including the development of powers for investigation of reality. Thus, the individual becomes an instrument of metaphysical inquiry, his nature having become correlative to certain metaphysically fundamental aspects of reality.

That Lewis was cognizant of these pagan and Jewish forms of Platonist inquiry concerning suprasensory aspects of creation may be surmized from his interest in Western occultist writings, the teachings of which were in large part drawn from the *Zohar*.<sup>18</sup> And that Tolkien and Williams as well as Lewis were cognizant of these philosophical views may be surmized from the activities, knowledge, and powers of some of their characters. Lewis' character Uncle Andrew in *The Magician's Nephew*; Tolkien's Sauron in the *Lord of the Rings*; and Williams' Mr. Berringer and Mr. Tighe in *The Place of the Lion* and Henry Lee and his uncle in *The Greater Trumps* all represent a misuse of the Platonist and Jewish Platonist opportunity and ability to seek knowledge of suprasensory aspects of creation. That is, each wishes this knowledge for the sake of the knowledge per se; for the sake of the power that such knowledge gives; or for the sake of the contemplation of the beauty that inheres in the suprasensory.

The Jewish Platonist view, on the other hand, is that the knowledge of the suprasensory will harm the individual who does not seek it out of a willingness—an eagerness, rather—to use that knowledge for the well-being of the community. And Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams likewise draw attention to the serious results of the misuse of these Platonist modes of inquiry. Nonetheless, there is ample evidence that each was sympathetic with the legitimate use of these methods. For each has at least one character who proceeds successfully along the path to the achievement and use of knowledge of the suprasensory. There is Tolkien's Gandolf who is a hero in *The Lord of the Rings*; Lewis' Hermit of the Southern March who is a kindly and honest character in *The Horse and His Boy*; and Williams' Prince Ali in *Many Dimensions* who is well-intentioned according to his own lights.

It is clear, however, that Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams are interested in contrasting all forms of non-Christian Platonism with Christian Platonism. Further, all three express the same conclusions on this topic through their characters' moral and spiritual development, as shown in words, actions, problems, aspirations, failures, and successes. This conclusion suggests the importance for these three writers of the distinction between, on the one hand, the Platonist and Neoplatonist knowledge of reality that is not Christian and, on the other hand, the way in which that knowledge is achieved. In general, Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams are agreed that these metaphysical beliefs are true. Also, they are agreed that these beliefs are desiderata for the spiritual development of some persons and their subsequent fulfilling of their roles in their communities.

The view of these three writers, however, is that these non-Christian approaches to metaphysical knowledge are not necessary for the Christian. And for the latter they may, in fact, be counterindicated. For the events of the Christian's life, together with his faith in Christian beliefs maintained through these events, takes the place of the several non-Christian disciplines. Through numerous sources come the needed insight into, convictions concerning, and experience with normally hidden depths of reality. A belief in the providential nature of these events, always important in Christianity, is a major theme in the work of these three writers.

Lewis encourages this interpretation of his work. For, on the one hand, he tells of his rejection of the non-Christian modes of inquiry;<sup>19</sup> yet, on the other hand, his fiction and much of his philosophical work are informed by the Platonist metaphysics. Peter, high king of Narnia, discovers that whatever knowledge of reality he requires comes to him from a variety of sources. At these times he is grateful that he has no need to use "magic." And Lewis uses "magic" to name non-Christian knowledge and the use of the laws of creation, particularly those pertaining to suprasensory aspects of creation. Also, Elwin Ransom is admitted to important knowledge of reality and of some creatures that he could never have achieved in his English university education because he had a love and reverence of the new truth he had glimpsed and because he loved those creatures whose language, knowledge, and perspective on reality he wished to learn. Lewis' description of Ransom's experience has great import for the understanding of Christian Platonism: "Through his knowledge of the creatures and his love for them he began ever so little" to hear their music "with their ears."<sup>20</sup>

Analogous comments are to be made of the characters of Williams and Tolkien who are spiritual leaders. Each in a distinctive way, and always in a way that is both practical and at least implicitly Christian, is an intellectual leader and provides metaphysical insight as well as spiritual leavening when and how they are needed. Thus, the unmistakable heroes of *The Lord of The Rings* are Frodo and Sam whose faithfulness and good will toward their respective tasks won for each knowledge needed for his work and the strength and wisdom to appropriate that knowledge. Also, there are Williams' characters Sybil in *The Greater Trumps*, Chloe in *Many Dimensions*, and Anthony in *The Place of the Lion*. Of great import for the comprehension of Christian Platonism are Anthony's reflec-

tions on the eve of his achieving the knowledge of reality and the determination, courage, and clarity of purpose that he needs to lead his community out of chaos:

An intense apprehension of the danger which many . . . were in grew within him, a danger brought about by the disorder which had been introduced. He could not honestly say he loved these others, unless indeed love were partly a process of willing good to them. That he was determined to do, and perhaps this willing of good meant restoration. By order man ascended; what was it St. Francis had written? "Set love in order, thou that lovest Me."<sup>21</sup>

A constant theme in all the literary creativity of Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams is the fundamental roles in creation of truth, goodness, and beauty and their inextricable interdependence. This theme, which they elaborate and defend in numerous ways, may be seen as a Christian appropriation of Diotima's affirmative answer to her question, "Is not the good also the beautiful?"; of her emphasis on the "science of beauty everywhere"; and of her teaching that, since beauty is the accompaniment of truth, true beauty will be recognized by persons with a rectified spiritual nature.<sup>22</sup>

Lewis' character Lucy, whose name signifies her spontaneous, eager discerning of the light of truth, has a deep appreciation of natural beauty. Her cousin Eustace, however, who is totally self-centered and out of touch with the true spiritual and moral orientation of creation, finds no beauty in stars, trees, or the great Aslan, who is spiritual leader of Narnia and friend and teacher of the children whom he calls to work in Narnia.<sup>23</sup> Tolkien's characters who are willing, albeit grudgingly, to lend a helpful hand to others and to try to keep their promises, display in their words and actions a pleasing whimsy. And some of these characters ultimately in their very being achieve a great beauty. On the other hand, orcs, whose exploited nature suggests the Platonic understanding of evil as the nonbeing of good, have faces, music, and language that, because of their ugliness, are frightening to innocent well-intentioned creatures. Williams' acceptance of the metaphysical ground of the interdependence of truth, goodness, and beauty is implicit in *Taliessen Through Logres*.<sup>24</sup> And the beauty of the transcendent archetypes as well as the beauty they bestow on all that participates in them is explicit in Mr. Tighe's ecstatic discernment of the archetypal butterfly. Mr. Tighe suffers a severe lack of spiritual development, however, as seen in his failure to care sufficiently for his daughter (i.e., because of his failure to appropriate the truth and the goodness that are the correlatives of the beauty he loves).<sup>25</sup>

Other important aspects of the Platonist tradition, which are stressed by one or two of our writers but not predominantly featured by all three, are the Platonist psychophysical dualism; the other-worldliness that is implicit in the latter; and the Platonist ontological view of the degrees of being.

According to the Platonist psychophysical dualism, although in this life soul and body are one harmonious whole, the individual is not his body nor the combination of spirit and body. Rather, the individual is spirit, and, surviving the death of the physical body, is at home eternally in suprasensory aspects of reality. That this is Lewis' view is clear. In *Out of the Silent Planet* the Oyarsa, or

archangel, can unbody anyone he likes; and the rational creatures who have been killed by evil men are said to have been unbodied and to have gone to their eternal home.<sup>26</sup> Further, at least three of Williams' novels—*Many Dimensions*, *Shadows of Ecstasy*, and *Descent into Hell*—are supportive of this psychophysical dualism.

The Platonist other-worldliness is a corollary of the Platonist psychophysical dualism. It is the belief that the mundane world is not man's true home and that during life in this world the hope for the next life provides a steadying, leavening influence. Perhaps this other-worldliness may safely be said to be at least implicit in the work of Tolkien and Williams. Tolkien's Frodo looks forward finally to unending life in the Grey Havens. It is suggested by friends of Williams' character Chloe that the latter will find fulfillment in the next life after her sacrificial acts in this life. The Platonist other-worldliness is, however, unmistakably a major theme in the writing of Lewis. He calls the intellectually and spiritually consummatory last chapter of the last volume of the *Chronicles of Narnia* "Farewell to Shadow Lands." And, as we have seen in the quotation given above, his characters who leave the shadow lands, having passed suddenly through physical death, find themselves in the "real England." And Lewis ends *The Chronicles of Narnia* thus:

And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been cover and title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read; which goes on forever; in which every chapter is better than the one before.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, with Heidegger's having recalled the philosophical community to work in ontology, it is of no little import that Lewis may be interpreted as having also called our attention to ontology and having thus made a creative contribution to twentieth-century ontological thought. The basis for this statement is the last four chapters of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. This novel tells how some of the characters are permitted to get very close to, yet not to enter, Aslan's country, which is the eternal home of those who die in Narnia. As they approach it they find differences in their very being and in the being of their surroundings. The characters need less food and sleep. Their eyes grow sharper and their minds clearer. The air becomes brighter, and the water is sweet. There is no explicit ontological discourse. But the children's responses, particularly those of Lucy, indicate ontological changes. Lewis describes some of their experiences thus:

There seemed no end to the lilies. Day after day from all those miles and leagues of lilies there arose a smell which they found it very hard to describe: sweet—yes, but not at all sleepy or overpowering, a fresh, wild, lonely smell that seemed to get into your brain and make you feel that you could go up mountains at a run or wrestle with an elephant. She and Caspian said to one another, "I feel that I can't stand much more of this, yet I do not want it to stop."<sup>28</sup>

I suggest that here Lewis has appropriated the Platonist ontological view of degrees of being and, moreover, has revealed its existential import for those, but

only for those, who are privileged to know mystically the aspects of reality where a fullness of created being is encountered.

3. To conclude: clearly the reappearance of Christian Platonism in our day is of interest to the historian of philosophy. It also has great significance for the creative and the constructively critical thinker. For Platonism has ever proved capable of harmonious synthesis of diverse philosophical views. A corollary is that Platonism has been developmental, Platonists having persuasively demonstrated the timeliness of their views in many times and places. Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams have given us clues to the present timeliness of Platonism by showing the existential import of this position.

Further, in the developmental aspect of their thought each has introduced a feature that in respect to Platonism is, perhaps, new as well as timely. This is the fact that not one of them has offered Christian Platonism as the sole path to true spiritual fulfillment. Each has characters who are appreciative of some types of beauty, truth, courage, and compassion, but who are in some respects not in total sympathy with the characters who represent the appropriation of Christian Platonism. Further, each of these characters brings to his community data, insights, and perspectives on reality and man that are possible to him only because he has walked his particular spiritual path. In fact, the view that there are several spiritual paths, each making possible the spiritual fulfillment of some, but only of some, is a central theme of all three writers. One thinks of Tolkien's hobbits, elves, dwarves, Valar, and men, each of whom in distinctive ways possesses some objective truth, enjoys some beauty and artistic creativity, and serves good causes. One thinks also of the several kinds of creatures Elwin Ransom learns from and comes to love in *Out of the Silent Planet*. And definitely this theme is dominant in Lewis' portrayal of life at Saint Anne's Manor, although it is suggested that the Christian Platonists of the community are intellectual and spiritual leaders.<sup>29</sup> And Williams' novels feature the tremendous importance to the philosophical enterprise not only of Christian but also of pagan, Jewish, and Islamic Platonism. I have suggested that this movement toward a philosophical ecumenism is a development within the synthetic creativity of Plato.

Further, there is in all three writers at least the suggestion of a ladder of intellectual, aesthetic, and moral development of the individual. In its totality this ladder is Platonist, Christian, and useful in our day. The first step on the ladder, however, is common to all paths that lead to peace and spiritual development. Not to take this first step is to choose one of the many paths that inevitably lead to frustration, and may lead to despair. This first step which may, but need not, lead to the spirituality of Christian Platonism has four features.

First, there is the willingness to the extent that one is able to give love to one's fellow man. *Love*, of course, is equivocal. And Lewis' analysis of love into four types serves admirably to illustrate the meaning of *love* in this context.<sup>30</sup> These are the appreciation of, rather than indifference to, others; willingness to share one's interests with likeminded persons; the recognition that one has need of others and the grateful appreciation of the persons who supply the need; and the charity which forgives and gives of itself for the sake of others. In this connection

we have seen the importance of love in the thought of all three writers. Second, there is hope which eschews skepticisms about the feasibility and value of the search for the truth that satisfies the spirit. It is the maintaining even in times of boredom, frustration, and pain of a trust in the burgeoning of a new spring in one's life and in the affairs of one's community. This hope is seen in the Narnian's sustained hope for the end of winter and in Gandolf's and Frodo's courage maintained through intense personal misfortune.<sup>31</sup> And among Williams' characters there is hope in the spiritual awakening of Damaris and her effort to rebuild her life and the lives of those close to her.<sup>32</sup>

Third, wonder is needed. This is the wonder that Aristotle said is the source of the search for truth. And perhaps in respect to Aristotle's emphasis on wonder, we do well to reflect that Aristotle is the pupil of Plato. For in the *Dialogues* Plato continually expresses wonder before beauty and the truth which is the correlative of beauty. Wonder before objective truth, before the beauty of that truth, and before the stupendous power of rational creatures to respond to the demands of life are constant themes in the lives of the characters of these three writers. Fourth, each writer sees the individual as possessing freedom to take some responsibility for cultivating love, hope, and wonder. Although on the other hand, each writer is also realistic about the extent to which and the ways in which the individual's power of choosing these may be limited, confused, or misguided.<sup>33</sup>

Although, as I have suggested, the nonexclusivist view that the taking of this first step may lead to a variety of spiritually fulfilling relations to reality may be new, the theme of the philosophical import of the spiritual development that corresponds to the axiological as well as the epistemological structure of reality is not new. This view has been present in all forms of Platonism. Here is, however, a most significant type of philosophical creativity: the present-day recalling and development of philosophical truth that has been virtually forgotten but which nonetheless is full of promise. In particular, Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams have drawn our attention to the role in philosophical inquiry of the spiritual development of the thinker. The many valuable areas of the philosophical enterprise which are stressed in our day are alike in ignoring this view of the demands that philosophical work makes on the thinker. At the very least these three writers are recalling us to the unification of all aspects of our nature in the philosophical enterprise. They have pointed to a path of philosophical creativity which is really a renewal of an ancient path. And the beauty that their characters are able to find on that path and the doors of learning and service that their faithfulness opens to them are powerful final causes attracting some of us to the same path and its current philosophical promise.

# 18

## *Negative Theology, Myth, and Incarnation*

A. HILARY ARMSTRONG

There are few, if any people who have done more than Jean Trouillard to open our eyes to the depth and richness of the thought of the last Hellenic Platonists, above all of Plotinus and Proclus. My own debt to him is immense, and I know others, of very different ways of thinking, who would say the same. But he has not been content simply to expound these venerable thinkers as period pieces, belonging to a past time and irrelevant to the concerns of our age. He has tried to show that they can speak to our condition, and do something to illuminate the religious and philosophical perplexities of our own time (though not, as we shall see, by providing dogmatic solutions). This has sometimes brought upon him the charge of inventing a "neo-Neoplatonism" of his own (a very Platonic thing to do). But his concern for the contemporary may be a very important reason for the depth of his insight into the ancient. And it is because of this that I dedicate in his honor this odd attempt to show the relevance of some of the late Platonic ways of thinking which he has so well explained to us to the crisis of religious thought in our own time.

It will be well to begin by explaining what this large vague phrase "the crisis



of religious thought" means to me. What seems to me to have been happening for a very long time, but to have become particularly apparent recently, is the progressive breakdown of any and every sort of "absolutism." By "absolutism" I mean the making of absolute claims for forms of words and ways of thinking about God as timelessly and universally true (including, of course, the absolute claim that all God-talk is meaningless and hopelessly incoherent). These claims can be made in various ways. They can be made by prelates, preachers, and theologians asserting the absolute, unique, and universal claims of one special revelation; or by philosophers of the older style (including, of course, systematic Platonists) who claim that their metaphysical system is the one absolutely and universally true philosophy and, of course, those of their newer-style opponents who claim equally dogmatically that *their* philosophy provides the one infallible method of disposing of all this metaphysical and religious nonsense; or by the believers in a *philosophia perennis* in the Huxleyan sense, a single tradition that underlies all the great religious traditions and is uniformly confirmed by all religious experience. There are, of course, plenty of absolutists of all these varieties still with us. But their influence is generally confined to restricted circles, and outside these circles (and I think increasingly within them) absolute claims and assertions are now subjected to immediate critical questioning, and generally found wanting or dubious: historical claims are questioned historically, and dogmatic nonhistorical statements (e.g., about the personality of God or the Trinity) are questioned philosophically.

Two points must be made here, which will probably indicate to many what a conservative and old-fashioned paper this is. The first is that questioning does not mean outright rejection; that would be just another, and unpleasant, form of dogmatism. In the field of Christian theology the rejection of "absolutism" does not mean that "radical" positions are always to be preferred to "conservative" ones. Many radical positions are very silly; many conservative ones deserve serious consideration and are supported by excellent scholarship. Nor does critical questioning mean wholesale rejection of the great systematic philosophies. This paper is permeated by the deepest qualified affection and critical respect for the great late Platonists, Hellenic and Christian, who were in some ways very systematic thinkers. And even if one finds the idea of a *philosophia perennis*, in any sense, implausible, one can still agree with its exponents who insist that living tradition is necessary for any art, including the art of living. What the rejection of absolutism means is that all dogmas become hypotheses, and that one does not arrive at an unhypothetical principle of demonstration or guarantee of certainty. (God is not such a principle or guarantee.) One therefore simply continues the discussion, probably forever. One must stand away from the tradition one respects (as Aristotle stood away from Plato and Aristotle's personal pupils from Aristotle), not to propound an improved dogmatism of one's own, but to go on asking more and more questions. This paper is conceived in this spirit, as a contribution to a completely open-ended discussion, not as a final solution to anything. The second point is that when claims to possess an exclusive revelation of God or to speak his word are made by human beings (and it is always human beings who

make them), they must be examined particularly fiercely and hypercritically for the honor of God, to avoid the blasphemy and sacrilege of deifying a human opinion. Or, to put it less ferociously, the Hellenic (and, as it seems to me, still proper) answer to "Thus saith the Lord" is "*Does he?*," asked in a distinctly sceptical tone, followed by a courteous but drastic "testing to destruction" of the claims and credentials of the person or persons making this enormous statement.

What are the reasons for this breakdown of absolutism? The first, and oldest, is, probably, steadily growing intellectual dissatisfaction with the arguments produced for the various and incompatible absolute positions. This springs from a very venerable element in our tradition, the sceptical in its Academic form,<sup>1</sup> which has revived particularly strongly in Western Europe since the Renaissance, and been powerfully reinforced in the last two centuries by the development of critical philosophy and critical history (modern critical historians and scholars are perhaps the truest spiritual descendants of the Academics in our world). The second, which is also ancient (it can be traced back to Herodotus), but which has developed very powerfully in my own lifetime, is an intense and vivid sense of our own historical limitations. We are aware, both by experience and our study of history, of the immense and irreducible diversity of human beliefs and ways of thinking. We know sufficiently well that not only our own thought but that of the founder and teachers of any religious group or philosophical tradition to which we may adhere is limited and determined by historical circumstance, by time, place, heredity, environment, culture, and education: even quite small differences in the circumstances of our education (e.g., going to a different university, or even a different college in the same university) might have made our religious and philosophical beliefs quite different by causing us to be influenced by different people, to read different books, and so on. And we think this matters—it is not to be casually dismissed with a few rude remarks about "relativism," as is still sometimes done. We should think it crudely and antiquatedly arrogant to be certain of our certitudes, especially in religious questions, without unattainable confirmation by the agreement of all those, of all beliefs and ways of thinking—saints, sages, and scholars—who are or have been competent to consider the belief for which certainty is claimed. This leads straight to the third reason for the breakdown of absolutism. This is comparatively modern (though it is anticipated to some extent in pre-Christian antiquity) and its strong and full development and increasingly wide dissemination are becoming more and more notable in our own time. It is the vast and unprecedented increase in our knowledge of other ways of faith, piety, and thought about God than our own, which has more and more both led to and been helped by a growth of understanding, respect, and sympathy for them and a willingness to learn from them. Especially if this is not merely gained by reading, but also by direct acquaintance with other ways and personal friendship with those who follow them, this produces an irrevocable change of mind and heart, which both strengthens and is strengthened by our sense of historical limitations. Our new awareness includes, of course, an awareness of the divergences, tensions, and contradictions within our own tradition and the value of many ways in it which diverge from those authoritatively accepted. We have become con-

scious of the folly and arrogance of "not counting" people; of simply dismissing from consideration (as some philosophers and theologians still do) those who do not conform to the official orthodoxy of the group to which we belong. We have learned at last, I think once and for all, to believe that there is no one universally true or universally saving way—that many different paths lead to the great mystery.

At this point some religious persons will no doubt want to say "But what about *real* faith? What about the Leap, the Wager, the Great Option? Throw away these rationalistic hesitations and commit yourself, if you want to know what true faith is." I am unable genuinely to accept this peremptory and dramatic invitation (I have tried hard enough), because, if one really looks around and stops "not counting" people, one finds that one is being invited to leap in altogether too many directions at once. One can only discriminate between them by returning to the probably endless and inconclusive critical discussion of claims, credentials, and arguments. And even if there was only one direction to leap in (and some Christians still talk as if this is so), it would be impossible without returning to the critical examination of the claims and credentials of the clergyman summoning me to faith (and other related matters), to distinguish faith from gross credulity, which is not religiously or morally virtuous, especially in an academician. I cannot, with regret, accept the view that our experience or awareness of God can in itself justify or guarantee one particular dogmatic and exclusive faith. This is because I hold the view that this experience (even at its lower levels) is strictly ineffable; we naturally try to interpret it, always inadequately, in the language of the religious tradition to which we belong, but the experience does not justify or guarantee the interpretations (not that we can think or say what it is "in itself" or compare it with the interpretations). Yet this whole paper is based on a faith in and dim awareness of the Unknowable Good, which I cannot and do not want to get rid of, but which remains tentative, personal, not absolute or exclusive, and making no demands on others.

What, then, has the old Neoplatonic "negative theology," and other related aspects of the later Platonic tradition—Hellenic and Christian—to give to those who have experienced the breakdown of absolutism but still want to believe in and worship God? I can only offer what I myself have found helpful. Trouillard has written most illuminatingly on this subject, and I have stumblingly tried to follow in his footsteps<sup>2</sup> (and have also learned very much from the Greek Orthodox Abbess Maria, who really lived the "negative theology" to its ultimate point). I will not here repeat much of what can be found better elsewhere, but it must be stressed that what seems likely to be helpful is the fully developed negative theology in which we negate our negations (which does not mean that we simply restore the original positive statement with a "super" attached, although this language is often used by the ancients because they could not find anything better); perhaps the "pre" language often used by post-Plotinian Neoplatonists ("pre-being," "preintellect," etc.) is somewhat less misleading nowadays than "super-being" or "superintellect". This leads us to the state of mind in which we are not content simply to say that God is not anything, but must say and be aware that he

is not not anything either: and, in the end, not even to know that we do not know. It is a strange kind of liberation from thinkings and languages that enables us to use them freely and critically, always with a certain distance and detachment. (There are, of course, a number of kinds of human language—poetic, musical, those used in the visual arts, and mathematical, as well as the rather clumsy and limited prosaic-discursive kind normally used in philosophy and dogmatic theology, which by no means escapes metaphor.<sup>3</sup> Of course, if we use this last we must use it precisely, and according to the rules of the game as played in our particular environment, as the great Neoplatonists did excellently.) Having gotten this far, we can, of course, use positive terms about God as freely as negative, provided that we prefix something like the favorite *hoion* of Plotinus ("as if" or "in a manner of speaking") to indicate their inadequacy. I can agree a great deal with what Christopher Stead says about the desirability of using "being" or "substance" terms about God, on the appropriate occasions, and could supply him with some excellent Neoplatonic texts in which they are freely and quite consistently used in a context of radical negative theology.<sup>4</sup> It seems that the traditional terms "beyond being," "nonbeing," or "nothing" applied to God are most significant when used in their proper Hellenic context in which being is closely correlated with intelligibility: real being is intelligible being. They mean, then, that God is not a somebody or something who can be discursively defined or discerned with intuitive precision. It is not that his intelligibility transcends our limited and fallen human intelligences, but that he has no intelligible content: Trouillard has explained this very well.<sup>5</sup> It is this ability to use positive terms in a peculiar way that may make the negative theologian sympathetic to "myths," as we shall see. I prefer, myself, to call what I am talking about "icons," partly for reasons of my own not unconnected with Eastern Orthodox theology and piety, and partly because "myth," since about the fifth century B.C. has had, probably for most people in the Western tradition, the rather narrow and derogatory meaning of "more or less poetic fiction." I shall, however, use "myth" (in an extended and complimentary sense) in this paper in order to relate it to contemporary theological discussions.

Before proceeding to discuss myth, it should be made clear that what has been said about "negative theology" so far is perfectly compatible with conservative Christian orthodoxy. The Eastern Christian tradition as a whole and many perfectly orthodox and traditional Western theologians insist that all our language about God is inadequate, that our statements about him are only "pointers" to or "icons" of his unknowable reality. But they hold that certain statements only are divinely revealed or authoritative, and so are privileged pointers or uniquely authorized icons, and that the Incarnate Christ is the one and only perfect icon (to use patristic language) of the supreme divinity. Reasons for disagreeing with this have nothing to do with the "negative theology" as such. They spring from the attitudes of mind discussed earlier which have led to the general breakdown of absolutism. For those in whom this breakdown has taken place, however, the "negative theology" can, I think, do something useful. It can, sometimes, prevent them from giving up the whole business of religion in disgust—the usual reaction—and help them to remain at least dimly aware that there is really somebody or

something there "behind" or "beyond" (to use the inadequate spatial metaphors that we must all use in this context) the dubious stories and inadequate concepts and definitions. It may help to give some expression to a deep, obscure anonymous faith that remains untouched by the breakdown of absolutism, though as the result of this breakdown it insists on remaining anonymous. And those who arrive (not necessarily by a Neoplatonic route) at understanding that a radically apophatic faith permits the use of very positive language in a peculiar way may come to understand the expressions of their traditional religion "mythically" or "iconically" and not just as "myths" or "icons" made up by men, but as a multiple and varied revelation of images through which the Good communicates "iconically" with all of us, of all religious traditions, according to our several needs, that we may all have something through which to sense his presence and worship him.

If we understand "myth" in this way, as part of the expression of what happens when the Unknowable, so to speak, seems not content to remain aloof in his ineffable obscurity but "turns" and comes back to us as the painter of many icons not made with hands in that "outgoing" which "Dionysius" calls his "ecstatic eros," we may see better how we should use the term and how widely it can be extended. The sense to be given to "myth" in the context of this way of thinking will obviously be strongly positive. It will often be practically equivalent to something like "general" or natural revelation (this involves, of course, human participation, and human error and inadequacies, in expressing what God suggests). In this way it will come close to the significance of myth (and ritual) as understood by Proclus, whose accounts of the function of mythical and mathematical imagination are most illuminatingly correlated and discussed by Trouillard.<sup>8</sup> Myths and the rites and arts that express them can provide true ways to God, although they can also mislead. (The superbly and fruitfully ambiguous valuation of art in relation to philosophy and religion by Iris Murdoch in her very Platonic—though not Neoplatonic—book on Plato and the artists<sup>9</sup> should be carefully studied by anyone who wishes to understand its dangers, uses, and, in the end, inescapable indispensability.) But myth for Proclus is exclusively poetic or imaginative myth: and he would not have been at all pleased if we extended the term to cover his own (or, as he thought, Plato's) systematic philosophical theology. But the breakdown of absolutism seems to have made it necessary to see systematic theology mythically, as well as the alleged historical facts contained in some particular revelations. The most abstract and logically constructed treatments of the Henads or the Trinity can only function for us mythically, if they function at all. (One can, and should, of course criticize the logic, as one can criticize the historical evidence or the expressive quality of the images in other kinds of myth, but these separate and distinct kinds of criticism will not necessarily deprive the myths to which they are applied of all power and value.)

It may help to clarify the way in which I regard the Christian story and Christian doctrine as mythical if I compare my position briefly with those of a small selection of others. I am not conscious of any strong differences with Maurice Wiles, though our different environments and preoccupations may lead to rather different theological conclusions. I admire the scholarly caution and reli-

gious discretion with which he pursues the argument, and find his comparison between the way in which Christian thought about the Creation and the Fall has developed and the way in which Christian thought about the Incarnation might reasonably develop fruitful; and his statement (derived, like so much else in contemporary discussions, from Strauss) that a myth may have a historical element may be a very useful corrective to extremist positions.<sup>10</sup>

With Don Cupitt, and others who think like him, my difference is rather sharp, and may be of some general significance.<sup>11</sup> It is not that I object to his history—his treatment of the evidence seems to me at any rate plausible. But (to say something which, from inherited reverence, I have refrained for some time from saying), I do not find the Jesus of good critical biblical scholars very impressive or interesting. I am not even sure that the only people in the first century A.D. with whom I can conceive myself having much in common would have thought so, that is to say, Greek-speaking people with some degree of Hellenic philosophical culture, for instance in the neighboring Decapolis. This reconstructed Galilean rabbi, this Jesus (or these Jesuses) of scholarship, seems very restricted, not only in period but in place and culture.<sup>12</sup> It seems unlikely that the "Jesus of scholarship" can ever attain even the limited universality, even in our transitory Western culture, of the "Christ of history." (I am using here the excellent terminology of Wilfred Cantwell Smith. The "Jesus of scholarship" is the Jesus reconstructed by scholars; the "Christ of history" is the mythical or iconic Christ, the Christ who has mattered in Christian history.)

I owe a personal debt of gratitude to the biblical scholars and theologians, conservative and radical, to the demythologizers and de-Hellenizers from Bultmann onwards, and to those who, with excellent pastoral intentions, have forced the Bible so much on our attention in the non-Reformed churches in recent years. They have shown me something that I was too obtuse and traditionalist to notice before, but is of the greatest historical significance—our Inherited Conglomerate (as Gilbert Murray and E. R. Dodds would call it)<sup>13</sup> is breaking up. The biblical and the Hellenic elements are, apparently now finally and irrevocably, coming apart. And, if they come apart, it is not as certain as Christian theologians and preachers seem to suppose that most of those who remain at all interested in the matter will choose the biblical and reject the Hellenic. In my own case my remote forefathers (if they were ever genuinely converted to anything) were pretty certainly converted to a strongly mythical, Hellenized form of Christianity, and the succeeding generations, Roman Catholic or Anglican, retained this form, on the whole, and interpreted the Bible in its light. The faith of my fathers centered on the "Christ of history." The tradition handed down to me was the myth, and in my own religious wriggings of earlier years I think I was, at first unconsciously, trying to get further from the Bible and nearer to the myth, in a strongly Hellenic, Mediterranean form for which I still have much affection. (Of course my Christian parents and teachers in the earlier twentieth century took very good care to see that I should be well educated in Greek poetry and philosophy, which carry Hellenic religion.) I really do not think that I have much reason for allegiance to "authentic," "truly biblical" Christianity, whether radical or conservative. And now that

(because of the breakup of the Conglomerate) I have to choose between the biblical and the Hellenic, I shall choose the Hellenic, though I can only choose it as myth. And it may be that a good many other people, less well informed than I am about our own older tradition, will make the same choice: either because it has really been the strongly Hellenic elements in the theology and piety of the Conglomerate that will be discussed later which have attracted them; or because it is the myth that has inspired the great Christian visual art and music that may be doing more than anything else to keep something of Christianity alive in our own day; or because they are drawn to Indian or esoteric Islamic ways which are often (for whatever reason) very much closer to Neoplatonism than they are to Jewish-Biblical ways of faith, thought, and piety.<sup>14</sup>

To conclude this essay, let us attempt to see what a "mythical" treatment of the central Christian doctrine of Incarnation might look like. It must be stressed here again that there is no question of dogmatic rejection of traditional doctrines, but of well-grounded doubt, suspense of judgment, the reduction of the doctrines to endlessly discussible hypotheses. In this position one is perfectly entitled to consider as acceptable more conservative and traditional hypotheses than those just discussed, when they are well based on excellent scholarship, like those of C. F. D. Moule,<sup>15</sup> provided that they are still considered as hypotheses, and not used apologetically to justify a return to absolutism. And this means that, within the limits imposed by free and sound scholarship and history, a closer hypothetical linking of the "Jesus of scholarship" and the "Christ of history" might be attempted than has been suggested above. We are not bound to believe that the myth has no historical foundation or core, even if the extent of the historical element in it must probably remain forever undefinable. But it should also be made clear again that the rejection of absolutism and the questioning of claims and demands extends beyond the claim that Jesus was God Incarnate in a unique sense. It extends to all claims made that any revelation of God has unique and universal authority or that any people or community has been brought into a unique and special relationship with him. If anyone demands faith, submission, or territory as a representative of the unique "people of God," he should be taken all the way back to the covenant with Abraham and his claims tested every step of the way by the intensest criticism that can be brought to bear, for the honor of God. Criticism can be inspired by religious fervor as well as dogmatic faith.

Even if one is prepared to consider, tentatively, as tenable the hypotheses of the more conservative New Testament scholars who really are scholars and not apologists (some of course, rather bewilderingly to the layman, speak now in one capacity and then in the other), one will probably have to go fairly far in separating the fully Hellenized "Christ of history" from the "Jesus of scholarship." (It is, at least, reasonably certain that Jesus was a Jew, and this makes a difference.) I have already shown my preferences if this has to be done.<sup>16</sup> What then, can an irremediable gentile like myself make of the center of the Christian myth, the doctrine of Incarnation? A good deal, in fact, and some of it surprisingly traditional; and I should describe my "mythical" interpretation as "expansionist" rather than "reductionist." The method I apply here to the thought of the Greek Fathers

is, of course, heretical in the strict sense, a process of *hairesis* or selection. (There is a good deal of *hairesis* in orthodox theology, especially nowadays.) For this reason I bring them in, not to claim their authority, but to acknowledge my debt to them. The characteristic that I have discovered in their thought struck me most forcibly when reading Dionysius, particularly the *Divine Names*.<sup>17</sup> Though it can certainly be observed over a much wider area,<sup>18</sup> and I do not regard it in Dionysius as an Athenian Neoplatonist deformation of Christianity, it will make for brevity and clarity—and be appropriate in a paper in honor of Trouillard—if I discuss it in a Dionysian context. The first point which impressed me was that, though the language, and I am sure the belief, of the author of the Dionysian writings about the Trinity is perfectly orthodox, *Trias* is only one of the names (all inadequate) for the Unknowable God, the Thearchy, interchangeable with others: his Trinitarian theology is rather in the background and only comes into use when required for the purposes of his simplified, and in a sense Christianized, Neoplatonism. It is not grounded in, and has not much connection with, the historic Incarnation.<sup>19</sup> About this, again, the author's language and faith is quite orthodox. But, as with *Trias*, "Jesus" is, in the Christological passages of the *Divine Names*, just another name for the ineffable Thearchy, whose whole function in these passages he takes over, and the details of his earthly life are interpreted entirely symbolically.<sup>20</sup> What this seems to mean is that what really matters to Dionysius (and perhaps to many others, in the Greek-Christian tradition especially, though individual cases need particular and careful examination)<sup>21</sup> is the outgoing of the Unknowable Godhead in his theophanies and ecstatic *eros*, which is creation, and his leading all things back to himself by that same *eros*, in its return, which is redemption. And both of these are cosmic and universal, not strictly tied to a particular human person or historic event, though the historic Incarnation is of course seen as the exemplar, guarantee, and center of the whole creative-redemptive process and the principal means of redemption.

When one has realized that this sort of distinction between a universal and a particularist understanding of Christian doctrine related to the Incarnation can be discovered in our Christian tradition, and that the emphasis (especially, perhaps, in the Dionysian tradition) lies sometimes more on the universal than the particular, some consequences may begin to appear to one who is conscious of the "breakdown of absolutism" and the grave doubts that must now exist about the Incarnation in its historical particularity. If one retains some sort of faith in the Unknowable Good, one may still want to be able to see not only God's creative but his saving work, as extending from everlasting to everlasting, not only to every human being, but to every being in his universe (anthropocentrism is one of the disadvantages of conservative Christianity<sup>22</sup>); and to hold that God so works because the cosmos is in him and he is united with it (though "inexpressibly," as the Fathers say about the Incarnation) from the beginning with an intimacy that the hypostatic union of developed Christology cannot surpass. This is part of any Platonic faith because the Platonic Good is self-diffusive, and being good means doing good.<sup>23</sup> And I (because of my Christian background) can think of no better way of speaking of this ineffable outgoing of the Good in his *eros* than in terms of

the everlasting and universal mission of Logos and Holy Spirit. Others will legitimately prefer other ways of speaking. I know that I only use these words because my parents and teachers, the books I have read, and perhaps most effectively of all, the great liturgies and arts of Christendom have taught me to. If I had been brought up in India, or in a Buddhist or Islamic country, I should have used different myths or icons. And even within our own traditions, many of anonymous faith—but (often with good reasons) deeply anti-Christian—will prefer other ways of speaking. But, if the negative theology carried through the double negation leads, as it often does, to this sort of belief in cosmic incarnation, then the Christian “myth” can come to have a very powerful and positive effect as a myth. It will not give us the kind of assurance possessed by all the Fathers and traditional theologians who believe (as they do) in the unique Incarnation fully and completely as historical fact and the dogmas in which its meaning was explained as divinely guaranteed; we must be content with a more tentative and uncertain faith nowadays. And accepting a myth is not like accepting a creed. It leaves room for free reinterpretation, imaginative and intellectual development, and plenty of criticism of details and variation of emphasis (even the most orthodox and conformist Christianity allows, and has always allowed, for plenty of all these, though theologians have sometimes pretended otherwise). But, in the end, I can think of no better representations of the faith I hold, if they are interpreted in the free and universal way I have suggested, than the great theological and artistic “icons” of traditional Christianity.

# 19

## *Why Christians Should Be Platonists*

JOHN N. FINDLAY

In presenting this paper at the end of this distinguished conference I should like to make an apology. I am not contributing to the historic discussion of some Christian thinker influenced by Platonism or Neoplatonism in some remote epoch, but making a personal statement as to what Platonism signifies in my personal and philosophical life, and how it relates to my Christian and other interests. What I am going to say has many qualities of a sermon, a form of discourse to which I am becoming increasingly addicted, though without the talents or depth of a Meister Eckhart. I am going to ask you to see your Christianity and everything else you care for in the light of the inspiration to be derived from Plato and Plotinus. My giving this paper is also an impertinence in that I am not in any orthodox sense a Christian. I am by nature and by force of circumstances a syncretist and an ecumenist, one who has found devotional and spiritual guidance in the Tao-teh-King as much as in the New Testament, in Plotinus as much as Saint Paul, and in the Upanishads, the Gita, and the great Buddhist Sutras as much as in Christian devotional and theological works. I was unfortunate in my first contacts with Christian belief—in the form of Dutch Calvinism, that of the

church of my mother—which effectively turned me off. I now realize that it represents a great intellectual structure, deeply penetrated by scriptural influences and by a type of spirituality, the Pascalian or Kierkegaardian, which, though it can never be mine, still deserves respect and reverence. It is the narrow way along which certain fine natures have to tread, even if I have the ignorance or the arrogance to think that I can well follow another course. In any case I am sufficiently a Christian not to want to leave Christianity and its transfigured Founder out of my thought and life, and with this preamble I shall proceed to business.

I regard both Christianity and Platonism as making contributions to a discipline that I prefer to call "Absolute theory," though the Aristotelian terms "theology" and "first philosophy" would be equally appropriate. Christianity, of course, does a great deal more than contribute to a philosophical discipline, but so also does Platonism. By Absolute theory I mean the elaboration of a particular sort of concept to which I shall ascribe seven demarcating characters.<sup>1</sup> An absolute is, in the first place, something that is credited with being in an unqualified sense, that is, it must not be thought of as existing merely in the sense that someone thinks of it or makes it the object of concern, ultimate or otherwise, or that it is merely an aspect or character or structuring form, or a dependent part of something else from which it is inseparable. What sort of thing has being in an unqualified sense will, of course, differ from ontology to ontology, and need not necessarily be individual: an absolute must, however, enjoy the prime ontological dignity in the ontology in question. An absolute must in the second place exist of necessity: it must be absolutely impossible (and not in some merely formal-logical or merely natural-scientific or merely contextual or relative sense) for such an absolute not to exist. It must not only be a fixture, but an irremovable ontological fixture. This means that, in the case of anything that we put forth for absolute status, its existence must cover the whole *Spielraum* of possibility and therefore be unconditionally necessary, or, if it does not and cannot do this, it can occupy no area in the *Spielraum* of possibility, and will accordingly be wholly impossible. Necessity of existence or total impossibility represent the hard choice before an absolute: it is not one of the sort of things that could either be or not be. And the ontological argument is absolutely valid provided the absolute's existence is possible, but if its nonexistence is in any way possible, then it is totally impossible that it should exist. That an absolute's being follows from its possibility is no doubt exciting, but since this very circumstance may lead us to deny its possibility, it leads to no conclusive result. An Absolute must, in the third place, be unique and can permit of no rivals and no alternatives. If *per impossibile*, there were a number of alternate absolutes, none of them could be the Absolute and there could be no absolute at all. There may be a plurality of alternative absolutes for our clouded insight, but certainly not in the nature of things. An absolute must fourthly be in the highest degree unitary: it may have many inner differentiations into aspects, members, relations, or functions, but in all of these functions it must be totally present, and can suffer no diremption into separable parts. And, since it must be a complete reality in whatever category we put it, it must, fifthly, be

capable of having an inner distinction of the essential and inessential, and the inessential aspects of its nature must be ontologically dependent on its essential aspects, and be the realization of one or the other of the alternative forms of self-realization of which it is capable. And among such unessential aspects may well be a capacity to be the originaive source of many dependent and derived existences that do not share its unqualified necessity of being. There must, however, be nothing in them that does not derive from the absolute, and represent the actualization of one of its essential powers. And an absolute must be credited with the power to *determine* which of the alternatives open to it will be realized by it, and must require no deciding factor beyond itself. And the sixth property of an absolute is that it must be all-comprehensive, both in regard to actual existence and also possibility. There can be nothing that exists that is not either an aspect or inseparable part of itself, or something whose being wholly depends upon it in every respect. Such all-comprehensiveness is in fact identical with its absolute necessity: there must be no possibility that it does not cover and no actuality that it does not determine. To these six qualifications of unqualified and necessary being, of uniqueness and incompositeness, and of the power to determine whatever is not necessary solely in virtue of the necessary, essential part of its nature, we may add, as a seventh character, that since Mind and its guiding values are by far the most remarkable, unique things that exist, they must both have a place in the Absolute, whether at its very center or not far from it. To banish them from the Absolute, or to give them a very marginal, derivative place in it, would make their existence unintelligible, and destroy the very nature of the Absolute itself.

I shall not attempt a detailed justification of my sevenfold delineation of an absolute. Plainly the human mind is haunted by ultimate explanatory concepts of the sort I have been sketching, and this is even the case when nothing of the sort is explicitly talked of. Matter, space-time, logical space, and the sensory continuum can be absolutes as well as the Absolute Ego or the Idea of Good or the Absolute Idea. And plainly religion builds itself around and enriches concepts of the sort I have been outlining, and would be felt to be imperfect if it did not include *all* their conditions. I shall also not attempt to deny that there are very great difficulties in the concept of an absolute. On some views, for example, those of Kant in respect to the phenomenal world, a necessity of existence is itself necessarily inapplicable and impossible, and all that exists is necessarily a brute contingency. And on other widely held views, the existence of something which is *freely* capable of realizing one or other of a set of alternatives, and which requires no further determining factor beyond the fact that it *is* so capable, is also of necessity inapplicable and impossible. And many other qualifications for absolute status can be held to be logically absurd (e.g., that an absolute can have no alternatives). I do not myself think that the conception of an absolute involves any inherent flaw, if sufficiently worked out, but I certainly do not *know* this, since the sort of insight required for determining even the *possibility* of the existence of an absolute, which involves necessary existence and the exclusion of all thinkable alternatives, exceeds my powers and could only, if at all, be enjoyed by the Absolute itself. And there is the further difficulty that some might object to the very notion of a possibility which, since it

covered all alternatives, would amount to a necessity, in which case there could not be an absolute at all. Our modal concepts may be among the most important we dispose of, but they are also among the most obscure. Nonetheless, it remains profitable for us men to engage in our unreliable ventures into Absolute theory, which have not so far been shown up as invalid, and among the forms of Absolute theory that now come up before us for consideration are those of Christian belief, on the one hand, and of Platonism and Neoplatonism on the other.

How shall I attempt to characterize the Christian Absolute insofar as this is documented in the Scriptures and other representative expressions of historic Christianity? I shall do no more presently but apply my own sevenfold list of qualifications to my own general impression of Christian absolutism: everything I say will be open to countless objections which I shall not here attempt to field. The Christian Absolute I should regard as in its main traits the same as the Hebraic and the Islamic Absolutes: all have had extensive historical commerce with Platonism and Neoplatonism, but all have retained a physiognomy that is in some ways definitely non-Hellenic. They all certainly believe in an absolute that exists in no derived, dependent manner and which could not in any circumstances not exist. They also all believe in its uniqueness and its unity, even though Christianity believes in a threefoldness of personal aspect which is not posited in Judaism and Islam. The Athanasian Creed certainly rules out any suspicion of tritheism; the Christian Absolute is not divided among its constituent personae but totally present in each. The Christian Absolute is certainly also thought of as all-comprehensive as regards existence and as regards possibility. There can be nothing that exists that is not either an aspect or inseparable part of itself, or whose existence and character does not depend wholly upon and is not wholly determined by itself. And certainly the Christian Absolute is thought of as being of the nature of Mind, or as being the transcendent original of which minds, as we know them, are the dim semblances, and also as incarnating the values of knowledge, power, love, bliss, and beauty in a superlative degree, or as being something better than them all, of which they are again only the dim semblances. What, however, is distinctive of the Hebraic-Christian-Islamic Absolute, and what sets it apart from other absolutes is, in the first place, that it is thought of (at least predominantly, and by the philosophically less sophisticated) on the likeness of what is individual, of what exemplifies characters and values and activities and relationships rather than on the likeness of those characters, values, activities, and relationships themselves. The Absolute of much of Christianity exists rather than is being, is mighty rather than is might, is beautiful rather than is very beauty itself, and so on. That "God is love" is indeed a Christian utterance, and that "to live and die are alike Christ" is also a Christian utterance, but there is for the Christian a certain strain of metaphor in them, and it is more natural to say that God is superlatively loving or that living and dying alike can be Christlike. And with this rooted individualism, literal or analogical, goes a tendency to stress the contingent aspects of the Absolute, as one does in the case of an individual, and with this tendency goes the tendency—since the Absolute is the sole determinant of all that specifies or derives from it—to exalt the arbitrariness of much that the Absolute is and of all that

it outwardly effects. It has generated a world but it need not have done so; it has generated such-and-such types of creaturely being conforming to such-and-such laws and having such-and-such freedoms, but it could have generated a quite different array of creaturely beings, and so on. One may of course give the Absolute an essence constituted by what one regards as the highest values (compassion, insight, etc.), but in the concrete implementation of these values there will tend to be much arbitrary selection and use of individual things and persons. The Jews are the divinely chosen people, not the Philistines; Abraham or Moses or David are their chosen leaders, Job and Saul are not; certain practices are prescribed for purification, atonement, and so on, while others are proscribed as idolatrous and vain. The Absolute does not care for Cain's pure offering of the fruits of the earth, but relishes the odors of frying lambs. Even in the New Testament there is a considerable element of the arbitrary. For while Jesus is made the embodiment of characters of boundless understanding of human need and weakness and boundless desire for human happiness and moral regeneration, which as values have nothing that is arbitrary about them, there is also something essentially arbitrary and Judaic about his role as chosen Messiah, chosen from all eternity to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom, and to bring it about by the dreadful rite of the Passion, with its betrayal, its condemnation, and its final agonizing execution, all of which were ritually necessary for the purgation of human transgression and for the ultimate realization of God's perfect kingdom. What is further arbitrary about the whole transaction is that the Passion was *not* provoked by man's unwillingness to recognize the universal absolute values that Jesus incarnated, but by the claims to a special messianic status which were essentially part of a Jewish historicistic mythology, which has no claims to the acceptance of all men of profound insight and good will. And if one substitutes later theological language for this earlier messianism, the arbitrary element consists in the choice of a particular human nature for fusion and transfiguration by the divine, timeless Logos. Even among the beautiful parables in the New Testament there are some that sadden us with a note of arbitrariness: it was not well for those who lacked a suitable wedding garment or who arrived late for the bridegroom's feast. This large element of the arbitrary, in my view, tarnishes the Absolute's image: like Habbakuk, as Voltaire describes him, he becomes *capable de tout*. He can harden Pharaoh's heart, while he reshapes and softens the heart of Paul; he has his vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor; he may even, as some late medieval philosophers opined, cause certain devout persons to have advance intimations of beatitude only to overwhelm them with final reprobation. We can then readily pass to the late medieval view, which Descartes also accepted, that the necessities of thought and the moral law are all in the last resort arbitrary, that they could and would have been otherwise had the Absolute so willed it.

These tendencies to attribute increasing arbitrariness to the Absolute are not necessary, but they spring from the strong individualism of the sort of absolute thus conceived. And with this deep individualism goes the tendency to set an unpassable gulf between dependent individuals and their absolute source, a gulf resembling that between ordinary finite individuals, only wider and deeper. The

immense disparity in status and power between the Absolute and its dependents then readily relegates the latter to the rank of puppets: how they will function, what roles they will fulfil, all wholly depends upon the Absolute. They will have the further disadvantage of not feeling themselves to be puppets or wishing themselves to be such, and the conviction that they are such will be profoundly painful to them. All the agonies I have been outlining have been actually felt by Christians, mainly of post-Reformation and Calvinistic creeds, who have given their absolutes too much of that divine seasoning, contingency. Contingency is the glorious, many-colored outer icing of the ontological cake—if you will permit an irreverent simile—it is not a fit substance for its well-composed interior. It is not, as I say, necessary to conceive the Absolute as post-Reformation Christianity has so largely done, but there are strong forces always moving in this direction. This tendency has its main roots in the Hebrew scriptures, though there is, of course, much in these (particularly in the Prophets) that attenuates and ennobles it, and much too, of course, in the New Testament. It has, however, been Hellenic and (in the main) Platonic influences that have countered these tendencies in Christian absolutism.

I shall now say something about the brand of absolutism that is associated with Plato and Plotinus. This constructs an ontology in which primacy of being is given, not to particulars or individuals, but to the universal patterns that they exemplify, and in the prime case to patterns that are specific cases of intelligibility and excellence. The Platonic ontology has indeed a secondary place for patterns that merely approximate to, or fall short of, positive perfection, or which are merely relative or artificial or contingently complex, but its prime place is for the patterns of perfect substances and their essential excellences. (See, e.g., Syrianus on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 1078b, 32). Here we find the whole numbers of arithmetic, the celestial dynamics of a purified astronomy, and the patterns of souls that are able to cognize all patterns and direct all movements because all of these patterns are built into their structure. And beneath all these ideal structures lies the world of instances of which they are the true causes, though instantiation also involves the half-real media of empty space, on the one hand (in which indefinite multiplication and changeable combination become possible) and time, on the other hand (which is nothing but the half-real flux of sensible, instantial being, reduced to order by the regular motions that Soul and its higher exemplars impose).

Above all this complex hierarchical system, however, lies the Absolute, the Very Good itself, which is also Very Unity itself, the originative source of all the unified and excellent natures whether arithmetical, geometrical, dynamic, or psychic, and for their myriad sensible instantiations. For though Platonism sets an ineffable gulf of type between ideal patterns and their instances, and between the absolutely Good or One and all ideal patterns, this gulf of type does not prevent the lower from deriving from the higher, and throughout participating in its character, and in fact deriving all that it has by way of existence or essence from that which stands above it. Platonism, by not giving its Absolute the character of an individual instance, also enables it to communicate all that it has or is, in varying

degrees, to what falls beneath it, and without sacrifice of its ontological priority which cannot be shared by anything. And the Platonic Absolute necessarily and not arbitrarily develops its inner resources in the realm of ideal patterns and in the ideal intelligence that knows and delights in them all. And it necessarily overflows into the realm of instances in which accident, deviation, mutability, and other departures from perfection necessarily have their place. But over all these confusions presides an ordering Soul or Spirit, the highest of instantial beings, which gives tone and order to the instantial cosmos, while taking its own tone and order from what lies above. And the human soul can see nothing above it that is alien or arbitrary; what can raise and guide it always enters into its deepest being since the unity that is the same as being always holds it together and enables it to exist.

All these features of Platonic absolutism may be recommended to Christians. They give God the infinite distance from and otherness than his creatures, and from their creaturely deviations and abuses, which Christians desire, but, by making this a difference of ontological type, and not of individual being, they make God something that can be genuinely participated in and communed with, which is also what Christians desire. They make whatever is contingent and that might have been otherwise deeply different from what is essential and normative and essentially subordinate to the latter. Persons, rites, books, institutions, and so on, are only authoritative to the extent that absolute patterns are exemplified in them, and never in their own right. Instances as such never can be august. At the same time the contingent and the instantial are not to be scorned, for it is of the essence of the Absolute to flow over, or to be able to flow over, into finite instances and contingencies, in which there will always be possibilities of deviation that the Absolute can help to set right. And the Trinitarian structure that was hammered out in the early church is not unacceptable from a Platonic point of view. For if the Absolute is in the first place a pure unity which transcends being because it is Very Being itself, it is also an ideal intelligence that is the timeless thought of all the ideal patterns, and also a concrete living Soul which, itself an instance, presides over the whole instantial world. I need not say, further that there is place in Platonism for Incarnation theology: if the Soul is a supreme instance presiding over the instantial world, there may also be a human instance that surpasses all other instances in its participation in the Absolute. Only on Platonic assumptions there will not be an absolute gulf between this instance and various near-incarnations of other types and degrees. And even though no one comes to the Father but through the divine Logos, the divine Logos may have other sheep that are not of a given fold, and may shepherd many who have never heard of or acknowledged his Christian manifestations. I myself speak as a vagabond among folds, and a committed member of none.

Another reason why Christians are to be recommended to become Platonists is that so many of their best members have done so. This is, of course, also true of many of the best Jews and Mohammedans. Let us start with Clement of Alexandria whose hermeneutic principle was to interpret the Scriptures so that nothing discreditable was attributed to God, which meant that the Scriptures had to be made to satisfy Platonic standards. And let me then turn to Origen whose Father is



the Very Good itself, whose Son lives absorbed in his vision of the paternal depths but is surrounded by as many attendant essences, powers, and minds as in Plato and Plotinus, some of which fall into perverse ways but will for the most part return to the Father in a final restitution. Let me then mention Gregory of Nyssa who contrasts the participated goodness of finite things with the unparticipated goodness of God the Father, which includes all excellence in a wholly unsplintered, simple fashion, and contrasts with the Word which ramifies into countless distinct energies, and with the Soul which, in its higher functions, has much of the paradoxical unity-in-multiplicity of divinity. Let us also consider Augustine who, though in many of his utterances approving of the divine arbitrariness, also taught that God was Truth itself, Intelligence itself, and Unity itself, that he embodied whatever was categorial in *all* the categories, that he was good without having a quality, great without having a quantity, everlasting without having a date, and the source of all mutability without himself changing. Let us then also remember Anselm of Canterbury whose God, wrongly thought of by critical ontologists as *instance* of absolute perfection, is in his *Monologue* affirmed to be Perfection itself, Justice itself, and all other transcendental perfections, without exemplifying them as just and other good beings do. Such a being is indeed necessary as a supreme instance arguably cannot be. Finally let us consider Aquinas who, though boundlessly critical of Platonism in his explicit comments on it, is also infinitely Platonic in his actual teaching, no doubt deriving much of his Platonic inspiration from the Pseudo-Dionysius. Aquinas' God is *penitus simplex* like the One of Plato and Plotinus, and becomes many only in what derives from him and participates in him. He does not *exist* so much as *is* self-subsistent being: the gulf between him and his creatures is the ineffable gulf between what shares in being and what is the very Being in which other things only share. His existence is also one with his Essence: he is not characterized by various remarkable *properties*, but rather *is* the unified being of what in other things are only present as properties. And his perfection consists largely in this coincidence of essence and existence. God does not have to achieve the realization of anything he might have, since he already *is* whatever might be thus achieved or had, in imperfect form, by other dependent things. God's intelligence is further not at all like *our* intelligence which merely receives the pattern of external realities. God, like the supreme Unity of Neoplatonism, holds all finite existence in his power: in being himself, and thus inclusive of all possibilities, he is something that our cognitive intentionality only distantly imitates. His will also is a mere expression of his essence, the external actualization of an infinitesimal fragment of what in his timeless essence he is. The three Persons of the Trinity are somewhat dimly distinguished in the divine simplicity: they are outward-facing aspects rather than inner differences. Aquinas is so Platonic in his theology that he is almost a Unitarian. I shall not proceed further in my analysis: I approach Thomas as an interested outsider who perhaps sees things in him that his ultraorthodox supporters fail to discern. Certainly I see a much stronger vein of Neoplatonism in him than his orthodox expositors would countenance. He is acceptable to such as myself since the mere tantrums of will play a very small part in his Absolute: his God simply

is the systematic unity of all the values that I venerate, which I rejoice to see treated as more absolutely real than the botched things I see around me or that I know of through history.

I have, I may say in conclusion, given you a number of reasons why Platonic and Neoplatonic reinterpretations of Christianity are to be preferred to versions that are less revisionary, and that adhere more closely to the original Hebraic deposit. There is nothing impious in holding that, while the Jews may have provided the basic energies which make for the kingdom of heaven, it was the Greeks that gave them an intellectually acceptable and beautiful form. The Jews themselves, since the time of Philo, have admitted as much, and so have the adherents of Islam. Providence, the Absolute in action, works through many instruments, and is as capable of influencing Western spirituality through the subtle frauds of a Dionysius as through the narrow zeal of Tertullian. And I believe, as I have said, that the present syncretic confluence of many religious traditions also represents the Absolute in action: it deepens our understanding of what is invariant and necessary and what is contingent and variable in our belief and our devotion. Many of you will not agree with me at all, and you are quite at liberty to hold that Christians should resist the persuasive lures of Platonism.

# Notes

## INTRODUCTION

1. See A. H. Armstrong and R. A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy* (New York, 1960), chapter 10.
2. Known as "Middle Platonism": see J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, New York, 1977).
3. The Platonism of Plotinus and his followers is known as "Neoplatonism"; for a good survey see R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York, 1972). These historians' labels are potentially misleading. Plotinus could well be described as a very original and outstanding Middle Platonist, and non-Plotinian Middle Platonism (!) continued to affect the Platonic movement after Plotinus' death. All, in any case, would have described themselves simply as "Platonists."
4. See, for example, C. Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Turin, 1950).
5. The treatment in, for example, C. Elsec, *Neoplatonism in Relation to Christianity* (Cambridge, 1908), is no longer adequate. Albert Camus' dissertation for the Diplôme d'études supérieures, *Métaphysique chrétienne et Néoplatonisme in Essais*, ed. R. Quilliot and L. Faucon (Paris, 1965), contains some valuable insights, but is of most interest, it seems, for the study of Camus. A recent useful survey of Neoplatonism in relation to Patristic thought can be found in E. P. Meijering, *God Being History* (Amsterdam, 1975), pp. 1-18. See also H. Dörrie, "Die Andere Theologie," *Theologie und Philosophie* 56 (1981), pp. 1-46.

6. See H. Dehnard, *Das Problem der Abhängigkeit des Basilios von Plotin* (Berlin, 1964); D. Balas, *Meiosis theou* (Rome, 1966) (on Gregory); P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris, 1968); P. Hadot, P. Courcelle, and A. Solignac (on Ambrose) in *Revue des Etudes Latines* 34 (1956), 202–239, and *Archives de Philosophie* 29, 3 (1956), 148–156; on Augustine's sources, see above, p. 35.
7. In a paper presented at the Conference on "Platonism and Christianity, the Fourth Century: Some Problems that Remain," Professor John Rist also gave a cautionary critique of various attempts to find Neoplatonic influences in Arius, Athanasius, and some Neo-Arians. This paper is part of a larger project to be published in the *Proceedings of the Toronto Saint Basil Symposium*.
8. On this triad see P. Hadot, in *Entretiens Hardt* 5 (1960), 107–141. On the *Liber de causis*, see Mahoney's bibliography below, p. 275, n. 45; p. 278, n. 56.
9. See McGinn's comments, above, p. 138.
10. The antidogmatic character of language about God in Neoplatonism and its religious value were also stressed by Professor Werner Beierwaltes in his paper "Image and Counterimage? Reflections on Neoplatonic Thought with Respect to Its Place Today" presented at the Conference and to be published in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, ed. H. J. Blumenthal and R. A. Markus (Liverpool, 1981).

## THE PLATONIC AND CHRISTIAN ULYSSES

1. 'Ο Φιλόσοφος 'Οδυσσεύς, "the philosopher Ulysses," is an expression used by the twelfth century Byzantine exegete Eustathius, *Comm. ad Hom. Odysseam* I 51, vol. I (Leipzig, 1825), p. 17, 10; X 241, p. 379, 1, etc.
2. See the two antithetical declamations *Ajax* and *Ulysses*, ed. F. Deleva Caizzi, *Antisthenes fragmenta* (Testi e docum. per lo studio dell' Antichità 13) (Milano-Varese, 1966), pp. 24–28, with fragments 51, 52A, and 54, pp. 43–45 and the corresponding notes, pp. 105–108. See also R. Höistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King. Studies in the Cynic Conception of Man* (Diss. Uppsala, 1948), pp. 94–102.
3. Cf. *testim.* 2B and 12, and fragment 15 in J. F. Kindstrand, *Bion of Borysthenes. A Collection of the Fragments with Intro. and Comment.* (Acta Univ. Upsal., Studia Graeca 11) (Uppsala, 1976), pp. 106, 108, and 116, with the corresponding commentary, pp. 134, 155, and 204.
4. Thus *Diogenes epist.* VII 2 and XXXIV 2–3, ed. Hercher pp. 237 and 248; cf. W. Capelle, *De Cynicorum epistulis* (Diss. Göttingen, 1896), pp. 23–24; H. W. Attridge, "The Philosophical Critique of Religion under the Early Empire," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 16, 1 (Berlin-New York, 1978), pp. 64–65 dates the pseudocynographic Cynic letters to the first century A.D. One will note that later Ulysses ceased to be an *exemplum* for the Cynics, as can be seen in *Cratetis epist.* XIX, pp. 211–212; cf. W. Capelle, *op. cit.* pp. 52–53. The same change is found in "Un recueil de diatribes cyniques, Pap. Genev. inv. 271," edited by V. Martin, *Museum helveticum* 16 (1959), col. XIV 42–57, pp. 104–105, trans. pp. 82–83. On the Cynic Ulysses, see also W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme. A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 96–100; F. Buffière, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* (Thèse Paris, 1956), pp. 367–374.
5. Cf. W. B. Stanford, *op. cit.*, pp. 121–127; F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, pp. 374–380.
6. Plutarch *Quaest. conviv.* IX 14, 6, 745DF. A probable reminiscence, as noted by F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, p. 480 (cf. pp. 476–481), of Plato *Phaedrus* 249B–250A, on the quasi-amorous emotion of the soul which remembers the former sights.
7. Thus Theo of Smyrna, *Expos.* ed. Hiller, p. 147, 3–6, credits the Pythagoreans with having meant by the Sirens the harmony of the spheres. Furthermore, two famous Pythagorean *akousmata* (in Iamblichus *De vita pythag.* 18, 82, = 58 C 4 Diels-Kranz, I, p. 464, 6–7) seem to testify, the one to a belief in a planetary sojourn of the souls after death (the Sun and Moon as the Islands of the Blessed), the other to the symbolic equation Sirens = cosmic harmony (the harmony in which the Sirens sing). See finally the attribution to Pythagoras of a theory of the Milky Way as the resting place of the souls that have left their bodies (Porphyry *De antro nymph.* 28, ed. Westerink et al., p. 28, 1–2; Proclus *In Plat. Rempubl. comment.* ed. Kroll II, p. 129, 24–26; Macrobius *Comment. in Somn. Scip.* I 12, 3; all three authors depend on Numenius: cf. *Testim.* 42, 44, 47 Leemans and pp. 151–152 of his collection), on which see P. Boyancé, *Études sur le Songe de Scipion* (Biblioth. des Univ. du Midi 20) (Bordeaux-Paris, 1936), pp. 136–137. There are, however, some reservations about this; see most recently I. P. Culianu, "'Démonisation du cosmos' et dualisme gnostique," *Revue de l'Hist. des religions* 196 (1979), pp. 4–10.
8. On this exegesis see A. Delatte, *Études sur la littérature pythagoricienne* (Biblioth. de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences histor. et philol. 217) (Paris, 1915), pp. 133–134, 259–264, 276; F. Cumont, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains* (Biblioth. archéol. et histor. des Antiquités de Syrie et du Liban 35) (Paris, 1942), pp. 23 and 328–331; E. Kuiser, "Odyssee-Szenen als Topoi," *Museum helvet.* 21 (1964), pp. 114–115. P. Boyancé, "Études philoniennes," *Revue des études grecques* 76 (1963), pp. 76–77, draws attention to a similar exegesis of the same origin (it is in fact simply a literary rapprochement, and not an allegory) in Philo *Quaest. in Gen.* III 3. The Pythagoreans also developed a more banal interpretation in which the murderous songs of the Sirens represent sensual pleasures: cf. Porphyry *Vita Pythag.* 39 and Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* I 10, 48, 6.
9. Cf. A. Delatte, *op. cit.*, pp. 128ff., 129: "Il semble que tous les mythes et toutes les légendes de l'*Odyssée* en particulier furent traités par l'interprétation symbolique." We must admit that we lack sufficiently well-established facts about this Pythagorean Ulysses, despite the efforts of M. Detienne, "Ulysse sur le stuc central de la Basilique de la Porta Maggiore," *Latomus* 17 (1958), pp. 270–286, and especially Homère, *Hésiode et Pythagore. Poésie et philosophie dans le pythagorisme ancien* (Collection Latomus 57) (Bruxelles, 1962), pp. 52–60.
10. See the discussion between Socrates and Hippias in Plato *Hippias min.* where we meet again with Antisthenes' preoccupations. The discussion in fact has to do with a quotation from *Iliad* IX 308–314 (365AB).
11. Notably in the episodes of Calypso (*Od.* v 55–269; vii 241–267), Circe (x 210–574; xii 8–143), the Sirens (xii 39–54 and 158–200), Charybdis and Scylla (xii 73–126 and 222–262).
12. Proclus *In Plat. Rempubl.* ed. Kroll, I, p. 131, 7–8 thus mentions those who "transpose to other deeper meanings (ἐπ' ἄλλας ἱστορίας) what is called the wandering" of Ulysses.
13. This difference impressed I. Heinemann, "Die wissenschaftliche Allegoristik der Griechen," *Mnemosyne* IV a ser., 2 (1949), pp. 15–16 who opposes Numenius to Heraclitus *Quaest. homer.* 70 (note that this last text contains several instances of the word "allegory", but it relates to a moral allegory on the surface of the text).
14. *Enn.* I 6 [I] 8, 16–21, ed. Henry-Schwyzer, p. 102; the first words Φερίωμεν . . . φίλην ἐς πατρίδα come from *Iliad* II 140 = IX 27 where they are spoken by Agamemnon, but φίλην ἐς πατρίδα is also found, in relation to Ulysses, in *Od.* v 37. There is a possible allusion to the return of Ulysses to his fatherland after much wandering in *Enn.* V 9 [5] I, 20–21.
15. *In Plat. Parmen.* V, ed. Cousin, col. 1025, 33–37; the mention of Ulysses is induced by the word πλάνη in *Parm.* 136E2.
16. *Ibid.*, col. 1025, 1–33.
17. *In Plat. Crat.* 158, ed. Pasquali, p. 88, 20–23; the passage commented on is *Crat.* 403DE, which has to do with the Sirens of Hades (Proclus distinguishes them from those of *genesis*). There are comparable texts, including the reference to the *Phaedrus*, in Proclus *In Rempubl.* II, p. 68, 3–16 and especially p. 238, 23–26: ". . . τῶν γενεσιουργῶν . . . Σειρήνων, ἃς δὴ καὶ αὐτὸς (Plato) ἄλλαχού συμβουλεύει κατὰ τὸν Ὀμηρικὸν ἐκείνῳ Ὀδυσσεῖ παραπλεῖν." See Festugière's notes *ad loc.*, vol. III, p. 195. Proclus' word θέλειν, "to bewitch," is already applied to the Sirens at *Od.* xii 40 and 44. On the sea as image of coming-to-be, see Proclus *In Plat. Tim.* ed. Diehl, I, p. 113, 30–31: τὴν εἰς τὸν πόντον τῆς γενέσεως . . . τῆς ψυχῆς φορὰν; Julian *Orat. VIII In Matrem deor.* 9, 169D: the soul flees γένεσιν καὶ τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ κλύδωνα; F. Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 66 n. 1 and p. 326.
18. *Comment. ad Hom. Odysseam* I 51, 1389, Leipzig ed. (Weigel, 1825) I, p. 17, 9–16; see for more details F. Buffière, *op. cit.*, pp. 461–464. The most remarkable aspect of this passage is its skill in combining Homeric and Platonic themes: the body as "envelope" (ἐλυτρον) comes from *Republ.* IX 588E; but the assimilation of the enveloped soul to a pearl (μάργαρον) connects with the

- comparison with the oyster in *Phaedrus* 250C: the island surrounded by currants (νήσω ἐν ἀμφιρύτῃ) of *Od.* i 50 evokes for the commentator *Timaeus* 43A on the body which receives and excretes a liquid flux (ἐπιρρυντον σῶμα καὶ ἀπόρρυντον), etc.
19. 259AB: παραπλέοντας σφας ὥστερ Σειρήνας ἀκηλήτους, ὃ γέρας παρὰ θεῶν ἔχουσιν ἀνθρώποις διδόναι ταχ' ἂν δοίεν.
  20. Hermias *In Plat. Phaedrum schol.* 259A, ed. Couvreur, p. 214, 4–24: the words between square brackets give mostly the restitutions or clarifications in Couvreur's apparatus. For the idea that the true fatherland of the souls is the intelligible world, see already *ad* 230CD, p. 32, 26.
  21. *In Crat.* p. 88, 20–23 and *In Rempubl.* II, p. 238, 23–26; cf. *supra* p. 5 and note 17.
  22. This is the case for Proclus himself, *In Rempubl.* II, p. 68, 11 παραπλεύσεται; the verb here is intransitive, as it often is; it can also have an object in the accusative as we have seen in Hermias and in Proclus following *Phaedrus* 259A: παραπλέοντας σφας.
  23. Thus H. Dunbar, *A Complete Concordance to the Odyssey of Homer* (Oxford, 1880; Hildesheim<sup>2</sup>, 1962 ed. B. Marzullo), p. 293B; A. Gehring, *Index homericus* (Leipzig, 1891–1895; Hildesheim-New York<sup>2</sup>, 1970 ed. U. Fleischer), col. 656.
  24. In xii 69, where the ship *Argo* alone sailed past (παρέπλω) the Wandering Rocks. Yet here the verb is used in its Ionian form παραπλώω.
  25. Porphyry *De antro nymph.* 34, ed. Westerink, p. 32, 13–21. The two verses quoted are *Od.* xi 122–123. The reference to Numenius is *Testim.* 45 Leemans, pp. 103, 25–104, 2, = Fragment 33 des Places, p. 84. The word ἀποκαθισταμένον, which denotes a reestablishment in a former state, has been studied by W. Theiler, *Forschungen zum Neuplatonismus* (Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Philos. X) (Berlin, 1966), p. 27 and n. 48, and *Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur* (Berlin, 1970), p. 536: he attempts to show that the well-known *apocatastasis* doctrine in Origen derives to some degree from Numenius, via Ammonius Saccas.
  26. *Ibid.* 35, pp. 32, 29–30 and 34, 4–7. Ulysses' "audacity" is to have blinded the Cyclops, hence Poseidon's hate (*Od.* i 68–75), which is to say: one does not free oneself of the life of the senses by blinding it in one blow. P. 34, 5 ἐν ψυχαῖς ἀπείροις, "with people who do not know . . .", is Westerink's correction of the MS reading ἑμψυχος ἀπείρων and of the reading ἀπείρος given by Hercher followed by Nauck; it has the advantage of harmonizing better with *Od.* xi 122–129 and with ch. 34 of the *De antro*, where it is the people among whom Ulysses must arrive, and not obviously Ulysses himself, who know so little of the sea as to make the mistake in question.
  27. Thus, in the geographical myth toward the end of the *Phaedo*, we find a devaluation of the sea, a place of corruption, imperfection, ugliness, decay (110A and E); in *Republ.* X 611B–612A the soul, joined to the body, is disfigured like the submerged statue of Glaucus, and will only show her true nature by leaving the sea (ἐκ τοῦ πόντου) in which she is; in *Laws* IV 704D–705A the proximity of the sea (θάλαττα) ruins morals; etc.
  28. 273D: εἰς τὸν τῆς ἀνομοιότητος ἀπειρον ὄντα πόντον (τόπον codd.); the whole context is ostensibly nautical: the Demiurge is described at length as a pilot who moves between the tiller and his observation post. One can understand then why πόντον would have been substituted for the supposedly authentic τόπον, whereas the reverse change would be harder to explain. The Neoplatonists in any case generally read πόντον. For the comparison, see J. B. Skemp, *Plato's Statesman* (London<sup>2</sup>, 1961), pp. 95–97. For the relation with *De antro* 34, see F. Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 500.
  29. Thus Proclus *In Tim.* I, p. 179, 25–26: . . . ὅλη, ἣν ἀνομοιότητος πόντον ἐν τῷ Πολιτικῷ προσείρηκε [sc. Plato], and pp. 174, 10–11; 175, 18–20 (178, 15–16), etc.
  30. We must note here a very similar image in a text which, by all accounts, is important to Porphyry. It is the alleged oracle of Apollo which he quotes in his *Life of Plotinus*. If Ulysses is not named in this text, his figure can be read between the lines, for in this text victory over corporeal subjection is assimilated to a swift swim to the coast; the nausea and dizziness produced by carnal food are compared to sea sickness. Plotinus' striving for salvation is presented as an escape from the bitter waves, in the midst of the billows (ἐν μεσάτοις κλύδωνος) (*Vita Plot.* XXII 25–27 and 31–33).
  31. Numenius Fr. 27 L., pp. 141, 16–142, 2 = Fr. 18, 2–10 des Pl., pp. 58–59, = Eusebius *Præ- evang.* XI 18, 24, in particular *in fine*: "The Demiurge resides over her (i.e., matter) as if above a ship on that sea which is matter" (thus I think one should translate, in the light of the reference to Plato in the preceding fragment and keeping the received text: αὐτὸς μὲν ὑπὲρ ταύτης ἵδρυται, οἷον ὑπὲρ νεὼς ἐπὶ θαλάττης, τῆς ὕλης). This is an actual quotation from Book VI of Numenius' treatise *On the Good*.
  32. As thinks J. F. Kindstrand, *Homer in der Zweiten Sophistik. Studien zu der Homerlektüre und dem Homerbild bei Dion von Prusa, Maximus von Tyros und Ailius Aristides* (Acta Univ. Upsal., Studia Graeca 7) (Uppsala, 1973), pp. 179–180.
  33. ὑποβαλοῦσα, a reading proposed with reason by J. F. Kindstrand, *op. cit.*, p. 179 n. 81 instead of Hobein's ὑπολαβοῦσα.
  34. Maximus of Tyre *Philos.* XI 10 h (= XVII 10 Dübner), ed. Hobein, p. 142, 8–12.
  35. J. Huskinson, "Some Pagan Mythological Figures and their Significance in Early Christian Art," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 42 (1974), pp. 80–81 has shown, à propos of the scene of Ulysses and the Sirens in early Christian art, that in most cases it is a re-use of pagan images by Christians in decorating their churches. For the same scene in early Christian art and its interpretation in the light of pagan and Christian literary documents, see T. Klauser, "Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der christlichen Kunst," VI, in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 6 (1963) pp. 71–100.
  36. The principal work on the Christian allegories of this episode is H. Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche. Die Ekklesiologie der Väter* (Salzburg, 1964), pp. 247–267; see also, by the same author, "Antenna crucis, I: Odysseus am Mastbaum," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 65 (1941), pp. 123–152. See also, especially for the Latin Fathers, P. Courcelle, "Quelques symboles funéraires du néo-platonisme Latin. Le vol de Dédale.—Ulysse et les Sirènes," *Revue des études anciennes* 46 (1944), pp. 73–91 (he gives also many details about pagan Neoplatonic exegesis); and again, by the same author, "L'interprétation évhémériste des Sirènes—courtisanes jusqu'au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Mélanges L. Wallach* (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11) (Stuttgart, 1975), pp. 33–48.
  37. Clement of Alexandria *Protrept.* XII 118, 1–4, ed. Stählin, p. 83, 8–30. I have profited by Mondésert's translation in the "Sources chrétiennes" series, 2. The prose quote at the end of the text comes from I Cor. 2:9. The last of the three poetical quotes is pure ornament and comes from Hesiod *Works* 373–374. The first two, on the other hand, are taken from *Od.* xii 219–220 and 184–185 (at 185 θειοτέρην, a "more divine" voice, is substituted for the νουτέρην of the text, "our" voice). There is furthermore an allusion to verses 45–46 (the island crowded with human bones) and 178 (Ulysses tied to his mast). This is good confirmation that Clement is really developing an exegesis of the Homeric episode.
  38. *Protrept.* X 109, 1, p. 77, 29–30; same opposition at X 89, 2 and 99, 3, as well as at XII 118, 1. On the word as applied to the cult of idols, see IV 46, 1; X 99, 1; 101, 1 and 3. These texts are referred to by H. Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 254–255.
  39. L. Alfonsi, "La Consuetudo nei Protreptici," *Vigiliae christ.* 18 (1964), pp. 32–36 gives several examples of this; let us make note of Cicero *Hortensius* Fr. 63 Ruch p. 134 (*consuetudo vitiosa*), Seneca *De ira* II 20, 2: plurimum potest consuetudo, quae si gravis est alit vitium.
  40. *Protrept.* IX 86, 2, p. 64, 27–37. This text has been very well analyzed by M. L. Amerio, "Su due similitudini del Protreptico di Clemente Alessandrino (*prot.* 9, 86, 2)," *Invisitata lucernis* (Bari), 1 (1979), pp. 7–37.
  41. I have drawn in this analysis from M. L. Amerio, *art. cit.*, especially pp. 12, 21–24 and 28–32 where a complete study may be found.
  42. *Strom.* VI 11, 89, 1–3, ed. Stählin, p. 476, 14–26; the quotation in brackets is from Psalm 23, 1. = I Cor. 10:26; it expresses at the same time the fact that Christian recruitment does not have ethnic limitations and that all knowledge is at the service of the faith. See the commentary on this text in A. Méhat, *Étude sur les 'Stromates' de Clément d'Alexandrie* (Patristica sorbonensia 7) (Paris, 1966), pp. 67, 132–133, 287, 327.
  43. Thus Paulinus of Nola (fourth to fifth century) *Epist.* XVI (*ad Jovium philosophum*) 7, ed. Hartel, pp. 121, 6–122, 2, cited by P. Courcelle, *art. cit.*, p. 89.
  44. Like [Justin] *Cohort. ad gentiles* (date uncertain) 36, ed. Otto, pp. 116–118: Plato and Aristotle seduce only by their δοκιμότης φράσεως and their εὐγλωττία; let us stop our ears with wax so as to escape the sweet death produced by these Sirens. One will note that Clement himself had

- recourse to the Sirens in order to denounce the magic of Sophists and the leading of the soul based on the charm of language; let us not repeat the trial of Ulysses, "it is quite enough for one man to have had to sail past the Sirens (Σειρήνας δὲ παραπλεύσας)" (*Strom.* I 10, 48, 6, p. 32, 8–10). On these texts see H. Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 255–256.
45. Hippolytus *Elenchus* VII 13, 1–3, ed. Wendland, pp. 190, 21–191, 11.
  46. Cf. *supra* p. 11 and V. Buchheit, "Homer bei Methodios von Olympos," *Rheinisches Museum* 99 (1956), pp. 19–23.
  47. Methodius *De autexuio* I 1–5, ed. Bonwetsch, pp. 145, 3–147, 1.
  48. Ambrose *Expos. in Lucam* IV 2–3, ed. Schenkl, pp. 139, 12–141, 3; the connection with the text of Luke seems very loose.
  49. Isaiah 13:21; there are thus "Sirens" in the Septuagint and in the Latin translation of the Old Testament read by Ambrose, but Jerome dared to use the word only once in the Vulgate, as Is. 13:22; cf. P. Antin, "Les Sirènes et Ulysse dans l'oeuvre de saint Jérôme," *Revue des études lat.* 39 (1961), pp. 232–234; E. Kaiser, *art. cit.*, p. 126.
  50. *Sermo XXXVII* 1–3, lines 1–43, ed. Mutzenbecher, pp. 145–146, = *Homilia* 49, Migne *Patrologia latina* 57, 339B–340B.
  51. This is the case in Augustine; see my work "Ex Platoniorum persona", *Études sur les lectures philosophiques de saint Augustin* (Amsterdam, 1977), p. xiii.
  52. Besides *Protrept.* XII 118, 3, see *Strom.* I 10, 48, 6, quoted *supra* note 44.
  53. *Nigrinus* 19: one must, imitating Ulysses, sail past (παραπλεῖν) the seductions of Roman life, but without binding one's hands or stopping one's ears with wax, so as to hold them, in full knowledge and liberty, in contempt. Every opinion on this point is of course full of uncertainty, given the lack of any collection of references which is near being exhaustive. I base myself on the rich repertory in E. Kaiser, *art. cit.*, where one finds seven instances of παραπλεῖν applied to the Sirens (pp. 128, 130, 131, 132, 134, 135, 136). If we eliminate the instances where this verb means "sail beside," and not "avoid," there remain only four texts of which two only are early enough to be of interest to our inquiry, one in Philostratus (*Heronius* 11), who must be a little later than Clement, and that in Lucian, who must be a little earlier.
  54. For the connection of the theme of flight with that of the return to the fatherland, see H. Merki, 'ΟΜΟΙΩΣΙΣ ΘΕΩ *Von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Paradosis VII) (Freiburg/Schweiz, 1952), p. 127, Hermias, *loc. cit.*, p. 214, 22 does not have φεύγωμεν, but has ἐκφεύγοντα τὴν Κίρκην, etc.
  55. Clement, *loc. cit.*, p. 83, 21: παρίθι τὴν ἡδονήν; Hermias, p. 214, 9–10: παρερχόμεθα τὸν ἐνταῦθα βίον.
  56. See on this theme the classic article by C. Bonner, "Desired Haven," *Harvard Theological Review* 34 (1941), pp. 49–67.
  57. *In Parmen.* V, col. 1025, 36–37.
  58. See the title of the article by I. P. Culianu cited *supra* p. 235, n. 7.
  59. Cf. P. Reymond, *L'eau, sa vie et sa signification dans l'Ancien Testament* (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* VI) (Leiden, 1958), pp. 123–124 and 182–198.
  60. Thus Origen *Hom. in Gen.* I 10; *Hom. in Levit.* VIII 3; *In Epist. ad Rom.* 5, 10; Ambrose *De fide* V 2, 31; *Expos. in Lucam* IV 40. I take these references from H. Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp. 291–292.
  61. *Op. cit.*, p. 253, where indeed no reference is made to Hermias.
  62. Origen *Fr.* 95–96 *In Thren.* 4, 3, ed. Klosternmann p. 270, 2–12: τὰς κατὰ Σύμμαχον Σειρήνας ἀκούσει τὰ πονηρὰ πνεύματα . . . Κατὰ γὰρ τὸν ἔξω μῦθον αὐταὶ διὰ τῆς ἡδονῆς τοὺς προστυχόντας ἀπώλλουσιν.
  63. P. Boyancé, "Écho des exégèses de la mythologie grecque chez Philon," in *Philon d'Alexandrie. Actes du colloque de Lyon 1966* (Paris, 1967), p. 170.
  64. Hippolytus *Elenchus* VI 15, 4–16, 2, ed. Wendland, pp. 141, 22–142, 5; this concerns *Od.* x 286–306.
  65. *Ibid.*, V 7, 30–32, pp. 85, 23–87, 3, on which see H. Leisegang, *La gnose*, French trans. (Biblioth. histor.) (Paris, 1951), pp. 89–90; the Homeric passage is *Od.* xxiv 1–5; ἀνεμνησμένων, a word-play with μνηστήρες, "suitsors."
  66. Proclus *In Rempubl.* II, p. 351, 7–17, a reference given by the editor Wendland, p. 86.
  67. J. Carcopino, *De Pythagore aux Apôtres. Études sur la conversion du monde romain* (Paris, 1956), especially pp. 177, 188, 211–213.
  68. As thinks W. Foester, intro. to *The Exegesis on the Soul*, in R. McL. Wilson (ed.), *Gnosis* vol. II (Oxford, 1974), p. 103.
  69. *The Exegesis on the Soul* ed. M. Krause and P. Labib, *Gnostische und Hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI* (Glückstadt, 1971), pp. 85–86, = p. 136, 26–35 of the Codex. What is given as a quotation from Homer is based on a compilation of several passages from *Od.* i 55–59 (Ulysses weeps and wants to see again the smoke of Ithaca), iv 555–558 (on Calypso's island, Ulysses weeps at not being able to return to his fatherland), v 82–83 and 151–158 (each day Ulysses weeps sitting on the cape), v 219–220 (Ulysses wants to return), xiii 299–301 (Athena never stopped helping Ulysses), etc.
  70. Epictetus *Discourses* III 24, 18–21, notably: "if Ulysses cried and lamented, he was not a noble man."
  71. See the excellent article by M. Scopello, "Les citations d'Homère dans le traité de L'exégèse de l'âme," in M. Krause (ed.), *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (Nag Hammadi Studies VIII) (Leiden, 1977), p. 3; the treatise is "une exposition du mythe gnostique de l'âme déchue dans le monde"; the purpose of the biblical and Homeric quotations is to "justifier le thème gnostique de la remontée de l'âme au Plérôme."

#### ORIGEN'S DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AND SOME LATER NEOPLATONIC THEORIES

1. *Ep. ad Menam*, p. 208, 26–32 Schw. = Fr. 9 Koetschau.
2. *Ep.* 124, 2, p. 98, 1–6 Hilberg.
3. 'Εκ τοῦ πρώτου λόγου τοῦ Πατρὸς ἀρχῶν βιβλίου. ὅτι ὁ μὲν θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ συνέχων τὰ πάντα φθάνει εἰς ἕκαστον τῶν ὄντων, μεταδίδους ἕκαστῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἰδίου τὸ εἶναι ὅπερ ἐστίν, ἐλαττόνως δὲ παρὰ τὸν πατέρα ὁ υἱὸς φθάνων ἐπὶ μὴν τὰ λογικά (δεύτερος γὰρ ἐστὶ τοῦ πατρὸς), ἐπὶ δὲ ἡττόνως τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπὶ μόνους τοὺς ἁγίους διακονοῦμενον ὥστε κατὰ τοῦτο μείζων ἡ δύναμις τοῦ πατρὸς παρὰ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, πλείων δὲ ἡ τοῦ υἱοῦ παρὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, καὶ πάλιν διαφέρουσα μᾶλλον τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἡ δύναμις παρὰ τὰ ἄλλα ἅγια.
4. "Filium quoque minorem a patre eo quod secundus ab illo sit, et spiritum sanctum inferiorem a filio in sanctis quibusque versari, atque hoc ordine maiorem patris fortitudinem esse quam filii et spiritus sancti, et rursum maiorem filii fortitudinem esse quam spiritus sancti, et consequenter ipsius sancti spiritus maiorem esse virtutem ceteris, quae sancta dicuntur."
5. "Arbitror igitur operationem quidem esse patris et filii tam in sanctis quam in peccatoribus, in hominibus rationabilibus et in mutis animalibus, sed et in his, quae sine anima sunt, et in omnibus omnino quae sunt; operationem vero spiritus sancti nequaquam prorsus incidere vel in ea, quae sine anima sunt, vel in ea, quae animantia quidem sed muta sunt, sed ne in illis quidem inveniri, qui rationabiles quidem sunt sed 'in malitia positi' nec omnino ad meliora conversi. In illis autem solis esse arbitror opus spiritus sancti, qui iam se ad meliora convertunt et 'per vias Christi Iesu' incedunt, id est qui sunt 'in bonis actibus' et 'in deo permanent.'"
6. The former question is well discussed in an article by Manlio Simonetti, "Sull' interpretazione di un passo del *De Principiis* di Origene (I 3, 5–8)," in *Riv. di Cult. Class. e Med.* 6 (1964), pp. 15–32, but he does not concern himself with possible Platonic analogies.
7. Πάν αἴτιον καὶ πρὸ τοῦ αἰτιατοῦ ἐνεργεῖ καὶ μετ' αὐτὸ πλείονων ἐστὶν ὑποστατικόν, εἰ γὰρ ἐστὶν αἴτιον, τελειότερόν ἐστι καὶ δυνατότερον τοῦ μετ' αὐτό, καὶ εἰ τοῦτο, πλείονων αἴτιον, δυνάμει γὰρ μείζονος τὸ πλείον παράγειν, ἴσης δὲ τὰ ἴσα, καὶ τῆς ἐλάττονος ἐλάττω καὶ ἡ μὲν τὰ μείζονα ἐν τοῖς ὁμοίοις δυνάμει δύναμις καὶ τὰ ἐλάττονα δύναται, ἡ δὲ τὰ ἐλάττονα δυνάμει οὐκ ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὰ μείζονα δυνήσεται, εἰ οὖν δυνατότερον τὸ αἴτιον, πλείονων ἐστὶ παρακτικόν.

ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ὅσα δύναται τὸ αἰτιατόν, μειζόνως ἐκεῖνο δύναται. πᾶν γὰρ τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν δευτέρων παραγόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν προτέρων καὶ αἰτιωτέρων παράγεται μειζόνως, συνυφίστησιν ἅρα αὐτῷ πάντα ὅσα πέφυκε παράγειν.

εἰ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸ πρότερον παράγει, δῆλον δῆπουθεν ὅτι πρὸ αὐτοῦ ἐνεργεῖ κατὰ τὴν παρακτικὴν αὐτοῦ ἐνεργειαν. ἔστιν ἅρα αἴτιον καὶ πρὸ τοῦ αἰτιατοῦ ἐνεργεῖ καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ μετ' αὐτὸ ἄλλα ὑφίστησιν.

ἐκ δὴ τούτων φανερόν ὅτι ὥσων μὲν αἰτία ψυχὴ, καὶ νοῦς αἴτιος, οὐχ ὥσων δὲ νοῦς, καὶ ψυχὴ αἰτία' ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸ ψυχῆς ἐνεργεῖ, καὶ ἃ δίδωσι ψυχὴ τοῖς δευτέροις, δίδωσι καὶ νοῦς μειζόνως, καὶ μηκέτι ψυχῆς ἐνεργοῦσης νοῦς ἐλλάμπει τὰς ἑαυτοῦ δόσεις, οἷς μὴ δέδωκε ψυχὴ ἑαυτήν, καὶ γὰρ τὸ ἀψυχον, καθόσον εἶδους μετέσχε, νοῦ μετέχει καὶ τῆς τοῦ νοῦ ποιήσεως.

καὶ δὴ καὶ ὥσων νοῦς αἴτιος, καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν αἴτιον' οὐκ ἐμπαλιν δέ, καὶ γὰρ αἱ στερήσεις τῶν εἰδῶν ἐκεῖθεν (πάντα γὰρ ἐκεῖθεν), νοῦς δὲ στερήσεως ὑποστάτης οὐκ ἔστιν, εἶδος ὢν.

8. τὸ γὰρ ἐν καὶ ὑπὲρ τὸ ὄν καὶ σὺν τῷ ὄντι καὶ ἐπὶ τὰδε τοῦ ὄντος, ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῆς στερήσεως.
9. *Did.* ch. X. 2: τούτου δὲ (sc. the Active Intellect) καλλίων ὁ αἴτιος τούτου καὶ ὅπερ ἂν ἐτι ἀνώτερω τούτων ὑφέστηκεν. οὗτος ἂν εἴη ὁ πρῶτος θεός. . . .
10. *Fr.* 15 *Des Places*: ὁ μὲν πρῶτος θεός . . . ἐστὶς. The πρῶτος νοῦς is also termed αὐτόον in *Fr.* 17, as being an object of contemplation for the Demiurge.
11. Alex. Aphrod. *In Metaph.* p. 59, I Hayduck, *ad Met.* 988a10–11.
12. *Fr.* 34 *Des Places*: "Ἰνθέν ἀποθοφσκει γένεσις πολυποικίλων ὕλης. Matter is also described as πατρογενής by Psellus in his *Hypotyposis*, sect. 27, p. 201 *Des Places*.
13. *In Alc.* p. 110, 13ff. Creuzer = lambl. *In Alc.* *Fr.* 8 Dillon.
14. Amelius, e.g., *In Tim.* *Fr.* 39; *Fr.* 54; *Fr.* 57 (with Numenius); Porphyry, *Fr.* 16; *Fr.* 70, Dillon.
15. *Expos. Chald.* 1153a10–11, p. 191 *Des Places*: συμπαθῇ δὲ τὰ ἄνω τοῖς κάτω φασὶ καὶ μάλιστα τὰ ὑπὸ σελήην.

#### A NEOPLATONIC COMMENTARY ON THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY: MARIUS VICTORINUS

1. Augustine, *St.*, *Confessions* VIII. 2.
2. P. Hadot, *Marius Victorinus* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1971), p. 239.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
4. H. Dörrie, "Une Exégèse Néoplatonicienne du prologue de l'Evangile de Saint Jean," in *Epektasis* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), pp. 75–87.
5. M. Victorinus, *Adversus Arium* I. 26 in *Traité Théologique sur la Trinité* (Paris: Editions du Cerf ["Sources chrétiennes" series], 1960). All translations of Victorinus' words are my own.
6. Plotinus, *Ennead* III. 2.9.
7. Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* III. 14. 20.
8. *Ibid.*, III. 6. 20; I. 4. 20–25.
9. Victorinus, *Ad Cand.* 29. 16–19; *Adv. Ar.* III. 17. 2; III. 15. 1.
10. Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* III. 18.
11. Victorinus, *Hymn* I. 15–16.
12. Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* I. 48. 21.
13. *Ibid.*, III. 8. 33.
14. *Ibid.*, III. 11. 13.
15. *Ibid.*, IV. 33. 21.
16. *Jn.* I. 18; *Adv. Ar.* III. 6. 20; I. 4. 20–25.
17. *Jn.* 14. 9–11.
18. P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* II (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1968).
19. D. O'Meara, review of A. Smith, *Porphyry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition*, in *Erasmus* 29(1977), pp. 628–630.

20. T. E. Pollard, "Marcellus of Ancyra, a Neglected Father" in *Epektasis*, pp. 187–196.
21. Plotinus, *Enn.* V. 4. 2; *Enn.* VI. 2. 6; *Enn.* II: Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* I. 32. 32.
22. Anonymous Commentary on the *Parmenides* XII. 22–29 in Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* II.
23. Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* III. 4. 6–46; IV. 5. 41–45; IV. 22. 10–14.
24. Plotinus, *Enn.* V. 4. 2.
25. Augustine, *St.*, *De Trinitate*, VI. 10. 11; X. 10. 13.
26. *Christlicher Platonismus* (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1967), p. 15.
27. Plotinus, *Enn.* VI. 8. 13.
28. Victorinus, *Ad Cand.* 30. 1–26; *Adv. Ar.* I. 43. 34–43; IV. 21. 19–25; *De hom. rec.* 3. 11.
29. Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* I. 23. 1–40.
30. *Ibid.*, I. 30.
31. *Ibid.*, II. 3. 34.
32. Victorinus, *Hymn* III.
33. Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* IV. 22.
34. *Ibid.*, III. 3 and 4.
35. *Ibid.*, I. 61. 13; I. 56. 7–15; cf. *Aug. Conf.* VII. 9. 13; *City of God* X. 2.

#### THE NEOPLATONISM OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

1. "Ancient Christian Writers" series vol. 12 (Washington, D.C., 1950), p. 23.
2. "St. Augustine's 'notitia sui' related to Aristotle and the early Neoplatonists," *Augustiniana* 27 (1977), p. 102.
3. A. Emout, *Lucrèce* (Paris, no date), p. 26: "même si l'explication était fautive, elle est bonne du moment qu'elle procure le résultat cherché."
4. *Contra Acad.* III. 43.
5. *Ibid.* 396f.
6. *Revue internat. de Philos.* 92 (1970), pp. 321–337.
7. *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1950), pp. 157 ff.
8. Augustine, *Conf.* 7. 23 (slightly rearranged).
9. *Ibid.*, 9. 25.
10. *Ciu. Dei* XIV. 28.
11. Plotinus, *Enn.* V. 2. 1 (Henry-Schwyzzer).
12. *Ciu. Dei* XIX. 23.
13. *Ibid.*, X. 32 (Loeb translation).
14. *Kleine patristische Schriften*, herausgegeben von Günter Glockmann (Texte und Untersuchungen 83) (Berlin, 1967).
15. P. Agaësse and A. Solignac, "Bibliothèque Augustinienne" series, volumes 48 and 49 (Paris, 1972).
16. In the *Saint Augustine Lecture* 1977. Villanova University, Pennsylvania (Villanova, 1981).
17. Plotinus, *Enn.* V. 3. 13 (MacKenna translation).
18. *Sententiae* XXV. 11, 4 (Mommert).
19. *De ordine* II. 16. 44.
20. *De gen. ad. litt.* V. 16. 34.
21. *Ciu. Dei* XXII. 29.

#### SOME LATER NEOPLATONIC VIEWS ON DIVINE CREATION AND THE ETERNITY OF THE WORLD

1. W. Wieland, "Die Ewigkeit der Welt," in *Die Gegenwart der Griechen im neueren Denken* (Tübingen, 1960), p. 293: "Noch bei seinem Übertritt zum Christentum macht er den Vorbehalt, es sei ihm unmöglich, in allen Punkten der christlichen Lehre zuzustimmen: zu denjenigen Punkten, die er von seiner bisherigen philosophischen Überzeugung auf keinen Fall aufgeben zu können glaubt, gehört die Lehre von der Ewigkeit der Welt."

2. L. G. Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (Amsterdam, 1962), pp. xv-xx.
3. L. G. Westerink, *op. cit.*, pp. xxiii-xxiv. According to Westerink, Elias "is clearly unwilling to abandon the old belief (viz., the eternity of the world)," whereas David and Stephen mention this doctrine without dismissing it. According to A. Cameron ("La fin de l'Académie," in *Le Néoplatonisme* [Paris, 1971], p. 282), the influence of Philoponus' teaching on the Alexandrian school was rather weak: "Olympiodore qui enseignait encore à Alexandrie dans les années 560, était en effet païen, et ses successeurs Élie, David, Étienne, bien que chrétiens, continuèrent à enseigner des doctrines comme l'éternité du monde et la divinité des corps célestes, qui avaient déjà été depuis longtemps réfutées par Philopon."
4. H. D. Saffrey, "Le chrétien Jean Philopon et la survivance de l'École d'Alexandrie au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue des études grecques* LXVII (1954), p. 406.
5. H. D. Saffrey, *art. cit.*, p. 397. After the death of Proclus there was some contention between Marinus who represented the Aristotelian trend and Isidorus who sided with the Platonic tendency.
6. H. D. Saffrey, *art. cit.*, p. 400; L. G. Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena*, p. xi.
7. W. Wieland, *art. cit.*, p. 300.
8. L. G. Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena*, p. xii.
9. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 10, p. 1363, 8 (*Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca* [CAG], vols. IX-X).
10. L. G. Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena*, pp. xv-xx.
11. H. D. Saffrey, *art. cit.*, p. 403.
12. H. D. Saffrey, *art. cit.*, p. 401.
13. Cf. W. Wieland, *art. cit.*, p. 303. The sentence in question ( *nihil ex nihilo*) is considered to be well known, notorious among physicists (*πολυθρόνητον ἄξιωμα*).
14. This position was firmly maintained by Proclus: in his view whatever comes to be must proceed from prime matter: cf. Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*, ed. H. Rabe (Leipzig, 1899), p. 455, 26.
15. Philoponus, *In Phys.* I, 3, p. 54, 8ff. (CAG XVI-XVII); cf. *De aeternitate mundi*, p. 458, 7ff.
16. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, pp. 1141-1142; cf. *De aeternitate mundi*, p. 344, 18.
17. Cf. *De aeternitate mundi*, pp. 64, 22; 367, 16; 368, 1.
18. Philoponus, *In Phys.* I, 9, p. 191, 9ff.; in his *De aeternitate mundi* also Philoponus endeavors to clarify the notion of divine creation: the author emphasizes the fact that God does not use any instrument when performing his creative activity (p. 76, 21) and that the divine substance does not become more perfect by producing the world; the cosmos does not contribute to the perfection of the Creator (p. 21, 1 and 21, 14). Both views are very interesting from a metaphysical viewpoint: they are clearly intended to show how creation has to be considered as an integral or transcendental causation.
19. Philoponus, *In Phys.* III, 5, p. 428, 23ff.
20. Philoponus, *In Phys.* III, 5, p. 429.
21. Philoponus, *In Phys.* III, 5, p. 458, 30; IV, 13, p. 762, 5-9.
22. E. Évrard, "Les convictions religieuses de Jean Philopon et la date de son commentaire aux 'Météorologiques,'" *Acad. royale de Belgique, Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres*, 39 (1953), pp. 300-301; cf. W. Wieland, *art. cit.*, p. 301.
23. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1130, 7ff.
24. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1133.
25. One of the arguments developed by Proclus in order to prove the eternity of the world starts from the Platonic definition of the soul. By its very nature the soul is a principle of movement and because it always exists, it necessarily causes an eternal movement: consequently the world must be constantly in movement, without beginning and without end. Philoponus however disagrees on this Platonic definition of the soul: the very essence of the soul could not be self-movement (*De aeternitate mundi*, p. 248, 19). If it belonged to the nature of the soul to move corporeal reality, then the psychic principle would depend on something lower and could not exist independently of the body. Moreover, the fact that the soul is able to move does not entail that it actually always moves (*De aeternitate mundi*, pp. 252ff.).
26. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1178, 9ff.
27. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1179.
28. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1179.
29. According to the *Timaeus* (32C and 41AB) of Plato, the Demiurge will never destroy the world: it would undoubtedly be wrong to pull down such a harmonious whole as the cosmos.
30. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 10, p. 1327.
31. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 10, p. 1329. According to Philoponus even the heavenly bodies are perishable by nature: they may however continue to exist indefinitely as a result of a divine decision: cf. *De aeternitate mundi*, p. 598, 7.
32. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1167.
33. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1163: Proclus contends that time must be eternal because it has been made according to an eternal pattern. In Philoponus' view the world could not reproduce in a perfect way the model according to which it has been made: there is always some distance between a perfect pattern and its imitation (*De aeternitate mundi*, p. 551, 8). As to the use of temporal terms, Philoponus points to the fact that we often use such words without implying any temporal meaning; we use them even when speaking about God (*De aeternitate mundi*, p. 117, 13).
34. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, pp. 1157-1158.
35. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1158.
36. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1164.
37. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, pp. 1141-1142; cf. *De aeternitate mundi*, p. 367, 16.
38. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1142; cf. *De aeternitate mundi*, p. 458, 7.
39. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1141; cf. *De aeternitate mundi*, p. 76, 21ff.
40. A. Cameron, *art. cit.*, p. 289.
41. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1166.
42. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1164. According to Simplicius all philosophers, except Plato, accept movement as eternal.
43. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1131.
44. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1135.
45. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1136.
46. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1180.
47. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, pp. 1180-1181.
48. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1165. Proclus already contends that, the pattern of the world being eternal, the world itself must be eternal too (*De aeternitate mundi*, pp. 24, 14; 550, 18). The reply of Philoponus is twofold: he firstly points to the fact that the Platonic doctrine of the Ideas is rather controversial and has actually been opposed by Aristotle. Moreover, the very essence of the Ideas is not that they are the patterns of sensible reality. In Philoponus' view the Ideas are self-sufficient and could perfectly exist without any relation to something else (*De aeternitate mundi*, p. 35, 6).
49. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1163.
50. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1168.
51. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1151. According to Philoponus the starting of creation does not involve any change in the divine perfection: it is not situated in a temporal dimension and is consequently not a movement; besides it is not a passage from potency to act, but a transition from an habitual (*ἐξής*) disposition to act, which can occur without being produced by something else (*De aeternitate mundi*, pp. 51ff.).
52. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, pp. 1159-1161.
53. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1161.
54. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1177.
55. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1173.
56. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1174.
57. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1177.
58. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1150.
59. Simplicius, *In Phys.* VIII, 1, p. 1327.
60. Muhsin Mahdi, "Alfarabi against Philoponus," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 26 (1967), p. 352.

61. W. Wieland, *art. cit.*, p. 315: "Denn das zeichnet ja Philoponus von den anderen Christen der Spätantike aus, dass er die zeitliche Endlichkeit der Welt nicht als Glaubenssatz hinnimmt, sondern sie gerade im Rahmen der aristotelischen Begrifflichkeit zu beweisen versucht."

### JOHN PHILOPONUS AND STEPHANUS OF ALEXANDRIA: TWO NEOPLATONIC CHRISTIAN COMMENTATORS ON ARISTOTLE?

*Note:* All references to the Greek commentaries on Aristotle are by page and line of the Berlin Academy edition, (CAG), and to the *de Anima* commentary unless otherwise stated; references to the Latin version of Philoponus' commentary on Book 3 of the *de Anima* are to G. Verbeke's edition, *Jean Philopon. Commentaire sur le de Anima d'Aristote. Traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke* (Louvain/Paris, 1966).

1. Cf. S. van Riet, "Fragments de l'original grec du 'de Intellectu' de Philopon dans une compilation de Sophonias," *Rev. Philosophique de Louvain* 63 (1965) 5-40.
2. On the relation of our texts to the original courses, cf. M. Richard, "ΑΠΟ ΦΩΝΗΣ," *Byzantion* 20 (1950) 191-199.
3. The authenticity of the commentary usually ascribed to Simplicius has recently been questioned, and its authorship assigned to Priscian, by F. Bossier and C. Steel, "Priscianus Lydus en de 'in de Anima' van Pseudo(?) Simplicius", *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 34 (1972) 761-782; their reasons do not seem to me entirely convincing. For another view cf. now I. Hadot, *Le Problème du Néoplatonisme Alexandrin. Hiéroclès et Simplicius* (Paris, 1978), 193-202.
4. Themistius, by contrast, wrote roughly the same on all three books.
5. Cf. A. J. Festugière, "Mode de composition des commentaires de Proclus," *Mus. Helv.* 20 (1963) 81ff. The presence of this arrangement in Book 3 only of Philoponus' commentary was already noted by the CAG editor, M. Hayduck, preface p. v.
6. Cf. 432a 26.
7. Cf. H. Blumenthal, "Neoplatonic interpretations of Aristotle on *Phantasia*," *Rev. of Metaphysics* 31 (1977) 251-252.
8. Simplicius refers to his (lost) commentary on *Metaphysics Lambda* for a discussion of *nous khōristos*, cf. 217, 23-28.
9. Philoponus 2. 13-27.
10. Stephanus 516. 8-15.
11. *Ibid.* 516. 8-517. 32.
12. Cf. above, p. 56, and n. 6.
13. On this cf. H. Blumenthal, "Neoplatonic elements in the *de Anima* commentaries," *Phronesis* 21 (1966) 72-83.
14. Cf. *ibid.*, 84-86, and Philoponus 215. 4ff., 224. 12ff.
15. Philoponus 2. 33ff.
16. Stephanus 518. 8ff.
17. Stephanus 520. 21ff.
18. Philoponus 3. 54-4. 69.
19. Stephanus 518. 8-520. 20.
20. Philoponus 4. 70-75.
21. Stephanus 521. 11ff.
22. He was summoned to the capital to become *oikoumenikos didaskalos* under Heraclius (610-634). cf. H. Usener, *De Stephano Alexandrino* (Bonn, 1880), in *Kleine Schriften* 3 (Leipzig, 1914) 248ff.
23. E.g., Stephanus 527. 29-32; on this cf. above, p. 61.
24. Cf. L. G. Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (Amsterdam, 1962) xxiv-xxv.
25. Some of these are, of course, publications by Philoponus of courses given by Ammonius, who was not a Christian.
26. A. Gudeman, "Ioannes Philoponus," *Pauly-Wissowa, Real-Encyclopädie* 9.i (1916) 1769, 1771, followed, e.g., by Schmid-Staehlin, *Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur* 2.ii (Munich, 1924) 1067, and M. Meyerhoff, "Joannes Grammatikos (Philoponus) von Alexandrien und die Arabische Medizin," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Instituts für ägyptische Altertumskunde in Kairo* 2 (1931) 2-3.
27. *Les derniers commentateurs alexandrins d'Aristote* (Mémoires et Travaux des Facultés Catholiques de Lille) (Lille, 1941) 55-56. Cf., too, H. D. Saffrey, "Le chrétien Jean Philopon et la survivance de l'Ecole d'Alexandrie au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Rev. des études grecques* 67 (1954) 402.
28. "Les convictions religieuses de Jean Philopon et la date de son Commentaire aux 'Météorologiques,'" *Académie R. de Belgique, Bulletin de la Classe des Lett., Sc. Mor. et Pol. sér. 5*. 39 (1953) 299-357.
29. Cf. the article cited in note 13, 73-74.
30. *Commentary on de Anima* 734.
31. On this question cf. E. R. Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1963) 313-321. Philoponus discusses it in his preface, cf. especially 18. 7-33.
32. For a history of the question, cf. Proclus in *Tim.* I. 276. 10ff. For modern accounts, from opposing points of view, cf. F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* (London, 1937) 34ff., and G. Vlastos, "The disorderly Motion in the *Timaeus*" (1939) reprinted with an updating postscript, "Creation in the *Timaeus*: is it a fiction?" (1964), in R. E. Allen (ed.) *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics* (London, 1965) 379-399 and 401-419.
33. Philoponus 229. 31-33.
34. Cf. *Topographia Christiana* 7. 1 (340A), and the notes *ad loc.* in the edition of W. Wolska-Conus, vol. 3, *Sources Chrétiennes* 197 (Paris, 1973) 56. Cf. also *eadem*, *La Topographie Chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustes* (Paris, 1962), chap. 5, especially 183ff.
35. Verbeke, in the introduction to his edition of Philoponus, lxx, suggests that a belief in preexistence and reincarnation may not have been regarded as incompatible with Christianity even at this period.
36. The Origenist belief in man's resurrection without a body, as well as preexistence, had been rebutted by Gregory of Nyssa a century and a half before Philoponus; cf. e.g., *de Hom. Opif.* 28. Migne, *Patrologia graeca* (PG) 44. 229B ff., and J. Daniélou "La résurrection du corps chez Grégoire de Nysse," *Vig. Chr.* 7 (1953) 155ff. It should however be noted that Origenism was not yet dead in Philoponus' time; cf. e.g., Justinian's letter to the patriarch Menas, 534 A.D.
37. Cf. *Contra Christianos* fragment 94 Harnack.
38. As opposed to the view that man approaches God by grace, encapsulated in Gregory's *ei gar hoper autos esti tēn physin, toutou tēn oikeiotēta kharizetai tois anthropois* . . . : "if he gives to men by grace assimilation to what he himself is by nature . . ." *de Beat.* 7, PG 44, 128OD.
39. Philoponus 5. 26-32.
40. *Ibid.* 12. 15ff.
41. *Ibid.* 2. 12-14, 18. 16-24.
42. *De Opificio Mundi* 6. 23 = 276. 22-278. 13 Reichardt.
43. Simplicius 86. 17ff.
44. 413a 6-9.
45. Cf. Simplicius 95. 24-33.
46. Philoponus 25. 8.
47. Moerbeke, *op. cit.*, 6. 10-12.
48. Stephanus 527. 27-33.
49. *Op. cit.*, (n. 24) xxiv.
50. For this cf. e.g., Paul the Silentiary, *Hagia Sophia* 126-27.
51. Cf. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon* s.v. *Pronoia* B. 2. iv., for this use.
52. Stephanus 511. 26, 521. 6.
53. *Ibid.* 547. 12-14.
54. Cf. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo* vol. 1. *Olympiodorus* (Amsterdam/Oxford/New York, 1976) 20.
55. Cf. the comments of Proclus, *PT* i.i = I. 6. 16ff. Saffrey-Westerink and Plotinus, *Enn.* 5. 1. 8.10-14.



56. On these conditions cf. A. D. E. Cameron, "The last days of the Academy at Athens," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* n.s. 15 (1969), and, on the arrangements made, Saffrey, *op. cit.* (n. 27) 400–401.
57. Cf. Cameron, *ibid.*, 7–8 and H. Blumenthal, "529 and its sequel: what happened to the Academy?" *Byzantion* 48 (1978) 369–385.
58. Cf. the article "Fragments . . ." by S. Van Riet cited in note 1.
59. The eleventh century manuscript Vaticanus 268, is defective for the last two-thirds of Stephanus; Parisinus 1914, from the twelfth century, is the first complete manuscript.
60. I should like to thank those members of the conference whose comments have enabled me to make improvements to this paper.

# NEW OBJECTIVE LINKS BETWEEN THE PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS AND PROCLUS

1. H. D. Saffrey, "Un lien objectif entre le Pseudo-Denys et Proclus," in *Studia Patristica* IX (Texte und Untersuchungen, Bd. 94) (Berlin, 1966), 98–105.
2. *Ibid.*, 104–105.
3. Ammonius Saccas according to E. Elorduy; Damascius according to R. F. Hathaway; Peter the Iberian according to E. Honigmann; Peter the Fuller according to U. Riedinger. The various studies relative to these identifications were surveyed and reviewed by J. M. Hornus, "Les recherches récentes sur le pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite," in *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses* 35 (1955), 404–448 and 41 (1961) 22–27. See also the very suggestive table in R. F. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (The Hague, 1969), 31–35.
4. H. Urs von Balthasar, "Das Scholienwerk des Johannes von Scythopolis," in *Scholastik* 15 (1940), 16–38, reproduced with corrections in appendix to *Kosmische Liturgie*, 2nd. ed. (Einsiedeln, 1962), 644–672, under the title: "Das Problem der Dionysius-Scholien."
5. At the present time one is obliged to read these scholia in the edition of Cordier (Paris, 1634), reproduced in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (PG), tome 4 (Paris, 1857).
6. PG 4, col. 264B–C. Cf. H. Ch. Puech, "Libératus de Carthage et la date de l'apparition des écrits dionysiens," in *Annuaire de l'École pratique des Hautes Études*, Section des Sciences religieuses, 1930–1931 (Melun, 1930), 3–39; and R. F. Hathaway, *op. cit.*, 11–12.
7. PG 4, col. 368D–369A.
8. Proclus, *Theol. plat.* I 29, 124, 12–125, 2 Saffrey-Westerink.
9. Proclus, *In Crat.*, 18.27–19.17 Pasquali. Cf. J. Trouillard, "L'activité onomastique selon Proclus," in *De Jamblique à Proclus* (Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt, tome XXI) (Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1975), 239–251.
10. Proclus, *In Parm.* IV, col. 851, 8–10 Cousin. See also *In Tim.* I, 99, 1–4.
11. Cf. A. Bielmeier, *Die neuplatonische Phaidrosinterpretation* (Paderborn, 1930), 29–39.
12. Hermias, *In Phaedr.* 70, 4–5 Couvreur.
13. On Hierocles, see most recently, Isetraut Hadot, *Le problème du néoplatonisme alexandrin, Hiéroclès et Simplicius* (Paris, 1978), 17–20.
14. Hierocles, *In Aur. Pyth. Carmen*, XXV 2, 105, 19–23 Koehler.
15. Plato, *Phil.* 12C 1–3.
16. Damascius, *In Phil.* §24.4, p. 15 Westerink, and note.
17. Damascius, *In Phaedr.* I, §503.3 Westerink, and note.
18. Iamblichus, *De myst.* VII 4–5, 254–260 des Places.
19. Julian, *Ep.* 89, 160.23–161.16 Bidez.
20. Marinus, *Vita Procli* 30. Cf. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, Proclus, *Theol. plat.* 1 (Paris, 1968), Introduction, Life of Proclus, pp. xxii–xxiii and notes. On the devotion of Proclus to Athena, see A. J. Festugière, "Proclus et la religion traditionnelle," in *Mélanges Piganiol* (Paris, 1966), 1581–1590, reproduced in *Études de philosophie grecque* (Paris, 1971), 575–584.
21. Unless John of Scythopolis is making an allusion to the teletic rite of the animation of statues, which consisted in introducing into the figurine symbols of the divinity through whom one wished to animate the statue. On this rite, cf. Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, new edition by Michel Tardieu (Paris, 1978), 495–496. See also Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 273, 11–13: "In the statues erected by the teletic art, certain characters are visible, others, hidden inside like symbols of the presence of the gods, and these are known only to the initiates . . ." and *ibid.*, III, 4.18–5.4.
22. Plato, *Symposium* 215A7–B3.
23. *Ibid.*, 216D3–7.
24. *Ibid.*, 215B1.
25. Plutarch, *De genio Socratis* 10, 580E.
26. Synesius, *Ep.* 154, p. 275, 7–9 Garzya.
27. John M. Dillon, *Iamblichus Chalcidensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta* (Philosophia Antiqua 23) (Leiden, 1973), p. 22. The quite incidental reference to the Platonic doctrine on demons in the *Symposium*, used by Iamblichus to support his interpretation of the third hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, cannot in any case be considered as an indication of a commentary by Iamblichus on the *Symposium*, see Dillon, *ibid.*, 222–223 (text of Damascius) and 400–401 (commentary). The implications of the position of Iamblichus have been admirably elucidated by Carlos G. Steel, *The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus* (Bruxelles, 1978), p. 85.
28. Proclus, *In Remp.* II, 381, 14 Kroll.
29. Proclus, *In Alc.*, 89, 3–10 Westerink.
30. Plato, *Symposium*, 218A5.
31. *Ibid.*, 216E6.
32. PG 3, col. 589D–592B.
33. St. Paul, Titus 3:4.
34. PG 3, col. 592B.
35. Willy Theiler, in *Theol. Literaturzeitung* 69 (1944), col. 71–72.
36. PG 4, col. 197A.
37. Cf. A. Van den Daele, *Indices Pseudo-Dionysiani* (Louvain, 1941), s.vv.
38. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Letter IX*, §1, PG 3, col. 1108A.
39. Proclus, *Theol. plat.*, IV 9, p. 31, 14–16 Saffrey-Westerink.
40. PG 3, col. 645B. Cf. H. Koch, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen* (Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur und Dogmengeschichte, Bd. 1) (Mainz, 1900), 162–163, and W. Theiler, *Die chaldäischen Orakel und die Hymnen des Synesios* (Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten-Gesellschaft, 18, 1) (Halle, 1942), p. 20, reproduced in *Forschungen zum Neuplatonismus* (Berlin, 1966), p. 275.
41. In John 4:14, it is the Christian who becomes a source of living water through which he never again thirsts, and it is always the Christians who are the buds on the tree of the people of God.
42. Proclus, *De malorum subsistentia*, II §11, 23–24, p. 192 Boese.
43. Werner Beierwaltes and Richard Kannicht, "Plotin-Testimonia bei Johannes von Skythopolis," in *Hermes* 96 (1968) 247–251. W. Beierwaltes returned to the borrowings of John of Scythopolis from Plotinus in another article: "Johannes von Skythopolis und Plotin," in *Studia Patristica* XI (Texte und Untersuchungen, Bd. 108) (Berlin, 1972), 3–7.
44. PG 3, col. 820A.
45. Proclus, *Theol. plat.*, I 3, p. 14, 1–4 Saffrey-Westerink.
46. *Ibid.*, II 3, p. 23, 15–19.
47. Plato, *Parm.*, 144B1–2.
48. PG 3, col. 824C.
49. PG 4, col. 329B.
50. I. P. Sheldon-Williams, "Henads and Angels: Proclus and the ps.-Dionysius," in *Studia Patristica* XI (Texte und Untersuchungen, Bd. 108) (Berlin, 1972), 65–71.
51. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, *Proclus, Théologie platonicienne*, tome III (Paris, 1978), ix–lxxvii.
52. To the examples of the use of the word "henad" before Proclus must be added: Aristides Quintilianus, *De musica* I 3, p. 4.8 Winnington-Ingram.
53. Cf. *Indices Pseudo-Dionysiani*, s.v. ἐνάς.

54. *Divine Names*, VIII §5, 892D.
55. *Ibid.*, I §1, 588B.
56. Proclus, *Theol. plat.* II 11, p. 65.12 and note 10 (p. 124 of Complementary Notes), and III 7, p. 30.4 and note 2 (p. 119 of Complementary Notes).
57. Th. Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, 1918), p. 187.
58. C. Steel, *The Changing Self* . . . p. 155.

## THE PROBLEM OF GENERAL CONCEPTS IN NEOPLATONISM AND BYZANTINE THOUGHT

1. See n. 3.
2. Ed. L. Benakis, *Philosophia* (Athens) 3 (1973), 361–379.
3. See L. Benakis, "The Study of Byzantine Philosophy: Critical Survey 1949–1971," (in Greek) *Philosophia* (Athens) 1 (1971), 390–433. H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* I (A. Philosophie) (München, 1978), 3–62.
4. My main source is K. Kremer's important contribution to the problem: "Die Anschauung der Ammonius (Hermeiou)-Schule über den Wirklichkeitscharakter des Intelligiblen," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 19 (1961–1962), 46–63. This article has not so far been given the attention it deserves.
5. It must be noted that the term "Platonism" is used here and subsequently in accordance with its established usage in many of today's logicians and specialists in the theory of knowledge, such as Quine, Goodman, Stegmüller, and others. That is, it is not an exact characterization of Platonic teaching, but is a recognition that today also it is a question of scientific significance whether or not abstract objects exist besides the concrete in the natural world. It is also generally accepted that if we remove the metaphysical and mythical appendages that have surrounded the Platonic theory of the Forms and which today have historical rather than theoretical interest, the Platonic "discovery" of ideal beings emerges even more as the great contribution of Plato to philosophy. Kant's important view on this point is not very well known: see *The Critique of Pure Reason* B, 370–371.
6. From a contemporary perspective on the problem of general concepts and given the content that the terms "Platonism" and "nominalism" assume today, there does not seem to be any room for theoretical support for this traditional conceptualism (conceptual realism), and particularly for psychological conceptualism (formation of general concepts by abstraction from experience, e.g., Locke: "to frame abstract ideas"). The latter, starting from the failure of the nominalistic interpretation of language, also ends up as a form of nominalism—this time at least without internal contradictions.  
That which certainly appears of great interest today in the theory of knowledge is so-called constructive conceptualism or constructionism, which reliable scholars consider to be an "unorthodox Platonism" to the extent that it involves an ontological questioning of the existence of ideal constructions. Perhaps in fact it is a variation of it, but free of contradictions which it avoids by its renunciation of "nonpredicative conceptual constructions" (nonpredicative concepts and definitions) and of "unpredicative conceptual constructions." We have in mind several such systems in the area of mathematics and mathematical logic of which the most known are those of Quine, Hao Wang, Kleene, Church, Turing, and other more recent systems. On the whole subject of the *universalia* problem, see now *Das Universalien-Problem*, ed. W. Stegmüller (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft [Weg der Forschung 83] 1978); papers by B. Russell, F. P. Ramsey, P. Bernays, O. Quine, A. Church, N. Goodman, L. Henkin, Hao Wang, N. Chomsky, A. Ross Anderson, R. Carnap, and others.
7. Porphyry *Isagoge*, ed. A. Busse, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* (CAG) vol. IV, 1, p. 1, 9–13.
8. Ammonius *In Porph. Isagogen*, ed. A. Busse, CAG IV, 3, p. 87, 19–20.
9. It is clear that we have here a mixing of two different problems without, curiously, the substance of the matter being altered.

10. Ammonius *In Porph. Isagogen* 39–42 and 104–105; Philoponus *In Categorias*, CAG XIII, 9 and 167.
11. With this transfer of the Forms to the mind of the God-Creator, the primary significance of the Form as creative cause of the sensible weakens, of course, but the Form does not cease to have its defining role in relation to sensible particulars. The difference is that it becomes an intermediate cause between the God-creator and the creature.

In Christian writers and in Byzantium, the exemplary character of the Forms ("exemplarism") is utterly rejected: God has no need of models, especially those existing before him. The Forms will be reduced still further to simple thoughts of the demiurge (Psellos: "thoughts of the Creator," "the first concepts of the creative Mind"; Symeon Seth: "existing kinds in the creative Mind," etc.) and their self-existence is rejected even more categorically (τὸ αὐθὺπαρκτον, τὸ ἀπὸλύτον, τὸ ἐνυπόστατον, τὸ μένειν καθ' ἑαυτάς). In the most positive formulation they give, the Forms are the creative causes of the sensible, disseminated by the Creator in the natural world as instruments of his power.

12. Photius *Amphilochia* 76, p. 131ff.
13. P. Joannou, "Eustrate de Nicée. Trois pièces inédites de son procès (1117)," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 10 (1952), 34.
14. See L. Benakis, "The Problem of General Concepts and the Conceptual Realism of the Byzantines" (in Greek) *Philosophia* (Athens) 8–9 (1978–1979), 311–340 (especially 327–336).

## THE PRIMACY OF EXISTENCE IN THE THOUGHT OF ERIUGENA

1. In this connection, one should consult, among others, the important studies of P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris, 1968), vols. I and II, particularly pages 270ff., 280ff., 488ff.; also S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena* (Leiden, 1978).
2. That is, the word "creator" (Eriugena, *Expositiones* (Exp.) XIII, 607). The other terms, *creare*, *creaturae*, *ex nihilo*, are absent from the text of Dionysius.
3. R. Roques has already illustrated this working method of Eriugena with the aid of other examples; see *Libres sentiers vers l'érigénisme* (Rome, 1975), pp. 99–130. E. Jeuneau likewise dealt with this question in a lecture entitled "Les traductions de Jean Scot" at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. (May 1977).
4. See R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien* (Paris, 1954), p. 41.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 79ff.
6. E. Gilson, in his book *L'Etre et l'essence* (Paris, 1948), has clearly shown that the question of origin raises that of existence, particularly on page 93 and the following pages.
7. Migne, *Patrologia graeca* (PG) III, 817, 816; see also *Celestial Hierarchy* ("Sources chrétiennes" series), IV, 1; XIII, 4.
8. PG 816; *Celestial Hierarchy* XIII, 4.
9. M. de Gandillac, in his translation of the *Celestial Hierarchy* (above note 7), has in my opinion interpreted this passage very well (p. 93).
10. *De divisione naturae* (DDN); Migne, *Patrologia latina* CXXII, 682; Exp. XIII, 405.
11. Column (Col.) 643.
12. Col. 682.
13. Exp. XIII, 607.
14. DDN 553.
15. DDN 453–454.
16. DDN 443, 644; Exp. IV, 133.
17. I accept the excellent translation of M. de Gandillac, *op. cit.*, p. 94, who writes: "La divinité sur-essentielle (i.e., au delà de l'être) est l'être de toute chose."
18. Exp. IV, 132. Eriugena here suspects the scribe of having written ZΩA instead of ONTA; it matters little as these terms would be synonymous, if not for all the Greeks at least for Dionysius. It was a fine opportunity for him to translate ONTA by *entia* or *essentiae*. Why then *existentiae*?
19. DDN 462.

20. DDN 490, 776. See the analysis by B. Stock in *Actes du Colloque de Laon*, éd. CNRS (Paris, 1977), p. 327.
21. DDN 487.
22. *De Praedestinatione*, Migne, *Patrologia latina* CXXII, 390.
23. *Exp.* VIII, 76.
24. DDN 455.
25. DDN 759. That is to say that the term "entia" is known; there is already an attestation for it in the *Inst. Orat.* of Quintilian, VIII, 3<sup>rd</sup>.
26. *Exp.* IV, 132.
27. See the commentary by M. de Gandillac, *Actes du Colloque de Laon*, éd. CNRS (Paris, 1977), p. 398.
28. A metaphor analysed by E. Jeuneau, *Quatre thèmes érigéniens* (Montréal, 1978), p. 36ff.
29. DDN 470, 471, 472.
30. *Exp.* IV, 62.
31. DDN 471.
32. DDN 445.
33. DDN 444.
34. DDN 867. It was doubtless for that reason that Eriugena wrote a *De divisione naturae* and not a *De divisione essentiae*.
35. DDN 481.
36. DDN 482.
37. DDN 482.
38. DDN 445.
39. DDN 443.
40. DDN 443.
41. DDN 444.
42. DDN 482, 639.

### THE OVERCOMING OF THE NEOPLATONIC TRIAD OF BEING, LIFE, AND INTELLECT BY SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

1. The Proclean authenticity of the *Elements of Theology*, which some had placed in doubt (namely, Bardenhewer and Geyer), is by now beyond discussion. On this point, see E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology* (Oxford, 1933), p. xiv, n. 3. Another problem is that of the dating of this work within the total literary output of Proclus. Its affinity with *The Platonic Theology* leaps to the eye of any reader, even in the edition of the entire text published by Portus (Hamburg, 1618). Instead of being a youthful work, as is commonly believed, could not the *Elements of Theology* perhaps derive from *The Platonic Theology* as a sort of compendium?

I shall on occasion refer to William of Moerbeke's translation of the *Elements of Theology* in the edition of C. Vansteenkiste, "Procli Elementatio Theologica translata a Guilelmo de Moerbeke," *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 13 (1951), pp. 263-302 and 491-531.

2. Dodds, p. xxv. On "absolute realism," see my *Tomismo e pensiero moderno* (Rome, 1969), pp. 440-441.
3. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, ed. H. D. Saffrey, *Textus Philosophici Friburgenses*, 4 / 5 (Fribourg and Louvain, 1954), lect. XVI, p. 94, lines 13-19; Pera, n. 318, p. 97a (since the edition of C. Pera [Turin, 1955] usually has a more accurate text, we shall follow it here):

Secundum autem Platonicas positiones, omne quod in pluribus invenitur oportet reducere ad aliquod primum quod per suam essentiam est tale, a quo alia per participationem talia dicuntur. Unde secundum eos virtutes infinitae reducuntur ad aliquod primum quod est essentialiter infinitas virtutis; non quod sit virtus participata in aliqua re subsistente, sed quia est subsistens per seipsam.

4. See *De causis*, prop. II, in Otto Bardenhewer, *Die pseudo-aristotelische Schrift 'Ueber das reine Gute' bekannt unter dem Namen 'Liber de causis'* (Freiburg, 1882), p. 165. See also lect. II in Saint Thomas' commentary (Saffrey, p. 11).
  5. Saint Thomas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. XVI, Saffrey, p. 94, 11. 16-29.
  6. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 138, ed. Vansteenkiste, p. 505. For the Greek text, see Dodds, p. 122.
  7. See Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 138, ed. Vansteenkiste, p. 505. The original Greek reads: πάντων, μετεχόντων τῆς θείας ιδιότητος καὶ ἐκθεομένων πρωτιστόν ἐστι καὶ ἀρχότατον τὸ ὄν (ed. Dodds, p. 122).
  8. See Saint Thomas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. IV, Saffrey, p. 29, 11. 8-16; Pera, n. 102, p. 28b.
  9. *De causis*, prop. IV, ed. Bardenhewer, p. 166, 11. 19-25.
  10. "De hoc igitur esse in intelligentiis participato, rationem assignat quare sit maxime unitum: dicit enim quod hoc contingit propter propinquitatem suam primae causae, quae est esse purum subsistens, et est vere unum non participatum, in quo non potest aliqua multitudo inveniri differentium secundum essentiam: quod autem est propinquius ei quod est per se unum, est magis unitum quasi participans unitatem. Unde intelligentia, quae est propinquissima causae primae, habet esse maxime unitum" (Saint Thomas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. IV, Saffrey, p. 29, 11. 16-24).
  11. It is not easy to decipher a text as difficult as that of the *De causis* in regard to what it preserves and what it lets drop of the complicated Proclean derivations. The key, it seems to me, is indicated in prop. II, which simplifies the triadic process by dividing *esse superius*, which is the sphere of the divine (τὸ Θεῖον) into *ante aeternitatem*, *cum aeternitate*, and *post aeternitatem et supra tempus*, which are respectively the First Cause, Intelligence, and Soul. The three propositions of Proclus to which Saint Thomas refers do not speak of the First Cause at all but treat of the sphere of the real as such, namely τὸ ὄντως ὄν. The Angelic Doctor himself understands the "... enter ens per oppositum ad mobiliter ens, sicut esse stans dicitur per oppositum ad moveri" and such is then the *esse superius* (lect. 2, Saffrey, p. 13, 11. 9-11). In the commentary on prop. 86, in which τὸ ὄντως ὄν appears for the first time in the technical sense, Dodds (p. 245) denotes it by *the One* while he translates (and does so better) *in loco by the true Being* (p. 79). The fact then that Proclus qualifies τὸ ὄντως ὄν as ἀπειρον ... κατὰ δύναμιν μόνῃν does not at all demonstrate that it is the One, not only because πέρας and ἀπειρον are proper determinations of the sphere of οὐσία, but also because Proclus himself affirms the existence of a πρῶτον πέρας and of a πρῶτη ἀπειρία (prop. 90) as principles of every composite. It is not a matter here of a simple nuance. The Platonic One and Good is ἐπέχειν τῆς οὐσίας while τὸ ὄντως ὄν of Proclus, on the other hand, is composed of the finite and the infinite (prop. 89) and is said to be placed the "closest" and "most like" to the One, and therefore cannot itself be the One.
- It is Saint Thomas' merit to have given a metaphysical content to the *Sum, qui sum* of Exodus (3:14) by means of the concept of intensive *esse*. Neoplatonism certainly noticed the break between the One, the Forms or Ideas (the "participations"), and the concrete things (the things which participate), but it did not succeed in bridging this gap. The One always remains isolated because there is lacking free creation.
12. Cf. Emile Bréhier, *La philosophie de Plotin* (Paris, 1928), p. 38; idem, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. Joseph Thomas (Chicago, 1958), p. 46.
  13. *The Platonic Theology* III, c. 7; ed. Portus, p. 135. Proclus explains the relations of appendage by way of a circle (III, 9, p. 135). Further on the dependence of the three hypostases on the first divinity is expressly affirmed (IV, c. 3, p. 185). This triad is then in its turn the source and cause of everything which comes after it (III, c. 21, p. 172). It should be noted that in all these complex schemes of metaphysical phylogenesis, of which *The Platonic Theology* is so extraordinarily rich, the fundamental triad is always stated in this order: οὐσία, ζῳή, νοῦς, and this is also to be noted in the *Elements of Theology*. On the probable origin of this latter doctrine, which sets forth life as the dynamic bond between οὐσία and νοῦς, see the commentary of Dodds, p. 252ff. and C. Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità* (Turin, 1960), p. 412ff.
  14. According to the Platonic conception of "vertical falling," as it has been called.

15. Saint Thomas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. III, Saffrey, p. 18, 11. 14–23; Pera, n. 66, p. 20a:

Inter has tamen formas hunc ordinem ponebat: quod quanto aliqua forma est universalior, tanto est magis simplex et prior causa: participatur enim a posterioribus formis. Sicut si ponamus animal participari ab homine et vita ab animali, et sic de aliis. Ultimum autem quod ab omnibus participatur, et ipsum nihil aliud participat, est ipsum Unum et Bonum separatim quod dicebat summum Deum et primam omnium causam. Unde et in libro Procli inducitur propositio CXVI talis: *Omnis Deus participabilis est, . . . excepto uno.*

The passage cited from Proclus is: πᾶς Θεὸς μεθεκτός ἐστι, πλὴν τοῦ ἑνός (ed. Dodds, p. 102; ed. Vansteenkiste, p. 497). On Proclus' oscillation regarding this principle, see Dodds' commentary, p. 262.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 18, 1. 23 to p. 19, 1. 9; Pera, n. 67, p. 20a.  
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 19, 11. 21–28; Pera, n. 70, p. 20b. Saint Thomas here quotes Proclus, *Elements*, prop. 129 (ed. Dodds, p. 114, 1. 11).  
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 19, 1. 28 to p. 20, 1. 4; Pera, n. 68–71, p. 20ab.  
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 21, 11. 9–24; Pera, n. 78, p. 21b.  
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 22, 1. 13 to p. 23, 1. 20.  
 21. *De causis*, prop. XVII, ed. Bardenhewer, p. 179, 1. 23 and p. 180, 11. 2–5.  
 22. Saint Thomas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. XVIII, Saffrey, p. 104, 11. 1–9; Pera, n. 345, pp. 103b–104a.  
 23. *Ibid.*, p. 104, 11. 9–14; Pera, n. 345–347, pp. 103b–104b:

Quia ergo intelligere praesupponit vivere, et vivere praesupponit esse, esse autem non praesupponit aliquid aliud, inde est quod primum ens dat esse omnibus per modum creationis. Prima autem vita, quacunque sit illa, non dat vivere per modum creationis sed per modum formae scilicet informationis. Et similiter dicendum est de intelligentia.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 104, 11. 14–16; Pera, n. 348, p. 104b:

Ex quo patet quod cum supra dixit intelligentiam esse causam animae, non intellexit quod esset eius causa per modum creationis, sed solum per modum informationis.

25. *Ibid.*, lect. V, Saffrey, p. 38, 11. 1–9; Pera, n. 139, p. 36b. See *De causis*, prop. IV; ed. Bardenhewer, p. 167, 1. 24 to p. 168, 1. 2.  
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 38, 11. 9–20. Modern historiography, especially under the influence of the studies of Werner Jaeger, accepts the “continuity of development” among Plato, Aristotle, and Neoplatonism. See Philip Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague, 1953), p. 169. Merlan remarks at the conclusion of his book: “It is perfectly legitimate to speak of an *Aristoteles Neoplatonicus*” (p. 195). Whatever be the case regarding the historic Aristotle, this statement can also hold for the Thomistic Aristotle.  
 27. It is instructive to compare this chapter with the *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 5, which has the identical scheme for the same argument, but which completely lacks the Neoplatonic theory of the intermediaries. That theory constitutes the principal part of the *De substantiis separatis*. The other sporadic allusions to the Platonists in the *De spiritualibus creaturis* are also somewhat vague. See a. 8, ad 10 and a. 9, ad 2.  
 28. Saint Thomas, *De substantiis separatis*, c. 1, n. 4; ed. Perrier, p. 125:

Una quidem secundum quod apprehendit numeros mathematicos et magnitudines et figuras mathematicas sine materiae sensibilis intellectu. . . . Alia vero abstractione utitur intellectus noster intelligendo aliquod universale absque consideratione alicuius particularis

29. *Ibid.*, c. 1, n. 5; ed. Perrier, p. 126 (trans. Lescoe, modified):

In ipsis etiam speciebus ordinem quemdam ponebat: quia secundum quod aliquid simplicius in intellectu, secundum hoc prius erat in ordine rerum. Id autem quod primo est in intellectu, est unum et bonum: nihil enim intelligit qui non intelligit unum et bonum. Unum autem et

bonum consequuntur se: unde ipsam primam ideam unius, quod nominabat secundum se unum et secundum se bonum, primum rerum principium esse ponebat, et hunc summum Deum esse dicebat.

Perrier accepts the reading “summum bonum” instead of the other reading of “summum Deum,” which I think should be preferred. In fact, the latter appears in the same context further on, namely in c. 16, and also in the commentary on the *De coelo et mundo*, II, lect. 4, cited below in note 36.

30. Further on in c. 16 (n. 94; ed. Perrier, p. 185), Saint Thomas praises Dionysius on this subject for his notion of intensive *esse*: “In quo removet opinionem Platonicorum, qui ponebant quod ipsa essentia bonitatis erat *summus Deus*, sub quo erat alius Deus qui est ipsum esse, et sic de aliis.”  
 31. In the *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. III, Saffrey, p. 19, 1. 2, and lect. XVIII, Saffrey, p. 103, 1. 18, mention is made of an *intellectus idealis*. This position is quickly corrected by Saint Thomas with Dionysius.  
 32. Saint Thomas, *De substantiis separatis*, c. 1, nn. 5–6:

Sub hoc autem uno diversos ordines participantium et participatorum instituebat in substantiis a materia separatis: quod quidem omnes ordines secundos deos esse dicebat, quasi quasdam unitates secundas post primam simplicem unitatem.

Rursus, quia omnes aliae species participant uno, ita etiam oportet quod intellectus ad hoc quod intelligat, participet eorum speciebus. Ideo sicut sub summo Deo, qui est unitas simplex et imparticipata, sunt aliae species quasi unitates secundae et dii secundi, ita sub ordine harum specierum et unitatum ponebat ordinem intellectuum separatorum, quia participant supradictas species ad hoc quod sint intelligentes in actu: inter quos tanto unusquisque est superior, quanto propinquior est primo intellectui, qui plenam habet participationem specierum, sicut in diis seu unitatibus tanto unusquisque est superior, quanto perfectius participat unitatem primam.

Separando autem intellectum a diis, non excluderat quin dii essent intelligentes; sed volebat quod superintellectualiter intelligerent, non quidem quasi participantes aliquas species, sed per se ipsos: ita tamen quod nullus eorum esset bonus et unus nisi per participationem primi et unius boni.

33. *Ibid.*, c. 1, n. 6; ed. Perrier, p. 126:

Rursus, quia animas quasdam intelligentes videmus, non autem hoc convenit animae ex eo quod est anima (alioquin sequeretur quod omnis anima esset intelligens, et quod anima secundum totum id quod est esset intelligens), ponebat ulterius, quod sub ordine intellectuum separatorum esset ordo animarum, quarum quaedam, superiores videlicet, participant intellectuali virtute; infirmas vero ab hac virtute deficient.

Rursus, quia corpora videntur non per se moveri . . . ponebat corporibus accidere in quantum participabant animam: nam illa corpora quae ab animae participatione deficient, non moventur nisi ab alio. Unde ponebat animabus proprium esse quod se ipsas moverent secundum se ipsas.

34. *Ibid.*, c. 1, n. 7; ed. Perrier, p. 127.

35. *Ibid.*, c. 9, n. 60:

His autem rationibus moti Platonici posuerunt quidem omnium immaterialium substantiarum et universaliter omnium existentium Deum esse immediate causam essendi secundum praedictum productionis modum, qui est absque mutatione vel motu; posuerunt tamen secundum alias participationes bonitatis divinae ordinem quendam causalitatis in praedictis substantiis.

As we have seen, this affirmation, which is of major import in Thomism, goes beyond the Neoplatonic dialectic. It also constitutes the innovation in Thomas' turning things upside down in his comparison of Plato and Aristotle.

36. Saint Thomas, *De substantiis separatis*, c. 9, n. 61; ed. Perrier, p. 162ff. The following synthetic

exposition in a commentary on Aristotle which is contemporaneous with the *De substantiis separatis* should be noted:

Considerandum est quod Platonici ponebant unum *Deum summum*, qui est ipsa essentia bonitatis et unitatis, sub quo ponebant ordinem superiorum *intellectuum* separatorum, qui apud nos consueverunt intelligentiae vocari; sub hoc ordine ponebant ordinem *animarum*, sub quo ordine ponebant ordinem corporum. Dicebant ergo quod inter intellectus separatos superiores, primi dicuntur *intellectus divini*, propter similitudinem et propinquitatem ad Deum; alii vero non sunt divini, propter distantiam ad Deum; sicut etiam animarum supremae sunt intellectivae, infimae autem non intellectivae sed irrationales. *Corpora* etiam suprema et nobiliora dicebant esse *animata*, alia vero inanimata. Rursus dicebant quod *supremae animae* propter hoc quod dependent ex intelligentiis divinis, sunt *animae divinae*; et iterum corpora suprema propter hoc quod sunt coniuncta animabus divinis, sunt corpora divina (Saint Thomas, *In librum II De coelo et mundo expositio*, lect. 4, *Opera omnia*, XIX [Parma, 1866], p. 87b).

It is satisfying to note that in his mature commentaries Saint Thomas frequently sees Aristotle in agreement with Plato on this point.

37. Saint Thomas, *De substantiis separatis*, c. 17, n. 111; ed. Perrier, p. 198. Cf. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 196, ed. Vansteenkiste, p. 525; Dodds, pp. 170 and 300. The meaning of this proposition from Proclus is that only the unparticipated Soul is wholly lacking in corporeity, since every other soul has a relationship with the "first body" (πρῶτον σῶμα) and the "first vehicle" (πρῶτον ὄχημα). See again Dodds, p. 313ff.: "The Astral Body in Neoplatonism."
38. Saint Thomas points out the agreement of the two schools on this point. See *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. II, Saffrey, p. 12; lect. XI, Saffrey, pp. 73–75, with appropriate discussion; lect. XXX, Saffrey, p. 137, for the eternal motion of the heavens.
39. According to Saint Thomas, the *De causis* is divided into the following general sections: prop. I, general theorem; prop. II–XV, the distinction of the causes; prop. XVI–XXXII, the coordination or dependence or comparison of the causes to one another. On the structure of the *Elements*, see Dodds, pp. 187, 193, 200–201, 212, 223, 227, 230, 236, 240, 246, 250, 257, 284, and 294.
40. The superiority of the *Parmenides* over the other dialogues of Plato, which even involves the reduction of the latter to the former, is the point of departure for the dialectical method of Proclus. One aspect of that dialogue's superiority is its reference to Parmenides himself. See *The Platonic Theology*, I, c. 9; ed. Portus, p. 17ff. See also c. 10, p. 23, and earlier c. 7, p. 16. In c. 10, p. 21, Proclus cites his commentary on the *Parmenides*.
41. *De causis*, prop. I, ed. Bardenhewer, p. 163, l. 3.
42. We observe something similar a century earlier in Nicholas of Methone or Messene, who often appeals to Dionysius. See his *Institutionis Theologiae Procli Refutatio*, ed. J. Th. Voemel (Frankfurt, 1825), pp. 6, 9, 17, 25, and 31. In the commentary on prop. LXXVI, p. 102ff., Dionysius is cited for having placed the "Ideas" of things in God.
43. In like fashion, there are many secondary universal causes. However, Saint Thomas still leaves out the "universalis" and it is not by chance that he does so.
44. Saint Thomas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. I, Saffrey, pp. 5–6; Pera, n. 21, p. 6a.
45. *Ibid.*, lect. I, Saffrey, p. 7, 11, 11–16; Pera, n. 24, p. 6a;

Ergo hoc ipsum quod causa secunda sit causa effectus, habet a prima causa: esse ergo causam effectus inest primo primae causae, secundo autem causae secundae. Quod autem est prius in omnibus, est magis, quod perfectiora sunt priora naturaliter: ergo prima causa est magis causa effectus quam causa secunda.

46. *De causis*, prop. I, ed. Bardenhewer, p. 164, 11. 3–6 and 12–16:

nam ergo manifestum est et planum quod causa prima longinqua est plus comprehendens et vehementius causa rei quam causa propinqua, et propter hoc fit eius operatio vehementioris adhaerentiae cum re quam operatio causae propinquae . . . , et quando removetur causa secunda a causato suo non removetur causa prima, quoniam causa prima est maioris et vehementioris adhaerentiae cum re quam causa propinqua et non figitur causatum causae secundae nisi per virtutem causae primae.

For "vehementius" the German version of Bardenhewer has "in hoheren Grade" (p. 59), which is certainly weaker. Proclus has μετρίωνος (prop. 56: p. 54, lines 5 and 16), which Dodds (p. 55) translates as "in greater measure." The Latin version is far more effective.

47. Saint Thomas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. I, Saffrey, p. 8, 11, 21–26; Pera, n. 34, p. 6b:

Manifestum est enim quod quanto aliqua causa efficiens est prior, tanto eius virtus ad plura se extendit; unde oportet quod proprius eius effectus communior sit; causae vero secundae proprius effectus in paucioribus invenitur, unde et particularior est. Ipsa enim causa prima producit vel movet causam secundam agentem et sic fit ei causa ut agat.

48. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 56, ed. Vansteenkiste, p. 286:

Omne quod a secundis producit et a prioribus et causalioribus producit eminentius . . . . Si enim secundum totam habet substantiam ab eo quod ante ipsum, et potentia sibi producendi inde est. Et enim potentiae productivae secundum substantiam sunt in producentibus et complement ipsorum substantiam. Si autem potentiam producendi a superiori causa sortita sunt, ab illa habent quod sint causa quorum sunt causa, mensurata inde secundum hypostaticam potentiam.

Identical terminology is to be found in the following proposition, namely, prop. 57. There "producere" is used to translate the Greek παράγειν which on other occasions is expressed by "derivare" (cf. Dodds, p. 54). We can observe that the problem of "producere" is discussed much earlier in the *Elements*. Following after the prologue, which contains the general doctrine of participation, the term appears explicitly in prop. 7: "Omne productivum alterius melius est quam natura eius quod producit" (ed. Vansteenkiste, p. 267). Cf. especially prop. 25–30, which prepare for the doctrine of ἐπιστορεσις.

49. Saint Thomas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. I, Saffrey, p. 8, line 8 to p. 9, line 1:

Inveniuntur igitur praedicta tria quae tacta sunt [causa prima plus influit . . . tardius recedit, prius adventit] primordialiter quidem in causis efficientibus et ex hoc manifestum est quod derivatur ad causas formales: unde et hic ponitur verbum *influenti*, et Proclus utitur verbo *productionis* quae exprimit causalitatem causae efficientis.

50. *Ibid.*, lect. I, Saffrey, p. 9, 11, 14–19; Pera, n. 38, p. 7a:

Comparatur autem prima omnium causa ad totam naturam sicut natura ad artem. Unde id quod primo subsistit in tota natura est a prima omnium causa quod appropriatur singulis rebus officio secundarum causarum.

Since Proclus expressly holds to this doctrine in the *Elements of Theology*, prop. 72 (ed. Vansteenkiste, p. 292), it is strange that Saint Thomas does not appeal to it here. However, the principle is present in an implicit form in prop. 57, which was cited by Saint Thomas. This extension of the causality of the One to prime matter is a post-Platonic development which is already found expressly in Syrianus (cf. Dodds, p. 231).

In *The Platonic Theology*, the creation or production of matter is the work of some one of the gods situated above the demiurge, while the demiurge of the whole places order and arrangement in the complex. The term used most frequently to indicate creation is ἀπογενεῖν and it seems to be a question of total production, though not from nothing in the biblical sense. In fact, Proclus uses the term παρόσσειν (see especially V, c. 17; ed. Portus, p. 281) both for the origin of matter and also for bodies.

51. Saint Thomas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, lect. I, Saffrey, p. 9, 11, 19–25; Pera, n. 39, p. 7a:

Nam propter ultimum finem, qui est universalis, alii fines appetuntur, quorum appetitus advenit post appetitum ultimi finis, et ante ipsum cessat. Sed et huius ordinis ratio ad genus causae efficientis reducit: nam finis in tantum est causa in quantum movet efficientem ad agendum, et sic prout habet rationem moventis pertinet quodammodo ad causae efficientis genus.

# THE PROBLEM OF THE REALITY AND MULTIPLICITY OF DIVINE IDEAS IN CHRISTIAN NEOPLATONISM

1. Cf. Plato's famous description of the ideas as "the really real" (*to onto on*) in *Phaedo* 65-66 and other classic discussions of the ideas.
2. Cf. *Parmenides* 132b-c (trans. Cornford):  
 "But Parmenides, said Socrates, may it not be that each of these forms is a thought, which cannot properly exist anywhere but in a mind? In that way each of them can be one and the statements that have just been made would no longer be true of it.  
 Then, is each form one of these thoughts and yet a thought of nothing?  
 No, that is impossible.  
 So it is a thought of something?  
 Yes.  
 Of something that is, or of something that is not?  
 Of something that is."
3. Cf. *Enneads* VI, 7, 15-16 (trans. MacKenna-Page), and occasionally through V, 1-2. In these passages the Ideas are spoken of as the product of the Intellectual-Principle.
4. *Enneads* V, 9, 7-8. Cf. also V, 3, VI, 6, 7-8, and off and on throughout V, 1-2. The essence of the position is that *Nous* and its objects constitute a single interdependent relational unity, neither properly prior to the other, but constituted together as a unitary life *simultaneously* by the overflow of the Good. But see VI, 6, 8 for a priority of being over *Nous*: "First, then, we take Being as first in order: then the Intellectual Principle. . . . Intellectual Principle as the Act of Real Being, is a second." The Greek texts here are entirely clear, the terms used being *pro*, *proteron*, etc.
5. This doctrine is clear, explicit, and constant throughout the *Enneads*. Cf. V, 1, 4; V, 6; V, 3, 10-15; V, 6; V, 9, 6; VI, 6, 9; VI, 7, 13 and 17. The intellectual realm is always a one-many, both because Being as object is distinct from the act that knows it and because each Being-Idea is distinct from every other, though not divided from it.
6. Anton Pegis has admirably summed up the dilemma posed to Christian thought by the Platonic world of ideas: "St. Augustine . . . thought to baptize the Platonic Forms and to make them ideas in the mind of God. But this was easier to assert than to accomplish philosophically. For the perplexing mystery of the Platonic Forms is that in a Christian world they can be neither God nor creatures. They cannot be creatures because they are immutable and eternal; and they cannot be God because they are a real plurality of distinct and distinctly determined essences. Yet they rose before the minds of Christian thinkers again and again, and they hovered somewhere on the horizon between God and creatures, strange aliens both from heaven and from earth, and yet aliens whose message proved so enduringly dear to Christian thinkers that, rather than forget it, they exhausted their energies in pursuing it." "The Dilemma of Being and Unity," in R. Brennan, *Essays in Thomism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), pp. 158-159. The whole article, in fact, is a brilliant example of a truly philosophical study in depth of the history of philosophy.
7. Cf. for example his famous brief treatise on the ideas, *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, Qu. 46 (Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, XL, 29-31), and other standard references.
8. Cf. F. J. Thonnard, "Ontologie augustinienne," *L'Année théologique augustinienne* 14 (1954), 39-52, esp. pp. 42-43. Clear texts are in Augustine *De Trin.* V, 2, 3: "Ab eo quod est esse dicta est essentia," and *De Immortalitate Animae* XII, 19: "Omnis enim essentia non ob aliud essentia est, nisi quia est."
9. *De Trinitate* V, 2, 3.
10. *Sermo* VII, n. 7.
11. *De Moribus Manichaeorum* VII, 7.
12. *Contra Manichaeos*, c. 19 (*PL*, XLII, 557). On the above texts see V. Bourke, *St. Augustine's View of Reality* (University of Villanova Press, 1965), and J. Anderson, *St. Augustine and Being* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1966).
13. It has been called to my attention, however, by the Augustinian scholar, Robert J. O'Connell, that

- Augustine, in *Confessions* X, c. 9-12, when speaking about memory, distinguished between the *sensible images* of past contingent events, such as going to the Tiber river, and the *intellectual intuition* of numbers and their relations, which intuition puts us in contact with the *very things themselves* (*res ipsae*), with the very reality of numbers, which *truly are* (*valde sunt*), hence buried deep in our intellectual memory, which is always in contact with the immutable and eternal truths of the intelligible world through divine illumination. Now since, as *rationes aeternae*, numbers are certainly on a par with all the other *rationes aeternae*, it would seem necessary to conclude by analogy that all the *rationes aeternae* are also *res ipsae, et valde sunt* (c. 12). Yet Augustine never quite seems to go this far or work out the implications.
14. On John Scottus Eriugena's doctrine, see M. Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Erigène* (Paris: Desclée, 1933); H. Bett, *Johannes Scotus Eriugena* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964); J. Trouillard, "Erigène et la théophanie créatrice," in J. O'Meara and L. Bieler, eds., *The Mind of Eriugena* (Dublin: Irish Univ. Press, 1973), 98-113; T. Gregory, *Giovanni Scoto Eriugena* (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1963), ch. I: "Dall' Uno al Moheplice"; and the standard histories of Gilson, etc.
  15. Cf. *De Divisione Naturae* II, c. 36 (1. ed. Sheldon-Williams, *Johannis Scotti Eriugena Periphyseon*, Dublin Inst. for Advanced Studies, 1972, pp. 205ff.). See also other main discussions of the primordial causes, *De Div. Nat.* III, c. 1-17 (M. Uhlfelder and J. Potter, *John the Scot: Periphyseon—On the Division of Nature*, Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1976).
  16. *De Div. Nat.* II, c. 4-9. Thus material things exist more perfectly even in the mind of man, as spiritual, than in themselves.
  17. *De Div. Nat.* III, c. 1 (trans. Uhlfelder and Potter, p. 129): "The first causes themselves are, in themselves, one, simple, defined by no known order, and unseparated from one another. Their separation is what happens to them in their effects. In the monad, while all numbers subsist in their reason alone, no number is distinguished from another: for all are one and a simple one, and not a one compounded from many. . . . Similarly the primordial causes while they are understood as stationed in the Beginning of all things, viz., the only-begotten Word of God, are a simple and undivided one; but when they proceed into their effects, which are multiplied to infinity, they receive their numerous and ordered plurality, . . . all order in the highest Cause of all and in the first participation in it is one and simple distinguished by no differentiae; for there all orders are indistinguishable, since they are an inseparable one, from which the multiple order of all things descends."
  18. Thus in *Enneads* VI, 6, 9 in the order of Being in the *Nous* number is declared to be already *unfolded*, not as it is in the Monad or One. In V, 3, 15, all the ideas are unfolded as distinct in the *Nous*, which thus becomes a one-many, whereas the One should not be said to contain all things as in an indistinct total. See the other texts in note 5. Thus what Eriugena describes as the mode of the primordial causes in the Word is explicitly denied by Plotinus of the divine *Nous* and could be applied only to the One, in which the ideas could in no way be said to be present.
  19. *De Div. Nat.* II, c. 20 (ed. Sheldon-Williams, p. 77).
  20. *Ibid.*, II, 8 (ed. Sheldon-Williams, p. 29). For this identity of the being of things with the thought of them, see Bett, *op. cit.*, in n. 14, pp. 51, 145; Gregory, *op. cit.*, in n. 14, p. 12: "Gli essere nella mente di Dio si risolvono nell'atto con cui elgi li conosce."
  21. Cf. E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1954), ch. III: "Platonism in the Twelfth Century"; N. Häring, *Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1965).
  22. Clarembald of Arras, *Tractatus super Librum Boetii De Trinitate* (ed. Häring, *op. cit.*, in n. 21), II, 41, p. 123.
  23. *Ibid.*, II, 29-30, p. 118: "Forma sine materia est ens a se, actus sine possibilitate, necessitas, aeternitas. . . et ipsa Deus est."
  24. Thierry of Chartres' commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate*, called *Librum Hunc* (ed. W. Jansen, *Der Kommentar des Clarembaldus von Arras zu Boethius De Trinitate*, Breslau, 1926, p. 18): "Omnium formae in mente divina consideratae una quodammodo forma sunt, in formae divinae simplicitatem inexplicabili quodam modo relapsae."
  25. See note 21.
  26. *Tract. super Lib. Boet. De Trin.* I, 34 (Häring, p. 99): "Omnis multitudo in simplicitate unitatis

- complicata latitat, et cum in serie numerandi post unum alterum et post alterum tertium numeratur, et deinceps tunc demum certa pluralitatis ab unitate profluentis forma cognoscitur, sicque sine alteritate nulla potest esse pluralitas."
27. *De Scientia Christi*, q. 2, c. Responsio (*Obras de S. Buenaventura*, Bihl. de Autores Christianos, Madrid, 1957), p. 138. Cf. also q. 3.
  28. Cf. the standard treatments of the "Thomistic existentialism," introduced by St. Thomas: E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1956), the famous chapter I on "Existence and Reality"; J. de Finance, *Etre et agir* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1960, 2nd ed.); and my own summaries: "What is Really Real?" in ed. J. Williams, *Progress in Philosophy* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1955), pp. 61-90, and "What is Most and Least Relevant in the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Today?" *Internat. Phil. Quart.* 14 (1974), 411-434.
  29. For Thomas' treatments on the divine ideas, see *Sum. c. Gentis IV*, c. 13, no. 10; *Sum. Theol.* I, q. 15 entire; I, q. 44, a. 3; I, q. 18, a. 4: "Whether All Things are Life in God"; *De Veritate*, q. 3, q. 4, a. 6 and 8. The description of the divine ideas as "invented" by God is in *De Ver.*, q. 3, a. 2 ad 6 m; as *rationes quasi excogitatas* is in *De Potentia*, q. 1, a. 5, ad 11 m.
  30. For Thomas' fundamental criticism of the Platonic realism of ideas, see *In I Metaph.*, lectio 10; *In I De Anima*, lect. 4, and the general discussion with texts in R. Henle, *St. Thomas and Platonism* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1956), part II, ch. 4: "Basic Principles of the *Via Platonica*."
  31. *De Trinitate VI*, c. 8.
  32. Cf., for example, the great Flemish mystic, Jan Ruusbroec. "According to the Flemish mystic, man's true essence (*wesen*) is his superessence (*overwesen*). Before its creation the soul is present to God as a pure image; this divine image remains its superessence after its actual creation." Louis Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood* (New York: Seabury, 1976), p. 103-104.
  33. See the texts in note 29, in particular *Sum. Theol.* I, q. 18, a. 4; *De Ver.*, q. 4, a. 8; *Sum. c. Gentis IV*, c. 13, n. 10 (Pegis trans.), and the special article just on this point, *De Ver.*, q. 4, q. 6: "Whether Things are More Truly in the Word than in Themselves." *In I Sent.*, d. 36, q. 1, q. 3 ad 2 m (M837): four modes of *esse creaturae*.
- St. Thomas' point is that if one looks at the mode of being of the thing in itself and in an idea (God's or man's), the *mode of being* in an idea, especially the divine idea, is a *spiritual* mode, identical with the being of the mind thinking it, hence from this point of view higher than the material being of a thing in itself; but if one considers the *proper mode* of a thing's own being as this thing, this is found only in the thing's own material being and not in its idea. Properly speaking, a thing's own being is not found in its idea. Thus Thomas is able to preserve intact the traditional formulas about the existence of things in the Word as more perfect, but the meaning he gives to them is notably different from their original intention, where his distinctions were not yet made.
34. Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibeta IX*, 2, cited in the fine study by Jean Paulus, *Henri de Gand* (Paris: Vrin, 1938), p. 91, n. 1.
  35. *Summa*, 68, 5, 7-14, cited in Paulus, *loc. cit.*
  36. *Loc. cit.* Cf. the illuminating remarks on Henry and his place in the history of our problem by Anton Pegis, *art. cit.* in note 6 above, esp. pp. 172-176.
  37. *In I Sent.*, d. 35, q. 5; cited in Pegis, *art. cit.*, p. 170.
  38. Gabriel Biel, *In I Sent.*, d. 35, q. 5C (Tübingen, 1501); cited in Pegis, p. 159.
  39. *In I Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 3K; Pegis, p. 171.
  40. *Art. cit.* in note 6, pp. 168-172.
2. "Dico nihilominus quod, si in deo est aliquid, quod velis vocare esse, sibi competit per intelligere" (*LW V*, p. 45, lines 4-5). The translation is that of A. Maurer, *Master Eckhart, Parisian Questions and Prologues* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), p. 48.
  3. E.g., R. Klibansky, *Magistri Eckhardi Opera Latina XIII* (Leipzig-Rome: Santa Sabina, 1936), p. xix.
  4. For an outline of some of these positions, see Imbach, p. 290, n. 42.
  5. E.g., *Predigt* (hereafter *Pr.*) 52 "Beati pauperes spiritu" (*DW II*, p. 492). I have examined this problem in greater detail in my paper "The God Beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart" *The Journal of Religion* 61 (1981), pp. 1-19.
  6. See, e.g., D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist. The Eastern and Western Way* (New York: MacMillan, 1957), pp. 18-21. For a nuanced discussion of the implications of the breakthrough to the Godhead in Eckhart, see R. Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart Mystic and Philosopher* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1978), pp. 114-118, 156-165, and 213.
  7. E.g., V. Lossky, *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Vrin, 1960), pp. 342-345 and 363-367; and J. Loeschen, "The God Who Becomes: Eckhart on Divine Relativity," *The Thomist* 35 (1971), pp. 417-419. The problem is also raised by M. de Gandillac, "La 'dialectique' du Maître Eckhart," *La mystique rhénane* (Colloque de Strasbourg, 1961; Paris: Presses universitaires, 1963), pp. 73-75.
  8. *In agro dominico*, art. 22: "Pater generat me suum filium et eundem filium. Quidquid Deus operatur, hoc est unum; propter hoc generat ipse me suum filium sine omni distinctione" (Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*: #972, olim 522). The excerpt is based on a passage in *Pr.* 6 "Iusti vivent in aeternum" (*DW I*, pp. 109.7-110.1). Eckhart's teaching on this point is also condemned in articles 11, 12, 13, 20, and 21, as well as being implied in appended article 1 concerning the uncreated element in the soul.
  9. The *Defense* has been edited both by A. Daniels and G. Thérý. I make use of Thérý's edition here. "Edition critique des pièces relatives au procès d'Eckhart contenues dans le manuscrit 33b de la bibliothèque de Soest," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 1 (1926), pp. 129-268. See, e.g., pp. 197-199, 241-244 for a rebuttal on the birth of the Word in the soul, pp. 188, 209-215, for one on the uncreated part of the soul.
  10. K. Kertz comes close to this in his article "Meister Eckhart's Teaching on the Birth of the Divine Word in the Soul," *Traditio* 15 (1959), pp. 327-363.
  11. *LW I*, pp. 131-132, 166-170, 181.
  12. E.g., *In Ex.* n. 15 (*LW II*, p. 21); *In Sup.* n. 20 (*LW II*, pp. 341-342); *In Io.* nn. 97 and 347 (*LW III*, pp. 83-84, and 321); and the *Defense* (ed. Thérý, p. 195).
  13. *In II Periherm.* lectio 2, #2-5, commenting on *Periherm.* 10 (19b20-25).
  14. *LW I*, p. 167, 2-8: "Cum igitur dico aliquid esse, aut unum, verum seu bonum praedico, et in praedicatione cadunt tamquam secundum adiacens praemissa quattuor et formaliter accipiuntur et substantive. Cum vero dico aliquid esse hoc, puta lapidem, et esse unum lapidem, verum lapidem aut bonum hoc, scilicet lapidem, praemissa quattuor accipiuntur ut tertium adiacens propositionis nec sunt praedicata, sed copula vel adiacens praedicati" (trans. Maurer, p. 94).
  15. *LW I*, pp. 169, 6; 172, 6-9; 175, 12-176, 2.
  16. *LW I*, p. 132, 4-5: "quod solus deus proprie est et dicitur ens, unum, verum et bonum" (trans. Maurer, p. 79). See also *LW I*, pp. 167, 9-10; and 181, 15.
  17. "... quaedam copula" (*LW I*, p. 181, 14).
  18. E.g., *Prologus* n. 3 (*LW I*, pp. 166, 12-167, 2); *In Io.* n. 60 (*LW III*, pp. 49, 13-50, 1); *Collatio in Sent.* n. 3 (*LW V*, p. 20, 2). The importance of the distinction has been underlined by K. Albert, "Der philosophische Grundgedanke Meister Eckharts," *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 27 (1965), pp. 320-39.
  19. Almost all the major studies of Eckhart contain a treatment of his doctrine of analogy. In addition there are the valuable articles of M. de Gandillac, "La 'dialectique'," especially pp. 83-86; J. Koch, "Zur Analogielehre Meister Eckharts," *Mélanges offerts à Etienne Gilson* (Paris: Vrin, 1959), pp. 327-50; and F. Brunner, "L'analogie chez Maître Eckhart," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 16 (1969), pp. 333-49.
  20. *LW V*, p. 45, 1-2.
  21. *LW V*, p. 54, 1-2.

## MEISTER ECKHART ON GOD AS ABSOLUTE UNITY

1. *Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Kohlhammer, 1936ff.), hereafter abbreviated as *DW* and *LW*. The passage discussed may be found in *LW V*, pp. 37-48. The most complete study of this text is that of R. Imbach, *Deus est Intelligere* (Studia Friburgensia, N. F. 53, Freiburg, Sweiz, 1976). See also J. Caputo, "The Nothingness of the Intellect in Meister Eckhart's 'Parisian Questions,'" *The Thomist* 39 (1975), pp. 85-115.

22. *LW II*, pp. 280–83. Eckhart's starting point in Thomas Aquinas is *In I Sent.* d. 22, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2.
23. *LW II*, p. 282, 1–5: "... analogata nihil in se habent positive radicatum formae secundum quam analogantur. Sed omne ens creatum analogatur deo in esse, veritate et bonitate. Igitur omne ens creatum habet a deo et in deo, non in se ipso ente creato, esse, vivere, sapere positive et radicaliter."
24. The term is that of Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 341–342.
25. *LW V*, pp. 37–48. For other examples of this denial, see *In Io.* nn. 5, 182–83 (*LW III*, pp. 7, 150–51).
26. *DW V*, pp. 8–61 *passim*, especially p. 30, 5–19. See also *Pr. 30* "Praedica Verbum" (*DW II*, pp. 93–109).
27. *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 440–441.
28. "Zur Analogielehre," pp. 341–345. Brunner seems to agree when he detects traces of an analogy of intrinsic attribution (*op. cit.*, pp. 344–46).
29. See Lossky, *op. cit.*, pp. 315, 322–323, and 356–357 on this reversal. If I read him aright, the same is suggested by C. F. Kelley, *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 170.
30. See Koch, *op. cit.*, pp. 336–337, and Brunner, *op. cit.*, 347, for the contrast with analogy in Aquinas.
31. *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge*, pp. 167–171.
32. *In agro dominico* art. 26 (D 976): "Omnes creaturae sunt unum purum nihil: non dico, quod sint quid modicum vel aliquid, sed quod sint unum purum nihil." The proposition is taken from *Pr. 4*, "Omne datum optimum" (*DW I*, pp. 69, 8–70, 1).
33. R. Schürmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 176–180, 185–192, has rightly emphasized the radical insufficiency of traditional notions of analogy to grasp the distinctive character of Eckhart's doctrine of God.
34. *LW II*, p. 482, 4–5: "Est igitur sciendum quod si unum idem est quod indistinctum. Omnia enim distincta sunt duo vel plura, indistincta vero omnia sunt unum."
35. Especially *LW I*, p. 172, 6–9. Slightly earlier in the *Prologus* Eckhart even seems to give priority to *unum* when he says: "Praeterea Boethius De Consolatione docet quod, sicut bonum et verum fundantur et finguntur per esse et in esse, sic et esse fundatur et figitur in uno et per unum" (p. 171, 3–5). On *unum* as the *nomen super omne nomen*, see *In Gen I*, n. 84 (*LW I*, p. 64, 7–10).
36. *LW II*, pp. 482, 10–483, 1: "Dicens ergo deum esse unum vult dicere deum esse indistinctum ab omnibus, quod est proprietas summi esse et primi et eius bonitas exuberans."
37. These are found in *LW II*, pp. 484, 1–485, 2.
38. *LW II*, p. 485, 5–7: "Sciendum igitur ad praesens quod si unum primo est voce quidem negativum, sed res ipsa affirmativum. Item est negatio negationis, quae est purissima affirmatio et plenitudo termini affirmati." The two poles identified here are similar to the two functions of unity discussed by Lossky, *op. cit.*, p. 68–72: *l'identité exclusive* or *puritas* (my second pole), and *l'identité inclusive* or *plenitudo* (my first pole).
39. *LW II*, p. 486, 3–5: "Propter quod immediatissime se tenet ad esse, quin immo significat puritatem et medullam sive apicem ipsius esse, quam nec si esse significat."
40. Macrobius, *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* I, 6, 7; Boethius, *De Trin.* 2; Proclus, *Elementatio theologica*, prop. 1.
41. *LW II*, p. 489, 7–8: "Iuxta quod notandum quod nihil tam distinctum a numero et numerato sive numerabili, creato scilicet, sicut deus, et nihil tam indistinctum." For what follows, see also the excellent discussion in Lossky, *op. cit.*, pp. 261–263.
42. *LW II*, p. 490, 4–7: "omne quod indistinctione distinguitur, quanto est indistinctius, tanto est distinctius: distinguitur enim ipsa indistinctione. Et e converso, quanto distinctius, tanto indistinctius, quia distinctione sua distinguitur ab indistincto. Igitur quanto distinctius, tanto indistinctius: et quanto indistinctius, tanto distinctius, ut prius." Eckhart concludes by citing the authority of Aquinas and John Damascene.
43. I wish to thank Richard Kieckhefer and his seminar group for helpful suggestions regarding these paraphrases.
44. *LW II*, p. 491, 7–10: "nihil tam indistinctum ab aliquo quam ab illo, a quo distinctione ipsa

- indistinguitur. Sed omne numerosum sive creatum sua distinctione indistinguitur a deo, ut dictum est supra. Ergo nihil tam indistinctum et per consequens unum. Indistinctum enim et unum idem. Quare deus et creatum quodlibet indistincta." The minor of the syllogism depends on the doctrine of *esse* advanced in n. 145 (p. 483, 4–7). This was the side of Eckhart's doctrine of God as Absolute Unity (taken in isolation, something which would have been anathema to the Meister) that was condemned in the Bull *In agro dominico* art. 10 (D960). The other two articles that attack his denial of distinction in God (arts. 23, 24) seem to be directed against the implications of the doctrine for faith in the Trinity.
45. Cited at *LW II*, p. 492, 3: "quanto quid est simplicius et unitius, tanto est potentius et virtuosius, plura potens."
46. This is logically distinct from the notion of identity that in its positive form lacks the dialectical character of *indistinctum*. *Sermo XXIX* n. 303 (*LW IV*, p. 269, 11–13) views *identitas* as one of the *consequentiae* of *unitas*.
47. The following list of examples is not exhaustive: *In Ex.* nn. 59–60, 102, 104, 107, and 117 (*LW II*, pp. 65–66, 104, 106, 107 and 112); *In Sap.* n. 52 (*LW II*, p. 379); *In Io.* nn. 99, 197, and 562 (*LW III*, pp. 85, 166, 489); *Sermones II* n. 7, X n. 105, XXIX n. 298, and XLIV, I n. 438 (*LW IV*, pp. 9, 100, 265, 368); and *Prolog.* n. 10 (*LW I*, p. 155).
48. See the note in *DW I*, pp. 361–362. Cf. B. Schmoltdt, *Die deutsche Begriffssprache Meister Eckharts* (Heidelberg: Quelle, 1954), p. 37.
49. *Quod.* X, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; and *In I Sent.* d. 24, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1.
50. *Procli Commentarium in Parmenidem*, eds. R. Klibansky and C. Labowsky in *Plato Latinus*, vol. III (London: Warburg Institute, 1953). On the question of the *negatio negationis* in Proclus and its possible influence on Eckhart, see W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos. Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1965), pp. 361–366, 395–398.
51. *In Ex.* nn. 110–117 (*LW II*, pp. 109–117) centers on the analysis of three axioms: (a) "nihil tam dissimile quam creator et creatura quaelibet," (b) "nihil tam simile quam creator et creatura quaelibet," and (c) "nihil tam dissimile pariter et simile alteri cuiquam, quam deus et creatura quaelibet sunt et dissimilia et similia pariter" (p. 110, 3–6). The dialectical parallel of this text to that in the *Wisdom* commentary comes out most strongly on p. 112, 7–15. See the discussion of this text in Lossky, *op. cit.*, pp. 265–274.
52. E.g., *In Sap.* nn. 38–39 (*LW II*, pp. 359–360), stressing opposition more than dialectic; *In Io.* nn. 99, 103, 151, 206–208 (*LW III*, pp. 85, 88, 125, 174–176); *Sermones VI*, I n. 53, X n. 103, XXXIV, 2 n. 344, XXXVII n. 375, and XLIV, I n. 438 (*LW IV*, pp. 52, 98, 299, 320–321, 367–368).
53. *Sermo IV*, I n. 28 (*LW IV*, p. 28, 5–9): "quia sicut deus est in se indistinctissimus secundum naturam ipsius, utpote vere unus et propriissime et ab aliis distinctissimus, sic et homo in deo indistinctus ab omnibus, quae in deo sunt—nam in ipso sunt omnia—et simul distinctissimus ab omnibus aliis."
54. *Pr. 52* "Beati pauperes" (*DW II*, p. 502, 5–9). The translation is that of R. Schürmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 218–219.
55. See K. Albert, *Meister Eckharts These vom Sein* (Saarbrücken: Universitäts- und Schulbuchverlag, 1976).
56. *In Io.* n. 360 (*LW III*, pp. 304–306).
57. *In Io.* nn. 511–513 (*LW III*, pp. 442–445). The same position can be found in nn. 516–518, and throughout the commentary on John 14:8 in nn. 546–565 (*LW III*, pp. 446–448, 477–493). See especially n. 562 (pp. 489–490).
58. This is clear from the discussion of *unum* in n. 513 (p. 444, 1–5). Here Eckhart approves the appropriation of *unum* or *unitas* to the Father, whereas in n. 360 he had distinguished between the *unitas* that signifies origin and is therefore proper to the Father and the hidden *li unum* which is proper to the divine ground and does not bear this positive connotation (p. 305, 9–306, 2).
59. *In Io.* n. 562 (*LW III*, p. 489, 3–10): "ratio enim entis est quid abiectum et indistinctum et ipsa sua indistinctione ab aliis distinguitur. Quo etiam modo deus sua indistinctione ab aliis distinctis quibuslibet distinguitur. Hinc est quod ipsa essentia sive esse in divinis ingentum est et non gignens. Ipsum vero unum ex sui proprietate distinctionem indicat. Est enim unum in se indistinct-



- tum, distinctum ab aliis et propter hoc personale est et ad suppositum pertinet cuius est agere. Propter quod sancti unum sive unitatem in divinis attribuant primo supposito sive personae, patri scilicet."
60. Even presumably late texts maintain the priority of *intelligere* over *esse* in God when *esse* is conceived of as God's first external work innermost to all things, e.g., *In Io.* n. 34 (*LW* III, pp. 27–28).
61. *Sermo* XXIX n. 300 (*LW* IV, pp. 266–267).
62. See n. 301 (*LW* IV, p. 267, 10).
63. N. 304 (pp. 269, 15–270, 3): "Intellectus enim proprie dei est, deus autem unus. Igitur quantum habet unumquodque de intellectu sive de intellectuali, tantum habet dei et tantum de uno et tantum de esse unum cum deo. Deus enim unus est intellectus, et intellectus est deus unus." On this Sermon, see Lossky, *op. cit.*, pp. 165–173, Imbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–174.
64. *Théologie négative*, especially pp. 60–64, 86–96, 200–207, 218, and 254–276. See the treatment of God as *unum* in Imbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 188–194.
65. *Art. cit.*, especially pp. 87–94.
66. E.g., H. Hof, *Scintilla animae* (Lund: Gleerup, 1952), pp. 105–112, 152–158, who has Hegel in mind; and J. Loesch, *art. cit.*, pp. 416 and 422, who never gives the reader any hint of what he understands by dialectic. For an introduction to the variety of ways in which dialectic has been understood in the history of philosophy, see R. Hall, "Dialectic," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* vol. II (New York: MacMillan, 1967), pp. 385–389.
67. *Hegel's Dialectic, Five Hermeneutical Studies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 20–22.
68. Gadamer argues for the latter on pp. 22–27.
69. *From Iamblichus to Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 153–167, 283–288. In terms of the exegetical background to this shift, Gersh (pp. 11, 155, and 166, note 181) follows E. Corsini in seeing it as involving the application of both the First Hypothesis (negative) and the Second Hypothesis (positive) of the *Parmenides* to the Christian God.
70. E.g., *Enneads* V, 5, 1, V, 5, 9, and VI, 4–5. On this dialectic of immanence and transcendence in Plotinus, see R. Arnou, *Le désir de Dieu dans la philosophie de Plotin* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1967), pp. 148–185; and E. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 159.
71. Indicative of this new dimension in Christian thought are the differences that W. Beierwaltes discerns between the Proclean and the Eckhartian understandings of the *negatio negationis*, especially concerning the positive and personalistic dimensions in Eckhart (*Proklos*, pp. 395–398).
72. *Dialogus de substantiis separatis physicis* (Strasbourg: Grataroli, 1567, reprint: Frankfurt: Minerva, 1967, p. 306).
73. Especially in #209, 213–215.
74. This has recently been pointed out by B. Gerrish, *Tradition in the Modern World, Reformed Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 46–47. "Codetermination" is Gerrish's term, not Schleiermacher's.
75. "Dialektik und Analogie des Seins," *Scholastik* 26 (1951), pp. 57–86.
76. *Art. cit.*, p. 82.
77. *Art. cit.*, pp. 83–86.
78. Lossky discusses Coreth in *op. cit.*, pp. 260–261, note 42; and p. 322, note 313.
79. *Théologie négative*, p. 275.

#### NEOPLATONISM AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY (NICHOLAS OF CUSA AND MARSILIO FICINO)

1. Nikolaus von Cues und die griechische Sprache (Heidelberg, 1938).
2. The Letter to Paul II is quoted in the partial critical edition in Honecker, *op. cit.*, 70–73.
3. Cf. F. Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra* (Paris, 1956), p. 306ff.
4. *Ein Proklosfund* (Heidelberg, 1929), p. 29, n. 2.

5. *De venatione sapientiae* (1463), ch. 20.
6. *Ibid.*, ch. 22.
7. *Directio speculantis*, or *De non aliud* (1462), ch. 20.
8. *De venatione*, ch. 21.
9. *Directio*, ch. 20.
10. Strasbourg ed. 1488, p. 76, Basel ed., 1565 p. 66; cf. *De venatione*, ch. 21: *Dionysius in hoc Platonem imitatur*; ch. 36: *ut recte dicebat Dionysius, quod et Plato prius viderat*.
11. *De venatione*, ch. 39.
12. *Ibid.*, ch. 17.
13. *Ibid.*, ch. 39.
14. In fact, the text of *Cel. Hier.* II 3, 140d to which Wilpert-Senger refer in their bilingual edition (Hamburg, 1970, p. 122) indicates only that the "revelatory sayings" of the "Thearchy" offer "images" that "signify what it is not, not what it is."
15. Strasbourg ed., p. 144; Basel ed., p. 127.
16. Strasbourg ed., p. 147; Basel ed., p. 130.
17. Strasbourg ed., pp. 148–151; Basel ed., p. 131–134.
18. *Directio*, ch. 21.
19. *De beryllo*, chaps. 5 and 36.
20. *De venatione*, ch. 21; cf. ch. 8.
21. Cf. Prov. 1:29.
22. Anonymous here, but Wilpert, in his bilingual edition of Book II (Leipzig, 1965, p. 127), easily recognizes, on the basis of allusions in the text, the reference to be to Augustine, John Scottus Eriugena, Thierry of Chartres, and Meister Eckhart.
23. *De conjecturis* (1441–1445), I 19.
24. *Vier Predigten im Geiste Eckharts*, J. Koch ed. (Heidelberg, 1937), p. 84ff.
25. *Cribratio Alchorani*, preface and II 12.
26. *De venatione*, ch. 30.
27. *Apologia*, Strasbourg ed., p. 74; Basel ed., pp. 64–65.
28. *De venatione*, ch. 8.
29. *Le Problème de l'être chez Aristote* (Paris, 1962, 2d ed. 1966).
30. *De beryllo*, ch. 24.
31. *De venatione*, ch. 1.
32. Basel ed., p. 355.
33. Migne, *Patrologia latina* LIV, 226c.
34. Cf. notably the sermon *Nos revelate* given at Brixen November 1, 1456 (Basel ed., pp. 610–611): "Speculantes transformantur continue in imaginem objecti. . . . Sed haec transformatio est semper nova. . . . Quare speculantes illi sunt transeuntes semper et aeternaliter a claritate in claritatem, cum absoluta maximitas uti est semper incomprehensibilis praecedat et attrahat."
35. *Opera* (Basel, 1561), II, p. 1537.
36. Letter to Barbaro, December 6, 1484, quoted and commented on by R. Marcel, *Marsile Ficini* (Paris, 1958), p. 472.
37. Saffrey-Westerink eds., I, p. 5.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.
39. Letter of September 6, 1469, *Opera* I, p. 616.
40. Cf. his *Summary of the Doctrines of Zoroaster and of Plato*, Alexandre ed., trans. Pellissier (Paris, 1858), pp. 262–269.
41. On this see the contrast, in parallel columns and in relation to some significant examples, of texts from Saint Thomas and from Ficino in the short study by E. Gilson, which is part of a course of lectures and is much earlier than the studies by Kristeller and Marcel, "Marsile Ficini et le *Contra Gentiles*," *Archives d'Histoire Littéraire et Doctrinale du Moyen Age* XXIV (1958), pp. 101–113.
42. On this text and its date, cf. Marcel, *op. cit.*, p. 309.
43. *Opera* I, p. 875.
44. To Pierleone, *Opera* I, p. 920.
45. To Poliziano, *Opera* I, p. 958.

46. *Opera* I, p. 871.
47. Cf. also *Plat. Theol.* XII, 1.
48. To Pannonius, *Opera* I, p. 872; cf. the *Proemium* to the *Enneads*, *Opera* II, p. 1557.
49. Commentary on the *Timaeus*, *Opera* II, p. 1438.
50. *Confirmatio christi*, *Opera* I, p. 868.
51. *Opera* I, p. 866.
52. In *Epist. Pauli*, ch. 12, *Opera* I, p. 461.
53. *Opera* I, p. 956.
54. In *Plat. Theol.* IV, 1, one is surprised at the misinterpretation made by Raymond Marcel who, in order to justify an erroneous translation, modifies the text of the manuscripts by writing (p. 165 of his edition, vol. I [Paris, 1964]) *et mundum vita carere volunt et sensu qui tamen vitam dant* . . . where one must clearly read *dat*, the subject of that verb being *mundus*, certainly not the opponents of Platonism, who refused to acknowledge life and feeling in the world, while rightly for them—the reference is, of course, to the Aristotelians—the heat of the sun and the humidity of the earth make plants grow without sowing and give a sensitive soul to animals born by *generatio aequivoca*, which Ficino is far from denying but in which he sees an additional reason for admitting cosmic animation.
55. Letter of June 25, 1490, *Opera* I, p. 911.

### NEOPLATONISM, THE GREEK COMMENTATORS, AND RENAISSANCE ARISTOTELIANISM

1. We shall treat both Themistius and also Simplicius as sources of Neoplatonic doctrines for the Renaissance Aristotelians. Since various scholars simply deny that Themistius is a Neoplatonist, some comment is in order. He is categorically denied to be a Neoplatonist by Wilhelm Von Christ, Wilhelm Schmid, and Otto Stählin, *Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur*, 6th ed., II, 2 (Munich, 1961), p. 1011: "Denn so viel er den Platon im Mund führt und sein Handeln durch Berufung auf ihn rechtfertigt, so ist er sich doch genau bewusst, dass er eigentlich kein Platoniker, am wenigstens ein Neuplatoniker ist." They do go on, however, to point out that while Themistius is an Aristotelian and wants to be one, he also believed Platonism can be reconciled with Aristotelianism. On the other hand, they point out (p. 1011, n. 8) that although there are Neoplatonic ideas in some of Themistius' orations, the latter also contain criticism of Neoplatonism and an emphasis on a practical, political direction lacking in Neoplatonism. Fritz Schemmel, in his "Die Hochschule von Konstantinopel im IV. Jahrhundert P. Ch. N.," *Neue Jahrbücher für Pädagogik* 22 (1908), pp. 147–168, discusses Themistius' paraphrases of Aristotle, dating their composition between 337 and 355 (pp. 152–155). He emphasizes their pedagogical purpose (p. 157) and the primacy of ethics and practise in Themistius' conception of philosophy (pp. 155 and 160–161). He too denies that Themistius is a Neoplatonist, though he admits that Themistius agrees with the Neoplatonists in the conviction that Plato and Aristotle teach essentially the same thing (p. 155). In like fashion, Eduard Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 5th ed., III, 2 (Leipzig, 1923; repr. Hildesheim, 1963), pp. 799–801, argues that the distinctive traits of Neoplatonism are not prominent in Themistius. Indeed, Themistius himself expressly indicates that he does not approve the innovations of Neoplatonism since these go beyond the older Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy. In turn, Karl Praechter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 12th ed. (Berlin, 1926), pp. 657–658, admits that if Themistius also wrote commentaries on Plato, this would agree with Themistius as a Neoplatonist, but he then emphasizes that Themistius had taken Aristotle as his model. The tendency to reconcile Plato and Aristotle is seen as self-evident in Themistius' day and not limited to Neoplatonism. G. L'aggin sees Themistius as belonging to Aristotelianism, not Platonism, and suggests that if he believed in the doctrinal unity of Platonism and Aristotelianism, he opposed it to the novelties of the Neoplatonists. See his article "Themistio," in *Enciclopedia filosofica*, 2nd ed., VI (Florence, 1967), col. 370–371. Willy Stegemann also follows the view that Themistius was not a Neoplatonist. See his article on Themistius in Paulys-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Zweite

Reihe, V (Stuttgart, 1934), col. 1642–1680, at col. 1648–1649. In a recent and important article, H. J. Blumenthal appears to deny or at least to minimize any Neoplatonism in Themistius and in the paraphrases on the *De anima* in particular. In his "Neoplatonic Elements in the *De anima* Commentaries," *Phronesis* 21 (1976), pp. 64–87, he remarks (p. 82) that Neoplatonism was already the dominant philosophy in the time of Themistius, who was "trying to be an Aristotelian." He admits that Themistius did not exclude Platonic or Platonist ideas and then adds (p. 83): "But his orientation was certainly different from that of the Neoplatonists." As to Themistius' comments on *De anima*, III, c. 5, Blumenthal remarks: "The vocabulary is Peripatetic, and the thought shows no signs of the Neoplatonic multiplication of entities: there are no participated and unparticipated transcendent intellects, no distinction between intelligible and intellectual life, no members of triads." Blumenthal does not appear to exclude completely the possible influence of Neoplatonism on Themistius when he refers in his article, "Neoplatonic Interpretations of Aristotle on *Phantasia*," *The Review of Metaphysics* 31 (1977), pp. 242–257, p. 253 to "Themistius, who, if not always a profound interpreter of Aristotle, is to some extent free from the Neoplatonic influences which in his time already dominated Greek philosophy." See also Blumenthal's *Plotinus' Psychology, His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague, 1971), pp. 11–13, nn. 10 and 13, where he indicates specific remarks of Plotinus which Themistius may be discussing. Stuart B. Martin makes no mention of Plotinus or Neoplatonism in his article, "The Nature of the Human Intellect as it is Expounded in Themistius' *Paraphrasis in libros Aristotelis De anima*," in *The Quest for the Absolute*, ed. Frederick J. Adelman, Boston College Studies in Philosophy, I (Boston and The Hague, 1966), pp. 1–21, though he is careful to bring out Themistius' tendency to reconcile Plato and Aristotle (p. 2, n. 3). And while he recognizes that the agent intellect is "both transcendently one and yet immanent in many" and that Themistius tries to account for this by the analogy of light and its source, the sun, Martin concludes that there really is only one agent intellect. His assumptions appear to be that Themistius cannot have it both ways and that analogy is insufficient as an explanation (pp. 14–16 and 20–21).

On the other hand, Pierre Duhem relates Themistius' explication of Aristotle's psychology to Neoplatonism and to Plotinus in particular. See Duhem's *Le système du monde*, IV (Paris, 1916), pp. 379–380, 387, and 395–397. It seems an exaggeration, however, simply to refer to Themistius as a Neoplatonist, as does Johannes Geffcken, *Der Ausgang des griechisch-römischen Heidentums* (Heidelberg, 1920), p. 168. Perhaps the most accurate way to express the situation is to point to those elements in Themistius' paraphrases on the *De anima* which are Neoplatonic without claiming that he is a thoroughgoing Neoplatonist. As Augusto Guzzo and Vittorio Mathieu express the matter: "Nell'interpretazione di Temistio si trovano tracce della concezione neoplatonica, senza tuttavia che egli possa esserne considerato un portavoce fedele." See their joint article, "Intelletto," in *Enciclopedia filosofica*, 2nd ed. III (Florence, 1967), col. 963. See also Paul O. Kristeller's review of Philip Merlan's *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metacosciousness* (The Hague, 1963), which appeared in *The Journal of Philosophy* 64 (1967), pp. 124–125. Kristeller clearly connects Themistius to Plotinus. One example of Neoplatonic influence appears to be Themistius' conception of a plurality of hierarchically arranged souls in man, each of which serves as "matter" or subject to the soul superior to it. See Themistius, *In libros de anima paraphrasis*, ed. Richard Heinze, *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, V, 3 (Berlin, 1899), p. 100, line 31 to p. 101, line 1. The notion that each level in the hierarchy of being is related to the level immediately above it as matter to form is Plotinian. See Plotinus, *Enneads* II, 4, 3; III, 4, 1; and III, 9, 15. For discussion see A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 76 and 86. Another apparent example of Neoplatonic influence occurs in Themistius' discussion regarding the question whether the agent intellect is one or many. In a celebrated passage, he says that the intellect that primarily illuminates (πρῶτως ἐλλάμπων) is one, while those that are illuminated and illuminate (ἐλλαμπόμενοι καὶ ἐλλάμποντες) are many, just like light, for while the sun is one, light is in some way divided in regard to the different powers of sight. Themistius underscores that Aristotle compares the intellect to light, while Plato, who makes it similar to the Good, compares it to the sun. He then adds that all of us have our being from this one intellect. See Themistius, *In libros de anima paraphrasis*, ed. R. Heinze, p. 103, lin. 32–39, and p. 100, lin. 31–32 and lin. 35 to p. 101, lin. 1. I suggest that those scholars are

- mistaken who hold that there is something faulty with the text here, arguing that Themistius could not have meant that the agent intellect is one and yet also many. Such a view is put forth by Hans Kurfess, *Zur Geschichte der Erklärung der Aristotelischen Lehre vom sog. NOYΣ ΠΟΙΗΤΙΚΟΣ und ΠΑΘΗΤΙΚΟΣ* (Tübingen, 1911), p. 23, n. 26, who is followed by Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness: Problems in the Neoaristotelian and Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague, 1963), p. 50–51, n. 3. Rather than correct the text of Themistius, we might do well to note that Plotinus' *Enneads* contain terminology and ideas that help make sense of Themistius' remarks about the intellect just cited and which seem to indicate the Neoplatonic background of those remarks. Plotinus tells us that the sun, which is a center for the light dependent upon it, serves as a model of the Good (I, 7, 1, 25–26). The act emanating from the One is like the light emanating from the sun. While remaining itself immobile, the One illuminates the intelligible realm (V, 3, 12, 40–45). The One is simply light, whereas *Nous* is illuminated in its very substance by the light which the One provides it. In turn, the Soul is made intelligent by *Nous* (V, 6, 4, 18–22). *Nous* provides light for the Soul just as the One does in regard to *Nous* (VI, 7, 17, 36–37). Soul illuminates because it is always illuminated (II, 9, 2, 17–18). Since it is illuminated and possesses light in an uninterrupted fashion, it gives light to the things that follow after it (II, 9, 3, 1–2; see II, 3, 17, 15–16 and IV, 3, 17, 18–31). Soul is a certain light coming from *Nous*, on which it depends (V, 3, 9, 15–16). There is an illuminating light that shines in Soul and makes it intelligible and like the light that is above it. Soul takes hold of intelligible light, which is an image of the life of *Nous* itself. The life of *Nous* is activity, namely, a first light which primarily illuminates (ἀμψον πρώτως) by itself, a light to itself, at once illuminating and being illuminated (ἀμψον ὁμοῦ καὶ λαμπόμενον), a true intelligible, which both knows and is known (V, 3, 8, 24–40). For discussion regarding Plotinus' use of the metaphor of light and his concept of the higher illuminating the lower, see A. H. Armstrong, "Emanation," *Mind* 46 (1937), pp. 61–66; H. R. Schwyzer, "Plotinos," in *Paulys-Wissowa, Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, XXI (Stuttgart, 1951), col. 570; Paul Aubin, "L' 'image' dans l'oeuvre de Plotin," *Recherches de science religieuse* 41 (1953), pp. 351ff. and n. 6; Joseph Moreau, "L'idée d'univers dans la pensée antique," *Giornale di metafisica* 8 (1953), pp. 332–334 and 337; *idem*, "L'un et les êtres selon Plotin," *Giornale di metafisica* 11 (1956), pp. 218 and 221–222; *idem*, *Plotin ou la gloire de la philosophie antique* (Paris, 1970), pp. 92–95; Émile Brehier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. Joseph Thomas (Chicago, 1958), pp. 48, 96–97 and 114–115; Werner Beierwaltes, "Die Metaphysik des Lichtes in der Philosophie Plotins," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 15 (1961), pp. 334–362; Cleto Carbonara, *La filosofia di Plotino*, 3rd ed. (Naples, 1964), pp. 318–320; J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 68, 72–73, 96, 114–117 and 197; John H. Fielder, "Chorismos and Emanation in the Philosophy of Plotinus," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. R. Baine Harris, *Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern*, I (Norfolk and Albany, 1976), pp. 106–115. The significance of the higher illuminating the lower within the individual soul is brought out by Blumenthal, "Neoplatonic Elements," pp. 68–69. However, Blumenthal himself in a recent article, "Themistius, the Last Peripatetic Commentator on Aristotle?" in *Arktouros: Hellenic Studies Presented to Bernard M. W. Knox*, eds. G. W. Bowersock, W. Burkert, and M. C. J. Putnam (Berlin and New York, 1979), pp. 391–400, especially pp. 396–398, seems to exclude any Platonic or Neoplatonic influence on Themistius' doctrine regarding the unity of the agent intellect. I am indebted to Professor Kristeller for having pointed out to me many years ago the apparent Neoplatonic aspects of Themistius' remarks about whether the agent intellect is one or many.
2. Paul of Venice, *Scriptum super librum de anima* (Venice, 1481). For discussion see Felice Momigliano, *Paolo Veneto e le correnti del pensiero religioso e filosofico nel suo tempo* (Turin, 1907); Bruno Nardi, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Florence, 1958), pp. 75–93; Eugenio Garin, *Storia della filosofia italiana* (Turin, 1966), pp. 436–446; Alan R. Perreiah, "A Biographical Introduction to Paul of Venice," *Augustiniana* 17 (1967), pp. 450–461.
  3. Cajetan of Thiene, *Super libros de anima* (Venice, 1493). The basic study on Thiene remains Silvestro da Valsanzibio, *Vita e dottrina di Gaetano di Thiene filosofo dello Studio di Padova (1387–1465)* (Padua, 1949). There is a copy of the first edition of Thiene's *De anima* (Padua, 1475; Hain 15502) in the Biblioteca Universitaria at Padua which contains notations apparently in more than one hand. However, many of these notations are clearly in the hand of Nicoletto Vernia. The shelf-mark of this volume is Sec. XV. 724. I identified this volume as belonging to Vernia in June, 1973.
  4. On Vernia see Pietro Ragnisco, *Nicoletto Vernia: Studi storici sulla filosofia padovana nella seconda metà del secolo decimoquinto* (Venice, 1891); Nardi, *Saggi*, pp. 95–126; Paolo Sambin, "Intorno a Nicoletto Vernia," *Rinascimento* 3 (1952), pp. 261–268; Garin, *Storia della filosofia italiana*, pp. 450–454; *idem*, *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano* (Florence, 1961), pp. 293–299; Cesare Vasoli, "La scienza della natura in Nicoletto Vernia," in *La filosofia della natura nel medioevo* (Milan, 1966), pp. 717–729.
  5. On Nifo see Pasquale Tuozzi, "Agostino Nifo e le sue opere," *Atti e memorie della R. Accademia di scienze, lettere ed Arti* (Padua), n. s. 20 (1904), p. 63–86; Giuseppe Tommasino, *Tra umanisti e filosofi* (Maddaloni, 1921), I, 123–147; Nardi *Saggi*, *passim*; *idem*, *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del Rinascimento italiano* (Rome, 1945), *passim*; Garin, *Storia della filosofia italiana*, pp. 523–527, 535–538 and 572–573; *idem*, *La cultura filosofica*, pp. 114–118 and 295–303; Etienne Gilson, "Autour de Pomponazzi, Problématique de l'immortalité de l'âme en Italie au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 28 (1961), pp. 236–253; William A. Wallace, *Causality and Scientific Explanation, I: Medieval and Early Classical Science* (Ann Arbor, 1972), pp. 139–153; Edward P. Mahoney, "A Note on Agostino Nifo," *Philological Quarterly* 50 (1971), pp. 125–132; *idem*, "Agostino Nifo," *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, X (New York, 1974), pp. 125–132; *idem*, "Agostino Nifo's Early Views on Immortality," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 8 (1970), pp. 451–460; *idem*, "Agostino Nifo's *De sensu agente*," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 53 (1971), pp. 119–142; *idem*, "Antonio Trombetta and Agostino Nifo on Averroes and Intelligible Species: A Philosophical Dispute at the University of Padua," in *Storia e cultura nel Convento del Santo a Padova*, ed. Antonino Poppi (Vicenza, 1976), pp. 289–301; Antonino Poppi, *Introduzione all'aristotelismo padovano* (Padua, 1970), *passim*. Nifo is presented from other points of view in three recent and interesting articles. See Paola Zambelli, "I problemi metodologici del necromante Agostino Nifo," *Medioevo* 1 (1975), pp. 129–171; E. J. Ashworth, "Agostino Nifo's Reinterpretation of Medieval Logic," *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 31 (1976), pp. 354–374; Lisa Jardine, "Galileo's Road to Truth and the Demonstrative Regress," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 7 (1976), pp. 277–318, especially pp. 290–295. Jardine brings out well the impact of the Greek Commentators, especially Themistius, in her discussion. What is surprising is that she does not mention Wallace's treatment of Nifo cited above. Nifo's interest in Themistius and Simplicius is noted in another context by Paolo Galluzzi, *Momento: Studi galileiani* (Rome, 1979), pp. 138–143. The only secondary literature on Nifo that he appears to cite is Zambelli's article just mentioned. However, he does state (p. 142, n. 105) that she has argued effectively against the thesis of Nifo's noteworthy philological competence supposedly sustained by Wilhelm Risse, F. Edward Cranz, Charles B. Schmitt, and myself. Although I have, on more than one occasion, drawn attention to the significance of Nifo's deliberately learning Greek, I am unaware that I have given him any grades for his ability at the language. Moreover, that he may have lightly revised an already existent translation does not appear to be unique to him (p. 94, 122–123) nor that he misunderstood a passage in Aristotle (p. 142). Galluzzi is to be praised, however, for presenting sections on the views of the Greek Commentators, notably, Themistius, Simplicius, and Philoponus (pp. 98–106 and 125–134), and for admitting the drawbacks of Ermolao's translation of Themistius (p. 98).
  6. Themistius, *Paraphrasis in Aristotelem*, trans. Ermolao Barbaro (Treviso, 1481). See Hain \*15463. I have examined copies of this edition at the Newberry Library, Chicago, and at the Beinecke Library, Yale University. This translation was reprinted on several occasions in the sixteenth century. For discussion see Arnaldo Ferriguto, *Almorò Barbaro, l'alta cultura del settrione d'Italia nel '400* *Miscellanea di Storia Veneta*, 3rd ser., XV (Venice, 1922), pp. 133–150. A new translation of the paraphrases on *De anima* III was made by Ludovico Nogarola and published as a supplement to a printing of Ermolao's translation. See *Themistii peripatetici lucidissimi Paraphrasis in Aristotelis Posteriora . . . Hermolao Barbaro patricio Veneto interprete . . .* (Venice, 1554), pp. 104–119. See p. 103 for the dedicatory letter to Cardinal Giulio da Montefeltro-Della Rovere in which Nogarola criticizes Ermolao's translation. I have examined ■

copy of this edition at the Biblioteca Vallicelliana, Rome. Yet another translation of the third book of Themistius' paraphrases on the *De anima* was made by Federico Bonaventura and published as the second volume of his *Opuscula* (Urbino, 1627). See *Themistii Euphradae Paraphrasis in tertium librum Aristotelis De anima Federico Bonaventura Urbinate interprete* (Urbino, 1627), pp. 10–11 for an attack on Ermolao and Nogarola as translators. I have examined a copy of this work at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. See also Nardi, *Saggi*, pp. 365–368. Vernia's own copy of the 1481 edition of Ermolao's translation of Themistius is today in the Biblioteca Universitaria at Padua. I identified this volume in July, 1973. It bears the shelf-mark Sec. XV. 96 and contains a statement on sig. ii7v that it had been his. The marginal notations are without doubt in his hand. I discovered another copy of the 1481 edition of Ermolao's translation in the Biblioteca San Marco Marciana, Venice, which also appears to have marginal annotations in Vernia's hand. It has the shelf-mark Inc. 447 and is bound with Inc. 448, which is a copy of Thomas Aquinas' *De unitate intellectus* (Treviso, 1476). The latter contains many marginal annotations that are clearly in Vernia's hand. Vernia was already citing Ermolao's translation in his preface regarding the *Physics* and in *Quaestio est, an medicina nobilior atque praestantior sit iure civili*, both of which are to be found in Vernia's edition of Walter Burley, *Super octo libros physicorum* (Venice, 1482). In the preface (sig. A2rb), Vernia praises Ermolao for his translation. See also sig. A3rb and A4rb for other references to Themistius. The question on medicine and law has been edited and republished by Eugenio Garin in *La disputa delle arti nel quattrocento* (Florence, 1947), pp. 111–123.

There are allusions to Themistius and also to Simplicius in the marginal annotations that Vernia made in his copy of John of Jandun, *Quaestiones super tres libros de anima* (Venice, 1473; Hain 7458). I discovered this volume at the Biblioteca Universitaria, Padua, in July 1974. It carries the shelf-mark Sec. XV. 717. Vernia himself indicates at the end of Book II (f. 48rb) that he had completed Book II on August 6, 1487. A few folios later (bottom margin of f. 51v) there is a long annotation in which he dismisses Scotus for saying Aristotle was in doubt whether the soul is bodily. He goes on to cite Averroes as saying that while the intellect remains after death, it has no memory. He then adds that Themistius and Simplicius expound the text in the same way. In another annotation (left margin of f. 74v), he addresses Jandun, telling him that he has not understood Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* because he has not seen the *Doctor lucidus*, that is, Themistius. There is also a copy of Jandun's *Quaestiones in libros physicorum Aristotelis* (Venice, 1488; Hain 7457) in the same library which once belonged to Vernia. Its shelf mark is Sec. XV. 665. I identified this volume in June, 1972. My attention was called to the existence of Vernia's copies of Jandun's *Physics* and Themistius' paraphrases in the Biblioteca Universitaria at Padua by a remark of Ragnisco, Nicoletto Vernia, p. 35 (= p. 625), n. 1.

In his lectures on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, which are to be found in Bodleian Library, Oxford, Canonici Miscell. Latini Cod. 506, ff. 224r–241r, Vernia makes constant reference to Themistius. At one point he tells his students: "Nemo enim fuit doctior illo, proinde adorate verba Themistii" (f. 234). Much from these lectures reappears to the word in Vernia's treatise against Averroes, cited in the following note 7. That a conciliating approach to Aristotle and Plato was taught at Padua is, of course, not in itself a surprise. That it was taught by Vernia is. I am editing this work for future publication.

7. See Nicoletto Vernia, *Contra perversum Averrois opinionem de unitate intellectus et de animae felicitate* (Venice, 1505), which was also reprinted in *Acutissimae quaestiones super libros de physica auscultatione ab Alberto de Saxonia editae* (Venice, 1516), ff. 83r–91rb. The first edition appeared in the Venice 1504 printing of Albert of Saxony's *Physics*, ff. 84ra–92rb. I have examined a copy of the first edition in the Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele, Rome. I shall cite the 1505 and 1516 editions in the present paper. For Vernia's references to Simplicius' *Physics*, see f. 5ra (1516 ed.; ff. 85vb–86ra), f. 9ra (f. 89ra), f. 10vab (f. 90rb–90va); for Simplicius' *De coelo*, see f. 4ra (f. 85ra); and for his *De anima*, see f. 4vb (f. 85va). There is discussion regarding the second of these commentaries in D. J. Allen, "Mediaeval Versions of Aristotle, *De caelo*, and of the Commentary of Simplicius," *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 2 (1950), pp. 82–120. Vernia refers to Simplicius' *De anima* several times in his *Proemium in libro*

*de anima*, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Canonici Miscell. Latini Cod. 506, ff. 319r, 321r, 321v. There are also several references to Themistius' *De anima* in this work.

The classic study on Simplicius' influence on late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century philosophy in Italy is Bruno Nardi's fine essay, "Il commento di Simplicio al *De anima* nelle controversie della fine del secolo XV e del secolo XVI," which was reprinted in his *Saggi*, pp. 365–442. Regrettably, Nardi nowhere discusses Vernia in his essay. On the other hand, he draws attention to the fact that Giovanni Pico della Mirandola had a copy of Simplicius' *De anima* in his library and also to the fact that he lists basic theses of Simplicius' own psychology in his "conclusiones." See Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones sive theses DCCCC Romae anno 1486 publice disputandae, sed non admixtae*, ed. Bohdan Kieszowski (Geneva, 1973), p. 39, and Pearl Kibre, *The Library of Pico della Mirandola* (New York, 1936), pp. 29 and 179 (entry 447). For discussion see Garin, *Storia della filosofia italiana*, pp. 463–464 and 470–471; Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and His Sources," in *L'opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola nella storia dell'umanesimo*, Convegno internazionale (Mirandola: 15–18 Settembre 1963), 1 (Florence, 1965), pp. 54–55 and 62; Giovanni Di Napoli, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola e la problematica dottrinale del suo tempo* (Rome, 1965), pp. 87, 125 and 218. The latter two scholars bring out in particular the connection between Pico's conciliation of Plato and Aristotle and his interest in Simplicius. There are also references to Simplicius in Pico's oration on the dignity of man. See Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate*, ed. Eugenio Garin, Edizione Nazionale dei Classici del Pensiero Italiano, 1 (Florence, 1942), pp. 140 and 144. In the latter text he mentions Simplicius along with Boethius as predecessors who proposed to show the conciliation of Plato and Aristotle but did not live up to their promises. However, it should be added that it is regrettable that modern historians have contrasted the interest in Neoplatonism and the conciliation of Plato and Aristotle to be found in Pico with the supposedly rigid Averroism of Vernia. The latter's own interests in Simplicius have been wholly overlooked, as have his attempts to conciliate Plato and Aristotle. Vernia is presented as a strict Averroist by Bohdan Kieszowski, *Studi sul platonismo del Rinascimento in Italia* (Florence, 1936), pp. 138–143, and Tullio Gregory, "Aristotelismo," in *Grande antologia filosofica*, VI, ed. M. F. Sciacca (Milan, 1964), p. 614.

The attribution of the *De anima* traditionally ascribed to Simplicius has been challenged by two recent scholars, F. Bossier and C. Steel, in their article, "Priscianus Lydus on de *In de anima* van Pseudo(?)-Simplicius," *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 34 (1972), pp. 761–821 (French summary: pp. 821–822). Their thesis that the work is in fact by Priscianus Lydus and not Simplicius has been submitted to a critical but sympathetic analysis by Ilsetraut Hadot in her book, *Le problème du néoplatonisme Alexandrin: Hiéroclès et Simplicius* (Paris, 1978), pp. 193–202. While she appears to grant their thesis probability, she calls on them to remove all doubts by a more detailed examination of the style of Priscianus. One of the authors has returned to the thesis in a book which he has authored by himself. See now Carlos G. Steel, *The Changing Self, A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus*, Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Letteren, Jaargang XL, Nr. 85 (Brussels, 1978), p. 7–11 and 123–154. In the present paper, I shall continue to refer to this *De anima* commentary as Simplicius' and I do so simply for the sake of convenience. However, I do not intend to question the plausibility of the thesis of Bossier and Steel. For useful summaries of the doctrine of this *De anima* commentary, see A. Ed. Chaignet, *Histoire de la psychologie des grecs*, V (Paris, 1893), pp. 357–375; O. Hamelin, *La théorie de l'intellect d'après Aristote et ses commentateurs*, ed. Edmond Barbotin (Paris, 1953), pp. 44–57. I very much regret that Steel's book became available to me only as I was completing the notes for this article. Given the theme of the present paper, it is interesting to note that Simplicius' authorship of the *De anima* commentary had already been questioned in the Renaissance and the possibility of Priscianus Lydus being the true author had been proposed. See Nardi, *Saggi*, pp. 431–432, who draws attention to a discussion in Francesco Piccolomini. See the latter's "Capita sententiae Simplicii ex commentariis librorum de anima depropterea," in his *In tres libros Aristotelis de anima lucidissima expositio* (Venice, 1602), f. 216r. I have examined a copy of this work

- in the Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele at Rome. Bossier and Steel pay credit (p. 762) to their Renaissance forerunner. On the dating of the commentaries regarded by all as genuinely Simplician, namely, those on the *De caelo* and *Physics*, see Alan Cameron, "The Last Days of the Academy at Athens," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 195 (1969), pp. 7–30, at pp. 22–24.
8. *Alexandri Aphrodisiei enarratio de anima ex Aristotelis institutione interprete Hieronymo Donato patritio veneto* (Brescia, 1495). See GKW, #859. For discussion of Alexander and his influence in the Renaissance see F. Edward Cranz, "Alexander Aphrodisiensis," in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries I*, ed. P. O. Kristeller (Washington, D.C., 1960), pp. 77–135, especially pp. 85–86 and 111–112; *idem*, "Alexander Aphrodisiensis: Addenda et corrigenda," in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*, . . . II, eds. P. O. Kristeller and F. E. Cranz (Washington, D.C., 1971), pp. 411–422, especially pp. 417–418; Nardi, *Saggi*, pp. 369–372 and *passim*; P. O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought II: Papers on Humanism and the Arts* (New York, 1965), pp. 111–118; E. P. Mahoney, "Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo on Alexander of Aphrodisias: An Unnoticed Dispute," *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 23 (1968), pp. 268–296.
  9. See Martin Grabmann, *Mittelalterliche lateinische Übersetzungen von Schriften der Aristoteles-Kommentatoren Johannes Philoponos, Alexander von Aphrodisias und Themistios*, Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Abteilung, 1929, heft 7, pp. 63–68; Marcel de Corte, "Thémistius et Saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 8 (1932), pp. 47–83, especially pp. 65–83; G. Verbeke, introduction to *Thémistius, Commentaire sur le traité de l'âme d'Aristote*, *Traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke*, *Corpus Latinum Commentariorum in Aristotelem Graecorum*, I (Louvain and Paris, 1957), pp. ix–lxii; E. P. Mahoney, "Themistius and the Agent Intellect in James of Viterbo and Other Thirteenth Century Philosophers (Saint Thomas, Siger of Brabant, and Henry Bate)," *Augustiniana* 23 (1963), pp. 422–467. For an analysis of Moerbeke as a translator, see Gérard Verbeke, "Guillaume de Moerbeke et sa méthode de traduction," in *Medioevo e Rinascimento, Studi in onore di Bruno Nardi II* (Florence, 1955), pp. 779–800. See also Verbeke's "Guillaume de Moerbeke, traducteur de Jean Philopon," *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 49 (1951), pp. 222–235. For scholarly literature on Moerbeke as a translator of Proclus, see below note 56. It must be added that Verbeke's remarks on the influence of Themistius on Thomas have been challenged by C. Vansteenkiste in his review of Verbeke's edition. See Vansteenkiste's review in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 53 (1958), pp. 514–526, especially pp. 524–526. However, he does not appear to question that influence in regard to Thomas' *De unitate intellectus*.
  10. "Utrum anima intellectiva humano corpore unita tamquam vera forma substantialis dñs ei esse specificum substantiale aeterna atque unica sit in omnibus hominibus," (Biblioteca Nazionale San Marco [Marciana], Venice, Cod. Lat. VI. 105 [= 2656], ff. 156ra–160va). I have prepared an edition of this treatise that will be published by Editrice Antenore, Padua under the title *Nicoletto Vernia's Early Treatise on the Intellective Soul: Introduction and Critical Text*. Vernia's authorship of this treatise has been established by a carefully documented and well-argued essay of Giulio F. Pagallo, "Sull'autore (Nicoletto Vernia?) di un'anonima e inedita quaestio sull'anima del secolo XV," in *La filosofia della natura nel medioevo* (Milan, 1966), pp. 670–682.
  11. See my study, "Nicoletto Vernia on the Soul and Immortality," in *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller* (New York and Leiden, 1976), pp. 144–163. On Vernia's "Albertism," see my essay, "Albert the Great and the Studio Patavino in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries," in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays 1980*, ed. James A. Weisheipl (Toronto, 1980), pp. 537–563.
  12. Vernia, *Contra perversam Averrois opinionem*, f. 4rb–4va (f. 85rb). For identification of Vernia's sources in Albert, see my article, "Nicoletto Vernia on the Soul," p. 151. Cf. Leopold Gaul, *Alberts des Grossen Verhältnis zu Plato*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, XII, 1 (Münster, 1913), pp. 12–21; Pierre Michaud-Quantin, "Les 'Platonici' dans la psychologie de S. Albert le Grand," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 23 (1956), pp. 194–207, especially pp. 198–201 and 204–206.
  13. *Ibid.*, f. 6ra (f. 87ra). See also f. 8rb (f. 88va).
  14. *Ibid.*, f. 5va (f. 86rb). Vernia adds arguments from the discussion in Plotinus' *Enneads* IV, 9, regarding the question whether all souls are one.
  15. *Ibid.*, f. 10vb (f. 90va).
  16. Themistius, *In libros de anima paraphrasis*, ed. R. Heinze, p. 103, lin. 32–36. For the literature on the debate regarding this passage in the late thirteenth century, see note 9 above. The Neoplatonic aspects of the passage were discussed in note 1 above.
  17. "Hoc idem in capitulo 32 ubi solvendo quaestionem an plures sint agentes intellectus inquit an intellectum illustrantem unum oportet esse, illustratos vero plures, sicut unus sol, et tamen lumen divellitur" (Vernia, *Contra perversam Averrois opinionem*, f. 9ra [f. 89rb]). See Themistius, *Paraphrasis de anima* III, c. 32, in *Paraphrasis in Aristotelem*, trans. Ermolao Barbaro, sig. ff2v, lin. 28–30: "An primum quidem intellectum illuminantem credi unum oportet. Illuminatos vero et subindeo illuminantes multos, quemadmodum quamquam sol est unus, tamen lux quae de sole prodit et mittitur quasi abiungitur ab eo et divellitur atque ita in multos obitus distrahitur distribuiturque." It is noteworthy that Vernia refers to the many intellects only as "illuminated" and not also as "illuminating." He does not integrate this passage very well with his overall presentation of Themistius. The single illuminating intellect is not further identified.
  18. *Ibid.*, f. 6va (f. 87rb) and f. 7ra (f. 87va). Vernia denies that Themistius intended to say that Aristotle condemned Plato regarding reminiscence. The text in question is Themistius, *Analyticorum posteriorum paraphrasis*, ed. Maximilian Wallies, *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, V, 1 (Berlin, 1900), I, c. 1, p. 4, lin. 27–32. See Themistius, *Paraphrasis in posteriora analytica*, I, c. 3, in *Paraphrasis in Aristotelem*, trans. Ermolao Barbaro, sig. A4r, lin. 30–34.
  19. On Vernia's use of Simplicius' *Physics* to defend his extraordinary claim that Alexander of Aphrodisias held to human immortality, see my article, "Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo," pp. 276–277 and note 34.
  20. For a contrast between Simplicius' *Physics* and the *De anima* traditionally attributed to him, see Bossier and Steel, *op. cit.*, pp. 798–815. But see also the comments by I. Hadot, *Le problème*, pp. 196–199. Vernia's difficulty in reconciling the two commentaries may be a persuasive argument in favor of the Bossier-Steel thesis.
  21. Vernia, *Contra perversam Averrois opinionem*, f. 5ra (f. 85vb). See Simplicius, *In Aristotelis physicorum libros quattuor posteriores commentaria*, ed. Hermann Diels, *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, X (Berlin, 1895), VIII, p. 1249, lin. 30 to p. 1250, lin. 4. Vernia does not give a wholly accurate report of what Simplicius says.
  22. *Ibid.*, f. 5ra (f. 85vb) and f. 9ra (f. 88ra). See Simplicius, *In Aristotelis physicorum libros quattuor posteriores commentaria*, V, p. 965, lin. 29–30. See also Vernia, f. 10va (f. 90rb).
  23. Vernia, *Contra perversam Averrois opinionem*, f. 7rab (f. 87vb). This discussion is also to be found in Vernia's lectures on the *Posterior Analytics*, f. 240v. If it is in fact based on the *De anima* attributed to Simplicius, it is a roughly accurate presentation of some of its doctrines. We can give here only a few remarks to indicate how Vernia agrees with the text. All references will be to Simplicius, *In libros Aristotelis de anima commentaria*, ed. Michael Hayduck, *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, XI (Berlin, 1882). The intellect in us is divided into the theoretic and practical intellects (p. 5, lin. 6–8; p. 61, lin. 11–13). The former is divided into the actual and the potential intellects—distinct "faculties" are not involved but the one soul as operating in various ways (p. 223, lin. 28–33). The potential intellect is the intellect as it proceeds forth to the outside, turning as a whole to the sensibles and in no way perceiving the intelligible forms that are apprehended by the actual intellect. It is then imperfect. However, when it turns away from sensation back within itself and is united with the actual intellect, it is perfected by the intelligible forms and is thus the perfect or habitual intellect. These forms are within the soul and bring about the perfecting of the potential intellect (p. 229, lin. 3–14). The intelligible forms are within, and it is from these forms as from causes that the intellect knows lower things (p. 124, lin. 28–30). That is to say, our intellect can sometimes operate along with sensation and so attend to sensibles, but it can also operate alone by itself and grasp inferior things from their causes, since it can know the very essences of physical forms (p. 276, lin. 16–27). Sense and imagination are aware of the accidental, not the substantial or essential (p. 277, lin. 34–37). Judgment, self-consciousness and comprehension of the intelligible forms are all reserved to the intellect as it operates independently

- of the body (p. 46, lin. 8–9; p. 124, lin. 28–30; p. 196, lin. 16–20; p. 203, lin. 35–36; p. 218, lin. 36–39; p. 223, lin. 33–34; p. 264, lin. 26–27; p. 277, pp. 29–30; p. 279, lin. 26–29; p. 281, lin. 29–30; p. 321, lin. 28). Besides the potential intellect and the habitual intellect there is also in the soul the active intellect, which Aristotle compares to light and habit (p. 223, lin. 9–11). The actual intellect turns into itself and is in no way in potentiality (p. 228, lin. 6–7). It draws its actuality into the unity and permanence within itself (p. 5, lin. 14–15). This intellect abides wholly in itself and unlike the potential intellect is united to higher beings, namely, the intellect above it which perfects it. In turn, the active intellect perfects the potential intellect (p. 243, lin. 21–26 and 34–35).
24. "Istum etiam triplicem modum operandi animae habes a Proculo propositione tertia de causis et decimaquinta. In tertia: 'Omnis anima nobilis triplices habet operationes, animale, intellectivam et divinam.' In decimaquinta: 'Omnis sciens qui scit essentiam est rediens ad eam reditione completa'" (*Ibid.*, f. 7rb [f. 87vb]). The numbering of propositions agrees with that found in Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Super librum de causis expositio*, ed. H. D. Saffrey (Fribourg and Louvain, 1954), p. 17 and p. 88. Perhaps Vernia is simply following his own understanding of Thomas' remark that the *Liber de causis* was excerpted by some Arab philosopher from the *Elements of Theology* by Proclus. See the *Proemium* in Saffrey's edition, p. 3. For scholarly literature on the *Liber de causis* and Proclus' *Elements*, see note 56 below.
  25. Above the human soul and its intellect there are two separated intellects that are distinguished according as to whether or not human intellects participate in them. Simplicius refers to them respectively as the unparticipated intellect and the participated intellect. See Simplicius, *In libros Aristotelis de anima commentarius*, p. 49, lin. 37 to p. 50, lin. 1, and p. 245, 38 to p. 246, lin. 1. For discussion regarding the two intellects above the human soul and intellect, see Chagniet, *Histoire de la psychologie des grecs*, V, p. 364; Kurfess, *Zur Geschichte*, p. 32; Steel, *The Changing Self*, pp. 123–132.
  26. *Destructiones destructionum Averrois cum Augustini Niphi de Suessa expositione* (Venice, 1497). XIII, dub. 4, f. 112ra and f. 115va; XIV, dub. 1, ff. 119ra, 120ra, 121rb and 121vb–122ra. There is perfect agreement between Nifo's citation at XIII, dub. 4, f. 115va of Plotinus, *Enneads* II, 2, 1 and Marsilio Ficino's translation. Nifo even quotes the chapter title.
  27. See I, dub. 11, f. 13vab; VII, dub. 3, f. 87rb; X, dub. 3, f. 103va for references to Simplicius' *De coelo*. His *Physics* is mentioned at VIII, dub. 1, f. 92vab and X, dub. 2, f. 101vb.
  28. The first edition is *Augustini Niphi super tres libros de anima* (Venice, 1503). For the sake of convenience, we shall cite the later edition: *Suessanus super libros de anima: Augustini Niphi Medices philosophi suessani. Collectanea ac commentaria in libros de anima* (Venice, 1522). See II, coll. 37, ff. 93vb–94ra. See Themistius, *In libros Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, ed. R. Heinze, *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, V, 3 (Berlin, 1899), p. 25, lin. 35 to p. 27, lin. 7. For Ermolao's translation, see Themistius, *Paraphrasis de anima*, I, c. 23, in *Paraphrasis in Aristotelem*, sig. bb2v, lin. 7–50.
  29. See Marsilio Ficino, *Argumentum to Ennead I*, I, c. 1, 7 and 8 in his *Opera omnia* (Basel, 1576), pp. 1548–1549 and 1551–1552. See *Opera Plotini*, trans. M. Ficino (Florence, 1492), ff. 11–12 and 14–14v. On one occasion Nifo compares the Plotinus who emerges from Ficino's commentary to the position of Averroes. He inquires whether they both believe man is always united by cognition with higher beings. See Nifo, *In libros de anima*, III, comm. 36, ff. 61vb–62ra. Nifo is obviously dependent on Ficino. See Ficino, *Argumentum to Ennead I*, I, c. 11, in *Opera omnia*, p. 1553 (*Opera Plotini*, f. 15r–15v). See the relevant remarks of Eugenio Garin, *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano* (Florence, 1961), p. 118.
  30. Nifo, *In libros de anima*, II, text. comm. 11, f. 66ra; comm. 21, f. 76va; comm. 26, f. 80rb; III, text. comm. 6, f. 26rb–26va. See Simplicius, *In libros Aristotelis de anima commentaria*, ed. Michael Hayduck, *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca*, XI (Berlin, 1882), p. 94, lin. 28 to p. 95, lin. 7; p. 102, lin. 12 to p. 103, lin. 8; p. 105, lines 6–13; p. 227, lin. 6–17. Nifo's presentation of Simplicius in *In libros de anima*, text. comm. 19, f. 40rb omits all reference to the notion of "lives" found in the text in question. (See Simplicius, p. 243, lin. 10–32.) On the other hand, when he refers to "lives" in *In libros de anima*, III, text. coll. 1, f. 1va, he assumes incorrectly that the vegetative and sensitive parts form but one life for Simplicius. On Simplicius' doctrine of "lives," see Chagniet, *Histoire de la psychologie des grecs*, V, pp. 362–363. Limits of this essay prevent us from analyzing passages from the *De anima* attributed to Simplicius relating to "lives."
  31. Nifo, *In libros de anima*, III, text. comm. 19, f. 40rb. However, he appears to take the third intellect to be one for all men when in fact Simplicius held that the third intellect was individual in each man's soul. Nifo's Averroist leanings at this point in his career may have led him to misread Simplicius. See Simplicius, p. 254, lin. 31–35 and 258, lin. 14–17. For discussion regarding the three levels of intellect according to Simplicius, see Chagniet, *Histoire de la psychologie des grecs*, V, pp. 364–370. Although Nifo was later attacked by such philosophers as Marcantonio Genua and Federico Pendasio for having misunderstood Simplicius, his interpretation regarding the unity of the intellect was widely accepted. Bruno Nardi points out that Flaminio Nobili, Francesco Piccolomini, Giacomo Zabarella, and even Genua himself believed that Simplicius held to one intellect for all men. See Nardi, *Saggi*, pp. 389, n. 52, 416–417, 420, 435–437 and 452. Even Nardi himself seems to believe that there is only one intellect for all men according to Simplicius (p. 450). Nifo also presents his interpretation of Simplicius' three levels of intellect in his *Liber de intellectu* (Venice, 1503), I, tr. 4, c. 13, f. 41rb–41va, where he is discussing his own interpretation of Averroes, namely, that there are three agent intellects, the first of which is God. For discussion see my article, "Pier Nicola Castellani and Agostino Nifo on Averroes' Doctrine of the Agent Intellect," *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 25 (1970), pp. 387–409, especially pp. 397–407. Nifo's interpretation of Simplicius as holding to the unity of the intellect stands in sharp contrast to Vernia's interpretation. The divergence between Averroes' doctrine of the unity of the intellect and Simplicius' belief that each human being had an intellectual and immortal soul which was proper to him is underscored by Léon Gauthier, *Ibn Rochd (Averroës)* (Paris, 1948), pp. 248–249. Nifo's tendency to interpret Simplicius from an Averroist perspective has been emphasized by Gregory, "Aristotelismo," p. 627 as well as by Nardi.
  32. I should like to emphasize that Nifo should not be given sole credit for initiating that tradition. Surely Vernia and also Pico must be kept in mind. It is surprising that there is no mention of Vernia's contribution to the development of interest in Simplicius and Themistius during the Renaissance in Charles B. Schmitt's essay for the Garin Festschrift, "Filosofia e scienza nelle università italiane del XVI secolo," in *Il Rinascimento, Interpretazioni e problemi* (Bari, 1979), pp. 355–398, especially at pp. 358–359 and 361–362. Dr. Schmitt appears to have overlooked my article, "Nicoletto Vernia on the Soul and Immortality." See note 11 above.
  33. Nifo, *In libros de anima*, III, text. comm. 1, f. 1rab. See Simplicius, p. 217, lin. 23–37. Cf. Ficino, *Argumentum to Ennead I*, I, c. 8, in *Opera omnia*, pp. 1551–1552. In his *Saggi*, pp. 378–379, Nardi identifies some of the passages from Simplicius that Nifo is here quoting, but he does not indicate Ficino's influence. Compare also Nifo, *In libros de anima*, III, comm. 23, f. 47va to Simplicius, p. 124, lin. 18–35; p. 126, lin. 29–30; and p. 252, lin. 5–7, and Ficino, *Argumentum to Ennead I*, 3, c. 1 and that to I, 1, c. 11 in *Opera omnia*, p. 1560 and pp. 1553–1554.
  34. Agostino Nifo, *Liber de intellectu* (Venice, 1503), I, tr. 2, c. 7, ff. 18vb–19ra. See Ficino, *Argumentum to Ennead I*, I, c. 7–8, in *Opera omnia*, pp. 1551–1552. Ficino uses the terms *vita* and *animatio* in *Argumentum to Ennead I*, I, c. 1, p. 1549, and *imago* in I, I, c. 8, p. 1552. For *vestigium* see Ficino, *Theologia platonica*, XV, c. 5, in *Opera omnia*, p. 338. It should be added that the terms "*vita*" and "*animatio*" are also used by Ermolao Barbaro in his translation of Themistius' paraphrases on the *De anima*. See Themistius, *Paraphrasis de anima*, in *Paraphrasis in Aristotelem*, trans. E. Barbaro, I, c. 23, sig. bb2v, lin. 7–8, 17 and 20 (Heinze: p. 25, lin. 34, p. 26, lin. 7, 12–13) for examples. See also Nifo's discussion of the concept of "animations" and "lives" attributed to Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus in *De intellectu*, I, tr. 3, c. 12, which draws on Ficino, *Argumentum to Ennead I*, I, c. 2, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 12. For discussions regarding Plotinus' own doctrine, see Gaetano Capone Braga, "Il problema del rapporto tra le anime individuali e l'anima dell'Universo nella filosofia di Plotino," *Rivista di filosofia* 23 (1932), pp. 106–125, especially p. 111, where the comparison to light and rays is mentioned; H. J. Blumenthal, "Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul in Plotinus," in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris, 1971), pp. 55–63, especially p. 60.
  35. *Ibid.*, I, tr. 2, c. 21, ff. 26vb–27rb. Nifo is relying on Themistius, *In libros Aristotelis de anima*

- paraphrasis, ed. R. Heinze, p. 26, lin. 8–21; *Paraphrasis de anima*, trans. E. Barbaro, I, c. 23, sig. bb2v, lin. 17–28. For discussion see my articles, "Agostino Nifo and Saint Thomas Aquinas," *Memorie Domenicane* 7 (1976), pp. 195–226 at pp. 207–208, and "Themistius and the Agent Intellect," pp. 434–438.
36. *Ibid.*, I, tr. 3, c. 20, ff. 33vb–34ra.
37. *Ibid.*, I, tr. 3, c. 27, f. 36rb. See Ficino. In *Timaeum commentarium*, c. 4, in *Opera omnia*, p. 1439. In the same chapter, Nifo had appealed to John the Evangelist, Paul, Moses, Augustine, and other theologians to argue for personal immortality. A few chapters later (I, tr. 3, c. 32, f. 37vb), he discusses the views of Plotinus and Proclus on the individuation of the soul. He is in fact borrowing almost to the word from Ficino, *Theologia platonica*, XV, c. 13, p. 354. See also *Argumentum to Ennead IV*, 3, c. 3, pp. 1732–1733. Nifo then attacks this position. For discussion see Bruno Nardi, *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del Rinascimento italiano* (Rome, 1945), pp. 162–163; Mahoney, "Agostino Nifo and Saint Thomas Aquinas," pp. 208–209. The "Platonic" theory of the soul and intellect which Nifo presents in *De intellectu*, I, tr. 4, c. 2, f. 38va is taken from Ficino's *Argumentum to Ennead I*, I, c. 9 and 11, pp. 1552–1553. His summary contains a quotation from Ficino's translation of *Ennead I*, I, 11.
38. For a discussion of the one-and-many in regard to Soul, see Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, pp. 64–73. Schwyzer alludes to the same theme in regard to *Nous*. See his article, "Plotinos," col. 556.
39. Agostino Nifo, *De immortalitate animae libellus* (Venice, 1518), c. 5, f. 2rab. There is frequent reference to Themistius and Simplicius in Crisostomo Marcello's *Universalis de anima traditionis opus* (Venice, 1508). See especially V, c. 6–7, ff. 209r–210v and c. 23, ff. 227v–228v. Nifo again makes use of Simplicius and Themistius in his later, Pisan commentary on the *De anima*, but he also makes heavy use of Philoponus. He again says that the Greek commentators, notably Themistius and Simplicius, hold there to be one intellect for all men, but he insists that Aristotle held no such thing. What is more important for our discussion here is that Nifo attacks Vernia for having taught that Plato and Aristotle both held to the preexistence of the human soul and to knowledge as a reminiscence. He argues that Aristotle held neither doctrine. See Nifo, *In libros de anima*, III, comm. 5, ff. 23ra, 23vb, 25rab and 26rb. Earlier in the commentary, he had noted that intelligible and sensible species are concreated with the soul according to Plotinus and the Platonists, for whom sensing and thinking are active and not passive. Nifo separates both Themistius and Aristotle from this position, thereby rejecting Vernia's interpretation of Aristotle and that Commentator. See Nifo, *In libros de anima*, III, comm. 2, f. 4ra–4vb.
40. See Nardi, *Saggi*, pp. 383–442. Vernia's position is apparently ignored by Nardi.
41. "Utor expositoribus graecis, latinis, arabibus; praecipue vero graecis, unde omnis et excitata et consummata philosophiae cognitio est. Iamblichus, Porphyrio, Alexandro, Themistio, Simplicio, Philopono, caeteris huius modi: post hos Averroi, quem ut multis ante se ita nemine post se inferiorem fuisse comperio. Et, hercule, si conferas eius viri scripta cum graecis, invenies singula eius verba singula esse furta ex Alexandro, Themistio, Simplicio. Sed de hoc alias" (Ermolao Barbaro, *Epistolae, orationes et carmina*, ed. Vittore Branca, I [Florence, 1943], p. 92, letter to Arnolfo di Bost, dated 1485). Ermolao and Vernia were in correspondence with one another. See Ermolao's letter to Vernia, dated 1484, in *Epistolae*, I, pp. 79–80. In a letter to Pico, dated 1485 (*ibid.*, I, pp. 84–87, at p. 86). Ermolao cites Simplicius to argue that no one can understand Aristotle if he doesn't also study Plato.
42. The most striking examples of the concern of church authorities regarding these two topics are the relevant propositions condemned by Stephen Tempier at Paris in 1277. Pietro Barozzi's 1489 edict forbidding public discussion of the unity of the intellect at Padua and the decree of the Fifth Lateran Council regarding the unity and mortality of the soul which was issued in 1513.
43. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E. R. Dodds, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1963). For discussion see E. Vacherot, *Histoire critique de l'école d'Alexandrie*, II (Paris, 1846; rep. Amsterdam, 1965), pp. 227–234, 242, 247–252, 270–280 and 307ff. Laurence Jay Rosan, *The Philosophy of Proclus* (New York, 1949), pp. 66–80, 101–105, 127, 134–135 and 190–192; Hampus Lyttkens, *The Analogy between God and the World: An Investigation of its Background and Interpretation of Its Use by Thomas of Aquino* (Uppsala, 1952), pp. 66–77; Giuseppe Martano, *Proclo di Atene. L'ultima voce speculativa del genio ellenico* (Naples, 1974), pp. 128–129 and 155–158, which is a reprint of his *L'uomo e Dio in Proclo* (Naples, 1952); Jean Trouillard, "La monadologie de Proclus," *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 57 (1959), pp. 310–315; Klaus Kremer, *Die neuplatonische Seinsphilosophie und ihre Wirkung auf Thomas von Aquin* (Leiden, 1966), pp. 119–281, especially pp. 208–233; Annick Charles, "Analogie et pensée sérielle chez Proclus," *Revue internationale de philosophie* 23 (1969), pp. 69–88, especially pp. 69–77. It seems extraordinary that there is no reference to the scheme of ascent-descent and hierarchical gradation in H. F. Müller, *Dionysios, Proklos, Plotinos: Ein historischer Beitrag zur neoplatonischen Philosophie*, BGPM, XX, 3–4 (Münster, 1926).
- For a valuable and careful analysis of Plotinus' own doctrine of hierarchy, see Dominic J. O'Meara, *Structures hiérarchiques dans la pensée de Plotin*, *Philosophia Antiqua*, XXVII (Leiden, 1975), pp. 4–6, 44–47, 79–85, 89–90, 97–98, 101–108, 111, 114 and 120–123. Dr. Salvatore R. C. Lilla has pointed out to me that the conceptual scheme is only suggested in Plotinus but becomes hardened in Syrianus, Iamblichus, Proclus, and Damascius. A precise comparison between Plotinus and these other thinkers is out of place here, but a survey of some of the relevant texts in Plotinus does seem appropriate. Plotinus thus speaks of the One as a measure which is itself not measured (*Enneads V*, 5, 4), as the measure and limit of everything else (I, 8, 2), and as the principle of all things (III, 8, 9; VI, 9, 3). All things imitate the One, but some do so in a distant manner, while others do so in a closer manner. Things are thus arranged in a series of priority and posteriority according as they have more or less unity (VI, 2, 11). That is to say, things exist and are unities according as they participate in the One and are closer to or more distant from the One (V, 3, 15–16). Plotinus discerns a diminution downwards through the realms of living things and of natural things (II, 9, 13; III, 2, 3). In the case of souls, they are ranked according as they are nearer to or further away from the intelligible world (IV, 3, 6), that is, according as they descend more or less from *Nous* (IV, 3, 12 and 17). A fuller treatment of Plotinus' doctrine regarding hierarchy in the living and natural realms would of course have to examine the roles played by Soul and the Logos. For discussion, see O'Meara, p. 89–95. Also relevant to the topic of this essay are Plotinus' remarks about the One that it has no place but is everywhere and yet nowhere (VI, 9, 6; VI, 8, 16; see also VI, 5, 4).
44. Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus*, c. 2, #10, c. 4, #4 and c. 5, #6, in *Patrologia Graeca*, III (Paris, 1889), cols. 648C, 697C, 700A, 820–821A; *idem*, *De coelesti hierarchia*, c. 8, #2, col. 240B–C and c. 10, #1, cols. 272D–273B. For discussion see V. Lossky, "La notion des 'Analogies' chez Denys le Pseudo-Aréopagite," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 5 (1930), p. 292–293 and 298–300; Endre von Ivánka, "Zum Problem des christlichen Neuplatonismus. II. Inwieweit ist Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita Neuplatoniker?" *Scholastik* 31 (1956), pp. 387–393; Michele Schiavone, *Neoplatonismo e Cristianismo nello Pseudo Dionigi* (Milan, 1963), pp. 76–90, 115–120, 124–133, 198–202 and 215–220. Especially important is René Roques, *L'univers dionysien. Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris, 1954), pp. 53–54, 72–81 and 96–106. For a good analysis of the scholarly literature regarding the Pseudo-Dionysius' dependence on Neoplatonism, see Salvatore R. C. Lilla, "Alcune corrispondenze tra il 'De divinis nominibus' dello pseudo-Dionigi l'Areopagita e la tradizione platonica e patristica," in *Studi in memoria di Carlo Ascheri*, Differenze, IX (Urbino, 1970), pp. 149–177. Several scholars have underscored the difference between the Pseudo-Dionysius and the Neoplatonic tradition. See Endre von Ivánka, "'Teilhaben,' 'Hervorgang,' und 'Hierarchie' bei Pseudo-Dionysius und bei Proklos (Der 'Neuplatonismus' des Pseudo-Dionysios)," in *Actes du XIème Congrès International de Philosophie*, XII (Brussels, 1953), pp. 153–158, and also his earlier "La signification du Corpus Areopagiticum," *Recherches de science religieuse* 36 (1949), pp. 5–24, especially pp. 15–18. See also F. Edward Cranz, "The Transmutation of Platonism in the Development of Nicolaus Cusanus and of Martin Luther," in *Niccolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno* (Florence, 1970), pp. 76–77; John M. Rist, "In Search of the Divine Denis," in *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of T. J. Meek*, ed. W. S. McCullough (Toronto, 1964), pp. 137–138.
45. For editions of the *Liber de causis*, see Otto Bardenheuer, *Die pseudo-aristotelische Schrift Ueber das reine Gute bekannt unter dem Namen Liber de causis* (Freiburg, 1882); ed. Robert Steele in

- Roger Bacon, *Quaestiones supra librum de causis*, *Opera hactenus inedita Rogerii Baconis*, XII (Oxford, 1935), pp. 161–187; Adriaan Pattin, "Le Liber de Causis. Édition établie à l'aide de 90 manuscrits avec introduction et notes," *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 28 (1966), pp. 90–203, which was published separately as *Le Liber de Causis*, ed. A. Pattin (Louvain, 1966). For discussion see Pierre Duhem, *Le système du monde*, IV (Paris, 1916), pp. 329–347; Leo Sweeney, "Doctrine of Creation in *Liber de Causis*," in *An Etienne Gilson Tribute*, ed. Charles J. O'Neil (Milwaukee, 1959), pp. 274–289; Henri-Dominique Saffrey, "L'état actuel des recherches sur le *Liber de causis* comme source de la métaphysique au moyen âge," in *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter*, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, II (Berlin, 1963), pp. 267–281.
46. For discussion regarding the scheme in Augustine, see John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London, 1938 and 1947), pp. 36–41, 90 n. 5, 149–150, 162, 174 and 193–194; Olivier Du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi dans la Trinité selon saint Augustin* (Paris, 1966), pp. 185–190, 324, 334–337 and 477–478; Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man*, A. D. 386–391 (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 41, 45–49, 114, 117–120 and 143–144; *idem*, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pp. 80–88, 146–149 and 178–181; Émilie Zum Brunn, *La dilemme de l'être et du néant chez saint Augustin* (Paris, 1969); *eudem*, "La dialectique du 'magis esse' et du 'minus esse' chez saint Augustin," in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris, 1971), pp. 373–380.
47. See my study, "Metaphysical Foundations of the Hierarchy of Being according to Some Late Medieval and Renaissance Philosophers," which will appear in *Ancient and Medieval Philosophies of Existence*, ed. Parviz Morewedge, to be published by the Fordham University Press in 1981.
48. Albert the Great, *Super Dionysium De divinis nominibus*, ed. Paul Simon, *Opera omnia*, XXXVII, I (Aschendorff, 1972), especially c. 1, 4, 5, and 7. See also *De causis et processu universitatis*, ed. A. Borgnet, *Opera omnia*, X (Paris, 1891), II, tr. 1, c. 8, p. 447b; tr. 2, c. 6, p. 488a; tr. 2, c. 15, pp. 500b–501a, c. 22, p. 512ab, c. 24, pp. 514b–515a; tr. 3, c. 4–5, pp. 553a–554a; *Metaphysica: Libros VI–XIII*, ed. Bernhard Geyer, *Opera omnia*, XIV, 2 (Aschendorff, 1964), X, tr. 1, c. 3, pp. 434–435 and 437–438; *Commentarium in primum sententiarum*, ed. A. Borgnet, *Opera omnia*, XV (Paris, 1893), d. 8, A, a, 7–8, pp. 228–230. For discussion see Rudolf Kaiser, "Die Benutzung proklischer Schriften durch Albert den Grossen," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 45 (1963), pp. 1–22; Bernhard Geyer, "Albertus Magnus und die Entwicklung der scholastischen Metaphysik," in *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter*, pp. 9–10.
49. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentum in primum librum sententiarum*, *Opera omnia*, VII (Paris, 1873), Prolog., q. 1, a. 2, ad 2, p. 6; d. 8, q. 4, a. 1, pp. 115–116, and a. 2, ad 3, p. 118; q. 5, a. 1, p. 120; *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei*, in *Quaestiones disputatae*, II, ed. P. Bazzi, et al. (Turin, 1953), q. 3, a. 5, p. 49; *Summa contra Gentiles*, I (Paris, 1959), c. 28, pp. 224–226; *Super librum De causis expositio*, ed. H. D. Saffrey (Fribourg and Louvain, 1954), prop. 4a, pp. 29–32. The basic study on God as a "measure" according to Aquinas is Gaston Isaye, *La théorie de la mesure et l'existence*, *Archives de philosophie*, XVI, I (Paris, 1940). But see also the important essays of Vincent de Couesnongle, "La causalité du maximum. L'utilisation par saint Thomas d'un passage d'Aristote," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 38 (1954), pp. 433–444; "La causalité du maximum. Pourquoi Saint Thomas a-t-il mal cité Aristote?," *ibid.*, pp. 658–680; "Mesure et causalité dans la 'quarta via'," *Revue thomiste* 58 (1958), pp. 55–75 and 244–284. On the topic of transferring a proportion from a quantitative relationship to any relationship and on analogy in general, see George P. Klubertanz, *St. Thomas on Analogy* (Chicago, 1960), pp. 27, 31–32, 46–49, 83–84 and 88–92; Bernard Montagnes, *La doctrine de l'analogie de l'être d'après Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, *Philosophes médiévaux*, VI (Louvain and Paris, 1963), pp. 75–89. There are scattered remarks regarding the scheme in Pierre Faucon, *Aspects néoplatoniciens de la doctrine de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Lille and Paris, 1975), but no specific analysis of it. On the connection of the scheme to Thomas' doctrine of participation see my article cited above in note 47.
50. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 16, and a. 11, ad 4; q. 23, a. 7, c. and ad 9, in *Quaestiones disputatae*, I, ed. R. Spiazzi (Turin, 1953), pp. 34, 51 and 427–429.
51. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ed. P. Caramello (Turin, 1952), I, q. 8, a. 1, c. and ad 3, p. 36; q. 9, a. 1, ad 3, p. 40; q. 67, a. 2, ad 3, p. 328. On the metaphorical manner of speaking involved, see Montagnes, *La doctrine*, pp. 88–89; M. T. L. Penido, *Le rôle de l'analogie en théologie dogmatique*, *Bibliothèque Thomiste*, XV (Paris, 1931), p. 103.
52. Siger of Brabant, *Questions sur la Métaphysique*, ed. C. A. Graiff, *Philosophes médiévaux*, I (Louvain, 1948), I, q. 7, pp. 11–22; III, q. 7, pp. 95–96; q. 12, pp. 109–110; q. 8, p. 99 and p. 103. See also Joachim Vennebusch, "Die *Quaestiones metaphysice* tres des Siger de Brabant," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 48 (1966), pp. 182–183. For discussion see Fernand Van Steenberghen, "La composition constitutive de l'être fini," *Revue néoscholastique de philosophie* 41 (1938), pp. 489–518, especially pp. 510–518; *idem*, *Maître Siger de Brabant*, *Philosophes médiévaux*, XXI (Louvain and Paris, 1977), pp. 289–293 and 297–301; Armand Maurer, "Esse and Essentia in the Metaphysics of Siger of Brabant," *Mediaeval Studies* 8 (1946), pp. 68–86. The scheme is also to be found in Siger's late questions on the *Liber de causis*. See *Quaestiones super Librum de causis*, ed. Antonio Marlasca, *Philosophes médiévaux*, XII (Louvain and Paris, 1972), q. 46, pp. 163–164.
53. Henry of Ghent, *Summae quaestionum ordinariarum*, I (Paris, 1520; repr. St. Bonaventure, 1953), a. 1, q. 6, f. 27; a. 25, q. 2, f. 148v–150r; a. 26, q. 2, f. 159v; *Summae quaestionum ordinariarum*, II, q. 1, f. 4r and f. 5r; a. 42, q. 2, ff. 6r–8r; *Quodlibeta* (Paris, 1518; repr. Louvain, 1961), Quodl. III, q. 5, f. 53r; IV, q. 15, ff. 124r–124v, 129r and 130r; V, q. 1, f. 152r and f. 143r; q. 3, f. 155v and f. 157r; q. 11, f. 169v; q. 12, f. 171r; VI, q. 1, f. 215r–215v; q. 2, f. 220r; q. 3, f. 221v; IX, q. 1, f. 393v and q. 2, ff. 346r–347r; XI, q. 11, f. 465v, f. 466v and f. 477r. There is no explicit treatment of the scheme in the classic work of Jean Paulus, *Henri de Gand: Essai sur les tendances de sa métaphysique* (Paris, 1938), but see p. 302 n. 2 and pp. 308–309 n. 2. See also José Gómez Caffarena, *Ser participado y ser subsistente en la metafísica de Enrique de Gante* (Rome, 1958), p. 153–158.
54. Giles of Rome, *Quaestiones metaphysicales super libros metaphysicarum Aristotelis* (Venice, 1501; repr. Frankfurt, 1966), X, q. 1, ff. 35va–36ra; q. 3, ff. 36vb–37ra; q. 4, f. 37vab; q. 6, f. 38rb–38vb; XI, q. 1, f. 39rb; *Primum Sententiarum* (Venice, 1521), dist. 8, par. 1, prin. 2, q. 1, a. 2, ff. 47vb–48ra; a. 3, f. 48va; *In secundum librum sententiarum quaestiones*, I (Venice, 1581; repr. Frankfurt, 1968), dist. 1, q. 3, a. 3, pp. 40a–41a; dist. 2, q. 1, a. 2, pp. 109b–110a; dist. 3, pars 1, q. 2, a. 2–5, pp. 195b–197b, 200ab and 206a; dist. 3, pars 2, q. 2, a. 2, p. 245ab; a. 4, pp. 256a–257b. Girolamo Trapè has written a number of highly informative articles on Giles' metaphysics. See for example his "Causalità e partecipazione in Egidio Romano," *Augustinianum* 9 (1969), pp. 91–117. However, there is no explicit discussion of the scheme. In like fashion, William E. Carlo presents texts containing the scheme in Giles' writings, but he too does not explicitly study it. See Carlo's *The Ultimate Reducibility of Essence to Existence in Existential Metaphysics* (The Hague, 1966).
55. Godfrey of Fontaines, Quodl. I, q. 3, in *Les quatre premiers Quodlibets*, ed. M. De Wulf and A. Peizer, *Les philosophes belges*, II (Louvain, 1904), pp. 242–247; Quodl. VII, q. 1, q. 7, q. 8, q. 12, in *Les Quodlibets cinq, six et sept*, ed. M. De Wulf and J. Hoffmans, *Les philosophes belges*, III (Louvain, 1914), pp. 265–266, 359–360, 364 and 388–389; Quodl. X, q. 1, in *Le deuxième quodlibet*, ed. J. Hoffmans, *Les philosophes belges*, IV, 3 (Louvain, 1931), pp. 298–299. It should be emphasized that Godfrey makes very tentative use of the scheme and does not appear to give wholehearted endorsement to it. For discussion see John F. Wippel, "The Dating of James of Viterbo's Quodlibet I and Godfrey of Fontaines' Quodlibet VIII," *Augustiniana* 24 (1974), pp. 348–386, especially pp. 350–362; Maurice De Wulf, *Étude sur la vie, les œuvres et l'influence de Godefroid de Fontaines* (Brussels, 1904), pp. 116–118 and 122–123.
56. On the Pseudo-Dionysius and his influence in the Middle Ages, see Paul Lehmann, "Zur Kenntnis der Schriften des Dionysius Areopagita im Mittelalter," *Revue Bénédictine* 35 (1923), pp. 81–97, especially for earlier period; H. F. Dondaine, *Le Corpus Dionysien de l'Université de Paris au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rome, 1953); Josef Koch, "Augustinischer und dionysischer Neuplatonismus und das Mittelalter," *Kant-Studien* 48 (1956/1957), pp. 117–133, reprinted in his *Kleine Schriften*, I (Rome, 1973), pp. 3–25; Joseph Turbessi, "L'influence du Pseudo-Denys en Occident," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, III (Paris, 1957), cols. 343–356; M. Cappuyns, "Le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite en occident au moyen âge," in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique*, XIV (Paris, 1960), col. 290–295; Piero Scazzoso, *Ricerche sulla struttura del linguaggio*



dello pseudo-Dionigi Areopagita (Milan, 1967), pp. 193–200. For his influence on Albert, see Francis Ruello, *Les noms divins et leurs "raisons" selon saint Albert le Grand, commentateur du "De divinis nominibus"*, Bibliothèque Thomiste, XXXV (Paris, 1963). The classic study for Thomas is, of course, J. Duranet, *Saint Thomas et le Pseudo-Denis* (Paris, 1919).

On the *Liber de causis*, see Saffrey, "L'état actuel des recherches sur le *Liber de causis*," cited above in note 45. Its influence on Thomas has been studied by various scholars. Among them are C. Vansteenkiste, "Il *Liber de causis* negli scritti di San Tommaso," *Angelicum* 35 (1958), pp. 325–374; Daniel A. Callus, "Les sources de Saint Thomas," in *Aristote et Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain and Paris, 1957), pp. 149–153; and Werner Beierwaltes, "Der Kommentar zum 'Liber de causis' als neuplatonisches Element in der Philosophie des Thomas von Aquin," *Philosophische Rundschau* 11 (1963), pp. 192–215. The influence of Dionysius and the *Liber de causis* on Giles of Rome is brought out by Girolamo Trapè, "Il platonismo di Egidio Romano," *Aquinas* 7 (1964), pp. 309–344. See also Carlo, *The Ultimate Reducibility*, especially pp. 57–86.

Translations of the *Elements of Theology* and other works of Proclus by William of Moerbeke made him directly accessible to the Christian medievals. See Clemens Baeumker, *Witelo*, BGPM, III, 2 (Münster, 1908), p. 261–271; Martin Grabmann, *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben*, II (Munich, 1936), pp. 413–423; *idem*, *Guglielmo di Moerbeke O. P. il traduttore delle opere di Aristotele* (Rome, 1946), pp. 147–160; Gérard Verbeke, "Guillaume de Moerbeke traducteur de Proclus," *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 51 (1953), pp. 349–373. Moerbeke's translation of the *Elements* has been edited by C. Vansteenkiste in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 13 (1951), pp. 263–302 and 491–531. For influence on Albert in particular, see, among others, Rudolf Kaiser, "Die Benutzung proklischer Schriften durch Albert den Grossen," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 45 (1963), pp. 1–22. On Moerbeke's own sympathies for Neoplatonism, see Maurice de Wulf, *Histoire de la philosophie médiévale*, 5th ed., II (Louvain and Paris, 1925), p. 110, Grabmann, *Guglielmo di Moerbeke*, pp. 57–61 and 147–160.

57. On the doctrine of intension and remission of form in medieval philosophy, see Anneliese Maier, *Zwei Grundprobleme der scholastischen Naturphilosophie*, 2nd ed. (Rome, 1951), pp. 1–109; Marshall Clagett, "Richard Swineshead and Late Medieval Physics," *Osiris* 9 (1950), pp. 131–161. There is a good general survey of fourteenth-century developments regarding the latitude of forms in John E. Murdoch, "Mathesis in philosophiam scholasticam introducta: The Rise and Development of Mathematics in Fourteenth-Century Philosophy and Theology," in *Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge* (Montreal and Paris, 1969), pp. 215–254, especially pp. 238–249. See also Edith D. Sylla, "Medieval Concepts of the Latitude of Forms. The Oxford Calculators," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 40 (1973–1974), pp. 223–283, especially pp. 252–256.
58. On Swineshead's influence in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Marshall Clagett, *The Science of Mechanics in the Middle Ages* (Madison, 1961), pp. 644–652 and 659–671; John E. Murdoch and Edith Dudley Sylla, "Swineshead, Richard," in *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, XIII (New York, 1976), pp. 184–213, at pp. 209–210 and 212. See also Carlo Dionisotti, "Ermolao Barbaro e la fortuna di Suiseth," in *Medioevo e Rinascimento: Studi in onore di Bruno Nardi*, I (Florence, 1955), pp. 217–253; Garin, *Storia della filosofia italiana*, pp. 444–449 and 456–457.
59. Paul of Venice, *Scriptum super librum de anima* (Venice, 1481), II, tr. 1, c. 3, t. c. 2, sig. e7rb; *Expositio super octo libros physicorum Aristotelis necnon super commento Averrois cum dubiis eiusdem* (Venice, 1499), V, tr. 1, c. 3, t. c. 19, sig. B5rb.
60. See Paul O. Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, trans. V. Conant (New York, 1943), pp. 74–84 and 98–109; *idem*, *Il pensiero filosofico di Marsilio Ficino* (Florence, 1953), pp. 66–77 and 93–105. The general conception of the scheme was accepted by Ficino in his early *Tractatus de Deo, natura et arte*, written in 1454 or 1455. See Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome, 1956), pp. 44–46 and 64–65. The joint influence of Neoplatonism and Thomism on Ficino's metaphysics has been well highlighted by Kristeller, *Medieval Aspects of Renaissance Learning*, ed. and trans. E. P. Mahoney, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, I (Durham, N.C., 1974), pp. 76–77.
61. See Kristeller, *The Philosophy*, p. 14 and p. 160; *idem*, *Il pensiero*, p. 27 n. 4 and p. 169 n. 1.
62. Marsilio Ficino, *The "Philebus" Commentary*, ed. and trans. Michael J. B. Allen (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1975), I, c. 27, pp. 251–257, c. 36, pp. 359–365; II, c. 1, pp. 387–393. For discussion regarding whether God is transcendent to or included within the ascending hierarchy of things, see Walter Dress, *Die Mystik des Marsilio Ficino* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1929), pp. 34–35 and 55, and Giuseppe Anichini, *L'Umanesimo e il problema della salvezza in Marsilio Ficino* (Milan, 1937), pp. 34–37. See also Kristeller, *The Philosophy*, pp. 82–83; *idem*, *Il pensiero*, pp. 75–77; Ardis Collins, *The Secular is Sacred: Platonism and Thomism in Marsilio Ficino's "Platonic Theology"* (The Hague, 1974), pp. 18–19, 44–45, and 55–56.

63. Marsilio Ficino, *Theologia Platonica*, II, c. 2 and c. 3, in *Opera omnia*, pp. 93 and 95. For Ficino's commitment to the scheme see *ibid.*, X, c. 3, p. 226 and XI, c. 6, pp. 259–260. Kristeller brings out Ficino's adoption of the scheme. See ch. IX of *The Philosophy*, entitled "Primum in Aliquo Genere," especially pp. 147, 150–153 and 159–166 (*Il pensiero*, pp. 154–155, 157–161 and 167–175). For discussion on the way in which Ficino's philosophy reflects both the Plotinian and medieval conceptions of hierarchy, the one emphasizing a few general spheres and the other accepting only grades or species, see Kristeller, *The Philosophy*, pp. 75–76 and 80–82 (*Il pensiero*, pp. 67–68 and 72–75); Michael J. B. Allen, "The Absent Angel in Ficino's Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36 (1975), pp. 219–240. See also A. K. Lloyd, "Primum in genere: The Philosophical Background," *Diotima* 4 (1976), pp. 32–36, who emphasizes the background of Aristotle, Plotinus, and Proclus. It should perhaps be noted that, while Ficino does accept the two poles of the scheme, he especially emphasizes the role of God as a measure.
64. Ficino, *Theologia Platonica*, XI, c. 4, pp. 247–249 and 252–253.
65. See George of Trebizond, *Comparationes [sic] philosophorum Aristotelis et Platonis* (Venice, 1523; repr. Frankfurt, 1965), II, c. 2, sig. D4v5 and E7v, who argues that all creatures are equally distant from God inasmuch as all are infinitely distant from him. In his *In calumniatorem Platonis libri IV*, III, c. 6, in Ludwig Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann*, II (Paderborn, 1927; repr. Aalen, 1967), pp. 238–239, Cardinal Bessarion escapes from George's criticism by suggesting that that relation of creatures to God can be understood either as to an infinite God or as to a being that is more perfect than any other being and which is the highest being. He uses texts from Aquinas and Augustine in arguing for his general position.
66. Gabriele Zerbo adopts the scheme in his *Quaestiones metaphysicales* (Bologna, 1482), I, q. 1, sig. A3vb–A4ra; XII, q. 10, sig. ee5ra–ee6rb. He rejects the position and arguments of the "Calculator," that is, Swineshead, in X, q. 3, sig. aa3rb–aa4rb.
67. See Pearl Kibre, "Cardinal Domenic Grimani, 'Questio de Intensione et Remissione Qualitatis': A Commentary on the Tractate of that Title by Richard Suiseth (Calculator)," in *Didascalie: Studies in Honor of Anselm M. Albareda*, ed. Sesto Prete (New York, 1961), pp. 187–194.
68. Pietro Pomponazzi, *Corsi inediti dell'insegnamento padovano*, vol. 1: "Super libello de substantia orbis expositio et quaestiones quatuor" (1507), ed. Antonino Poppi (Padua, 1966), c. 2, pp. 110–111; q. 1, pp. 195 and 210; *idem*, *Tractatus de intensione et remissione*, in his *Tractatus acutissimi, utilissimi et mere peripatetici* (Venice, 1525), Proemium and Sectio prima, c. 1, f. 2rab; c. 5–7, ff. 3ra–3vb; Sectio quinta, c. 6–7, ff. 15vb–17vb. For a discussion of the latter work, see Curtis Wilson, "Pomponazzi's Criticism of Calculator," *Isis* 44 (1953), pp. 355–363.
69. Antonio Trombetta, *Opus in Metaphysicam Aristotelis Padue in thomistas discussam cum quaestionibus perutilissimis antiquioribus adiectis* (Venice, 1502), f. 84rb. See also f. 77vb and 94rb. On Trombetta see Antonino Poppi, "Lo scotista patavino Antonio Trombetta (1436–1517)," *Il Santo* 2 (1962), pp. 349–367.
70. Thomas de Vio, *In De ente et essentia D. Thomae Aquinatis commentaria*, ed. M. H. Laurent (Turin, 1934), c. 5, #103, pp. 162–163, and c. 6, #131, pp. 210 and 212–213; Iacobus Brutus, *Corona Aurea* (Venice, 1496), sig. i7r–i8v. Cajetan's commentary was finished at Padua in 1495. A few years later, in a question finished at Pavia in 1499, he faced the problem of how God could be infinitely distant from creatures and yet measure them by their approach to him. See his "Utrum Deus gloriosus sit infinitae virtutis," in his *Opuscula omnia* (Venice, 1588), p. 193a and p. 205b. For discussion see Antonino Poppi, *Causalità e infinità nella scuola padovana dal 1480 al 1513* (Padua, 1966), pp. 170–185.
71. See *Destructiones destructionum Averrois cum Augustini Niphi de Suessa expositione*, cited above in note 26.
72. For references to the *Liber de causis*, see *ibid.*, III, dub. 12, f. 35vb; VII, dub. 3, f. 84vb; VII,

- dub. 5, f. 89ra; XIV, dub. 1, f. 122rb. Albert's commentary on the work is cited at XIV, dub. 1, f. 119ra. On the possible influence of Thomas, see my article, "Agostino Nifo and Saint Thomas Aquinas," pp. 197-198.
73. *Ibid.*, III, dub. 12, ff. 35rb-36vb; dub. 16, ff. 42vb-43ra; VIII, dub. 1, f. 92ra. See also III, dub. 14, f. 14vb; dub. 19, f. 52ra; V, dub. 3, f. 70rb. The scheme also appears in Nifo's *De intellectu* and his commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima* (1503) and Averroes' *De beatitudine animae* (1508). For further discussion see my article, "Pier Nicola Castellani and Agostino Nifo on Averroes' Doctrine of the Agent Intellect," especially pp. 397-405.
74. Marcantonio Zimara, *Annotationes in Joannem Gandavensem super quaestionibus Metaphysicae*, in John of Jandun, *Quaestiones in duodecim libros Metaphysicae* (Venice, 1505), f. 174rb-174va and f. 175va; *Theoremata seu memorabilium propositionum limitationes* (Venice, 1539), prop. 10, f. 6ra; prop. 12, f. 9ra; prop. 13, f. 9vab. On Zimara see Antonio Antonaci, *Ricerche sull'aristotelismo del Rinascimento: Marcantonio Zimara I* (Lecce-Galatina, 1971); Nardi, *Saggi*, pp. 321-355.
75. On Achillini see Herbert Matsen, *Alessandro Achillini (1463-1512) and His Doctrine of "Universals" and "Transcendentals"* (Lewistown, 1974); Nardi, *Saggi*, pp. 179-279; Garin, *Storia della filosofia italiana*, pp. 502-504 and 563-564.
76. Zimara, *Theoremata*, prop. 13, ff. 9vb-10ra.
77. Alessandro Achillini, *De intelligentiis quodlibeta* (Bologna, 1494), Quodl. I, q. 1, sig. A2ra; Quodl. II, q. 1, sig. B6ra; q. 4, sig. C4vb; Quodl. V, q. 1 and q. 2, sig. F3ra-F3va and F4ra-F5ra. For discussion, see Nardi, *Saggi*, pp. 200-202 and 220-221.
78. Zimara, *Theoremata*, prop. 13, f. 10ra.
79. Giovanni Crisostomo Javelli, *Epitome super propositionibus libri de causis* (Venice, 1567), prop. IV, ff. 28r-30r.
80. Gaspare Contarini, *Primae philosophiae compendium*, in his *Opera* (Paris, 1571), II, pp. 106-107, 110, and 117; III, p. 123; IV, pp. 141-143; VI, pp. 161-162 and 167.
81. Francesco Buonamici, *De motu libri decem* (Florence, 1591), X, c. 17, p. 928; c. 40, pp. 975-976; c. 42, pp. 979-980; c. 43, pp. 981-982. For further analyses of this work see Alexandre Koyré, *Études galiléennes*, I (Paris, 1939), pp. 18-41; William A. Wallace, "Buonamici, Francesco," *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, II (New York, 1970), pp. 590-591. Professor Wallace was kind enough to draw my attention to these passages. I shall examine the thought of Contarini, Buonamici, Galileo, Mazzoni, and Cremonini regarding hierarchy in greater detail on another occasion.
82. *Ibid.*, X, c. 42, pp. 980-981. He explicitly attacks the "Calculator" (that is, Swineshead) and Achillini for taking the zero grade of being as the sole measure of hierarchy. See X, c. 41, p. 977.
83. Galileo Galilei, "Juvenilia," q. 5, in *Le opere di Galileo Galilei*, ed. Antonio Favaro, I (Florence, 1890), p. 78, lin. 14-25 and p. 95, lin. 32 to p. 96, lin. 4. However, Galileo does not discuss in these passages whether the zero grade of being can be taken as the measure of all things. The *Juvenilia* are early notebooks apparently based on the lecture notes of various Jesuit professors at the Collegio Romano and other writers. See William A. Wallace, "Galileo and the Thomists," in *Saint Thomas Aquinas, 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies*, I (Toronto, 1974), pp. 293-330, especially pp. 325-330; *idem*, *Galileo's Early Notebooks: The Physical Questions* (Notre Dame, 1977), pp. v-viii, 12-24 and 270-274; *idem*, "Galileo Galilei and the Doctores Parisienses," in *New Perspectives on Galileo*, eds. Robert E. Butts and Joseph C. Pitt (Dordrecht and Boston, 1977), pp. 87-138; A. C. Crombie, "The Sources of Galileo's Early Natural Philosophy," in *Reason, Experiment, and Mysticism in the Scientific Revolution*, eds. M. L. Righini Bonelli and William R. Shea (New York, 1975), pp. 157-175 and 303-305.
84. Jacopo Mazzoni, *In universum Platonis et Aristotelis philosophiam praeludia sive de comparatione Platonis et Aristotelis* (Venice, 1597), p. 16 and pp. 47-48. Professor Wallace and Professor Frederick Purnell, Jr. brought these passages to my attention and discussed them with me. Mazzoni rests much of his argument on Contarini's *Primae philosophiae compendium*, but he also makes some use of Aquinas. On Galileo's relations with Mazzoni, see Frederick Purnell, Jr., "Jacopo Mazzoni and Galileo," *Physis* 14 (1972), pp. 273-294. Both Mazzoni and Cremonini are mentioned by Alexander Koyré in his *Metaphysics and Measurement* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 35-36; *Études d'histoire de la pensée scientifique* (Paris, 1966), pp. 12, 149, 152, 167-168 and 197; "Galileo and Plato," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (1943), pp. 402 and 420-421.
85. Cesare Cremonini, *Disputatio de coelo in tres partes divisa* (Venice, 1613), Part III, Section 2, c. 2, pp. 320-321; c. 3, pp. 321-322; c. 4, pp. 323-326; c. 5, pp. 327-330; and c. 6, pp. 330-331 and 333. He cites in the first text (pp. 320-321) Nifo's *De intellectu* (Venice, 1503), I, tr. 4, ff. 43vb-44va and Zimara's *Theoremata*, prop. 40, ff. 25vb-26rb. For Galileo's acquaintance with Cremonini, see Antonio Favaro, *Galileo Galilei e lo studio di Padova*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1883), I, pp. 282-283, 392-394 and 466; II, pp. 29-30, 36-42, 87 and 283. On the thought of Cremonini, see among others Léopold Mabillean, *Étude historique sur la philosophie de la Renaissance en Italie (Cesare Cremonini)* (Paris, 1881), especially pp. 191-264, 349-355, and 357-366; Giuseppe Saitta, *Il Rinascimento*, 2nd ed., II (Florence, 1961), pp. 436-454, who discusses Cremonini's *De coelo* but not the scheme; Maria Assunta Del Torre, *Studi su Cesare Cremonini, Cosmologia e logica nel tardo aristotelismo padovano* (Padua, 1968), especially pp. 53-88; Stillman Drake "Galileo and the Career of Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977), pp. 12-32, especially pp. 21-28. In his *Storia della filosofia italiana*, p. 559, Eugenio Garin appears to attribute the scheme to Cremonini, but the matter is not wholly clear. In any case, he does not mention the passages in Cremonini's *De coelo* which we have cited.
86. See *Enneads* V, 5, 10; V, 8, 9; VI, 5, 11; VI, 7, 32; VI, 8, 9; VI, 9, 6. On the One as infinite and on Plotinus' general doctrine of infinity see Joseph Moreau, "L'un et les êtres selon Plotin," *Giornale di metafisica* 11 (1956), pp. 209-213 and 221; Leo Sweeney, "Infinity in Plotinus," *Gregorianum* 38 (1957), pp. 515-535 and 713-732; *idem*, "Another Interpretation of *Enneads* VI, 7, 32," *The Modern Schoolman* 38 (1960-1961), pp. 289-303; *idem*, "Basic Principles in Plotinus' Philosophy," *Gregorianum* 42 (1961), pp. 506-516; W. Norris Clarke, "Infinity in Plotinus: A Reply," *Gregorianum* 40 (1959), pp. 75-98; Rist, *Plotinus*, pp. 24-37. Of particular note are two essays of A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus' Doctrine of the Infinite and its Significance for Christian Thought," *The Downside Review* 73 (1955), pp. 47-58, especially p. 53, and "God's Transcendence and Infinity" in A. H. Armstrong and R. A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy* (New York, 1960), pp. 8-15, especially p. 12. He comments that when Plotinus calls the One the measure, he does not refer to him as infinite. I hope to return to this point on another occasion.
87. See *Enneads*, VI, 8, 9 and 20. For comment see A. H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (Boston, 1963), pp. 155 and 182; O'Meara, *Structures hiérarchiques*, pp. 58-59, n. 22 and p. 98, nn. 12-13.
88. For bibliography on Proclus, see note 43 above. In his commentary on the *Elements of Theology* (p. xxi), Dodds notes that Proclus hardens into a "law" what Plotinus expresses only in a tentative fashion. See also my essay, "Metaphysical Foundations," n. 2.
89. See William R. Schoedel, "'Topological' Theology and Some Monistic Tendencies in Gnosticism," in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig*, ed. Martin Krause (Leiden, 1972), pp. 88-108; *idem*, "Enclosing, Not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God," in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant* (Paris, 1979), pp. 75-86. I am indebted to my colleague at Duke, Professor Robert C. Gregg, for bringing these essays to my attention.
90. On the contrary, Gregory rejects the notion of degrees of "more" and "less" being, appears to consider all creatures to be an equal distance from God, and maps out major divisions in the metaphysical hierarchy rather than a gradually ascending scale of degrees or species. Indeed, he appears to reserve the notions of degrees of perfection and of "more" and "less" participation for the human being's striving for greater and greater perfection and likeness to God, a God who by reason of his infinity will never be reached. See the clear and helpful study of David L. Balás, *ΜΕΤΟΨΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ: Man's Participation in God's Perfections according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, *Studia Anselmiana*, IV (Rome, 1966), pp. 44, 51, 55, 62, 77-78, 114-115, 130-135 and 154-155. See also Endre Ivánka, *Hellenisches und Christliches im frühbyzantinischen Geistesleben* (Vienna, 1948), pp. 43-49 and Ekkehard Mühlberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Göttingen, 1966), especially pp. 147-165. For a sample of Gregory's notion of the soul's unending ascent upwards toward an infinite God who can never be reached, see his *De vita*

*Moyssis*, ed. Herbert Musurillo, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. VII, pars I (Leiden, 1964), Book II, pp. 110–117.

91. This essay was completed in its final form during the tenure of a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation for 1979–1980. Many friends and colleagues have discussed with me various of the topics which it covers. However, I must thank in particular Robert C. Gregg, Paul O. Kristeller, Dominic O'Meara, and Frederick Purnell for helpful advice and information which enabled me to complete the essay.

## ANDREAS CAMUTIUS ON THE CONCORD OF PLATO AND ARISTOTLE WITH SCRIPTURE

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1. See esp. J. Soudek, "The Genesis and Tradition of Leonardo Bruni's Annotated Latin Version of the (Pseudo-)Aristotelian *Economics*," *Scriptorium* 12 (1958), 260–8; "Leonardo Bruni and His Public: a Statistical and Interpretative Study of the Annotated Latin Version of the (Pseudo-)Aristotelian *Economics*," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 5 (1968), 51–136; "A Fifteenth-Century Humanistic Bestseller: the Manuscript Diffusion of Leonardo Bruni's Annotated Latin Version of the (Pseudo-)Aristotelian *Economics*," in *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller* (Leiden, 1976), 129–143; H. Goldbrunner, "Durandus de Alvernia, Nicolaus von Oresme und Leonardo Bruni. Zu den Übersetzungen der pseudo-aristotelischen *Ökonomik*," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 50 (1968), 200–39; "Leonardo Bruni's Kommentar zu seiner Übersetzung der pseudo-aristotelischen *Ökonomik*: ein humanistischer Kommentar," in eds. A. Buck and O. Herding, *Der Kommentar in der Renaissance* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1975), 99–118. In general see E. Garin, "Le traduzioni umanistiche di Aristotele nel secolo XV," *Atti dell'Accademia fiorentina di scienze morali "La Colombaria"* N.S. 2 (1947–50), 55–104.
2. M. Florid, *Incunabula classicorum* (Amsterdam, 1973).
3. See F. E. Cranz, *A Bibliography of Aristotle Editions, 1501–1600* (Baden Baden, 1971), which is far from complete.
4. This is true for essentially all of Aristotle's works. The documentation for this will appear in the section on Latin translations of Aristotle which I am preparing for *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum*. One typical example is the pseudo-Aristotelian *De virtutibus et vitiis* of which there is a single thirteenth-century translation, three fifteenth-century translations, eight versions from the sixteenth century, and two from the early seventeenth century. See my "Aristotle's Ethics in the Sixteenth Century: Some Preliminary Considerations" in *Ethik im Humanismus*, eds. W. Rüegg and D. Wuttke (Boppard, 1979), 87–112.
5. Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Milan, 1939) and later editions and translations.
6. The terms "generatio" and "corruptio" were used in all the medieval translations to render γένεσις and φθορά. The same usage continued through the fifteenth century with the translations of Georgius Trapezuntius and Andronicus Callistus and into the sixteenth century with the new rendering of Agostino Nifo, who in this matter might be called the last of the medievals. The other sixteenth-century translations by Vatable (1519), Alcionio (1521), Péron (1550), Grouchy's revision (1552), and Nobili (1567) wavered between the titles of *De ortu et interitu* (Vatable, Péron, and Grouchy) and *De generatione et interitu* (Alcionio and Nobili). The new usage gradually won the day at the end of the sixteenth century with Vatable's translation getting into both the Casaubon and Duval editions. For further details and documentation see my "Some Observations on the Renaissance Translations of Aristotle" to appear in the proceedings of the Colloquium on the Transmission and Reception of Knowledge held at Dumbarton Oaks (Washington) in May, 1977.

7. For one example see E. J. Ashworth, "Agostino Nifo's Reinterpretation of Medieval Logic," *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 31 (1976), 354–374.
8. This has yet to be worked out in detail, but see E. Garin, *Rinascite e rivoluzioni. Movimenti culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo* (Bari, 1975), 316.
9. D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology* (London, 1972), incorporating papers written in the early 1950s.
10. See the references given in my "Reappraisals in Renaissance Science," *History of Science* 16 (1978), 200–214, at 212n26.
11. See C. B. Schmitt, *A Critical Survey and Bibliography of Studies on Renaissance Aristotelianism, 1958–1969* (Padua, 1971) and "Towards a Reassessment of Renaissance Aristotelianism," *History of Science* 11 (1973), 159–193.
12. On this see the literature cited in *Storia di Milano* (Milan, 1953–1966) XI, 353n5.
13. The full title of the work is *Andree Camutii ad reverendissimum et illustrissimum episcopum et principem Tridentinum dominum D. Christophorum Matruccium, in Sacrarum Literarum cum Aristotele et Platone concordiam. Praefatio*. At the end we read: "Ex Academia Ticinensi pridie nonas Decembris, anno virginiei partus M.D.XLI. Sacrarum Literarum placita, neque Aristoteli neque Platoni aliqua ex parte adversari, et fatemur, et asserimus. Disputabitur Mediolani, die et hora alias publicanda. Excudebat Ticini Io. Maria Simoneta." The only copy known to exist is in the Biblioteca Trivulziana and is described in *Le cinquecentine della Biblioteca Trivulziana, II Le edizioni lombarde*, ed. G. Bologna (Milan, 1966), 131 (no. 283) and *Index aureliensis* VI, 382 (no. 130, 936). My citations will be to my photocopy which I have paginated from the beginning and it is hereafter referred to simply as *Praefatio*.
14. I have used the following sources: Zedler, *Grosses Universal Lexicon* (Halle-Leipzig, 1732–1754) V, 491; Supplementband IV, 1367; C. G. Jocheer, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1750–1751) I, 1617; J. C. Adelung, *Fortsetzung und Ergänzungen* (Leipzig, 1784–1897; repr. Hildesheim, 1960–1961) II, 72; F. Argelati, *Bibliotheca scriptorum Mediolanensium* (Milan, 1745; repr. Farnborough, 1966), 2076–2077; G. B. Giovio, *Gli uomini della Comasca* (Modena, 1784), 326; A. Fabroni, *Historia Academiae Pisanae* (Pisa, 1791–1795; repr. Bologna, 1971) II, 281–284; *Dictionnaire historique, critique et bibliographique* (Paris, 1821–1823) V, 418; Michaud, *Biographie universelle*, nouv. éd. (Paris, 1854) VI, 524; Hoefer, *Nouvelle biographie générale* (Paris, 1855–1866), VIII, 431–432; *Dictionnaire historique et biographique de la Suisse* XII (1924), 396; *Biographisches Lexikon der hervorragenden Ärzte* (Berlin-Vienna, 1929–1935) I, 816; M. E. Cosenza, *Biographical and Bibliographical Dictionary of the Italian Humanists* (Boston, 1962) I, 815; A. L. Albanese, "The Theory of Love and Happiness of Andrea Camuzio" (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1973 = *Dissertation Abstracts* 34 (1973), p. 2544A [order no. 73–28 180] adds little which is new. Of these Argelati and Fabroni are probably the most helpful. I have not been able to see G. A. Oldelli, *Dizionario storico-ragionato degli uomini illustri del Canton Ticino* (Lugano, 1807–1811) and G. Ghilini, *Alcune biografie di medici illustri [per nozze Tecchio-Sardi]* (Venice, 1880).
15. See the material cited in note 12 and C. Salzmann, "Francesco Camuzios Consilium über das Steinleiden," *Gesnerus* 8 (1951), 168–176 and "Der Luganensee. Betrachtung zu einem Brief des Humanisten Francesco Cicercio aus Mailand an den Luganenser Arzt Girolamo Camuzio aus den Jahr 1539," *Gesnerus* 10 (1953), 69–76.
16. Argelati (note 14), 2076.
17. "Neque enim me praeterit multos esse, qui me plus iusto audacem dicant et temerarium, quod iuvenis adhuc utpote novem et viginti vix natus annos, de altissimis philosophiae locis (nam et theologiam eandem esse cum philosophia contendimus) de sublimibus naturae mysteriis, quae nemo hactenus ne olfacere quidem ausus est nedum adgredi, in amplissimo doctissimorum hominum coetu saepe disputationes promulgare non dubitem" (*Praefatio*, 19).
18. See note 34 below.
19. The secondary works agree on this and it seems to be the implication of various indirect statements in the *Praefatio*.
20. *Memorie e documenti per la storia dell'Università di Pavia* (Pavia, 1877–1878; repr. Bologna, 1970) I, 121, 169.
21. *Ibid.*, 169: "Dal 1538 al 1559 non insegnò, cessò affatto dal 1568, nel qual anno credesi morto."

22. Jerome Cardan, *The Book of My Life* (*De vita propria liber*), trans. J. Stoner (New York, 1930; reprint New York, 1962), 44. For the original text see Jérôme Cardan, *Ma vie*. Texte présenté et traduit par Jean Dayre (Paris, 1936), 30.
23. *Andreae Camutii disputationes quibus Hieronymi Cardani magni nominis viri conclusiones infirmantur, Galenus ab eiusdem iniuria vindicatur. Hippocrates praeterea aliquot loca diligentius multo, quam unquam alias explicantur* (Paris, 1563) [copy used: British Library 774.b.9(3)]. According to the table of contents in volume I of Cardano's *Opera* (Lyon, 1663) this work should appear in volume VIII, but I have been unable to locate it in the reprint (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1966).
24. This presumably happened in 1568 when he left Pavia. See above note 21. According to Hoefer (note 14) he was called to Vienna in 1564.
25. *Andreae Camutii Serenissimae Imperatricis physici de amore atque felicitate libri novem* (Vienna, 1574) [copy used Vatican Library Barb. L.IX.25]. There is a manuscript of this work which I have not seen in Milano, Biblioteca nazionale Braidense A. G. IX, 31 [see P. O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum* (London-Leiden, 1963f.) I, 358]. The manuscript version is in six books.
26. *Ibid.*, fol. 311v. The letter is dated July 1, 1574.
27. *Andreae Camutii . . . excussio brevis praecipue morbi nempe cordis palpitacionis Maximiliani secundi Caesaris invictissimi simul ac aliorum aliquot virorum illustrium praeter naturam affectuum* (Florence, 1578) [copy used British Library 1187. a. 1(1)]. I have not seen the reprint of the same work issued at Florence in 1580 [Index Aureliensis 130, 942]. There is a substantial literature on the illness and death of Maximilian II. See H. Schöppler, "Über den Tod Kaiser Maximilians II.," *Mitteilungen zur Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften* 9 (1910), 219–225, which cites the earlier literature.
28. E.g., *Dictionnaire . . . de la Suisse* (note 14) XII, 396 and *Biographisches Lexikon der . . . Ärzte* (note 14) I, 816. See note 21 for a death date as early as 1568.
29. Fabroni (note 14). His presence there is corroborated by Pisa, Archivio di Stato, Univ. G. 77, fols. 155–165 and Univ. 178–179, during which time he was the highest paid professor in the Faculty of Arts at Pisa, earning more than twice the salary of his nearest rival.
30. Fabroni (note 14) II, 341–344. Cf. Schmitt, "Girolamo Borro's *Multae sunt nostrorum ignorantium causae* (Ms. vat. Ross. 1009)" in *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller* (Leiden, 1976), 462–476, at 463–464.
31. Camuzio is listed in the *rotulo* published in *Le opere di Galileo Galilei*, ed. A. Favaro (Florence, 1929–1939), XIX, 33.
32. I have thus far uncovered no information regarding the precise date of his death. He is not listed in the Pisa *rotulo* for the academic year 1587–1588, cited above in note 29.
33. H. Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, trans. F. Graf (London, 1957f.) I, 570n6.
34. MS Vat. lat. 3725 [s. XVI, 22 fols., on vellum, well written in a neat italic hand; see Kristeller, *Iter II*, 323]. *Andreas Camutius contra Martinum Lut[he]ri. Ad S.D.N. Paulum III Pontificem Max. in ecclesiae catholicae defensionem contra hueresiarchas nostrae tempestatis Andreae Camutii, praefatio*. The MS is dated "Lucani pridie Kalendas Iulias anno virginiei partus 1544." At the end is written: "Disputabitur Romae die et hora alias publicanda." This formula is the same as that used in *Praefatio*, cited above in note 13.
35. "Huius monitis alias Aristotelis et Platonis dogmata pro viribus publica disputatione conciliavi, quod caeteri utriusque interpretes ne somniant quidem, tantum abest ut praestiterint: Ioannem Picum Mirandulam excipio, qui in epistola quadam ad Angelum Politianum, pollicitus est quidem Aristotelis et Platonis concordiam, sed morte praeventus quod pollicitus fuerat, conficere non potuit. Porro quam strenue aut (si quibus potius arridet) quam male me gesserim hoc in negotio, testes sunt viri Bononienses nobilissimi, quorum incredibilem expertum sum humanitatem nullo aeo posthabendam: testis est clarissima Patavinorum et Ticinensium Academia. Deffendi et seorsum prius cuncta Platonis dogmata: adhuc genii eiusdem instinctu priusquam publice profiterer, quartum et vigesimum vix natus annum, omnes pene dignas Aristotelis interpretum controversias collegi summo cum labore, deffendique in utranque partem in clarissimo Ticinensium Gymnasio" (*Praefatio*, 19–20). For Pico's letter to Poliziano (i.e., *De ente et uno*) see G. Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno*, ed. E. Garin (Florence, 1942), 385–441. Camuzio then goes on to quote at length Gianfrancesco Pico's account of his uncle's attempt to reconcile Plato and Aristotle. Cf. G. F. Pico, *Opera quae extant omnia* (Basel, 1601), 486 [*Examen vanitatis* 1.2].
36. *Andreae Camutii theoricam in Gymnasio Ticinensi primo loco publice profitentis, de humano intellectu libri quatuor* (Pavia, 1564) [copy used Florence, Biblioteca nazionale 5. 9. 56]. The prefatory letter, dated June 1564, reads in part: "Verum enimvero profusa Dei benignitas interim credentibus ultro nobis, affatim sapientiae latices effundit, humanam certitudinem (quam scientificae demonstrationes parturiunt) longo intervallo superantes. Adeo constat experientia (quanquam humanae cognitionis fineis egreditur) fidei habitum, ei quem scientiae gignunt, anteire: quod adpositissime summi vir ingenii Mirandulanus ille Ioannes Picus aetatis suae decus adnotavit" (fol. 3<sup>v</sup>).
37. "Obijcient (dico) mei adversarii (quorum Ticini praecipue maximus numerus viger) laudes in ore proprio sordescere" (*Praefatio*, 21).
38. "Eo nanque animo sunt, cum philosophi, tum Sacrarum Literarum professores, ut existiment philosophiae studium peripatheticum praecipue, Sacrae Theologiae plurimum adversari, philosophorumque placita theologorum sanctionibus, salutaribusve Christi praeceptis omni ex parte reluctari" (*Praefatio*, 1).
39. Following on from the text quoted in the previous note, he says: "Horum sententiae quae vulgo probatur dudum subscripsi, faviq[ue] adeo, ut interea puderet pigeretque studiorum meorum" (*Ibid.*).
40. "Etenim si istud donemus, inficiari non possumus philosophiam nihil aliud agere praeterquam decipere, circumvenire, praestigiari, veluti magicis machinamentis siderare homines, ac pro arbitrio (ut rhetores) in candida quod aiunt nigrum vertere, in nigra candidum. Nunquid igitur philosophiae professores rerum causas non doceant, sed tanquam argumentosi homines rerum puritatem ludicris veluti, et calamistris dehonestant, ac in quam libuerit faciem habitumque transformant, ut non quales suapte natura res naturales ac divinae, sed quales voluerint, non fiant quidem, sed cum non sint, esse tamen audientibus appareant?" (*Ibid.*, 1–2).
41. "Proh Deum atque hominum fidem, si philosophus talis tantusque impostor est, qui publice in doctissimorum coetibus profiteri passim permittitur? Quid? Quod quidam ultro obstrepunt idem apud philosophos verum esse, quod in theologia mendacium sit, quasi unius rei multiplex possit esse veritas?" (*Ibid.*, 2).
42. The roots of two quite different tendencies are to be found in the intellectual tradition stemming from Plato. One is the synthetic, metaphysical, dogmatic, and constructive side which developed into Neoplatonism. The other is the critical, negative, antidogmatic, and destructive side that developed into Academic scepticism. See my discussion in *Cicero scepticus* (The Hague, 1972), 51–53, 160.
43. E. N. Tigerstedt, *The Decline and Fall of the Neoplatonic Interpretation of Plato* (Helsinki, 1974).
44. "Quod variis ratiociniis aucupari humana ratio contendit, id lex divina severa quadam maiestate sancit, quo facile liquidove videatur utranque [i.e., philosophiam et theologiam] ad eundem finem dirigi, utrius siquidem finis est divinae essentiae (ut philosophice dixerim) cognitio" (*Praefatio*, 3). Cf. Ficino, *Opera* (Basel, 1561), 668.
45. "Philosophus nanque, cum divino propter contemplationem atque decoro frequenter adhaereat, ob idque divinus ipse decorus, quoad homini possibile est, efficiatur, ea quae in superna illa mente intuetur, ad mores hominum iure optimo et privatim et publice transferat, oportet" (*Praefatio*, 10). Ficino adopts a similar position, for example in the *Quaestiones quinque de mente* in *Opera*, 675–682.
46. "Obstrepant licet sacrarum literarum philosophiaeque professores, ego sum huius sententiae, ut existimem sacrosanctae theologiae praecepta Aristotelis atque Platonis placitis nulla ex parte reluctari, quin etiam conspirare in omnibus" (*Praefatio*, 18).
47. Ficino, *Opera*, 853–854.
48. *Praefatio*, 4.
49. *Ibid.*
50. "Quamobrem cum aliis in rebus, tum hoc in negotio praecipue mihi semper visus est Plato

sapienter laborasse, quod disputationes ubique morales ad bene beateque vivendum institutas proposuerit ad purgandum adolescentum animos. Mox ad naturalia investiganda perexit, hinc ad divina indaganda paulatim ascendit" (*Ibid.*).

51. "Ac cum ex naturalium contemplatione abunde didicerit animam quandam esse harmoniam, pro viribus nititur, ut fortitudinem cum temperantia misceat, harmoniamque in moribus constituat compositioni animae quae harmonia dicitur, si fieri possit, maxime conformem. Quod harmonia quaedam sit animus, coelestique harmoniae aliquando (ut Platonicè dixerim) assuetus, vel illud evidentissimum argumentum esse potest, quod nullum animal praeter hominem rhythmici et harmoniae sensum habet. Quinetiam corpus nostrum teste Platone harmonia quadam consistit: vegetant et harmonia quadam plantarum partes, omnium denique mixtorum temperaturae harmonia vigent, praecipue primum animae instrumentum spiritus. Huiusce rei argumentum est, quod si vindictae cupiditate nonnunquam (ut fit) exarserit, per consonantiam vocum aëream, aërcum spiritum motu penetrantem, praesertim si tanta fuerit consonantia, ut affectum canentis et animam secum transferat: tunc praecipue audientis affectum movet affectu, et animum afficit animo, sensimque mentem in pristinum habitum restituit, iramque propulsat. Hinc sit, ut animus pulchra et consona, propterea quod natura suae conformia sint et cognata, semper desyderet. Hinc nimirum Academici passim inculcant optimum id esse ingenium, quod ex temperantia et fortitudine mixtum sit, utpote docile, memor, ad divina propensum, cumque eiusmodi ingenia recte educata sunt, religionis cultum ab iis in alios proficisci verissimum, civitatisque omnium utilissimum asserunt. Tantum potest in hominum mentibus miscella fortitudinis cum temperantia, quam philosophus ex rerum naturalium divinarumque contemplatione primum inexit" (*Praefatio*, 7-9).
52. "Atque hoc in negotio praecipue Plato mihi semper visus est caeteris praestare, cum de musica passim disserat atque gymnastica, quod magni sint momenti, plurimumque conferant ad fortitudinis temperantiaeque mixtionem consequendam aut conservandam" (*Ibid.*, 9).
53. Further investigation is required to determine the cultural *ambiente* at Pavia during those years. Among those teaching philosophy at Pavia during Camuzio's time are Branda Porro (who was also subjected to abuse by Cardano), Arcangelo Lanfrancconi (a Carmelite), Giulio Ferrari, and Filippo Marchesi (a Franciscan).
54. See C. B. Schmitt, "L'Introduction de la philosophie platonicienne dans l'enseignement des universités à la Renaissance," in *XVF Colloque international de Tours: Platon et Aristote à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1976), 93-104, at 99, and the literature cited there.
55. In addition to the works listed above in notes 13, 23, 25, 27, 34, and 36, there are also the following two published works: (1) *Rationes adductae in articulos duos . . . de sacramento ordinis . . .* (Pavia, 1563) [not seen: Index aureliensis 130, 938] and (2) *Andreae Camutii . . . de nobilitate libri octo hactenus in lucem nusquam editi* (Milan, 1641) [copy used: Florence, Biblioteca nazionale 22. 6. 13]. Besides the manuscript works already mentioned, there are various letters scattered through various collections of manuscripts.
56. E. Cassirer, *Die platonische Renaissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1932), Einleitung (1-5).

### TRIADS AND TRINITY IN THE POETRY OF ROBERT BROWNING

1. A prefatory footnote, also, is essential. I am conscious that, in thus surveying the Browning canon, I have drawn on the wisdom of many critics read over the years whose names will not appear in the ensuing notes. To all such, my gratitude is here expressed. I thank also my colleagues and friends, Thomas J. Collins, Donald S. Hair, Cory Bieman Davies, and Linda Dowler, with all of whom I have conversed, fruitfully from my point of view, during the evolution of this paper.
2. *The Works of Robert Browning*, ed. F. G. Kenyon, Centenary Edition (London, 1912; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966). "Pauline," pp. 292, 295. All further line references will be drawn from this edition and incorporated in the text.
3. New York: MacMillan, 1891.

4. Boyd Litzinger, in *Time's Revenges: Browning's Reputation as a Thinker, 1889-1962* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1964), documents the decline in Browning's reputation and calls for reassessment.

Jones is answered most directly by Philip Drew in "Henry Jones on Browning's Optimism," *Victorian Poetry* 2 (1964), pp. 29-41. He expands his arguments in *The Poetry of Browning: A Critical Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1970); a long note on p. 186 gives examples of the "incalculable" and misleading influence of Jones' work. Drew's sane discussions are representative of good modern criticism on the issues here raised. He is not directly concerned with triadic or trinitarian formulations.

5. To speak of birth as the "descent" of the soul was commonplace in Plato and his followers, and in ancient Gnosticism; the philosophers usually showed themselves conscious of using metaphor, the Gnostic mythmakers less so. Two brief references: "The Descent of the Soul" in *The Essential Plotinus*, trans. and ed. Elmer J. O'Brien (Toronto: Mentor, 1964), 59-71; Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1958), pp. 62-64.
6. Christopher Butler, *Number Symbolism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 3.
7. In notes to a previous essay, "An Eros Manqué: Browning's 'Andrea del Sarto,'" *Studies in English Literature* 10 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 252-254, I cite evidence and confirming opinion concerning Browning's familiarity with the Platonic tradition. More recently, Curtis Dahl and Jennifer L. Brewer have written on "Browning's 'Saul' . . . A Neoplatonic-Hermetic Approach," *Browning Institute Studies* III (1975), pp. 101-118. John Maynard, in *Browning's Youth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 85-96, describes the encyclopedic nature of Browning's father's library. *Curiosa* and standard works of all kinds, in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and many modern languages were available, both directly, and as filtered through the elder Browning's retentive memory. Thurman Los Hood, in *Browning's Ancient Sources* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1922), offers exhaustive lists of analogues and sources for specific passages in Browning: Plato, Suetonius, Plutarch, Cicero, and Iamblichus are among those cited. Judith Berlin-Lieberman, in *Robert Browning and Hebraism* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1934) demonstrates Browning's familiarity with rabbinical sources, without being concerned directly with their possible use as vehicle of Neoplatonic commonplaces.
8. A brief description of Hegel's dynamic system is available in most encyclopedias and histories of philosophy: see, for example, *New Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, eds. J. Grooten and G. Jo Steenbergen (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972), pp. 180-183.
9. At the risk of anticipating key arguments in this paper: the process of critical discovery, as the revealing of the desired end, bears a precise analogy to Browning's understanding of the poetic process as his means of reaching towards his Answer.
10. The stages in Browning's development that culminate in the completed "Saul" have been described by such critics as F. E. L. Priestley, Thomas J. Collins, William Whitla, and David Shaw. Notes to my article, "The Ongoing Testament in Browning's 'Saul,'" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 43 (Winter, 1974), pp. 151-168, give particulars.
11. I indicate at this point some fairly recent publications that bear on matters here addressed. H. B. Charlton's "Browning as Poet of Religion," first published in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* (June, 1943), was given fresh currency in 1970 in a Folcroft Library Edition. It all but ignores Jones' adverse charges in providing an outline of Browning's more positive assertions concerning faith, and misses the constant presence of scepticism in the scheme of things. William Whitla's *The Central Truth: The Incarnation in Robert Browning's Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963) recognizes the continuing importance of scepticism in Browning, seeing the movement through doubt and the recognition of love to acceptance of the incarnate Christ; but Whitla does not deal with the differences in emphasis I find important between early, central, and late periods, as defined by my awareness of such differences. (His organization is thematic, without, of course, ignoring chronology.) He finds Browning's "trinitarian" position a good deal more readily definable than I do. He equates the Holy Spirit with Knowledge, without underscoring the radical necessity of the act of choice in knowing, itself dependent upon the fruitful scepticism. Norton B. Crowell in *The Triple Soul: Browning's Theory of Knowledge* (University

- of New Mexico Press, 1963) is not as concerned with triadic formulations as his title suggests. He offers, primarily, a series of readings of individual poems that are chosen to demonstrate Browning's view of man's quest for knowledge.
12. In "The Ongoing Testament . . ." I develop more fully the easily recognized evidence that Browning sees himself in a prophetic role.
  13. W. C. DeVane, *A Browning Handbook* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955), p. 55.
  14. F. E. L. Priestley, in "The Ironic Pattern of Browning's *Paracelsus*," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 34 (1964) pp. 68-81, and Collins, in *Robert Browning's Moral-Aesthetic Theory, 1833-55* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), p. 30, emphasize the degree to which Aprile's aspiration to love "infinitely" misleads Paracelsus at this point. I agree that Aprile's words feed Paracelsus' passion for infinity, but find the Priestley and Collins arguments not at all incompatible with mine, that Paracelsus glimpses the partial truth here that "love" and "power" belong together. For suggestions as to how I will have it both ways, see the paragraph on vertical and horizontal dimensions of the dyadic dilemma on page 194.
  15. C. G. Jung's two essays on Paracelsus, accessible in *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature* (Princeton: Bollingen, 1966), give an interesting and concise impression of the life, with enough historical particulars to substantiate Browning's characterization.
  16. Paracelsus, like most Renaissance mages, dabbled in cabalistic lore. Some method is suggested in his madness if we recall the prominence of the occult commonplace "as above, so below" in Cabala with the suggestion therein of a reciprocal dynamic between spiritual and mundane realms. A passage in *Zohar* on the creation of man (ed. G. G. Scholem, New York: Schocken, 1963 pp. 31-33) witnesses to the close interrelationship between upper and lower worlds in rabbinical lore, a devout mystical awareness pushed towards manipulative magic in Renaissance occultism. See also Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 264-274.
  17. See note 10, and works therein cited.
  18. Collins, p. 122, points to evidence in the "Essay on Shelley" which implies that the movement of conversion for Browning was essentially complete by 1852, in which case the stanzas in question may have been written at least that long before publication.
  19. They have been anticipated, too, in the luminous water-snakes that provide release for Coleridge's ancient mariner from the stagnation that has bound him.
  20. In stanza xii.
  21. The dissenters' chapel of the speaker's choice should not be too closely identified with the York Street Congregational Chapel attended by the youthful Browning with his mother, which was more pretentious than the one the poem presents. See Maynard, pp. 51-62, and Hoxie N. Fairchild, *Religious Trends in English Poetry IV* (New York: Columbia, 1957), p. 139.
  22. Images from Genesis 2:9 and Revelation 22:2 underlie these words of course. Fallen life itself becomes the median term stretching between primal innocence and *eschaton*.
  23. DeVane, p. 298.
  24. *Enneads* III, 8 (available in O'Brien, 163-175); *Paradise Lost* V, 469-505.
  25. The poem is subtitled "Or, Natural Theology in the Island."
  26. The usage of the term "Molinists," in multiple occurrences throughout *The Ring and the Book*, is curious. Browning clearly intends it to refer to the followers of Miguel de Molinos, who are mentioned only once in the Old Yellow Book that serves as his major source: these "heretics" espoused, in the late seventeenth century, a form of contemplative mysticism known usually as "Molinism," or as "Quietism." "Molinism," in church history, is not regarded as a heresy: it is a legitimate doctrine on the freedom of the will established in the sixteenth century by Luis de Molina. Helen M. Loschky, in "Free Will Versus Determinism in *The Ring and the Book*," *Victorian Poetry* 6 (1968), pp. 333-352, reviews the criticism to that point, and finds as I do, against the majority of earlier discussants, that Browning is not at all confused in his usage. (The thrust of her argument is towards the earlier term, of mine towards both.) Browning's conflation serves to provide appropriate historical coloring to his narrative, a purpose for which "Molinism" would have done at some strain to the metrics; the term serves, through evidences that a mystical heresy is being indicated, to point to the apprehensions of eternal truth by inner means while avoiding the term "Quietism" which would be quite foreign to the active encounters with spiritual truth Browning is interested in presenting; and it serves to suggest the dimensions of willful choice that are central to Browning's own evolved theology. It is doubtful that he would have expected many readers to catch the play upon terminology, but in a poet whose applications of erudition impressed his incompatible contemporary Swinburne with their precision (see Clyde de L. Ryals, *Browning's Later Poetry*, Ithaca: Cornell, 1975, p. 245), such density in the function of obscure detail is not surprising.
  27. See F. E. L. Priestley, "A Reading of 'La Saisiaz,'" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 25 (1955), pp. 47-59; and Cory Bieman Davies, "From Knowledge to Belief in *La Saisiaz: The Two Poets of Croisic*," *Studies in Browning and his Circle* 6 (1978), pp. 7-24.
  28. Donald S. Hair, in "Exploring Asolando," *Browning Society Notes* 8 (1978), pp. 3-6, finds in the volume's subtitle "Fancies and Facts" a useful focus for ranging through the volume.
  29. DeVane, p. 553.
  30. Ryals, p. 238.
  31. John Donne, "A Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness," available in many anthologies as well as in *John Donne, The Complete English Poems*, ed. A. J. Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971) p. 347.
  32. "A Death in the Desert," I, 101.

#### THE CHRISTIAN PLATONISM OF C. S. LEWIS, J. R. R. TOLKIEN, AND CHARLES WILLIAMS

1. *Descent of the Dove* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974) copyright date is 1939.
2. *Surprised by Joy* (London, England: Fontana Books, 1959) copyright date is 1955, chapters XIII, XIV, and XV.
3. *Taliessin Through Logres* in Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis, *Taliessin Through Logres, The Region of the Summer Stars, and Arthurian Torso* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974) copyright date of *Taliessin Through Logres* is 1938. Six of Williams' novels are currently published by Eerdmans Publishing Co.: *Shadows of Ecstasy*, *War in Heaven*, *Many Dimensions*, *The Greater Trumps*, *The Place of the Lion*, and *Descent into Hell*. The seventh novel, *All Hallows' Eve*, is published by Noonday Press.
4. "On Fairy Stories" in *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
6. *The Chronicles of Narnia* are currently published by Collier Books: *The Lion*, *The Witch*, and *The Wardrobe*; *Prince Caspian*; *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*; *The Silver Chair*; *The Horse and His Boy*; *The Magician's Nephew*; and *The Last Battle*.
7. *The Last Battle*, p. 170.
8. p. 73.
9. *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, ed. C. S. Lewis (Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966), p. 8.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
11. *The Lord of the Rings* consists of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965) copyright date is 1963.
12. *The Silmarillion* (London, England: George, Allen, and Unwin, 1977).
13. The Trilogy is currently published by Macmillan: *Out of the Silent Planet*; *Perelandra*; and *That Hideous Strength*. The quotation is from *Perelandra*, p. 199.
14. p. 195.
15. *The Place of the Lion*, p. 116.
16. *Sophist* 248C in the *Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1892).
17. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
18. *Surprised by Joy*, chap. XI. Also, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: MacMillan, 1947), pp. 86-90.
19. *The Abolition of Man*, loc. cit.

20. *Out of the Silent Planet*, p. 131.
21. p. 189.
22. Symposium 201D–212A in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett.
23. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, chap. VII.
24. In my opinion, Williams' desire to express this philosophico-religious position in literary art is firmly within the Platonist tradition. Here the beauty of the material is expressed in the beauty of poetry.
25. *The Place of the Lion*, chap. XI.
26. chap. 18.
27. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, p. 184.
28. p. 206.
29. *That Hideous Strength*, chap. XVII.
30. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1960).
31. *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, chap. X.
32. *The Place of the Lion*, chap. XI.
33. *The Last Battle*, chap. XV.

### NEGATIVE THEOLOGY, MYTH, AND INCARNATION

1. The Academic rather than the Pyrrhonian is, I think, the strongest sceptical element in our tradition. It differs from the Pyrrhonian in admitting degrees of probability, and so leaving room for enthusiasm, and even a degree of commitment (though not absolute commitment). See the generally excellent statement of the difference between the two traditions by the Pyrrhonian Sextus Empiricus (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 226–231); though it does not seem to be true that, as Sextus asserts, the Academics fell into the elementary mistake of stating dogmatically that they knew that they did not know, or that Carneades in any way illegitimately smuggled certainty as an ultimate norm into his theory of probability; see A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (London, 1974) pp. 94–99.
2. J. Trouillard, "Valeur critique de la mystique Plotinienne" in *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 59 (August, 1961) pp. 431–434; "Raison et Mystique chez Plotin" in *Revue des études augustiniennes* 20 (1974) pp. 3–14; "Théologie négative et autoconstitution psychique chez les néoplatoniciens" in *Savoir, faire, espérer: les limites de la raison* (Publications des Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, Brussels, 1976) pp. 307–321; A. H. Armstrong "The Escape of the One" in *Studia Patristica XIII* (Berlin, 1975) pp. 77–89; "Negative Theology" in *Downside Review* vol 95, no 320 (July, 1977) pp. 176–189.
3. "Of course he [Plato] used metaphor, and metaphor is basic: how basic is the most basic philosophical question," Iris Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* (Oxford, 1977) p. 88.
4. See Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford, 1977) ch. x, *Conclusion*. Plotinus uses a great deal of positive "substance" language about God, in the way described, in VI 8 [39] where in my view, which I propose to develop in another paper, he is arguing, patiently though not without irritation, with a Christian theist much concerned about the free will of God. But the Neoplatonic work that uses substance and knowledge-language most strikingly (and quite coherently) of God in a context of extremely radical negative theology is the anonymous commentary on the *Parmenides* so admirably studied and edited by P. Hadot in his *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris, 1968; text of the Commentary in vol. II), especially IV and V (pp. 74–83, Hadot: fol. 94<sup>v</sup> and fol. 64<sup>v</sup>). It is not quite as certain as Hadot supposes that the commentary is by Porphyry. I hope that my pupil Dr. G. Adolf will publish his reasons for questioning the identification of the author. But it is a most original Neoplatonic work, of great importance for the development of negative theology.
5. In "Théologie négative et autoconstitution psychique . . ." (see note 2) pp. 312–313: "Dès lors, la notion de 'Dieu caché' change de sens. Le Dieu de saint Augustin et de saint Thomas est caché parce que, étant la plénitude infinie de l'intelligibilité, sa trop grande clarté nous éblouit, comme le soleil regardé en face offusque nos yeux. L'Un néoplatonicien est nocturne parce qu'il refuse tout contenu intelligible et toute pensée. Il est au-delà l'ordre de connaissance. Il n'a donc pas de secret, c'est-à-dire d'essence qui se déroberait au regard. Cela ne veut pas dire qu'il ne peut se communiquer et qu'il reste muré dans une transcendance inaccessible." What follows, on the immanent interior transcendence of the One as an "inexhaustible starting-point," always before, never attained by, thought is very relevant to a proper understanding of what I mean by "myth" in its extended and positive sense.
6. For my curious use of "icon," cf. "Negative Theology" (see note 2) pp. 188–189.
7. *Divine Names* 4, 13 (712A–B).
8. In "Le Merveilleux dans la vie et la pensée de Proclus," in *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger* (1971) pp. 439–452; section 3 "La fonction de l'imagination," pp. 447–452. The principal source for the views of Proclus on poetic myth is in *Rempublican* I 368–407, 69–205 Kroll, especially 368–378, 71–86 Kroll.
9. *The Fire and the Sun* (see note 3), especially pp. 69–89.
10. I refer particularly to his "Does Christology Rest on a Mistake" in *Religious Studies* 6, 1, (March, 1970) pp. 69–76 and his second essay in *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London, 1977) "Myth in Theology," pp. 148–166. I also find very satisfying his treatment, both historical and theological, of a most important and difficult theme in the "myth," that of resurrection, in the appendix to his *Remaking of Christian Doctrine* (London, 1974) pp. 125–146. I find this much more satisfying than the summary dismissal of the resurrection by both sides in the older controversy between Jaspers and Bultmann (originally published in book form as *Die Frage der Entmythologisierung*; English translation (*Myth and Christianity*) first printed in paperback New York, 1958 and frequently reprinted since). In many ways, however, my position is fairly close to that of Jaspers', and I agree with much in his defense of liberalism and his appreciation of the religious value of myth.
11. I have in mind particularly his essay in *The Myth of God Incarnate* (see note 10) "The Christ of Christendom," pp. 133–147, and his numerous and vigorous defenses of his position since, generally on radio or television.
12. On the historical Jesus I am at present in general agreement with the position of Dennis Nineham in his somewhat devastating *Epilogue* (pp. 186–204) to *The Myth of God Incarnate* (see note 10), which shows clearly what very awkward questions a serious critical study of the evidence can raise.
13. Cf. Gilbert Murray *Greek Studies*, pp. 66f and E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (University of California Press, 1951) pp. 179–180.
14. I have discovered this by experience in dialogue with an Indian and an Isma'ili friend. If they spoke the language of their own traditions and I spoke the language of Neoplatonism, we understood each other without much need of interpretation. P. Hadot, in his profound interpretation of Hellenic philosophy as a whole, *Exercices Spirituels* (*Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études*, 5<sup>e</sup> Section, T. LXXXIV, pp. 25–70) has demonstrated that we have in our own Western tradition a rich and varied store of the sort of wisdom for which many people now look to the East.
15. In *The Origins of Christology* (Cambridge, 1977). The excellent hypotheses—clearly presented as such—of the chapters devoted to a scholarly consideration of the New Testament evidence do not, unfortunately, seem to me, even if they are taken as certain conclusions from that evidence, to support sufficiently the apologetic conclusion.
16. Those of others will, of course, be different. It is perfectly possible to make a "Jesus of scholarship," even before he goes out of fashion, the historical foundation of a myth; and for very many people a Semitic rather than a Hellenic form of myth, incarnational or nonincarnational, Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, will be the right and necessary one. My own reasons for especially disliking un-Hellenic or de-Hellenized Western Christian or post-Christian biblical myths would take too long to explain adequately: it would be necessary to deal with such subjects as the disjunctiveness of biblical monotheism, the "meaning of history," and the harm done in real history by the idea of an elect or chosen people in its various forms. (Of course, in many of them the gentiles of the myth will include or be Jews).
17. My belief that what I had noticed in Dionysius was really there was strengthened by discovering that Dr. Bernhard Brons had noticed the same phenomena and forcibly described them in his

scholarly studies of the Dionysian writings. *Gott und die Seienden* (Göttingen, 1976) and "Pronoia und das Verhältnis von Metaphysik und Geschichte bei Dionysius Areopagita" in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 24 (1977) 1-2, pp. 165-186. Of course, as the theological position of Dr. Brons seems to be almost the exact opposite of my own, he notes these characteristics of Dionysian thought with disapproval.

18. It has often been observed that the Fathers of the Alexandrian tradition, in particular, seem more interested in the "incarnability" of the Logos and the universal theandric union of God with humanity as a whole than in the particular historic Incarnation, and something of this persists in Greek-Christian theology and theology influenced by it in the West. E. P. Meijering's "Cyril of Alexandria on the Platonists and the Trinity" in *God Being History* (Amsterdam-Oxford-New York, 1975) pp. 114-127 is of much interest in this connection.
19. For the way in which Dionysius speaks of the Trinity see, e.g., *Celestial Hierarchy* VII 4 (212C); *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* I 3 (373C-D); *Divine Names* I 4 (592A); 5 (593B); II 7 (645B-C); III 1 (680B); XIII 3 (980D-981A); *Mystical Theology* III (1033A) and V (1048A; cf. Letter II). On the way in which Dionysius, as is generally supposed, adapts Athenian Neoplatonism to Christian purposes by a certain conflation of the Neoplatonic One and the Neoplatonic *Nous*, see the most recent discussion by S. Gersh *From Iamblichus to Eriugena* (Leiden, 1978). It is agreed that Dionysius is not a "hierarchical" thinker in the sense of Proclus (cf. my "Negative Theology"—see note 2—pp. 181-184) and that he uses very positive language about God's being, knowledge and action while strongly maintaining an extreme apophatic theology. But there are unsolved, and possibly insoluble, questions as to the precise relative importance of the contributions made to this Dionysian Christian Platonism by the distinctively Christian side of the theology which he inherited (especially from the Cappadocians), by the predominantly pre-Plotinian Platonism which was the philosophy most used by fourth-century theologians, and, possibly, by a return, which might have been deliberate, to a more Plotinian-Porphyrian kind of Neoplatonism (see p. 217 and note 4).
20. The principal Christological passage is *Divine Names* II 9-10 (648A-649A); cf. XI 1-2, 948D-953B where *Eirene* and "Jesus" or "Christ" seem to be interchangeable divine names.
21. In view of his great influence, the universal sweep of his vision of creation and salvation, and his intense devotion to the Incarnate Lord (who is much more than a symbol to him, however allegorically he interprets the details of his earthly life), Origen deserves particularly careful investigation on this point. And I do not wish to lump together the great thinkers, from Maximus onwards, who have more or less followed the Dionysian tradition under any superficial generalization.
22. See my "Man in the Cosmos" in *Romanitas et Christianitas* (Amsterdam-London, 1973) pp. 5-14.
23. The main Platonic authority for this conviction for later Platonists has of course been *Timaeus* 29D-30B, though it pervades the theology of the *Dialogues*. My way of putting it is a summary paraphrase of Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, Proposition 122 (especially p. 128, lines 19-21 Dodds).

*Note:* I had written this paper before the publication of Dr. E. P. Meijering's excellent book, *Theologische Urteile über die Dogmengeschichte: Ritschl's Einfluss auf von Harnack* (Leiden, 1978). This does a very great deal to clarify the nature, origin, and much of the development of what I have described as "biblical" theology, and in the author's final critique of Harnack suggests approaches to the Bible, Greek philosophy, and the theology of the Christian Fathers which, if they were widely followed, might lead to the transformation rather than the disintegration of our Inherited Conglomerate.

## WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE PLATONISTS

1. On Absolute theory, see also my *Ascent to the Absolute* (New York, 1970), *The Discipline of the Cave* (New York, 1966) and *The Transcendence of the Cave* (New York, 1967).

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*Porphyry's Letter  
to His Wife Marcella*

CONCERNING THE LIFE OF PHILOSOPHY  
AND THE ASCENT TO THE GODS

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK BY  
ALICE ZIMMERN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
DAVID R. FIDELER

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**NEOPLATONISM AND  
CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT  
PART ONE**

**R. Baine Harris, Editor**

*INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR NEOPLATONIC STUDIES*

Volume 10 in *Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern*  
R. Baine Harris, General Editor

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## PREFACE

R. Baine Harris

All philosophers are children of their age and primarily speak to the intellectual needs of their constituencies, but the really great ones somehow manage to transcend their own time. They think more deeply and provide a more profound analysis of the issues and produce a new, richer, and more consistent synthesis of their thought than do lesser philosophers. They break the bounds of the concerns of their day by focusing upon those perennial questions that people in all cultures ask when they philosophize, questions such as 'What is really real?', 'What is the true nature of man?', 'How do we know and how do we know we know?', 'Will we survive our death?', 'Is there a divine source of the world, and if so, how are we related to it?' 'What responsibilities do we have to ourselves, to the earth, and to all the social groups that live on it?', and similar questions. On the basis of his responses to all of these questions Plotinus, an Egyptian who taught philosophy in Rome in the middle of the Third Century AD, certainly qualifies as a great philosopher, and has been so regarded by major thinkers in the West in various centuries since his time, including some in our own century.

Rome in the middle of the Third Century AD was a place that had an intellectual milieu quite similar to the one in our time. By then Rome itself had been intellectually invaded by the cultures of those countries her armies had invaded during the past six centuries. Old established ideas and customs were being challenged by new ways of thinking. There was such a profusion of them that there was considerable confusion among both the general public and the philosophers concerning what ought to be believed. A parallel situation exists in our time in most every country of the world. Old established cultures are being challenged by the intrusion of new ideas brought in by numerous visitors to their shores, and from foreign radio, movies, television and the Internet. Just as in Third Century Rome there is now much confusion concerning what ought to be believed.

Like Confucius, Plotinus thought of himself as only a conservative and a traditionalist who sought to speak to the intellectual disorder of his time by appealing to the unified thought of certain earlier philosophers. More specifically, he thought of himself as a Platonist who sought to bring the unified philosophy of a Greek philosopher who had lived in Athens six

centuries earlier to bear upon the intellectual issues that were then facing Roman culture. Thus, in his old age and after many years of teaching and thinking, he synthesized a new version of Platonism, which he presented in his lectures in his academy in Rome. He only wrote one small book. Actually, he did not write the book himself, but allowed a colleague of his, Porphyry, to take down notes from his lectures and arrange them into a series of essays in nine divisions with six essays each, a work which later became known as the *Enneads*, or "the Nines."

Whether or not his version of Platonism is "true Platonism" is an issue that is still being debated by contemporary Platonic scholars; but it was the version that came to have the most historical importance in the West. His version is old in the sense that it follows the basic assertions of Plato, but new in the sense that it takes into consideration Aristotle's criticisms of Plato and makes some adjustments for them in a more logically organized consistent system of thought, similar in style to Aristotle's way of philosophizing. Thus, he actually produced an Aristotelianized version of Platonism or Platonized version of Aristotelianism, so much so that German scholars in the late Nineteenth Century dubbed him and his imitators in later centuries as "Neoplatonists." Regardless of what he is now labeled, Plotinus would likely have not thought of himself as a new Platonist but merely as an old one who merely formulated Platonism into a more organized consistent form.

The term "neoplatonist," however, needs some further consideration. None of the later Neoplatonists, including all of the teachers associated with him in his academy, chose to accept Plotinus' metaphysical system exactly as he presented it. Even his "Boswell," Porphyry, his editor, promoter, and biographer, in his own version of Neoplatonism denied five of Plotinus' logical categories and substituted five of Aristotle's categories in their place, and thus produced another version of Neoplatonism that for many centuries was more influential than the version given in the *Enneads*. Although all his followers may be loosely called "Neoplatonists," some of them, and especially the teachers then associated with him, simply made their own versions of Platonism, versions that are similar to his, while others of them, especially in later centuries, revised his system with major emendations. Still others accepted only certain parts of his epistemology, metaphysics, psychology, etc. mixing new ideas and new reformulations with it. The latter raises the question how much of the thought of Plotinus must be incorporated into a new formulation of it in order for it to be labeled "Neoplatonic."

Thus, we must conclude that the term "Neoplatonist" does not have a very exact meaning. In the strictest sense, there probably has never been another pure Plotinian since Plotinus; but, nevertheless, elements of his thought, and even new versions of his metaphysics, have appeared in various degrees in the thought of various philosophers, theologians, artists, and poets in various venues in the West in various centuries since he first formulated it in Rome. In addition, philosophical formulations similar to his have appeared in the thought of certain philosophers in India, both before and after the Third Century, AD. Although these have not been historically labeled as Neoplatonic, some of them have a remarkable affinity with his views. To the writer's knowledge, there have been no efforts to make a new reformulation of his metaphysics in modern times, but his influence has been much greater than it might at first appear to be due to elements of his thought that have been embedded in the thought of other writers and scholars who are still widely read. Numerous Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and "pagan" philosophers, theologians, artists, and poets throughout the centuries of Western Intellectual History have gone to his *Enneads* almost cafeteria style and picked out certain elements of them to be reused in their own new formulations. In this way he has actually been one of the most influential of all the Roman thinkers who helped to shape what we now term "Western Civilization."

This explanation is relevant to a consideration of the nature of the forty essays in the two volumes of this book. Most of them were first given in an earlier form at a four day international congress of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies held in Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee held in May of 1995, with some 130 scholars in attendance. The purpose of the conference was to illustrate that some elements of the thought of Plotinus survived to be of some importance in the Twentieth Century and may be viable for the future. As its name suggests, this society is a society for the *study* of Neoplatonism rather than a fellowship of Neoplatonic believers, and as such, includes members who vary in their degree of academic involvement in the subject. For some it is their primary field for teaching and research, while others are interested in it only as it may be related to some other major concern. In like manner, its members also vary in the degree to which they sanction Neoplatonism as a philosophy. Some see it as an important element in understanding the history of Western Thought, but judge it to have only antiquarian value, while others see some elements of it to be quite viable for modern times. The various essays in these two volumes reflect the same sentiments. They are not so much apologies for Neoplatonism as they are evaluations

of it, both as a historical phenomenon, and as a philosophy and a way of philosophizing that still can speak to the intellectual needs of modern man. Included among them are essays by some of the major recent noted authorities on Neoplatonism, including those by John Anton, Leo Sweeney, A.H. Armstrong, Werner Beierwaltes, and John N. Findlay. Part One contains essays that relate Neoplatonism in some way to Contemporary Science and Contemporary Philosophy while those in Part Two relate it to Contemporary Social Theory, Contemporary Aesthetics, and Contemporary Spirituality.

Finally, as editor I wish to express my appreciation to Professor John Lachs, Director for the Center for Neoplatonic Studies at Vanderbilt University for hosting and co-directing the 1995 ISNS conference and for the scores of persons, ISNS members and otherwise, involved in the production of this book.

Old Dominion University

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# Science and the Great Chain of Being

Huston Smith

I toyed with titling this paper "Science and Neoplatonism," but because I will be making few explicit references to Plato and his successors, I have chosen the Great Chain of Being as a more general designation for the hierarchical ontology that ascends from lesser existences through intermediate planes up to the *ens perfectissimum* at its top. Arthur Lovejoy said that most educated persons everywhere accepted this groundplan of the universe without question down to late in the eighteenth century,<sup>1</sup> and Ken Wilber has added that belief in it has been "so overwhelmingly widespread that it is either the single greatest intellectual error every to appear in human history—an error so colossally widespread as to literally stagger the mind—or it is the most accurate reflection of reality yet to appear."<sup>2</sup> My object is to match it with the scientific world view that in the eighteenth century replaced the Great Chain of Being (hereafter the GCB) as the presiding ethos in the West. I want to consider how they do and do not mesh.

## I

As mine is the opening presentation in this conference, it seems in order to direct a few words to the theme of our conference as a whole, "Neoplatonism and Contemporary Thought," before I turn to my specific topic. Neoplatonism—I shall be using that word and the Great Chain of Being interchangeably—is a hierarchical metaphysics, and few words are in less favor today than those two, "metaphysics" and "hierarchy." So I feel we need to begin our conference by manning the barricades and insisting that they are respectable words.

Regarding metaphysics, I recently heard a theologian tell of a tour he led to the main geographical centers of the Protestant Reformation. The participants were a select group of well-informed Christians. They were keenly interested in, and knew a lot about, Wittenburg and Guttenburg, Luther's Ninety-five Theses and his plan of salvation. My informant was surprised, therefore, to find that from his point of view his tour members missed the main point. They were not aware that Luther had a world view, a theological system that he thought spanned everything—all human life and the universe as well. They thought in terms of individual statements—justification by faith, the priesthood of all believers, and the like. These isolated doctrines they held important, and they gave them their wholehearted assent. But not only did they not have what Calvin called "the Christian world and life view." They were hardly aware that such a thing existed, much less might be important if not essential. This marks a change, my informant concluded. Whereas earlier in this century Christians of many denominations vigorously opposed Darwinism as having naturalistic and atheistic implications, the situation today is different. It is not so much that most Christians have been persuaded that evolution is true and can be reconciled with the truths of Christianity. The two have been compartmentalized, so that not only do they not conflict. They don't even seem to impinge on each other.

I relate this report as providing an instance of the indifference to world views that characterizes not just theology but our ethos as a whole today. At bottom the indifference derives from an incomprehension of what world views are and can contribute to life, and we have to admit that philosophy in our century has furthered that incomprehension. If we follow Jean-Francois Lyotard in defining postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives," twentieth century philosophers have fostered that incredulity. There are three kinds of postmodernism, three degrees of it we might say. *Minimal* postmodernism contents itself with reporting that we have no world view today, none that remotely approaches consensus. *Mainline* postmodernism goes on to argue for the permanence of this condition. Never again will we have a believable world view; we know too well how little we can know. Lastly, *Hardcore* postmodernism adds to this contention, "good riddance."

Metanarratives totalize, and in so doing marginalize minorities. They are oppressive power-plays, so we are better off without them.

What do we say to this three-pronged attack on metaphysics? We can say that each prong voices a half-truth, but not the full truth,<sup>3</sup> while adding what Jacques Maritain said a half century ago; namely, that "a loss or weakening of the metaphysical spirit is an incalculable damage for the general order of intelligence and human affairs."<sup>4</sup> If we are to say more than that, I so often find myself agreeing with the critics of metaphysics if metaphysics is what they say it is, that I feel the need to cut back behind technical definitions to common sense understandings of the project.

Claude Levi-Strauss tells us that one of the differences between mythic and scientific thinking is that myth-makers think that you don't understand anything unless you understand everything; and when we think of the way context controls meaning and peripheral vision affects focal vision, I think we can say that those myth-makers, our ancestors, were on the right track. Their insight can be expanded as follows: Minds require *ecoches* as much as organisms do, and the mind's *ecoch* is its world view, its sense of the whole of things, however much or little that sense is articulated. Short of madness there has to be *some* fit between the two, and we constantly try to improve it. Signs of a poor fit are the sense of meaninglessness, alienation, and in acute cases anxiety that postmodernity knows so well. The proof of a good fit is that life and the world make sense. When the fit feels perfect, the energies of the cosmos pour into the believer in startling degree. She knows that she belongs, and this produces an inner wholeness that is strong for being consonant with the wholeness of the All.

As for hierarchies, relentless unnuanced assaults from what Frederick Crews calls the eclectic left have all but wrecked this once noble and still etymologically perfect word (in which we in this Society have a vested interest, we might add, it having been coined by one of our own number, Dionysius). I say etymologically perfect word, because I know no other single word that joins the two virtues—holiness, *hieros*; and sovereign power, *arkhes*—which, conjoined, announce the central religious claim. For as William James put the matter, "religion says that the best things are the more eternal things, the things in the universe that throw the last stone, so to speak, and say the final word."<sup>5</sup>

Three years ago Judith Plaskow, the feminist contributor to the journal *Tikkun*, wrote an essay titled "What's Wrong with Hierarchies."<sup>6</sup> It said important things about the dangers of hierarchies, but it was so unadmittedly one-sided that it wrung from me a rejoinder titled "Is Anything Right about Hierarchies?" A graduate student who read my piece said, "They will agree with you, but they won't print it because it doesn't serve their political agenda."

What I said in my rejoinder was that, apart from the obvious facts: first, that we live in a hierarchic universe (or holarchic universe as Arthur Koestler preferred to say) wherein gradations of size, power, and complexity confront us at every turn; and second, that the social world (animal as well as human) couldn't last a week without accepted chains of command—aside from these two obvious facts the decisive point is that hierarchies can be empowering as well as oppressive. A loving family with small children is an example of an empowering hierarchy, as is a well-run classroom. The definitive example of a benevolent hierarchy is God's relation to the world and its creatures. In Christian idiom, "God became man that man might become God."

With metaphysics and hierarchies reaffirmed, I turn now to science where I will begin by stating my strategy for relating it to the Great Chain of Being.

## II

I do not think we can get to the Great Chain of Being through science. But if we start with the GCB there is much in science that can encourage us, shoring up our conviction that it is true. Looking at the findings of science through Neoplatonic eyes, we often find ourselves exclaiming, "Why, of course! This is what we might expect in a world that in its entirety, metaphysically as well as physically, is hierarchically arranged." Science doesn't prove the GCB. It's rather that its findings symbolize it. Approached from the Neoplatonic angle, they deflect our gaze in its direction. If there are sermons in stones and Allah did not disdain to use even a gnat for a symbol, may not science too have symbolic possibilities?

This brings me to the heart of my paper where I shall target five scientific findings that have Neoplatonic "feel" to them.

## III

1. Science finds that its part of the whole—the part it deals with, the physical, material universe—carries the hierarchical signature of the whole itself.

Mirroring the Neoplatonic metaphysical hierarchy—which in Plotinus's scheme descends from the One, through Nous, then Soul, to Matter—science finds that on the rung of the hierarchy it deals with, matter, the hierarchical pattern of the whole reappears. As Stephen Jay Gould puts the matter, "nature is organized as a hierarchy—genes in organisms, organisms in populations, and populations in species."<sup>7</sup> Beginning with size, the picture expands from the micro-world of quantum physics, though the macro-world our senses register, to the mega-world of the astronomers. And there are levels of complexity as well. Aristotle's mineral, plant, animal, and rational kingdoms name them in one way, and the academic disciplines of physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology refine the list. Here as everywhere a level is defined by two things. First, it has a distinctive population; physicists deal with particles but not with chemical compounds or biological cells. Second, each population is governed by its own distinctive laws. Newton's laws of motions do not hold for Brownian movements.

I mentioned that Arthur Koestler preferred "holarchy" to "hierarchy." This has the advantage of avoiding the coercive connotations that have been foisted on the word "hierarchy," while at the same time implying, accurately, that complex objects surround and contain simpler ones. The obvious model for a hierarchy is a ladder of ascent, or a chain composed of links of decreasing size; whereas holarchies suggest concentric circles in which atoms are inside molecules, genes are within organisms, and so on. There is a trade-off, however. Among spatial metaphors it is verticality—the vertical axis—that monitors worth, as phrases like "superior intelligence" and "the higher things of life" attest. In science, where questions of values are secondary if they appear at all, holarchy is clearly the better word, whereas in metaphysics hierarchy has the edge for keeping the qualitative issue central.

2. Only seemingly does science invert the Neoplatonic hierarchy.

The preceding point—that the physical universe retains (holographically, we might say) the hierarchical structure of the

whole in its part; "as above, so below," as the hermeticists used to say—seems obvious. But there appears to be a glaring difference between the hierarchies of science and the Great Chain of Being. In the latter, the less derives from the more, whereas science shows the more as deriving from the less.

Or does science show this?

In popular understanding, it does. Dramatically obvious in biology where life begins in slime and ends in intelligence, the sequence seems to apply across the board—from cosmogony (where molecules arrive after atoms) all the way to developmental psychology where maturation takes time. But interesting things have been happening in our century.

Even in classical physics, order comes first and is the "more" that precedes the dissipations of entropy. (I don't think Ilya Prigogine's work retires the second law of thermodynamics. Time will tell.) Be that as it may, 20th century science carries the issue of "less from more" beyond the question of entropy.

Plotinus speaks of the fall of soul into matter, and that fall can be given a scientific reading. In Neoplatonism the fall occurs because, out of its generosity the One veils itself progressively to allow the Many to appear. But 'veils itself' is only a metaphor. What actually goes on in the veiling? Science answers as follows: Photons are the bridge from the immaterial to the material. (The immaterial as such will be the topic of my next, third, point.) Photons pump power into the spatio-temporal world, but are not themselves subject to space and time. A photon that reaches the earth light years after it left Sirius arrives with the same energy it had when it left home. Time exacts no toll from it; how could it when all clocks stop at the speed of light? The nuclear particles that photons produce *are* subject to time, but not to space, for no definite position can be assigned to them. They are definitely material, though, in having rest mass and charge, which photons lack. Atoms, for their part, are even more fallen, even more material, for being locked into both space *and* time. Still, they are not as "fallen" as molecules are, for atoms are free to absorb and release energy which molecules—almost completely imprisoned in the determinism of our macro-, inanimate world—cannot. (I say *almost* completely imprisoned, for molecules *can* become excited, but the conditions are unusual.)<sup>8</sup>

You get my point. Science *seems* to show that the more derives from the less, but when we look carefully, this "less" derives at every step from what is demonstrably greater in power, and seemingly in freedom as well.

When science bumps into places where the less *seems* to produce the more—life from non-life; animals from vegetables, language where none previously existed—it explains the progressions with a word, emergence, which actually has no explanatory power whatsoever. To say that an attribute emerges *describes* what happens, but doesn't explain what happens. I am surprised at how many philosophers, even, fail to notice this. They join the scientists in trying to cover the nakedness of emergence—as-an-explanatory-concept by covering it with metaphors. The standard one is water. Neither hydrogen nor oxygen are wet, but  $H_2O$  is, which is taken to prove that a new ontological category has been produced. But wetness is a subjective experience, as is dryness, the presumed state of molecules in isolation. Chemically speaking,  $H_2O$  isn't wet. It is simply molecules configured differently from the way they were before hydrogen and oxygen combined. Subjectively speaking, dryness changes into wetness; chemically speaking  $H + H + O$  changes into  $H_2O$ . No new category of being—ontological category—has emerged.

3. Science now concedes that Reality is not exclusively material. I shall be using the words material and visible interchangeably and will define the visible as that which impacts our physical senses, with or without the help of instruments such as telescopes and electron-microscopes.

In the Great Chain of Being matter is an island in the sea of sentience which in itself isn't material. Modern science reverses that picture. For science, sentience exists only (as far as we know) on our planet, and on that planet only in the stream of organic life that inhabits it; so sentience (or consciousness) is the island speck in the fifteen-billion-light-years-across sea of dead matter that envelopes it. Hardcore materialists and behaviorists do not acknowledge that that island exists.

Since the demise of positivism things have changed markedly on this front. It is a confusing topic, for matter and energy are primitive terms in science and cannot be precisely defined, which makes it difficult to define their opposites, the invisible and

immaterial. Still, it is obvious that invisibles occupy a larger and more respected place in science than they previously did.

A mere catalogue must suffice.

a) Whatever preceded the Big Bang is invisible if not immaterial, for what we recognize as matter derives entirely from it.

b) Dark matter, which is known only by the gravitational pull it exerts on detectable matter, is invisible for eluding even the most sensitive scientific instruments. Scientists call it matter because that's all they know that exerts gravitational pull, but for all they know about what dark matter *is*, it might just as well be Aristotle's Unmoved Mover; Stephen Hawking refers to it as "absolute elsewhere." Be that as it may, the entire universe is now calculated to consist almost entirely of this invisible X, for the current recipe for the universe reads, "70 parts cold dark matter, about 30 parts hot dark matter, and just a pinch for all the rest."<sup>9</sup>

c) Dark matter may eventually become visible through improved detection devices—the issue is still up in the air—but no scientist expects that the wave packets (from whose collapse particles derive) will ever be seen.

d) What about psychosomatic medicine? From the common sense (and even medical) point of view this important development of the last half-century looks like a clear case where science now takes invisibles seriously, for no one has ever seen a thought or an emotion, yet demonstrably they can affect the body's immune system. In ordinary language, stress creates ulcers, but in philosophy this whole issue remains ambiguous because mainstream philosophers of mind are epiphenomenalists (John Searle) where they are not rank materialists (Daniel Dennett); dualists like Karl Popper and John Eccles are out of fashion. So even where the mainliners concede that thoughts are not material, they continue to assume that they derive from their neurological underpinnings. By this account, ulcers are caused by neurological disturbances in the brain which we *experience* as stress, not that experience itself. "Mental materialism is back, with a vengeance. It is not only back, but back in an unapologetic, out-of-the-closet, almost exhibitionistic form. This later incarnation might be called 'exuberant materialism.'"<sup>10</sup> Given this neuroscientific triumphalism, we cannot unambiguously cite psychosomatic medicine as a domain where science countenances invisibles.

4. Returning from living forms (where the working assumption in biology and psychology is that the more *has to* derive from the less) to physics, my fourth point is that in making room for the immaterial/unseen, science also *honors* it. In two ways: first, by granting it causal priority; and second, by crediting it with greater power than its material derivatives possess.

Causal priority has already been mentioned. Whatever preceded the Big Bang is presumably immaterial, for everything that we recognize as matter has proceeded from it.

As for greater power, in nature power is inversely related to size. The well-founded law that the shorter the wavelength the larger the energy that is compressed into it, produces the conclusion that "in a thimbleful of vacuum there is more energy than would be released by all the atomic bomb fuel in the universe."<sup>11</sup> Expressed in terms of particles instead of waves,

the amount of energy associated with light corpuscles increases *as the size is reduced*. The energy necessary to create a proton is contained in a light pulse only about  $10^{-11}$  centimeters in diameter. And the energy of a million protons would be contained in a light pulse a million times smaller.<sup>12</sup>

5. My fifth and last point is that science has joined Neoplatonism in being, in the end, apophatic. If "to penetrate into the transintelligible is the deepest desire of our intellect,"<sup>13</sup> science has come to honor that dictum. I will let a single quotation, from John Wheeler, the father of superspace, make my point.

A drastic conclusion emerges out of quantum geometrodynamics: *there is no such thing as spacetime in the real world of quantum physics....*

On this picture physics is a staircase. Each tread registers a law. Each riser marks the transcendence of that law. The staircase climbs from: step to step: density, and density found alterable; valence law, and valence law melted away; conservation of net baryon and net lepton number, and these conservation laws transcended; conservation of energy and angular momentum, and these laws likewise overstepped; and then the top tread displaying all the key constants and basic dynamic laws—but above, a final riser leading upward into nothingness. It bears a message: With the collapse of the universe, the framework falls down for every law of physics. There is no dynamic principle that does not require space and time for its

formulation; but space and time collapse; and with their collapse every known dynamic principle collapses.<sup>14</sup>

## IV

My conclusion?

As I said at the outset, if we proceed from the whole (The Great Chain of Being) to the part of the whole that science deals with, science's findings seem not only compatible with that Chain, they seem actually to support it, to incline in its direction, in that from the Neoplatonic perspective they turn out to be the kinds of things we could expect science to discover.

The opposite does not hold, however. We can no more get from science to the Great Chain of Being than we can get from that Chain to the specifics of science, DNA and the like. For quality eludes science, and the Great Chain of Being is above all else a qualitative hierarchy. Playing upon the vertical dimension, which (as I noted) among spatial metaphors always and everywhere monitors degrees of worth, the Great Chain of Being proclaims that its higher levels are better and more real than the lower ones.

But the notion of degrees of reality, while easily grasped by children and the general public, has no place in science and therefore—I am asserting a causal connection here—is currently suspect in philosophy. That disparity, between children and the general public on the one hand (who accept as a matter of course that some things are more real than others) and on the other hand scientists and intellectuals who can't make head nor tail of the notion, says a lot about how out of touch with life philosophy has grown. So I want to insert two examples to drive that out-of-touchness home.

A former chairman of mine, after arguing well into the night against degrees of reality, toward the end of his diatribe grew suddenly thoughtful as he recalled that the previous evening his six year old son had introduced the notion in a context where (my chairman had to admit) it did seem to make sense. His son was watching a TV western. As the gunfire and fatalities mounted, he became alarmed and asked his father, "Dad, is this real?"

In some region of their psyches, adults too respond to the idea that reality is graded. Marketing agents know this well and turn it

to their advantage. On the day that I left for this conference, the cereal box on my breakfast table carried (as its inducement for costumers to select it over competing brands) two words that could have been scripted for our gathering: "Get Real!"

But to complete my conclusion: If the idea of a hierarchy of meaning, worth, significance, and in the end reality, has no place in science and has become suspect in philosophy, all the more need for a society dedicated to preserving the idea: The International Society for Neoplatonic Studies.

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## NOTES

1. Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 59.
2. Ken Wilber, "The Great Chain of Being," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer 1993), p. 53.
3. I spell out this retort in "The Religious Significance of Postmodernism," *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (October 1994).
4. Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 59.
5. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The Macmillan Company).
6. Judith Plaskow, "What's Wrong with Hierarchies," *Tikkun*, 7:1, 1992.
7. S. J. Gould, *The New York Review of Books*, November 19, 1992, p. 47.
8. This paragraph has followed closely Arthur Young's *The Reflexive Universe* (San Francisco: Delacorte Press, 1976). See especially the diagram on page 9.
9. As reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 1, 1992, p. A16.
10. *The New York Review of Books*, April 8, 1993.
11. Quoted in Harold Schilling, *The New Consciousness in Science and Religion* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1973), p. 110.
12. Arthur Young, *Which Way Out?* (Berkeley: Robert Briggs Associates, 1980), p. 2.
13. Jacques Maritain, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
14. "From Relativity to Mutability," in Jagdish Mehra (ed.), *The Physicist's Conception of Nature* (Dordrecht, Holland; Boston, U.S.A.: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 227, 241.

# **Scientific Realism and Plotinus' Metaphysic of Nature**

**Michael F. Wagner**

I have settled down to the task of writing these lectures and have drawn up my chair to my two tables. Two tables! Yes; there are duplicates of every object about me—two tables, two chairs, two pens...One of them has been familiar to me from earliest years. It is a commonplace object of that environment which I call the world...Table No. 2 is my scientific table. It is a more recent acquaintance and I do not feel so familiar with it. It does not belong to the world previously mentioned—that world which spontaneously appears around me when I open my eyes...I need not tell you that modern physics has by delicate test and remorseless logic assured me that my second scientific table is the only one which is really there—wherever “there” may be. On the other hand I need not tell you that modern physics will never succeed in exorcising that first table—strange compound of external nature, mental imagery and inherited prejudice—which lies visible to my eyes and tangible to my grasp.<sup>1</sup>

Thus did Sir Arthur Eddington introduce the world to his “two tables” and therein intimate some of the issues confronting realists in contemporary philosophy of science. Here, I shall not attempt to canvass the many variations in scientific realism. My presentation shall be selective and thematic. Nor do I claim that contemporary realists are incapable of resolving their issues. I shall, however, adopt a critical stance in developing some of them, partly to anticipate my subsequent explication of Plotinus' metaphysic of nature<sup>2</sup> and ways in which it incorporates a realist conception of science.

## I. Scientific Realism

Two issues implicit in Eddington's two-tables remarks are the relationship between his scientific table and his commonplace table (which "spontaneously appears...when I open my eyes") and the metaphysical character of his scientific table (which modern physics "has assured me...is the only one which is really there").<sup>3</sup> I shall return to this second issue later, in the guise of explicating the metaphysically enigmatic character of scientific entities. As for the first issue, contemporary scientific realists prefer to ignore it but occasionally attempt at least to finesse it. Reichenbach, in an early such attempt, exemplifies a common obfuscation among realists and foreshadows what has replaced that issue as one of contemporary realism's most problematic features. He remarks that "[k]nowledge begins with observation: our senses tell us what exists outside our bodies. But we are not satisfied with what we observe; we want to know more, to inquire into things that we do not observe directly."<sup>4</sup> Despite Reichenbach's glib appeal here to the existents "outside our bodies" which our senses "tell us" about, his example of the epistemic odyssey which science embarks upon is "when the physicist infers from the deflection of a magnetic needle that there is an invisible entity, called electricity, in the wire."<sup>5</sup> To be sure, insofar as the measuring apparatus (magnetic needle) and the conductor (wire) are situated in what we might characterize (to feign some semblance of metaphysical and epistemic banality) as the mundane world of routine sense experience, this example may comport with his previous remark. Indeed, Reichenbach seems to adopt a contrary stance to Eddington's when he proposes that scientific unobservables are just *façon de parler* for certain conceptual simplifications and presuppositions which allow science to suppose that mundane existents conform to its laws.<sup>6</sup> But, he quickly abandons this proposal. He locates routine observables in a macroscopic world which includes our body and sensory organs but, in regards to science, he proposes that, "[a]s in the world of our daily life, there are observables and unobservables in the world of the atom."<sup>7</sup> Reichenbach thus adopts a two-world stance which distinguishes observed and unobserved macroscopic entities from unobservable (sub)microscopic entities and the scientific observations to which he epistemically links them.

## 1.1 The Ontological Profligacy of Contemporary Realism

Scientific realists, I have noted, prefer to reduce Eddington's two-table problem to a one-table problem by sidestepping his commonplace entities altogether. Thus, echoing Eddington and Reichenbach, scientific realism has oftentimes been delineated just in terms of the unobservable entities of science, e.g. "[s]cientific realism is always some version of the following vague idea: scientific research often puts people in a position to claim that kinds of things exist that are unobservable."<sup>8</sup> Recent philosophy of science, however, has increasingly expanded scientific realism to encompass every existent denoted by any purported science, including so-called natural-kinds.<sup>9</sup> Implicit in this wholesale expansion of the sorts and number of scientific entities embraced by realism is the more liberal notion that, since all that matters to scientific realism are the denotations of science, this includes observable as much as unobservable scientific entities.

Scientific realism, accordingly, has also been characterized as the claim that "[s]cience aims to give us, in its theories, a literally true story of what the world is like; and acceptance of a scientific theory involves the belief that it is true."<sup>10</sup> To be sure, various realists would object to the reference here to truth. Harre, for example, argues for "a shift from truth realism to referential realism" with respect to scientific entities.<sup>11</sup> Others appeal to such alternative notions as best explanation<sup>12</sup> or something even weaker, e.g. the notion that science involves "the assessment of the real existence of postulated entities" just insofar as "scientific inferences to the existence of unobservables make agnosticism about these entities unreasonable."<sup>13</sup> But, these variations only underscore contemporary realists' readiness to embrace wholesale the many diverse existents denoted or postulated by science. As *realists*, in other words, scientific realists have no special interest in science's "story of what the world is like" apart from its ontological commitments.<sup>14</sup> In these terms, for example, "science advances by accumulating and sometimes deleting specimens from its collection"<sup>15</sup> or "inventories";<sup>16</sup> and it posits "the equal reality...of objects both large and small."<sup>17</sup> Two special influences help explain realism's tendency to embrace wholesale the putative ontological commitments of every science. The first is rooted in Logical Positivist explications of science and their subsequent



scrutiny. The second is the demise of scientific reductionism. I begin with the first.

Moritz Schlick, in a 1932 *Erkenntnis* essay, introduced the Logical Positivist conceit that scientific entities are linked to observables by virtue of the meanings of science's referring expressions or denotative statements. Schlick maintained that "[t]he meaning of a proposition consists, obviously, in this alone, that it expresses a definite state of affairs. And this state of affairs must be pointed out in order to give the meaning of the proposition...Accordingly, in order to find the meaning of a proposition, we must transform it by successive definitions until finally only such words occur in it as can no longer be defined, but whose meanings can only be directly pointed out. The criterion of truth or falsity of the proposition then lies in the fact that under definite conditions (given in the definition) certain data are present, or not present."<sup>18</sup> Schlick elaborates this early version of the *verification theory of meaning* in terms of his phenomenalist understanding of sense experience, so that "it is impossible to interpret an existential proposition except as a statement regarding a connection of perceptions";<sup>19</sup> and he underscores a key implication of this theory when he adds that "[i]t is perfectly true that every statement about a physical object or event *means* more than is verified, say, by the occurrence of a single experience. It is rather presupposed that the experience occurred *under very definite conditions*, whose realization of course can only be verified by something given."<sup>20</sup> This implies that statements purportedly denoting physical objects or events will differ in meaning just in case they (or their meanings) are verified by different data, where a phenomenal "given" constitutes a certain sort of data in virtue of the "very definite conditions" under which it shall be present.

Schlick also exemplifies the obfuscation noted in Reichenbach when he remarks: "But science! Does it, in opposition to common sense, mean something other than things like houses and trees when it speaks of the external world? It seems to me that nothing of the sort is the case...In fact we are at last convinced that the existence of even the most subtle 'invisible things,' assumed by the scientist, is, in principle, verified exactly as is the reality of a tree or a star."<sup>21</sup> Of course, Schlick's external world is already very different from what common sense supposes it to be. His is a world comprised of phenomenal "givens" and statements whose meanings are verified

by their presence as "data." His remark amounts to insisting that, since all meaningful statements are linked to phenomenal data, scientific statements in that sense denote the "same reality" as routine discourse. But, one may equally conclude from this (*a la* Reichenbach)<sup>22</sup> that the world of science must therefore be distinct from the world of common sense inasmuch as the "data" which verify scientific statements under very definite conditions—e.g. the deflection of Reichenbach's magnetic needle—are just *not* the same as those pertaining to the mundane existents of routine sense experience.

When Logical Positivists focused just on science, the usual approach was that intimated by Reichenbach's proposal that "[c]ognitive meaning is defined by a step process. First, a basic class *O* of *observational sentences* and terms is introduced which are assumed to have *direct meaning*...Second, the meaning of further terms and sentences is constructed by the help of *derivative relationships D*, which connect these new terms with the basis *O*. A step process of this kind is assumed in all forms of the verifiability theory of meaning."<sup>23</sup> This approach, including its distinction between observational and theoretic discourse, has been vigorously criticized.<sup>24</sup> Its phenomenalist associations, and its notions of theory and (or) meaning construction, have also come under scrutiny.<sup>25</sup> One strand of this scrutiny targets its roots in concerns over purportedly unobservable entities<sup>26</sup> and in particular seeks to weaken or dissolve the distinction between observables and unobservables as applicable to scientific entities.

Carnap himself, after distinguishing empirical from theoretical laws and characterizing the former as "laws that can be confirmed directly by empirical observation," remarked that "a warning must be issued." Philosophers and scientists have quite different ways of using the terms 'observable' and 'nonobservable'. To a philosopher, 'observable'...applies to such properties as 'blue', 'hard', 'hot'. These are properties directly perceived by the senses. To the physicist, the word...includes any quantitative magnitude that can be measured in a relatively simple, direct way...There is no question here of who is using the term 'observable' in a right and proper way. There is a continuum which starts with direct sensory observations and proceeds to enormously complex, indirect methods of observation."<sup>27</sup> Carnap's intimation here that this continuum does partly reflect scientists' lack of philosophical

acumen, however, is now dismissed. Harre thus argues more generally that "the rules for the use of any conceptual opposition, including that between 'observable' and 'unobservable' things and events, cannot be laid down in advance. Were the Mayor of New York smart enough to hire King Kong there might be a marked advance in the technology of garbage disposal. No doubt there would then be a shift in the rules for the use of the distinction between the portable and the non-portable. The same argument can be used in the case where a new technique of observation is developed perhaps with the help of more sophisticated instrumentation."<sup>28</sup> In effect, the primary meaning of 'unobservable' now connotes just the current lack of a designated observational technique or instrument. Indeed, Miller argues that already, "in a broad sense, the kinds of alleged entities, for example, molecules and electrons, to which any anti-realist wants to be uncommitted are observable. Physicists observe electrons passing through cloud chambers. Some crystals are single giant molecules, observable by the naked eye. Even electrons can be seen with the naked eye, when speeds near that of light give them substantial mass and energy."<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, though, such attempts to weaken or dissolve the distinction between observables and unobservables in science have not lessened the estrangement between the scientific world and what Cartwright also calls "the reality we have at hand."<sup>30</sup> Indeed, they have instead further entrenched scientific realism's ontological profligacy. This suggests that what they challenge is rather the pertinence of (un)observability concerns to scientific realism in the first place. More pertinent to the realist conception of science as "accumulating and sometimes deleting specimens from its collection" is the fact that scientific entities seem to be "new" additions to reality in a sense unrelated to scientific methodology, and so to whether or not they are observable. Bacteria, quasars, dinosaurs, and various other entities denoted by science may reasonably be thought of as not so much "scientific entities" as they are previously unknown mundane entities which science has made known to us. Whereas, the newness of such entities as Schlick's "subtle invisible things" is not due to their purported unobservability but because they seem in a sense to be inherently postulates of science itself. Science seems not merely to make these entities known to us but, as it were, to invent them even

while it investigates them; and these latter sorts entities, rather than the former, continue to serve as philosophy of science's model for scientific entities generally. Accordingly, far from mitigating the ontological profligacy implicit already in Logical Positivist explications of science, the upshot of their subsequent scrutiny is rather reflected, for example, in Quine's assertion that "[e]verything to which we concede existence is a posit from the standpoint of a description of the theory-building process, and simultaneously real from the standpoint of the theory that is being built,"<sup>31</sup> and in Harre's gloss of realism in terms just of "the use of sortal terms by a scientific community to pick out natural-kinds."<sup>32</sup>

Earlier this century, the preferred way for realists to mitigate any *prima facie* profligation of scientific entities was by appeal to *scientific reductionism*—the notion that all (other) sciences or parts of science are reducible to a single science and so, likewise, that all (other) scientific entities are reducible to the entities of this one science. This science was presumed to be elemental Physics inasmuch as its entities were presumed to be the most-elementary constituents of nature. In philosophy of science, this notion was explicated in terms of *theory reductionism* wherein the anticipated reduction "involves a hierarchy of theories, each of which is, ideally, derivable from a theory of simpler entities of the first [reducing] theory and structures of entities of the second [reduced] theory...[so that] in principle all our understanding of everything should be derivable from our understanding of the smallest components of the universe."<sup>33</sup> The ontological commitments of various sciences may thus be thought of as "a hierarchical classification of objects in which the objects at each level are complex structures of the objects comprising the next-lower level," even though methodologically the "[r]eduction consists in deriving the laws at each higher (reduced) level from the laws governing the objects at the next-lower (reducing) level."<sup>34</sup> But, scientific reductionism is now widely thought to be untenable. For example, Dupre argues that "the objects with which the macroscopic life sciences are concerned cannot generally be treated as structures solely of objects from the next-lower level. A sponge, perhaps, is a multicellular organism that is nothing but an assembly of cells. But an aardvark would more naturally be treated as an assembly of organs and other complex systems. Moreover, many of its essential constituents, such as hormones, are not cells, or parts of cells, but

molecules, whereas ions, also vital for its well-being, are more nearly atoms. So we find not only an intermediate level of organization, but also items from lower levels. Nor can these lower-level entities be treated merely as exogenous environmental variables. Their presence may often be determined by very complex events at the level of organs or organ systems...[And so] lower-level events may perfectly well be determined by what is happening at a higher level."<sup>35</sup>

A realist might respond to the demise of scientific reductionism by waxing poetic, e.g. by opining along with Cartwright that "[n]ature tends to a wild profusion, which our thinking does not wholly confine" and celebrating "the richness and variety of the concrete and particular",<sup>36</sup> or by pursuing a semantic double-aspect approach, as suggested in Ryle's claim that "[a] bit of the theory of ultimate particles has no place in it for a description or misdescription of chairs and tables, and a description of chairs and tables has no place in it for a description or misdescription of ultimate particles. A statement that is true *or* false of the one is *neither* true *nor* false of the other. It cannot therefore be a rival of the other."<sup>37</sup> But, such approaches pose additional problems. For example, their thinly veiled appeals to mundane entities challenge realism finally to confront the issue of scientific entities' relationship to those entities and to resolve it without resorting to poetics or semantic legerdemain. At the same time, realism must account for the fact that scientists (and most philosophers of science) still suppose that certain sciences are indeed more fundamental, or penetrate the reality of nature more deeply, than others.

## 1.2 Two Metaphysical Enigmas

Eddington, in this essay's prefatory passage, considers his commonplace table to be more stubborn than real. He maintains that his scientific table is his *real* table. He believes, in effect, that whenever he sits at his table, the table at which he is sitting is in reality his scientific table. Presumably, too, when he again sits at his table after pausing for lunch, the table at which he shall be sitting will once again be his very own scientific table. After all, since this is his real table, presumably it remains so even while he

is not sitting at it. The two metaphysical enigmas regarding scientific entities that I wish to highlight here concern, first, this notion that they *are* real entities (indeed, *the* real entities) which exist in the natural universe purportedly investigated by science and, second, their presumed individuality—e.g. such presumptions as that *this* one is a real entity and it is a distinct entity from *that* one, or that *this* is the *same* real entity as one which existed here earlier today. The metaphysically enigmatic character of scientific entities seems most patent in attempts to explicate the conceptual apparatus of extremely high-energy or deep quantum Physics. However, certain thematic trends in contemporary philosophy of science render all scientific entities metaphysically enigmatic in these respects.

It seems especially characteristic of the entities or phenomena postulated by deep quantum Physics that they manifest themselves only "in a particular environment, which, when deliberately created, we call the experimental conditions"; indeed, "[e]xperiments at this level, transform nature."<sup>38</sup> Harre is in part arguing towards his thesis that science's postulates "involve very special assumptions about manifest behavior in usually highly contrived conditions."<sup>39</sup> Science thus "transforms nature" insofar as its own conceptions of the entities it postulates may or may not comport with the "behaviors" or "natures" of real existents in their natural environment. But, Harre is presumably also alluding to the more particular fact that the postulates of deep Physics are unobservables in a very special sense. As Reichenbach notes: "But why can they not be observed? Why can we not use a supermicroscope and watch the particles on their path? The trouble is that in order to see a particle we have to illuminate it...A light ray falling on a particle pushes it out of its way; what we observe, therefore, is a collision and not a particle traveling peacefully on its path."<sup>40</sup> Moreover, it is unclear whether this collision allows us to observe the particle itself, even if contrivedly and distortedly: "Speaking of particles means attributing to them a definite place and a definite velocity for each time point...For small particles, however, the disturbance by the observer, as Heisenberg has shown, makes it impossible to measure both values simultaneously."<sup>41</sup> Here, though, the observational (measurability) uncertainty implied by Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle is less pertinent than the ontological uncertainty, as it were, which it may suggest (but does

not entail). In this regard, perhaps the more significant fact concerning entities whose mass and energy render them "smaller" than light is their duality with respect to how they manifest themselves to science, so that "the same physical reality admits of two possible interpretations, each of which is as true as the other, although the two cannot be combined into one picture... We can regard the elementary constituents of matter as particles or waves; both interpretations fit the observations equally well and equally badly."<sup>42</sup>

Scientists and philosophers of science strive to avoid supposing that the entities observed in slit experiments, for example, just *are* both particles and waves. Hawkins' explication of the conceptual apparatus of deep Physics, accordingly, has it that "quantum fluctuations of [the quantum matter-field] and the associated creation and destruction of particles are described as *potentialities* of the field";<sup>43</sup> and Harre proposes that the "entities" postulated by deep Physics be thought of as *affordances* inasmuch as they manifest themselves to science "in phenomena which are brought into being through some human intervention."<sup>44</sup> Potentialities and affordances, though, are what they are just by virtue of the ways in which they manifest themselves; by themselves, they are nothing at all, or they are not any sort of *real* existents. Moreover, a sort of real existent which manifests itself in conceptually incompatible ways hardly seems less enigmatic than one which just *is* two conceptually incompatible sorts of entity.

Harre suggests, rather, that an affordance may instead be thought of as "the disposition of an unspecified substrate to manifest a definite interaction with a highly specified interactant."<sup>45</sup> He calls this substrate *glub* and purports that "classical physics permits the realization in physical apparatus of two classes of concepts, particulate and distributed, particle concepts and wave concepts. The glub is such that the two classes of apparatus cannot be used together, and therefore a description of phenomena in which instances of concepts of each class are paired is unacceptable. Particles and waves are created out of the glub by the use of pieces of apparatus. We should not think of the glub as being either particulate or wave-like in the absence of such an interaction."<sup>46</sup> But, this only deepens the enigma inasmuch as the conceptually incompatible ways in which deep-entities manifest themselves are now explicitly thought of as experimental

contrivances or artifacts. Perhaps Harre's glub is not nothing at all; but, what it *is* cannot be explicated without reference to certain experimental conditions or scientific apparatus and their artifice. Inasmuch as Eddington presumably is not sitting inside a high-energy accelerator beam when he sits at his table, this renders his supposition that he is sitting at his scientific table entirely opaque. Indeed, it now is entirely unclear whether it makes sense even to suppose that there ever is a deep-scientific table (or its deep-constituents) in the absence of the requisite experimental conditions and apparatus.<sup>47</sup>

The second metaphysical enigma is implicit already in questioning the sense of supposing that there are such things in nature as Harrean glub-ular entities, or individuations of his ubiquitous glub-ular postulate. Regarding deep Physics itself, Hawkins remarks that "[i]n quantum-mechanical identity... there are natural kinds, species, whose members are indistinguishable from one another in *all* respects that are relevant to the *causal* description of their behavior"; indeed, "quantum mechanics assumes that two elementary particles are wholly indistinguishable," so that "[for] the building blocks of matter... there is no individuality."<sup>48</sup> Minimally, even if we allow that deep-entities must be individuals in *some* sense, we have no conceptual basis for distinguishing between the same individual manifesting itself in similar but distinct phenomena and those phenomena being manifestations instead of distinct individuals. At one extreme, Eddington's scientific table may be a distinct table every time he sits at it; at the other extreme, it may be the same table as Albert Einstein's and everyone else's.

Further clouding the matter is the notion already implicit in Early Modern science that scientific entities or phenomena cannot ultimately be explicated without reference to the natural world in its entirety. For example, "[w]ith the development of Newton's laws it became possible to say that the motions in any system of bodies are determined by, and predictable in terms of, the forces of interaction within the system and the external forces acting on it"; but, "[e]xternal forces, in turn, are internal to a more inclusive system. In the imagined limit to which any isolated system could be expanded—in the universe as a whole—all motions are determined by the material interactions of [all] bodies according to the laws of

motion."<sup>49</sup> But, here again, the metaphysical implications of this notion become more patent with deep Physics.

Harre, for example, introduces the notion of *ultragrounding* to propose that we "ground the basic dispositions, the tendencies, propensities and powers of the simplest beings that theory requires and experiment sustains, in the properties of the whole universe."<sup>50</sup> The gist of this proposal is more explicitly applied to quantum-reality in Miller's treatment of "the most important distinctive feature of quantum physics, the so-called superposition of quantum states, and the entanglements and interferences among probabilities to which superposition gives rise."<sup>51</sup> Miller explicates the pertinent conceptual and mathematical apparatus which allows one to calculate from the wave functions associated with observed quantum manifestations *eigenvalues* which (in realist terms) correspond to *eigenstates* of the observed subsystem or object-reality;<sup>52</sup> and he argues that "[i]n the realist quantum physics that I have described, real properties of systems, described using distinctively quantum-physical means, are all that influences events within the systems...[Thus,] properties of systems, typically superpositions irreducible to separable properties of systems, govern the course of events."<sup>53</sup> Inasmuch as the "system" to which quantum events, states, or properties would belong outside the experimental environment is just the natural universe, this implies that the postulates of deep Physics are in reality nothing other than the entire universe, or certain states or properties of it.<sup>54</sup>

Though most patent for the postulates of deep Physics, these enigmas are implicit as well in recent work focusing on what might be characterized as the ineradicably *contextual* nature of all scientific entities. Some of this work responds to an earlier naivete regarding scientific methodology or justification, and how scientific laws relate to real existents in nature. An example of this naivete is Reichenbach's contention that inductive inference is the pivotal notion upon which "the development of modern empiricism hinges" and that "all forms of inductive inference are reducible to induction by enumeration," so that modern empiricism encompasses science inasmuch as "repetition is all that distinguishes the causal [i.e. scientific] law from a mere coincidence."<sup>55</sup>

In response, Hintikka argues that *scientific* induction does not infer generalizations from individual instances but proceeds from what is already "a limited generalization...to a less restricted

generalization;"<sup>56</sup> and Cartwright rejects altogether the notion that scientific methodology or justification is an application of inductive logic, explicating it instead in terms of what she calls *the analytic method*, where "[t]he analytic method is closely associated with what we often call Galilean idealization. Together idealization and abstraction form a familiar two-tiered process that lies at the heart of modern scientific inquiry. First, we try to find out ...how the feature under study behaves, or would behave, in a particular, highly specific situation...[Second,] we abstract the nature [e.g.] of the charge interaction from how charges behave in these specially selected 'ideal' circumstances. The key here is the concept 'ideal.' On the one hand, we use this term to mark the fact that the circumstances in question are not real or, at least, that they seldom obtain naturally but require a great deal of contrivance even to approximate. On the other, the 'ideal' circumstances are the 'right' ones—right for inferring what the nature of the behavior is, in itself."<sup>57</sup> Similar to Harre's treatment of deep Physics, Cartwright's more general approach questions the pertinence of scientific methodology to real existents in their natural environment but it also challenges the supposition that the entities postulated by science are at least *real* entities and not mere contrivances, artifices, or conceptual inventions.<sup>58</sup> Or, as Suppe concludes from his own treatment of scientific methodology, "[p]hysical systems, then, are highly abstract and idealized replicas of phenomena" purported to exist in nature.<sup>59</sup>

A second sort of recent work focusing on the ineradicably contextual nature of scientific entities is partly related to the scrutiny of Logical Positivist explications of science noted earlier. It considers how (purportedly) empirical concepts in science arise in the first place. Harre, for example, proposes that a scientific natural-kind concept is semantically determined by a presumed "exemplary instance" which, in effect, is posited in response to the question "How is it possible that there are many beings which display contextually interesting similarities?"<sup>60</sup> And, Dupre argues further that "[o]nly the most extreme reductionist could suppose that examining a particular individual would allow one to determine to what kind it belonged apart from the prior recognition and at least partial characterization of that kind," where this *a priori* characterization of a natural-kind must then "be considered as applying to typical members of kinds rather than to all members."<sup>61</sup>

Kuhn develops the theme yet further in maintaining, first, that acquiring an empirical concept involves a "metaphor-like process" wherein one encounters "exemplary elements of the extension of the concept" but, second, that its scientific usage also requires synthesizing it into the conceptual form of rules and generalizations, wherein the requisite "explication which molds [an empirical concept] into such a form will, in a certain sense, change its nature."<sup>62</sup> Such considerations as these not only challenge the supposition that empirical scientific concepts denote real entities but implicitly question as well whether they even denote *individual* existents rather than conceptual exemplars, formalized artifacts, or the like.

To be sure, science itself, except perhaps in the special case of deep Physics, is widely presumed to be uninvolved with the sorts of metaphysical issues which philosophers raise concerning individuality. Common wisdom has it, for example, that "the science of mechanics...[is] applicable indifferently to all material things;"<sup>63</sup> and the Physics of relativity seems, if anything, to buttress classical Physics's presumed universe of individual existents inasmuch as "[t]he spatio-temporal order appears no longer as an empty vessel within which matter happens to be, but as the modality of the coexistence and interaction of things."<sup>64</sup> Accordingly, it seems appropriate and reasonable that philosophers of science should presume that individuality is insured for scientific entities just by the spatio-temporally indexical character of a science's referring-expressions, or of their use by scientists.<sup>65</sup> This suggests that scientific entities—like, perhaps, more mundane entities—are *individuals* by virtue of their spatio-temporal continuity, e.g. so that two spatio-temporally indexical uses of a scientific referring-expression shall denote the same individual just in case the denoted entity exists at every moment along a spatio-temporal continuum that includes these two referential moments.

A chief difficulty with this suggestion, at least for philosophy of science, is that it can insure only a *contingent* individuality and not the *modal* individuality required by scientific entities. Suppe, for example, maintains that the physical systems postulated and investigated by science "are highly abstract and idealized replicas" which at best characterize how a natural entity "would have behaved *had* the idealized conditions been met" in nature;<sup>66</sup> and Cartwright avers that "to understand [scientifically] what happens

in the world, we take things apart into their fundamental pieces...[We] carry the pieces from place to place, assembling them together in new ways and new contexts. But [we] always assume that they *will try to behave* in new arrangements *as they have tried to behave* in others."<sup>67</sup> Minimally, individuality in the scientific world requires that what exists (or "behaves") in one context may be the same individual as one which *might* also exist (or "try to behave") in a different context. But, that what exists at a certain spatio-temporal moment may *in fact* be, because of its spatio-temporal continuity, the same individual as one which exists at another spatio-temporal moment does not insure that it also *might* exist in yet other spatio-temporally indexical contexts, including contrived or idealized ones.<sup>68</sup>

Perhaps the requisite modal individuality may be explicated by reference to the modal character of scientific laws.<sup>69</sup> This latter notion has sometimes been explicated by supposing that scientific laws are implicitly subjunctive and(or) counterfactual in meaning or intent.<sup>70</sup> That is, supposing that a scientific law may be expressed in the form of a conditional statement 'if A obtains then B obtains,' we might then suppose that the sense of 'if...then...' here entails the subjunctive statement 'if A were to obtain then B would obtain' and(or) the counterfactual statement 'if A had obtained then B would have obtained'.<sup>71</sup>

One influential approach to understanding the meaning of modal discourse and its relation to individuality employs the notion of possible worlds. If such modal features of scientific laws as their subjunctive and(or) counterfactual intent are taken to be manifestations of some more general modal characteristic, e.g. natural necessity, we might suppose that "[a] statement may be said to be naturally or physically necessary if, and only if, it is deducible from a statement function which is satisfied in all [possible] worlds that differ from our world, if at all, only with respect to initial conditions."<sup>72</sup> We might then further suppose that scientific entities have the requisite modal individuality just insofar as they are capable of having necessary properties, or having properties necessarily. Plantinga, for example, posits that "an object *x* has a property *P* contingently only if there is a possible state of affairs *S* such that *x* would not have had *P* had *S* obtained. This...obviously implies that the same object exists in more than one possible world."<sup>73</sup> Conversely, then, an object would have a

certain property necessarily just in case there is no possible state of affairs (or "world") wherein it would not have that property. Notice, however, the implicit reliance here upon the modal notion that the object *would* or *would not* have a certain property. As an explication of modal individuality for real (or actual) entities in nature, moreover, it presumes as well that these entities are indeed the same individuals as the ones which it purports to exist in and across possible worlds, or to have or not have certain properties in and across possible worlds. A chief difficulty with this approach, accordingly, is its apparent question-begging reliance upon modal individuality, or its presumption of modally-individual real entities.

### 1.3 Two Epistemic Enigmas

Contemporary philosophy of science demands that science, and also philosophy of science itself, shall conform to the Modern empiricist tradition, or at least that it shall use any conceptual means and machinations it can devise in pursuit of this ideal. Here, I shall highlight two of the epistemically enigmatic features of contemporary philosophy of science generally, though they may seem all the more enigmatic in the more specific context of scientific realism. The first is that the less empirical a science is or becomes, or the farther removed its conceptions are or become from its supposed empirical ties to nature, the more true and perhaps even scientific it is or becomes. The second lies in the recognition by philosophers of science, despite their empiricist desideratum, that science is distinctively different in some epistemically significant respect from more routine empirical cognitive activities, including from the paradigmatically empirical activity of sense experience.

The first enigma can be seen, for example, in Popper's observation that scientific theories vary in their generality and his related contention, regarding the "worlds" they denote, that "[a]lthough in one sense of the word 'real,' all these various levels are equally real, there is another yet closely related sense in which we might say that the higher and more conjectural levels are the *more real* ones—in spite of the fact that they are more conjectural."<sup>74</sup> In a similar vein, Harre supports the *robustness principle* that "[w]hatever persists unchanged through change is

real" while also claiming that more general theoretic conceptions are less "reviseable," or more persistent, than less general ones, so that natural-kind concepts are semantically more robust than individuals and "categories" are more robust than kind-concepts.<sup>75</sup> Insofar as Popper's higher, more conjectural levels of scientific theory and Harre's more general concepts and categories cognize natural existents in increasingly more perspicuous or "true" ways, such *contrapost* seems also to intimate how distinctively different science is from other empirical cognitive activities. This difference has more traditionally, though, been characterized in terms of science's distinctive status as discerner of nature's laws.

To be sure, the Positivists' covering-law or deductive-nomological model of scientific explanation seemed to downplay science's cognitive distinctness and remoteness from other sorts of empirical cognition insofar as it just "makes explanation...a matter of subsumption under general laws...In the 'deductive-nomological pattern,' empirical general laws and statements of initial conditions are presented which logically entail the statement that the event in question has occurred."<sup>76</sup> At the same time, though, this appeal to scientific laws' purported empirical generality meant to embrace the traditional supposition that "there is a basic difference between laws of nature and laws of society, on the one hand, and between laws of nature and accidental generalization, on the other. Laws of society can be violated and can be changed, while laws of nature can neither be violated nor be changed. Laws of nature are supposed to reflect necessary connections between events of one kind and events of another (or between certain properties and other properties), which are absent in the case of merely accidental generalizations."<sup>77</sup> More recent philosophers of science are less coy about distancing the cognitive aims and character of science from routine empirical cognition, e.g. averring that scientific cognition requires "a two-stage move from raw phenomena to statements of the theory—first a move from phenomena to 'hard' data about the physical system in question, and then a second move from the physical system to the postulates, etc., of the theory. *The two sorts of moves are qualitatively quite different.*"<sup>78</sup>

Further isolating science from other cognitive activities, contemporary philosophers of science also portray particular sciences as cognitive wholes unto themselves—as each constituting a certain conceptual scheme whose cognitive employment is

ineradicably theory-dependent.<sup>79</sup> One response to this isolationism attempts to include science as just one among many cognitive activities comprising the archeology or sociology of human knowledge.<sup>80</sup> Typically, though, its distinctiveness is still recognized in some fashion. For example, Grinnell maintains that there remains a distinctive "scientific attitude" which differs "from other attitudes [by its] assumption of universal, intersubjective validity";<sup>81</sup> and Harre purports that, although epistemic agreement among scientists should be explicated as a socio-behavioral phenomenon, in science "the conditions of social co-ordination of action require a drive towards achieving the maximum of intersubjectivity among belief-systems."<sup>82</sup>

Another response involves a new generation of empiricist epistemologies which replace the Positivists' phenomenalist entities with a naturalistic explication of sense experience and insist that even routine sense experience is already a fully-fledged cognitive activity. This approach was inspired especially by Quine's proposal that "[e]pistemology, or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science. It studies a natural phenomenon, viz., a physical human subject. The human subject is accorded a certain experimentally controlled input—certain patterns of irradiation in assorted frequencies, for instance—and in the fullness of time the subject delivers as output a description of the three-dimensional world and its history...The old epistemology aspired to contain, in a sense, natural science; it would construct it somehow from sense data. Epistemology in its new setting, conversely, is contained in natural science, as a chapter of psychology."<sup>83</sup>

An influential example of the pages purportedly to be found in psychology's epistemology chapter is Gibson's conjecture that "physical objects and their properties are specified by information present in the 'ambient array'. The ambient array is a flux of energy shaped by the presence of both the perceiver and that which is perceived... 'Information' in the ambient array 'specifies' the object which structured the array. An organism in actively exploring the array for higher-order invariants, 'picks up' that information. It is as the 'pick up' that perception occurs."<sup>84</sup> The related insistence, implicit already in this portrayal of sense experience as a kind of information "pick up," on the cognitive character of routine sense experience is rendered explicit, for example, in Kuhn's view that

"[t]he products of perceptual acts are rather codetermined by 'conceptual categories,' 'conceptual parameters,' or 'perceptual categories,' in the sense that such parameters determine *as what* a given object of perception will be identified," though he qualifies this in maintaining that "these perceptual categories should not be assumed to be constant over all humans, for they depend to an important degree on the perceiver's learning history."<sup>85</sup> This qualification, however, is emblematic of the apparent circularity, or perhaps vacuity, which seems endemic to naturalistic epistemology. Hoyningen-Huene thus notes, regarding Kuhn's view, that individual and community learning histories cannot "imply any progress toward more closely capturing the *nature* of the purely object-sided (whatever that might mean); all it implies is that we more closely capture an object-sided *equivalence relation*,"<sup>86</sup> i.e. that we may continually refine *as-what* we happen to identify certain objects of sense experience. The implied challenge is whether naturalistic epistemology can explicate epistemic notions (e.g. knowledge) without reducing them just to individuals' concepts or beliefs (e.g. to what someone happens to have "learned" to believe, and so purport to constitute knowledge); or, whether it requires that, like Quine, we ignore the distinction between natural processes of knowing and (scientific) knowledge of natural processes.

One strategy for mitigating this feature of naturalistic epistemology in effect reasserts the legitimacy of employing scientific concepts to explicate empirical cognitive activity by arguing that science does an epistemically superior job at sense experience's own cognitive aim—in realist terms, of discerning real existents in nature. The strategy turns on some such claim as, since naturalistic explications of sense experience presuppose science, "[w]hat almost all such [naturalistic] conceptions share...[is] a strategy of *deferring to the actual causal structure of the world* in classificatory, inductive, and explanatory practice."<sup>87</sup> This still presumes, though, that science and(or) philosophy of science includes and(or) exhausts the epistemically important features of empirical cognition. The strategy also presumes that science does a superior job at discerning the *same* existents which routine sense experience discerns. Moreover, all but lost in the attempt to render science, as it were, like sense experience only better is the longer-standing supposition, still shared by scientists and by many



philosophers of science, that the cognitive aims of science are just *not* the same as sense experience's. They may include the cognitive task of discerning natural existents but science, perhaps most distinctively, also aims to discern nature's laws, for example.

## II. Plotinus' Metaphysic Of Nature

Eddington's distinction between the real world of science and the seeming world of routine cognition is emblematic of science's epistemic preeminence, especially since Early Modern times, as well as of its increasing isolation from the rest of human cognition. Indeed, we have seen that the contemporary presumption that science is fundamentally an empirical activity has, ironically, deepened this isolation while also rendering its epistemic preeminence all the more opaque.

Plotinus was well aware of the scientific conceptions of his day and sought to accommodate them in his philosophy. In this, the scientific realism implicit in his metaphysic of nature eschews Eddington's dualism between scientific and commonplace entities. A more appropriate contemporary distinction for locating science within Plotinus' conception of human cognition is Wilfrid Sellars' classic distinction for contemporary philosophy of mind between the *manifest image* of human beings and the *scientific image* of them.<sup>58</sup> Sellars' distinction is not meant to distinguish science's conception(s) of things (e.g. human beings) from purportedly non- or pre-scientific conceptions. Rather, his scientific-image connotes the increasingly de-person-alized physical and neurologic sciences which have emerged more-or-less during the past century; whereas, his manifest-image connotes all other, though especially all previous, conceptions and sciences.

Plotinus' metaphysic of nature incorporates a conception of science which seems overall to comport with Sellars' notion of manifest image(s). A dissimilarity may be that Plotinus' scheme does accommodate highly formalized and deep science.<sup>59</sup> Like a Sellarsian manifest image, however, Plotinus' scheme does not entirely distinguish the real objects of science from the real objects of routine cognition; and it does not identify the latter just with Eddington's "world which spontaneously appears around me when I open my eyes," nor with sense data or similar phenomenalist

entities. The latter do comprise the world of sense experience; but, for example, they are also objects for Plotinus' second principal cognitive modality, intellection. To be sure, Plotinus does sometimes contrast the "real" objects of intellection and the "unreal" objects of sense experience. His meaning, though, must be discerned alongside his companion doctrine that sense experience is in its own way an intellectual activity. He, accordingly, is not claiming that the objects of sense experience are not real existents but that cognizing real existents *as real*, or with respect to their reality, is the province of intellection; whereas, sense experience contrasts with intellection as such—with higher or more purely intellectual activities—in not cognizing existents this way.

Sellars' distinction provides contemporary counterpoint to Eddington's dualism.<sup>60</sup> My principal exegetical conceit, however, shall be that for Plotinus real entities in nature are *metaphysically polymorphic* inasmuch as they comprise distinguishable but not distinct realities or levels of nature's reality. A secondary exegetical conceit distinguishes those realities into certain dualities, or contrasting conceptions of nature's reality. This scheme accommodates science (or a science) as a cognitive activity which supplements a given conception of reality with a certain conception of natural causality or a principle of change. Plotinus distinguishes, for example, conceiving change to be an exchange of contrary qualities from conceiving it to be movement undergone by a natural entity due to another movement which is capable of producing such a change, and both of these from conceiving change to be a natural entity's coming-to-be a certain sort of entity (or moving thing) for which it has the potential to come-to-be.

A science's presumption of a certain conception of causality or of a principle of change marks it as fundamentally an intellectual activity, even if a relatively low-level kind compared to higher or purer kinds of Plotinian intellection. *Whether or not* a natural entity is capable of being an object of sense experience, accordingly, is irrelevant to its status as an object for science. The three examples of Plotinian science just noted may investigate unobservably small or dim existents (e.g. vanishingly small quantities or "atoms" of matter, or the Earth's atmosphere) and unobservably huge or bright existents (e.g. the natural universe itself, or Sol's internal "fire") as much as the medium-sized or visible-to-us objects of routine sense experience; and so nor would new observational techniques or

revised conceptions of observability be relevant to their status as objects for science.

My three examples of Plotinian science also illustrate the realist ranking of sciences implicit in Plotinus' scheme—as it were, his levels or deepness of natural reality alternative to contemporary scientific reductionism—inasmuch as the passive-*post*-productive movement conception of change is more real or metaphysically deeper than the contrary-qualities conception, and the actual-*post*-potential coming-to-be conception is yet more real than both of these. I shall not attempt to survey the various sciences or sorts of science accommodated by Plotinus' metaphysic of nature. Rather, I now turn to my exegetical conceits of natural entities' metaphysical polymorphism and certain pertinent conceptual dualities, some of which may be schematized as follows:

SCHEMATIC of some conceptual dualities pertaining to natural reality:<sup>91</sup>

1. Substantiality (*ousias*)

A. qualified & relational	VS	B. self-substantial
Ai. qualitative VS quantitative		Bi. corporeally constituted VS formally composited

2. "Becomingness" (*genesens*)

I. static	VS	dynamic
ii. potential	VS	actual
iii. passive	VS	productive

3. Modality (*katagorema*)

A. accidental	VS	B. essential
A'. sense-experiential	VS	B'. intelligible

Here, I shall address mainly certain features of the first two groupings, which underscore the importance to Plotinus' scheme of ways in which we may conceive nature to be comprised of real entities and of natural coming-to-be.

II.1 Plotinus' Dual-Focus Conception of Natural Reality

Aristotle introduced the notion of substance (*ousia*) to denote the proper subject(s) for assertions of real existence or ascriptive assertions which presuppose real existence. Plotinus also uses this notion when explicating the real objects of cognition. However, Plotinus' use of it, especially in the case of natural entities, differs from Aristotle's in crucial respects. One of these differences may be seen to follow from the special importance which Plotinus accords to coming-to-be. Plotinus considers the classical Greek identification of the natural universe as the world of coming-to-be to be far more germane to explicating its reality than its status as the world of sense experience. But, an Aristotelian might understand this to mean that coming-to-be presupposes or must be ascribed to the entities denoted by Aristotle's notion of substance, indeed by his "primary sense" of this notion; whereas, Plotinus seems to understand this to mean that natural reality ultimately just *is* coming-to-be, so that the proper subjects of cognitions or ascriptions concerning natural existents must ultimately be explicable in terms of some metaphysically adequate notion of coming-to-be.

In Plotinus' scheme, such cognitive activities as sense experience and science, as it were, focus on substance(s) when postulating or cognizing real existents in nature; but, the notion of substance ultimately plays only an intermediate role in the explication of natural reality. Moreover, natural substance may itself be conceived in several ways. In a second crucial departure from Aristotle's notion of substance, Plotinus' analysis of natural substance implies that we may properly conceive real entities in nature to be substances in several ways. More precisely, he distinguishes four senses of *substance* for natural entities:<sup>92</sup>

(S1) *The form-matter composite substance.* This way to conceive natural substance may be considered primary with respect to the other three because it most clearly does satisfy the Aristotelian definition of "primary" substance as "that which neither exists in a substrate nor is designated by reference to a substrate as something distinct from it"<sup>93</sup> and because the deeper Plotinian notion of forming-principle (*logos*) is related most closely to this conception, inasmuch as a forming-principle effects a real entity "in conformity to the form" of its composition.<sup>94</sup>

(S2) *The corporeally constituted substance.* This conceives a natural substance to be comprised of certain functional components and their corporeal constituency. It also satisfies the Aristotelian definition;<sup>95</sup> but, it assumes that a substance is delineated by its corporeal components and constituency rather than by its form of composition. Corporeally constituted substances may be distinguished into (i) *more matter-like substances* which are delineated just by their constituency—e.g. the four “simple” bodies: air, earth, fire, and water—and (ii) *more instrument-like substances* which are delineated by their “particular configurations of parts,” i.e. functional components, along with their corporeal constituency.<sup>96</sup>

(S3) *The Accidental substance*<sup>97</sup> conceives a natural substance to be “a certain agglomeration of qualities and matter.”<sup>98</sup> Here, that natural existents are the real objects of sense experience is properly salient,<sup>99</sup> though Plotinus’ notion of qualities does not presuppose sense experience. Qualities are ways or respects in which one entity may be demarcated in relation to others,<sup>100</sup> though this surely includes so-called sensible qualities. This way of conceiving natural substance no longer satisfies the Aristotelian definition since qualitative existence is included among those things which “come about from and because of” substances in the (S1) sense,<sup>101</sup> and so it fails to satisfy the second half of that definition.

(S4) *The Derivable substance*<sup>102</sup> results from conceiving one or more of the qualities in an (S3) agglomerate to be qualifying an (S1) substance itself, thereby rendering it a *qualified thing*. Consequently, (S4) substances are derivative from (S3) substances. Though this way of conceiving natural substance seems to satisfy the Aristotelian definition, it is thus farther removed than (S3) from (S1)’s primacy.<sup>103</sup>

But, why is (S2) substance derivative or less real compared to (S1) substance merely because it delineates a natural substance in terms of its corporeal components and constituency instead of its form of composition? To answer this, we must recognize that the matter referred to in the (S1) notion of substance, viz. its substrate, does not contribute to a composite’s real existence since it is as such nothing; or, rather, it is not anything other than or apart from the natural substance itself. Something is a *substrate* insofar as something is related to it in such a way that we may ascribe this to it. The notion of substrate, accordingly, denotes a function and not

a reality, or real existent, and what fulfills that function for the composite is just the natural substance itself.

The term ‘matter’ may also be used to denote something real which may be properly associated with natural composites. In particular, it may also be used to denote, instead of a composite’s substrate, another substance—call it a *constitutive substance*—from or out of which the substance has been composited. This “real matter” becomes the corporeal constituency of the composite’s functional components. But, the substrate referred to in the (S1) notion itself is that to which we may ascribe things, e.g. as belonging to or received by or informing an (S1) substance; and, that to which we may ascribe things, including a certain form of composition, is not the composite’s functional components nor their corporeal constituency but the thusly composited substance itself. A composite substance, in other words, is not somehow “composed” of two real components, one denoted as *form* and the other as *matter*, but a single real entity which both is composited in a certain way (“has form”) and is also that to which we may ascribe its being composited in that way (“is matter”). Since every natural composite has corporeally constituted functional components (or at least distinguishable parts) it may also be conceived as an (S2) substance. But, the composite is not derivative from this (S2) substance; rather, that a given natural substance has certain functional components (or at least distinguishable parts) which in fact have a certain corporeal constituency is a consequence of the way in which it has been naturally composited (i.e. its form).

This also implies that a natural entity’s compositional form already satisfies the Aristotelian definition of ‘primary substance.’ Unlike qualities (which “belong to” it) or qualifications (which are “of” it) or corporeal components and constituency (which it “has”), its form is what in its entirety a natural entity just *is*, or rather ‘*is a*’—e.g. it is a tree or it is a human being. For example, “[i]f I predicate *human being* of Socrates, I am not asserting something akin to stating ‘the wood is white’ but akin to stating ‘the white thing is white’ since stating ‘Socrates is a human being’ asserts regarding some particular human being that he *is a human being*, which is to say that it asserts *human being* in reference to Socrates’ humanity, and this amounts to the same thing as asserting *Socrates* in reference to Socrates.”<sup>104</sup> The real existence of a composite substance is thus entirely delineated by its form, just as its real

persistence in coming-to-be is explicated by its continued conformity to its form—i.e. by its remaining just the natural substance which it is, or 'is a'.<sup>105</sup> Accordingly, Plotinus argues further that "Socrates does not impart the reality of a human being to what is not a human being but, rather, humanity imparts this reality to Socrates; for, since a particular human being thereby partakes in humanity, what else could Socrates be if not just the particular thing of the human being sort which he is? and, how could this *particular-of-the-human-being-sort* which he is effect any more real a substance than the existent human being does already?"<sup>106</sup>

The intermediate role of substance in Plotinus' metaphysic of nature emerges when we ask why a given natural substance is composited the way it is, or "has" the compositional form it has. For this, the pivotal notion is *forming-principle*. Plotinus maintains, for example, that in the domain of coming-to-be "a real substance itself proceeds by coming-to-be from a real existing source";<sup>107</sup> for, "nothing is real which is not a unity"<sup>108</sup> and "whatever is not a unity in some respect must be sustained by a unity and be just what it is because of that unity since, had it not become a unity despite its many constituents, it would not now exist just as itself—as what we designate to be a *particular* thing."<sup>109</sup> Plotinus identifies this real originative and sustaining cause of a natural entity's unity as its *forming-principle*, and so argues

It has been asserted regarding the qualified thing that, by intermixing and blending different qualities and in consort with matter and quantity, it effects substance for the objects of sense experience; and it has also been asserted that what common speech designates as a 'substance' is just this agglomerate of many things, so that a substance is no longer the particular thing itself but a qualified thing. Even then, however, the real existing forming-principle (e.g. of fire) would still indicate more the particular thing, while the shape it effects indicates more something qualified. Likewise, the *real forming-principle of a human being* is the *particular existent human being*, whereas the qualitative superfluance associated with corporeal nature is in reality an image of the forming-principle and exists rather as some qualified thing. Just as if, for example, the visible Socrates were the real human being and yet an image contrived in his likeness, and whose reality amounts to so much color and paint, was designated to be Socrates—so too, since there exists a *real forming-principle to which the real Socrates conforms*, the Socrates experienced sensorially is strictly

*speaking not Socrates* but so much color and configurations of parts which in reality are imitations of real existents encompassed by his forming-principle."<sup>110</sup>

The intermediate role of substance becomes even more patent when Plotinus turns to explicating natural coming-to-be, including the coming-to-be of substances. Plotinus typically appeals to (S1) substances when focusing his examples and explication of coming-to-be on natural entities.<sup>111</sup> But, as just seen concerning a natural entity's substance and individuality, Plotinus' explication of natural coming-to-be will ultimately focus instead on his forming-principles.

Of the three dualities included under 'becomingness' in my schematic, the distinction between passive and productive coming-to-be may seem especially pertinent to explicating coming-to-be inasmuch as these two notions seem not only to distinguish contrasting conceptions of coming-to-be but to delineate two classes of coming-to-be, or movement (*kinesis*). Indeed, Plotinus at first supposes just this, that every coming-to-be in nature may be classified either as passive or as productive. He suggests several ways in which the distinction might be formulated; but the formulation which instigates his critique of this supposition states that "movements which proceed from the moving things themselves are productive," whereas "movements which proceed from others [into the moved thing] are passive."<sup>112</sup> Plotinus examines this formulation by considering, first, whether passivity might not then characterize movements which could also be characterized as productive when considered from another (opposite) viewpoint and, second, the relevance of a movement's source to whether it is productive or passive.

Plotinus introduces the first consideration by observing that if movements which proceed from others are thereby passive, then the same movements could also be denoted as "movements which proceed into others"—e.g. "cutting as both as proceeding from what is cutting and proceeding into what is being cut is one movement"—so that they would also be productive.<sup>113</sup> He suggests two ways to avoid having the same movement be both passive and productive. The first considers such movements to be in fact comprised of successive pairs of movement, e.g. so that "cutting occurs when, from a certain sort of actuality and movement ascribed to the cutter, another succeeding movement comes to be in

what is cut."<sup>114</sup> The second considers the cutting movement to be as such a single (productive) movement proceeding from the cutter into what is cut, and then utilizes the notion that one existent may be distinct from yet a consequence of another existent to maintain that "the difference may not pertain to being cut as such but to a distinct movement which comes to be [in the recipient or 'patient'] consequent upon being cut: for example, being in pain, which is a clear case of something that is undergone passively."<sup>115</sup> Plotinus prefers this second way because it conforms to clear cases of passivity, as when a sentient being suffers pain as a consequence of being cut. He concludes that, when no such distinct movement is undergone by the patient, there is no passivity but just the fact that when movement proceeds from one thing into another "productive movement has a double existence: first, without regard for its existing in another thing, when this is intended by it, and, second, as existing also in that other thing."<sup>116</sup> He also concludes from this that 'passivity' denotes "what comes to be consequent upon a productive movement, where this does not mean its opposite (as being hurt is the opposite of burning) but denotes something that comes to be consequent upon the one real movement of being burnt and burning—viz. pain or something else, e.g. shriveling-up."<sup>117</sup>

Plotinus' second consideration, the relevance of a movement's source to its productivity or passivity, is more subtle. He considers whether a source of movement might not also passively undergo something consequent upon its own movement<sup>118</sup> and whether, even when one thing is moved by another, it might not also be involved somehow in bringing about what it passively undergoes.<sup>119</sup> He also considers whether the source of productive movement must always be the moving thing itself.<sup>120</sup> As a result of these considerations, Plotinus proposes that "passivity does not exist based on whether movement is from another or from oneself—e.g. something may rot on its own; rather, it exists when something, without part of itself being involved in the production, endures an alteration which is not involved in bringing about its substance."<sup>121</sup> Subsequently, he considers and dismisses a potential counterexample to this caveat concerning the bringing about of something's substance; but, he seems to think that this caveat does unnecessarily muddy the key point. He also recognizes that, strictly speaking, 'alteration' denotes movement in the domain of qualitative existence, typically with respect to contrary qualities. Accordingly, Plotinus concludes

his discussion of passivity and productivity by proposing that "passivity comes-to-be when something has within itself a movement whereby it is altered in any way; whereas productivity exists either when something has within itself a self-contained movement arising from itself, or else when a movement arising from itself proceeds to its end within another."<sup>122</sup>

Plotinus restates this conclusion without mentioning the restrictive term 'alteration' at all, proposing that "passivity resides in something's being disposed [ordered, inclined] *differently than before*. The substance of what passively undergoes as such acquires nothing whatsoever pertinent to a substance; rather, when a substance comes-to-be, what passively undergoes something is another reality," viz. its corporeal components or constituency.<sup>123</sup> Since every movement involving a corporeal entity leaves it "disposed differently" in some way, Plotinus' conclusion implies that passivity characterizes not only all alterative (i.e. qualitative) movements but also all movements ascribed to corporeal existents. He thus concludes elsewhere that *corporeal things are as such always and only passive* with respect to movement.<sup>124</sup> Rather than delineating two classes of coming-to-be, passivity and productivity are instead associated by Plotinus with corporeal movement and soul-like movement, respectively.<sup>125</sup> A movement is passive or productive, in other words, depending on whether it is conceived to be corporeal and(or) qualitative or to be soul-like, where for natural reality this latter connotes compositional forms or forming-principles.

Perhaps, then, natural comings-to-be or movements may as such be characterized in a singular fashion. Indeed, Plotinus echoes Aristotle's definition in suggesting that perhaps movement may be characterized as "the passage of something from potentiality to that which it is said potentially to be."<sup>126</sup> When characterized in this fashion, movement may be distinguished into those wherein something potential comes-to-be a real thing of a certain sort and those wherein something potential comes-to-be a real thing with respect just to the movement itself: "For, something may be potentially a real thing in that it can attain a certain form (e.g. it may be potentially a statue) and another in that it can attain an activity (e.g. it is able to walk), and when the former proceeds to become a statue, this procession is its movement; whereas, when the latter proceeds to walk, the walking is the movement," e.g. so

that the thing becomes something-walking.<sup>127</sup> In both cases, however, identifying a movement as a passage (or procession) implies that the movement itself must be entirely an actuality or actual existent, viz. an actual passage of a certain sort, and not at all a potentiality or potential existent—so that it in fact is just like a certain “restlessly awake form.”<sup>128</sup> The potentiality mentioned in this Aristotelian-seeming characterization of movement—and so, too, the notion of potential coming-to-be in my schematic—must instead refer to some existent’s having a potential for a certain actual movement, or its being a potentially real thing with respect to that movement. But, this also must conform to Plotinus’ Neoplatonic stricture that only actually real existents can be real causes. In cases where the movement or coming-to-be is such that something “attains a form,” for example, Plotinus maintains that “one must speak of some potentially real thing as *already another thing*—that is, as some thing and able to be another thing subsequently to being itself, either in such a way that it nonetheless survives the production of that other thing or else meaning that by admitting its own destruction it sacrifices itself for the sake of that other thing. The former is the sense of saying ‘bronze is potentially a statue,’ whereas water is potentially bronze and air is potentially fire in the latter sense.”<sup>129</sup> In previous terms, the statue is an example of composite substance and the bronze an example of constitutive substance; whereas, the latter examples involve pairs of constitutive substances.

Does this imply that we can properly ascribe a certain potential existence to something, as it were, only after the fact? We might reasonably suppose so when one constitutive substance comes-to-be from (i.e. replaces) another constitutive substance, and perhaps also when the composite is indeed a human contrivance (e.g. the statue). When the composite is entirely natural, however, Plotinus’ insistence that the potentially real thing must itself already be a certain actually real thing may be germane. Plotinus thus proposes, alternatively, that “potential existence, in our sense, designates some such thing as a certain substrate for passive undergoings and for shapes and forms which it is meant to receive in that it is disposed by nature to be receptive of them.”<sup>130</sup> This implies that the notion of a potentially real thing, or a potential existent, most properly denotes a corporeal or qualitative existent whose reality, we have seen, would derive from a compositional form or

(ultimately) a forming-principle. A corporeal or qualitative existent may thus be “disposed” in certain ways by virtue of its entirely actual compositional form or forming-principle.<sup>131</sup> Contrary to supposing that potential existence can only be ascribed *ex post facto*, accordingly, Plotinus claims that “it then is not that the potential thing comes-to-be an actual thing but rather that the subsequent actual thing comes-to-be from the already existent potential thing.”<sup>132</sup>

A useful analogy for synthesizing Plotinus’ ascription first of passivity and now of potential existence to corporeal and(or) qualitative existents as they relate to coming-to-be is that of a tool or instrument, viz. for the soul-like productive movements of actually real compositional forms or forming-principles. Plotinus maintains, for example, that the actual reality of movement, far from being an abstraction from our observations of movements or moving things, is rather itself the real cause of the observable phenomena or corporeal movements with which we commonly identify it:

We must not suppose that things which are in movement are the existent movements. For, walking is not the feet but an actuality proceeding from a certain *potency* to encompass the feet. Since the potency cannot be seen in the authentic condition in which it exists [as a potency], however, it is necessary to look at the activity of the feet—that is, not simply the feet as when they were at rest but as they are now encompassed by another [prior or higher] existent. This existent cannot as such be seen but by its relating to something else [viz. the feet] it can be seen accidentally (*kata symbebekos*) when one looks at the feet as first one assumes a certain position and then the other one does and they are not still. But the alternating bipedal movement one thus sees is a consequence of the alternating feet whereas the walking-movement itself is not something qualitative regarding the feet.<sup>133</sup>

A natural entity’s corporeally constituted functional components and(or) certain associated qualitative phenomena are in reality instrumentalities by means of which certain prior or more real actualities may manifest themselves, e.g. to our sense experience—analogous to the capabilities of tools to be utilized in certain ways in order to accomplish various tasks. As Plotinus thus proclaims elsewhere, “movement comes into sensible [corporeal] things from another [reality] which stirs and prods and innervates

and pushes those which partake in it so that they do not pause nor exist successively in the exact same condition."<sup>134</sup> Or, it "proceeds" into them "as a breath of air proceeds into another. And so, the movement potency pertaining to the capacity to walk pushes, as it were, and productively moves the walker's feet continually to assume one position after another; and when it pertains to the capacity to heat it heats something; and when the [movent] potency brings matter together into a natural assemblage it pertains to the generative capacity for natural growth...."<sup>135</sup>

The prior actualities of movement, or productive potencies, which are the real causes of corporeal and(or) qualitative movement may initially be ascribed to natural entities' compositional forms inasmuch as "no form of any kind can admit disorder or be at all passive but must be itself undisturbed while the matter has become passively related to it so that when there is coming-to-be the form, because of its presence in the composition, sets the matter in movement.... And so, this is the manner in which actual form exists in nature: such that it produces coming-to-be because of its presence in a composite substance—just as if the harmony existing in a lyre, by proceeding from itself, plucked the lyre's strings."<sup>136</sup> But, a compositional form, as the lyre analogy suggests, does not continually set its matter in movement, at least not with respect to every potency which might be ascribed to it. Here, too, the ultimate real cause is instead the forming-principle: "We term that *form* which is capable of producing a substance and *forming-principle* that which in the domain of [natural] substance productively moves it in conformity with its form."<sup>137</sup>

Inasmuch as corporeal and qualitative existence are less real ways to conceive the same natural reality, Plotinus even proposes:

When the form proceeds to matter it brings everything along with it, since the form encompasses everything—even magnitude, and everything else *in accordance with the forming-principle and what proceeds from it*. Magnitude is thus delineated for each sort of natural thing because of its form; for, the magnitude [or dimensions] of a human being differs from a bird's, and it also differs among various sorts of birds... Likewise, a particular thing, insofar as whiteness may be present in it, comes-to-be white because that [forming-principle] within this living being produces a white-colored thing, just as various other colors may be present in a variegated thing not because there

exists some sort of variegated color but, if you please, because it has a variegated forming-principle.<sup>138</sup>

Accordingly, "although corporeal things (e.g. animal bodies and vegetal bodies) exist, each one of them, as a plurality because of their colors and configurations and magnitudes and their various bodily parts and in whatever else may differ among them, this entire plurality derives from some one thing...[so that] corporeal substance exists because of the potency of forming-principles."<sup>139</sup> At the same time, though, we must not suppose that forming-principles, or their inherently actual productive potencies, somehow resemble their effects in the corporeal and qualitative domains of natural existence. Plotinus cautions:

The things we denote as being particular existent substances of a given sort are entirely forming-principles, which produce the qualities we then associate with those particulars; and so, if we subsequently investigate what in this respect a certain particular substance is, based on those [qualities] which forming-principles have produced, as if this were now itself entirely the substance, what we would now be considering is the qualified thing and no longer the particular substance itself. Indeed, this is how we always become misled—when, while investigating the particular substance, we back away from it and conform our investigation to the qualified thing instead. For, the real existent fire, for instance, is not what we are asserting it to be when we delineate it in terms which pertain to the qualified thing. The fire itself is a real existent substance; whereas, what we are seeing right now—as we gaze intently at what we are now considering the fire to be—this diverts our investigation from the particular substance, so that what would end up getting defined in this way is the qualified thing [and not the fire substance itself].<sup>140</sup>

Notice, too, that the distinction between compositional form and forming-principle all but dissolves here. Plotinus' choice of fire, the most active of the classical elements,<sup>141</sup> to illustrate his current point is emblematic of his view that ultimately natural reality is dynamic and not static.<sup>142</sup> Despite his use of the static Aristotelian notion that composite substances "have" form, Plotinus seems ultimately to conceive a compositional form to be certain interrelated soul-like processes or movements which sustain a natural entity's compositional integrity. But, it would seem, this conception could equally characterize an entity's forming-

principle; and so the distinction all but dissolves again when Plotinus argues further:

What, in the case of fire, then, is that substance which precedes the qualified substance? Is it the body? The genus—body—will then be the substance of fire, and then fire as such will be just the hot body and not even the entire qualified body will be the substance of fire. Or else, the heat will be in the fire in the way that snub-nosedness is in you. But, if we then took away the heat, and also the brightness and the lightness—as these also seem to be qualitative existents—the body's three-dimensional extension is all that remains, and then this matter will by itself be the elemental substance. But this does not seem correct; for, the form of a thing more properly designates its substance. But, the form of fire seems to be something qualitative. Not at all; the form of fire is not a fiery quality but a forming-principle.<sup>143</sup>

This metaphysical dynamicism extends “down” to corporeal and qualitative existence as well. For example, Plotinus adumbrates his doctrine that a potentially real thing must itself already be a certain actually real thing by averring that, “for a potentially existent thing, its own actuality is *its ability to move as this proceeds from it itself*”;<sup>144</sup> and, he insists, the fact that even the most body-like of corporeal existents are also soul-like (or living) is most evident in certain patently dynamic corporeal and qualitative phenomena: “But how is the Earth living? ... The expansion and shaping of rocks and the visible formation of mountains and their growing upwards from within themselves: all such things as these indicate the presence within the Earth of a productively craft-like ensouling forming-principle of some sort.”<sup>145</sup>

The main point to Plotinus' previous remarks concerning fire, however, was that we especially should not suppose that the inherently actual constituent potencies of forms and forming-principles somehow resemble corporeal or qualitative existents.<sup>146</sup> He thus elaborates that, “among the forming-principles, every term we use to designate a quality should be taken to denote an actuality, in concordance with our doctrine that the qualities which may be distinguished for each existent thing are *those ways in which substances may be demarcated in relation to one another*.”<sup>147</sup> Indeed, Plotinus avers that, “while a quality is entirely a characteristic of some particular thing, it is not a characteristic of it because of its being a substance of a certain sort”;<sup>148</sup> for, though a natural entity's qualitative existence is “brought about” by its

form or forming-principle, it thereby “derives from it *as it relates to some state-of-affairs external to it*.”<sup>149</sup> Insofar as we nonetheless find it useful to use terms denoting qualities when referring to their real causes, we must not forget that “the same quality-term is being used to designate both...something existing in a particular substance—what is just a certain actuality of it—and also something consequent upon this prior [reality] but pertaining to the one substance *as it relates to some other substance*,” or some external state-of-affairs.<sup>150</sup>

This characterization of qualitative existence as it relates to natural reality's higher or deeper levels implies as well that it, conversely, is not somehow reducible to them. Plotinian sciences which investigate coming-to-be in terms of concepts and principles pertaining to qualitative existence (or, likewise, to corporeal existence) are not reducible to sciences which employ concepts and principles pertaining to higher levels of natural reality. In the domain of Accidental or of Derivable substance, such notions as the classical conception of alteration as an exchange of contrary qualities may be appropriate for investigating coming-to-be; so, too, may be supposing, for example, that “when qualities intermingle with respect to matter many of them will interact productively with one another, especially those which exist in contrareity to one another,...[and so] that which passively moves is altered with respect to contraries by what is contrary to it,”<sup>151</sup> or supposing that an (S3) or an (S4) substance has the facility to “render what is apt to passively undergo qualitatively like itself ... to prod others into likeness with itself.”<sup>152</sup> Likewise, though corporeal (and also qualitative) existents are metaphysically passive, it may be appropriate when investigating this level of natural reality to employ not only such notions as local-movement but also such notions as impact, force, and the like. We may even, for example, explicate a corporeal substance's perishing by supposing that corporeal things, insofar as they are deficient in life, “destroy one another because of their irregular and unrestrained movements” and their resulting impacts on one other.<sup>153</sup>

Plotinus' scheme also seems to accord special status to quantitative concepts pertaining to corporeal and(or) qualitative existence. He notes, for example, that in the qualitative domain quantifiable extension seems to function as a kind of substrate in relation to all other qualities;<sup>154</sup> and he avers that extension and



other such quantifiable qualities seem in a way distinctive of natural existents inasmuch as, it seems, "whatever matter receives, it accepts *in an extended form*."<sup>155</sup> To be sure, "that which is receptive of every form cannot itself even be mass. But, concurrently with receiving any other quality, it is as though it becomes a certain mass."<sup>156</sup> Plotinus likewise conjectures that in effecting corporeal existence the soul-like forming-principles "generate a magnitude in accordance with the intelligible form...so that what has come-to-be will be proportionately equal by virtue of its magnitude to the potency of its unextended archetype"<sup>157</sup> and that they therein effect a corporeal universe "so filled with magnitude...that it is not deficient anywhere with respect to magnitude and is not scattered randomly about, but has interrelated parts and is not incomplete in any parts."<sup>158</sup> He does not develop detailed proposals regarding the sort(s) of science which might employ or presume such a geometric conception of natural existence; but he does proffer the dynamic conception of a natural universe which "actively moves its parts in relation to itself, forever reconfiguring its greater parts, as the relationships of its parts to one another and to the whole and their differing consequent dispositions towards one another bring about all the rest [of coming-to-be]...Each part thus moves in conformity to numbers—like the choreographic parts of a living being—so that the activities of the existing universe must be completely rational in two ways: both regarding the [geometrically] configured things which come-to-be within it and regarding configurations among these parts [of the universe]—and also regarding whatever these bring about and the manners in which they do so."<sup>159</sup>

## II.2 Two Metaphysical Conjectures

The foregoing elaboration of the Plotinian conjecture that natural entities are metaphysically polymorphic postulates a dual focus, or a dual conception of the ultimate real subjects, for our cognitive activities. Insofar as cognition postulates or presupposes real existence, its proper subjects may be explicated in terms of the classical notion of *substance*. But, natural substance may be conceived in four ways. The denotations of ascriptive predicates or terms, which Aristotle characterized as *things pertaining to*

*substance*, may be conceived to constitute substances insofar as they are thought to include their own substrate or (as, for example, in Stoicism) to be real qualifications of existent substances. Natural substance may also be conceived to be just certain functional components and corporeal constituencies. But, these ways are secondary or derivative in relation to conceiving natural substances to be form-matter composites, i.e. to be forms of natural composition. Thus, all cognitive activities regarding natural existents, insofar as they postulate or presuppose real existence, ultimately focus on compositional forms existing in nature. In the wider context of this essay, this implicitly contrasts this conjecture with contemporary realism's wholesale acceptance of the ontological commitments of every science. It implies that the postulates of a given science, which at least initially may be delimited by the conception of natural causality or the principle of change it presumes, will belong to one or another domain of natural existence whose "entities" are rather a certain level of nature's reality, i.e. they denote natural entities with respect to a certain conception of their real existence.

At the same time, Plotinus maintains that natural reality is more properly or perspicuously conceived in terms of coming-to-be as such and its real causes. Insofar as cognition postulates or presupposes real *causes* for natural existence and its coming-to-be, it ultimately focuses on forming-principles, whose constituent real potencies or productive actualities effect natural substances and comings-to-be. In this context, 'cause[s]' and 'effect[s]' denote a metaphysical process or relationship rather than those presumed and investigated by science. They connote that, although a lower level of reality is as such not reducible to a higher or deeper level, the former may be properly thought of as an image, manifestation, trace, or vestige of the latter.<sup>160</sup> This aspect of Plotinus' conjecture implicitly contrasts it as well with contemporary realism's commitment to spatio-temporal indexicality or continuity as fundamental to individuality in nature. More precisely, a second metaphysical conjecture which I shall impute to Plotinus distinguishes two sorts of individuality, one contingent and the other modal; and it proposes that the former is less real than, or is properly explicated by, the latter. In previous terms, the former is an image or vestige of the higher, more real individuality ultimately of Plotinus' forming-principles.

To a degree, this second conjecture is already patent, for example, in Plotinus' insistence that Socrates' forming-principle is most truly the *real* Socrates and in his related comparison of Socrates' qualitative (and also his corporeal) existence with a painted semblance of Socrates, since Plotinus associates spatio-temporality with qualitative and corporeal existence. This comparison, however, is imperfect on at least two counts. First, Socrates' forming-principle is not another Socrates but the same Socrates as the corporeal and the qualitative (as well as the composite) existents which also answer to Socrates' name. Second, Socrates' forming-principle "brings with it" his corporeal and qualitative (as well as his composite) existence inasmuch as the latter, and therein also his spatio-temporal existence,<sup>161</sup> are encompassed by his forming-principle as their metaphysical cause.

On both counts, moreover, Plotinus' forming-principles differ from the *natures* which we have seen contemporary realists ascribe to scientific entities. If we allow that an entity's actual past, present, and future behavior and even its putative behavior in contrived, possible, or contrary-to-fact contexts is due to its nature, it may then seem reasonable to suppose that its nature also would insure that it remains the same individual as science (in Cartwright's metaphor) takes it apart and reassembles it in various actual or possible contexts. But, an entity's nature could at best insure that *if* subsequent to an actual or possible contextual transposition a certain entity would be the same individual as a certain actual spatio-temporally present entity *then* not only would its nature account for its behavior in that new context just as it does here and now but this nature would belong to the same individual. Whereas, in contextually taking apart and reassembling a Plotinian forming-principle, science is transposing the individual as such since a real entity does not merely "have" a forming-principle but in reality just *is* a certain forming-principle.<sup>162</sup> Its behavior in some new (actual or possible) context would not merely be due to the same forming-principle but the same individual would thereby be causing or manifesting this behavior—in part, too, because its present spatio-temporal existence is itself due to the forming-principle which it in reality just *is*. Indeed, that spatio-temporal indexicality or continuity cannot insure the modal individuality required by scientific entities may be explained by its being a *contingent* manifestation or vestige of this latter (modal)

individuality; whereas, for contemporary realism this deficiency is due to the fact that spatio-temporal indexicality or continuity is presumed to be the individuality most proper to natural entities, so that they as such are incapable of transposition into or across scientific contexts.

Especially pertinent for any further elaboration of this second conjecture is Plotinus' conception of materiality or matter, which various Ancient and most Modern philosophers suppose constitutes the reality of nature and its coming-to-be. We have seen that for Plotinus corporeal and(or) qualitative existents are entirely passive with respect to coming-to-be. In this, these two domains are emblematic of two fundamental aspects of materiality, and of spatio-temporality as well. The reality of corporeal existents resides mainly in their status as instrumentalities for soul-like movements or potencies of compositional forms and forming-principles; and the reality of qualitative existents resides mainly in their status as substrates for interrelational demarcations of natural substances and for qualitative (accidental) ascriptions, including those pertaining to sense experience. Now, insofar as spatio-temporality is a feature or a relationship among certain features of corporeal and(or) qualitative existents, it is entirely an effect ultimately of the forming-principles' metaphysical causality, and so it may be an index of individuality just for corporeal constituencies and instrumentalities, or for interrelationally demarcated substances and the substrates of qualitative existence. But, the putative reality of an instrument is as such exhausted by its instrumental *functions* or *capabilities*; and, not only is the putative reality of a substrate for (external) relations and accidental ascriptions as such exhausted by this particular function, but it is therein a substrate only for contingent demarcations, ascriptions, or assertions.<sup>163</sup> This latter point especially would explain why spatio-temporal indexicality or continuity can at best impart a contingent individuality to natural entities even though their own deeper reality is neither corporeal nor qualitative, nor accidental or contingent. The former point may also suggest that the aim of scientific investigations or experiments which consider natural entities otherwise than just in their actual context or natural environment is to probe corporeal existents' capabilities as instrumentalities for natural or technologically induced comings-to-be, or qualitative existents' capabilities to manifest these in diverse ways or contexts—even though these

capabilities could then be ascribed to the natural existents themselves only contingently.

One caveat, at least, is in order regarding my proposal that a Plotinian realist might appeal to something like Plotinus' forming-principles to explicate the transposition of real individuals into or across scientific contexts. This caveat introduces an aspect of Plotinus' scheme ignored in this essay thus far, viz. its universalism concerning natural existence. Plotinus' conception of qualitative existence, for example, implies that an Accidental or a Derivable substance may be delineated ultimately in relation to every other substance or external state-of-affairs whatsoever. But, he also considers the interrelated totality of all qualitative (and, likewise, of all corporeal) existents to be itself a manifestation or vestige of a fundamental unity to nature, whereby it indeed constitutes a natural *universe*. This unity partly derives from Plotinus' forming-principles constituting a kind of interrelated totality as well; but he also ascribes a deep-unity to nature itself, imbuing it with a soul or forming-principle which seems meant to supplement and not merely canvass the forming-principles of individual entities.<sup>164</sup> This supplemental forming-principle seems meant to serve as forming-principle for natural existents which are not reasonable candidates for real individuality, e.g. such mass-entities as rivers and mountains or such proper-parts of nature as volcanoes and the heavenly circuit.<sup>165</sup> It might also be meant to serve as a kind of coordinating or ombuds forming-principle for the ways in which corporeal and qualitative existence interrelationally manifest the deeper reality of individual entities' forming-principles and their constituent productive potencies—both as such and in consort with its own role as forming-principle for mass-entities and proper-parts of nature. Perhaps, too, contextually artificial or highly contrived scientific investigations and experiments (e.g. those of deep Physics) may then be construed as indeed not pertaining to real entities but to manifestations or vestiges of this supplemental reality or metaphysical cause of universal nature.

### 11.3     Two Epistemic Conjectures

Contemporary scientific realism, we have seen, is just realism with respect to scientific entities. Plotinus is already a realist

concerning the objects of human cognition, including science and sense experience. His cognitive realism already accommodates science, as a cognitive activity which presumes some conception of natural causality or a principle of change. A Plotinian *scientific* realist, then, might be characterized as a realist with respect to natural existents insofar as they may be cognized as instances or consequences of natural causality and change. Insofar as cognizing and investigating natural existents in such a manner presumes in particular that they comport with a certain principle of change in cognitively discernible ways and respects, this conceives natural coming-to-be or movement to be ineluctably rule-governed or lawful. The traditional conception of science's distinctive status as discerners of nature's laws, in other words, would be fundamental to a Plotinian's scientific realism.

This traditional conception of science's distinctive cognitive aim may be more explicitly related to Plotinus' metaphysic of nature by imputing to him two epistemic conjectures concerning human cognition. The first resembles Popper's conjecture about theoretical constructions in science. It attributes the truth-bearing capability of cognition primarily to its form instead of its content. Insofar as a cognition of some natural existent may be thought of as a conceptual representation of it, the conjecture might state that a true conceptual representation more perspicuously cognizes a real existent the less its truth is due to the particular way in which it represents that existent and the more its truth is due to its own conformity to rules governing the construction, formation, or warranted assertion of conceptual representations pertaining to the domain or level of natural reality wherein it locates it.<sup>166</sup> The second conjecture proposes that scientific cognition encompasses instead of ignores the real objects of our other cognitive activities, including sense experience. Science, in pursuing its distinctive cognitive aim, supplements rather than supplants our other cognitive activities in the interwoven fabric of human cognition inasmuch as discerning nature's laws may be conceived to involve conceptually representing the rules which lawfully govern natural existents at least partly by rendering explicit formational rules governing cognition generally. Insofar as a law of nature may be thought of as a certain way in which comings-to-be comport with some principle of change and cognitive formation rules may be thought to manifest themselves most explicitly in conceptually

necessary cognitions, this would imply that discerning a law of nature may involve recognizing pertinent conceptual necessities when investigating comings-to-be as manifestations or vestiges of nature's laws, or lawfulness—or, perhaps, that discerning a law of nature is a joint cognitive product of certain pertinent conceptual necessities and applying a certain principle of change to natural existents and phenomena.

Plotinus maintains, when we locate his metaphysic of nature within his wider metaphysical system, that human souls and nature's forming-principles are all manifestations of a single higher-order metaphysical principle, his hypostasis Soul,<sup>167</sup> which itself derives from a yet higher-order principle of reality, his hypostasis Intellect.<sup>168</sup> Two features of Intellect seem especially pertinent here.<sup>169</sup> Intellect—the archetype of all intellectual activity—and the object(s) of its activity are not distinct existents. Intellect does not, for example, construct representations of its purported objects; rather, its archetypal intellectual activity effects its object(s) as such, without reference to anything other than the reality of Intellect itself, or of this archetypal intellection. Second, Intellect's archetypally productive activity is unendingly (or timelessly) continual such that it *systematically* effects its object(s)—or so that it may be thought to effect an archetypal *system* of intellectual objects, or intelligibles. In previous terms, we might say that in absolutely pure intellectual cognition there is no representational content but only conceptual form—or, perhaps, that its content is exhausted by its form—and that the form of each such cognition would systematically relate it to every other such cognition in some archetypal (necessary, noncontingent) fashion. An appropriately similar remark would apply to nature's forming-principles, and so to their manifestations or vestiges in the domains of compositional form and of corporeal and qualitative existence. Plotinus, accordingly, identifies his archetypal intellectual activity as also archetypal truth, so that the two features of Intellect glossed above seem to foreshadow such notions of conceptual necessity as “the predicate is entirely contained in the subject” and the derivability of theorems in an axiomatized formal system.

The foregoing by itself suggests the first epistemic conjecture. The second conjecture also seems implicit when we recall that the real objects of every (true) cognition concerning natural existents are nothing other than those effects of the hypostasis Soul whose

highest or deepest reality Plotinus identifies as nature's reason-principles. I have claimed that this encompasses the objects of sense experience, so that sense experience itself becomes a (lowest) kind of intellectual cognition insofar as its objects are in reality manifestations or vestiges of the archetypal intelligibility which informs Soul, and so also nature's forming-principles. Like contemporary naturalistic epistemologists, Plotinus recognizes that the distinctive character of sense experience lies in its association with certain natural (corporeal) processes and capabilities, particularly those pertaining to our sensory organs or neurology. He likewise recognizes that the primary objects of sense experience are not those processes and capabilities themselves, nor the phenomenal content of sense experience which these seem somehow to be responsible for, but “external” existents in the natural universe encompassing our body and sensory organs. Plotinus, however, considers this latter point to be epistemically the more important of the two. His own natural epistemology of sense experience, accordingly, places paramount importance on somehow uniting external objects with the internal processes and capabilities by virtue of which we sense experience them. He accomplishes this ultimately by incorporating into his account of the natural aetiology of sense experience the notion of *sympatheia* or cosmic sympathy, as this originally Stoic notion may be incorporated into his metaphysic of nature,<sup>170</sup> and by conceiving sense experience to be a fully-fledged cognitive activity which therefore comports with his realist conception of cognition generally.

Insofar as this conception thinks of our cognitive activities as various kinds or levels of intellectual activity, this renders sense experience intellectual activity which utilizes the instrumentality of our sensory organs and their distinctive processes to cognize its objects, or which is occasioned by our sensorial “unity” with external objects by virtue of nature's cosmic sympathy.<sup>171</sup> The epistemic value of sense experience does not reside in its sensorial processes or phenomenal content but in its actively cognizing natural existents in a manner which implicitly locates them in the system of (lowest level) intelligibles comprising natural reality as this is effected by Soul, at least partly by itself comporting with formation rules and conceptual necessities which govern human cognition generally by virtue of our own souls' status as manifestations of Soul. In sense experience we are not merely

sensorially aware of a certain natural existent which natural *sympatheia* has "united" with that awareness as its object but we therein cognize, for example, a certain *human being*. Plotinus thus characterizes the objects of our sense experiences as in reality "already entirely present among intelligibles";<sup>173</sup> and he likewise characterizes sense experiential cognition as in reality such that an existent therein "comes to be present as something intelligible"<sup>173</sup> inasmuch as, Plotinus claims elsewhere, "sense experience is just the outward image" of a soul's "contemplation of form."<sup>174</sup> Accordingly, the real objects of sense experience do not exist somehow apart or cut off from the rest of natural existence, including as this may also be cognized and investigated by science.

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#### NOTES

1. Eddington 1958, xi-xiv.
2. For pertinent discussion on a variety of the concepts and issues I shall address regarding Plotinus' philosophy, see Gerson 1994a.
3. Eddington renders this second issue all the more acute when, having insisted that science has demonstrated his scientific table to be the only *real* table, he avers that "our scientific information is summed up in measures... We feel it necessary to concede some background to the measures—an external world; but the attributes of this world, except in so far as they are reflected in the measures, are outside scientific scrutiny" [Eddington 1958, xiii].
4. Reichenbach 1951, 176.
5. Reichenbach 1951, 176.
6. "We must regard our statements of unobserved objects... as conventions, which we introduce because of the great simplification of language. What we know is that if this convention is introduced it can be carried through without contradictions; that if we assume the unobserved objects to be identical with the observed ones, we arrive at a system of physical laws which hold both for observed and unobserved objects" [Reichenbach 1951, 179].
7. Reichenbach 1951, 181.
8. Miller 1987, 356. cf.. Hollinger 1980, 142; Grandy 1992, 228-229.
9. Cf.. Harre 1986, 109; Dupre 1993, 22.
10. van Fraassen 1980, 8.
11. Harre 1986, 39.

12. Cf.. Cartwright 1983, 4-10; Miller 1987, 10, 352-356, 367-372, 448-455.
13. Miller 1987, 354. Alternatively, Miller also proposes: "How often must scientists be in a position to claim that [e.g.] unobservables exist, for scientific realism to be true?... [Answer:] whenever a theory postulating unobservables is rationally preferred as empirically adequate" [1987, 366; cf.. 385-390 & 482-485].
14. Classic texts pertaining to the contemporary notion of ontological commitment include Carnap 1937, 114, and Quine's assertion (criticized by Carnap [cf.. Beth 1963, 498]) that "[t]o be assumed as an entity is, purely and simply, to be reckoned as the value of a variable... *to be* is to be in the range of reference of a pronoun... [or] to be reckoned among the entities over which our variables range in order to render one of our affirmations true" [Quine 1963, 13. Cf.. Quine 1960, 242]. For a more recent example, Kuhn's ontological recipe has it that the "similarity classes of natural families or natural kinds" associated with learning the lexicon of a given science or part of science constitutes its own distinctive "phenomenal world" [Hoyningen-Huene 1993, 72, 111, 267].
15. Harre 1986, 60.
16. Miller 1987, 366.
17. Dupre 1993, 6-7. Dupre himself characterizes this as "radical ontological pluralism" [1993, 18].
18. Schlick 1959, 87.
19. Schlick 1959, 99.
20. Schlick 1959, 91.
21. Schlick 1959, 101.
22. Reichenbach 1951, 186; Reichenbach 1953, 101-102.
23. Reichenbach 1953, 94. Cf.. Bergmann 1953, 267-270; Nagel 1961, 90; Hempel 1963, 697 & 701-702; Carnap 1966, 258-259.
24. Cf.. Miller 1987, 357-359; van Fraassen 1980, 13-18.
25. Cf.. Strawson 1963; Goodman 1963; Hempel 1963. Classic elaborations of the phenomenalist approach include Carnap 1928; Goodman 1966.
26. Thus, for example, Reichenbach adds to his above proposal that "[g]oing from the basis *O* to indirect sentences is the same as going from observables to unobservables" [1953, 99].
27. Carnap 1966, 225-226. Similarly, after characterizing theoretical laws by contrast as laws whose terms "do not refer to observables," Carnap remarks that even regarding the theoretical laws *par excellence* of Atomic Physics "[i]t is true that [their] theoretical concepts differ from concepts of length and temperature only in the degree to which they are directly or indirectly observable" [1966, 227]. For a somewhat but not entirely different perspective on this, see Cartwright 1983, 1.
28. Harre 1986, 57.
29. Miller 1987, 359.
30. Cartwright 1983, 19.

31. Quine 1960, 22. Quine himself thus devalues (un)observability concerns in asserting that "observation sentences as we have identified them are just the occasion sentences on which there is pretty sure to be firm agreement on the part of well-placed observers" [1960, 44] and arguing that questions of ontology cannot be resolved by experiment or observation because "such issues are connected with surface irritations in such multifarious ways, through such a maze of intervening theory" [1960, 276]. Yet, Quine stubbornly insists that "[w]hat reality is like is the business of scientists, in the broadest sense, painstakingly to surmise; and what there is, what is real, is part of that question" [1960, 22].
32. Harre 1966, 109.
33. Dupre 1993, 4.
34. Dupre 1993, 88. Cf. Hawkins 1964, 114.
35. Dupre 1993, 185. And, regarding the purportedly single science at which all theory reductions are presumed to aim, Cartwright argues: "In physics it is usual to give alternative theoretical treatments of the same phenomenon. We construct different models for different purposes, with different equations to describe them...No single model serves all purposes best" [1983, 11].
36. Cartwright 1983, 19.
37. Ryle 1954, 79.
38. Harre 1986, 280-281.
39. Harre 1986, 283.
40. Reichenbach 1951, 181-182.
41. Reichenbach 1951, 183.
42. Reichenbach 1951, 175 & 186.
43. Hawkins 1964, 185.
44. Harre 1986, 280.
45. Harre 1986, 292.
46. Harre 1986, 304.
47. The way in which John Locke's I-know-not-what account of material substance played into George Berkeley's hands may be instructive here.
48. Hawkins 1964, 178-180.
49. Hawkins 1964, 118.
50. Harre 1986, 296. Harre considers Ernst Mach's 1893 work on inertia to be an especially relevant antecedent to this notion: "The essence of Mach's analysis is simple...Why should inertia, the disposition to resist acceleration, be an intrinsic property of each material body, when all other mechanical properties are relative to the rest of the system? The most conceptually coherent stance is to treat it as a disposition grounded in the properties of the universe as a whole" [1986, 295]. Having insisted that deep Physics "transforms nature," Harre attempts to support his current proposal to "ground" its postulates in nature by employing a gambit similar to one employed by some recent naturalistic epistemologists [see below] to argue that "[t]he principle of

- complementarity [or duality] reflects the fact that we can make two kinds of glub-squeezing apparatus—so there are particle-like electron phenomena, and there are wave-like electron phenomena. Apparatus, like anything else, must be just glub, squeezed into some form or other. The universe at large is that which shapes up largish things like apparatus, just as apparatus shapes up particulate electron phenomena" [1986, 305].
51. Miller 1987, 522.
  52. Miller 1987, 527. In this, Miller serves up a clear illustration of how some recent realists conceptually link scientific entities to experimental apparatus, conditions, and outcomes. More pertinent for Miller's technically more detailed analogue to Harre's ultragrounding is his intent that this technical argument buttress his conceptual argument that "[q]uantum physics tells us how states of whole systems govern probabilities for events to happen, and this governance is not the product of causal powers or tendencies of entities or events in the system," so that "the many observed phenomena of superposition cannot be explained as due to characteristics of individual events in a dynamical system, but can be explained as due to the quantum state of the system as a whole" [1987, 542 & 556].
  53. Miller 1987, 592.
  54. One way to elaborate the significance for individuality of Harre's and Miller's approaches is by way of Carnap's stipulation that "[w]e use the term 'individual' not for one particular kind of entity but, rather, relative to a language system *S*, for those entities which are taken as the elements of the universe of discourse in *S*, in other words, the entities of lowest level (we call it level zero) dealt with in *S*, no matter what those entities are" [1956, 32]. Accordingly, if a logicist analysis of the language of deep Physics has it that its level zero lexicon is comprised just of the terms by which it distinguishes its natural kinds (e.g. which denote the quarky attributes of spin, charm, *et al.*), these would be its individuals. But, Harre's affordances and Miller's eigenstates or quantum properties are not Carnapian level zero entities; their level zero lexicons would in effect be comprised of a single term, e.g. *ur-stuff* or *the universal system of nature*.
  55. Reichenbach 1951, 81, 86, 158.
  56. Hintikka 1992, 31.
  57. Cartwright 1992, 50.
  58. To be sure, the charge that science contrives or idealizes its investigations is not inherently problematic. Hawkins thus argues *pace* Positivism that in Newtonian science "[w]hat distinguishes [causal or scientific] laws from mere generalizations is, rather, the claim of unconditionality. Bodies interact, and the behavior of any particular body is contingent on the environment of other bodies. But the way in which it is thus contingent is specified *completely*. This completeness

is, we have seen, equivalent to the claim that a mechanical system can be isolated, that, when the forces acting on it are specified, *no other aspects of its environment are relevant* to its behavior" [1964, 121; cf., 127]. The charge becomes problematic when articulated to portray science as therein contriving or idealizing the entities, phenomena, or systems—e.g. Harre's electron phenomena, Cartwright's charge interactions, or Suppe's physical-system replicas—to which its laws apply.

59. Suppe 1993, 118. Cf., Cartwright 1983, 15.

60. Harre 1986, 104 & 120.

61. Dupre 1993, 63 & 66. The complex of issues to which Harre and Dupre are responding is intimated, for example, in Putnam's proposal that "[a] natural kind term...is a term that plays a special kind of role. If I describe something as a *lemon*, or as an *acid*, I indicate that it is likely to have certain characteristics...but I also indicate that the presence of those characteristics, if they are present, is likely to be accounted for by some 'essential nature' which the thing shares with other members of the natural kind. What this essential nature is is not a matter of language analysis but of scientific theory construction" [1977, 104]. Note especially Putnam's blurring together of scientific natural-kinds and, as it were, commonplace natural-kinds. Many scientific natural-kinds, however, are postulated with no regard at all for commonplace natural-kinds. Moreover, what science is interested in the essential nature of lemons? Or, conversely, what nonscientist (or society) postulated chemical acids?

62. Hoyningen-Huene 1993, 98 & 120.

63. Hawkins 1964, 111.

64. Hawkins 1964, 169.

65. An example is Harre's notion of *referential grids*, which he bases on "the assumption that the ground for acts of reference by the community of physical scientists must be some differentiated extension...Strong exclusion relations must obtain between individual beings composing the field and the target of an act of reference if it is to be capable of being used as a ground" [1986, 125]. Chief among these strong exclusion relations are space and time: "In sum, then, we need a spatio-temporal grid in order to make reference possible" [Harre 1986, 127].

66. Suppe 1993, 118.

67. Cartwright 1992, 49.

68. Minimally, as Cartwright sees it, "when we associate a particular principle of change with a given structure or characteristic, we expect that association to be *permanent*" [1992, 47]; and, when this association is a consequence of some experimental condition(s), "we are prepared to assume that the situation before us is of a very special kind: it is a situation in which the behavior that occurs is *repeatable*. Whatever happens in this situation can be generalized...across varying external conditions" [Cartwright 1992, 51].

69. For example, Russell posited that a particular "will be something which is concerned in the physical world merely through its qualities or its relations to other things...But when I call something a 'particular,' I do not mean to assert that it certainly has no structure; I assert only that nothing in the known laws of its behavior and relations gives us reason to infer a structure" [1954, 277].

70. Cf., Suppe and Cartwright above.

71. Cf., van Fraassen 1980, 114-118.

72. Popper 1993a, 81-82.

73. Plantinga 1977, 266.

74. Popper 1993b, 434.

75. Harre 1986, 99 & 277.

76. Miller 1987, 15 & 18.

77. Fetzer 1993, 41.

78. Suppe 1993, 121. Cf., Cartwright earlier.

79. Of course, science may not be unique in this regard. Kuhn, for example, maintains that an empirical concept—whether or not also a scientific one—"can't be learned in isolation from other empirical concepts. Each concept is rather introduced...into a preexisting net of mutually correlated concepts...[and these] mutually correlated concepts constitute a whole, such that the individual constituent concepts aren't independently existing parts or elements of this whole but...are nothing outside the whole" [Hoyningen-Huene 1993, 100]. Or, as Harre summarizes the theme, "the essences of human cognitive processes and structures are semantic networks, webs of meaning held together by ordered sequences of analogies" [1986, 7]. For additional perspective on the conceptual schemes notion, cf., Crumley 1989; Sellars 1968, 116-150. Nevertheless, its roots are in philosophy of science. In this regard, an important influence not explored here is discussion of so-called scientific revolutions: cf., Kuhn 1970; Cohen 1981. Some contemporary realists even maintain that this cognitive or conceptual isolationism is in fact a virtue instead of a liability in argument for scientific realism: cf., Boyd 1992, 143; Grandy 1992, 229-230.

80. Cf., Mulkay 1985.

81. Grinnell 1992, 155.

82. Harre 1986, 94.

83. Quine 1969, 82-83.

84. Harre 1986, 156. For a more detailed explication of Gibsonian theory and its relevance to epistemology, e.g. by way of functionalist notions, see Machamer 1978, 437-440 & 444-446. Gibsonianism does have venerable antecedents, e.g. Aristotle's notion that "an eye, for example is made of certain materials (*which* materials being unimportant for the present purpose) that are naturally and normally in a certain ratio to one another... When suitably stimulated by the medium's transmission of motions from a molar physical thing that has active 'color power' (my

- expression), the eye takes on a ratio that is formally akin to, or, if you please, identical to, a certain ratio in the thing (which is or produces its 'color power'). Thus the eye takes on the form of the sensitive object without its matter" [Turnbull 1978, 22-23].
85. Hoyningen-Huene 1993, 40. In this regard, Kuhn also "employs a metaphor borrowed from computer science. The basic idea is that of some programmable and reprogrammable neural apparatus, situated between the organs that receive perceptual stimuli and perception itself, that is responsible for processing perceptual stimuli into actual object perceptions. Learning similarity relations can be understood as a way of programming, or reprogramming, this neural apparatus" [Hoyningen-Huene 1993, 84-85].
86. Hoyningen-Huene 1993, 57.
87. Boyd 1992, 144-145.
88. Sellars 1963, 1-40.
89. Of course, Sellars' distinction does not assert a sharp conceptual demarcation between scientific-image science and other (or previous) science.
90. Sellars does argue in later work for a conception of scientific realism which maintains that "a correct account of concepts and concept formation is compatible with the idea that the 'language entry' role could be played by statements in the language of physical theory, i.e. that in principle this language could *replace* the common-sense framework in *all* its roles" [1968, 146]. Here too, though, Sellars in effect cautions that this does not imply that the objects of sense experience and (or) routine cognition do not exist, or are unreal: "We must distinguish carefully between saying that [certain] objects do not really exist and saying that they do not really exist *as conceived in [a certain] framework*...To say that an object doesn't exist *as conceived in* [one conceptual framework]...is to claim that there are significant differences between the way in which the object is conceived [in that framework] and the way in which it is conceived [in a second framework]"—e.g. in first a common-sense framework and then a scientific framework [1968, 148-149].
91. In every case, the reality denoted on the right is more real than that denoted on the right, inasmuch as the right-side denotes the metaphysical cause (*aitia*) or source (*arche*) of the reality denoted on the left.
92. Regarding the notion of substance in Plotinus' natural philosophy, see also Rist 1967, 103-111; Evangelidou 1988, 144-150; Lloyd 1990, 85-95. Cf., Anton 1976; Gerson 1994b.
93. *En* VI.3.5.13-16. [*En* = Plotinus' *Enneads*.]
94. *En* VI.3.3.13-16.

95. *En* VI.3.8.10-11.
96. *En* VI.3.9. Cf., VI.3.2.5-6.
97. *symbebekola* [*En* VI.3.2.7].
98. *En* VI.3.8.20.
99. Cf., *En* VI.3.1.8.
100. *En* II.6.3.5-6.
101. *En* VI.3.4.35-36.
102. *parakolouthounta* [*En* VI.3.2.7].
103. Cf., *En* II.6.2; VI.3.6.
104. *En* VI.3.5.18-23. Cf., VI.3.4.16-18.
105. *En* IV.3.8.25-28.
106. *En* VI.3.9.28-32.
107. *En* III.7.4.24-25. Cf., VI.3.7.29-30.
108. *En* VI.6.13.50.
109. *En* V.3.15.13-14. Cf., VI.6.13.47-60.
110. *En* VI.3.15.24-37.
111. Cf., *En* VI.3.3-5.
112. *En* VI.1.19.11-12.
113. *En* VI.1.19.14-16.
114. *En* VI.1.19.16-18.
115. *En* VI.1.19.18-21.
116. *En* VI.1.19.23-25.
117. *En* VI.1.19.35-39.
118. *En* VI.1.20.10-12.
119. *En* VI.1.20.30-32.
120. *En* VI.1.21.14.
121. *En* VI.1.21.18-21.
122. *En* VI.1.22.1-5.
123. *En* VI.1.22.8-10. Cf., III.6.19.8-11.
124. Cf., *En* III.6.3; III.6.6.53-54.
125. *En* VI.1.19.9.
126. *En* VI.3.22.4-5.
127. *En* VI.3.22.5-9.
128. *En* VI.3.22.14.
129. *En* II.5.1.17-22.
130. *En* II.5.1.29-32.
131. Or by the compositional form or forming-principle of the natural universe as a single whole, though I shall not discuss this supplement to natural reality until later.
132. *En* II.5.2.8-9.
133. *En* VI.3.23.5-13.
134. *En* VI.3.23.1-4.



135. *En* VI.3.23.20-25.
136. *En* III.6.4.35-44.
137. *En* VI.3.3.15-16.
138. *En* II.4.8.23-28 & II.4.9.8-10. Cf. III.6.16.1-10; III.6.17.27-31; IV.3.13-21.
139. *En* VI.2.5.1-5 & 14. Cf. II.4.8.23-28; II.7.3; III.6.16-17; VI.2.5; VI.7.3.10-23.
140. *En* II.6.1.41-48.
141. Cf. *En* III.6.12.37-45; V.9.3.25-33; VI.5.8.40-45; VI.7.11.41-48.
142. Cf. *En* III.6.6.50; III.7.4.29-33; IV.4.1.25-36; VI.1.16.
143. *En* II.6.2.8-16.
144. *En* II.5.2.34.
145. *En* VI.7.11.18-26.
146. Cf. *En* II.6.3; III.6.6.65-77; VI.1.10.19-28.
147. *En* II.6.3.3-6.
148. *En* VI.1.10.54-55.
149. *En* II.6.1.28-29.
150. *En* VI.1.10.55-59.
151. *En* III.6.9.25-28 & 33-34.
152. *En* IV.3.10.33-36.
153. *En* I.8.4.4.
154. *En* II.4.11.1-30; II.4.12.1-11.
155. *En* II.4.11.18.
156. *En* II.4.11.25-26.
157. *En* II.9.17.8-10.
158. *En* III.6.18.9-14.
159. *En* IV.4.33.28-31 & IV.4.35.13-17.
160. Regarding the implied relationship here between higher and lower levels of Plotinian reality, see Fielder 1976; Fielder 1978; Fielder 1982; Wagner 1986, 60-62. Cf. *En* I.6.8-9; II.9.3.
161. Regarding the metaphysical source of spatio-temporality, see especially *En* III.7.11; VI.5.11. Cf. Manchester 1978; Strange 1994.
162. In this regard, Plotinus at one point portrays his Intellect's systematic generation of intelligible form as culminating in "uncutables," or *atomai* [*En* VI.2.2.13]. This may refer to the intelligible reality which Plotinus insists upon according even to purportedly "simple" bodies—e.g. air, earth, fire, and water. But, in context it more likely refers to the distinct intelligible reality of each individual entity in nature—a Plotinian analogue, perhaps, to Leibniz's identity of indiscernibles.

163. Of course, we have also seen that instrumental functions or capabilities, though not as such realities or real existents, may be ascribed only to actually real existents. This suggests that the second aspect of materiality is in fact more fundamental than the former; it, in effect, is *the* fundamental aspect of materiality for Plotinus. With respect to its function as the ultimate substrate for (external) relations and accidental ascriptions, including ascriptions of instrumentality, matter may be properly characterized as *privation* inasmuch as "the opposite of all form is privation; but, privation is real only in relation to something else and has no reality of its own" [*En* I.8.11.1-3]. Though Plotinus at times uses language suggesting that matter in some way affects whatever may descend towards it (e.g. *En* I.8.14.38-44; II.9.11.1-13; III.6.14.5-10; III.6.18.28-30), strictly speaking "matter cannot be isolated as any kind of pre-existent darkness, for there is no pre-existence either temporally or ontologically" associated with the metaphysically productive movements or potencies of Plotinus' real causes [Rist 1967, 117]. For pertinent discussion, cf. Rist 1961; Rist 1962; Armstrong 1967, 256; Lee 1979; O'Meara 1980; Corrigan 1985, 47-49; Simons 1985; Wagner 1986. Regarding matter as substrate, cf. *En* I.8.10.2-4; II.4.6-14; II.5.4-5; III.6.7.1-5; IV.3.9.24-27; VI.5.11.
164. Cf. *En* II.9.7.29; III.2.3.7-9; III.2.15.2; III.8.2; IV.3.7-10; IV.4.10-12; IV.4.32-38. For pertinent discussion, see Deck 1967, 74-80; Rist 1967, chapters 8-10; Wagner 1985, 288-290; Wagner 1986, 71-81; Gurtler 1988, chapters 1 & 3; O'Meara 1993, 65-78.
165. A contemporary Plotinian might add the postulates of deep Physics to these examples.
166. Elsewhere, I broach this in terms of a distinction between Real-truth and Accidental-truth for Plotinus: Wagner 1985, 285-286.
167. Regarding the strict propriety of referring to Plotinus' primary metaphysical principles as *hypostases*, see Anton 1982; Deck 1982.
168. Regarding souls' and cognition's relation to Intellect, see *En* I.1.9; II.9.1.33; III.5.7.50-54; III.6.2.32; IV.3.1; IV.4.12; V.9.3.31-39; VI.5.11; VI.9.5.10-13. As Inge puts it, Plotinus "has found in the creative Reason which is at once in our minds and the formative principle of the world, the bridge between thought and thing" [1929, 57]; and Brehier remarks that since the Intellectual Realm "appears as a series of Forms each of which depends hierarchically on the preceding... the universe can be the object of rational thought" [1958, 43]. Cf. Schiller 1978; Wagner 1982a, 58-59.
169. Cf. Findlay 1982; Wagner 1985, 280-284; and *En* III.6.6.1-33; III.8.11; IV.3.4.9-11; V.1.4.26-45; V.1.7; V.4.2; V.5.2; V.5.7-10; VI.2.7-11; VI.2.21; VI.7.13-17.
170. Cf. Gracsec 1972, 105-111; Gurtler 1988, 90-137.

171. Cf. Clark 1942; Blumenthal 1971; Wagner 1982a, 60; Wagner 1982b; Emilsson 1988, chapters 3 & 7; Wagner 1993, 43-47.  
 172. *En* VI.4.11.20-21.  
 173. *En* IV.4.23.14. Cf. III.6.18.25-28  
 174. *En* I.1.7.13-14.

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## Teleology Revisited: A Neoplatonic Perspective in Evolutionary Biology

Peter Manchester

Aristotle had complained, about Platonists or "friends of the ideas," that they had a perfectly sound understanding of the formal and material causes, but did not know how to invoke the moving causes—the efficient and final causes. Neoplatonism responded to this challenge with an adaptation of the well-known Stoic doctrine of *σπερματικοὶ λόγοι*, "seminal λόγοι." A characteristic use of the image is in Plotinus, "On Eternity and Time," where he says that eventuation in time is "a *λόγος* unfolding itself as though from a resting seed."<sup>1</sup>

The familiar exposition of this doctrine is badly attuned to the state of theoretical questions in contemporary biology. It sounds to biologists like *homunculi*, whereas, as I will argue, the "unfolding *λόγος*" is an account of teleological causation that ought to be acceptable and productive in biological explanations of the emergence of living forms—on each of the frame-scales of time in which individuation takes place.

I want to argue that already in Aristotle a *τέλος* is a *natural* cause, and teleological explanation not just a valid but a necessary component of complete explanation in biology. But the Neoplatonic development of the self-unfolding *λόγοι*, rigorously expounded, is even more evidently useful and productive in evolutionary biology.

### I. Context

There are many good reasons why explanations that imply teleology are rejected in modern biology, which is to say, in evolutionary biology.

First, teleology is associated with theism and the medieval transposition of the myth of creation into metaphysics. Specifically, there emerged a teleological argument in theology: that the suitability for their ways of life seen in living forms establishes that they were made "on purpose." When structured as a proof for the existence of God, this is called the argument from design. The God that is arrived at, so far as he is a maker, is the supplier of a τέλος—end, term, goal (Latin *finis*)—for each living thing. This position was blind historically to the transient character of species in evolutionary time, assuming that all genera and species are everlasting. It was also the paradigm of supernatural explanation of living forms, a mode of explanation that simply preempts any possible empirical research.

Second, teleology is the inevitable recourse for accounts of evolution for which the emergence of human reflective intelligence was somehow a goal of the origin of species from the beginning. A profound methodological problem arises for any such theoretical construct—call it observer bias. In a cosmological context it is called the anthropic principle: things are as they are so that we could be here. Empirical biology must renounce this kind of presupposition.

Finally, teleology suggests that speciation itself is an expression of purpose: reptiles adapted their forelegs to be wings so that they could fly, etc. Here biology in the past century has asked for a *mechanism* to be demonstrated whereby physiological variations among individuals could be selected for in the interest of a new capability. Or rather, I should not say selection in the way I just did, as selection "in the interest of a new capability," because classic Darwinism refuses to let the notion of 'selection' become purposive or intentional. The 'matter' on which selection acts such that changes of 'form' take place is *variation*, and just as 'selection' is treated as mechanically as possible, so also variation is assumed first of all to be stochastic—i.e. random and undirected. These theoretical reflexes of the biologist are not reductionist, but express instead an important methodical restraint. Evolutionary biology understands *very well* what it tries to identify and suspend wherever it rears its head: it calls it *teleology*, but what it really means is the supposition of occult or 'spiritual' causes about which, as an empirical science, it can be at best agnostic.

## II. A Platonic Problem

The unit of selection in biological evolution is the species, not the individual. This is the most general way in which to state the consequence for modern biology of the defeat of Lamarckism, which postulates the inheritability of individually developed traits.

But precisely in this role, as the concrete subject of whatever causes operate to evolve new species from prior ones, species exist in *two dimensions*: On one hand, a species is a population of individuals sharing morphological and behavioral characteristics that suit them to share a common niche in an ecosystem, and to be reproductively closed among themselves. This is the species studied in taxonomy—in both synchronic and, via the fossil record, diachronic taxonomy or the elaboration of evolutionary 'trees'.

On the other hand, a species is a gene pool, a DNA structure shared with only minor variations by all individuals in the population. The advent of chromosome mapping and the increasingly remarkable capability of recovering and sequencing DNA from fossils has led to the emergence of an independent and powerful tool for confirming, and sometimes correcting by genetic analysis, evolutionary derivation trees based on morphology and geological stratigraphy.

How is the relation between these two ways in which species are present to be understood? Neoplatonism has done some very valuable thinking about just this question—or rather, on an analogous question, where I shall first have to state briefly and then to defend the analogy.

In broad Platonic terms, the DNA-species is the eternal εἶδος, the population species is the participating individuals. Biology speaks of the genotype and the phenotype in making the same distinction.

In Platonism, the εἶδος or genotype is eternal. It is routinely supposed that a notion of the eternity of species precludes any insight into the evolution of species, because to say that the εἶδη are 'eternal' implies that they are 'fixed' or 'static,' unchanging. But this is simplistic concerning the notion of αἰών and the αἰώνιος, the 'eternal.' The eternal is not the αἰδιος, the everlasting. Its resting (μένων ἐν ἐνί, *Timaeus* 37d) is not logical stasis but what biology calls homeostasis, a self-sustaining order or pattern in which a participating lower order of motion (sensible

κίνησις, e.g. metabolism regarded as biochemical pathways) maintains itself. Αἰών is not something extensive about time, but something *intensive*—cohering with the most ancient senses of the term as life or prevailing-life-principle.

The elemental Platonic distinction is between an intelligible and originating dimension of things and the dimension in which things are in sensible motion or the process of coming-to-be and perishing (τὰ ἐν γενέσει). It is not a 'two-worlds' theory, but a distinction intrinsically well suited to illustration from biology, where an organism's DNA is intelligible (we speak of its 'code') and originating (directing protein synthesis), and only the living and developing organism itself actually comes to be and perishes in a metabolic sense. Since the time-frames in which DNA patterns themselves move and evolve are only incidentally related to those of the phenotype and its ontogenesis, they transcend the time of individuals and can quite properly said to be *eternal*—if eternity is understood as sketched above. Since the defining feature of the eternal is not its extension through time, but its relationship to forms or patterns enacted in that extension, there is no obstacle at all to assigning an evolutionary aspect to the plurality of εἶδη in Platonism, which is to say, to eternity itself.

This becomes all the more evident in Neoplatonism, where one of the most easily observed modifications of Platonism is the almost complete displacement of the εἶδη by λόγοι. We need to digress for a moment to lay out a context in which to appreciate the importance of this shift for biology.

### III. Causing In Aristotle

For Aristotle, it requires the correct integration of four distinct kinds of explanation to account for the being of a natural entity. This is usually referred to as the doctrine of the Four Causes.<sup>2</sup> Let me present them in the form of a simple chart:

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	<p>οὐσία form, essence, the "What" it was to be; the "Formal Cause"</p>	
<p>the ἀρχή of motion: its beginning or effector the "Efficient Cause"</p>		<p>the τέλος of motion its end, term, finish (Latin <i>finis</i>); The "Final Cause"</p>
	<p>Matter: what persists in presence through change; the "Material Cause"</p>	

Each of these four patterns of explanation is exhaustive. They are equiprimordial. That is to say, each, in its own way, explains everything: there is nothing left out. An organism, for instance, is entirely a material being. Yet it is also an ongoing metabolism, matter in which motion has been instigated—for example, nutrition. It is also a phenotype of a species, an οὐσία subject to identification and classification. And finally, insofar as it is growing, maturing through a life-cycle, and behaving in ways that subserve reproduction, its motion has to be understood teleologically. For Aristotle, it is knowing how to integrate these four αἰτίαι or modes of explication that constitutes knowledge of being.

In an organism or living being (Aristotle's ζῶον), the formal cause is intimately linked with the efficient and final causes to comprise the 'soul' (ψυχή) as he understands it. What it means to be ensouled is, in effect, to have one's own 'onboard' efficient and final causes. Now in general, there is for Aristotle a kind of complicity or coordination between the efficient and the material causes, on one hand, and the formal and final, on the other. Hence in the reductionist material philosophy and physical mechanics of the 17th and subsequent centuries, it is not surprising that the idea of 'cause' is wholly given over to efficient causality. But it is the conjunction of formal and final causes that leads in directions useful for biology. It is reflected in the use of the imperfect past tense in the Aristotelian technical phrase for essence as formal cause, "the 'what' it was to be" (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι). This names the

adult or reproductively mature individual in relation to its gestation, growth, and development: the butterfly is "what the caterpillar was going to be." The same vision of living as the enactment of changes directed to a formal end is also expressed in the term for 'actuality' that Aristotle prefers in natural science and especially biology, ἐντελεχεία, 'entelechy', which is ordinarily construed to mean 'holding or achieving completion' (ἐντελής ἔχειν), but as Aristotle uses it carries the more compounded sense of 'tending into or toward an end' (ἐν τέλος ἔχειν).<sup>3</sup>

Precisely a desire to think the εἶδος of a living being operating as a τέλος of its unfolding development leads to the Neoplatonic displacement of the εἶδη by the λόγοι. While εἶδος is certainly not 'form' (the common translation), which needs to be reserved for μορφή, it is still true that because of the term's association with vision and the visible, it naturally tends to imply a simultaneity-structure rather than a developmental pattern. Λόγος, on the other hand, is naturally associated with time. Already Aristotle *On the Soul* had used λόγος to name such things as the perceptual quality of sound,<sup>4</sup> which taken materially is vibration, but as audible is 'modulated' by a λόγος that the soul re-enacts in hearing. In such contexts, one usually translates λόγος as 'ratio' or 'proportion', having in mind the relationship between frequency (a physical determination) and pitch (a perceptual one). This is almost certainly too mechanistic: it means more generally intelligible pattern, almost 'rationale.' But in particular—as illustrated by its application to sound—λόγος is well suited to name an intelligibility enacted over time, a phase-series or developmental sequence.

With this, we are brought back to Plotinus' "λόγος unfolding itself as though from a resting seed." Only now, we are in position to see that far from being a simple appropriation of the Stoic λόγοι σπερματικοί, the Neoplatonic λόγοι are precursors of how contemporary biology understands the nature and role of DNA genetic sequences. Indeed, the λόγοι are no more 'seeds' than DNA is—or better, are 'seeds' in exactly the same way.

#### IV. Teleology

We are all familiar with the notion that the DNA 'code' of a living species determines the adult form of engendered individuals. How does it do so? In no way at all is it a precursory version of the adult form that has only to enlarge and perhaps reportion itself. Nor does it provide anything like a 'mold' or 'template' into which material is poured or by which it is stamped. We know that instead and most directly, it specifies protein synthesis, but does so dynamically, in such a way as to direct the course of cell division in embryogenesis (and in cognate developmental metamorphoses like insect pupation).

Consider the development of a large and complex animal from egg to adult. Simply to track and describe the strategies involved in tissue differentiation—on the way from the single cell of initial fertilization, through two, four, eight, sixteen...through the first foldings that differentiate endo-, meso-, and exoderm...into the elaboration of organ and body structures—remains a frontier in contemporary embryology. Even greater challenges to understanding arise from the fact that it is the λόγος of this developmental sequence—its 'logic'—that mediates between the gene pool and the population-species. In the developing individual, the genotype acts as goal or τέλος of development, through the mediation of the DNA-specified λόγος. The adult form is more elicited than produced. This feature of the logic of embryogenesis is so sharply felt that biologists have coined the term 'teleonomy' to describe it, 'teleology' being regarded as discredited. I propose that we think about what we call the DNA 'code' the way that Neoplatonism thought about the λόγοι whose unfolding constitutes the life-course (the βίος) of living beings (ζῶα), and unabashedly recognize it as teleology.

Neoplatonic λόγος determines or causes as a τέλος: in a completely strict way, the Neoplatonic understanding of natural life is *teleo-logia*, teleology. Lurking beneath the objections to teleological thinking outlined at the outset is an assumption that it involves a mistaken idea about time, illicitly postulates some way in which the future affects the present. Hence it is especially valuable that the most explicit Neoplatonic discussion of how λόγοι mediate between eternal intelligible being and sensible process occurs in Iamblichus' account of time. I will conclude with



the presentation and brief explanation of a few of the relevant texts.<sup>5</sup>

Iamblichus' thought about time survives principally in fragmentary quotes and long paraphrases incorporated into the Aristotle commentaries of Simplicius and Proclus. What follows is synthesized from two such places. I introduce Roman numerals to mark two separate elements of a traditional definition on which Simplicius tells us Iamblichus is commenting:

The divine Iamblichus in his first commentary on the *Categories* says that Archytas defines time as (i) "a kind of number of movement," and (ii) "the general interval of the nature of the universe." His exegesis of this definition is as follows:

(i) the movement referred to here is not one of the many (for then the others would be in want of time), nor is it the communion of the many (for such a communion would not be one), but it is the movement which is one in its being, preexisting all the others as though a monad of motions. This is the first psychical change [πρώτη ψυχική μεταβολή], unfolding [ἐκφυσμένη] the projection of the λόγοι; it is justly primary and the cause of all motions.

(ii) the general interval of the nature of the universe includes all the natures of the universe and penetrates through the whole of them entirely. Identified in this way, time begins from above on the level of the first λόγοι and reaches as far as a certain level where, in accordance with the transition [μετάβασις] and movement of the whole λόγοι, it determines the general interval. For in the same way that, with things in process, this Now along with the Now beforehand and this movement along with the first movement are what makes change manifest, so also, in a much prior and more fundamental way, the interval of the most senior time of all is seen as pre-existing with the essence of the whole λόγοι of the natures and, with sovereign propriety, as filling it to completion.<sup>6</sup>

What makes this position not just unfamiliar but unexpected is its distinction of two different dimensions of time. The higher, or 'psychical' time belongs to the hypostasis Soul in its productive descent from the intelligible to the sensible. The lower is physical time, the dimension in which sensible motions appear. This too is a psychical time, in the sense that it is still within Soul, but now it is Soul embodied in physical (natural) beings, so it is time as ordinarily understood, in which motion has its earlier and later

phases. In developing his theory of two-dimensional time, Iamblichus is expanding a theme latent in Plotinus' definition of time as the "life of soul (ζῶη ψυχῆς) in a movement of transition from one lifetime (βίος) to another." This transitional movement is 'vertical' in a systematic sense: it is the movement of Soul from its contemplative proximity to Νοῦς (one of its two βίοι) downward or outward into its production of nature or sensible being (its other βίος). Iamblichus calls this the "monad of motions." In a related remark, recalling the identification of time as "an image of eternity moving according to number" (*Timaeus* 37d), he points out that time moves only in relation to eternity.<sup>7</sup>

We could summarize this doctrine by saying that true or "senior" time is the life of Soul in its eternal movement from eternity into sensible time, which is to say that time is a perpetual arrival into itself. The position is not that there are two 'times,' but rather that time in its very nature is two-dimensional.

But now the argument has interpreted these definitions of time as two, whereas it is necessary to bring them together into one. For thus the whole nature of time will be seen.<sup>8</sup>

The reason Iamblichus seizes upon and elaborates this doctrine is for what it allows him to say about the presence of intelligible order in the growth and activities of natural beings: it is *time* that "projects" the λόγοι upon sensible motion, and "unfolds" the interval-patterns through which they are enacted. For Neoplatonism, time is what we could call the 'engine' of participation—the fully worked out answer to the complaint of Aristotle with which we began.

For the generative time, being, like a time-like monad, the number of self-moving movement, is the interval of the natural λόγοι, not however according to bulk nor with regard to outward movement simply, but it is the interval according to the pre-existing order of movement, in which the earlier and later are arranged beforehand and provide order to actions and movements. For one cannot infer the earlier and later of affairs without the pre-existence of time in itself, to which the order of actions is referred.<sup>9</sup>

In this distinction Iamblichus is exploiting an ambiguity in the term *τάξις*, which can mean both serial order-in-succession and 'ordinance,' deliberated arrangement or purposive shape. In time, only as sensible is the order of affairs purely serial; the pre-existent order is intelligible and purposive:

If we posit 'earlier and later' in this order, we do so not according to the transitions of movements or according to the unravelings of life or according to the pathways of cosmic processes, or anything like this; but we characterize it according to the ranking of causes and the continual concatenation of engenderings and the primordial act and power of motions bringing purposes to completion—according to all considerations like this.<sup>10</sup>

As the 'engine of participation,' time is clearly being understood *teleologically*. And because time is the life of soul, *participation* is the essence of life itself.

To translate this analysis into a Neoplatonic proposition in evolutionary biology: DNA is the Platonic *εἶδος*, understood in an Aristotelian way as harboring the *λόγος* of living beings. Its role in ontogenesis is best portrayed teleologically.

On the level of phylogenesis, the way to apply a Neoplatonic perspective is also clear. The stability that allows for the genetic identification of a species is a kind of homeostasis in time, an *αἰών* in the Platonic sense. Evolutionary biology calls it an 'equilibrium'. In evolution, the eternity of species is itself subject to change. The question is whether such change must also be understood teleologically.

We should not forswear the Neoplatonic answer: of course. Since the entire 'career' of Soul, embodying itself in Nature, is an enactment of *Noûs*, the evolution of species is *Noûs* on its way to itself. Whether this is again the 'anthropocentric' fallacy remains to be seen.

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## NOTES

1. III 7 [45], 11:23.
2. *Metaphysics* I, 3, restating *Physics* II, 3.

3. Otherwise, the definition of motion in *Phys.* III, 1 as "the *ἐντελεχεία* of the potential, as potential" would be incoherent.
4. *On the Soul* II, 12.
5. For a more comprehensive explication of these texts, see P. Manchester, "Time, Soul, Number: Late Platonic Light on an Obscurity in Aristotle," in Peter J. Opitz and Gregor Sebba, eds., *The Philosophy of Order: Essays on History, Consciousness, and Politics*, (Festschrift for Eric Voegelin), (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), pp. 110–124.
6. Here and below, I supply my own translations of passages collected in *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism*, edited with an introduction by S. Sambursky and S. Pines (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1971; hereafter Sambursky/Pines). In giving references for the texts I will first list the place in the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, then in Sambursky/Pines, it being understood that I depend on them to have located the texts originally. In the text presented here, (i) is Simplicius: *Physics* 786, 11–18, Sambursky/Pines 32, lines 18–26; (ii) is Simplicius: *Categories* 352, 2–10, Sambursky/Pines 26, 6–16.
7. Procl., *Tim.* III, 31, 5f; Sambursky/Pines 44, 20f.
8. Simpl.: *Categ.* 352, 10–13, Sambursky/Pines 26, 16–18.
9. Simpl.: *Categ.* 353, 13–20, Sambursky/Pines 26, 18–27.
10. Simpl.: *Phys.* 794, 7–10, Sambursky/Pines 42, 10–16 (Dillon frag. 63).

# **Plato, Proclus and Peirce: Abduction and the Foundations of the Logic of Discovery**

**Scott A. Olsen**

The thesis of this paper is that the Neoplatonist Proclus carefully preserved, though purposefully in a somewhat veiled manner, an ancient method of inference that Plato had discovered and employed in the Academy. And further that Charles Sanders Peirce rediscovered, and clearly emphasized the supreme importance of this dialectical technique of scientific discovery. Employed successfully by Kepler and many others, this inferential method is *de facto* the very basis of today's pragmatic success in the realm of scientific hypothesis formation. This is clearly evidenced in its enlightened and successful application by our creative geniuses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as, Albert Einstein and David Bohm. Unfortunately, though employed by intellectual geniuses throughout history (e.g., Kepler was especially proficient and insightful in its use), the method seems to have been somewhat ignored in the realm of "academia." This oversight now needs rectification.

We must begin our discussion with Plato. However, it is important at the outset to make some preliminary background observations regarding my construal of both Plato and Neoplatonism. First, my studies of Plato have led me to the conclusion that Plato was primarily a Pythagorean. Secondly, I take an "accurate" Neoplatonic view of Plato to be in fact an accurate view of Plato. In other words, when successful, Neoplatonism accurately depicts Platonic doctrine. This is not to deny that there are some Neoplatonic developments that are in all likelihood either extensions of or foreign to Plato. But my concern is with that central element of Neoplatonism that attempted to unfold the inner essential, if not esoteric, doctrine of Plato. In my view, Plato was a real midwife, like Socrates. Plato's intent was

not to explicitly set forth his doctrine in the dialogues. Rather he presents puzzles, problems, and incomplete analyses, from which the reader may infer (abduct) the solutions (or adequate hypotheses). See for example Plato's disparaging statements regarding "writing" in the *Phaedrus* (see 274e–275e), his avowed reticence toward setting forth his true doctrine as expressed in the *7th Letter* (see 341c–342a), the statements of Aristotle regarding Plato leaving the solutions to problems an open question in the Academy (see for example, *Metaphysics* 987b9–13, 1028 & 1076), and the entire Indirect Tradition as to the esoteric or unwritten doctrines of Plato (see H.J. Kramer, 1990). There is in fact remarkable consistency between Aristotle, the Indirect Tradition, the Neoplatonists, and Plato's own avowed feelings regarding this issue. It is ironic that some of the twentieth-century's more talented commentators, more interested in pushing their particular interpretations than arriving at the truth, went so far as to claim, as Cherniss once did, that Aristotle (Plato's pupil for 20 years) "misinterpreted and misrepresented" him (see Cherniss, 1945, p. 25). Or as Robinson apparently felt constrained to do, even deny Plato's own express words, lest Robinson's position be contradicted by Plato himself (see Robinson, 1953, p. 183).

As we shall shortly see, Plato elicited in the recipient (listener or reader) a technique of reasoning, in both the Academy and his Dialogues, by presenting a problem, anomaly, or incomplete solution, to which the member of the Academy or reader of the Dialogue was expected to reason backwards or "upwards" to an adequate solution or hypothesis. Throughout history this has been referred to in a variety of ways, such as the dialectical ascent, apogee, reduction, analysis, geometric analysis, abduction, hypothesis formation, novel reasoning, and retrodution. This upward dialectical movement was clearly discerned by Aristotle when he wrote:

Let us not fail to notice however that there is a difference between arguments from and those to the first principles. For Plato, too, was right in raising this question and asking, as he used to do, "are we on the way from or to the first principles?" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1095A)

In the Academy itself this dialectical method was often conjoined to mathematical discovery, moving upward (as metaphorically described in the Cave and the Divided Line of the

*Republic*), from the visible representations of this lower world, up through the intermediate realm of mathematical, up to the Forms as numbers and ratios, and up ultimately to the First Principles of the Forms, namely the Indefinite Dyad (Greater and Lesser) and the One (the Good), which upon deeper reflection appear to be intimately tied to the golden section and its reciprocal, in relation to unity.

This interrelation of mathematics and abduction (dialectic) was central not only to the techniques and interests in the Academy, but also to the tradition preserved by Proclus, and the rediscovery made by Charles Sanders Peirce (which actually became a cornerstone of the logical technique involved in pragmatism). As we know, the Academy itself was primarily made up of philosopher-mathematicians. Of course recall the tradition that over the doors of the Academy were the words, "Let no one unversed in geometry come under my roof" (Thomas, 1957, vol. 1, p. 387). These philosopher-mathematicians included, for example, Eudoxus of Cnidus, Theaetetus of Athens, Speusippus, Heraclides, Menaechmus, Callipus, Xenocrates, Leodamos, Dinostratus, Neoclides, Leon, and Theudius of Magnesia (see Thomas, 1957 & Olsen, 1983). It is interesting to note that regarding the mathematical emphasis in the Academy, Aristotle, who was much more interested in the strictly dialectical process stripped of a mathematical ontology, remarked in a somewhat "disgruntled" manner:

Mathematics has come to be identical with philosophy for modern thinkers, though they say it should be studied for the sake of other things. (*Metaphysics* 992a 32–34)

The tie between the mathematical and the dialectical has been noted by even some of the most conservative of commentators. Cherniss, for example, remarked:

If students were taught anything in the Academy, they would certainly be taught mathematics...that their minds might be trained and prepared for the dialectic; and this inference from the slight external tradition is supported by the dialogues, especially the seventh book of the *Republic* (Cherniss, 1945, pp. 66–67)

Now before discussing the essence of dialectic, i.e., abduction, it is important to recall that Plato is avowedly reticent about his true doctrines, especially in the dialogues. Both Aristotle and the Indirect Tradition (see Kramer, 1990) make it clear that there was a deeper oral doctrine within the Academy itself. And I would add that this doctrine is subtly imbedded within the dialogues themselves. However, this hidden or esoteric knowledge is very difficult to access in the dialogues, unless you already intuitively, or through personal teaching from Plato at the time, possess the key. It is somewhat analogous to the old story of the person who is looking for her lost spectacles. Ironically she really needs them to be able to find them, *unless someone is present to assist in the process*. As Plato made eminently clear for those with eyes to see and ears to hear:

I don't think the attempt to tell mankind of these matters a good thing, except in the case of *some few who are capable of discovering the truth for themselves with a little guidance*. (7th Letter 341e-342a)

Even though Plato is not absolutely clear in the dialogues as to the nature of dialectic (what I am taking to be abduction), he is unequivocally clear that it is the finest tool available in the acquisition of knowledge. As he says, "Dialectic is the coping-stone that tops our educational system" (*Republic* 534e). And in the *Philebus* he states:

It is a method quite easy to indicate, but very far from easy to employ. It is indeed the instrument through which every discovery ever made in the sphere of the arts and sciences has been brought to light....[It] is a gift of the gods...and it was through Prometheus, or one like him (Pythagoras?), that it reached mankind, together with a fire exceedingly bright. (*Philebus* 16c)

Furthermore, it is the dialectician who can reason backwards to a hypothesis which "can take account of the essential nature of each thing" (*Republic* 534b). But Plato recognizes that all abductions, though pragmatically useful, are tentative unless ultimately tethered to the final abduction of the One. This occurs only when the dialectical ascent is carried sufficiently far that one attains to the vision of the Good:

When one tries to get at what each thing is in itself by the exercise of dialectic, relying on reason without any aid from the senses, and refuses to give up until one has grasped by pure thought what the Good is in itself, one is at the summit of the intellectual realm, as the man who looked at the sun was of the visual realm....And isn't this progress what we call dialectic? (*Republic* 532a-b)

Within the Academy itself this dialectical key was employed in response to various problems, anomalies, and paradoxical situations presented by Plato and requiring creative and intuitive solution. For example, in response to Plato's astronomical question (i.e., the famous example of saving the appearances), Eudoxus responded by creatively abducting and then setting forth an explanatory hypothesis of concentric spheres. Of course he was not the only one to "abduct" an hypothesis to account for the phenomena. Speusippus, Heraclides, and Plato himself, each developed, or retroducted, plausible solutions. However, the hypothesis of Eudoxus more accurately explained the apparent movements of the sun, moon and planets. Menaechmus then followed and expanded the Eudoxian solution. Callipus made corrections on the Eudoxus-Menaechmus hypothesis, which was then adopted by Aristotle. The essence of the Eudoxian solution, based upon a combination of circular movements, went unchallenged until the time of Kepler. Sir Thomas Heath recognized the pragmatic success of the Eudoxian abduction:

...notwithstanding the imperfections of the system of homocentric spheres, we cannot but recognize in it a speculative achievement which was worthy of the great reputation of Eudoxus and all the more deserving of admiration because it was the first attempt at a scientific explanation of the apparent irregularities of the planets (Heath, 1913, p. 211)

This abductive procedure was employed in the Academy in many of the geometric problems. A good example is that of the Delian problem of doubling the cube. But my contention is that the technique is also required to solve the problems presented by Plato in the dialogues. For example, when confronted with the "worst difficulty argument" in the *Parmenides*, abduction leads to the hypothesis of the doctrine of intermediates. Plato, as a true midwife, plants the clues along with the problems throughout the

dialogues. Thus, in the *Timaeus* he performs an incomplete analysis of the regular solids. He is simply being reticent, as the true esotericist (Pythagorean) that he is, about the most sacred part of his mathematics. The reader must abduct the existence of the "golden triangle" and hence the "golden section" as a fundamental component in the construction of the solids (see Olsen, 1983). Plato generally will provide the reader with a pregnant clue, such as:

These then...we assume to be the original elements of fire and other bodies, but the principles which are prior to these Deity only knows, and he of men who is a friend of Deity... anyone who can point out a more beautiful form than ours for the construction of these bodies shall carry off the palm, not as an enemy, but as a friend...he who disproves what we are saying, and shows that we are mistaken, may claim a friendly victory. (*Timaeus* 53a-54h)

Plato, in his dialogue the *Theaetetus*, again provides an incomplete analysis, this time of knowledge. It is necessary for the successful reader to abductively infer the solution. Desjardins recognized this fundamental need for *apagoge*, or abduction, in the *Theaetetus*. In fact she correctly states that it is the "essence of that creative operation" of problem solving and hypothesis formation:

For the solution to the overall problem of the dialogue—"what knowledge really is"—is provided through the mode of problem solving known to mathematicians as "reduction" or *apagoge*...a method used to powerful effect by Hippocrates of Chios and Theaetetus of Athens....Theaetetus' work with irrationals provides the reductive solution to the problem of knowledge...rendering ever more rational what was originally irrational—(this) is, both in geometry and in knowledge as a whole, the essence of that creative operation which we know as the rational enterprise. (Desjardins, 1990, p. 170)

There actually are several variations of abduction, one variety is known as mathematical or geometrical analysis. Many of the abductions occurring within the Academy may have been simply "reductions" of one problem to another. This would be the case in the solving of the Delian problem of doubling the cube, as a reduction to the problem of finding two mean proportionals. On the other hand, the problem of saving the appearances (of the apparent disorderly motion of the planets), would be more an example of

abduction in its generic sense as discovery of a hypothesis which will account for the anomalous behavior or observations. In fact, as we shall see, it is this generic sense of abduction that I maintain lies at the very center of creative discoveries in the theoretical realm of the sciences and other fields, and is the basis of proper paradigm formation, overthrow, and reformulation. But the various distinctions and varieties must be kept in mind.

To fully understand the roots of Plato's abductive methodology, it is important to recognize that he was primarily a Pythagorean. Both his epistemology and his ontology are carefully intertwined, and both are rooted in mathematical principles. It is to the credit of the Neoplatonist Proclus, with his Neopythagorean leanings, to have accurately gleaned from the oral and written traditions, what Plato was really up to. But those commentators who are unwilling to look seriously at Proclus, the other Neoplatonists, and the Inner (esoteric) Tradition, will have to lament at their "loss of the key." As Robert Brumbaugh once put it:

We have probably lost the key to much of the "mathematics" that Plato's student is supposed to bring with him when he confronts the mathematical projection of the metaphysical scheme. (Brumbaugh, 1954, p. 56)

Let us now turn to Proclus and his commentators to get a better grasp of the "key." First recall the reference by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095a30 to Plato's always rightfully asking, "are we on the way from or to the first principles?" I might add the question, "are we moving up the ontological and epistemological Divided Line, up out of the Cave of the *Republic*?" Or, on the other hand, "are we 'deductively' proceeding back down into the Cave of 'ordinary' visible experience, preparing for the 'quasi-experimentation' process (what Peirce refers to as induction)?" As to the upward abductive movement, we find Proclus in his "Eudemian Summary" indicating that:

certain methods have been handed down. The finest is the method which by means of analysis carries the thing sought up to an acknowledged principle, a method which Plato, as they say, communicated to Leodamas, and by which the latter, too, is said to have discovered many things in geometry. (Heath, 1956, vol. 1, p. 134)

The two basic movements, upwards, inwards or backwards to the One and downwards, outwards or forward into the Many, were clearly recognized by Proclus as central to Plato's combined epistemology/ontology. Thus Morrow, in the introduction to his translation of Proclus' *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, states:

...the cosmos of mathematical propositions exhibits a double process: one is a movement of "progression" (proodos), or going forth from a source; the other is a process of "reversion" (anodos) back to the origin of this going forth. Thus Proclus remarks that some mathematical procedures, such as division, demonstration, and synthesis, are concerned with explication or "unfolding" the simple into its inherent complexities, whereas others, like analysis and definition, aim at coordination and unifying these diverse factors into a new integration, by which they rejoin their original starting-point, carrying with them added content gained from their excursions into plurality and multiplicity. (Morrow, 1970, p.xxxviii)

Proclus not only preserved this Platonic sense of double movement, including its ontological relevance, but also its very intriguing epistemological sense. In particular, he captured the essential feature of analysis or abduction. And by doing so he is one of the few commentators to recognize the parallel with Plato's cryptic remarks in the *Republic*. But here again, to really begin to see this, we must turn to a commentator on Proclus who possesses a mathematical background. In our earlier quotation of Proclus by Sir Thomas Heath, where Proclus refers to "...the finest method...analysis...which Plato...communicated to Leodamos," Heath provides a very telling comment in a footnote:

Proclus' words about carrying up the thing sought to "an acknowledged principle" suggests that what he had in mind was the process described at the end of Book VI of the *Republic* by which the dialectician... uses hypotheses as stepping-stones up to a principle which is not hypothetical, and then is able to descend step by step verifying every one of the hypotheses by which he ascended. (Heath, 1956, vol. 1, p. 134, fn. 1)

Mueller, following in this Neopythagorean mathematical interpretation of Plato's epistemology, has set forth a view consistent with that espoused here of Plato's adaptation of

mathematical analysis to the general dialectical method of discovery:

Analysis can be thought of as the process of looking for the proof of an assertion P by searching for the propositions that imply P, until one reaches propositions already established....(Mueller, *Mathematical method, philosophical truth*, in Kraut, ed., 1992. p. 175)

Of course one must realize that it may not always be the case that one arrives at an independently established proposition, or for that matter, hypothesis. The tentative hypothesis thus derived may be shown to work out only through subsequent deductive predictions and observation (involving confirmation or disconfirmation) as is the case with our general scientific method. Likewise, the analysis may result in a lemma which requires further proof, or a diorismos which sets forth the necessary and sufficient conditions under which the truth of the proposition or hypothesis, or solution of the problem, may be established. Each of these specific features is nonetheless consistent with the overall generic method of abduction, apagoge, or analysis.

In addition to Proclus' overall recognition of the primary character of abduction or analysis, he also set forth some of the subcategories or specific applications of abduction, for example that of reduction:

Reduction is a transition from one problem or theorem to another, the solution or proof of which makes that which is propounded manifest also. For example, after the doubling of the cube had been investigated, they transformed the investigation into another upon which it follows, namely the finding of two means; and from that time forward they inquired how between two given straight lines two mean proportions could be discovered. (Heath, 1956, vol. 1, p. 135)

It is unfortunate that few philosophers of the modern or postmodern periods have penetrated into a real understanding of the quintessential technique employed by Plato. Very few philosophers have taken seriously the interpretive skills of Proclus as preserving inner truths of Plato. This is true also with the Platonic commentators. With very few exceptions (e.g., Thomas Taylor and Darcy Wentworth Thompson), unless one recognized the truly Pythagorean, and therefore esoteric approach of Plato, one was not

able to discover the inner wisdom of the King of Philosophers. It was left to the mathematician-logician/philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce, to truly rediscover the essence and supremacy of Plato's dialectical method of discovery. Although familiar with many of the Neoplatonic writings, Peirce himself pinpoints the logical writings of Plato's student, Aristotle, as the source of his discovery.

Pierce states that he discovered Abduction in the logical writings of Plato's student Aristotle, in particular, in the latter's *Prior Analytics*. As Peirce states:

There are in science three fundamentally different kinds of reasoning, Deduction (called by Aristotle *synagoge* or *anagoge*), Induction (Aristotle's and Plato's *epagoge*) and Retrodution [abduction] (Aristotle's *apagoge*). (Peirce, *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, \*65, p.28)

Although most logicians are content to distinguish Deduction and Induction, it is to Peirce's credit that he recognized that the members of the Academy, Aristotle included, were really on to something unique. He understood what the Platonists (through their Neoplatonic interpreters, like Proclus) had been suggesting all along. Here we have a real creative and intuitive technique of discovery, what today we might suggest involves the nondominant right hemisphere. In fact, *it is the only inferential method that leads to new and original material*. Plato was not exaggerating when he maintained in the *Philebus* that:

It is indeed the instrument through which every discovery ever made in the sphere of the arts and sciences has been brought to light....[It] is a gift of the gods....(*Philebus* 16c)

Peirce in his brilliance recognized, that although the resulting hypothesis is tentative and conjectural, this was the one technique that provided something new and original:

Abduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is *the only logical operation which introduces any new ideas*.... (Peirce, 1931-1958, 5.171)

It should be noted here that it was to the credit of the Platonic commentator Cornford that he (Cornford) recognized the intuitive

leap involved in the process of Plato's dialectical ascent. Thus Cornford writes:

Plato realized that the mind must possess the power of taking a step or leap upwards from the conclusion to the premiss implied in it. The prior truth cannot, of course, be deduced or proved from the conclusion; it must be grasped (ἀψασθαι, Republic 511b) by an act of analytical penetration. Such an act is involved in the solution "by way of hypothesis" at *Meno* 85....The geometer directly perceives, without discursive, argument, that a prior condition must be satisfied if the desired construction is to follow. (Cornford, 1965, p.67)

Peirce recognized that this intuitive aspect of Abduction, with the corresponding leap in insight, was part and parcel of the actual scientific method. He saw that successful abduction depends upon creativity and an ability to see new relations and reason in new and novel ways. Thus, gradual progression,

... is not the way in which science mainly progresses. It advances by leaps; and the impulse for each leap is either some new observational resource, or some novel way of reasoning about the observations. Such novel way of reasoning might, perhaps, be considered as a new observational means, since it draws attention to relations between facts which would previously have been passed by unperceived. (Peirce in Buchler, ed., *The Scientific Attitude and Fallibilism*, 1955, p. 51)

Peirce had also recognized the successful use of Abduction by Johannes Kepler. Kepler is clearly one of the few who penetrated into the secret doctrine of Plato, both in terms of his ontology (c.g., the One, Indefinite Dyad, and the golden section) and epistemology (e.g., abduction). Peirce had recognized that the scientific method of reasoning may be viewed as a series of explanatory approximations to the observed facts. Our "abductively conjectured" hypotheses will often approximate to an explanation of the facts. One continues to attempt to retroduct a more complete hypothesis which does a better job of explanation. Thus, we see the unfolding of a series of abductively derived hypotheses. Each hypothesis presumably approximates more closely to an "adequate" explanation of the observed facts. Hence, observing Kepler's work in "De Motibus Stellae Martis," Peirce wrote:



At each stage of his long investigation, Kepler has a theory which is approximately true, since it approximately satisfies the observations...and he proceeds to modify this theory, after the most careful and judicious reflection, in such a way as to render it more rational or closer to the observed fact. (Peirce in Buchler, ed., *Abduction and Induction*, p. 155)

Furthermore, Peirce recognized in Kepler's application of Abduction that, even though there is an element of guess-work involved, it is in no sense capricious:

...never modifying his theory capriciously, but always with a sound and rational motive for just the modification he makes, it follows that when he finally reaches a modification—of most striking simplicity and rationality—which exactly satisfies the observations, it stands upon a totally different logical footing from what it would if it had been struck out at random. (*Ibid.* p. 155)

Thus Peirce recognized certain unique characteristics regarding Abduction that distinguished it from either the Inductive or Deductive methods of inference. Abduction clearly involves creative and intuitive, though not capricious, guesswork. In its generic sense, the goal of Abduction is to arrive at a satisfactory explanatory hypothesis. Peirce actually referred to it as the "operation of adopting an explanatory hypothesis" (Peirce in Buchler, ed., p. 151). It is always the originating process based upon the observation of anomalous phenomena (i.e., phenomena which do not fit in with the prevailing paradigm or accepted theory; what Peirce's friend William James referred to as "novel observations" or "wild facts"). Thus, Peirce referred to Abduction as theory. As such, Peirce referred to it as "...the first process, that of entertaining the question" (*Ibid.*, p. 151). And he recognized that what most distinguished it from the other methods of inference was that "it is the only logical operation which introduces any new ideas" (Peirce, 1931-1958, 5.171). But he also realized that the Abduction, to be justified, required subsequent verification through deductive predictions and inductive verification. As he stated, "...in pure abduction, it can never be justifiable to accept the hypothesis otherwise than as an interrogation" (Peirce in Buchler, p. 154). Thus, it is really the probational adoption of a hypothesis.

Peirce makes this clear when he examines more closely the work of Kepler:

at certain state of Kepler's *eternal exemplar of scientific* reasoning, he found that the observed longitudes of Mars, which he had long tried in vain to get fitted with an orbit, were (within the possible limits of error of the observations) such as they would be if Mars moved in an ellipse. The facts were thus, in so far, a likeness of those of motion in an elliptic orbit. Kepler did not conclude from this that the orbit really was an ellipse; but it did incline him to that idea so much as to decide him to undertake to ascertain whether virtual predictions about the latitudes and parallaxes based on this hypothesis would be verified or not. *This probational adoption of the hypothesis was an abduction. An Abduction is Ordinary in respect of being the only kind of argument which starts a new idea.* (Peirce in Buchler, ed., 1955, p. 156)

One of the most fascinating aspects of Peirce's rediscovery of Abduction, was his recognition that its form is similar in structure, though not identical, to a deductive fallacy, namely, the fallacy of affirming the consequent. Peirce set forth the "form" of abductive inference as follows:

The surprising fact, C, is observed; But if A were true, C would be a matter of course. Hence, there is *reason to suspect that A is true.* (*Ibid.*, p. 151)

Note that the inference is not that A is true, but rather, that we have reason to suspect the truth of A.

Finally, before leaving Peirce, it should be noted that not only did he discover the central role of Abduction in the discovery and explanation process, but he also explicated its relation to Deduction and Induction:

The Deductions which we base upon the hypothesis which has resulted from Abduction produce conditional predictions concerning our future experience. That is to say, we infer by Deduction that if the hypothesis be true, any future phenomena of certain descriptions must present such and such characters. We now institute a course of quasi-experimentation in order to bring these predictions to the test, and thus to form our final estimate of the value of the hypothesis, and this whole proceeding I term Induction. (Peirce, *Collected Works*, vol. VII, Footnote 27 to \*115, p. 67)

In conclusion, Plato developed the technique of discovery (Abduction) in the Academy as well as with the astute readers of his dialogues. Proclus carefully, but reservedly, perpetuated the tradition *for those few amongst us who have eyes to see and ears to hear*. And the genius of Charles Sanders Peirce grasped the supreme importance of the technique, making it a cornerstone, if not the foundation stone of his Pragmatism. In our own century, people like Albert Einstein and David Bohm continuously employed the method. Starting with anomalous phenomena, they were able to abduct hypotheses with tremendous explanatory power. Although it is true that this can be troubling to those stuck with their petrified paradigms. Relativity Theory was the abductive result of focussing upon (rather than ignoring) three problems anomalous to the prevailing paradigm of the time. As Thomas Kuhn has pointed out:

Einstein wrote that before he had any substitute for classical mechanics, he could see the interrelation between the known anomalies of black-body radiation, the photoelectric effect and specific heats. (Kuhn, 1970, p. 89)

This anomaly/ abduction procedure was also very true of David Bohm. From personal experience as a student of his at Birkbeck in the mid-seventies, I can attest to the basic process of abductive reasoning in his daily work. These intellectual giants followed upon the groundwork of Plato, Proclus and Peirce, in the process of focussing upon the anomaly (or anomalies) and abductively reasoning backwards (and upwards) to a novel explanation (and corresponding new paradigm). Focus upon anomalies, including the Einstein, Podolsky, Rosen experiment, helped stimulate David Bohm in his startling discoveries of ■ Universe rooted in nonlocality, analogous to a hologram, with an implicate as well as explicate order. We probably owe the most to the Philosopher King himself, Plato. However, we must not forget the careful, though enigmatic and veiled preservation by Proclus (and the Neoplatonic tradition), as well as, the incredible rediscovery made by Charles Sanders Peirce. Here we see the beauty of a foundational logical method cutting across Platonism, Neoplatonism, and Pragmatism.

My good friend, colleague, and mentor Huston Smith has the opening paper in this book, which he titles: "*Science and the Great*

*Chain of Being*." In this wonderfully challenging and insightful paper, Professor Smith states:

I do not think that we can get to the Great Chain of Being through science. (p. 4)

What I would contend here is that the essence of the scientific method of discovery, which I take to be Abduction, is truly applicable to the Great Chain of Being. For Plato and the Neoplatonists, Abduction carries us upwards to the 1st *Republic* within the Cave and Divided Line similes. This epistemological method is not at all inconsistent with ■ deeply metaphysical and in fact spiritual ontology. Where science per se has failed us in the past is when certain materialistic and reductionistic assumptions and presuppositions have been made. In those contexts, it has been mere scientism masquerading as science. But Abduction, the logic of discovery and the essence of the scientific method, is an epistemological method clearly applicable to the divine hierarchy of the Great Chain of Being. I fully contend that Plato was both serious and correct when he stated in the *Philebus* that:

It is indeed the instrument through which *every discovery ever made in the sphere of the arts and sciences* has been brought to light.... (Philebus 16c)

It is now time that "mainstream academia" recognize the supreme role of Abduction, and pay homage to Neoplatonism (predominantly through Proclus) and to Peirce for carefully preserving for us this great technique of discovery that had its birthplace and refinement in the hallowed halls of the first Academy.

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# **Neoplatonism and the Cosmological Revolution: Holism, Fractal Geometry, and Mind-in-Nature**

**David Fideler**

## **I. From the Living Universe to the Mechanical Universe and Back Again**

In the Philosophies of ancient and traditional cultures, the universe was recognized as being all of one piece. Social and religious structures helped maintain the bond between individual, culture, and cosmos, and in traditional societies the universe itself was commonly seen as an organism, a living entity with whom they lived in mutual symbiosis. Plato described the cosmos as a "single Living Creature which encompasses all the living creatures that are within it,"<sup>1</sup> a canonical description quoted time and again by Plotinus.<sup>2</sup> In the body of the living universe, animated by the World Soul, all parts are interrelated through the power of sympathy and by the fact that the manifest cosmos is itself rooted in the Nous (Mind/Being), which is a dynamical system of unity-in-multiplicity.

Nothing could be further from the Neoplatonic vision of the living universe than the mechanistic cosmology of the Scientific Revolution, which emerged from the first great cosmological revolution of the Western world. God was portrayed as an engineer and lawmaker who set the atomistic, world-machine in motion. The universe was pictured as a giant clock, and all external reality was reduced to two fundamental principles: dead, unintelligent matter, and motion, the efficient cause that powered it. Galileo suggested that only the primary qualities of mass and motion were essential; secondary qualities like color and beauty, which could not be quantified, were irrelevant in scientific work and perhaps even unreal. Descartes explained that only humans possessed mind; our

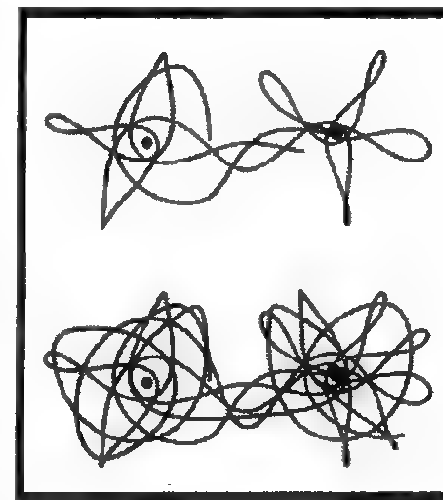
bodies, animals, and the rest of the world functioned as mere machines. Francis Bacon formulated a philosophy of science in which the worlds of fact and value were sharply divorced, and in which science was seen as a means for the rational control and exploitation of nature.<sup>7</sup> Thus, at its birth, contemporary science was not simply a search for rational understanding as philosophy had claimed to be in earlier times. Science became a way of knowing based on prediction and control of the external world. The picture of God as an engineer was really nothing other than a image of the scientific ethos itself. This "divine engineer" possessed detached, calculating reason; power, prediction, and control over nature; and the godlike wisdom to structure reality in the best possible way. With the rise of capitalism and the explosion of industrial technology, the stage was set for the emergence of the contemporary world. Not only did the scientific worldview sanction the exploitation of nature, but with the rise of economic and factory structures, workers too came to be pictured as cogs in a vast economic machine. Technology, which promised human salvation in the new, millennialistic mythology of progress, also possessed an ambiguous, shadow side, for the very machinery that was supposed to liberate humanity from mundane concerns could itself become an instrument of bondage.

Over the last century the mechanistic view of the universe has started to completely break down. Because the implications of quantum mechanics, chaos theory, and the realization that we inhabit an evolutionary, self-organizing universe are starting to work themselves out, it is no exaggeration to say that we are truly living in the midst of a new Cosmological Revolution that will ultimately overshadow the Scientific Revolution of the Renaissance. And if the mechanistic world view left us stranded in Flatland—a two dimensional world of dead, atomistic matter in motion—the emerging cosmological picture is far more complex, multidimensional, and resonant with the traditional Neoplatonic metaphor of the living universe.

In the basic equations of classical physics, a complexity so great has been discovered that it renders simple natural systems unpredictable and "chaotic." Our awareness of the universe is returning to life with chance, spontaneity, and creativity. The

Newtonian model of the solar system as a deterministic, periodic system works quite well when the system consists of only two bodies—the sun and one planet—but as soon as other bodies are introduced, so too is a chaotic, nonlinear dimension.<sup>8</sup> Figure 1 illustrates the path of an imaginary dust particle orbiting between two equal gravitational centers; it exhibits a complexity so great that, beyond a certain point, it is impossible to predict the orbit of the dust particle with classical equations. Astrophysicists now realize that a similar complexity exists within the solar system, and highly chaotic behavior is exhibited by Hyperion, a moon of Saturn. As Hyperion tumbles through space its speed of rotation is in constant flux, exhibiting periods of order in an otherwise chaotic sea of behavior.<sup>9</sup> For the most part, regions of chaotic gravitational turbulence in the solar system are found to exist between the habitual pathways of the planetary orbits, but this is not entirely true; it is possible for planetary orbits to change, and chaotic variations in the Earth's own orbit account in part for the climatic changes associated with Ice Ages. Astrophysicists think that Pluto's orbit might some day change suddenly; and, while not as likely, it is possible that the Earth itself could shift into a new orbit. While somewhat unsettling to contemplate, the solar system is stable only in a statistical sort of way.<sup>10</sup>

If mechanistic science had painted a thoroughly deterministic picture of the world, it is now suggested that the indeterminacy of the quantum realm would be inevitably amplified through the sensitive dependence on initial conditions that underlies chaotic,



**Figure 1**  
Chaotic behavior exhibited by a dust particle orbiting two equal gravitational centers.

natural systems. Given two planets that were absolutely identical in every respect, it wouldn't be long before they started to exhibit uniquely different behavior in their weather patterns and so forth, thanks to the creative, indeterminate energy boiling up from the quantum level.<sup>7</sup>

By over-simplifying the world, classical physics contained the seeds of its own destruction. In a universe comprised solely of discrete bits of unintelligent matter in motion, it's hard to account for the self-organization of the cosmos and the fact that organisms behave as though they are more than the sum of their individual parts. But the real surprise came as physicists began their descent into the mystery of matter. Matter itself dematerialized and started to look more like dancing patterns of energy; according to the theory of General Relativity, matter and energy are entirely equivalent. Then, with the emergence of quantum physics, the whole apparatus of discrete, either-or categories on which traditional Western logic is based were shown to be inadequate. Paradoxically, light acts like a discrete particle *and* a non-discrete wave in one and the same phenomenon.<sup>8</sup> Recently in 1982, physicists proved by repeatable experiments that "particles" of light that originate from a common source continue to act in concert with one another as a whole system, regardless of how far apart they are—the type of "spooky action at a distance" that Einstein tried so hard to avoid.<sup>9</sup> The tantalizing implication of quantum nonlocality is that the entire universe, which is thought to have blazed forth from the first light of the big bang, is at its deepest level a seamless holistic system in which every "particle" is in "communication" with every other "particle," even though separated by millions of light years. In this sense, experimental science seems to be on the verge of validating the perception of all mystics—Plotinus included—that there is an underlying unity to the cosmos which transcends the boundaries of space and time.<sup>10</sup>

If the emblem of the mechanistic world view was the Cosmic Clock, the symbolic image which best reflects our current cosmological revolution is the Mandelbrot set, a specimen of fractal geometry which first entered public awareness in 1985 and has continued to ripple outward ever since.<sup>11</sup> Fractal geometry provides one of the most powerful cognitive tools available for deeply understanding the complex fabric of nature, and it is a subject that is intrinsically related to the Neoplatonic philosophy of Mind. As

we reflect upon the basic characteristics of fractal geometry and the Plotinian description of the Nous, the essential relationship between the two topics becomes immediately obvious.

We'll begin in familiar territory with the Plotinian description of the Nous and move on to fractal geometry.

## II. The Plotinian Description of the Nous

### 1. *The Nous Is a Living Harmony of Sameness and Difference, Unity and Multiplicity*

Aside from the One which exists beyond Being, the most abstract, universal concept is Being itself. But Being possesses two essential qualities: simultaneous Unity and Multiplicity or Sameness and Difference. In order for something to be, it must first be itself through self-identity or Sameness, and it must also be unique and distinct from everything else through the principle of Difference.

For Plotinus, universal Being is a living, harmonic synthesis of Sameness and Difference, Unity and Multiplicity, the Finite and the Infinite.<sup>12</sup> All of these analogous terms describe the same fundamental relationship, and in his thinking Plotinus is indebted to the Pythagorean and Platonic tradition. For the Pythagoreans, the *kosmos* is a *harmonia* of the Limited and the Indefinite, the perfect image of which is the musical scale: a harmonically differentiated image of Unity.<sup>13</sup> Plato likewise follows this tradition in the *Timaeus* when he describes the generation of the World Soul: The primordial constituent of reality is Being, and its two faces, Sameness and Difference. The demiurge weaves Sameness and Difference together through the mathematical ratios of music, and, the resulting harmonic entity is the World Soul, in which every part is sympathetically related to every other part through logos, proportion, and resonance.

### 2. *The Nous is Self-Recursive: Intellect-Being is Folded Back on Itself*

Another characteristic of the Plotinian Nous is that Intellect and Being is self-recursive or folded back upon itself. Plotinus characterizes the Transcendent Absolute as One, the Nous as a One-Many, and the World Soul as a One-and-Many. As a living

Unity multiplicity, the Nous is folded back upon itself in a circle. Plotinus insists repeatedly that the Nous is a thought that thinks itself. thinker, thought, and the object of thought are one; intellection and Being is a living vision in which subject and object are identical.<sup>14</sup> Reality is a self-recursive act rooted in the eternal.

3. *The Nous is a Holistic System in Which the Parts Contain the Whole and all the Parts are Interimmanent within One Another*

There is a total harmony and unity of existence. The manifest universe, rooted in the Nous, is a closely knit organism in which all of the parts are interrelated, for they are parts of a self-sympathetic living unity. The whole is articulated in the parts and the parts holographically reflect the nature of the whole.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the parts are interimmanent<sup>16</sup> and reflected in one another; in the cosmic fellowship of the universal organism, the far is also near, and every part both receives from the All and gives to it.<sup>17</sup> From an epistemological perspective, knowledge is possible because all beings are rooted in Being and all intellects are rooted in Intellect. As Plotinus states, Mind is not something in us, but we are in Mind, and the very fact that you can understand these words is because we are rooted in a common matrix of Mind which exists between us.

### III. Fractal Geometry, Mind, and the Fabric of Nature

Like Plotinus's description of Mind, the most interesting type of fractal geometry—non-linear fractal geometry—emerges when a natural or mathematical process is folded back upon itself in a self-recursive loop. Because the existence of computer graphics makes the exploration of fractal geometry possible, the study of fractals is relatively young. But fractal geometry is already changing the way that we look at the world, because it has become obvious that most natural phenomena possess a fractal dimension. As we can see in Figure 2, one primary characteristic of fractal geometry is that it possesses self-similarity at different levels of scale. In this computer generated fractal of a maple leaf—and in actual maple leaves—we can see that the pattern of the entire leaf is organically replicated at ever smaller levels. Like the edges of a leaf, coastlines and mountain ranges are fractal and exhibit self-similarity at different levels of magnification. Each tiny leaf on a fern is a model of the branch on which it resides (Figure 3). each branch is a model of the entire fern (Figure 4). The same type of self-similarity is seen in many types of trees (Figure 5).

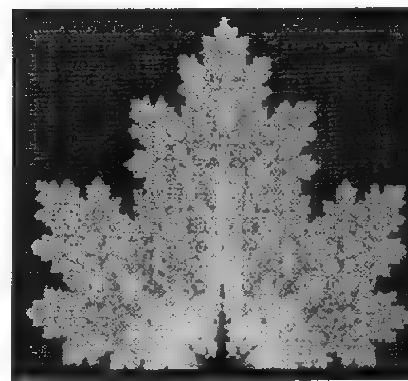


Figure 2. Fractal model of a maple leaf. (© Michael Barnsley, from *Fractals Everywhere* by Michael F. Barnsley, published by Academic Press, 1988, 1993).

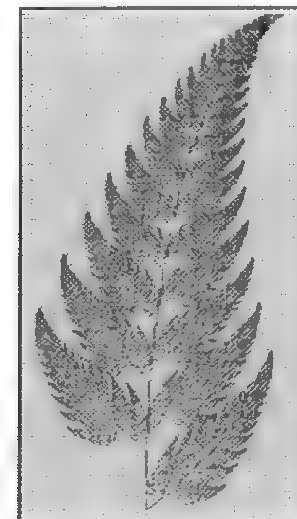


Figure 3. Fractal model of a fern in two-dimensions.

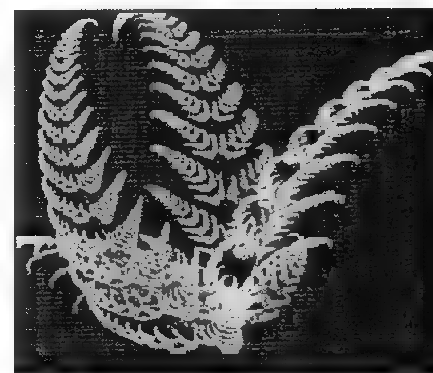


Figure 4. Fractal model of a fern in three-dimensions. (© Michael Barnsley, from *Fractals Everywhere* by Michael F. Barnsley, published by Academic Press, 1988, 1993).



Figure 5. Fractal model of a branch. (© Michael Barnsley, from *Fractals Everywhere* by Michael F. Barnsley, published by Academic Press, 1988, 1993).

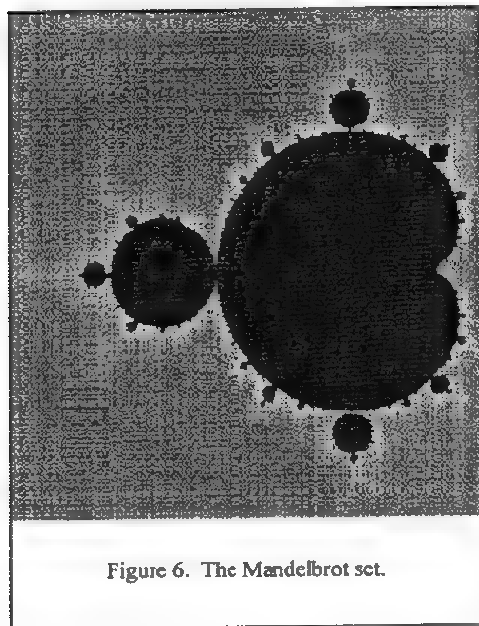


Figure 6. The Mandelbrot set.

As the mathematical study of fractal geometry progressed, it became obvious that the central patterns of fractal geometry—self-similarity, scaling, and feedback—are reflected most organic and inorganic phenomena. In the same way that we exist in Mind, and mind is not something exclusively “in” us, so too are fractals not exclusively “in” the computer: the fabric of the living universe is

itself fractal in nature. The fractals are not in the computer, but we are in the fractals.

It is possible to draw a much stronger analogy between the Neoplatonic philosophy of Mind and the nature of fractal geometry. For this we turn to the most famous example of fractal geometry, the so-called Mandelbrot set (Figure 6), which is an infinite, artificial fractal that reveals the life and activity of numbers on the complex plane. The Mandelbrot set, which can be explored on a home computer with easily available software, is described by a simple algorithm which harmonically weaves the principles of Stability and Change, Sameness and Difference, the Finite and the Infinite.

If we look at the equation which describes the Mandelbrot set, we can see how it harmonically unites Sameness and Difference (Figure 7). A fixed number provides the foundation of Finite Sameness and Stability, but a changing number contributes the principle of Infinite Difference and Change. Like Plotinus's description of the Nous, the equation is recursive and folds back on itself, and through the circular path of Sameness pulsates an ever-changing informational flow of Difference.

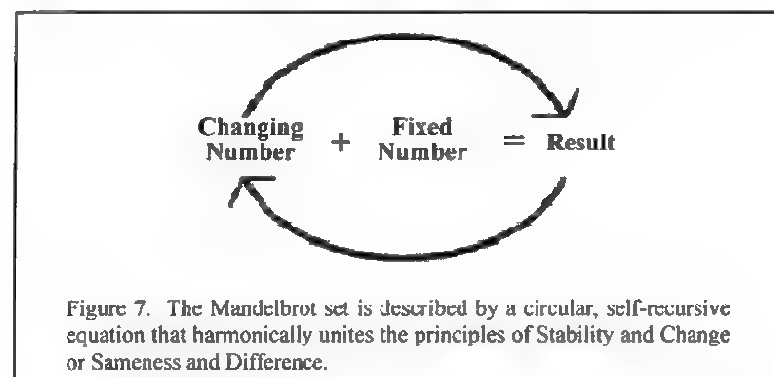


Figure 7. The Mandelbrot set is described by a circular, self-recursive equation that harmonically unites the principles of Stability and Change or Sameness and Difference.

When a computer plots the Mandelbrot set, it tests each individual computer pixel, which represents a fixed number on the complex plane, against the recursive algorithm to see how fast the number is changing. This is represented on the screen in various colors: stable numbers at rest are painted black, while numbers that are rushing off toward infinity are assigned different colors depending on their rate of change. From this simple equation, an entire graphic universe is brought into being.

Because the complex plane is infinite between any two points, it is possible to use a computer as a microscope to explore ever-finer details of the Mandelbrot set at ever-increasing magnifications. The most interesting and complex region appears at the boundary between stability and change. Zooming in along the edges, in different parts of the set we discover a host of organic forms reminiscent of the natural world: rivers, coastlines, flashes of lightning, crystals, leaves, and patterns that look like simple organisms. But the most amazing thing of all is that no matter how great the magnification is increased, the spaceship-like shape of the “mother set” continually reappears. This characteristic is shown in Figures 8A–8F, where the highlighted area is enlarged in the following illustration.

Using supercomputers which can magnify the scale billions of times, the haunting visage of the mother set continues to appear at ever-deeper levels like a mandala of tranquillity amidst a sea of change and becoming.

Like the universe now being envisioned by quantum physics, the self-recursive cosmos of the Mandelbrot set—and the cosmos of Plotinus—is a self-contained whole in which every part is related to every other part. And like the axiom of the Hermetic philosophers, “as above, so below,” the Mandelbrot set is holographic: a part contains the pattern of the entire whole—the macrocosm is perfectly reflected in the microcosm.



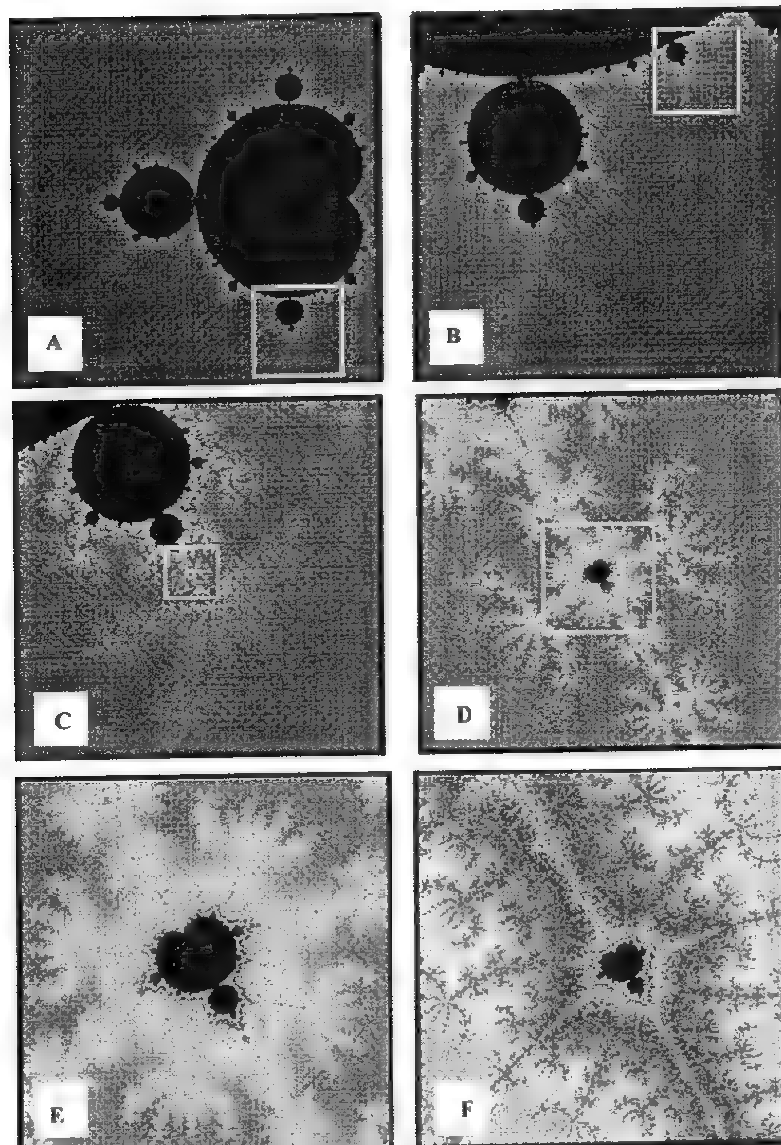


Figure 8 A-F. A short voyage into the infinite depths of the Mandelbrot set. Each successive illustration is an enlargement of the highlighted area in the previous illustration. Because the Mandelbrot set harmonizes the Finite with the Infinite in a self-recursive loop, it is infinitely complex but displays a holographic self-similarity at all levels of magnification. (David Fidler)

In summary, Plotinus's description of the *Nous* details how a marmonic union of the Finite with the Infinite, linked in an eternally self-recursive loop of self-reflection, gives birth to a holistic universe—a dynamical system in which the parts contain the whole and are interimmanent within one another. The Mandelbrot set clearly illustrates *all* these central characteristics of the Plotinian *Nous*, and gives us a clear idea of what it looks like to gaze into a self-recursive infinity of Sameness united with Difference. Yet beyond the infinite, there is also an elegant simplicity to all of this. Fractal geometry also shows how a simple, repetitive cycle of self-recursion can give birth to very complex structures of organic relatedness, a fact undoubtedly related to the genesis and development of organic life.

Finally, as Plato and the Pythagoreans symbolized the World Soul—the harmony of Sameness and Difference—by the musical scale, the Mandelbrot set offers an even better symbolic image of the World Soul because it shows in a graphic way how the harmony of Sameness and Difference gives birth to the organic relatedness of the natural world.

#### IV. Revisioning Neoplatonism: Life and Mind in an Evolutionary Universe

While the implications of fractal geometry and the existence of quantum nonlocality tend to support Plotinus's view of the seamless, holistic interconnectedness of the universe, the findings of contemporary cosmology also undermine several of his premises. Contemporary physics has demonstrated that all classical conceptions of matter are inadequate in the extreme, and if Plotinus was with us today he would surely revision his thinking in this area. Another problem occurs with Plotinus's assumption that the Earth and solar system have existed from eternity and always will,<sup>18</sup> which doesn't reconcile itself very well with our contemporary knowledge of the evolutionary universe. Platonists can still accept the premise that the universe and its beauty are rooted in eternal Being, and that beauty, contemplation, and creativity are gateways to the experience of timeless levels of reality. But the question remains: How does eternity get played out in the flow of time? And how do we bridge the gap between the eternal, noetic realm, and the evolutionary, self-organizing universe?

I believe that an answer might be found in Gregory Bateson's philosophy of Mind. Anthropologist, biologist, epistemologist, and

contributor to the theory of cybernetics, Gregory Bateson saw Mind as a metapattern, "a pattern that connects." Bateson described Mind in its simplest expression as "a circular or more complex system of parts in which information flows that makes a difference."<sup>19</sup> (Figure 9.) From this perspective, Mind is a self-recursive system, and processes like ecosystems can be said to possess Mind. Through varying combinations of negative and positive feedback within a system, minds can grind to a halt, be self-regulating, or spin wildly out of control on a runaway course. In healthy organisms, societies, and ecosystems, there is some type of self-regulating dynamic at work; otherwise, these types of minds would self-destruct or cease to exist. Assuming that such minds can pass on their characteristics through time, the evolutionary unfolding of further complexity becomes possible.

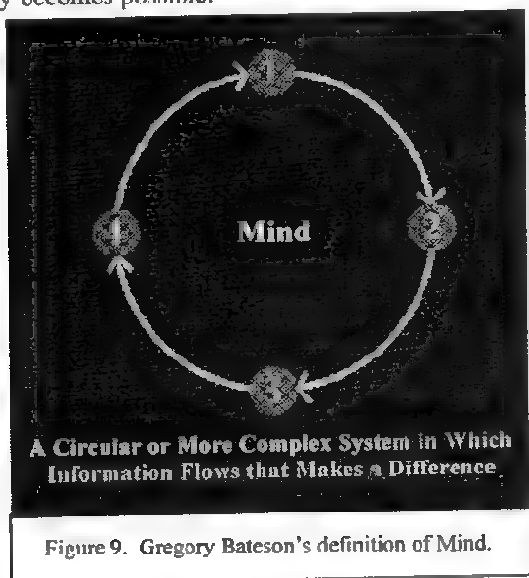


Figure 9. Gregory Bateson's definition of Mind.

As a biologist and a naturalist, Bateson never fully worked out all the philosophical, cosmological, and metaphysical implications of his conception of Mind, which, as he pointed out, is closely allied, if not identical, with the principle of Life.<sup>20</sup> But these considerations could provide a rewarding area for further exploration. The most unhappy and destructive bias of the modern world is the Cartesian notion that Mind exists only within humans, and that the rest of the world is inanimate, dead, and dumb. However, the epistemology of Plotinus and Bateson points

in an entirely different direction. Plotinus, after all, repeatedly affirmed that the entire universe is a single, living, intelligent organism.

Contemporary cosmology also suggests that the universe itself is teeming with life. Galaxies are now described as manifestations of self-recursive fractal geometry, and there are at least 100 billion galaxies, 20 billion of which can be photographed from Earth. Each galaxy contains on average some 100 billion stars and at least that many planets, a certain percentage of which must be inhabited by noetic, contemplative beings. Swimming like vast organisms in the endless sea of space, spiral galaxies appear as beautifully spun, moving, pulsating, evolving and mutating entities—celestial flowers or starfish—containing billions of individual cells. While Gregory Bateson never advanced the claim, galaxies are certainly "circular or more complex systems in which information flows that makes a difference," and thus are noetic, living systems by his definition. Moreover, if a galaxy is silently humming with the thoughts of beings who wonder about the meaning of existence, how can we assert that the galaxy itself is unconscious? Just as the skeletal system provides a foundation for more complex life processes but in itself does not think, galaxies, stars, and planets should not be hastily dismissed as dead and unintelligent when they are inhabited by intelligent life.

If we continue to investigate Gregory Bateson's definition of Mind and travel in a thought experiment back to the initial conditions of the physical universe, the universe itself could be said to possess a noetic dimension as soon as the fundamental forces of creation were linked together in a circular, mutually-transformative process, which must have been at an unimaginably primordial date. From this perspective, the entire universe can be seen as a circular noetic event progressively unfolding itself in time—"a thought that is thinking itself," to use the terminology of Plotinus. The advantage of this model is that it successfully reconciles the Platonic and process schools of philosophy which are not contradictory, in my opinion, but complementary. On the one hand, all of reality is rooted in the archetypal foundation of eternal Being, but on the other hand there is a genuinely creative evolutionary unfolding of manifestation, which can itself be pictured as a forward moving noetic event of increasing complexity. Time is thus revealed as "the moving image of eternity,"<sup>21</sup> to quote Plato—a moving image that is not closed, but creative and open-ended. The implication of this view is that the entire universe is noetic, dialectical, and evolutionary in nature; it is also teleological in the sense that it leans very heavily in certain directions. But by the same token,

there is creative freedom, for no one specific manifest phenomenon is absolutely predetermined in advance. In this sense, reality is both process and Being, an ongoing dialectic between time and eternity, between creative freedom and the confines of Form and universal Necessity. From this perspective, Bateson's view of Mind may be the needed missing link that can unite the Platonists with the process philosophers, the ontologists with the evolutionists, and the philosophers with the cosmologists.

Now that the mechanistic world view is breaking down, we need a new language, science, epistemology, and ontology that reflects our holistic relation with the living universe more accurately than does the language of classical science. In this sense, the epistemology of Plotinus and Bateson points in a direction that can help us move beyond the subject-object impasse of Cartesian dualism. Physicist John Wheeler's concept of the participatory universe also points in a similar direction. In a charming illustration, Wheeler describes the universe—the big "U" in Figure 10—as "a self-excited circuit" that is looking back at itself.<sup>22</sup> Starting with the primordial Flaring Forth,<sup>23</sup> over billions of years the universe expands, cools, and evolves, only to look back at itself in a moment of contemplative self-reflection. Humanity's so-called "dialogue with Nature" is actually the universe's dialogue with itself. In this regard, Plotinus offers some valuable advice:

All that one sees as a spectacle is still external; one must bring the vision within and see no longer in that mode of separation but as we know ourselves; thus a man filled with a god—possessed by Apollo or one of the Muses—need no longer look outside for his vision of the divine being; it is but finding the strength to see divinity within.

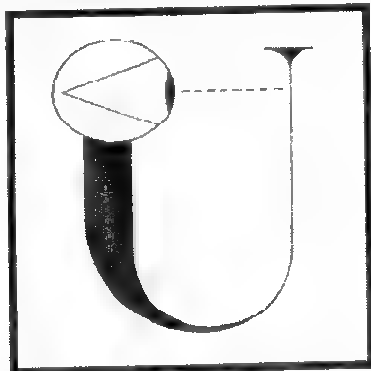


Figure 10. Physicist John Wheeler's concept of the participatory universe.

Plotinus, Bateson, and Wheeler each suggest that the psyche is not distinct from the cosmos, but the Mind of the living universe in search of its own nature. In this sense, none of us are detached, isolated observers, but we all belong to a community of beings which is itself a reflection of the entire universe. Because a world view colors every aspect of human experience, in the aftermath of the Scientific Revolution the focus of life became more one dimensional and utilitarian as individuals came to be seen as passive, mechanical cogs in systems of social and economic control. In the aftermath of the Cosmological Revolution, the focus of life will become more multidimensional, contemplative, and celebratory as we as individuals come to see ourselves as living embodiments of the-universe-in-search-of-its-own-Being, and as active participants in the ongoing creation of the world.

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#### NOTES

1. Plato, *Timaeus* 30D3-31A1.
2. See for example Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.2.6, 3.2.7, 4.4.11, 4.4.32, 5.9.9.
3. On the mechanization of the world order in the Scientific Revolution, see Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature*; Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World*; and Rupert Sheldrake, *The Rebirth of Nature*.
4. This unpredictable complexity was first discovered by Henri Poincaré in his work *On the Problem of Three Bodies and the Equations of Dynamics* (1890). For discussion see Ian Stewart, *Does God Play Dice?*, chapter 4, and the sources cited in note 6.
5. Stewart, *Does God Play Dice?*, chapter 12.
6. For further discussions of chaos in the solar system see Ralph Abraham, *Chaos, Gaia, Eros*, chapters 15-17, and John Briggs, *Fractals: Patterns of Chaos*, 50-54.

7. Some forms of "chaos" are completely deterministic but unpredictable. Other forms, like the "quantum chaos" described here, are indeterminate. For a lucid discussion of the implications of chaos theory in relation to the different concepts of determinism, see Stephen H. Kellert, *In the Wake of Chaos*, chapter 3.
8. This is proven by the famous two slit experiment in quantum physics. For discussion see John Gribbin, *In Search of Schrödinger's Cat*, 163-171; Paul Davies and John Gribbin, *The Matter Myth*, 209ff.
9. On the experimental verification of nonlocality see Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point*, 82-85; John Gribbin, *In Search of Schrödinger's Cat*, 216-231; Paul Davies, *The Cosmic Blueprint*, 176-177.
10. For a fascinating though sometimes technical discussion of the implications of quantum nonlocality, see Menas Kafatos and Robert Nadeau, *The Conscious Universe: Part and Whole in Modern Physical Theory*.
11. The Mandelbrot set was discovered by mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot and first seen in 1980 on a computer screen at Harvard University. This mathematical object first entered widespread public awareness in 1985 when it was featured in a *Scientific American* cover story. One fractal enthusiast suggests that "It could be thought of as a particularly insidious computer virus in that it not only takes over computers (very computationally intensive) but also the minds of programmers with its fascination."
12. This is encapsulated in Plotinus's Pythagorean-Platonic doctrine that the Nous is a harmonic union of the Monad (Form) and the Indefinite Dyad (the infinite "Intelligible Matter" of the noetic realm).
13. See my introduction to Kenneth Guthrie, *The Pythagorean Source book and Library*.

## Some Reflections on the Neoplatonic View of Space And Time

Robert Meredith Helm

On a summer's day in early childhood, I asked my mother a question that had been troubling my infant mind.

"What was there before the world was made?"

"Only God," she replied.

"Who made God?" I persisted.

"He was never made," she said. "He always has been."

I repaired to the porch swing, my favorite spot for contemplation, and tried very hard to think "forever and ever backwards." The idea of an eternal future had been hard enough for me to swallow when it had been brought to my attention by the language of the Church, but for some reason it had not assailed me with the sort of cosmic terror that I now felt at being confronted with the bottomless abyss of an infinite past.

I was tempted to dismiss the whole notion of a reality without beginning or end as impossible, but to my dismay I discovered that the alternative was equally inconceivable. Any possible beginning or end would have to have something before or after it. It did not take me long to see that what was true of the problem of time was equally true of space. To think of it as infinite was to show that it must be finite. To think of it as finite was to show that it must be infinite.

It was only many years later that I realized that on that day I had become a fledgling philosopher by grappling with a question which, far from being original with me, had for two and a half millennia been driving some of the greatest thinkers into paradox.

I say "for two and a half millennia." Actually the problem may be a much older one, especially in the East, but there is little evidence to show that it was formally recognized by Western thinkers until the birth of Greek philosophy in the sixth century

before the common era, when Anaximander, perhaps without full realization of the Pandora's box he was opening, made the *apeiron*, the indefinite or infinite, the physis at the heart of reality. We do not have enough fragments of his writings to know whether or not he gave any serious consideration of the problems to be encountered in a consideration of an infinitely extended spatial continuum or a time without beginning or end, and it seems likely that the term *apeiron* refers primarily to the indefinite or formless character of the primal reality.

We must look to Parmenides and Zeno of Elea for the first clear recognition in Greek philosophy of the paradoxes of space and time that were later to lead their successors to question whether ultimate reality can indeed be spatial and temporal. In defining Being as a finite whole, bounded neither by something else, which by pure logic could not exist, nor by non-being, which by definition cannot be, Parmenides took his logic beyond the categories of plurality and motion and invited the inevitable question as to whether space and time can exist anywhere but in the illusory world of "seeming." He himself must have seen his somewhat clumsy attempt to describe pure Being in physical terms as having become mired in paradox, for he appears to have laid the groundwork for a sort of philosophical idealism when he wrote:

Thinking and the object of thought are the same. For you will not find thought apart from being, nor either of them apart from utterance. Indeed, there is not anything at all apart from being, because Fate has bound it together so as to be whole and immovable. Accordingly, all the usual notions that mortals accept and rely on as if true—coming-to-be and perishing, being and not-being, change of place and variegated shades of color—these are nothing more than names. (Diels Fragment 8: 34-41. Wheelwright 98)

The *reductiones ad absurdum* by which Zeno essayed to demonstrate the impossibility of motion were equally destructive of time, the matrix in which motion occurs. As for space, we have this tantalizing fragment: "If place existed, it would have to be in something, i.e. in a place" (Diels Fragment 4).

It is difficult to determine what Melissus, the third of the Eleatics, thought of space and time. In the surviving fragments of

his writings, he argued for infinite as opposed to finite being and seems to have treated it as physical. According to Aristotle, "It seems that whereas Parmenides conceived of the One by definition, Melissus conceived of it in terms of matter" (*Metaphysica* 986b 19. Wheelwright 118).

Heraclitus, who took time and change as seriously as any philosopher in history, nevertheless was the first of the Greek thinkers to recognize by name the *Logos*, later to play an important role in theories positing a non-temporal and non-spatial ground of reality. "It is wise," he wrote, "to hearken not to me, but to the *Logos*, and to confess that all things are one" (Diels Fragment 50. Bakewell 31). There is no indication in the surviving fragments of his writings as to whether or not he thought of the *Logos* as beyond time and space, and the single cryptic reference he is known to have made to either of those categories by name does little to clarify their ontological status. "Time is like a child playing at draughts," he said. "The kingdom is a child's" (Diels Fragment 52. Bakewell 31). It is, however, significant that Plotinus referred to Heraclitus as one who, "with his sense of bodily forms as things of ceaseless process and passage, knows the One as eternal and intellectual" (*Enneads* 5.1.9. McKenna 377).

The Atomists, with a fine disregard for the logical difficulties posed by the assumption that space and time are primary features of the real world, theorized that "what is not," that is to say, empty space, is just as real as "what is," i.e. the atoms. Space, though non-being, is infinite and has at least one quality, infinite extension. Its infinity and the numerical infinity of the indestructible atoms that forever move in it in a real time seem not to have daunted Leucippus, Democritus, or their later followers, Epicurus and Lucretius.

Plato, patron sage of the later Neoplatonic movement, obviously was concerned about the problems of space and time and far better attuned to the Eleatics than to the Atomists. He was also strongly influenced by the Pythagoreans, who, in turn, had obviously been inspired in no small measure by ideas filtered into the Hellenic world from the East. The universe, Pythagoras and his followers had said, is generated from number, and the beginning of number is the monad. The resultant mathematically

conceived system was to play an important part in the development of Plato's metaphysics.

The Good, or the One, is clearly spaceless and timeless, as are the *Archai*. The relation of the *Mathematica* to time and space, however, is not without ambiguity, especially in the case of geometricals and possibly some ideas such as those related to the forms governing melody, which by their very nature would seem to necessitate some notion of temporal sequence. It can at least be said that for Plato, what is ultimately real is itself neither extended in space nor subject to change.

The world, on the other hand, is a creation and had a beginning. The "father and maker of all this universe" (*Timaeus*. Jowett 13) designed his creation in imitation of the unchangeable and eternal. "And having been created in this way," Plato said, "the world has been framed in the likeness of that which is apprehended by reason and mind and is unchangeable, and must therefore of necessity, if this is admitted, be a copy of something" (*Timaeus* 29. Jowett 13). When the same words are used about the world and the eternal reality of which it is, in some sense, a copy, they are employed neither univocally nor equivocally, but analogically (*Timaeus* 29. Jowett 13).

The eternal kind of being known to the intellect is clearly not extended in space, but it in some way provides the archetype for a world that is spatial and, after its own fashion, eternal and indestructible. This copy is the repository of created things known to the senses. Space itself "is apprehended without the help of sense, by a kind of spurious reason, and is hardly real" (*Timaeus* 52. Jowett 32). We experience it "as in a dream" (*Timaeus* 52. Jowett 32), recognizing that anything that has existence must have location and occupy space but that space itself cannot, therefore, exist.

Of these and other things of the same kind, relating to the true and waking reality of nature, we have only this dream-like sense, and we are unable to cast off sleep and determine the truth about them. (*Timaeus* 52. Jowett 32)

As for time, it came into existence in some fashion with the creation of the material world. Plato—or Timeaus in the work of that name—tells us that the Creator, in his joy at having succeeded in creating an image so like the original, decided to

improve the likeness by making the created universe eternal in so far as that might be possible. The everlastingness of "the ideal being" could not be realized in the created world, and so the Demiurge had to settle for a lesser degree of reality.

Wherefore he resolved to have a moving image of eternity, and when he set in order the heaven, he made the image eternal but moving according to number, while eternity itself rests in unity; and this image we call time. For there were no days and nights and months and years before the heaven was created, but when he constructed the heaven he created them also. They are all parts of time, and the past and future are created species of time, which we unconsciously but wrongly transfer to the eternal essence for we say that he "was," he "is," he "will be," but the truth is that "is" alone is properly attributed to him, and that "was" and "will be" are only to be spoken of becoming in time, for they are motions, but that which is immovably the same cannot become older or younger by time, nor ever did or has become, or hereafter will be, older or younger, nor is subject at all to any of those states which affect moving and sensible things and of which generation is the cause. These are the forms of time, which imitates eternity and revolves according to a law of number. Moreover, when we say that what has become is become and what becomes is becoming and that what will become is about to become and that the non-existent is non-existent—all these are inaccurate modes of expression. (*Timaeus* 38-39. Jowett 19)

Although Aristotle wrote a good deal about space and time, he dealt with those categories, for the most part, as they exist in experience of the physical world rather than with their relation to eternity. His influence on the Neoplatonists appears to have been primarily in areas where he was most nearly in agreement with Plato.

The Stoics were more concerned with Heraclitian flux than with speculation about a reality transcending space and time. "Time," Marcus Aurelius wrote, "is like a river made up of events that happen, and a violent stream; for as soon as a thing has been seen, it is carried away, and another one comes in its place, and this will be carried away too" (Marcus Aurelius IV 43. Long 72). Stoic influence on the Neoplatonic conception of space and time was, accordingly, somewhat limited. In general, Plotinus's views on the subject were a derivation of Plato's, adapted to fit in with

his own version of the three levels of reality responsible for the generation of the world of the senses: the One, Intellect (*Nous*), and Soul (*Psyche*).

The One, Plotinus held, must be because the idea of plurality without that of unity is as inconceivable as the idea of imperfection apart from that of perfection. The One, however, is not merely a numerical abstraction. It is the ultimate source of the distinction between unity and plurality and thus, in some way, the ground of spatial and temporal distinctions. Progress toward reality must proceed from lower to higher unities, and so the ultimate goal must be a reality transcending all differentiation and therefore beyond space and time.

Having said that much about the One, together with the ascription to it of a variety of other predicates entailing paradox, Plotinus nevertheless maintained that its real nature is unknown. It cannot properly be said even to be existent, and all meaningful propositions are based on the making of distinctions about existent categories. The best approach we can make to it by reason alone is by the denial of attributes. Only through mystical intuition, attained in an ascent to the highest level of awareness, can the soul gain a direct revelation of the source of its being.

Creation by the One is not *ex nihilo*. It is, rather the process of emanation or *perilampusis*, involving a going out and a returning of its own substance. As the One, the ultimate reality is first cause; as the Good, it is the final cause of everything.

The One is the totality of being. Its emanation of the world is a projection of itself into nothingness, with progressive diminution of the degree of reality that can be claimed by any particular feature of existence, until on the outer edges, metaphorically speaking, there is scarcely any reality at all.

The first emanation from the One, *Nous*—Divine Mind, the Intellectual-Principle, the Intellect, or Spirit—is the highest category of reality accessible to human thought. In it, there is awareness of differentiation, but the Intellect sees subjects and objects as diffusions of the higher unity. *Noesis* is the activity of *Nous*, and the *Noeta*, the Platonic archetypes, sharing a common origin with *Nous* in the One, are, in a sense, identical with *Nous*.

The world of *Nous* is not extended in space, nor is it in the stream of time. Those categories have their origin in the next stage of the process of emanation, that of Soul (*Psyche*), the

creator of the world of the senses. Space and time are necessary conditions of the distinction between subjects and objects, the plurality of objects in the everyday world, and the succession of events. *Psyche* partakes of the dichotomy of the One and the Many. As the World Soul, it retains its unity, reflecting the oneness of *Nous*, from which it proceeds. As differentiated into individual souls, its consciousness is fragmented.

Soul generates the physical universe, which operates under laws imposed upon it by the higher levels of reality. It is in this stage of the process of emanation that space and time come into their own, as individual souls become incarnate in particular bodies, through which they relate themselves to the world of things. Those things cannot, in turn, look downward or outward and continue the creative process, for they exist on the outer fringes of reality, beyond which is nothing but the darkness of non-being, and therefore, no space or time.

Objects, properly speaking, are not "material" in the popular sense. They are projections of soul. For Plotinus, as for Aristotle, "matter" is a relative term, in that the same aspect of the world may be form with reference to that which is below it and matter with respect to what is above it. At the lowest level, then, it can have nothing at all below it. It is whatever would remain if one began with any object and stripped away all its predicates. Such a process would leave one with no ponderable and extended stuff, but only with a bare abstraction. Matter is the *apeiron* of Anaximander, insofar as that term suggests the indeterminate. It is "bodiless—for body is a later production, a compound made by matter in conjunction with some other entity" (*Enneads* III. 6. 7. MacKenna 209). It rightly should be called Not-being rather than Being. It is "the image and phantasm of Mass, a bare aspiration towards substantial existence" (*Enneads* III. 6. 7. MacKenna 209). So powerless is it that if the forms imposed on it by Soul did not exist, it would not exist at all. Where the activity of Soul ends, then, we have the outer limits of Being. Between the *Noeta* of *Nous* and the Not-being of formless matter, space and time have their domain. "Matter and even body," however, "precede place and space" (*Enneads* II. 4. 2. MacKenna 113).

Later Neoplatonists modified Plotinus' system in ways that point up the difficulties involved in establishing the precise point

in the process of emanation at which space and time have their origin. Iamblichus especially, in introducing into Neoplatonism a more complex hierarchy of hypostases than Plotinus had thought necessary, injected between the intelligible world of ideas and the soul world an "intellectual" world of thinking subjects for whom time is real in a way analogous to, though not identical with, the lesser moving reality it has in the wholly dynamic soul world. There is, in other words, a higher time in the intellectual world and a lower one that manifests itself in the soul world as well as on an even lower level that Iamblichus called the "sensible" world (Sambursky and Pines 13). The constant motion of objects of sense touches the higher time of the intellectual world only at a "now" that is a point without magnitude so far as the senses are concerned, dividing a past that is gone from a future that is not yet. Iamblichus suggested that these events exist statically in the higher time of the intellectual world, where "earlier" and "later" have meaning, even if "past" and "future" do not.

"For," Simplicius quotes him as saying, "it would be impossible to reckon actions as earlier and later, had time not existed by itself, to which one has to refer the order of actions" (*Phys.* Sambursky and Pines 41).

For Iamblichus, however, as for the other Neoplatonists who, in greater or lesser degree introduced changes in Plotinus' system, the central thesis of the Neoplatonic view of space and time remained intact. They do not exist as predicates of ultimate reality but have their origin somewhere down the scale in the process of perilampsis. Their lesser reality is affirmed by every member of the school as well as by those Western thinkers from Augustine to Inge who have patterned their ontology and metaphysics along Neoplatonic lines.

During the time that Platonic and Neoplatonic themes were dominant in Western Scholastic philosophy the sharp dichotomy between the temporal and the eternal aroused little controversy. With the rediscovery of Aristotle in Europe in the twelfth century, the more empirical Peripatetic view of space and time received increasing attention and, during the Renaissance, European science and philosophy drifted farther and farther away from the Neoplatonic view.

It is interesting to note the way in which the arts reflected the changing attitudes toward the temporal and the eternal. In early

Christian painting and sculpture in Byzantium and Western Europe, the Virgin and the Christ Child are hieratic figures, stiffly enthroned in static architectural forms, where the passage of time has little or no relevance. In Renaissance art, the Virgin has become a supple young woman, arrested in some act of attending to her infant son, and the child is a real, live, wriggling little boy, frozen in a childish posture at a particular instant in time. As for the backgrounds, they are as often pastoral as architectural, suggesting the growing concern with process in the natural world.

With the resurgence of science too, scholarly attention turned toward the notion of space and time as absolute matrices in which objects exist and move according to mathematically formulable laws. This view of reality reached its zenith in the early modern period in the work of Isaac Newton, whose theories of space and time dominated Western science from the eighteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth.

Space, time, and motion, Newton maintained, have an absolute existence beyond any of the processes of observation and measurement by which their "relative" properties may be defined. "Absolute space, in its own nature, without relation to any thing external, remains always similar and immovable," he wrote. Relative space, defined by the senses, he held to be mutable (*Mathematical Principles*. Thorpe 12). Similarly, "Absolute, true, and mathematical time, in itself, and from its own nature, flows equally, without relation to any thing external; and by another name is called Duration" (*Mathematical Principles*. Thorpe 12). Measurement of discrete units such as hours, months, and years is a relative matter.

Absolute motion he defined as "the translation of a body from absolute place to absolute place" and relative motion as "the translation from relative place to relative place" (*Mathematical Principles*. Thorpe 13).

From the beginning, Newton must have realized that all the data that the senses can provide, as well as his own laws of gravitation, have to do only with relative motion. The concepts of absolute space and time can be justified, he admitted, only as presuppositions of certain properties of motion that can be experimentally verifiable. A belief in uniform, homogeneous, and infinite space and time was, however, of the utmost importance to him, perhaps not so much for its scientific significance as for the



way it fitted in with his philosophical and religious convictions. In the *General Scholium* added to the second edition of the *Principia*, he wrote:

...from his true dominion it follows that the true God is a living, intelligent, and powerful being; and from his other perfections that he is supreme, or most perfect. He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient; that is, his duration reaches from eternity to eternity; his presence from infinity to infinity; he governs all things and knows all things that are or can be done. He is not eternity or infinity but eternal and infinite. He endures forever, and is everywhere present; and by existing always and everywhere, he constitutes duration and space. (Beck 19)

In the *Opticks*, Newton advanced the further suggestion that infinite space is the sensorium of God, who, "being in all Places is more able by his Will to move the Bodies within his boundless uniform Sensorium, and thereby to form and reform the Parts of the Universe, than we are by our Will to move the Parts of our own Bodies" (403).

Newton was no pantheist. The world is not the body of God, and he is not composed of the objects and events that occupy space and time. He is, however, ubiquitous and eternal, and the spatio-temporal frame of reference that determines absolute motion exists in his consciousness. Although Newton advised caution in ascribing attributes to God, his position must be regarded as at odds with that of the Neoplatonists in that it appears to make space and time primordial attributes of ultimate reality. Later writers uprooted the intricate structure of the Newtonian cosmos from the soil of the theistic world view from which it grew. Dispensing with God, they saw the infinite, mathematically describable continuum as the setting for a "world-machine" in which bodies move according to inexorable mechanical law without reference to any spiritual source.

Deprived of the philosophical and theological support that Newton's philosophy provided, it was, perhaps, inevitable that open attacks on the concepts of absolute space and time would draw open attacks from critics like Bishop Berkeley and Immanuel Kant, who were unwilling to acknowledge the existence of space and time apart from thinking subjects. Scientists, however, found the clockwork precision that the Newtonian

framework provided convenient for their work, and it remained dominant in Western cosmology until the failure of the Michelson-Morley experiments to detect any absolute motion of the earth provided an empirical ground for Einstein's special and general theories of relativity, which dispensed with absolute space and time altogether.

Later work by Hubble, Friedmann, Hawking, and other investigators of the phenomena that suggest an expanding universe have led to widespread acceptance of the "big-bang" theory, according to which the universe did not begin its expansion into a pre-existing continuum but created space and time in the primal explosion that initiated the expansion.

And so, after seventeen centuries, the main body of Western cosmological speculation has turned back to a world view with which the early Neoplatonists might feel quite at home. Even before "big bang" became a household term, Dean Inge, who called himself "a disciple of Plotinus," was maintaining in his *God and the Astronomers* that the developments of early twentieth-century science were compatible with a Neoplatonic view of reality.

Neoplatonists and other theorists baffled by the inevitable paradoxes that result from the attribution of spatial extension and temporal duration to primal reality, have suggested a realm transcending both space and time. In their appeal to reason in support of their systems, they have arrived at conclusions that produce as many difficulties as the sort of naive realism that they reject as contrary to reason.

One obvious problem arises in their attempt to explain precisely what is meant by their assertion that Soul and the space and time generated by it are "less real" than the Intellect or the One.

In everyday usage, "real" is used to differentiate a genuine member of some definable class from something that has some but not all of the definitive characteristics of objects belonging to that class.

When a victim of alcoholic psychosis is told that his pink elephant is not "real," his informant usually means no more than that the object in question is not one that can be subjected to public examination and pass muster as a genuine *Elephas Maximus* or *Loxodonta Africana*. It is, however, a real

hallucinated elephant—that is, an object having four legs, a trunk, fan-like ears, and a variety of other perceived elephantine qualities, even though it may lack extension in public space. If it is true that the imagined pachyderm is not publicly perceived, it is equally the case that if a publicly perceived elephant should wander into the field of vision of our alcoholic friend, it might be a disastrous error to treat him as a real hallucinated elephant.

In this popular usage, the expression “degrees of reality” is unintelligible. But the popular usage clearly does not carry the meaning—or at least not the whole meaning—that the Neoplatonists assign to the term “real.” To say that something is “more real” than something else is apparently to ascribe to the former a higher status in a metaphysical hierarchy or to say that it has a higher value. In either case, it assumes an archetypal status as related to something which, “imitating” it in some ways, is nevertheless of lower metaphysical rank or lesser value.

So, the relationships that make possible a plurality of objects in space in the world of the senses must be imitative of some properties in the intelligible world. In the case of numericals, I may possibly be able to think of one number’s being related to another without reference to any clearly spatial separation, but the case is considerably less clear for geometricals. The very essence of any conceived class of triangles or circles, and perhaps even of triangularity and circularity themselves, is of necessity defined in spatial terms, and so, if the archetypes designated by the terms do not possess extension in the sort of space apprehended by the senses, we are nevertheless impelled to posit an analogous “space” understood by the intellect.

The fact of the matter is that if it is virtually impossible to imagine a limited spatial continuum without thinking of it as contained within another space, it is equally difficult to think of the totality of space, finite or infinite in extent, as being somehow “contained” in something else without thinking of that container as another “space” of some sort. Human imagination is so ordered that to try to picture spacelessness is to fall almost inevitably into the trap of conceiving of it as an unextended point in space.

The same would seem to be true of time. I may be able to frame a denial of the existence of referents for “past” and “future” in the world of the Intellect, but I find it much more difficult to

get rid of “before” and “after” if I am to assume that there is any sense in which events in the world of the senses have their ground in the ideas or forms apprehended by the Intellect.

Let us consider three events, all of them occurring in the city of Rome. In December of the year 100 B.C., one Marcus Antonius, was named consul for the coming year. In December of the year 800 A.D., Charlemagne was crowned as Emperor. In December of the year 2000 A.D. it is entirely possible that some other individual will assume some other office at a spot quite near those on which the other events occurred. Now from our standpoint, the greater distances between these events are not spatial but temporal in nature. Moreover, there is a radical distinction between the two sorts of measurement. I can traverse the spatial distance that separates any two of the three locations in either direction and could conceive of doing so even if they were much more widely separated, but the temporal distance is quite another matter. Two are in different regions of the past and one in a problematical future. In the world of the senses, I might bridge the temporal gap that separates them only if I had a life span of more than two millennia and could be present at all three in proper sequential order. The third event, from my present standpoint, has this further difference from the other two. It has not yet occurred and can be productive only of propositions having that sort of ambiguous truth values that Aristotle could attribute to his sea battle.

Unlike the spatial axes defining the relationships between one event and another, the temporal axis does not permit me to travel freely from one to the other. I must look back on past events and forward to future ones. Only the present is immediately accessible to me, and I cannot, by any act of will, move to another time as—given the proper circumstances—I can move to another place.

But what of the present? Is it something without temporal magnitude, separating a past that has ceased to exist from a future which as yet has no existence? To define it in that way would seem to lead to a sort of nihilism that would prohibit my saying that anything can exist at all, in view of the fact that at any present, it lacks one essential dimension—that of duration—and must thus lose all its solidity and become a mere mathematical abstraction like a plane or a line or a point. Attempts to evade

this conclusion, however, by positing some sort of extended present like Bergson's *durée*, would seem to involve the inclusion in that present of a little bit of past and a little bit of future.

How much? And why just a little bit? Why not the whole of the past and the whole of the future, whether those wholes be finite or infinite? It is, I think, just this sort of question that led to the spatialization of time that seems to be entailed in Neoplatonism and that has come to have a widespread appeal among twentieth-century cosmologists. I can evade the problem by taking refuge in a sort of "eternal now" known to the Intellect.

But can I? If the Intellect is in any sense the model for the Soul World, it must, even if it provides some perspective from which all events can be regarded as in some sense "present," still regard Marcus Antonius's election as "before" Charlemagne's coronation, and the installation of our official in Rome in the year 2000 as "after" both of the other events. If this is denied, these events cannot simply be relegated to a "lesser" reality. They can have no reality at all.

I am, of course, in a situation somewhat analogous to that of an eternal or pan-temporal observer in my relation to a written narrative or one recorded on film, tape, or disc. All the "spaces" and "times" in the work are in a different universe of perception from the one in which I live my everyday life, and all are, in a sense, "eternally" present for me by virtue of being simultaneously present in my broader universe. In *Macbeth*, the encounter with the witches, the murder of Duncan, and the movement of Birnam Wood to Dunsinane are, at any instant of my time, all present in the play or in any filmed or taped performance of it, and I can contemplate them in any order I choose, or even—somewhat fuzzily, to be sure—think of them simultaneously. But, if I am familiar with the whole play, I can never be unaware of the fact that in the universe of the drama they occur in different places and succeed one another in different times. Moreover, each event owes a major part of its character to the causal relationships that bind them together. It is presumably considerations of this sort that led Iamblichus to conclude that the spatio-temporal relations experienced in the Soul World have a corresponding ground in the Intellect, if not in the One itself.

Of course, my analogy, like all analogies, is inexact. My attention is so limited that it "takes time"—my time, that is—for

me to examine the events of the drama in any order. An omniscient observer, not subject to my limitations might be able to take in the whole of the cosmic order and its history in a single act and thus live ubiquitously in an "eternal now." He would not, then, remember the past or foresee the future. Rather, he would know every event as a present reality. But can we really think of that sort of knowledge as wholly "timeless" or do we find ourselves forced into the notion of a sort of "time beyond time," in which God—if I may be permitted to identify our omniscient observer theistically—perpetually contemplates all the events in the space-time continuum. Does not the very notion of an act of contemplation entail the element of duration, even if that duration is in a different time frame from that in which the events of the world of experience succeed one another? In other words, does the broader concept of time necessarily involve motion and measure, or may it not rather refer to a more radical mode of Being itself? To say that God's time is not our time is not the same thing as saying that his mode of being is wholly non-temporal.

Iamblichus retained some meaning for "earlier" and "later," if not for "past" and "future" in the world of *Noëta*, and the question inevitably arises as to whether this distinction must not also have some sort of meaning in the One—the source of all reality.

Iamblichus, of course, like other Neoplatonists, would admonish us that this is a question that cannot properly be put, for we must not assign predicates to the One—not even those of being and non-being. I find it easier to regard the injunction as grounded not so much in ontological necessity as in epistemological nescience. If I am really ignorant of the nature of the Absolute, I should be at least as reluctant to use terms like "timeless" and "spaceless" in describing it as I would be to refer to it as "ubiquitous" and "pan-temporal." To be beyond time as experienced in the phenomenal world may possibly be more like time than like timelessness if timelessness is thought of as a complete absence of "going-on-ness." If, in spite of everything, I find that, like most Neoplatonists, I cannot speak of the One at all without ascribing some sorts of properties to it and if those properties must be analogically related to those we know from our

awareness of the lower hypostases, I am likely to find it difficult to avoid the idea of a "time beyond time" as ultimate.

Those attracted to spatialized conceptions of time may find some notion of this sort essential to the formulation of a coherent ethical theory. The realm of space and time is the theatre of moral activity. Spatial location makes possible situations in which individuals can behave well or badly toward one another. As for time, it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine what could be meant by referring to a moral act as timeless. Dean Inge often acknowledged the problem this fact poses for the Neoplatonist. "Time, it is often said, is the form of the Will," he wrote in his *God and the Astronomers*, "and it is the moral Will which cannot dispense with a real process in Time" (119).

He immediately tried to lessen the damage of this concession by saying, "Moral goodness, however, is only one of the absolute values. Neither Truth nor Beauty depends on Time to anything like the same extent" (119). The moral question, however, loomed large in Inge's mind, and he never settled it to his complete satisfaction. Forced by his adherence to the Christian faith to take the matter seriously, he concluded "on a note of indecision":

That events in Time are relevant to the eternal order is the belief of Christianity. Things of lasting moment really happen; souls are saved and lost. Whether the eternal mode of existence can really be deflected in any way by happenings in Time, is a question which I shall not attempt to answer. The philosophical difficulties in the way of an affirmative answer are great; but Christians have always believed that in the personal life the consequences of right and wrong conduct on earth are decisive for the condition of souls in eternity. (124)

Some philosophers of an idealistic bent have set no great store by the preservation of freedom in their systems. Others have thought it extremely important to allow a place for genuinely meaningful and undetermined moral choice. Here again, it is necessary to define clearly what is meant by terms like "free will." Advocates of a rigid linear determinism are prone to accuse their opponents of belief in a universe so radically chaotic as to be destructive of the sort of prediction scientists regard as essential to their disciplines. The criticism has lost most of the

cogency it might ever have been supposed to have with the growing recognition, even in the most precise of the physical sciences that at bottom no predictions based on empirical observation can lay claim to anything more than a high degree of statistical probability. Paradoxically, some of the most ardent defenders of rigid determinism are to be found in the ranks of the psychologists and sociologists, whose predictions concerning individual or collective human behavior are hardly likely ever to aspire to as high a degree of certitude as that which is considered necessary for physical research. In fact, there can be little reason for them to resist the only concession that is needed to provide a ground for moral philosophy: the recognition that there are situations in which an antecedent event might lead to one of two or more consequent ones rather than absolutely necessitating any particular one. We might call this a "disjunctive determinism."

Traditionally, advocates of ethical systems positing moral freedom have a tendency to feel more at home with metaphysical systems that allow the future to be open-ended by virtue of its non-existence at the time at which an action is performed. Can a theory of time like that of the Neoplatonists accommodate the modest degree of disjunction required for genuine free will?

The difficulties are obvious. If past, present, and future are frozen together in a sort of "eternal now" in a "more real" domain, the relations among events, seen *sub specie aeternitatis*, are essentially spatialized, and the future would seem to be as fixed as the past. In such a view, if the notion of action is to be taken at all seriously, any particular act must have its "real" being not in the phenomenal world in which it appears to occur but rather in *Nous*, and possibly even in the One. To put it in broader terms, in philosophies of this sort, actions manifested in time must originate in eternity, and in eternity, strictly speaking, events *are* but do not *happen*. In view of the fact that they have no alternatives, a true disjunctive determinism would seem to be precluded. To assign moral responsibility to an individual for his or her actions, it would be necessary to assume that somehow a timeless decision is being eternally made about the whole course of the person's life, as if an author, writing in the first person were able to *will* an entire drama into Being all at once and to *will* all his own actions as protagonist to be coordinated with those of everyone else in the drama. If we imagine a number of authors

cooperatively producing the work in question, the situation becomes complicated in the extreme. If the real world is conceived in this way, while there is, perhaps, freedom in the single eternal choice, the whole fabric chosen in that act—if it may be called an act—has the crystallized character of a completed past, and there is no freedom to intervene at any point within the fabric to choose an alternative future act.

But in our literary analogy, the author of a work is, of course, not operating from a timeless framework. He is producing and reviewing it in his own time—a time different from that of the characters in the work, but a time nevertheless, in which events of the novel could possibly be disjunctive in a way quite different from that which would be the case if our writer were outside of time altogether.

He is at liberty to edit. If in his time, he wishes to change something he has written, he can, so to speak, enter into the time-frame of the narrative, alter an event, and—if he is the only author—make all the events stemming from the alteration consistent with it, or—if there are co-authors, work with them in their common time to achieve the desired synchronicity. It was, something of the sort that J. W. Dunne had in mind when he pointed out that the act of moving down a world line containing all the events in the life of an individual would “take time” and that the time thus taken would have to be in another dimension which he designated as “time two.” From there, he was led on to the conclusion that there must be an infinite series of such temporal dimensions, all “at right angles” to one another. If his conclusion seems somewhat bizarre, the reasoning behind it was solid in terms of his conviction that a future foreseen in a dream could be altered. If we are going to talk about changing a future that has some sort of real existence, there is no point at which we can take refuge in ■ static eternity. There must always be a “time” from which the action is initiated, no matter how remote that “time” may be from the one in which the action appears to occur.

In conclusion, let me make it clear that I am not urging the acceptance or rejection of any particular theory of space and time. If the effect of the denial of any significant kind of reality to them is imagined as the shrinking of space to a point without magnitude and time to an instant without duration, not only do we eliminate

the possibility of moral freedom; we destroy any possible locus for a world of shoes and ships and sealing wax and cabbages and kings. If, on the other hand, we regard the realm beyond the space and time of our everyday experience as somehow containing potentially or actually all these items and their history, it would seem that we are impelled to think in terms of something analogous to extension and “going-on-ness” even in the eternal contemplation of them.

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## The Influence of Plotinus on Bergson's Critique of Empirical Science

Curtis L. Hancock

That the philosophy of Henri Bergson is significantly influenced by the doctrines of Plotinus is indicated by the many years Bergson devoted to teaching Plotinus and the many parallels in their respective philosophies. This influence has been discussed at some length by Bergson's contemporaries, such as Émile Bréhier and Rose-Marie Mossé-Bastide.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere is this Plotinian influence more apparent than in Bergson's treatment of the natural world. In fact, his most refined formulations about the physical universe appear to have taken shape after his lectures on Plotinus' fourth Ennead at Collège de France, 1897-1898.<sup>2</sup> In this article I will outline ways in which Plotinian elements appear to work their way into Bergson's philosophy, especially his account of empirical science. In pursuit of this objective, this study will thereby provide further evidence that Neoplatonism is alive in twentieth century thought. While Bergson's philosophy does not have the following it enjoyed during the first few decades of this century, still the effects of Bergsonism are evident in certain contemporary philosophical groups, especially among "pragmatists, postmodernists, psychologists, and theologians."<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, through the descendants of Bergson a vestige of Neoplatonism perdures into the late twentieth century.

It is not surprising that Bergson would find Plotinus' writings congenial to his thought. Plotinus surely satisfies his taste for a philosophy that eschews system-building. Unlike many modern philosophers, Bergson will not brook a philosophy developed out of *a priori* principles, or erected *more geometrico demonstrata*. As writers, both Plotinus and Bergson approach philosophical issues in much the same way, taking up particular problems and challenges and letting their thought naturally unfold in response to

those problems.<sup>4</sup> Bergson's response engenders the many familiar topics associated with his philosophy: life, time, movement, memory, unity, sympathy, intuition. These are all expressions that have, of course, their counterpart in Plotinus' lexicon, a catalogue of terminology and doctrine which appear to have their influence on Bergson. To explore these parallels and points of influence, I have decided to focus on Bergson's critique of empirical science. Such a focus will give manageable dimensions to my discussion, given the limits here of the Bergsonian categories of time and space. But while I will concentrate on the theme of science, I cannot avoid borrowing on issues from the full range of Bergson's philosophy, since his thought, like that of Plotinus, tends toward monism and thus encourages the scholar to appeal to the many sympathies and interdependencies in the various elements and principles of his philosophical explanations.

### 1. Mysticism and Intuition

It is often difficult to prove one thinker's influence on another, especially when interpreting a philosopher such as Bergson, who wrote in a lyrical and sometimes cryptic style. Fortunately, however, Bergson supplies us with at least a few passages richly suggestive of Plotinus' influence. Some of the more significant passages concern Plotinus' mysticism, which, even though it may not appear so at first consideration, is indeed related to Bergson's critique of modern science. The following text from *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932) is instructive:

In our eyes, the ultimate end of mysticism is the establishment of a contact, consequently of a partial coincidence, with the creative effort which life itself manifests. This effort is of God, if it is not God himself. The great mystic is to be conceived as an individual being, capable of transcending the limitations imposed on the species by its material nature, thus continuing and extending the divine action. Such is our definition. We are free to posit it, provided we ask ourselves whether it ever finds its application, and then whether it fits such and such a particular case. As regards Plotinus, there is no doubt about the answer. It was granted to him to look upon the promised land, but not to set foot upon its soil. He went as far as ecstasy, a state in which the soul feels itself, or thinks it feels itself, in the presence of God, being

irradiated with His light: he did not get beyond this last stage, he did not reach the point where, as contemplation is engulfed in action, the human will becomes one with the divine will. He thought he had reached the summit: in his eyes, to go further would have meant to go downhill. This is what he expressed in language of rare beauty, yet which is not the language of thoroughgoing mysticism. 'Action,' he said, 'is a weakening of contemplation.'

In this passage Bergson is saying a number of things, which, once explicated, will begin to bring into perspective how he assimilates Plotinus' philosophy in his assessment of modern science. First, Bergson salutes Plotinus for having realized that reality can be grasped through mysticism. It is no surprise, of course, that Bergson would commend him for this. Bergson sees in Plotinian mysticism a doctrine equivalent to what he calls "intuition," which signifies an immediate experience of reality; or put negatively, an experience of reality that is not mediated by conceptualization or analysis. However, Plotinus, Bergson laments, did not take the final step, which is to turn mysticism into a *method* applying it to all the problems of philosophy, and even science. It might seem odd to speak of mysticism, or Bergson's equivalent, "intuition," as implying a "method," but this is an important part of Bergson's philosophy of intuition, following upon his insistence that philosophical reflection must begin correctly. Appreciating that reality is grasped in intuition is essential to providing that sound starting point. All methodical developments are grounded in intuition and are directed by it. Philosophical method is an explication of reality grasped intuitively.<sup>6</sup>

Intuition is the alpha and omega of successful philosophy. Hence, it is an error to limit intuition (or mysticism) to a transcendent experience. Mysticism is not the capstone of contemplation; it is the apprehension of reality on every level of existence. Philosophy is successful when it adopts the right method and makes the right distinctions so as not to distort this apprehension of reality, or to detect it when it does occur, as it inevitably does in the explanations of science. The application of intuition must be total in philosophy. *Praxis*, as well as *theoria*, makes sense only when explained according to the light of intuition. Accordingly, Greek philosophers like Plotinus went wrong in limiting mystical intuition to the realm of contemplation. Mystical intuition must also belong to the realm of action. This

point is important because in Bergson's philosophy science is a special organ of the realm of action, for action aims at command of nature, and the work of intelligence and scientific analysis aims at such command. Hence, if science, as well as all other reflection on the world of action, is to be correctly understood, it too must be explained under the light of our basic intuitions. Intuition must guide our understanding of science as much as it governs all other reflection.<sup>7</sup>

Bergson, then, seeks to bring our mystical sensibility back to the natural order, to reattach our intuitions to reality lived in the everyday, where our very selves are united to and merged with reality. The great mystics of the past did not go far enough; they mistook detachment from everyday life as a condition for the discovery of life. Immediately following the above quotation from *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson makes this point even more directly.

...he [=Plotinus] remains faithful to Greek intellectualism, he even sums it up in a striking formula [that "action is a weakening of contemplation"]; and at any rate he did contrive to impregnate it with mysticism. In short, mysticism, in the absolute sense in which we have agreed to take the word [i.e., to apply to action as well as contemplation], was never attained by Greek thought. No doubt it would like to have come into being; as a mere virtuality, it knocked more than once at the door. The door opened wider and wider, but never wide enough for mysticism wholly to enter.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, two things are clear: (1) that Bergson is sufficiently impressed with Plotinus' mysticism to be open to its influence, and (2) that he envisions his own doctrine of intuition to be a deeper and more complete application of Plotinian mysticism. In sum, Bergson regards Plotinus with a certain ambivalence, an ambivalence that we will see repeated in other ways. On the one hand, he acknowledges that Plotinus is a special voice in the history of philosophy, but, on the other, he insists that his example should be improved upon. "It was granted to him to look upon the promised land, but not to set foot upon its soil."

Of course, one is tempted to protest here that Bergson's interpretation of Plotinus may be mistaken and unfair. Plotinus' account of remanation tries to give mystical intuitions an application in diverse ways, including experiences of the natural

world and of human moral practice. Regardless, the important point at this stage is that, to the extent Bergson is open to Plotinus' influence, it is not unqualified. He will transpose Plotinus according to his own needs. So it is that he appropriates Plotinus' mysticism, employing it in a way, as it will happen, that furnishes a critique of modern empirical science.

## II. Duration, Space, and Mechanistic Science

For Bergson the strength of Plotinus' mystical philosophy is this: it provides a kind of awareness (although a knowing that is paradoxically "not knowing") that transcends the limits of other kinds of knowledge. From the perspective of mystical knowing, the philosopher is in a position to express truths about reality comprehensively and intelligently. This he can do because he will no longer assume that one partial perspective on reality, such as mechanistic science, will sufficiently capture it. All of the incomplete accounts of reality will now be subalternated to the comprehensive vision of a higher consciousness—mysticism for Plotinus, intuition for Bergson.

Plotinus' genius was his ability to bring into synthesis the two great currents coincidental in ancient philosophy: Orphism and dialectics.

True, no influence of this kind [i.e., Orphism] is noticeable in Aristotle and his immediate successors; but the philosophy of Plotinus, in which the development culminates, and which owes as much to Aristotle as it does to Plato, is unquestionably mystic. If it has undergone the influence of Eastern thought, so very much alive in the Alexandrine world, this occurred without the knowledge of Plotinus himself, who thought he was merely condensing all Greek philosophy, with the whole object of opposing it to foreign doctrines. Thus, to sum up, there was in the beginning a leaven of Orphism, and at the end a metamorphosis of dialectics into mysticism.<sup>9</sup>

As Bergson sees it, managing the proper relationship between Orphism, the intuitive or mystical strain in philosophy, and dialectics, the intellectual, conceptual, or analytical element, is as much the task of philosophy today as it was in Plotinus' time. By "dialectics" Bergson means the science of the One and the Many,



and therefore it is not surprising that Bergson would be attracted to Plotinus, whose vision of reality turns on the contrast between unity and multiplicity.<sup>10</sup> For Bergson the problems of philosophy consist in discerning multiplicities and overcoming them. For this reason one finds two tendencies always evident in Bergson's writings, aims which are coincidentally operative in Plotinus: (1) to discover dualisms and draw out their implications, and (2) to transcend these dualities in a higher, intuitive vision of reality. For Plotinus everything but the One is subject to duality and fragmentation. Indeed, it is precisely because the One transcends dualistic analysis that it merits being the highest hypostasis.<sup>11</sup>

Bergson's litany of dualisms is famous: matter-memory, perception-recollection, space-time, quality-quantity, heterogeneous-homogeneous, continuous-discontinuous, contraction-relaxation, instinct-intelligence, etc.<sup>12</sup> These dualities are ways of expressing problems of dialectics, which may be expressed as the problem of the One and the Many, but may also be expressed as the problem of distinguishing differences of degree from differences of kind. The problem with much of scientific inquiry and explanation is that it confuses differences of degree with differences of kind. This is Bergson's way of saying that the modern scientist's world-view interprets everything from the standpoint of quantity, imagining that there is a space, a homogeneous, quality-less medium in which everything occurs. This assumption prejudices the case for a mechanistic and reductionist view of nature, so that quantities, differences of degree, are taken as real, and qualities, differences of kind, are nullified, reduced to mere illusions. Due to the influence of Galileo, who believed that reality is found on a corpuscular, particulate, micro-physical level, and due to the influence of Descartes, who believed that nature should be wholly quantified, spatialized, mathematicized, the prejudice of materialist mechanism has become the scientific orthodoxy in modern times. The way to overcome this reductionism is not to take that first question-begging step in which one pre-judges that the reality of something is spatial, i.e., ultimately verifiable in terms of quantitative, mathematical analysis. Errors of this type, Bergson argues, lead to disciplines like contemporary psychology in which the human mind is quantified and spatialized as mere brain states. To confuse the reality of duration with the conception of space need not occur once

the philosopher sees that duration differs from space not in degree, as matters *within* space so differ, but in kind. This is difficult for modern minds to grasp, since in the wake of Cartesianism we think of duration itself, i.e., time, as a measurable, spatialized, mathematicized thing. But duration is an experience intuited in our inner life wherein there is qualitative, not quantitative, interpenetrating of changes. Time is rendered a quantity, thought of as a unit or series of units, by abstract analysis. But abstraction is not the same as intuition. Abstract analysis or conceptualization spatializes and "fixes" experiences, whereby the intellect, of which science is a product, can control its environment, mainly for adaptation and survival. Conceptualization represents or refashions reality, i.e., the experience of duration, into an abstraction, an intelligibility, which is to say that it has become accessible to the intellect. Reality itself, not its mere representation, is known by intuition, which immediately and non-conceptually grasps its object—duration or life. Furthermore, intuition knows it in its "virtuality," as a qualitative whole, which is only potentially reducible and analyzable to the functions of the intellect. As a qualitative whole life flows with a rich spontaneity, an unpredictability not constrained by the concepts of mechanistic quantification. Does this mean Bergson enthusiastically embraces a teleological view of nature? "No," comes the reply. Mechanism and teleology constitute a false duality. Teleology is as much a mistake as mechanism. Just as mechanism falsely constrains life by the fiction of quantification, teleology limits it by imposing on it an *a priori* interpretation demanded by an abstract, conceptualized, static final cause. Both these alternatives strip life of its spontaneous energies, order it according to fixed laws, and inevitably entail determinism.<sup>13</sup>

Plotinus would surely disagree with Bergson's dismissal of teleology as a principle of nature, as I shall make clear at the end of this essay.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Plotinus would probably agree with Bergson's assessment of mechanism. Additionally, the above summation captures several other points which have their analogue in Plotinus. First, it is certainly the case that Plotinus believes that an intuitive, mystical experience grasps reality in a way that rational cogitation, with its implicit dualities and discriminations, cannot. In fact, throughout the *Enneads* Plotinus protests against the common philosophical illusion that dualisms cannot be

surpassed in knowing reality. Plotinus recognizes that dualities must be given their due, but his over-all monistic vision of reality refuses them the last word.<sup>15</sup> Hence, he often repeats what he says in Ennead VI, 9 (9) that the One transcends even the most universal of Platonic dualities: the *megista genē* of the *Sophist*, which Plotinus projects into the intelligible world of the second hypostasis. Accordingly, the One is neither sameness nor difference; neither motion nor rest; nor is it being!<sup>16</sup> To think it must be constrained by these categories is to presuppose that rational awareness—conceptualization and analysis—is absolute; that the perspective of rational cognition is the only kind of knowledge. But mystical awareness, apprehending its object without the disrupting disunities of rational consciousness, attests to another way of knowing. The distinctions of reason are not bankrupt, only incomplete. Their limits are transcended in the higher intuition of mystical union. It is difficult to imagine that Bergson could have read Plotinus carefully and not have come under the influence of his account of the limits of rational analysis and of his belief that an intuition of a non-conceptual sort is necessary for reality to be grasped.

Even the awareness of *Nous*, the perfect rational being, comprehends its objects—the totality of beings/intelligibles—in an intuition, wherein all the elements—all these divine intelligibles—are actually present in every other. Hence, it is only by rational analysis that the intelligibles are discriminated and separated from one another. In reality, they exist as one with *Nous* and *Nous* as one with them. Accordingly, *noēsis* and *noēton* are really the same, only distinct by analysis and rational reflection. Hence, Aristotle was right, Plotinus tells us, to describe Intelligence as *noēsis noēsēos*, for the objects thought are really the same as the thinker.<sup>17</sup> There is a sympathetic interrelation present to all the elements of the intelligible world that could provide a Plotinian analogue for what Bergson is trying to say about all the “virtualities” contained in the experience of nature. The intellect can by abstract analysis divide up and isolate “components” of reality. Duration, the human experience of life itself, is subject to this kind of analysis. Duration is “virtually” everything that is subject to analytical separation and discovery. Science and philosophy take this undifferentiated experience of duration, which is actual, and subject it to conceptual explication. While duration

is real, it is in potency to all the many differentiations of kind and of degree that philosophy and science can make actually explicit through conceptualization and analysis. In order to exhaust the many ways in which the human person can approach life and make sense of the world, conceptual philosophy and scientific analysis both have their place. One must remain cautious, however, of interpreting their perspectives as authoritative. Bergson's view of philosophy here parallels in many ways Plotinus' own, since the ancient Neoplatonist often speaks as though philosophy is an inadequate narration about the highest reality, the One, which can only be known by mystical union. Talk about God we must, since short of mystical experience, there is nothing else to do, but we indulge this philosophical discourse on account of human needs and circumstances, not because it really says anything significant about the One/Good.<sup>18</sup>

### III. Ambivalence Revisited

A consistent theme throughout Bergson's writings is that metaphysics is not the same as empirical science. The object of science is matter, whereas the object of metaphysics is spirit. Bergson resists the reductionism implied by physicalism and quantification in modern science. Modern philosophers, as well as scientists, have deluded themselves, he insists, in thinking that metaphysics is impossible or, at least, unnecessary. Scientific knowledge, which modern philosophers regard as genuine, is unintelligible unless situated in a broader vision of reality, a vision that metaphysics alone can supply. In short, science does not judge metaphysics; science must answer to the latter's authority.<sup>19</sup>

Bergson's attitude toward natural science is not unlike Plotinus' own view of the natural order. I am aware of the dangers of anachronism in a study of this kind. So I merely point to similarities, aware of the fact that modern science *per se* is not something Plotinus, as an ancient thinker, could know. Nonetheless, similarities can be carefully identified. To begin with, Plotinus agrees that in order to understand fully the principles and operations of nature, a more comprehensive philosophical explanation is required. And yet, ambivalence emerges again in Bergson's attitude toward Plotinus. While Bergson accepts that an

empirical account of nature cannot stand alone, that it must be explained according to the higher light of intuition, Bergson will not accept Plotinus' appeal to the principles of Platonic dialectics as elements contributory to an explication of reality. That would be to commit the error of Greek intellectualism. And in the last analysis the *Enneads*, for Bergson, represent a damaged philosophy, spoiled by a commitment to the Greek intellectual tradition, a legacy which Plotinus should have altogether rejected. The reason for his disapproval is this: whereas for Neoplatonists, intuition becomes stronger as more universality is achieved, for Bergson intuition is in principle compromised by universality, since this implies abstraction, analysis, conceptualization—all of which terms signify the "spatializing," "fixing," and "distorting" character of intellectual representation of the real. For Plotinus intuition is directly proportionate to universality up to that point at which universality is altogether transcended in mystical union. But universalities—the noetic natures of beings in the intelligible world, i.e., Plato's Forms, to the extent that they participate, however imperfectly, in the unity of the transcendent One—manifest reality to a considerable degree. While all the Forms define the life of *Nous*, they are nonetheless analyzable into a multiplicity of logically distinct *ousiai*, a multiplicity which slightly compromises the reality of the intelligible world, since to be real is to be one. Still, Plotinus is committed to the view that the Platonic intelligibles are valid objects of the intellect, necessary conditions as a stage in its mystical ascent and divine *noeta* in their own right.<sup>20</sup>

It is the result of Bergson's "methodism"—by which he extends intuition even to the realm of practical life and science—that he constrains the abstract intelligence to a very limited purpose, and at times seems to reduce it to a creator of fictions. Given this attitude, Bergson is bound to reject Greek intellectualism even if championed by a philosopher like Plotinus whom he admires otherwise. To think that a dialectical use of universals can express reality, which is duration, is an illusion. Such expressions have their value because they help the human mind adapt to its world, not because they inform us about reality. Bergson prefers to employ the term "virtuality" as a foil against "universality." The unitive, qualitative reality of duration is a "virtuality" in the sense that it contains the potentiality for all those distinctions,

demarcations, discriminations that abstract intelligence can derive from it when spatializing and quantifying that which is really temporal and qualitative.<sup>21</sup> Professor Mossé-Bastide and Émile Bréhier suggest that the act of intelligence for Bergson is reminiscent of what the second hypostasis seems to obtain in its moment of *epistrophê*: it apprehends reality in its own limited way, fragmenting its object into a plurality of beings.<sup>22</sup> But the comparison should not be overstated, for Bergson seems to render the intelligence cognitively ineffectual in a way that Plotinus does not.

In sum, Bergson reproves Greek intellectualism, and by association Plotinus, because it mistakes a difference in kind for a difference of degree: it mistakes time for space because it thinks the former, reality itself, is accessible through the spatializing and quantifying of abstractions. Like Plotinus, Bergson rejects mechanism because it falsely assumes that space, quantity, and mathematics are sufficient explanations of reality. However, to make his case he does not appeal to higher metaphysical intelligibilities. For Bergson this Platonizing of experience undermines our contact with the real as much as spatializing and mathematicizing experience does. In fact, Platonism, which finds reality in abstract, universal, fixed intelligibilities, and Cartesianism, which finds reality in measurement and mathematics, are both symptoms of the same error: mistaking the abstract for the real, which, for Bergson, means confusing space and time. Hence, while Bergson may borrow from the *Enneads* to develop his own thought, his dependence on Plotinus is selective, always on guard against the taint of Platonism, which substitutes intellectual construction of reality for an intuitive grasp of it. In light of this, Richard Wallis has accurately expressed Bergson's relationship to Plotinus: "Bergson's thought can be viewed as an attempt to restate Plotinus' philosophy of Soul (*significantly ignoring his eternal Intelligible world*) in terms of scientific ideas....[italics mine]."<sup>23</sup> Of course, Bergson believes that to ignore Greek intellectualism is an advantage, but in the end it makes his position open to the charge of irrationalism, as I will point out at the close of this essay.

Still, in spite of this important divergence, Plotinus and Bergson are alike in the way they react to the prevailing orthodoxies of natural philosophy in their respective periods. And

in the case of Bergson this similarity further relates to his views on modern science. Their agreement centers on a corresponding attitude regarding the status of quantity as an object of knowledge. Both agree that quantity is *not* a proper object of metaphysics. While Plotinus demands that higher Platonic universals must supply the content of a satisfactory metaphysical account of the natural world, and while Bergson rejects Platonism as a mistake, there is still in principle a requirement on the part of each that metaphysics—not a philosophy or science of quantified particulars—must explain nature. This condemnation of quantity as an improper and unreal object of intuition is shared by them both. This disapproval of quantity is behind Plotinus' rejection of the Aristotelian categories as valid objects of knowledge as much as it is behind Bergson's dismissal of mechanistic science. In VI, 2 (43), chapter 13 Plotinus explains that quantity cannot be an object of science (taking *epistēmē* in the broadest sense—as equivalent to the Latin *scientia*) because true objects of knowledge exist as pure forms or beings in the intelligible world. Quantity, however, cannot be a form (*eidos*) or genus (*genos*) descriptive of beings in the intelligible world. His argument in brief is as follows: Quantity is either discontinuous, i.e., number, or continuous, i.e., extension or magnitude. But the unity of intelligible being, in which all genera are really identical with one another, precludes number. And the genera cannot be magnitudes, since they do not contain matter. Hence, quantity is not among the primary genera, the true objects of knowledge. Quantity, along with the other Aristotelian categories are pseudo-epistemic principles having as their objects changing, sensible existents which are but shadows of reality. Ennead VI, 1 (42) and VI, 3 (44) complement what Plotinus says in VI, 2 (43), providing him also an opportunity not only to reject the Aristotelian categories as pseudo-scientific principles but the Stoic categories as well.<sup>24</sup>

As Plotinus' comments regarding quantity and the other categories are transparent in his writings, it is quite probable that Bergson took Plotinus into account in fashioning his own view about quantity, including his views on the quantitative limits of mechanistic science.

#### IV. The Mind-Body Relationship and The Science of Man

Historians of philosophy align Bergson with the spiritualist movement in France. Bergson's work, *Matter and Memory*, supports this affiliation, since the book aims to show that reducing human experience to brain states alone is mistaken. Human experience requires an explanation that includes the non-physical. And for Bergson this implies many cognitive and moral consequences attesting to the full range of man's spiritual life. Still, matter must be given its due. Plotinus, too, refused to reduce human consciousness to a mechanistic explanation, even if he opposed an ancient mechanism rather than a modern one. Many of the illustrations and distinctions Bergson employs appear to have Plotinian inspiration, especially seated in treatises from the fourth Ennead. This influence should become evident once I summarize Bergson's position on the mind-body problem.

French philosophers, no matter how hard they may try, seldom transcend all the effects of Cartesianism on their philosophical education. Bergson is no exception. Accordingly, it comes as no surprise to hear him declare that his philosophy of the human person is decidedly dualistic. In Bergson's language this is to say that body and mind differ in kind and not just in degree. He believes there is strong evidence for this difference, especially if one regards common sense awareness as counting for knowledge. Such awareness instructs the knower that he has a consciousness that observes not only mental states but also bodily ones. These latter are not just known by perception but also "from within by affections."<sup>25</sup> This common sense awareness provokes the philosopher to ask "What is the relationship of mind to body?" The reductionist, of course, is quick to answer: the relationship is either one of identity—in the form of central state materialism, according to which mental and brain states are the same—or of complete causal dependency—in the form of epiphenomenalism, according to which mental states are not identical with cerebral states, but they have no causal efficacy of their own. The reductionist boasts that the evidence is overwhelmingly on her side: Is not the mind clearly affected by the body? Is it not demonstrable by ordinary experience and by scientific experiment that when brain undergoes change or accident mental powers are affected? Since such effects are evident, say, in the cases of brain disease or accident, it is

reasonable to conclude that brain states alone explain the human person.

Bergson's reply is that the philosopher is under no obligation to accept the reductionist's interpretation of the evidence. Aware of the popularity of reductionism, Bergson labored to provide lengthy, alternative explanations to the significance of brain disease and trauma. For this reason, his writings contain long passages where he addresses aphasia, amnesia, and an assortment of brain debilities. The aim of his comments is to show that all we must concede to the reductionist is that brain is a necessary condition for human behavior; however, we need not concede that it is a sufficient one. If one grants the teachings of the evolutionists, Bergson argues, then one may interpret the brain as nothing more than a motor assist to the needs of the organism. Consciousness, however, is something over and beyond these needs. When the motor support of the brain is damaged, this does not necessarily mean that the mind is itself damaged, but only that the translation of a perceived need into activity is impaired. For Bergson the body is "an instrument of action, and of action only."<sup>26</sup> As a result of this different interpretation of the evidence, reductionism is acknowledged as the prevailing orthodoxy among scientists but is not esteemed as philosophically demanded.<sup>27</sup>

To reinforce his critique of materialism, Bergson elaborates on the nature of memory. This is important because, again, the reductionist claims memory is affected by changes in various sites of the brain. He goes beyond his earlier argument, which I have summarized above, by furnishing a detailed account of the nature of memory. The reductionist is right to regard memory as central to the mind-body problem: memory is precisely where the liaison of mind and brain is understood. But, Bergson insists, there are two kinds of memory: (1) memory as mechanical repetition or bodily habit—automatic organic movements patterned after a succession of behaviors, resulting in a disposition or bodily aptitude (walking is an obvious example); (2) memory in the pure sense as retaining representations of past events—a spiritual cognition since these do not necessarily aim at action as do habits. The error of materialist reductionism is that it confuses these two types of memory. The reductionist fails to grasp that these are distinct in kind. These differences are virtual to the composite, duration. Bergson's intuitive method demands that this composite be analyzed correctly.

In short, he argues that he supplies this correct analysis, reflections which help us philosophically deepen our awareness of duration, whereas the reductionist has given an incorrect analysis, mistaking differences in kind for differences of degree.

Moreover, just as scientific reductionism mistakes these types of memory as differing only in degree, likewise it errs when judging the difference between recollection and perception. The error of the physicalist is to explain the former as a weaker version of the latter. These experiences are next quantified, explained in terms of different intensities. As Hume said, recollection differs from perception because it is a less vivid, less intense, impression. But this interpretation in terms of degree and intensity is a mistake, according to Bergson. Clearly, recollection and perception differ in kind. Quite simply, perception is of a present object, but recollection is of a past representation.

There is a further difference, a difference Bergson identifies in keeping with his evolutionary doctrine that our experience of present events and objects is largely dictated by needs. In light of this doctrine, Bergson regards perception as having primarily a utilitarian character and observes that it is "entirely oriented towards action."<sup>28</sup> Perception is limited by and focused on particular things, their presence to perception requiring a response to specific needs. Perception abstracts a specific object from the background of total experience and gives it full attention. This means that there is an entire world of experience to which perception is indifferent—a world "negated" and "ignored" by perception. It is the philosopher's task to recapture this world, which can be done by reflecting on the nature of memory, which comprehends the full range of living experience, past and present, oriented to the future. Hence, it is recollection or memory that chiefly uncovers for Bergson the fullness of human experience, the consciousness of duration, and the depth of the self. Of course, it is important to note that when Bergson contrasts recollection and perception he is analyzing experience according to the requirements of philosophical reflection, which is to help us explicate different elements and dimensions of life (variously described as "reality," "duration," "*elan vital*"). In other words, he is contrasting recollection with "pure perception," not "concrete," or "actual" perception, which, as an experience of the full person, must involve recollection as well. "Perception is never a simple contact of the

mind with the present object. It is wholly impregnated with memory-images which complete it while interpreting it."<sup>29</sup>

As has already been noted, Bergson believes that a central error of modern science is to think of time in a spatialized, mathematical sense. This is to think of time as succession, a fictionalized representation of duration which likens experience to a collection of units, and generates the kinds of puzzles and errors to which Zeno succumbed. A philosophy, however, that rightly understands memory will overcome this error, for memory "recovers" and "uncovers" the reality of the past in human experience, i.e., in the life of duration. This reality is not just a psychological fact; it is ontological as well. Since time and space are really different from one another, and since to think of the present alone as real is to spatialize time along a line wherein the past has ceased to be, the experience of duration is a simultaneous interpenetration of present and past. Hence, the past has ontological significance: the past is an on-going living, qualitative, not quantitative, dimension of duration, which is reality.

Memory awakens us to a deeper self. Whereas perception abstracts from reality so as to satisfy needs, memory represents and recaptures experiences, events, and meanings which transcend the requirements of present objects. Bergson eloquently expresses the primacy of memory in his Huxley lecture of 1911.

A consciousness that retained nothing of the past would be a consciousness that died and was re-born every instant—it would be no longer consciousness. Such is just the condition of matter; or at least it is just the way we represent matter when we wish to oppose it to consciousness. Leibnitz defined matter—that is to say, what is not consciousness—by calling it momentary mind, an instantaneous consciousness. And in fact an instantaneous consciousness is just what we call unconsciousness. All consciousness then is memory; all consciousness is a preservation and accumulation of the past in the present.

Recollections stimulate our consciousness to a deeper awareness; they influence our lives even when we are not attending to them directly. The past is as real as the present and both a sound psychology and ontology must acknowledge the power of the past. Speaking of its ontological status:

The past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist: One is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is The past, which does not cease to be but through which all presents pass. It is in this sense that there is a pure past, a kind of "past in general": The past does not follow the present, but on the contrary, is presupposed by it as the pure condition without which it would not pass. In other words, each present goes back to itself as past. The only equivalent thesis is Plato's notion of Reminiscence. The reminiscence also affirms a pure being of the past, a being in itself of the past, an ontological Memory that is capable of serving as the foundation for the unfolding of time. Yet again, a Platonic inspiration makes itself profoundly felt in Bergson.<sup>30</sup>

Memory, then, is the ground of duration and the source of our spiritual lives. To perception belongs matter; to memory belongs spirit. As a corollary to this dualism, the human person is defined in terms of two selves: a higher and a lower self; or a deeper and superficial self. Our ordinary consciousness defines a spatialized, empirical self in contact with material objects for the purposes of action, but our deeper, metaphysical awareness uncovers a self in contact with spirit, reality, duration.

Bergson's distinction between a higher and a lower self is reminiscent of Kant's contrast between a phenomenal and a noumenal self. But the distinction has a basis in Plotinus as well. That memory can recover the ontological ground of things is a way that both Plato and Plotinus characterize; higher consciousness, an understanding informed by *logoi* and *noēta* which require the human soul to commune with the intuitive power of the Cosmic Soul and the Divine *Nous*. Plotinus' interpretation of Plato's allegory of the cave and the doctrine of *anamnesis* would naturally be attractive to Bergson. The *Enneads* interprets Plato's doctrine of ontological memory "as denoting not a temporal recovery of what the soul knew in the past, but an awakening to what her true self knows eternally."<sup>31</sup> Bergson is surely aware of this Plotinian interpretation since it occurs at the heart of the fourth *Ennead*, with which he had a special familiarity. He would find in it a view parallel with his own conviction that spiritual integration is achieved by reflective awareness of the power of memory and its content in our lives. This is Bergson's way of echoing Plotinus' call to a higher consciousness.

That memory is operative in Plotinus' prescription for higher understanding, and the perfection of the deeper self, is reinforced by his distinction between habitual and pure memory, precisely the distinction found in Bergson. Plotinus explains these terms in a way similar to Bergson's account of perception, which supplies the object stimulating the mechanism of habitual memory, and which is always mixed with recollection, so that what we perceive is significantly influenced by what we have been and have become. Memory produces our disposition so that "we become what we remember" (IV, 4, 3, 6-8), reminding us that the objects of our interest, of our contemplation, eternally bear on our destiny.<sup>32</sup> For Bergson perception relies on the brain to filter the influence of memory so that nothing interfering with the contemplation of just the relevant object will obtain. Habitual memory draws on memory only to the extent specific representations of our past can contribute directly to the focused activity at hand. Plotinus, too, is struck by the fact that in habitual behavior perception draws our attention on objects according to our degree of interest, making us indifferent to objects that fail to be relevant to consciousness at the time. Like Bergson, Plotinus illustrates with ordinary activities: "For instance, if on a walk we are concerned only with the act of walking and not with the places traversed, our awareness of those places is proportionately dim."<sup>33</sup> But Plotinus goes beyond Bergson and connects the specification of perception to contemplation as a whole. Accordingly, as human souls acquire a greater integration with the higher realities, they turn their contemplation toward the spiritual and become more indifferent to matters in the sensible world. Indeed, even though the stars appear to survey the earth providentially in their orbits above us, they, in fact, care nothing about us, having their attention focused exclusively on the intelligible world.<sup>34</sup>

At any rate, Bergson's overarching thesis that our grasp of reality is informed by and grounded in memory probably reflects Plotinus' influence, since the ancient Greek philosopher was surely committed to the view that the depth of consciousness is itself proportionate to the degree that it remembers or "is awakened by" the perfect life of the second hypostasis, where pure intelligence eternally intuits perfect intelligibilities. Bergson's identification of reality with movement pure and simple probably has Plotinian inspiration, even if it results from a misreading of Plotinus.

Plotinus enthusiastically accepts Plato's judgment in the *Sophist* that *kinēsis* must belong to the realm of *Nous*. In fact, Plotinus agrees that *kinēsis* is one of the *megista genē* comprehensively defining the intelligible world and that *kinēsis* as a synonym for cognition is a description of the noetic act of the Divine Intelligence. But a creative reinterpretation of his predecessors appears when Plotinus chooses to follow Aristotle by insisting that the second hypostasis be described as pure *energeia* and that its contents be defined as perfect *energeiai*. Plotinus insists on this even though he departs from Aristotle in a significant respect: After all, for the Stagirite *energeia* is aligned with *akinētos* rather than *kinēsis*.

These comments on kinesis are ■ witness to Plotinus' independence as a thinker and are a further indication of his influence on Bergson. Still, while Plotinus may be the source of Bergson's view of movement, the Frenchman may enjoy this influence at the price of wrongly interpreting him in significant respects. For Plotinus would have no part of the irrationalism that seems to be implied in Bergson's ontology. Plotinus might react as Aliotta does: "Bergson's fantastic mysticism reduces the world to a perennial stream of forms flowing in no definite direction, a shoreless river whose source and mouth are alike unknown, deriving the strength of its perpetual renewal from some mysterious, blind, and unintelligent impulse of nature, akin to the obscure will of Schopenhauer."<sup>35</sup>

Unlike Bergson Plotinus recognizes not only the importance of *kinēsis* but also that of *stasis*, awarding it also the title *megiston genos*. Hereby, Plotinus escapes irrationalism and explains the motion of the cosmos as a mirroring on a less perfect level the ordered motion of the intelligible world. Being is *kinēsis* with *stasis*—where there is life and duration, true enough, but where life and duration have being because there is law and rationality. This is an important point clearly showing how Plotinus and Bergson, in spite of the former's influence on the latter, still must disagree about the nature of philosophy, which for Plotinus must prize the adequacy of reason at least when discussing matters short of mystical union.

This disagreement relates to inadequacies regarding Bergson's view of science. Since he lived during the third century, Plotinus' writings do not speak to the nature of empirical science in its

modern form. But if rationality and law are necessary elements of science, one can be sure that Plotinus would be at odds with Bergson's critique of science, and would probably regard it as a pitiful retreat into the sanctuary of irrationalism. And this would probably be his judgment no matter how much he might approve of Bergson's appropriate criticisms of reductionism. Again, even though Plotinus acknowledges that reason is itself overcome at the threshold of mystical union, still reason within its own purview—the world of beings and intelligibilities—is sound, valid, adequate. Against the backdrop of Plotinus' philosophy, where both *kinēsis* and *stasis*, both rationality and intuition, are given their due, one may judge Bergson's failure this way: He mistakenly assumes that the being of change requires an absence of rational structure and law, even the laws of science. Accordingly, it is very much in the spirit, if not the letter, of Plotinus to reply to Bergson in the way his contemporary, Dean Inge, responds to him. This passage speaks volumes about why a Neoplatonist can esteem science in a way that a Bergsonian cannot.

Are we then denying the truth of the kinetic aspect of reality when we postulate unvarying laws of nature? This thought is the starting-point of the vitalistic philosophies...such as that of Bergson. It is said that if reality consists of unvarying general laws, illustrated by transient manifestations which in no way affect the eternal steadfastness of the laws, the time-process is without significance, and the universe has no history. They are the expression of the life and purpose which constitute the unity of the whole in which they are embraced. Within any unitary whole there may be developments of what we call laws as well as in the processes which exhibit their working; for the laws are only the methods of operation adopted by the Universal Soul, and are uncontrolled by any necessity. Whether, as a matter of fact, the laws of nature are uniform, is to be decided by observation. But when we consider the subordination of the individual to the larger processes of the world-order, it is most improbable that our private volition should be able so to modify the course of events as to give the world the appearance of a "wild" system, which by its unaccountable behaviour administers shocks even to its Creator, as William James would have us believe.<sup>36</sup>

Later in his study of Plotinus, Inge explains in unequivocal terms why a Neoplatonic view of reality is simply incompatible with Bergsonism.

The view [of Bergson]...has some obvious affinities to the philosophy of Plotinus. But it is at bottom irreconcilable with it. It is based on the assumption—which underlies all Bergson's philosophy—that caprice and eccentricity are the marks of freedom and spiritual activity. The spontaneity of life is supposed to show itself in motiveless diversity, while regularity—all that can be predicted—is a proof of thralldom to blind necessity and mechanism. It is no wonder that superstitious supernaturalism holds out both hands to this philosophy. But such a view is abhorrent to Platonism, since it hands over nature, not indeed to a malignant power, but to a purposeless machine, and the formative and directive agency which interferes with the regularity of its working is not the Universal Soul, which for Plotinus is responsible for the whole visible universe, including those parts of it which seem to us devoid of life, but a plurality of finite spirits, who act upon the world from outside, as it were, and triumph in proportion as they can introduce the unpredictable into the predetermined. All this is contrary to the genius of Greek philosophy, and especially of Platonism. For Plotinus, the purposefulness and relevance of the world here below, across which no hard lines are drawn, are the image of the complete harmony which prevails in the eternal world. We are not driven to assign some phenomena to mechanism and others to miracle; Soul, and behind Soul Spirit, are at work everywhere.<sup>37</sup>

So, in the end, the impression of Plotinus seems evident on Bergson's philosophy of science, including his views regarding the natural and the human sciences. But in light of these closing remarks, this influence should not be taken as concurrence, nor should it encourage the judgment that Bergson is in fact a Neoplatonist.

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#### NOTES

1. See Émile Bréhier, "Images plotiniennes, images bergsoniennes," in *Les Etudes Bergsoniennes*, Vol. II (Paris: Albin Michel, 1949); also Rose Marie Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959).
2. Bergson admits this himself in *Creative Evolution* (New York: Modern Library, 1944), p. 384.



3. William James acknowledged Bergson's influence in *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York, 1909). Gilles Deleuze is a prominent postmodernist who expresses his debt to Bergson: *Bergsonism* (New York: Zone Books, 1988). Minkowski, *Le temps vécu* (Paris, 1966), and Binswanger, *Le cas Susan Urhan* (Paris, 1970), credit Bergson as a key influence in their theories of psychiatric treatment. Of course, Teilhard de Chardin comes to mind as a theologian significantly influenced by Bergson.
4. So averse was Bergson to the dangers of apriorism in philosophy that he once said in an interview (*Mercure de France*, 1913, p. 397) that he never knew in advance where any of his conclusions would lead.
5. Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton, trs. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), pp. 209–210.
6. These remarks on intuition as method derive from Deleuze's *Bergsonism*, chapter 1.
7. See Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, chapter 2.
8. Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, pp. 209–210.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
10. Following Leo Sweeney, "Basic Principles in Plotinus's Philosophy," *Gregorianum* 42 (1961), pp. 506–516, and Plato Mamo, "Is Plotinian Mysticism Monistic?" in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, R. Baine Harris, ed. (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 199–216, I interpret Plotinus' philosophy to be a mystical monism committed to three basic principles: (1) that to be real is to be one; that where there is unity there is reality; (2) that whatever is one is also good; that where there is unity there is perfection; and (3) that whatever is posterior in the universe is inferior to what is prior; i.e., reality reflects a gradation of perfections. These three suppositions appear to constitute the non-negotiable core of Neoplatonism.
11. See VI, 9 (9), 11; V, 1 (10), 8; I, 2 (19), 3; IV, 4 (28), 16; III, 8 (30), 9; VI, 2 (43), 3.
12. This is the list compiled by Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 21.
13. Bergson explains that he must reject both mechanism and teleology in several of his works, but most lucidly in *Creative Evolution*, chapters 1 and 4.
14. See the quotations by Inge which I select to conclude this article.
15. See VI, 9 (9), chapters 4–9.
16. VI, 9 (9), chapters 4, 5, and 7. Also see VI, 7 (38), chapters 13, 17, 18, 37, and 40.
17. See V, 9 (5), chapters 4 and 5.
18. VI, 9 (9), chapters 9 through 11; also VI, 8 (39), 13.

19. Bergson seems himself somewhat undecided about the status of science. At times he speaks as though science is just a fiction that imposes arbitrary constructs on reality; at other times he says that science makes distinctions that have a foundation in reality. He says in some places that he does not want to depreciate science; at other places he seems to regard science as misleading, a betrayal of intuition and metaphysics. This inconsistency, whether apparent or real, makes Bergson a challenge to his interpreters.
20. So it is expressed, for example, in VI, 9 (9), chapter 3.
21. See above, note 19.
22. Rose-Marie Mossé-Bastide, *Plotin et Bergson*; see Introduction by Émile Bréhier, p. 5.
23. Richard Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 173.
24. John Anton elaborates on Plotinus' criticism of both the Aristotelian and Stoic categories in his fine essay, "Plotinus' Approach to Categorical Theory," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, pp. 83–99.
25. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer, trs. (London and New York, 1911), p. viii.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
27. Among contemporary philosophers of mind, reductionism enjoys great popularity. However, there are some who, following Bergson's example, still voice dissent: e.g., John Eccles, *The Human Psyche: The Gifford Lectures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992). See also David H. Lund, *Perception, Mind, and Personal Identity* (New York: University Press of America, 1994); and Robert Geis, *On Personal Existence After Death: Reductionist Circularities and the Evidence* (Peru, Illinois: Open Court Press, 1995).
28. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 21.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
30. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 59.
31. Richard Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 30. See IV, 3 (27), 25, 27–34.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
34. *Ibid.*
35. R. Aliotta, *Idealistic Reaction Against Science* (London, 1912), p. 128.
36. Dean Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp. 66–67.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 243–244.

# **The Ascent of Soul to Noûs: Charles S. Peirce as Neoplatonist**

**Kelly Parker**

To Real Being we go back, all that we have and are...(*Enn.* VI 5 [23] 7)

If there is one project definitive of recent Western philosophy, it may be the search for an alternative to the materialistic metaphysics that has come to prominence with the rise of science. While some insist that the *end* of metaphysics is the only valid alternative, others call instead for a thorough reconstruction of metaphysics. Such a reconstructed metaphysics must both accommodate the insights of modern science and account for the deeply felt sense that non-material mind or spirit is a real aspect of the cosmos.

The task of reconstructing metaphysics along these lines is enormous. There are only two directions in which to look for the kind of insights that will guide such a project: we may look outside the West to other religious and philosophical traditions, or we may look back into the West to religious and philosophical thought that has been eclipsed by materialism. This last approach inevitably brings one to examine Neoplatonic thought. The question arises, though, how Neoplatonism can accord with modern science. The work of the American philosopher Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914) may be seen in part as an attempt to place the enterprise of modern science into a philosophical framework that is properly (though not exhaustively) described as Neoplatonic.

Part I of this paper traces lines of possible Neoplatonic influences on Peirce's thought. Though there are no obvious direct influences, there are sufficient indirect connections to justify a reading of Peirce as a modern Neoplatonic philosopher. Part II presents some "Neoplatonic" features of Peirce's philosophical system. Part III elaborates these features by comparing Peirce's cosmology to that of Plotinus. Part IV identifies additional

significant similarities and differences between Peirce and Plotinus, and proposes further consideration of Peirce's philosophy as a model for "scientific Neoplatonism."

### I. Neoplatonic Influences on Peirce's Thought

At the beginning of what is probably his most "Neoplatonic" work, "The Law of Mind," published in the *Monist* in 1892, Peirce offers the following *apologia* for what he is about to spring upon his readers:

I may mention, for the benefit of those who are curious in studying mental biographies, that I was born and reared in the neighborhood of Concord—I mean in Cambridge—at the time when Emerson, Hedge, and their friends were disseminating the ideas that they had caught from Schelling, and Schelling from Plotinus, from Boehm, or from God knows what minds stricken with the monstrous mysticism of the East. But the atmosphere of Cambridge held many an antiseptic against Concord transcendentalism; and I am not conscious of having contracted any of that virus. Nevertheless, it is probable that some cultured bacilli, some benignant form of the disease was implanted in my soul, unawares, and that now, after long incubation, it comes to the surface, modified by mathematical conceptions and by training in physical investigations. (CP 6.102)

Peirce's disparaging tone in this passage offers a hard beginning to our search for Neoplatonic sources in his thought. This is amplified by the fact that the index of the eight volume *Collected Papers* reveals no other places where he refers to Plotinus by name. Likewise, a search of Peirce's unpublished papers turned up no signs of direct Plotinian influence.

The late Max Fisch, whose word on these matters is nearly infallible, writes only that the influence of Plotinus and other Neoplatonists on Peirce's mature philosophy is "largely indirect" (Fisch 241-42). Indirect influences can be as powerful as direct ones, of course, and my position is that "some benignant form" of Neoplatonism did animate his work. Peirce devoted most of sixty years to articulating a system of knowledge, based on a rigorous logic and methodology of inquiry, that would encompass all that is humanly knowable about reality. The capstone of his system—and

in his estimation, the highest ambition of the human mind—is a metaphysic and religious philosophy that reconciles the spirit of modern science with the spirit of ancient philosophy. In evaluating his own relationship to the tradition, Peirce characterized Aristotelianism as "a special development" of Platonic philosophy, and counted himself "an Aristotelian of the scholastic wing, approaching Scotism, but going much further in the direction of scholastic realism" (CP 5.77n1).

This reminds us that what appears as a Neoplatonic influence on Peirce may as easily be the result of influences common to Peirce and Neoplatonism. Indeed, Peirce was a careful student of the works that shaped Neoplatonism. He asserts that by 1894 he had "read and thought more about Aristotle than about any other man" (MS 1604, quoted in Fisch 240). He later turned to the serious study of Plato—a study he began by copying the Greek texts of key dialogues into notebooks and making his own interlinear translations. He came to consider the *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus* as Plato's greatest works, and went so far as to reconstruct the chronology of the dialogues in the course of a survey of ethical concepts. This exercise notably shaped Peirce's conception of the *summum bonum*, the Good that defines the *telos* of all activity in the cosmos (Fisch 240-41). Peirce also investigated Pythagoras' life as a test case for his own logic of drawing history from ancient documents (MSS 476, 1277-78, 1582), and characterized Pythagoras' as "the sublimest of all human biographies" (Fisch 239). On the other hand, Peirce's principle of *tychism* (absolute chance), which runs so strongly against Neoplatonic principles, was clearly inspired by his reflections on Aristotle and Epicurus (Fisch 231).

It must be noted that Peirce's reading of ancient philosophy was inevitably colored by the traditional interpretation of the texts, and that the traditional interpretation is itself largely Neoplatonic. This effect of the received interpretation of the ancient texts is then the first likely source of indirect Neoplatonic influence on Peirce's thought.

As for traceable Neoplatonic influences, there is an obvious line of contact that needs to be explored further. Peirce was above all a logician, and had read widely in the available Neoplatonic and Stoic sources. References to Porphyry are frequent. All such references that I have checked, however, seem confined strictly to

logical concerns, even where the originals clearly carry a metaphysical burden. Peirce would not have been incognizant of that burden, though, so we have here a second likely source of indirect influence.

Finally, Peirce was of course conversant in more recent philosophy. He knew and respected the work of such latter-day Neoplatonists as Leibniz and Herbert Spencer. They must not be overlooked as likely sources of Neoplatonic themes in Peirce's work.

I suggest that the notable similarities between the Peircean and Neoplatonic philosophies are due not primarily to particular direct or indirect Neoplatonic influences, but rather to the philosophers' similar aims, to shared ancient sources, and to the residual effects Neoplatonism had on the traditional interpretation of these sources. For these reasons it is legitimate to consider Peirce as a metaphysician and cosmologist working within the Neoplatonic tradition, though perhaps he did not do so self-consciously.

## II. Plotinian Themes in Peirce's Philosophy

The signature feature of Peirce's philosophy is his theory of three irreducible and universal categories. The categories appear in different guises depending on the area of thought under consideration. In mathematics and logic they are forms of relation; in phaneroscopy (the analysis of phenomena) they are elements of any experience; in metaphysics they are modes of being. Since these universal categories first appear in mathematics, and because they "are best defined in terms of numbers," Peirce sometimes calls them the "kainopythagorean categories" (CP 7.528). He defines the *phaneron* as "the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not" (CP 1.284). All three categories are inevitably to be found in any *phaneron*. They are thus similar to the five genera or categories identified in Plato's *Sophist* (254-55), categories which Plotinus took to be the primary categories of the intelligible world (*Enn.* 6 [43] 8). The closest parallel to Peirce's categories in Plotinus is probably the identification of Being, Life, and Thought as aspects of *Noûs* (Armstrong 246).

Peirce's first attempt to identify the categories, based on the analysis of propositions, produced a list of five: Being, Quality, Relation, Representation, and Substance (W 2:49-59). Peirce shortly revised the list to three categories, on the basis that Being and Substance are the unthinkable *limits* of cognition, and hence have no meaning in thought. He also later renamed the three remaining categories as generically as possible.

*Firstness* is the monadic mode—uncaused, irrational possibility; spontaneous occurrence. *Secondness* is the dyadic mode—the brute fact that something just is, as it is, in relationship to others. *Thirdness* is the triadic mode—the meaning of a *phaneron* for a mind; the habit, law, or pattern that emerges as unifying many particular actions for an observer; the general idea that encompasses an infinite number of individuals under a class (CP 1.284-353, 5.41-119). In discussing the three categories, it is crucial to note an implicit principle that emerges in the tension of Firstness' spontaneity and Secondness' stability: the world manifests change and stasis everywhere, at all levels. The fractal images discussed in David Fideler's contribution to this volume nicely represent this interplay between Firstness and Secondness, and Peirce would likely point to the fact that we so quickly learn to look for a recurring pattern in these chaotic sets as an illustration of Thirdness in our interpretation of the images.

Peirce's pragmatism stipulates that the meaning of any idea consists in "our *concept* of what our conduct *would be* upon *conceivable* occasions" in which the idea might enter (CP 8.208). This is the definition of meaning that led him to amputate the "false categories" of Being and Substance from his list: these terms name modalities beyond the limits of relation, and hence beyond conception. With respect to Plotinus's hierarchy, Peirce would no doubt eliminate both matter and the One for the same reason. Of the Plotinian cosmos, then, *Noûs*, Soul, and Bodies would remain for Peirce's philosophical consideration. This does not necessarily imply that the One is unreal in Peirce's scheme, but perhaps only that the ineffable *is* ineffable and that discourse and thought have no dealings There: philosophy, for Peirce, is evidently a dialectical activity of the soul. Within the remaining Plotinian realms, each of Peirce's three categories would be found. The most obvious correlation, to my eyes, is in *Noûs*, where Life exemplifies Firstness, Being exemplifies Secondness, and Thought exemplifies

Thirdness. This correlation, however, is merely an illustration of how Peirce's categories relate to Plotinus' hypostases. For real insight, we turn to Peirce's own words on cosmology.

### III. Peirce and Plotinus on Cosmology

Peirce's philosophy emphasizes the principles of *continuity* and *process*. His semeiotic, or general theory of signs, is an all-purpose model of continuous process. I cannot here go into the details of Peirce's semeiotic, but will only note that in his system metaphysics and cosmology are based upon the results of logic, where logic is conceived as semeiotic. His metaphysics, for which he preferred the name *synechism*, combines logical realism with metaphysical idealism. Mind, which is not an individual thing for Peirce, "*lives, and moves, and has its being*" in the continuum of symbols (NEM 4:344). The cosmos embodies a logic that our own can only approximate, and the whole of what there is can be seen as the unfolding of an evolutionary process describable as cosmic semeiosis: "all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs" (CP 5.448n1). Signs are teleological. By implication, so is the universe, and Peirce ventures to state the *telos* of the universe in these terms:

The purpose of every sign is to express "fact," and by being joined with other signs, to approach as nearly as possible to determining an Interpretant which would be the *perfect Truth*, the absolute Truth, and as such...would be the very Universe. Aristotle gropes for a conception of perfection, or *entelechy*, which he never succeeds in making clear. We may adopt the word to mean the very fact, that is, the ideal sign which should be quite perfect....The entelechy of the Universe of being, then, the universe *quâ* fact, will be that Universe in its aspect as a sign, the 'Truth' of being. (NEM 4:239-40)

The universe is an argument of vast scope, whose end is not a determinate conclusion statable in a proposition (since propositions serve the higher end of *expressing* truth), but is rather the living idea that is reality. The universe is an ever-growing continuum in which thought, matter, and feeling are coming to be welded together into a harmonic state of "concrete reasonableness."

Peirce writes that "Synechism is founded on the notion that the coalescence, the becoming continuous, the becoming governed by laws, the becoming instinct with general ideas, are but phases of one and the same process of the growth of reasonableness" (CP 5.4). One might well ask why Peirce thought the cosmos is striving toward greater reasonableness. The answer is that his best hypothesis as to the origin of the cosmos indicates that it must necessarily be doing so, in the long run.

Peirce's cosmology, or "mathematical metaphysics" (CP 6.213) aims to show "how law is developed out of pure chance, irregularity, and indeterminacy" (CP 1.407). The account, outlined in the accompanying chart, unfolds as follows.

If we are to proceed in a logical and scientific manner, we must, in order to account for the whole universe, suppose an initial condition in which the whole universe was non-existent, and therefore a state of absolute nothing.

But this is not the nothing of negation....The nothing of negation is the nothing of death, which comes *second* to, or after, everything. But this pure zero is the nothing of not having been born. There is no individual thing, no compulsion, outward nor inward, no law. It is the germinal nothing, in which the whole universe is involved or foreshadowed. As such, it is absolutely undefined and unlimited possibility—boundless possibility. There is no compulsion and no law. It is boundless freedom.

Now the question arises, what necessarily resulted from that state of things? But the only sane answer is that where freedom was boundless nothing in particular necessarily resulted.

I say that nothing *necessarily* resulted from the Nothing of boundless freedom. That is, nothing according to deductive logic. But such is not the logic of freedom or possibility. The logic of freedom, or potentiality, is that it shall annul itself. For if it does not annul itself, it remains a completely idle and do-nothing potentiality; and a completely idle potentiality is annulled by its complete idleness. (CP 6.215-219)

Thus the principle that the logic of the universe is at least as sophisticated as our own—that it therefore includes retroduction or abduction, the spontaneous form of inference that initiates a stream

of inference—leads us to an account of the first stirrings of determination in the utter indeterminacy of Nothing. This is the first appearance of a mode of positive possibility, different from the mere absence of determination that characterizes the initial zero-state.

I do not mean that potentiality immediately results in actuality. Mediately perhaps it does; but what immediately resulted was that unbounded potentiality became potentiality of this or that sort—that is, of some *quality*.

Thus the zero of bare possibility, by evolutionary logic, leapt into the *unit* of some quality. (CP 6.220)

The potentiality of a quality, in Peirce's metaphysics, is analogous to the Platonic Form or Idea, in that it is a timeless, self-subsisting possibility that serves as the metaphysical ground of the world of actual existence.

The evolutionary process is, therefore, not a mere evolution of the *existing* universe, but rather a process by which the very Platonic forms themselves have become or are becoming developed. (CP 6.194)

Peirce says that the very earliest stages of cosmological evolution are characterized by extreme vagueness of form (CP 6.191). Our hypothetical single, spontaneously emerging qualitative possibility is not sharp-edged; the process of determination as yet consists only in a lone arbitrary determination within the zero-state. This is the possibility of a quality, indeed, but a quality that is not distinct from any other qualities: it thus brings a whole *continuum* of immediately connected possible qualities into being. The process has to unfold further before qualities can meaningfully be considered distinct.

[W]e must not assume that the qualities arose separate and came into relation afterward. It was just the reverse. The general indefinite potentiality became limited and heterogeneous. (CP 6.199)

The evolution of forms begins or, at any rate, has for an early stage of it, a vague potentiality; and that either is or is followed by a continuum of forms having a multitude of dimensions too great for

the individual dimensions to be distinct. It must be by a contraction of the vagueness of that potentiality of everything in general, but of nothing in particular, that the world of forms comes about. (CP 6.196)

With the emergence of the continuum of positive possibility, the first of the three "universes of experience," the Universe of Ideas or Possibility, is established (CP 6.455).

There is, however, an element of Secondness in the emergence of the continuum of forms where there was only indefinite nothingness before, and an element of Thirdness in the continuity and eternal subsistence of those forms. As the evolution continues, Secondness comes to the fore. Nascent relations of identity and difference emerge in and among parts of the continuum of forms, and qualities thereby come to be differentiated.

The *second* element we have to assume is that there could be accidental reactions between those qualities. The qualities themselves are mere eternal possibilities. But these reactions we must think of as *events*. Not that *Time* was. But still, they had all the here-and-nowness of events. (CP 6.200)

The next milestone in the evolution of the cosmos is the appearance of enduring existence, the Universe of Brute Actuality of things and facts (CP 6.455). The evolutionary shift from the first universe to the second, however, is not abrupt: what Peirce is describing is a continuous process of beginning. The designation of the different universes only indicates stages in the process. As the development of relations progresses, through several stages of evolution by chance occurrence, time and space emerge.

Out of the womb of indeterminacy we must say that there would have come something, by the principle of Firstness, which we may call a flash. Then by the principle of habit there would have been a second flash. Though time would not yet have been, this second flash was in some sense after the first, because resulting from it. Then there would have come other successions ever more and more closely connected, the habits and the tendency to take them ever strengthening themselves, until the events would have been bound together into something like a continuous flow. (CP 1.412)

This continuous "quasi-flow" represents the headwaters of the almost perfectly continuous temporal stream that we experience.

The quasi-flow which would result would, however, differ essentially from time in this respect, that it would not necessarily be in a single stream. Different flashes might start different streams, between which there should be no relations of contemporaneity or succession. So one stream might branch into two, or two might coalesce. But the further result of habit would inevitably be to separate utterly those that were long separated, and to make those which presented frequent common points coalesce into perfect union. Those that were completely separated would be so many different worlds which would know nothing of one another; so that the effect would be just what we actually observe. (CP 1.412)

Space develops in a similar fashion, through the spontaneous occurrence of pairs of events that tend to become ever more regular under the influence of the principle of habit. Substance, the distinguishing feature of an enduring thing, develops out of the establishment of habits within such pairings.

Pairs of states will also begin to take habits, and thus each state having different habits with reference to the different other states will give rise to bundles of habits, which will be substances. Some of these states will chance to take habits of persistency, and will get to be less and less liable to disappear; while those that fail to take such habits will fall out of existence. Thus substances will get to be permanent. (CP 1.414)

In the nascent time and space, then, organized bundles of habits come to embody particular qualities that are distinguishable from other bundles of habits embodying other qualities. Those bundles of habits that tend to persist, which happen to acquire the habit of enduring, come to dominate the universe in the form of existing things or actualities. Thus the cosmos develops into a state where Secondness predominates, and this Peirce calls the Universe of Actuality (CP 6.455).

Peirce next turns to the principle of habit-taking, and its most dramatic effect on the evolving cosmos:

all things have a tendency to take habits....[For] every conceivable real object, there is a greater probability of acting as on a former like

occasion than otherwise. This tendency itself constitutes a regularity, and is continually on the increase....It is a generalizing tendency; it causes actions in the future to follow some generalizations of past actions; and this tendency itself is something capable of similar generalizations; and thus, it is self-generative. (CP 1.409)

The principle of habit-taking, operative but feeble in the first two stages of cosmic evolution, begins to come to prominence once actuality is well established. Actuality is characterized by reactions among enduring things. The character of such things, and consequently the relations and modes of interaction among them, would be extremely irregular at first. The principle of habit-taking has the effect of making events in the Universe of Actuality more stable and regular. It underlies the emergence of permanent substances, as we have seen. Beyond this, it has the effect of stabilizing the kinds of reaction which tend to occur among different substances. Nothing *forces* there to be a tendency toward regularity in the Universe of Actuality, for the notion of force implies necessity, an advanced variety of the regularity we are trying to explain (CP 1.407). Regularity, like possibility and particularity, must appear in the evolving cosmos by chance. But just as we have seen the tendency to take habits operate on Firstness to establish the Universe of Ideas and on Secondness to establish the universe of Actuality, so does it operate on Thirdness, on itself, to establish a universe dominated by Thirdness, lawfulness, order, and reasonableness.

The element of habit-taking has a peculiarity about it: it is the only possibility that, once occurring, "can grow by its own virtue" (CP 6.101). Thus it operates in the respective universes with increasing efficiency. In the Universe of Actuality it serves to establish regularity in the various substances, both in their internal nature and in their external relations to one another. It gives rise, in short, to the regularities we recognize as the laws of nature. According to Peirce's cosmology, "each law of nature would consist in some permanence, such as the permanence of mass, momentum, and energy. In this respect, the theory suits the facts admirably" (CP 1.415). As the principle of habit-taking operates to promulgate its own influence, events in the actual world become more regular, more predictable. *Necessity*—as embodied, for example, in the idea of necessary connection which Hume rightly said is absent from the observable realm of existent

things—emerges in the form of laws that govern events. Necessity is the support of actuality by reason, the generalization of the particular events in the Universe of Actuality (MS 277, p. 123).

As law takes hold, the evolving cosmos can be seen wending its way toward a Universe of Necessity, in which law would be perfect. This Universe is the completely reasonable state of things that is identified (in Peirce's esthetics) as an ideal. This universe is on the one hand unrealizable in principle, since it would imply the complete eclipse of Possibility and Haecceity, which are as fundamental as Necessity; on the other hand, it is the regulative ideal toward which self-controlled thought and action aim. The increase of reasonable thought and action, in the context of all three universes, is accordingly the *summum bonum* in Peirce's philosophy.

This rather lengthy account of Peirce's cosmology should suggest a number of things to the reader already familiar with Plotinus' account of creation. At the most general level, it is notable that Peirce, like Plotinus, sees the origin of the universe as the result of a spontaneous (i.e. uncaused) act of creation. This act of creation proceeds through stages, and both philosophers see the realm of existent bodies as an imperfect reflection of the realm of Forms that is the proper object of knowledge. Though the pregnant Nothing of the zero-state bears some affinities to the Plotinian One, there is apparently no room in Plotinus for Peirce's doctrine of *tychism*, his insistence on irrational chance as the driving force behind creation. The Plotinian One is the ground of creativity and necessity. Peirce separates these two principles. Creativity is Firstness, the generative principle, while necessity is Thirdness, the end toward which events in the universe are drawn. Given the role of indeterminacy in modern scientific explanations, it may be that Peirce's approach is to be preferred.

#### IV. Conclusion

Like Plotinus, Peirce sees the Platonic Forms as teeming and seething with life (*Enn.* VI 7 [43] 12), but for Peirce this implies that the Forms develop, evolve, and change. Peirce and Plotinus both reject the Platonic notion that the laws of nature are "laid down in advance and then applied" (Armstrong 253). Plotinus

holds that they appear fully perfected in Nature when Soul contemplates *Noûs*; Peirce sees them as imperfect, and perfecting them is itself the *telos* of the existent universe. Peirce's philosophy, moreover, banishes the One from metaphysics: there is no completed perfection with which we might in fact be (re)united. Peirce does mention belief in a God who is in and yet transcends the cosmos (CP 6.452), but except so far as its immanent manifestations are explored under other areas, this God is not a possible object of our knowledge. The *entelechy* of the universe is an ideal to be approximated through the infinite, ongoing effort of mind acting in the world we inhabit. For that reason, Peirce does not denigrate material body: the Universe of Existence is for him an indispensable positive aspect of reality, and not a flawed reflection of reality. In a problematic passage, Porphyry says that Plotinus "seemed ashamed of being in the body;" Peirce might ask just how he would ever accomplish much *without* a body.

Where Peirce and Plotinus are in sympathy, the possibilities are exciting indeed. I will mention only three such areas. First is Peirce's mathematical analysis of the continuum as an infinitely divisible plenum, in which every part has the same properties as the whole. Second is his modeling of this principle of continuity in a theory of signs, which allows us to view the universe as a process of continuous and reflexive *semeiosis*, every part of which potentially carries us a fragment of greater Truth. Finally, Peirce's related work on the mathematics of transfinite sets (work which diverged from George Cantor's in metaphysically important ways) may help resolve some difficulties in Plotinus' conception of infinity.

Peirce's account of the *summum bonum*, the disciplined development of mind toward a state of perfect order, lawfulness, and concrete reasonableness, seems almost a perfect adaptation of the Plotinian idea that Soul seeks contemplation and union with *Noûs*. The difference is that Peirce makes refinement of the process, and not its completion, the *telos* of the activity. In Peirce's philosophy, this process of deliberate and self-correcting pursuit of Truth, the ascent of soul to *Noûs*, is nothing other than scientific inquiry.

Peirce's metaphysical doctrine of *synechism* is his account of how things are with us that this progression is possible. For Peirce, we are of the same stuff as the cosmos. Not just materially, but also



at the higher level of Form: the human person, in one facet, is a symbol and hence already is a part of that elevated reality. This accords with Plotinus' doctrine that the higher part of the soul already participates in *Noûs*. This effective continuity of soul and idea, a central corollary of synechism, in fact appears capable of accommodating Plotinus's account of the efficacy of prayer and magic (CP 6.516; *Enn.* IV 4 [28] 40-41).

As we approach the close of the twentieth century, philosophy, science, and religious thought stand in need of a metaphysics and cosmology that do justice to the full human encounter with reality. This encounter includes not only our experience of the ordinary, but also our most advanced scientific inquiries and our most elevated spiritual experiences. The ancient Neoplatonic thinkers sought to express the mystery of our relation to Being itself in their accounts of the soul's journey toward higher reality. In what is here referred to as the "scientific Neoplatonism" of Peirce's metaphysics, this highest human ambition is characterized as the deliberate effort to enter into and express Truth. Peirce urges us to see that this human endeavor is commensurate with, and contributes to, the unfolding of the cosmos itself. Perhaps the account of reality we seek has been here all along, then, in the form of a Neoplatonism that has continued to develop even in the shadow of modern science—its "cultured bacilli" carried into this century by philosophers such as Charles S. Peirce.

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Peirce's Cosmology, or  
Mathematical Metaphysics

<i>Zero-State</i>	Nothingness (Absolute Indeterminacy) Unbounded Potentiality	The indeterminate is unstable
<i>Firstness</i>	Spontaneous "Flash" Emergence of Bounded Potentiality	One potential but vague quality entails a continuum of potential qualities
Universe of Possibility	Potentiality of Some Quality => Development of Forms	
<i>Secondness</i>	Emergence of Relations among Forms (e.g. Identity and Difference)	A system of relations develops among the forms, concretizes into determinacy, oppositions established
Universe of Actuality or Existence	Enduring Distinct Qualities: Substance  Temporal and Spatial Relations, Material Universe(s) Emerge	
<i>Thirdness</i>	Possibility of Regular Relations and Reactions among Existent Individuals	The possibility of order applies to its <i>own</i> possibility, and is thus self-increasing

Universe of Necessity or Reason	Laws of Nature Evolve Reason Grows, becomes Self- Controlling => Mind	
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<i>End-State</i>	Perfect Reasonableness, Absolute Necessity  Unreachable Ideal serves as <i>telos</i>	<i>Summum bonum</i> is the growth toward greater order, not its attainment

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## Alfred North Whitehead: Between Platonism and Neoplatonism

David Rodier

That the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead is a variety of "Platonism" is a generally accepted commonplace. There are clear differences between Whitehead and Plato on many issues of metaphysics as Whitehead himself frequently notes. There may be some discussion about the precise sense in which Whitehead's metaphysical system is "Platonic." There is, nevertheless, a common consensus that Plato exerts more overt influence on Whitehead than any other philosopher. In this paper I shall argue that the Plato who has influenced Whitehead is a Plato interpreted along the lines of Plotinus rather than the Plato who is commonly presented in current philosophy texts. I am not arguing that Whitehead was directly influenced by Plotinus. I am, however, arguing that the reading of Plato which Whitehead presents is one which has significant similarities with the interpretation of Plato which Plotinus presents.

### I

Whitehead's frequent favorable references to Plato would seem to make it natural to refer to Whitehead's metaphysical system as "Platonic." Even a casual reader of Whitehead can not but notice the large number of references to Plato. References to modern philosophers outnumber references to Plato in *Science and the Modern World*—as might be expected from the subject matter. But a glance at the index to *Adventures of Ideas* will show that there are more entries for Plato than for any other philosopher. In fact, there are more entries for Plato in that index than there are for any topic or any other person. The tendency to regard Whitehead's philosophy as a variety of Platonism is only strengthened when we

notice the similarities between Whitehead's "Eternal Objects" and Plato's "Forms," the resemblance between the Whiteheadian God and the Platonic Demiurge, or even Whitehead's explicit references in his discussions of Creativity to the Platonic Receptacle. When writing metaphysics, Whitehead appears to follow the traditional view that Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato: whatever course other twentieth-century philosophers may take, Whitehead develops his philosophy—or at least his metaphysics—in constant dialogue with Plato. But however useful it may be to characterize Whitehead's philosophy as a kind of Platonism, I fear that the degree to which that philosophy is embedded in the Platonic tradition is more obscured, rather than illuminated, by the use of the term "Platonic."

Most contemporary writers in their discussions of Whitehead's "Platonism" have in mind the interpretation of Plato which has tended to dominate late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century scholarship. This interpretation of Plato and Platonism originates, as far as the English-speaking world is concerned, in the efforts of the Arnolds and Jowett to construct a secularized Platonism to serve as the basis of an educational reform which would produce gentlemen devoted to a liberal and secularizing state. Crucial to this effort to present Plato as the patron of the liberal democratic state was the separation of Plato from his successors. Platonism needed to be constructed as a tradition without any essential religious or mystical components. But if Plato was to be interpreted this way then Plato's philosophy must be sharply distinguished from that of his immediate successors as well as from the philosophy of Plotinus and his successors who clearly developed Plato's texts into a metaphysical tradition with religious overtones and whose mysticism ranged from the rational to the theurgic.

Obviously, the motives for this separation between Plato and what were now termed the "Neoplatonists" were political rather than philological. However, this revisionist version was successful. In standard usage the term "Platonism" no longer means what it did to the Cambridge Platonists or even to Coleridge. "Platonism" no longer encompassed a continuous philosophic tradition beginning with Plato and continued by philosophers from Plotinus to Proclus and then modified by Christian, Jewish and Muslim authors. Instead "Platonism" stood for the philosophy of the Platonic dialogues interpreted in opposition to what was now termed

"Neoplatonism"—a decadent tradition which was said to have its beginning with Plotinus. Of course, E. R. Dodds in 1928 and Cornelia de Vogel again in 1959 showed that the idea that Neoplatonism was a late corruption of the platonic tradition was indefensible. Yet their work is still, I fear, not part of the common consensus. Most philosophy texts still present the Plato of the Arnolds and Jowett—a Plato who is presented as the patron of the enlightened leaders of a modern liberal democratic state. Those who do not share this nineteenth-century interpretation present not a Plato as interpreted by the Neoplatonists but rather the reactionary and totalitarian Plato of Popper and Ryle or the homophobic and misogynist Plato of the post-moderns.

So it would seem to be the case that when most scholars refer to the Whitehead's Platonism, it is, I suspect, the Platonism of the tradition stretching from Jowett to Cornford which they have in mind. I do not believe that they mean "Platonism" as the Cambridge Platonists or Coleridge would have understood the term. But if the term "Platonism" is used as distinct from, and in opposition to, the term "Neoplatonism," then it is rather misleading to refer to Whitehead's philosophy as a form of Platonism. On the one hand, Whitehead's philosophy differs in many significant ways from the philosophy discovered in Plato's *Dialogues* by the dominant Platonic interpreters of the late-nineteenth-century and twentieth-century. On the other hand, the very ways in which Whitehead's philosophy differs from this version of "Platonism" provide good reasons for referring instead to the "Neoplatonism" of Whitehead.

## II

Obviously, in this paper I can not discuss all of the differences between Neoplatonism and the Plato of the current common tradition. Similarly I cannot present a discussion of Platonic and Neoplatonic elements in all of Whitehead's published works. For the purposes of this paper I shall focus on three key differences between Neoplatonism and the current standard presentation of Plato's philosophy and I shall discuss these differences as they appear in only the last three of Whitehead's major philosophical works. Let me present a brief justification for each of these restrictions.

Even if the discussion of the differences between Neoplatonism and the standard presentation of Plato were to be limited to Classical Pagan Neoplatonic writers there would be a great variety of different opinions. For my purposes I shall limit my discussion of Neoplatonic positions to Plotinus because I feel that the differences between Plotinus and the standard version of Plato are particularly illuminating when examining Whitehead. I shall further restrict my discussion to three key issues which define the differences between Plotinus and the current standard version of Plato.

The standard versions of Plato whether nineteenth-century or post-modern see Platonism as characterized by at least three themes:

- (1) a metaphysical dualism—especially a dualism of soul and body;
- (2) a devaluation of physical existence—the physical world is a prison for the soul and is characterized by imperfection, flux a genesis which is fundamentally a lack of being, a world only of becoming;
- (3) an almost childish use of the myth of the Demiurge to explain the physical world order—a Demiurge which is too much like the Creator God of the Bible and one who lacks the philosophic sublimity of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover.

In radical contrast to these three themes are the following positions which are characteristic of Plotinus' reading of Plato:

- (1) the denial of a radical dualistic opposition between body and soul;
- (2) a rejection of any attempt to devalue the physical world and the especially the belief that the physical world is perfect after its kind and not merely a deceptive prison for the soul;
- (3) the perfection of the world is not the result of the conscious purpose of a Creator God who is distinct from the physical world rather it is the result of the world's reflecting the order of the world of the forms.

Each of these characteristically Plotinian themes can be found in Plato's *Dialogues*. However, although each of them are present in

the *Dialogues*, each theme is frequently marginalized in the standard twentieth-century presentations of Platonism. The thesis of my paper is that each of these Plotinian themes is characteristic of Whitehead's philosophy as he presents it in his major works from *Process and Philosophy* through *Adventures of Ideas* and *Modes of Thought*. For this reason I hold that it is perhaps more appropriate to refer to Whitehead's "Neoplatonism" than his "Platonism" when trying to characterize his philosophy.

Just as a full consideration of the relationship between a narrowly defined Platonism and Neoplatonism is obviously beyond the compass of a short paper, so also is a discussion of Neoplatonic elements in all Whitehead's works. Many interesting questions might be raised about Platonic and Neoplatonic elements in Whitehead's accounts of logic and mathematics. However, rather than attempting the ambitious project of discussing Whitehead's affinity for the Neoplatonic tradition throughout his intellectual career, I shall limit my discussion here to the issue of the affinity between Neoplatonism and Whitehead's metaphysics in the major works he produced after he came to Harvard. And just as I have limited my discussion Neoplatonism to three key points in the philosophy of Plotinus, I shall focus my discussion of Whitehead on Whitehead's last three major philosophical works. These are: *Process and Reality*, *Adventures of Ideas*, and *Modes of Thought*.

Whitehead regarded *Process and Reality* and *Adventures of Ideas*, together with the earlier *Science and the Modern World*, as presenting a single philosophic point of view:

The three books—*Science and the Modern World*, *Process and Reality*, *Adventures of Ideas*—are an endeavor to express a way of understanding the nature of things, and to point out how that way of understanding is illustrated by a survey of the mutations of human experience. Each book can be read separately; but they supplement each other's omissions and compression. (AI vii)

In discussion of Whitehead's metaphysics both *Adventures of Ideas* and *Modes of Thought* are often neglected in favor of a discussion based almost exclusively on *Process and Reality*. For my purposes these latter two works need to be included. There are two reasons for this. First, the subject matter of both *Adventures of Ideas* and *Modes of Thought* provides Whitehead with the opportunity for a more explicit discussion of Plato than the more technical *Process*

*and Reality*. Secondly, just as it is realized that *Process and Reality* does not just supplement, but radically transforms the vision of *Science and The Modern World*, by giving it a very precise metaphysical framework, so, I think, it can be said that *Adventures of Ideas*, although recapitulating and presupposing much of the conceptual framework of *Process and Reality*, manages subtly to change the system, even if in only nuances. I would further argue that these nuanced modifications become even more significant in *Modes of Thought*—a work which occupied Whitehead for the five years succeeding the publication of *Adventures of Ideas*. For the same reasons I shall exclude reference to *Science and the Modern World* from my discussion since the subject matter of *Science and the Modern World* gives Whitehead little opportunity directly to comment on Plato.

### III

Plotinus does not claim to be presenting a new philosophic position. He claims only to be interpreting the philosophy of Plato. For this reason it would be expected that he would adhere to some variety of Platonic dualism; especially since such a dualism is quite characteristic of his Middle Platonic predecessors. There are similar a priori reasons for expecting Whitehead to hold to a version of Platonic dualism, especially if such a dualism really is characteristic of Plato's philosophy. Even if it were not the case that Whitehead develops his positions in constant dialogue with Plato he is, in any case, like most modern philosophers, also the heir of a radical Cartesian mind-body dualism. In the light of these facts it seems quite remarkable that both Whitehead and Plotinus reject the radical dualism of soul and body which is found in some of Plato's middle *Dialogues*—the very dualism which is thought to be the most characteristic of Plato's metaphysics.

What is even more remarkable is the fact that the reasons for Whitehead's and Plotinus' rejection of this dualism are based in both cases on a metaphysics which makes the dualism impossible. Further both philosophers not only reject the metaphysical dualism of soul and body, they also reject the valuational attitude which underlies that metaphysical dualism. In this section I shall only consider the first point, i.e., the metaphysical basis for Plotinus'

and Whitehead's rejection of Platonic dualism. I shall postpone a consideration of their rejection of the body/prison view of the world until the next section.

The rejection of the dualism of body and soul found in such middle Platonic dialogues as the *Phaedo* or the *Republic* is fundamental to the metaphysics of Plotinus. For Plato there is a fundamental duality between the eternal World of the Forms and the ever-changing physical world. This metaphysical opposition between the Forms and the physical world leads to the further dualism of the soul which has a likeness to the Forms but is trapped in the prison of the body. In contrast to this view, Plotinus sees reality as composed of three ontological levels: The One, Intellect, and Soul. Each of these is the ontological ground of its successor and each successor, although distinct, is never completely separated from its prior. Since none of the three hypostases is ontologically independent of its prior, there can be no dualism in the sense of ontological opposition between the levels of reality in the Plotinian scheme of things. In the light of his ontological commitments, no matter how much he attempts to use Plato's language, Plotinus never can affirm the dualism of soul and body the way that his Platonic predecessors do.

There are two basic reasons why Plotinus rejects both theses of Platonic dualism. These two theses, once again, are: (1) the concept that the soul and the body are distinct and independent kinds of things and (2) the concept that the soul is imprisoned in the body. Plotinus' two reasons for rejecting the theses are: (1) there is no body apart from soul; and (2) soul is never, properly speaking, in the body. Let us consider both of Plotinus' reasons in more detail.

First, although Plotinus insists that there is a radical distinction between soul and body, in his scheme of things the physical world is not a separate reality which can exist apart from soul. Rather the physical world is the lowest manifestation of Soul as an ontological principle. Soul is not dependent for its existence on body but every body depends for its existence on the presence of a soul. No body exists apart from soul—or as Plotinus would prefer to say—without the soul's being present to it...All physical objects are the product of soul's contemplation:

If body did not exist, soul would not go forth, since there is no place other than body where it is natural for it to be. But if it intends to go

forth, it will produce a place for itself, and so a body. Soul's rest is, we may say, confirmed in absolute rest; a great light shines from it, and at the outermost edge of this firelight there is a darkness. Soul sees this darkness and informs it, since it is there as a substrate for form. For it was not lawful for that which borders on soul to be without its share of formative principle, as far as that was capable of receiving it. (IV.3.9.21-27)<sup>1</sup>

The second reason is that the soul is never contained and limited by the body. "For every soul has something of what is below, in the direction of the body, and what is above, in the direction of Intellect" (IV.8.8.13-15). This two-fold direction of vision is especially clear in the case of the World Soul:

And just as the intellectual way of outgoing is a descent to the lower limit of that which is worse [than Intellect]—for it is not possible for it to go up to that which transcends it; but it must, acting outwards from itself and unable to remain on its own, by the necessity and law of nature arrive at soul; for this is its goal, and it must hand over what comes after to soul and run up again itself—so is the activity of soul; what comes after it is this world and what is before it is the contemplation of real being; this kind of experience comes slowly to partial souls, when they are in the worse and a turn takes place to the better, but that which is called the Soul of the All has not become engaged in the worse kind of work and, having no experience of evils, considers what lies below it contemplatively and remains attached to the realities before it for ever. (IV.8.7.18-30)

Plotinus' rejection of the view of the body as a prison for the soul becomes evident in two images which he uses to express the relationship between soul (in this case the World Soul) and body. These two images are of a net in the sea and of a builder living in a house which he has made. The first image—that of the universe as a net immersed in the sea which represents soul—is used to emphasize the point that the body neither possesses nor contains the soul:

...it [sc. body] is mastered, not the master, possessed not possessor. The universe lies in soul which bears it up, and nothing is without a share of soul. It is as if a net immersed in the waters was alive, but unable to make its own that in which it is. The sea is already spread out and the net spreads with it, as far as it can; for no one of its parts can be anywhere else than where it lies. And soul's nature is so great, just because it has no size, as to contain the whole of body in one and the same grasp; wherever body extends, there soul is. If body did not exist, it would make no difference to soul as regards size; for it is what it is. The universe extends as far as soul goes; its limit of extension is the point to which in going forth it has soul to keep it in being. The shadow is as large as the rational formative principle which comes from soul; and the formative principle is of such a kind as to make a size as large as the form from which it derives wants to make. (IV.3.9.36-51).

Plotinus' second image is a deliberate rejection of the Pythagorean and Platonic image of the soul in the body being like a prisoner in a prison. Plotinus opposes to the image of the world as a prison the image of "a beautiful and richly various house":

There came into being something like a beautiful and richly various house which was not cut off from its builder, but he did not give it a share in himself either; he considered it all, everywhere, worth a care which conduces to its very being and excellence (as far as it can participate in being) but does him no harm in his presiding over it, for he rules it while abiding above; it has a soul which does not belong to it, but is present to it. (IV.3.9.29-36)

The crucial point in this image is that the builder is living in the house and caring for it, but he is both superior to it and not trapped in it. The builder cares for the house but it, "does him no harm in his presiding over it, for he rules it while abiding above."

This same insistence that the soul is not "of the body" but "to the body," i.e., that the soul is not the possession of, but the possessor of the body is as true of the individual souls as it is of the Plotinian World Soul. Plotinus' basic position of the relationship between the individual souls of living things and their bodies is well stated in a passage from the quotation preserved by Elias and appended by Henry and Schweitzer in their edition to the text of *Enneads* 1.9:

<sup>1</sup>All quotations from Plotinus are from the translation by A. H. Armstrong printed in the Loeb edition of the *Enneads*.

...so the philosopher must imitate God and the sun and not neglect his body altogether in caring for his soul, but take thought for it in the appropriate way till it becomes unfit and separates itself from its community with the soul (trans. Armstrong, loc. cit. p. 325).

But since the passages I have quoted so far have concentrated on the World Soul it is necessary briefly to show why Plotinus would think that the same arguments should apply to the relationship between the individual souls of living things and their individual bodies.

It is certainly true that in many passages in the *Enneads* it is not clear whether Plotinus is speaking of the individual souls or the World Soul. At times it may even seem that at times Plotinus is not quite clear conceptually whether a reference to the World Soul or a reference to the individual soul is required by his argument. It is also the case the relationship between the individual souls and the World Soul is a particularly complex one for Plotinus. He certainly wants to assign moral responsibility to the individual souls, but at the same time he wants to assert that not only are the individual souls "parts" of the World Soul but that their partition is not a kind of separation. The individual souls are divisions of the World Soul the same way that the soul is divided among the organs and parts of the body: "...for that of it which is divided is indivisibly divided. For it gives itself whole to the whole and is divided in that it is present in every part (IV.1.19-23)". Plotinus is quite clear that the souls of individual beings are not separate from the World Soul.

Plotinus is one of the few Classical or mediaeval philosophers to whom the terms "monopsychist" literally applies. Plotinus holds to a strict ontological unity of all the individual souls. He accepts the common position in classical philosophy that there is a single sensitive soul in the sentient being. But he notes that this implies a certain partibility of the soul. The soul is present in its entirety at any point in the body of the organism and is not divided by being so present. Since the particular souls of individual living things are not divided among the various parts of the body, there would not seem to be any difficulty in assuming that the World Soul unifies the universe and is equally present in each part of the universe. In this case it would seem reasonable to argue that the alleged individual souls of different living beings are merely parts of the

World Soul and parts not in the sense of having a common origin—as the *Timaeus* myth might imply—but parts in the sense that they are ontologically one with the World Soul.

Is it true that, just as we maintain that the soul of each individual is one because it is present as a whole at every point of the body, and is really one in this way, not having one part of it here and another there in the body...so in the same way my soul and your soul are one, and all souls are one?...Now if my soul and your soul come from the soul of the All, and that soul is one, these souls also must be one (IV.9.1.1-14).

Obviously this claim that all souls are one seems to contradict our experience of the privacy of such various states of soul as feelings, desires and virtues. The claim that all individual souls are one would seem to entail that the desire felt by a given soul would be felt by all other souls. But this is patently not the case. To this objection Plotinus give the following response:

First of all, then, it is not true that, if my soul and someone else's are one soul, just for that reason my composite [of body and soul] is the same as his composite. For when something which is the same is both in one thing and in another it will not have the same experiences in each of them, as for instance the [form of] the human being in me when I am in motion: the form in me in motion and in you not in motion will be in motion in me and stationary in you; and there is nothing absurd, nothing really disconcerting about the same thing being in me and in you: it is certainly not necessary that when I have a perception the other also should have exactly the same experience. For even in one body one hand does not perceive what happens to the other but the soul in the whole body. (IV.9.2.1-10)

Plotinus' point seems to be that the unity of the individual souls of living beings in the universe does not imply an identity of either passions or desires, since these are the result of the specific body which is present to the soul at that location. The unity of souls is rather the kind of unity which the various parts of an organism possess by virtue of being members of a single living being. This unity of the individual souls is an ontological unity which is both a unity of origin (since all souls derive from the World Soul) and a unity of Activity (since the individual souls are all acts of Soul). Because the individual souls never are completely separated from



their ground, they can not be imprisoned in the body. In fact Plotinus prefers not to speak of the individual souls as separate entities. His preferred metaphor is to speak of the individual souls as radii of a circle. They remain connected to a central point but they also touch the circumference. The body does not contain and imprison the soul for only a part of the soul attends to the body. The other part of the soul is joined to the World Soul. As such it always looks upwards to the Intellect:

'from the indivisible and that which is divisible in the sphere of bodies' is equivalent to saying that soul is composed of the part which is above and that which is attached to that higher world but has flowed out as far as these parts, like a line from a center. But when it has come here in this part, see how in this way it preserves in the very part the nature of the whole (IV.1.14-18).

It seems that Plotinus even obliquely hints that his teaching on this point conflicts with the usual interpretation of Plato, "And, if one ought to dare to express one's own view more clearly, contradicting the opinions of others..." He continues,

even our own soul does not altogether come down, but there is always something of it in the intelligible; but if the part which is in the world of sense-perception gets control, or rather if it is itself brought under control, and thrown into confusion [by the body], it prevents us from perceiving the things which the upper part of the soul contemplates. (IV.8.8.1-6).

Plotinus is prepared to admit that some souls may completely immerse themselves in the physical world and fail to turn their gaze upwards. But even for these souls the return is always possible because no soul ever completely descends into the physical world: "...the whole [of the soul] does not depart, but there is something of it which did not descend" (IV.1.1. 12-13). Or, as he says in ending his discussion on the "Descent of the Soul" (*Enneads* IV.8):

But the souls which are partial and of a part have also the transcendent element, but they are occupied with sense-perception, and by their [lower] faculty of conscious apprehension they apprehend many things which are contrary to their nature and grieve and trouble them, since what they care for is a part and defective, and has a great many alien and hostile things around it, and a great many

which it desires; and it has pleasures, and pleasure deceives it; but there is a higher part which the transitory pleasures do not please, and its life is conformable [to its nature] (IV.8.8.17-24).

As we shall see shortly, Plotinus' account of a soul which simultaneously looks downward to preside over the physical world and looks upwards to the Nous bears a striking resemblance to Whitehead's account of actual entities as having a physical and a mental pole. And so it is to Whitehead's account of the actual occasion as a unity of the physical and the mental poles that I shall now turn.

That Whitehead rejects any form of dualism is obvious to even a casual reader. Given that general rejection of dualism, the point that Whitehead's position is better characterized by the Plotinian continuity of body and soul than by a Platonic dualism of body and soul is easy to establish.

This is not to say that the two metaphysical structures are identical. Of course there are striking differences between the two accounts. Whitehead has completely eliminated the traces of the Platonic dualism which Plotinus continues to accept. Whitehead refuses to accept a definition of the soul, or the mental, as a different kind of thing from the physical. He might also be said to reject Plotinus' account of the higher and lower parts of the soul, although he is quite prepared to have a range of greater or lesser degrees of consciousness among his actual occasions. Nevertheless, Whitehead's account of the structure of actual entities seems to have more in common with Plotinus' account of the relationship between soul and body than it does with the radical dualism implicit in Plato's soul in prison metaphor.

Whitehead's ultimate metaphysical units—the actual entities—each have in their process of coming to be a physical and a mental pole. In *Process and Reality* Whitehead states:

...no actual entity is devoid of either pole; though their relative importance differs in different actual entities...an actual entity is essentially dipolar, with its physical and mental poles; and even the physical world can not be properly understood without reference to its other side, which is the complex of mental operations. (366)

This complete identity of the self both with the body and with the mind is further developed in the following passage:

Thus our experience in the present discloses its own nature as with two sources of derivation, namely, the body and the antecedent experiential functionings. Also there is a claim for identification with each of these sources. The body is mine, and the antecedent experience is mine. Still more, there is only one ego, to claim the body and to claim the stream of experience. I submit that we have here the fundamental basic persuasion on which we found the whole practice of our existence. While we exist body and soul are inescapable elements in our being, each with the full reality of our own immediate self. (MT 220-221)

Not only is Whitehead's concept of the unity of the actual entity which has a physical and a mental pole similar to Plotinus' denial of any soulless body, but in this passage even his language is remarkable similar to Plotinus' description of the soul as equally present in the whole of the body: the soul contains, "the whole of body in one grasp; wherever body extends, there soul is" (IV.3.9.43-44).

#### IV

As I said earlier both Plotinus and Whitehead not only reject the Platonic image of the soul imprisoned in the body because they reject its dualistic presuppositions, they also both reject the world-despising attitude implicit in the image. There are those who seem to interpret Plotinus' mysticism as world-renouncing and essentially of a piece with various neo-Pythagorean and Gnostic schools which flourished in the third century. But such a view is mistaken. Instead of viewing the physical world as either evil or as the creation of a less than perfect being, an intense and principled opposition to any form of Gnostic belief is the hallmark of Plotinus' philosophy. However mystical the philosophy of Plotinus may be, his mysticism never allows him to disparage the physical universe. As A. H. Armstrong has observed. "When Plotinus is looking at the material world as a whole, from the point of view of soul, he regards it as an ensouled organic unity, *good and necessary as a whole and in every part*" (86 italics added).

In opposition to the Gnostics' devaluing of the physical world Plotinus claims that the physical world is good after its kind. It is not the world of the forms and it is, by necessity, inferior to the

world of the Forms. But this ontological inferiority does not entail that it lacks its own degree of perfection:

The greatest beauty in the world of sense, therefore, is a manifestation of the noblest among the intelligibles, of their power and of their goodness, and all things are held together for ever, those which exist intelligibly and those which exist perceptibly, the intelligibles existing of themselves and the things perceived by sense receiving their existence for ever by participation in them, imitating the intelligible nature as far as they can. (IV.8.6.23-29)

It might seem unlikely that Whitehead in the twentieth-century should have to oppose anything like world devaluing Gnosticism. However, Whitehead realized that the Gnostic attitude towards the physical world was a continuing option even for modern man.

...in practice there has always been the temptation to abandon the immediate experience of this world as a lost cause. The shadows pass—says mystical Religion. But they also recur, and recur—whispers the Experience of Mankind. Be tranquil, they will end—rejoins Religion. The mystical religion which most whole-heartedly adopts this attitude is Buddhism. In it despair of this world is conjoined with a program for the world's abolition by a mystic tranquillity. Christianity has wavered between Buddhist renunciation, and its own impracticable ideals culminating in a crude Millennium within the temporal flux. The difference between the two consists in the difference between a program for reform and a program for abolition. I hazard the prophecy that that religion will conquer which can render clear to popular understanding some eternal greatness incarnate in the passage of temporal fact (AI 33).

But while Plotinus' rejection of the Gnostic devaluation of the physical world was based on his unwavering commitment to what he understood as Hellenism, Whitehead's opposition to world-renunciation is not just a matter of his accepting the values of twentieth-century science and Enlightenment liberalism. Whitehead opposes any form of thought which posits ultimate value as existing anywhere other than in immediate experience because his philosophy recognizes as ultimately real only that which is constituted out of experience. For Whitehead the ultimately real are self-constituting occasions of experience. This rejection of any form metaphysical dualism lies at the foundation of Whitehead's

system. In the familiar Ontological Principle he enunciates this fundamental position that all reality is grounded in the world of experience: "...by the ontological principle whatever things there are in any sense of 'existence' are derived by abstraction from actual occasions" (PR 113). Or as he succinctly observes on another occasion: "Wherever a vicious dualism appears, it is by reason of mistaking an abstraction for a final concrete fact" (AI 190).

It is precisely the rejection of any devaluation of the physical world as it presents itself in our experience that is at the heart of Whitehead's insistence that all ultimately real things must be beings. Whitehead's trenchant critique of Plato's cosmology is not just a criticism of dualism in general. It is a criticism which sees any kind of dualism as ultimately leading to a devaluation of the physical world. Because of its duality between the World of the Forms as Being and the Physical World as Becoming, Whitehead regards as Plato's cosmology as the "feeblest of solutions" (AI 168). But, as the passage in *Adventures of Ideas* makes clear, Whitehead's harsh evaluation arises from his seeing that such a dualism must reduce the physical world to a mere imitation of the truly valuable. Such a dualism entails that the physical world and our experiencing of the physical world be merely second-rate substitutes for Reality:

When Plato is faced with the problem of expressing the relationship of God to the World, and of the relation to the World of those Ideas which it is in God's nature to contemplate, Plato's answer is invariably framed in terms of mere dramatic imitation. When Plato turns to the World, after considering God as giving life and motion to the ideas by the inclusion of them in the divine nature, he can find only second-rate substitutes and never the originals. For Plato there is a derivative second-rate God of the World who is a mere Icon, that is to say an image. Also when he looks for the ideas, he can only find in the World, imitations. Thus the World for Plato, includes only the image of God, and imitations of his ideas, and never God and his ideas (AI 167-168).

In contrast, Whitehead argues

What metaphysics requires is a solution exhibiting the plurality of individuals as consistent with the unity of the Universe, and a solution which exhibits the World as requiring its union with God, and God as requiring his union with the World (AI 168).

Whitehead's rejection of levels of reality is thus grounded ultimately in a positive evaluation of the world. For Whitehead, "Truth and Beauty are the great regulative properties in virtue of which Appearance justifies itself to the immediate decision of the experient subject" (AI 241). But the value present in the world is no mere appearance as opposed to some unchanging reality: "The temporal world is the stage of finite accomplishment" (AI 172). In language remarkably like that of Plotinus Whitehead refers to "that element in perishing lives which is undying by reason of its expression of perfections proper to our finite natures" (AI 172).

## V

My third point of contrast between the standard version of Plato and Plotinus is the contrast of a Platonic account of the world either in terms of the divine Eros of the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* or the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* and Plotinus' insistence that the physical world is not the result of conscious design. On this point at least the standard interpretation does seem to be more true to the entire tendency of the *Dialogues* than Plotinus. Even if we hold that Plato realized that any attempt to speak of the origin of the universe must involve mythic language, even if we treat the accounts of the *Timaeus*, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* as myths which should not be read too literally, an underlying point seems to remain when all allowances for myth are taken into account. That point is that Plato does hold that the dynamic nature of the physical world in contradistinction to the eternal fixity of the realm of the Forms demands that any adequate account of the physical world be teleological. And that teleology be the result of conscious design. That this is the correct interpretation of the core philosophic content of the myths of the *Timaeus* and other middle dialogues is confirmed by Plato's account of the cosmos in the *Laws X*. There Plato seems not to be appealing to myth when he speaks of the order of the universe being due to the guidance of a Good Soul.

A rather literal reading of the Platonic text seems to have dominated middle platonic writers. In fact the middle Platonists even read the Platonic myths as literal metaphysical accounts and developed the concept of a "second God" who ordered the cosmos. Plotinus emphatically opposed this reading of Plato. Instead of a

Providence ordering the universe, he insisted on the doctrine of "untroubled causation." For Plotinus the appropriate model for creative activity is not that of a craftsman's purposive making something, but rather the model of contemplation. He dismisses the position that, "it is necessary that the intelligence which is in the All should have calculations and memories" as "a statement of men who assume that unintelligence is intelligence, and have come to the conclusion that to seek to be intelligent is the same thing as to be intelligent" (IV.4.12.2-6). He continues:

For what else could calculation be but the effort to find intelligence and reason which is true and attains to the truly existent? For the man who calculates is like one who is playing the lyre to acquire the art of lyre-playing or who is practising to acquire habitual proficiency, or in general like one who is learning in order to know. For the man who is calculating seeks to learn that which if someone already possesses, he is intelligent: so that intelligence is in one who has come to rest.... If then we are going to put the ruling principle of the universe into the class of learners, we should attribute to it calculations and perplexities and memories which are proper to one who compares the past with the present and the future. But if we are going to class it as a knower, we must consider that its knowing is in a repose which reached its term (IV.4.12.6-23).

Plotinus emphasizes the distinction between the universe as produced by contemplation (*theorein*) and the universe as produced by action (*poiein*):

And if anyone were to ask nature why it makes, if it cared to hear and answer the questioner it would say: "You ought not to ask but to understand in silence, you too, just as I am silent and not in the habit of talking. Understand what, then? That what comes into being is what I see in my silence, an object of contemplation, and that I, originating from this sort of contemplation have a contemplative nature. And my act of contemplation makes what it contemplates, as the geometers draw their figures while they contemplate. But I do not draw, but as I contemplate, the lines which bound bodies come to be as if they fell from my contemplation." (III.8.4.1-11)

Surely A. H. Armstrong is correct in his footnote to his translation of this passage: "...the intuitive spontaneity of the process here, as contrasted with the careful and deliberate mathematical planning

in Plato's symbolical description [in the *Timaeus*], brings out clearly an important difference in the mentality of the two philosophers."

The way that Plotinus avoids any reference to purpose or intention in his account of the origin of the physical world is vividly illustrated by the image of the house and the builder which was discussed in section 3 above. There we noted how Plotinus discussed the relation of the soul and the body in terms of the body's being a beautiful house which was taken care of by its builder (the soul) rather than the body's being a prison to which the soul is confined. Here we should note that in using his image of "a beautiful and richly various house" Plotinus carefully avoids any references to the house's being made by the builder. Instead of saying that someone built or made the house, Plotinus—in rather tortuous language—states that "something like a house came into being [*γενόμενος*]" (IV.3.9.29). Even when his image would naturally call for purposive language, Plotinus' insistence that the creation and governance of the universe does not involve intentional activity is so strong that he avoids even the appropriate language demanded by his image.

Whitehead differs sharply from Plotinus in his proposed correction of Plato's concept of a creator and orderer of the physical world. Unlike Plotinus, Whitehead is not troubled by the fact that Plato's Craftsman is not perfect. Despite his strictures on Plato's cosmology quoted earlier, it is precisely the Platonic Eros and Plato's vision of the Creator not as static perfection but as a Craftsman constantly shaping the world which appealed to Whitehead. Whitehead even is willing to allow the Demiurge to have an ideal vision which he attempts to elicit from the materials of the physical world. What Whitehead finds intolerable is Plato's occasional lapses in speaking of the creative activity in terms of will rather than in terms of persuasion and his dualism which separates God from the world. Although he emphatically rejects Plato's dualism of static Forms and ever-changing physical world, Whitehead still can find merit in Plato's idea of God urged to create by the vision of Beauty:

The religion of Plato is founded upon his conception of what a God can be, with gaze fixed upon forms of eternal beauty; and his sociology is derived from his conception of what man can be, in

virtue of a nature which for its full description requires themes applicable to the nature of gods. (AI 12)

In a similar fashion Whitehead returns repeatedly to the Platonic conception of a divine Eros as shaping the world. In the formal structure of *Process and Reality*, the Platonic Eros appears in the guise of "subjective aim"; but in the narrative structure of *Adventures of Ideas* it is undisguised:

But we have to ask whether nature does not contain within itself a tendency to be in tune, an Eros urging towards perfection (AI 251).

We must conceive the Divine Eros as the active entertainment of all ideals, with the urge to their finite realization, each in due season. Thus a process must be inherent in God's nature, whereby his infinity is acquiring realization (AI 277).

His sharpest criticisms are reserved for the concept of a "static God" whose only activity can be that of a Divine Will imposed on a radically distinct world.

The vicious separation of the flux from the permanent leads to the concept of an entirely static God, with eminent reality, in relation to an entirely fluent world, with deficient reality. But if the opposites, static and fluent, have once been so explained as separately to characterize diverse actualities, the interplay between the thing which is static and the things which are fluent involves contradiction at every step in its explanation. Such philosophies must include the notion of 'illusion' as a fundamental principle—the notion of 'mere appearance.' This is the final platonic problem (PR 516).

There are significant differences between Whitehead's God who is ever becoming and the utterly transcendent One of Plotinus. These differences arise from the radical differences between the Classical vision of the world which is based on an essentialist science and as a result ultimately sees a fixed arrangement of possibilities in the physical world even though there is disagreement as to whether the possibilities are finite or infinite and Whitehead's process philosophy which attempts to take seriously the advances of twentieth-century science. But despite the differences between Whitehead's God and Plotinus' One they share two traits which sets them apart from Plato's Demiurge. Both are

intimately in the world. Whitehead's God is fully immanent and Plotinus' One is never apart from anything which flows from it. Further, both are in an important sense infinite and that infinity is precisely the ground of the creation of the world. Plotinus would disagree with Whitehead on the nature of the process by which God's infinity is realized but he surely would echo Whitehead's words: "Thus a process must be inherent in God's nature, whereby his infinity is acquiring realization (AI 277)."

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## Process and Eternity: Whitehead Contemplates Plotinus

Lewis S. Ford

Contemporary process thought diametrically opposes neo-Platonism on one fundamental point. For neo-Platonism, and for Greek thought generally, eternity is ontologically primary, time secondary. Process thought finds no way in which time can be derived from the eternal, particularly if this term "eternal" is disambiguated as meaning the atemporal or timeless, that which has no time, rather than the everlasting. (It is most surprising that the same term, "eternal" should come to mean both that which has no time and which has all time, but this is probably the result of identifying the Greek timeless deity with the everlasting God of the Bible, the One who was, and is, and is to be.)

Since process thought also opposes all forms of dualism, including the dualism of time and eternity resulting from conceiving them as having separate roots, the only possible alternative is that eternity should be derived from time. Is it so surprising that the timeless should be abstracted from time?

A complete derivation of the timeless from time, however, will require some modification of Whitehead's philosophy, particularly with respect to the primordial nature of God and the nature of eternal objects. In this regard Whitehead's philosophy represents a sort of halfway house, combining many traditional nontemporalist features with the temporalist dynamic which inspires a our endeavour to conceive of an all-inclusive temporalism. We propose to conceive time as including all being, creative power and transcendence.

Whitehead is generally considered a Platonist with respect to his forms or eternal objects. Unlike the actual entities they characterize, these forms are out of time. "The mountain [his example of actuality] endures. But when after ages it has been worn away, it has gone. If a replica arises, it is yet a new mountain.

A colour is eternal. It haunts time like a spirit. It comes and it goes. But where it comes, it is the same colour. It neither survives nor does it live. It appears when it is wanted. The mountain has to time and space a different relation from that which colour has" (SMW 86f). These eternal objects are like Plato's forms in being unchanging, impervious to the ravages of time. Yet where Plato tends to have a select few, though questioning this procedure in the *Parmenides*, Whitehead has forms for everything, thus thoroughly democratizing their domain.

During this period Whitehead made the strongest declaration of his Platonic affiliation:

if we had to render Plato's general point of view with the least changes made necessary by the intervening two thousand years of human experience in social organization, in aesthetic attainments, in science, and in religion, we should have to set about the construction of [his own] philosophy (PR 39).

Yet he later found it necessary to modify his position such that

the general Aristotelian principle is maintained that, apart from things that are actual, there is nothing—nothing either in fact or in efficacy (PR 40).

This emphatically applies to eternal objects as existing only in actual entities. From the systematic point of view, Whitehead is a moderate realist, an Aristotelian rather than a Platonist. Yet if we concentrate on the genesis of his theory, we find that he did hold, however implicitly, to the separate existence of eternal objects for a time. That time can be narrowly specified: from the revisions of *Science and the Modern World* until the insertion of the quotation above. Its early appearance in the printed text is somewhat misleading, for compositional analysis indicates that it was inserted after most of part II and the theory of concrescence in part III, including intellectual feelings, had been formulated.<sup>1</sup>

Whitehead did not always have [even immanent] "eternal objects." Speaking of *sensa*, he writes in a letter to Norman Kemp Smith dated January 24, 1924:

I should not call them 'eternal' because...I do not consider them as 'in time' in the primary sense of the phrase. I should call an unending event eternal (EWM 67).

The ambiguity of "eternity" as both timelessness and everlastingness is clearly present, for Whitehead initially understands eternity as everlastingness. Sometime during early 1924 he realized, however, that its other meaning, timelessness, could significantly improve his classification of objects.

In his earlier philosophy of nature he had distinguished between *sensa* or sense-objects, perceptual objects, scientific objects, and percipient objects. This is a somewhat ad hoc enumeration of various objects, which could be systematized according to their relation to spacetime. *Sensa* were, strictly speaking, outside time entirely, while all the rest persisted through time as enduring objects.

It is important to realize that when these *sensa* were introduced as eternal, as having an entirely different relation to time, they were conceived as purely immanent, as simply illustrating the surfaces of events. This is implicitly the Aristotelian doctrine of moderate realism. We do not see this if we read *Science and the Modern World* as a single interpretive whole, for the later chapter on "Abstraction" emphatically treats the eternal objects as transcendent. Nearly all books are conceived as interpretive wholes, but this book is an exception. There is a major shift between the first part delineating objects and infinitely divisible events, and the second part introducing actual occasions which cannot be further divided (EWM ch. 1).<sup>2</sup>

Eternal objects could be immanent in the early part, because even possibilities could be understood as illustrating future events. With the introduction of the temporal atomicity of actual occasions, the present differs ontologically from the future. Since the occasions are first atomized in the present, the future is devoid of occasions. There is nothing for the eternal objects representing future possibilities to be based on, so they are implicitly regarded as existing independently. Whitehead never comments on their mode of existence. In any case, he never claims that the eternal objects exist in a primary sense, from which the actual occasions may in some sense derive their existence.

Though it might seem an easy move, Whitehead resisted for quite some time the temptation to vest all forms in the mind of God. Apparently the realm of eternal objects (SMW) was felt to have its own unity and order, needing no explanation beyond itself. Yet the issue finally came to a head concerning unrealized eternal objects, a topic central to his theory of novelty, then expressed in the problematic doctrine of reversion. In the meantime Whitehead had become concerned with the role of togetherness, placing togetherness in concrescence, the process of actualization (PR 147f, 150, 189f). Thus when the relevance of forms unactualized in the world became the basic issue to be considered, Whitehead responded with the following reflection:

In what sense can unrealized abstract form be relevant? What is its basis of relevance? 'Relevance' must express some real fact of togetherness among forms. The ontological principle can be expressed as: All real togetherness is togetherness in the formal constitution of an actuality. So if there be a relevance of what in the temporal world is unrealized, the relevance must express a fact of togetherness in the formal constitution of a non-temporal actuality. (PR 32)

Heretofore Whitehead regarded the eternal objects to be ordered and interrelated by their respective relational essences (SMW 160-62). Now these purely formal relations were no longer deemed sufficient to bind the forms together in the absence of actuality. If there were no actual means of interconnecting them, then unactualized forms would have a very precarious hold on reality. There could be no novelty, for all new actualization makes use of forms hitherto unrealized. Whitehead now makes use of his emerging conception of concrescence as the growing together of the many past actualities into one, applying it to the problem of the multiplicity of the forms. Just as unrealized forms need togetherness, so do they all, and this can be achieved in a single act of primordial envisagement. Thus in a single "nontemporal concrescence" the multiplicity of eternal objects could be ordered and unified together.

I have called this "envisagement" or "conceptual realization" a "nontemporal concrescence" in order to underscore its affinities with ordinary temporal concrescences, which are finite unifications of causal influences growing together into concrete actualities. But Whitehead has become increasingly aware that present immediacy

can be identified with concreting, and pastness with the concrete determinateness of the concrecent product. If concrescence is thus intrinsically temporal, there could be no nontemporal concrescence. Also each concrescence instantiates creativity, while creativity as nonactual and temporal was earlier contrasted with God as the nontemporal actual entity (RM 88).<sup>3</sup>

By this reconception we may say that Whitehead moves from Plato to middle Platonism, locating the totality of the forms in the mind of God. The forms themselves, however, were uncreated (PR 257). Though he does not say so, we might consider the possibility that the eternal objects were limited to the individual essences. Then their togetherness could be effected by God's primordial envisagement, and the relational essences could be abstract expressions of this togetherness.

A Plotinian revision might intensify the scope of this nontemporal act to include not just the interrelation of the individual essences but their generation as well. After all, if the relational essences could be brought into being, why not the individual essences as well? This would avoid a glaring problem with the primordial envisagement, namely, the existence of a multiplicity of forms presupposed by, and hence "prior" to that nontemporal act. (It is difficult to see how this could be accomplished within the context of Whitehead's philosophy, however, for creativity always moves from the many to the one, not from the one to many [PR 21].)

The Plotinian revision would share with the primordial envisagement a common difficulty: if some eternal objects or other must be relevant to every conceivable set of circumstances, there will be hosts of utterly useless and utterly irrelevant forms, those which the world has simply passed by. To be sure, this need not be true for a Platonism recognizing only a restricted number of forms, or for divine omniscience already cognizant of the future in detail, but neither of these assumptions were available to Whitehead.

In any case, he opts for a nontemporal ordering of uncreated eternal objects. Yet his own ontological principle, if sufficiently generalized, requires that the nature of eternal objects be explained. The ontological principle places the reasons for things in actualities, either in terms of their process of coming into being, or in terms of their settled determinateness (PR 24). While the general Aristotelian principle, as a corollary to the ontological principle,



vests the reason for the existence of eternal objects in actualities, it does not account for their natures. Why are particular forms what they are? If there is reason for such natures, it must be located in some actuality.

Nontemporal generation dissociates the nature of eternal objects from their ingredience in the world. We could conceive of them as temporally created, however, insuring that they remain always relevant to the passage of nature. The paradoxical air of this claim can be mitigated by realizing that these are essentially "atemporal objects," objects which abstract from time, and in particular from their temporal origination. They merely "appear" to be atemporal because their temporal origination has been systematically ignored.<sup>4</sup> Yet with respect to the atemporal, there can be no difference between seeming and being. The eternal objects are abstractions from actual occasions, provided we can sufficiently account for novelty.<sup>5</sup>

Such a theory, however, runs into difficulties with respect to metaphysical principles. These cannot have a temporal origination, for there can be no occasions before which they were operative. Here we can have recourse to Robert C. Neville's theory of creation. Whatever is in any wise determinate, such as the metaphysical principles, requires determination. Since that from which they are determined must in the last resort be absolutely indeterminate, they must be created *ex nihilo*. This act, moreover, determines God as the creator of these principles.

Many process thinkers conceive the metaphysical principles to be the final basis of explanation, principles which God exemplifies. Yet this does not account for the determinateness of the principles themselves, particularly for a philosophy committed to finding all reasons in the actualities themselves, according to the ontological principle.

Previously Neville tended to argue that any set of first principles needed to be grounded in some transcendent unity, but since Whitehead's principles are interdependent, they already have unity. The present argument that whatever is determinate requires determination is more powerful, and has the added advantage of being warranted by the ontological principle.<sup>6</sup>

Thus in creating the metaphysical principles God creates the necessary features of the world and Godself as the creator of this world. But that need be all God that God determines timelessly.

Neville holds that God eternally creates all things, but from the perspective of process theism, whatever else that is determinable can be contingently determined. Timeless creation must determine what is atemporal, whether necessary or possible, but the temporal, contingent and concretely actual can be determined by temporal creation.

If God's creating were wholly to determine an event, then either the event's causal and self determination would be for nought, or the event would be determined twice over. It seems better to conceive timeless divine determination, past causation, and self-determination as all necessary determinants of the event, although none would be sufficient. If God's role is restricted to the determination of metaphysical principles, however, we are left with a very abstract deism. Yet God could be further characterized as the contingent, temporal provider of aims for temporal actualities. Should God determine their contingency any further, their freedom would be jeopardized. Should God not determine their contingency at all, either chaos or causal determinism would take over.

These aims include novel aims. Then novelty can ultimately come from God by means of the eternal objects which serve as these initial aims. We find it necessary to replace these eternal objects with "subjective forms," understood in a more restricted sense. Whitehead allows for the re-enactment of subjective form, which means they function as eternal objects or objective forms under certain circumstances. For me, subjective forms are never objective forms, for they cannot be isolated from the subjective activity in which they inhere. Thus the novelty is communicated to the occasion, which actualizes this possibility before it can be objectified.

In providing aims, including novel aims, appropriate to each situation, God is dynamically responsive to contingent occasions, God must be both personal and temporal. For Neville, however, God is eternal. He sees eternity as "both the ground and the fulfillment of the temporal," illustrating this with respect to Boethius' account of eternity as an endless life made whole and perfect in a single moment.<sup>7</sup> He adds this proviso: "A degenerate image or theory of eternity is that it is something by nature static and unchanging, such as a mathematical equation or a form; this is sometimes attributed to Plato but it really comes from modern confusions of space with eternity as the contrast term to time."

Whether degenerate or not, the basic sense of timelessness is form, for form can be divorced from the spatiotemporal rootedness of ordinary actuality. In modern philosophy form is understood as objective. Insofar as eternity is more than objective form, we submit, it can be understood in terms of time, provided we take into account time in its transcendent mode.

If the objective fundamentally contrasts with the subjective, then insofar as eternity is more than objective, it involves the subjective. The endless "life" of the Boethian eternity would then entail nontemporal subjectivity. The key question is whether subjectivity could possibly be nontemporal. The Boethian moment, if understood as a nontemporal instant, seems to squeeze out all the life, without which this eternal experience could not be. If subjectivity were inherently temporal, then timelessness could only be objective. Only degenerate eternities could then exist. This may not yet have become fully apparent at the time of Descartes, when the subject/object contrast was first clearly discerned, but it is evident in Whitehead's philosophy.

It is extraordinarily difficult to determine whether nontemporal subjectivity is possible. Aristotle conceived of an Unmoved Mover contemplating the forms. This model is not applicable for Plotinus' One, which may be considered to be beyond subjectivity and objectivity, but it is appropriate, with modifications, for the Mind: the one mind timelessly contemplates the many intelligibles. Intelligibles are not merely objective forms; the subject/object contrast may be a good way to conceive the one/many contrast within Mind. Yet does it warrant us in ascribing subjectivity to the Mind? Jewish and Christian piety, informed by the passionate personalism of the Biblical God, thought so, but did this have sufficient philosophical warrant?

Whitehead, starting with the assumption that God was nontemporal, found no good way to infer to God's subjectivity, until he adopted divine temporality as well as nontemporality.<sup>9</sup> As we have seen, while the nontemporal ordering of the eternal objects might be conceived as a concrescent unification on the order of the dynamic unifications of ordinary actual occasions, Whitehead never calls it a "nontemporal concrescence." Ever since he introduced temporal atomicity into his theory of events, the contrast between becoming, the coming into being of an actuality (its concrescence), and its resultant being, was deepened and emphasized as the heart

of his philosophical analysis. Since the resultant being of an actuality was the way it could be objectified, the becoming in contrast could be understood as subjectivity. This is the cause of his notorious panpsychism, better conceived as pansubjectivity. Every event is presently subjective in its becoming, in order to be objectively past in its being. The most generic meaning of the subject/object contrast is temporal, ontologically conceived.

If subjectivity is thus inherently presentness, it is also inherently temporal, and any nontemporal subjectivity becomes problematic. We may consider this in terms of subjectivity's objective correlate, personhood. God is naively portrayed in personal terms in the Bible. This may be evaded as anthropomorphism, or as unwarranted projection, or as expressing something deeply significant about God. This depends upon an ontological determination of the meaning of personhood. I take a person to be essentially a dynamic responsive center or source of value. A nontemporal being can be apparently responsive, but true responsiveness requires temporal existence. Hence we need to explore whether there can be any adequate temporal counterpart of eternity, insofar as it is more than formal objectivity.

This project seems all but impossible to achieve in the light of Neville's observation that "Process philosophy in Whitehead and Hartshorne, too, comes down to the view that only the present is real, that the past is gone and the future is not yet."<sup>10</sup> This may seem unduly restrictive, but it is affirmed by some Whiteheadians, such as Ivor Leclerc, who considers past occasions to be no longer actual, and Donald W. Sherburne, who argues that the snows of yesteryear are nowhere.<sup>11</sup> These philosophers presuppose a univocal meaning for actuality as acting, or more precisely, as the activity of concrescing, the process of actualization. Yet Whitehead himself stubbornly maintained the actuality of past actual occasions.

This is obscured for us by his talk of "perishing." In neither type of perishing, however, does the past perish. In one mode the subjective immediacy of the present perishes, thereby transforming the activity of present unification into the unity and being of the past (PR 60, 81f; cf EWM 194-96). In the other mode the relatedness of the past to the present fades by the interposition of added occasions between any given past and the ongoing present (PR 340). Such fading is overcome by God's perfect prehension of

the past, thereby guaranteeing that every element of the past is preserved in an active concrescence.

If past occasions are still actual, then a case can be made for thinking of the future as having some actuality as well. For Whitehead, at least implicitly, actuality can have diverse meanings based on temporal modality. As present, actuality is active becoming, as past it is concrete determinateness. Perhaps as future actuality has as yet another meaning, as long as there is only one kind of actuality per temporal mode to avoid the problems of dualism, so evident in Descartes' philosophy. I propose that we conceive of future actuality as the infinite instantiation of creativity, as the infinite divine activity.<sup>12</sup>

We usually conceive the future in terms of possibility (our present projections upon a purely passive future), or in terms of "future actuality," where actuality is implicitly understood in terms of concrete determinateness. In that sense we describe what will be the case at some later date, i.e. what will have become determinately concrete then. Then, of course, it will no longer be future but past. For on the usual view only the present and the past can be actual. The future can also be actual as the source for the creativity of present occasions. The creative advance marks the diversification of future creativity to empower the activity of present occasions.

Neville describes the shifting character of the future, "each shift occasioned in the temporal order by some antecedent present decision affecting the future."<sup>13</sup> These are the conditions which the present lays down on future, as Whitehead describes them (AI ch. 12). In addition, to my mind, there is the subjective reception of the past coupled with the divine evaluative responses which guide our present actualizations, particularly with respect to novelty.

Consider Neville's account of Plotinus: "Eternity is the response of soul in its infinite completeness. It contains time within it as a potential, but not as actually following out the sequence of moments."<sup>14</sup> For process thought divine future experience is not perfect according to the perfection of being, which requires God to know the future as if it were already as determinate as the past. However, it contains the fullness of the past as it becomes past, and the unbounded reaches of the future. It is not immutable, for it enjoys the perfection of becoming, being constantly open to further enrichment. It does notprehend (know) the thin wedge of the

present creative advance, for there is (as yet) nothing determinate to know.

Apart from this thin wedge, the divine future concrescence meets all the requirements of the Boethian eternity: an endless life whole and perfect in a single moment. We ordinarily take "moment" to be a fleetingly brief temporal period, and so it is in the case of ordinary actual occasions, which must "perish" in order to be objectified as causally efficacious in the world. Yet God's "moment" never perishes, being a single everlasting act of unification, constantly experiencing and integrating those experiences within the divine life.<sup>15</sup>

Suppose, on the contrary, that God of process theism were to experience the present as well. It would then contain all time in the sense of prehending all past and present occasions from the "standpoint" of the entire region of the future. This completeness would be achieved at the expense of the present's indeterminacy of becoming. Then there would be no present becoming, no finite subjectivity, creativeness, or self-power. Instead of God encompassing all becoming as well as prehending all being, God bequeaths the power of creative becoming to the present, and then reaps the results. God forgocs this kind of completeness in order to foster finite creativity, which requires the transition from an initial indeterminacy to determinate prehensibility.

This future contains the present within it as potential, which is actualized as present moments of becoming, resulting in past being. The pluralization of time first takes place in present atomization, so that God experiences the future as one single whole, which lacks only immutability to fit classical understandings of eternity.

Philosophical theists, enamored of immutability, tend to identify God with the One. Atsushi Sumi, in his essay for this volume, makes a very persuasive case that "creativity" ought to be correlated with the One as its more pluralistic and immanentistic counterpart. Then God could be understood as the "basic Psyche" (AI 147) combining both primordial Mind with the temporal dynamism of Soul. Classical theists have limited God to the One, or Mind, or both, but process theists would be inclined to assign all three hypostases, in their non-particularized form, to God.

The One is beyond being. In Whitehead's terms, this means: what is beyond determinate being. Present concrescing occasions are beyond the being they produce, but their multiplicity excludes

them from comparison with the One. Future activity is not so divided. The One is fecund. By process it leads to Mind, to Soul, and to totality of the World. Future activity is likewise fecund, providing the creativity and aim making it possible for the creature occasions to create themselves, thereby furnishing the universe.

One of the most striking parallels concerns Plotinus' account of the descent of the soul. The soul is originally aspatial, yet in its descent acquires a spatial location.<sup>16</sup> The soul as the incipient self may be considered in Whiteheadian terms as the initial subjective aim derived from God, which the occasion in its self-creation makes into an actuality. While it is a disputed point whether the process of actualization ought to be considered temporal or not,<sup>17</sup> the actuality itself is in ordinary, physical time.

While the structure is the same, the evaluation of the process of making space is opposite. For Plotinus, it is a descent, a dispersal of the soul into matter and confusion; for Whitehead it is a creative achievement, ultimately enriching God.

Here it is instructive to consider the four stages outlining the relation between God and the world in a later neoplatonic thinker, John Scotus Erigena. The first and fourth stages express God's procession forth in creating the world, and the return of all things into God at the end. Yet it is important to note that the return contains precisely the same as its procession. Otherwise it would be impossible for God to be perfect, complete, containing all things from the beginning. Were the return to contain more, it would be a superfluous addition undercutting the eternal completeness of God. Yet the pointlessness of such a process and return is awesome.

Corresponding to the fourth phase would be Whitehead's concept of the consequent nature of God, the way God experiences and is enriched by the actualizations of the world. Classical theism conceived of God as perfect being, complete in itself, and tolerating no additions. Process theism, on the other hand, conceives of God as perfect becoming, for whom enrichment is always possible.<sup>18</sup>

The four phases are:

1. *That which is uncreated and creates.* This is God as creating, which best corresponds to Neville's nontemporal creation. Both thinkers regard God apart from creation to be absolutely indeterminate, a *Nihil*. Insofar as knowing (prehending) means

knowing something determinate, God apart from creation could be said not to be able to know Godself for both thinkers.

For Whitehead God is not so much uncreated as self-created, establishing the principles God exemplifies (PR 344). God does not totally create any actuality, certainly not *ex nihilo*, but God is a necessary yet partial factor in the creation of every occasion by providing its initial subjective aim, the specific possibility inspiring the occasion's actualization.

2. *That which is created and creates.* Erigena meant the Christ conceived as the logos, but for Whitehead it takes on added significance in terms of the actual occasions, having received their aims from God (and in that sense being created), can actualize themselves in a process of concrescence which is their self-creation. They achieve more than they receive, and this achievement enriches God.

3. *That which is created and does not create.* The world, which is created by God for Erigena, and by God and finite concrescences for Whitehead.

4. *That which is not created and does not create.* The return of all things into the *Nihil* for Erigena, but the enrichment of God's consequent nature for Whitehead.

If we return now to the contrast between Neville and process thought, we see that he argues that "the past, present, and future modes of time are not temporally related: they are eternally related."<sup>19</sup> "The only way by which temporally distinct things can be together in such a way as to be temporally related is by being created together *ex nihilo*."<sup>20</sup> There need not have been three temporal modes, for everything could have been determined nontemporally, or in a gradual fashion requiring solely a future creator and past creatures. But whatever arrangement obtains, it must be nontemporally determined, in order to apply to all moments of time whatever."

Neville continues from the last quotation:

The creative act is eternal and has as its end product the temporal order which is also eternal in the sense explained. Therefore, I would say, in

accord with Plotinus, that the creating of the temporal order is ■ vast eternal life, fully dynamic as containing all dateable things in all their temporal modes and as in constant dynamic shifting. This is life in the fullest sense.<sup>22</sup>

This follows from Neville's view that the nontemporal act creates everything, not just the nontemporal. It excludes the temporal from creating the temporal. The term, "temporal order," is wildly ambiguous. Insofar as it means the togetherness of the temporal modes, it is most plausibly understood as nontemporally determined. Insofar as it means the whole temporal adventure containing all concrete temporal instances, much must be granted to finite acts of self-creation. Yet as a description of divine life, provided that life includes what is received from the world as well as what God supplies, it applies equally well to Whitehead's conception of God.

Eternity transcends time. Does this mean that time is derived from eternity? The process theist finds this to be implausible, and tries to derive eternity from time. This can be done provided eternity means strict timelessness. Much analysis of eternity permits this, for this is the best way to protect God's changelessness. Change requires the difference between two successive moments, but there can be no such difference if there is no temporal succession. Other accounts of eternity seem to relax this requirement of strict timelessness. If so, they can be understood in terms of the temporality of the future. The future has the indeterminacy, the fecundity and the power of eternity, yet without the suggestion of timelessness.

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## REFERENCES

(except for EWM and MF, all books are by Alfred North Whitehead)

AI = *Adventures of Ideas* (1933). New York: The Free Press, 1967.

EWM = Lewis S. Ford, *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics*, 1925–1929. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

MF = *Metaphysics as Foundation. Essays in Honor of Ivor Leclerc*, eds. Paul A. Bogaard and Gordon Treash (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993.)

PR = *Process and Reality* (1929). New York: The Free Press, 1978.

RM = *Religion in the Making* (1926). New York: Meridian, 1974

SMW = *Science and the Modern World* (1925). New York: The Free Press, 1967.

## NOTES

1. Though these passages are only a page apart, they appear to come from different strata of Whitehead's composition. According to the analysis of EWM, PR 39 is part of the original text of II.IC, while PR 40 forms part of an insertion from G, introduced after the basic part of parts II (c) and III (DEFH) were written. On PR 40, see also MF 131–36.
2. Or see "Whitehead's First Metaphysical Synthesis," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 17/3 (September, 1977), 251–64.
3. The nature of nontemporal concrescence was explored in "The Non-Temporality of Whitehead's God," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 13/3 (September, 1973), 347–76, but this needs some correction. It ascribes subjectivity to the nontemporal concrescence which Whitehead implicitly rejects, and its notion of ■ nontemporal decision is a difficult one, best replaced by Neville's nontemporal determination. (The difference is that decision presupposes prior alternatives, and determination does not.)
4. A "real" eternal object differs from a merely "apparent" one in that it was available for temporal instantiation before the apparent one emerged, while the apparent one was not. Yet neither was instantiated in fact earlier, for had it been, the apparent one would simply have emerged earlier.
5. The extension of the ontological principle to embrace the natures of eternal objects, as well as their temporal creation, is discussed in my essay on "The Creation of 'Eternal' Objects," *The Modern Schoolman* 71/3 (March 1994),

- 191–222, esp. 209f 14.
6. This argument is given in his *A Theology Primer* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1991), the third chapter.
7. Neville, "Neoplatonism In Contemporary Christian Spirituality," *Neoplatonism and Contemporary Thought: Part Two*, p. 370.
8. *Ibid.* p. 370.
9. See my essay on "The Riddle of Religion in the Making," *Process Studies* 22/1 (Spring 1993), 42–50.
10. Neville, "Neoplatonism In Contemporary Christian Spirituality," *Part Two*, p. 371.
11. Donald W. Sherburne, "Mais Ou Sont Les Neiges D'Antan?," MF 98–100.
12. See my essay, "The Modes of Actuality," *The Modern Schoolman* 67/4 (May, 1990), 275–83.
13. Neville, "Neoplatonism In Contemporary Christian Spirituality," *Part Two*, p. 376.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 374.
15. See my essay on "Boethius and Whitehead on Time and Eternity," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 8/1 (March, 1968), p. 38–67.
16. See the perceptive essay by Paulos Mar Gregorios, "Does Neoplatonism have Anything to say to Post-Modern Spirituality?" in this volume.
17. See my essay on "Can Whitehead's God be Rescued from Process Theism?" pp. 19–39 in James F. Harris, ed., *Logic, God, and Metaphysics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992).
18. See my essay on "Process and Thomist Views Concerning Divine Perfection," pp. 115–129 in *The Universe as Journey: Conversations with Norris Clarke, S.J.*, ed. Gerald A. McCool, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988.)
19. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
20. Neville's Essay "Neoplatonism in Contemporary Christian Spirituality," *Part Two*, p. 377.
21. We will ignore here another alternative, the possibility of a first moment of temporal actualization, which could then determine the temporal structure of all succeeding moments.
22. Neville's Essay "Neoplatonism in Contemporary Christian Spirituality," *Part Two*, pp. 377ff.

## The Psyche, the Forms, and the Creative One: Toward Reconstruction of Neoplatonic Metaphysics

Atsushi Sumi

An attempt to restore Neoplatonism, especially Plotinus' metaphysics, probably sounds incurably anachronistic. While his exquisite depictions of mystic and religious experiences still provide some devout people of today with fresh jolt, his grandiose system of metaphysics seems even to them to take no firm root in the intellectual climate of our age. Indeed the majority of today's students of Neoplatonism believe that its analyses of theological and psychological concepts have more to offer and that all present appearances point in the direction toward the burial of its metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> This trend precisely points to the contemporary relevance of Neoplatonism that, according to Wallis, its empirical basis "offers an antidote to the view, widespread among modern Anglo-Saxon philosophers, that philosophy must accord with the dictates of 'common sense.'"<sup>2</sup> His remark indeed appears to be moderate, but I cannot but raise a rather basic question. Do *all* present appearances really lead to the burial of Neoplatonic metaphysics, even though it is consistently connected with the Neoplatonic analyses of psychological notions? Can there be any trend toward reconstruction of Neoplatonic metaphysics? Hence the main purpose of this paper is to explore the possibility of revitalizing Neoplatonic metaphysics as the foundation of a viable *Weltanschauung* in our age. First of all, we need to find an initial step to this grand undertaking. The initial step will drive us to more specific problems to be discussed in this paper.

In *Adventures of Ideas* Whitehead stresses the modern relevance of several notions in Plato's later writings. His later thought circles round the interweaving of seven main notions: the Ideas, the

Physical Elements, the Psyche, the Eros, the Harmony, the Mathematical Relations, and the Receptacle.<sup>3</sup> Whitehead remarks that they are "as important for us now, as they were then at the dawn of the modern world" (AI 147). Two aspects of them are briefly mentioned. In the first place, we can only conceive a complete fact in terms of these notions, concerning the nature of reality, which connect philosophy and science (AI 146, 158). The possibility of connecting them depends upon the primary concern of metaphysics, the discovery of the general principles under which specific principles of science should fall.<sup>4</sup> Precisely as metaphysical principles, the Platonic notions are "philosophic, and in the narrow sense not scientific" and "suggest no detailed observation" (AI 151). In the second place, all philosophy is an endeavor to express a coherent system interweaving the Platonic notions with some modification (AI 158, 275). This point is admittedly applicable to Neoplatonism, because some of the seven notions—the Forms, the Psyche, the Eros, and the Receptacle—are interwoven into the frame of its metaphysics.<sup>5</sup> Whitehead's view of the Platonic notions in *Adventures of Ideas* certainly opens up a path to reconstruction of Neoplatonic metaphysics and therefore should be treated as the initial step in our inquiry. Thus our basic strategy of reconstruction is to conceive a coherent system of these notions. Moreover, the Neoplatonic metaphysics to be reconstructed is expected not only to connect science and philosophy, but to reconcile science and religion.<sup>6</sup>

Whitehead maintains that his own philosophy of organism in *Process and Reality* renders "Plato's general point of view with the least changes made necessary by the intervening two thousand years of experience" (PR 39/63). According to him, "[all] modern philosophy hinges round the difficulty of describing the world in terms of subject and predicate, substance and quality, particular and universal" (PR 49/78). To avoid the pitfalls disclosed by modern philosophy, he says, we must be brought back to "some restatement of Platonic realism" (PR 50/79).

The main problem of this paper is as follows. How can we reconstruct Neoplatonic metaphysics with some necessary modifications, by developing Whitehead's view of the Platonic notions, so that it serves as a solid foundation of a viable view of the world? This problem takes shape with the following three problems. The first problem is why such notions like the Psyche,

the Forms, and the Receptacle are still important for us today. Here Whitehead's thoroughgoing criticism of scientific materialism in *Science and Modern World* is reviewed, and his interpretation of the Platonic notions in *Adventures of Ideas* is analyzed in light of this criticism. The Platonic notions need to be unified into a coherent system. This systematization drives us to the problem concerning the way of interweaving two key notions, the Psyche and the Forms. The second problem is hence what principle their interweaving must satisfy. Moreover, we will discuss whether or not this principle can be consistent with Neoplatonic metaphysics of antiquity. For this inquiry, the relevant passages in *Adventures of Ideas* will be compared with the doctrine of the conceptual realization of eternal objects in the primordial nature of God in *Process and Reality*. The final problem is how the complex thus interwoven of the Psyche and the Forms must be modified for a satisfactory interpretation of our experience of creative advance of the universe toward novelty. For this inquiry, again, we need to refer to Whitehead's doctrine of the realization of an infinite and unordered multiplicity of eternal objects in the primordial nature of God in *Process and Reality*. In addition, we will consider two problems concerning the Neoplatonic One that does not fall under the seven Platonic notions. First, on this modification, are there still some exigencies to posit the Neoplatonic One? Second, if there are, what conception of the One is really compatible with the complex of the Psyche and the Forms? In short, an analysis of the relevant passages from the ninth chapter of *Adventures of Ideas*, "Science and Philosophy," constitutes the basic method in this paper. To develop the possibility of reconstructing Neoplatonic metaphysics, furthermore, we must clarify the philosophical concerns and merits of Whitehead's own philosophy of organism and exploit rich suggestions from it, after the counterparts of the Platonic notions in discussion are identified. These suggestions surely indicate necessary modifications for the metaphysics to be reconstructed.

### I. The Delineation of the Neoplatonic Metaphysics to Be Reconstructed

Starting from the seven Platonic notions mentioned in *Adventures of Ideas*, our attempt to develop the possibility of reconstructing Neoplatonic metaphysics first encounters a question why these notions are still "important for us now." By answering this question we can delineate the general character of the metaphysics to be reconstructed. To understand contemporary relevance of the Platonic notions we should not overlook the sets of problems and issues which occupied Whitehead in his later period.

#### 1. Whitehead's Criticism of Simple Location and Substance-Quality Metaphysics

Whitehead regards the doctrine of simple location and the substance-quality metaphysics as two fundamental assumptions which underlie the whole philosophy of nature during the modern period (SMW 48-55). In the following we may briefly review his criticism of them.

Described by the fundamental notions, matter, space, and time (SMW 142),<sup>7</sup> the ultimate fact in the scheme of Newtonian physics is nothing else than a configuration of material particles at a durationless instant of time. Such an ultimate fact has the character of what Whitehead calls "simple location"; material can be said to be *here* in space-time, "in a perfectly definite sense which does not require for its explanation any reference to other regions of space-time" (SMW 49).<sup>8</sup> Since the matter in question is sufficiently describable without any reference to other portions of matter and to past or future, the character of simple location involves the denial of internal relations.<sup>9</sup> Matter in the Newtonian scheme is in itself "senseless, valueless, purposeless" (SMW 17).<sup>10</sup> This assumption of inactive matter having the character of simple location and following a fixed routine imposed by external relations is termed "scientific materialism" (SMW 17) or "materialistic mechanism" (SMW 50).

Modern physics abandons the doctrine of simple location, entirely unsuited to the scientific situation of today (SMW 17; AI 157-158). It is inconsistent with the notions of velocity and momentum because of its rejection of internal relations (MT 145-146). Whitehead does not consent to Bergson's view that

simple location is a vice necessary to the intellectual apprehension of nature. It is rather an error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete, an example of what he calls "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (SMW 50-51).<sup>11</sup> Accordingly his criticism of simple location does not point toward anti-intellectualism. This point must not be overlooked insofar as his criticism brings us back to "a fundamental Platonic doctrine" (AI 157-158).

Another assumption is the two correlative categories of substance and quality: "the final metaphysical fact is always to be expressed as a quality inhering in a substance" (PR 157-158/239). The substance-quality metaphysics has entrenched itself in Aristotelian logic which exhibits the formal structure of everyday usage of language in the subject-predicate form of proposition, so that there is a sound pragmatic defense for its employment in language.<sup>12</sup> Linked with simple location (SMW 52-53), the substance-quality metaphysics refuses internal relations among physical things (PR 50/79-80). When the metaphysics invokes the Lockian distinction between primary and secondary qualities, nature as such, deprived of secondary qualities, is "a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colorless; merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly" (SMW 54).

Christian aptly summarizes Whitehead's criticism of the substance-quality metaphysics.<sup>13</sup> There are two metaphysically false elements in traditional interpretations of substance. One is the conception of a static and vacuous substratum or an unchanging subject of change; the physical substances are sheer facts, devoid of all intrinsic values, so that their generation, endurance, and corruption cannot be explained at all (FR 24).<sup>14</sup> Another element is the notion that substances exist in isolation, completely independent of each other. Refusing internal relations (AI 133), a doctrine of the disjunction of primary substances renders an explanation of change impossible. On the substance-quality metaphysics, no sufficient explanation is possible of the interconnectedness of things which is evident and pervasive in our experience.<sup>15</sup> Hence substance and quality are another instance of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness (SMW 52). Whitehead's treatment of substance as a whole, however, does not amount to a total rejection of it. It is "the notion of an actual entity as the unchanging subject of change" (PR 29/43) that is viewed as sheer error to be abandoned in his philosophy of organism.<sup>16</sup> In the



subsequent discussion, the first and the second elements are respectively called "the static fallacy" and "the isolation fallacy" for brevity.<sup>17</sup>

The possibility of reconstructing Neoplatonic metaphysics is exactly based on the possibility of the Platonic notions to replace the basic concepts of the classical Newtonian scheme. From this viewpoint the question why the Platonic notions are important for us now must be considered. Before examining their contemporary relevance, we may sketch the fundamental features of the world view based on the metaphysics to be reconstructed. In the world view which is to replace scientific materialism,

[n]ature is a theater for the interrelations of activities. All things change, the activities and their interrelations (MT 140).

Thus the new world view has two basic features. First, it aims at avoiding the static fallacy by replacing senseless, valueless, and lifeless matter by activity and process (MT 140).<sup>18</sup> Second, the new world view restores internal relations among real things to eschew the isolation fallacy.<sup>19</sup> In the following, we shall examine whether or not the Platonic notions—especially the Psyche, the Forms, and the Receptacle—can serve as the fundamental notions of the world view to be expected.

## 2. The Psyche as the Self-Moving Cause of Change

The basic notion in our metaphysics is activity and process. The notion of activity involves a physical side and a mental one; the latter is the Psyche (AI 275). Whitehead focuses attention on two aspects of the Psyche. In the first place, the Psyche's active grasp of the Forms conditions the universe. Being entertained in the Psyche, the Forms obtain efficiency (AI 147). The entertainment of the Forms is intrinsically associated with an inward ferment, an activity of subjective feeling, and an appetition which melts into action. This is the Eros, the urge toward ideal perfection (AI 148, 275). In the second place, the Platonic Psyche is contrasted with the Aristotelian self-identically enduring substance. Without the Psyche and the Eros, we should obtain a static world (AI 275-276).

The notion of the Psyche in the second aspect avoids the static fallacy. It is obvious that Plato's definition of the soul as the self-mover or the cause of all change and motion,<sup>20</sup> accepted also by

Plotinus,<sup>21</sup> is exploited for the avoidance. As Plato views the physical universe as "a sort of moving process of becoming" (*Sophist* 246c),<sup>22</sup> and Plotinus holds such a dynamic conception of nature that everything is endowed with contemplative force,<sup>23</sup> nature in our metaphysics is entirely permeated by the Psyche and has the power of contemplation, replacing the materialists' view of "senseless" matter.

The notion of the Psyche appeals to the viewpoint of modern science "expressed in terms of energy, activity, and the vibratory differentiations of space-time" (MT 137-138).<sup>24</sup> In modern science, the notion of the substratum composed of self-identically enduring bits of matter has been abandoned, because of the identification of matter with energy which is sheer activity. "The soul entertaining ideas" as the mental side of actuality would be synonymous with "an underlying eternal energy in whose nature there stands an envisagement of the realm of all eternal objects" (SMW 105). Whitehead regards the notion of physical energy as "an abstraction from the complex energy, emotional and purposeful, inherent in the subjective form of the final synthesis in which each occasion completes itself" (AI 186). Following this suggestion, we can consider physical energy to be an abstraction from the Psyche's self-motion guided by the urge toward ideal perfection or the Eros. The business imposed upon our metaphysics is to describe more concrete facts, of the Psyche and the Eros, from which the abstraction is derivable.

How can the Psyche meet the isolation fallacy? Here we may invoke Plotinus' doctrine of cosmic sympathy. The organic unity of the universe for him is characterized by sympathy, without which individual parts of the cosmos "would fall into atomistic isolation."<sup>25</sup> In virtue of this organic unity, those parts "encounter each other (πρὸς ἀλλήλα συνιόντα)" (IV 4 [28], 32, 34),<sup>26</sup> being internally related to one another. Plotinus' theory of cosmic sympathy is lead by his analysis of Plato's conception of the universe as a single living being in *Timaeus* 30d-31a, and the analysis results in the ascription of sympathy to the operation of the cosmic soul (32, 4-22).<sup>27</sup> He further applies sympathy to an account of experience; sensation is grounded in the sympathetic unity of the cosmos (IV 5 [29], 3, 18-20).<sup>28</sup> This theory is akin to Whitehead's view that a fact of perception calls for internal relatedness in which one entity has an effect on another (PR 56/88-89, 145/219-220).

Plotinus even appeals to sympathy in order to interpret comprehensively various mysterious phenomena.<sup>29</sup> Although it may seem to Whitehead and his followers to be immature, the Plotinian theory of sympathy has some possibility of coping with the isolation fallacy. To develop this possibility, our metaphysics must patiently work out several problems. In the first place, temporality must be taken seriously for more strict formulation of the notion of sympathy, so that the notion becomes viable within our view of the universe as incessant process. In the second place, our metaphysics must give a detailed account of sympathy among souls, which Plotinus did not fully unfold (IV 3 [27]; 8,1-3; IV 9 [8], 3,1-6), in order to treat adequately, for example, the problem of other minds.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. The Forms as Pure Possibilities

Whereas Whitehead restores the Platonic Forms as eternal objects in his systematic thought,<sup>31</sup> his account of the role of the Forms in *Adventures of Ideas* is quite brief; the connection and the disconnection among the Forms, as discussed in the *Sophist*, determine compatibility and incompatibility for their joint exemplification (AI 147, 277).<sup>32</sup> Hence we are compelled to develop this account with recourse to other works.

The relevance of the Forms to our age is evinced by the doctrine of evolution ascribed to the nineteenth century. On the materialistic theory relying on external relations between portions of matter, evolution cannot be adequately explained (SMW 107). The doctrine of evolution calls for "a conception of organism as fundamental for nature" and "an underlying activity...expressing itself in individual embodiments, and evolving in achievements of organism" (SMW 107). The latter, of course, has something to do with the Psyche as the self-moving source of activity, while the former appeals to the Forms. Whitehead supposes that "non-materialistic philosophy of nature will identify a primary organism as being the emergence of some particular pattern" (SMW 103). On the general principle that "in a new environment there is an evolution of the old entities into new forms" (SMW 107), the organism either purposefully reiterates an old pattern or selects a new one. Here the role of the Eros can be acknowledged, too. The organism is "a unit of emergent value, a real fusion of the characters of eternal objects, emerging for its own sake" (SMW 107). The evolutionary process is hence viewed as the theater of the embodiment of patterns, and this view dismisses

the materialistic conception of nature as valueless and purposeless.<sup>33</sup> In addition, "the emergence of novel organisms" certainly requires the Forms as timeless possibilities. Nothing novel comes to being out of nowhere; something novel must be "given" as an unrealized potentiality (PR 45-46/72, 164/249). Without unrealized possibilities, we must obtain "a static monistic universe" (PR 46/72). The possibility unrealized in the temporal realm, if it is not given out of nowhere, must be atemporal or eternal.<sup>34</sup> This insight, which was not entertained by ancient Platonists, must be fully exploited in our reconstructive undertaking. In a word, "eternal things are the elements required for the very being of the process" (SMW 108).

In Whitehead's own system eternal objects serve as pure potentials for actualities. The terse account of the Forms in *Adventures of Ideas* can be seen in terms of their status as potentials for becoming. Each Form has not only its own unique individual essence, but a relational essence which indicates its reference to other Forms and thereby determines how it is possible for the Form to be instantiated in the process of becoming (SMW 159-160). The Forms thus interconnected constitute such a realm of possibility that "is disclosed by all the untrue propositions which can be predicated significantly of" a physical event (SMW 158). (Whether or not the realm of Forms should be conceived to be intrinsically ordered will be discussed later.) Therefore the physical realization of a possibility in the event exactly means the selection and limitation of that possibility for its own sake, excluding all other possibilities. The outcome of this limitation is value, so that "the definite finite entity is the selected mode which is the shaping of attainment" of value, which amounts to the intrinsic reality of that entity (SMW 93-94). The conception of organism as "a unit of emergent value" is thus explicated by the role of the Forms as possibilities for becoming.

Several interpreters, we may note, hold that Whitehead's notion of the Forms as possibilities represents his criticism of Plato's notion of them as a kind of self-sustaining actuality.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, the introduction of the Forms is able to replace the basic scheme of the substance-quality metaphysics. The Aristotelian substance or self-identically enduring entity is dissolved to some retention or reiteration of an emergent particular pattern derived from the Forms (SMW 104, 108, 119-120, 152).

The same dissolution is fully achieved in the passage of the *Timaeus* dealing with the Receptacle; Plato there urges us to conceive the universe, not as a domain of self-subsisting things, but as a moving pattern of recurring characteristics (48e-52d) or images of the Forms.<sup>36</sup> For the dissolution to be successful, the so-called substantial or substantival Forms must be on the same footing as the qualitative or adjectival ones in the proposed inventory of the Forms.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. The Receptacle as the Matrix of Interconnectedness

The Receptacle in Plato's *Timaeus* is that in which images of the Forms appear to arise and pass away. The Whiteheadian analogue to it, the metaphysical continuum of extension, receives an actuality, and each actuality atomizes it and occupies its region (PR 67/104). Therefore that in which eternal objects have ingression is not the metaphysical continuum of extension as such, but an actual occasion.<sup>38</sup> In *Adventures of Ideas* the Receptacle is considered mainly from such a point of view (AI 134).

Whitehead remarks on the relevance of the Receptacle to modern physics. Modern mathematical physicists do not believe that any mathematical formulae which apply to the happenings in space-time can be derived from a mere notion of space-time. Space-time in itself is bare of all forms. Conceived in abstraction from such mathematical formulae, therefore, the space-time of modern mathematical physics is "almost exactly Plato's Receptacle" devoid of all forms (AI 150).

The significance of the Receptacle is seen primarily in relation to the isolation fallacy. Imposing internal relations on all that happens, the Receptacle is the medium of intercommunication (AI 134).<sup>39</sup> Although such a role can be read nowhere in the *Timaeus*, he appears to elicit it from Plato's designation of the Receptacle as "the foster-mother of all becoming" (49a).<sup>40</sup> In our metaphysics, it is immanent characters or copies of the Forms that are reflected in the Receptacle. The characters are not ultimate actualities but actualities in a derivative sense that they are physically realized by virtue of an actuality or a Psyche. With Plotinus, we may call them "that which is in actuality (τὸ ἐνεργεῖν)" rather than actuality (II 5 [25], 2, 26-27).<sup>41</sup> Our metaphysics is thus expected to take on itself the difficult problem of explaining interconnectedness between those which are in actuality, rather than ultimate

actualities, in terms of the unity ascribed to the Receptacle, for solving the isolation fallacy.

#### 5. The Form and the Receptacle: The Logic of "Paradigmatism"

In the last subsection we never felt reluctant to accept the Platonic conception of becoming as the realm of images of the Forms. On the contrary, Whitehead commits himself to a realistic view of becoming and refuses the Platonic conception as an unfortunate result for both cosmology and theology (AI 167-168; PR 346-347/ 526).<sup>42</sup> In this respect, our position diverges from his thought and subscribes to the Platonic conception termed "Paradigmatism."

In the subsection on the Forms, it was mentioned that the dissolution of the substance-quality metaphysics was achieved in the *Timaeus* passage dealing with the Receptacle. The significance of this dissolution is cogently explained by Norio Fujisawa.<sup>43</sup> As the basis of the description of the physical world, the distinction between the Form and the sensible, with the notion of the former being the paradigm of which the latter is likeness, is placed in the outset of the discourse (27d-29c). In the passage dealing with the Receptacle (48e-52d), the physical world is viewed as a moving pattern of recurring characteristics rather than a realm of self-subsisting things, and the locution employing "this thing" as its subject is rejected for a description of phenomena. The principle of the causal theory of participation in the Form in the middle dialogues cannot do away with "this thing (x)" as its subject: "This thing (x) is beautiful (F), because it participates in the Beauty itself (Φ)."<sup>44</sup> In the recommended way of describing phenomena, therefore, "This (x) is beautiful (F)" in everyday language is rendered to the locution "In this part of the Receptacle the Form of Beauty (Φ) is imaged (F)," or "An image (F) of the Form of Beauty (Φ) has now come into this part of the Receptacle." By means of paradeigmatism, phenomena are described solely in terms of F and Φ, without referring to X.<sup>45</sup> The lines of thought which Plato pursues in his later dialogues are to question the ultimate status of "this something (x)" and to elaborate the logic of paradeigmatism; these lines point to the final answer in the *Timaeus*.

Fujisawa suggests that the logic of paradeigmatism saves nature from valuelessness entailed by the conception of the Aristotelian substance as ■ vacuous substratum:

... 'this thing' as subject-substrate, *x*, is in itself axiologically neutral and hence to hold such *x*s in some form or other to be ultimate factors in the world would seem to exclude values from the basic reality in the world and dissociate Being from Value.<sup>46</sup>

Whitehead's oversight of philosophical advantages of paradigmaticism cannot be reproached.<sup>47</sup> It is by no means such a logic that degrades the flux of becoming to mere appearance or illusion. The metaphysics to be reconstructed is not recommended to relinquish it.<sup>48</sup>

## 6. Summary

In our metaphysics, the Psyche as an actuality correlates with the Forms as potentialities. Distinguished from the actuality, the process of becoming is an actuality in its derivative sense or "what is in actuality." It is a moving pattern of recurring images of the Forms, mirrored in the Receptacle, by virtue of the Psyche's efficacy. The Receptacle is a potentiality because of the absence of agency from it. Our notion of the Psyche is not monopsychic. In addition to "a basic Psyche whose active grasp of ideas conditions impartially the whole process of the Universe," there are "finite souls of varying grades, including human souls, all playing their part in conditioning nature by the inherent persuasiveness of ideas" (AI 147-148). Accordingly the Psyche is categorized into two groups. The first is the non-temporal actuality which entertains Forms in itself. The second is the temporal actualities directly responsible for the temporal realization of Forms. The former and the latter, of course, are analogous respectively to Intellect and souls for Plotinus.

The fundamental theses of our metaphysics express the systematic interweaving of the Platonic notions. They are formulated with recourse to the outline of Whitehead's restatement of Platonic realism in *Process and Reality*. The first thesis prominently represents what he calls "Plato's general point of view" (PR 39/62); things which are temporal arise by their imitation of the things which are eternal.<sup>49</sup> The second thesis is that the finite souls of varying grades with the process of becoming and the eternal Forms are mediated by the basic Psyche which is both actual and timeless.<sup>50</sup> It is precisely by virtue of this mediation that the Forms can be instantiated in the temporal world. Finally, as

regards the interweaving of the basic Psyche and the Forms, Whitehead suggests that, by the nontemporal actuality, "the barren inefficient disjunction of abstract potentialities obtains primordially the efficient conjunction of ideal realization" (PR 40/64). Without such "efficient conjunction of ideal realization," novelty would be meaningless and inconceivable (PR 40/64). This suggestion indicates the direction in which the interweaving of the basic Psyche and the Forms may modify Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect.

In the initial stage, we attempt to rebuild Neoplatonic metaphysics as a Platonic metaphysics concerned with the defense of the immutability of the Forms, the basic thesis in Plato's theory of Forms (*Parmenides* 135b-c).<sup>51</sup> For the aforementioned first thesis to be consistent with this thesis, therefore, the Forms' constancy must not be compromised by them being imitated by their immanent characters. As for the interweaving of the basic Psyche and the Forms, moreover, we need to keep in mind that the active grasp of the latter by the former must not violate the latter's unchangeability. The defense of the fundamental thesis of the theory of Forms is one of Plotinus' serious concerns, when he discusses the causal relation between the intelligibles and the sensibles and the Intellect-intelligible identity.<sup>52</sup> This way, I believe, is the steadiest step toward the reconstruction. It would be itself Neoplatonic in the sense that it allows us to philosophize along with Plotinus who strived to systematize general ideas scattered through Plato's writings.

## II. The Interweaving of the Psyche and the Forms

In this section we purport to look into a principle which the interweaving of the basic Psyche and the Forms must satisfy. It is suggested that the inefficient disjunction of Forms obtains the efficient conjunction of ideal realization by virtue of the Psyche. But this view, *prima facie*, diverges from the traditional conception of the fixed order of Forms. Hence we may begin with the problem of how this interweaving renders "Plato's general point of view."

### 1. Whitehead on *Sophist* 248e-249a

In the passage dealing with the Platonic notions, Whitehead elucidates the ideal realization of Forms in the non-temporal Psyche:

Plato then passes on to the agency whereby ideas obtain efficiency in the creative advance. As he conceives them in abstraction, he finds ideas to be static, frozen, and lifeless. They obtain 'life and motion' by their entertainment in a living intelligence. Such a living intelligence with its 'gaze fixed upon ideas' was what Plato termed a Psyche... (AI 147).

The last sentence unmistakably refers to the Demiurge's contemplation of Forms in the *Timaeus* (28a, 29a). But the Demiurge is there conceived to see Forms as self-sustaining outside himself.<sup>53</sup> The view that Forms obtain efficacy by virtue of the intelligence comes from another dialogue, the *Sophist*. In the following we will review Whitehead's interpretation of the passage concerning the defense of the theory of Forms by "the friends of Forms."<sup>54</sup> According to him, the suggestion that the criterion of being as the power of acting and being acted upon<sup>55</sup> must be construed in terms of the doctrine of law of nature as immanent, which involves a doctrine of internal relations (AI 113). "The friends of Forms" refuse to define the soul's cognitive intercourse with Forms in terms of the relation of action and passion; they admit the criterion of being as applying only to becoming, but not to true being. Thus the Eleatic Stranger asks the crucial query, which reads in Jowett's translation quoted by Whitehead as follows:

Can we imagine being (τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι) to be devoid of life and mind, and to remain in awful unmeaningness an everlasting fixture? (*Sophist* 248e-249a).

This passage is highly controversial. Whitehead believes that Plato here still abides by the criterion of being and considers Forms to be acted upon in being known. Being acted upon, the eternality of Forms is connected with the fluency of becoming by the mediation of "life and mind." Here we do not question whether or not this is an accurate interpretation. But the theses that the atemporal objects are mediated with the temporal process by the non-temporal actuality and that those objects obtain efficiency by that actuality are closely connected with Whitehead's reflection on the above

cited passage. Thus he would be confident that they unmistakably render "Plato's general point of view."<sup>56</sup>

In spite of their difference in the exegesis of the *Sophist* passage, Whitehead and Plotinus share "Plato's general point of view" in respect of the thesis that Forms obtain "life and motion" in a living intelligence. Plotinus considers the intelligible objects placed outside Intellect to be "without perception and without any share of life or intelligence," and concludes that such objects are inconceivable (V 5 [32], 1, 32-38). Whitehead does not attempt to move from the ideal realization to self-knowledge of the intelligence. On the other hand, Plotinus refuses to think that Forms are acted upon by intellection, on the ground of the real unity of Intellect and Forms.<sup>57</sup> Whereas Plotinus gives no "demiurgic" implication to the Intellect-intelligible identity,<sup>58</sup> Whitehead seems to think seriously of the vulnerable point of Plato's theory that Forms in abstraction may be totally devoid of efficiency and useless for an account of becoming, as Aristotle points out.<sup>59</sup>

## 2. The Realization of the Forms in the Psyche and the Ontological Principle

In Whitehead's systematic thought the entertainment of Forms in the basic Psyche is rendered the conceptual realization of all eternal objects in the primordial nature of God, which is required for "the differentiated relevance of eternal objects to each instance of the creative process." The conceptual realization is the only answer consistent with what he calls "the ontological principle" (PR 256-257/392). In the subsequent discussion we employ the term "noetic realization" instead of "conceptual realization" which is prone to turn Forms to God's "concepts." For Forms to be "relevant" to the temporal process, again, physically unrealized Forms have some intrinsic relation to physically realized ones. Hence there must be intrinsic "togetherness" among Forms in noetic realization, which, on the ontological principle, must be togetherness in the formal constitution of a non-temporal actuality (PR 32/48, 46/73). What is then the ontological principle? Whitehead mentions it in the context dealing with the realization of eternal objects in God:

By this recognition of the divine element the general Aristotelian principle is maintained that, apart from things that are actual, there is nothing—nothing either in fact or in efficacy (PR 40/64).

The principle is basically the affirmation that some entities are fully existent, and secondly, that all other types of existence are derivative and abstracted from those fully existent entities.<sup>60</sup> In separation from the ideal realization, there is mere isolation of eternal objects, not only indistinguishable from nonentity but unrealized in the temporal world (PR 40/64).<sup>61</sup> Insofar as the Forms are related to the basic Psyche as potentialities are to an actuality, it is the principle that their interweaving must first exemplify.

The ontological principle is indeed an Aristotelian principle. Nevertheless Whitehead seems to regard the response by the Stranger in *Sophist* 248e-249a as an exemplification of it. As often pointed out, this passage is a *locus classicus* for Plotinus' conception of Forms as living and being active, necessary for the intellect-intelligible identity.<sup>62</sup> For him, in fact, there is no such thing as a Form subsisting outside Intellect: such a Form would be "without perception and without any share of life or intelligence." But he nowhere defines the relation between Intellect and Forms as that between actuality and potentialities. Therefore his doctrine of the presence of Forms within Intellect cannot be seen as an exemplification of the ontological principle, though his philosophy is never incompatible with it.

The status of the Plotinian One as the hyper-ontic activity (V 6 [24] 6, 3-9)<sup>63</sup> is a development from the ontological principle in its Aristotelian version. In a sense, Plotinus radicalizes it. He justifies his introduction of the hyper-ontic activity as follows:

Nor should we be afraid to assume the primary activity without real being, but posit this very activity as his, so to speak, hypostasis. But if one posited a hypostasis without activity, the principle would be defective and the most perfect of all imperfect. And if one adds activity [to the hypostasis] one does not keep the unity. If then the activity is more perfect than the real being, and the First is most perfect, the First will be activity (VI 8 [39], 20, 9-15, tr. A. H. Armstrong, adapted by A. Sumi).

Plotinus here maintains that the activity or actuality which makes a real being actual must be prior to the being to be actualized, by

considering a thing that is actual to consist of activity and being and thereby to be in duality. The ontological primacy of activity over being makes a remarkable revolution in ancient Greek metaphysics and a bold challenge to the Aristotelian tradition. Did Aristotle and his successors ever envisage a bare activity in separation from a primary substance, hylomorphic or divine? Moreover, the view that the real being without activity is defective would certainly bring us back to *Sophist* 248e-249a. Whitehead's interpretation of this passage that Forms, intrinsically devoid of efficacy, must be entertained in a living intelligence is based on his construction of "that which is completely real ( $\tau\omicron\ \pi\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon\lambda\omega\varsigma\ \delta\upsilon\nu$ )" as Forms. Plotinus, on the other hand, takes it as the intelligible world which does not consist solely of Forms, and explores the nature of intellection that may not infringe upon their unchangeability.<sup>64</sup> But, if it is read apart from the specific context of the *Sophist*, the passage under discussion will be construed otherwise; it is an activity expressed as "life and thought" that makes "that which is completely real" what it is. *Sophist* 248e-249a can be the *locus classicus* not only for Whitehead's application of the ontological principle to the relation between the non-temporal actuality and eternal objects, but for the Plotinian principle of the priority of actuality to being. Since Plotinus' reading of Plato's dialogues sometimes neglects the relevant context of a given text,<sup>65</sup> it is to some extent probable that he considers the priority of actuality to be a development of Plato's point of view. Needless to say, it is the authentically Neoplatonic principle of the priority of unity to multiplicity that leads Plotinus to the radicalization of the Aristotelian principle and the application of it to the ontological status of the One.

### 3. The Forms are not the Concepts of the Psyche

When the ontological principle is applied to the interweaving of the Psyche and the Forms, there arises an unfavorable tendency. In one of its application, Whitehead says, the principle "issues in the doctrine of 'conceptualism'" (PR 40/ 64). The preceding quotation from Descartes' *Meditation* that "every clear and distinct conception (*perceptio*) cannot derive its origin from what is nought" refers to a conceptualism in which a traditional causal principle is applied to the representational character of concepts. But Whitehead intends to develop the ontological principle in the

direction opposite to a more subjective kind of conceptualism, for instance, the critical philosophy of Kant, in which "the world emerges from the subject" (PR 88/135).

Insofar as the ontological principle has such a conceptualist tendency, the noetic realization of Forms in the Psyche as an exemplification of that principle is prone to invite a Middle-Platonic theory of Forms as God's concepts. Plotinus is also aware that his doctrine of the presence of Forms in Intellect is liable to be misunderstood in terms of the Middle-Platonic theory. He critically points out that, on the Middle-Platonic theory, Intellect is forced to hypostatize a Form by apprehending a concept which has not yet been existent (VI 6 [34], 6, 14-19).<sup>66</sup> In other words, that theory renders the Forms "arbitrary concepts without any substantial content of their own."<sup>67</sup>

Whitehead's denial of the hypostatization of eternal objects by the nontemporal actuality is worth considering. He rejects the creation of eternal objects by God, because God's nature *qua* actuality requires eternal objects *qua* potentialities in the same degree that the latter requires the former: "This is an exemplification of the coherence of the categoreal types of existence" (PR 257/392). I pointed out elsewhere that Plotinus' claim of interdependence of Intellect and Forms, too, is incompatible with the Middle-Platonic theory.<sup>68</sup> God's primordial existence is the act of complete valuation of eternal objects (PR 31/46, 247/378). Apart from the primordial forms of definiteness, hence, no existence of God is possible at all. The relationship of mutual requirement between God and eternal objects amounts to the one between being and definiteness, the two being distinguished from one another.<sup>69</sup> Whitehead would suggest that it is possible to avoid the tendency of the noetic realization of Forms toward the Middle-Platonic doctrine, by means of the relation of mutual requirement between the Psyche and the Forms. Moreover, if they need to be viewed in terms of being and definiteness, the basic picture of the complex consisting of them is very akin to that of the Plotinian intelligible world which consists of intelligible shapes and intelligible matter, the latter being endowed with some contemplative force.<sup>70</sup> The Psyche in abstraction from the Forms would be analogous to sheer intelligible matter. But, insofar as the Psyche is the non-temporal actuality, Plotinus' dictum that "the divine matter when it receives that which defines it has a defined

and intelligent life" (II 4 [12], 5, 15-16) must be inverted as follows; the Forms when they are entertained by the Psyche have an intelligent life. To this extent, the relation of mutual requirement between the Psyche and the Forms can be an analogue to Plotinus' notion of the definition of intelligible matter or the inchoate Intellect by intelligible shapes.

As Christian notes, the point of divergence of Platonic realism from Platonic idealism in Whitehead's system is whether or not the datum of the initial aim constituting the primary phase of a subject is something objective to that subject. Platonic realism admits the possibility of disconnection between the datum and the subjective form—*how* the subject feels the object—of God's primordial appetite.<sup>71</sup> Let us explicate Christian's remark. The data to God's primordial nature are the disjunctive multiplicity of all eternal objects (PR 87-88/134).<sup>72</sup> God's subjective forms are "valuations determining the relative relevance of eternal objects for each occasion of actuality" (PR 344/522).<sup>73</sup> It is by reason of the actuality of God's primordial valuation that "each eternal object has a definite, effective relevance to each concrescent process" (PR 40/64). Finally, "relevance" must express some real fact of togetherness among eternal objects (PR 32/48). In reference to eternal objects, therefore, the disconnection in question is between their disjunctive multiplicity simply given to God and their togetherness determined by him. If our metaphysics appeals to this point, we must say that interrelations among Forms are dependent on the basic Psyche's act of determining the relative relevance of Forms for each Psyche underlying the process of becoming. In other words, interrelations among Forms are not intrinsically fixed. Such a consequence is obviously at variance with the classical Platonic view that those interrelations are eternally decided. Do we then need to consider seriously this consequence? If we need to do so, what are its philosophical merits? These problems will be discussed in the next section.

#### 4. The Refusal of the Principle of Plenitude

In the last subsection we referred to "God's primordial appetite." What Whitehead calls "appetition" is an "urge towards realization of the datum conceptually prehended" (PR 32/47). The urge is always involved in God's contemplative act of eternal objects. He envisages them in their relevance for particular

actualization. This view would compel us, against Plotinus' will, to give some "demiurgic" implication to the presence of Forms in Intellect. The basic Psyche is responsible for adjusting the togetherness of Forms on which the cosmic order depends; for "the determinations of compatibilities and incompatibilities [for joint exemplification] are the key...to the understanding of the world in its function as the theatre for the temporal realization of ideas" (AI 147). Exactly in this sense, the noetic realization of Forms in the Psyche is given a "demiurgic" implication. The basic Psyche is hardly indifferent to the actual conditioning of the process of becoming.

The Psyche does not have an urge to realize all of the Forms physically at once. In Whitehead's words, the Divine Eros coupled with the basic Psyche is "the active entertainment of all ideals, with the urge to their finite realization, each in its due season" (AI 277). The finite realization is evidently the rejection of what Lovejoy terms "the principle of plenitude" or the "theorem of the 'fulness' of the realization of conceptual possibility in actuality," that "any eternal essences have temporal counterparts." On the principle, the universe is "a *plenum formarum* in which the range of conceivable diversity of *kinds* of living things is exhaustively exemplified."<sup>74</sup> The finite realization of Forms is precisely the case of the alternative to the principle of plenitude, proposing that "out of the whole range of the Ideas, only a limited selection have sensible embodiment."<sup>75</sup> Again, Christian finds Whitehead's notion of eternal objects as *pure* possibilities to be the refusal of that principle,<sup>76</sup> which is usually regarded as essential to Neoplatonism.<sup>77</sup> Therefore the objection will be naturally raised that the metaphysics under reconstruction might be anti-Neoplatonic. Our response to this objection is that the admission of the principle of plenitude cannot serve as a criterion for characterizing Neoplatonic philosophy. Let us touch upon the point of our reply briefly.

It is difficult to apply the principle of plenitude to the entire range of the world of Forms. The principle is formulated on *Timaeus* 41b-c, where we are told that the realm of Forms would be deficient if it did not contain all the kinds of *living being*. The realm, however, does not consist solely of the Forms of various living entities; Plato's "catholic" list of Forms includes not only the so-called substantival Forms but the so-called adjectival and verbal ones (*Epistle* VII, 342d-e). Therefore it is not warranted

even in Plato's thought to conclude "the *necessarily* complete translation of all the ideal possibilities into actuality"<sup>78</sup> from the conception of the physical universe as the *plenum formarum*. In other words, the principle of plenitude is applicable at best with regard to the specific Forms subsumed under the generic Form of Living Being, or the Forms mentioned in the cosmological context of the *Timaeus*. If the whole range of Forms were *necessarily* translated into physical actuality, there could not arise the problem of intermittent causation of Forms as pointed out by Aristotle.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, the Neoplatonic theory of emanation is often regarded as an exemplification of the principle of plenitude.<sup>80</sup> Indeed it is true to say that that which is indiscriminately and formlessly contained in the One is exhaustively articulated in the noetic world (V 5 [32], 6, 1-5). But Plotinus does not admit the fulness of the physical actualization of conceptual possibilities: "if one takes 'things in the sense-world' to mean 'things in the visible realm,' there are not only the things in the sense-world there [*sc.* in the intelligible world], but more" (V 9 [5], 13, 15-17, tr. A. H. Armstrong).<sup>81</sup> The rejection of the principle does not necessarily result in the divergence from Platonism or Neoplatonism.

The finiteness in the physical realization is not the result of imperfection. Whitehead notes that it "results from the fact that there are possibilities of harmony which either produce evil in joint realization, or are incapable of such conjunction" (AI 276). The notion of intrinsic incompatibility "has never been applied to ideals in Divine realization," though it "has an important bearing upon our conception of the nature of God" (AI 277). Our metaphysics may appeal to the principle of intrinsic incompatibility rather than to the principle of plenitude for the regulative principle of the physical realization of Forms. The principle of incompatibility, as Whitehead notes, precisely marks the viability of Plato's conception of connection and disconnection among Forms as discussed in the *Sophist*.

### III. The Forms as the Inexhaustible Domain of Possibility and the Neoplatonic One

Whitehead gives an account of the contemporary relevance of the Platonic Forms primarily in terms of connection and



disconnection among them. His insight that they are needed for an account of the emergence of novelty in the universe must be sufficiently exploited for our reconstructive undertaking. This suggested notion of the Forms would require a revision of the traditional conception of the intelligible world as a fixed order of immutable essences. In this section, we will clarify the necessary revision of the world of Forms. And then we will discuss whether or not our metaphysics is exigent of the Neoplatonic One.

### 1. The Forms as the Inexhaustible Domain of Possibility

Whitehead characterizes the universe as a creative advance into novelty. A novel feature must be given as a physically unrealized potentiality, without which we would obtain a static monistic universe. For the creative advance into novelty to be intelligible, some potentialities always remain physically unrealized, though realized in the non-temporal actuality. The advance definitely presupposes an inexhaustible domain of possibility, the boundless and unstructured infinity of togetherness of Forms.<sup>32</sup>

The inexhaustible domain of possibility radically revises the classical picture of the noetic cosmos as an intrinsically fixed realm of immutable essences. In the first place, Forms are unlimited in number.<sup>33</sup> Plotinus maintains that the original pattern consisting of a finite number of Forms can engender an infinite number of their sensible manifestations (V 7 [18], 1, 25-27; 3, 22-23).<sup>34</sup> But this thesis inescapably appeals to the Stoic doctrine of an infinite succession of world periods, and so is incompatible with the creative advance toward novelty. According to Syrianus, on the other hand, Amelius, as does St. Bonaventure, believes in an infinity of Forms which cannot all be reproduced in the finite universe, even in infinite time.<sup>35</sup> This enables him to renounce the theory of identical cosmic cycles.<sup>36</sup> Our metaphysics is willing to adopt Amelius' innovation which was not developed at all by ancient Neoplatonists.

In the second place, connection and disconnection among Forms are not intrinsically fixed. Because of the application of the ontological principle to the noetic realization of Forms, togetherness among Forms must be precisely togetherness in the formal constitution of the basic Psyche. A physically unrealized Form can be relevant to the temporal process only if it has some togetherness with physically realized ones. Thus the connection

between "the eternality of being" and "the fluency of becoming" by "the medium of activity" (AI 120) is secured by the real fact of togetherness among Forms within the basic Psyche.

It is the basic Psyche that orders the entire multiplicity of Forms. Apart from this ordering, in Whitehead's words,

there would be a complete disjunction of eternal objects in the temporal world. Novelty would be meaningless, and inconceivable (PR 40/64).

Forms, by themselves, are utterly unrelated to one another. Insofar as the relevance of a physically unrealized Form to the process of becoming calls for some relation to the Forms physically realized, the complete disjunction of Forms results in their physical unrealizability. Moreover, novelty which presupposes the physical realizability is conceivable only if Forms are not intrinsically ordered. If the domain of possibility consists of a finite number of Forms, whether or not their togetherness is intrinsically structured, it is exhausted so that novelty cannot be always insured. On the other hand, if an infinite number of Forms, as Amelius proposes, cannot all be physically realized even in unlimited time, novelty in a sense is safeguarded, even though their togetherness is eternally fixed. But the alternative that interrelation among Forms is immutably fixed allows no new combination of possibilities. What Whitehead means by "novelty" is not restricted to a mere emergence of some Forms physically unrealized. Novelty needs to be considered also in terms of compatibility and incompatibility among Forms. He writes:

In the nature of things there are no ultimate exclusions, expressive in logical terms. For if we extend the stretch of our attention throughout the passage of time, two entities which are inconsistent for occurrence on this planet during a certain day in the long past and are inconsistent during another day in more recent past—these two entities may be consistent when we embrace the whole period involved, one entity occurring during the earlier day, and the other during the later day. Thus inconsistency is relative to the abstraction involved (MT 54-55).

In short, the novelty under discussion denotes also an emergence of some new combination of Forms. With the proposal that

togetherness among Forms is dependent on the organizing act of the non-temporal Psyche, the notion of joint exemplification of Forms is drastically revised. Whereas the joint exemplification—for example, Snow and Coldness in the hypothesis argument of the *Phaedo*—is conceived solely in terms of the definite “blending” of the Forms involved in the ancient theory of Forms, it, as Christian remarks, must be strengthened by the qualification that a physical realization of one possibility “necessarily excludes the unbounded welter of contrary possibilities”<sup>87</sup> in our position. The consequence of this revision is the replacement of the traditional view that “the history of the Universe contains an infinite number of vast but finite schemes”<sup>88</sup> by Whitehead’s terse statement that “in process the finite possibilities of the universe travels towards their infinitude of realization” (MT 54).<sup>89</sup>

Our position does not admit a “realm” of Forms in the strong sense of the word. In the Psyche’s envisagement Forms constitute a realm only in the sense that they have ■ general togetherness.<sup>90</sup> Each Form has not only its unique individual essence, but a relational essence which indicates its reference to other Forms (SMW 159-160). As to the latter essence it must be noted that the relationships among Forms are internal relations (SMW 160).<sup>91</sup> The adequate notion of internal relation is that “just as the relations modify the natures of the relata, so the relata modify the nature of the relation” (AI 157). Hence the claim that togetherness among Forms is not intrinsically fixed is prone to entail the fear that the Psyche’s organizing activity may modify the nature of the Forms involved, and thereby their immutability may be compromised. But this fear can be dissolved by the distinction between individual and relational essences of Forms; in being reevaluated by the Psyche, they are modified—in Plato’s words, “acted upon”—in their relational essences, but not in their individual essences. On the dependence of Forms’ interrelations upon the organizing act of the Psyche, therefore, the defense of Forms’ immutability urgently calls for the distinction of the two essences of Forms, which is also a necessary revision of the classical theory of Forms.

The modifications in relational essences of Forms may drive us to several complicated problems. One of them is how these modifications are compatible with the non-temporality of the basic Psyche and the “eternality” of Forms; for the notion of modification seems to involve some temporality or duration. In speaking of

Intellect’s movement within the framework imposed by the notion of nondurational eternity, as Armstrong points out, Plotinus is confronted with a similar problem.<sup>92</sup>

## 2. The Neoplatonic One and the Whiteheadian Creativity

It is unquestionable that the transcendent One or Good is something essential to Neoplatonism. On our view of the interweaving of the Psyche and the Forms, are there still some exigencies to posit the Neoplatonic One? If there are, how does the ancient doctrine of the One have to be modified?

Our exploration of the possibility of rebuilding Neoplatonic metaphysics starts from the seven Platonic notions highlighted by Whitehead. But the transcendent Good is not included in them. We must consider exigencies of the One from another angle. The One is exactly something ultimate in Neoplatonism. According to Whitehead, every philosophical thought recognizes a metaphysical category of the ultimate, which is actual in virtue of its accidental embodiments; in his own philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed “creativity,” and in monistic philosophy “God” or “The Absolute” (PR 7/10-11). Creativity is a basic activity of self-creation generic to all individual actualities and conceived in abstraction from them.<sup>93</sup> It is “ultimate” in the senses that it constitutes the generic metaphysical character of all actualities and that the actualities are individualizations of it.<sup>94</sup> Indeed many students of Whitehead’s thought regard his notion of creativity as something enigmatic or elusive. In this paper I do not go into the widespread controversy regarding its role in his metaphysics. Nevertheless, his notion of creativity is worth considering in our effort to explore a proper conception of the One in our metaphysical scheme. “The category of the ultimate” in *Process and Reality* is demarcated from “categories of existence” under which both actual entities and eternal objects are subsumed. In thinking of something ultimate and distinct in categorical level from the Psyche and the Form, we may focus attention on the notion of creativity. The Plotinian One is the hyper-ontic, primordial activity which is instantiated in diverse individual intellects.<sup>95</sup> It would be reasonable to analogize the One to creativity.

In the subsequent discussion, the One analogized to creativity for our metaphysics is denominated “the creative One.”

Creativity is the ultimate principle whereby the disjunctively many become the one actuality: "It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity" (PR 21/31). This notion is exactly analogous to the One which insures the self-unification of the soul (VI 9 [9], 1, 42-43). Into our metaphysics the creative One may be introduced as the principle by which each Psyche not only unifies itself but is intrinsically related to other Psyches, bringing complex unity or internal relations to the physical world. It is the ultimate principle of self-unity of the actualities and internal relations among them. The role of the creative One as the self-creative and unificative activity generic to all actualities would certainly remind us of Plotinus' ontological use of *συναίσθησις*, the most basic term for consciousness in his psychology. Applied to every level in his ontological hierarchy, the term implies "the essential unity of an entity, that moment when it is most complete in itself and, simultaneously, transcendent cause of what comes after it."<sup>96</sup> The One's *οἶον συναίσθησις* whereby its *κατνόησις* is the One itself (V 4 [7], 2, 17-18)<sup>97</sup> represents the activity of unification in the highest degree. Again, he defines intellection as *συναίσθησις τοῦ ὅλου* (V 3 [49], 13, 12-13),<sup>98</sup> which turns "inward unifying its own interior multiplicity."<sup>99</sup> The basic Psyche's activity is akin to *συναίσθησις* of Intellect, unifying the unordered multiplicity of Forms into their togetherness.

Whereas we purport to analogize creativity to the One, Whitehead himself analogizes it to Aristotelian matter because of its characterlessness (PR 31/46-47). In his comparative study of Plotinus and Whitehead, Rodier follows this line of analogy and points out the resemblance between the metaphysical functions of creativity and of the Plotinian matter; they are both responsible for the ongoingness of the universe.<sup>100</sup> But our viewpoint of analogy differs from Rodier's, since we regard Psyches as actualities instantiating creativity. We are reluctant to consider the Receptacle, which corresponds to the Plotinian matter, in our metaphysics as responsible for the ongoingness of the universe.<sup>101</sup> Also with regard to its indeterminacy, creativity can be easily compared with the Plotinian One.

Moreover, creativity is defined as the principle of novelty, endlessly producing novel actualities by a process of self-creation (PR 21/31-32). Christian maintains that creativity and the theory of an infinite and unordered multiplicity of eternal objects require

each other in Whitehead's system. For the infinite and unordered multiplicity of eternal objects to be physically realized, on the one hand, novel actualities must be produced endlessly. On the other, this endless production of novel actualities is logically possible only if the realm of eternal objects constitutes an inexhaustible domain of possibility.<sup>102</sup> Since the Whiteheadian theory of atomicity of actuality is not adopted in our metaphysics, we need to consider the principle of novelty from another angle. In our position, novelty primarily means an emergence of the Forms and their combinations, physically unrealized, to the physical world. On our narrower notion of novelty that does not denote the production of novel actualities, the creative One can serve as the principle of novelty in two ways. In the first place, the creative One incessantly underlies finite, temporal actualities or souls of varying grades, as well as the basic Psyche, so that the unending physical realization of the inexhaustible domain of possibility is carried on by them. In the second place, the creative One is always instantiated by the non-temporal actuality or the basic Psyche, so that it perpetually realizes an infinitude of Forms in itself. Apart from this realization, novelty is inconceivable. Insofar as the classical notion of the fixed realm of Forms must be replaced by the infinite and unordered multiplicity of Forms which are to be organized by the non-temporal actuality, the physical realization of them and the unending sustenance of actualities by the creative One must require each other.

It must be noticed that this unending sustenance of actualities by the creative One renders the Neoplatonic doctrine of "undiminished giving,"<sup>103</sup> which goes back to *Timaeus* 42e.<sup>104</sup> The doctrine of undiminished giving does not attempt to explain the creative advance of the universe into novelty. On the contrary, the notion of the creative One would revitalize that doctrine as an insight which is required by the physical realization of the inexhaustible domain of possibility and appeals to our experience of the emergence of novel features in the world. In addition, Plotinus maintains that the immortality of Intellect and souls is based on the undiminished power of the One (IV 4 [22], 10, 22-30). Since the creative One is the basic activity of self-creation generic to all individual actualities, each of them exemplifies the generic metaphysical characteristic of the creative One and therefore is describable as an instance of self-creative activity. In the first

section, it was pointed out that the significance of Plato's definition of the Psyche as the self-mover consists in its avoidance of the static fallacy involved in the Aristotelian substance-quality metaphysics. The status of each Psyche as an instance of self-creative activity leads to the revision of his definition; sustained perpetually by the creative One, every Psyche endlessly continues to create itself. This endless self-creation results in the replacement of the Aristotelian substance by the creative One (cf. PR 21/32) and, if we invoke Plato's argument in the *Phaedrus* and the *Laws*, in the Psyche's immortality. The creative One thus exactly renders the Platonic and Neoplatonic point of view. Moreover, Leclerc notes that Whitehead's category of creativity replaces Aristotle's matter<sup>105</sup> viewed as something ultimate in the notion of simple location. It is the creative One that gives a *coup de grâce* to scientific materialism.

Although creativity is not explicitly included in the seven Platonic notions, it is rendered by the Eros to some extent. Conceived as "the urge towards ideal perfection," the Eros is sublimated into "the notion of the soul in the enjoyment of its *creative* function, arising from its entertainment of ideas" (AI 148, *Italics mine.*). The Eros urges the Psyche to create a new fact woven out of the old and the new, so that, if we omit both of them, "we should obtain a static world" (AI 275). Whitehead defines the very essence of real actuality as process (AI 274): "the process is its absorption into a new unity with ideals and with anticipation, by the operation of *creative Eros*" (AI 276, *Italics mine.*) It is evident that the Eros assumes the roles of creativity as the ultimate principle by which the many become the one and as the principle of novelty. Although we have regarded each Psyche as an instantiation of the creative One, we must now correctly say that the creative One is individualized by every Psyche with its indwelling Eros.<sup>106</sup>

How is the creative One related to Forms? Whitehead nowhere states that eternal objects are derived from creativity. The following passage in *Science and the Modern World*, where creativity is referred to as "the general activity," requires serious consideration:

The general activity is not an entity in the sense in which occasions or eternal objects are entities. It is a general metaphysical character which underlies all occasions, in a particular mode for each occasion. There is nothing with which to compare it: it is Spinoza's one infinite substance. Its attributes are its character of individualization

into a multiplicity of modes, and the realm of eternal objects which are variously synthesized in these modes. Thus eternal possibility and modal differentiation into individual multiplicity are the attributes of the one substance. In fact each general element of the metaphysical situation is an attribute of the substantial activity (SMW 177).

The first sentence clearly prefigures the distinction between the categories of the ultimate and of existence in *Process and Reality*. While creativity is not described as a "substantial activity" in *Process and Reality*, such a description, with the comparison of creativity with Spinoza's infinite substance, insinuates that it is somehow more real than actualities.<sup>107</sup> Then, how should we understand the statement that the realm of eternal objects is attributes of creativity? Does it mean that each eternal object instantiates creativity as does each actuality? We must also seriously take the comparison with Spinoza's infinite substance into consideration. Insofar as Whitehead is critical about the substance-quality metaphysics, his comparison must not be taken literally. Nevertheless, the realm of eternal objects can be suitably analogized to attributes of creativity, in that the infinitude of possibilities constituted by that realm expresses the boundlessness of creativity.<sup>108</sup> In addition, Whitehead's comparison would allure us into the conception of creativity as a kind of *natura naturans*.<sup>109</sup> But we must not form the hasty conclusion that the "existence" of Forms may be dependent on or derived from the creative One.

As for Whitehead's analogy of creativity to Spinoza's infinite substance, Leclerc gives an instructive suggestion. In considering Whitehead's analogy, he invokes H. F. Hallett's characterization of Spinoza's infinite substance as an eternal potency-in-act actualizing itself in determinate modes.<sup>110</sup> The one substance is called the "potency-in-act" because the modes are the enaction of the eternal act, the actualization of the eternal potency. For Whitehead the Spinozistic modes become the finite, determinate actualities, which are the actualizations of creativity or a primordial indeterminate potency-in-act. But he does not agree with Spinoza in holding that this ultimate creative potency-in-act is not an actual entity or a substance, an οὐσία. On the other hand, its actualizations are οὐσίαι.

The characterization of creativity as the primordial potency-in-act may be taken seriously for our conception of the nature of the creative One. The creative One is something neutral

to actuality and possibility, so that it is expected to take a role of mediating the Forms and the basic Psyche. On the ontological principle, togetherness among Forms must be referred to some actuality. Here we may raise a rather basic question. Why is it that the disjunction of Forms primordially obtains the conjunction of noetic realization by virtue of the actuality? It does not lie in the notion of actuality *as such* that the many enter into complex unity. An answer to this question can be given by an appeal to creativity.<sup>11</sup> The reason why the disjunctive multiplicity of Forms is organized into their efficient conjunction is that the basic Psyche is an instantiation of the creative One by which the many become the one actuality. The basic Psyche and the Forms are metaphysically mediated by this instantiation of the creative One, in the Psyche, by which alone the disjunctive multiplicity of Forms can enter into complex unity. If the Psyche were not an individualization of the creative One, Forms would eternally remain isolated from one another. Whitehead regards a mere isolation of Forms as "indistinguishable from nonentity" (PR 257/392).<sup>12</sup> From his analogy of creativity and eternal objects to Spinoza's substance and its attributes, we are reluctant to conclude that the existence of eternal objects is derived from creativity. To the extent that the instantiation of the creative One in the basic Psyche keeps Forms away from "mere isolation indistinguishable from nonentity," we can say that the "being (τὸ εἶναι)" of Forms is a consequence of this instantiation. The metaphysical relation between the creative One and the Forms, of course, requires much more inquiry. The above suggestion would support our attempt to conceive the nature of the One in its analogy to creativity; for the creative One carries out the roles to mediate the Psyche and the Forms and to provide the Forms with "being," the roles which Plato gives to the transcendent Good in the metaphor of the sun (*Republic* 507e-509b).

The characterization of Spinoza's substance as the indeterminate potency-in-act goes well with Whitehead's own conception of creativity. Creativity is the "boundless, abstract possibility" limited by each actuality (PR 220/336-337). The status of the Plotinian One as the hyper-ontic activity is a consequence of the radicalization of the Aristotelian principle. Then, how can our analogy of the One to creativity be consistent with the status of the Plotinian One? Notice that the term ἐνέργεια for Plotinus is never

univocal. Intellect's actuality is an actualization of its hypostasis, and intellection is an activity of Intellect. On the other hand, if the One's actuality were an actualization of something, its absolute simplicity would be compromised so that it would be placed on the level of Intellect.<sup>13</sup> The ἐνέργεια in the sense of an actualization of something is definitely denied to the One.<sup>14</sup> The One's actuality is simply an activity totally undifferentiated from itself. In Whitehead, an actuality always denotes an actual entity. The Psyche in our metaphysics is an actual entity, an actualization of the creative potency-in-act. Creativity for Whitehead is not an actual entity. Yet he sometimes calls it an "activity," that is, the basic activity of self-creation generic to all individual actualities. Likewise in our metaphysics, the creative One must be called the hyper-ontic activity or potency-in-act. As for the status of the creative One, however, we do not appeal to the ontological principle in *any* version.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, we assuredly diverge from Plotinus.

Finally, we are confronted with a serious problem concerning the transcendence of the creative One. Whitehead maintains that creativity is always found under its individual embodiments; it is not a transcendent "creator" creating actualities. The comparison of creativity with Spinoza's substance implies that it is an immanent principle of self-creation. Here Whitehead's Platonism and Plotinus' Neoplatonism, as Rodier points out,<sup>16</sup> would be sharply contrasted. Yet Whitehead remarks, at the end of his account of creativity, that "[the] sole appeal is to intuition" (PR 22/32). We are allowed to appeal to our own intuition in knowing what the creative One is. "Intuition (ἐπιβολὴ ἀθρόα)" (III 8 [30], 9, 21-22) to which Plotinus appeals in knowing what the One is really includes mystic intuition. Even if our appeal to intuition tells a bare, transcendent activity not conditioned by any actuality, we are compelled to meet various problems which the notion of the transcendent activity may invite. Those problems to be seriously worked out in our metaphysics are totally beyond the scope of this paper. But the following point must be noticed. Our discussion about the analogy of the One to creativity surely satisfies the minimum requirement for the transcendence of the creative One; the creative One does not fall under the categories of existence. It is neither an actual entity nor a Platonic Form. This is the minimum requirement, precisely because Plato's statement in *Republic*

509b—the *locus classicus* for the transcendence of the Neoplatonic One—is so brief as to remark simply that the Good is not real being, but beyond it in dignity and power. From this brief statement starts Plotinus' elaborate doctrine of the One. Having satisfied the requirement, we are sharing the initial step toward the transcendent One with Plotinus. Our metaphysics, too, newly starts from *Republic* 509b and is expected to put a novel "series of footnotes" to that *locus classicus*.<sup>17</sup>

#### IV. Epilogue

The above discussion is a mere contour of a Neoplatonic metaphysics we propose to reconstruct; the Platonic notions other than the Psyche, the Eros, the Forms, and the Receptacle have been left unconsidered. Whitehead strongly convinces that it is our task to rebuild such a world view that we are now struggling to obtain:

The mere compulsion of tradition has lost its force. It is our business...to re-create and reenact a vision of the world, including those elements of reverence and order without which society lapses into riot, and penetrated through and through with unflinching rationality. Such a vision is the knowledge which Plato identified with virtue (AI 99).

This type of philosophical vision of the world is unmistakably a virtue, since its "gifts are insight and foresight, and a sense of the worth of life, in short, that sense of importance which nerves all civilized effort" (AI 98). It is in the civilized world of today that this kind of vision is sought after; for "when civilization culminates, the absence of a coordinating philosophy of life, spread throughout the community, spells decadence, boredom, and the slackening of effort" (AI 98). Anyway our ambitious business has just been begun.<sup>18</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), p. 177. For the special position of Plotinus in the history of psychology, see É. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* tr. J. Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 110-111; R. E. Aquila, "On Plotinus and the 'Togetherness' of Consciousness," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 30 (1992):7; G. M. Gurtler, *Plotinus: The Experience of Unity* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 49-51.
2. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 177.
3. A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 146-147. Hereafter the following abbreviations of titles and the editions of Whitehead's works are used for reference:
 

AI	<i>Adventures of Ideas</i> (New York: The Free Press, 1967).
FR	<i>The Function of Reason</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1929).
MT	<i>Modes of Thought</i> (New York: The Free Press, 1968).
PR	<i>Process and Reality</i> , edited by D. R. Griffin and D. W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978).
SMW	<i>Science and the Modern World</i> (New York: The Free Press, 1967).
- With regard to PR, page numbers following a slash refer to the 1929 Macmillan edition.
4. For the nature of metaphysics, see PR 3/4, 116/178; AI 222.
5. Needless to say, one of the most prominent features of Neoplatonic metaphysics is the One beyond the Forms. Whitehead's position is uncertain about the Platonic Idea of the Good or the Neoplatonic One. He neither reckons the Good among the basic notions as an independent one nor categorizes it into the notion of the Ideas.
6. Giuseppe Martano's description of the comprehensive nature of Proclus' philosophy (*Proclo di Atene*, 2nd ed. [Naple: Giannini, 1974], pp. v-vi) would be to some extent applicable also to Plotinus' philosophy. It certainly indicates the direction in which our reconstruction of Neoplatonism must steer. Whitehead, too, maintains that "the purpose of philosophy is to rationalize mysticism" (MT 174).
7. See also SMW 17; PR 70-71/108-111.
8. See also AI 156; MT 139.

9. MT 138: "The concept of matter presupposed simple location. Each bit of matter was self-contained, localized in a region with a passive, static network of spatial relations, entwined in a uniform relational system from infinity to infinity and from eternity to eternity." See also SMW 17; AI 156-157; PR 309/471.
10. See also MT 134.
11. See also SMW 57-58; PR 209/319.
12. PR 30/45, 79/122, 158/240; AI 132, 276.
13. W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 106-111. See also I. Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics* (Bloomington, London: Indiana University Press, 1958), pp. 63-67, 116-119.
14. Whitehead regards as fallacious the notion of a point in process, which implies that "process can be analyzed into compositions of final realities, themselves devoid of process" (MT 96). Leclerc views this possibility of analysis as the doctrine of the unchanging subject of change (*Whitehead's Metaphysics*, p. 64).
15. The immanence of the cause in the effect, too, is an internal relation (AI 157). Leclerc mentions a significant view of the twentieth-century physics that all interaction between the particles involves the gain or loss of energy, understood as an internal ingredient of the particles (*Whitehead's Metaphysics*, p. 118, n. 2).
16. See also PR 79/122. For the "living" elements of the traditional notion of substance in Whitehead's thought, see W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, pp. 111-115.
17. For the linkage of the two fallacies, see AI 276.
18. See also MT 136: "The whole spatial universe is...a field of incessant activity."
19. The view of nature as a theater for interrelations of activities is also the basic character of Whitehead's own philosophy of organism. One of the metaphysical principles in his philosophy is that "the very essence of real actuality...is process" (AI 274). Again, the interrelatedness of activities points to the solidarity of the universe, the fundamental thesis of his philosophy: "every item of the universe, including all the other actual entities, is a constituent in the constitution of any one actual entity" (PR 148/224). It is generalized in MT 66: "...each entity, of whatever type, essentially involves its own connection with the universe of other things." For the formulation of the thesis in terms of internal relations, see J. L. Nobb, *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Extension and Solidarity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 1. To the elucidation of

- interconnectedness of actualities the philosophy of organism is devoted (PR xii/vii, 7/10, 50/79-80; AI 228; MT 66, 140). Hence it is set in contrast with the philosophy of substance (PR 151/228, 205/311).
20. *Phaedrus* 245c-246a; *Laws* 895e-896b, 966e.
21. IV 7 [2], 9, 6-7; 12, 4. See also V 1 [10], 2, 1-27.
22. The universe is conceived to be dynamic process also in the *Timaeus*. For the analogy of the Whiteheadian actual entity to the process of becoming and perishing in *Timaeus* 28a, see PR 82/126.
23. For Plotinus' rejection of a static substance as the subject of change, see VI 3 [44], 2, 1-4. For the nature of body as continual flux, see also II 1 [40], 2, 5-6; IV 3 [27], 8, 24-27; 26, 53-54; IV 7 [2], 3, 19; 8, 45; V 6 [24], 6, 15-16.  
For the thesis that everything aspires to contemplate, see III 8 [30], 1, 1-7; 1, 18-21. For the earth's perception, see IV 4 [28], 26, 5ff.
24. In SMW 101-102 Whitehead points out that in the nineteenth century the notion of energy becomes fundamental and displaces matter from its unique preeminence, endangering the adequacy of scientific materialism.
25. G. M. Gurtler, *The Experience of Unity*, p. 116.
26. See 32, 47-48: "...it was not possible for all the individual things to be as if they were alone." See also VI 7 [38], 2, 30-36. Gurtler notes: "Absolute autonomy or individuality would indeed make little sense in Plotinus" ("Sympathy in Plotinus," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1984): 403).
27. Gurtler here finds out two foci of sympathy: (i) the comprehensive unity of the universe as a whole and (ii) the particular sympathy operative between its different parts (*The Experience of Unity*, p. 112). For the connection between the Platonic conception of the universe and the Plotinian cosmic sympathy, see also IV 4 [28], 35, 8-9.
28. See also IV 4 [28], 23, 19-28; IV 5 [29], 1, 34-40; 2, 16ff.; 8, 1-7.
29. IV 4 [28], 26, 1-4; 40, 1-4; 41, 1-9; IV 9 [8], 3, 4-6.
30. For the possibility of considering the problem of other minds with recourse to sympathy among souls, see G. M. Gurtler, *The Experience of Unity*, p. 93; *idem*, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1984): 406. On the contrary, Paul Henry believes that despite his adoption of sympathy, man is for Plotinus an isolated monad ("The Place of Plotinus in the History of Thought," in *Plotinus, The Enneads*, tr. S. MacKenna, revised by B. S. Page, 3rd ed. [London: Faber & Faber, 1962], p. xxxix). See also É. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, p. 5.

At the section named "The Flux of Energy" in the eleventh chapter of AI, Whitehead claims that the contrasted aspects of nature, continuity and atomicity, are both indispensable and, in their modern phase, relevant to the present stage of science. Continuity is represented by a flux of energy with a quantitative flow and a definite direction, while atomicity by the nature of electrons, protons, and photons as unit charges of electricity and the quanta of the flux of energy (AI 185-186). These aspects, of course, are sufficiently considered in his notion of actual occasion. Also in Plotinus' doctrine of sympathy, as Gurtler notes, the individuality of each member of a unitary whole and the basic unity among members are well balanced (*The Experience of Unity*, p. 112; *International Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1984):398). This parallel would certainly support our attempt to reevaluate Plotinus' doctrine of sympathy from the Whiteheadian perspective.

For our present inquiry we should not overlook D. F. T. Rodier's illuminating paper, "The Problem of Ordered Chaos in Whitehead and Plotinus," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. R. B. Harris (Norfolk: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), pp. 301-317. He views that Whitehead's theory of non-statistical probability is an expression of the same philosophical concern as Plotinus' account of sympathy. The concept of simple location involves great difficulties for induction (SMW 151). Whitehead endeavors to defend the possibility of induction on the basis of his metaphysics. Non-statistical probability is supported by two factors. First, any actual occasion belonging to an assigned species requires its past environment adapted to that species. Second, the directionality of each actual occasion toward novelty is derived from the primordial nature of God (PR 206-207/314-315). If we attempt to revise Plotinus' doctrine of sympathy by exploiting this suggestion, we are recommended to ground sympathy on both the interconnection among Forms and "the Soul entertaining ideas" (AI 275), rather than on the cosmic soul alone. In other words, the revision calls for the interweaving of the Psyche and the Forms.

In addition, Rodier explicitly maintains that "Plotinus is asserting that each part of the universe is related to each other part in terms of its own internal structure" (*op. cit.*, p. 309). This view is no doubt encouraging to our philosophical concern. He finds Plotinus' distinction between internal and external relations in IV 4 [28], 11, 1-7 (*ibid.*). See also note 26.

31. The eternal objects are modeled on the Platonic Forms (PR 44/70).  
32. See also W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, p. 252.

33. The eternal objects also insure the aesthetic values of nature (SMW 87-88). The role of the Forms must not be confined solely to cosmology.  
34. The "eternality" of Forms further implies their identity and immutability over time among their diverse temporal embodiments (SMW 86-87).  
35. I. Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics*, p. 98; W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, p. 197.  
36. F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937), pp. 183-184.  
37. Whitehead presents no comprehensive classification of eternal objects. For his suggestion of several examples, see PR 52/82. See also W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, pp. 202-203. For his admission of secondary qualities, see AI 293: "The appearance will...not [be] an importation of qualities and relations without any corresponding exemplification in the reality." For Plato's comprehensive list of Forms, see *Epistle VII*, 342d.

As to the extent of Forms Plotinus' position is slightly subtle. Wagner claims that Plotinus is not a naive realist; sensible qualities for him are in general accidents of the soul's products, so that they do not belong among the items carried down from the intelligible world. The intelligible world, which does not contain naive realist Forms such as Justice and Goodness, can be absolutely determinate and without contrariety, and therefore provides a foundation for science. See M. F. Wagner, "Realism and the Foundations of Science in Plotinus," *Ancient Philosophy* 5 (1985): 269-292. I do not share this view. Indeed Plotinus holds that sensible qualities are only affections ( $\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta$ ) of underlying substances and do not reveal to us the reality of what underlies sensible appearance (II 6 [17], 1, 40-49; VI 2 [43], 14, 17-18). But it is not warranted to jump from this view to the conclusion that the intelligible world contains no adjectival Forms. In II 6 [17], 1, 13-15 Plotinus admits that the qualities in the noetic realm are *differentiae* of substance. In V 9 [5], 10, 6-9, we are told that there are "harmonious qualities" in the intelligible world. All qualities have been seen in that world (VI 2 [43], 21, 44-53). It is not impossible to regard the qualities in discussion as *differentiae*, though Wagner does not envisage this alternative. But it would be rash to limit the range of the adjectival Forms solely to the *differentiae*. There are two noteworthy passages. In VI 7 [38], 12, 23-30, Plotinus exquisitely depicts the intelligible world as one quality that holds and keeps all the qualities in itself. Although it would be possible to take this passage as a mere metaphor, the second passage cannot be treated as a metaphor. In



III 6 [26], 17, 22-25 Plotinus, abiding by *Timaeus* 52a, maintains that the color and other sensible qualities are named after their intelligible archetypes; the archetypes of certain sensible qualities must be posited as the Forms. Therefore, I believe, Wagner's attempt to show that Plotinus is not a naive realist is not successful enough. The extent of the Forms in the Plotinian noetic world is reserved for fuller consideration at another occasion.

I would like to make two more comments on Wagner's paper. In the first place, he is inclined toward an idealist interpretation of the relation between Intellect and Forms, regarding Forms as the outward images of Intellect's simple, inner act of self-determination (*op. cit.*: 280-285). This view is misleading, because it forces Intellect to contemplate its outward images and thereby is very likely to be deceived. For Plotinus' endeavor to avoid the Middle-Platonic conception of Forms as God's thoughts, see my "The One's Knowledge in Plotinus," (Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1993), pp. 124-126. In the second place, the significance of the intelligible world for him cannot be exhausted by it being the foundation for science. Incidentally, Gurtler remarks that an explanation of the One "comes at the end of a long and critical examination beginning with human experience and tracing out the necessary conditions that make such experience possible" ("Plotinus and the Platonic *Parmenides*," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1992): 457). This remark would be surely applicable to Intellect lying in the midway of the "long and critical examination." Hence the intelligible world must be a part of a metaphysical system in terms of which every item of our experience can be interpreted. It must be the foundation, not only for science, but for ethics, religious and aesthetic experiences. The extent of Forms needs to be considered in such a wide context.

On the atomic conception of actuality, the Forms make a contribution to the dissolution of the substance-quality metaphysics in another way. To generalize, the influence of the past on the present requires for its intelligibility the existence of entities which can be multiply instantiated. The part of the Forms required for interrelatedness in causation is called a "relational function" (SMW 103; PR 58/91, 164/249, 238/364, 291/445-446; AI 183; MT 100). See also W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, pp. 139-140, 217. Although the relational functions of the Forms can cope with the isolation fallacy, our metaphysics does not adopt the atomic theory of actuality and is reluctant to appeal to the relational functions.

38. Whitehead's notion of "ingression" of an eternal object in an actual entity is certainly modeled on the verb εἰσιέναι employed at the Receptacle passage of the *Timaeus* (50cl, 3, 4).  
Taylor notes that there is "an almost absolute equivalence" of the Receptacle with "passage"—the condition of only "events" and no "objects" ingredient in them—in Whitehead's early works such as *The Principles of Natural Knowledge* and *The Concept of Nature*. See A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work* (London: Methuen, 1926; reprint ed., Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 456, n. 1. Keeping in mind that "objects" are the ancestors of eternal objects and "events" those of actual entities, we cannot but doubt whether or not the equivalence is "almost absolute."
39. See also AI 150, 154, 187, 201, 275.
40. For Whitehead's allusion to this section, see AI 134, 150.  
Whitehead does not fully explain why the Receptacle can be the medium of intercommunication. For the revision of his theory of the metaphysical continuum of extension for grounding the mutual immanence of actual occasions, see J. L. Nobo, *Extension and Solidarity*, pp. 207-231, 348.
41. For the distinction between "being actually existent" and "being actuality," see 3, 2-3.
42. This rejection is inseparably linked with Whitehead's criticism of the Platonic Forms as a kind of self-sustaining actuality. See note 35.
43. The following sketch of Fujisawa's interpretation of Plato is based on his "Ἐχειν, Μετέχειν and Idioms of 'Paradeigmatism' in Plato's Theory of Forms," *Phronesis* 19 (1974): 49-56.
44. By the symbols, Φ, F, x, we respectively refer to the separate Form, the immanent character, and the individual thing which participates in the Form and has the character. As to the use of them I follow the examples of Vlastos. See G. Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*," in *Plato I*, ed. G. Vlastos, (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1970), pp. 132-136. The symbol "F" will be used indiscriminately for both the character and the corresponding predicate.
45. For the disappearance of participation terminology in later dialogues, see R. D. Archer-Hind, *The Timaeus of Plato*, edited with Introduction and Notes (New York: Macmillan, 1888; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1973), p. 182; H. Cherniss, "The Relation of the *Timaeus* to Plato's Later Dialogues," in *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*, ed. R. E. Allen (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 362-364; W. D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951; reprint ed., Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 230.

It must be noted that in the *Timaeus* the adjectival Forms and their images are treated on the same footing as the substantial Forms and their images. See *Timaeus* 51a6 with F. M. Cornford's note in his *Plato's Cosmology*, p. 186, n. 3 and N. Fujisawa, *Phronesis* 19 (1974): 54, n. 64.

46. N. Fujisawa, *Phronesis* 19 (1974): 56.

47. I cannot subscribe to Whitehead's observation that Plato is an adherent to substance-quality metaphysics (PR 137/209).

In addition, Whitehead seems to take "ingression" and "participation" almost synonymously (PR 39-40/63). This point would insinuate his possible supposition that participation terminology for describing phenomena is still viable in the *Timaeus*, in other words, the fact that he is not fully aware of the philosophical disadvantages of that terminology.

48. According to Fujisawa, Aristotle's application of the term "the participant" to the Receptacle in *Physics* 209b11-13 and 15 would show that he is led, by his basic metaphysics, to reintroduce into Plato's conception of the Receptacle "this something" as the subject-substrate; the statement, "The Receptacle participates in the Form," is an unwarranted, non-Platonic locution. See N. Fujisawa, *Phronesis* 19 (1974): 55-56; W. D. Ross, *Aristotle's Physics*, Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 565-566.

From this viewpoint, Plotinus' position concerning sensible matter, *prima facie*, would be essentially non-Platonic. In his own position it is matter that participates in Forms (VI 5 [23], 8, 1-2; III 6 [26], 11, 4-8; 11, 31-43). Does this imply that he introduces into his conception of matter the Aristotelian self-subsisting entity? The answer is negative. "Matter's participation in Form" seems to be simply a *façon de parler*; "participation" would imply no more than a causal dependence, and the syntactical structure of the participation locution is not considered. In VI 5 [23], 8, Plotinus repeats that what matter receives is not the Form itself but its likeness. Fujisawa points out that while employing such expressions as "receive (δέχεσθαι)" and "come into (εἰσέναι, ἐγγίγνεσθαι)" in the *Timaeus*, Plato is emphatic in asserting that what comes into the Receptacle is not the Form itself but its image (*Phronesis* 19 (1974): 55). Hence Plotinus in VI 5 [23], 8 faithfully abides by the spirit of that dialogue; he, I believe, is misled neither by Aristotle's characterization of the Receptacle as the participant nor by *Timaeus* 51a7-b1 μεταλαμβάνον δὲ... τοῦ νοητοῦ, the phrase which is often misconstrued to be an evidence of the use of "participation in the Form" in the later dialogues. (Proclus made this misinterpretation [*In Parm.* col. 876. 34-35].)

In exploring the significance of the Receptacle in relation to the logic of Paradigmatism, therefore, we may rely primarily on suggestions from the *Timaeus* and temporarily shelve Plotinus' theory of "matter's participation in the Form."

49. For the Whiteheadian counterpart of the first thesis, see PR 39/63; SMW 158.

50. For the Whiteheadian counterpart of the second thesis, see PR 40/63-64.

51. See also F. M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937), p. 100.

52. See my "The Omnipresence of Being: An Essay on the Dispute about Indian Influences on Plotinus," in *Neoplatonism and Indian Philosophy: Being, Becoming, and Knowing*, ed. P. M. Gregorios (Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming); and "The One's Knowledge," pp. 113-118, 127-128.

The similar point is never overlooked in Whitehead's own position. The relation between an eternal object and an actual entity is internal as regards the latter, but external as regards the former (SMW 160). The self-identity of eternal objects is not dependent on the flux of things (SMW 151).

53. Referring to *Timaeus* 37a, some critics view that the intellect-intelligible unity was maintained, though in an obscure and dispersed fashion, by Plato himself. See J. Pépin, "Éléments pour une histoire de la relation entre l'intelligence et l'intelligible chez Plotin et dans le Néoplatonisme," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 146 (1956): 40-44; R. D. Archer-Hind, *The Timaeus of Plato*, p. 115. For my objection to this view, see "The One's Knowledge," pp. 94-95, n. 45 to Chapter II of Part I; and "Plotinus on *Phaedrus* 247D7-E1: The Platonic *Locus Classicus* of the Identity of Intellect with the Intelligible Objects," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1997): 409-410.

54. The following sketch of Whitehead's exegesis of the *Sophist* is based on AI 119-121.

55. Plato himself, however, is not committed to this criterion. See my "The One's Knowledge," pp. 49-50, n. 50 to Chapter I of Part I. Plotinus also refuses to apply the criterion to the intelligible entities (III 6 [26], 6, 34-38).

56. It seems to me that Whitehead crucially deviates from Plato's own intention in his observation that the criterion of being applies to true being so that Forms are acted upon in being known. For more detailed analysis of the defense of the theory of Forms in the *Sophist*, see my "The One's Knowledge," pp. 24-34.

57. See A. Sumi, "The One's Knowledge," pp. 113-118.

58. A. H. Armstrong, "The Background of the Doctrine 'That the Intelligibles are not outside the Intellect,'" in *Les Sources de Plotin* (Geneva, Vandoevres: Foundation Hardt, 1957), pp. 400-401.
  59. R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedo*, Translated with an Introduction and Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), pp. 144-145. See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 988a8-11, 991b3-5; *On Generation and Corruption* 335b7ff.. For Aristotle's characterization of the Platonic Forms as "potentialities," see *Metaphysics* 1050b34-1051a2.
- Whitehead is critical about Plato's conception of Forms as a kind of self-sustaining actuality (see note 35). Indeed the description of the realm of Forms as the Living Being in the *Timaeus* and the causal theory of Forms in the *Phaedo* invite the absorption of actuality to Forms. The inconsistency between the self-sustaining, actual Forms and the Forms devoid of efficacy would be one of the reasons why Whitehead considers Plato to be "never entirely self-consistent, and rarely explicit and devoid of ambiguity" (AI 146) and to have "always failed in his attempts at systematization" (AI 166).
60. I. Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics*, p. 24. The general Aristotelian principle is not exactly identical with the ontological principle, but generalizes it. See L. S. Ford, "Perfecting the Ontological Principle," in *Metaphysics as Foundation: Essays in Honor of Ivor Leclerc*, ed. P. A. Bogard & G. Treash, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 132. We may note that Aristotle characterizes the Platonic Forms as potentialities in the context dealing with the priority of actuality to potentiality (see note 59).
  61. See also PR 167/254, 257/392, 349/530.
  62. P. Hadot, "Être, Vie, Pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin," in *Les Sources de Plotin* (Geneva, Vandoevres: Foundation Hardt, 1957), pp. 108-120; M. Atkinson, *Plotinus: Ennead V. 1, A Commentary with Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 76-77; J. N. Deek, *Nature, Contemplation and the One: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 27, n. 7; R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 55.
  63. For more detailed discussion about the One as the hyper-ontic activity, see my "The One's Knowledge," pp. 263-264, 311-315.
  64. See note 57.
  65. A good example is his exegesis of *Epistle II*, 312e (I 8 [51], 2, 28-32; V I [10], 8, 1-4; VI 7 [38], 42, 8-20). My own position is that the *locus classicus* for the priority of actuality is primarily *Republic* 509b, where the Good is said to be beyond being with

66. regard to power. See my "The One's Knowledge," pp. 314-315. For Plotinus' rejection of the Middle-Platonic doctrine, see also VI 7 [38], 8, 3-8. For more detailed discussion about this issue, see my "The One's Knowledge," pp. 124-126.
- The thesis to which Plotinus appeals for refusing the Middle-Platonic doctrine is the one that Plato employs for dismissing the suggestion that the Form may be a concept arising in human mind, the thesis that a concept is always of something that is (*Parmenides* 132b-c). Cornford's comment on this passage can be taken as an objection to the Middle-Platonic doctrine: "If it [sc. the Form] existed only in one mind, it would be inaccessible to all other" (*Plato and Parmenides*, p. 91). Notice that this thesis is exactly the same as the Cartesian version of the ontological principle, cited by Whitehead, that "every clear and distinct conception...cannot derive its origin from what is nought" (PR 40/64). In other words, the ontological principle in its Cartesian version rather checks the Middle-Platonic doctrine.
- In spite of Plato's refusal to regard Forms as concepts, the following remark by Patrides is acceptable: "Certainly the ever-present tendency to regard Plato's Forms as thoughts in the Divine Mind does not cancel the debt owed to Plato's original conception" ("The High and Aiery Hills of Platonism: An Introduction to the Cambridge Platonists," in *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. C. A. Patrides [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969], p. 3).
67. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 54.
  68. A. Sumi, "The One's Knowledge," p. 126.
  69. I. Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics*, pp. 199-200. The Whiteheadian claim that apart from forms, no existence of God is possible is countered by Neville's view that God as creator *ex nihilo* can exist without determinateness. R. C. Neville, *A Theology, Primer* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 30-33.
  70. For the dynamic conception of intelligible matter, see J. M. Rist, "The Indefinite Dyad and Intelligible Matter in Plotinus," *Classical Quarterly* 12 (1962): 101-102.
  71. W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, p. 216.
  72. For the initial data as a disjunctive multiplicity, see PR 30/44, 221/338.
  73. See also PR 240/367, 247/378, 248/380.
  74. A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 52.
  75. A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain*, pp. 51-52.

76. W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, p. 200, n. 7. Strictly speaking, the notion of eternal objects as possibilities does not *per se* entail the rejection of the principle of plenitude. Lovejoy believes that the principle implies the conception of the world of Forms as "an order of 'possibilities'" (*The Great Chain*, p. 53). It is Whitehead's notion of God as "the principle of limitation" in SMW whereby he rejects the principle of plenitude (*op. cit.*, p. 333). For a more striking statement of his rejection of that principle, see AI 276: "There is no totality which is the harmony of all perfections."

In spite of his introduction of "the principle of limitation," contrary to Lovejoy's estimation, Whitehead's position in SMW is that all eternal objects are ingredient in all actual occasions: God is not yet considered to be the locus of unrealized possibilities so that eternal objects must depend on one or more of the actual occasions already in existence. See L. S. Ford, *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics 1925-1929* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 72-76. In SMW hence the rejection of the principle of plenitude is not complete. Whitehead is there forced to make room for unrealized possibilities. Our position that the Divine Eros is endowed with the urge to the finite realization of Forms is rather akin to his later theory of the elimination of alternative possibilities by means of negative prehension (PR 23-24/35, 41/66).

77. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, pp. 64-65; A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain*, pp. 61-62.
78. A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain*, p. 50, Italics mine.
79. *On Generation and Corruption* 335b18-21. For Aristotle's rejection of the principle of plenitude, see A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain*, p. 55.
80. See note 77.
81. Plotinus continues as follows: "...but if one means 'things in the cosmos,' including soul and the things in the soul, all the things are here below which are in the intelligible world" (13,17-19, tr. A. H. Armstrong, adapted by A. Sumi). The soul here in discussion is the soul rising up from the body (13, 12). In Lovejoy's words, the things in the soul would belong to "conceptual possibility" rather than to "physical actuality."
82. W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, p. 252-254.
83. W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, p. 253.
84. See also H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), pp. 116-120; A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus's Doctrine of the Infinite and Its Significance for Christian Thought," *Downside Review* 73 (1955): 51; J. M. Rist,

- "Ideas of Individuals in Plotinus: A Reply to Dr. Blumenthal," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 24 (1970): 299; P. S. Mamo, "Forms of Individuals in the *Enneads*," *Phronesis* 14 (1969): 87, n. 27; A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain*, p. 66.
85. Syrianus, *In Met.* 147,1-6. It is noteworthy that a disciple of Plotinus so explicitly refuses the principle of plenitude.
86. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 94.
87. W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, p. 254. See also AI 276. The same thought is expressed otherwise in MT 52: "A partially understood pattern is more definite as to what it excludes than as to what its completion would include. As to inclusion there are an infinitude of alternative modes of completion."
88. W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1928), 1:189.
89. In PR all relationships among eternal objects are taken as dependent on the primordial valuations of God. In SMW, however, Whitehead considers each eternal object to have its status in the "general systematic complex of mutual relatedness" which "is inherent in the character of possibility," so that "the realm of eternal objects is properly described as a 'realm'" (SMW 161, Italics mine). As Rorty points out, the latter view implies that those objects might, all by themselves, exercise an influence upon the choices made about them, and would have to be counted as themselves actualities. Whitehead was incautious about this danger in SMW. See R. M. Rorty, "Matter and Event," in *Explorations in Whitehead's Philosophy*, ed. L. S. Ford and G. L. Kline (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), p. 91. But Christian endeavors to show that Whitehead in SMW speaks of eternal objects as related in the primordial nature of God, and thereby that his doctrine in SMW is consistent with that in PR (*An Interpretation*, pp. 258-263). Here I do not go into problems which may be raised by Christian's construction.
90. See W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, p. 277.
91. On the contrary, Forms in their individual essences are only externally related (W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, p. 277). See also note 92.

For internal relatedness among Forms in Plotinus, see V 8 [31], 4 *passim*; V 9 [5], 10, 9-10. Bréhier regards Plotinus' theory of mutual inclusiveness of intelligible beings as the transformation of the Stoic doctrine of universal sympathy (*The Philosophy of Plotinus*, p. 94). Although I cannot subscribe to this view, it reminds us of internal relatedness among Forms.

The Platonic counterpart of the relational essence of eternal objects would be the Form's capacity ( $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$ ) of combination

with other Forms (*Sophist* 251e, 252d).

92. A. H. Armstrong, "Eternity, Life and Movement in Plotinus' Accounts of ΝΟΥΣ," in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris: Centre de la Recherche Scientifique, 1971), pp. 67-74; *idem*, "Elements in the Thought of Plotinus at Variance with Classical Intellectualism," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 93 (1973): 19.

For the unchangeability of the individual essences of Forms not to be infringed upon by possible modifications in their relational essences, their relational essences must be only externally related to their own individual essences, while those individual essences are internally related to their own relational essences, as Whitehead notes in "the principle of the Isolation of Eternal Objects" (SMW 165). This external relatedness also solves the difficulty posed by the finite realization of specific Forms as mentioned in note 76. See L. S. Ford, *The Emergence*, pp. 76-80.

Rorty tries to defend the unchangeability of eternal objects in being reevaluated, by saying that the order among them "is not some sort of quasi-spatiotemporal reshuffling, but is simply the 'suggestions' about which eternal objects are more relevant than others made to a concrescent actual entity...by the Primordial Nature of God" (*Explorations*, pp. 102-103, n. 39). But this conception of the order cannot be a plausible solution to the present problem.

On the alternative that the order among eternal objects is intrinsically fixed, Rorty notes, the actuality would be forced to "follow rigid guidelines, tiresomely reiterating pre-established patterns" (*op. cit.*, p. 91). On the other hand, our proposal that the order is dependent on the Psyche's activity would dispel an anxiety that Divine Intellect might get bored with itself. Armstrong believes that this anxiety, of which "a great philosopher in the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition should ever have thought," must have crossed Plotinus' mind (*The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 93 (1973): 20). Because of the necessity to explain why Intellect does not get bored with itself, Plotinus found himself compelled, perhaps rather against his will, to talk about "eternal life" in V 8 [31], 4 (*ibid.*). The "eternal life" without any tedium is described as follows:

They do not grow weary of contemplation there, or so filled with it as to cease contemplating....But there is a lack of satisfaction there in the sense that fullness does not cause contempt for that which has produced it: for that which sees goes on seeing still more, and, perceiving an infinite self and those which are seen, follows its own nature (V 8 [31], 4,

27-34, tr. A. H. Armstrong, adapted by A. Sumi).

This description nicely fits our proposal. An infinite multiplicity of Forms—grasped would result in the infinite richness of the basic Psyche's experience of fullness, the content of which is continually and endlessly being modified in its patterns. But our view may be countered by the objection that the eternality of Forms, whether their order is fixed or not, does not allow God to experience any absolute novelty. See L. S. Ford, "Contrasting Conceptions of Creation," *Review of Metaphysics* 45 (1991): 100-102.

93. I. Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics*, p. 84.  
 94. I. Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics*, p. 86.  
 95. For the ontological status of the One as the unique activity, see note 63. In his informal presentation of the One's nature and activity, Plotinus speaks of the self-creation of the One (VI 8 [39], 13, 55; 15, 8-9).  
 96. G. M. Gurtler, *The Experience of Unity*, p. 81.  
 97. For my exegesis of this passage, see A. Sumi, "The One's Knowledge," p. 200. See also G. M. Gurtler, *The Experience of Unity*, p. 81: "The use of consciousness with the One clarifies the kind of unity implied by the other cases...."  
 98. See also V 6 [24], 5, 1-2; VI 7 [38], 16, 19-20; 35, 30-33.  
 99. G. M. Gurtler, *The Experience of Unity*, p. 80.  
 100. D. F. T. Rodier, *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, pp. 313-315.  
 101. It is true, as Rodier notes, that the image of any Form in matter has the unstability of matter. But the unstability does not confirm that matter is a dynamic principle responsible for the ongoingness of the universe. It is rather better compared to a dead body (II 4 [12], 5, 15-18; V 1 [10], 2, 25-27).  
 102. W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, pp. 277-279.  
 103. For the undiminished giving of the One's power, see V 5 [32], 10, 21-23; VI 9 [9], 5, 36-37; 9, 1-6.  
 104. IV 8 [6], 6, 10; V 2 [11], 2, 2; V 3 [49], 12, 33-34; V 4 [7], 2, 21; 2, 33-34. See also M. Baltes, *Die Weltentstehung des platonischen Timaios nach den antiken Interpreten*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976-1978), 1: 200.  
 105. I. Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics*, pp. 82-85.  
 106. In Whitehead's interpretation, the Psyche and the Eros are indissolubly tied with one another. It is from the operation of both of them that "the 'life and motion,' which are essentials in Plato's later thought, are derived" (AI 275).

There is an alternative that the One is analogized to such a Form as Order-in-general that corresponds to the Form of the

Good. But, if it were introduced, the multiplicity of Forms would no longer remain unstructured. Whitehead rejects the notion of one ideal order (PR 83-84/128). See R. M. Rorty, *Explorations*, pp. 91-92.

107. See W. J. Garland, "The Ultimacy of Creativity," in *Explorations in Whitehead's Philosophy*, ed. L. S. Ford and G. L. Kline, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), p. 212. For an affinity of Whitehead's philosophy of organism to the scheme of Spinoza's thought, see PR 7/10-11.
108. Whitehead rejects the Spinozistic view that the necessary order of possibility is exhaustively actualized in an order constituted by actualities (W. A. Christian, *An Interpretation*, pp. 278-279).  
Ford entertains an alternative that the Forms are created out of something absolutely indeterminate (*Review of Metaphysics* 45 (1991): 102).
109. The notion of *natura naturans* would be also applicable to the creative One. For the Plotinian One as the highest "nature," see J. N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One*, p. 20.
110. I. Leclerc, "Being and Becoming in Whitehead's Philosophy," in *Explorations in Whitehead's Philosophy*, ed. L. S. Ford and G. L. Kline, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), pp. 57-59.
111. Garland considers Whitehead's dictum that "[it] lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity" (PR 21/31) to imply that our attempts at explanation must end at what he calls "ultimate explanation," which appeals to the principle of creativity, but not to specific actual entities (*Explorations*, pp. 222-223).
112. Plato also entertains that the total isolation of the Forms results in their non-existence, from a different viewpoint (*Sophist* 251e-252a).

Questioning the ultimacy of Whitehead's category of the ultimate, Neville proposes the alternative conception of creativity, designated as "ontological creativity," that it creates both one and many and accounts for ontological unity of one and many, the condition for creativity in the category of the ultimate. See R. C. Neville, "Whitehead on the One and the Many," in *Explorations in Whitehead's Philosophy*, ed. L. S. Ford and G. L. Kline (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), pp. 257-271. If the creative One were analogized to ontological creativity which is "productive of all determinate plurality" (*op. cit.*, p. 267), we could say that all Forms were derived from it. In the present undertaking, however, we wish to rest on Whitehead's primitive notion of creativity with Leclerc's interpretation and do not develop the notion of the creative One with recourse to Neville's

- alternative conception.
113. See J. Bussanich, "Plotinus on the Inner Life of the One," *Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1987): 178. See also my "The One's Knowledge," p. 321, n. 27 to Chapter VI of Part II.
114. I 7 [54], 1, 17-20; III 9 [13], 9, 8-10; V 3 [49], 12, 23-24; VI 7 [38], 40, 29-30. See also J. Bussanich, *The One and Its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), p. 213.
115. Here I subscribe to Garland's view that creativity is the ultimate explanatory principle that lies beyond the scope of the ontological principle (*Explorations*, pp. 217-224). The status of the Plotinian One as the hyper-ontic activity presupposes the priority of ἐνέργεια to οὐσία, a bold challenge to the Aristotelian tradition of metaphysics ("The One's Knowledge," pp. 312-313). Whitehead characterizes the ontological principle as "the general Aristotelian principle" (PR 40/64). Leclerc explains this characterization by saying that the ontological principle constitutes the fundamental assertion about "existence" or "being" of a thing which is actual or οὐσία (*Whitehead's Metaphysics*, pp. 20-25). The thesis that the principle of creativity lies beyond the scope of the ontological principle marks its ultimacy over that Aristotelian principle, though it is not a challenge to it.
116. D. F. T. Rodier, *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, p. 315.
117. Since creativity is somehow a positive notion, our endeavor to develop the notion of the One in its analogy to creativity is forced to counterbalance the positivity derived from the notion of creativity and the transcendence which necessarily involves some negativity. In other words, we are reluctant to rely deeply on negative theology in unfolding the notion of the creative One. In this respect, our stance will be sharply contrasted with Armstrong's position that he expects a positive contribution of the negative theology of the One to natural theology in the intellectual climate of our own period. See A. H. Armstrong, "The Escape of the One: An Investigation of Some Possibilities of Apophatic Theology Imperfectly Realised in the West," *Studia Patristica* 13 (1975): 87-89; "Negative Theology, Myth and Incarnation," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. D. O'Meara (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 213-222; "Platonic Mirrors," *Eranos* 55 (1988): 172-173; "On Not Knowing Too Much about God," *Philosophy*, supplement 25 (1989): 129-145. For my objection to his position, see A. Sumi, "The One's Knowledge," pp. 358-361.
118. My special thanks are due to Professor Lewis S. Ford for helpful suggestions and comments in producing the final version of this paper.

# Santayana's Christian Neo-Platonism

Paul G. Kuntz

## Part I

In the "Preface" to *Scepticism and Animal Faith* Santayana<sup>1</sup> writes that "The Realms of Being of which I speak are not parts of a cosmos, nor one great cosmos together; they are only kinds or categories of things which I find conspicuously different and worth distinguishing, at least in my own thoughts."<sup>1</sup> Does this mean that categories are as real as the cosmos or that we make the categorial distinctions in our thought? *Scepticism and Animal Faith* can be read in either an objectivist or a subjectivist way.

The significance of order in Santayana's philosophy had not fully developed by 1889, in *Lotze's System of Philosophy*, though there is a clear repudiation, following Lotze, of a single cosmic order as in Leibniz, a "best of all possible worlds."<sup>2</sup> The full significance comes with the process by which matter takes on form, the central problem of the production of art in *The Sense of Beauty* and *Reason in Art*.<sup>3</sup> Order is central also in Santayana's moral and political philosophy, and the preliminary chapter "Chaos and Order" shows this.<sup>4</sup> What is particularly helpful in understanding the relationship of the four categorical orders to each other is his manuscript "The Order of Genesis and the Order of Discovery." How does Santayana's thinking about the four "realms" relate essence to existence to truth and to spirit? The answer is made very clear in *Scepticism and Animal Faith* and this shows that the initial problem of order in *The Life of Reason*<sup>5</sup> was, to Santayana's

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<sup>1</sup>Reprinted from an article "The Ascent of Spirit: Is Santayana's System a Naturalistic Neo-Platonic Hierarchy?" From *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the Santayana Society* 10 (Fall 1992): 22-31. Used by permission.

satisfaction, solved in *Realms of Being*.<sup>6</sup> I think badly of Dewey's rejection of the *Realms* to leave only *The Life of Reason* by which to remember Santayana's contribution to moral philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

To set the stage for Santayana on order and the categories we will restate his apprehension and appropriation of Royce and James, whose philosophies of order become typical of the "Dialecticians" and the "Naturalists" respectively. Santayana's critique remains the best approach to understanding their relationship.

Then we can begin to appreciate in Santayana the distinction between essence and existence, first pointed out to Santayana by Royce, after the publication of *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. How Santayana came to add to the realms, beyond *matter* and *essence*, those of *truth* and *spirit* is not so clear, but "Apologia Pro Mente Sua" places the realms in their "proper logical" order.

There is a journey of the mind, as St. Bonaventura called it *itinerarium mentis*, from *essence* to *matter*, then to *truth* and to *spirit*. The realms are stages of a metaphysical adventure or pilgrimage, even, in a related metaphor, called by Santayana a "hunt."

In these metaphors Santayana reveals himself to be very much a Catholic philosopher working with a Neo-Platonic hierarchical scheme of Jacob's Ladder. Not only are persons on various levels, as says the Vicar of Iffley in *The Last Puritan*, "hylic," "psychic," and "pneumatic,"<sup>8</sup> but to compress the four realms or stages into three, societies are pre-rational, rational, and post-rational. These correspond to matter, essence and truth, and spirit in the metaphysics.

If the four orders as our categories are only what each of us finds "worth distinguishing," are they made by us and imposed upon reality or do we find them there in experiencing reality? *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, which as *The Life of Reason* can be read in either way, needs to be considered as a dialogue. The earlier dialogue is between the Naturalist (Empiricist) and the Dialectician (Idealist), that is, between James and Royce, and this is not unrelated to the later dialogue between the Subjectivist and the Objectivist—except that Santayana has a new basis for the categories, *animal faith*. Some categories may be nominal or subjective, but other categories are objective or real.

My conclusion will be that, although the *Realms* are first presented in a sceptical way, the conclusion of *Realms of Being*

uses the Holy Trinity as a symbol of three "dimensions of reality." If the three realms are not "one great cosmos together" are they one great God together, no parts, for God has no parts, but three aspects together as a fourth? How can each be all, yet the all a fourth dimension?

If one needs to define the term "order" which was carefully defined by James in *Principles of Psychology*<sup>9</sup> and by Royce in his *Principles of Logic*,<sup>10</sup> it is to the opening chapter of *The Life of Reason* that one could turn.<sup>11</sup> Although Santayana offers us seven meanings, among them is no parallel to serial order, which had deeply impressed James the psychologist, and which Royce the logician had defined in a way parallel to Whitehead and Russell; that is, a relation that is "asymmetrical, transitive and connected."<sup>12</sup> Santayana does not choose to be a mathematical formalist. The common sense meanings may be listed as:

1. "Any arrangement whatsoever" (RCS 36).
2. "A specific arrangement favourable to a given form of life" (RCS 36).
3. A process of gradually shifting stages (RCS 36).
4. "Another and now static order called historic truth," absolute and important (RCS 37).
5. "The efficacious and physical" causes (RCS 38).
6. An order of settled categories by which one accounts for something by its origin (RCS 38-9).
7. "The real universal order" (RCS 39).

"Order" obviously then has a wide enough range of meanings to cover all the varieties of being. Thus a single term can be specified to designate the relative status of a creature with its specific interest (Df. 2) or the absolute status of the cosmos itself (Df. 7). Order could be specified as to essential symmetry or asymmetry, be a two-termed symmetry rather than the three-termed asymmetry and transitivity (Df. 1), and one could argue for Santayana's philosophic shrewdness in avoiding the over-mathematising so evident in Russell's philosophic use of order as the central category of philosophy generally.

As Santayana demonstrated in his defiant imitation of analysis, "Some Meanings of the Word 'Is'," he could have begun his study of the categories with the definitions of "order."<sup>13</sup> Since our metaphysician chose rather to tell the story of the emergence of his "system," why should we not follow his narration?



Santayana always reminds us that he is a Catholic, and came as a stranger to live among Protestants. Since he considers philosophy to be religion naturalized, and he stresses above all his resentment of the Puritan arrogance of his teachers, we need to ask how exactly this helps to shape the contrast between the categories of a Catholic in contrast to those of a Protestant.

How does the very Protestant Bertrand Russell order his world and define the cosmos? In Santayana's excellent "Philosophy of Mr. Bertrand Russell," we find the Puritan moral habit of attaching his mind "to some essence or other."<sup>14</sup> Russell takes comfort in mathematics, thus "lay[ing] up his treasures in the mathematical heaven" (PBR 123). Russell in escape from the "dreary exile of the actual world" expresses his spirit. How, we may interrupt, does this differ from Santayana's radical distinction between essence and existence? The Puritan is far more dualistic, with less reconciliation of the sacramental Catholic.<sup>15</sup> The Puritan is confronting the realm of essences rather more morally than aesthetically. The Puritan essences are those "that ought to exist, or at least, if anything exists, it ought to conform to them. What exists, however, is deaf to this moral emphasis in the eternal; nature exists for no reason; and, indeed, why should she have subordinated her own arbitrariness to a good that is no less arbitrary? This good, however, is somehow good notwithstanding, so that there is an abysmal wrong in its not being obeyed. The world is, in principle, totally depraved; but as the good is not a power, there is no one to redeem the world" (PBR 153).

What is implicit in this well-distanced critique? That the modern categorial division is a deeper chasm than that of the Catholic world which has not only the redeemer—God who has become man by taking on human flesh in the realm of matter—but a Christology founded on the classical polarity of composite substance, matter and form.

The Protestant spirit, if it ceases to fear "hell in the next world," is still, in the heroic loneliness and rigidity of life, "sure to find it here." The Catholic Santayana, by contrast, retains bonds between levels of being and can use, as in myth and symbol, the material to express the spiritual. For Santayana to welcome religion as poetry, and use its rhetoric, is therefore deeply and metaphysically shocking to James and Royce.

Before Santayana, the young poet and critic, had recognized his own categories, Royce perceived what was implicit in *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*.<sup>16</sup> For "the moral imagination" there are welcome fictions, not believed true to fact, and Santayana's former dissertation director Royce, "who had kept a kindly but troubled watch over [his] youth, once said that the gist of [his] philosophy was the separation of essence from existence. This was one of those rare criticisms that open one's eyes to one's own nature, ...perhaps one of those prophecies that help to fulfil themselves; because it came long before [he] began to make any special use of the word "essence," or to analyse the concept of existence."<sup>17</sup> Of course Royce's Protestant belief in America as the fulfilment of the divine order in history was quite different from Russell's estrangement of the "free man" from irredeemable existence. Royce's Puritanism did not drop God as cosmic imperative for the human spirit. How does Santayana regard Royce's "God"?<sup>18</sup> When Calvinism is logicized, God becomes universal mind: "what" writes Santayana, "I should call the truth, but personified and turned into a psychological entity." Can the category truth mediate between essence and existence? Even though "the contrast between essence and existence...is inevitable and axiomatic," and there is a different sense of "is" used for each, Royce attempts logically to get from one to the other. But this is fallacious in the logic of Santayana's categories. Logic operates only hypothetically and not existentially, or as he put it "not necessarily applicable to natural facts." Still, Royce wanted *connection* and control of the realm of essence over the realm of matter. Santayana here finds what the Puritan atheist Russell shares with the optimistic theistic rationalist Royce. Moral fervor controls metaphysics, which we may call "metaphysical moralism," or the imposition of the partial prejudices of a mere creaturely part upon the whole cosmos.

Santayana's philosophy of order and the categories is to be as unprejudiced as Spinoza's. Royce is a hypocrite in rebuking Santayana's categorial separation of essence and existence. The real motive is that Royce needed to give "logic...coercive authority over facts." Otherwise "his religious and political convictions could not be enforced by pure logic, but would have to be advanced on empirical evidence (notoriously not available) or else posited with sporting risks by a desperate act of faith" (APMS 498).

Royce's metaphysics is then the expression of moral faith that the good would triumph, by which he meant that he is fighting on the winning side. Santayana is drawn to Spinoza as an opponent of moralism: Santayana would accomplish for Catholic Christianity what Spinoza had done for Judaism. The efficacious and non-superstitious connection between essence and existence is artistic creation. This connection is encouraged by Catholic culture whereas it was discouraged by Puritan Protestantism.

Out of this fascinating debate of Santayana the Catholic with his Protestant teachers James and Royce and his Protestant friend Russell comes a philosophy of four orders: essence, existence, truth and spirit. Santayana has a way of reading these realms as stages of a pilgrimage. The selections in Fisch's *Classic American Philosophers* make these stages easier to follow (Essence, CAP 270-80, Matter, 287-91, Truth, 291-93, Spirit, 293-97).

These distinctions in discourse and experience can be affirmed, claims Santayana, at a time when "human faith is again in a state of dissolution." Empirical doubt, as in the case of Locke, dissolved knowledge of substance, and if the master category of Aristotle is gone what can the attributes qualify? The importance of Santayana's categories of the four orders is that even if "substance" is indefinable, and in an empirical sense we have no impression of it; it is indeed "something I know not what," still it is the object of animal faith.

The Catholic philosopher may have lost his religious faith but he has regained a philosophic faith. Scepticism can reduce the symbols of the creed to fiction, but scepticism cannot touch animal faith. "This natural faith opens to me various Realms of Being, having very different kinds of reality, and a different status in respect to my knowledge of them..." (CAP 297).

"Realms" symbolizes by geographical metaphor, and specifically on our metaphysical journey we have crossed "the watershed of criticism". We may be completely sceptical, yet the basis of faith affirms the Realms of Being. "I have now reached the culminating point of my survey of evidence, and the entanglements I have left behind me and the habitable regions I am looking for lie spread out before me like opposite valleys" (CAP 280; SAF 99). What realm was discovered in the valley of scepticism? Although life may there be but a dream, yet still there are essences. But in the vital valley of belief, in which we must act, we can do so by

faith, because we have no comparable certainty. What of the other three realms—of matter, truth, spirit? To journey thence is characterized as an *adventure*, a *hunt*, and an *ascent*. There is a sequence of journey metaphors that together constitute an allegory of increasing intensity and confident discovery. When we pass beyond the watershed there is a new rhetoric.

"It is AS IF Substance SAID to Knowledge: My child there is a great world for THEE to conquer, but it is vast, an ancient, and a recalcitrant world. It yields wonderful treasures to courage, when courage is guided by art and respects the limits set to it by nature. I should not have been so cruel as to give thee birth, if there had been nothing for thee to master; but having first prepared the field, I set in thy heart the LOVE OF ADVENTURE" (SAF 191, capitalization mine).

The metaphor of HUNTING from *The Realm of Matter*: "In the chase, for those who follow it, the intensity of experience is not like the intensity (limitless, if you will) of contemplating pure Being—immutable, equable, and complete. The hunter and the hunted believe in something ambushed and immanent: present images are little to them but signs for coming events. Things are getting thick, agents are coming together, or disappearing, they are killing and dying. The assurance of this sort of being is assurance of existence...."<sup>19</sup>

The metaphor of ASCENT is used in "On Metaphysical Projection," which Daniel Cory calls a "kind of supplementary Introduction to *Realms of Being*."<sup>20</sup> "The ontological hierarchy" runs from the bottom, MATTER through appearance, or "ESSENCES manifested to sense and to thought" to "the aspects which the universe would wear to omniscience," TRUTH, all unmanifested Being, THE REALM OF ESSENCE finally "the simplicity of PURE BEING."

"As these last phrases suggest, the interest of this ontology is not merely logical, in that it defines the order of a possible world, as we might frame the rules for a new game. It represents faithfully the stages of an actual spiritual progress: I will not say the only path of progress open to the human soul, because life is elastic; but certainly the path hitherto most familiar and sacred. Life carries every sensitive animal as far up as appearance; intelligence raises him, at least in intention, to the level of truth; contemplation lifts him to that of essence, and ecstasy into the heart of pure Being. But

this ascent is internal to experience...It is not a material translation from one part of the universe to another..." (OMP 119-20: I would insert "faith" between "life" and "intelligence", and say "animal faith comes to reveal in action the dynamic world called matter.")

This is a Platonic argument of correspondence between levels of soul and levels of being. Either a pure empiricism or a pure materialism is limited to the apprehension of either the realm of essence or the realm of matter. What is demanded psychologically of a person to comprehend both essence and matter is pure introspection into what is given and apprehension of the indefinable substance confronted in action by animal faith. In addition there must be developed the intelligence to grasp truths independent of either of the above, but dependent for existence on them, and also contemplation and ecstasy of the mystic who grasps Being and even Non-Being.

Has the argument above made too much use of the metaphors of journey, adventure, hunt, ascent? I believe not, because if the realms are distinguished because they are not reducible to one, then we must borrow terms from one of the realms and apply them to the transitions between realms. "Journey" is spatial, and borrowed from the realm of matter. But "ascent to the one," as in Plotinus, stresses not the travel but the goal beyond being.

Santayana was obviously a great geographical traveler, but was he not also a pilgrim? The most pertinent evidence is his neglected "The Philosophy of Travel,"<sup>21</sup> which I must confess has influenced my writing about homo viator.<sup>22</sup> Santayana's Catholic ordering of the cosmos begins with plants which are not as active as the animals in moving from place to place. Animals "owe their intelligence to their feet. No wonder, then, that a peripatetic philosophy should be the best..." We might put the contrast in terms of the watershed: we may sit and dream in the valley in which essences are discovered, but if we walk in the valley in which we discover existing matter and truth, we must think. "*Thinking while you walk ...keeps you alert: your thoughts, though following some single path through the labyrinth, review real things in their real order; you are keen for discovery, ready for novelties, laughing at every little surprise, even if it is a mishap; you are careful to choose the right road, and if you take the wrong one, you are anxious and able to correct your error...*" As novel objects appear, "a thousand hypotheses run to meet them..." (PT 9).

The old word before "hierarchia" was invented in a philosophical sense by the Pseudo-Dionysius, was "gradus," as in St. Augustine. Santayana graded kinds of travelers: better than *migrants* and *immigrants* are *explorers*; better than *conquerors* are the disinterested *adventurer* and *scientific observer*; better than the *merchant* is the *tourist*. But the kind Santayana is, is a *spectator*. He alone has *SAVING knowledge*. "A man who knows the world cannot covet the world; and if he were not content with his lot in it (which after all has included that saving knowledge) he would be showing little respect for all those alien perfections which he professes to admire" (PT 16).<sup>23</sup>

Although we cannot do more than suggest the Platonic hierarchial correspondence between levels of soul and levels of being, we need also to suggest that in some very precise ways Santayana's theory of virtues is likewise hierarchical. Plotinus and other Neo-Platonists, holding to the doctrine of four cardinal virtues, distinguish the level of development, and we have grades of temperance, courage, justice and wisdom.<sup>24</sup>

One example must suffice, but it is the well-developed contrast between degrees and kinds of courage.

Blind courage is an animal virtue indispensable in a world full of dangers and evils where a certain insensibility and dash are requisite to skirt the precipice without vertigo. Such animal courage seems therefore beautiful rather than desperate or cruel, and being the lowest and most instinctive of virtues it is the one most widely and sincerely admired. In the form of steadiness under risks rationally taken, and perseverance so long as there is a chance of success, courage is a true virtue; but it ceases to be one when the love of danger, a useful passion when danger is unavoidable, begins to lead men into evils which it was unnecessary to face. Bravado, provocativeness, and a gambler's instinct, with a love of hitting hard..., is a temper which ought already to be counted among the vices rather than the virtues of man. To delight in war is a merit in the soldier, a dangerous quality in the captain, and a positive crime in the statesman.<sup>25</sup>

My argument about the relationship between *The Life of Reason* and *Realms of Being* is that both use the principle of hierarchy to integrate various philosophies. Each kind of morality is appropriate to its level. Each kind of ontology is appropriate to its level. Just as the Neo-Platonist could agree with Aristotle's categories and with Plato's categories, just as the Hindu Vedantist could agree

with all the orthodox systems, just as Hegel attempted an integration of the whole history of thought, so Santayana's system of the four orders makes whole what are otherwise disparate and incompatible parts of wisdom.

My departure from the well-established interpretations of Santayana's system is that these overemphasize the naturalism, that is, the realm of matter.<sup>26</sup> The other way to put the same point, these established interpretations have not taken seriously the appeal to "the Indians" as representatives of universal human wisdom. I have in another place tried to spell out why it is so important to note the initial mottoes of *The Realm of Spirit*, quotations from Plotinus, from *The Upanishads*, from Spinoza<sup>27</sup> "Spirit can never condemn or undermine natural life; this can be done only by some rival centre of life at the same biological level, tending to steal away matter or energy from its ancestors or neighbours." "Spirit requires no new matter or energy besides that of its organ, but only order and harmony in the matter or energy at hand" (RS 552).

My emphasis on order is of course my personal central concern but it is a not inappropriate way to recognize what the different realms share such that they can not only be distinguished but also integrated. *The Realm of Matter* began with the scripture so frequently quoted by the Western Medieval scholastics and the Renaissance founders of modern science, such as Pascal, "Thou hast ordered all things in number and measure and weight."<sup>28</sup>

If the physical order were the only real order, then the order of essences, the order of truths, and the "order and harmony" sought by the spirit would be partial and eccentric, and as such subjective. But the search for objectivity of the categories as discovered in being rather than imposed upon it, culminates in spirit. Spirit, says Santayana, has no commitment but "to see things as they are" (RS 553, emphasis mine).

Santayana's philosophy forces us to rethink "objectivity" such that there is not merely objectivity on the level of matter, but also on the levels of essence, truth, and spirit. The clue is given to unravel this mystery. The

presence of essences occasionally to imagination was very accurately called by the Scholastics their *objective* being, contrasted with the intrinsic or logical being which they had in themselves, and with the formal embodiment which they might have in things; but in the utter

confusion of modern philosophy, substances being denied in one breath and imagination in the next, 'the objective' has come to mean that which is independent of intent or attention fixed upon it; which is precisely what the *objective* can never be. It is indeed the intuition of essences in their own category, when the things that may embody them are absent or non-existent, that makes up the essence of spirit.... Spirit is the actuality of the unsubstantial.<sup>29</sup>

As "being" has many senses, so also "objectivity", and "category," and "order." The vision provided by spirit in its reflection on the levels of being is systematically pluralistic. Santayana is what I have called an "order pluralist." The finest expression of this position is in the "Conclusion" to *Dominations and Powers*.<sup>30</sup>

Rational government limits what it imposes by law as required and leaves all else "to the special genius of each free society and each free individual." In suggesting such a division of moral labour, order where the conditions are known, liberty where imagination makes its own laws, Santayana is not expressing confidence that we can achieve such balance and maintain it. "Reason is itself a method of imaginative thought. It insinuates itself with difficulty even into economic arts, by virtue of the regularity of natural processes, to which action has to adapt itself; but it lives happy and safe only in ideal constructions, mathematical or poetical" (DP 463).

What is the difference between Santayana's synthesis of the many orders and a metaphilosophy of different types of philosophies? Both Santayana and such metaphilosophies as those of S.C. Pepper's *World Hypotheses* and Richard McKeon's four methods share tolerance of alternative metaphors and methods. It is the hierarchical ordering of the different orders as stages on a philosophic pilgrimage that is special to Santayana. Hierarchy is alien to Pepper<sup>31</sup> and McKeon, who make a democratic virtue of equality, while hierarchy is Santayana's chief super order, and he does not conceal his aristocratic principle of inequality.<sup>32</sup>

Santayana's hierarchical ordering is not as rigid as some traditional systems that identify the highest as that which is both the origin of the process of becoming and the first principle discovered by rational reflection. Such a deductive system makes all that is an attribute of God or Nature, and also the first axiomatic truth that it

is that which is cause of itself. Santayana's thinking about stages distinguishes "The Order of Genesis and the Order of Discovery."<sup>33</sup>

First: In the order of genesis comes essence since it spreads out the field of forms through which existence may travel and may pick up one form after another along its special path. Existence in this order is second and truth third: for truth is the ideally complete description of the existing world, as it is, has been, and is to be. Finally spirit with all its discoveries comes last because the psyche—without which spirit could not arise or life—is a trope established in matter; that is to say, a truth concerning the order and cohesion of certain events in the flux of nature (OGOD 2).<sup>34</sup>

As far as the origin of the world from ultimate one, this theory is non-committal. But clearly the Neo-Platonic emanation from intelligence, to psyche, finally to matter, is denied. There is no cosmic way down toward matter as "almost nothing," as St. Augustine called matter. In this sense, the Neo-Platonic hierarchy, as Hegel's world by Marx, has been stood on its head. And a card-carrying Plotinian would certainly disapprove of Santayana's ontological Umwertung as much as an orthodox Christian must disavow Nietzsche.

Yet there is also "the order of discovery." In this order "what comes first is matter. Undoubtedly a pure and free spirit, could such a spirit exist, would distinguish essence at the first dawn of consciousness and would never distinguish anything else ['any datum of intuition...is *ipso facto* a pure essence']...; the very nature and function of spirit is to distill pure essence, simple or complex, from the flux of existence. Yet in an animal life intuition is hatched in a nest of pressing occasions: intent precedes intuition...." I believe the account of spirit deeply troubled by demands of the flesh, especially the demands of passions that fill "spirit with a sense of urgency, of distress, or of triumph" is the kind of struggle depicted by St. Augustine in his *Confessions*. Why is Platonism a necessary step in turning to God? Because spirit, in Santayana's account, "may come to rest for a moment on the pure forms of things and on their essential relations..." (OGOD 3).

If this is a Neo-Platonic "way up," as I am asserting it is, it is a struggling way up through the realm of matter towards something more satisfying to spirit in the flesh. It corresponds to St. Augustine's version, and if the fragment had not broken off, it

could have given the way back to the Father through Truth, the Son. Santayana, as Augustine, follows John's Gospel in identifying "Christ with the Logos" and avoids "the semblance of reduplicating the Godhead."<sup>35</sup> The Logos is not only "the Light, the Way, the Truth" but also "Life and Love" that seem to fit better with the mediating office of Christ, as teacher and redeemer and the intimate essence of his person (ICG 32). Does Santayana identify will and love as the way to freedom? Yes, when that will is directed to what spirit truly loves (ICG 193 quotes Augustine, "Quid magis in voluntate quam ipsa voluntas?").

The metaphysical importance of Christ is that this is a symbol of mediation. The realms that are otherwise separate are united when the Word becomes flesh. There is more to Santayana's use of the symbol of Christ than "spirituality."<sup>36</sup>

The Incarnation leads to that other great mystery of faith, the Holy Trinity. In the "General Review" Santayana uses the Father as symbol of "the realm of matter" and the Son as "the realm of essence." Although these are distinguished in the cosmos, in the Godhead they are one. This dogma "which might seem unintelligible, becomes clear if we consider that power could not possibly produce anything unless it borrowed some form from the realm of essence and imposed that form on itself and on its works." Power is not power unless it produces "something specific, something eternally distinct and recognizable in its character. The Son is thus an indispensable partner and vehicle for the life of the Father" (RS 846).

The Logos is "*begotten not made*" (RB 846). The Logos is "as much God as the Father, since power cannot exist without form. But form also cannot exist without substance..." (RB 847).

To these "incommensurable and equally original features of existence [I had rather say 'being']" are added the third dimension, Spirit (RS 847-8). On this the Nicene Creed is relatively silent except that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son and is the universal lord and life-giver," and is equally divine (RS 849). Insofar as the Spirit speaks by the prophets, is this also the Realm of Truth? This is suggested because spirit is known "by all voices inspired by power and by truth" (RS 850). In this sense, there is, for metaphysical purposes, a Holy Quaternity in the Holy Trinity.

Has this conclusion erred in pressing too far the parallelism between the Christian dogma and the language of ontology based

on analysis? Santayana warns against it (RS 853). I wish to avoid the question here of the senses in which Santayana is a Christian philosopher.<sup>37</sup> He is certainly a Christian poet, at least sometimes.<sup>38</sup> One important point with which to end is that the Realms of Being which are distinguished in our world are united in God. That Santayana had to end by borrowing from theology the symbol of three in one to express a truth that the four realms require one another signifies that his system was left unfinished, a project yet to be completed. And should not every metaphysician, as did Whitehead, say his system is incomplete? As an invitation to reflect it remains one of the great suggestive frameworks which we can use in our present "metaphysical turn" of philosophy.

## Part II

Spirit, since its essence is to aspire,  
comes to life at the foot of the ladder;  
it lives by contemplation,  
by knowing the thing above it.<sup>39</sup>

My reading of Santayana puts the spirit at the center, and organizes the other aspects of the metaphysical system, including naturalism, around this center. This is a reading that is different, I am told, from others.<sup>40</sup> Santayana, when he reflected on his long literary productivity found this meaning:

In my various books I have discussed things at very unequal removes from the fountain of spirit within me. But that center was truly philosophical. I can identify my self heartily with nothing in me except with the flame of spirit itself. Therefore the truest picture of my inmost being would show none of the features of my person, and nothing of the background of my life. It would show only the light of understanding that burned within me and, as far as it could, consumed and purified all the rest.<sup>41</sup>

This passage from *the Idler and his Works* presents a crucial problem for American naturalism. Is Santayana only a "half-hearted realist and less than a half-hearted American" who celebrated the spirit in man as the flame of the divine? Is he to be

pitted as so old with senses failing and even regarded for these words "pathetically false to his naturalistic realist friends"?<sup>42</sup>

Even before we analyze some of the many sources we need to state clearly what the problem is in having a position called "naturalistic Neo-Platonic hierarchy." Although I had already given up the way down from the One, emanation, but claimed that Santayana could be a Neo-Platonist if he preserved a way up, the ascent of spirit, Saatkamp states a difficulty I had ignored. How can there be hierarchy without teleology, a cosmic purpose fulfilled in the ascent of spirits? The metaphysical dilemma is this, if there is fulfilment of such a end, then indeed Santayana may be a Christian Neo-Platonist, but if not, then he has so far diverged from Neo-Platonism that honesty demands that we not confound the issue by any discourse of man on a pilgrimage.

If I have introduced confusion by not following the conventional classification of Santayana as a naturalist who is only a naturalist, then I should allow Saatkamp the last word. But we must understand Santayana the Catholic, who, standing "at the church door," hoped that a philosopher, saint, or poet—Plotinus, Augustine, or Dante—would give him the key to enter that portal. But if that hope proved vain, there remains only the poetry of *homo viator* as a projection, or work of the moral imagination, imposed on a neutral and valueless and chance existence. Naturalism dispels the illusions of religion, and in the cold air of truth there should be no nostalgia for the warmth of the cozy and incensed interior of the church.

The naturalistic critique of the Neo-Platonic metaphors, which Santayana admittedly uses, nevertheless, according to Saatkamp admits an "integral relationship" between the "realisms of being and spiritual values" (III, 22). But since these values are all presumably "genuine interests" of the body and the psyche, they can be only "projections from a material base." Bodies and circumstances are of many and diverse sorts, hence there are "diverse forms of good, each complete and not convergent with other goods..." (III, 23). It would then follow, as Saatkamp says, that the hierarchical claim that the spiritual life exemplifies virtues that are "higher than" the animal life has no basis. The single value specified as "spiritual" is that of freedom as the "goal of highest value," and there is no order, as of essences, for the spirit to aspire toward and to be united to (III, 24–25). Therefore, although the

"steps of spiritual progress" is a well-trod path held in many traditional philosophies of East and West to be sacred, these have only a certain "poetic beauty" (HI, 26). What Dante presents therefore could not give to pilgrims "a hierarchical map" with directions toward "an ultimate goal." Saatkamp gives a beautifully logical and coherent picture. He is true to the central statement which he quotes from Santayana: "So much for the projection of an ontological hierarchy, marking stages of spiritual emancipation, into a metaphysical world beyond the natural world, or taking its place. The fable is transparent."<sup>43</sup>

Yet if this critique from a naturalistic perspective is true, why does Santayana not reduce essence, truth, and spirit to chapters of *The Realm of Matter*? Why are they given full treatment as realms which are called "real" and called "realms of being"? Why does Santayana spend so much time on the journey beyond the level of matter and exploring the categories of these other orders? Why does he call attention to the wisdom of idealistic and transcendentalist Hindus and Buddhists, praising their guidance as superior even to the Neo-Platonic Greeks? Why should Santayana himself trace the "steps of spiritual progress," indicating the virtues attained by saints? There is more than mere traveling through the varieties of religious experience, as though Santayana were a psychological companion of William James and an historical colleague of Josiah Royce. Saatkamp leaves us with Santayana the "festive critic" who interprets but does not judge the rank of a sheer plurality of forms (HI, 27).

How is it that in the *Three Philosophical Poets*, although Santayana the critic accepts the cosmology of Lucretius, he accepts the moral order of Dante, and ranks him the highest poet? How is it that in *The Life of Reason* Santayana condemns the Jews and Protestants who are limited to prerational attachments to the natural world and are not disillusioned and detached as the Indians of the post-rational stage of development? When his attention was called to Dean Inge's restatement of the wisdom of Plotinus, Santayana wrote *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*. And, when rereading the *New Testament* as though *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*.

Therefore I reread one of the above, *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, and it convinced me that Santayana's naturalism can be read in a Neo-Platonic way, and this is more justified than the opposite

reading of the spiritual life and its ascent in a naturalistic perspective.

Wherein does my reading of Santayana's Jacob's Ladder differ from Saatkamp's?

1. The naturalist rendering of hierarchy as a mere projection is not true to the realistic justification of the harmony and hierarchy that Plato discerns in the Cosmos (I & II, 1-8).

2. The naturalistic rejection of "pre-existing celestial models" for life frees us from committing the intellectual error of invoking "magnetic control over formless matter, inducing in it here and there an inward striving to imitate their form" (9-10). But it is not true to the realistic tendency of Platonists and Christians to fail to recognize the "natural underpinning which values require if they were to arise" (10). "Some constitution the cosmos must have, and must disclose to our faith of science" (11) (III).

3. The critique rejects Ideas as powers and as separate from exemplification (12) but not "the sense—a somewhat esoteric sense—in which such essences as beauty may be called 'the most real things in the universe'" (13).

The good may be called absolute (14). Only if we have some "absolutes" is there something higher for spirit to aspire to be united with.

4. The critique is true to the rejection of independent Ideas or Forms on the basis of artistic creation. The beauty lies in the poem that has a certain "precise arrangement of words and images." Those are natural causes of the thing which manifests that beauty (12). Although this naturalistic explanation ruins the possibility that forms emanate the formed, nevertheless there is according to Santayana a good case that God and the ideas are and must be independent. Otherwise they cannot be worshiped (16). Indeed Dean Inge's Platonism is too modern and subjectivistic in abandoning supernatural dualism.

Santayana knows the advantages of naturalistic reduction of vision to projection, but also he sees deficiency and resultant inadequacy.

Platonism... would be entirely stultified and eviscerated if it were not suffered to be all that modern criticism, inspired as it is by a subjective psychological philosophy, most thoroughly dislikes; I mean supernaturalistic, realistic, and dualistic. This is only another way of saying that God and the unseen world really exist in themselves, so that they can precede, create, attract, and survive their earthly emanations. (V, 17-18)

5. Naturalism faithfully uses the method of dissolving dogmas "into their subjective components, and showing them to be but verbal expressions for certain radical ambient values." Platonism can be naturalistically demonstrated to be "but a moral and poetic fable" (20). But this is Platonism "taken literally and dogmatically...[as seen by] the outsider" (19). Those who reject Platonism "have not understood it from within, historically, emotionally; they have not recovered the experience and the immanent logic..." (19-20). Only when emanation is so understood do we understand that hierarchy or steps or levels are "rounds of a Jacob's ladder by which the soul might climb again to her native heaven, and it was only *'there'*, above, that she truly lived and had been blessed from all eternity" (25). When the spirit burns with "concentrated fire" there are hierarchies of angelic choirs above, and below are mere "incidents in the barnyard" (25). "The only ambition worthy of a philosopher was to transcend and transfigure his human nature, and to pass unsullied through the nether world in adoration of the world above" (25-26).

6. Moral life is a life of attachment and duties, and to this naturalistic ethics attends. Here there are and must be degrees: the "moral parable" of "the realm of ethics will always be a set of concentric circles. Life necessarily radiates from centres": self, family, nation, world...(27). Yet when love is liberated from pious attachments, then intellectual life of the spirit, discounting the lower hierarchy, relegates animal needs and prejudices "to their relative station, where by their nature they belong" (29).

Santayana here is rethinking the political life in contrast to the spiritual life. As Plotinus says, there is order common to both, a lower hierarchy and a higher hierarchy. The analogy is implicit but most effectively conveyed by examples.

7. There is an illusion that the natural world is made for man, and specifically is a "protecting world designed for...benefit or vindication" of our specific political way of life...(31). Santayana denounces moralism, and sometimes it is only naturalism that is proposed as freeing us from illusions of a "coddling...universe" (31). "Spirituality" says Santayana "comes precisely of surrendering this animal arrogance and this moral fanaticism...." The spirit attains "perfect candour and impartial vision."

At this point Santayana goes beyond even the Alexandrine Greeks to the Indians, Moslems, Christians, and Jews, in giving an account of universal mercy. "Spirit is merciful...because it has no private motive to make it spiteful; yet it is unflinchingly austere because it cannot make any private motive its own" (31). At this point there is not only implicitly Guatama Buddha's universal sympathy but also Jesus Christ. "The spirit is content with the widow's mite and a cup of cold water; it considers the lilies of the field; it can say with literal truth: Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto me." Here the theme developed twenty years later: the Christ represents spirit (32).

Is there then, apart from the variety of pieties, each tied to a part of the human race, as well as relative to time and circumstance, also a universal orthodoxy? Earlier Santayana had appealed to Platonism as part of perennial philosophy. From the naturalistic perspective, the very idea of a transcending universal morality, appealing to an 'unchangeable order' is absurd. Does spirit then transcend moral relativism?

8. Another paradox emerges in IX: although as spirit ascends, all below its level appears contemptible, and mystics are famous for regarding matter as filth (cf. 25), with universal charity comes the Franciscan spirit: "As it loves the non-human parts of nature, so it loves the human parts, and is in no way hostile to the natural passions and to the political and religious institutions that happen to prevail" (32). Earlier spirituality was contrasted to political institutions and to institutions of piety. But there is a stage at which spirituality accepts piety.

9. Another paradox is that earlier spirit is disintoxicated (Santayana stressed disintoxication, 30) and renounces the world, but spirit can accept "any level of being" as good (33). Then is



there nothing evil? Evil is only "accidental," as "slackness in the strings" that do not play the universal harmony (33). The harmony can be restored. The vision of universal good in musical or other artistic metaphors can be found in Leibniz and Berkeley, and is here called "orthodox morality." This is close to saying that evil is only privative, nothing real, or as Augustine says, "nothing."

"Imperfection enters [the world] only below the circle of the moon, like bad manners below stairs; and even here, on earth, evil is but an oscillation and dizziness in matter which nature perpetually calls back to the norm, as the motion of a top rights it in its gyrations" (34).

Not only then is everything good in its way, but also there is a principle which we call "homeostatic" which corrects excess.

10. The naturalistic critique of such a Platonic doctrine of cosmic harmony and balance is that it is belied by contingent existence. As we follow Santayana dialectically, the transcendentalist voice having become so eloquent calls for the naturalistic voice in him. "...existence, while it is the home of particular certitudes, is also a cage in which an inevitable and infinite ignorance sings and dies imprisoned" (35). Santayana goes on about the self-centeredness of existences, their limited character and duration, much as Bertrand Russell refers to a "higgledy-piggledy job lot of a world in which chance has flung us." Is there nothing essentially orderly or unlimited or eternal...? What is there to aspire to and how can spirit ascend? Not so, replies the spirit. There is the realm of essence, which is alone "necessary" and "all-comprehensive being." This is not merely another possible world, to which spirit might flee seeking freedom, but "infinite Being" (36).

11. A naturalistic objection to spirituality is that there are few contemplatives and very few saints. To exist depends on "material conditions," and spiritual people are no exceptions. By what condition does a man become a "spiritual man"? Any such theory must provide an explanation of how some became "spiritual." "...Concentration of thought, indifference to fortune and reputation, warmth of temperament (because spirit cannot burn clear except at a high temperature) disciplined into chastity and renunciation" (38). Santayana speaks of "novices," and has in mind, as in St. Johannes Climacus and St. John Cassian, the specific virtues that must be

attained as climbing the rungs of Jacob's Ladder. Santayana knows the encouragement of zeal, the examination of conscience, the striving for holiness by serving God alone (39). There is also patience implicit, specifically waiting for gifts of the spirit.

As we considered virtues earlier (6, 7), so here is an amplification of courage and confidence of those who become spiritual. "The spirit itself is not afraid of being stamped out here, or anxious to be kindled there; its concern is not about its instances or manifestations; it is not essentially learned or social; its kingdom is not of this world. It leaves propaganda to those who call themselves its friends but probably know nothing of it, or are even its enemies, and only agents of some worldly transformation ultimately quite nugatory" (39-40).

The whole of XI is on the antithesis between the world and the spirit, and ends with the world judging its spiritual people by what they contribute of value to the world, as business judges what artists create. The spirituals reciprocally evaluate what the world contributes from the perspective of spirit. Whereas politics is partial, "Spirituality is the supreme good for those who are called to it, the few whose intellectual thirst can be quenched only by impartial truth and the self-annihilating contemplation of all Being" (40).

The section begins: "it is the world's business to call down spirit to dwell in it, not the spirit's business to make a world in which to dwell" (38). The ambiguities involved are such that it might make more sense to say that "it is NOT the world's business to call down spirit to dwell in it."

12. A very obvious common sense naturalism opens XII: "It is impossible that spirit in a living creature should ever be wholly freed from the body and from the world..." The liberation of spirit from body cannot be a total detachment, otherwise the flame of spirit evaporates without the fuel of the lamp. Ontologically the talk of independence of spirit is therefore absurd. Santayana goes further and points out that if contemplation of "essences and truth" could lead spirit to union with "Pure Being," this particular mind ceases to be a special perspective, and omniscience has nothing which could be added to it.

How are we to think of the categories in which, for example, the Fourth Gospel contrasts the "spirit" to the "flesh"? Santayana's

hermeneutics is that the distinction is not between kinds of substance but "*the quality of their attention*" (italics mine, 42). One is "intuitive possession." The other, flesh, means "an anxiety, inquiry, desire and fear." Can we make a choice between the naturalistic and the spiritual perspectives, having quickly switched from the dependence on the body and the environment to the troubles of the body in an environment? The position of Santayana is that both are true. The naturalistic truth is that "spirit must have some organ." The spiritual truth is that when spirit is "once aroused it does not look in the direction of its organ or care at all about preserving it. It looks rather...to a realm anterior to all worlds,...infinite Being..." (43).

We had been told that the spiritual man has an "intellectual thirst [which] can be quenched only by impartial truth" (40). It follows that spirit does not invent another world. "The spirit," writes Santayana, "is not a tale-bearer having a mock world of its own to substitute for the humble circumstances of this life" (42). Here the spiritual Santayana replies to the charge of some naturalists that spirituality is wishful thinking and self-deception.

But the spirit, telling the truth about the world, becomes the object of "worldly hatred, and it is very fierce...." At this point we have proceeded section by section through XII, roughly half of *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, and it is time to pause and to reflect that, in spite of the naturalistic critique, there still remains for spirit a ladder of ascent.

Plato and his followers have projected their moral ascent onto the cosmos and ignored the naturalistic fact that only bodies have power and forms are not causes. Second, Plato is still political, attached to the *polis*, and reads the cosmos as a crystal setting for the Greek city state, with the failure to free spirituality from piety. With these deep reservations about Plato himself, what is there to be said for Platonism? The spirit knows the body as the body does not know the spirit. The body ties us to particular circumstance, but the spirit frees us for universal vision. The body leads to frustration because needs cannot be satisfied endlessly, and in disillusion the spirit contemplates essences and truths which do satisfy the desire to know. The body cannot set limits or find endless satisfaction, but the spirit discovers infinite Being and eternal essences and truths. The body is a source of values found in

the environment and in other bodies, but the spirit loves all things and finds all things to a degree good.

The very recognition of the variety of goods through naturalism, its tolerance, makes it a phase of spirituality. It was wrong then to oppose naturalism to Platonic spirituality, as though it were a zero-sum game and the advantage of one were the loss of the other. The whole effort to state naturalism as basis for discounting Santayana's Neo-Platonism is a mistake. Santayana developed the two together, not one external to the other as exclusive alternatives. The whole style of Santayana in every section of *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* is a dialogue between Santayana the naturalistic critic and Santayana the defender of Plato and proponent of the spiritual life. There are not two Santayanases but one.

Without going into the same detail and without extensive quotation, the second half of the book elaborates the ways in which there can be and should be a "naturalistic Neo-Platonic hierarchy." It is going beyond the evidence of the text of *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* to say that the author is commending rather than merely describing.

On what basis can the two parallel movements of thought converge?

Spirituality among Calvinists reduced the fanatical belief in divine punishment. When Santayana judges that "the speculative sword" both exalts the superhuman above "the weak judgements of the heart" and should dissolve "moral fanaticism," is he perhaps referring to such New England Transcendentalists as Emerson, on whom Santayana in his early career had written eloquently? His statement is also in harmony with Spinoza's *Ethics*: "Pure Being is infinite, its essence includes all essences; how then should it issue particular commands, or be an acrimonious moralist?" (XIII, 45). The One of Plotinus, though "called good, is not properly so called" (46). Just as the relative forms of the good diminish prejudice when naturalistic analysis discloses the partiality of any life form, so the mystic transcendence of good itself as a category brings "the peace that passeth understanding..." (46).

A familiar distinction of aspects of religion is between piety and spirituality. Historically, as we know from *Reason in Religion*, piety is conceived in Hebraic terms as faithfulness to the Lord of the people to whom he has given his law, while spirituality is the

Hellenic universalizing of salvation. Here the "profound dualism" is between "creative power and redeeming grace" which "point in opposite directions; but a complete religion needs to look both ways, feeding piously at the breast of nature, yet weaning itself spiritually from that necessary comfort to the contemplation of...eternal things" (XIV, 48).

Our attention has been called to Santayana's devotion to Hermes. Santayana thought mythically, as should one in the Neo-Platonic tradition. Attachment to home and the detachment of travel can be reconciled. "The psyche in each of us is like Vesta, the goddess of the Ilcarth, mother of the Promethean flame, mother of spirit; and she needs to learn the difficult unselfishness of the parent—or of the foster-parent; for her child is of another race. She must be content to be abandoned, revisited only in haste or on some idle holiday, with a retrospective piety; and even as she embraces her full-grown over-topping son he will seem a stranger to her, and she will catch sight of his eyes, gazing over her head into a far country" (XV, 52).

Although doctrines conflict, questions of diverse perspectives converge. Santayana's naturalism and spirituality may sometimes be contrasted and contradictory views of causal efficacy and material causes without purpose are not tenable as a doctrine with universal providential design. But Santayana also expresses naturalistic questions about "moralistic metaphysics" and "spirit" also means to question "human vanity" (XVI, 55). "When I say the *light of the spirit*, I might as well say light simply; for what is spirit but the act of making light actual, or greeting, observing, questioning, and judging anything and everything. Spirit is awareness, intelligence, recollection. It requires no dogmas, as does animal faith or the art of living" (XVI, 56).

"Order" is a categorical requirement of naturalism and also of spirituality, and in many modes of order this is elaborated. "Chaos could not sustain the animal life, the psyche, which spirit requires for its organ" (XVI, 56). Natural forces "have established rhythms, such as day and night, favourable to that life..." (58). And between spirit and its conditions there can develop "natural harmony" (58).

An important mode of order is balance, holding the middle way and avoiding excess. Wisdom is required of both piety and spirituality. The folly of Platonic and Christian piety is to worship power and to go beyond experience in positing other sources of life

(XVII, 60). The folly of spirituality is to deny its dependence. These are bad forms of spirituality: "The pride of Lucifer, the mock independence of the Stoic sage, the acosmism and absoluteness of the Indian mystic, and the egotism of German philosophy, thinking to create and recreate its world in its flight through nothingness" (XVII, 60). There must be a marriage of piety with spirituality and no forced attitude that leads to any attempt to divorce them.

Santayana goes on to specify conditions of balance, harmony, reconciling the opposites: spirituality is not doctrinaire as scientific thought with a primary concern for the truth of a system (XVII, 61). And spirit accepts graciously whatever conditions support it, and towards institutions expresses "a resigned courtesy. Such things must needs be; it would be foolish to reject them instead of profiting by them" (XVII, 63).

Another danger of the spirit in forgetting its dependence is to so free itself from the finite that it loses itself in the formless infinite or the infinity of forms. The moral point of view is then to prevent any "idle aestheticism" (XVIII, 66). To be human is to live under specific conditions. "Perfect impartiality is not human..." (68). "It is therefore natural that the intrinsic infinity of Being should remain in the background, even in the spiritual life, and that essences should be contemplated and distinguished rather as ideals for the human imagination than as beings necessary in themselves" (XVIII, 68).

Only towards the end of *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* is the question raised: what is meant by emanation? "Consider the universe of Plotinus: a process of emanation from the One through the Ideas to the Soul of the World, whence, like rays from different stars, human and animal souls descend on occasion to animate material bodies." What is the purpose of this hierarchical cosmology? "This system was designed to encourage the spirit to rise from its animal prison...reversing that emanation until it covered the primal bliss of contemplative union with pure Being" (XIX, 70). But nothing in the system itself "invite[s] the spirit to ascend at all." Therefore we might as well have Hegelian evolution of stages without any "wish...to reverse the process in his heart..." An Hegelian would wish to press on in the process, and would see "angels...descending Jacob's Ladder, and none ascending." Santayana's system is to reverse Hegel and to state the purpose of

Plotinus. The central proposition is, "only the ascent concerns the spiritual life" (XIX, 71). Emanation is by itself only to account for what has happened prior to spirit awakening, "entangled in animal passions and foolish ambitions." Santayana then does not totally diverge from the moral judgement that our spirits are imprisoned (71).<sup>44</sup>

Starting from whatever facts and predicaments may seem to envelop it, [spirit's] function is to detach itself from them one by one, escaping the flux and urgency which they have in the REALM OF EXISTENCE, unraveling and synthesizing their temporal perspectives, in order to transpose them all into the REALM OF TRUTH, where they form an eternal picture; and then to let this picture itself recede into its setting in the REALM OF ESSENCE, where it is but one form of being, which this world by chance has manifested, amid the countless forms of being which perhaps have not been manifested anywhere. (XIX, 71, capitalizations added.)

Here are the four realms of Being related as stages of ascent. Could we not then say that Santayana's system is a Neo-Platonic system, with acknowledged ancestry in Plotinus? Is this not another introduction to *The Realms of Being* that states, as did *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, that spirit is going toward salvation. Emanation is a "projection" with a soteriological intent, and the cosmology that is closer to fact, as naturalists judge fact, can be accepted as a substitute, just as *Three Philosophical Poets* holds to the moral degrees of virtues from the *Divine Comedy* as well as to the atomistic mechanism of Lucretius.

We have then a 'naturalistic Neo-Platonic hierarchy'! This is indeed at first paradoxical and contradictory, but not at the end of a long series of interpretative qualifications. But can such a 'naturalistic Neo-Platonic hierarchy' be 'Christian'? We saw above that Santayana uses the symbols of the angels ascending and descending. He is in the tradition of the Pseudo-Dionysus. Ponder the passage remembering the sermon of the Vicar of Iffley in *The Last Puritan*: "The angels, even in their descent, will then be messengers to the philosopher from an eternal world, to which in ascending again, they carry up his heart..." (XIX, 72).

Another Christian aspect of Neo-Platonism is speculation on the persons of the Holy Trinity, similar to that in the "General Review" of *Realms of Being* (XX, 73-74). In my original essay, I coupled

the Trinity with the doctrine of the Incarnation. The point of "speculative fiction" is to express the concept of descent as well as of ascent (74).

The concluding chapters show a qualified sympathy with mysticism. The qualification of accounts of the bliss of union is that "the reports which reach us of the ecstasy indicate that the chasm has never really been bridged" with supreme Being (XIX, 76). But the best communication of the saint is silence and only by repeating his experience can we know. "The saint pulls up his ladder with him into his private heaven..." (XXI, 76). This is of philosophic importance because the language of metaphysics uses metaphorical language. We might speak of a "heaven of forms" as well as a "realm of essence." We have no geographical spatiality relating "all sorts of regions which are not of this world" (XXI, 78).

Similarly, both religious mystics and speculative metaphysicians talk of Nothing as well as of Being (XXII, 80-82). The saints, including those devoted to the Buddhist Nirvana and Hindu Brahma, show the need of the "spiritual life" for a language of symbols. Santayana's cool naturalism comes out in XXII: "they use, like all of us, the words they find" (XXII, 81).

Santayana frequently quotes from the Gospels, and grasps one further point that recommends spirituality; it is a rebuke to the righteous. Spirit "crop[s] out marvelously in the sinner, as it may in the child or the poet" (XXIII, 84). Santayana prefers the Gospels to Plato:

Platonism is moralistic.... It was a censorious, puritan, prescriptive love; it was not spontaneous, it was not sympathetic, it was not love of nature at all, but a political, human good. ...Free spirit would be more generous.... The spirit, having itself suffered, recognizes in many an alien form of existence a maimed effort and a lost glory analogous to its own; but a love unqualified by prejudice, by envy, by fear of being outshone or discountenanced. ...It is the essence of spirit to see and love things for their own sake.... (XXV, 92-93)

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## NOTES

1. *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (New York: Scribners, 1923), p.v. For convenience I shall abbreviate this Preface to *The Realms of Being* "SAF" and sometimes quote from the selections in Max H. Fisch, *Classic American Philosophers* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951), p. 268 (abbreviated in text "CAP") Unless otherwise noted, books and manuscripts mentioned are by Santayana.
2. Although Lotze speaks, in Santayana's words, "of the unity of the cosmic process and of the purpose of nature,...this unity will never constitute for him the value and justification of what comes under it; rather it will be the condition and means of producing conscious and happy life." Paul G. Kuntz, Ed., *Lotze's System of Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1971), p. 138. Santayana ascribes this idealistic optimism to a way of thought in Kant and Hegel called "formalism," which Santayana defines as "a system that tends to reduce things to the relations between them." *Ibid.*
3. I believe we need to study the progression from *The Sense of Beauty* to *Reason in Art* as mediation between matter and form, and therefore of prime metaphysical importance.
4. "Chaos and Order," Ms., early draft for *Dominations and Powers*, 5 p., gift of Corliss Lamont, Columbia University. The chapter "Chaos and Order" occurs as Book First, Chapter I of *Dominations and Powers*. See Beth Judith Singer, "Order and Liberty in Human Life: A Study of Santayana's Metaphysics of Society," Ph.D., Columbia University, 1967.
5. *The Life of Reason* begins "Whether Chaos or Order lay at the beginning of things," a question debated between Dialecticians who appeal to a "principle" prior to creation while Naturalists trace creatures springing from chaos. *Reason in Common Sense* (New York: Scribner's, 1922), p. 35. (This first volume will be abbreviated in the text as "RCS")
6. *Realms of Being*, one-volume edition with a new Introduction (New York: Scribner's, 1942). (Abbreviated "RB")
7. "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics" has recently been republished in an Appendix to John Dewey, *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, Vol. 3: 1927-1928. Eds: Jo Ann Boydston and Patricia Baysinger. Introduction by David Sidorsky (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), pp. 367-84. This volume contains "Half-Hearted Naturalism," pp. 73-81, and "Philosophy as a Fine Art. Review of George Santayana's *The Real of Essence*," pp. 287-93. I owe these valuable references to my colleague, Professor James S. Gouinlock.
8. See my "The Tragedy of Oliver Olden: Santayana's Last Puritan: A Phenomenological Study of Order and Chaos," *Memorias del XIII Congreso Internacional de Filosofia*, Vol. 8, pp. 331-45, México: Universidad Nacional Autonomía de México, 1964.
9. There is an unexplained gap between the consideration of order in *Principles of Psychology* and *Varieties of Religious Experience*. In the first, *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), Vol. I, p. 490, and Vol. II, p. 646, the principle of skipping intermediary terms is "on the whole the broadest and deepest law of man's thought." In the second, such a principle is replaced by any subjective response to any arrangement whatsoever, depending on the satisfaction of interest. See the Modern Library Edition, 1936, of *Varieties*, ft. Pp. 428-30.
10. Josiah Royce "Order", James Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, (Edinburgh: T. And T. Clark, 1917), Vol. IX, pp. 553-40, and *Royce's Logical Essays*, Ed. Daniel S. Robinson (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1951), pp. 204-31.
11. My "Santayana's Theory of Order," part of my *American Philosophies of Order*, is based on a study of the five-volume *Life of Reason*.
12. My *Alfred North Whitehead* (Boston: Twayne's, 1984) and *Bertrand Russell* (Boston: Twayne's, 1986) show the centrality of order to their philosophies.
13. "Some Meanings of the Word 'Is'," in Justus Buchler and Benjamin Schwartz, Eds., *Obiter Scripta* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 189-212, with commentary *Apologia*, *op. cit.*, p. 576.
14. "The Philosophy of Mr. Bertrand Russell," *Winds of Doctrine: Studies in Contemporary Opinion* (New York: Scribner's, 1913). (Abbreviated "PBR")
15. See Archibald Allen Bowman, "Physical and Spiritual in Modern Philosophy," in *A Sacramental Universe: A Study in the Metaphysics of Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), pp. 51-84, and my "Religion in the Life and Thought of George Santayana," Ph.D., Harvard University, 1946.
16. *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (New York: Scribner's, 1900 and 1922).
17. See page 497 of "Apologia Pro Mente Sua," *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1940), pp. 495-605. (Abbreviated "APMS").
18. See Chapter IV of *Character and Opinion in the United States: With Reminiscences of William James and Josiah Royce and Academic Life* (New York: Scribner's, 1920).
19. *The Realm of Matter* (New York: Scribner's, 1930), pp. 9-11. CAP 289-290 then recounts ten principles of the cosmos of substance.

20. *The Idler and His Works and Other Essays*, Ed. Daniel Cory (New York: George Braziller, 1957), p. vi, "On Metaphysical Projection," pp. 116-35. Cory gives no date for this piece which begins by referring to orthodox Hindu speculations on Brahma, and uses a subtitle: "by which Existence is referred to the Non-Existent as to its Ground." (abbreviated "OMP").
21. "The Philosophy of Travel," *The Birth of Reason and Other Essays*, Ed. Daniel Cory (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 5-17. (abbreviated "PT")
- My contributions to philosophy of travel appear in *Itinerarium: The Idea of Journey*, Ed. Leonard J. Bowman (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1983), especially "Man The Wayfarer", pp. 216-34. "Augustine: From Homo Erro to Homo Viator," appears also in *Augustinian Studies*, Vol. 11, 1980, pp. 79-89.
22. My "From the Angel to the Worm: The Hierarchical Structure of St. Augustine's *Confessions*," forthcoming in *Religious Studies*. Many articles such as this on hierarchy are gathered together in *The Great Chain of Being After Fifty Years*, Eds. Marion Leathers and Paul Grimley Kuntz (Bern: Peter Lang, forthcoming).
23. Cf. *My Host the World, Persons and Places*, Vol. III (New York: Scribner's, 1953), Ch. III, pp. 33-56, and "The Coming Philosophy," in *The Idler and His Works (Doc. Cit.)* p. 192. Note how interested Santayana is in the metaphor of E.B. Holt, *The Concept of Consciousness*: A navigator exploring his course at night with the help of a searchlight illuminates a considerable expanse of wave and cloud and other objects that lie above the horizon. The cross sections are neither inside of the searchlight nor dependent on the searchlight for their "SUBSTANCE OR THEIR BEING", (p. 171, emphasis mine).
24. My contribution to Brian Vickers' collected volume *Action and Contemplation* considers the grades of virtues (forthcoming).
25. *The Life of Reason, or the Phases of Human Progress: Reason in Society* (New York: Scribner's, 1932), pp. 83-4. The passage is followed by a passage written from the perspective of the post-rational level. In the Augustinian judgment, the virtues of the pre-rational, even the rational, are but "splendid vices" (*Ibid.*, p. 84).
26. I have attempted three demonstrations of non-naturalism in Santayana: "Santayana the Mystic," "Santayana and Buddhism," and "Santayana and the Indians." A brief account is "The Thread of Salvation in this Labyrinth of Folly," in *Philosophy in the Life of a Nation*, (N.Y. CUNY, 1976, pp. 140-44).
27. In conjunction with *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* (New York: Scribner's, 1927). I am informed by R. Baine Harris that he has made study of the correspondence between Dean Inge and Santayana. This is important in showing his relation to the leading Christian Platonist and Plotinus scholar of our century. *The Realm of Spirit* in RB., p. 548

- (hereafter abbreviated "RS").
28. RM 182, from *Wisdom of Solomon*.
29. *Realm of Essence* in RB 129.
30. *Dominations and Powers: Reflections on Liberty and Government*, (New York: Scribner's, 1951); (abbreviated "DP"). I enjoyed the excellent commentary of Beth J. Singer, *The Rational Society: A Critical Study of Santayana's Social Thought* (Cleveland: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1970).
31. Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942).
32. "Equality," MS, Columbia University Library.
33. "The Order of Genesis and the Order of Discovery" MS, Columbia University Library (hereafter abbreviated "OGOD").
34. Timothy L.S. Sprigge, *Santayana: An Examination of His Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) is particularly helpful on "reality" of "a system of behavioural dispositions" paralleling a "system of tropes." (p. 103)
35. *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels or God in Man* (New York: Scribner's, 1946), p. 31 (hereafter abbreviated "ICG").
36. Sprigge's interpretation here seems to me only a partial truth. *Op. Cit.*, p. 216.
37. My article "Can Whitehead be Made a Christian Philosopher?" *Process Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, Winter 1982, pp. 232-42, shows the complexity of the problem.
- I have tried to show the importance of Christ as mediator and the doctrine of the Incarnation in "The Dualism of Paul Elmer More," *Religious Studies*, Vol. 16, 1980, pp. 389-44, especially the conclusion.
38. *The Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, Ed. Lord David Cecil (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940) has recently led to a new edition with a subtle consideration of what could be meant by "Christian poet." Perhaps the best title for an essay on Santayana would be "The Christian Philosophy and Christian Poetry of an Ex-Christian." Relevant to this is the analysis of T.S. Eliot that not even Russell succeeded in becoming truly "ex-Christian". See my *Bertrand Russell*, *op. cit.*, Ch. 8. Lord David writes in his Introduction of Blake: "It is doubtful whether he should appear in a book of Christian verse at all. If he was a Christian, he was certainly a heretic." The gospel of Santayana is equally surprising and also at odds "with the doctrines of every important branch of Christianity...." Then comes the defense: "But Blake, whether he would or no, was soaked through with Christian thought: Christian symbols are an essential part of his native language." This I find true of Santayana, and with regard to life as a journey, I should add that he was "exquisitely responsive to certain phases of Christian sentiment" (p. xxvi). The editor writing in 1940

includes seven poems of Blake beginning with "To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love". The successor to Lord David, Donald Davie, in *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) limits Blake to "Jerusalem." I suspect that Santayana, whose sonnet on faith was once used by religious liberals, is now less acceptable than he used to be. Davie includes a long note on the Neo-Orthodox Karl Barth, who would have classed Santayana as a Gnostic and very non-Christian.

39. George Santayana, *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1927, p. 73. Page references of the form (19-20) or (V, 19-20), without further identification, are to this book. A version of this paper was presented at the American Philosophical Association, Sheraton-Boston, 29 December 1986, in a series on Neo-Platonism and American Philosophers.
40. Beth J. Singer, "Naturalism and Generality in Buchler and Santayana," *Ibid.* p. 37.
41. George Santayana, *The Idler and His Works, and Other Essays*, Ed. Daniel Cory, George Braziller, New York, 1957, p. 20.
42. So Herbert W. Schneider rejects what I call the Neo-Platonic or spiritual Santayana in *A History of American Philosophy*, 2nd Edition, Columbia University Press, New York, 1963, p. 508.
43. (HI, 26) from "On Metaphysical Projection," George Santayana, *The Idler and His Works*, Ed. Daniel Cory, George Braziller, N.Y., 1957, 123).
44. See page 70: Santayana notes that "prison" was the word used.

## Plotinus and Wittgenstein on Memory

Joseph Sen

### I

A "family resemblance" between Plotinus and Wittgenstein has been detected on more than one occasion. Emilsson, commenting on Dillon, has seen this in terms of a highly personal method and style common to both philosophers and exemplified most clearly in their tendency to write as though thinking aloud.<sup>1</sup> Hadot, on the other hand, concentrating on the early Wittgenstein has drawn attention to the significance of the mystical in the *Tractatus* and construed this as a modern expression of the perennial concern of the *Enneads*.<sup>2</sup> These similarities, while somewhat provisional, do indicate a potentially fruitful connection. We must nevertheless be careful lest any comparison becomes vacuous through its very generality. A family resemblance, we might say, is more impressive if we have more to go on than the most general features of the thinking involved—a deeper kinship might perhaps emerge from an investigation of points of detail, the moles and spots, as it were, not only the broader profile. In this paper I will engage in such genealogy through limiting myself to the subject of memory as it appears in the discussions of Plotinus and Wittgenstein. Plotinus, as we shall see, develops a view of memory which is remarkably in line with a rather exceptional one maintained by Wittgenstein's in recent times. This does not necessarily enforce the plausibility of Plotinus' view but it certainly lends it pertinence for contemporary discussion.<sup>3</sup>

## II

I will forget temporal priority and begin with a remark from Wittgenstein:

I saw this man years ago: now I have seen him again, I recognize him, I remember his name. And why does there have to be a cause of this remembering in my nervous system? Why must something or other, whatever it may be, be stored up there in any form? Why must a trace have been left behind? Why should there not be a psychological regularity to which no physiological regularity corresponds? If this upsets our concepts of causality then it is high time they were upset.<sup>4</sup>

Wittgenstein is here calling into question identity-theories of memory which posit a physical trace of some sort to account for the "preservation" of memory across time. Usually, this trace is thought to be deposited in the brain of the rememberer, to be reactivated on the occasion of recall. It is somehow felt necessary to postulate such a physical intermediary to fill in the gap between the original experience and the event of recall. What we have here is a three-tier theory of memory: firstly, an experience occurs; secondly, it is stored away as a physical trace; thirdly, it is recalled. The second stage is here thought especially crucial for explaining remembering so far as it prevents a temporal gap between the original experience and the act of recall. Otherwise, we might be faced with a form of causality across temporal gaps which is, of course, a highly disreputable notion in this context!<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein contests the conceptual inevitability of this second stage. Ockham's razor might serve us well here were it not for a reluctance on our part to discard a physical entity, even when its being is purely theoretical. Wittgenstein, however, asks boldly

Why should there not be a natural law connecting a starting and a finishing state of a system, but not covering the intermediary state?<sup>6</sup>

Wittgenstein is not so much formulating a positive thesis here as presenting a possibility which tends to get overlooked, so set are we on assuming that something must function as a trace to account for the causality of memory. Why not simply consider that there is no particular physical counterpart to the act of remembering? Why,

in short, do we feel so compelled to fill the gap by postulating some physical intermediary?

## III

Plotinus provides one answer to this question. When it comes to the soul we tend to base our thinking upon inappropriate analogies drawn from our experience of physical things.<sup>7</sup> We think of perception and memory, for example, in terms of letters written on tablets or pages. Plotinus could have Plato's discussion of the wax tablet in the *Theaetetus* in mind here but Aristotle, who pursues the analogy more vigorously, is the likelier target. In his treatise *On Memory and Recollection* Aristotle identifies memory with an image (*phantasma*) in the soul, which is an imprint (*tupos*) in the body of a former sense-perception.<sup>8</sup> The memory-image is an affection which Aristotle likens to a picture—

For the change that occurs marks in a sort of imprint, as it were, of the sense-image, as people do who seal things with signet rings.<sup>9</sup>

Plotinus is critical of this picture of memory. He insists that the activity involved is nothing like what happens in the case of wax.<sup>10</sup>

The wax tablet analogy obscures the fact that memories are not magnitudes nor are they comparable to seal-impressions, counter-pressures or imprints.<sup>11</sup> Since memories are not physical no physicalist account associating them with a process of "pushing" from the outside will explain them. To take this back a step: given that even sense perceptions don't involve physical imprints, how could memories be retentions of imprints which were never inscribed in the soul in the first place?<sup>12</sup> Plotinus rejects the physicalist analogy and prefers to construe memory (as well as sense-perception) on the analogy of thinking (*noësis*).<sup>13</sup> If, for example, it makes little sense to speak of thoughts as counterpressures the same holds true for memory. Or again if in thinking nothing is stored away in the soul like a shape in wax, the same holds true for memory.<sup>14</sup>

Plotinus examines the coherence of the tablet analogy in further detail. It encourages us to think of the mind as a tablet marked by imprints which enable us to gain access to previous experiences.



After all, its advocate might say, how could we remember something that wasn't already stored away "in" the mind? This picture, however, comes apart on inspection. It is subject to a two-pronged dilemma<sup>15</sup>:

...if the impressions persist, either it will not be possible for others to be imprinted because the first will prevent them, so that there will be no other sense-impressions, or if others are made, those former impressions will be destroyed: so that there will be no possibility of remembering.<sup>16</sup>

The weakness of the wax analogy is here exposed in the light of our effective ability to remember and perceive things in succession without one experience impeding the other. Conversely, "smudging" would seem inevitable if memories really were akin to physical shapes or images and the soul a wax tablet.<sup>17</sup>

If there is a particular analogy Plotinus favours for understanding memory it is the more active one of physical exercise (*gymnasia*).<sup>18</sup> On the tablet analogy better memory would be related to susceptibility to greater numbers of impressions. We might, then, expect memory to improve in proportion to degree of affection. Practically, however, memory seldom works like this—

exercises to improve our mental grasp show that what is going on is an empowering of the soul, just like physical training of our arms and legs to make them do easily what does not lie in the arms or legs, but what they are made ready for by continuous exercise.<sup>19</sup>

How, Plotinus asks, would it be possible to forget something and remember later if all memory involved was the presence of impressions? The tablet analogy would have us think that memory is simply a straightforward matter of something being physically in the mind or not. By contrast, the comparison with exercise suggests that things are never so clear-cut. Memory, for example, can be improved and strengthened through practice. This shows that memory depends on something more than mere passivity to impressions and affections—

what actually occurs appears to be the opposite of this; for nowhere does exercise for any purpose make what is exercised easily affected;

since with the senses also it is not what is weak, an eye for instance, which sees, but the organ which has greater power for its activity.<sup>20</sup>

The static view of the mind which the tablet analogy suggests is here replaced by something much more dynamic and, for that matter, organic. The mind here is less akin to a slate than a muscle which can be built up through exercise, not because of enlarged storage space. The accent thus shifts from regarding memory simply in terms of contents deposited in the mind to a more subjective emphasis upon the soul's power to initiate and strengthen the ability to recall.

#### IV

Wittgenstein provides an assessment of the impression-based model of memory which we have considered so far:

An event leaves a trace in the memory: one sometimes imagines this as if it consisted in the event's having left a trace, an impression, a consequence, in the nervous system. As if one could say: even the nerves have a memory. But then when someone remembered an event, he would have to infer it from this impression, this trace. Whatever the event does leave behind in the organism, it isn't the memory.<sup>21</sup>

Wittgenstein does not deny outright the possibility of some kind of physical correlate to memory but is doubtful whether this is constitutive of memory as such. If it were, it would mean that remembering would be a much more indirect and awkward procedure than we usually experience it to be. On this view, remembering would require first looking up a trace already present and stored in the brain and then inferring the memory from it. Generally, Wittgenstein is skeptical about such attempts to explain memory in terms of intermediary factors, whether physical or mental. These accounts lose sight of the direct, non-inferential character of the larger part of mnemonic experience. For example, the tendency to view memory as a sort of picture of the past can be misleading:

Experiences of the past are not like objects in the next room; although I do not see them now, I can go there. But can I go into the past?<sup>22</sup>

This indicates a limitation in the spatial notion of a picture as a means of illuminating the essentially successive character of temporal experience. While a physical picture can be placed alongside an original for comparison a memory image can hardly be set alongside an independently given past. More often than not we simply have to trust our memories; doubt is exceptional, certainly not the rule. For this reason Wittgenstein speaks of the way in which memory is the "source"<sup>23</sup> of our consciousness of the past, not merely a sign of it.<sup>24</sup>

Plotinus emphasizes this more active and indeed creative<sup>25</sup> character by describing memory as a power (*dunamis*)<sup>26</sup> and a strength (*iskhus*).<sup>27</sup> Specifically, memory is the power or ability to "have what we do not have".<sup>28</sup> This cryptic phrase alludes to the fact that what we remember can be present "to" us without, however, being present "in" us like a shape in wax or, for that matter, like a physical trace in the nervous system. Plotinus admits that it is indeed "wonderous" that the soul should have such an ability, that it should, in other words, be capable of having apprehensions without affections.<sup>29</sup> It is nevertheless an ability which needs to be appreciated on its own terms and not explained away.<sup>30</sup> The latter happens when memory is reduced to the far less paradoxical physical state where we can, after all, only have what we have. What is gained here in on the level of physical possession leaves us much worse off in terms of wonder. For those who regard wonder as a rather trifling commodity in philosophy this is no real loss but this is an assessment neither Plotinus nor Wittgenstein would share.<sup>31</sup>

## V

Plotinus and Wittgenstein are sensitive to the strong influence certain pictures can exert over our philosophizing. In the case of memory the picture with which they contend portrays the mind as a passive tablet or storehouse in which experience inscribes its indentations.<sup>32</sup> Now we need, of course, to be sensitive to the contexts in which these arguments occur. Part of the motivation for Plotinus is to maintain the impassibility of the soul which is hardly a concern to Wittgenstein. Nevertheless, we can perhaps detect a certain kinship in these critiques. Some pictures have a very long

shelf-life in philosophy; but they can also provide a way of tracing otherwise inconspicuous ties between seemingly disparate thinkers.

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## NOTES

1. See John Dillon's "The Mind of Plotinus" with commentary by E.K. Emilsson in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* vol. 3, ed. John J. Cleary, (University Press of America, 1987), p. 359.
2. See *Plotinus on the Simplicity of Vision*, trans. Michael Chase (University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 112.
3. The biologist Rupert Sheldrake has acknowledged Plotinus as the first Western philosopher to offer a critique of trace-centred theories of memory. Sheldrake has followed Plotinus' lead in his own work, see especially *The Presence of the Past* (Fontana, 1989), chpt. 12.
4. Zettel, #610, ed. and trans. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1967).
5. Zettel, #613. Plotinus, of course, might be as comfortable with the notion of causality across a temporal distance as he is with causality across a spatial distance. Wittgenstein's student Norman Malcolm has taken the idea quite seriously, see his *Memory and Mind* (Cornell University Press, 1977), chpt 7. Malcolm's book is probably the most thorough defense of Wittgenstein's approach to memory available.
6. Zettel, #613. Wittgenstein remained adamant about this: "Indeed, I confess, nothing seems more possible to me than that people some day will come to the definite opinion that there is no copy in either the physiological or the nervous systems which corresponds to a particular thought, or a particular idea, or memory": *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology* vol. I, #504, trans. C.G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A.E. Aue, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1982).
7. IV.6.3.71-74.
8. *On Memory and Recollection* 450a22, trans. Richard Sorabji (Duckworth, 1972).
9. Aristotle's view is the antecedent of the kind of trace-theory upheld most famously in recent times by C.B. Martin and Max Deutscher, see their "Remembering," *The Philosophical Review*, 75, 1966, 161-196.
10. IV.3.26.31.
11. IV.3.26.29-30.
12. IV.6.3.56-57.
13. IV.3.26.31-33.
14. III.6.2.40-41.

15. Unless otherwise indicated translations from Plotinus' *Enneads* follow those of A.H. Armstrong in the Loeb Classical Library edition (7 volumes, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, London 1966–1988).
16. IV.7.6.43–46. Sextus Empiricus attributes a similar argument to Chrysippus: "For if the soul in experiencing a presentation is stamped like wax, the most recent change will always obscure the previous presentation, just as the outline of the second seal wipes out the former one. But if this is the case, then memory, which is a storehouse of presentations, is destroyed and so is every craft": *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.372–373, trans. Brad Inward and Lloyd Gerson, in *Hellenistic Philosophy* (Hackett, 1988), p. 92.
17. See IV.7.8.19–23. Plotinus himself is not above comparing the soul to some kind of "surface" but it is for him better likened to the reflective surface of a mirror than a wax tablet (see I.4.10.6–24). A mirror, after all, is never affected intrinsically by what it reflects. Even when dusty it can always be polished.
18. IV.6.3.31.
19. IV.6.3.29–33.
20. IV.6.3.49–53.
21. *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. Von Wright, (Basil Blackwell: Oxford 1980), p. 220.
22. *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: conversations recorded by Friedrich Waismann*, ed. and trans. Joachim Schulte and Brian McGuinness (Oxford Basil Blackwell, 1979), p.48.
23. *Ibid.* p.53.
24. "Does he know that it is remembering because it is caused by something past? And how does he know what the past is? Man learns the concept of the past through remembering": *Philosophical Investigations*, #231e, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1958). Joachim Schulte provides valuable elaboration upon Wittgenstein's notion of memory as source: "If I remember a certain passage from the Fourth Symphony by Brahms and hear the sequence of tones before my mental ear, do I listen to a reproduction of a certain performance? If yesterday I heard the Fourth conducted by Kleiber and the day before yesterday I heard it conducted by Karajan, then my memory is likely to be influenced by both, and it may even be that I am able to reproduce—that I am able to call to mind—differences between those two performances. But no matter what kinds of trace may be there in my nervous system, I am the one now 'playing' Brahms' Fourth Symphony. It is my present performance—what I am doing now—which makes memory such a puzzling thing and at the same time such an important agency": *Experience and Expression: Wittgenstein's*

- Philosophy of Psychology* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), pp. 118–119.
25. Indeed memory is so creative for Plotinus that we not only remember what we have become but become what we remember; see IV.4.3.5–6.
  26. IV.6.3.4.
  27. IV.6.3.54–55.
  28. III.6.2.43–44.
  29. IV.6.3.3–5.
  30. Walter Stace expresses Plotinus and Wittgenstein's position perspicuously: "What is it that makes the mind able to remember? For what information does this question enquire? Does it suggest that some other "thing," which is not itself mind, from the outside pushes the mind into remembering or enables it to remember? And if we found this other thing, should we then be asked what third thing enables this thing to enable the mind to remember? Since memory is one of the essential characters of consciousness, these questions are like asking what it is which enables a triangle to be triangular": *The Nature of the World* (Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 59.
  31. There is a sense in which both Plotinus and Wittgenstein take wonder not merely as a stimulant but an end for philosophizing. This is well-expressed by Plotinus "...we do not think it proper to investigate ordinary things, nor do we disbelieve in them, but we disbelieve in the detailed working of the other powers which are out of the ordinary and encounter the extraordinary with wonder, though we should wonder at these ordinary things too if we were unfamiliar with them and someone presented a detailed account of them to us and explained their powers." IV.4.37.7–12 (Armstrong, modified). A similar sentiment is found in Wittgenstein: "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless that fact has at some time struck him.—And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful": *Philosophical Investigations* #129. For more on the centrality of wonder to Wittgenstein's thinking see Gordon C. F. Bearn's *Waking to Wonder: Wittgenstein's Existential Investigations* (SUNY Press, 1997).
  32. Karl Popper has called the view which Plotinus and Wittgenstein challenge "the bucket theory of the mind", see his essay "Realism" in *A Pocket Popper* (Fontana, 1983), p. 221. In a similar vein Gabriel Marcel has warned against being duped by material images in studying the mind—"we persuade ourselves falsely that to understand, for the mind, is like, for a vessel, being filled with a certain content": *The Mystery of Being* vol. 1, (University Press of America, 1950), p.56.

# The Neoplatonism of Dean Inge

R. Baine Harris

William Ralph Inge (1860–1954) is already known by most Neoplatonic scholars through his monumental study *The Philosophy of Plotinus*. His public career extended for more than sixty years and he was one of the best known Englishmen of his day. Trained primarily as a classicist, he became interested in philosophy in his mid-thirties, finally settling in his mid-forties upon the thought of Plotinus, and remaining a serious student of Neoplatonism for the rest of his life. In addition to his work on Plotinus, he is the author of more than forty-five major books and an equal number of pamphlets and scholarly articles. His first major book, was published in 1899 and his last article was published in 1954 when he was 94. In his books, he sets forth a form of Christian Platonism that is roughly in the same tradition as Augustine, Erigena, Eckhart, and the Cambridge Platonists, and especially the latter.

His Neoplatonism is to be found mainly in his ontology and epistemology, although there are distinctive Neoplatonic sub-themes running throughout his theology, psychology, and ethics. In contrast to Erigena, he should be regarded as Neoplatonic Christian rather than a Christian Neoplatonist, since he returns to distinctively Christian commitments in the final stages of his theory of salvation, his theology, and his ethics. Contrary to Erigena, he does not attempt to provide a Christian religious meaning within a metaphysical framework that is Neoplatonic in its architectonic structure, but forms his own idealistic synthesis without an appeal to a Neoplatonic logic or dialectics.

Inge saw one of the main intellectual difficulties of Christianity in the modern age to stem from the attempt to present it purely as a religion and more specifically, the effort to present it apart from its inherent Neoplatonic ontological element. Without a metaphysics, he believed it will not be able to compete with its rivals.<sup>1</sup>

In the last chapter of his major book on Plotinus he writes:

Our task is very much the same as that which was laid on Plotinus and his successors in their day. They also had a precious tradition to preserve; and, as happens so often in human life, they won their victory through apparent defeat. They resisted Christianity, and were beaten; but the Church carried off so much of their honey to its own hive that Porphyry himself would have been half satisfied if he had seen the event. For us, the whole heritage of the past is at stake together; we cannot preserve Platonism without Christianity, nor Christianity without Platonism, nor civilisation without both.<sup>2</sup>

**Ontology.** In his own ontology Inge distinguishes between essence and existence, but treats the distinction as polarity. "Reality" is a higher existence and "existence" is a lower reality. He does not postulate two worlds, one of substance and one of shadow, nor set an unreal natural order in opposition to a real supernatural one.<sup>3</sup>

The visible world is no deceiving phantom; it is the creation and copy of a higher sphere of existence, but the two are numerically one. Reality is constituted by the *laws* that make up the content of the mind of God. These laws are to be identified with the eternal values and are to be regarded as existents as well as ideals for they are powers as well as creative values.<sup>4</sup>

He regarded Truth, Goodness, and Beauty to be the most real elements in our world of experience and he viewed them as extensions of the deity. As such, they are literally the most real things in the world. He writes:

Things truly *are* in proportion as they "participate" in Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. These attributes of Reality, which so far as they can be known, constitute its entire essence; that is today, they belong to a sphere of supra-temporal and supra-spatial existence, which obeys laws of its own, and of which the world of common experience is a pale copy.<sup>5</sup>

Value and reality are ultimately identical. To be is to have value and the eternal values have objective existence. Our world of existence, our world of process and becoming, is built up out of our own valuations of existence. Inge comments:

Existence is itself a value, and an ingredient in every valuation; that which has no existence has no value...It is quite certain that we can think of no existing world without valuation. The ultimate identity of existence and value is the venture of faith to which mysticism and speculative idealism are committed. It is indeed the presupposition of all philosophy and religion...<sup>6</sup>

The world does not have its own independent objective existence. We contribute something to its existence in the act of knowing it. Valuation is necessary for existence to have meaning and the valuation of existence leads to the production of a scale of values.<sup>7</sup>

He concludes that there could be no greater error than to leave the two "judgments," that of existence and that of value, contrasted with each other or treated as unrelated in our experiences and he frankly admits that the identification of existence and value on their various levels can only be asserted as an act of faith.<sup>8</sup>

**Epistemology.** In his own epistemology Inge asserts that there are levels of knowledge and knowing. The sort of knowledge gained through the senses is adequate for some levels of understanding, but not for the highest mental judgments, such as the understanding of human personality, for example. Knowledge gained through logical and psychological operations may be adequate for scientific purposes, but not for metaphysical judgments. The level of knowing must correspond to the level of being of the object involved and knowledge of the supreme principle is different in type from all other types of knowledge.

**Faith.** All forms of knowing including scientific knowledge must begin with some element of faith, since all values must begin with an act of faith. Faith differs from "existential knowledge" in that it entails the recognition of an objective, external, and ideal standard of value by which things given in experience may be judged.

Inge further asserted that knowing and valuing are inseparable. Knowledge cannot occur apart from some form of evaluation and all affirmations of knowledge have some valuations implicit in them. Essentially, he claims that the level of knowledge is dependent upon the manner of evaluation. Valuation is not the direct product of either the will or the intellect, but is a primitive experience arising normally in our response to the ideal as we

encounter it in human experience. It is neither an intuition nor a "pure feeling."

**Knowledge.** The first level of knowing is the level of faith. The second level, the level that is usually called knowledge, is the level of relational knowledge and it is here that both science and metaphysics are produced. This stage is not in opposition to the primitive faith-state, but it exhibits a higher level or organization. It is sub-divided into two operational levels: 1) the development of the discursive intellect, and 2) the development of reason. The first aims at the achieving of a logical synthesis, and the second aims at the total synthesis of the whole of human experience. The highest function of the higher reason is the production of a metaphysics in which judgments of fact and judgments of value are fully reconciled. In order for science to be converted into metaphysics, the higher reason, or *Nous*—the total knowing of the whole person—must be engaged to exercise judgments that could not be made within the limits of logic alone. Facts are not reduced to values and values are not reduced to facts, but both are highly integrated in producing many valued, i.e., metaphysical judgments.

The third and highest level of knowing is the level of love. Relational knowledge at its best cannot provide the sort of complete knowledge for which the human spirit longs, but complete knowledge is possible through love. Such knowledge is not complete in the sense of being an adequate human experience. It can come only as the product of considerable personal intellectual discipline and spiritual growth.<sup>9</sup>

Although this form of supra-relational knowledge is the very highest form of faith and knowledge, it cannot be adequately characterized as a form of either one of them. Although no exact line of demarcation can be drawn between relational and supra-relational knowledge, the latter state may be said to occur when the "mind in love" rises above the level of *Nous* so that *Nous* passes into a higher level of synthesis than a synthesis of facts and values. At this point there is a complete harmony of feeling, intellect, and will, and thus, the complete unification of the personality.

Inge does not believe that knowing at the level of love resolves the various intellectual difficulties that existed on a lower level of knowing. It does not provide solutions to logical antinomies and it does not eliminate the laws of logic. Neither does it make metaphysics unnecessary. It transcends, but does not dissolve the

various logical and metaphysical issues involved in relational knowledge. It does not annul the distinction between knowing and being, and between thought and its objects. In perfect knowledge there is perfect correspondence of thought and object, but this is not the same as ontological identity. This supra-relational level of knowing, however, is the basis of religious knowledge. More divine mysteries can be revealed through love than through active work or metaphysical judgments.

**Theology.** Inge is essentially Augustinian in his theology. He accepted the distinction between the God of Religion and the God of Philosophy and concluded that Christianity has never been deficient in its conception of the former, whereas it has been in the latter at various times, including the present age. He believed that Christianity was able to exist without a well defined philosophical theology for its first three centuries but was provided with one only through the aid of the Middle Platonists and Plotinus. Essentially, what Plotinus contributed to Christianity through Augustine and others was the notion of a truly transcendent Absolute. Thus, Inge saw Christianity's chief contemporary theological deficiency to be the product of various modern attempts to depart from the basic Platonic-Neoplatonic conception of God that has been a part of Christian philosophy since Augustine.

*God as the Absolute.* Although Inge does not hold to the idea of God's absolute immutability (as is suggested by both Plotinus and Augustine), he rejected the Hegelian Absolute and all forms of theism that allow a fundamental change in the character or essence of the deity. For Inge, God is Absolute in the sense of being self-sufficient. He exists both in and apart from the created order and he is not dependent upon it for his essential attributes or for his continued existence. He is, however, effected by the universe to some extent and is capable of being moved by events that occur within it, including the decisions of men, even though his nature is not severely altered nor his purposes frustrated by these decisions. Late in his career he decided to abandon his early use of the word "Absolute" in reference to the deity.<sup>10</sup>

*God and the World.* According to Inge, the relation between God and the physical universe is transitive, asymmetrical and irreflexive. God is essential to the existence of the world, but the world is not essential to God's nature or existence. It is but the expression of his mind and the field in which his thoughts and

purposes are actualized. Anything we learn about the natural universe teaches us something about the nature of God, since the two are not separate entities. God is immanent in the world, but the world is not immanent in him.

*God in the World.* Inge clearly says that Platonism alone, including Neoplatonism, cannot provide an adequate conception of God and needs to be supplemented by the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and the Cross, both of which are compatible with it, although not inherent in it.<sup>11</sup> The doctrine of the Incarnation provides an added dimension to the idea of God not foreseen by the Platonists, for not only is God immanent in all instances of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, he is also immanent in flesh, in historical humanity, and in tragedy and suffering. The full doctrine of Jesus Christ as the Logos, Inge believes, bridges the gap between an Unchanging God and a changing world and simultaneously allows for both Divine Transcendence and Divine Immanence. In Jesus Christ the Platonic ideals of Wisdom, Goodness or Perfection, and Beauty are converted into the simple assertion that God is love. Without the doctrine of the Cross—namely, the thesis that Divine Goodness necessarily leads to Divine Self-sacrifice—there is no Christianity.<sup>12</sup>

*The Nature of Man.* Like Ficino, Inge returned to the ancients for his basic inspiration, minimized asceticism as an ideal, affirmed man as a legitimate part of nature, upgraded freedom of choice, and affirmed the essential identity of philosophy and religion. In fact, one of his main theses, that early Christian philosophy “put the capstone in the arch” of Greek philosophy, had already been stated in almost identical form by Ficino.

As a Christian theist under the strong influence of Plotinus, he could not regard man as the measure of all things nor as the crown of creation. Yet he does take the dignity of man quite seriously. Like Plotinus he insists that it is the conception of man as a soul that allows a metaphysical ground for establishing his inherent worth, for unless man can be viewed as having some transcendental element that is valued by something more than man, he may only be prized as a tool for the working of human ends. Like Plotinus he establishes the worth of man in his inherent literal identity with God through the spark of divinity that he believed to constitute an essential part of human personality.

*Man as Body.* According to Inge, man is simultaneously body, soul, and spirit and cannot be adequately defined on an exclusive material, psychical, or spiritual basis. All of his three natures are operative in every situation in which he finds himself in the present world order.<sup>13</sup> Man is “a living mirror of the universe.” He recognized that there is an element in human nature that mitigates against the development of man’s highest potential. His position is that the body as the body is not necessarily evil even though there are elements within the body that work against the development of the soul. Following St. Paul he characterized this as the flesh at war with the spirit, but he also teaches that the body itself can be reformed as a spiritual body. Following Plotinus he regards that which is natural as basically an extension of the soul and hence potentially redeemable, even on its lowest levels. Just as the soul is reformed and refined through its conformity to the spirit, so the body is improved by the working of the spirit through the soul upon it.

*Man as Soul.* In the strictest sense Inge did not believe in the existence of a soul as a being, i.e., as a self-existing individual that is transcendent and everlasting. Instead, he regarded it as the *function* of being alive in space and time and the result of the interplay of feeling, will, and thought. Man’s psychical life embraces much more than his empirical self, which is generally stable, but not absolutely stable in man.<sup>14</sup>

Although the human soul does not have independent existence, self-determination, and full self-consciousness, it does have an independent value. His position was that the individuality of the soul is a fact of experience and history, even though it may not necessarily be considered to be an eternal possession. Our soul is not something we own or control or do with as we please. Man is thus only potentially an individual. His individuality is grounded in his being in the image of that which has greater individuality than he does. Although the unity of soul-life is not realized in space and time, it is realized in the Eternal World.

*Man as Spirit.* Inge always uses the word “spirit” to signify the divine and when he says that man is spirit he means only to affirm that man possesses some element of the divine nature. For Inge, spirit is not separate from the soul, but it is not the soul in its normal operation as the empirical self. It is the “divine core” of the soul, the highest and most real aspect of its being.<sup>15</sup> It is the soul at

its best, just as the flesh is the soul at its worst. It is the immanence of the Divine in the human heart.<sup>17</sup>

Essentially Inge's view is that man is potentially spirit, but rarely actually spiritual. He is not an eternal spirit, but possesses enough of the divine to be spiritual. He does not possess a spirit any more than he possesses a soul. His spiritual essence, which is his true essence, is hidden in the normal operation of the empirical self.

*Man as a Person.* The essence of Inge's Neoplatonic Christianity is to be found in his doctrine of man as a person. In contrast with the Personal Idealists,<sup>18</sup> he held that man cannot be defined as a self-conscious ego, that is, as an individual, or as a person existing on his own and within his own powers. Inge held that man *is* a person, but he is only what he is to God. He is that particular individuality that he has in the mind of God. His worth is his worth to God and his personhood consists in the particular role that he plays in the life of God. This explains why he cannot be said to *be* a body, a soul, or a spirit, even though he has bodily, psychical and spiritual natures. It further explains why it is not easy for him to know his own true personality.

This idea of personhood, Inge believes, is the basis of the Christian teaching of the dignity of man. Man's worth cannot be located in his being a biological organism or a psychical or spiritual monad and it is not to be found in his worth to society, or to the state, or even to himself. It is to be found only in his worth to God, a theme that raises the level of his dignity beyond that to be found in various utilitarian social philosophies. The practical result of such a view is that it guarantees the notion of man as an end.

Inge further makes a distinction between man as a personality and man as a person. The former may be described and defined as a process, but the latter is an ideal and is only rarely grasped. It is an aim of religion to assist man in adjusting his personality in accordance with his true personhood, to adapt his physical and psychical behavior into conformity with his spiritual nature. This is the only way man can realize his own true self as a person.

*Human Salvation.* Man's salvation, according to Inge, is still much more than the refinement of his body and soul in terms of his spirit. Although he follows Plotinus in his journey for self-improvement through ethical self-culture, the elimination of the power of the passions, and the control of the will, the final stage of

salvation is somewhat different from that suggested by Plotinus. Instead of the return of the alone to the Alone or the reduction of the non-divine elements, Inge suggests rather the higher integration of the divine elements, with the human. Salvation for Inge is "Emmanuel,"—God with us, a union that does not dissolve the distinction between the individuality of the divine and the human, but instead intensifies the individuality of the human in the presence of the divine. The individual character of the divine is preserved as divine and the individual character of the human is preserved as human. Inge writes:

Our inner life should be a progressive transformation of soul into spirit. Spirit is the divine part of our nature, potentially but not actually ourselves...We do not believe in the absorption of personality in an impersonal Absolute; the 'I' and 'Thou' relationship remains to the end, otherwise love and worship would cease...<sup>19</sup>

Religion, for Inge, is that attitude and activity that leads man to come to realize his own full personality. It is whatever assists man in finding his own "conscious existence in God." This unification of the personality cannot be achieved through the integration of self-consciousness within the limits of the empirical self. It can only be achieved on a *religious* basis, namely, through the identification of the individuality of the self within the universal life. Inge writes:

To attempt to find self (the individual) without God (the universal), says Professor Ritchie, is to find—the devil. The individual assumed by the psychologist, and by the common political and ethical theories, is a half-way abstraction of the ordinary understanding, a bastard product of bad metaphysics and bad science. Christianity...from the very first rejected it.

This paradox of the spiritual life implies that the universal and individual are abstractions, each of which would collapse without the other. Indeed, the union of individuality and universality in a single manifestation forms the cardinal point in personality.<sup>20</sup>

Although religion involves the loss of the ego, it does not lead to the complete loss of self-hood. Quite the contrary, it leads to the discovery of one's self, that is to the discovery of the true nature of one's own individuality in terms of the role one plays in the universal life.



Finally, Inge's humanism is to be seen in his belief in the essential unity of philosophy and religion. From a distant perspective his whole career may be seen as an effort to bring these two ancient disciplines closer together in the modern period. This he proposed to do by giving philosophy a considerably broader role than that allowed to it by most philosophers of his day, returning to the ancient conception of it as an *ars vivendi* in which all forms of knowledge, scientific, religious, and otherwise would be synthesized. His dialectic is nearer to Plato's than to the dialectic of Plotinus, but he agreed with Plotinus that the final vision of truth occurs beyond the limits of the dialectic. To say the least, Inge believed that in their final phases, philosophy and religion are identical. In his book on the philosophy of religion, *God and the Astronomers*, he expressed his conviction that it is possible to work out a harmony among science, philosophy, and religion if science is kept within its limits and not allowed to expand into metaphysics and if philosophy and religion do not take on the character of a science.

Dr. Rudolf Metz in his *A Hundred Years of British Philosophy*, written in 1938, gave the following assessment of Inge's contribution:

...The real import of his work is...in his having focussed the intellectual life of England upon historical forces and powers which had hitherto been in part buried and hidden...Present-day English philosophy...owes him ■ noteworthy widening of its cultural horizon, the sharpening of its vision for far views over space and time, a training in genuine thought about and insight into history and the philosophy of civilization. Inge seems to me to feel more vividly than any other contemporary British thinker that philosophy is not a self-sufficient detached affair, but an organic member of the general culture of the mind, in which it is included and which is operative in it.<sup>21</sup>

Inge founded no school of thought and there is little evidence that he has any remaining major philosophical disciples. He once said that the nation that first finds a practical reconciliation between science and idealism is likely to take the front place among the peoples of the world. His pioneering efforts in pointing out the formula for this reconciliation are still worthy of our consideration.

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## NOTES

1. W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1918), I, p. 12.
2. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 227-28.
3. W. R. Inge, "Philosophy and Religion," in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, J. H. Muirhead, ed., First Series (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1924), p. 195.
4. W. R. Inge, *Personal Idealism and Mysticism* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), p. 148.
5. W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 74.
6. W. R. Inge, "Survival and Immortality," *The Hibbert Journal* 15 (July, 1917), p. 589.
7. *Ibid.* pp. 78-80.
8. W. R. Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, First Series (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1919), p. 271.
9. W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, *op. cit.* II., pp. 78-80.
10. W. R. Inge, *God and the Astronomers* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1933), pp. 218-219.
11. W. R. Inge, *Vale* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1934), p. 48.
12. On the relation of the doctrine of the Cross and Neoplatonism Inge writes: "...Other religions besides Christianity worshiped a suffering and even a dying God; but the Neoplatonist would, I fear, have shrunk from such a doctrine with horror, or dismissed it with contempt. It would have seemed to undo all the work of deliverance which his philosophy had built up for him...How can a perfectly good man, much more a God, feel pain and grief?...And yet until we accept the doctrine that vicarious suffering...is Divine, the sting of the world's evil remains undrawn...Redemption must be vicarious; it must be wrought by the suffering of the just for the unjust." W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, *op. cit.*, II., pp. 233-34.
13. W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1899), p. 34.
14. W. R. Inge, *Personal Idealism and Mysticism* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), pp. 3-4.
15. W. R. Inge, *Things, Old and New* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1933), p. 37.
16. W. R. Inge, *Faith and its Psychology*, p. 134.
17. W. R. Inge, *Personal Religion and the Life of Devotion* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1924), p. 71.
18. Inge wrote his *Personal Idealism and Mysticism* in 1907 in an effort to refute the position of such men as Henry Sturt, G. F. Stout, W. R. Boyce Gibson, and Hastings Rashdall, all of whom were Christians who formulated a theory of man based upon the idea of man as a sustained self-conscious, self-determining rational ego. The Personal

Idealists made personality as such the foundation of their whole metaphysical and ethical structure.

19. W. R. Inge, "What Life Has Taught Me," *What Life Has Taught Me by Twenty Five Distinguished Men and Women*, Sir James Marchant, ed., (London: Odhams Press, Ltd. 1948), p. 19.
20. W. R. Inge, *Personal Idealism and Mysticism*, op. cit., p. 103.
21. Rudolph Metz, *A Hundred Years of British Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1938), pp. 784 and 788.

## Paul Tillich's System and Neoplatonism

John Charles Cooper

### Introduction

The German-American Philosopher-Theologian, Paulus Oskar Johannes Tillich (1886-1966) was known during his lifetime as a responder to the new in the Twentieth Century, a welcomer of the insights of artists and architects, depth psychologists and scientists. Above all, Tillich's "System" was a response to the questions raised by modern people; questions he saw reflected in the often tortured teachings of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Philosophers. Both liberal defenders and conservative attackers of Tillich's contributions acknowledge that much of his conceptual apparatus is derived from G.F.W. Hegel (with his Absolute Idealism), with a strong dose of Karl Marx and a leavening of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore somewhat odd, perhaps, to write about Tillich's System and Neoplatonism. Odd, that is, to anyone not familiar with Tillich's three volumes of Systematic Theology<sup>2</sup> and, in particular, with his exposition of the Holy Trinity and the Logos and with his concept of revelation "as ecstatic reason."<sup>3</sup>

### I. The Trinity

Tillich well knows that the Trinitarian Doctrine of God's hypostases derives from Plotinus,<sup>4</sup> who believed the hypostases in God are Three and no others. These Three are The *One*, beyond being and essence; the *Mind* or *Nous*, the Unity of Being and Thought; and the *Soul*. As Giovanni Reale says:

...The determination of the principle according to which the successive hypostases proceed from the first hypostasis and according to which the sensible cosmos itself proceeds from the last

hypostasis as well as the determination of the nature of this process is the new and distinctive trait of Neoplatonism.<sup>5</sup>

Tillich, of course, goes on to develop the specifically Christian doctrine of *Creatio ex nihilo*, and so does not follow Plotinus in his pantheism.<sup>6</sup> Tillich does, however, observe:

The divine life is infinite mystery, but it is not infinite emptiness. It is the ground of all abundance, and it is abundant itself. The consideration of the Trinitarian principles is not the Christian doctrine of The Trinity. It is a preparation for it, nothing more. The dogma of The Trinity can be discussed only after the Christological dogma has been elaborated.<sup>7</sup>

For Tillich, the Trinitarian hypostases are necessary if one is to speak of a living God. Interestingly, the revelation by which this God is made known is called "ecstatic reason," which is similar to the ecstasy by which Plotinus believed he had become God, if only partially and fragmentally, as both he and Tillich would have observed. Tillich mentions Ecstasy in *The Systematic Theology* twenty-five times, with one discussion running for eight pages.<sup>8</sup> While Dean Inge holds that "the importance of ecstasy in Neoplatonism has often been much exaggerated;"<sup>9</sup> it is no exaggeration to say that Plotinus valued ecstasy above everything else, perhaps because it was a rare experience. As Inge says: "When in this state the Soul would exchange its present condition for nothing, no, not for the very heaven of heavens; for there is nothing better, nothing more blessed than this."<sup>10</sup> Tillich's conception is almost the same, with this caveat, for Tillich there is sin and estrangement between the human and the Divine (unlike Plotinus) and so the Divine Spirit must invade the human spirit (in grace):

If the Divine Spirit breaks into the human spirit...it drives the human spirit out of itself. The spirit (small "s")...is driven into a successful self-transcendence; it is grasped by something ultimate and unconditional. ...'Ecstasy' is the classical term for this state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence. It describes the human situation under the Spiritual Presence exactly.<sup>11</sup>

Tillich remarks in the same place:

...The revelation of the finite to that which is infinite...is incommensurable....On the other hand, there is no way to express any relation to the divine ground of being other than by using finite material and the language of symbols.<sup>12</sup>

This is, of course, the same position as St. Thomas Aquinas: the *Analogia entis*.<sup>3</sup> Essentially, Plotinus, Inge, Aquinas and Tillich all mean that God is ineffable, beyond comprehension, wholly other (as Karl Barth might say<sup>14</sup>). Tillich suggests that we might overcome the inevitable limitation on all attempts to express the relation (of the infinite) to the ultimate by radically qualifying the metaphor of "dimension," as in the expression, "the dimension of depth" or "of the eternal." Such an expression would mean, for example, "the dimension in which all dimensions are rooted and negated and affirmed." Tillich notes that "this transforms the metaphor into a symbol."<sup>15</sup>

Edward D. O'Connor in "Paul Tillich: An Impression," in *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought*<sup>16</sup> observes:

But it is patent from Tillich's writings that he does not mean by *symbol* what St. Thomas means by *analogy*....Symbol and analogy are not the same thing; two beings are analogous by reason of an 'essence'...in both of them...But we freely take one being to symbolize another because of some likeness or association between them....

O'Connor maintains that "the fact that he (Tillich) thinks that there is nothing more in analogy than in symbol is a convincing sign that he is not thinking on a truly ontological level, but on a more imaginative level..."<sup>17</sup> While O'Connor does raise some interesting points, his essay ends in a general attack on Protestantism for being weak in Metaphysics, from Luther to Tillich. Incredibly, he offers submission to ecclesiastical authority and monastic renunciation of the world as a corrective. In this, O'Connor sounds more like Plotinus than Tillich ever does.

Much more appreciative—although critical—of Tillich is George H. Tavard in *Paul Tillich and The Christian Message*.<sup>18</sup>

To say 'that God is the Infinite, or the Unconditional, or Being-itself' is no longer presented as a non-symbolic statement. Rather, 'these terms precisely designate the boundary-line at which both the

symbolic and the non-symbolic coincide. Up to this point every statement is non-symbolic....Beyond this point every statement is symbolic...the point itself is both symbolic and non-symbolic."<sup>19</sup>

In sum, Tillich points towards mystical participation in the Divine "ground" of reality. The Divine and the experience, ecstatic and form outside the self, is ineffable, beyond words, as both Plotinus and St. Paul<sup>20</sup> agree.

## II. The Logos

From the time of the early Stoics, through the Academy, to the Neo-Stoics and Neo-Platonists, the concept of The Logos played a role in Greek Philosophy. While it is true that *any* Christian Theologian or Philosopher of Religion *must* deal with the Trinity and the Logos, Tillich spends a great deal of time in dealing with these concepts in depth.<sup>21</sup> For Tillich, "Logos" is the principle of the divine self-manifestation in God as well as in the Universe, in nature as well as history."<sup>22</sup> He calls The Logos "the main tool for the Christological work of the Church."<sup>23</sup> Tillich continues by referring to the Stoics for whom the Logos unites cosmological and religious elements. "It unites rational structure and creative power. In Philo and the Fourth Gospel the religious and symbolic quality of the idea of the Logos prevails."<sup>24</sup> Tillich gladly acknowledges Heraclitus as the creator of the Logos doctrine and declares that: "In Philo the motif is the unapproachable mystery of God which demands a mediating principle between God and man...."<sup>25</sup> This is the Logos.

The influence of Philo of Alexandria upon Tillich is clear enough. Plotinus' influence is less than clear. That Plotinus and Tillich shared a similar approach to theology seems clear<sup>26</sup> but Plotinus' use of "one," "mind" and "soul" (rather than Logos, Soul is used for intelligence or Reason) in designating the Three Divine hypostases is very different from Tillich's usage. The similarity of approach of the two thinkers is revealed by Emile Brehier's comment on "The Fundamental problem in the philosophy of Plotinus":

All interpreters agree in recognizing in Plotinus the coexistence of two orders of questions: first, the religious problem concerning the

destiny of the soul...; and second, the philosophical problem of the structure and rational explanation of reality.<sup>27</sup>

However, we may take a clue from St. Augustine, the Father of Christian Theology and himself a Neoplatonist, who holds that Plotinus determined that at the very beginning of the process of emanation, the One (Ultimate Reality) produces an image of itself in which it knows itself. This is "The Intelligence," which St. Augustine identifies with the Christian Trinitarian Logos, The Christ.<sup>28</sup> Once this identification is made—and Tillich was aware of it—we may conclude that Tillich is as much influenced by Plotinus in his doctrine of the Logos as he is in the doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed, St. Augustine read Plotinus' One as the Father; The Intelligence as the Logos or Son; and the Soul as the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup> This understanding underlies Tillich's Vol. II, which is the doctrine of Christ. Tillich even makes the claim that the Biblical reports about Jesus do not psychologize, they ontologize.<sup>30</sup>

## III. Ecstasy/Ecstatic Reason

Tillich once denied that there is a knowledge-content in religious symbols, repudiating Ernst Cassirer's theory of pansymbolism:

*The non-symbolic element in all religious knowledge is the experience (emphasis mine) of the Unconditional as the boundary, ground, and abyss of everything conditional. This experience is the boundary—experience of human reason and therefore [it is] expressive in negative-rational terms. But the Unconditional is not God (emphasis mine). God is the affirmative concept pointing beyond the boundary of the negative-rational terms and therefore is itself a positive-symbolic term.*<sup>31</sup>

James Luther Adams declares that "for Tillich, the symbol represents 'existential truth,' that is, a truth toward which one cannot have the spectator-attitude, and to which one must surrender in order to experience it. In this sense the 'symbols provide no objective knowledge but yet a true awareness,' namely, of the *mystery* (my stress) of the ground, which never can become an

object for a subject, but that draws the subject into the object thus overcoming the cleavage between them."<sup>32</sup>

Adams later remarks that "Tillich exhibits affinity to Boehme," the medieval mystic.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, Tillich's is a mystical way of understanding the decisive experience of revelation, that is the essence of religion. In his mystical depth, Tillich is much like Plotinus.

In *Systematic Theology*, speaking of "the depth of reason," Tillich observes: "The depth of reason is the expression of something that is not reason but which precedes reason and is manifest through it."<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, Tillich goes on to discuss Nicolaus Cusanus and his Catholic Mysticism. Later he declares that "A revelation is a special and extraordinary manifestation which removes the veil from something which is hidden in a special and extraordinary way.... A genuine mystery... is experienced in an attitude which contradicts the attitudes of ordinary cognition. The eyes are 'closed' because the genuine mystery transcends the act of seeing... mystery characterizes a dimension which 'precedes' the subject-object relationship."<sup>35</sup>

One can only refer to the *experience* of revelation as "Ecstasy."<sup>36</sup> "Ecstasy" points to ■ "states of mind... in which reason is beyond itself, beyond the subject-object structure."<sup>37</sup> It is induced by the "ontological shock," i.e., an experience of the original fact that there is *something* and not *nothing*.<sup>38</sup> Although Ecstasy is not a product of reason, it does not destroy reason, either.<sup>39</sup>

In considering whether Plotinus and Neo-Platonism are influences upon Tillich's System, we need to keep in mind two words above all: *Experience* and *Ecstasy*. We find that Tillich denies all revelation not based upon experience, and sees the genuineness of Christianity in the experience of the transforming power of the Symbol of The Christ. For Tillich, too, Philosophy, which asks the questions of human existence, finds its answers in Theology, not in doctrine, but rather in the experience when reason is driven to its ontological depths, becoming ecstatic reason. This means reason is driven outside itself, to unite with Being-Itself, much as the prophet is beside himself or suffers from divine madness. To find the source or model of such a view of reason (and human fulfillment), we need look no further than Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, for his quote from Apollo's Oracle about Plotinus:

So to this godlike man, who often raised himself in thought, according to the ways Plato teaches in the *banquet*, to the First and Transcendent God, that God appeared who has neither shape nor any intelligible form, but is throned above intellect and all the intelligible. I Porphyry, declare that once, in my sixty-eighth year, I drew near and was united to Him. To Plotinus 'the term even near was shown': for his end and term was to be united to, to approach the God above all things. Four times while I was with him he attained that term, in an unspeakable actuality and not in potency only.<sup>40</sup>

What "happened" to Plotinus four times, and to Porphyry once, Tillich declared can and does happen to Christians due to the surpassing power of the symbol of The Christ. Like Paul, who once declared "...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise..."<sup>41</sup> all these belong to Christ and the Christian, so, too, Paul Tillich, in his *Systematic Theology*, claims everything true and good for his faith. And among the best that Tillich found in our common history was Plato and Plato's spiritual interpreter, Plotinus, of Alexandria and Rome.

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#### NOTES

1. See Leonard F. Wheat, *Paul Tillich's Dialectical Humanism*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1970, p. xii and *Tillich's System*, by Wayne W. Mahan, San Antonio, TX, Trinity University Press, 1974, pp. 18ff.
2. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology. Three Volumes in One*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1967.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 235-289, STI; Ch. II, "The Reality of God"; B, "The Actuality of God", especially see pp. 250-255.
4. Giovanni Reale, *The Schools of The Imperial Age, A History of Ancient Philosophy*, translated and edited by John R. Catan, Albany, Sun Press, 1990, p. 314.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Tillich, ST, p. 253. Also see Philo, "On the Unchangeableness of God" in *The Works of Philo*, translated by C.D. Yonge, Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, pp. 158-173, especially paragraph no. 119.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 251. Also see Wm. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, Vol. I, 3rd Ed, London, Longmans, Green, & Co., 1948, p. 122.
8. *ST I*, 13; 111-114; 117; 123; 126-127; 129; 136; *III*, 112-120; 126; 129; 132; 135; 137; 142-144; 151; 187; 192; 196; 200; 229; 230; 242; 294; 355; 411. Additionally, *Ecstatic* is mentioned four times in *ST II*, 5; 7; 8; 10.
9. Inge, *Philosophy of Plotinus*, Vol. II, p. x.
10. *Ibid.*, II, p. 135.
11. *Op. Cit.*, *ST III*, II A, 1, a, pp. 111-112.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 113. Also see Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, NY, Harper Torch Books, 1958; Wm. L. Rowe, *Religious Symbols and God, A Philosophical Study of Tillich's Theology*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1968. Rowe follows Sydney Hook in holding that Tillich uses *being-itself* as a Platonic essence or Universal. This is because Tillich speaks of *participation* in being-itself, which is a term used to suggest the relationship of particulars to universals. (Rowe, pp. 43-62). For a statement of the Thomistic Tradition of allowing only Analytical (or Symbolic) knowledge of God, see Gerald Vann, o.p., *Myth, Symbol and Revelation*, Washington, D.C., The Thomist Press, 1962.
13. *Ibid.* See George H. Tavad, *Paul Tillich & The Christian Message*, NY, Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1962, especially pp. 19-20.
14. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Introduction To The Theology of Karl Barth*, Grand Rapids, MI, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979, p. 9. Barth declares that through the Holy Spirit believers know *the word of God*. The real question is *how* they do so.
15. *ST III*, *op.cit.*, p. 113.
16. *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought*, Dubuque, IA, The Priory Press, 1964, edited by Thomas A. O'Meara, O.P. and Celestin D. Weissner, O.P., pp 37-38.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
18. *Op.cit.*, Tavad, Chapter IV, "Christology As Symbol", pp. 52-81.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
20. II Corinthians 12:1-10, RSV.
21. For The Logos, see *ST I*, 15-18, 23-28, 57, 64, 72-75, 84, 101, 119, 122-23, 149, 154, 156-59, 172-73, 176, 188, 229, 250-51, 259, 287; II, 12, 14, 89, 92, 95, 108, 111, 112, 138, 139, 141, 143, 149, 159, 160; III, 24, 29, 61, 93, 126, 254, 256, 284, 286, 288-90, 294, 335, 367, 380, 441.
22. *ST*, II, p. 95.
23. *ST*, II, p. 111.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, p 112.

26. Emile Brehier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, p. 32.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation*, Second Edition, Mayfield Publishing Co., Mountain View, CA, 1995, pp. 226-228.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
30. *ST*, II, p. 124.
31. "Symbol & Knowledge", *Journal of Liberal Religion*, II, (194), p. 203.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 204. See *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture. Science, and Religion*, James Luther Adams, Harper & Row, NY, NY, 1965, pp. 247-251.
33. Adams, *Ibid.*, p. 251.
34. *ST*, I, p. 79.
35. *ST*, I, p. 108.
36. *ST*, I, pp. 111-115.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
40. A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus*, Collier Books, NY, NY, 1962, p 48.
41. Philippians 4:8 (RSV).

# The Contemporary Christian Platonism of A.H. Armstrong

Jay Bregman

The Christian Platonist and Neoplatonic scholar A. H. Armstrong is especially well known for his English translation of the *Enneads* of Plotinus, his book, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus*, as the editor of the *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, other books and numerous articles, many of these gathered in the collections *Plotinian and Christian Studies* and *Hellenic and Christian Studies*. (See notes.) In his works for some sixty years he has also expressed his personal Platonic religious outlook. Most significant among these are his "apophatic" or "negative theology," a rather un-orthodox religious openness combined with Socratic skepticism as well as with traditional religious practice, a positive view of the cosmos reflected in his sense of the universe, itself an epiphanic icon of the divine.

Armstrong's scholarship has been well received and has made a major impression on the learned world seriously concerned with Late Antiquity and Neoplatonism. His personal religious ideas are perhaps less well known. In them he presents viable alternatives to rigid exclusivist Orthodoxies, and he builds bridges between East and West: Neoplatonism is the most natural and advantageous point for a Westerner to approach Eastern, especially Indian, thought; he offers living options within the tradition, that do not deny or negate historical criticism, modern concerns or modern science. His feeling for the rhythms of the cosmos, nature and "the beautiful" speaks to modern sensibilities, concerns and problems, while it retains a creative relationship to the tradition; especially to the Hellenic rather than the Biblical elements of our "inherited conglomerate."

Beginning in the mid 1930's, as a Roman Catholic convert, Armstrong's works display developments in Neoplatonic

scholarship as well as his own changing religious attitudes and commitments. In the 1936 "Plotinus and India," a theme Neoplatonists continue to think about, still under the influence of Gilbert Murray and E.R. Dodds, he reflects the old ideas of late antiquity as an "age of anxiety" and the "failure of nerve." Even essentially rationalist Greek thinkers were concerned with ascending beyond the *Heirmarmene*-ruled cosmos and/or unifying with its inner principle. The Gnostics prefer the first, the *Hermetica* and especially Plotinus both of these methods of release; there is no sharp distinction between subject and object and all are deeply influenced by the Hellenic outlook. Yet despite similarities to Vedanta Plotinian pantheism (as Armstrong then called it) and related phenomena need not be Indian in origin as E. Brehier thought. The 1937 "Emanation in Plotinus" takes up the theme of "solar theology" (later so important to the emperor Julian) in Plotinus and the *Hermetica*. *Nous* ("divine intellect") is "*ho ekei Helios*" the sun of the other world and Soul is an intermediary between *Nous* and the visible sun.

During his Roman Catholic period (essentially the 1930's to the 1970's) Armstrong avoided the "party line" of the Christian theological "de-Hellenizers," who blamed the Greeks (especially the Platonists) as the main source for contemporary perceived defects of Christianity: dualism, devaluing of the body and the material world and non-linear therefore non-progressive views of history. Even when he takes the Catholic side in this debate he minimizes the differences and even sees advantages for Christians in the Greek view: "...the Christian, like the Platonist, should apprehend the eternal as present here and now, and should not reserve his hope for the end of the historical processes and the Christian ought to desire as passionately as any Pythagorean or Platonist to be delivered from coming to be and passing away from the cycle of death and generation."<sup>1</sup> Armstrong also perceives common ground for the notions of Platonic *Eros* and Christian *Agape*. The outpouring of the One is not a form of natural automatism; beyond necessity the One gives itself. The impulse of *Eros* comes from above, though the One remains impersonal.<sup>2</sup> The Christian emphasizes history and community more than Plotinus. Even the most individualistic Christian mystic expects to enjoy the Beatific vision in the company of heaven. Yet the mystery of how and why the citizen-souls of the City of God are being assembled

in history, no Christian interpretation of history can solve. For Plotinus, the beginning of ascent must be the exercise of *politikai aretai*. He also has a strong feeling for "the visible universe as a community of living intelligences"; it would hardly be going too far to speak of the "mystical body of the cosmos" in Plotinus. Their refusal to recognize *any* community with the gods of the visible universe was one of his strongest reasons for hostility to the Gnostics. On *this* doctrine, Armstrong notes, Christians could well learn something from Plotinus, "and our traditional doctrine of angels would enable us to do so within the limits of orthodox belief."

In his Roman Catholic period, then, Armstrong's qualified pro-Plotinian position might be thus summarized: Though Plotinus' description of the unity in diversity of *Nous* may have had a powerful influence on the Christian discretion of the unity-in-diversity of the heavenly city, intellect remains an impersonal universal principal, not a community of beatified persons: "And union with the One is *always* unqualified *monou pros monon*."

To some extent during the 1960's and especially the 1970's, Hilary Armstrong moved more and more in the direction of "Hellenic Christianity." By 1981, he had arrived at a religious position, perhaps best expressed in his "Negative Theology, Myth and Incarnation"<sup>4</sup> in which he makes a very sharp distinction between the Hellenic and Biblical, history and myth, and attempts to take the Hellenic side.

This also involved a return to the liberal Christian Platonism encountered in the late 1920's at Cambridge and also a personal *paradosis* from his (more conservative) father, an Anglican clergyman. Indeed, one who accepted a traditional equation of Platonism and the Bible. A form of liberal Christian Platonism, which, he claims to have abandoned in immature and exaggerated reaction to both its defects and virtues for a more conservative form of Christianity and to have only recently fully consciously returned to it.<sup>5</sup>

Platonic philosophy has been a force against the alienated Gnostic attitude, reinforcing elements in traditional Christianity opposed to Gnosticism and opposed to those Gnostic influences which have persisted in the Christian tradition.<sup>6</sup> The Plotinian view of divine hierarchy opposes the austere monotheistic idea of no degrees of divinity: "it is not contracting the divine into one but



showing it in that multiplicity in which God himself has shown it which is proper to those who know the power of God (*theos*), inasmuch as abiding who he is, he makes many gods, all depending upon himself and existing through him and from him"—God comes and brings *the gods* with him.<sup>7</sup>

This Henotheistic/polytheism as a pure Hellene might conceive it—inclusive monotheism for a Christian Platonist, provides a contrast between monotheism in which god communicates divinity (in and through himself) and the "Abrahamic" tradition's exclusive God separated from *His creation*. For the Christians, despite talk of the cosmic function of the Logos and the world-animating activity of the Holy Spirit, the saving work of the Logos is through membership in the Church rather than the Cosmos. This difference, about the religious relevance of the material cosmos and its multiple self-communication and revelation everywhere and always, the ecclesiastical vs. the natural cosmos, Christian anthropocentrism, led the way for modern technological progress and pollution in a de-sacralized world. There is no theophany left for the majority, no divine self-manifestation here below. "We had been set free by the Christianity which most of us had abandoned from the superstition and wisdom of the ancients, set free to try to realize our dreams of a wholly man-centered technocratic paradise, which is beginning to look to more and more of us more and more like hell."<sup>8</sup>

The Christian Hilary Armstrong elaborates "Some Advantages of Polytheism":

The (Hellenes) did not repudiate the gods for the sake of God, the world is a unity in plurality, a harmony of conflicting opposites and alternating rhythms (seasonal) of a dance, rather than a march to a goal. Plotinus' *On Providence* (the greatest ancient theodicy) remains close to the spirit of the tragedians and in *Enn. I, 8*, Plotinus implies the cosmic choral dance in his adaptation of Sophocles view of Colonus to the cosmos: 'All the place is holy, and there is nothing which is without a share of soul' (*Enn. I 8 [5,] 14, 36-37; Soph. O C 54*). I can only say that awareness of God in the natural world is the heart and foundation of any religion I have.<sup>9</sup>

The notion of God as a Person tends to make him one particular among others; the Good always lies over the edge of our thought. We can only construct a multiplicity of inadequate images...the

symbol for reality. The icon is a *sign*, not a likeness, by which he makes himself present. The true Neoplatonist is an *idoloclast* but an *iconodule*.<sup>10</sup> Thus the theologians formulations are "icons" as much as are the artistic "images" of the church and neither can be elevated in status.

The important Eranos paper on "The Divine Enhancement of Earthly Beauties"<sup>11</sup> was written in part as a Hellenic response to the disintegration of our inherited conglomerate. "The beauties of Earth and the beauties of the gods, or the divine...are apprehended together so that earthly beauties stimulate and provide expression for awareness of divine presence, and in turn, the sense of divine presence enhances earthly beauties"<sup>12</sup>; such reciprocal perception is at the root of Neoplatonic aesthetic experience. (see Plato's *Symposium* 210A-212B; *Enn. I.6; V.8*) In this paper Armstrong discusses 1) Archaic/Classical Greek religion, with its ubiquitous but varied sense of concrete omnipresent *numina*; 2) Hellenistic "cosmic piety" somewhat artificially distinguished from 3) Neoplatonic transcendence, which includes and transforms 1) and 2). In the final stages of Hellenism Platonic and poetic religion had come together...Neoplatonists of Athens were the last defenders of the old Hellenic ways of recognizing and worshiping the gods as icons. They also went beyond Plotinus in overcoming dualism—the "feminine other," the dyad, is equal to the monad and both proceed from the One. They were well content that the Platonic imagination should be the old Hellenic imagination, and in fact had never ceased to be.<sup>13</sup> On the ladder of the *Symposium* (from beautiful things to the Beautiful) *all stages remain at every stage* (*Enn. I 3(20)*) and at every stage from beginning to end the universal and absolute beauty is present in particular beauties and is apprehended as what makes them beautiful.<sup>14</sup> The spiritual enjoyment of earthly beauties was most splendidly celebrated in 17th Century England by Armstrong's country neighbor, Thomas Traherne, whose writings he quotes at length<sup>15</sup> and then goes on to point out that "it was above all Plotinus who gave Platonism the form in which it has helped most to make us vividly aware of the *divine presence in the beauties of the earth*."<sup>16</sup>

In the allegory in *Enn. V, 5 (32)*, 18-24 about Ouranos (the One), Kronos (Nous) and Zeus (Psyche) the latter's (as Hadot suggests) preference is for Ouranos—"he is not satisfied with the contemplation of his father but aspires to, we might say, the active

power with which his grandfather established reality in being"—a *hidden preference* in Plotinus for the process of procession, at the root of which is the *bonum diffusivum sui*, the primacy of the generosity of the Good. That even the perfection of Nous—the absolute perfection of Being—is not enough, is ■ striking development of Platonism.<sup>17</sup> Armstrong points out, however, that Zeus also remains in Kronos and even if the Hypostases are distinguished, they are never disjoined. Plotinus himself might have let the sharp distinction vanish.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, the later, Athenian Neoplatonists, went far in overcoming dualism, and in this surpassed Plotinus. Platonic-Pythagorean dualism is never simply a conflict dualism of the Iranian pattern—"light vs. dark" in more or less eternal opposition—it is rather in between the Iranian and the Chinese Yang-Yin Circle. The late Platonists, "by rehabilitating" the account of the feminine principle, the "dark other" brought it over to the Chinese side. The negative statements about this principle are abandoned, both (monad and dyad) are seen as equal, proceeding directly from the One/Good, the father and mother of all that exists, of real being and intelligible cosmos as well as of material cosmos. Though as imperfection "evil" is in ■ sense a result of the "dark other", she still has a necessary and transcendent function.<sup>19</sup> As Proclus puts it in *PL. TH. III.8*, "all unity, wholeness and community of being and all the divine measures depend on the primal limits and all division of generative making and procession to multiplicity come from the supreme unboundedness."<sup>20</sup>

Armstrong summarizes his position as follows:

The recognition of the 'dark other'...can clearly do a great deal to remove the Platonic uneasiness, still apparent in Plotinus, about the beauties of the material world...the point is that at which cosmic optimism becomes...too roseate...and world affirmation...self indulgent, and there is no longer any call to rise to the higher world of spirit. The doctrine of the Athenian Neoplatonists does not deny the evil of the material world...it still preserves something of the ambiguity of valuation inherent in the concept of image. But the image is now very much an icon. It becomes more necessary than ever before for the devout philosopher to be aware of the divine in and through material things and outward observances.<sup>21</sup>

The Athenian Neoplatonists not only practiced Chaldaean theurgic rites, but were champions of Hellenic and all pieties and theophanies. Proclus thought that a philosopher should be the "hierophant of the whole world."<sup>22</sup> In the history of Hellenic and Platonic awareness of the divine in the beauties of the earth the beginning was present in the end. The last defenders of the primeval theophanies were Platonic philosophers.

Today Hilary Armstrong takes his religious stand with Christians whose piety is becoming "pre-Constantinian" and who have abandoned the "Theosdosian model" of universal compulsory Christianity. He has also abandoned religious exclusiveness: "I normally worship God in a Christian Church....But if I came across a Hindu temple, our world's answer to a temple to Graeco-Roman Isis, I should go into it and give true veneration to their holy *images* as *true images* of God."<sup>23</sup>

A figure from late antiquity I consider to be comparable is Synesius of Cyrene (ca370-413CE). Synesius was a well connected Greek gentleman from the polis of Cyrene in Libya. According to Gibbon he had the longest pedigree in history. He came to Alexandria in the 390's to study with Hypatia, the Platonic-Pythagorean philosopher. She "initiated" him into Neoplatonic "mysteries." His famous metaphysical hymns, especially the early ones, suggest the fervor of ■ "convert" to the Neoplatonic philosophy. Whether or not Synesius was somehow Christian, for whatever reason, before he encountered Hypatia's teaching, or, as is more likely, shortly after, by all appearances he remained an Hellenic Neoplatonist in the Hypatia sense and probably didn't care much about what orthodox clergy said or thought. But when he accepted an episcopal appointment in 410 CE he felt obligated to take a position. In *Ep.105* he expresses Platonic reservations concerning Christian dogma: the world was not "created," nor will it ever be destroyed; the human soul pre-exists; the resurrection can only be an allegorical image of a purely spiritual event. After 410 he continued to correspond and confide in Hypatia; and to understand his religion from the perspective of an *inclusive* Hellenic Neoplatonist.<sup>24</sup>

Hilary Armstrong's remarks in correspondence and private conversation clarify the way in which he perceives the religiosity of Synesius in relation to his own. "My religion was never very Jesus-centered—and similar in some ways in my upbringing to

Cambridge Platonists like Henry More...since the Sixteenth Century the Anglican Church has tolerated Christian Platonists, who have sometimes had a good deal of influence." On re-reading Synesius's *Ep.* 105: "One difference struck me among the many which there are between me and Synesius. Synesius believed there was one true religion, the Platonism he'd learned from Hypatia, as opposed to the myths of the demos. This is why for him the main opposition in religion is between philosophical truth and 'myth.' The main opposition for me is between people who claim to know too much about god including all sorts of highly sophisticated people, and those who don't. I am quite addicted to religious 'myths' as long as no one tries to impose them officially. I used to light candles to local goddesses all over the place especially in or near the Alps. I'm more like Amelius than either Porphyry or Iamblichus...I'm inclined to think that both Protestantism and Indian 'spirituality' (not the religion of India as a whole) make the separation between the 'spiritual' world and this one very sharp and hard. This seems to me more like Gnosticism than the platonic tradition...which is why 'icons' or 'theophanies' are important to me."<sup>25</sup>

In recent speculations (*Sphinx* 4) he reflects on eschatological themes from the point of view of an almost purely Hellenic Neoplatonist—but also from a critical/modern/revised-perspective. The soul's *experience* of eternity is emphasized, while the traditional idea of immortality is abandoned or left in doubt. The idea of resurrection is avoided for clear critical reasons, in a way not very far from those of Synesius. It seems philosophically incoherent and fantastic.

Thus Armstrong presents a special though non-dogmatic status for the Christian myth.<sup>26</sup> "Diversity, in my opinion, is co-extensive with all conscious thought and reflection on higher reality. I have lately taken to symbolizing this by the late Neoplatonic doctrine of the Peras-Apeiron (see my "Platonic Mirrors" = *H&C* VI) and in general am more devoted to the splendid diversity of the holy images of the unknowable in this world." He accepts negative theology as such, but from an anti-absolutist perspective. Negative theology may suggest a deep, obscure, anonymous faith in something, a dim awareness that there really is something "behind" and "beyond" all the inadequate concepts and expressions. A radically apophatic faith permits the use in a peculiar way very positive language. Its adherents may thus come to understand the

expressions of their traditional religions, not just as "myths" or "icons" made up by men, but as multiple and varied revelation of images through which the Good communicates "iconically" with all of us, of all religious traditions.<sup>27</sup> "This 'general' or natural revelation—close to Proclus' view of the significance of myth and ritual (see Trouillard, *In Remp.* n.8)—will of course, include human participation, error and inadequacy. This attitude should also be extended to include the statements of dogmatic and philosophical theology, not only poetic and imaginative myth, icons and so on."

Armstrong's personal background suggests comparisons with Synesius: "Some sort of Christian Platonism or Neoplatonism was a natural growth in the soil of a moderately well-read English country vicarage when I was young, which was my native soil...its very difficult to explain the ethos in which one was brought up...."<sup>28</sup> "Classical" and "Christian" *really comprised* a conglomerate. "I think I love the Inherited Conglomerate, think I belong to it, and even see classical civilization to some extent through it, though I'm conscious of the differences, rather as one would love an old house in a splendid landscape, to which one's ancestors had contributed a great deal, in which one was brought up."<sup>29</sup> On the Classical vs. Biblical debate within the Christian tradition: "the only reason why I to some extent believe in and practice unreformed Christianity is that it has been Hellenized enough for me."<sup>30</sup> Armstrong, therefore, is often surprised at the to him somewhat strange penchant for "revived Classical" myths that have been given special significance in the modern world. For example, Archetypal Psychologists, who see the gods as diseases and/or (collective) powers of the Psyche often become "enthusiastic" when they invoke Dionysus. His reaction is that "when they talk to me in this manner they don't seem to realize that they are referring to an old friend of mine."<sup>31</sup>

Today the "Platonic Mirrors" of an "implicate order" of the cosmos in which "all things are in all things, but appropriately" (Proclus *Elements of Theology* prop. 103)<sup>32</sup> informs the "Procline" Physics of David Bohm and others. For Hilary Armstrong the Plotinian image/archetype reflections on *all levels* symbolize the idea that the cosmos itself *is best characterized* as the resulting image of an "effortless contemplation"—an almost natural reflection, rather than the painstaking work of a "craftsman" from a "model"—Platonic dogmatism or "fundamentalism." But all of the images are shattered in the One.<sup>33</sup> And the One is the (only)

cause of Matter (*Hyle*). The "highest" and "lowest" are imageless. But only images (icons) point to them.

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## NOTES

1. *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London, 1979) VI, "Salvation, Plotinian and Christian", 136. (Referred to below as *P&C*).
2. *P&C* VI, 127-29. Here Armstrong follows the ideas of Jean Trouillard.
3. *P&C* VI, 138 & n.23.
4. In *Hellenic and Christian Studies* (London, 1990) VII, 47-62. (Referred to below as *H&C*.)
5. *H&C* Intro. xi, where Armstrong also claims—at the time of writing—to have made too sharp and exclusive distinctions between history and myth, Hellenic and Biblical in the section I have paraphrased immediately above.
6. *P&C* XXI, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy", esp. 104-107; *H&C* XII, "Dualism, Platonic, Gnostic and Christian", esp. 34-37.
7. Plotinus, *Enn.*, II.9 (33) 9, 37-39.
8. *P&C* XXII, "Man in the Cosmos. A Study of Some Differences between Pagan Neoplatonism and Christianity". 11-12.
9. *H&C* I "Some Advantages of Polytheism", 184.
10. *P&C* XXIV, "Negative Theology", 189.
11. *H&C* IV, 49-81. This article provides the best summary in print of Greek religiosity from the Archaic and through the Hellenistic era and Late Antiquity from the point of view of a Platonist.
12. *H&C* IV, 51.
13. *H&C* IV, 65.
14. *H&C* IV, 69.
15. *H&C* IV, 71-72.
16. *H&C* IV, 72.
17. *H&C* IV, 73-74.
18. "Aristotle in Plotinus", 127. In *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*. Ed. Julia Annas. Supplementary Volume, 1991, *Aristotle and the Later Tradition*, ed. Henry Blumenthal and Howard Robinson (Oxford 1991) 117-127.
19. *H&C* IV, 79-80.
20. *H&C* IV, 80.
21. *H&C* IV, 81.
22. Marinus *V. Proc.*, 19.
23. Correspondence, Jan., 1993. (All correspondence referred to is personal correspondence.)
24. In his first *Hymn* Synesius refers to the One as "Unity of Unities, Monad of Monads" (58-9), which "holds the force of three summits." This is a reference to the Neoplatonic/Chaldean First Intelligible Triad rather than the Christian Trinity which he was later able to assimilate to this Triad. For a review of Synesius religious ideas see my "Synesius of Cyrene: Early Life and Conversion to Philosophy" in *California Studies in Classical Antiquity*, vol. 7, 1974, 55-88; "Synesius, The Hermetica and Gnosis" in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, edited with an Introduction by Richard T. Wallis and Jay Bregman. Vol. 6 *Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern*, with preface by R. Baine Harris, general editor.
25. Correspondence, May, 1992.
26. See *H&C* VII, *passim*.
27. *H&C* VII, 52.
28. Correspondence, Jan., 1993.
29. Correspondence, Apr., 1995.
30. Correspondence, June, 1995.
31. Correspondence, Feb., 1995.
32. Proclus *The Elements of Theology*, translated with an introduction and commentary by E.R. Dodds (Oxford, 1963) second edition. See p. 254 for some interesting connections of this proposition with earlier and later philosophers: "the Pythagoreans," Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Bruno, Leibniz.
33. "...we have passed irrevocably, into a climate of opinion in which the more one claims to know about God the less one is likely to be believed" (Correspondence, Feb., 1996).

# **The Neoplatonic Background of the Metaphysics of Karl Jaspers and Its Impact on His Moral Philosophy**

**F.-P. Hager**

Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) is one of the most important existential philosophers of the 20th century and, as such, has emerged primarily as a systematic thinker. Although he is primarily an important systematic thinker, he shows an intensive interest in the history of philosophy and especially of European philosophy from the beginnings in Greek antiquity up to the present. In the lively philosophical disputes with the great philosophers of the European (but also the Indian and Chinese) history of ideas, he has developed as philosopher and has arrived at his own fundamental convictions. A persuasive testimony of these disputes is the planned monumental work "The Great Philosophers" of which the old Karl Jaspers (1957) published the first great volume (the other two comprehensive volumes contain only individual descriptions, fragments, remarks and an inventory and were published in 1981 by the intellectual administrator of the Master's estate, Hans Saner).

Platonism plays an important role throughout this monumental work of the history of philosophy of Jaspers, which is based and structured on decisive systematic fundamental thoughts. Two individual sections of the work, which Jaspers published himself, stand out especially: namely the one on Plato himself, who (together with St. Augustine and Kant) is presented as the pathbreaking founder of philosophising (p. 234ff.) and the one on Plotinus whom Jaspers lauds as "a metaphysician who thinks from the origin" (p. 656ff.). The interpretation of Plotinus, especially, shows clearly how and in which manner Jaspers adopted his Neoplatonic thinking, i.e., what was for him especially important in it. The reference to this true, original, Plotinus interpretation by Jaspers himself will enable us in the following to point out and establish

the Neoplatonic background of many of Jaspers' important fundamental philosophical convictions.

Basically we will proceed in a manner that will permit us to investigate the Neoplatonic affinities of Jaspers' thought within a circle of three different philosophical themes. First we will analyze the metaphysics, and more exactly the philosophical theology, of Karl Jaspers with special attention to how far Jaspers' conception of the approach of man to God, or the human cognition of God, is influenced and oriented Neoplatonically (1st part). Then we will attempt to show that also the existential-philosophical conception of man of Karl Jaspers with its very special understanding of the determination and recognition of the true self-being of man is unthinkable without reference to the Neoplatonic philosophy, i.e. to its cognitive-theoretical and ontological metaphysical assumptions (2nd part). Finally, according to Jaspers, certain moralistic impulses clearly arise from the existential-philosophical interpretation of man, i.e., a certain existential-philosophical moral philosophy or ethics can be structured on it. Also, these ethical implications of the existential philosophical conception of man and conception of God have their points of contact to Neoplatonic thought and we will also attempt to work out this connection (3rd part).

However, we are not concerned in this essay with pursuing in connection with Karl Jaspers' "Source research" and, compared to the philosophical-historical past, to lead his very original existential philosophical new attempts back to the Neoplatonic roots of it. Much rather, the similarity of the forms of thinking in Plotinus and Jaspers is to be illuminated while yet still retaining the differences between the two positions.

### **I. Relationship of Man to God and the Cognition of God in Metaphysics**

The existential philosophy, especially in the form represented by Karl Jaspers, has its name, characteristically, from the peculiar human sense of being, the "Existenz," about whose elucidation the existential philosophy of Karl Jaspers actually turns. Despite this central interest in man, the existential philosophy, in certain aspects, is also the resurrection of the antique thinking of being and, especially with Karl Jaspers, leads in his first philosophical main work the "Philosophy" (1932), from the "World Orientation" (first volume), via the "Existential

elucidation" (second volume) up to his "Metaphysics" (third volume) finally to nothing else than Jaspers' philosophically termed and reflected Deity, the "Transcendence," the absolute being which is presented in comparison with the being in the totality and in general. The "Metaphysics" then also contains an ascent of the being analysis from a particular being, from the finite and bounded being of the world, up to the eternal and absolute being of God, the Transcendence. This ascent is also thought of as evidence of the reality of the divine Transcendence, although Jaspers rejects the proofs of God's existence in their traditional form. The main section of the "Metaphysics," however, is dedicated to the relationship between man and God, i.e., to the answer of the question of how man, especially from the existential dimension of his being, achieves the inner (intellectual and emotional) approach to the Deity, to the absolute being of the Transcendence.

Very similarly now (and yet with some very important fundamental differences) there is formed in the framework of the Neoplatonic metaphysics of the Being and the One, the intellectual philosophical ascent to the perfect One and Good as the ultimate Deity and the highest principle of all. From the various levels of forms, Plotinus leads us to the perfect Ideas of the divine Intellect and by means of various levels of the oneness and being he leads us up to the perfect One and Good as the highest principle which is certainly elevated above any beingness and all being. Then, there arises immediately after these "Proofs of Deity," which for Plotinus are still pure, rational arguments for the existence of the highest principle and the divine Intellect, also the important question of how the absolutely perfect highest principle of all, the One Good, in its elevated state above every form and every being, can be recognized and comprehended by humans whose recognition is usually directed completely to objects (forms). This question is identical for Plotinus with all other questions (which also occupied Jaspers) which dealt with the meaning of the highest Deity for man in his search for his welfare (and for Jaspers for the realization of the true self-being).

In the following there will now be described, one after another, the ascent to the Deity, especially the relationship of man to God, and the cognition of God as they are characterized in the metaphysics by Jaspers and Plotinus before both positions, that of Plotinus and that of Jaspers, are compared with each other and a possible adoption of the Neoplatonic train of thought by Jaspers can be clarified.

### A. Metaphysics as Philosophical Theology and its Importance for Man in the View of Karl Jaspers

According to Jaspers, philosophy is the never ending question of what being is. Various methods of the search for being from possible "Existenz" are also, according to Jaspers, ways to the Transcendence, simply ways to the Deity. Thus, according to Jaspers, metaphysics is the philosophical elucidation of the path to Transcendence ("Philosophy" III, p. 3 and p. 4). Metaphysics, thus also as the culmination of existential philosophy, is philosophical theology. This attempt by Jaspers can only be understood unmistakably if one follows Jaspers' fundamental train of thought: man first comes up against a particular being in this world, which as defined being is knowable. The fundamental terminology of scientific cognition, the categories, show the basic modes of the definition of the particular beings. Being in the sense of "being known and thought" becomes objective in its ramifications and in its diversity. But the being does not exhaust itself simply in the known and thought. In the world orientation, which is, as it were, the lowest rung of the philosophical elucidation of being man takes hold of the empiric reality, which is not only known and thought, but also contains a something more, something covered by thought but not penetrated. Being as being known carries at the same time the unknown at its bounds. But even the known with the cognitively recognized unknown as the world being does not simply exhaust being ("Philosophy" III, p. 3).

From mundane being, transcending it, man, according to Jaspers, comes to himself as possible "Existenz." Thereby he achieves the next highest level of the philosophical search for being, the existential elucidation which follows to the lower degree of philosophy, the world orientation. Man, as "Existenz," in his being is a self structured being, fundamentally free but always together and in communication with other human self-beings, with other "Existenz." Man, to a certain extent, is a being in his "Existenz" which still decides whether and what it is, he cannot emerge from himself and see himself. But also this being of man himself, the "Existenz," is not simply the being with which all things would be exhaustible. The "Existenz" of the individual man is not only together with other free beings (that is, with and through the other human "Existenz"), but is itself related to a being which is not "Existenz" but Transcendence ("Philosophy" III, p. 4f.). Here there is clearly mentioned for the first time by Jaspers that man is not an absolutely complete and in himself autarchal unity

(he is not that especially because of "Existenz"), but refers above himself to a last, absolute being which is the final ground of all being.

However, Jaspers' existential philosophical search for being differs substantially from the classical metaphysical ascent to the Deity in Neoplatonism in that Jaspers starts his reflection with the conception of the disjointedness of the being, i.e., of an incoherence of the various levels and layers of the being: the being cannot be terminologically comprehended in the form of a hierarchy of being. The transitions from one level of being to another (from the world to the "Existenz" and from the "Existenz" to the Transcendence) are no longer rationally discoverable, but separated by a chasm which can only be bridged by an irrational jump. For this reason, the question of being as being cannot be properly understood from the viewpoint of the rational consciousness of man. To simply bring the disjointedness of the being to cognition is, according to Jaspers' treatment, an act of the freedom which can only arise from the true self-being of man, the "Existenz."

And yet, the search of man for being, which leads him ultimately to the absolute being of the Transcendence (as the Deity), has a certain inner necessity: possible "Existenz" as compared to the being of the empiric reality is characterized in that it really is in this search for the being. This search of the being finds no satisfaction in the finite being. Man finds the "floor of being," i.e., the ultimate ground of being, in none of the portions of the being, not in mere existence, not in the manifold certainties of particular being as cognition and recognition, not on the level of the "Existenz," not in his self-being as an isolated and not in the communication with other self-beings.

In view of the absolute being of the Transcendence (as the deity), it seems that the search for the being, even with Jaspers, eventually comes to rest. But this rest, or a certain satisfaction and fulfillment which is seen in view of the Transcendence, does not mean that the thinking of man can comprehend the Transcendence as a term or as knowledge content. The search for the Transcendence as the last ground does not cease in view of the Transcendence. The final reason, the ultimate source of a being constantly withdraws itself from the conceivableness of human understanding. Yet this abyss of the Divinity, a void for the intellect, can fill up for the "Existenz." The searching can be turned to finding in the temporal being of man when related to eternity, when man realizes that the search for the absolute being is not cut off from that which it is seeking, because only from the anticipation of what is to be found can a search be made; Transcendence must already

be present where man seeks it. In transcending, i.e., in the inner ascent to the Transcendence, man knows of being neither in the form of objective knowledge such as world orientation, nor as he knows of his inner self as himself in the existential elucidation, but rather he knows of the absolute being in an inner doing that even in failure remains with the actual being of the Transcendence. The actual being of the Transcendence, without being found as objective support, can give to the "Existenz" the strength to uplift itself in existence ("Dasein") and to rise to itself and to Transcendence in one ("Philosophy" III, p. 5). With this, according to Jaspers, a first and important indication is given of the necessary being of the Transcendence and of the meaning of the Transcendence as the last possible recourse, as the last possible reference point for man. At the same time, Jaspers never tires to point out that this being of the Transcendence cannot be recognized and proven scientifically and cannot be rationally demonstrated. Much more, he points to the unavoidable relationship of the human "Existenz" as freedom with the divine Transcendence as absolute being from the discontent of man as "Existenz" with all being that is not Transcendence ("Philosophy" III, p. 5-7).

After the being and the reality of the Transcendence has been pointed out, Jaspers' whole efforts really focus on describing the various methods of approach of man to the Absolute. The philosophical metaphysics for Jaspers is nothing else than the elucidation of the path to Transcendence ("Philosophy" III, p. 5).

Fundamentally, Jaspers knows of three important relationships of man to the Transcendence as the absolute Divine, namely: first, the formal transcending, secondly, the existential relationship to the Transcendence and thirdly, the reading of the ciphers. Jaspers provides an extensive explanation of all these three characteristic aspects of the relations of man to the Transcendence ("Philosophy" III, p. 34ff., p. 61ff. and p. 113ff.). We can only touch briefly here on these three fundamental relationships of man to the Transcendence and on how they are described in the metaphysics of Jaspers.

In order to understand what Jaspers means with the formal transcending as the first approach or path to the Absolute, and what is the deeper meaning of all three methods of approach to the Absolute, one must comprehend what, for Jaspers, transcending is all about: Transcending in philosophy is the overstepping of the objectivity. Philosophy is the thinking ascertainment of the true being itself. Because no being, which could be taken as a researchable object, is possible as the true

being itself, philosophy must transcend above all objectivity ("Philosophy" I, p. 76ff.). Transcending occurs in the world orientation, the existential elucidation and the metaphysics ("Philosophy" I, p. 83ff.). But also the methods of dealing with the approach to the Transcendence treated in the "Metaphysics," which I mentioned previously, are each a transcending, an overstepping of objectivity ("Philosophy" III, p. 37f.). Now the formal transcending as the first method of approach of man to the Absolute and to the Transcendence, limits itself to the purely conceivable and the area of thought. Beyond the beings defined in the categories as the fundamental forms of thought and scientific cognition, the thought transcends from the defined to the undefined. Thinking, with its links to categories, would always like to better connect Transcendence to a particular object and thus make it comprehensible to thought, but, if it remains consistent, one is always led to the recognition that the absolute being of the Transcendence cannot be grasped by means of particular terminology, that all categories of thought must still be negated from the Absolute or the Transcendence. The intellectual execution of this train of thought is just formal transcending. Whereas the thought of the categories would like to see all being to be exhausted with the categorical determination and whereas the rendering absolute of individual or all categories would lead to a definition of the Transcendence—i.e., to an ontology—the way to Transcendence is kept open in the formal transcending. The experience of a formal transcending is an original philosophical experience. It is still empty, but in thought as such it is present. In it, the thought and the metaphysical ascertainment come together ("Philosophy" III, p. 38-60).

Another form of approach to Transcendence can now be found by man in the existential relationship to Transcendence (even though we are dealing here again with a transcending). The being of the "Existenz," which in itself is insufficient, feels itself in its self-being in one with the Transcendence. Transcendence is very important for the existential self-realization of man, and for this reason also, one makes use of metaphysical terminology in the existential elucidation, in order to develop possibilities of "Existenz." Metaphysics makes the existential relationships of man to Transcendence such as Defiance and Surrender, Rise and Fall, the Diurnal Law and Nocturnal Passion, the Wealth of Diversity and the One, an explicit theme. Not Transcendence itself, but how it supports possible "Existenz" in its self-being is thought of in the metaphysics when the second method of approach to Transcendence is elucidated ("Philosophy" III, p. 61-112).



Beyond the empirical reality contained in the world orientation and beyond the freedom appealed to in the existential elucidation, the thought transcends in that it follows the reading of all being as a cipher script of the Transcendence, as far as it could be deciphered for the "Existenz." Ciphers for Jaspers are virtually symbolic characters with which man can come to understand the total appearing reality, the empirically ascertainable world of the being ("Dasein") and the region of the existential self-being as a manifestation of the Transcendence. Man can arrive at the reality of the Transcendence from the regions of nature, history, the theoretical consciousness in general, the actual being of man in existential freedom and via the medium of art in the reading of the ciphers. Nature, history, consciousness, "Existenz," freedom and art are regions of ciphers and ciphers themselves. The reading of the cipher language is either the thinking cognition of reality as it is perfected in art and poetry (because they also explain reality as manifestation of the Transcendence), or it is the creation of a philosophical language which, on its side, attempts to decipher in thought the Being as cipher. The philosophical metaphysics, which in its conceptions of the reality ("Weltanschauungen") does not mean them literally but therein states the Transcendence (i.e., by means of its "Weltbilder" interprets the Transcendence symbolically) finds its place here ("Philosophy" III, p. 113-208).

Jaspers' whole expositions in his "Metaphysics" ("Philosophy" III) of the being of the Transcendence, the Deity and of the approach of man to it, already show internally several paths which point to an inner relationship to the Neoplatonism of Plotinus. This is particularly clear at certain points, e.g., where Jaspers (within the framework of the existential relationship to the Transcendence) comes to speak of the seclusion of the Deity ("Philosophy" III, p. 70ff.), and more there where he comes to speak of the "Wealth of Diversity and the One" and therein of the "Transcendence of the One Deity" ("Philosophy" III, p. 84-94, esp. 92ff.). However, Jaspers mentions elsewhere again, that his metaphysics, which does not aspire to be an enclosing ontology, differs fundamentally from the ontology of Plotinus (and Hegel), but the philosophy of Plotinus, according to Jaspers, is also an appeal to possible "Existenz" and form of a cipher script ("Philosophy" III, p. 138ff., esp. 139).

It is now immediately necessary to delve into the method of how Plotinus proves the One-Good as the highest principle and how he goes about the approach to the One-Good and the cognition of the

One-Good as the highest Deity through man, before we compare the two positions, that of Plotinus and that of Jaspers, with each other and before we can clarify a possible Plotinus-adaption by Jaspers as regards to his metaphysics of the Transcendence.

#### B. Plotinus' Philosophical Theology: The Proof of the Existence of the One-Good As The Highest Principle and the Cognition of the One-Good

The core and centre of the philosophy of Plotinus and especially his philosophical theology or metaphysics is his teaching of the three hypostases, of One-Good, divine Intellect and World Soul, as he describes it in the writing of the same name (V, 1). What interests us most, naturally, is Plotinus' teaching of the One-Good as the highest principle of all because a comparison with Jaspers is best possible here. Jaspers recognizes no hierarchy of the divine entities as does Plotinus. In any case, a marginal comparison of the divine Intellect which thinks of the cosmos of Ideas as itself, should be included because, according to Plotinus, the divine Intellect is the most immediate and highest manifestation of the One-Good and the second highest cause of all and the analysis of its being and existence permits us to come to conclusions on the existence and nature of the One-Good as the highest principle.

Of very particular interest in the present context, however, is the rational, intellectually proven and argumentative character of Plotinus' metaphysics and especially his teachings of the perfect One and Good as the highest principle of all and the ultimate Deity. Although Plotinus is of the view that man finally and ultimately will comprehend the perfect One and Good as the highest principle only through mystical union with it, his philosophy is nevertheless no oriental irrationalism for his teaching of the perfect One and Good as the highest principle as well as also his teaching of the divine Intellect as the metaphysical cause of the second rank is rational in every aspect, i.e., based on reasonable, understandable and reconstructable arguments as is shown especially in my book "Der Geist und das Eine" (esp. p. 255ff., see also p. 237ff. for the perfect One and Good and p. 217ff. for the divine Intellect).

I only emphasize the most important aspects here as I will next show how Plotinus proceeds fundamentally in the proof of the existence of the One-Good as the highest principle and which philosophical methods he then brings to bear on the explanation of the nature of the One-Good as the highest principle of all.

In his treatise "Of the One-Good" ("Enneads" VI, 9) Plotinus presents one of his most famous methods of proof for the existence of the highest principle (namely in VI, 9: 1-2) before he then presents extensive explanations of the (just as rational) determinations of the nature of the highest principle (VI, 9: 3-6) and finally even works out instructions for the mystical view of the One (VI, 9: 7ff.).

In his arguments in favour of the existence of the One-Good as the highest principle (VI, 9: 1-2), Plotinus starts from the basis that "All being is, by virtue of the one, a being, as well as what an original and an actual being is as that, which is designated as being only in an arbitrary sense. Because what could it be if it is not one. If, indeed, one were to take its declared oneness away from it again, it is no longer what one calls it" (VI, 9: 1, 1-4). Thus, the oneness of each being constitutes its being and its reality, and that this is so is now shown by Plotinus on the basis of a whole hierarchy of beings. The higher a being is, the more one and simpler it is and the higher is also the level of its being and its structure (essence). Plotinus thus guides us through a whole hierarchy of beings from the groups and aggregates in the area of the observable (army, herd, dancing group), through the artificially constructed objects, the artefacts (e.g. houses), the continuous magnitudes, the organisms to the intelligible world and, in this, from the human soul to the World Soul. And from this to Intellect, Ideas and Being, united in a divine Intellect and from this again to the One-Good which, in its absolute Simplicity and Goodness, is elevated even above Intellect, Ideas and Being. Therefore, the One-Good is the highest principle of all because oneness at all levels of being is the cause of being and the constitution of being and because the perfectly simple being, the One-Good, is also in the best position to cause all else in its oneness and in its being (VI, 9: 1-2).

The whole hierarchy of all beings, which differ among themselves on the various levels of the hierarchy of being by means of larger or smaller oneness, beingness, structure (essence) and fullness of reality is finally metaphysically caused by the perfect One and Good as the highest principle. We are actually dealing here with a hierarchy of levels of being which can easily be compared with Jaspers' areas of being, but which also, as we shall see more exactly later, has important differences to Jaspers' metaphysics of being. One of the most important differences, which we can mention in advance here, is naturally that, with Plotinus, one cannot speak in any manner of the disjointedness of the being, rather, the various hierarchical levels of being are connected

with each other by means of a strict, continuous, order. A further difference is of rather lesser importance, namely that with Plotinus, the highest principle of all, the highest Deity is not permitted to be designated as being, not even as the ultimate being but it is elevated above all being and not a being, also not a perfect being any longer, but just a perfect One and Good. And yet, naturally, the philosophical theology of Plotinus can be ranked as metaphysics of being, which is what has actually happened in the literature.

But if in this manner the perfect One and Good as the highest principle of all and as actually the highest, supreme, being (although being above being) is proven by Plotinus (for further arguments see also F.-P. Hager: "Der Geist und das Eine," p. 237ff., esp. p. 244ff., p. 271ff., p. 294ff.), then a further question arises: How can Plotinus' perfect One and Good be recognized as the highest principle of all, i.e., how is one to imagine the approach of man to Plotinus' supreme Deity?

The way in which man knows of the One-Good as highest principle is derived by Plotinus, with logical necessity from the term of the One-Good. The One-Good as highest principle is perfectly simple and elevated above all plurality (above all which possesses a multiple structure and form); thus, it can be identical neither with the perfect divine Intellect nor with the World Soul as, although they are united in a divine manner, both are nevertheless plural presences. The perfect One is neither Being, nor Idea, nor Intellect, it is above Being and above Intellect. It can be described and comprehended by none of the Aristotelian categories (e.g., substance, space, time, quantity, quality) and by none of the Platonic categories such as movement, quiet, identity, difference (according to Plotinus, the Aristotelian categories include the visible world and the Platonic categories the intelligible or spiritual world; see VI, 1-2). In a word, the One-Good can only be comprehended in what was later called the negative theology, it can only be comprehended in that one determines everything that it is not: only if all finite and bounded being and its being and all being terms is negated of the perfect One and Good, only then does one arrive at a more or less adequate comprehension of the One-Good as the highest principle of all (for this, see especially VI, 9: 3-6).

However, for Plotinus, the negative theology as regards the One-Good as the highest principle of all is not absolutely valid. Although it is correct that, according to Plotinus, there can be no cognition of the One-Good as the supreme Deity because all cognition, according

to Platonic teaching, always refers to being and being has a pluralistic structure. The actual, true cognition refers to the true being of the Ideas (and not as the mere opinion (δόξα) of the sensory perception to the corporeal world). But even the true being of the Ideas, which Plotinus identifies with the divine Intellect, is a plurality, if also the highest (an intelligible cosmos as Plotinus says with Philo of Alexandria), and thus differentiated from the One-Good which is perfectly simple. Thus, if cognition is always directed towards being and plural being, then the One-Good cannot be part of this cognition and cannot be comprehended as it is perfectly simple.

If, however, there can be no cognition of the One-Good, then all the negations which arise in connection with the One-Good can have no absolute validity as they also claim to be comprehensions. The negations, which the negative theology declares and affirms of the One-Good must be negated again for the sake of the perfect simplicity of the One-Good, which means nothing else than that at least, and above all, the characteristics of the nature of the divine Intellect as the supreme manifestation of the One-Good in the metaphorical sense and in a symbolic manner must again be assigned to the One and Good and may be attributed to him.

In fact, in various places, but especially in two famous ones, there are attributed to Plotinus' One-Good again (although in the manner of perfect simplicity) various characteristics which remind one of the characteristics of the divine Intellect. In the one place (V, 4: 2, 12-26), there are attributed to the One-Good as the origin of the divine Intellect the designation "Intelligible" (νοητόν) and, in connection with it, a certain self-consciousness (ὅλον συναίσθησις). In the metaphorical sense, and at the same time, there is connected to it the assumption that the One-Good in an absolutely original and simple manner already contains everything in it and can thus be the cause of all which comes later and, above all, of the divine Intellect, which also contains an ideal totality of archetypes, an intelligible cosmos in itself. Plotinus says it in the following words:

The Intelligible (νοητόν), in which it remains by itself and is not definite as is the seeing and thinking...is nevertheless at the same time not, as it were, unconscious (οὐκ ἔστιν ὅλον ἀναισθητόν), for all that is being, is in it and with it, it is completely able to discern itself (διακριτικὸν ἑαυτοῦ), there is life in it and all things are in it (πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ), it is itself his own self-thinking, in that it is able, to a certain extent, to remain by a type of self-consciousness

in eternal rest and thinking (καὶ ἡ κατανόησις αὐτοῦ αὐτὸ οἶονεῖ συναισθῆσαι οὐσα ἐν στάσει αἰδιῷ καὶ νοήσει), other than it is the case of the thinking of the Intellect. (V, 4: 2, 12-19).

Basically, the same attribution of a supra-intellectual original thought of the One-Good with simultaneous differentiation between the One-Good as the highest principle and the divine Intellect is now also carried out by Plotinus in the chronologically (in comparison to V, 4 = No. 7) later writing, namely in VI, 8 (No. 39) which has as its theme the freedom of the will and the free self-creation of the One-Good. Also in this second writing (VI, 8), the One-Good can be depicted again in the metaphorical sense as not soulless and senseless life (VI, 8: 15, 30-33), it can be called "Virtual Intellect" (ὅλον νοῦς) in that it virtually loves itself (VI, 8: 16, 14-18). Further, it can be determined that the One-Good possesses its supreme actuality in that it, as it were, contemplates itself, and in this self-contemplation also creates itself (VI, 8: 16, 19-21). Further, in a symbolical manner, one can attribute an eternal energy to the One-Good, which is a type of ever-present awakening (ἐγρήγορις) and a thinking above thought (ὑπερνόησις) (VI, 8: 16, 30-40) with which Plotinus, leads to Aristotle. And in a last passage containing evidence of the writing VI, 8 which should be mentioned here, Plotinus can even say that the divine Intellect and the truly Being (the Ideas) which exude from the One-Good (or which have poured out of him as Plotinus also formulates it in the framework of the emanation teaching) bear witness, on the basis of their Intellectuality, of the virtual Intellect in the One which is not Intellect but one (VI, 8: 18, 18-22).

Important for us in this positive determination of the nature of the perfect One and Good as the highest principle is this, that here, besides for the negative theology and parallel to it, but not in contradiction to it, there appears still a different form of approach to the highest principle which has already demonstrated its importance within the framework of the intellectual discussion of the One-Good or the supreme Deity, namely, a type of symbolic theology (this too is a term, that, like that of the negative theology, has arisen in connection with the later Neoplatonism). Here, now, the central terms, which are to serve for the designation of the One-Good as the highest principle, are no longer negated by the One-Good but are used, if only in the metaphorical sense, directly for the supreme Deity. This is valid, primarily for all characteristics which bring the perfection, or one of the aspects of

perfection, of the divine Intellect to expression. But also, it is valid (and this is interesting for the comparison with Jaspers) for the total reality which has been derived from the One-Good as the highest principle. The One-Good which has simply produced the whole (τὸ πᾶντα) of the derived reality of all beings, has at its disposal in itself a supremely simple prototype of an intelligible cosmos, which means, that in reverse, everything remaining describes a form of allegory, mirror and representation of the supreme Deity and the highest principle (as for Jaspers everything in the reality of the phenomena can be a cipher of the Transcendence).

A further important approach of man to the supreme Deity as the highest principle, besides the negative and besides the symbolic theology, is very essential especially for the comparison with Jaspers. While each metaphysical-theological discussion, whether as a negative or positive symbolizing theology, proceeds intellectually and must be in a position to exactly intellectually justify the method of its procedure, the mystical unity (unio mystica), through which alone (if also only in seldom occurring moments of elevation) man attempts to achieve the perfect adequate comprehension of the One-Good is a super-rational, super-intellectual process which grows from a particular, practical ethical, ascetic and cathartic style of life and cannot be rationally planned. In the discussion VI, 9 "Of the One-Good" from which we started, Plotinus provides, after the theoretical part which includes the proof of the existence of the One-Good (VI, 9: 1-2) and the explanation of its nature (VI, 9: 3-6), detailed descriptions which allow us to recognize that he speaks from a long experience of philosophical lifestyle as well as mystical contemplation and concentration (VI, 9: 7ff.). Here, if anywhere in the Plotinus writings, one realizes that Jaspers is correct when he speaks of the existential seriousness of Plotinus ("The Great Philosophers," first volume, p. 656ff., esp. pp. 666 and 671ff.).

Thus, it seems to me that for our purposes, the important facts have been discussed on the philosophical theology and metaphysics of Plotinus, of his proof of the existence of the One-Good, of his explanations of the nature of the supreme Deity and of his view of the approach of man to God and we can pass on to a comparison of Jaspers with Plotinus.

### C. Existential Philosophical and Neoplatonic Thinking in the Comparison and the Adoption of Plotinus by Jaspers

If we now turn to the question of how far the existential philosophy of Karl Jaspers, especially in its metaphysics was inspired or even

influenced by Neoplatonic thinking, then no source historical point of view comes to the fore, that is, we do not want to know exactly in which details, historically and factually, Karl Jaspers is dependent on certain formulations of Plotinus. Of rather greater interest to us is the question of important agreements between the metaphysics of Jaspers and the philosophical theology of Plotinus; also then, if this agreement cannot be traced back from the start to direct historical influence on the one thinker (Jaspers) by the other (Plotinus). For this reason, in this chapter, we will next compare the two thinkers and their metaphysical or philosophical theology, we will define similarities but also differences and only then will we attempt to answer the question of *Plotinus' adoption by Jaspers*, i.e., in his own philosophy.

In fact, certain *similarities and points of agreement* between Jaspers' metaphysics and the philosophical theology of Plotinus are very apparent. Both thinkers start from the point of view that man is intrinsically occupied with metaphysics and, in the philosophical sense, with theological questions, and that the answers which he finds to these questions are of the highest existential relevance to him. Both hold that the posing of the being question is the central concern of philosophy and both are of the point of view that the original metaphysical questioning of the being as such will lead man with a form of inner necessity finally to posing the question of the ultimate reason of all being, to the unconditioned and absolute being.

Both are also of the point of view that one can philosophically demonstrate the reality of the Transcendence, the Divine, as the ultimate ground of all being, in that, through analysis and interpretation of various levels and regions of the being, one arrives finally with inner intellectual necessity at the absolute ultimate perfect final ground of all being.

Nevertheless, here the first important *differences* between Plotinus and Jaspers already appear: Plotinus assumes a whole hierarchy of the beings and of the levels of being which according to the grade of their being as well as their oneness and their goodness are dependent on each other and finally and ultimately on the One-Good as the highest principle and highest ground of all being. Jaspers, on the other hand, he differentiates between various "levels of reality" and regions of the being, does not divide them into a hierarchical order of rank by which they are linked to each other cosmically and organically but strictly separates them from each other so that one can move from one to the other only by means of a jump. There reigns here for Jaspers

what he calls the disjointedness of the being (a type of disorder, which would be unthinkable for Plotinus).

The result of this is that Plotinus believes, arguing from the different levels of reality which represent, for him, the grades of the being, the structure, the oneness and the goodness, that he can refer back to the One-Good as the ultimate source and the highest principle of all being, all oneness, goodness and form. Plotinus has certainly assumed in his own version something in the form of a proof of the existence of God with his arguments for the being and the efficacy of the divine Intellect and the perfect One-Good. In comparison to this, Jaspers polemicizes for various reasons against the significance and necessity of the proof of God if one takes this literally as that which it wishes to be, namely a scientific proof for the being of the Deity and not rather as a cipher ("Philosophy" III, p. 175ff.). For Jaspers there is only a super-intellectual, irrational (in any case no longer scientific), "existential" inner necessity of the ascent of man to the Divine. From the discontent of all that is bounded, limited being, from the discontent, in fact, of all being which is not transcendent, man arrives at the ultimate ground of the being, the Transcendence ("Philosophy" III, p. 5ff.).

But although Plotinus deals with the question of God within the framework of the traditional rational metaphysics and ontology founded by Plato, but Jaspers within the framework of an existential philosophy which is much more irrational and has passed through the Kantian criticism of knowledge, nevertheless some important aspects of the cognition of the Divine and of the approach of man to the Transcendence can be compared in both thinkers. Thus it is easily possible to compare the negative theology of Plotinus with the Jaspersian process of transcending when comprehending the Deity and thus, what Jaspers designates as the reading of the ciphers when ascending to the Transcendence, can be easily compared with certain aspects of the symbolic (allegorically affirmative) theology of Plotinus. Also here, naturally, it is valid to note the differences between Plotinus and Jaspers (as was done in the evidence of the being of the Divine).

When we compare Jaspers' method of transcending when ascending to the Divine with the negative theology of Plotinus, and Jaspers' reading of the cipher language with the symbolic theology of Plotinus, we must be aware that both theological methods in the philosophy of Plotinus are developed within the framework of the rational metaphysics and ontology and in all cases must be viewed as intellectually provable processes. All direct statements on the One-Good and each direct

attribution of particular characteristics to the One-Good according to Plotinus is impermissible because the One-Good is perfectly simple and thus elevated far above each pluralistic structure of being, which is the actual object of the statement, cognition and attribution. For this reason, the One-Good can only be comprehended by means of negative theology. And for the same reason, all expressions of excellence of the divine Intellect, all characteristics which express its perfection can only be applied and referred to the One-Good as the highest principle of all (and the origin of the divine Intellect) in the metaphorical sense.

With Jaspers, on the contrary, the rational metaphysics and ontology are discarded because, Jaspers adopted certain of the fundamental insights of the Kantian theory of knowledge and the latter's critique of the rational theology and metaphysics, and because, according to Jaspers, an actual science is only possible supported by human experience in the region of the appearances. For this reason it has a somewhat different, wider meaning when Jaspers, with reference to the comprehension of the Transcendence and the Divine requires the method of transcending (also formal transcending), and on the other hand insists, that one approaches the Transcendence or the Divine which one attempts to comprehend positively through the reading of the ciphers, i.e., only in an allegorical symbolic method. The Divine, simply the Transcendence, according to Jaspers, can no longer be comprehended by means of a rational theology and ontology and therefore, according to Jaspers, everything that is bounded and limited, all science and rational cognition must be transcended if one wishes to comprehend the Divine which for Jaspers is simply the Transcendence. For this reason also, one can only approach the comprehension of the Divine in an allegorical symbolic manner, by reading the ciphers, whereby one must assume that the visible, objective, comprehensible reality is in total a form of allegory of the Divine.

Not wholly without importance for a comparison of Jaspers' metaphysics of the Transcendence with the philosophical theology of Plotinus is that for both the Oneness and Uniqueness of God as the highest principle (as opposed to the plurality of the appearances and all individual reality) plays a large role. Not only in Plotinus is the perfect One as the perfect Good (or as the perfectly simple Absolute) the highest principle of all (see also VI, 9: 1-2), but also for Jaspers one can talk of the "Transcendence of the One Deity" and thus of the Transcendence as the one Deity and as the perfectly simple Unity of the perfect One ("Philosophy" III, p. 110ff.). However, here, too, one must point

out the differences, that in Plotinus with the One-Good, the highest principle is meant the first Deity of a hierarchy of three original divine Hypostases (that the One-Good is placed at the top of a Trinity to which the divine Intellect and the divine World Soul also belong), while with Jaspers there is only one single Deity (here Jaspers is to be compared rather with the Christian and Jewish monotheism than with the henotheism of the philosophical theology of Plato and of Neoplatonism). However, it seems to me that this (undeniable) difference is not very important when one considers that also for Jaspers the Deity is repeatedly referred to as *the One* which wants truth especially when man approaches it in a truly existential reference (see also op. cit., esp. p. 111f.).

This, however, brings us to a final, and for us, important aspect of the comparison between Jaspers and Plotinus in the philosophical theology and the question of the Deity. Jaspers emphasizes in various places that the experience of the divine Transcendence has true substance only for possible "Existenz," while the cipher of the divine Transcendence must remain empty for the merely logical thought. This is why, for Jaspers, the existential relations to the Transcendence are so important ("Philosophy" III, p. 61ff.). Doubtless, this teaching of the existential relations of man to the Transcendence is something which can only exist on the foundation of Jaspers' existential philosophy. This concept of the existential relationship to the Transcendence thus presents an original and genuine philosophical effort on Jaspers' part. Yet, Jaspers himself never shrank back from ascribing to certain philosophies and thoughts of earlier times an existential, or at least existentially-relevant philosophy. He mentions this especially with respect to Plotinus, calling him a metaphysician who thought from the origin ("The Great Philosophers," first volume, p. 656ff.). Indeed, although with Plotinus one cannot find existential relationships to the Transcendence in the narrow sense of the existential philosophy, one can certainly find it in the wider philosophical metaphysical sense to the One-Good as the highest principle and to the supreme Deity. Especially, for example, the *directions for the mystical view of the One or to the mystical union with the One-Good* as the highest principle as Plotinus gives them in the writing VI, 9 (Chap. 7ff.) after the theoretical part on the existence and nature of the One show that the ascent to the One-Good as the source of all is no occasion of dry abstract thinking but the guiding principle of man as a whole whereby also practical aspects must be included.

After this comprehensive comparison between the positions of Jaspers and Plotinus in the question of God, we should finally direct our efforts, to clarify, or at least, discuss the question of whether, in the case of the metaphysics and the philosophical theology of Jaspers, one can talk of an *adoption* of Plotinus by Jaspers which could have deeply characterized Jaspers' own systematic philosophising.

First we can take for granted that, especially in the presentation of the great metaphysician Plotinus in "The Great Philosophers" (a.a.O.), Jaspers brings to bear terminology and forms of thought as well as thought processes which then return in the systematic philosophy of Jaspers himself. Especially the term of the transcending, the thinking reaching out beyond a certain threshold or level of reality or beyond any finite being or particular being, plays a great role in the presentation of the metaphysics of Plotinus ("The Great Philosophers" I, p. 667ff., p. 678ff.) and one can clearly perceive from the various types and meanings, how and in which the term is used by Jaspers in the philosophical historical presentation, that important aspects of the meaning which Jaspers attributes to this term in his systematic philosophy (especially in the metaphysics) have a Platonic origin (whereby, with Jaspers, one must always take the influence of Kant into account). Furthermore, the thought often returns that certain terms of Plotinus (mostly those that concern the Divine, especially the highest principle) are used in the metaphorical or purely in the symbolical sense. Indeed, the external, the form of the system as a whole, is according to Jaspers for Plotinus only an allegory for the intellectual contents, which Plotinus basically means ("The Great Philosophers" I, p. 666, p. 692ff.).

Next, the actual core of Karl Jaspers' philosophising appears there where Jaspers in his presentation of the metaphysics of Plotinus points to existential moments in the Neoplatonic philosophising itself ("The Great Philosophers" I, p. 666, esp. p. 694ff.). The soaring of the soul to Transcendence on the basis of man's freedom, which finds fulfillment not through the strength of the will but only through the gift and mercy of the Almighty, this is a philosophical conception in the midst of the existential philosophy of Jaspers and what it declares of the existential relationship of man to the Transcendence ("Philosophy" III, p. 74ff.). And exactly this conception, according to the presentation by Jaspers, can be found emphasized throughout the philosophical metaphysics of Plotinus ("The Great Philosophers" I, p. 694ff.).

Finally, it is reiterated: Plotinus' philosophising is not evaluated with a view to individual thought contents or dogmas by Karl Jaspers

for his existential philosophy and adopted in this sense; but in a sense of the living intellectual exchange, Jaspers apparently allowed himself to be animated by certain forms of thought and thought processes as well as by the intellectual fundamental attitudes of Plotinus. And this is apparently possible because a certain intellectual relationship nevertheless exists despite the centuries which have passed between Plotinus and Jaspers and despite the changed intellectual situation caused by social and scientific "progress".

## **II. Jaspers' Existential Core of Human Being, Plotinus' Innermost Essence of Man and the Recognition of Both as a Problem**

It is really self-evident that, for a particular thinker, his fundamental assumptions and his important philosophical convictions in the regions of metaphysics and the philosophical theology would stand in connection with his philosophical teachings in the region of the philosophical anthropology and ethics. Indeed, it is also easily possible, and in certain cases perhaps necessary, that the metaphysics and theology of a thinker has a decisive effect on his ethics and philosophical anthropology. With Karl Jaspers this is evidently so as regards the relationship between philosophical theology and philosophical anthropology. And also his ethical and moral-philosophical convictions, which he did not develop at all independently from his conception of man and his philosophical anthropology, are closely associated with the fundamental assumptions and the fundamental facts of his philosophical theology, i.e., his metaphysics. With Plotinus too, there is a close inner association of the teachings in philosophical theology and metaphysics, philosophical anthropology and psychology as well as in ethics and moral philosophy. And yet, one can say that for both of the great philosophers the metaphysics and philosophical theology does not have the same effect on their philosophical anthropology and ethics or that in both, theology, anthropology and ethics do not have the same inner association.

Especially important for our philosophical-historical investigation, which is concerned not only with the comparison of the pertinent theories of both thinkers but is also concerned with the question of Plotinus' adoption by Jaspers, is the following: very obviously, as we have shown in the 1st chapter, the metaphysics as philosophical theology of Jaspers provides important agreements and many points of contact

with the metaphysics and philosophical theology of Plotinus. This Neoplatonic influence in the metaphysics and philosophical theology of Jaspers also affects the philosophical anthropology and the ethics of our philosopher in a definite manner, because his metaphysics and conception of man have an inner association, indeed because the determinations of his metaphysics are of importance for the innermost core and for the "nature" of man. As compared to this, the Neoplatonic conception of man and the Neoplatonic ethics must be judged of lesser importance for the philosophical anthropology and for the moral philosophy of Jaspers which is the reason why, in the 2nd and 3rd chapter, we can keep our treatment substantially shorter than in the 1st chapter.

### **A. The Existential Core of Man and the Approach to the Self-Being With Jaspers**

The true self-being of man, the "Existenz," i.e., what is called in traditional philosophic language the inner structure of man or the core of man, is comprehended and presented by Jaspers in a completely unique way, namely, in that it is differentiated in a radical manner from the being of the world and from the being of the natural presence of man in the world ("Dasein"). Jaspers calls the world the contents of all that is approachable by man through orientation of the cognition as a necessary knowledge that is compelling for every man. In view of the being of the world, Jaspers immediately asks himself the question whether all being is exhausted with the mundane being and he answers this question, immediately thereafter, that what is called soul and God in mythical expression and is known, on the other hand, in existential philosophical language as "Existenz" and Transcendence, is not the world and cannot be designated as mundane being. Being ("Dasein"), for Jaspers, is a factual presence in the world and, when referred to man, is his life as that of a higher living being in the biological world, who strives with other living beings for his survival and who is interested in the world as the material and the basis of his life. "Existenz," however, is neither world nor existence ("Dasein"). "Existenz," therefore, cannot be simply factually known. "Existenz" is also not factually available and given. It is not (in the sense of being "Dasein") but is that what can be and should be. In the phenomenality of existence ("Dasein") and in time, it decides whether it is in eternity ("Philosophy" II, p. 3).

In order to describe more clearly that which Jaspers means as the "Existenz," it will now be shown how Jaspers advances his philosophizing

to the content of the "essence" of the "Existenz" and then there will also be explained the methods which he uses in the "Existential Elucidation," under which he understands the comprehension of the "Existenz."

In his great main philosophical work, the three-volume "Philosophy," Jaspers, in the first, introductory chapter of the second volume first points to the being of the "Existenz" before, in a second chapter, he separates the true I myself from the other aspects of man's being and in a third and fourth chapter brings it into a connection with communication and historicity (II, p. 3ff., 25ff., 47ff., 104ff.).

It is especially noticeable that Jaspers, before he presents explicitly what the true self-being of the "Existenz," is, or rather more, is not (2nd chapter, p. 25ff.), must point out again that, in fact, the true self-being the "Existenz" (of man) is or (as we would say) exists. Thus, as one doubts the existence of God, so one can doubt the self-being of man and, as Jaspers in an analogy to that, what earlier had to serve as the proof of the Deity, led to the evidence of the being of the Transcendence, so now he also raises speculations which are suggestive of the being (or as we would say: the existence) of the human self-being. However, similarly to the question of God, in the proof of the being of the Transcendence, there can no longer be rational proofs or scientific reasons which, according to Jaspers, compellingly prove the being of the "Existenz." Far more it is the final discontent of the human being in the world, which leads it more sensitively and unsuspecting to the being of the "Existenz" (comp. with the 1st chapter, p. 6ff. on the "Possible 'Existenz,' Unsatisfied in Existence = Dasein").

Now in the second chapter, Jaspers depicts how the true I Myself, the "Existenz," after the I has awakened from the natural unconcerned state, separates itself from all the remaining aspects of the human being one after the other, from being as consciousness, being as mere existence ("Dasein") and characteristic being (being as "character"). In this sense, Jaspers indicates that the true self-being, the "Existenz," is not the general consciousness of man (the I at large, that as "I think" makes possible and is the foundation of all human cognition and all human acts of consciousness), but also is not identical with the various aspects of being as existence ("Dasein") (Jaspers counts out such aspects of being: the I as a spatially present body = physical I, the I as rating in social life = social I, the I as I of achievement or active I, the I as the past; all these are I-aspects of the I-being [Daseins-Ich] and not to be identified with the I-myself). Finally however, Jaspers also emphasizes that the true I-myself does not exhaust itself in the

I as a characterized being, as an understandable typed character. I is all that, namely I as consciousness, existence and character but in being all that it is not aware of itself as a whole, beyond this it is still in the freedom of its existential self-formation ("Philosophy" II, p. 26ff.).

Similarly to the second volume of his "Philosophy," Jaspers later, in his work "Of the Truth" ("Philosophical Logic," first volume), differentiated the "Existenz" as "Base and bond of the modes of the all-embracing" not only from the world and Transcendence but also from the immanent modes of the all-embracing in man himself, namely from the existence ("Dasein"), consciousness ("Bewusstsein") and spirit ("Geist"). Existence and consciousness particularly are characterized as in the "Philosophy," "spirit" is the source of the ideas in man which permits him to realize ideal targets in communal social associations ("Of the Truth," p. 76ff.).

I however, after our depiction of the transcendence of the true self-being of man compared to all mundane being and all immanent aspects of man's being in Jaspers has been explained, Jaspers' reflections of the methods of the existential elucidation are very informative ("Philosophy" II, p. 10-18). Jaspers differentiates three such processes, namely: first, a "Leading to Limits," second, the "Objectivation in the Psychological Logical and Metaphysical Language" as well as third, the "Devising a Specific Generality for Existential Elucidation" (p. 11f., 12ff., 15ff.).

We have become acquainted with the first-named method, the "Leading to the Limits" when we presented how Jaspers comprehends the human "Existenz" in that he elevates it above all those aspects of man's being with which they are not identical. Jaspers himself says of this method: "We use a *negative method* of dealing with objects in order to rebound from what is not 'Existenz'" (op. cit. p. 12). However, from this it is already clear (and this is emphasized here) that we are dealing with a process which is thoroughly analogous and comparable to the negative theology. The two other methods utilize, on the one hand, traditional philosophical and psychological terminology in the metaphorical sense for the comprehension of the "Existenz" or, on the other hand, attempt to elucidate the "Existenz" in a symbolical manner with a specific terminology and general terms (which Jaspers calls "signa" and uses in the place of categories valid for the scientific cognition of objects) invented for the existential elucidation. Here we can in any case think of the symbolic theology of Jaspers and Plotinus, and determine that we are dealing with processes and methods which are provided for



the elucidation of the "Existenz" and which are analogous to the philosophical theology of Jaspers and Plotinus. However, this now means that the question of the Neoplatonic influence concerns not only the metaphysics but also the conception of man of Jaspers.

#### B. Plotinus' Conception of the Innermost Essence of Man and the Problem of its Intelligibility

When one views all, that for Plotinus could be called philosophical anthropology, one could say that for Plotinus the region of man's being (on the basis of his belief of the immortality of the soul of man) reaches far further than is the case of a thinker of the 20th century who has passed through several waves of secularization and criticism. Plotinus not only believed in the immortality of the soul but also, as already his master Plato, believed to be able to prove this on rational grounds with logically secure arguments. One only has to compare his writing IV, 7 "On the Immortality of the Soul." He who really desires to have knowledge of man must concern himself above all with this immortal soul which, according to Plotinus as well as Plato, is the actual core of man's being (see also his writing I, 1 "What is the living being and what is man?"). The soul of man (and literally all individual souls) derives from the higher intelligible world, combines in a secular condition with a mortal body and longs, in its secular condition, for the return into its original spiritual home, to which return it is called again after the death of the flesh. The philosophical anthropology of Plotinus can thus be divided into a first part, which concerns itself with the origin of the soul from the intelligible world, a second part in which Plotinus analyses the nature of man in the earthly condition, and into a third part in which the primary theme is the fate of the soul after the death of the body. We will concentrate here on the general conclusions of Plotinus on the nature of the soul and on the soul in the earthly condition (i.e., in its connection with the body) because only for this aspect of the teaching of Plotinus of the soul and man is there a certain comparability with the philosophy of Jaspers which we will demonstrate in the comparing presentation.

For Plotinus there are not many features for the soul and the actual man, also in the earthly condition, which would be particularly suitable for a comparison with the conception of man or the philosophical anthropology of Jaspers. One of the main concerns of Plotinus' philosophical anthropology is namely to protect the highest intellectual core of man which, at the same time, is man's innermost essence, from the being

besmirched by the sensual and bodily which could easily occur by the association of the soul with the body in the earthly life of man. According to Plotinus, this problem occurs due to the fact that the originally purely intellectual soul has linked itself with a body and, together with it, seems to present in the earthly life something that is combined.

The actual essence of man, the true man, according to Plotinus, is only the higher intellectual nature of man (see also I, 1: 7, lff.). The higher intellectual soul of man, which lives purely in the intelligible reality, has at the same time released a second soul which is intertwined in the body and its activities and is directly connected with it (I, 1: 10, 5ff.). Through the higher intellectual ground of the soul, man is related to the World Soul and equal to it (IV, 7: 12; see also II, 1: 5). This higher intellectual nature of the soul is a purely intellectual form which is not touched by the sensual (I, 1: 2, lff.). The higher intellectual ground of man is even related to the eternal divine Intellect, indeed, it can visualize it in a unitary view so that it is in its immediate presence (I, 1: 8, lff.). Also during the temporal, earthly life of man, the higher, intellectual, soul of man remains in the intelligible reality (in a purely intellectual, divine area with the World Soul and with the divine Intellect) and permits only the lower soul, which is virtually appended to the higher, to reach down to the world of the senses (VI, 7: 5; IV, 8: 8; III, 4: 3; VI, 3: 12).

The true man, according to Plotinus, the intellectual ground for the human soul, cannot be easily defined. Plotinus distinguishes three levels in it: the one, the intellect and the soul, which correspond in likeness to the three original divine Hypostases of One, Intellect and World Soul (V, 1: 10, 5-10). Through the last, highest and simple ground of his soul man tries to unite mystically with the One-Good (VI, 9: 10), the intellect in the higher intellect-soul suits the immediate view of the Divine Intellect and its Ideas, the soul, however, can accept the discursive thinking; the intellect of the human intellect-soul attempts intuitively to view the Ideas of the divine Intellect in its oneness and totality, the soul differentiates them in their specific characters and universal relationship (V, 1: 10; V, 1: 11; V, 3: 3; V, 9: 3; I, 1: 8).

Now in a most singular manner, Plotinus has differentiated this higher intellectual ground of the soul, related to the Divine, from a soul of a lower type, virtually as the second soul of each man which penetrates the body and together with it forms a composite (I, 1: 7, lff.; VI, 4: 15; V, 7: 5). Only to this second soul, or the composite

animated by it, does Plotinus ascribe sensory perception, emotions, feelings, sensual desires and even self-consciousness (I, 4: 9; IV, 4: 4).

But this immediately brings us to the problem of the cognition of the higher intellectual ground and the true self-being of man according to Plotinus: from the point of view of the actual consciousness of man, this higher intellectual ground is not really continuously present and directly open to inspection, the intellect and the higher soul of man can have an effect on man, according to Plotinus, even if we are not aware of it, because, again according to Plotinus, temporal self-consciousness is only the reflex of the intellectuality in the perceptual sense and only occurs with the second soul. However, now, the eternal being of the Ideas in the Divine Intellect, according to Plotinus, is in itself perfectly intelligible and the Divine Intellect is approachable to man's intellectual soul in the sense of its cognition. This is similarly valid for the World Soul and its relationship to the intellectual soul of man. Only from the viewpoint of the temporal self-consciousness of man do there arise certain cognition problems but this consciousness of man (and his self-consciousness) is for Plotinus no absolute starting point and the centre of the highest human certainty as for Descartes, and for Plotinus the sensually perceptible and empirical scientific aspects of man's being are not, as for Jaspers, an object of generally valid and compelling knowledge so that the transcendence of the divine intellectual ground of the soul for Plotinus means something different from the transcendence of the self-being for Jaspers.

#### C. To the Comparison of Both Positions and to the Question of the Adoption of Plotinus by Jaspers

The two conceptions of man of Plotinus and the existential philosopher Jaspers do not allow for such good comparisons as the fundamental conceptions of the philosophical theology of Plotinus and Jaspers, although the two philosophical anthropologies of the thinkers being investigated by us can stem from fundamental metaphysical concepts which are very similar. But the historical distance and the philosophical differences between the two philosophers have stronger effects in the region of the philosophical anthropology and the conception of man than in the region of metaphysics.

Also Jaspers recognizes something similar to the belief of the immortality of the soul, but for him this belief can no longer be a conviction of the rational metaphysics even in the sense of Plato and Plotinus.

Plato and Platonism, Plotinus and the Neoplatonism believe that they can prove the immortality of the soul with the arguments of reason and on the basis of the relationship with the intelligible reality of the truly being Ideas and the divine Intellect. But also on the subject of the rational anthropology and psychology and not only on that of the philosophical theology there stands, between the Platonic tradition and Jaspers, the criticism of Kant which subjected not only the proofs of God but also the metaphysical arguments for the immortality of the soul to a critical investigation and thus arrived at a rejection of their scientific basis.

For Jaspers then, the allocation of the self-consciousness of man to the eternity means something other than the teaching of the immortality of the soul for Plato and Plotinus. The "Existenz" realizes in the temporal being ("Zeitdasein") its possible self-being, it appears to itself in the empirically comprehensible aspect of man's being and decides through eternity the sense of its self-realization. For Jaspers, in this sense, the moment as the identity of timelessness and temporality is the immersion of the factual moment to the eternal present. In the historical consciousness, according to Jaspers, a sense of historicity makes man aware of two things in one: of evanescence as a phenomenon and of eternal being by way of this phenomenon—in the sense that, once fulfilled, the temporal particularity is comprehended as the appearance of eternal being, that the tie between this eternity and *this* moment is absolute ("Philosophy" II, p. 111). There is everything to be said for the fact that we are dealing here with an eternity of the fulfillment of the sense ("Sinnerfüllung"), an eternity in the sense of the ethical absoluteness but not of an ontological, and certainly not a rationally verifiable eternity.

If, now, the teaching of the immortality of the soul, as advocated by Plato and Plotinus, does not occur in this manner with Jaspers, then this applies to an even greater extent to the teaching of the higher intellectual ground of the soul by Plotinus and of its cognition, which teaching should in some way correspond to the understanding of the true self-being of man with Jaspers. Jaspers emphasizes very clearly that the true self-being of man cannot be recognized on scientifically compelling, generally valid, grounds in the way that the empirically comprehensible aspects of man's being can be researched and recognized by means of sciences such as psychology, sociology and biological anthropology. The true self-being of man is only comprehensible negatively by means of a leading to the limits in that it is shown what the true

self-being, the "Existenz," is all not, or only symbolically is, in that the terminology of the sciences (psychology, logic) and metaphysics are applied to the self-being in a metaphorical sense or that a terminological instrument is utilized that is conceived uniquely for the existential elucidation (that is, in that so-called "signa", symbolical symbols are used for the existential elucidation).

For Plotinus, however, the higher intellectual ground of man's soul, which is somewhat similar to the true self-being of man by Jaspers, is also not constantly present to the discursive and sensually bound and in itself reflective, self-consciousness of man but is always active in man and linked with the higher, divine, intelligible world of the three original divine Hypostases (One, Intellect, Soul), even if man is not always aware of it. But in itself, it is not unrecognizable but a truly intelligible being as also the, for him, original divine Intellect-Being as cosmos of the Ideas is in itself perfectly intelligible. The approach to the divine intellectual ground of the soul as to the divine Intellect itself is not easy but can only be carried out through an inner resurgence to the intuitive view and to the purely Intellectual. And yet, Plotinus utilizes no negative methods for the purpose of the cognition of the divine intellectual ground of the soul and also does not believe that the approach is only possible by means of symbolic thought. Even when rising up from discursive thinking and the sensual consciousness to the intuitive view, from self-consciousness to the becoming inside of the intelligible totality, then at the most, one progresses from soul to soul, from the derived soul linked to the body to the original intellectual ground of the soul, which is not affected by the sensual but lives in the Intelligible.

The difference between Plotinus and Jaspers with regards to the approach to the divine intellectual ground of the soul or the cognition of the true self-being of man, now becomes clearer in that one visualizes what the positive scientifically recognizable for Jaspers is, opposed to the only negative or symbolic comprehension of the self-being and one then asks oneself whether there is a comparable situation of the theory of knowledge with Plotinus. For Jaspers, the empirically comprehensible aspects of man's being are universally valid through sciences such as psychology, sociology and biological anthropology and are recognizable by means of compelling logical necessities whereby methods of the moral sciences as well as of the natural sciences are assumed. In the total area of the mundane being (not only as regards to man) it is mostly the natural sciences that are active with justified

demands on scientific cognition. In opposition to this scientific cognition, there is now conceived by Jaspers the comprehension of the true self-being of man, the existential elucidation, which is really no longer a scientific, universally valid and logically compelling cognition but which operates only with particular negative or symbolic methods of the existential elucidation.

With Plotinus, however, one naturally seeks in vain for this type of dignity and honour of empirical sciences about the world and about man. As for Plato so also for Plotinus is the sensually perceptible corporeal world not only a reality of lesser (fourth of fifth) level, but also the area of the mere opinion and the uncertain assumption. Plotinus' eternal Ideas, identical with the Intellect according to Plotinus, are in contrast the truly intelligible reality, admittedly not in the sense of a cognition as is known in modern natural sciences, but in the sense of the speculative metaphysics. Thus, one can see that with Plotinus, a completely different situation concerning the theory of knowledge and the theory of science is given as for Jaspers and for this reason Jaspers's conception of man and his ideas of the cognition and approach of the true self-being of man cannot just be compared (or only with difficulty) with the philosophical anthropology and theory of knowledge of Plotinus.

This can be strengthened by a further thought: It was René Descartes who as the precursor of the whole modern philosophy from the 17th century founded all further philosophical certainty in the self-consciousness of the thinking human I about his own existence. With this there emerged to the fore of philosophical reflection the theoretical consciousness of man as the main characteristic of man's nature and the foundation of all scientific cognition. This universal theoretical consciousness also had a further effect (via transmission of Kant) on Jaspers (the consciousness is for him one of the modes of the all-encompassing which man is himself; see also "Of the Truth," I. p. 64ff.). Also from the level of this consciousness, in which for him theoretical clarity and compelling knowledge becomes an event, Jaspers characterizes the extraordinariness of the existential elucidation in its "negative" and "symbolic" aspects. However, something similar to this theoretical consciousness in Descartes, Kant and Jaspers cannot be found in Plotinus. The temporal consciousness of man is not for him the region of greater theoretical clarity and lucidity, rather this is achieved first in the intuitive view of the Ideas and the divine Intellect. That is why here also there is no reason for him to carry out the ascent to the divine intellectual

ground of the soul in a manner which would be comparable in any way or would be derived from the negative and symbolic theology, which for him is the approach to the One-Good as the highest principle of all.

But when Jaspers in his teaching of the true self-being of man and of the methods of the existential elucidation, which *for him* are so related to the process of comprehension of the Transcendence of the Deity, gives the impression of being indebted to the Neoplatonic tradition of thought as also in the philosophical theology or metaphysics, to what can this be attributed, if his conception of man, compared with that of Plotinus, displays such substantial differences? In my view, this can be explained by the fact that Jaspers is above all influenced by Plotinus in his philosophical theology and metaphysics (however, naturally, already in the sense of the highly independent subsequent treatment of the Neoplatonic impulses) and that as a result of inner factors and processes in his existential philosophy, the inner core, or the true self-being of man was conceived analogous to the ultimate Deity, the Transcendence, which had effects especially on Jaspers' teaching of the approach of man to his true self-being and of its intelligibility. Naturally, according to Plotinus, man must first also ascend to the divine ground of his soul if he wishes to comprehend the One-Good as the highest principle of all and then must divest himself of all views of any type (also intellectual) of plurality in order to become perfectly simple and to unite with the One-Good (see also VI, 9: 10f.). But with this, there has not yet been developed a theory of the cognition of the ultimate ground of the soul, which would permit the approach to it only by utilizing the procedure of the negative theology.

### III. The Moral Impulses of the Philosophy and the Metaphysical and Anthropological Foundations of them

Ethics as an independently existing and clearly bounded philosophical discipline exists neither in Plotinus nor in Jaspers. Neither of them wrote a systematic treatise on ethics, as did Spinoza or Nicolai Hartmann, and none of them created connected systematic writings on the totality of practical philosophy as, for instance, Aristotle or Kant. But naturally, ethical themes play their part with Jaspers as also with Plotinus and above all there arises in both, from their metaphysics and their conception

of man, a certain basic attitude on ethics and a concept of ethical modes of behaviour which are to be valued or to be censured and which both thinkers often express.

To close off this treatment, we will now briefly view the ethical aspects and implications of the philosophies of both thinkers. This ethical dimension of the philosophies of both thinkers, as was seen with the comparison of both conceptions of man, will show no very substantial agreement, but it will still be important to explore this briefly because Plotinus and Jaspers are here introduced as representatives of a particular basic moral philosophical attitude.

#### A. Jaspers' Moral—Philosophical Impulses from the Existential Philosophical Interpretation of Man

There can be no doubt that, from the existential philosophical interpretation of man and man's being, there stem moral appeals to humanity, even if Jaspers did not summarize them in an explicitly worked out systematic ethics. We can say, interpreting Jaspers, that it is the vocation of man to transcend the various aspects of being as existence ("Dasein") and being as character ("Sosein") within his human being to reach his true self-being, but it is also the vocation of man to realize his true self-being in the argument with the concrete conditions of his being in the world and in the penetration of aspects of the being as existence and the being as character in his temporal mundane life with intellectual, eternal content. Man can and should bring his true self-being to unfold in connection with other possible self-beings in existential communication, man should be aware of the historicity of his being in the unity of being as existence and "Existenz," of freedom and necessity as well as of temporality and eternity. He should attempt to realize his "Existenz" as unconditionality in situation, absolute consciousness and acts.

It is especially in connection with his presentation on unconditionality in acts and on unconditional acts that the ethical aspects of the philosophical interpretation of man by Jaspers become clear. Jaspers further differentiates the unconditional acts of man from the immediate instinctive actions, the purposive actions and the vital actions out of instinct and reflection which fulfill and drive our conscious being. All these acts are conditional acts. According to Jaspers, however, in the acts of man another can be present in which they are removed from the temporal endlessness of the mundane acts and are returned in a self-being which becomes certain in its acts. This acting from

out of the self-being and for the sake of the self-being is called unconditional acts by Jaspers ("Philosophy" II, p. 255ff.). Unconditionality of acts, according to Jaspers, can be manifested in ethical acts and in religious acts. Unconditionality is, as inner acts, absolute (i.e., existential) consciousness, is freedom, is in the medium of the self-reflection; as acting in the world, unconditional acting is the "Existenz" in the polarity of subjectivity and objectivity ("Philosophy" II, p. 279ff.). Existential ought is in the form of the appropriation by a subjectivity which confronts within itself, as objective, what determines it ("Philosophy" II, p. 311ff., esp. 312). The ought in its objectivity is, according to Jaspers, as existential the irresistibility of the claim of the presence of my self-being on myself. Wherever I am truly myself, says Jaspers, I am not really myself alone. Thus I feel the Transcendence in the unconditionality of the ought on myself ("Philosophy" II, p. 316ff.).

Jaspers himself explicitly expresses in this connection the possibility of a philosophical ethics: because the fixed commands and prohibitions which rationally can be thought of and applied as a set of directions, have lost their absoluteness, there remains, according to Jaspers no ethics possible which announces the truth from the philosophizing of possible "Existenz" but one such which, more decisively, in self-being, reminds of the substance through dialectical discussion. This ethics must not be created abstractly but must grasp the ought in the existing reality of the fellowship of the family, society, the state, from the claim of religion, then in the realm of the communicable cultural products and understandings that connect mankind. The concrete real substance of this ethics, so Jaspers, would appeal to the roots man has in his self-being, traversing the possibilities of action in every direction of the historic world ("Philosophy" II, p. 317).

From all this, one can see with sufficient clarity that, from the existential philosophical conception of man with Jaspers as well as from its metaphysical foundations, there can well arise a specific ethical basic conviction and that an ethics built thereon would be possible. However, this will no longer be dealing with a rational system of ethics or a system of specific commands and prohibitions (as it is characteristic for the ethics of a particular religion), but only of an ethics of the self-being, which gives indications of the concretizing forms of a particular existential basic conviction.

## B. Ethical Implications of Plotinus' Metaphysics and Anthropology

As with Karl Jaspers so the ethics of Plotinus also corresponds fully to the conditions and truths of his conception of man and his metaphysics: with Plotinus, the ethical determinations and directions, which he certainly provides, have their very particular systematic place in the whole of Plotinus' metaphysics and anthropology, without the ethics being fully developed as a particular individual discipline which can be autonomously detached from the whole of the philosophy. The ultimate determination of man, according to Plotinus, is to return again to the One-Good after the descent from the One-Good as the highest principle, which all souls have trod over the footsteps of the Divine Intellect, the Idea Cosmos and the World Soul in the corporeal world and to arrive again in a form of intellectual ascent to the One-Good as the ultimate origin and the ultimate ground. The ethics provides some directions for this, how this ascending path is to be trodden and which ideals are to be used as guides.

The ethics of Plotinus, which is primarily meant to enable man to return to the One-Good as the highest principle, because this type of behaviour is the morally best one and which has provided the nearest approach to the One-Good, attempts to reach this goal of the nearest possible approach to the ultimate Deity and a similarity with it, above all through the cleansing of the soul of all corporeality and sensuality.

Because the soul only does wrong and evil in that it errs and that this error occurs substantially because of its being chained to the body and because of its fascination by the world of the senses, it is the task of the soul not to change its innermost God-related nature, but much rather to elevate itself through cleansing from the sensual to its original determination. This can occur, according to Plotinus only in a preparatory manner, through the actual political virtues which still have a relationship to the practical activity and external world and which set the effective boundaries to the affections of persons as well as preventing incorrect opinions. The actual cleansing is first carried out by means of the higher theoretical virtues. Only when referred back to the pure view of the intelligible realm do Plato's four cardinal virtues, which as political or practical virtues only have a propaedeutic character, receive their highest sense and attempt to assist in an approach to God (see also in Plotinus' "Enneads" the treatise I, 2; for the ideal of the *ἀποιώσις θεῷ* see already Plato's "Theaetetus" 176b).

Thus, according to Plotinus, man never approaches the last aim and the highest determination in practice but always in the theoretical

view and that is why, in the teaching of the ascent of the soul to the highest principle, the differentiation of various levels of perception and cognition, which is only understandable in connection with his metaphysics, has a particular meaning: the sensual perception, which by Plotinus is interpreted as a mere image of a perception directed towards the intelligible, in the framework of the intellectual ascent, is placed only on the lowest plane (I, 1: 7; V, 3: 9; VI, 7: 7). Above all kinds of perception is set conceptual knowledge, i.e., the differentiation and comparing of the idea dialectic which comprehends the intellectual reality methodically and receives the principles from the Intellect (I, 3: 4f.). But beyond this still discursive process, there exists for Plotinus the immediate thought and view of the over-sensual in the unity with the divine Intellect, in which the intellectual soul is not simply identified with the higher reality, but, despite all oneness with the divine Intellect still retains its own existence as intellectual soul (V, 3: 4; VI, 7: 35; IV, 4: 2). However, with this level, the ascent of the soul is not ended. In order that man truly achieves the ultimate and highest determination, the soul of man must unite beyond the divine Intellect with the origin and fundamental ground of all, the One-Good, and only here is the union free of any boundaries. In the One there is no duality. In this way, the own existence and special consciousness of the soul are perfectly erased. It unfolds fully in the One as the highest principle and finds itself in it with the centre (of itself as man) in the centre (of the whole reality). This soul thus partakes of the mystical condition of the ecstasy, a beatific condition of satiated peace in which the soul, having arrived at its destination, lets all behind it and scorns all thought that was once so loves because it is movement, but it wishes to remain unmoved as also the first is unmoved (VI, 9: 10; VI, 7: 35).

The principal feature and the main tendency of Plotinus' ethics is very clear from what has been said above: this ethics seeks to lead man back to the ultimate and highest divine intelligible realities and to the highest Deity as the highest principle. The true determination of man, according to this ethics, exists in the return and finally and ultimately in the union with the divine absolute origin and ground from which man stems. The ought of man, his divine obligations, does not refer in Plotinus to the acts in this world and in a state, but much more to the contemplation, the theory, the view of the Deity. The theoretical and cathartic virtues are for Plotinus rated far above the ethical, i.e., practical virtues, which refer to the practice and especially

the political acts, in a manner that would be unthinkable for Plato (a classical philosopher *also* of political philosophy; Plotinus' distinction corresponds rather to the differentiations of Aristotle concerning the virtues).

One can ask oneself whether this ethics and this moral basic attitude to life is nothing but a withdrawal from the world and whether its attitude towards the sensually perceptible world of the phenomena is fully negative and depreciative, whether it depreciates the practice as against the theory as it does the body compared to the soul. The obvious tendency with Plotinus is undoubtedly in this direction but Plotinus (as a historical phenomenon) does not seem to have taken this road to the end (up to an absolute asceticism of the way of life and up to the absolute rejection of the world). However, he can acclaim similarly to Plato, the beauty even of the visible world as a well ordered whole (compared to Gnostic disparagements) and the body and the sensible world for Plotinus (as for Plato) is nevertheless, even when it is the lowest level, at the bottom of a value hierarchy which leads to the perfect beauty of the Idea and the divine Intellect (see also Plotinus V, 8 and with Plato: "Symposium" 210a ff.). This, now, leads us finally to a comparison of the fundamental ethical attitudes and of the fundamental convictions of the ethics of Plotinus and Jaspers.

#### C. To a Comparison of Both Positions and to the Question of the Adoption of Plotinus by Jaspers

Plotinus' ethics is an ethics of the inner ascent to the intelligible world, to a region of the Divine and the Intellectual, and finally to the perfectly simple and perfectly good highest principle of all. This ethics contains also tendencies to flight from the world and world rejection (when referred to the sensible world of the phenomena). Indeed, it cannot deny certain ascetic features (with the limitations which I mentioned in 3 B).

The ethics of Karl Jaspers (or what one can summarize as the ethical fundamental convictions of this existential philosopher) is also concerned with the inner ascent of man to his true self-being and to the Transcendence (the Deity). But with Jaspers, that intellectual path which leads man (in the search of his determination) always beyond the various aspects of being as existence ("Dasein") and being as character ("Sosein") in order to reach the true self-being of man, the "Existenz," must always be supplemented with another intellectual path with other, if not opposite direction, namely the tendency to a philosophical penetration of the

being and consciousness aspects of man's being with the true self-being of man, the "Existenz," which comes to the fore in this penetration process and thus realizes itself for the first time. Man, according to Jaspers, cannot be his true self if he does not transcend all being as existence and as character within his human being, but he also cannot realize his true self-being if he does not penetrate from his "Existenz" to his being as existence and as character in the world in order to take it up in his very own responsibility. A fleeing from the world and a rejection of the world, and in this sense an ascetic component, cannot therefore be found in Jaspers' ethics (in comparison to that of Plotinus).

One could further clarify the difference between Plotinus and Jaspers in that one applied the terminology of the Platonic metaphysics of Plotinus also to the existential philosophical conception of man of Jaspers (Jaspers, himself did this by way of hints) and compares the true self-being of man by Jaspers with the intellectual ground of the soul by Plotinus. True self-being of man and empirically conceivable aspects of man's being with Jaspers would then relate somewhat to each other as the soul-intellect of man to the body as the corporeal dimension of man with Plato and Plotinus. On the background of this parallelism, one could say the following of the (anthropologically and metaphysically based) difference of the two ethics: with Plotinus, the incorporeal soul, before its incorporation, descends from the intelligible region into the corporeal world, unites with the body but remains, for its earthly life, connected with the higher intellectual world and has (this is the ethical component) the vocation to return wholly to the higher intellectual world in that it frees itself step by step from the body and the fascination with the senses. With Jaspers, now, the point of view of the philosopher in his actual thinking is limited wholly by the life of man in this world, because only of this (according to Jaspers) can a sensible philosophical account be rendered. Man, though, has the vocation to elevate himself above the aspects of being as existence, consciousness and character within the human life in the world and to achieve the true self-being of man in view of the Transcendence (God's). But the vocation of man is not to leave the world, to strip off the bonds of the soul as soon as possible and to unite eternally with the Transcendence (God). This, for Jaspers, is not the aim of the ought for the reason, on the one hand, because man just does not possess sufficient insight to envisage such an otherworldly objective and, on the other hand above all, for the ethical reason, because the final free core of man, the "Existenz," is responsible for the earthly

factual empirical appearance aspect of man's being and has the task of penetrating it intellectually and besides can realize itself only in it.

In summary, one can say that the ethical appeal which originates from the existential philosophical interpretation of man in Karl Jaspers, although on the one hand it is inspired by the tendency of the transcending over the world, existence and empirically conceivable aspects of man's being (as also characterizes the metaphysics, the conception of man and the ethics of the Neoplatonic Plotinus), on the other hand it is characterized by a decisive turning to the world and being and to the earthly aspects of the man's being as it can be found in no manner in Plotinus. The reasons for this turning to the world and affirmation of being in Jaspers (in comparison to the rejection of the world and of being by Plotinus) are, in my point of view, metaphysical anthropological as well as genuinely ethical. On the one hand, as already mentioned earlier, Jaspers has passed through the epistemological critique of Kant and, as a man of the 20th century who is impressed by the thinking of the empirical sciences, dares not speak seriously of the pre-existence and post-existence of the soul. A peculiar anthropological basic conviction in the existential philosophical sense allows him, furthermore, to assume a mutual reference and dependence of self-being and being as existence, soul and body together: the being as mundane factual given is in itself unfulfilled, it still requires the self-being, which penetrates it philosophically and attempts to fill with sense. The self-being, in reverse, attempts to realize itself only in the temporal appearance of the being of the world. On the other hand Jaspers is also inspired by genuine ethical reasons to affirm from the inner outwards this relatedness and dependence of the self-being on its appearance in the temporal being. Man in his self-being, man as "Existenz" has a moral responsibility for the world in which he lives and for the being ("Dasein") in which he realizes himself.

What on the whole, finally once again, (this time in view of the ethics) refers to the question to be put, in how far Plotinus has a certain influence on Jaspers or (seen from Jaspers' point of view) there is an adoption of Plotinus, the question must be answered in the sense that with Jaspers, especially in the ethical field, one can talk of an adoption of Plotinus only insofar as the ethics of Jaspers follows a fundamental impulse of the ethics of Plotinus (which indeed is itself again the consequence of his metaphysics and conception of man). Insofar, however, as the basic direction of the ethical desires and thinking

of Jaspers differs from that of Plotinus, one would have to assume with Jaspers not an adoption and intellectual approach to Plotinus but much more a critical dispute with him.

One finds the critical dispute with Plotinus especially in the "Critical Characteristic" by which Jaspers supplements his presentation of the philosophy of Plotinus as a metaphysician who thinks out of the origin, in the first volume of his work on "The Great Philosophers" (p. 712-719). This criticism by Jaspers of Plotinus substantially confirms what we have said of the difference of the conception of man and the ethics between Plotinus and Jaspers.

What now concerns the adoption of Plotinus by Jaspers is also valid for the ethical consequences of the philosophy of Plotinus which we have already presented in connection with the influence of Plotinus on the conception of man by Jaspers: Plotinus had an effect, above all, on the metaphysics of Jaspers. The metaphysics of Jaspers itself, with its clear Neoplatonic affinities is fundamental for the existential philosophical interpretation of man, and through its consequences in the ethics, a part of the ethical fundamental convictions of Jaspers are inspired by Plotinus.

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Quotations of the text of Jaspers refer to the German original as mentioned above, except for "Philosophy," in which case they refer to the English translation; quotations of the text of Plotinus refer to the Greek original as established in the critical edition of Henry-Schwyzler.

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## The Place of Neo-Platonism in the Post-Modern World

Christos C. Evangeliou

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The appellation "Western" is perhaps inappropriately applied to the products of Ancient Greece, especially Hellenic philosophy. For neither the spirit of free inquiry and bold speculation, nor the quest for human perfection via autonomous virtuous activity and ethical excellence survived, in their Hellenic form, the imposition of inflexible Church doctrines and practices upon Europe with the coming of Christian faith and the theocratic proclivity of the Churches, especially the hierarchically organized Catholic Church.

Yet, these noble ideals had been embodied in the lives, and expressed in the theories, of genuine Hellenic philosophers for many centuries, from Pythagoras to Plato, to Plotinus, to Porphyry, and beyond. Since the Renaissance, several attempts, primarily by Platonists, to revive the free spirit, and the other virtues of Hellenic philosophy, have been invariably frustrated by violent reactions of Christian movements, such as the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and the religious wars which followed.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, while modern science somehow succeeded, after much struggle with the Catholic Church, in freeing itself from the snares of Medieval irrational restrictions, and thereby it managed to reconnect itself with the scientific spirit of late antiquity and its great achievements (especially in the fields of cosmology, physics, mathematics and medicine which enabled it to advance);<sup>3</sup> the main stream of "Western philosophy" has as yet failed to do so. As in the Middle Ages, so in modern times philosophy has continued to play such undignified and servile roles as *ancilla theologiae*, *ancilla scientiae* and, with the coming of Marx's "scientific socialism," *ancilla ideologiae politicae*. In this respect, "Western philosophy," as it has been historically practiced in Europe, is a very different

activity from that noble and autonomous intellectual discipline which the Ancient Hellenes named *philosophia* and honored it as the queen of arts and sciences to which it had given birth.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, as we stand at the end of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the Post-Cold War era; as we witness the collapse of Soviet-style socialism and the coming of the post-modern era; as we look at the dawn of a new millennium and dream of a New Global Order, the moment would seem propitious to stop and reflect upon our philosophical past as exemplified in the free spirit of Ancient Hellenic philosophy and its many misfortunes, its long passion, if you like, in the West in the last two millennia. From such a vantage point, it would seem imperative that the philosophic freedom and its concomitant religious tolerance, as experienced in the Hellenic pre-Christian era, be revived and fostered in the post-modern world of today and tomorrow, if our global, fragile, and culturally diverse community is to be preserved and allowed to flourish in the dawning new millennium.

In my view, Neoplatonism, as a form of successfully revived Platonism in late antiquity, has much to contribute to the noble goal of our common cultural preservation and global flourishing. Representing, as it does, the last phase of the free spirit of Hellenic philosophy in late antiquity, and having played the key role of defending Hellenism against every form of barbarism, Neoplatonism can become once again the avant-guard of a new movement to restore philosophy to its ancestral dignity by reviving the philosophic spirit of freely theorizing about nature and culture, and by acknowledging no other authorities besides reason.<sup>5</sup>

Before closing my introduction, let me add parenthetically that, as a life long student of the history of Hellenic philosophy, I have been puzzled by the facility with which European historians of philosophy attempt to appropriate the heritage of Hellenic philosophy as their own exclusively, and to make it part of what they call "Western philosophy," which they oppose to the Eastern philosophies with arrogant Nordic contempt.<sup>6</sup> More recently, in my trips to Greece and to India, I was surprised to discover that even these non-Western and remote peoples have uncritically accepted the above false claim and artificial division between East and West, with Ancient Greece and its glorious philosophy placed, firmly but unwisely, in the West. Unexpectedly, I encountered strong resistance from Greeks and Indians, when I tried to enlighten them

about the falsity of the Northern European arrogant, exclusive, and unjustifiable claim to the heritage and glory of Ancient Hellenic philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

I would like, therefore, to take this opportunity to express some of my unorthodox views regarding the question of the so-called "Western philosophy" and its alleged connection to, and continuity of, the free spirit of inquiry of genuine Hellenic philosophy.<sup>8</sup> In what follows I shall argue that the appellation "Western" is a misnomer when it is applied to Ancient Hellas in general, and to Hellenic philosophy in particular which, on the artificial balance of "West versus East" conventional division, has historically inclined invariably towards the culturally more refined East.<sup>9</sup> I shall also argue that the reason for which the Theocratic West, as a matter of historical fact, did not develop any schools of genuine philosophy comparable to the many and diverse schools of Democratic Hellas, is directly related to a terrible misfortune which befell Europe and from which it has not, as yet, completely recovered. By this I mean the coming into being of two aberrations of Judaism,<sup>10</sup> which are euphemistically called Christianity and Islam. These two monotheistic religions have been, by their own dogmatic theologies and theocratic proclivities, historically proven to be intolerant not only of other Gods and Goddesses but also of Lady Philosophy as the Ancient Hellenic philosophers envisioned genuine *philosophia*, that is, free and unfettered inquiry into the nature of all things including truth, beauty, goodness, and human and divine beings.

A note of clarification is called for, and I wish to be very clear on this important point. The expression genuine *philosophia* is intended to capture, I repeat, the original sense in which φιλοσοφία was understood by Hellenic philosophers during the millennium of their activity from Pythagoras to Proclus. The Ancient Hellenes practiced philosophy in at least two essential ways which have been conspicuously absent from Western Europe:<sup>11</sup> First, philosophy as a free, unfettered, and intelligent search for truth regarding the nature of Nature and the nature of Man; and secondly, philosophy as an authentic way of life which is self-sufficient and active in accordance with both kinds of Hellenic excellences, intellectual as well as ethical.

### I. The Ambiguity of "Western Philosophy"

In the expression "Western philosophy" two ambiguous terms are connected closely and repeated so frequently that the confusion generated by such infelicitous juxtaposition almost cries out for clarification. Regarding the first term "Western," one would be taxed to point out, in the globe which revolves round the sun and makes day and night, where on Earth the East stops and the West begins. Even if we follow the conventional wisdom and allow that Iceland and England are definitely in the West, while Korea and Japan, for example, are definitely in the East, where shall we rightfully place countries like Greece and India? Both are to the East of the first pair, but to the West of the second pair. Hence the problem. One may think that the problem can be easily solved by comparing the two countries directly to each other, in which case it can be said that India is definitely in the East and Greece in definitely in the West relative to each other. But perhaps the situation is more complex than it appears to be at first glance.

For, even if the Indians were to go along with this solution, I suspect that the Greeks would have great difficulty accepting it for the following reason. Geographically Greece belongs to "Eastern Mediterranean;" at our time, as in ancient times, Greece occupies the tiny peninsula and the Aegean sea where three continents meet: Africa, Asia and Europe. This fact perhaps explains why the Ancient Hellenes conceived of the strange notion that the center of the world, "the navel of the Earth" as they used to say, was right there in the middle of Hellas, at one of the peaks of Parnassos. It was there, at the holy shrine of Delphi where Dionysus, the god of music and dance, rested from his long journey from India through Asia and Africa, according to ancient legend, and was welcomed by his brother Apollo, god of light and reason. In this way the East and the West came together and from their harmonious union the Classical Hellenic civilization emerged among the other civilizations of the great rivers: the Nile, the Euphrates, the Indus, the Ganges, and the Yangze.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of Geography, then, the Modern Greeks, like their ancestors or like any sensible people, may think of themselves as Westerners when they face towards the rising sun, but when they turn around and face the setting sun they consider themselves as Easterners or, at least, as non-Westerners. Even if we turned to

History for assistance, we would find that it provides no greater help than Geography for the correct characterization of the place of Hellas and its philosophy: Western or Eastern? Historically speaking, from the time of the rise of Rome to political power in the third century B.C. to the Italian Renaissance in the fifteenth century A.D., the Hellenic and the Hellenistic Hellas, and even the Byzantine and Christian Greece, had invariably identified itself with the culturally more refined East, in Conscious opposition to the Latin West which to the Hellenic minds and eyes of that time, as opposed to Modern times, appeared as a synonym of barbarity.<sup>13</sup>

Thus when the Roman Empire was divided into two in the end of the fourth century A.D., the division created the Latin Western and the Greek Eastern Roman Empires. Perhaps ironically, History was to repeat itself in the eleventh century, when a schism occurred in Christianity between the Catholic Church which was not surprisingly Latin and Western, and the Orthodox Church which was, again not surprisingly, Greek and Eastern.<sup>14</sup>

These historical considerations seem to tip the balance of placing both Ancient Hellas and Christian Greece definitively toward the East in the artificial division between East and West. But this is not the end of the story. Since the Crusades, and more so with the rise to prominence of such European powers of France, England, and Germany, the ex-barbarians of the West and the North thought that they would gain some respectability if they presented themselves as inheritors of the Ancient world and its culture. Thus they boldly claimed as their own not only the Latin, but also the Hellenic, Classical heritage which they began, at that specific time, to characterize as "Western" and oppose it to the Eastern Orthodox (and to the Islamic) world.<sup>15</sup> Intellectually awoken Greeks have always remained somewhat skeptical about the applicability of the appellation of "Western" to their ancestral culture and about the truthfulness of the arrogant and unjustifiable Nordic claim. However, the Northern Europeans have been successful in persuading almost the entire world that there is no real difference between themselves, in the role of the builders of colonial imperialism, and the creators of Classical Greek civilization and philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

The unfortunate result of these activities of the Europeans has been that the Ancient Hellenes are uncritically identified as Westerners at the present, and they are placed in the same basket

with the British, the French, the Dutch and German colonialists of Africa and Asia, not only by the Northern Europeans themselves but also by many African and Asian peoples as they struggle for ethnic identity, national recognition, and social reconstruction against the odds which were left overs by European colonialism. This outcome is certainly unfair to the Ancient Hellenes; but it is also unjust to the African and Asian nations which, as a result of the Northern European exclusive claim to the Classical Hellenic heritage, cannot readily perceive the falsity of such claim at their own expense. For they are slyly deprived of a valuable ally, the treasure of Hellenic culture and philosophy, in their present pedagogical, political, intellectual and cultural endeavors. This is tragic. The European claim is an unholy monopoly of the worst possible kind.<sup>17</sup>

It is time that the fraud be exposed and the truth be told to all who have ears to hear the simple truth that the achievements of the Ancient Greeks do not belong exclusively, or even primarily, to the Christian West or to Islamic East. They belong to the World at large and to the suffering mankind, especially to those remnants of pre-Christian and pre-Islamic traditions and cultures, with which the Ancient Hellenes had many affinities including: the love of human and undogmatic wisdom, as opposed to the dogmatic and divine "wisdom" to be found in some sacred books; and the tolerant worship of many Gods and Goddesses, as opposed to the monomaniac folly of masculine monotheism and its concomitant bigotry, intolerance and fanaticism as historical characteristics of the Western ethos. Working together those of us who value these old traditions can bring about a revival of philosophy of the genuine kind, perhaps here in America, this great land of the free and the brave, whose democratic institutions have been characterized by relative tolerance and diversity at least till now.<sup>18</sup>

## II. Hellenic Philosophy Delineated

Since the previous observations have shown that Ancient Hellas and the West have, historically and geographically, stood at opposite poles; and since philosophy is legitimately connected with Ancient Greece, it follows that the expression "Western philosophy" as used and abused by Northern European historians

of philosophy, becomes problematic. Besides, if we were to grant the Northern Europeans their wish to remove Classical Hellas from the middle place which it has historically occupied between the East and the West, the South and the North, as a beacon of light available to every part of the world which seeks philosophical enlightenment; and, furthermore, if we were to allow the Northern Europeans, especially the Germans, to claim as exclusively their own the Hellenic Classical heritage, especially Hellenic philosophy which, by its very nature, has an ecumenical and pan-anthropic appeal;<sup>19</sup> then we would be doing a disservice, as I said earlier, to our students and our children who deserve a better future, a life with more genuine humanistic *paideia*, and with less racial intolerance and even lesser religious fanaticism.<sup>20</sup>

From these considerations the following central question arises: Has the Christian West, impartially seen as an entity separate and different from Ancient Hellas, and narrowly defined as the barbarized Western part of the divided Roman Empire, in its millennial history produced any philosophers or philosophical schools which are comparable to the schools of Hellenic philosophy or to Indian and Chinese schools of philosophy for that matter? This is an important and complex question which cannot be answered with a simple and short answer. The nature of the answer depends on the meaning to be assigned to the word *philosophia* which, like the word *demokratia*, is a very attractive Hellenic concept and, thus, it has been much used and abused by many in the European West who, as Plato said, would like to seem rather than be philosophers.<sup>21</sup>

What, then, is philosophy? What is this wisdom with which great minds, the authentic philosophers, are said to fall in love? What exactly did the glorious Hellenes mean with this beautiful word *philosophia*, and how did they distinguish the genuine from the seeming philosophers of their time whom they called Sophists?<sup>22</sup> In a broad sense, there is nothing mysterious about the inborn and burning human desire to learn by opening the eyes and the mind to the natural and the cultural world around us; by asking difficult questions both as teachers and as students; and by trying to the best of our ability to articulate reasonable, responsible, and honest answers to such questions.<sup>23</sup> But if we were to be asked to isolate any specific criteria by which an authentic philosopher would be distinguished from his/her "homonyms," then in the light of the

long history of Hellenic philosophy we would not be far off the mark, if we specified the two kinds of Hellenic excellence, intellectual and ethical, as such criteria.<sup>24</sup>

According to this delineation of genuine Hellenic philosophy, one can say that a genuine philosopher is both a noetically self-sufficient and an ethically autonomous human being, which means that he/she has accomplished two important philosophical tasks.<sup>25</sup> First, he has thoroughly examined himself; he has, for a long time, carefully observed the natural and the cultural world around him; he has respectfully studied the works of other great minds and has freely discussed with his friends the great questions of life; and after a prolonged and serious thinking, he has possibly formed a cosmo-theory and/or bio-theory, which articulates his insight into the nature of things and his own nature, the human nature, so that he can give a reasoned account of it and he can teach those who may wish to listen and learn from his acquired human wisdom.

Secondly, the genuine philosopher does not only teach his wisdom, but also and more importantly, he practices his teaching in his own daily life; for he is ready and willing to hold himself up to higher ethical standards than the ones which his society demands of its members; and he is prepared to set the value of his philosophic freedom higher than life itself, and much higher than wealth and material goods of any kind. By so doing, the genuine philosopher naturally sets his lived philosophy as a model way of living for his pupils and others fellows who may wish to follow. Like Socrates and Plotinus, he has become an enlightened man, a passionate lover of truth, a gentle teacher by word and by deed, and a beacon of light for those who might desire enlightenment.<sup>26</sup>

This is, in brief, the noble portrait of the ideal philosopher as envisioned and occasionally realized by many of the Ancient Hellenes and other non-Western persons who were able to look at the cosmos, at their political institutions, and at their inner souls and minds as free human beings, without the fetters of any dogma, least of all any ecclesiastical dogma backed by the rhetoric and the sophistry or, even worse, by the fear and the terror of some entrenched Theocracy. This being so, next the crucial question arises: What happened to this noble philosophical ideal in the West?

### III. From Hellenic Philosophy to "Western Philosophy"

Judging by the two specified standards, as set by the Ancient Hellenic philosophers,<sup>27</sup> I doubt seriously that one will be able to find many or any of the so-called "Western philosophers" who would be able to meet the two mentioned criteria, especially the second. Let me explain my skeptical pessimism on this important point. By the criterion of noetically self-sufficient inquiry, anyone who takes divine revelations on faith (although they are found in old books of uncertain origin), and then uses "philosophy" (that is, philosophical terminology and arguments) to justify religious dogma on behalf of some established theocracy, as Christian and Moslem theologians, jurists, and orators have traditionally done, is clearly disqualified from being called a genuine philosopher, as the Hellenes understood and used this honorable name, and as we delineated it above. He may be a good writer and/or a sharp-tongued advocate of the cause of his sect, but a philosopher he cannot be, according to our first criterion.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, by the second criterion of autonomous, exemplary, and self-sufficient life of ethical excellence, any one who may seriously believe in the efficiency of divine grace by baptismal ablutions in holy waters, and other sacraments of this kind, to produce and sustain a life of integral virtue, as Catholics, Protestants and other Christians and Muslims traditionally have believed, cannot be called a genuine philosopher. He may be a good man or even a saint, but a philosopher, in the Hellenic sense of this hellenic word, he will never be, for a genuine philosopher is expected to rise to human perfection by human means, that is, by virtuous activity at each case and under any adverse conditions.<sup>29</sup> In this light, and considering the fact that Western Europe, in the last two millennia, has served under the double yoke of Catholic scholastic dogmatism and Protestant puritanical fanaticism, it is not surprising that philosophy, in the Hellenic sense of the word, has not flourished there, and that genuine philosophers are conspicuously absent from the scene of "Western philosophy."<sup>30</sup>

Some may find it perhaps amusing, but it is really sad to see how cautious the philosopher-theologians, and other so-called "philosophers" of the Western European type, have been in their writings lest they go against the received dogma of the respective Church and, thus, upset the ecclesiastical authoritarian hierarchy.

The list of such persons is long and would certainly include not only Augustine, Aquinas, Bonaventure, and other theologians and Church Fathers, but also Modern "philosophers" such as Descartes, Berkley, Leibniz, Hegel, and many more men whose purpose for philosophizing seems to have been either to explicitly provide support for the revealed dogma or, implicitly, to make room for the revelations of Christian faith, especially in its Protestant and Catholic formulations in Western Europe, as defined above.

It is true that in the last four or five hundred years several attempts have been made to revive the Classical Hellenic spirit of free, autonomous, and self-reliable inquiry but, philosophically, they all have failed and, for the most part, have been abortive.<sup>31</sup> For example, the hope that the opening of the Florentine Academy, during the Italian Renaissance in the fifteenth century, would lead to the rebirth of "Platonic philosophy" in its Hellenic version, as opposed to its Christian and Islamic versions, was cut short by the coming of the Protestant Reformation from the Teutonic North.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, "the Age of Reason" of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, on which the French *philosophes* had built their dreams for a Europe freed from religious oppressive dogma, ended up with the formation of the Holy Alliance and the coming of German Romanticism and the concomitant obfuscation. Once again, "Western philosophy" was turned into a handmaid of Lutheran Protestantism as it had been of Catholicism earlier on.<sup>33</sup>

These historical examples clearly indicate that up to the nineteenth century no genuine school of philosophy in the specified sense had appeared in the horizon of the Western world.<sup>34</sup> But the situation, significantly, has not changed since that time, in spite of the multiplication of "isms" coming out of Northern Europe in rapid succession: Marxism Existentialism, Phenomenalism, Nihilism, Deconstructionism, etc. These movements and their protagonists may make much noise, but they are ephemeral phenomena passing away. They can be fairly classified into several categories none of which can pass the two tests of genuine philosophy as specified above.

Be that as it may, the recent collapse of communism and the discrediting of Marxism; the disillusion that science will find the ultimate "truth" by chasing the Platonic "Great and Small" which keeps becoming smaller or greater without apparent end; and, above all, the end of the Cold War and the coming of a New Global Order,

has given some hope for the possibility of philosophy's rebirth. Hence the urgent need for the philosophically minded to return to their genuine philosophical roots, which are pre-Christian and pre-Islamic, in search for a new inspiration for the new millennium.

#### IV. Conclusion

The lesson to be learned and the conclusion to be drawn, by any person with an open mind and a sensitive soul, is that Hellenic philosophy in general, and the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition in particular, do not belong exclusively to the Northern Europeans despite of their claim to it. Rather it belongs to the global world and to mankind as a whole by reason of its perennial and ecumenical virtues, including the freedom to theorize and the responsibility to perfect ourselves, i.e. body, soul, and mind.

What we need at the present is some serious search for a way to reconnect with the interrupted ancient tradition of Platonism and Neoplatonism in order to be able to possibly recover a measure of the lost spirit of Ancient *Philosophia* with its expressed love of free speculation, its polytheistic tolerance of "the other," its diversity of methods, and its pan-anthropocentric appeal. The friends of Plato and Plotinus, of Porphyry and Proclus, of Pletho and all other Platonic lovers of wisdom, are called upon to try once again to restore philosophy to its ancestral autonomy, dignity and glory. The task is a noble one. May the Platonic Friends be more fortunate than the Platonists of the Florentine Academy and the Cambridge Platonists were, as they labor under the protection of Athena!<sup>35</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. In this essay, I will be able to provide only the main points and arguments in support of a challenging thesis which is still evolving. When fully developed, it will be published as a monograph under the tentative title: *The Passion of Philosophy in Europe*. In its present form the paper was presented at the XII International Conference on Neoplatonism and Contemporary Thought, which was organized by the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, on May 25-28, 1995, at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. A shorter version of the

- paper was published in *The Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research* XII, 2 (1995): 27–38.
2. The most promising and, therefore, the most sadly frustrated, was certainly the movement of revival of Hellenic philosophy in the fifteenth century, which was initiated by the great representative of Platonism, George Gemistos or Pletho, who opposed the Christianized and Islamized “philosophy” for reasons which will become apparent as we proceed further into my thesis. See also on this my “Pletho’s Critique of Aristotle and Averroes and the Revival of Platonism in Renaissance” in *The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies*, (forthcoming); and C.M. Woodhouse’s excellent monograph, *George Gemistos Pletho: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
  3. Many of us who take pride in the achievements of modern science tend to forget that many of these discoveries would have occurred a millennium earlier, had there not been for the discontinuity of the Hellenic scientific and philosophical tradition, brought about by the otherworldly orientation of the early Christian Church and its terrifying eschatology which proclaimed the end of the World!
  4. According to Aristotle, one of the outstanding practitioners of Hellenic philosophy, the noble character of this discipline is described as follows: “Evidently then we do not seek it [philosophy] for the sake of any other advantage: but as the man is free, we say, who exists for his own sake and not for another’s, so we pursue this as the only free science, for it alone exists for its own sake” (*Metaphysics* 982b 24–27). It is doubtful whether Northern Europeans would have been able to appreciate the nobility of this Hellenic pursuit, either during the Middle Ages, when they used “philosophy” to justify religious revelations, or even during Modern times, when they used “philosophy” to justify political revolutions and greedy pursuits of power over Nature and Nations. In so doing they involved the entire globe in disastrous wars.
  5. The changed global conditions in the last five centuries permit the friends of Hellenic philosophy to be cautiously optimistic that they will have better luck than Pletho and his Florentine friends. But, as genuine lovers of wisdom know so well, working diligently for a noble cause, like any other virtuous activity, is rewarding in itself regardless of the final positive or negative outcome.
  6. Two typical cases of such historians of philosophy, E. Zeller and W.K.C. Guthrie, I have discussed recently in “Ancient Hellenic Philosophy and the African Connection,” *Skepsis* 4 (1994): 4–67.
  7. The Conference on The Role of Philosophy in the Formation of Unified Europe, was organized by the International Center of Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Research at Ancient Olympia, Greece, August 1992; while the Conference on Neoplatonism and Indian Thought, was

- organized by the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies in cooperation with The Indian Council of Philosophical Research at Delhi, India, January 1992. I expressed similar views also in the lectures which I gave at several Indian universities during my short visit. What made my visit to India enjoyable and exciting, besides the traditional Indian hospitality, was the natural Indian inclination to philosophy, both of which reminded me of the Ancient Hellenes. Although the traditional hospitality is still alive in Greece, philosophy, as the Ancient Hellenes understood it, is as dead there as it is in the rest of Europe in which the Modern Greeks are eager to become incorporated.
8. In this light, K.S. Murty’s following statement would seem over optimistic and only partly correct with certain qualification: “I think modern India and Europe can and do understand ancient India and Greece, and the West and East also can and do understand each other:” *Philosophy in India: Traditions, Teaching and Research* (Delhi: ICPR, 1991, revised edition), p. 201. I would not like to be such a pessimist as to doubt the possibility or potentiality of understanding (that is, the modality of “can”), but the historical facts (that is, the modality of “do”) do not support Professor Murty’s claim at least in so far as it concerns Modern Europe and Ancient Greece. For, philosophically, they are poles apart because of the intervening dogmatism and oppression of Christian and Islamic theocracies and theologies which have affected deeply the European mind. So, if we want to find a “kindred spirit” which resembles the philosophically free, diverse, playful, undogmatic, and tolerant spirit of Ancient Hellas, we should look to Ancient India rather than to Western Europe. That is our only hope for a better future, philosophically speaking. For Northern Europe whether in its Medieval, Modern, or post-Modern mental and cultural outlook, would seem more like an aberration of Ancient Judaism than a legitimate offspring of Ancient Hellenism.
  9. The case of Modern Greece and its “Westernization” is a very interesting but separate issue. I will say only this: To the extent that it is Christianized, like the rest of Europe, Modern Greece has lost its ancient potency for autonomous philosophic activity. In the emerging United Europe, in which tiny Greece is supposedly an equal partner, there is a real danger for Greeks to lose their cultural and ethnic identity. Most tragic of all, they may also lose the beautiful language which they have inherited from Homer and Plato, and have preserved even during the long and dark period of Turkocracy. This is a nightmare for the few intellectually and culturally awakened Greeks. They will have to work diligently to prevent such disastrous outcome. We wish them a lot of good luck.

10. In their aggressive proselytism, in their utopian but dangerous universalism, and in their exclusive claim to the "only way" of salvation, by faith in the Bible or in the Koran respectively, Christianity and Islam, as organized religious theocracies, differ from Judaism from which both of them derived, and with which they share the monomania of monotheism and the myth of "the elect people" on a popular level. In the case of Judaism, the folly of this monopoly of God, was rather innocent being national and politically powerless; while in the other two cases, it was not innocent at all because it became supranational and soon acquired political power to the detriment of philosophy and free inquiry.
11. To avoid confusion I should explain that by "philosophy" I will mean in this discussion all the so-called philosophical productions of the Christianized and Islamized Western or Eastern world whether by systematic or edifying thinkers to use R. Rorty's distinction. Rorty also uses "philosophy" to indicate "something on the other side of the tradition." *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 394. According to Rorty, the "tradition" is supposed to extend from Plato to Nietzsche, while on "the other side" he places such thinkers as Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey (Chapter VIII, "Philosophy without Mirrors," pp. 357-394). This is a rather curious division in light of the historical facts and the gulf which separates the mentality of the Christian West and its monotheistic religion from Ancient Hellas and its humanistic philosophy. Rorty's division may serve only what he calls "neo-pragmatism" which looks like a new name for the old art of the Sophist. In this light, his project becomes virtually indistinguishable from that other major misfortune of post-modern Western European, deconstructionism.
12. For more on this point, see my "Ancient Hellenic Philosophy and the African Connection," *Skeptis* IV (1994): 4-67.
13. See on this my *Aristotle's Categories and Porphyry, Philosophia Antiqua* vol. 48 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), pp. 165-181. In a serious sense, the last three centuries of the Roman Empire, before its division into Eastern and Western and the collapse of the latter, can be seen as a "civil war" among Hellenic and Hellenized intellectuals and political leaders, who were split into two parties: those who wished to Hellenize the Latin segment of the population and, thus, revitalize the whole Roman Empire; and the others who wanted to Christianize it first and Hellenize it later, by moving its center towards the East. Plotinus, Porphyry, and Julian belong to the former party. Constantine, Eusebius, and Athanasius belong to latter party which won to the detriment of Hellenic philosophy.
14. The schism is still holding today in spite of all the efforts of unification by both parties which have invariably failed.
15. Ironically, Greece at that time was under the heavy yoke of the Ottoman Turks. She did not manage to liberate herself until the wars of independence in 1821-1922, which ended with a holocaust: the killing, expulsion and dispersion of more than one million Greeks from their Ionian homes in Asia Minor where Hellenic philosophy and Homeric poetry were born and thrived millennia ago. Since Asia Minor unfortunately did not become a part of Modern Greece, a revival of Hellenic philosophy in its birth place has been thwarted no less there than in Europe. This is tragic.
16. What an audacity, what a fraud, one may be inclined to think. Yet, the trick seems to have worked well for the Europeans. For multiculturalists who rebel against Eurocentrism, perhaps out of ignorance, tend to include the Hellenic philosophers in the same category as the European imperialists, which is unfortunate and unfair. It should be corrected and the sooner the better for them.
17. It is even worse than the monopoly of God as claimed by the European Christian and the Asian Islamic versions of Judaic monotheism.
18. This could be a valuable and needed lesson for the fanatical fundamentalists whether Muslims, Jews or Christians who, in the dawning of the third millennium, are about to exterminate each other in the name of the One and only true God, as in Bosnia, Palestine, and Chechnya. What a pity! What a shame! What a degradation of humanity! But this is only the prelude of what may be coming in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Northern Africa. For its origins, see my "Porphyry's Criticism of Christianity and the Problem of Augustine's Platonism," *Dionysius* XIII (1989): 51-70.
19. The opening lines of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* tell us that: "All human beings by their nature desire to know".
20. In this light, it would seem that the natural fanaticism, which has historically characterized the dogmatically monotheistic religions of Christianity and Islam, will be revived with greater force now. Since the common threat of atheist communism, which had kept them quiet for a while, has been removed, these two old rivals will ready themselves to battle again over the foolish question of which of them has the most exclusive revelation of the saving truth as the only and truly "Chosen people" of the one true God. Judaism, as usual, would not be able to resist the temptation of playing the one fool against the other, and of signing with the victorious party at the end of the bloody day. To prevent such an outrageous outcome, humanity will need all the help it can get from everyone, including genuine Hellenic philosophy and its enlightening power. Hence the problematic and the urgency of my present thesis.



21. In *The Republic*, Book VI, the genuine philosopher is described and distinguished from both the Sophists and the politicians of that time. Post-modern "philosophers" should consider it again.
22. The Platonic Stranger describes the Sophist in *Sophist* 268b-d.
23. In this sense, every healthy and normal human being, by its very nature and its potential, can become a lover of excellence depending on specific natural endowment, cultural environment, and above all, appropriate *paideia*, as Aristotle clearly noted in *Politics* 1332a 39 b 10.
24. "Now virtue also is differentiated in correspondence with this division of the soul. Some forms of virtue are called intellectual virtues, others moral virtues. Wisdom or Intelligence and Prudence are intellectual, Liberality and Temperance are moral virtues." NE 1103a 4-7 (H. Rackham's translation and capitalization of virtues).
25. When, for convenience, I use "he," the disjunctive "he or she" is understood here. As on the issue of erotic sexuality, so on the issue of generic equality, the Hellenic Democracies were more open minded and tolerant than the Christian and the Islamic Theocracies. From the Madinean Diotima to the Alexandrian Hypatia, many female philosophers flourished in the land of Hellas, especially in the Pythagorean tradition. I doubt that such a phenomenon could have appeared in the Theocratic West or in the Theocratic East during the Middle Ages or even in Modern times. Post-modernity is a different case, but it is too soon for us to be able to foresee its future and to foretell its fortune philosophically or otherwise.
26. Both during his short life on earth and, especially, after his death, when his wisdom would perhaps gain a sort of immortality by being present in the minds of other philosophers and other mortals as Socrates argues in the *Symposium*. See my "Eros and Immortality in the *Symposium* of Plato," *Diotima* XIV (1985): 200-211.
27. Or, one may add, the Ancient Indian and the Ancient Chinese philosophers whose speculations were free from theocratic dogmas in ways in which no Western "philosophers" could have been until now. What will happen in the future time will tell. We can only hope for the better, if not in old Europe, at least in the young America.
28. Once again, I would like to make it clear that I am talking about Lady Philosophy here. The arts are a different story. Many artists can be commissioned to produce works of art which are masterpieces. Philosophy, as the queen of arts and sciences, needs its freedom, its absolute freedom, for she accepts no masters other than reason to guide her pursuits. With God and the Gods, she is always in good terms, if she is of the genuine and gentle kind. For Plato and Aristotle, the genuine philosopher is always *Theophilus*.

29. In my view, this was the core of the conflict, which developed between Hellenic and Christian Platonism, as typified by Porphyry and Augustine. See my "Porphyry's Criticism of Christianity and the Problem of Augustine's Platonism," *Dionysius* XIII (1989): 51-70.
30. The prevailing climate, religious, political, intellectual and so forth, was not conducive to the growth of the spirit of Hellenic philosophy in the West and the North, because such a spirit is in need of bright light, free air, unclouded skies, religious tolerance, democratic institutions, and much more.
31. I emphasize the adverbial "philosophically" to contrast it with the "scientifically" and "artistically" which are different cases lying outside of our strictly limited concern with "philosophy."
32. This came at the critical time after Constantinople, the capital of the Christian Eastern or Byzantine Empire had fallen to the Turks in 1453. This tragedy cut short the process of Hellenic revival which had begun with Pletho and his friends at Mistra.
33. The difference was that Protestantism replaced Catholicism this time, and that Hegel seriously assumed the role of Thomas Aquinas. See, for instance, *Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, P.C. Hodgson, ed., (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), Part III, which is titled: "The Consummate Religion."
34. In this light, the verdict of E. Gilson, *op. cit.*, seems perfectly justified. But the conclusions which he draws from this historical fact are very different than mine. He wants to silence those historians of "Western philosophy" who have raised doubt whether there was any philosophy in the Middle Ages. He claims that, given the dependence of Modern European philosophy (from Descartes to Leibniz, Kant, and so on) on the Medieval Christian theology, it is unfair to apply the glorious name of "philosophy" only to the former and not to the latter. The truth of the matter is that, precisely because of that affinity, neither Medieval Theology nor European "Philosophy" deserve the mane of *philosophia* in the same sense as the Ancient Hellenic philosophers used this beautiful word. To make public this simple but forgotten truth has been the purpose of my present thesis.
35. For more on this theme see my book *The Hellenic Philosophy: Between Europe, Asia and Africa* (Binghamton University, SUNY: Binghamton, 1997) in which a longer version of the paper has been incorporated.

**NEOPLATONISM AND  
CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT  
PART TWO**

**R. Baine Harris, Editor**

*INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR NEOPLATONIC STUDIES*

Volume 11 in *Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern*  
R. Baine Harris, General Editor

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## PREFACE

R. Baine Harris

All philosophers are children of their age and primarily speak to the intellectual needs of their constituencies, but the really great ones somehow manage to transcend their own time. They think more deeply and provide a more profound analysis of the issues and produce a new, richer, and more consistent synthesis of their thought than do lesser philosophers. They break the bounds of the concerns of their day by focusing upon those perennial questions that people in all cultures ask when they philosophize, questions such as 'What is really real?', 'What is the true nature of man?', 'How do we know and how do we know we know?', 'Will we survive our death?', 'Is there a divine source of the world, and if so, how are we related to it?' 'What responsibilities do we have to ourselves, to the earth, and to all the social groups that live on it?', and similar questions. On the basis of his responses to all of these questions Plotinus, an Egyptian who taught philosophy in Rome in the middle of the Third Century AD, certainly qualifies as a great philosopher, and has been so regarded by major thinkers in the West in various centuries since his time, including some in our own century.

Rome in the middle of the Third Century AD was a place that had an intellectual milieu quite similar to the one in our time. By then Rome itself had been intellectually invaded by the cultures of those countries her armies had invaded during the past six centuries. Old established ideas and customs were being challenged by new ways of thinking. There was such a profusion of them that there was considerable confusion among both the general public and the philosophers concerning what ought to be believed. A parallel situation exists in our time in most every country of the world. Old established cultures are being challenged by the intrusion of new ideas brought in by numerous visitors to their shores, and from foreign radio, movies, television and the Internet. Just as in Third Century Rome there is now much confusion concerning what ought to be believed.

Like Confucius, Plotinus thought of himself as only a conservative and a traditionalist who sought to speak to the intellectual disorder of his time by appealing to the unified thought of certain earlier philosophers. More specifically, he thought of himself as a Platonist who sought to bring the unified philosophy of a Greek philosopher who had lived in Athens six

centuries earlier to bear upon the intellectual issues that were then facing Roman culture. Thus, in his old age and after many years of teaching and thinking, he synthesized a new version of Platonism, which he presented in his lectures in his academy in Rome. He only wrote one small book. Actually, he did not write the book himself, but allowed a colleague of his, Porphyry, to take down notes from his lectures and arrange them into a series of essays in nine divisions with six essays each, a work which later became known as the *Enneads*, or "the Nines."

Whether or not his version of Platonism is "true Platonism" is an issue that is still being debated by contemporary Platonic scholars; but it was the version that came to have the most historical importance in the West. His version is old in the sense that it follows the basic assertions of Plato, but new in the sense that it takes into consideration Aristotle's criticisms of Plato and makes some adjustments for them in a more logically organized consistent system of thought, similar in style to Aristotle's way of philosophizing. Thus, he actually produced an Aristotelianized version of Platonism or Platonized version of Aristotelianism, so much so that German scholars in the late Nineteenth Century dubbed him and his imitators in later centuries as "Neoplatonists." Regardless of what he is now labeled, Plotinus would likely have not thought of himself as a new Platonist but merely as an old one who merely formulated Platonism into a more organized consistent form.

The term "neoplatonist," however, needs some further consideration. None of the later Neoplatonists, including all of the teachers associated with him in his academy, chose to accept Plotinus' metaphysical system exactly as he presented it. Even his "Boswell," Porphyry, his editor, promoter, and biographer, in his own version of Neoplatonism denied five of Plotinus' logical categories and substituted five of Aristotle's categories in their place, and thus produced another version of Neoplatonism that for many centuries was more influential than the version given in the *Enneads*. Although all his followers may be loosely called "Neoplatonists," some of them, and especially the teachers then associated with him, simply made their own versions of Platonism, versions that are similar to his, while others of them, especially in later centuries, revised his system with major emendations. Still others accepted only certain parts of his epistemology, metaphysics, psychology, etc. mixing new ideas and new reformulations with it. The latter raises the question how much of the thought of Plotinus must be incorporated into a new formulation of it in order for it to be labeled "Neoplatonic."

Thus, we must conclude that the term "Neoplatonist" does not have a very exact meaning. In the strictest sense, there probably has never been another pure Plotinian since Plotinus; but, nevertheless, elements of his thought, and even new versions of his metaphysics, have appeared in various degrees in the thought of various philosophers, theologians, artists, and poets in various venues in the West in various centuries since he first formulated it in Rome. In addition, philosophical formulations similar to his have appeared in the thought of certain philosophers in India, both before and after the Third Century, AD. Although these have not been historically labeled as Neoplatonic, some of them have a remarkable affinity with his views. To the writer's knowledge, there have been no efforts to make a new reformulation of his metaphysics in modern times, but his influence has been much greater than it might at first appear to be due to elements of his thought that have been embedded in the thought of other writers and scholars who are still widely read. Numerous Christian, Jewish, Islamic, and "pagan" philosophers, theologians, artists, and poets throughout the centuries of Western Intellectual History have gone to his *Enneads* almost cafeteria style and picked out certain elements of them to be reused in their own new formulations. In this way he has actually been one of the most influential of all the Roman thinkers who helped to shape what we now term "Western Civilization."

This explanation is relevant to ■ consideration of the nature of the forty essays in the two volumes of this book. Most of them were first given in an earlier form at ■ four day international congress of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies held in Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee held in May of 1995, with some 130 scholars in attendance. The purpose of the conference was to illustrate that some elements of the thought of Plotinus survived to be of some importance in the Twentieth Century and may be viable for the future. As its name suggests, this society is a society for the *study* of Neoplatonism rather than a fellowship of Neoplatonic believers, and as such, includes members who vary in their degree of academic involvement in the subject. For some it is their primary field for teaching and research, while others are interested in it only as it may be related to some other major concern. In like manner, its members also vary in the degree to which they sanction Neoplatonism as a philosophy. Some see it as an important element in understanding the history of Western Thought, but judge it to have only antiquarian value, while others see some elements of it to be quite viable for modern times. The various essays in these two volumes reflect the same sentiments. They are not so much apologies for Neoplatonism as they are evaluations

of it, both as a historical phenomenon, and as a philosophy and a way of philosophizing that still can speak to the intellectual needs of modern man. Included among them are essays by some of the major recent noted authorities on Neoplatonism, including those by John Anton, Leo Sweeney, A.H. Armstrong, Werner Beierwaltes, and John N. Findlay. Part One contains essays that relate Neoplatonism in some way to Contemporary Science and Contemporary Philosophy while those in Part Two relate it to Contemporary Social Theory, Contemporary Aesthetics, and Contemporary Spirituality.

Finally, as editor I wish to express my appreciation to Professor John Lachs, Director for the Center for Neoplatonic Studies at Vanderbilt University for hosting and co-directing the 1995 ISNS conference and for the scores of persons, ISNS members and otherwise, involved in the production of this book.

Old Dominion University

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# Hierarchies, Cultural Institutions and the Problem of Democracy: A Neoplatonic Critique<sup>1</sup>

John P. Anton

## I. The Concept of Hierarchy

The concept of hierarchies, whether of beings or of values, of institutions or social standing, is as old as human culture. The word "hierarchy" is used here not in its original meaning of "leading sacred acts" of theurgy in late Hellenistic culture. It has now become acceptable practice to use the term metaphorically to cover any systematic ranking of institutionalized practices, values, concepts, ideas, performances, offices, as well as cosmic entities. As a result, the metaphor has made possible usages way beyond the initial meaning of the Greek verb *ἱεραρχεῖν* and the noun *ἱεράρχης*, and the term itself has acquired such breadth as to cover not only what Plato and Plotinus called *ἀναβαθμοί*, steps in an ascending order, and also a great variety of types of grading in ascending order.

I should like to add a note of explanation concerning the expression "neoplatonic critique." It refers mainly to the critical examination of a hierarchical model. The model itself can be traced back to the Neoplatonists of antiquity who used it to support their ontologies. Aside from propounding a doctrine of a hierarchy of being, their model required the formulation of criteria for the justification of the doctrine. In this paper the issue I raise is not about the practice of hierarchical gradings but whether the implicit model contains the requisite criteria for the justification of the arranged values and entities. Given that hierarchical arrangements are inescapable, the concept of criteria is as a matter of rule easily ignored. Hence the need to re-introduce the requirement of justification on the basis of explicit criteria.

The overt and covert employment of hierarchical schemata without explicit criteria of justification is as much a source of logical difficulties as it provides a way to evade exhibiting the basis of acting on projected priorities, be they social or personal. The criticism that the neoplatonic model recommends calls for exposing the dangers that attend the adoption of hierarchies without justification open to public inspection. As I will try to show, a host of difficulties are allowed to remain unattended in the fabric of contemporary democracies due to unexamined grading of values and institutions. Such hierarchies have nothing in common with the tradition for which the Great Chain of Being once stood.<sup>2</sup> Whereas the ancients, especially the Hellenistic Platonists made use of explicit principles on which to base their speculative systems of priorities, the moderns, after the demise of the *scala natura* in the eighteenth century, moved away from using comparable principles of descending ontic orders or ascending ethical ones.

There is no denying the fact that preferences leading to priorities occur spontaneously. Certain objects and feelings for a great variety of reasons are recognized and pursued as being more beneficial and satisfying than others. Preferential conduct is inescapable though not the projected and adopted hierarchical patterns of approved values. The institutionalization of such patterns, in support of whatever causes, creates situations of injustice. Of the many devices that have been introduced from time to time to redress cases of social inequities none proved more effective than the appeal to the principle of equality. As such, however, this principle of justice is a later development in the history of social conduct, an afterthought as it were, and has stood in opposition to what hierarchical priorities establish as norms.

As a principle, equality has limited efficacy in that it serves mainly as a corrective and preventive mechanism, not one that can be unconditionally legislated to remove all existing and future hierarchies of preferential patterns of either individual or social conduct. For to force equality sweepingly to apply to every mode of priorities would inevitably throw into disarray the principle of freedom, if not cause it to be temporarily canceled. Equality finds its best application in situations of flagrant abuses of privilege by persons or institutions who wield power. The purpose of equality as a tool, next to its corrective role, is to prevent the imposition of new social hierarchies and the removal of old ones once they have

become causes of injustice. But to say that equality is a panacea for the intrusion of hierarchies into the social, political and cultural fabric, is simply a utopian expectation. The problem here is not with the clash between equality and freedom but with the hierarchical orders that become orthodoxies and prevail without accountability.

When Plato proposed and defended the rational faculty as the foundation of a new system of education, he evoked a tradition already in place but in need of completion. The time had come for the direct challenge of competing hierarchies or established modes of ordering values. The proposal was made in the name of justice, individual and political. The building of the new *politeia* demanded the close cooperation of all skilled people, workers, poets, philosophers, and statesmen. The competing views of justice we see in the opening book of the *Republic* make it clear that everyone present was fully aware why the resistance of the operating hierarchies was expected to be fierce. It still is. This is a perennial problem of reforms and is present in all social and political organizations; it is a problem for all cultures and all seasons. As Plato would say, it is the animal resistance of the appetitive systems of hierarchies to the principle of rational excellence, to the practical and theoretical efficacy of the rational powers that call for a new mode of education. A new set of excellences is needed to re-orient the psychic priorities and to instruct the body politic in the conscious acceptance of the criteria that reason introduces for the evaluation of hierarchical reforms.

We may now want to ask a comparable question. What is the relation of the ubiquitous presence of hierarchies to the quest for *isonomia* to challenge the hierarchies of power, wealth, position, inheritance and other agents in democratic societies? Whenever the presence of hierarchies in the social structure frustrates the pursuit of reforms to effect a reasonable distribution of privilege, there emerges an unavoidable tension between inequalities due to hierarchical arrangements and needed reforms to serve equality as the principle of justice.

## II. The Problem of Democracy

In monarchical and theocratic states the tension between freedom and equality is hardly an issue that may threaten the stability of their standard institutions. However, such is not the case in democratic societies in which the commitment to the principles of equality and freedom is stated in the form of constitutional rights. Yet the unequal distribution of power and the intrusion of countervailing priorities create the paradoxical situation of conflicting hierarchies of values not only between different persons but also between persons and institutions. The question that is often left unanswered is the extent to which citizens in democratic societies are willing or prepared to correlate the constitutional guaranteed equality and the imposed institutional hierarchies, when the latter impinge on personal priorities and demand the subordination of the latter to the former. The privilege to invoke logical criteria to effect a balance between the two patterns of hierarchical values has become increasingly difficult to exercise. Conciliation between conflicting patterns of multiple hierarchies on the basis of uniform logical criteria is a rather rare phenomenon. Reforming wavering democracies to turn them into rational societies of balanced institutions in accordance with the principle of equality, has always been a difficult undertaking. The same holds in the case of stable democracies still in need of ameliorative changes once the interests of the most powerful institutions continue to reign at the expense of others. Whatever the intensity of trends may be in cases such as the one just described, the question about the extent to which the principle of equality in democracies is being observed must always be raised.

The principle of equality, of *isonomia* before the law, does not work in practice in the case of institutions. Here hierarchies prevail usually by complying to the rankings of special objectives while rendering consistency with the values of other institutions marginal. Needs, not logical criteria, dictate the prioritizing of institutions in the most developed forms of democratic states. As expected, the result is that no functional unifying principle of reason becomes readily available to justify the vertical ordering of institutions, just as there is no explicit concept on which to build a universally acceptable and coherent vertical order in the hierarchy of personal values. Each person naturally arranges his/her value priorities,

through desire, habit, including the responses to externally imposed responsibilities. Still, there is no absolute rule by means of which one can be held prisoner to some unalterable vertical order of values throughout one's life in the face of changing conditions. Clinging to an authentic "meaning of life" that is also unconditionally valid, one that may in turn serve as the criterion of correct hierarchical orders for all human beings everywhere and for all times, has been an elusive goal. In the face of so radical a relativism, what, we may ask, could a "neoplatonic critique" mean in the context of a pluralistic view of democratic freedom? Unless a unifying principle of coherence can be found to harmonize the variety of personal and social hierarchies, relativism deserves to be given free reign and recognized as the ruling authority of conduct.

Let us consider the case of religion as a candidate to provide a unifying and ordering principle. Its function would be to give coherence to institutions and persons by removing actual and conceivable conflicts. Religion at certain periods in history, including our own, as K. Mannheim has argued, functioned as "a social control inspiring patterns of behavior and ideals of the good life." The gradual withdrawal of religion as a dominant institution in Western culture and political history with the advent of the Renaissance, made it possible for other agents, such as industry, commerce, education, art and science, to follow a path of their own. With the withering of feudalism, modern types of government, kingship, democracy, fascism, communism filled the vacuum. They in turn acted to re-arrange human activities in a manner that best suited their ends, subjecting the social components to new sorts of hierarchical order. Whatever the character of the new special orders, it was founded on some hierarchical principle that either implicitly or overtly functioned as the unifying force to provide the desired organizational model.

Consider a negative circumstance where a philosophical proposal of order did not and obviously could not receive support from the political and legal forces. I have in mind the modern philosophies of art that espoused a hierarchy of the arts. No matter how well argued, their social efficacy was kept at a minimum. There is no need to elaborate on how complicated the classification of the arts became in modern times and how the philosophies of art came to propose novel hierarchies in the domain of aesthetic values, what since the eighteenth century, after the writings of

Addison and Gerard, are known as aesthetic categories. A quick comment on Hegel's contribution will suffice. While he thinks of art as the sensuous presentation of the Idea in the course of his panlogical idealism and denies any dichotomy in the world, still it is reason, including art as reason, that renders intelligible the march of the Absolute or God. The place art occupies in the unfolding of the Absolute as Idea determines the order of art and the orders within it. There is double hierarchy here: one of the absolute mind in art as thesis, religion as the antithesis and philosophy as the synthesis, and another order within art, the symbolic as thesis (architecture); the classical as antithesis (sculpture); and the romantic as synthesis, within which painting is the thesis, music the antithesis and poetry the synthesis.

The classification of the arts, actually a hierarchy, is done on the basis of the degree to which they express or become means for the self-realization of the Absolute Idea in its evolution to become Absolute Spirit. Whether we stay with Hegel's or Schopenhauer's views of the arts as the timeless objectifications of the Will, or any later conception of the hierarchy of the arts, the question is not about the soundness of the modern aesthetic theories but their potential role to lead and provide the principle of institutional balance. No concrete proposals proved derivable from aesthetic theories for political justice in democratic states. One can not even work out from a study of Hegel a feasible plan to legislate support for an institute of the arts without meeting with resistance from other powerful value centers. The impractical character of such a move is too obvious for comment. Yet we still have to view the broader problem of cultural justice, including the arts, in the context of political theory and the adequacy of a unifying principle capable of effecting equality and institutional justice.

### III. Hierarchies and Freedom

An essential feature of personal freedom is the right to form one's own hierarchies of values under the protection of the law. Still, the interference of authorities to limit or even suspend the exercise of this feature of freedom is hardly confined to non-democratic forms of government. We must admit that freedom-seeking citizens exist and feel suppressed not only in the political

climate of dictatorships but also in every constitutional form when authoritarian rule tends to control value gradations without the full consent of the public. The worst enemies of democracy, its principles, methods, concepts of institutional equilibrium and cultural open-mindedness, are not necessarily confined to the policies of non-democratic states. In their case, opposition and resistance rise more readily, but the groups and individuals who undermine democracy as a matter of rule are constituents within it. Aristotle pointed out long time ago how the decline from within must be feared at least as much, if not more, as the danger of external aggression. Protecting democracy from within is the major problem of Western culture today. Research into the prospect of political deterioration is more urgent than research into other fields of inquiry, if only because ultimately the preservation of democracy depends on information made public to maintain alertness to the conditions that secure the unimpeded practice of all inquiries.

In recent times we seem to be so preoccupied and bedazzled by our specialized research that the broader context of research either escapes our attention or is taken for granted. The consequence of complacency is that democracy continues its course in an anomalous pattern of institutional interrelationships while the public loses sight of the confusions that the unchecked hierarchical stratifications of its institutions generate. It is small wonder then that clusters of common values in our culture are often driven to underprivileged positions. And once this is done, we are at a loss to understand why the defenders of differently prioritized values demand equal status with those at the top of the pyramid of power. Such is the case, for example, of the artistic activity when compared to the status that religion or science enjoy.

When people in a democratically governed state allow certain institutions to struggle for survival while others dictate from a privileged position, hierarchical arrangements eventually cause serious axiological imbalances. Perhaps, in this regard, the political problem in our century is no longer that of capitalism versus labor in the old-fashioned class-struggle pattern. The nineteenth century model of contrary forces has become outmoded due to progressive welfare reforms and social improvements of underprivileged groups. The institutional inequality actually runs in much deeper and subtler ways because it works at a more complex level, not easily detectable. The public inequalities in Western democracies

are more fundamental now because they go beyond the conflict of groups or individuals; they operate at the level of institutions. We have institutions that enjoy the fruits of freedom but at the same time they are hierarchically stratified on the basis of power, controls, efficaciousness and image-forming. The principle of *being*, to speak with philosophy, has been replaced with the principle of *power* in the evaluation and identification of these entities.

The difficulties that institutional inequality creates are readily reflected in the attitudes of the common people who, with or without embarrassment, often find it necessary to apologize for being interested in the so-called impractical studies and professions. But the irony of the thing is that we often find ourselves defending the finer side of culture. Our universities and colleges are already displaying unreasoned preferences siding with the *hoi polloi* and offering no apologies. The ratings of departments, the salaries of teachers, the buildings that house academic specialties, the administrative procedures and decisions, on the whole reflect the same broader institutional inequities.

It is simply amazing that democratically governed states have been driven to the point that their citizens openly view the values of the cultured life or, even worse, the value-making reflective activities, with the same indifference that they accept this hierarchical injustice. A comparable hierarchy of professions, based on power and special services, has emerged without support from any principle of coherence. The powers at the top of the pyramid, even when they reluctantly invite criticism, remain unconvinced and recalcitrant. They reign and rule devoted to perpetuating the hierarchy of cultural institutions without attention to the principle of institutional balance as befits democracy as a way of life. Those who knowingly or passively subscribe to the "unexamined life" or the uncritical acceptance of the imposed hierarchy of values, commit two excesses: (a) they build a prison wall around human nature by confining the development of the possibilities of sensibility through restrictive codes to "approved" priorities of actions; (b) they carefully discourage the reorganization and/or expansion of cultural values. In other words, they oppose the cultivation of alternative hierarchical arrangements. They turn freedom into acceptance of available choices within controlled and sanctioned systems of relations. What this seems to purport, then,

in terms of human character, is an ideology of human work, functions, interests, and a limited use of critical intelligence.

The wholeness of any culture is found in both structure and function, not different from that of the human individual, except in one, albeit very important respect. Individuals are endowed with potentialities that make them distinctive in various ways and capable of decisions and actions exemplifying their own grading of values. However, over and beyond this stratification of hierarchically organized interests, the human individual is a being capable of re-integrating new interests at levels where established hierarchies cannot enter. Thus, any given axiocratic system can be removed and withdrawn in favor of a different one. Let us call this procedure a method of habit substitution. The resulting series of such substitutions form a sequence of horizontal sets organically grouped with some degree of coherence attained at each phase of development by eliminating certain elements or adding others until such time as character is settled and solidified. Transitional phases vary from person to person. What matters mostly is not the fact of serial changes but the freedom to exercise choice from available alternatives.

Whereas a free human individual works simultaneously with vertically arranged preferential schemes as well as horizontally ordered plural interests, an institutional structure cannot perform in both directions. The reason is simple enough: what we call culture is not an organism, a living thing endowed with consciousness and freedom. Culture is called an organism only in a metaphorical sense. Clearly, cultures cannot and do not act, move, think, desire, grow, sleep, rest, change. In view of this fundamental difference between human beings and their culture, once the analogy of the concept of culture to the concept of organism is understood, the question to be asked is: What is an appropriate order for institutions in democratic societies? The answer cannot be that of the inflexibly vertical, i.e. an uncritically imposed hierarchical order, since "culture" is not an entity that can act on its own. Cultures do not resolve and replace entrenched vertical stratifications of constituent institutions, unlike what human beings do as they move actively between the vertical and the horizontal grading priorities. Therefore, the only permissible and theoretically defensible order that is assignable to the plurality of institutions is one that recognizes their integrity and distinctness by placing them on a par.

Essentially, this is what the principle of institutional balance means. Hence, the criterion of cultural health is not how to increase the power and efficient control by one institution but to serve harmony or cultural justice. The correct point of departure of cultural criticism then is to assume the plurality and autonomy of institutional significance and its role to effect mutual enhancement. Given this initial framework of cultural justice to provide for balance and improvement, each institution issues an invitation for cooperative sustenance and support. This is the best meaning of democracy as a progressive program, at once a general opportunity for all citizens and an open frontier for approximating the ideal of social conduct.

Democracy as just cultural pluralism and as a model of equal opportunity, makes the whole of culture available, at least in principle, to all citizens. This is what was meant when I stated that each person is entitled to enjoy fully the values that social cooperation ensures. Hierarchical orders are justified only when universal values become openly accessible to individuals. Any other organization of institutions sooner or later leads to dissolutions, dissociations, divisions and fragmentations. Inevitably, such disruptions turn citizens into estranged and alienated beings, mainly because they are forced to use only inflated segments of themselves and of their culture to compensate for the whole that has lost its cohesion. When this is allowed to happen, one part of the whole preys on the others until all become either atrophic or, at best, some survive parasitically at the expense of the others.

For the wholesome endurance of democratic cultures, their constitutive institutions require not only the atmosphere of relative autonomy but also that of cooperation. This applies to science, politics, economics, and all the others, as well as education, art and religion. Neither individual persons nor given institutions can flourish in isolation or by claiming supremacy. Yet, they often do by resorting to inflated forms of subjectivism. Consider, for instance, what happens when supremacy is claimed for religion or art. Such misdirected significance easily injects disharmony into the whole institutional system, and with disastrous results for the political and legal agencies. Hence the social responsibilities of the artist, for example, once a hierarchy of values is accepted, reside not outside the artist but inside the artist as citizen. The artist as

such is not qualified to do things outside his special work, that is things unrelated to the performance of art. They belong to the exercise that renders artistic work socially important as public goods. The artist's responsibilities flow naturally and constructively from the correlating of the aesthetic attitude to the whole spectrum of common values that define the wholeness of that culture, i.e., the artist as citizen. That is how, I think, personal hierarchies of values can function best. *Mutatis mutandis*, the principle holds equally for the prelate, the scientist, the teacher, the statesman, and all the others who function as participants in an established set of institutions.

#### IV. The Legitimate Limits of Hierarchies

All along I have been talking about two types of hierarchies: institutional and personal. Both are products of the preferential principle of decisions and values. Hierarchical orders occur naturally enough. As orders, however, they present us with a perennial issue. At one level of individual conduct, we have biological needs and their gratifications which by nature seem to fall into gradable orders for survival purposes, depending on the primacy of given needs. At another level we have social and interpersonal needs that call for effecting a different type of enduring stratifications related to the survival of the group, be it nomadic, ethnic, state, or other. There is no definitive pattern that can advocate with absolute certainty the subordination of the personal to the group type of stratified needs and goods other than the elementary necessity to meet survival exigencies. They are the ones that attain the earliest crystallization recognizable as basic common goods.

That personal needs often exceed the permissible limits of common needs is too obvious to require explanation. What is of the essence here is the fact that individual and social orders may and do conflict. At this point the juxtaposing of personal or atomic hierarchies resulting from the ranking of needs and choices, and those of the social, cultural and political hierarchies, grants special urgency to the tension that arises between these two types of ordering of values. Seen in another way, the tension is due to a conflict between subjective and objective or personal and public

arrangements. The latter are always social in character and act as controlling agents demanding the conforming of the subject to the object, which in fact is none other than the set of objectified common needs and ends. Objective hierarchies impose upon the subjective order of values what is recognized as vital to the group, the result being that such imposition eventually takes the form of sacrosanct institutions, indispensable to the welfare of the group.

And now for the problem. Effecting agreements between the two orders by re-aligning the subjective and the objective hierarchies is too vital a task to be unconditionally delegated to legislating authorities, for it conceals a paradox. The needs of the individual cover a wider spectrum of desirable entities than what the survival of the group considers necessary. The picture is actually more complicated. There is another factor that affects the hierarchical orders of the individual and the group: the special interests of influential organizations within given societies and the hierarchies of values they generate. The complexity of orders and conflicts between orders increases considerably, and the problems that must be solved to effect harmonies and conciliations multiply proportionately.

Reforms, whether peaceful or violent, constitute intended answers to the emerging tensions. Many types of solution have been tried and will continue to be tried, although their codification is far from complete to give us a final list of remedies. Let me mention an example. Resorting to religion has been one way of bringing about agreements among conflicting orders of valuing. The mode this type uses is that of commands to be obeyed by submitting to the will of the divine. How acceptance of this way of ranking responses is communicated is another issue and need not concern us at this point. Yet other types of resolving conflicts are legislating through the device of authority invested in elected leaders and that of self-appointed arbiters. The end result is the same: agreement to accept the rule of law. Now, we may ask: what would be the role and what contribution can other institutions, e.g., science or art make, beyond what their primary function allows, inquiry in the case of the former and *techné* in the case of the latter, to effect agreements? It is easy to talk about the social mission of science or art, but difficult to identify the precise way in which either can arbitrate between conflicting hierarchies of broad social objectives and needs.

The conflicts of systems of stratified values is an old story, though not the systematic reflection on this perennial problem and on solutions. I would like to pause at the first great phase of the latter concern, when the authority of an explicit principle was rooted in the appeal to the nature of things. We know enough about this early phase. The great legislators of Greece, Solon, Lykourgos and others, did exactly that: they appealed to what they thought was a principle transcending disagreements. In all cases the appeal was to *logos*, the rational structure of reality. Suffice it to say that this principle was one of the cornerstones of early Greek thought and political conduct. It may not be an exaggeration to say at this point that the culmination of the theoretical search for the principle that warrants the hierarchy of values found its first elegant expression in the doctrines Plato stated in his *Symposium*. Eros and the ladder of the objects of desire are too familiar to need commentary. The hierarchical arrangement of the desirable objects, recommended for personal development and as the ground for the educational system that best prepares the citizens to serve the common good, is stated both as a psychological theory and as an ontological doctrine.

Aristotle's theory of life, expounded in the *De Anima*, and repeated in other works, continues the Platonic search for a principle of order best to guide human activities. He had in fact found the principle in the nature of the human type of life where the hierarchical order of the functions of the *psyche*, already encoded in *entelecheia*, holds the key to the supremacy of the *logikon*, a principle that calls for training of the logical faculties to reign over the *orektikon*, the *threptikon* and the *aisthetikon* parts of the soul. The controlling principle of human *entelecheia* is meant as a scientific *arche* grounded in nature for the stratification of the powers of human beings and of their ethical and political actions that flow from their exercise. Here the *taxis* of all institutions finds its objective justification. It is this central point in Plato's and Aristotle's political reflections that became the ground for the Neoplatonic hierarchy of both Being and Value, of ontology and axiology.

Plotinus' conception of the production of the hypostases of being from the One provided the basis for the hierarchy of being, the ontological order. It also became the foundation for the axiology undergirding the ethical path of the return of the soul to

the One, the spiritual *nostos*, the ontology of the ascending order of ethical and noetic attainments. The One, source and end of both hierarchies, subjective and objective, constitutes the principle from which agreement flows when priorities are polarized and tensions become unhearable.

Going back to Plato and Aristotle, the criteria that test the endurance of agreement between personal and social hierarchies of values are best understood in the context of life in the *polis*, the community and its institutions. In modern times, however, the organization of the state, what the Greeks meant by the idea of the *kratos*, replaced the *polis*. It is not surprising that the criteria of justification have also undergone a radical change along with the meaning of the individual and the right to effect subjective hierarchies. Consider, for instance, the relationship between state and individual in light of constitutions which embody such principles as underscored in the American Declaration of Independence: Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. The implicit right to a hierarchy of personal values contained in the concept of Happiness is left unspecified if not purposely vague. No principle of objective hierarchical order, other than the preservation of the constitution and the rule of law, is stated. In preserving the conditions of freedom, the task of politics excluded from its objectives the finding of a connective continuity to correlate the subjective and objective hierarchies that inescapably emerge in the transactions of institutional conduct. Add to this the problem of changing orders, due to the dynamics of pressures from other modes of valuing, such as economics, religion, within hierarchies, be they personal and subjective or institutional and objective, and one sees clearly why the educational policies are forced to follow suit. Once the goals of education become infested with the free-floating demands from the more powerful institutions, the ensuing instability of curricula follows, altering the directives for the formation of character.

The fluidity that has attended the goals of education in this century served well the rising interest in commercial production, the professionalization of the teaching enterprise and the increasing dependence of the economy of the leading nations on consumerism. The demeaning of the contribution of the humanities in forming personal hierarchies of value stems from the external hierarchies of the dominant institutions. The burning issue is not whether

education as an institution is honored on the basis of the principle of institutional equality, for clearly it is not, but whether there is in modern times a philosophical enterprise engaged in re-affirming the quest for a principle to secure institutional balance and cultural justice. So far neither ontology nor political action has shown strong interest in asserting, to say nothing about identifying, such a principle to serve as the foundation of hierarchial organizations.

Neoplatonism may not be a doctrine whose revival holds the key to the solution of the problem, but it cannot be denied that it is a way to understand the issues and perplexities of the period in which it appeared. At least this much can be said about its relevance to our times. Neoplatonism deserves special attention as a study of hierarchies, both personal and ontological. As such it is a landmark and a model, offering a theory that gave credence, at least for a while, to the methods of discovering a unifying principle to establish continuities between the subjective and the objective. We have none. And that is something that may be taken either as the blessing of freedom or as a covert curse. In either case it points to a serious flaw in the order of human activities. And now that multiculturalism has emerged as a theory to defend the equality of cultures, though not their continuity, not enough is being said for the need to introduce a principle of cultural justice where disconnected plurality has come to prevail. So far we try to face the problem of multiplicity by rejecting the quest of a unifying principle of hierarchy. Since equality does not figure as a vital issue, the uncritical acceptance of hidden hierarchies is bound to reappear with vengeance. For the time being, we can do no better than to contemplate and nurse our suspicions.

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#### NOTES

1. A plenary session paper presented at the Conference on Neoplatonism and Contemporary Thought, sponsored by Vanderbilt University, May 25-28, 1995.
2. See A.J. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, (Harvard University Press, 1948). He uses the term 'hierarchy' with reference to Aristotle's "hierarchical arrangement of all organisms, which was destined to a greater influence upon subsequent philosophy and natural history" (58). He further notes how "the conception of the plan and structure of



the world which, through the Middle Ages and down to the late eighteenth century, many philosophers, most men of science, and, indeed, most educated men, were to accept without question—the conception of the universe as a ‘Great Chain of Being,’ composed of an immense or...of an infinite number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagerest kind of existents...through ‘every possible’ grade up to the *ens perfectissimum*” (59).

## Porphyry’s Concept of *Ablabeia* and the Issue of Animal Rights

Michael Hornum

When Justinian closed the Academy in Athens, a millennium long tradition of debate concerning the ethics of killing animals and other nonhumans for food was suspended. Advocates of philosophical vegetarianism had included Pythagoras, Empedokles, Theophrastus, Plutarch, and Porphyry. Plato, too, has been shown by Daniel Dombrowski to have possessed a positive estimation of the vegetarian life.<sup>1</sup> The closure of the debate in Late Antiquity is clearly rooted in the attitude of the newly dominant Christian intellectual milieu. It was now held that God himself had shown the killing of animals and plants for consumption not to be in itself a wrongful act, but only in its effects; for example, if such food inclines one to gluttony or causes divisiveness within the church. This perspective is typified by the comments of St. Augustine in *On the Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life*:

Christ himself shows that to refrain from the killing of animals and the destroying of plants is the height of superstition, for, judging that there are no common rights between us and the beasts and trees, he sent the devils into a herd of swine and with a curse withered the tree on which he found no fruit.

It has only been during the present century that debate concerning the extension of human moral concern to include nonhumans has again gained wide currency. Most of the present debate revolves around the question of the post-Enlightenment issue of rights. Two of the most powerful contemporary arguments in favor of “animal rights” are those of the philosophers Tom Regan and Bernard Rollin.

Tom Regan’s position is grounded in a Kantian approach.<sup>2</sup> Kant had contended that human beings were entitled to moral treatment because they could never be reduced to means to an end, but were

always ends in themselves, possessing an inherent worth. Regan argues that at least certain animals, particularly mammals, must also be considered as having inherent value. He criticizes Kant and other philosophers who have made the criteria for inherent value rest upon language, rationality or other traits that seem to exclude nonhumans. In place of what he perceives as purely arbitrary categories, he posits the notion of "subject-of-a-life" as the criterion for establishing inherent worth. Individuals are considered subjects-of-a-life if they have a capacity to experience pleasure and pain, possess emotions, have a sense of perception and memory, are able to intentionally initiate an action to satisfy their desires and goals, have beliefs, have a sense of their own future, and possess a welfare in the sense that they fare well or ill during the course of their lives. Such individuals, whether they be moral agents or moral patients, are ends in themselves.

After having attempted to demonstrate that nonhuman mammals, at least, possess the characteristics of subjects-of-a-life, Regan suggests that human actions regarding those animal individuals should be undertaken in a way that respects their inherent value. Because of their inherent worth, these animals have a right to respectful treatment. Under Regan's position, humans have a moral duty to seek to avoid killing other mammals for food, or any other purposes, because these animals possess an inherent worth comparable with that possessed by humans. Only in cases where such killing is necessary to preserve human life does Regan's ethic permit a weighing of human and nonhuman rights on the basis of the "worse-off principle," namely that whichever creature will experience a greater loss in its death will be preserved. Regan is unclear regarding our duties towards animals that do not appear to fit the subject-of-a-life criterion.

Bernard Rollin takes a similar, although more inclusive, approach to the issue.<sup>4</sup> He asserts that each living creature possesses a telos or certain intrinsic activities and needs that it seeks to fulfill. Certain needs can be classified as interests in the sense that they matter to the creature. Of course, in order for needs to become interests, the creature must have some degree of awareness or consciousness, no matter how simple. Rollin, a biologist, attempts to demonstrate that even the least complex animals, such as invertebrates, appear to possess a sufficient degree of awareness to have interests. Because animals possess interests, Rollin argues that

they have the right to seek to fulfill those needs that matter to them, and above all the right to life, because life is the basic prerequisite to satisfying all of those needs. Rollin excludes plants from moral consideration because they do not appear to have interests, and therefore lack rights. Rollin does not offer a general principle, like the "worse-off principle," under which one can resolve conflicts between rights of humans and nonhumans, but suggests that each instance must be considered on a case by case basis.

There are two major problems with the rights approach to moral consideration for animals. First is the concept of moral rights in itself. This notion is largely predicated upon the assumption that one or several inherent characteristics of humans and/or nonhumans bears a value that demands absolute respect, and should not be subject to whims of might or circumstance; for example, the rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" guaranteed all American citizens. This idea of natural or inalienable rights ultimately stems from the concept of Natural Law, a higher law written into the world by the Creator, and to which all human laws must ultimately conform. However, the ideas of Natural Law and inalienable rights are subjects of a great deal of debate.

Many Utilitarian philosophers and others have attacked these notions as nothing but unproven assumptions.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps one might find these ideas more plausible if natural rights were merely the equivalent of biological needs, although, even here, it is difficult to see why a need necessarily implies a right. Most natural rights theorists, however, do not so regard inalienable rights, but connect them with interests rather than needs. To do so inevitably brings the problem of how we can know another's interests without being required to merely speculate based upon our own feelings and goals. Certainly, others can communicate what appear to be their interests to us, but can we really get inside another's mind in order to make sure that we are not being deceived? By stepping into this controversy, the rights approach must attempt to satisfy such objections before even beginning to embark upon a defense of the creatures whose rights it seeks to protect.

Once embarking upon that defense, the rights approach to moral consideration of nonhumans encounters its second problem. In order to give animals moral consideration we must discern in them qualities sufficient to demand moral treatment. The rights approach forces the philosopher to demonstrate that nonhumans have

consciousness, intentionality, beliefs, desires, or other qualities sufficient to constitute the foundation for having interests or being subjects-of-a-life. To do this, the philosopher must not only study intensively all relevant scientific data, assuming that the scientific method can access the inner life of either nonhumans or humans, and must assiduously eschew anthropomorphizing nonhuman behavior. This is no mean task. It is difficult enough to peer into the inner life of even our most intimate human companions, let alone penetrate into the minds of nonhumans. The rights approach creates a daunting burden of proof for the philosophical advocate of vegetarianism.

In the remainder of this essay, I shall endeavor to explain Porphyry's Neoplatonic approach to this issue, and show how it can establish a foundation for a less burdensome argument in support of vegetarianism and other moral concerns related to animals and even plants. Porphyry, like his teacher Plotinus and many of his Neoplatonic contemporaries, had ceased to consume animal flesh when adopting the philosophical *bios*. Plotinus, Porphyry tells us, even avoided medicines containing animal products.<sup>6</sup> Porphyry is one of only two ancient Greek philosophers, of whom we are aware, who composed tracts specifically designed to support a vegetarian lifestyle; the other being Plutarch in his "Of Eating the Flesh."<sup>7</sup> Porphyry's *De abstinentia* was composed as an exhortation to a fellow pupil of Plotinus, Firmus Castrius, to return to the vegetarianism that he had abandoned.<sup>8</sup>

Porphyry's argument is presented in four sections. Each section relates to a different topic of philosophical concern: purity and moderation, piety, justice, and cultural acceptance. Porphyry attempts to convince Castrius that a philosopher's purity, piety and justice require his adoption of a vegetarian diet. In each of these first three sections, Porphyry offers refutation of many of the philosophical arguments presented by opponents of vegetarianism, particularly the Stoics and Claudius of Naples, a first century rhetorician. In the final section, in order to counter the argument that such a diet runs counter to normal human behavior, he shows how widespread vegetarianism has been in the past and how common it is among the wisest people of other cultures. Worth noting as well is Porphyry's attack on animal sacrifice in the second section, which constitutes a rare example of ancient intellectual

critique of the practice and contrasts sharply with the favorable view of the practice among many later Neoplatonists.

Porphyry's arguments at times intersect those of modern proponents of animal rights. For example, he devotes a large portion of the third book to enumerating examples of animal language and reason in order to establish a closer alliance of man and beast than many ancient philosophers were ready to accept. For, as Porphyry says, "he who admits that he is allied to all animals, will not injure any animal" (III.26). In addition, as Daniel Dombrowski has pointed out, Porphyry is the first philosopher to use the now popular "argument from marginal cases," namely, that exclusion of animals from moral concern based upon reason or language, as is so often done, also requires us to exclude many humans, including infants and the mentally enfeebled.<sup>9</sup>

However, despite these similarities with the modern rights approach, the overall thrust of Porphyry's argument is quite different. While it is true that Porphyry does show consideration for the nature of nonhumans and their suffering, these concerns are subordinate to the pursuit of human perfection. His perspective is not that animals have certain rights that we must respect, but that the goal of human life cannot be achieved if we harm nonhumans. His approach is what I will characterize the *ablabeia* or harmlessness approach.

Like Plotinus, Porphyry holds that the goal of human life is to perfect oneself, through virtue and contemplation, into an experience of the fullness of life available in the eternal realm of Forms, and, in so doing, to arrive at a point at which one may transcend the self, even the noetic self, in a union with God.<sup>10</sup> Our experience of the spiritual or noetic life is made possible through the "undescended" aspect of the soul, which does not tend the body but looks perpetually toward the Forms.

Porphyry makes clear in several places within *De abstinentia* that harm or injury to humans or nonhumans is an obstacle to this realization of human perfection. This is explicit in Book III.27, where he states: "he who does not confine harmless conduct to men alone, but extends it to other animals, is more similar to divinity." He goes on to advocate an extension of this ethic to plants as well, although he suggests that we cannot be entirely harmless to plants. Although Porphyry is not specific about why he believes this, one must assume that he is thinking of our needs like building houses

and weeding our fields, but not the eating of plants, since elsewhere (II.13 and III.26) he points out that we do not injure plants when we gather what they will cast off (i.e., nuts, fruits, and most vegetables) or harvest those of them that are dead (i.e., grains).

Why does harming nonhumans prevent humans from experiencing the noetic life? Porphyry argues that Divinity, whether noetic or that of the One, is innocuous, and that our best assimilation to the Divine comes through our own harmless conduct (III.26). However, he never is explicit in precisely defining the nature of harm, in establishing how the killing of nonhumans for food constitutes a harm, and in explaining exactly how a harmful action serves to separate us from Divinity. Perhaps this is because such explanations were tacitly understood within the Neoplatonic position held by Porphyry and Firmus Castrius. Whatever the case may be, it is left to us to expand upon Porphyry's argument, to fully explain its importance to Neoplatonism, and to assess its applicability to the modern debate.

First, harm must be defined. Harm or injury must involve the loss of some measure of good because injury constitutes an impairment, which means a worsening in quality, ability or value, and being worse is, by definition, none other than the state of being less good. Consequently, harm is a loss of good, and a harming action is a taking away of good. Moreover, killing must be regarded as a type of harming act in the sense that death constitutes a worsening in quality, ability, or value; in particular, a loss of all of these.

However, harm must be more carefully understood, since what appears to be an act of harm may not always result in a loss of good. For example, while cutting off a gangrenous leg may result in an impairment in one's ability to walk or run, and therefore a loss of some measure of good, leaving it in place will cause blood poisoning and result in death. So while this act has caused a loss of good in the sense that the one can no longer walk or run as well, it also has prevented a loss of good in the sense that the death would render one unable to do anything as well. If the act of harm is a taking away of good, how do we assess this act in which good has been both taken away and provided? We must determine whether the net result of the action is a loss of good.

To do so, it must be pointed out that since life is prerequisite for walking or running, the loss of life is inclusive of both that

proportion of good lost in a loss of life and also that proportion of good lost in the loss of a leg, while the loss of a leg is not inclusive of the that proportion of good lost in the loss of life as well as that lost in its own loss. If the loss of life must involve a loss of a greater proportion of good than the loss of a leg, then the prevention of the loss of life provides a greater good than that lost, and the net result of the action is a giving rather than a taking away of good. In this sense, if harming is a taking away of good, the act cannot really be characterized as one of harm.

Accordingly, an act of harm is actually that which remains a taking away of good after what is given, in other words, a net harm. As in the example provided above, we can assess whether an act is a net harm by establishing the degree to which certain qualities are prerequisite for others, and, when taken away, involve the loss of a greater proportion of good than that to which they are compared. Life is prerequisite not only for walking and running, as in the above case, but it is clearly required for pain or pleasure or for any activities and experiences at all. Existence is required for life in the sense that the existence of a species is essential for the life of its members or existence as what you are is prerequisite for your life to be yours at all. Therefore, this order of prerequisites indicates existence as the most basic thing that can be taken away, then life, and then the various attributes of living experience. With this established, it becomes evident that any removal of life or existence not done in order to provide the same or more basic of the two would involve the loss of a greater proportion of good, thereby leaving the act a taking away of good, and constituting a net harm.

Next we must determine whether human killing of nonhumans for food constitutes an act of net harm. In order to do this, we must establish whether taking life from nonhumans for food is done in order to provide life or existence for those humans responsible for this act, either those who consume the nonhumans or those who kill them for consumption. In the continuing life of humans who follow a vegetarian diet, and there are a great many, we clearly experience the superfluity of eating slain animals for human life or existence. In addition, the ongoing life of other humans who also refrain from eating plants that are uprooted for consumption, but subsist entirely from the fruits, nuts, grains, and those vegetables that either do not kill the plant when taken or are harvested after the plant has already died naturally, demonstrates the superfluity for human life or

existence of eating killed plants. As a result, the taking of nonhuman life for food is not done in order to provide life or existence for the human consumer.

In the case of the humans who make a wage from the killing of nonhumans for consumption, the continuing life of the unemployed makes clear that employment is not necessary for providing life, and, therefore, that their killing is not done in order to provide for their life or existence. In the end, it is obvious that the act of taking nonhuman life for food is not undertaken in order to provide human life or existence for the consumer or those killing for human consumption. Therefore, since the taking of life is not balanced or exceeded by the provision of life or existence, the act remains a taking away of good, and is a net harm.

Several objections may be made to this assessment. First, does not the killing of nonhumans for consumption provide life to those destroyed so that humans may eat other things that are not killed? Must we not cut down wild vegetation and destroy creatures living there to grow crops, and must we not, when gathering wild nuts and berries, take sustenance from creatures that would otherwise eat such foods? Second, by killing nonhumans for food do we not give life to other nonhumans that would be consumed by those we kill or to those whose sustenance would be consumed by those we kill? Third, what about the limited character of our knowledge. How do we know that when we do not take a particular nonhuman's life, we are not actually taking away something more basic; for example, if the nonhuman subsequently eats another that is the last of its species, thereby taking away existence?

Each of these arguments seeks to avoid the net harm assessment that results from weighing the taking of nonhuman life for food against what is provided for the humans who are responsible for the act by pointing to real or conjectured provision of life or existence for other nonhumans as a repercussion of the act. However, in every case the arguments are essentially irrelevant to our assessment. First, when we grow crops or gather wild foods we also provide life for the crops and creatures that thrive in agricultural fields, and, when we gather wild foods, we provide life for creatures that consume any creatures that die without such foods. Similarly, if by killing nonhumans for food we save the lives of nonhumans they would kill for consumption or as a result of resource competition, our act also takes life from those nonhumans that would otherwise

eat the nonhumans we consume, as well as from those that would have sustained themselves from the bodies of the creatures now spared from death due to our action.

In the final case, we can speculate that it is just as possible that the nonhuman we kill for food will not cause extinction of another species, and may, in fact, preserve a species through a future action or through its own peculiar genetic variations that may prove invaluable in a time of future climatic change. In every instance, reality or possibility leave us with a series of balances of life taken with life given, and by canceling that taken with that given, returns us to the original assessment of the act of killing nonhumans for food solely in terms of whether that act is done in order to provide life or existence for the humans responsible for it. As we have seen, that answer is no, and the act of killing nonhumans for food is, by consequence, a net harm.

Faced with such a conclusion, it remains to be determined how such an act is an obstacle to the Neoplatonic goal of human perfection. The answer to this problem lies in metaphysics. From a Neoplatonic perspective, one may contend, with Porphyry, that the Divine Forms and the One are donative, in the sense that the former give existence to all the things in the physical world that participate in them and the latter is ultimately the giver of all things through the emanational process. However, acts of harm, including the killing of nonhumans for food, are, as we have seen, by nature privative. As a result, the act of harming others cuts a human being off from the donative nature of Form and the One. Unless we cease to be harmful not only to our fellow humans but also to nonhumans, we will not be able to experience the spiritual life available to us through the undescended aspect of our souls, or place ourselves in a position to transcend even that life and experience the Source of All. It is both the donative nature of the spiritual life to which we aspire and the privative character of the act of harm that appear to have led Porphyry to regard harmlessness (*ablabeia*) as essential to the goal of human life.

In this interpretation and expansion of Porphyry's position, we have seen how *ablabeia* is an essential component of life for those who accept a Neoplatonic metaphysical perspective. Some might conclude that without this metaphysical framework there is no moral imperative for the embracing of the harmlessness ethic. However, that the *ablabeia* argument should also be of concern to

any person who seeks to do good and avoid doing evil, becomes immediately manifest upon a rational consideration of what evil is.

It is clear that evil is different in every way from good, being the very opposite of good. It is also obvious that a thing which differs in every way from some other thing obviously must possess nothing of that from which it differs, since otherwise it would not differ in every way. Therefore, if evil differs from good in every way, then it must possess nothing of good. If evil possesses nothing of good, then we would not doubt be correct in asserting that evil is an absence of good, since nothing of good being there is clearly the same as good being absent from there. If we so conclude that evil is an awayness or absence of good, then it follows that doing evil is the causing of good to be absent, the taking away of good.

This conclusion, taken together with the position, established above, that the act of harm is a taking away of good, indicates a direct correlation between harming and doing evil. To do harm is to do evil, for each is nothing other than the act of taking away good. Since an act of harm is thus an act of evil, and since killing nonhumans for food has been shown to be an act of harm, this act is also an evil action. Hence, anyone who seeks to avoid doing evil, must avoid killing nonhumans for food. That person also must begin to assess all of his or her activities, with regard to humans and nonhumans, according to the same principles established for the issue of killing nonhumans for food. Unless it can be certainly established that any act of taking away some measure of good from another creature is done in order to provide something qualitatively equal or more basic than that which is taken, the act must be considered not only one of harm but one of evil.

When comparing the *ablabeia* approach with the current rights approach, it is evident that the former possesses two significant advantages. First, it is far more inclusive, extending moral consideration to plants as well as animals. In any case where an act of taking life is not required to provide life or existence, as in diet, there is no moral relevance for what kind of life is involved. Our act in such an instance would be evil whether the life taken is that of our father, a hog, or an evergreen. Even in the case of deciding conflicts of life against life, for example in the cases of microbes we kill as we breathe or deadly viruses we kill with a vaccine, the type of creature involved is not important. In these cases, our act of taking the life of the other can be regarded as justifiable not

because our life is more valuable than that of the other, but the act is done in order to provide life for us. In any case like this, whether involving us individually or others, we must only kill or permit killing if it is certain that taking life is necessary to preserve life or existence (i.e., of a species). It becomes incumbent upon us to try to find any way to prevent a death that does not involve taking another life, and only if no alternative is found can we truly balance the life taken with that given, and avoid doing evil. This position avoids the rather arbitrary distinctions, traditional to Western moral philosophy, which still pervade much of modern animal rights literature. In this way, we need not enter into subjective value judgements in order to determine whether the life of a tree is as worthy as that of a flea, that of a flea as that of a dog, that of a dog as that of human.

The second advantage of the *ablabeia* approach is that, unlike the rights approach that requires the proponent of moral behavior towards nonhumans to enter into an essentially subjective assessment of nonhuman inner life, the *ablabeia* position pushes the burden of subjectivity into the opponent's camp. In instances such as diet, where taking of the life is not done in order preserve life, the opponent of extending moral concern to nonhumans must prove why differences between humans and nonhumans make human pleasure as basic or more basic than nonhuman life, and, thereby, that killing for such pleasure is not a net harm and evil. This is not easy. Pleasure is an experience, and life is prerequisite for all experiences, whether human or nonhuman. Therefore, human pleasure is equivalent to the level of nonhuman experiences, but not to nonhuman life. In order to avert such a conclusion, the opponent would have to prove that human differences from nonhumans make us so far superior that even our experiences are as basic or more basic than nonhuman life. It is unlikely that the opponent will ever be able to show why these differences make for superiority without the dogmatic retreat to a subjective value judgement that having rationality or self-identity (for example) is better than not having them or a religious belief that humans are simply just created as superior entities.

In conclusion, the *ablabeia* approach, rooted in Neoplatonism but not confined to it, can provide an argument for moral consideration of nonhumans (and humans as well) without reliance upon reading their inner lives. It explains why killing without doing

so in order to provide life or existence is evil, not in terms of a violation of rights, but in terms of the nature of the act itself. It also demonstrates how such an act serves as an obstacle to the agent's full experience of the spiritual life.

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## NOTES

1. Daniel A. Dombrowski, *The Philosophy of Vegetarianism* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 58-63.
2. St. Augustine, *The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life*, translated by D.A. Gallagher and L.J. Gallagher (Boston: Catholic University Press, 1966), 102 (17.54).
3. Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
4. Bernard Rollin, *Animal Rights and Human Morality* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1981), and *The Unheeded Cry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
5. For example, Jeremy Bentham, *Anarchical Fallacies* (Edinburgh, 1843), article II, and R.G. Fry, *Interest and Rights: The Case Against Animals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
6. Porphyry, *The Life of Plotinus*, 2.4-6.
7. Plutarch, *Moralia*, translated by F.C. Babbitt (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1927).
8. Porphyry's *De abstinentia* has been published in three volumes with the Greek text and French translation in Porphyre *de l'abstinence*, translated by J. Bouffartigue and M. Patillon (Paris: Budé, 1977). An English edition only has been produced by Thomas Taylor as *On Abstinence from Animal Food* (reprinted London: Centaur Press, 1965).
9. Dombrowski, *The Philosophy of Vegetarianism*, 78-79.
10. For Plotinus, cf. *Enneads* V.3.17; VI.7.36 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, 1988). For Porphyry, cf. *The Letter to Marcella* (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1986), 49 (16), 53 (23); and *Launching-Points to the Realm of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1987), 27-33 (1.1).

## Plotinian Roots of Ecology, Post-Normal Science and Environmental Ethics

Laura Westra

### Introduction

I have recently argued for the necessity for an altered world-view, to permit us to transcend our present destructive interaction with our natural environment (Westra, 1994). Recent ecological paradigms taken primarily, but not exclusively, from complex-systems theory, conservation biology and post-modern science, often use concepts that can be traced back to Plotinus. The ecosystem approach I have defended is holistic (Kay and Schneider, 1994), and consonant with post-normal science and with its support for the intimate connection between values and scientific knowledge, whereby the former are a constitutive part of the latter (Funtowicz and Ravetz, 1991). Because of this connection, whether or not it is explicitly acknowledged, some important Plotinian concepts can be shown to be relevant to both science and ethics, in regard to the environment.

Some recent work has traced the connection between Plotinus and "deep ecology," for instance Richard Evanoff's "An Ecological Reading of Plotinus," and Donald Blakeley's "Mystical Unity and the Cosmos in Plotinus," to name but two. I have also defended the role of "freedom" in Plotinus, through an analysis of *Enneads* 6.8, which further emphasizes these connections and that unity.

Complex systems theory demonstrates the lack of predictability in science, leading to a certain "freedom" in the possible evolutionary trajectories of natural systems.

One can fairly say that there are several interesting conceptual links between Plotinus' thought and current paradigms in both environmental science and ethics. There can be viewed under three major clusters of issues, 1) unity, 2) freedom, and 3) value, and the

connection between them. These issues will be discussed in turn, tracing Plotinus' position in each, then relating them to present day ecology, "deep ecology" and ecocentric ethics.

### I. Unity

There is no problem in establishing textually the centrality of unity in Plotinus's thought. The One is the Source of all that is, and the intimate connection between the One and the natural creation that He engenders cannot be denied. First of all, there is our kinship with all that exists. Plotinus says: "For anyone who feels affection for anything at all, shows kindness to what is akin to the object of his affection and to the children of the Father he loves" (2.9.16.7ff.). These children appear to be the "heavenly bodies," so that the "sympathy" with all for which Evanoff argues, can at least be said to apply to natural entities (R. Evanoff, 1994). In fact, the whole discussion takes place in the Treatise (2.3.7). "Are the Stars Causes?" The argument proceeds from the description of the functioning of an organism, to that of the functioning of the whole.

Plotinus speaks of "the eyes...or...some other part of the body," and says, "If these parts of us are members of a whole, so are we: in different ways the one law applies" (2.3.7). Below, he adds:

All things must be enchain'd; and the sympathy and correspondence obtaining in any one closely knit organism must exist, first, and most intensely in the All. There must be one principle constituting this unity of many forms of life and enclosing the several members within the unity, while at the same time precisely as in each thing of detail, the parts too have each a definite function, so in the all each several members must have its own task...(2.3.7).

Further, these "functions" are interconnected so that "each receives something from the others" (ibid.), and the functioning of the whole universe is governed by the "Law of Justice," which provides both "orderliness" and "the power of the controlling force" (3.3.8). The whole is thus a well-ordered unity of which we are a part. Armstrong observes:

...we may at least begin to feel again the need for some sense of unity with our world and not be content to stand apart from it and isolated,

superior thinking beings, over and against a mass of brute matter...without worrying about any nonexistent cosmic holiness or intelligence...(A.H. Armstrong 1976).

If we accept this interpretation of Plotinus, it permits us to reconcile Plotinus' explicit words here, with his well-known *rejection* of "sympathy," in regard to other humans. I have argued that Plotinus's doctrine does not permit the latter: "sympathy" was viewed by the Stoics as a sin. Plotinus argues systematically against involvement, as we should strive not to be affected by the pain of others, any more than we should permit even our own pain to affect "us," or our higher soul. It is worth noting, however, that Plotinus wants to *teach*. Perhaps making people's *souls* better, is the only true concern permitted. Christians exhort people to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Plotinus, paradoxically, could say the same thing, but only in an equivocal vein: we must not "love" ourselves, at least, not in the ordinary sense of our everyday embodied, separate selves. Our concern must be limited to our upper souls, and perhaps to those of others, as for instance even suicide is preferable to losing one's ability to remain aloof (Westra, 1990).

Our "sympathy" therefore, is far more consonant with environmental concern, than with a human doctrine of emotion-based morality, such as that of David Hume, for instance. Donald Blakeley discusses Plotinian "sympathy" in relation to unity; he says, "the unity that is realized in the material realm Plotinus identifies as sympathy" (D. Blakeley, 1994).

This brief discussion of the role of sympathy serves to underlie one of the bases for unity in the cosmos; the other is clearly our co-generation by the one, and our co-dependence upon Him. But the connection between unity and the Plotinian universe, may be understood best by turning to Plotinus's treatises on "Providence" (III.2, and III.3). The value and the importance of the physical universe is dependent on its unity, which originates with the One. In contrast with Plato's depreciation of changing, embodied reality, Plotinus emphasizes its derivative Oneness, hence its origin, while defending the universe as "good," possessed of a goodness both compatible with and derived from its (planned/willed) diversity and multiplicity. Plotinus further emphasizes those aspects of the cosmos which show it to be neither predetermined nor mechanical in its unfolding:



To make the existence and coherent structure of this Universe depend upon automatic activity and upon chance, is against all good sense (III.2.1).

In order to avoid this facile conclusion, Plotinus argues, we must understand both *how* and *why* all things were made. The Cosmos is a unity. "...a life living and having intellection as one act within a unity: ...for there is no separation of thing from thing, no part standing in isolated existence from the rest..." (III.2.1). The intellectual principle, or Reason within this whole, "has brought the universe into being," as from a "seed," so that all future growth parts and processes are concentrated within a single identity. Hence, any dissonance that may arise in the cosmos, is a product of this "mixed thing," of the diversity arising from embodiment out of a single, unitary principle. Its beauty and harmony are limited to what can be absorbed by a physical mixture, and ought not to be judged deficient, each viewed in isolation.

In contrast, the Cosmos' beauty and nobility (the best possible under the circumstances) arise from the Source of all, and each thing can be judged only in relation to the (beautiful) totality. The diversity engendered within the Cosmos' totality must be accepted as necessary and beautiful as well, and we have no right to demand that everything within this totality be a "mass of fragments," all equal to one another (III.2.3). Elsewhere Plotinus suggests that, if we expect all to be equally excellent, we are as misguided as if we were to require that toes and fingers should see, not only eyes, or if we expected a beautiful painting to be filled with "all eyes," or all light, without shadows and neutral aspects, better to bring the more vibrant aspects of the work into relief (III.2.11).

It is equally wrong to expect the cosmic unity to exhibit nothing but perfection throughout: embodiment and diversity are the result of Divine design and—as such—must be less than perfect, as it belongs to a lower level, far from the Beauty of its Source. The beauty of the Cosmos lies precisely in the contrasts within the whole, as it is governed by harmonious natural laws. To a great extent, we must abide by cosmic laws. When we attempt to defy them, evil will follow; sometimes evil will happen even if we don't, and it is hard for us to understand the reason for it. Essentially, though, *justice* governs the cosmos and the relation between all its parts now and in the future. If we attempt to work against them, our

defiance will not go unpunished, either now, or at some future time, hence the beauty, orderliness and justice of the whole will not be affected.

Although Plotinus does not stress the "scientific" facts he presents he clearly expects his hearers to understand them as he does. Neither the existence of the cosmos, nor of the laws, regularities and justice that reign within it are ever in question. His main concern, instead, is to reconcile the fact "Divine Reason is the beginning and the end" (III.2.15), hence that the cosmos must show rationality and order—with the fact that, for this order to prevail, "...the devouring of Kind by Kind is necessary as the means to the transmutation of living things." These occurrences, although constant, appear to be random, ugly and, at times, unfair; but if we adopt the right perspective, we must acknowledge that things "go to their dispatch," only to be "serviceable to others."

Nothing truly dies, because things that are killed simply return in a new form. Plotinus' example is that of a play in which some actors may be murdered, but eventually will re-appear in the *next* act of the play, in different costumes:

Murder, death in all its guises, the reduction and sacking of cities, all must be to us just such a spectacles the changing scenes of a play; all is but the varied incident of a plot, costume on and off, acted grief and lament (III.2.15).

The individual dissonance, however, unites in a complete "harmony" (III.2.16), composing contraries, "white and black, hot and cold, winged and wingless...reasonable and unreasoning—but all these elements are members of one living body, their sum total." Thus there are Reason and Unity in the whole, and it is wrong-headed and useless to seek *either* in each individual action and event. For Plotinus, we can and must understand the unity of the cosmos and of its regularities and laws, before we can understand what is right and wrong, and why. The basis for moral understanding is our dependence upon the One, and that is determinant of our role and our destiny within the universe.

I don't believe it is necessary to amass further evidence to prove the role of the One in the Plotinian corpus, as Primary Source of all that exists, and we'll return to this theme in the next section. For now, we need to turn to ecology and environmental ethics, in order to show their relation to unity.

## II. Unity, Ecology and Environmental Ethics

The most obvious connection between Plotinus and recent environmental thought is precisely through the very interconnectedness that ecology demonstrates. It has formed the basis for Aldo Leopold's *Land Ethic* (A. Leopold, 1969), as well as from my own "principle of integrity" (Westra, 1994; Westra, 1998). It has also influenced Arne Naess's "deep ecology" platform, although he does not appeal to ecological interconnectedness specifically.

The ecosystem approach I support, demands a unitary understanding of the biosphere, or of each ecosystem, in order to support ecosystem function: one cannot refer to personal or organismic integrity, without subsuming *identity* in the concept. In other words, a holistic approach *must* view the system under consideration as *one* in order to be able to discuss coherently whether or not it may be healthy, or subject to too much anthropogenic stress, and whether it may possess integrity. To view an ecosystem as a functional whole, providing life-support to its parts, is to view it as *one*. Aldo Leopold's landmark statement, "a thing is right when it tends to promote the stability, integrity and beauty of an ecosystem, wrong when it tends otherwise" (Leopold, 1969), suggest that certain characteristics are not only prudentially desirable on our part, but that they are the result of morally right action. All these characteristics are to be attributed to one system, or rather to any *unitary* system.

In his book, *Life Itself*, Robert Rosen discusses both function and self-identity of systems in a chapter entitled "entailment without States: Relational Biology." He speaks of "heterogeneous systems," wherein "one part looks different, or behaves differently from another part." He continues:

If we leave the system alone, some autonomous behaviour will ensue. On the other hand, we can ask a question like: if we were to remove, or change, one of these distinguishable parts, what would be the effect of that behaviour? It involves a new element, not merely observation, but willful active intervention. The results of that intervention is, in effect, the creation of a *new system*, which can be regarded as a kind of *perturbation or mutilation* of the original one (R. Rosen, 1991).

As Aristotle would say, there is a significant difference between a random heap and an organized whole. Integrity identifies the evolutionary, naturally optimum state of this organized whole, an ecosystem, although it is not possible to fully limit and circumscribe each ecosystem as such.

We can conclude that cosmic interconnectedness and the primacy of unity, both central Plotinian concepts, are very much in existence, as articulated today through the science of ecology and the ecocentric theories of environmental ethics, although the latter have not been discussed yet in essence. Aldo Leopold's position suggests that man should no longer consider himself separate from the rest of the natural world, and a creature apart, a master of all. On the contrary, because of the interconnectedness of all natural entities and their interdependence, humans must realize that, physically, they are simply part of the biota of ecosystems. They must fully acknowledge this kinship and learn to love, not master the land. Natural entities are not only "resources" for mankind, that is, things which only have value because we value them. On the contrary, Leopold ascribes intrinsic value to natural wholes, beyond the instrumental value they may possess for humans, and many have argued this way as well (Rolston III, 1986; Westra, 1994; Westra, 1998).

My position is also both biocentric and holistic. Integrity is a specific state of ecosystems. It is not pristineness, but it is "wild," that is, natural systems that possess it are not managed or manipulated. A percentage of all landscapes, globally, ranging from 15% to 45% (Noss & Cooperrider, 1994) must be left "wild," or unmanaged, in order to support the existence of the rest for sustainable human use. In a state of integrity, a system can pursue its own natural evolutionary path, it is resilient when stressed, and it retains the optimum capacities of which it is capable at a specific time and location. Ecosystem integrity goes beyond ecosystem health, because the latter is compatible with management and manipulation, as well as the loss of certain parts, provided that a desired function is maintained. As an example, we can think of a human being who is healthy, but needs insulin on a regular basis, because he is diabetic, glasses to see, and perhaps some other medication to support another minor ailment that might still permit him to reach a ripe old "healthy age" (Westra, 1994).

The functional and historical role of biodiversity is central to integrity. But what is required is not simply maximizing numbers of species, which might include the addition of exotics and perhaps bioengineered "aliens" into the systems, but respecting the optimum biodiversity required by the naturally evolutionary paths of each specific system (Westra, 1994; Karr and Chu, 1995). The respect for both cosmic laws and for the Source of the cosmos that are required by Plotinus, one could argue, *also* will not permit the intentional interference with either the logos or the Divine plan of the universe, through our extraneous interventions.

Hence, it will be required to respect enough wild areas to permit the orderly unfolding of evolutionary paths, and the preservation of the life-support role they are designed to play. For Plotinus, one could argue, all entities within the cosmos possess intrinsic value, in two senses: a) they represent a valuable part of ■ biodiverse divine design; and b) they each play a specific role in the functioning of the cosmos, and they support and facilitate the orderly unfolding of its laws.

Intrinsic value of natural entities is also asserted by Arne Naess who speaks strongly in support of the wild, and recommends in his platform an altered life-style based on a changed awareness of the value of nature, and we'll return to this topic in the last section of the paper. We can therefore conclude that cosmic interconnectedness and the primacy of unity, both central Plotinian concepts, are very much in existence in reality, as articulated today through the science of ecology and the ecocentric theories of environmental ethics. Moreover, even the effects of this understanding are viewed as morally significant by Plotinus. That is, for Plotinus, once we realize that we are part of a created universe, a manifestation of the will of the One, then our role within this universe defines the parameters of our intellectual and moral activity. Plotinus' view of virtue, however, cannot be helpful as a parallel for environmental ethics. Rather, the step I propose is to see the similarities between Plotinus' metaphysics and recent ecological theories which are also used to define in some sense the limits and parameters of our morality. Most ecocentric environmental philosophers view these facts as equally morally significant—pace David Humc, and his is/ought distinction. Our position as *parts* of a functioning whole which is also somewhat purposive, *limits* the rights we presume to have to interfere with

natural ecosystems; hence it supports the moral value of the *negative* commands of environmental ethics, beyond their purely prudential value. A holistic environmental ethic argument suggests, in general, that the physical realities of the universe do not support a sharp distinction between the moral considerability extended to our species or at least to the individuals within it, and the purely instrumental consideration that characterizes our interaction with non-human nature. Plotinus suggests that our kinship with all in the universe is metaphysically, hence morally, significant.

Neither Plotinus nor any ecocentric deep ecologist intends to say that what "is," represents the "ought" of morality: yet *both* would agree that our place within the cosmic whole, as well as the understanding of the structure and origin of this whole, helps us understand our *moral* role within it.

### III. Freedom—Ecology and Ethics

I have argued that Freedom, in its various senses, and in its different applications to the One and to us, is the central concept in the *Enneads* (Westra, 1990). However this is not a generally accepted position: with the exception of *Enneads* 6.8, the main focus of my work, only four instances of the use of *eleutheros* are present in the whole Plotinian corpus (although the expression *autexiousios* is more common). This fact has perhaps discouraged scholars: thus it is primarily Paul Henry, and even more Vincenzo Cilento, who have seen the same emphasis in Plotinus, and discussed it. Based on Cilento's work, I found ten senses of Freedom in Plotinus: 1) Freedom as Contemplation; 2) freedom as salvation; 3) freedom as genius, ease of life, or man's "daimon"; 4) Freedom as explanatory principle; 5) Freedom as conclusion/culmination; 6) freedom as the good; 7) freedom as one's nature; 8) freedom as root of existence; 9) freedom as unity; 10) freedom as creation (Westra, 1990). As this paper is concerned with the natural environment, only "freedom as root of existence" and "freedom as creation" appear truly relevant, as well as "freedom as unity." "Root of existence," pertains clearly to the One, who is causative of all that is. Like the One, whom Cilento characterizes as absolute freedom, both unity, creative power, and existence itself are *freely* flowing from the One, as neither random

chance nor constraints of any sort are possible with Him. Plotinus says:

No more than in the circle are the lines or circumference to be identified with that center which is the source of both: radius and circle are images given forth by indwelling power and as products of a certain vigour, not cut off from it (6.8.18).

Freedom is the source of power: "...it generates Intellectual Principle by its sheer wealth" (6.8.18). If we identify the One with freedom, then freedom is creative power, both the root and the final aim of existence as our returning to the Source is the moral aim for which we must strive. The Source of all and Primary Cause is Freedom. Just like goodness, then, freedom will be a characteristic of all that He engenders, in progressively diminishing levels. Metaphysically, freedom, for Plotinus is what we must strive for, within our capacities, and it is solitude in the sense of detachment and aloofness: the last phrase of the *Enneads* is precisely the flight of the alone to the Alone. But this solitude is dynamic, not static, it is creative, contemplative.

It is hard to say precisely what level of freedom is left at each level of creation. Once again, it is instructive to turn to complex systems theory and its applications to ecology. We need to understand systems' behaviour, so that we can acquire a better understanding of what level of management (if any) is safe, from the ecological standpoint. James Kay explains Prigogine's position and its implications:

An open system with high quality energy pumped into it is moved away from equilibrium. But nature resists movement away from equilibrium. So the open system responds with the spontaneous emergence of organized behaviour that uses the high quality energy to maintain its structure, thus dissipating the ability of the high quality energy to move the system away from equilibrium (Kay and E. Schneider, 1994).

The first thing to note is that this science proposes explanations which are radically different from the linear science of old. It is important to note the terminology used in the last scientific quotation: we are speaking of "spontaneous emergence" of "organized behaviour." There is an intrinsic freedom to material entities and even stranger, to material wholes, which manifests

itself through spontaneity and the rise of emergent properties that cannot be predicted or anticipated necessarily from our knowledge of either the system or its component parts as in many senses we cannot derive complete knowledge about the behaviour of a whole, from adding together the behaviour of all its component parts. Kay says:

This view of the world is radically different from that of a reductionist view which sees the world's workings in terms of mechanical interactions between the components of a system. The emergence of organized behaviour, and even life, is now mandated by thermodynamics (Kay and Schneider, 1994).

In place of mechanistic theories, we must now turn to "catastrophe theory" to "describe the change of systems over time." Changes can be expected, but they will not be necessary or continuous. There is nothing abnormal, however, about catastrophe theory, which incorporates the occurrence of "surprises" without claims about complete predictability. Hence, it portrays the behaviour of natural systems and their evolutionary development, far better than the precise models often still favoured by Newtonian scientists.

For our purpose, therefore, what is significant is the fact that "emergent" behaviour of systems, like "emergent" properties of species, are both spontaneous, that is, they are essentially free, although, clearly, there is no "intention" or other cognitive activity in either natural organisms or systems. Yet these organisms and systems are not completely free, in the sense that a savannah or rain forest ecosystem cannot "flip" into a desert or arctic system, without massive external stresses. Rather, within each system's geographical and temporal location, there are several evolutionary paths and trajectories that can arise.

For Plotinus, contemplation (*theoria*) informed the world, hence rendered it intelligible, in some cases, even intellective, and—in a descending order—*somewhat* free, although the One's absolute freedom cannot be found elsewhere. Contemplation originates with Nous, from the One; in their different ways, all things contemplate and possess at least some minimal capacity for freedom. According to catastrophe theory (a misnomer that simply indicates the possible occurrence of unpredictable events), "The world does not change in a continuous and deterministic way" (Kay and Schneider, 1994). Kay adds:

Chaos theory takes this one step further by noting that change in a dynamic system is ultimately not predictable, because individually small interactions between components accumulate.

In environmental ethics, the protection of ecosystem integrity is ultimately simply protection of their capacity to regenerate, to recoup and recover from imposed anthropogenic and other stress, and thus permit them to continue their own evolutionary process of development. Hence respect for ecosystem integrity is primarily respect for the same systems' capacity to freely follow their evolutionary path. *Ipsa facto* it also supports our capacity to freely develop (in the physical sense), rather than have our lives stunted or blighted through ecosystem damage. I have argued that the principle of integrity emphasizes *freedom from* interference with a system's unfolding (and our natural unfolding which parallels it). It also supports the freedom of a natural system to actualize itself, within it the self-actualization of all natural entities.

The importance of natural *freedom* is thus undiminished since Plotinus' day. Because of this freedom, science today raises far more questions than it can answer:

Consequently our ability to forecast and predict is always limited, for example, to about five days for weather forecasts, regardless of how sophisticated our computers are, and how much information we have (Kay and Schneider, 1994).

For Plotinus too, the "Universe is immensely varied, the container of all reason-principles and of infinite and diverse efficacies" (IV.4.36). And, although each member has a life of its own, Plotinus adds, "this however does not imply ■ deliberate intention" (IV.4.36). This point can be supported through distinguishing "tending" from "intending" in ecosystems, where the former concept, and not the latter is used to express the unfolding of their natural evolutionary processes (Westra, 1994). Rolf Sattler discusses teleology in his *Biophilosophy* (R. Sattler, 1990). He suggests four separate senses that can be ascribed to the concept, only one of which escapes modern scientific critiques. He describes this sense of teleology as follows:

The laws of nature are held responsible for the goal-direction of the sequential behaviour which is also called developmental teleology...the

role of consciousnesses excluded...genetic programs are also considered to be important in this respect, because they are "selected...."

Hence, it is in freedom, understood as free creativity (Westra, 1990), that one finds the closest parallel to some recent ecological approaches, as well as to ecocentric environmental ethics, insofar as these depend in some sense on those new paradigms. Plotinus says, "We cannot think of the universe as a soulless habitation...it must be alert throughout" (IV.4.36). "Life" and "alertness" seem to indicate precisely the self-organizing processes that the call to integrity I have proposed, is intended to protect and restore.

Things and systems in nature change, evolve, and go through a constant cycle of birth, growth, death and renewal, the "devouring of kind by kind," that Plotinus cites (III.2.15). The "information" that is somehow preserved through these changes, is a reflection of what works, of what the system "learns" in order to adapt and respond to changed climatic and other circumstances. For Plotinus intellectual "formation" and intelligibility are part of the nature of the universe. And if all is informed in various proportions, and, as we have seen, all contemplates as it is ■ reflection of the powerful free creativity of the One, then we can see that Plotinus discovered a long time ago some of the principles of chaos and of complex systems theory; he also appeared to indicate the evolutionary role played by genetic information at the level of the single organism. This in turn translates into biodiversity at the systemic level.

The argument I have proposed supports the existence of links between Plotinus and ecology in its recent paradigm. In the next section these common concepts will be related to value, or the "good" in Plotinus in order to trace the connection between Plotinus, ecology, and environmental ethics.

#### IV. The Good in Nature

Spontaneous creation and "self-realization" as it occurs in the Plotinian universe is good, and all in it is valuable, because of these characteristics, which ultimately depend on the One. In his treatise "Against the Gnostics" (II.9), Plotinus defends the beauty of all nature and its value. Nature exists at a lower level than the

perfection of the One, yet it does come from Him and the World Soul. It is this fact, that is, the origin of all nature, that guarantees its value for Plotinus. He says:

No doubt it is a copy, not original; but that is its very nature; it cannot be at once symbol and reality. But to say that it is an inadequate copy is false: nothing has been left out which a beautiful representation in this physical order could include (II.9.8).

The position Plotinus adopts must be viewed in relation to his metaphysics. What is the relation of the natural world to the One? How did matter come to be, why and what is its role? All creative acts starting from the One, might be viewed as declines from complete perfection, as they are movements toward lesser entities. Yet Plotinus hastens to clarify what he means: "We assert its creative act (that of the All Soul) to be a proof not of decline but rather of its steadfast hold" (II.9.4). Hence it is incorrect to view all "enmattering" as descent into darkness and evil. To do so, casts an unfavourable light upon all creation, and "taints" the Primals:

In fine the theory amount to making evil one of the Primals, and with it the matter from which it emerges... (II.9.12).

Aside from the human component of *tolma* (wilfulness), which starts us on the road to otherness and separation, coming to be embodied is not sinning, it is doing something right, good and proper to fulfilling the plan of the universe (IV.8.1). The plan of the Universe requires lesser entities in addition to the One:

There is a reason why the Soul of this All should be sent into it from God: in the same way the soul of each single one of us is sent, that the Universe may be complete (IV.8.1).

Diversity is needed for completeness, and it comprises declining entities as well as entities from a higher realm. Yet the body inhabited by the World Soul "is complete, competent, selfsufficing, exposed to nothing contrary to its nature" (IV.8.1). For Plotinus then, the natural world as planned, cannot be total, progressive evil: it can perhaps be the occasion for the possibility for evil, while at the same time, it is also the ground for the possibility of reascent to the One. Responding to the claims of the Gnostics, Plotinus says:

They cannot deny that the Soul of the Cosmos has exercised such a weight of power to have brought the corporeal principle, in itself unlovely, to partake of good and beauty, to the utmost of its receptivity—and to a pitch which stirs souls, being of the divine order (II.9.17).

By its very nature, the corporeal principle is not beautiful. It is the intellection and beauty with which it is informed that add loveliness and intelligibility to the corporeal. Through Soul then, the material world is helped to fulfill its role in the complete plan of the universe. Thus we must not condemn the world: it is "no disgrace to the Maker" (III.2.3). Plotinus says:

It is therefore impossible to condemn the whole on the merits of the parts which, besides, must be judged only as they enter harmoniously or not into the whole....To linger about the parts is to condemn not the Cosmos, but some isolated appendage of it; in the entire living Being we fasten our eyes on a hair or a toe, neglecting the marvelous spectacle of the complete man (III.2.3).

There must be, then, both good and beauty in the whole world as the world is totally immersed in the World Soul. Cilento translates it: "The world is immersed in soul as a net in the sea." Further, "Soul spreads order and beauty on our Universe with a tranquil power" (Cilento, 1971; *Enneads* III.8, V.8, II.9 and IV.8.2). The ontological potential of nature and its status, arising from the role of contemplation and intelligence upon it, are the two aspects of its beauty and value:

This then is how the material thing becomes beautiful, by communicating in the thought (Reason, Logos) that flows from the divine (I.6.2).

It is not surprising, that ecocentric ethics of the environment also relies on "wholeness," potential and capacities, and unitary tendencies in ecosystems to support their value, both intrinsic and instrumental.

In the discussion of freedom, the relation between "self-realization" and freedom was emphasized. In Plotinian terms, the value of both is based upon their origin in the One. In ecocentric environmental ethics, as well as in the biocentric holism I defend,

the Plotinian ground for the "good," and the spontaneity, "self-realization," and ontological capacities of nature are deemed sufficient to support its intrinsic value (Westra, 1994; cp. P. Taylor, 1986; A. Naess, 1991; Evanoff, 1992). Evanoff (1992) has argued that "the history of Western thought...is the history of the progressive alienation of value from nature..." and many others have taken a similar position before him (L. Whyte, 196; L. Moncrief, 1970; M. Oelschlaeger, 1991). Still other, have contrasted Western ideas, both philosophical and religious, with non-Western secular and religious attitudes and beliefs (O.P. Dwivedi, 1990; L. De Silva, 1987; M.Y.I. Deen, 1990; O. Kokole, 1995). Evanoff sees the split between the secular and the religious as the single major problem in the devaluation of nature. He sees the "transcendentalising" of God and the "process of alienating values from nature" as forcing human culture to develop its own realm, as a mixed blessing (Evanoff, 1992). In this case, all value is located *outside* the world, in God, and nature is viewed as valueless.

Plotinus has a clear answer to this problem, as we have seen. In addition, it can also be argued that the scientific arguments I have cited, based as they are on ecology, can equally be supported on metaphysical Plotinian grounds. But the science-based arguments have the advantage of being philosophically defensible thus possibly more convincing to those who may have a problem with metaphysical or religious arguments.

But a serious problem remains, that is, the defense of the step from the intrinsic value of nature, whatever the grounds for its support, to the moral obligation arising from such value. Paul Taylor uses the inherent value of non-human organisms to ground the attitude of "respect for nature," and goes on to show the formal conditions that must be present "for any set of rules and standards to constitute a valid normative ethical system." They must be, a) a general in form; b) must be considered applicable to all moral agents as such; c) must be intended to be applied disinterestedly; d) must be advocated as normative principles for all to adopt; and e) must be taken as overriding all non-moral norms (Taylor, 1986).

Holmes Rolston III argues that our view of nature is "filtered through our conceptual framework, hence it must be based on a metaphysic." Value, in turn, is not "imposed on an ecosystem, it is discovered there." He says:

Yet ecological description generates this valuing of nature, endorsing the systemic rightness. The transition from *is* to *good* and hence to *ought* occurs here; we leave science to enter the realm of evaluation, from which an ethic follows. The injunction to maximize the ecosystem's excellence is ecologically derived, but it is an evaluative transition (Rolston, 1986).

I have accepted this argument as well as the position Rolston takes, that is, that an "is" represents a *limit* to any "ought" whatever, and I have defended the reasons for my agreement elsewhere (Westra, 1994). In brief, I believe that *all* purely interhuman moral theories, *also* rely on what *is*, tacitly or explicitly, in support of their arguments. It is because we *are* capable of pleasure and pain that the utilitarian can argue *universally* for the greatest "good," if we were not, the argument could not be used in the same way. Similarly, the Kantian imperatives rely on the fact that we *are* rational beings. In both cases, what we *are* does not imply what we ought to do. But the recognition of the "is," *pace* Hume, provides the limit for what we ought to be and underlies the possibilities this ought implies.

Environmental norms acknowledge the consequences of a deepened grasp of the natural realities and their functioning and processes; further, when they *also* meet the criteria proposed by Taylor for appropriate moral norms, they can be supported philosophically. Evanoff argues that it is the religious component present in Plotinus, that will serve us best to return to a position of respect for nature. Many who support intrinsic value in natural entities and wholes are prepared to accept some metaphysical belief and principle. I have taken an Aristotelian approach in my defense of environmental ethics principles that can be based on the value of integrity, and I have used the concepts of causality and of truth, and raised the question of origins (Westra, 1994).

From a Plotinian standpoint, nature is good and the locus of value; the obligation arising from the good is based primarily on its Source and origin, and on our place within the universe, hence it is based on Plotinus' metaphysics, not his ethics. From a scientific standpoint based on complex systems theory and post-normal science, intrinsic value is present in both individual entities and whole. The individuals' value is based on their spontaneity, freedom and the role they play in the life support function of

natural wholes. The latter derive their own value precisely from that function and their life-support capacities.

It is fair to say, with John Rist, that in general the natural world did not represent an issue for the Greeks (Rist, 1997), just as "the problem of the commons" was not an issue for John Locke (Hardin, 1968; Hargrove, 1989). Thus we cannot expect specific environmental guidance from either Ancient or Hellenistic philosophy, although recent scholarship has indicated interesting resonances between the Ancients and environmentalism (Westra and Robinson, 1997). Nevertheless, for most of these thinkers the natural world had real intrinsic value for metaphysical, rather than prudential grounds, whether or not humans were ready to acknowledge this value.

This is eminently true of Plotinus's philosophy, as this brief discussion of some of the key elements of his doctrine has indicated. It can be argued that this metaphysical understanding provides a solid locus of goodness and value, parallel to the one provided by modern scientific considerations, taken from both biology and ecology. For both, the importance of *hybris* and the necessity for limits to human activities can be derived and supported.

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# **Commonality and Difference Between Neoplatonism and Deep Ecology**

**David R. Lea**

Various environmental N.G.O.s and Green political movements have come to prominence in recent years and have found their philosophical and intellectual spokesmen/women with the emergence of environmental ethics within academic philosophy. Environmental ethics divides between so called deep ecology and shallow ecology. What I shall endeavor to do in this paper is criticize deep ecology through a comparison with Neoplatonism. The ethics of sustainable development has been seriously challenged by so called deep ecology which calls for a much more radical ethical approach.

So called shallow ecology, in which one locates the concerns for sustainable development remains rooted in the anthropocentric attitudes toward nature, or so "deep ecologists" claim, as it sees nature as receiving value through human ends and purposes. On this view nature must be preserved not for its own sake but rather so that it will continue to satisfy human needs and aspirations through future generations. Shallow ecology, because of its anthropocentric bias is alleged to promote an instrumental approach to nature. In contrast, the various positions of the "deep ecology" reject the anthropocentric position for the bio-centric. They argue that non-human phenomena merit the same consideration that Kant thought should only be extended to rational beings.<sup>1</sup> In order to effect this end we need to divest ourselves of the anthropocentric framework and see nature from the non-anthropocentric biocentric perspective.

The question to be considered in this paper is whether deep ecology offers a coherent basis for human ethics. Through a contrast of the deep ecologist's approach to nature and that of the earlier Neoplatonist, I demonstrate that the deep ecologist's

attempted non-anthropocentric approach offers an incomplete and perhaps incoherent narrative, because it seeks to avoid human purposes and interests. As ethics is essentially an evaluation of the telic dimension of human experience, deep ecology cannot succeed in grounding normative systems, whereas Neoplatonism does.

### I. The Application of Deep Ecology

The convictions and motivations which have fueled our destructive activities are more specific failings which have a great deal to do with the ways in which we treat other members of humanity. Indeed if it were the case that humanity were properly anthropocentric in its thinking such that we did universally attribute intrinsic value to all other members of the human race (in accordance Kant's categorical imperative), then there would exist powerful moral constraints on the most significant forms of environmentally destructive behaviour. Firstly, it would no longer be possible to sustain our present economic system which regards the impoverished sections of the third world as a mere source of labour and natural resources to be utilized in the production of the goods and services to satisfy the ever expanding demands of the West. If the West were really to treat these people as having intrinsic value, as ends in themselves, then we would have to relax our demands upon their labour and resources and reassess our policies, and inevitably this reassessment, in accordance with Kantian principles, would not find in favour of our present economic system. Secondly, the growing militarization through the growing military economy would have to cease since the infliction of this form of harm on the civilian populations and the environment can only be sustained by attitudes which regard other human beings and foreign peoples and nations as significantly failing in humanity, and in any event, having value which is inferior to our own communal or national goals, aspirations or "interests."

If anything the thinking of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment, encouraged by the growth of science and modern technology, demanded active engagement in the transformation of nature. But this philosophy has been undermined not so much by new moral sensitivities like "deep ecology," which teach the non-instrumental value of nature, but rather through an appreciation of

the fragility of nature and her ecosystems, our own natural and precarious dependence on these systems, and the unforeseeable nature of the consequences of our own activities. Ultimately these sobering realizations have dashed all hopes of the enlightenment dream which sees the world radically transformed through science to create an environment exclusively accommodating human needs, leisure, comfort and creativity.

What, therefore, is the intellectual position which deep ecology confronts if Western science and philosophy have already recognized the empirical impossibilities of the enlightenment program for the transformation of the world? I suggest that one possible opponent is the lingering Enlightenment conviction that human beings have a sovereign status in the universe based upon their supposed unique capacity for rational thought and action. This is the belief that human beings alone have intrinsic value, which finds renowned expression in Kantian pronouncements which declare the rational human will to be an end in itself. Even though empirical realities have worked to disconnect the notion of inherent human value from activist prescriptions to change the face of nature, belief in the ultimate value of human beings does remain a vestigial remnant inherited from an age when human beings grew to recognize their own unique qualities, rational powers, and abilities to utilize nature for their advantage. In other words, this was the enlightenment dream of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries before the twentieth century taught us to accept the awful limitations on those powers.

But one wonders if the message of the "deep ecologists" is really particularly prescient if they are simply asking us to disregard this final inheritance of the enlightenment, the belief in man's superiority to the rest of the created order, since it is no longer the case that these beliefs connect with the conviction that human superiority will enable us to transform nature into a human utopia. Wherein, therefore, can we hazard the value of deep ecology lies? Undoubtedly its proponents see themselves as carrying through a revolution in ethical thought whereby Kantian moral theory has been expanded so as to offer more comprehensive and thorough ground for our ethical experience. It might be alleged that deep ecology has laid the intellectual framework which will allow our normative systems to respond adequately to our growing awareness of various environmental concerns by the very fact that

it *does* expand the class of the intrinsically valuable to include not only human agents but also natural phenomenon, including the order of nature herself. If this is the essential point of the deep ecology manifesto then the question thereby posed is whether deep ecology really represents a revolution in our moral attitudes. In the course of this paper I argue that deep ecology adds no new insights concerning man's importance in the universe, and when used as the basis for ethical response offers a very incoherent program, and moreover does so in such a way which fails to satisfy certain fundamental moral concerns. In order to illustrate these points let us now turn to consider the cosmological vision which preceded the advent of Renaissance humanism.

## II. Neoplatonism

Deep ecology which purports to reinvest value in the natural order may be seen as consistent with other contemporary a post-modernist critiques in its rejection of Renaissance humanism and the discourse of the enlightenment. But on a superficial level this re-interpretation has many affinities with Neoplatonism. One very important common theme which dominated much of Humanist and Enlightenment thinking was the idea that man stood superior to the natural order and could ultimately dominate and transform the environmental arrangement in a positive way. The idea that man has sovereignty in the created universe begins perhaps with Ficino, and with the advent of the reformation this sovereignty acquires responsibilities to work and transform the earth, ultimately generating the notions of Marxian and similar utopias in which nature is rationally transformed to meet human specifications and needs. But though deep ecology may represent the abjuration of the Enlightenment notion of human centrality, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment themselves, stand together as intellectual rejections of earlier philosophies which taught that the cosmos was inherently valuable and consisted of multiple gradations of superiority in which humanity's place within this scheme was not the highest.

Anders Nygren points out that the religious cosmology of the Middle Ages *exhibits* a domination by the simple pictorial scheme of the Alexandrian world scheme.<sup>2</sup> According to this scheme the cosmos exhibits motion in two directions—the procession of

everything from God to levels of lesser perfection toward the material world and then a returning ascent from the material and lesser realities towards the higher spiritual levels and ultimately God himself. The latter movement was seen to originate in eros, the love of the greater spiritual reality which engenders a desire to possess this higher reality. The Alexandrian world scheme was a creation of the Neoplatonists derived in turn from the Hellenic tradition, specifically the Platonic doctrine of the Two Worlds, the world of ideas and the material world, and the Aristotelian notion of the ladder.<sup>3</sup> At his/her highest level of activity, at the apogee of intellectual development, Aristotle saw man abandoning his material concerns, and the deliberations of practical reason, and achieving a contemplative relation with the ultimate spiritual reality of the unmoved mover.

The Alexandrian world scheme of the Neoplatonists understood the created order to consist of higher and lower forms of creation in which one's status was dependent upon participation in the higher forms of goodness, beauty, intelligence, harmony etc., as opposed to immersion in the lesser reality of material existence. The angels and the stars, for example, existed at the highest stages of perfection since they were entirely purged of the material dross. Man whose existence was clearly immersed in the material world could hardly claim any superior status in this scheme, though he could work to turn away from these material interests, and through contemplation of the higher realities, approach some form of union with the "one," his transcendent source.

Seen in this light Neoplatonism can be viewed as an important part of the ontological grounding of Medieval Christianity as it offers a cosmic vision which renders comprehensible the ethical tendencies of Medieval Christianity. Specifically it serves to make understandable the ascetic and other worldly proclivities of this morality when compared to the subsequent normative tendencies of the reformation and post reformation.<sup>4</sup>

But aside from normative implications, the idea that man had an intrinsic value which outweighed that of other created existents had no place in the Christian thought of the Middle Ages. The ideas of the Renaissance humanists which attributed this superiority to human beings must themselves be interpreted as a rejection and the negation of this medieval ideology. The question to consider is whether the view of the deep ecologists, which attributes intrinsic

value to non-human phenomena, in fact, offers an intellectual contribution which is superior to the Medieval views derived from the Neoplatonists. In order to answer this question we need to underline the similarities and differences between Deep Ecology and Neoplatonism.

### III. Similarities and Differences Between Deep Ecology and Neoplatonism

Like the deep ecologists the Neoplatonist saw profound value in the harmony, beauty, intelligible unity of the natural order. They did not, however, use this experience as the basis to formulate any practical behavioural attitude towards "nature." But in similarity to the deep ecologists they did attribute great importance to the reality of species and the holistic unity of system as opposed to ontology and etiology based on distinct member components. In an important sense, the Neoplatonist also believes in the efficacy of holistic relations rather than a mechanistic world of distinct efficient causes. For example, Plotinus taught that by means of the Soul the sensible world is ontically effected through the generation of order and systemic proportion. With respect to the content of this cosmic circuit, Plotinus speaks of a system with a purpose in which everything has "its coordinate place" (*Enneads* IV.3.12).<sup>5</sup> In this reality the individual soul must adapt itself to the "times and seasons" dictated by the cosmic circuit.

Similarly with respect to species the Neoplatonist also supports the ontic distinctness of species seeing species as determinate existents distinct from the subjective belief systems of human beings. In addition to the World Soul, and the individual souls there are species souls which are said to be Intellectual originals. Each soul is attached to its own Intellectual original. "...they have chosen the way of division; but to the extreme they cannot go; thus they (the souls) keep, at once, identification and difference; each soul is permanently a unity (a self) and yet all are, in their total, one being" (*Enneads* IV.3.5.) Each soul is identical with all others of its kind in the species or species soul which is a distinct unitary being.<sup>6</sup> The ideas or intellectual forms of different species are thereby realized through the species soul in particular instantiations

and thus Neoplatonism similarly affirms the ontic significance of species.

But also with respect to the experiences which ground the two systems there appear to be striking parallels. If we enquire as to the source of this belief which sees nature as having intrinsic value in itself, the deep ecologist often points to a contemplative relation with the natural world. Although not strictly a deep ecologist, Holmes Rolston III, a leading figure in environmental ethics states, "We take ourselves to nature and listen for its forms of expression, drawn by a realm of values not of our construction. We ought not to destroy this integrity but rather preserve and contemplate it."<sup>7</sup> An environmentalist like Rolston also believes that the valuing experience is not identical with the intellectual representation of facts or the calculations involved in discursive thinking. Valuing, he says, involves an internal excitation in which "...the marriage of the subject to its object gives birth to value."<sup>8</sup> It is indeed easy to see the experience of which Rolston speaks as being very proximate to the ultimate mystical experience of the One of which Plotinus spoke. As in the valuing experience, described by Rolston, Plotinus refers us to an ultimate experience in which there is a form of union of the human soul with its ultimate source, the One. As we all know this is not achieved through discursive reasoning or intellectual activity; it is an experience beyond intellection which involves the union of the subject with its supreme contemplative object. The principal difference, of course, between the two positions, is that Rolston is speaking of an experience of nature in which there is a marriage or union of the human subject with nature as its object. On the other hand, Plotinus refers to the union of the human subject with the ultimate source of nature herself, value, symmetry, beauty etc. However, the difference may not be all that significant, Plotinus saw the harmony, order, beauty of nature as indicative of the source which generated and maintained the reality of the natural world, that is to say, an ultimate experience of the creative force behind and beyond intellectual principles and the changing panorama of the natural world. In this secular age an environmentalist would avoid such claims to some form of experience of the Divinity in Nature so as not to alienate agnostics and atheists who might otherwise be sympathetic to the environmentalist cause. However, Rolston intimates his sympathy with this position in his description of the experience of nature as

"...a positive aesthetic experience—one that often leads toward religious experience."<sup>9</sup> In other words, for the modern environmentalist, the foundation for our obligations to the land, the ecosystems and the biosphere, is rooted in an experience which is in a strong sense mystical and very much similar to experience of which Plotinus speaks.

Overall one observes that like the deep ecologist, the Neoplatonist recognizes that harmony, intelligible unity and even integrated beauty of nature which, through its systems, "protects, regenerates and reforms" and creates diverse living phenomenon (species) with their own unitary roles and tendencies. But on the other hand, Neoplatonism and deep ecology exhibit great discrepancies with respect to the conclusions which are drawn from these similar experiences. The deep ecologist concludes that we are under a duty to preserve these intrinsically valuable states of affairs and this is a conclusion which a Neoplatonist would not be prepared to draw. The Neoplatonist's reluctance to follow these sorts of prescriptions appears well considered if we look at the problems inherent in the deep ecologist idea of "preserving intrinsically valuable states of affairs."

#### IV. Intrinsically Valuable States of Affairs

The fundamental problem for the deep ecologist is the very multiplicity of phenomena which can be regarded as intrinsically valuable. Because the number of indwelling valuable states of affairs is transitory, vast and complexly ordered through hierarchical relations—which we incompletely understand—there can be no consensus as to an effective practical course of action, and worse still anthropocentric subjectivity creeps into the selection of possibilities. Thus we receive a dismaying panoply of diverse, overwhelming and sometimes conflicting instructions. For example, J. Baird Callicott tells us to preserve the "objective harmony of the biosphere as a whole,"<sup>10</sup> John Rodman tells us that we ought to respect anything which has a "telos,"<sup>11</sup> Paul Taylor respects all forms of "life," while Tom Regan preaches protection of "non human animals who are subjects of life."<sup>12</sup> It has been pointed out by a critic of environmental ethics that in order for ethics to be viable it must be among other things "non-vacuous" and

"decidable" for an ethic cannot be prescriptive if all systems and individuals are of equal intrinsic value, nor can it be practical if it cannot solve ethical dilemmas and dictate what is of value and what is not.<sup>13</sup> These are problems which dog the ethics of deep ecology.

Unfortunately, the living entities and other states of Affairs to which we are to attribute intrinsic value are overwhelming vast and demand some form of anthropocentric decision making if we are to act consistently. This is because as another critic recently pointed out, "an ecocentric or biocentric perspective delivers no determinate answers as to which of the abundant and wonderfully various unfolding planetary biotas should be preferred."<sup>14</sup> Action grounded on the perceived intrinsically valuable is in itself insufficient for one simply cannot consistently act in such a way as to preserve all perceived intrinsically valuable states of affairs. For example, if one acts in such a way as to preserve all non-human animals this may undermine the ecosystem and other species; if one acts to protect the ecosystem this may require the destruction of individual animals; if one respects all forms of life or anything with a telos this may mean respecting the virus which causes A.I.D.S. which may destroy our own species etc.<sup>15</sup> An appreciation of the beauty, harmony, diversity of the natural environment does not appear to entail any consistent ethical course of action, without the introduction of further criteria and these criteria will tend to carry anthropocentric bias as when we feel free to disregard the viral autonomy of the A.I.D.S. virus when it conflicts with our interests. I will argue later that anthropocentric perspective is not only unavoidable in ethical decision making it also essential as I will demonstrate through consideration of the Neoplatonic perspective.

Beyond the problems of consistency, vacuousness and decidability, there is also the problem of deriving a duty of care from these experiences. Ultimately, the deep ecologists have intuited a profound value in nature in terms of harmony, beauty, balance, intelligible unity, holistic integrity etc. and sought to go beyond these experiences to ground a prescriptive and proscriptive normative system. But though as Tom Regan points out,<sup>16</sup> it may be true that one sees the sunset as beautiful why should I respect it, and what set of practical obligations would follow from this experience?

But moreover there are fundamental conceptual problems with the very notion of "states of affairs." "Deep ecologists," inspired by G.E. Moore, have argued that our ethical positions should be derived from states of affairs which are seen to have intrinsic value so that we are under a duty to maintain these states.<sup>17</sup> Among other things deep ecologists desire that we acknowledge a duty of care towards not only individual non-human existents but also ecosystems and species. Ecological systems and species, however, possess meaning which cannot be reduced to mere "states of affairs." Holmes Rolston describes an ecosystem as that which "...projects and protects, regenerates and reforms all these member components in biotic community."<sup>18</sup> With respect to species G.G. Simpson asserts "An evolutionary species is a lineage (an ancestral-descendant sequence of populations) evolving separately from others and with its own unitary evolutionary role and tendencies."<sup>19</sup> These are conceptual descriptions which are not adequately captured by the term "state of affairs," or as Tom Regan points out, environmentalists wish to attribute value in a holistic manner but, "Sustainable, diverse and balanced systems of life are not states of affairs any more than species are."<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, by emphasizing intrinsically valuable states of affairs, deep ecologists stand in danger of undermining the ordered unity of nature they are committed to protecting. For example, one cannot consistently maintain that individual members have intrinsic value, and should be treated as ends in themselves, and maintain, as many environmentalist wish to, that reducing the surplus numbers of an overpopulated species is justified to maintain ecological balance, as when one advocates hunting wild animals (for example, deer) to cull their number in order to promote the stability of the ecosystem. Conversely, emphasizing the importance of balanced systems, and functional relations which define ecosystems and species, devalues individual members and components so that it is impossible to maintain the notion that non-human individuals possess intrinsic value.

This point, I believe, underlines the difficulty. The experience of "nature" as harmonious, holistic and balanced points not entirely to the transitory embodiments of these qualities but also to an intelligent unifying power or force which endures independent of any given state of affairs—that which "projects and protects, regenerates and reforms." For example, a given ecosystem may

prove to be unstable and die out yet there will be a reformation and a new one will emerge. There are also the effects of ecological succession, the process by which the structure of the biological community, with respect to both niche structure and species structure, alters as a result of the species modification of habitat. As happens most often in the case of dominance of one species within an ecosystem, this process ultimately renders the habitat unfit for the dominant species, yet a new habitat is thereby created which will support new and diversely different species. Thus, it seems absurd to attempt to preserve and maintain given states of affairs, as nature herself is a dynamic system in which given members die out and situations constantly alter, yet the living force, which resolves and brings forth these rich concatenations, endures and constantly reinstates new conditions and new member components.

Neoplatonists in contrast did not linger with the natural phenomenon which are the expressions of this life giving force but sought to go beyond instantiations to the transcendent source of these enduring qualities. In contrast, the deep ecologist remains transfixed on the individual phenomena which carry these qualities and tries to tell us that we should preserve the transitory states of affairs which exhibit these qualities. This is precisely where the deep ecologist runs into trouble.

I say this because first of all the experience of this value in nature confounds rational choice when it is made a basis of practical action. Without anthropocentric guidelines one is confronted by diverse and conflicting courses of action, and moreover, fixation on "valuable states of affairs" denies the unifying source or power which exists independently of particular instantiations.

## V. Beyond the Rejection of Anthropocentrism and "Detached Science"

To this point we have underlined that Neoplatonism, unlike deep ecology, does not explicitly attempt to prescribe or proscribe definite forms of social organization. In contrast, deep ecology explicitly intends its articulations to function as guides to appropriate societal norms including social and economic

arrangements. However, despite this reticence it has been historically the case that Neoplatonic theory offered powerful theoretical support for Medieval Christianity and its ethical teachings. In the subsequent pages I argue that, in fact, Neoplatonism does offer a superior theoretical basis for deriving moral positions, a basis which is perspicuously lacking in the articulations of the deep ecologists, and that this advantage is linked to an understanding of the cosmic order which does not defenestrate anthropocentric concerns.

As we have said, one view of modernism which the deep ecologist denies is that Man is the centre of the universe. But the other aspect of modern thought which deep ecology also rejects is the detached attitude of scientific enquiry which refuses to invest value or meaning in natural phenomena. In part what we mean by the detached nature of modern scientific understanding is the belief that our understanding of nature must be value free, and concomitantly, a central tenet of modern scientific enquiry is the notion of objective detachment. Despite the fact that deep ecologists believe that the moral advantage of a position which invests intrinsic value in the natural world is to be found in an implied non-instrumental attitude, in fact, the premises of pure science enjoin an initial parallel non-instrumental approach. As a precondition of its investigation, detached scientific enquiry demands an uninvolved observer, one whose desires, expectations, preconceptions do not enter into or otherwise prejudice the enquiry, though ultimately the product of these enquiries may be used to satisfy these varied goals of human agency and predilection. As Charles Taylor states, "Science could only be carried on by a kind of asceticism, where we discipline ourselves to register the way things are without regard to the meanings they might have for us."<sup>21</sup> The notion of the purely scientific enquiry is, in fact, the ideal of the non-anthropocentric, an enquirer who divests from himself of all human concern and feelings of value for the object of study, whether instrumental or otherwise.

This, of course, is consistent with the ruthless quest for scientific knowledge with its unconstrained probing and experimentation. The idea that natural phenomenon have intrinsic value or any value can be an unacceptable hindrance to the study of phenomena as it is made ruthlessly subject to altering variables of pressure, temperature, division, fission and fusion etc. This

explains, in contrast, why the human sciences are much more constrained in methodology and must approach their topics in a much more gingerly fashion since, in accordance with Kantian premises, they must regard human life as having some sort of intrinsic value. On the other hand, the natural sciences could hardly have ever made their great advancements if one approached nature as sacrosanct repository of intrinsic values.

But strangely enough deep ecology does indeed seek to promote a very similar non-instrumental approach, but it seeks to avoid instrumentality by an alternative method, that of advancing an egalitarian unity of species with no special place for human beings. In doing so, it denies the position of traditional detached scientific enquiry which sees nature bereft of value, proposing instead, that it is the repository of equivalent intrinsic values. In this light deep ecology, in commonality with the scientific approach attempts to purge the anthropocentric, but at the same time, it operates as a fundamental reaction to the ideal of scientific detachment, which refuses to attribute value to the natural order.

However, deep ecology is not the first philosophy which regarded nature as exhibiting intrinsic values. In fact, the ideal of scientific detachment replaced an older view which according to Charles Taylor did not separate understanding the universe and the project of what he calls "attunement with the universe."<sup>22</sup> As Taylor says, the older view involved first of all seeing man as having an end or telos. Humankind's proper end was inseparable from one's proper place in the meaningful order of the universe. According to the most important philosophies of the classical period, especially Aristotelianism, Platonism and Neoplatonism, this order was to be discovered through the application of human rational nature. In Western civilization the latter view predominated until the seventeenth century and the advent of modern Western science, when the idea that the goals of human existence were revealed in the inherently valuable order of the universe became incompatible with the methods and goals of scientific progress. As Charles Taylor states "...the breaking of the connection between understanding and attunement was an essential part of the modern revolution in science. The conception of the universe as meaningful order, as a possible object of attunement, was seen as a projection, a comforting illusion which stood in the way of scientific knowledge."<sup>23</sup> The advancement of science thus appeared to require



that one first separate out the questions of human meaning and purpose from study into the nature of natural phenomenon. But in doing this, we defenestrated both the conviction that the natural order was itself inherently valuable, together with the idea that the purposes of individual human existence were revealed through an understanding of this valuable cosmological order. In itself the natural order was not regarded as valuable or revealing as to the purposes of human life, it was simply an object of study in which understanding occurred independent of these concerns, an object of study with the sole purpose of technological advance.

Does deep ecology in fact simply return us to this older view by reinstating the notion of inherent or intrinsic value of the natural order<sup>24</sup> or does it offer a further advancement? In fact it effects neither possibility. It sees the natural world as being intrinsically valuable, yet it fails to articulate an explanation of this intrinsic value which links to an understanding of the nature of human beings with their proper end or telic goal within this order. As we have pointed out, the classical view, illustrated perhaps best in the philosophy of Neoplatonism, necessarily includes in the definition of the natural order an indication of man's proper role and place within an encompassing meaningful order. This failing on the part of deep ecology in terms of lacunae again is essentially traceable to the premise that human interests and ends must be abstracted from a fundamental appreciation and understanding of the natural environment—the fundamental proscription against anthropocentrism.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, the articulations exemplified in Neoplatonism function both as an enquiry into the nature of human beings and consequently their appropriate ends, and the inherently valuable universe in which one is placed, and the two are not distinguishable projects such that either project could be accomplished independently of the other. In understanding and appreciating the cosmological order, we also come to understand the ends and purposes of human beings, and so receive important answers to a central concern of moral existence. Humanity maintained the connectedness of these concerns until science separated the notion of understanding the natural order from that of recognition of humankind's meaning and role within this order. In contrast, the view of the deep ecologists falls into the trap of merely iterating the scientific principle that we approach nature through disregarding desires, goals and ends of human beings and thus like

an all embracing scientific outlook, this attitude can undermine the grounding of any meaningful normative system regardless of the novelty of the original axiological conclusions.

If we are to state the issue in alternative terms we might say that the central problem for both deep ecology and pure science can be traced to the fact that both systems find themselves impaled on the horns of the dilemma created by the Cartesian metaphysics which accompanied the scientific advance of the sixteenth century, and from which contemporary philosophy struggles to escape. In effect, Cartesian philosophy formally articulated a position consistent with the implicit methodology of scientific enquiry which strived to separate subjectivity from the ideal of objective understanding. Cartesianism states that the subject and object must be separated as they represent distinct realities such that principles applicable within one realm are inapplicable with respect to the other. Thus the so called "modern" period has been burdened with the task of fusing together the disparate realities consisting of conscious subject and external object in order to effect a complete picture of the world and the cosmic order. Science, for example, despite its spectacular successes, proves to be unsatisfactory for the very reason that it so clearly refuses to effect a fusion because of its preoccupation with the "objective." As one postmodern commentator states, "Scientific explanations are themselves interpretations of a sort, ones, however, which have the particular characteristic in that the human subject or the author of the discourse does not show."<sup>26</sup> Natural science's spectacular success depended upon ignoring the human subject by delimiting and rejecting all issues of value, preference, and interest, emanating from the subject, but so fails to offer any insight into the condition of the human subject who finds himself confronted by this objectivity. Unfortunately deep ecology suffers from a very similar incompleteness in that it believes that the intrinsic value of the objective world can only be approached if we remove all reference to the human subject with its particular interests, projects and its value giving and creating activities. Thus deep ecology also offers a description of the world which can never be a complete description because the human subject is missing. Science confronts the subject/object distinction and seeks to remove the valuing subject in order that it can better objectify the objective, while deep ecology seeks to purge subjectivity from value

judgements by also denying the creative, valuing and value giving activities of the subject, while striving hopefully to objectify value in the external object believing that this can be achieved through the removal of the human subject. But in attempting to reinvest value in the objective, deep ecology does not leave us any better off than science because it fails to offer a full account of both our own valuing activities and the value which we perceive in the objective world of nature.

Neoplatonism, in contrast, achieves a greater completeness because it does not insist upon the distinctness of the human subject and the external world because the fundamental principle of reality applies equally to both human subject and external nature. The "Reason Principle" which Plotinus states the human subject possesses at the summit of its being (*Enneads* I.1.8) is the same principle by which the Soul brings into actuality the external world of nature, (*Enneads* II.3.16). In the act of intellection we realize the characteristic act of our human soul and at the same time experience the Act of the intellectual Principle upon us, (*Enneads* I.1.13). The idea of the distinctness between knower and known is thereby an illusion. As Plotinus states, the Intellectual or Knowing Principle must be one and the same with that which knows of the knowing, (*Enneads* II.9.1). The Intellectual Principle which orders and forms the natural world is thereby active with respect to the human subject and the realm of external nature. Through intellection the human subject maintains his link with the Intellectual Principle—the fundamental principle of natural reality, and the human subject achieves his excellence through association with the higher principle (*Enneads* I.1.8).

In his system Plotinus goes beyond science and deep ecology in that he offers a full account of the human condition recognizing that the so called objective world must be seen as intrinsically valuable and must include an account of the valuing subject who is intimately connected to the cosmic order and who is understood to have a proper and specific place within this order.

To expand on the last point we touch upon conclusions reached by Alistair McIntyre, but also in similar ways by Charles Taylor and Michael Sandel. McIntyre locates the essential failure of modern moral philosophy in this very refusal or failure to articulate the proper goals and purposes of human life. What Neoplatonism does offer, and what deep ecology does not, is an indication as to

how the individual can realize his own nature in terms of his own good. A complete ethics must according to Alistair McIntyre give an account of the qualities necessary to achieve: 1) the goods internal to practices; 2) qualities contributing to the good of the whole life; 3) an account of their relationship to the pursuit of the good of human beings.<sup>27</sup> Certainly deep ecology espousal of non-anthropomorphism elides issues 2 and 3 and in its present general undefined state can offer no direction as to issues relating to 1.<sup>28</sup>

To be fair, however, some environmentalists have recently recognized this problem and some have pointed out that the discernment of a cosmic purpose for ecosystems and all beings including human beings, is essential to the success of a viable environmental ethic. One author has recently alleged that stumbling blocks to success have been this failure on the part of deep ecology to offer a vision of cosmic purpose in which human beings play a unique role. He states, "...if the question of cosmic purpose can be taken up once again, we may be on the verge of achieving a novel vision of the greater nature in which all beings have a value in themselves and as part of quickening genesis."<sup>29</sup> This refusal to entertain issues relating to the special goals and purposes for human beings within the unfolding and development of the cosmos will, I believe, continue to militate against any wide acceptance of deep ecology. Environmental ethics cannot advance until it defenestrates the notion that ethics can be based on notions of non-anthropocentric value. So long as the environmental ethics of deep ecology delimit these areas as an inappropriate subjects of discussion, it can really offer no ethical advance on non-axiological scientific theories of nature.

Of course, in some ways deep ecology is not alone in this failing. McIntyre has pointed out that at least since Hume, moral philosophers have attempted moral theories which avoid addressing the issues of the nature of human beings, their proper good and telos, etc. However, deep ecology is different from the others in that it attempts to reinstate the idea of the value of the natural order, but without providing adequate answers as to the role of the human being within it answers, which address issues of the individual and humanity's own natural good. It fails in the latter respect because it pronounces that the latter should not be the concern of ethical theory, but in doing so it offers a theory which can never be completely satisfying or even adequate. Indeed if

McIntyre is correct in holding that an ethical theory lacks substantive moral content if it does not address these issues, then it may well be the case that though deep ecology has offered new axiologies, these are in the nature of the aesthetical rather than the ethical. Ultimately it is the suggestion of this paper that a return to the Neoplatonic thought will allow us to rediscover the lost possibilities which connect individual human existence with a comprehensive view of nature and non-human reality, connections which are missing from the stale discourse of scientism or the radical rejection of anthropocentrism embraced by deep ecology.

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#### NOTES

1. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H.J. Paton, (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 61.
2. Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans P.S. Watson (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1969), 613-38.
3. According to one aspect of the latter notion, the Divine exercises an attraction while remaining itself unmoved and unchanged. At the same time the whole material universe bears the mark of eros, the lower reaching out after the higher striving to become like it. In general the ladder signifies the lower realities striving everywhere upward towards the higher spiritual reality.
4. See David R. Lea, "Christianity and Western Attitudes Towards the Natural Environment", *The History of European Ideas* 18, No 4, (July 1994): 513-525.
5. Plotinus, *the Enneads*, trans. Stephen McKenna (London: Faber & Faber, 1969).
6. See M.F. Wagner, "Vertical Causation in Plotinus", *The Structure of Being: A Neoplatonic Approach*, ed Baine Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982): 51-73, 59.
7. Holmes Rolston, *Environmental Ethics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 40.
8. *Ibid.*, 28.
9. *Ibid.*, 245.
10. J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 142.
11. John Rodman, "Theory and Practice in the Environmental Movement: Notes Toward an Ecology of Experience," in *The Search for Values in a Changing World: Proceedings from the Sixth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences* (San Francisco: International

- Cultural Foundation, 1978) 45-56.
12. Tom Regan, "Does Environmental Ethics Rest on a Mistake," *Monist* 75, No.2 (1992):161-183, 174.
13. Janna Thompson, "A Refutation of Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1990):147-160, similarly concludes that environmental ethics, among other things, cannot satisfy the requirements of any viable ethical system in that it is "inconsistent" which is to say that it cannot dictate which similarities and differences are relevant and why. Also it falls short with respect to further requirements. She argues that successful ethics must be "non-vacuous" for an ethic cannot be prescriptive if all systems and individuals are of equal intrinsic value, thirdly, it must be "decidable" since it must solve ethical dilemmas in order to be practical and it cannot do so if it is unable to dictate what is of value and what is not.
14. William Gray, "Anthropocentrism and Deep Ecology," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 71, No 4 (1993): 453-476, 470.
15. On this and similar points, see Tom Regan in "Does Environmental Ethics Rest on a Mistake".
16. *Ibid.*, 170.
17. See for example Robert Elliot, "Value, Obligation and Naturalness," *Monist* 75, no. 2 (1992): 138-160. G.E. Moore's original thought can be found in *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903).
18. Holmes Rolston, *Environmental Ethics*, 188.
19. G.G. Simpson, *Principles of Animal Taxonomy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 153.
20. Tom Regan, "Does Environmental Ethics Rest on a Mistake?"
21. Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers II* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), 143.
22. *Ibid.*, 142-145.
23. *Ibid.*, 143.
24. Environmental ethics often distinguishes between "inherent" and "intrinsic" value. Bryan G. Norton, "Epistemology and Environmental Values," *Monist* 75 (1992): explains that advocates of "intrinsic value" believe that natural objects have value entirely independent of human consciousness. According to this theory, the value in nature existed prior to human consciousness and it will continue to exist even after human consciousness disappears. On the other hand, those who see "inherent value" in nature see nature having value that is independent of the values and goals of human valuers, it is not merely instrumental to human ends, but this value is attributed by conscious valuers, either human or otherwise. J. Baird Callicott advocates inherent value of nature in which nature is valuable for its own sake, but is not valuable in itself, that is, independent of human or other valuing consciousness

(see J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 1989), 163.

25. In fairness to the movement, however, it must be pointed out that some environmental ethicists, for example, Eugene Hargrove ("Anthropocentric Intrinsic Value," *Monist* 75 (1992): 181-207) and John O'Neill ("Varieties of Intrinsic Value," *Monist* 75 (1992): 119-137) recognize that one cannot really base ethics on non-anthropocentric intrinsic value but argue that this does not imply that all value must be instrumental. O'Neill particularly argues for an Aristotelian approach in which it is argued that the flourishing of many other things ought to be promoted because they are constitutive of our own flourishing which includes the idea that we value things for their own sake. Also A. J. Fabel "Environmental Ethics and the Question of Cosmic Purpose," *Environmental Ethics* 16 (1994): 303-314, has recently argued that we must reintroduce the idea of cosmic purpose and humanity's role within that purpose. However it does remain that the leaders of the environmental movement, for example, Holmes Rolston III (*Philosophy Gone Wild* and *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in Nature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), Paul Taylor (*Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), and J. Baird Callicott (*In Defense of the Land Ethic*) have struggled to maintain the notion of non-anthropocentric value.
26. G.B. Madison, *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity: Figures and Themes* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 48.
27. Alistair McIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1993), 273.
28. Janna Thompson, "A Refutation of Environmental Ethics," points out that environmental ethics cannot satisfy the requirements which any ethical system must satisfy because: 1) it is inconsistent because it cannot dictate which differences and similarities are relevant and why; 2) it is vacuous because all individuals and systems are granted equal intrinsic value and therefore it cannot be prescriptive if all individuals or systems are of equal value; 3) it must be decidable, it must be able to dictate what is of value and what is not in order to solve ethical dilemmas, for if it is not decidable it is not practical.
29. A.J. Fabel, "Environmental Ethics and the Question of Cosmic Purpose," 310.

## Neoplatonism in Transpersonal Psychology: The Thought of Ken Wilber

Daniel Kealey

Transpersonal psychology emerged as a discipline in the early 70's. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, initiated in 1973, declares in its statement of purpose that it

is concerned with the publication of theoretical and applied research, empirical papers, articles and studies in meta-needs, transpersonal values and states, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, ecstasy, mystical experience, being, essence, bliss, awe, wonder, self-actualization, self-transcendence, spirit, sacralization of everyday life, oneness, cosmic awareness, cosmic play, individual and species-wide synergy, the theories and practices of meditation, spiritual paths, transpersonal actualization, compassion; and related concepts, experiences and activities.

One of the principal founders of transpersonal psychology was Abraham Maslow who also distinguished himself as the founder of humanistic psychology, or "Third Force" psychology to differentiate it from the dominant psychological schools of Freudian psychoanalysis and behaviorism, both of which are reductionistic when it comes to what Maslow referred to as "the further reaches of human nature" (the title of one of his books). Rather than focusing almost exclusively on the pathological or lowest common denominator aspects of mental health and basing a model of human psychology on that, Maslow decided to study healthy, creative, integrated individuals who, as "self-actualizers" and pursuers of "being-needs," were developed beyond the "moral majority" whose lives were centered around the satisfaction of the "deficiency-needs" of survival, security, belonging, and recognition etc. Somewhat to his surprise, Maslow found that self-actualizing

people tended to have significantly higher rates of what he called "peak experiences," and the more focused study of this phenomenon became the impetus for transpersonal psychology's outgrowth from humanistic psychology. These two schools overlap considerably, the difference being that while all transpersonal psychologists embrace humanistic psychology, not all humanistic psychologists embrace transpersonal psychology. Some of the main contributors to this school of psychology are Stanislov Grof, Chogyam Trungpa, Frances Vaughan, James Fadiman, Michael Murphy, Roger Walsh, Daniel Goleman, Roberto Assagioli, Ken Wilber and many others.<sup>1</sup> There is at least one graduate school completely devoted to it, the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology, and several other graduate schools offer programs that are mainly or partly oriented to it. Through the prolific "workshop culture" of the mental health field, transpersonal psychology has extended its influence far beyond the sphere of those who are primarily identified with it.

Ken Wilber stands out in the field of transpersonal psychology as its greatest theoretician. In his many books he displays a phenomenal grasp not only of the entire field of psychology, but of both Western and Eastern philosophy and the social and natural sciences.<sup>2</sup> He has been called the Freud of transpersonal psychology, but his latest book has won him praise as the new Hegel (it's 800 pages long and only the first of three volumes). Wilber refers to Plotinus and other figures of the Neoplatonic line of thought often throughout his writings, and in his latest book, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, explicitly identifies himself as carrying forth this tradition (via Schelling who temporalized Plotinus). In the following pages I will abstract some of the key features of his synthesis.

In *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, Wilber's first book, he develops the theory of a *psychologia perennis* or spectrum psychology, metaphorically likening consciousness to the light and energy spectrum. There are levels of consciousness ranging from the most unified or whole to the most fragmented. Wilber focuses on the block of the spectrum that describes human evolution but makes quite clear that consciousness extends in both directions beyond the human. Ultimately, Reality is consciousness, not in the sense of subjective idealism, but in the sense that ultimate reality, the Absolute, is revealed only in the state of nondual knowing

where it stands out not as an object of a separated consciousness but as pure nondual consciousness, as undivided wholeness. It is thus consciousness beyond subjective consciousness, prior to the primary dualism of subject and object. We are that One, which is the innermost essence of our present consciousness no matter how overlayed it is by bifurcations and repressions that alienate us from primal unity. Here Wilber draws strong support from Vendanta, Mahayana Buddhism and Daoism as well as such Neoplatonists as Plotinus, Eckhart and Nicolas de Cusa.

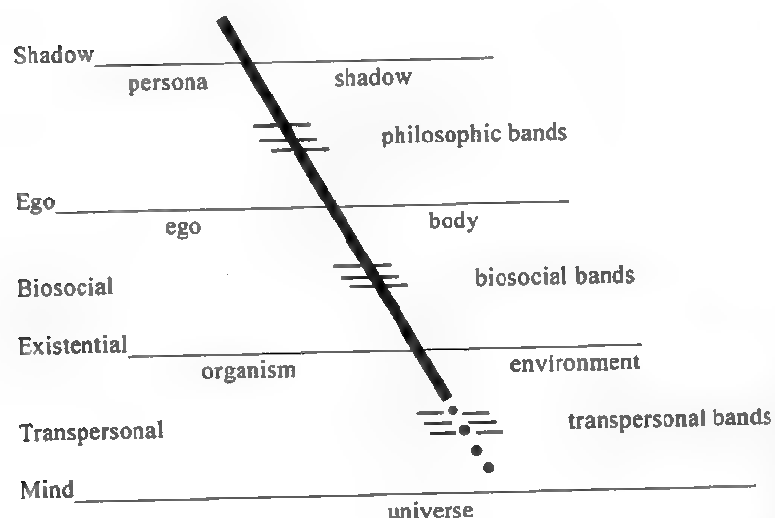
While neither Wilber nor anyone else can give us the reason why the Absolute involves itself in duality, for reason itself is within *maya* and cannot account for it, we can become aware of how the spectrum of consciousness is generated from "out of" the infinite. Indeed, there is a sense in which we generate the spectrum from moment to moment, as when, quoting from the Lankavatara Sutra, we engage in the process of "reflection by memory wrongly interpreted" in which we mistake our present memory for real knowledge of a "past," thus creating the illusion of real time outside of this present moment. We can become aware of how distinctions arise and obscure their nondual origin. So out of undivided unity consciousness a primal distinction arises. The distinction takes the form of a gestalt or figure/foreground configuration in which the nondual absolute becomes repressed as background and simultaneously there is the projection of duality. "The Primary Dualism, therefore, is actually the Primary Dualism-Repression-Projection. 'Let there be a distinction,' and the non-dual awareness (Absolute Subjectivity) is repressed, thereupon projecting itself as the opposites subject vs. object or organism vs. environment. This general process of dualism-repression-projection is an important one, for it repeats itself numerous times throughout all subsequent levels of consciousness, each time generating a new band of the spectrum and increasing man's ignorance of his Supreme Identity."<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1 (below) diagrams the procession of successive dualism-repression-projections beginning from unity consciousness at the bottom and progressing up through the spectrum.

The Primary Dualism produces space, the gap between the seer and the seen. It also creates time, as we have seen, made acute by the fear of death which arises when we distinguish ourselves from the environment. This Existential level can be brought to awareness

easily by abstracting away personal, social and gender identifications and simply being organismically aware. The transpersonal bands are somewhat more difficult for the average person to become aware of, but awareness of those levels emerge especially in the soul's return to its source.

Fig. 1: Spectrum of Consciousness



*Angst*, or the fear of death, eventually provokes a further dualism-repression-projection within our own separated being. We begin to identify more with the idea of ourselves and thus form an egoic identity that represses the flesh. The diagonal line thus represents our identity boundaries or the locus of the dualism. What's on the left side of the diagonal represents our conscious self, and on the right we find our unconscious or repressed aspects. The particular manner in which the egoic duality is effected depends on such factors as one's linguistic matrix, introjected structures of one's family, cultural beliefs and myths which comprise the Biosocial bands.

The ego, however, is not the impenetrable bastion it sometimes thinks itself to be. It can find itself in conflict with itself, differentiating between its "good" self and "bad" self. One redraws

one's boundaries even more closely in, initiates another dualism-repression, identifying with the good parts of one's psyche and repressing the bad parts, thus projecting the dualism of persona vs. Shadow (in the Jungian sense).

Such fragmentation leads to obvious dysfunction, and healing this dysfunction initiates the return journey towards greater integration. The existence of many different psychological theories, many contradicting each other, can be quite confusing. What type of psychotherapy best addresses my situation? Wilber's spectrum model clarifies this conflict of theories by identifying which dualism any particular form of psychotherapy is addressing. A person with a dysfunctional persona and ego would not be advised, for example, to take up Bioenergetics therapy which aims to overcome the mind/body unity, much less to take up Zen which tells you to forget your ego. Rather a person on the Shadow level of conscious identity would be advised to take up simple, "talk" counseling, the aim of which is to get the client to come to terms with those repressed parts of her own mind which she projects onto other people, causing conflict with them. The aim of this therapy is usually stated to be adaptation to one's social circumstances, which in the spectrum diagram would fall into the healthy persona category.

If, on the other hand, one's dysfunction is primarily neurotic and self-limiting, one would be advised to take up one of the many therapies that are designed to patch up the ego, such as Psychoanalysis, Transactional Analysis, Psychodrama, Reality Therapy, Ego Psychology, etc. A healthy ego is the result of overcoming and integrating the persona-shadow dichotomy. The next category of psychotherapies aim at integrating the ego-body dichotomy. Representative of this level are Rogerian therapy, Gestalt therapy, Existential analysis, Logotherapy, and Humanistic psychology. Wilber refers to the integrated mind/body level of development as the centauric stage.

When one develops the urge to merge with a reality greater than one's individual self, the transpersonal therapies are there to help you. Examples here would include Jung's Analytical Psychology, Assagioli's Psychosynthesis and Past-life therapy. Generally, as one moves down the spectrum we find that therapies recognize and deal with the dualities at levels above them, whereas they don't recognize or deal with dualities below them on the spectrum, or,

insofar as they notice them at all they do so reductionistically. (Remember that "upper" and "lower" refer to the spectrum as delineated in Figure 1.) Reichian bioenergetics therapy, for example, will deal with problems related with Persona or Egoic dysfunction, but will not provide help in synthesizing a greater integration with the Existential or environmental "other," or unity with the Absolute. The transpersonal therapies are not primarily concerned with achieving transpersonal states, but do include work at that level without attempting to reduce them into upper level theoretical structures. The Transpersonal bands include a whole gamut of experiences that extend consciousness beyond the egoic sphere, such as peak experiences, psychic phenomena, interaction with the collective unconscious, out-of-body experiences, working with spirit guides, etc.

Finally we arrive at those disciplines that enable one to overcome all dualities to achieve unity with the Divine. Here we completely leave behind the domain of psychotherapy and take up the spiritual work of the esoteric traditions. Vedanta, Mahayana Buddhism, Daoism, Sufism, Mystical Christianity and Esoteric Judaism represent the schools of thought that are appropriate here.

The overall parallel of Wilber's spectrum of consciousness of Plotinus's schema of the One and Its processions to Intellect and Soul and return back to the One is quite obvious. In subsequent writings, however, Wilber amends this circular model wherein the soul simply returns to its divine origins (the U-turn model) and argues that evolution progresses indefinitely, such that the soul is not merely making up for lost ground in the return journey but is involved in the divine project of ever greater integrations. The goal is not to leave this body and earth to return to heaven, but to bring more of heaven down to earth. More ascent is a half-baked spirituality. Ascent is followed by descent; the greater one's ascent, the greater one's compassion and capacity for integrating the lower. Here we find the influence of Plato, Jean Gebser and Sri Aurobindo prominent in Wilber's reformulation of the significance of spiritual development. This distinction better enables Wilber to criticize those theories that declare, for example, that egoic rationality is a mistake and that salvation lies in regressing to pre-egoic, mythic or magical states of consciousness integration. He strongly emphasizes the importance of developing reason to its full capacity. The great seers of nonduality, such as Buddha, Nagarjuna, Shankara, Eckhart,

Wang-Yang Ming and Ramana Maharishi, did not disparage reason, but used reason to the fullest to go beyond reason.

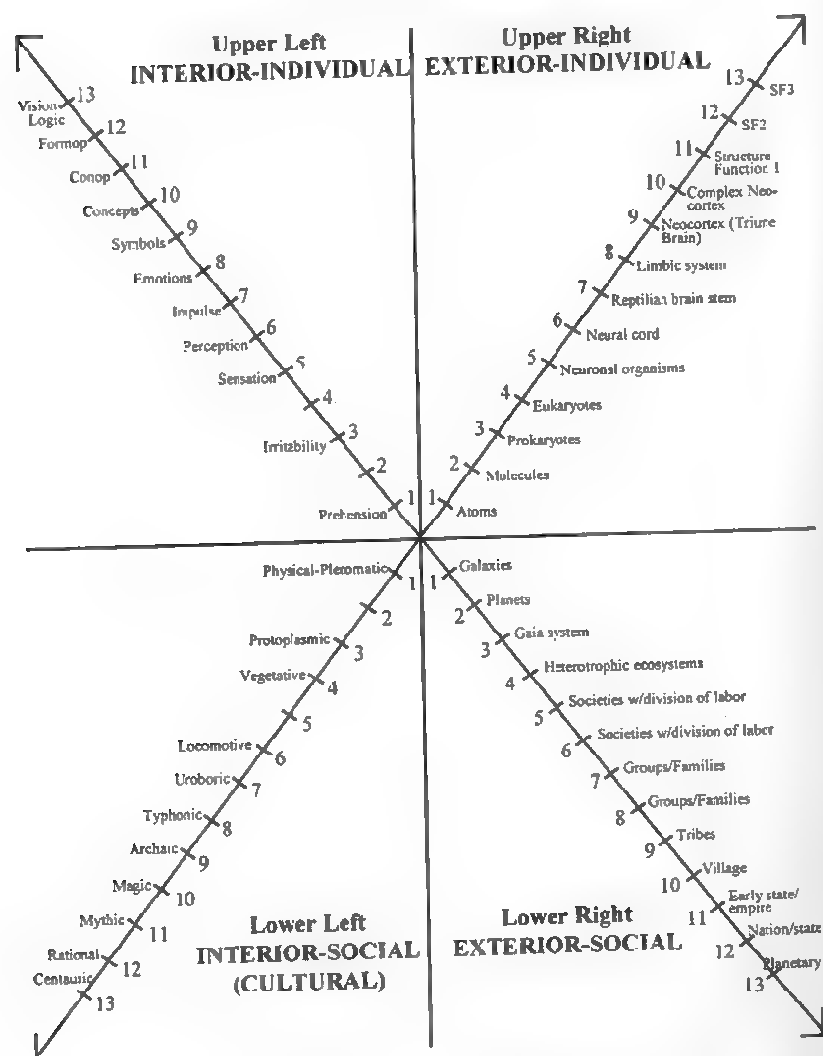
It is not possible in this modest essay to touch on all but a few of the major bases of Wilber's thought developed through a dozen books, but I would like to close with some ideas taken from his latest book, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*.

In the tradition of Leibniz and Whitehead, Wilber states that, "All developmental and evolutionary sequences that we are aware of proceed by hierarchization, or by orders of increasing holism—molecules to cells to organs to organ systems to organisms to societies of organisms, for example."<sup>4</sup> Another way of saying it is that the world is arranged holarchically. "Reality is not composed of things or processes; it is not composed of atoms or quarks; it is not composed of wholes, nor does it have any parts. Rather it is composed of whole/parts, or holons.... There is nothing that isn't a holon (upwardly and downwardly forever)."<sup>5</sup> "Every holon is simultaneously both a subholon (a part of some other holon) and a superholon (itself containing holons). Holons, moreover, both as individual and as social holons, have both an exterior and an interior (i.e., some form of consciousness). These are a few of the score of tenets Wilber describes of holons leading up to the major thesis that all holons have four quadrants.

The four quadrants are depicted in Figure 2. The right hand side graphs the exterior sides of holons and the left hand side denote the interior. The upper half charts individual holons while the lower half charts social or communal holons. Thus, if we start with the upper right quadrant, there we can chart the evolutionary progress of the exterior forms and structures of individual holons. In each quadrant we begin at the center and move out. Holons and evolution have directionality towards increasing complexity, telos, autonomy, etc. So the center here would be the Big Bang and we move from there up the ladder of evolutionary forms to subatomic particles to atoms to molecules to cells to neural organisms to triune-brained organisms. When referenced to humans this quadrant emphasizes behaviorism, which will have nothing to do with introspection. The data of introspection would be found in the upper left quadrant. From the center we follow the evolutionary trail from prehension to sensation, impulse, image, symbol, concept and so on. Every point on the left side has a correlate on the right

side (concepts, for example, with the neocortex of complex triune brains); every exterior has an interior.

**Fig. 2: The Four Quadrants**



(Formop=formal operational thought; Conop=concrete operational thought)

Every point on the upper half has also a corresponding point on the lower half. So all four quadrants have corresponding points with each other. The lower right quadrant runs from the Big Bang to superclusters to galaxies to stars to planets to (on Earth) the Gaia or bio-system to ecosystems to societies with division of labor to families. With reference to humans, this quadrant then runs from kinship tribes to villages to nation-states to global world-system. Of course everything on the right hand side is studied through the empirical sciences. Sociology, for example, mostly confines itself to studying the exterior, measurable, behavioral aspects of social systems, to the unfortunate neglect of the lower left quadrant of the interior, cultural aspect of shared values and common world views. With regard to humans, the lower left quadrant charts the evolution of world views or structures of consciousness from the archaic to the magical to the mythic to mental and emerging possible postmodern developments.

From a Neoplatonic viewpoint, the Four Quadrants schematizes the evolutionary Return to Spirit in a grand way. Wilber uses this schema to illuminate various psychohistorical developments. For example, while most critics of modernity have focused on the atomism of upper right-handers, the fact remains that most Enlightenment thinkers were indeed holists, but holists of the lower right, which is to say, they were "flatland" holists who reduced the left hand quadrants to the right. Thus the burgeoning crop of eco-holists and systems theorists today are not really an improvement over the modernists. They, too, reduce the Kosmos of the four quadrants to just the right hand. Merely indoctrinating people with flatland eco-holism will not bring about the reorientation towards nature necessary to avert ecological destruction. There has to be a corresponding transformation of the interior, consciousness dimension if we are to correctly attune ourselves to the evolving reality.<sup>6</sup>

As a last thought, the Four Quadrants can be reduced to three when we combine the two right hand quadrants into one, since they both are exteriors that can be described in it-language (the upper left uses I-language and the lower left, we-language). Wilber refers to these as the Big Three (it, I, we). We find the Big Three in many philosophies. For example, Plato's the True (or propositional truth referring to an objective state of affairs, it), the Good (or cultural justice and appropriateness, we), and the Beautiful (or the individual-aesthetic dimension, I). Again, the Big Three are covered by each of Kant's three Critiques.<sup>7</sup> Kant's work climaxed



modernity's effort to differentiate the Big Three (a feat most Romantics have wanted to reverse). The task of postmodernity, writes Wilber, is to integrate the Big Three. Kant and many post-Kantians hoped to find the key to integrating them in the aesthetic dimension. While it is true that the aesthetic domain does connect the empirical phenomenon of sensorimotor cognition ("science") and practical ethics ("morality"), this connecting link does not integrate these domains. Wilber makes his point by way of a metaphor: "It's like saying that the fourth grade lies between the third grade and the fifth grade and connects them, which it does; but the *integration* of the knowledge in those three grades is to be found in the sixth grade, not in the fourth."<sup>1</sup> Hence, the integration of the Big Three is not to be found in some intermediate domain but dialectically at a yet-higher level which he calls vision-logic. Here he sounds a note similar to such other contemporary Neoplatonically-oriented writers as Gebser and Sri Aurobindo.

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#### NOTES

1. A good introduction to transpersonal psychology is the book *Paths Beyond Ego* by Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughan, eds. (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1993).
2. Books by Ken Wilber include the following: *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (Wheaton, Ill: Quest, 1977); *No Boundary* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1981) is a shorter, more popular version, ideal for undergraduate students; *The Atman Project: A transpersonal view of human development* (Wheaton: Quest, 1980); *Up From Eden: A transpersonal view of human evolution* (NY: Doubleday, 1981); *A Sociable God* (NY: McGraw Hill, 1982); *Eye to Eye: The quest for the new paradigm* (NY: Anchor, 1983); and with J. Enger and D. Brown, *Transformations of Consciousness: Conventional and contemplative perspectives on development* (Boston: Shambhala, 1986).
3. *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, p. 119.
4. *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995), p. 19.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
6. For a Neoplatonic approach to environmental ethics strikingly similar to that advocated by Wilber, see my *Revisioning Environmental Ethics* (New York: SUNY-Press, 1990). I argue that *theoria* or contemplation is the indispensable basis for effective ecopraxis.
7. *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 144.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 392.

## Platonopolis Revisited

Robert Meredith Helm

Plotinus (c. 204-270) may be given credit for establishing Platonic philosophy as an ineradicable influence in Roman intellectual life and, indeed, in the Western world at large. He was born in Egypt and, although his ancestry is uncertain, he had a Latin name. After attending elementary school in his home town, he went to Alexandria for further study. There he went from philosopher to philosopher until his twenty-ninth year, searching for a key to the truth about the universe. At last, on the advice of a friend, he sought instruction from Ammonius Saccas, called "The Porter," who had once been a Christian but who had returned to the Greek religion. Ammonius's teaching was of such high quality that Plotinus stayed with him for eleven years.

Interested in learning something about Oriental philosophy, Plotinus went with the army of the Emperor Gordian III in a campaign against King Sapor of Persia, hoping to be able to have consultation with the Persian Magi and perhaps even the Indian sages. Gordian was murdered in Mesopotamia, and Plotinus, on his way home, got back as far as Antioch. Instead of returning to his native Egypt, however, he went to Rome in 244. There he established a school and spent the rest of his life as a teacher. He was a favorite of the Emperor Gallienus and his wife.

Like his master, Ammonius Saccas, who never committed his thoughts to writing, Plotinus confined himself to oral teaching until he was fifty years of age. Then he began writing down his thoughts in the work we know as the *Enneads*, so called because of the arrangement of its chapters in groups of nine. After his death, Porphyry, one of his pupils and himself a celebrated Neoplatonist, wrote his master's biography and used it as an introduction to the *Enneads*, which he edited and published.

For Plotinus, the Platonic philosophy was not simply a way to know about the universe through rational speculation. It was a way of life by which he sought to ascend through the stages of reality to the source of his own being through intellectual and moral self-discipline.

It thus had for him a distinctly religious quality, and it was seen by his followers as an alternative to Christianity and the other cults which commanded the allegiance of people of the Empire. It thus represented the last stand of enlightened Hellenic Paganism against the onslaught of Eastern religious thought.

A tantalizing paragraph of Porphyry's biography gives us an all too brief glimpse of Plotinus as a would-be statesman.

The Emperor Gallienus and his wife Salonina greatly honoured and venerated Plotinus, who thought to turn their friendly feeling to some good purpose. In Campania there had once stood, according to tradition, a City of Philosophers, a ruin now; Plotinus asked the Emperor to rebuild this city and to make over the surrounding district to the new-founded state; the population was to live under Plato's laws: the city was to be called Platonopolis; and Plotinus undertook to settle down there with his associates. He would have had his way without more ado but that opposition at court, prompted by jealousy, spite, or some such paltry motive, put an end to the plan. (Porphyry 12. MacKenna 9)

Had Platonopolis actually been founded, what sort of city would it have been and what impact would it have had upon the history of statecraft? Plotinus himself never formulated a systematic political theory, but he clearly regarded the Platonic state as an appropriate vehicle for the achievement of certain ends that had some importance in his philosophy.

But which Platonic state? The one laid out in the *Republic*, the one ruled by a single philosopher-king proposed in the *Politicus*, or the pragmatically designed one described in the *Laws*?

Everything we know about Plotinus' nature from his writings would seem to indicate that he had the *Republic* in mind as his model, but if he had been permitted to carry out his plan, he undoubtedly, like Plato in his later years, would have found it necessary to face some hard questions as to the ways in which the values of an ideal state can in some measure be realized in an actual human community.

Basically, there are two ways in which governments can make a plausible claim to legitimacy.

The first may be described as ethnic or tribal. On the basis of blood kinship, reinforced by a common language and shared folkways, a society gradually takes shape as a sort of organic growth. Its common ideas are rooted in a familial tradition, and any codification of them is in the nature of a ratification of existing custom rather than of a

formal contract on which the society is based. If radical innovation occurs, it is as the result of the arbitrary decision of an authority with sufficient power to enforce its decrees, even if they challenge tradition. Legitimacy is endangered when the challenge is perceived as too radical for the populace to accept.

The second may be characterized as ideational or ideological. On the basis of a conceptual scheme dealing with human nature and the purposes for which organized societies exist, a collection of people convinced of the correctness of that scheme contract with one another to form a community based on their principles. Government achieves legitimacy by gaining the consent of the populace to be ruled by those principles. Legitimacy is threatened when government violates the principles or when they cease to be recognized as normative by the governed.

Plato's *Republic* was the quintessential expression in antiquity of the second path, and although his attempt to put theory into practice in Syracuse and Plotinus's later proposal to found the Republic in Italy were frustrated, it has been influential in almost every society in the West since his time.

Of course, the society that Plato envisioned in each of his political writings was a *polis*, a city state in the Greek mould, which would in some measure have the additional claim to legitimacy of an ethnic society in that it would possess from the outset many of the common feelings and shared folkways of a relatively homogeneous citizenry. Plotinus too would apparently have been content with a single city and a little land surrounding it. We have no evidence that he thought in terms of polyglot populations with diverse cultural backgrounds, scattered over very large areas. A Roman Empire governed by philosophy was not his goal. That vision was left for Stoics and followers of Cicero. In the Italy of his day, Platonopolis might or might not have had a homogeneous population, but in either case, its principal claim to legitimacy would have resided in the ideas on which it was based.

For Plotinus, as for Plato, the proper function of a state is determined by an understanding of what constitutes virtue. The ground of reality provides the ultimate sanction for an ethical system, and the One, who may also be called Beauty or the Good, is the source of all value. Virtue, however, does not exist as such in the transcendent realm from which the world of space and time are generated. It is a property of the Soul world. In that lower realm, civic virtues have a role of some importance in creating and supporting a society in which members

of a community may as individuals be free to develop those higher faculties that can lead them toward ■ greater likeness to God.

The material house is not identical with the house conceived in the intellect, and yet stands in its likeness: the material house has distribution and order while the pure idea is not constituted by any such elements; distribution, order, symmetry are not parts of an idea.

So with us: it is from the Supreme that we derive order and distribution and harmony, which are virtues in this sphere: the Existences there, having no need of harmony, order, or distribution, have nothing to do with virtue; and none the less, it is by our possession of virtue that we become like to Them.

Thus much to show that the principle that we attain Likeness by virtue in no way involves the existence of virtue in the Supreme. (*Enneads* I. 2. 1. MacKenna 31)

Likeness to God is attained by "becoming just and holy," "living by wisdom" (*Enneads* I. 2. 1. MacKenna 30). It is sought out of the desire to escape from evil, which has no place "among Beings or in the Beyond Being," where there is only good. What we think of as the evils of the world are situate in a faint image of Being not far above Non-Being, which is not "something that simply does not exist, but only something of an utterly different order from Authentic-Being" (*Enneads* I. 8. 3. MacKenna 67-68).

Now this (the required faint image of Being) might be the sensible universe with all the impressions it engenders, or it might be something of even later derivation, accidental to the realm of sense, or again, it might be the source of the sense-world or something entering into it to complete its character. (*Enneads* I. 8. 3. MacKenna 68)

Absolute evil is "below all the patterns, forms, shapes, measurements, and limits" (*Enneads* I. 8. 3. MacKenna 68). In human experience, however, evil is found in varying degrees and kinds because the soul, in association with matter,

...accepts evil—unmeasure, excess, and shortcoming, which bring forth licentiousness, cowardice, and all other flaws of the Soul, all the states, foreign to the true nature, which set up false judgements, so that the Soul comes to name things good or evil not by their true value but by the mere test of like or dislike. (*Enneads* I. 8. 4. MacKenna 69)

It is the function of a legitimate state to provide conditions under which individual souls are given every possible opportunity to escape that hedonic bondage to matter. In human life, however, the situation is complicated by the fact that not every lack is evil. There is an intermediate classification of "Not-Goodness" (*Enneads* I. 8. 5. MacKenna 70). Shortcomings in this category, however, are dangerous in that they may provide an occasion for the ultimate fall of the soul, and so a sufficiently serious shortcoming may in this sense be "an evil" (*Enneads* I. 8. 5. MacKenna 70).

Another aspect of Plotinus's view of the relation of evil to human institutions may be found in his concern with matters "external to the soul," such as sickness and poverty. How, he asked, may they be related to his privative theory of evil? He answered:

Well, sickness is excess or defect in the body, which as a material organism rebels against order and measure; ugliness is but matter not mastered by Ideal-Form; poverty consists in our need and lack of goods made necessary to us by our association with Matter whose very nature is to be one long want. (*Enneads* I. 8. 5. MacKenna 70)

All these may be "evils." Are they subject to amelioration by individual or collective action, or are they ineradicable features of the human condition? Plotinus, while maintaining that *any* association with the Non-Being of matter introduces a lack and that any considerable lack may conduce to evil, gave a firm, if qualified, endorsement of moral effort. The Platonic injunction to "flee hence," he said, does not refer to an immediate flight to the heavenly realm. "The flight we read of consists not in quitting earth but in living our earth-life with justice and piety in the light of philosophy" (*Enneads* I. 8. 5. MacKenna 70).

The stage is thus set for a place in the Platonic state for all those operations that might be concerned with bodily well being, the production of useful goods, and even the cultivation of the arts, for which Plotinus showed greater appreciation than Plato, holding, as he did, that works of art, rather than being mere reproductions of natural objects which are themselves imitations, "go back to the Reason-Principles from which Nature derives, and...are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking" (*Enneads* IV. 8. 1. MacKenna 422-423).

For Plotinus, as for Plato, the state exists to establish and maintain justice. The Republic is a macrocosm modeled after the microcosm of the individual. Plato saw every human soul as having an appetitive,

■ spirited, and a rational part, although in view of the unity of the soul, the word "faculty" is probably preferable to "part" as ■ rendering of *metos* in this context. The lowest is the appetitive faculty, the seat of physical craving. Somewhat higher is the spirited faculty, the seat of daring and enterprise. Higher still is the rational faculty, which ideally governs the other two and keeps them in harmony, as the charioteer in the *Phaedrus* controls two horses of unequal nobility and keeps them on a steady course. When a proper balance of the faculties is achieved by the subordination of the two lower aspects of the soul to the higher, each *metos* achieves the virtue proper to it.

Temperance is the virtue of the appetitive faculty when it is under the rule of reason. Fortitude, or courage, is the virtue of the spirited part when it initiates rationally controlled actions. The rational faculty is, of course, autonomous, and its proper self-governance results in wisdom. When the faculties work together in harmony, a fourth virtue, justice, is produced. This is the good for the individual human being.

Plotinus in one context described the soul in terms of reproductive, intellective and intuitive "phases" (*Enneads* V. 3. 9. MacKenna 390-391), but in discussing the civic virtues, he accepted the language of Plato. Though for him they may be predicated only of souls enmeshed in the world of sense and not of pure souls unencumbered by matter, the Platonic civic virtues have real significance for the establishment of a human society (*Enneads* I. 2. 1. MacKenna 30). Although he did not supplement his own account of the civic virtues of individuals with a detailed treatment of the state as "man writ large," it is evident that for Plotinus, as for Plato, the state must have corporate functions similar to those of the individuals composing it and that a society would be supplied, defended, and governed justly when it is ruled by the rational faculty. Justice does not prescribe similar treatment for all the citizens of a state. Neither for Plato nor for Plotinus, to be sure, is there any suggestion of the desirability of an aristocracy of birth, although Plato had an apparent interest in eugenics, which has been echoed in our own time in the works of Dean Inge. In Platonic political theory though, proper education of the right people can cultivate an aristocracy of the soul, the relative presence or absence of which can dictate the place a person ought to occupy in society.

There are, Plotinus said:

...two distinct forms, the way of the Sage and the way of the mass, the Sage intent upon the sublimest, upon the realm above, while those of

the more strictly human type fall, again, under two classes, the one reminiscent of virtue and therefore not without touch with good, the other mere populace, serving to provide necessities to the better sort. (*Enneads*, II. 9. 9. MacKenna 140)

Plato regarded his rulers as the cream of a broader class which also included not only the finally selected Guardians, but also those defenders of the state who came to be known as Auxiliaries. Plotinus, though recognizing that the auxiliaries are "not without touch with good," appears to have thought that they do not differ from the masses as much as they do from the sages. The function of both of the lower classes seems to be to support "the better sort."

On the face of it, this seems to suggest a coldly aristocratic view of society, redeemed only in part by the fact that Plotinus saw the material demands of "the better sort" as minimal. For them:

It (the soul) will hold itself above all passions and affections. Necessary pleasures and all the activity of the senses it will employ only for medicament and assuagement lest its work be impeded. Pain it may combat, but failing the cure, it will bear meekly and ease it by refusing to assent to it. All passionate action it will check: the suppression will be complete if that be possible, but at worst the Soul will never itself take fire but will keep the involuntary and uncontrolled outside its own precincts, and rare and weak at that. The soul has nothing to dread, though no doubt the involuntary has some power here too: fear therefore must cease except so far as it is purely monitory. What desire there may be can never be for the vile: even the food and drink necessary for restoration will be outside the Soul's attention and not less the sexual appetite: or if such desire there must be, it will turn upon the actual needs of nature and be entirely under control; or if any uncontrolled motion takes place, it will reach no further than the imagination, be no more than a fleeting fancy. (*Enneads* I. 2. 5. MacKenna 34)

In providing an environment in which such a lofty mode of life can be followed by "the better sort," there is no barrier to the achievement of lesser goals by those who serve that purpose. An abstemious and non-acquisitive intellectual aristocracy is not incompatible with a lively world of commerce at the lower levels. Arguably, the activities conducted at those levels might be essential for the health of a society that could afford philosophers. The Platonic society makes no pretense of being democratic, but it does seek to produce sources of satisfaction appropriate to each level of the populace.

What relevance does Platonopolis, an unfulfilled dream of a third-century Neoplatonist, have for the problems the world faces at the close of a century in which the ideologies that inspired such confidence in a more optimistic age are succumbing to a growing tribalism based on seemingly irreconcilable ethnic differences? Can any system of ideas serve as a pattern for the governance of great states with heterogeneous populations in such a way that political legitimacy rests on the shared ideas rather than on genetic, linguistic, cultural, or religious identity?

Plotinus offered us no blueprints for a state, and if he had, there would have been many features in them that we would reject. There are, however, some fundamental principles in his philosophy that may be essential to any attempt to establish and maintain the sort of societies demanded for our own time.

First, there is the primacy of the individual. Although the structure of Plato's *Republic* has all too often served as a model for unsavory governments guided by principles quite different from his own, it must not be forgotten that his political theory was based on his analysis of the faculties and needs of single human beings. The state was "man writ large." The society he proposed is, to be sure, one that is so highly structured that it constitutes a sort of complex organism in itself, but its corporate hungers and aspirations are the hungers and aspirations of private citizens working together for the common good. For Plotinus too, the state exists so that individuals may live in an environment that will enable them to seek the highest degree of fulfillment to which they may reasonably aspire. Inequalities in the society are the result of differing potentialities rather than of the arbitrary exercise of power by an external authority. For those whose desires are directed toward pleasure or gain, sources of amusement and material wealth exist in the good *polis*, but it reserves the most honored place for those who follow a way of life that leads them beyond worldly values.

Withdraw into yourself and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful: he cuts away here, he smooths there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also: cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is overcast, labour to make all one glow of beauty until there shall shine out on you from it the godlike splendour of virtue, until you shall see the perfect goodness established in the stainless shrine. (*Enneads* I. 6. 9. MacKenna 63)

Plotinus has often been criticized for being too much concerned with the personal and private aspects of character building and too little with concern for the welfare of one's fellows. It is true that his conception of *eudaimonia* is essentially individual rather than collective and that loving one's neighbor as oneself does not play a central role in his political philosophy. "The proficient," he said, "would like to see all men prosperous and no evil befalling anyone; but though it prove otherwise, he is still content" (*Enneads* I. 4. 11. MacKenna 49). This independence of the individual soul, however, in seeking the higher good, is by no means inconsistent with at least a passive preference for the well-being of other individuals. In fact, Plotinus said, "The more perfect the man, the more compliant he is, even towards his fellows; we must temper our importance, not thrusting insolently beyond what our nature warrants; we must allow other beings, also, their place in the presence of the Godhead" (*Enneads* II. 9. 9. MacKenna 141).

Second, a legitimate state cannot exist merely as an instrument of power or privilege. It must be an agency for the achievement and maintenance of justice. As defined by both Plato and Plotinus, the idea of justice embraces every function of society from the production of material goods to philosophy, and there is the further implication that in a just society—one ruled by reason—each citizen must be treated fairly. Fairness does not mean that all of them are treated identically, without regard for their circumstances, their abilities, or their particular needs. It does require that all be afforded the opportunity to become what they can become in the light of the dictates of reason. Education is therefore of paramount importance in the Platonic society as an instrument for offering every individual the maximum opportunity to escape the bondage of an imprisoning environment.

Plotinus's position on the equality of souls is not without ambiguity. A certain sort of equality is suggested by the fact that pure souls, untrammelled by matter, are ideally and equally free of evil. Even this notion may, however, have a caveat. "Souls," he said, "vary in worth; and the difference is due, among other causes, to an almost initial inequality; it is in reason that, standing to the Reason-Principle as parts, they should be unequal by the fact of becoming separate" (*Enneads* III. 2. 18. MacKenna 77). In becoming embodied, souls naturally gravitate to the sort of condition appropriate to them. Legitimate differences are, thus, ideally grounded and are not a merely a product of arbitrary social determination.

Third, a good state embodies freedom. Freedom is an aspect of the essential nature of the soul, which, when it is not joined with body, "is not, itself, ■ thing sprung like things from life-seeds, but a first-hand Cause, bodiless and therefore supreme over itself, free, beyond the reach of cosmic Cause" (*Enneads* III. 1. 8. MacKenna 159). Plotinus rejected materialism categorically, and he also denied that a human being is essentially "the couplement of Soul and Body" (*Enneads* I. 4. 14. MacKenna 50). We do *have* bodies though, along with the surroundings in which they function. As human beings in society, we are partly controlled by our environment and partly sovereign. The nobler the soul, the greater is the degree of freedom it enjoys (*Enneads* III. 1. 8. MacKenna 159).

In Plotinus's thought, then, the idea of freedom goes well beyond the privilege of doing what one wishes. In fact, since one's wishes are more often than not shaped by one's environment, that sort of pseudo-liberty can, in Neoplatonic terms, be the most abject form of slavery. A populace conditioned to exercise its liberty by uncritically accepting the values of politicians, pundits, and mass media is no fit candidate to qualify as the citizenry of a rational state. True freedom is an autonomous activity of the human soul that wills not to accept the tyranny imposed upon it by the bombardment of the senses and is ever seeking higher ground. In Platonopolis, freedom entails not only liberty but moral responsibility.

Fourth, it may be urged that if any of the ideals of such a state are to be realized in our time, the cement that binds the members of a society together must transcend ethnic and cultural differences. Its shared values must be defined in terms of human characteristics that have universal value. It was *ideas* that brought the Republic and Platonopolis to life in the minds of their creators. This is not to say that the richness of ethnic values cannot be fully appreciated and enjoyed in the cultural life of the larger society. They should, in fact, be treasured far beyond the bounds of the communities that gave birth to them. But they must not be sources of hatred, division, and civil strife. People of different races, religions, and languages can live side by side in peace and friendship when they are united by a view of the world that sees diversities as reconcilable in the higher unity of a common humanity.

Finally, the principles that make such a unity possible must, as Plotinus himself insisted, be recognized as having their origin in a transempirical realm. The world of sense is not without importance,

and Plotinus was uncompromisingly hostile to the Gnostics, who could see no good in it, not recognizing that "the world, to those who have known it once, must be the starting-point of the pursuit" (*Enneads* II. 9. 15. MacKenna 147). It cannot, though, be the source of value, nor, he held in his criticism of materialism, could the soul itself be a product of the fortuitous concurrence of atoms. No combination of bodily matter can produce a unitary soul capable of "self-sensitiveness" (*Enneads* IV. 7. 3. MacKenna 343). Matter is not self-molding and cannot impart life to itself, and so, "life must be brought upon the stage by some directing principle, external and transcendent to all that is corporeal" (*Enneads* IV. 7. 3. MacKenna 343).

The same is true of value. The world of sense has many things in it that remind us of truth, goodness, and beauty, but it cannot be the source of those values. No amount of expertise in analyzing what *is* can be a sufficient qualification for determining what *ought* to be, and no mere combination of colors, shapes, or sounds can account for the beauty we experience in material objects.

Since the First World War, the greater part of the present century has been dominated by interaction among political and economic ideologies: Marxism, Fascism, National Socialism, Western democracy, and the like. Adherence to the two most durable of these, Marxism and Western democracy, made it possible for peoples with widely varying cultures to be brought together under systems represented as universal enough to combine those cultures into super states with a shared ethos that was supposed to transcend ethnic differences.

The experience has been instructive, but not altogether encouraging. In some instances, the ideologies, whatever their positive accomplishments, not only have been insufficiently inclusive to avoid conflict with one another, but have failed to provide a cement of sufficient strength to hold together diverse peoples with strong emotional commitment to their own traditions and aspirations and equally strong hatred for the traditions and aspirations of others. The result has been a proliferation of smaller states, asserting a precarious legitimacy on ethnic grounds and living in uneasy tension or open warfare with their neighbors.

Even the ideationally based states that have survived more or less intact have not altogether managed to banish the specter of ethnic dissolution. The idea of the common good as defined in terms of a shared humanity has been diluted by the special claims of particular groups, asserted on the basis of a shared racial, cultural, or religious identity putting them at odds with other factions pressing rival claims

and all of them at odds with the structure of the broader societies of which they are a part.

In a world that seems to be poised on the brink of an anarchic dark age, and in which the current rush toward ethnocentrism cannot possibly provide a sufficiently broad foundation for a world society in which a recognition of the interdependence of nations can be effectively recognized, we are faced with a question on which our very survival may depend. Can we arrive at any common agreement on principles on which the relations of members of each society toward their fellows and the relations of those societies to one another in a peaceful world community can be based?

Whatever criticisms may be leveled legitimately against many features of the Platonic Republic, Plotinus, more clearly than most thinkers, saw that no coherent moral or political philosophy is possible without empirical and ideal elements. Principles are grounded in the ideal and their particular applications in the empirical. It is the business of rational individuals and rational governments to bring the two together in harmony for personal and social good. In revisiting Platonopolis, we can refresh ourselves from one of the springs from which that conviction flows.

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Note: All citations are for Plotinus. *The Enneads*. Stephen MacKenna, tr. 3rd ed. London: Faber: 1962.

## Deconstructionism and Neoplatonism: Jacques Derrida and Dionysius the Areopagite

Leo Sweeney, S.J.

In beginning to present this paper I find a remark of Derrida may prove helpful. At the start of his book, *Dissemination*, he places what he calls "Hors Livre: Outwork; Hors d'Oeuvre, Extratext, Foreplay, Bookend, Facing, Prefacing." My paper also begins with a "Preface."

### Preface

Two or three years ago I had heard the word "deconstruction" in connection mainly with literature and philosophy, and I took it to mean one deconstructs a text by reading into it whatever would please me and ignoring the meaning which its author had in mind.<sup>1</sup> But last fall R. Baine Harris invited me by telephone<sup>2</sup> to present something during a plenary session at Vanderbilt University on May 27, 1995, a day dedicated to "Neoplatonism and Contemporary Fine Arts." Imprudently, I agreed and gave him as a title: "Deconstruction, Poetry, Neoplatonism: Jacques Derrida and John of the Cross"—"poetry" in the title would be what Jacques and John might share because the former had commented upon some poetry<sup>3</sup> and John's writings are poetry.

But when I began to read Derrida, I discovered he seems seldom if ever to mention John of the Cross and attends rather often to Meister Eckhart and to Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite.<sup>4</sup> Since I am somewhat acquainted with the last, I decided to reflect on his negative theology and on Derrida's remarks on the same topic in his essay, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," where he often quotes and interprets Dionysius.<sup>5</sup>

A second comment in this "Preface" may be helpful—namely, my attention was directed also to deconstructionism when writing

chapter 26 in my book *Christian Philosophy: Greek, Medieval, Contemporary Reflections*, (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. 1997). That chapter asks, "Can Thomas Aquinas Help Our Modern World?" and it developed by my setting up a section, "The Modern Mind: 1920–1960," where the "roots and primal forces" of the ideas dominating our minds, according to Jacques Maritain, are Luther in religion, Descartes in philosophy and Rousseau in morality.<sup>7</sup> "The Modern Mind: 1960–1980" is a second section, where the ideas dominating our minds, according to columnist George F. Will, are Darwin, Freud and Einstein.<sup>8</sup> A final section is entitled "Deconstructionism: 1980 to Now," where obviously Derrida would fit. But here something strange occurred. It turns out that on that occasion my awareness of deconstructionism and, more generally, postmodernism was under the guidance of two authors who are unsympathetic to that postmodern movement and to Derrida.

This guidance occurred because the three sections just named had been preceded by a section, "Past, Present and Future," which served as an introduction to my chapter 26 on Aquinas and our contemporary world by sampling books and articles which contrast or compare past decades with current and future ones and which take varied approaches. For example, some authors restrict themselves to specific topics, such as poverty<sup>9</sup> or the Cold War<sup>10</sup> or religion<sup>11</sup> or abortion.<sup>12</sup> Others trace the history of a specific people—for instance, Nathan Rotenstreich's books on Jews<sup>13</sup> and Yeshayahu Leibowitz's *Judaism, Human Values and the Jewish State*.<sup>14</sup> Although Morris Dickstein restricts himself to literary criticism,<sup>15</sup> others attend to modern art as well,<sup>16</sup> or to the academic life even more generally. For example, in his long essay, "The Fraying of America," *Time*, February 3, 1992, pp. 44–49, Robert Hughes speaks of political correctness and multiculturalism and of their effects on campus life and studies.<sup>17</sup>

This list terminated with Gertrude Himmelfarb's book, which is decidedly unsympathetic to deconstructionism and which is entitled *On Looking into the Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society*.<sup>18</sup> She discloses that the very title of her book comes from the deconstructionists, who use "the image of the abyss" with reference to language—"a purely linguistic [abyss] constructed and deconstructed." But, she adds, "philosophy also has its abysses, and some philosophers are confronting them in the same way—playfully and irreverently, as a linguistic construct, having no 'correspondence' with anything posing as 'reality' or 'truth.'" "for, as Nietzsche says, 'Truths are illusions

of which one has forgotten that they are illusion."<sup>19</sup> Thus, as Himmelfarb summarizes her interpretation,

In literature, postmodernism amounts to a denial of the fixity of any 'text,' of the authority of the author over the interpreter, of any 'canon' that privileges great books over lesser ones. In philosophy, it is a denial of the fixity of language, of any correspondence between language and reality—indeed, of any 'essential' reality and thus of any proximate truth about reality. In law (in America, at any rate), it is a denial of the fixity of the Constitution, of the authority of the founders of the Constitution, and of the legitimacy of law itself, which is regarded as nothing more than an instrument of power. In history, it is a denial of the fixity of the past, of the reality of the past apart from what the historian chooses to make of it, and thus of any objective truth about the past.<sup>20</sup>

To make matters worse in my understanding or appreciating Derrida, I first learned of Himmelfarb's book from Michael Howard's review in the *New York Times Book Review*, where he states that Himmelfarb's book is a "coherent and devastating attack on the forces of postmodernism in academic studies, literary, philosophical, and historical." A postmodernist such as Jacques Derrida has emitted "a dense cloud of unintelligible verbiage... [He and other deconstructionists are at best] frivolous game-players who make a virtue of their moral irresponsibility. At worst, they are set on destroying the standards that not only make their own activity possible but also enable society to survive at all. Either way they are bad news."<sup>21</sup>

But there is more to come: still another author I read who is hostile to deconstructionism—namely, David Lehman in his *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man*.<sup>22</sup> There he centers on the deconstructionism introduced to America especially by Paul de Man (1919–1983), who was a teacher in the French and comparative literature departments first at Cornell and Johns Hopkins universities and, from 1970 on, at Yale. By "adapting Derrida to the field of literary studies, de Man obtained for deconstruction what it never fully or only fleetingly enjoyed in France: an institutional base of operations and a home in the academic disciplines devoted to English and comparative literatures" (Lehman, p. 145). His first book, *Blindness and Insight* (1971), "quickly achieved the status of a classic." In its opening essay de Man "announced... that 'the rules that governed the discipline of criticism and made it a cornerstone of the intellectual establishment



have been so badly tampered with that the entire edifice threatens to collapse.” His solution to the crisis? He proposed

a radical relativism...; there are no longer any standpoints that can a priori be considered privileged, no structure that functions validly as a model for other structures, no postulate of ontological hierarchy that can serve as an organizing principle in the manner in which a deity can be said to engender man and the world.

This, in short, was the deconstructive credo (Lehman, p. 153), which allowed de Man to “stare unflinchingly into the abyss” of modern literature and thought and to come away smiling, even though (or, rather, precisely because)

there were no truths. They had all become texts, duplicitous texts, fictions within fictions within fictions. If you examined a text closely enough, you inevitably arrived at a point where it deconstructs itself. Suddenly the ground beneath you has given way, and you must brace yourself for a fall from a vertiginous cliff (Lehman, p. 155).

As a result of his teaching, writing and public lectures de Man was to his academic confreres and to students “an exemplary figure, an inspiration and a model worth emulating. His was the fortunate immigrant’s tale: a survivor of Hitler’s Europe—a refugee or a resistance fighter; the details weren’t clear—who came to America and rose from penurious obscurity to a position of high intellectual eminence” (Lehman, p. 143). By the time of his death from cancer in December 1983, no one on the then contemporary intellectual scene surpassed him. “This adulation—and the widening ripples of de Man’s intellectual influence—continued for four years after his death. Then came the catastrophic revelations. Long ago and far away, the revered professor had done the unmentionable—something that, at any rate, he himself neglected to mention afterward” (Lehman, p. 158). On December 1, 1987, the *New York Times* revealed that in his native Belgium during World War II, de Man had from November 1940 to November 1942 written ninety-two articles for a newspaper (*Le Soir*) edited by a pro-Nazi staff.<sup>23</sup>

This revelation raised three heatedly debated questions. “Was de Man a fascist by ideological conviction, or was it sheer careerist opportunism that prompted the budding young literary critic to grab the chance to write for *Le Soir*, a national newspaper—albeit one committed

to a Nazi party line?” (Lehman, p. 159). Next, “how were people to understand his failure to acknowledge his wartime writings?” and third, “to what extent should a writer’s actions modify our understanding of his ideas?” That is, “did his wartime words, and his subsequent silence about them, confirm or contradict his analysis of language and writing, meaning and truth?” (Lehman, p. 160).

As a result of those three questions “the academic equivalent of a guerrilla war broke out in the pages” of newspapers and journals (Lehman, p. 161). This was a war Derrida himself entered in the Spring 1988 issue of *Critical Inquiry* with an article entitled “Like the Sound of the Sea Deep within a Shell: Paul de Man’s War.” This became a chapter in the 1989 volume *Responses on Paul de Man’s Wartime Journalism*.<sup>24</sup> Having been brought to America by Paul de Man in the 1970s for a series of visiting appointments at Yale University, Derrida in that chapter strove to deconstruct Paul de Man’s anti-Semitic writings of 1940–42 and thus exonerate him.<sup>25</sup>

The preceding pages of “Preface” have allowed me to disclose that my initial awareness of Derrida and, more generally, of deconstructionism has been nonsympathetic because colored by Gertrude Himmelfarb’s *On Looking into the Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society* and David Lehman’s *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man*. It is now time to make a different approach by studying Derrida himself on his own. This I shall do by sketching first what he means by deconstructionism and then how he applies that general theory to negative theology and related topics. My paper will terminate by looking at Neoplatonism and the negative theology one finds there.

## I. Jacques Derrida: Deconstructionist

Understanding Derrida authentically is now our goal, which however is not easy to achieve, and this might seem to occur at times because of Derrida himself. For example, consider his commentary on these verses of the poet Angelus Silesius.<sup>26</sup>

*Nichts werden ist GOTT werden.*

Nichts wird was zuvor ist: wirstu nicht vor zu nicht,  
So wirstu nimmermehr gebohrt vom ewgen Licht.

*To become Nothing is to become God.*

Nothing becomes what is before: if you do not become nothing,

Never will you be born of eternal light.

"How," Derrida asks, "is this *becoming* to be thought?"... This coming to being

starting from nothing and *as nothing*, *as God and as Nothing*, as the Nothing itself, this birth that carries itself without premise, this becoming-self as becoming-God—or Nothing—that is what appears impossible, more than impossible, the most impossible possible, more impossible than the impossible if the impossible is the simple negative modality of the possible.

In the next paragraph Derrida continues by defining deconstruction.

This thought seems strangely familiar to the experience of what is called deconstruction. Far from being a methodical technique, a possible or necessary procedure, unrolling the law of a program and applying rules, that is, unfolding possibilities, deconstruction has often been defined as the very experience of the (impossible) possibility of the impossible, of the most impossible.... The possibility of the impossible, of the "more impossible" that as such is also possible ('more impossible than the impossible'), marks an absolute interruption in the regime of the possible that nonetheless remains, if this can be said, in place.<sup>27</sup>

How are we to understand that definition (deconstruction is the experience of the impossible possibility of the most impossible), which on first hearing sounds contradictory? We must turn to what is the starting-point (as Rodolphe Gasché advises) of all modern philosophers from Descartes through the German idealists and Husserl and, apparently, to Derrida himself because of his acceptance (with them) of the Cartesian methodology. That is, one must turn away "from any straightforward consideration of objects and from the immediacy of such an experience toward a consideration of the very experience in which objects are given." Thus by "bending back upon the modalities of object perception, reflection shows itself to mean primarily self-reflection, self-relation, self-mirroring."<sup>28</sup> When one thus severs "the self from the immediacy of the object world," it is given "freedom as a thinking being."<sup>29</sup> And when one severs the self even *from the very experience itself* in which objects are given, it becomes even more free. It now has the freedom to ignore both objects and cognitive experiential states so as to concentrate upon language or, more accurately, upon texts and upon the speaking

and writing producing them or, still more accurately, upon endlessly thinking, speaking, writing otherwise than whatever precedes.

A few pages earlier Gasché has correctly pointed out that Derrida has no place for the "reflection" alluded to in my previous paragraph—not "because he would wish to refute or reject [it] in favor of a dream of immediacy" but because "his work questions reflection's unthought and thus the limits of its possibility." He is concerned with that "unthought" with that "beyond" of the "orchestrated mirror play of reflection that Derrida's [own] philosophy seeks to conceptualize." Thus he is concerned not with the mirror itself but with its "tain"—"the tinfoil, the silver lining, the lusterless back of the mirror. Derrida's philosophy, rather than being a philosophy of reflection, is engaged in the systematic exploration of that dull surface without which no reflection and no specular and speculative activity would be possible, but which at the same time has no place and no part in reflection's scintillating play."<sup>30</sup>

But what are the "unthought" and "beyond" which are symbolized by the mirror's tain? They consist in the infrastructures or undecidables which "command the mirror's play and determine the angles of reflection." Yet since this foil

is made of disseminated structural instances, the mirror's tinfoil necessarily becomes semitransparent and, as a correlate, only semireflective. Reflection, then, appears to be affected by the infrastructures that make it possible; it appears breached and breached as an inevitably imperfect and limited *Scheinen*. Total reflection is a limited play, not because of some defect owing to its finitude—as Hegel has shown, it is a *truly* infinite play—but because of the structurally limitless play of the undecidables that make it possible.<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly,

at first the mirror that Derrida's philosophy holds up seems to show us only its tain; yet this opaque tain is also transparent. Through it one can observe the play of reflection and speculation as it takes place in the mirror's mirroring itself. Seen from the inside this play gives an illusion of perfection, but observed through the tain, it appears limited by the infrastructural agencies written on its invisible side, without which it could not even begin to occur.<sup>32</sup>

Thus Derrida's criticism does not reject reflection and speculation (as found, for example, in traditional onto-theologies with their search for transcendental signifiers and transcendental signifieds)

in favor of total immediacy, nor does it presuppose an originary unity by virtue of which the traditional problems of reflexivity can be dialectically overcome in absolute reflection or speculation. Derrida's debate with reflection and speculation is not dependent on the essentially philosophical problem of the aporias, contradictions, or negations of reflection, in terms of which it refuses to criticize or solve the problems of reflection. As we have seen, both operations are intrinsically speculative.<sup>33</sup>

Rather, by focusing

on an analysis of those heterogeneous instances that are the 'true' conditions of possibility of reflection and speculation without being susceptible to accommodation by the intended totality, Derrida's philosophy reinscribes, in the strict meaning of this word, reflection and speculation into what exceeds it: the play of the infrastructures.<sup>34</sup>

How can infrastructures be more fully described?

Infrastructures are economically and strategically minimal distributions or constellations—archesyntheses—of essentially heterogeneous predicates. The principle articulated by each singular infrastructure applies to itself as well, and although each one of the by right infinite number of infrastructures can be replaced (or supplemented) by another, they are not synonymous with or even identical to one another. Thus one can see clearly how infrastructures contain the *possibility* of tying elements together into a totality of foundation, as well as of self-thematization and of element combination and transformation.<sup>35</sup>

Gasché next sounds a warning.

Since infrastructures combine heterogeneous predicates, however, and apply to themselves only the better to unground themselves, they also appear to be strangely ambiguous or ambivalent. Yet it is not the sort of ambiguity that would be witness to an absence of clarity in the process of their determination, to the negativity of a lack of precision, to vagueness or looseness of terms, in short to semantic confusion, nor is it an ambiguity concerning the meaning of the infrastructures, owing to some polysemic richness. Ambiguity in these senses is always a function of presence—that is, of an ultimately self-identical signification—as is demonstrated by the possibility of the dialectical sublation of ambiguous meanings, whereas

the ambiguity of the infrastructures is not the positive sign of a dialectical or speculative state of affairs. . . . The specific ambiguity of the infrastructures cannot be sublated or made to sound in unison. If determinacy requires self-identify, then the ambiguity of the infrastructures has no boundaries.

Therefore, "it is advisable to avoid the term *ambiguity* altogether in characterizing the infrastructures" and to qualify them "provisionally as undecidables"<sup>36</sup>—a word which

must be understood to refer not only to essential incompleteness and inconsistency, bearing in mind their distinction from ambiguity, but also to indicate a level vaster than that which is encompassed by the opposition between what is decidable and undecidable.<sup>37</sup>

Consequently,

As "originary" syntheses, or economic arrangements of traits, the undecidables constitute both the medium or the element between the binary philosophical oppositions and between philosophy and its Other, as well as the medium that encompasses these coupled terms. They are undecidable because they suspend the decidable opposition between what is true and false and put all the concepts that belong to the philosophical system of decidability into brackets. By virtue of their constituting a space in between conceptual dyads and, at the same time, comprising them, the infrastructural undecidables are "the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other" (*D*, p. 127). Their undecidability, their "floating indetermination," permits the substitution and the play of the conceptual binary oppositions, which, by turning into one another, become incapable of denominating and defining the medium from which they emerge (*D*, p. 93). Thus, if one calls infrastructures "ambivalent" or "ambiguous," it is in the sense that they do not offer themselves to mastery in terms of simple and clear-cut distinctions. Indeed, conceptual couples and their play essentially represent nothing other than the attempt to bring the play of the medium of the undecidables to a stop, to make rational what, according to their implicit and explicit ethos, can only be irrational, to appropriate it, to identify it by forcing a self-identity upon it. The restricted play of the philosophical conceptual couples proceeds to this task by trying to reconstitute the undecidables as dialectical contradictions susceptible of eventual dissolution; but, Derrida notes, undecidability "is not contradiction in the Hegelian form of contradiction" (*P*, p. 101). The undecidables, on the contrary, are what suspend decidability in all its forms, particularly in its dialectical form of a mediation of contraries *and* of that in which

decidability and definiteness carve themselves out. Above all, the "ambiguity" of undecidables is rigorously irreducible and irresolvable because of its essentially *nonsemantic* character.<sup>38</sup>

## II. "How to Avoid Speaking: Denial"

Before interpreting this chapter of Derrida<sup>39</sup> on negative theology and related topics, let us set down points from our previous section which may contribute to that interpretation. (a) Onto-theology and its partner, negative theology, are instances of the reflections or (literally) speculations on the surface of the human mirror which is the mind (see note 30 above). (b) But those reflections are made possible and are affected by the tain of the mirror—i.e., by the infrastructures which are located on succeeding levels of that tain and which allow the reflections to occur (see notes 31–34 above). (c) These infrastructures are negative discourse; they are constellations of heterogeneous predicates (see note 34), grounded in such a way as to be open-ended to further combination and transformation (see note 35). (d) Or one may substitute "undecidables" for "infrastructures" and say that reflections on the mirror's surface are made possible by undecidables (see note 36). These are the medium between philosophy and theology in such a way as to encompass both; they suspend the opposition between what is true and false, between possible and impossible; they are the space between these latter conceptual dyads and yet comprise them; they are the medium within which opposites are opposed, linked together and reversed; they are floating indeterminates which allow conceptual oppositions to combine (thus neither of them dominates) and to make rational what can only be irrational by trying to reconcile undecidables; they are the philosophical and theological conceptual couples which can be misconstrued as dialectical contradiction susceptible (with Hegel) of eventual dissolution; they suspend decidability in all its forms but especially as a mediation of contradictions; because nonsemantic in character these are rigorously irreducible and irresolvable (see note 38 above).

Perhaps some of those points may help us in interpreting Derrida's comments on avoiding speaking through denial. His chapter shows itself to consist of two main parts, the first of which runs from p. 73 to p. 96, the second from p. 96 to p. 131. In the first he considers negative theology as traditionally understood (e.g., is it one or multiple?) and practiced by Pseudo-Dionysius and by Meister Eckhart. He then faces

three objections leveled at himself: he is a nihilist or, at least, an obscurantist; he speaks solely for the sake of speaking and writing; granted that negative discourse is not sterile or obscurantist, but it might make all discourse theology if "God" is the truth of any negativity (see pp. 75–77). His answering those objections occurs in two stages: by speaking of negative theology first in general (pp. 77–82) and second in greater detail with reference to "promise" and "secret" (pp. 82–96).

The second main part of his chapter begins with a consideration of place (e.g., Jerusalem, where the colloquium is to take place); figurative spatialization in speech and writing and in meaning and reference; the rhetorical *topoi* which concern apophatic procedures (pp. 96–100). These pages lead into three subordinate parts concerned with three paradigms of negative theology, the first of which (pp. 100–108) centers on the *epekeinas tēs ousias* of Plato's *Republic* (509B sqq.) and on the *khōra* of his *Timaeus* (48E sqq.), the second (pp. 108–22) on the nonexperiential experience of the *khōra* and on Christian *via negativa*, the third (pp. 122–31) on Heidegger's writing and reading *Sein* under erasure.<sup>40</sup>

Now let us turn to the chapter itself, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denial," where Derrida mixes comments on traditional negative theology with his own replacement of it by never-ending negation. Let us reread his pages 74 and 75, where he describes negative theology as traditionally understood, followed by his deconstruction of it.<sup>41</sup> [a] Negative theology (he begins) considers "that every predicative language is inadequate to the essence, in truth to the hyperessentiality (the being beyond Being) of God; consequently, only a negative ('apophatic') attribution can claim to approach God, and to prepare us for a silent intuition of God." [b] Accordingly, "one would recognize some traits, the family resemblance of negative theology, in every discourse that seems to return in a regular and insistent manner to this rhetoric of negative determination, endlessly multiplying the defenses and the apophatic warnings." [c] Hence, *X* (whatever that may stand for) "is" neither this nor that, neither sensible nor intelligible, neither positive nor negative, neither inside nor outside, neither superior nor inferior, neither active nor passive, neither present nor absent, not even neutral, not even subject to a dialectic with a third moment, [*X* is] without any possible sublation ('*Aufhebung*').<sup>42</sup> [d] Despite appearances, then, "this *X* is neither a concept nor even a name; it does *lend itself* to a series of names, but calls for another syntax, and exceeds even the

order and the structure of predicative discourse. It 'is' not and does not say what it 'is.' It is written completely otherwise."<sup>42</sup>

But on page 76 Derrida sketches what seems to deconstruct negative theology by substituting negativity (and, in this context, God even) for it. [e] "Once the apophatic discourse is analyzed in its logical-grammatical form," ... it perhaps leads us to consider the becoming-theological of all discourse. From the moment a proposition takes a negative form, the negativity that manifests itself need only be pushed to the limit, and it at least resembles an apophatic theology. [f] Every time I say: X is neither this nor that, neither the contrary of this nor of that... I would start to speak of God, under this name or another. God's name would then be the hyperbolic effect of that negativity or all negativity that is consistent in its discourse. God's name would suit everything that may not be broached, approached or designated, except in an indirect and negative manner. Every negative sentence would already be haunted by God or by the name of God, the distinction between God and God's name opening up the very space of this enigma. If there is a work of negativity in discourse and predication, it will produce divinity." [g] In fact, though, "divinity is not produced but productive. Infinitely productive. Hegel would say.... God would be not merely the end, but the origin of this work of the negative. Not only would atheism not be the truth of negative theology; rather, God would be the truth of all negativity. [h] One would thus arrive at a kind of proof of God... by His effects, or more precisely a proof of what one calls God... by effects without cause, by the *without cause*.... In the absolutely singular logic of this proof, 'God' would name *that without which* one would not know how to account for any negativity: grammatical or logical negation, illness, evil and finally neurosis which far from permitting psychoanalysis to reduce religion to a symptom, would obligate it to recognize in the symptom the negative manifestation to God. [i] Without saying that there must be at least as much 'reality' in the cause as in the effect,... one would see... in the negation or suspension of the predicate, even of the thesis of 'existence'—the first mark of respect for a divine cause which does not even need 'to be.' [j] And those who would like to consider 'deconstruction' a symptom of modern or postmodern nihilism could indeed, if they wished, recognize in it the last testimony—not to say martyrdom—of faith in the present *fin de siècle*. This reading will always be possible. Who could prohibit it? In the name of what?"<sup>43</sup>

In summary we can say that statements #a–#d above are a recognizable presentation of traditional negative theology: as transcending being, God also transcends affirmative predications (#a–#b), and allows one to make negative predications at best (#c–#d). But statements #e–#j eliminate even negative predications (#f) and "God" no longer names transcendent being but stands for negation itself (#g), whether grammatical or logical, whether the privation of physical, moral or mental health (see #h–#i). So understood, deconstruction is not nihilism but the sole testimony of or martyrdom for "faith" in these our final days (#j).

Does Derrida provide further information? Yes, seemingly, while attending to the *khôra* which Plato introduces in *Timaeus* 48E as a "third species."<sup>44</sup> [k] Neither subsistent Form nor image of a Form, *khôra* is "this absolutely necessary place" in which the images "of the eternal beings originate by impressing themselves there.... At the moment, so to speak, when the demiurge organizes the cosmos by cutting, introducing and impressing the images of the paradigms 'into' the *khôra*, the latter must already have been *there*, as the *there* itself, beyond time or in any case beyond becoming, in a beyond time without common measure with the eternity of the ideas and the becoming of sensible things." But "how does Plato deal with this disproportion and heterogeneity?" There are, for Derrida, "two concurrent languages in these pages of the *Timaeus*."<sup>45</sup>

[l] "One of these languages multiplies the negations, the warnings, the evasions, the detours, the tropes, but *with a view* to reappropriating the thinking of the *khôra* for ontology and for Platonic dialectic in its most dominant schemas. If the *khôra*... is neither sensible nor intelligible, it seems to *participate* in the intelligible in an enigmatic way (*Timaeus* 51A). Since it 'receives all,' it makes possible the formation of the cosmos. As it is neither this nor that (neither intelligible nor sensible), one may speak as if it were a joint participant in both. *Neither/nor* easily becomes *both/and*, both this and that." [m] Because of Aristotle, *Physics* IV, "one has always interpreted this passage on the *khôra* as being at the *interior* of philosophy.... The *khôra* is the atemporality of the spacing; it (a)temporalizes, it calls forth atemporality, provokes it immutably from the pretemporal *already* that gives place to every inscription."<sup>47</sup>

[n] The other language one finds in the *Timaeus* "and the other interpretive decision, without ceasing to be atemporal or anachronistic in their way... would inscribe an irreducible spacing interior" but

also exterior to Platonism. "Under the name of *khôra* the place belongs neither to the sensible nor to the intelligible, neither to becoming nor to non-being ... nor to Being." [o] And all such aporias "would signify that *there is* something that is neither a being nor a nothingness; something that no dialectic, participatory schema, or analogy would allow one to rearticulate together with any philosopheme whatsoever, neither 'in' Plato's works nor in the history that Platonism inaugurates and dominates. The *neither/nor* may no longer be reconverted into *both...and*. Hence, the so-called 'metaphors' are not only inadequate, in that they borrow figures from the sensible forms inscribed in the *khôra*, without pertinence for designating the *khôra* itself. They are no longer metaphors."<sup>44</sup>

[p] Yet to say that "Plato does not use metaphor or sensible figures to designate the place does not imply that he speaks appropriately of the proper and properly intelligible meaning of *khôra*. The import of receptivity or of receptacle which, one may say, forms the elementary nonvariable of this word's determination, seems to me to transcend the opposition between figurative and proper meaning. The spacing of *khôra* introduces a dissociation or a difference in the proper meaning that it renders possible."<sup>45</sup> [q] "Radically nonhuman and atheological [as the *khôra* is], one cannot say that it gives place or that *there is* the *khôra*.... It does not give place as one would give something, whatever it may be; it neither creates nor produces anything, not even an event insofar as it takes place. It gives no order and makes no promise. It is radically ahistorical, because nothing happens through it and nothing happens to it. Plato insists on its necessary indifference; to receive all and allow itself to be marked or affected by what is inscribed in it, the *khôra* must remain without form and without proper determination. But if it is amorphous (*Timaeus* 50D), this signifies neither lack nor privation. *Khôra* is nothing positive or negative. It is impassive, but it is neither passive nor active."<sup>46</sup>

What can be said of the preceding paragraphs #k to #q? Derrida's remarks there on the *khôra* of Plato's *Timaeus* 48E sqq. present, in an admittedly opaque manner, a twofold interpretation of negative theology and of its deconstruction parallel to that found above in paragraphs #a to #j. That is, paragraphs #k to #q investigate the two languages running concurrently in Plato's description of *khôra* (#k), the first of which (#l-#m) concerns Platonisms as positions corresponding to onto-theologies and negative theologies.<sup>47</sup> Although itself neither Form nor image of a Form, *khôra* is the indispensable place in which

those images originate from the Forms as models and from the agency of the divine demiurge (#k). As atemporal space, the *khôra* thus makes possible, even though it itself is neither sensible nor intelligible nor temporal, "the formation of the cosmos" by receiving all *as if* it were a joint participant of sensibility and intelligibility (#m).

The second language (#n-#q) which the *Timaeus* speaks concerns the *khôra* as that which is beneath even negations: "there is something that is neither a being nor a nothingness," something that escapes the dialectics, participation and analogy Plato or later Platonisms might use to appropriate it.<sup>48</sup> something which escapes even metaphors (#n-#o). *Khôra*, although termed receptivity or receptacle, "transcends the opposition between figurate and proper meaning" and inserts "dissociation" or "difference" into language (#p). "Radically nonhuman and atheological" and "ahistorical" as it is, one cannot say even that the *khôra* is or that it gives place to anything or that it produces any event. Of itself it is without form or determination. It is neither positive nor negative, neither passive nor active (#q).

What do my two immediately preceding paragraphs establish? The two languages running concurrently in Plato's depiction of the *khôra* (*Timaeus* 48E sqq.) parallel Derrida's presentation earlier of traditional negative theology (#a-#d) and its deconstruction through elimination even of negative predications themselves (#e-#j). What grounds that parallel? The fact that the *khôra*, although neither Form nor image nor God and although neither sensible nor intelligible nor temporal, provides place within which the images originate from the Forms and from divine agency so as to form this cosmos and so as (even more relevantly) to ground Platonic onto-theologies and Neoplatonic negative theologies (see #l-#m). Second, the *khôra* as neither being nor nothingness also lies beneath the negations of traditional apophatic theologies and thus cannot be appropriated by Platonisms—it eludes dialectics, participation, analogy, metaphor, literal and figurative speech; it inscribes dissociation and difference into language (see #n-#q above).

What then does the factor eliminating even negative predications (an elimination which Derrida himself names "deconstruction"—see #j above) have in common with *khôra* as the underground which no Platonism as such can appropriate? Apparently that factor would correspond to the "tain" of which we spoke above (see paragraphs linked with notes 30 sqq.). The tain of the mirror makes possible the reflections (which correspond to traditional onto-theologies) on its surface—a

possibility which issues from the infrastructures or undecidables (e.g., différance, re-mark, arche-trace, iterability, supplementarity) on succeeding levels of the tain (see initial paragraph linked to note 39 above). Similarly, the deconstructive elimination of negative predications and, then, the *khôra* of the *Timaeus* each makes possible the traditional onto-theologies, which however rest upon the endlessly deepening levels of negativity.<sup>53</sup>

If my interpretation is accurate, deconstructionists might well be pictured as terminating each day in a silence of exhaustion from having been endlessly thinking, speaking, writing otherwise than whatever precedes. Their silence would (I might add and as I hope to show presently) be in contrast to that of Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius and other Neoplatonists, who terminate each day in a sacred silence of adoration of the God who exists but transcends being and knowledge.

If one were asked why the former group ends up exhausted each day, it is because of where they start. If in knowing you begin with Descartes by liberating yourself from objects (i.e., from actual existents in concrete cases) and next from even the experience itself of such objects, you then are confined to language (spoken or written), to texts, to textual exegesis but with nothing outside to control meaning. The result? One either sells cars or plays computer games or, if one is an academic, goes below texts to endlessly deepening levels of deconstruction, of differing and deferring.<sup>54</sup> One never reaches the last word: there is no last word, there is always another word afterwards.

Now let us briefly turn to Neoplatonism and to the silent adoration of God one can find there.

### III. Neoplatonism and Negative Theology

In contrast to Jacques Derrida, Neoplatonic expositions of God and of negative theology are relatively simple and clear because reality (= value, worth) for every Neoplatonist consists in unity: to be real is to be one.

#### *Plotinus*

As a first example consider Plotinus (205–270), the founder of Neoplatonism.<sup>55</sup> According to him to be real is to be one, with the result that God *is* the One and all else emanating from God (e.g., Intellect and intellects, Soul and souls) are real to the extent that they are the-One-on-a-lower-level. Since Being is a combination of

one-many (= the emanated level of Intellect) and Becoming a combination of many-one (= the emanated level of Soul), God transcends being (as well as what is linked with being—namely, intellection, life, eternity, immutability) and becoming (together with what is linked with becoming—namely, reasoning, sensation, time, motion). Thus God escapes all descriptions—including, finally, that of “unity” too.<sup>56</sup> Consequently with Plotinus it is best to be in a state of silent adoration of the actually existing God,<sup>57</sup> who is entirely above entity, knowledge and language. This silence of adoration continues until I become literally one with God and thereby I am truly and fully real (although there is no “I” any longer, which was a burden, an imperfection, an unreality anyway). In any human person’s state of union with God

there were not two, but the seer himself was one with the Seen (for it was not really seen but united to him).... He was one himself then, with no distinction in him either in relation to himself or to anything else; for there was no movement in him, and he had no emotion, no desire for anything else when he had made the ascent, no reason or thought; his own self was not there for him, if we should say even this. He was as if carried away or possessed by a god, in a quiet solitude, in the stillness of his being turning away to nothing and not busy about himself, altogether at rest and having become a kind of rest. He did not belong to the realm of beauties but had already passed beyond Beauty [which is on the level of Intellect].... [After his contemplation and intimacy with God—but perhaps that] was not a contemplation but another kind of seeing, a being out of oneself [*ekstasis*], a simplifying, a self-surrender, a pressing toward contact, a rest, a sustained thought directed to perfect conformity [and identity with God].... Before the vision [one has of God] one seeks what is beyond the vision, and what is beyond the vision is that which exists [*to ho estin*] before all [= God].... When a soul travels [away from matter] it comes, not to something else, but to itself; and so when it is not in anything else it is in nothing but itself. But when it is in itself alone it is not in being, it is in That [= God]; for one becomes oneself not as being but beyond being by that intercourse.... This is the life of gods and divine and blessed men, deliverance from the things of this world, a life which takes no delight in things of this world, escape in solitude to the Solitary.<sup>58</sup>

#### *Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite*

If one can prudently locate Dionysius as *florens* between 485 and 533,<sup>59</sup> he obviously postdates Plotinus by two centuries and has been subjected to influences (both pagan and Christian) of which the former is free.<sup>60</sup> But the basic constituents of Neoplatonism are still there.

Consider Dionysius' address to his friend Timothy in *The Mystical Theology* [hereafter: *MT*].

[a] My advice to you as you look for a sight of the mysterious things, is to leave behind you everything perceived and understood, everything perceptible and understandable, all that is not and all that is, and, with your understanding laid aside, to strive upward as much as you can toward union with him who is beyond all being and knowledge. By an undivided and absolute abandonment of yourself and everything, shedding all and freed from all, you will be uplifted to the ray of the divine shadow which is above everything that is.<sup>61</sup>

After warning Timothy not to disclose what had just been said to "the uninformed, that is to say, to those caught up with the things of the world," Dionysius speaks of God as [b] "the transcendent cause of all things." Since it is

cause of all beings, we should posit and ascribe to it all the affirmations we make in regard to beings, and, more appropriately, we should negate all these affirmations, since it surpasses all being. Now we should not conclude that the negations are simply the opposites of the affirmations, but rather that the cause of all is considerably prior to this, beyond privations, beyond every denial, beyond every assertion (*MT*, p. 135).

[c] This transcendent cause

of all is both eloquent and taciturn, indeed wordless. It has neither word nor act of understanding, since it is on a plane above all this, and it is made manifest only to those who travel through foul and fair, who pass beyond the summit of every holy ascent, who leave behind them every divine light, every voice, every word from heaven, and who plunge into the darkness where, as scripture proclaims, there dwells the One who is beyond all things (*ibid.*).

[d] Elsewhere, he continues, I have

praised the notions which are most appropriate to affirmative theology. I have shown the sense in which the divine and good nature is said to be one and then triune, how Fatherhood and Sonship are predicated of it, the meaning of the theology of the Spirit, how these core lights of goodness grew from the incorporeal and indivisible good, and how in this sprouting they have remained inseparable from their co-eternal foundation in it, in themselves, and in each other. I have spoken of how Jesus, who

is above individual being, became a being with a true human nature (*MT*, ch. 3, pp. 138–39).

Such are the concerns of affirmative theology.

[e] But there is also a negative theology.

The more we take flight upward, the more our words are confined to the ideas we are capable of forming; so that now as we plunge into that darkness which is beyond intellect, we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing.... My argument now rises from what is below up to the transcendent, and the more it climbs, the more language falters, and when it has passed up and beyond the ascent, it will turn silent completely, since it will finally be at one with him who is indescribable (*MT*, ch. 3, p. 139).

Dionysius recapitulates.

[f] The Cause of all is above all and [yet] is not without entity, lifeless, speechless, mindless. It is not a material body, and hence has neither shape nor form, quality, quantity, or weight. It is not in any place and can neither be seen nor be touched. It is neither perceived nor is it perceptible. It suffers neither disorder nor disturbance and is overwhelmed by no earthly passion. It is not powerless and subject to the disturbances caused by sense perception. It endures no deprivation of light. It passes through no change, decay, division, loss, no ebb and flow, nothing of which the senses may be aware. None of all this can either be identified with it nor attributed to it (*MT*, ch. 4, pp. 140–41).

[g] Again, as we climb higher we say this. It is not soul or mind, nor does it possess imagination, conviction, speech, or understanding. Nor is it speech per se, understanding per se. It cannot be spoken of and it cannot be grasped by understanding. It is not number or order, greatness or smallness, equality or inequality, similarity or dissimilarity. It is not immovable, moving, or at rest. It has no power, it is not power, nor is it light. It does not live nor is it life. It is not an entity, nor is it eternity or time. It cannot be grasped by the understanding since it is neither knowledge nor truth. It is not kingship. It is not wisdom. It is neither one nor oneness, divinity nor goodness. Nor is it a spirit, in the sense in which we understand that term. It is not sonship or fatherhood and it is nothing known to us or to any other being. It falls neither within the predicate of nonbeing nor of being. Beings do not know it as it is being and it does not know them as they are beings. There is no speaking of it, nor name nor knowledge



of it. Darkness and light, error and truth—it is none of these. It is beyond assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it, for it is both beyond every assertion, being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and, by virtue of its preeminently simple and absolute nature, free of every limitation, beyond every limitation; it is also beyond every denial (*MT*, ch. 5, p. 141).

### Commentary

Dionysius' communication to Timothy is rich with details and yet is comparatively clear. God, who is the transcendent cause of all beings (#b, #f), resides in the darkness (#c, #e; also see #a) above all affirmations and denials (#b, #g) and above all our intellections and language (#e). Theology nonetheless can be characterized as affirmative and as negative. The first describes the descending journey the divine and good nature undertakes from darkness to illuminations, which are God first as triune (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) and then as the incarnate Jesus (see #d) and which continue on in and through the celestial and the ecclesiastical hierarchies.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, negative theology ascends from and through both these until it rises above not only all material and spiritual existents (#e, #g) but also the trinity and divinity (#g) and thereby achieves complete silence so as finally to be one with the Indescribable (#e). Accordingly, Dionysius' achievement seemingly parallels Plotinus': silent adoration terminating in final oneness of self and God.

How different is the journey a human person thus takes in Neoplatonism and in deconstruction: sacred silence and identification in contrast to descent into an endless shifting and sifting of words.<sup>63</sup>

Let me conclude with the prayer (prior to Text #a above) with which Dionysius begins his treatise *Mystical Theology* and which Derrida repeats after adding these introductory words: "Dionysius addresses himself directly to You, to God, from now on determined as 'hyperessential Trinity' in the prayer that prepares the theologemes of the *via negativa*":

O Trinity beyond being (*Trias hyperousiè*), beyond divinity (*hyperthèe*), beyond goodness (*hyperagathè*), and guide of Christians in divine wisdom (*theosophias*), direct us to the mystical summits more than unknown and beyond light. There the simple, absolved, and unchanged mysteries of theology lie hidden in the darkness beyond light of the hidden mystical silence, there, in the greatest darkness, that beyond all that is most evident exceedingly illuminates the sightless intellects. There, in the wholly imperceptible

and invisible, that beyond all that is most evident fills to overflowing, with the glories beyond all beauty the intellects who know how to close their eyes (*tous anemmatous noas*). This is my prayer ('*Emoi men our tauta eutkhô*). And you, dear Timothy, be earnest in the exercise of mystical contemplation. (ch. 1: 998a)<sup>64</sup>

At the end of the prayer Derrida adds these comments.

What happens here?

After having prayed (he [Dionysius] writes, we read), he presents his prayer. He quotes it and I have just quoted his quotation. He quotes it in what is properly an *apostrophe* to its addressee, Timothy. The *Mystical Theology* is dedicated to him; in order to initiate him, it must lead him on the paths toward which Dionysius himself has prayed to God to lead him, or more literally to *direct* him in a straight (*ithunon*) line. A pedagogy which is also a *mystagogy* and a *psychagogy*: here the gesture of leading or directing the *psyche* of the other passes through *apostrophe*. The one who asks to be led by God turns for an instant toward another addressee, in order to lead him in turn. He does not simply turn himself away from his first addressee who is in *truth* the first Cause of his prayer and already guides it. It is exactly because he does not turn away from God that he can turn toward Timothy and *pass from one address to the other without changing direction*.<sup>65</sup>

If only Derrida had himself traveled that straight-line path, which is at once a pedagogy, a psychagogy and a mystagogy! That path would have terminated in a silent adoration of and unity with the subsistent and yet transcendent God instead of ending in the silence of ennui, which a deconstructionist experiences today while awaiting tomorrow's similar exhausting pursuit of sifting and shifting words, of differing and deferring.

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### NOTES

1. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 1.

2. That my initial intuitive understanding of deconstruction had some basis, see Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 137–39.
  3. On the significant role for Derrida a telephone call from Jerusalem plays in the chapter “How to Avoid Speaking: Denial,” see H. Coward and T. Foshay (eds.), *Derrida and Negative Theology* [hereafter: *Negative Theology*] (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), pp. 85–87.
  4. As an example see Derrida’s comments on Angelus Silesius’ poem *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, see *ibid.*, pp. 288–90; also see paragraphs corresponding to notes 26–27 below. For a translation see Angelus Silesius (1624–1677), *The Cherubic Wanderer*, trans. Maria Shradly, preface by F. J. Furcha, and introduction by Josef Schmidt, “The Classics of Western Spirituality” (New York: Paulist Press, 1986). For biographical data and style-commentary, see *ibid.*, pp. xvii–xxii and 3–33.
  5. For Derrida’s references to Meister Eckhart, see *Negative Theology*, pp. 113–15, 120–21, 188–91, 269–70.
  6. See *ibid.*, pp. 77–80, 89–97, 102, 110–12, 116–18.
  7. Maritain, *Trois Réformateurs* (Paris: Plon, 1925; English trans. London: Sheed and Ward, 1928), as reported by G. B. Phelan, “St. Thomas and the Modern Mind,” *The Modern Schoolman* 20 (1942), 37.
  8. See *Chicago Sun-Times*, March 13, 1979.
  9. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Knopf Publishers, 1984), 2 vols.; *idem*, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (New York: Knopf Publishers, 1991). Also see R. D. Christy and L. Williamson (eds.), *Land-Grant Colleges and Universities 1890–1990* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1991).
- For a book by Himmelfarb on conceptions of history see *The New History and the Old* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987). On history and politics, see Eli Sagan, *The Honey and the Hemlock: Democracy and Paranoia in Ancient Athens and Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).
10. Martin Walker, *The Cold War: A History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1994); John Lukacs, *The End of the Twentieth Century and the End of the Modern Age* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1993).
  11. Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: Protestantism to Nonbelief* (Oxford University Press, 1994); Barry Alan Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton University Press, 1994).

12. Ray Kerrison, “Commentary” [on President Bill Clinton], *Catholic Eye*, June 27, 1994; Pope John Paul II, “*Veritatis Splendor*: The Splendor of Truth” (August 6, 1993), and “*Evangelium Vitae*: The Gospel of Life” (March 25, 1995).
13. Nathan Rotenstreich, *Between Past and Present: An Essay on History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958); *idem*, *Jewish Philosophy in Modern Times: From Mendelssohn to Rosenzweig* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968); *idem*, *Man and His Dignity* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1983); *idem*, *Jews and German Philosophy: The Polemics of Emancipation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984); *idem*, *Order and Might* (New York: SUNY Press, 1988).
14. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992. Also see Herbert Schnädelbach, *Philosophy in Germany: 1831–1933* (Cambridge University Press, 1984).
15. Morris Dickstein, *Double Agent. The Critic and Society* (Oxford University Press, 1993). For a review, see John Sutherland, *New York Times Book Review*, Feb. 7, 1993. Jürgen Kleist and Bruce Butterfield (eds.), *Breakdowns: The Destiny of the Twentieth Century* (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1994).
16. Louis A. Sass, *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).
17. Also see Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985); Eric Gans, *The End of Culture: Toward a Generative Anthropology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Daniel Bell, “American Intellectual Life, 1965–1992,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (Summer 1992), 74–107.
18. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994. Hereafter I shall refer to Himmelfarb’s book as *Looking into the Abyss*.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 133. For an exposition of Richard Rorty’s “light-minded” pragmatism, which allows him to believe “there is no fixed or fundamental principle, no ‘essential’ truth or reality” and thus philosophy is not an independent discipline (*ibid.*, p. 14), but is to be replaced by a “light-minded aestheticism,” which extends even to morality so that the historical account of Hitler’s persecution of the Jews is to be read as a novel, see *ibid.*, pp. 13–17. This deconstructing of history (pp. 17 sqq.) is at the core (and rightly so, I would say) of Himmelfarb’s rejection of Derrida and other deconstructionists.
21. *New York Times Book Review*, March 6, 1994, pp. 11–12.
22. New York: Poseidon Press, 1991.
23. The final count is 180 articles—170 published in *Le Soir* and ten more in *Het Vlaamsche Land*—see Lehman, p. 165.

24. Edited by W. Hamacher, N. Hertz and T. Keenan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989). Derrida's chapter is on pp. 127–64. For Himmelfarb's evaluation of his chapter, see *Looking into the Abyss*, pp. 19–23.
  25. See D. Lehman, ch. 10, pp. 245–58, for reactions to Derrida's attempted exoneration. In a private conversation, Brent Adkins (see bibliography below) preferred to express Derrida's reaction to P. de Man's 1940–42 writings not as an exoneration but as demonstrating the undecidable matrix out of which the writings of de Man could occur but at the same time as deconstructing that writing.
  26. Quoted by Derrida, *Negative Theology*, p. 289. For data on Silesius, see *ibid.*, p. 322, n. 3. Also see n. 4 above.
  27. For bibliographical data on the first appearance in 1987 of this definition of deconstruction, see *ibid.*, p. 323, n. 5.
  28. Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* [hereafter: *Tain*] (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 13. For review of *Tain* see Henry Staten, *Criticism* 30 (1988), 144–49; Charles Altieri, *Comparative Literature Studies* 26 (1989), 376–84; Christopher Fynsk, *Review of Metaphysics* 41 (1987), 137–39; John D. Caputo, *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1987), 245–59.
- In contrast to the Cartesian methodology which Gasché applies to modern philosophers, Aristotle's and Aquinas's epistemologies consist of "straightforward consideration of objects," which are the content-determining-causes of all nonconstructural knowledges, by and in which we are one with the known. See L. Sweeney, S.J., *Christian Philosophy: Greek, Medieval, Contemporary Reflections* [hereafter: *Christian Philosophy*] (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), ch. 21: "Preller and Aquinas: Second Thoughts on Epistemology," pp. 537–62.
29. *Tain*, p. 14.
  30. *Ibid.*, pp. 6 and 7. When speaking of Hegel, Derrida himself (*Dissemination*, pp. 32–33) alludes to *tain*: "It is because we have now arrived at the point where the relation between the 'text'—in the narrow, classical sense of the term—and the 'real' is being played out, and because the very concepts of text and of extratext, the very transformation of the relation between them and of the preface we are engaged in, the practical and theoretical problematic of that transformation, are at stake. The new kind of text that retains and seems to limit us here is in fact the infinite excess facing [*débord*] of its classical representation. This lining fringe, this extra edge, this de-limitation, invites ■ rereading of the form of our relation to Hegel's logic and to all that can be subsumed therein. The breakthrough toward radical otherness (with respect to the philosophical concept—of the

concept) always takes, *within philosophy*, the *form* of an a posteriority or an empiricism. But this is an effect of the specular nature of philosophical reflection, philosophy being incapable of inscribing (comprehending) what is outside it otherwise than through the appropriating assimilation of a negative image of it, and dissemination is written on the back—the *tain*—of that mirror. Not on its inverted specter. Nor in the triadic symbolic order of its sublimation. The question is to find out what it is that, written under the mask of empiricism, turning speculation upside down, *also does something else* and renders a Hegelian sublation [*relève*] of the preface impracticable. This question calls for prudent, differentiated, slow, stratified readings."

31. *Tain*, p. 238. On the "structurally limitless play of the undecidables," see R. Gasché, "Nontotalization without Spuriousness: Hegel and Derrida on the Infinite," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 17 (1986), 289–307, where Gasché lists Derrida's statements on the "infinite substitutability" which characterizes language and texts and which aborts "all possible totalization" of language or texts (p. 289).
- "Infinity" as Derrida uses it is similar to Aristotle's use, for whom any actual extension is always definite but is potentially infinite as capable of further bisection. See L. Sweeney, *Divine Infinity in Greek and Medieval Thought* [hereafter: *Divine Infinity*] (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1998), ch. 8: "Aristotle's Infinity of Quantity," pp. 143–65.
32. *Tain*, p. 238.
  33. *Ibid.*, pp. 238–39.
  34. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
  35. *Ibid.*, pp. 239–40.
  36. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
  37. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
  38. *Ibid.*, pp. 241–42. In the quotation, "D, p. 127," "D, p. 93" and "P, p. 101" refer to Derrida's *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson (University of Chicago Press, 1981), and *Positions*, trans. B. Harlow (University of Chicago Press, 1971).
  39. *Negative Theology*, pp. 73–142 (see n. 2 above). In the points to be made now, my parenthetical references to note 30, etc., should be read as referring to "the paragraph corresponding to note 30 above," etc.
  40. See *ibid.*, pp. 125–29. On erasure in Derrida, see *ibid.*, pp. 260–61; Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), "Erasure and palaeonymy," pp. 128–37. See *ibid.*, pp. 123–24 (especially n. 33), with reference to the "possible/impossible," which is discussed in the prgrs. corresponding to my n. 27 above.

41. Lowercase letters are bracketed in subsequent paragraphs to make references easier.
42. "How to Avoid," p. 74.
43. See #a-#d in previous prgr.
44. "How to Avoid," pp. 76-77.
45. Plato in the *Timaeus* names this third aspect of physical reality not only *khôra* but also "receptacle," "nurse," "mother," "pliable stuff," "necessity." For references to the Greek text and to secondary literature, see L. Sweeney, "Participation in Plato's Dialogues," *Divine Infinity*, pp. 142-46.
46. "How to Avoid," p. 104.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-6.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-7.
51. The Neoplatonism of Pseudo-Dionysius and others would fit here.
52. See previous note.
53. Another correspondent to *tain* and *khôra* is the "Mystic Writing Pad," which Freud compared to the unconscious in a human psyche. Why so? Because the pad offers an "ever-ready receptive surface and permanent traces of the inscriptions that have been made upon it" ("A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad' " [1925], quoted by Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 223). For Derrida "the depth of the Mystic Pad is simultaneously a depth without bottom, an infinite allusion, and a perfectly superficial exteriority: ■ stratification of surfaces each of whose relation to itself, each of whose interior, is but the implication of another similarly exposed surface. It joins the two empirical certainties by which we are constituted: infinite depth in the implication of meaning, in the unlimited envelopment of the present, and, simultaneously, the pellicular essence of being, the absolute absence of any foundation" (*ibid.*, p. 224).
54. See Kevin Hart, *Trespass of the Sign*, p. 19: "Often Derrida does not read a text to put pressure on western metaphysics but rather to affirm those elements forgotten or repressed by previous readings. In other words he does not stop at showing that a text does overrun its limits, but he explores the streams, the runnels and deltas which that overflow causes, although with the sediment it brings to the surface only to deposit elsewhere."
55. Although Porphyry, Iamblichus and other later Neoplatonists diverge from Plotinus in their conceptions of soul and intellect, in their eschatologies and in their epistemology and logic, they do agree with him in their basic metaphysics: for all, to be real is to be one. See L. Sweeney, *Christian Philosophy*, pp. 416-31.

56. See *Enneads* V, 5 (32), 6, 16-37; L. Sweeney, *Divine Infinity*, pp. 185-86 and 236-37.
57. Although God is above entity, Plotinus explicitly states that He actually exists—see V, 5 (32), 13, 12-14: "If then one takes away everything and says nothing about him and does not say falsely about anything that it is with him, he allows him his 'existence' (*eiase to estin*) without attributing to him anything which is not there." Also see VI, 9, (9), 3, 51: *ekeinou ontos en hautô*. See L. Sweeney, *Divine Infinity*, pp. 240-41.
58. VI, 9 (9), 11, 4-51.
59. The first date is that of Proclus' death, whereas 533 is when Severus, the monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, quoted Dionysius for the first time. See Jaroslav Pelikan, "The Odyssey of Dionysian Spirituality," in *Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite*, "The Classics of Western Spirituality" (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 11-24; Paul Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), pp. 3-10; William J. Carroll, "Participation in Selected Texts of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's *The Divine Names*" (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1981), pp. 167-69, for a listing of "the many names in the history of thought with whom Dionysius has been identified," starting from the year 129 and ending with the year 544. Also see *ibid.*, pp. 4-15.
60. A major pagan influence on Dionysius is that of Proclus (410-485), whose theory of magical theurgy may have influenced Dionysius on the sacraments. Proclus' distinction (to some degree) of Being, Life and Intellect, as well as his structured theory of participation, certainly influenced Dionysius. See L. Sweeney, *Divine Infinity*, ch. 12: "Participation and the Structure of Being in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*," pp. 257-88. Also see R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 161: "The problem posed by the Dionysian corpus, despite its supposed Apostolic authority, was that its Neoplatonism was that of the more avowedly pagan Athenian School [= Proclus]; in particular Dionysius' angelology seems too reminiscent of the Athenian School's order of gods. Hence, his God tended to become merely the supreme term in the metaphysical hierarchy, and as such to be conceived as operating on the material world only through intermediaries. In this Dionysius echoed the ambivalent tendencies of pagan Neoplatonism and, what was perhaps even more serious, he seemed equally equivocal on the fundamental point separating Neoplatonic and Christian world-views, whether creation is a result of the divine nature or of a gratuitous act of grace. Hence his sacramentalism tended to lose its supernatural element and become hard to distinguish from pagan theurgy. Finally Dionysius

- seemed to pay too little attention to the Incarnation."
61. The translation is that of Colm Luibheid in "The Classics of Western Spirituality," *MT*, ch. 1, p. 135.
  62. The celestial hierarchies consist of three triads in this descending order: seraphim, cherubim, thrones; dominations, powers, virtues; principalities, archangels, angels. The ecclesiastical hierarchies consist also of three triads in this descending order: bishop, priest, deacon; monks, holy people, purified orders; catechumens, penitents, possessed. Both hierarchies have in common this definition: "A hierarchy is a sacred order, ■ state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine. And it is uplifted to the imitation of God in proportion to the enlightenments divinely given to it.... The goal of a hierarchy, then, is to enable beings to be as like as possible to God and to be at one with Him.... Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God in all respects, to be clear and spotless mirrors reflecting the glow of primordial light and indeed of God himself. It ensures that when its members have received this full and divine splendor they can then pass on this light generously and in accordance with God's will to beings further down the scale" (*The Celestial Hierarchy*, ch. 3, pp. 153-54). Also see John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1969), ch. 5: "Pseudo-Dionysius," pp. 68-84; Eric Perl, "Hierarchy and Participation in Dionysius the Areopagite and Greek Neoplatonism," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (1994), 15-30; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, pp. 344-49.
  63. Different from both the Neoplatonic and the deconstructionist journeys is that of Thomas Aquinas, who starts from contingent material actual existents and rises to God as subsistent and infinite Existence—a philosophy and theology resting on the awareness that to be real is actually to exist. See last prgr. of n. 28 above; also L. Sweeney, *Authentic Metaphysics in an Age of Unreality*, 2d ed. (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1993), chs. 4-6.
  64. The translation is that given in "How to Avoid Speaking," p. 116.
  65. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

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# Signifying Nothing: Being as Sign in Neoplatonism and Derrida

Eric D. Perl

The basis for the much-discussed connection between Neoplatonic negative theology and deconstruction<sup>1</sup> is not hard to see. Deconstruction is fundamentally a theory of signification, which attacks the (supposedly) traditional notion that a signifier (word, text, or image) refers to a signified, the meaning which the signifier expresses, and which itself is prior to and independent of the signifier. Derrida calls this the "transcendental signified": the meaning underlying the expression, the archetype underlying the image, that which is not sign but "pure signified." On the traditional assumption, any system of meaning, be it a written text or the cosmos itself, has such a transcendental signified. In the case of a text, it is the author's intent, what he means to express; in the case of the world, understood as a system of signs, it is God. In Derrida's much-quoted words, "The intelligible face of the sign remains turned toward the word and the face of God....The sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth."<sup>2</sup> The idea that the world has a transcendent ground is simply a special case of the traditional understanding of the relation of signifier to signified, so that God, for Derrida, is simply a version of the transcendental signified. Hence Derrida believes that in declaring the insuperable absence of the transcendental signified he is striking at the roots of traditional western metaphysics, characterized by Heidegger as "ontotheology."

For Derrida's project is to show that this entire theory of signification is wrong, that no "pure" or transcendental signified can ever be found, prior to and outside of the sign, text, or world. Whatever we posit as the pure meaning turns out to be another sign, constituted only within the system of signification, the "text," whose meaning it purports to be. This process of showing the meaning to be constituted only within and by the text to which it is

supposedly prior is precisely the activity of deconstruction. All we have, all we can ever have, then, is signs; we can never transcend signs to arrive at a pure signified which is not itself a sign. And it is here that the affinity between deconstruction and Neoplatonism becomes clear. For Neoplatonism, too, declares the radical and absolute inaccessibility of God, the One or the Good. Being is that which is intelligible, and this does not include God, who is "beyond being." Anything that can be thought, and hence all that is, is *ipso facto* not God but only an image, sign, or expression. God himself, the ultimate meaning underlying all expressions, the source and archetype of the world-image, is as absolutely unavailable, inexpressible, not belonging to the whole of reality, as deconstruction declares the transcendental signified to be. Hence Neoplatonism refuses to allow any name, word, concept, or thought—even, in the end, negative ones—to apply to God, and ends in utter silence. Thus the connection between negative theology and deconstruction lies in their common insistence that all that is, all that is available for thought, is sign; that no ultimate meaning, no transcendental signified, no pure presence, can be attained. But whereas for Neoplatonism this implies that the world is infinitely meaningful, the manifestation of God, for deconstructionism it implies that the world is meaningless.

Derrida has more than once found it necessary to deny that his own project is a version of negative theology, and has tried to articulate the difference between the two.<sup>3</sup> He argues that negative theology continues to posit a transcendental signified in that, in its very insistence that God is not (a) being but "beyond being," it is attempting, in his words, to "disengage ■ superessentiality," to locate a presence above and other than all beings, or signs.<sup>4</sup> But this reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of Neoplatonism.<sup>5</sup> Properly understood, Neoplatonic negative theology already anticipates and incorporates Derrida's insights into the nature of signification, and consequently offers an interpretation of transcendence and a view of the world as sign which is not subject to Derrida's critique of the entire western tradition as "metaphysics of presence." My own project, then, is not to adopt but rather to co-opt Derrida's postmodern arguments in favor of a fundamentally pre-modern, Neoplatonic vision of being as nothing but sign. We agree only in holding that all that is and is intelligible is nothing but sign and image, in our common denial of a God who is encountered

as a pure presence, an inner core of meaning which remains when all signs and expressions have been stripped away. In short, as the title suggests, my thesis might be summarized in the old quip that the only difference between ■ mystic and an atheist is that the mystic spells 'Nothing' with a capital 'N'.

## I

Derrida's argument may be said to begin with the simple idea that meaning is constituted by the "play of differences" within a system of signification. A sign can be meaningful only in virtue of its difference from other signs, so that difference is the "condition of signification."<sup>6</sup> Consequently, meaning can occur only in a system of mutually differentiated signs, or, in short, a "text." "This principle dictates to us...to consider every process of signification as a formal play of differences." This "play of differences" is what Derrida calls "différance." "The signified concept is never present in itself, in a sufficient presence which would refer only to itself. Every concept is...essentially inscribed in a chain or in a system in the interior of which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by systematic play of differences. Such a play, *la différance*, then, is no longer simply a concept but the possibility of conceptuality, of the conceptual system and process in general."<sup>7</sup> Différance, "which is neither a word nor a concept," is, we might say, the production of differences, and therefore of meaning. But this brings us to the crucial point. On the one hand, the system of signification depends on and is constituted by the differences within it. On the other hand, these differences occur only within, and are constituted by, the system itself. They cannot be present prior to, or apart from, the system of signs which they themselves determine. Différance founds the system, but itself takes place only within the system: "If *différance* (I also place the 'is' under erasure) that which makes possible the presentation of the being-present, it never presents itself as such. It never gives itself to the present."<sup>8</sup> It is neither one element within the system, nor outside of and prior the system, but is the production of the system itself. "We must therefore admit, before every dissociation language/word, code/message, etc., [in short, signifier/signified] ...a systematic production of differences, the *production* of a system of differences—a *différance*."<sup>10</sup> This



word "production" attempts to capture the indeterminacy between the active and the passive which, Derrida explains, is represented by the 'a' of "différance."<sup>11</sup> It is the *production* of the system: neither merely a prior cause which produces it nor an effect produced by it. Hence it is neither the system as a whole, nor any part of it, nor something else prior to it. The term 'différance' is a way of indicating our awareness of the system of signification as constituted by and consisting of differences, and of the differences as constituted by the system, so that no ultimate origin, or pure presence, can be identified.<sup>12</sup>

It is because meaning occurs only through difference and therefore within a system of differences that no transcendental signified can be found. "From the moment that there is meaning, there are nothing but signs. We *think only in signs*... One could call *play* the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play, that is to say as the destruction of ontotheology and the metaphysics of presence [*italics in original*]."<sup>13</sup> In opposition to this principle, Derrida describes what he regards as the traditional view of signification:

This layer of pure meaning or signified goes back...to a layer of pre-linguistic or pre-semiotic meaning...of which the presence would be thinkable outside of and before the work of *différance*, outside of and before the process or the system of signification. The latter would come only to bring the meaning to light, translating it, transporting it, communicating it, incarnating it, expressing it, etc.... Such a meaning... would therefore not be...inscribed in the relational and differential tissue. Metaphysics has always consisted...in wanting to pull out the presence of meaning, under this name or under another, from *différance*; and each time one claims to cut off or rigorously isolate a region or a layer of pure meaning or pure signified, one makes the same move.<sup>14</sup>

But this move is impossible, precisely because meaning cannot be torn out from difference: "In so far as that which is called the 'meaning' (to 'be expressed') is already...constituted of a tissue of difference, in so far as there is already a *text*..., a textual transformation in which each supposedly 'simple' term is marked by the trace of an other, the presumed interiority of the meaning is already worked by its own outside. It always already carries itself outside itself."<sup>15</sup> Thus, whenever a supposed "transcendental

signified" is posited, it turns out, necessarily, to be defined and constituted by difference, and therefore produced within the system, the text, to which it is supposedly prior and independent. This is why Derrida rejects the notion of a "subject," an interiority of thought or intent which then expresses itself outwardly in language. Quoting Saussure, he insists that "language...is not a function of a speaking subject." This implies that the subject...is inscribed in language, is a 'function' of language.<sup>16</sup> And again, "There is no subject who is the agent, author, and master of *différance*...Subjectivity—like objectivity—is an effect of *différance*, an effect inscribed in a system of *différance*...The subject, and especially the conscious and speaking subject, depends on the system of differences and the movement of *différance*."<sup>17</sup>

Language, then, is not the outward expression of a prior, inward, non-linguistic subject or thought. This is why Derrida rejects the idea of "authorial intent" underlying a text as its meaning. Meaning occurs only within the text; it cannot be isolated or detached from the text, the expression, the sign. But therefore, the text, language, or sign is not the expression of *anything* prior to itself. It is, indeed, expression, but not the expression of *anything* (else); it is sign, but does not refer to a separate signified. The differences which constitute language, according to Derrida, "are produced effects, but effects which do not have for cause a subject or a substance, a thing in general, a being somewhere present and itself escaping from the play of *différance*. If such a presence were implied...in the concept of cause in general, it would be necessary therefore to speak of effect without cause."<sup>18</sup> This recognition of any system of meaning as "effect without cause" is what Derrida tries to indicate by calling it "trace": whatever we can say or think is not pure presence but trace, referring elsewhere, but never to any referent, anything which is not itself a trace, outside the system. In the traditional view, a sign is, as Derrida says, always "second and provisional: second from an original and lost presence from which the sign has just derived; provisional with regard to this final, lacking presence in view of which the sign would be in movement of mediation."<sup>19</sup> But for Derrida, it is, we might say, a second without a first, for while, as a sign, it is always derivative and refers outside itself, there is nothing there for it to derive from and refer to. Hence he concludes that "the representation of language as 'expression' is not an accidental prejudice, it is a sort of structural

decoy, what Kant would have called a transcendental illusion."<sup>20</sup> The idea that language expresses a prior meaning is an illusion, but an illusion that inevitably and necessarily arises from the very nature of language itself. Deconstruction is the endless exposure of this illusion: necessarily endless because the illusion itself is inevitable and can never be definitively escaped.

Derrida, then, breaks down an entire series of parallel metaphysical dualisms which he sees as central to the western, Platonic tradition. "All these metaphysical oppositions (signifier/signified, sensible/intelligible, writing/spoken word...) become non-relevant. They all come back...to subordinating the movement of *différance* to the presence of a value or a meaning which would be anterior to *différance*, more originary than it...This is still the presence of...the 'transcendental signified.'"<sup>21</sup> With Derrida, the signifier is no longer the expression of a signified; the sensible is no longer the expression of the intelligible; language is no longer the expression of thought; the outward is no longer the expression of the inward. And we may complete and summarize this list by adding that the world is no longer the expression of God. Derrida's view is nicely captured by Umberto Eco's metaphor of an onion: we wish to peel the onion to arrive at the core, to penetrate through all signs to arrive at the inner core of meaning. But "the universe is peeled like an onion, and an onion is all peel."<sup>22</sup> When all the layers of peel, all signs, have been removed, nothing remains. All is outside with no inside, image with no archetype, expression with no subject. All language, all being, is like an onion, all peel and no core—an endless play of signifiers, signifying nothing.

## II

Derrida's account of the constitution of meaning by difference, and his insistence that nothing can be present outside the system of differentiated signifiers, cannot fail to strike a familiar note for anyone acquainted with Plotinus' account of the nature of intelligible being. For Plotinus, being, τὸ ὄν, that which is, is trace, sign, and image, a complex system of forms or intelligible natures, a "one-many" reflecting and expressing the One.<sup>23</sup> For Plotinus as for Derrida, all that is available for thought, is sign.

Each being (ὄν) is a form, and being as a whole is the interconnected and interpenetrating totality of these forms.<sup>24</sup> As such it is the total content of thought, at once act-of-thinking and object of thought, and thus also goes by the name of Intellect. Being and thought are not only correlated and co-extensive but identical. "We have here, then, one nature, Intellect, all realities, and truth."<sup>25</sup> But since, for Plotinus, to be is to be intelligible, being is constituted by differences. To be intelligible, an object and content of thought, is to be determinate. "Being must not fluctuate, so to speak, in the indefinite, but must be fixed by limit and stability; and stability in the intelligible world is limitation and shape, and it is by these that it receives existence."<sup>26</sup> But to be determinate is to be defined over against other beings, to be this and not that. Determination depends on, or indeed is constituted by, otherness or difference. This is one of the reasons why being, as intelligible, cannot be absolutely simple, but must be a multiplicity of distinct forms. Where there is no multiplicity, there is no otherness and therefore no determination, no intelligibility, no being. "Each of the things which are being thought brings out along with itself sameness and otherness....Therefore the thinker must apprehend one thing different from another and the object of thought in being thought must contain variety."<sup>27</sup> Hence Plotinus' forms are established precisely as Derrida describes the play of signifiers within a text. Intelligibility, and therefore being, is constituted only in and by the differences of one form from another within the system of being. Being itself is a text, an interweaving of forms constituting one another through their mutual differentiation. This is why no form can be isolated and considered apart from the others. They are related, as Plotinus says, like theorems in a body of knowledge,<sup>28</sup> so that each one both implies and is implied by the whole, and the extraction of any one would involve the destruction of itself and of the entire system. What Derrida says of all concepts applies precisely to Plotinus' forms: "Every concept is...inscribed in a chain or in a system in the interior of which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by a systematic play of differences."<sup>29</sup> Here Plotinus and Derrida are in complete agreement as to the nature of intelligibility. Only within the system of differences can anything be thought, and therefore no object of thought, no being, can be isolated outside this system and encountered as a pure presence. Intelligibility and therefore being

is constituted by the play of differences within the system of intelligible beings. Differentiation is not prior to being, since there can be no difference without beings which differ (from each other) but neither is being prior to differentiation, since there can be no being without determination and therefore difference. Plotinus' account of being and difference, then, matches Derrida's notion of *différance*. The play of differences which constitutes being takes place only within the system of being itself, and nothing can be prior to, or escape from, this intra-systemic play of signifiers.

At this point, however, an obvious objection arises. To be sure, Plotinus regards being as sign, image, and trace. But for Plotinus, is it not the sign of something, a trace of the One or the Good? Being is precisely not ultimate and supreme, but points beyond and behind itself to the One, which would be, in Derrida's terms, the transcendental signified, the meaning of the text, the core of the onion, the ultimate first principle to which being, as sign, is second and provisional, that which is not itself a sign and is prior to, exempt from, not included within the system of being or difference. Indeed, Plotinus describes being as not only the image and trace of the One, but as its *λόγος* or expression.<sup>30</sup> Is he not then guilty of metaphysics as Derrida describes it, adhering to the classical system of dualisms which Derrida deconstructs? The One is the "inside" of which being is the outward presentation. The One is the "subject" which "speaks" being as its self-expression. The One is the archetype of which being is the image. Indeed it would seem that Neoplatonism is the clearest, even the paradigmatic case, of the attempt to isolate a pure presence, a transcendental signified, prior to the play of differences. This is, indeed, precisely how Derrida distinguishes his own project from negative theology:

Negative theology [is] always concerned with disengaging, as one knows, a superessentiality beyond the finite categories of essence and existence, that is of presence, and eager always to remember that if the predicate is refused to God, this is to recognize for him a superior, inconceivable, ineffable mode of being.<sup>31</sup>

And Derrida has already deconstructed any such move. If the One is said to be "beyond being," this simply defines it over against being, and thereby re-inscribes it within the system of differences. The One is, in short, a supposed transcendental signified, and as such can easily be shown to be not truly transcendental, but

involved in and produced by the system which it supposedly founds. This, however, is a fundamental misreading of Plotinus' idea of being and the One, a misreading which is not by any means unique to Derrida, but which is made by all those, including some of Plotinus' supporters, who fail to realize the true meaning and radical implications of "beyond being." Because to be is to be intelligible, and therefore finite, determinate, and complex, whatever is is therefore derivative, dependent on the determination and unity whereby it is. No *being* can be the first principle, for to be a being, i.e. to be, is to be derivative. "For all things [together, the totality of being] are not an origin, but they came from an origin, and this is no more all things, or one of them."<sup>32</sup> Consequently the One, precisely as not derivative and dependent, neither is nor is intelligible. The central point of Plotinus' doctrine that being is not supreme, but is the product and expression of the One which transcends it, is that *anything whatsoever* is not and cannot be the ultimate ground. The unfortunate common phrase "Supreme Being" would be, for Plotinus, a sheer contradiction in terms: no *being* can be supreme. The One, therefore, as Plotinus repeatedly says, is not any thing, indeed is Nothing. No common term whatsoever can be applied to beings and to the One. As Plotinus explains, "It is not equal to the other units so as to be one of their company; otherwise, there will be something in common between it and those which are included in the count with it, and that something in common will be before the One itself."<sup>33</sup> Thus it is not the case that Plotinus, as Derrida says of negative theology, "recognizes for [God] a superior, inconceivable, ineffable mode of being." This would imply that being can be predicated, albeit in radically different "modes," of both finite beings and the One, thus situating the One, however "differently," within the totality of being, and making it subject to a term more inclusive than, and hence prior to, itself. This is precisely what Plotinus intends to avoid when he insists that nothing can be predicated of the One in any way whatsoever.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, since to be is to be intelligible, an "inconceivable, ineffable mode of being" is simply contradiction and nonsense. Hence, when Plotinus says that to attain the One we must "take away everything,"<sup>35</sup> he means no less than he says: not "everything else," but, strictly and simply, "everything." For Plotinus knows, like Derrida, that if the One is anything at all, it

will inevitably be re-inscribed within the system of differences which constitutes intelligible being.<sup>36</sup>

What then are we to make of Plotinus' innumerable descriptions of the One in terms appropriate to a transcendental signified, as *something* which is beyond being, other than and prior to being? Such statements must be interpreted in the light of the philosophical principles already articulated. First, Plotinus is well aware that the One cannot be other than being in the sense in which one being is other than another, for this would ascribe determination to the One. "It is the nature of the Good not to be all things and not to be any one of them; for [if he were] he would come under one and the same classification as all of them, and if he came under the same classification, he would differ only by his individuality and specific difference and some added attribute."<sup>37</sup> This is precisely why Plotinus says that the One "has no otherness."<sup>38</sup> If the One were other than being, it would be another being, and so would not be truly other than all things. To be truly, absolutely "other" than all things, truly transcendent, the One must be not even other. Here already we see Plotinus developing a notion of transcendence quite different from that which Derrida criticizes. The many indications of the One's "priority," too, cannot be taken at face value, for that which is prior to being would, again, be something, a being, other than other beings, which Plotinus denies for the One. Rather, we must take his references to the One's "priority" as nothing but a way of describing the secondariness of being, its derivativeness, its non-ultimacy. Plotinus indeed tells us as much when he says, "Even to say 'cause' is not to predicate something accidental of it [the One] but of us, that we have something from it, while That is in itself; but neither ought one who speaks precisely say 'that' or 'is'..."<sup>39</sup> Even "cause," and hence, of course, ontological priority, must be negated, as indicating only our secondariness, not a positive priority on the part of the One.

Plotinus' One, then, is not a transcendental signified but rather has far more in common with Derrida's *différance*. In explaining why his project bears an apparent resemblance to negative theology, Derrida says that *différance* "is not, does not exist, is not a being-present (*on*) whatsoever; and we will be led to indicate also everything *which it is not*, that is, everything; and consequently that it has neither existence nor essence. It belongs to no category of being, whether it be present or absent."<sup>40</sup> It is after this that he goes

on to distinguish his project from negative theology, in a way that we have already seen to be inaccurate. For the One is neither a word nor a concept nor a being, but rather, we might say, the making-possible of being. That which is can be intelligible, and so can be, only by being one, by being finite, determinate, unitary. And hence every being, and being as a whole, in that it is one, is a trace and sign of the One. But the One itself is not anything. Therefore, for Plotinus as for Derrida, being is a trace, but not a trace of *something*; a sign, but not a sign of some signified, some presence rising above the sign. "And thus [the One] is none of all things, but before all things. What is it, then? The power of all things."<sup>41</sup> This frequently recurring expression (*δύναμις τῶν πάντων*)<sup>42</sup> indicates the One as not any being but the possibility of all beings, not intelligible but the possibility of intelligibility, precisely as Derrida describes *différance* as not a concept but "the possibility of conceptuality." Being as intelligible is a system of differences, and the One is the production (not the producer) of these differences: not a differentiator, but the differentiation itself of being. Derrida says, "This (active) movement of the (production of) *différance* without origin, could one not have called it, simply and without neographism, differentiation? Among other confusions, such a word would have let think some organic unity, originary and homogeneous, coming eventually to divide itself, to receive difference as an event."<sup>43</sup> This is, unfortunately, precisely how Plotinus' One is often erroneously presented. But in fact, the One is not something which in any sense first is and then produces difference, an agent distinct from and prior to its productive action, but is rather Differentiating, the production of difference, itself. This is what Plotinus intends to express by his insistence that the One is not a being which acts but rather is (productive) activity.<sup>44</sup> All this is involved in saying that the One is the "power of all things," itself Nothing, not a cause which lies behind and prior to its effects.

Plotinus thus offers an understanding of transcendence quite different from that which Derrida takes to be the universal norm in the western tradition. Transcendence here does not mean priority, separability, or, to use Derrida's term, disengageability from that which it transcends. Plotinus' One is not a "superessentiality" which can be "disengaged" from intelligible being. The One, as the differentiating which occurs in being, establishes being, so to

speaking from within. There is no One without being, for the One, itself Nothing, is the production of being. There is, as Derrida insists, no meaning, no signified, apart from the system of signifiers. The One, the meaning of being as sign, is indeed transcendent, in that it is not reducible to or identifiable with being as a whole or any part of it.<sup>45</sup> But it is transcendent to being only as immanent in being. Indeed, for Neoplatonism, transcendence is not prior to immanence, as in the metaphysics which Derrida criticizes, but rather identical with it. Plotinus explains with the utmost clarity why this identity is necessary:

[The One] is there and not there; it is not there because it is not in the grasp of anything, but because it is free from everything it is not prevented from being anywhere. For if, on the other hand, it was prevented, it would be limited by something else, and...God would go just so far, and would not be independent but a slave to the beings which come after him. The things, therefore, which are in something are there where they are; but everything which is not somewhere has nowhere where it is not. For if it is not here, it is clear that another place contains it, and it is here in something else, so that the "not somewhere" is false. If therefore the "not somewhere" is true and the "somewhere" is false...it will not be absent from anything. But if it is not absent from anything and is not anywhere, it is everywhere independent.<sup>46</sup>

As transcendent, the One cannot be "somewhere," i.e. determinate, for it would then be finite, a part of the system of being. But precisely because it is "not somewhere," it is, at once and identically, nowhere and everywhere, transcendent and immanent. For if it were "not here," i.e. merely other, it would be somewhere else, a determinate being. Precisely in order to be not somewhere, not any thing, and so not derivative, it must be everywhere, all things. Transcendence which is not immanence is not true transcendence, but mere otherness. Real transcendence is universal immanence. "The One: all things and not even one,"<sup>47</sup> says Plotinus, and again, "All these things are the One and not the One."<sup>48</sup>

Another way of putting this is to say that the One cannot be, as it is often described, the center-point from which being emerges as a surrounding circle. There can be no such identifiable center-point, for any such point would be one point within the system, determined or located relative to all other points. The lack of a

center for being or thought is another common way of expressing the deconstructionist denial of the transcendental signified. Plotinus' One is not the center as one point within the system, for then it would not be truly transcendent, truly Nothing. But for Plotinus, this implies that the center is everywhere and everywhere is the center, that no one point is the center because all is center. Where anything is, there is the center; and therefore, no one thing is the center. Plotinus expresses this by asking us first to envisage being proceeding from the One as light from a point-source, and then instructing us to remove the determinate source but retain "the power of the light."

Would you still say that the light was somewhere, or would it be equally present over the whole outer sphere? You will no longer rest in your thought on the place where it was before...you see the light everywhere.<sup>49</sup>

Returning to the image of the onion, we can see clearly just where Derrida and Plotinus meet: they agree in rejecting the dualism of peel and core, the notion of peeling off all the layers of signs until we arrive at, or "disengage," a pure signified. When all the signs have been stripped off, we are left with nothing. But for Plotinus, this means that it is as true to say it is all core as that it is all peel. The center is everywhere. This is quite different from Derrida's notion that traditional western metaphysics invariably seeks the transcendental signified as an identifiable center distinct from that which surrounds it.

Plotinus' One, then, is not a "pure presence." Indeed, Plotinus' philosophy is not fundamentally a doctrine of the One (there can be no such doctrine, for nothing can be said of the One), but a study of being, of that which is; and what it discovers is that being, all that is, is not ultimate or autonomous, but is trace, sign, and image. Plotinus wishes us to see reality as sign and image, but not in a dualist manner, not as the sign and image of some separate, independent Other. It is, as Derrida describes any system of signification, an effect without a cause, a second without a first. It is not the isolation of a transcendental signified, but rather the recognition of being as sign, that Plotinus is trying to indicate by his description of being as the trace of the One. Thus he says, "[The Good] has given from itself a trace of itself to the seeing Intellect

to have; so that there is desire in Intellect, and it is always desiring and always attaining;"<sup>50</sup> not first desiring and then attaining, as it would if the One could be disengaged as a pure presence, a stopping-point for the motion of being, but "always desiring and always attaining." Being can never rest, because it is not signified but sign; but in its very motion of referring it presents what is never present, it has what it desires. It is not in stripping away the sign to disengage the signified, but in reading being as sign, that we encounter its meaning. In this way may retain the meaningfulness of the text, of being, without falling into either the pernicious dualism of signifier and signified which Derrida rightly criticizes, or the nihilist meaninglessness which the mere absence of the transcendental signified entails.

### III

The same theme emerges still more explicitly in the thought of Dionysius the Areopagite. For Dionysius, as for Plotinus, God is "beyond being,"<sup>51</sup> beyond not only all affirmative but also all negative predication,<sup>52</sup> indeed not only ineffable and unknowable but beyond ineffability and unknowing (ὑπερὰ ῥήτως, ὑπεράγνωστον).<sup>53</sup> Hence his negative theology consists not of negative statements about God, which would still leave God defined over against being, but rather of utter silence. We must "honor the hidden of the divinity beyond mind and being with unsearchable and sacred reverence of mind, and ineffable things with a wise silence,"<sup>54</sup> and union with God "comes about in the cessation of every intellectual activity,"<sup>55</sup> in complete "non-activity of all knowledge."<sup>56</sup> And this is for the same reason that we found in Plotinus. If God were anything at all or were accessible to the mind in any way at all, he would be determinate, derivative, and hence not God. "If someone, having seen God, understood what he saw, he did not see God, but something of those things of his which are and are known."<sup>57</sup>

Since, for Dionysius as for Plotinus, to be is to intelligible, or determinate, what makes a thing to be is what makes it to be itself and not any other. Consequently God is not determinate and is not anything. But at the same time, the determination or differentiation whereby each being is itself and thus is, is its creator, God-in-it.

This is why Dionysius says, "The being of all things is the divinity beyond being."<sup>58</sup> God, himself not anything, is the creative determination, the being, of all things:

In the cause of all things the paradigms of all beings pre-exist, in one embracing union beyond being...Paradigms, we say, are the being-making (οὐσιοποιούς) logoi of all beings, which pre-exist uniformly in God, which theology calls pre-determinations...determinative and creative (ἀφοριστικά καὶ ποιητικά) of beings, according to which the Beyond Being both predetermined and produced all beings.<sup>59</sup>

On this ground Dionysius even ascribes the name "Different" to God, as the differentiation which makes all things. God is called "different, because he is present providentially to all things, and becomes all things in all things for the preservation of all...Let us consider the divine difference not as some alteration of its super-unchangeable identity, but as the single multiplication of itself and the uniform processions of its fecundity to all."<sup>60</sup> Hence, as the differentiation of beings by which all things are, Dionysius' God, like Plotinus', is at once radically transcendent and totally immanent, no thing and all things, "all beings and none of beings."<sup>61</sup> Consequently God is at once absolutely unknowable and totally manifest:

God is known in all things and apart from all things; and he is known by knowledge, and by unknowing, and of him there is intellection, and reason, and science, and touching, and sense perception, and opinion, and imagination, and name, and all other things; and he is neither thought, nor spoken, nor named; and he is not any of the things that are, nor is he known in any of the things that are; and he is all things in all things and nothing in any, and he is known to all from all and to none from any.<sup>62</sup>

Since all being is theophany, the unfolding of God into the intelligible multiplicity which constitutes beings, every cognition is an experience of God; and since he is not any being whatsoever, no cognition grasps him. It is in this sense that all creatures, i.e. beings, are symbols or images of God. Thus Dionysius' vision of creation as theophany agrees with Plotinus' understanding of being as sign, but not sign of a disengageable "pure presence."

Derrida, however, does not read Dionysius in this way. In "How to Avoid Speaking," his fullest discussion of the relation of his thought to Neoplatonic negative theology, he expresses his awareness that deconstruction can be given such a Neoplatonic twist:

One would thus arrive at ■ kind of proof of God—not a proof of the *existence* of God, but a proof of God *by his effects*, or more precisely a proof of what one calls God...by effects without cause, by the *without cause*...And those who would like to consider 'deconstruction' a symptom of modern or postmodern nihilism could indeed, if they wished, recognize in it the last testimony—not to say the martyrdom—of faith in the present fin de siècle. This reading will always be possible.<sup>63</sup>

But Derrida proceeds to explain why he does not adopt this reading. He contends, first, that negative theology "seems to reserve, beyond all positive predication, beyond all negation, even beyond Being, some hyperessentiality—a being beyond Being."<sup>64</sup> That is, he thinks that even Dionysius posits, and intends to "disengage," a transcendental signified, a pure presence to be encountered in a mystical union above all signs. "My uneasiness was...directed toward the promise of that presence given to intuition or vision. The promise of such a presence often accompanies the apophatic voyage. It is doubtless the vision of a dark light, no doubt an intuition of 'more than luminous...darkness,' but still it is the immediacy of a presence."<sup>65</sup> The "ascent" to this intuition, for Dionysius, he says, "corresponds to ■ rarefaction of signs, figures, symbols."<sup>66</sup> He quotes Dionysius' characterization of symbols as "shields" which hide a "secret" from the uninitiate<sup>67</sup> to argue that Dionysius retains the notion that there is a secret, a meaning which lies hidden behind all the symbols or expressions. Hence he concludes that in "apophatic discourse," "the possible absence of a referent still beckons, if not toward the thing of which one speaks (such is God, who is nothing because he takes place, without place, beyond Being), at least toward the other (other than Being)."<sup>68</sup> For Derrida, then, Dionysius' God remains "other," and therefore "the most negative discourse, even beyond all nihilism and negative dialectics, preserves a trace of the other."<sup>69</sup> Hence it cannot escape the signifier/signified dualism, and cannot altogether avoid positing a transcendental signified.

Derrida, then, reads Dionysius in the all-too-conventional way as a kind of "mystical iconoclast,"<sup>70</sup> who calls us to strip away all created symbols and images and attain a non-symbolic vision of and union with God as a "pure signified." But all this is a misreading of Dionysius' understanding of creation as symbol. First, as we have already seen, God is not "other" in such a way as to be defined over against being and therefore encountered outside of or apart from it. For Dionysius, he is no more "not-being" than he is being. By the same token, and for the same reason, there is no final encounter with or presence of God, no "silent intuition," which overcomes, or leaves behind, or dispenses with symbols. The symbols, or beings, cannot be "rarefied" or stripped away until God as a "pure signified" is left. When all symbols are taken away, *nothing* is left. We cannot go to God behind the signs, beyond being, not because of any incapacity on our part, but because there is no there there. All things that are are finite, determinate; creatures, not God; signs, not signified. "For," Dionysius says, "it is not possible for the thearchic ray to illuminate us otherwise than anagogically cloaked in the variety of the sacred veils."<sup>71</sup> This does not promise, but on the contrary excludes, any encounter with God beyond all signs. Since, for Dionysius as for Plotinus, to be is to be determinate, all that is available to us, all that we can encounter, all that is, is not pure signified but sign and symbol. "For if all knowledges are of beings and have their limit in beings, that which is beyond being is also above all knowledge."<sup>72</sup> The "rarefaction" of signs which Derrida finds in Dionysius' account of the ascent to God is therefore not an elimination of signs in favor of a pure signified, but rather a movement into the signs, an understanding or reading of them as signs. "We must, then, contrary to the popular assumption about them, *cross over into* the sacred symbols in a way befitting the sacred, and not despise them, because they are the offspring and impressions of the divine marks, and manifest images of the ineffable and supernatural visions."<sup>73</sup> The "silent intuition" of God, the only possible encounter, is attained not by discarding being but by experiencing it as icon, as sign. God is "present" only in, though, and as the created symbols, not apart from, above, or prior to them. No such presence is possible or promised. God is accessible, is revealed, is present to us, only in the veils, the created symbols, which conceal him from us. The symbol does not, as Derrida suggests, merely conceal something other (a presence, a

secret, a transcendental signified) lying behind it; rather, it reveals what it conceals. The secret does not lie hidden behind the manifestation. The secret itself is manifest, an open secret.

Dionysius says that the symbolic characterizations of God are

sacred compositions of daring God-formation, manifest presentations (προβεβλημένα) of hidden things, and multiplications and divisions of single and indivisible things, and multiform shapings of formless and shapeless things; if anyone is able to see their hidden inner beauty, he will find them all mystical and deiform and filled with much theological light. For let us not think that the manifestations of the compositions have been formulated for themselves, but that they shield (προβεβλήσθαι) the ineffable and invisible knowledge to the many, lest the all-holy things be accessible to the profane; but they are unveiled only to the genuine lovers of divinity, who do away with all childish imagination about the sacred symbols and are able to cross over by simplicity of mind and fittingness of contemplative power to the simple and supernatural and exalted truth of the symbols.<sup>71</sup>

Derrida cites part of this passage to support his contention that Dionysius regards the symbols as "shields" which conceal the secret knowledge of God.<sup>72</sup> But this is only half the story. Dionysius here says not merely that the symbols "shield" such knowledge, but also that they are "manifest presentations" of it. And the crucial point, which Derrida surprisingly misses or ignores, is that it is one and the same Greek word which, in a manner after Derrida's own heart, means both "presentation" and "shield." (The root meaning of this word, προβάλλω, is "to throw forth, to project," so that it comes to mean both "present, put forth," and "shield, screen, set up a defense.") The symbols, then, present what they shield and shield what they present, and the presenting and the shielding are one and the same act. This expresses precisely the relation of being to God. "Before the other participations of him being is presented (προβέβληται)."<sup>73</sup> and "the beyond-goodness-itself is hymned as presenting (προβαλλομένη) the first gift, that of being itself."<sup>74</sup> "The order of all things," Dionysius says, is "προβεβλημένης, presented as a shield, from [God]," and this is why "he is known to all from all and to none from any." Being itself is the presentation which shields and the shield which presents, the veil that reveals and the revelation which veils. Here again transcendence cannot be distinguished from

immanence. The divine silence does not lie behind the words, symbols, beings which express it; the silence is in, or indeed is, the words. The divine darkness does not lie behind or inside the intelligible light, but rather "the divine darkness is the inaccessible light in which God is said to dwell."<sup>75</sup> Thus Dionysius says that the angels, and by implication all things, "reveal in themselves the hidden goodness and are 'angels' because they proclaim the divine silence and, as it were, present (προβεβλημένως) clear lights which interpret that which is in secret."<sup>76</sup> The silence is the words, the darkness is the light, for all words, lights, beings, are symbols proclaiming the divine silence. Thus the relation of symbol to symbolized, of creature to God, does not fall into the dualistic framework of signification which Derrida claims for it.

#### IV

The Neoplatonic vision of all that can be present to thought, of all that is, as sign, thus escapes Derrida's deconstruction of the "transcendental signified" and his blanket characterization of the western tradition as "metaphysics of presence." But deconstructionism has performed a much needed, although purely negative service, in destroying, we may hope once and for all, the false notion of transcendence which has prevailed in the west since at least the late Middle Ages. Postmodernity at least represents our awakening from the dream of a first principle, a God, who is included within the totality of that which is and hence can be disengaged and thought apart from all signs, images, or symbols. Thus deconstruction eliminates any possible dualism between world and God, peel and core, signifier and signified. But this is precisely the lesson of Neoplatonism, with its radical insistence on God as "beyond being," its refusal to locate God at all within the realm of being, intelligibility, presence. In its doctrine of being as icon, as trace, sign, and symbol, Neoplatonism offers us "the rethinking of the idea of transcendence"<sup>77</sup> which our own time so urgently requires: transcendence without dualism, transcendence as immanence.

Like so many of the radical implications of Neoplatonism, this idea is most clearly expressed by Eriugena:



Everything which is understood or sensed is nothing other than the appearance of the non-apparent, the manifestation of the hidden, the affirmation of the negated, the comprehension of the incomprehensible, the expression of the ineffable, the access to the inaccessible, the understanding of the unintelligible, the body of the bodiless, the essence of the superessential, the form of the formless. ...the visibility of the invisible...the definition of the infinite..."

And the hidden, the incomprehensible, is not, of course, *something else* apart from the manifestation, for then it would not be hidden or incomprehensible and the manifestation would not be all that is. Hence Eriugena calls God Nothing, and expresses the relation between God and the world thus:

We ought not to understand God and the creature as two things distinct from one another, but as one and the same. For the creature is subsisting in God; and God, manifesting himself, in a marvelous and ineffable manner is created in the creature, the invisible making himself visible and the incomprehensible comprehensible and the hidden revealed...and the simple composite...and the infinite finite and the uncircumscribed circumscribed...and creating all things he is created in all things and making all things is made in all things...and...he...becomes all things in all things. And I am...here speaking...of the ineffable descent of the Supreme Goodness. ...into the things that are so as to make them be, indeed, so as itself to be."

The world is God's self-creation, his emergence into being and intelligibility. Just as meaning occurs within the text which it produces, so transcendence is found within the world which it establishes. "Except for the point, the still point, there would be no dance, and there is only the dance."<sup>1</sup> The still point makes the dance possible, but "there is only the dance:" not both the still point and the dance. When we speak, in traditional terms, of the world as a book which expresses God, we must conceive this relation not as that of a text to its author but as that of a text to its meaning. The meaning grounds the text, but occurs only in the text. Thus we are left, not with God-and-the-world, but with, only, the theophanic world. All is sign and nothing but sign. But for this very reason, the world is not meaningless but infinitely meaningful.

Understood in this way, Neoplatonism has the greatest significance for our current intellectual and cultural predicament. The modern world-view, having taken its origins in the later Middle

Ages, has now collapsed into postmodernity (including deconstruction), which is not opposed to modernity but is rather in continuity with it, its inevitable fulfilment and self-destruction. Modernity may be said to begin with the loss of the Neoplatonic doctrine of God as beyond being, the inclusion of God within the totality of that which is.<sup>2</sup> This leads to the ontotheological dualism in which God is one thing and the world is another. God is now merely another being, outside of and apart from creation, and so neither truly transcendent nor truly immanent. Hence we lose the vision of the world as sign, which expresses the unity of transcendence and immanence. The world can now be viewed as autonomous, rather than as nothing but sign, and the basis has been laid for modern science and modern secularism. Deconstruction at least does away with this modern illusion, exposing the bankruptcy of any claim to arrive at an ultimate account of reality which is not mythic, metaphorical, and symbolic, and thus showing how the modern rejection of myth and symbol, the loss of authentic transcendence, inevitably collapses into nihilism. But by bringing modernity to this conclusion, postmodernism reveals the necessity of mysticism and sacramentalism as the only way of preserving reason and meaning. The postmodern deconstruction of modernity, although purely negative and destructive in itself, may thus open the way, for the first time in many centuries, for a return to Neoplatonism's sacramental mysticism and mystical sacramentalism, to the vision of the world as the sign and icon in which we encounter the divine Nothing. "So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing."<sup>3</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. Attested, for instance, by the recent book *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (New York, 1992). But the essays in this book tend to consider negative theology simply as a linguistic phenomenon, a way of speaking (or not speaking) about God, rather than as a way of viewing the world, an account of the nature of reality.
2. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, tr. G. Chakravorty (Baltimore, 1976), pp. 13-14.

3. No doubt this is motivated in part by his wish to include Neoplatonism in his characterization of the entire western tradition as "metaphysics of presence."
4. Jacques Derrida, "La différence," in *Marges de la Philosophie* (Paris, 1972), p. 6; cf. "How To Avoid Speaking: Denials," tr. Ken Frieden, in *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York, 1989), pp. 7-11, 20-24.
5. Jean-Luc Marion, in *L'idole et la distance* (Paris, 1977), p. 318 n. 39, quoting this passage from *La différence*, rightly remarks, "We have seen that, precisely, the theology called negative, in its depth, does not aim at re-establishing a 'super-essentiality' since it aims neither at predication or at Being." The relevant part of Derrida's reply ("How To Avoid Speaking," pp. 63-64, n. 2) is that "it is necessary to elaborate an interpretive discourse as interesting and original as that of Marion...to distinguish the 'depths' (the thinking of the gift, of paternity, of distance, of celebration, etc.) from what in the so-called 'negative theology' still seems to be very concerned with hyperessentiality." This merely reveals Derrida's inadequate understanding of negative theology (see below, pp. 132ff.). In fact, all that Marion finds in Dionysius is actually there, and Marion's "interpretive discourse" represents simply a sound understanding of what Dionysius, and by extension Neoplatonic negative theology in general, is trying to achieve.
6. "La différence," p. 11.
7. Jacques Derrida, "Sémiologie et grammatologie: entretien avec Julia Kristeva," in *Positions* (Paris, 1972), p. 37.
8. "La différence," p. 11.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
10. "Sémiologie et grammatologie," p. 40.
11. "La différence," p. 9.
12. See *ibid.*, p. 10.
13. *Grammatology*, p. 50.
14. "Sémiologie et grammatologie," pp. 43-44.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.
16. "La différence," p. 16.
17. "Sémiologie et grammatologie," pp. 40-41.
18. "La différence," p. 12, cf. "How to Avoid Speaking," p. 6.
19. "La différence," p. 10.
20. "Sémiologie et grammatologie," p. 45.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
22. Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum*, tr. William Weaver (New York, 1990), p. 514.
23. See e.g. V.5.5.

24. This description of Being, Intellect, or the "world of Forms," covers the whole of reality for Plotinus. The sensible cosmos is not another world, a set of beings additional to the Forms (see e.g. VI.2.1). The intelligible, or Being, as Plotinus repeatedly insists, is all things, all that is, and the sensible is simply the manifestation in greater multiplicity (and hence less reality) of what is already contained in greater unity in the intelligible. (See my "Hierarchy and Participation in Dionysius the Areopagite and Greek Neoplatonism," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (1994), pp. 24-27.) Thus there is no fundamental opposition between the sensible and the intelligible; the sensible is the intelligible, only less so, so that Plotinus can say that sensibles, and even matter, are forms, albeit lesser ones: "All this universe is held fast by forms from beginning to end: matter first of all by the forms of the elements, and then other forms upon these, and then again others...Then matter, too, is a sort of ultimate form; so this universe is all form, and all the things in it are forms; for its archetype is form" (V.8.7). Correspondingly, sense-perception, as a way of apprehending form or being, is not opposed to intellection, but is simply a lesser mode of it: "Sense-perceptions are dim intellections, and...intellections are clear sense-perceptions" (VI.7.12). Contrary to a common misreading, therefore, the fundamental distinction for Plotinus is not between the sensible and the intelligible (the latter then being subdivided into One, Intellect, and Soul), but rather between the intelligible, or being (including soul and the sensible as lesser modes of intelligibility and being) and the One. And this distinction, as we shall see, cannot imply any sort of dualism, for the One is not anything.
25. Plotinus, tr. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge and London, 1978-1988), V.5-3; cf. V.3.5. All quotations from Plotinus are from this translation unless otherwise noted.
26. V.1.7; cf. V.5.6.
27. V.3.10; cf. VI.7.39.
28. V.9.8.
29. "La différence," p. 11.
30. V.1.6.
31. "La différence," p. 6.
32. III.8.9; cf. V.5.6: "Since the substance which is generated [from the One] is form...the One must be without form. But if it is without form it is not a substance; for a substance must be some one particular thing, something, that is, defined and limited; but it is impossible to apprehend the One as a particular thing: for then it would not be the principle, but only that particular thing which you said it was. But if all things are in that which is generated [from the One], which of the things in it are you going to say that the One is? Since it is none of them, it can only be said to be beyond them. But these things are

beings, and being: so it is 'beyond being'."

33. V.5.4.
34. E.g. V. 5. 6.
35. V.3.17.
36. John Rist, in his otherwise admirable Plotinus: *The Road to Reality* (Cambridge, 1967), has argued that when Plotinus says that the One is "beyond being," he means that it is "infinite being;" that it is not the case that the One is Nothing; and that there must therefore be an analogy of being between finite beings and the One. Apart from its textual difficulties (the description of the One as Nothing is not, as Rist implies, Eriugena's innovation, but occurs frequently in Plotinus), this interpretation misses the fundamental point that since to be is to be intelligible, all that is must necessarily be finite, so that "infinite being" is a self-contradiction. This is not, as Rist argues, merely a limitation of Plotinus' lexicon, in which terms such as οὐσία and ὄν comport finitude, but a strictly philosophical conclusion. To argue as Rist does is to play into Derrida's hands by attributing to the One "a superior, inconceivable, ineffable mode of being," and thus including the One within the totality of that which is.
37. V. 5.13.
38. VI. 9. 8.
39. VI.9.3 (my translation).
40. "La différence," p. 6.
41. III.8.9-10 (my translation).
42. cf., V.1.7; V.3.15; V.4.2; VI.7.32.
43. "La différence," p. 14.
44. VI.8.20; cf. V.3.12.
45. This is why Plotinus is not a pantheist in a pernicious sense, simply identifying God with the totality of existing things.
46. V. 5. 9.
47. V.2.1 (my translation).
48. V. 2. 2.
49. VI. 4. 7.
50. III.8.11 (my translation).
51. Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Leiden, 1992), p. 203, argues that Dionysius, and indeed the entire Plotinian tradition, cannot ascribe being to God because "Dionysius did not have a fully developed appreciation of the absolute and transcendental nature of Being. Greek philosophy as a whole had not yet discovered the transcendent or universal and analogical value of Being, i.e. that as a concept unrestricted in itself, 'being' adequately [!] expresses the reality both of creatures and of God [emphasis added] while yet allowing their radical distinction. It failed, therefore, to harmonise faithfully within a unified order both the finite and

infinite character of reality." O'Rourke thus claims to find a "concept" more inclusive than God; hence his idea that the finite and the infinite together make up a single "unified order," or "reality." He, and the line of thought he represents, is therefore open both to Plotinus' objection (see above, pp. 129-130, and nn. 32 and 36) that this subordinates God to that concept ("being") and thus includes God within a larger whole ("reality") and turns him into one being among others, and to Derrida's parallel contention that such a God still in some way *is* and so does not escape from the play of *différance*. The radical claim of Neoplatonism (which is not a mere inadequacy of Greek thought) is that *any* inclusion of God under a common concept with creatures is a violation of transcendence. *Reality itself* is secondary and derivative, and so cannot include God. The One, says Plotinus, "is the power of all things, and its product is already *all things*. But if this product is all things, that Principle is beyond all things: therefore 'beyond being'; and if the product is all things but the One is before all things and not on an equality with all things, in this way too it must be 'beyond being'" (V.4.2).

52. *De Mystica Theologia*, in *Corpus Dionysiacum II*, ed. Günter Heil and Adolf Martin Ritter (Berlin, 1991), I.2, p. 143 (P.G. 3, 1000B). Henceforward abbreviated *MT*.
53. *Corpus Dionysiacum I: De Divinibus Nominibus*, ed. Beate Regina Suchla (Berlin, 1990), 1.4, p. 115 (592D). Henceforward abbreviated *DN*.
54. *DN* 1.3, p. 111 (589AB).
55. *DN* 1.5, p. 116 (593C).
56. *MT* 1.3, p. 144 (1001A).
57. *Epistula* I, in *Corpus Dionysiacum II*, pp. 156-57 (1065A). Henceforward abbreviated *Ep*.
58. *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, in *Corpus Dionysiacum II*, IV.1, p. 20 (177D). Henceforward abbreviated *CH*.
59. *DN* V.8, p. 188 (824C).
60. *DN* IX. 5, p. 210 (912D).
61. *DN* 1.6, p. 119 (596C).
62. *DN* VII. 3, p. 198 (872A).
63. "How to Avoid Speaking," pp. 6-7.
64. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 23-24.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

70. The phrase is borrowed from Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Denys," in *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. II: Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles, tr. A. Louth et al. (San Francisco and New York, 1984), who rightly rejects it: "By no means is Denys just the advocate and architect of negative theology, the mystical iconoclast, as he is generally thought to be...Denys contemplates the divine symbols in creation and the Church with an aesthetic delight. Things are not simply the occasion for his seeing God; rather he sees God in things. Colours, shapes, essences and properties are for him immediate theophanies" (p. 179). And this, as Balthasar realizes, is merely the other side of negative theology: "The same knowledge of God demands both a deeper penetration *into* the image and also a more sublime transcendence *beyond* it, and the two are not separated one from another but are the more fully integrated, the more perfectly they are achieved" (p. 169).
71. *CH* I. 2, p. 8 (12 1B).
72. *DN* I.4, p. 115 (593A).
73. *Ep*. IX.2, p. 199 (1108C).
74. *Ep*. IX.1, pp. 196-97 (1105BC).
75. "How to Avoid Speaking," p. 24.
76. *DN* V.5, p. 183 (820A).
77. *DN* V.6, p. 184 (820C).
78. *Ep*. V, p. 162, (1073A).
79. *DN* IV.2, p. 145 (696BC).
80. Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity* (New Haven, 1993), p. 252.
81. *Periphyseon* III, P.L. 122, 633AB.
82. *Ibid.*, III, 678CD.
83. T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*.
84. Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, "La vanité d'être et le nom de Dieu," in *Analogie et dialectique* (Geneva, 1982), p. 20: "The distinctive feature of modernity, understood as the perfect completion of metaphysics, does not at all consist in a negation of God...Modernity is characterized in the first place by the annulling of God as a question. Why does God no longer abide questioning? Because the response to the question of his essence or of his existence (according to the strict metaphysical acceptation of these terms) becomes indifferent...What then is found put into play in a negation or an affirmation of God? Not God as such, but the compatibility or incompatibility of an idol called 'God' with the totality of the conceptual system where the being in its being (l'étant dans son être) marks the age...Theism or atheism aim equally at an idol. They remain enemies, but enemy brothers in a common and unsurpassable idolatry." In other words, once God is reduced to the level of being, it does not much matter whether we believe that such a God exists or not, for in either case we are failing to envisage true

- transcendence and such a "God" is not God at all but an idol. Marion's thought, as articulated for instance in *Dieu sans l'être* and *L'idole et la distance*, is a highly important example of "contemporary Neoplatonism," the deployment of a profoundly Neoplatonic vision in contemporary language and with regard to contemporary concerns.
85. T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*.

# Can Neoplatonism be Harmonized with Postmodernity?

John R. A. Mayer

Postmodernity may be characterized as a philosophical attitude which has abandoned the notion that truth is capable of being articulated in a coherent and rational system of propositions. Rather, assertions are imaginative locutions which evoke responses from readers/listeners. These evocations are echoes of erased traces of not-yet articulated meanings. In some sense Plato's doctrine of *anamnesis* has some kinship with this view, even though Plato was convinced that there is a singular absolute truth which each human has had access to in some pre-incarnate condition of his soul. Postmoderns do not usually accept either the doctrine of an eternal soul, or its cognitive exposure to a transcendent realm of ideas prior to earthly birth. But they do recognize the famous Platonic paradox about learning: namely that one could not seek to find what one does not know, for in that case one would have no criterion in terms of which to accept or recognize what one has sought, or reject what does not constitute the object of one's search. Thus, there must be some double sense of knowing—a pre-accessible or pre-explicit knowledge, in terms of which one accepts some new, previously unthought claim, while one rejects or remains aloof from other such claims. Then there is the more conventional sense of overt, formulable knowledge.

What constitutes plausibility, what constitutes evidence or argument, are all based on the pre-explicit knowledge. This pre-explicit knowledge is neither formulated nor formulable. But it does function in every individual. Unlike Plato, most postmoderns are convinced that this inchoate cognition is not universally identical in all humans, but is partially determined by one's cultural and linguistic experience. It may further be differentiated in individuals with different character, different levels of spirituality, different degrees of access to the inward structures of consciousness. Of

course all of the foregoing is laden with metaphysical and anthropological assumptions, which the post-modern may reject, or at least, question; leaving the field open to alternative characterizations of postmodernity.

Another characteristic of postmodernity is its transvaluation of reason as the principal feature of the human and of reality. For humans the most important faculty is imagination rather than reason. The real is not deemed the rational, as Hegel claimed, rather it is characterizable by it being a judicious admixture of the rational with the novel, the unexpected, the surprising. It is not that these cannot be rationally accounted for once they have taken place: reason is flexible and inventive enough to allow for anything, and account for it in some way. In fact, reason can allow for that which doesn't happen, or will not happen just as well as it can account for what in fact took place or will occur. Thus the predictive characteristic of the rational faculty is what is questioned, and reality is seen to operate on principles additional to rationality, if they can be deemed to operate on principles at all. Perhaps reality just happens: admittedly within the constraints of what has already happened, and what has not. Imagination takes pride of place over reason, and the ability to speak poetically, originally, evocatively is of greater import than restricting articulation to the objective, the quantitative, the repeatable and the empirically demonstrable. Postmodernity is unashamedly pluralistic, reveling in diversity and difference, celebrating the primacy of the particular over the universal. It is also critical of the modern tendency to overvalue the technical and the technological for purposes of problem-solving, and the tendency to encounter the problematic with a will to solve it, rather than to respect it as such.

How can then one speak of Neoplatonism in a postmodern vein? Let us first characterize Neoplatonism briefly. Neoplatonism is a metaphysical teaching about the ultimacy and primacy of the One, which is the source, the origin of everything else, and towards which everything strives. Plotinus, claims that from the One there are a series of emanations: the first of these is *Nous*, or mind, then *Psyche*, or soul, from which *Physis* or the natural world emanates. And just as the One is the origin of this series of emanations, so the One is their ultimate goal or objective: to be achieved in reverse order to the original emanation. The path back to the One is arduous: reason might show the way back all the way to *Nous*; but

from *Nous* to the One the only path is Love, *Eros*. This doctrine, then, claims the ultimate and fundamental oneness of being, the belonging together of all the diverse differences and differentiations which we can make based on experience and rational analysis: contrast is a relative and derivative concept.

This type of doctrine has had an interesting cross-cultural history. Perhaps differing in detail and in the technical terms of description, but fundamentally the Vedanta philosophy of India, the views of Christian mystics, the cosmology of Spinoza, and some Mahayana Buddhist doctrines bear great resemblance to Neoplatonism. Not only has the teaching won converts where it was taught and read; it was reinvented, so to say, independently of the texts which belong to the tradition. In the cultural history of the West Neoplatonism has been a minor strain, nevertheless, because Christianity, based on the Jewish view of Creation came to understand the world to be radically different from its Creator; and objected to Neoplatonic teachings as tending to Pantheism, which it deemed heretical. Exactly because of this it is interesting to note that Neoplatonism continued its appeal throughout the Christian centuries, producing resurgent schools of Neoplatonism throughout the centuries.

But since Neoplatonism is a particular metaphysical claim about the ultimate unity of being, and postmodernism is the rejection of the final adequacy of any metaphysical claim, Neoplatonism included, how can the two positions be brought into harmony?

While the postmodernist does not accept the truth status of a metaphysical truth claim, he does recognize that assertions, claims have a function. The function of Neoplatonic claims is to invite attention to several aspects of reality, which may otherwise escape notice, or be simply overlooked in the immediate obviousness of the claims of pluralism, relativism and naturalism. It is the case that certain positions which in the past have been contending as metaphysical truth claims have a certain immediate obviousness of the claims of pluralism, relativism and naturalism. These have been both simply assumed or explicitly asserted as metaphysical truth-claims in the past, because they have a certain immediate appeal, a self-evidencing quality both for ordinary contemporaries and also for others in different temporal and cultural frameworks. The postmodern philosopher, however, is committed to denying the finality and truth of these positions as well. These are naturalism

and relativism. The former judges reality to be nothing other than the multiplicity of particulars accessible to the senses; the latter asserts that one's culture, disposition, character and experience contribute to what one deems real and/or of value, and as these factors are diverse in different individuals and situations, it is impossible to determine in a singular way what constitutes reality, and what are objective, absolute values. Thus, the naturalist does not consider transcendence a metaphysical possibility. He sees the heterogeneity of the natural world, and tends to think that the whole is "shoes and ships and sealing wax, and cabbages and kings." Such homogenizing principles as "substance" or "matter" are merely human notions applied to the manifold of reality to be large grouping concepts—analogous to smaller grouping concepts such as "dog" or "tree," which terms select a subset of particulars from the multiplicity of all of them, and these "class" names then apply to any one within the selected subset. "Matter" is similar, the only difference is that it applies to a much larger, perhaps nearly all-inclusive subset. What might not be included in that subset are largely the linguistic structures consequent to the formulation of a metalanguage to talk about talk; such a metalanguage contains names of elements or entities which are not objects in the natural world, but are elements of the language used in the natural world. Thus "language" would be a noun referring to something "real," which, however, is not subsumed in the subset of reality designated by "matter." That here we are skirting at the edge of a paradox cannot be explored in the present paper.

The Neoplatonic position, which, of course, intends to reject or refute such naturalism, does not usually offer arguments for its support that would convince the naturalists. It simply makes counter-assertions. What we are arguing for in the present paper is that this contrariety with the naturalist should not be interpreted as making incompatible and contending truth-claims, even if that is exactly how traditionally the issue has been understood. We would rather explore how the naturalists' views and assertions may be integrated with those of the Neoplatonist. If Naturalism is not the whole truth, it may nonetheless be significant and functional. But let us now pose some questions which Neoplatonism makes possible. How does the naturalist know that the natural, the domain of *physis*, is the whole truth? Could it not be that there is a transcendent unity on which the natural manifold depends,

inasmuch as it gets its *quiddity*, its whatness, from consciousness? Without a *psyche* would a tree be a tree, or a dog, a dog? Is not being a tree or a dog a relational notion, since the particular is only a particular, and it requires a consciousness to create the class concept of tree or dog in terms of which this particular is a tree, and that one, a dog? So, to be a tree or a dog requires not only the particulars which are so classified or recognized, but a consciousness which creates the classificatory schema, and applies it, positively or negatively, to particulars, so that this one is the tree and not that; that one is the dog, and not this. So a Neoplatonist invites the naturalist to consider the logical priority of *psyche* to *physis*.

Similarly, one can show that there is some kind of a rational structure presupposed in consciousness; the capacity of consciousness to make inferences and generalizations, to make comparisons and contrasts is essential for consciousness to be consciousness; for without such powers one could neither recognize nor differentiate, thus not be aware, since recognition and differentiation are fundamental to consciousness. These processes in turn are but aspects of order and reason, the structure that Plotinus deems *nous*, mind. And while a similar argument is not possible for the establishment of the priority of the One to the *nous*, Plotinus suggests that some kind of love, desire, longing points beyond reason, to the unity of being. It is this pointing which gave birth to monistic metaphysics. Its function is not the mere assertion of plain truth; no. Its function is to evoke from us a deep-seated memory, a resonance with the call to see the wholeness, the interdependence of things; the structure that lies behind and above the "shoes and ships and sealing wax" that the naturalist not incorrectly insists on. What is perhaps wrong with the naturalist's position is not what he asserts and emphasizes positively, but what he negates, denies or ignores. The metaphysics of transcendence draws attention to these aspects; but perhaps overstates its claims by making pejorative and disvaluational claims about exactly that which is dear to the naturalist's sense of reality. It is this deemed emphasis in disvaluing the "derivative," the temporal, the merely situational and transitory that weakens the Neoplatonic position.

Of course it is not incorrect to say that in some circumstances, as the attitude of one particular mode of consciousness, in one specific and important way of being, the relative importance of the

particular fades, as one contemplates the whole, which embraces and integrates all difference, all contrast, all otherness. Such a way of being, such a disposition of mind is useful for vivial purposes, especially when one is dissatisfied with the specificity of the specific, the contrast with what is, with what might have been, or what ought to be. In other words, the aesthetic, the feeling component of the mode of being that is the source of Neoplatonic metaphysics is a powerful antidote to the ressentiment, the suffering, the dissatisfaction that may arise when one is immersed in the condition in which naturalism and relativism are the persuasive metaphysical claims. Neoplatonism, then, the postmodern may argue, is not primarily a metaphysical dogma, but a call to a new way of being personally disposed; a way, which the Neoplatonist believes—not without some evidence—is available to human consciousness; a way that enhances and enriches rather than reduces or eliminates the ordinary naturalist way of being. Yes, perhaps it imbeds that way in its own; but it opens a way for human orientation which may not be the one and only final truth; but which has a truth to it; and, more importantly, it has a function in developing the dispositional possibilities of human intelligence, human passion and human awareness. Such a development may have an intellectual component, but it certainly also has an existential aspect which enriches and empowers the individual to deal with pain, sorrow, and suffering more effectively both in the first-personal sense, and in the role of one who is compassionate and consoling when the suffering and sorrow touches the lives of others.

As a postmodern, it is not the truth of Neoplatonism that makes for its significance, but rather, its empowering aspect, its capacity to transform. Paradoxically, for in the end all is paradox, it is this empowering that most seriously attests to the truth of Neoplatonism, which we rejected out of hand as the postmodern predilection. Perhaps, if truth and falsity be both recognized as species of half-truths; the former, the half-truth deemed useful in a context; the latter, the half-truth which, though persuasive, is dysfunctional, we can come to appreciate the value of Neoplatonism in a postmodern world, with a postmodern stance. It is an important empowering supplement to the naive and easy naturalism and relativism—which need not be rejected, only transcended, *aufgehoben*, as Hegel would have suggested, into that

postmodern synthesis which asserts both the thesis and the antithesis—in this case naturalism and Neoplatonism—and shows the limitations of each at the same time.

Thus we hope to have shown that postmodernity may be the Hegelian synthesis of naturalism and relativism as one pole—the thesis—Neoplatonism, as its higher opposite, the antithesis. When the focus of our concern is not metaphysical truth but the extension of human existence and human consciousness, the synthesis becomes clearly achievable.

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# Alexej Losev: A Neoplatonic View of the Dialectic of Absence and Presence in the Nature of Artistic Form<sup>a</sup>

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Recently the traditional views on the nature of thinkable and intelligent reality have been severely challenged. One of the radical expressions of this alternative view is contained in Derrida's "Of grammatology". His task, to put it in his own words, is to undermine an "ontology which...has determined the meaning of being as presence and the meaning of language as the full continuity of speech...to make enigmatic what one thinks one

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<sup>a</sup>Alexej Fyodorowitch Losev (1893–1988) was the last survivor of the pre-revolutionary generation of great Russian philosophers. Having stayed in the communist Russia, his original philosophical career ended in 1930 with an arrest and an almost two-year stay in Stalin concentration camps. He never again returned to original philosophical writings which now include, above all, five monographs published prior to 1930 (as yet none of them translated into English). After his release, the scholar continued teaching ancient languages and resumed publishing on various subjects pertaining to ancient culture in the 1960's. His most comprehensive work is an eight volume "History of Ancient Aesthetics". Although heavily influenced by Husserl's phenomenology, Losev described his own philosophical method as "dialectical logic" inspired in part by German classical philosophy (Fichte and Schelling in particular). However, as is evident already from his early writings (and especially his first monograph "Ancient Cosmos and Modern Science"), Losev was much more indebted to Neoplatonic thinkers, and especially Plotinus and Proclus. From them he not only drew inspiration but often assimilated methods and ideas, re-working and transforming them in his own philosophical writings. All this allows us to consider him the last significant Russian thinker of an original Neoplatonic orientation.

understands by the words 'proximity', 'immediacy', 'presence'.<sup>11</sup> The structure which must replace the ontology of presence is the trace, when the actual "meaning" or "essence" is always absent, already "not there" by the time of one's intellectual experience. The ontology of presence, however, efficiently survives finding its confirmation in mystical experience. The view attacked by Derrida, in its contemporary form, can be illustrated by the writings of Georg Kuehlewind, a disciple of Rudolf Steiner. According to him, all intelligent reality for a typical present-day human consciousness is divided into the planes of the past and the present. "...The essential or eternal present is the source from which the linked duality of time and space...emerges at the moment when the source is mirrored and no longer experienced as such. After the timeless conception of the meaning of a sentence, the source itself retreats into the superconscious sphere. The fragments of it which appear at the level of the past we call time and space."<sup>12</sup> The essential presence "also lights up in thought intuition and understanding...When we understand something through thinking, our soul briefly touches the superconscious plane of the present and then remains on the plane of the past..."<sup>13</sup> Kuehlewind's account thus includes the notion of the trace as the essence of our common, unenlightened experience. However, the difference with Derrida lies in the fact that, for Kuehlewind, the "essential present" does not have to remain concealed forever, but is in its nature conceptual and entirely thinkable: the experience that can be gained in the course of long intellectual practice. Having reached the final goal, "pure perception," "we are no longer blinded, and the incomprehensible regains its rank as a high idea. Our perception dissolves into understanding, into spiritual presence in the here and now."<sup>14</sup>

The two positions have just been outlined very schematically. It is obvious that continuous efforts have been made to bring both positions into alignment with each other. One of the most daring attempts to bring together in a kind of a dialectic, on the one hand presence or disclosure and on the other hand absence or concealment, was made by Heidegger with reference to the nature of art. His early work "The Origin of the Work of Art" appeared almost at the same time as Losev's "Dialectic of Artistic Form", and both works, while remaining radically distinct, have a surprising number of similar images and ideas evoked by two

independent phenomenological reflections. The essence of the work of art, according to Heidegger, lies in the opening up of a "world" and holding it open. The "Open of the world" is a metaphor for presencing, deconcealing, disclosure, or truth in the Greek sense of *aletheia*. "Some particular entity ...comes in the work to stand in the light of its being." The principle that the work of art "moves...into the Open of a world" and "causes to come forth" Heidegger calls the "earth" (46). However, the earth even in the process of its presencing ever remains concealed or somehow "absent." The earth "shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate into it....The earth appears openly cleared as itself only when it is perceived and preserved as that which is by nature undisclosable, that which shrinks from every disclosure and constantly keeps itself closed up" (47). The two principles then, the opening up and disclosing by means of a world, on the one hand, and concealedness and impenetrableness of the earth, on the other, operate together and form the unity and self-subsistence of the work of art. Heidegger writes,

A being can be concealed...only within the sphere of what is lighted. Each being we encounter and which encounters us keeps to this curious opposition of presence in that it always withholds itself at the same time in a concealedness. The clearing in which beings stand is in itself at the same time concealment (53).

Although the main element in the essence of the work of art remains its presencing and opening ability, concealment is dialectically necessary. If there is no concealment there is no openness, something can never be revealed. However, Heidegger, having presented the dialectic of the two necessary elements that are inseparably connected with each other, never goes beyond the simple meditative circle of "openness/closed-ness." The relationship between them remains unexplored.

Let us turn now to Losev's work "The Dialectic of Artistic form". First of all, I would like to recall the prominent place logic held among many Neoplatonists, especially such thinkers as Proclus who had influenced Losev greatly, contrary to a commonly held opinion of Neoplatonism as a kind of "mysticism." This logical inspection of the inner intelligent reality almost makes Neoplatonism into an ancient form of phenomenology—the very

method that Losev chose as his research tool. It must be remembered therefore that Losev is not concerned with common definitions or explanations, but with pure phenomenology: the thinkableness and the conditions and presuppositions for the thinkableness of artistic form. It is also important that Losev, following the traditions of German idealism, uses what he calls a dialectical method in logic which means that all later categories are dialectically derived from the earlier and that the earlier categories are dialectically contained in the later, just as all inner levels are contained in the outer.

Losev starts to derive his categories from the most abstract level by exploring the conditions of thinkableness as such. He does it by constructing the abstract Tetractyde, the elementary "brick" of intelligibility. The first category is the One.

The beginning of dialectic is unthinkable-ness, supra-thinkableness, absolute one-ness which is neither this nor that, not any particular thing at all but the potentiality of all things and categories (10).<sup>6</sup>

Thought first demands unthinkable-ness, but then requires the "positing" or setting-in-place of this one, in other words, its "being." Thus we produce the "being-one," the one that is one, that exists.

It means that it differs from the other, is circumscribed within its limits, becomes something, is defined, becomes meaningful and shaped. From now on, it is not just the indivisible one but also the divided many, for it has assumed a border. It has received a contour and therefore became meaningful. It has become something definite and therefore being. It is such one-ness that is given as divisible plurality (10).

This will be the second element of the Tetractyde, its abstract meaning which Losev calls *Eidos*.

At this point the question concerning the nature of intelligent reality, that is whether it is essentially presence or difference and the trace, can be resolved by means of pure phenomenological reflection. Thought demands that, in order for something to be thought, there must be two things, the thought must differ from what is not thought. Therefore an experience of "essential presence" is possible, but at this level there can be no reflection or thought. The level of conceptual thinking, however, demands

duality, or the ever escaping structure of the trace and difference. This has been known at least since the time of Plotinus (cf., e.g., *Enn.* 5.4.2 and 8.11). It would be absolutely wrong, however, to credit a Neoplatonic position merely with this elementary observation. The real value of the Neoplatonic approach, and in particular that of Losev, is in the developing of the dialectic of the many levels and layers of gradual presencing and appearing between the unthinkable One and clear thinkableness, between the concealedness and unconcealedness. And it is to this multi-level dialectic that I now return.

The second element of the Tetractyde was *Eidos*. *Eidos*, however, is the same as the One, only insofar as the One differs from something other, which was demanded at stage two, the One looked at from the point of view of this other. This other is just an aspect of the One, the other of the one, or the becoming-other of the one. This third category Losev calls Becoming. It is the allogical becoming of ■ logically divisible unity. In its dialectical development, Becoming must resolve into yet another category. This will be the "become" (*das Gewordene*), that which is at hand, the fact which carries on itself the becoming and the whole of the meaning of the triad. Here, according to Losev, is the end of the necessary dialectical definition of the thinkable (and being) as such. The Tetractyde thus derived is closed and completely self-sufficient. Yet, the levels of the fact and becoming include—purely logically at this point—a possibility of the extension of *Eidos* into a different kind of other, into a surrounding environment, a becoming as being perceived by something else: the quality that Losev calls expression.

Expression, however, does not mean proceeding to the next category from the Tetractyde. Rather, it means moving to another level "in depth," and not "in extension"; to the level when the other, instead of being one of the aspects of the One, starts to include also its perception from the outside and its reflection in that which is outside. The Tetractyde can be thought of

as if coated with its other. It would mean to view this...dialectical category as a potentiality...and the principle of various incarnations of this category in the further other. It would mean to pass from the fact, that carries within it the triadic meaning, to its expression, or form. The expression of the fact is the fact differentiated from the surrounding other. Expression is not meaning, for meaning (our second

principle) presupposes the other only inside itself: it is the self-divisibility that is viewed itself in itself. Expression, or form, is the meaning which presupposes the other outside itself, co-related with the other which surrounds it; it is the self-divisibility that is viewed from the point of view of the other (12).

The next stage after the abstract Tetractyde is the self-conscious Tetractyde, the Tetractyde at the intelligent and living level, or the Tetractyde as intelligence. The first principle then becomes the identity of the knower and the known, or of being and being-other which Losev calls ecstasis. Eidos at the intelligent level is cognition: the "positing, affirming oneself as defined through the being-other" (19), the intelligence looking at itself from the inside. The principle of becoming or developing, since the other at this stage is still immanent to *Eidos* itself will be striving or will. The fourth element—the fact—will become the living body with its organs, and the "extending," or "projecting" aspect of the latter is emotion, or feeling. This level of the living and intelligent Tetractyde is not directly relevant to Losev's investigation of the nature of artistic form, but it is included in the subsequent layers.

The key to Losev's theory of artistic form is the functioning of expression at the intelligent level. Taken in its expressive aspect, the intelligent and living Tetractyde goes outside itself into a thinking and perceiving environment. It must be mentioned now that for Losev's phenomenology the subject/object distinction in this case is not essential. Here the Tetractyde exists as a self-intellecting entity at the level above self-contained individual life, or an individual object, or a particular consciousness. On the contrary, it includes, with equal validity, all phenomena and objects of consciousness, both "mythical" and "real," absolutely all that, under certain circumstances, can become intelligent, either as a subject or as an object. Rather, expressiveness at this level and its particular case—artistic form—is some supra-subjective and supra-material entity that governs all the rest, being akin to the principles of existence in general. In art, as opposed to technology, we create or perceive life, in the sense that it is something that we cannot completely control or understand, like natural living organisms. Therefore artistic form cannot be sustained within the limits of individual consciousness. On the other hand, artistic expressiveness needs consciousness and intelligent levels for its

existence. Such expressiveness thus exists in-between different layers of reality and is connected to all of them.

At this expressive level when the Tetractyde opens up, gains access to the outer world and is perceived, while still remaining in itself, reflective and alive, three other categories are introduced. The abstractly given meaning, or *Eidos*, "given in its intelligent fullness," in its "intelligent expressive-ness" is called the Myth. The Myth is understood by Losev as an ontological category of the intelligent level. It is any meaningful entity that enters consciousness and is able to exist and sustain itself in it independently, to have its own life. It differs from abstract meaning in that the Myth is meaning taken together with its self-conscious and reciprocal relation with the outside, or the other, with its intelligent and perceiving environment, and therefore with a particular content and a particular way of understanding this content. It is most important to analyze the nature of the relationship between the Myth and its other. For this purpose, Losev introduces a new category—the Symbol. The Symbol is

that aspect of the myth which is specifically expressive...the outwardly-manifested face of the myth (26).

Expression by itself has symbolic nature. However, Losev uses the category of the symbol to describe expressiveness at the specifically intelligent level. The other of the Myth as an intelligent entity is understanding, which means that it includes the environment, the fact of being perceived and understood. The symbol then will be that specific aspect of the myth that allows it to manifest itself outwardly in its other. The myth that has undergone the process of becoming or expression, that is taken as fact (stage four) is the Person, the "I," an absolutely unique entity. The fact that is intelligent, however, again includes its being perceived, or its environment. This means that every Person has a Name which denotes the manifested aspect of the Person, its signification, the Person's relationship with the outer world. It must be remembered, however, that the intelligent fact is still the last element in the Tetractyde. There is nothing outside the fact. The relationship with the "environment" is happening precisely at the level of symbol or intelligent fact. At this level the symbol and expression include the environment. The otherness which, in this

case, is understanding coats and encloses all intelligent expressive levels without extending beyond the fourth element.

It is hard to describe the way the symbol functions better than Losev himself:

*Eidos* knows in the world only itself, and its differentiation is differentiation in itself. The person, being a fact of the myth, only demands that it itself perform differentiations in itself and posit the other to itself in itself. However, the name, or expression, is such an aspect of *eidos*, myth and person in which they differentiate themselves...from the surrounding being-other, from the outer otherness. There we had a meaningful, or essential, differentiation and otherness; here we have differentiation beyond meaning and essence. And when the person mythico-cidetically differentiates itself as a whole from all other, compares itself with the latter and, therefore, becomes aware of itself also from the outside—such fullness of intelligent self-awareness is the name, and not simply the meaning and *eidos*; it is expression and form, and not simply the essence, albeit mythical and personal (28-29).

And so *eidos*, myth and symbol start “not only to express themselves and remain in this self-enclosed-ness and self-contained roundedness, but also to open themselves up to all other, apart from themselves,” start “to shape, enlighten, mythologize and symbolize also all other apart from themselves” (30).

It is only now, after outlining the series of preliminary categories, that Losev introduces the most abstract definition of artistic form. Artistic form belongs to the level of “understanding,” or symbol—the intelligent form of expression of the myth (or intelligent *eidos*) at the intelligent level of the Tetractyle. However, artistic form is not just understanding or expression, but the one that is characterized by absolute “adequacy”—it is a particular mode of understanding or intelligent expression.

Artistic expression, or form, is expression which expresses the given reality wholly and with absolute adequacy, so that there is neither more nor less meaning in the expressed than in that which is being expressed. Artistic form is born when in an offered meaning-generating reality all is understood and acknowledged in the way that it itself demands. Artistic form is form which is given as an integral myth, integrally and adequately understood. It is the otherness beyond meaning which adequately reproduces this or another

meaning-generating reality. It is the otherness that has generated an integral myth. It is the alogical otherness of meaning such that one does not have to reduce it to the initially given abstract meaning in order to understand it. And it is meaning which is understood by itself, without reducing it to its external allogical given-ness. The artistic in form is an essential equilibrium between the logical and alogical elements (35).

Having described all the main categories pertaining to the thinkableness of artistic form, Losev proceeds to the detailed analysis of these categories in application to the notion of artistic form. He uses the method of antinomies (or antinomies, as he calls it)—thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Although the analysis of the abstract Tetractyle with respect to artistic form is very elaborate, I shall restrict myself to just a few remarks. It must be remembered that, as before, all the more abstract categories are contained in the more concrete ones which are analyzed later. Artistic form pertains to the level of expression which appears as a mediator between the meaning (or *Eidos*, Myth) and its other. Losev stresses once again that at the level of artistic form the transition of meaning is “not simply into the other, but...into human consciousness, i.e., it is understanding,” this level includes its “environment” (44). Although the abstract meaning always remains preserved, artistic form dialectically includes all its perceptions and interpretations. This is how Losev describes a concrete example of this dialectic:

a painting preserves in itself its artistic form which unmovably rests among all its spatial and temporal becomings, understandings etc. But a painting also preserves in itself the traces of spatial and temporal environment and becomes known in the conditions of such and such understanding of it... Depending on all these conditions, the artistic form that is really imprinted in a painting acquires infinitely varying forms. It is on the leash of its non-meaningful becoming and changes every minute...It reflects in itself the meaning of its non-meaningful becomings. It cannot be perceived without this environment... (56).

Most interesting in Losev's analysis are the specifically expressive intelligent categories: the myth and the symbol. As I have mentioned already, the other at the intelligent level is the way something is understood. However, artistic form is not just understanding but mythical understanding. Losev distinguishes two elements in artistic form: the unconscious which is independent

from understanding and the conscious. The specificity of artistic form lies not only in the fact that it must necessarily include the conscious element. This conscious element, or perception and understanding, the "environment," actively participates in the creation of artistic form and influences the perceived meaning.

Artistic form is not simply meaning-generating reality that is independent from its understanding, but first appears only as understood reality, so that understanding, by introducing something new, creates the very form of this reality... (62).

Another way of describing this reversed influence would be through the subject/object relationship at the level of life. Otherness creates a striving, or an impulse of the will, in the meaning-generating reality which, in turn, creates itself and appears freely. Artistic form is thus the identity of the subject and the object.

Artistic form is an accomplished myth, i.e. a living being, self-related and self-feeling. Here lies the dialectical solution to that mysterious, enigmatic spirituality which permeates any work of art. Simple and hardly interesting things of common use—chairs, couches, lamps—becoming works of art necessarily spiritualize, come to life, turn into a myth... (62).

The last remaining category is the symbol, or the expressive aspect of the myth. Losev explores the symbol in its artistic function in the so-called "antinomy of adequation." Expression, or symbol, Losev writes,

makes the meaning-generating reality appear, i.e. co-relate with the otherness beyond meaning, and makes the otherness beyond meaning, e.g., sensible, become meaningful. How does it happen if an artistic form results? It happens in such a way that the meaning-generating reality becomes manifest as a whole, that none of its elements remains unexpressed, that in its expression nothing is added or subtracted that would in this way hinder the adequacy of the expressed with that which is being expressed (64).

The reality that is wholly expressed, or the ideal of expression, becomes the goal and the beacon of the work of art, which Losev calls the prototype, or the first-image. The dialectic of the first-image, or a

specific structure which is the arena for the meeting of the mythical *eidos* with its being-other (77)

becomes the most important section in Losev's treatment of artistic form. The main idea is that there is a reciprocal relation between the image and its first-image. The image is not a mere reflection of its first-image. The image shapes and forms its own first-image as it emerges, and the first-image never exists separately from its image. The production or perception of a work of art is in some way always independent from any particular subject-consciousness. Artistic form always remains independent, simply using all other forms of reality, both material substance and individual consciousness as the media for producing itself.

Artistic form is...the first image of itself, or an image that creates itself as its first image, that becomes...its first image... (67). Beauty as if streaming through an artist, uses him as a certain tool, a pathway, a medium, in order to manifest itself in the world. The artist himself is a passive and mechanical instrument of its orders... (72).

Artistic form thus appears as a special kind of symbol: it is the expressiveness of itself as of its first image which happens with perfect adequacy.

If one wonders what all this means in terms of common sensical understanding, a few examples may suffice to clarify the situation. Losev's dialectic positions the phenomenon, or rather noumenon, of artistic form in a most general way. It means that if we would like to apply Losev's general definitions to particular cases, they are necessarily going to fit. Let us take, for example, the Heideggerian attempt to distinguish between a tool, a thing, and a work of art. The essence of a tool is fully expressed only in its usage, so its expression manifested in its perceived appearance will be inadequate. Inanimate things do not possess the level of life, and therefore cannot form an intelligent *eidos* which would make them unique. Animate or organic things (a flower, an animal) can, indeed, express their essence adequately in case of their perfection. However, they do not require, by their essence, the level of intelligent expression. They can stop at the level of a self-contained tetractide, without proceeding to the mythical and symbolic levels where their perception by the other would be required.

However, the value of Losev's approach is not in these simplifications. At the level of artistic form which, on the one hand, deals with concrete material artefacts, but, on the other, includes the intelligent, psychological and cultural environment in which the latter are perceived, a bridging and a symbolic connection is accomplished between the rational and the irrational. The reciprocity between the logical and the alogical which happens in the symbol tightly binds the alogical reality to intelligibility, which allows us to treat this "cluster" as a whole and effectively eliminates the opposition. The wholesome and integral approach which is suggested by the nature of the symbol, which includes both the concealed and the unconcealed elements, is certainly neither full presence nor clear conceptuality. And still such symbolic connection is a kind of intelligibility and knowing already. And its value is not in the ability to think something to the end conceptually but in the elucidation of the nature and stages of the transition from unintelligibility to intelligibility and in exploring the conditions of this transition and its phenomenological happening.

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Appendix<sup>7</sup>

## A. F. Losev: The First Dialectical Tetractyde

1. We do not yet know anything or affirm anything. We take the One. What exactly this One is, is not important, for we take precisely the category of the One which is everywhere, in all things, one and the same. Here we derive first of all the pure One which is as such non-distinguishable and is an absolutely indivisible one-ness. Take this particular clock that is standing on the table. Although in reality it consists of many parts, nevertheless according to their meaning they are a certain one-ness that cannot be divided into anything else anymore. Now take all the things that constitute the world. Thought demands that they be, first of all, some indistinguishable One, a one-ness, that all being in it merge into supra-being, into primordial unity which is already an individuality and continuity that is no longer divisible into anything else. If we take being in its entirety, it already has nothing from which it could differ and, therefore, it has no borders whatsoever; it means that it is above borders, above any circumscription, above meaning, above knowledge, above being. Such is the one-ness of the world as a whole, such is also the one-ness of each thing in particular (in respect to particular parts of the thing). Thus the beginning of dialectic is unthinkable-ness, supra-thinkableness, absolute one-ness which is neither this nor that, not any particular thing at all but the potentiality of all things and categories.
2. However, to remain on the ground of unthinkable, supra-ontic, merely potentially definable essence would be to give in to metaphysical agnosticism, to the dualistic teaching of "things in themselves." Thought, first of all demanding unthinkable-ness, immediately after demands the positing of this One, demands the being of this One. The One is already not merely One, but it also is. When the One is only One and nothing else, it is not One at all and is, in fact, nothing since it does not differ from anything. But now the One is One, the One exists. What does it mean? It means that it differs from the other, is circumscribed within its own borders, becomes something, is defined, becomes meaningful and acquires shape. From now on, it is not just the indivisible One but also the divisible many, for it has assumed a border. It has received an outline and therefore became meaningful. It has become something definite and therefore being. It is such one-ness that is given as divisible plurality.

3. Can we stop at this? No, dialectic goes further using its main method of contradiction. We began by fixing a certain point, a certain One, a one-ness. Then we found that this one-ness is already not one-ness but plurality. It is at this point, where abstract thought comes to a stall, that the real domain of dialectic begins. The One is both One and many. These thesis and antithesis must be reunited in one synthesis: a new category which is already neither merely One nor merely many. How does it happen? The One became many merely owing to the fact that we had placed it in opposition to the "other." The "other" is not some new One, for in this case the first One from which we had begun would already not be simply One, but One of many. Nevertheless we had to establish the One as a certain all-embracing one-ness beyond which there is nothing "other." Now we take this absolute one-ness in opposition to the "other" (it is assumed, however, that the "other" is not some new One, but only an aspect of the original One). What is this aspect? As we have said, it is the other. It means that it is precisely not-One, just as, obviously, it is not many, for the many as such is also a certain One. It is only this pure other, pure other-ness, pure not-One: not in the sense of a new One but in the sense of a certain principle of the same original One. It is the becoming of the One. The One itself is the other of the other and, therefore, itself contains its own other, i.e., is a becoming One. It is here that the synthesis we are looking for is found: the synthesis of the thesis of the One with the antithesis of the many and, therefore, the other. And, indeed, becoming demands that there be something that becomes: absolutely identical in all the aspects of its becoming, for otherwise there will be nothing to become. On the other hand, becoming demands that that which becomes be other and other all the time, for it is only thus that the very becoming can be accomplished. It means that becoming is a dialectical synthesis of the One (pure being-ness as such) and the other (the principle of manifold being-ness in general). With all that, one must always keep in mind the peculiarity of this third aspect as opposed to the first two. The first is above all being and knowledge, above definition. The second is a full and stable determinate-ness and divided-ness. The third is a further absence of dividedness, however, already not in the sense of unmoved one-ness but in the sense of the mobility of becoming. If the second principle is something logically divided, we can think of the third principle as of an a-logical dividedness; and if the second principle is an absolute coordinated dividedness and determinateness, the third principle is the continuity and uninterrupted-ness of becoming in the sphere of this dividedness.

- Therefore it is an alogical becoming. But since the third principle is a synthesis of the first two, and the second is dividedness and intelligibility, the latter aspect is nevertheless contained in the third principle, and therefore the third principle is the alogical becoming of logically divisible unity.
4. Becoming is a synthesis of the One and the other. The One, having been placed in opposition to the other, became many. The many, having been placed in opposition to the other, became becoming. What will become now of becoming itself if it demands its own other? For, according to the main law of dialectic that we have derived, any dialectical definition is accomplished through opposition to the other and the following synthesis with the latter. Let us now try to define dialectically becoming itself. For this reason we place it in opposition to its own other. What does becoming demand, in this situation? It demands the become, the fact, that which is at hand, which would carry becoming within itself. Just as the other becomes many after receiving within itself the One, and just as the other becomes becoming after receiving within itself the many, so the other, after receiving within itself becoming, most necessarily is the become, precisely that which becomes. However, by carrying on itself the third principle, the fact also carries on itself the whole complete meaning of the triad.
  5. Here ends the necessary dialectical definition of the thinkable in general. Dialectic is, of course, far from being exhausted by this. However, we will immediately demonstrate that the established tetractide provides the necessary definition of the thinkable and being in general that is quite finished in itself. The further categories of dialectic differ from the first tetractide as a new specific group of categories. Indeed, if we are to employ a common method of dialectical transition we must ask a question: what will happen to the "other" if we think about it as having received our fourth principle, i.e., the fact? The fact is placed in opposition to its other. Just as the many was the breaking down of the One due to the introduction of otherness, and just as, further on, becoming was the breaking down of the many due to the same reason, and just as, finally, the fact is, in every particular moment of its becoming, the same non-becoming fact and therefore poorer than the creatively growing becoming—exactly so that new entity which we dialectically look for after the first tetractide will be nothing other than the breaking down of the fact, the disintegration of the fact, that or another partial manifestation of it. Even without starting to formulate those new categories, we already see beforehand that all new developments will be merely a partial reflection of the first tetractide and that, therefore, the first



tetractyde is really something independent and finished. Therefore it can set a limit to the dialectical derivation of thinkableness in general. However, there is one more category which seems to reach beyond the limits of the first tetractyde and which we must touch upon, since it starts to play the leading role precisely in the problem of artistic form. It comes down to the following.

6. The tetractyde is finished in itself. All further analysis would already deal with its partial and deficient aspects. However, there is absolutely no necessity, immediately after the derivation of the first tetractyde, to start speaking about its other, for the latter is understood as having received the first tetractyde in that or another degree. By thinking the other of a given category, as has been determined above, we, indeed, always move on to the limiting of the given category and, consequently, to the hypothetic or actual realization of the given category as limited and, furthermore, deficient from this point of view. However, instead of this, it is quite possible not to move on in reality to subsequent categories and not to bring forth new categories with the help of the one that has been derived, but only to think the given category as merely co-related with the other, as if coated with its other. It would mean to view the derived dialectical category as the potentiality, potency and principle of all kinds of incarnations of the given category in the further other. It would mean to pass from the fact, that carries within itself the meaning of the triad, to its expression, or form. The expression of the fact is the fact that is differentiated from its surrounding other. Expression is not meaning, for meaning (our second principle) presupposes the other only inside itself; it is the self-divisibility that is taken itself in itself. Expression, or form, is the meaning which presupposes the other outside itself, which is co-related with the other that surrounds it; it is the self-divisibility that is looked upon from the point of view of the other that comes in from the outside. What does it mean that a given thing expresses something? It means that the meaning of something rests upon this thing, that the meaning of something is embodied in this thing. But for this, it is necessary that there be expression in general—as that which implicitly contains in itself an infinite number of its various incarnations and formations of innumerable kinds. This is precisely the expression, or form, of which we speak, i.e., the meaning that has transgressed the limits of its divisibility and has been co-related with its outward otherness, but has not yet incarnated into anything, although being able already to incarnate into everything. It is given here as yet merely as its own incarnate-ness—in itself, as a limit and, therefore, potentiality of all possible incarnations. In accordance

with the general dialectical antinomies, we can formulate, at this point, the interrelation between the essence of the tetractyde, that has been defined above, and its expression.

**Thesis.** The expression, or form, of the essence, in respect to its fact and being, differs in nothing from the essence itself; it is the sole fact of the essence. Expression is inseparable from the essence and therefore is essence itself.

**Antithesis.** The expression, or form, of the essence is different from the essence, for it presupposes something other which exists apart from the essence (and in which it manifests itself).

**Synthesis.** The expression, or form, of the essence is the essence that becomes in its other, constantly flowing with its meaningful energies. It is the potentiality and assurance of any kind of functioning of the essence outside itself. It is the firmly outlined face of the essence in which the logical meaning is identified with its alogical manifested-ness and given-ness. Generally speaking, expression is the symbol.

#### NOTES

1. J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by G. C. Spivak (The Johns Hopkins Un. Press, London, 1976), p. 70.
2. G. Kuhlewind, *The Logos-Structure of the World*, trans. by F.-E. Schwarzkopf (Lindisfarne Press, 1986), p. 87.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
5. M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by A. Hofstadter (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 36. Further page references to this edition are given in brackets.
6. *Dialektika khudozhestvennoj formy* (The Dialectic of Artistic form), Moskva, 1927 (Nachdruck Munchen: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1983; *Specimina philologiae slavicae* Bd. 55), p. 10. Further page references are given in brackets.
7. My translation of the first chapter of "The Dialectic of Artistic Form".

# **Aesthetics as a Philosophic Ethos: Plotinus and Foucault**

**Robert M. Berchman**

## **Introduction**

This essay aims at retracing two conceptual moments of a history of the soul and the self within the "horizon" of aesthetics.<sup>1</sup> The field of aesthetics is one in which sediments of such a history are most visible and perhaps richest in meaning. Thus the attempt is made in this study to hold on to both ends of a fragile, complex chain: initially, to recapture definitions of art, aesthetics, and the soul at the close of antiquity in Plotinus. Next, to represent definitions of subjectivity where they have been most strongly formulated in our present age with Foucault.

A single focus, consequently, and four problematics generally define this paper. The human subject is the focus. The problematics are the specter of the isolated subject, the relation between art and truth, the notion that we construct our ontological and axiological positions by recourse to an aesthetics of the soul and of the self, and most importantly for this study, the value both Plotinus and Foucault see in art and aesthetics for the overcoming of the fallenness and isolation of the self in later antiquity and later modernity.

Some brief statements on the self, the subject, and subjectivity are apposite. To avoid misunderstanding it is not my intention to provide a history, or even an outline of these concepts in antiquity and modernity. Briefly, my purpose is to point out the importance of these concerns as they impact upon the thought of Plotinus and Foucault.

## I. The Self, the Subject, and Subjectivity

There is no real blood flowing  
through the veins of the knowing  
subject constructed by Locke, Hume,  
and Kant, only the diluted juices  
of reason, a mere parade of thought.

Dilthey, *Selected Writings* <sup>2</sup>

The concern with subjectivity in antiquity begins with an interest in the problem of knowledge. In terms of the subject-object relation it is fair to say that Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus stress the objective aspects of this relation. Being, Logos, the ideas, substance, and Nous satisfy a normative requirement for an invariant object understood as a necessary condition of knowledge, the object that is known, and the subject that knows.

The concern with subjectivity in modernity, as part of a heightened focus on the foundations of knowledge, shifts the emphasis from the object to the subject of knowledge. Beginning with Descartes the view of the subject is dependent on the concept of the individual. Here the *cogito* becomes the basis of objectivity. This "turn" is subsequently heightened and refined, at least in the continental traditions, by Kant, Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger. Here it is proposed that the subject is the condition of objective knowledge and that subjectivity is the key to objectivity. We need merely to be reminded of Kant's transcendental unity of apperception, Hegel's substance becoming subject, Husserl's transcendental ego, and Heidegger's *Dasein*. Each of these concepts is introduced to support a claim to know not in a subjective sense, but in an objective sense. That is to say, a proposition is raised that resonates to this day in contemporary philosophy—that subjectivity is the key to objectivity.<sup>3</sup>

Now this "epistemological turn" from objectivity to subjectivity is not the concern of this essay although it impacts upon what is the focus of this study. The "aesthetic turn" has as its focus the subject and its clue to its value in the world. As such, the focus here is ontological and ethical. Indeed, in the case of Plotinus and Foucault it appears that the subject-object problem is an elision largely

solved. The concern they primarily address is the subject-value relation. Plotinus' theory of knowledge turns on a foundationalist conception of *Nous* as the indubitable ground of the soul and knowledge. Moreover, he argues that perception is a type of knowing whereby the soul grasps the ideas aesthetically. Furthermore, he proposes that aesthetic knowledge transforms the soul in terms of its value in the world. This insight reformulated by Baumgarten, Kant, and Hegel is reassessed by Foucault on Nietzschean and Heideggerian terms. He proposed that to be in the world required a knowledge of how to be aesthetically in the world.

The leading theme of this whole story, accordingly, is the notion of an extraordinary concept of the self as subject. This is the soul of Plotinus whose nature and ambitions are soberly ecstatic, unprecedentedly hypercosmic, and the self of Foucault who is uniquely autonomous and remarkably self-constrained. The soul of Plotinus and the self of Foucault are no ordinary subjects. The soul is not merely the singular self. It is rather self as such, the soul of humanity, whose *telos* is an imaginative, ecstatic union with a hyperreality—the One. For Foucault the individual is the singular self as such, the individual, whose goal is the creation of an "aesthetics of existence," which finds expression in a radical autonomy of the self.<sup>4</sup>

Despite remarkable differences between these "horizons of the self" one insight links Plotinus and Foucault—"the aesthetic pretense." Fully developed this pretense has two central components: first, the remarkable inner richness and expanse of the soul or self; and secondly, the consequent right to project from the undescended and subjective structures of one's own mind to ascertain the nature of human value and the destiny of subjectivity as such. That is to say, an "aesthetic pretense" accompanies this self as an mode of experience fundamental to the attainment of wholeness and freedom. As such, the aesthetic structures of one's own personality establish the conditions for the possibility of ethics.

Now these advocates of "aesthetic pretense" really thought they could change the subject, and sometimes they probably did. Indeed, an appreciation for their lack of modesty is essential for understanding their aesthetics and ethics. Their imaginative, if sometimes abstruse efforts aimed at changing human beings. They thought of themselves as sages and revolutionaries. In this sense,

the "aesthetic pretense" as argued by Plotinus and Foucault is not so much about the study of knowledge as it is about the human being concerned with being, as the clue to being. Indeed, both offer dramatic stories of a philosophical self-image in which knowledge and reason play an important role in the cultivation of the self, but only alongside perception, imagination, feeling, and creativity. And as such, Plotinus and Foucault represent a minority in the history of western philosophy. That is to say, they are representative of those isolated philosophers who valorized aesthetics and marginalized reason in the cultivation of the subject.

## II. Art, Aesthetics, and the Self

Very early in my life I took  
the question of the relation of  
art to truth seriously: even now  
I stand in holy dread in the face  
of this discordance.

Nietzsche, *Nachlass*, xiv. 386

A specter haunted later ancient and contemporary thought: the specter of the isolated subject.<sup>5</sup> In fact many aspects of ancient and contemporary culture bring forth the suspicion that the individual's relation to the world is undergoing a profound dislocation, and that the relation to the idea of an objective universe, simultaneously transcending the subject and uniting the self to others has become singularly problematic.

Moreover, the discordance of art and truth, in the face of which Nietzsche felt holy dread, is as old as philosophy itself.<sup>6</sup> The proposition that art stands in second relation to the true for the intelligible world is always superior to the sensible world can be traced back to the "construction" of the metaphysical Plato, with his two-world theory, his denigration of corporeality, and his celebration of eternal immutable ideas which are the erotic *telos* of *dianoia* and *noesis*. The realm of *aisthesis*, consequently, was the sign of the human condition, of limited knowledge.

In the wake of such a judgement Plato challenged the authority of Homer and expelled artists from the republic that was to be

grounded in reason and truth alone. Since the cosmic order was viewed as closed, hierarchical, and purposeful by Plato, the idea of the beautiful was associated with the bringing into reality by the artist of an order where measure and proportion ruled.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the beautiful object was understood as a sensible presentation (an illustration) of the true, as the transposition into the sphere of the material sensibility of a moral or intellectual truth. A work of art, subsequently, is the mere reflection of the idea of the beautiful. It is the idea of the beautiful that furnishes the work of art with its authentic meaning from without.

There is a dread of art and aesthetics for two reasons: first, art is mere art, and as such it is merely a matter of taste; secondly, art and aesthetics always appear to be outside of truth, reason, and morality. If art and aesthetics appeared as somehow more truthful than noetic or empirical truth, more rational than methodical reason, more just than liberal justice, more valuable than principled morality or utility then the very foundations of *episteme* would crumble. That is to say, the claim that art is somehow more than reason is always disturbing. It is undemonstrable and incommensurable with what truth saying and valuing are thought of in the shadow of Plato.

As such, the discordance of art and truth, in the face of which Nietzsche felt holy dread, stands over and constitutes modernity more so than it did over Plato's utopia. Few philosophers after Plato placed art and aesthetics at the center of the constitutive, cognitive, and practical mechanisms that produce society. The reasons are not difficult to discern. Art, and the theoretical discourse that comprehends art, speaks its own voice and this voice lies outside truth, goodness, and reason. Two philosophers will challenge this perspective—Plotinus and Foucault.

## III. Plotinus

In the aesthetic mode of  
contemplation we have found two  
inseparable constituent parts -  
the knowledge of the object, not as  
individual thing but as Platonic  
idea,...and the self-consciousness

of the knowing person...as pure  
will-less subject of knowledge.

Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*<sup>8</sup>

#### A. Perception and Intellection

Plotinus stolidly maintained the priority and superiority of intellection over perception as laying the foundations for physics, and subsequently for psychology and epistemology.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, his view of the plastic arts is decidedly novel.<sup>10</sup> First, he claims that art is a visible expression of ideal beauty.<sup>11</sup> Second, he asserts that the ideas of beauty exist in the human soul.<sup>12</sup> Third, he claims that the imagination is the mental faculty through which the soul gains initial awareness of ideal beauty.<sup>13</sup> Fourth, this aesthetic awareness leads, eventually, to knowledge of the ideas of beauty, if not the beautiful itself.<sup>14</sup> Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, he claims that the arts are a means for the soul to reverse a situation of misfortune—her descent into corporeality. For through the arts and the aesthetic imagination the soul regains her awareness of her intelligible origins and, consequently, begins her ascent from sensibility to intelligibility.<sup>15</sup>

Yet Plotinus' powerful defense of aesthetics is, accordingly, based on something far more profound than a reappraisal of the value of the plastic arts themselves. For the origin of all symbolic activity, including artistic activity, emerges from the fact of the soul's descent and its ignorance of its authentic undescended state.<sup>16</sup> Even though the higher soul remains in the intelligible world the lower soul is unconscious of this fact.<sup>17</sup>

#### B. The Undescended Soul and the Active Intellect

Goodness and beauty are known to the higher soul but not the lower soul. For only souls motivated by intellect and illuminated by beauty know goodness.<sup>18</sup> These souls are exceptional and conscious of their undescended selves.

The higher soul always remains united with intelligible being; the lower soul is unconscious of this link. Involved in the sensible world, in the tumult of the body, she is unconscious of what the upper part beholds.<sup>19</sup> Busied with carnal desires she knows nothing of her divine link.

What of these souls, unconscious of their undescended selves, and ignorant of the eternal verities? For:

living under a crust of evil...filled with injustice and desires, torn by internal strife, full of the fears of its own cowardice and the jealousy of its meanness, busied in its thoughts about the perishable and the low, the friend of vile pleasure, it lives a life of submission to bodily desires.<sup>20</sup>

There is a way out of this situation of misfortune. Through apprehension of aesthetic symbols the soul becomes aware of the forms and begins her tenuous ascent from unconsciousness to consciousness.<sup>21</sup>

Visible beauty points to soul to intelligible beauty.<sup>22</sup> In this sense art functions to make the soul aware of her divine source. Once conscious this soul becomes aware of her eternal, intelligible link to the divine. For through the aesthetic imagination the soul unites her disparate self and begins her ascent to the eternal verities and, perhaps, eventual union with the divine.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, art is therapeutic. It assists in the transfiguration of the soul from unconsciousness to consciousness, from an awareness of its sensibility to a knowledge of its intelligibility.

For Plotinus, then, the psychological and ontological shift from unconsciousness to consciousness, from misfortune to fortune, involves the use of the imagination, the active intellect, and at times, the plastic arts. Art, thus, commits the soul to an upward passage, to an ascent from the lower to the highest divine beauty. Consequently, the various *artes* are accorded a valued place in Plotinus' system.<sup>24</sup>

Logic, observation, and piety all reinforced this position. For Plotinus there was something grotesquely impious in the idea that the sense-world was devoid of the forms or that physical objects, even objects of art, could not awaken in the soul images of the eternal verities.

#### C. The Imagination and Intelligible Beauty

Plotinus' judgement is understandable, only when it is coupled to his psychology and epistemology.

Plotinus rejected Plato's tripartition of the soul. Moreover he accepted Aristotle's view that knowledge is a function of a series

of psychological faculties.<sup>25</sup> Although Plotinus does not settle on a definite scheme of faculties, his acceptance of Aristotle's view of the imagination plays a decisive role in his aesthetics.<sup>26</sup> With these concessions, Platonism finally comes to terms with the insights of Aristotelianism.

Among the most important of the Aristotelian elements in Plotinus' system is the notion that an actively thinking mind is identical with its objects.<sup>27</sup> He also accepted Aristotle's view that sense-perception involved the reception of the forms of sense-objects without their matter.<sup>28</sup> As Alexander insisted, the absolute certainty of knowledge springs from the fact that it has its origins in perception.<sup>29</sup> This is the complement of Plotinus' observation that the physical world is a self-contained, cogent, and certain instantiation of the noetic world.<sup>30</sup>

This is possible because the soul is self-moving. Always in movement she is in contact with those intelligible faculties active within her even though she is unconscious of them. The lower soul becomes conscious of her higher self when the active intellect transmits to the imagination an image of the forms. This occurs when the soul views an art form. This triggers memory of the intelligibles for the soul sees the form of beauty in the work of art.

There are two faculties of imagination. One arises in regions of the soul concerned with the body. Another emerges from the part of the soul concerned with the intellect.<sup>31</sup>

Plotinus says that the secondary act of imagination which is opinion in the soul is caused by disturbance and shock. Thus it is the product of the lower part of the organism. Its images are a faint opinion and unexamined mental picture.<sup>32</sup>

However, it is not secondary but primary imagination that is important in Plotinian aesthetics. The primary imagination has images of the forms passed on to it by the active intellect and the higher soul.<sup>33</sup> The *logos* deploys the thought and shows it to the imaginative faculty as though in a mirror. This presentation of thought to the imagination makes us aware of the intellection (*noesis*) which is always in progress. The imagination apprehends it and the persistence of the image is memory.

The imagination (*phantasia*) receives the products of thought (*logoi*) and perception (*aisthesis*).<sup>34</sup> These products are, then, passed on to the reasoning faculty for processing.<sup>35</sup> Imagination is, accordingly, based on something far more profound than an

awareness of physical conditions. It carries a meaning close to the idea of consciousness.<sup>36</sup> This means that the imagination is a power of perceptive awareness that transcends sensation. Significantly, it refers to that mental faculty which provides knowledge of the intelligibles above and within the soul.<sup>37</sup>

This assures for Plotinus the possibility of memory (*anamnese*)—the becoming receptive on the part of the lower soul what the higher soul eternally beholds<sup>38</sup>—for image-collecting is the basis of memory.<sup>39</sup> Memory, in turn, plays an important role in Plotinian eschatology and psychology.

For Plotinus believed in reincarnation, and assumed the form in which the soul is reincarnated depends on its previous life and conforms to the characteristics of that life. For example, the way the soul preserves its character between reincarnations is through memory. Memory makes the soul what it is and controls its descent.<sup>40</sup>

As noted Plotinus assumed that souls move from an unconscious to a conscious understanding of the intelligibles<sup>41</sup> and the way the transition is made is through memory.<sup>42</sup> For example, the imagination fired by its perception of a statue of a god remembers the form of the god and moves from an unconscious to a conscious awareness of the divine.<sup>43</sup> Thus art plays an important role in the way consciousness of the higher soul and the intelligibles is achieved by the lower soul.<sup>44</sup>

For images of the forms are transmitted to the imagination through sense objects. Accepting the Aristotelian postulate that sense-perception involves the reception of the forms of sense-objects without their matter Plotinus says:

On what principle does the architect when he finds the house standing before him correspond with his inner ideal of a house and pronounce it beautiful? Is it not that the house before him, the stones apart, is the inner idea stamped on the mass of exterior matter, the indivisible exhibited in diversity? We call something beautiful when we see something imprinted on it that we recognize as our own, by virtue of our continuity with the ideal world, and the immanence of that world in the object where we recognize beauty.<sup>45</sup>

Art objects also move the soul to imagine the form of beauty. This notion is forcefully presented in his work *On the Intelligible Beauty*.<sup>46</sup> Plotinus describes an intelligible world in unity with the

sensible world. The capacity to grasp this synthesis leads the mind to an understanding of beauty. Next, he examines the imagination and shows how it aids the soul in its ascent from sensible to intelligible knowledge. Finally, he illustrates how the craftsman and his *artes* concretely instantiate in visible form the intelligible world's truth and beauty.

Plotinus describes an intelligible world whereby each member remains itself, in distinction from all others, yet simultaneously all members form a single unity. He asks us to imagine a transparent globe or sphere containing all the things of the universe. Then he asks us to correct it by imagining another sphere stripped of all magnitude and spatial differences. Next we are urged to make a synthesis wherein each is all, one undivided divine power of many facets, each sharing one existence and remaining distinct from all others.<sup>47</sup> This is the beautiful.

Plotinus strains to lead our minds to the higher world of the forms and argues that sensual images lead us on our ascent. To correct the conclusions we might draw from the first-level image, he asks us not to abandon imagery entirely but to imagine another sphere, one whose properties run counter to the first. The deficiencies of image-thinking are eventually corrected by bringing the sense-image to a second stage and then urging our metaphysical imaginations to leap beyond this stage as well, to the desired insight into the intelligible realm. Central to this process of ascent is not of abandoning or turning away from the sensible world but of using imagery and the faculty of imagination to the point of strain and shatter. At the moment of shatter, intelligible insight occurs.<sup>48</sup>

The ingredience of the higher in the lower world suggests the fecundity of Plotinian aesthetics. He illustrates this in his comparison of hieroglyphics and art. Both suggest non-discursive images of the intelligible world—the ideas are not propositional truths but reified beings (*onta*).<sup>49</sup>

Moreover the ideas are envisaged as *agalmata*, each bodying forth in a species of translucence the inner wealth of the intelligible world's truth and beauty. Thus the individual who has seen this world of beauty will become his true self, even in this sensible, corporeal world, a concrete embodiment, in and through which others catch the glimmerings of the transcendent splendor of the forms.<sup>50</sup>

For Plotinus one such *agalma* is the artist, another the artist's creation. Thus the craftsman's task is, first, to imagine the ideal specification to which reality conforms, and then—so far as the nature of matter permits—to arrange it in conformity with its ideal specification.

A sculpture, for example, represents the creative ideas contained in the soul of the artist. With the assistance of the imagination the artist in an inward vision grasps the forms intuitively. Next the craftsman projects the intelligible beauty of the forms outwards, giving them visible form.

This understanding emerges from his interpretation of Phidias' statue of Zeus. Plotinus states that:

...it goes back to the ideas from which nature itself derives and adds where nature is lacking.<sup>51</sup>

The craftsman's work instantiates the form of beauty. It reflects the *he kallone*—the beauty of deity itself. The sculpture, then, functions to awaken in other souls an imaginative awareness of the ideas from which all else derives.

Plotinus suggests that such awareness leads to psychological enlightenment for the soul is the immovable place or subject for the immutable truth of the higher world.<sup>52</sup>

What do you feel in the beauty of souls? When you see that you yourself are beautiful within, what do you feel? What is this Dionysiac exaltation that thrills through your being, this straining upwards of all you soul, this longing to break away from the body and live sunken within the true self? These are no other than the emotion of souls under the spell of love...All these noble qualities are to be revered and loved but what entitles them to be called beautiful? Everyone that sees them must admit that they have reality of being, and is not real being, really beautiful?<sup>53</sup>

#### D. Aesthetic Symbols, the Soul, and the Arts

Note carefully that Plotinus' understanding of intellectual beauty confirms a new Roman rhythm. His terminology—imagination (*phantasia*), exaltation (*ekstasis*), love (*eros*), and emotion (*pathe*)—affirms that the intelligible world and its divine source can be grasped not only noetically, but also aesthetically. In a remarkable reversal of an older aesthetic pattern,

divine apperception involves *patheia* not *apatheia*. Another *via sacra* opens up; one which involves non-discursive, indeed imaginative and erotic ascent to the divine. Plotinus is toying with a sweeping hypothesis.<sup>54</sup>

Although the theme is strongly reminiscent of the Platonic Socrates, that Silenus figure which, once opened, was seen to contain the images of the gods within him, the Plotinian Phidias and that Zeus figure are strikingly distinct.<sup>55</sup> Plato often returned to that mysterious, youthful experience, to that encounter with the beloved which is simultaneously an encounter with a transcendent world of value that stretches beyond the "concrete person" involved in the encounter.<sup>56</sup> Plotinus reflects and expands upon this encounter and includes within the *agalmata*, that permits encounter with the intelligible world, factors which Plato never countenanced—the imagination, the active intellect, and the plastic arts. These forms are communicated to the soul by the active intellect through the image making faculty of the soul in reflection on the work of art.

The consequence of these assumptions propels Plotinus to propose, at least for Platonism, an unprecedented aesthetic axiology. Psychological and ontological "schizophrenia" are overcome aesthetically. The soul's unawareness of her higher self is reversed and her situation of misfortune overturned through imaginative, indeed, artistic perception. Aesthetics, then, is not only therapeutic, it is also a path to salvation.<sup>57</sup> Art assists the soul to leave the sensible world and terrestrial pollution and gain the intelligible world and celestial bliss.

The soul's descent into matter results in the unconscious splitting of the self. Her fall from the intelligible world also signals her separation from true reality and her embodiment in symbolic reality. This leap into matter is a function of a situation of misfortune. The imagination, the active intellect, and the arts are intimately linked to the reversal of psychological and ontological misfortune. Indeed, for Plotinus the arts present to the soul one of the greatest blessings a later Roman could obtain—full possession of the self, awareness of the forms, and ascent to the divine.

Thus, in turning to a statue or temple the imagination sees not merely a physical object but perceives an image of the forms. This, eventually, leads to an awareness of the eternal value of nature, the human soul, and the divine-like nature of both. An awareness of beauty is nothing less than a recognition of the value of the physical

world and of self. Through art the ontological distance between being and becoming is overcome in an epistemological and psychological act of imaginative identification.

For Plotinus the human soul contains within herself the ability to gain salvation. She has the ability to willingly save herself through contemplation (*theoria*).<sup>58</sup> Art and the imaginative perception of its inner beauty is a mode of contemplation which leads the soul on her ascent to the intelligible world. In this sense, Plotinus has an acute sense of the multiplicity of reality and self and a chain of intermediaries that reached, yet further still, from self to God. In *nuce*, Art functions to erase the distinctions between the layers of the soul, to bring the ontologically distant epistemologically present.

*Aisthesis* is nothing more than the lower soul becoming conscious of what the higher soul eternally beholds. *Phantasia* is nothing more than the presentation to the lower soul of an *antilepsis* which permits her to identify her empirical self with her pure, true self that transcends the sensible. Art serves to heal the disparate self. It brings that which is so noetically distant, sensibly present. It is about the joining of heaven and earth in the human soul.

Thus, the dangerously long distance between being and becoming, consciousness and unconsciousness is overcome through an aesthetic that stresses the possibility of unanimity between subject and object. Such identification makes the soul conscious of her intelligible beauty. Such consciousness leads the soul upwards to divine beauty and wholeness itself.

To conclude: In the second half of the third century, we find ourselves caught up in an aesthetic transformation which is still incomplete. Plotinus fractures the foundations of earlier Platonic aesthetic theory. Bit by bit, the static framework of the noetic world, on which Platonic metaphysics rested, is dismantled. By now, the ineffaceable character of forms and gods, which earlier Platonists saw as the ultimate justification of a *mimesis* between the intelligible and sensible worlds, between intelligibility and sensibility has been dissolved aesthetically. Art as Plotinus hints all along—no longer belongs to the sensible world alone.

This discovery has three aspects. It compels Platonists to recognize the value of perception—something they might guess, but before Plotinus could not prove. Secondly, it establishes the veracity of the imagination because later Platonists have come to



understand the general processes by which it works: its link to the higher soul and active-intellect provides proof of its intelligibility. Thirdly, it establishes the conditions for the possibility of rendering nugatory the specter of the isolated subject and the discordance between art and truth.

What may be called Plotinus' "aesthetic shift" has its grounds in his valuation of the natural world, his concerns about the "fall" of the soul, and his desire to expand its horizons by rendering nugatory the unconsciousness of *aisthesis* and the arts. Significantly, all these ideas resonate well beyond Plotinus in a contemporary philosophies with his concerns about subjectivity and an aesthetics of the self. It is to these issues we now turn.

#### IV. Foucault

Our age is, in especial degree, the  
age of criticism, and to criticism  
everything must submit.

Kant, Preface to *The Critique of Pure Reason*<sup>49</sup>

There has been an explosion about the term "postmodernity" which is difficult to pin down. Heidegger called such an amorphous, elusive protean debate a *Stimmung*. Indeed, "postmodernism" is perhaps the most controversial intellectual movement of our times. There are those who think that it is a clever intellectual fraud, a harbinger of nihilism, a whimsical destroyer of any canons of rationality, a self-indulgent scribbling that delights in irresponsible word play, punning, parody, and even self-parody. With wit, barbs, and deft swift movements, this movement is the slayer of the tradition of western metaphysics and logocentrism. This characterization is to say the least problematic, at least for Foucault.

The reasons are several. Many interpreters of postmodernism—and one should not place Foucault's thinking solely in a postmodernist context—have characterized the postmodern *ethos* as excluding all notions of truth, enlightenment, and self-understanding. Moreover, Foucault's genealogies of power/knowledge have been identified as exhibiting a Nietzschean

scepticism with regard to truth-claims or ethical values of whatever kind.

I would like to suggest that this picture incorrectly characterizes Foucault's later philosophical positioning.<sup>50</sup> Foucault's philosophical agenda is about criticism and the "decentering" of a variety of methodological and metaphysical *a priora*. In this sense its pedigree is an ancient one and its philosophical precursors include Socrates, Pyrrho, Sextus Empiricus, Montaigne, Voltaire, Kant, and Nietzsche. Those who read these thinkers and their heirs as merely celebrating formlessness and chaos are missing the Socratic sense, the Kantian deconstructive bite, which demands that there is no "boundary-fixing" that cannot itself be questioned.

In *nuce*, Foucault will continue this critical approach which can be identified with Kant's and Nietzsche's own critique of foundations. Moreover, his attention is drawn to the ethics and aesthetics of these thinkers in three ways. First, Kant and Nietzsche made freedom something that is necessarily outside the province of (theoretical) knowledge. Secondly, one of the radical novelties of Kant was the notion that we construct our meaning of life through ethics because it is through this medium that we endow ourselves with purpose. Thirdly, it was Nietzsche who suggested to Foucault that "living one's life as a work of art" is the *telos* of human existence.

#### A. Critique in the Modern Age

Kant taught us that what characterizes the enlightenment impulse is not dogmatism or the search for firm foundations, but its persistent questioning of the conditions and possibility of experience: including ethical-political experience.<sup>51</sup> Foucault's historical work was guided by a philosophical attitude derived from the Enlightenment values of human liberation and of autonomous human thought as an instrument of that liberation.

Foucault defined his project by comparing and contrasting it to Kant's eighteenth century critique of reason which was an attempt to make use of understanding without direction from another.<sup>52</sup> Kant thought that his own age was the beginning of reason's emergence as an autonomous force directing human life. Thus, reason itself required a careful assessment of its precise scope and limits. Thus, according to Foucault Kant indicated a way out of the

immaturity and the heteronomy that characterized human thought before Enlightenment. By immaturity Kant meant "a certain state of our will that makes us accept someone else's authority to lead us in areas where the use of reason is called for."<sup>63</sup> His motto was *aude sapere* and it must be construed "both as a process in which men participate collectively and as an act of courage to be accomplished personally."<sup>64</sup> Thus, "Enlightenment" is characterized by Kant as an ongoing process and as a task and an obligation to "problematize" existing readings of knowledge and truth.

Kant thought that the limits of reason derived from necessary *a priori* structures that defined the very possibility of our knowledge—that is, from formal structures with universal value. It is here that Foucault's project for a critique of reason differs from Kant's. Foucault is not concerned with determining the *a priori*, necessary conditions governing the exercise of reason but with a critical reflection on the extent to which such conditions have a contingent historical origin. Through such reflection—carried out by histories of thought—he attempts to show how we can free ourselves from the constraints of these conditions. Even free ourselves from the error of mistaking culture-specific claims for *a priori* valid truth-claims.

In this sense Foucault scarcely alters the agenda and axiology of the Kantian critique. His central concern is to articulate a critique of reason and an ethic premised on the values of autonomy, freedom, and self-determination attained through an exercise of practical will remarkably kin to Kant's own threefold question "What can I know?; What should I will?; and What may I reasonably hope for?" The crucial difference is in Foucault's way of posing these questions. He treats them in genealogical fashion as not belonging to a transcendently certain, but to a historically delimited configuration of knowledge, discourse, and the will to truth.

This shift represents an important reformulation of the cultural role played by reason. In brief Foucault abandons the traditional philosophical goal of grounding theoretical, practical, and aesthetic knowledge in an understanding of the essential, universal structures of thought and reality. Instead, he applies the philosopher's analytic and synthetic skills to the task of uncovering and dissolving contingent historical constraints on thought and action. As such Foucault abandons the venerable but empty pretension that

philosophy provides a privileged access to fundamental truths. That is to say, he rejects any version of the strong universalist premise that would hold such values to be more than contingent, more than just a product of own modernist attachment to "universal discourse."

In brief, Foucault inverted Kant's order of priorities. He demoted the claims of "transcendental" reason (or critique) to the status of a localized episode in the history of thought, and he identified truth with the level of contingent events or shifts in the order of power/knowledge relations that can best be revealed through his genealogical approach to thought systems. That is to say, the enlightenment project survives in Foucault in a sharply delimited form as the impetus to a kind of reasoned investigative thinking that does not characterize much of postmodernism. As such for Foucault Kantian questions still have a capacity to provide critical reflection on the ways and means of enlightened self-knowledge that exist for us now as subjects inscribed with a culture specific discourse.

Critique needs to be recast in such a form as to exclude any notion of "truth" or "critique" as values transcending this localized context of utterance. Thus: "How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations? How are we constituted as subjects of our own actions?" This remains among the most important of enlightenment questions for Foucault.<sup>65</sup>

These are the kinds of questions that have occupied thinkers from Kant to Habermas. But they differ that for Foucault self-knowledge can only arise through the exercise of a freedom created in the margins of an otherwise ubiquitous will to power whose watchwords are "reason," "enlightenment," and "truth." Hence the most important question for Foucault is: "how can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?"<sup>66</sup> His answer is to shift the main burden from the relationship between knowledge and ethics (as developed chiefly in Kant's first two *Critiques*) to the relationship between ethics and aesthetics (as taken up in the last *Critique*). This explains Foucault's turn to an aesthetic perspective.<sup>67</sup>

## B. The Aesthetic Turn

There are differences between Kant's and Foucault's ways of answering the question "What is Enlightenment?" For Kant it is a matter of attaining intellectual and moral maturity through the exercise of criticism in its various modes, whether applied to issues of theoretical understanding (where intuitions must be brought under adequate concepts), to questions of an ethical or political order (where practical reason supplies the rule), or to issues in the sphere of aesthetic judgement where the tribunal can only be that of an intersubjective community of taste appealing to shared principles or criteria of value.

For Foucault this doctrine of the faculties is a "transcendental" illusion and in its place he offers an artistic and literary *ethos* which possesses no such universalist claims. Here the aesthetic moves to center stage as the focal point of everything that challenges, eludes, or subverts the truth-claims of a traditionally understood Enlightenment critique.

Following Baudelaire and Nietzsche, Foucault argued we should not go off to discover ourselves, our secrets and hidden truths. We should try to invent ourselves by ironically "heroizing" the present moment and the scope it offers for aesthetic self-creation.<sup>64</sup> This turn explains Foucault's focus upon a categorical imperative of ever more inventive variations on the theme of aesthetic self-invention that leads toward an *ethos* of "Private" (aesthetic) fulfillment.

If we are to see the significance of the question of the nature of the work of art and how this question is connected with the basic problems of philosophy for Foucault we must gain some insight into certain assumptions present in the Kantian concept of a philosophical aesthetics.<sup>65</sup> It was only with the explicit restriction of Enlightenment rationalism that the autonomous right of aesthetic knowledge would be first asserted by Baumgarten.<sup>66</sup> With these premises in hand Kant in his third critique—specifically the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*—argued for the independence of the judgement of taste from the categories of the understanding and its regulatory concepts.<sup>67</sup>

Kant established the problem of aesthetics in its systematic significance. Here he discovered in the subjective universality of the aesthetic judgement of taste the powerful and legitimate claim to independence the aesthetic judgement makes against the claims

of the understanding and morality.<sup>68</sup> According to Kant the taste of the observer can not be comprehended as the application of concepts, norms, or rules. The beautiful and the sublime cannot be apprehended as a knowable, determinate property of an object. Rather it manifests itself in a subjective manner—in the intensification of the "Lebensgefuehl" through the harmonious correspondence of imagination and understanding.<sup>69</sup>

What we experience in beauty or sublimity in nature and in art is the free interplay of our moral powers. These judgements of taste are not knowledge, yet they are not arbitrary. They involve a claim to universality that establish the autonomy of the aesthetic realm on the basis of the subjectivity of the mind's powers.<sup>70</sup> For Kant the determining factor was the congruity that existed between the beauty and sublimity of nature and the subjectivity of the subject. Similarly, he understood the creative genius who transcends all rules in creating the work of art to be a favorite of nature.<sup>71</sup> This assumption was based on the self-evident validity of a natural order that has its ultimate foundation in the teleological idea of creation.<sup>72</sup>

The disappearance of a teleological grounding of aesthetics followed rapidly upon Kant. In its place there emerged a notion of radical subjectification, or the doctrine of the freedom of the genius from the horizons of rules. No longer subject to the comprehensive whole of the order of nature this artist is privileged to contrast reality and the raw prose of life. Here art—on the level of sense intuition—becomes the manifestation of the perfected concept of spirit. In the literal sense of the word art became for Schiller and Hegel an intuition of the world.<sup>73</sup>

Now Gadamer argues that "basing aesthetics on the subjectivity of the mind's powers was...the beginning of a dangerous process of subjectification."<sup>74</sup> Dangerous or not this was the "way" of aesthetics after Kant. Moreover, if we wish to understand the point of departure of Foucault's aesthetics, we must keep in mind that these earlier aesthetic horizons of Kant, Schiller, and Hegel—that inscribed a special significance to nature and works of art as the *organon* of a nonconceptual understanding of truth—are eclipsed in Foucault's lexicon by Nietzsche and to a lesser degree by Heidegger, and Bataille.<sup>75</sup> It is to Foucault's aesthetics we now turn.

## C. Aesthetics of the Self

Foucault suggested that such an aesthetic turn cannot be perceived or theorized by a philosophy still wedded to "transcendental" notions of reason, truth, and critique. Hence Foucault's (often misunderstood) critique of the Enlightenment humanism associated with Kant's first two *Critiques* that prevented discourse from moving beyond its subject-centered or anthropological origins.<sup>8</sup> This kind of humanism can be opposed Foucault thought by "the principle of a permanent critique and a permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy: that is a principle that is at the heart of the historical consciousness that the Enlightenment has of itself."<sup>9</sup>

The consequence of Foucault's revisionist reading of Kant's third *Critique* is to aestheticize issues of politics, morality, and social justice to the point where they become a "transfiguring play of freedom with reality," an "aesthetic elaboration of the self," worked out by the Nietzschean strong individual in pursuit of desires, or in accordance with a private self-fashioning, that "ironic heroization of the present...which Baudelaire called art." In *nuce*, Foucault erected a Kantian ethics grounded in the maxims and postulates of enlightened practical reason to an ethics premised on the Nietzschean will to treat existence as "justified" to the extent we can view it as an "aesthetic phenomenon."

The important question now is does such an espousal of a private-aestheticist creed force Foucault to abandon the truth values of enlightened thought—of reason in its jointly epistemological and ethico-political modes? Does it compel Foucault to renounce any claim to promote and articulate the interests of autonomy, justice, and human emancipation? I suggest not. Rather it initially leads to the kind of self-delighting paradox or wished for *aporia* that figures so prominently in Foucault's thought. Later this "play" culminates in discourses, practices, and technologies of the self, where individuals create their own identities through ethics and forms of aesthetic self-constitution in order to attain a certain state of happiness and purity.

Foucault states that, henceforth, criticism will "not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to know and do." Rather it will "separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think."<sup>10</sup>

Initially, this sentence strikes one as a repudiation of Kantian thought. It appeared to support his claim that the only type of project that warrants his allegiance is an ethics/aesthetics of radical self-invention. Foucault's statement might promote this interpretation, but it also corresponds at every point to Kant's own claims in the original text "What Is Enlightenment?" Kant argued that we must think our way through and beyond these limits, those various forms of self-imposed tutelage or servitude as we exercise our powers of autonomous critical reason. If this is done autonomous judgement makes possible a critique that promotes human liberty. It also allows us to evaluate various orders of truth telling and to judge their ethical accountability in respect to their meaning, conditions, and goals.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps, this explains how much was at stake in Foucault's historical studies of the origins of the human sciences and his critiques of structuralism and various (neo)Marxisms. He acknowledges the claims of certain moral imperatives. These imperatives *necessarily* hold whenever human liberty is endangered or compromised. Moreover, their validity cannot be relativized to this or that "phrase-regime," "discourse," or cultural "form of like" (*contra* Lyotard). Nor can this merely be a matter of one's private "perspective" (*contra* Lyotard and Rorty). For Foucault ethics is a matter of autonomous, freely willed choice arrived at after a laborious, critical study of historical evidence. On the basis of empirical evidence we make aesthetic judgements on the value of such evidence.

Thus, "the thread that connects Foucault to the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to its doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude—that is of a philosophical *ethos* that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era."<sup>12</sup> That is to say, in keeping with Kant's critical imperative Foucault required that philosophy take nothing on trust, its own "doctrinal elements" included. Instead we should persist in the kind permanent critique of self-questioning activity that allows no privileged exemptions, no truth claims (epistemic or ethical) that cannot be justified on reasoned or principled grounds. The primary function of the philosopher then is to analyze the present and to reveal its fractures and instabilities, the ways in which it once limits human liberty.

In brief, freedom is not understood as the liberation of some human essence that is locked up in what we essentially are or the even liberation of some repressed human essence. Freedom is a type of detachment or suspension of judgement that opens new possibilities for thought and action. It is new possibilities of thinking and acting, of giving new impetus to the undefined work of freedom—which is immediately bound up with an “aesthetics of existence” where it is imperative that we turn our lives into a work of art through self-mastery and ethical stylization.

Foucault as Kant *revivendus*? Yes and no. Foucault argued that the Enlightenment formulated a philosophical question that remains for us to consider and a philosophical attitude that requires implementation—namely an *ethos* of permanent critique. Such critique abjures the “blackmail of the Enlightenment”—that the acceptance that its reasoning discourses are a “final vocabulary” that progressively lead to wider and deeper modes of human emancipation. It is to this topic we now briefly turn.

#### D. Aesthetics, Ethics, and the Technologies of the Self

What do aesthetics, ethics, freedom, and purposiveness have to do with each other? In his last writings Foucault was drawn to the ancient philosophical notion of life as the art of living, as a style of life, as a way of life. He described this *ethos* as practices of the self, as the care of the self, and called it an “aesthetics of existence.”

Foucault taught that the only way we can be individuals is to create ourselves. He grounded his aesthetics (and ethics) on the idea of freedom. He argued that the inherently unknowable (or unreason) should be the foundation of aesthetics and ethics. Finally, he suggested that the key to understanding aesthetics and ethics is the concept of “purposiveness.”

He understood the ethics of the ancients as one of pleasure which is taken into the self.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, he saw in these practices of the self a conversion towards the self wherein one liberates oneself from externals, from sensual attachment to external objects and to the pleasures which these procure. Finally, he perceived in this lifestyle a self-mastery, self-possession, and a happiness in internal freedom and independence. Through moderation and regulation one cares for the self. Indeed, it is the responsibility of each individual to give style, beauty, and grace to his existence.

In brief, ethics is the relation the individual has with himself. The notion that ethics is immediately bound up with an aesthetics of existence is central to Foucault's understanding of freedom. For Foucault ethics is the deliberative component of free aesthetic activity and the basis for a prolonged practice of the self whereby one masters oneself in order to constitute one self as a free self. That is to say, freedom is associated with a mastery of the self and its desires. As such, the subject can turn his life into a work of art through self-mastery and ethical stylization. Such a transformation leads to a certain state of happiness, purity, perfection, or immortality.<sup>88</sup>

While Foucault does not uncritically affirm Greek culture, his unstated “normative assumption” was that Greco-Roman ethical practice is superior to later ancient and mediaeval Christian, and modern moral systems. First, subjectivity is not viewed as a reified construct of power. Secondly, the subject is no longer determined by a functionalist system of gratuitous power whose biopower trains bodies and regulates populations for no purpose other than its own intrinsic ends. Rather Greco-Roman ethics allow for the conditions of the possibility that a self-governing individual could create itself, and enjoy types of experience, pleasure, and desire in autonomous stylized forms which lead to a transformation of the self.

In brief, for Foucault ancient philosophy offered the opportunity to promote new forms of subjectivity to counter the normalized individuality which has been imposed on us for centuries.<sup>89</sup> The point is that contemporary philosophers can take up the Greek philosophy again “as an experience which took place once and with regard to which one can be completely free.”<sup>90</sup>

The specter of the isolated subject in contemporary thought is overcome through Foucault's aesthetical inquiries into ancient ethics and his valorization of a form of ethical practice that is non-universalizing, non-normalizing, attentive to individual differences, attentive to individual liberty, and the larger social context of the freedom of the self.<sup>91</sup>

Ethics here depends not so much on moral norms as free choice based upon aesthetic criteria which bracket the subjectivizing of the individual into a normalized, universal ethical subject. Foucault argued that the task of life is not to discover oneself but to continually produce a self as an autonomous subject.<sup>92</sup> That is to

say, freedom is understood as an ongoing ethical practice of self-mastery and care of the self.

Foucault argued that the subject is still discursively and socially conditioned, and still theorized as situated within power relations. The difference is now he sees that individuals also have the power to define their own identity, to master their body and desires, and to create a practice of freedom through "techniques of the self." Freedom is mastery of and power over oneself. As such, "liberty is the ontological condition of ethics and ethics as the deliberate form assumed by liberty."<sup>91</sup>

This study began with a specter that haunts contemporary thought: the specter of the isolated subject. Foucault proposed the overcoming of isolation through the study of how individuals in Greco-Roman culture handled problems such as "questioning their own conduct, watching over and giving shape to it, and shaping themselves as ethical subjects."<sup>92</sup> Foucault claims that "ethical freedom has to be practiced," that "ethics is the thoughtful practice of freedom," and that such self-mastery leads to an "aesthetics of existence."<sup>93</sup>

### V. Plotinus and Foucault

The effort to rethink the Greeks today consists not in valorizing Greek ethics as the moral domain par excellence that we need in order to think about ourselves but of doing it in such a way that European philosophy can start again from Greek philosophy as an experience once given, in relation to which we can be totally free.

Foucault, *Les Nouvelles littéraires*<sup>94</sup>

Although there are marked differences between the aesthetics of Plotinus and Foucault, and difficulties in Foucault's interpretation of ancient philosophical texts,<sup>95</sup> there exist, nonetheless, certain ideas each share with the other. First, there is

the recognition that aesthetics heal the disjointed, fractured self. Through art and aesthetics the individual overcomes isolation, dislocation, and rupture. Secondly, there is the claim that art and aesthetics are linked to truth, autonomy, and happiness. Thirdly, there is no discordance between art, aesthetics, and truth. Indeed, both appear more truthful than empirical truth, more rational than methodical reason, more valuable than normative principles of morality or utility.

The essential point for both is: cultivate yourself, create your own beautiful or sublime individuality, aestheticize your existence, craft an *ethos* that is good and honorable. Aesthetic and non-normative, sustained by personal choice and not by legal constraint, both Plotinus and Foucault propose relationships with the self that are differentiated, whose primary purpose is the "aestheticization" of the self. As such the power of philosophy is drawing up a design for an ethics of the individual, an ethics of freedom, which permits the self's overcoming of rupture, fragmentation, and isolation.

#### A. Art and Aesthetics: Rupture and Reconciliation

The ancient subject was not able to cultivate the soul apart from the metaphysical and mythical discourses which accompanied them. Plotinus proposed that whoever practices these aesthetic exercises accedes concretely to the universality of the *noetic* perspective, through a grasping of the presence of intelligible beauty.

The art of living in Plotinus' philosophy was grounded on a metaphysical "foundationalism." The emancipation of the individual has its *locus* in the domains of ethics and aesthetics. The individual achieves liberation through contemplative technologies of the self. These exercises make one aware of the undescended soul. Next, they permit one to grasp intelligibles, and indirectly the One through a variety of aesthetic symbols. Plotinus reflects on the ascent of the soul and the role art and aesthetics play in going beyond the self, at thinking and acting in union with universal reason. The best part of the self is ultimately a transcendent, "undescended" self wherein art and aesthetic perception reveals to the subject. Truth in grasping this eternal self, by discovering she has a reason in herself, the soul discovers she is a part of the universal reason which is within all humanity and the cosmos itself.

The contemporary self is able to practice the philosophical exercises of antiquity while separating them from the metaphysical

or mythical discourses which accompany them. Indeed, Foucault argues whoever practices these aesthetic exercises sees the world with new eyes. He discovers, in the enjoyment of the present a splendor of existence, which Nietzsche said allows us to say yes "not only to ourselves but to existence." Foucault describes with precision what he calls the practices of the self preached by Platonists, Epicureans, and Stoics in antiquity. He saw in this care of the self a cultivation of the body and soul which leads to a conversion towards the self, a possession of the self. In mastering this contingent self, by discovering it has a value in itself, the subject forges his spiritual identity as an autonomous being.

The art of living according to Foucault is not grounded in any "metaphysical foundationalism." Nonetheless, the emancipation of the individual depends upon a recognition of the many relationships the subject has with the self, or of the consciousness of the self. Moreover, the individual achieves liberation through "technologies of the self" which manifest themselves through a variety of symbols. It is here we encounter similarities between Plotinus and Foucault.

Subjectivity for both denotes relations to the self, and the critical function of philosophy is the elaboration of new "subjectivities" through the construction of "technologies of existence." Plotinus and Foucault propose a fundamental relationship of the self (subjectivity in its broadest meaning), ethics (determination of the principles of existence), and aesthetics (the individual's attempt to care for the self). The goal of life is caring for oneself by making one's life a work of art by designing one's life with the conviction that by caring for the self the individual renders the greatest service to humanity.

What Plotinus calls the ascent of the soul to intelligible beauty and what Foucault calls the practices of the self "in the ancients" corresponds to a movement of conversion towards the self: one liberates oneself from externals, attachments, and the pleasures one can procure. The difference between this "ancient" and this "postmodern," however, is that in Plotinus this movement of interiorization is inseparably linked to another movement in which one raises oneself to a higher psychic level, in which one remembers another type of exteriorization, another relationship with the exterior, another way of being-in-the-world which consists of being aware of the self as part of universal reason.

According to Plotinus, one identifies with an "Other" which is universal reason, and which is present in each of us. According to Foucault, however, one identifies with the "Self", which is freedom, which is present in each of us. As such, in Plotinus there is a radical transformation of "perspective" which has a universal and cosmic dimension which Foucault does not see. That is to say, "interiorization" for Plotinus is going beyond the self in a way which leads to universalization.

For Foucault there is nothing apart from "interiorization," a conversion toward the self which leads to a cultivation of the self.<sup>9</sup> The subject needs only recognition of the self to grasp the multiple forms the self can take to attain enlightenment and freedom. Indeed, for Foucault liberty becomes a certain form of relationship of the individual to the self. Hence his refusal to exteriorize: the...critical function of philosophy derives...from Socrates' imperative: 'Know thyself': that is, base yourself on freedom, through self-mastery."<sup>10</sup> Freedom is located in the individual fragment which is the contemporary self. It is not located in any universal totality beyond and within the self as argued by Plotinus.

#### B. Homo Aestheticus and Old Gods Ascending

Kierkegaard has noted:

Each age has its characteristic depravity. Our is perhaps not pleasure or indulgence or sensuality, but rather a dissolute contempt...for individual man."<sup>11</sup>

In their own times Plotinus and Foucault affirmed the self as soul and individual. Moreover, they argued that ethics are possible through the aesthetic cultivation of the self. This soul or self are not in the world as the limit of the world or exclusively as a subject that has *episteme* and *dianoia*. They are in the world as the unlimited of the world as a self that has *eupatheia* and *phronesis*.

In a contemporary world, Foucault argues that if moral experiences centered on the subject are no longer satisfying today because they have been uncovered as subjugation, then "we are confronted by a certain number of questions posed to us in the same terms used in antiquity."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, because "we no longer believe ethics to be based upon religion"...and..."we do not want any legal system to intervene in our private and personal lives," "our problem

today...is...somewhat similar" to what it was for the Greeks: how to base ethics on the rigorously personal choice of a style of existence.<sup>100</sup> A clear result from reading Foucault is that the achievement of wholeness and freedom in our age demands a return to the individuality of antiquity, and a retreat from subjectivity as moderns describe it.

In Plotinus (and Kant) the cohesion of the self rests upon transcendent (or transcendental) foundations. For Foucault cohesion rests on aesthetic interindividuality that abjures all types of transcendence provided either by a metaphysical reality or a transcendental normalizing intersubjectivity that would be humanity's shared lot.

We can now, perhaps, better understand, at the end of our story, what Foucault rejects in these enlightenment philosophies. But we can also better appreciate what he finds appealing in them. He locates freedom in the individual, he structures the quest for liberty in the arts and aesthetics. Contemporary existence can no longer be anything than an extension of the self as artist. The world is an aesthetic reality created by the subject, who is finally an autonomous, indeed ethical individual.

The ancient world considered ethics as an art which brings about in the community and the individual the order within which each individual finds the place and proportion due it. In brief, the goal of life is to achieve aristocratic excellence. This can only be achieved through the cultivation of the soul which is achieved through the care of the self. That is to say, autonomy lies in individuality, in the invention of a *homo aestheticus*. Since nothing is given and everything is constructed, ancient ethics and aesthetics provides the contemporary individual with the knowledge lacking to achieve autonomy, Foucault argues. Aesthetics also provides us with a means to overcome the prison of modernity, a way to emancipate ourselves from forgetfulness, fragmentation, and rupture.

Although Foucault argues we cannot go back and there is no *arche* that is free of all forgetting of concern for the self, explicit in his later works is an appreciation for the philosophy of the ancients. In this sense he has been central in the rehabilitation of ancient philosophy among contemporary philosophers. By his critical appropriation of themes in Plato, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Metrodorus, and Plotinus—Foucault has argued that our

"postmodern" condition, our existence in the world, is to be a creative individual. As such, it is necessary to return to the ancient sages in order to go beyond "modernism." His "postmodern" road begins in a *via antiqua*. For Foucault this is the only consistent basis for the new departure. Antiquity offers an ethics "through which the subject postulates the form he gives to his life."<sup>101</sup> It proposes aesthetics as a philosophical *ethos*.

For Foucault the need to lend a voice to the silence of the "Other" is a condition for enlightenment and freedom. His reading of the Plato and the ancients lead to a remarkable discovery. It was his autonomous self. This "self" is not just another entity in the world. In a fundamental sense this self creates worlds. Moreover, in knowing itself it comes to recognize other selves, and the "horizons" of any and every possible self. This acquisition of an "aesthetic pretense" is no innocent philosophical thesis. It is a weapon of enormous power. And it could not have been uncovered without the help of old gods ascending.

### Conclusion

This partial, yet it is hoped, representative survey of the aesthetics of Plotinus and Foucault, does not yield firm conclusions about the commensurability of their views of the arts and aesthetics. It does, however, suggest that their theories are not incommensurable. Therefore, it is possible to draw a few preliminary conclusions:

First, Plotinus and Foucault make extensive use of aesthetic symbols and techniques for overcoming the fallenness of the soul and rupture of the self. They affirm the concordance of art and truth. Art and aesthetics form an integral part of their strategies for the ascent of the soul and the technologies of the self. In addition they reject any associations of Plato, Platonism, and ancient philosophy with oppression, repression, and the loss of being. The ancient sages offer the possibility for an "aesthetic turn" which once taken culminates in the liberation of the self as *homo aestheticus* and the attainment of an "aesthetics of existence."

Secondly, art and aesthetics are valuable for the philosophical intentions of Plotinus and Foucault. Each stand as important and independent elements within larger programs for the ascent of the



soul and the liberation of the self. To view the aesthetics of Plotinus and Foucault from this perspective is to connect their theories of the arts with their proper philosophical context. Aesthetics is an affirming philosophical *ethos* that valorizes the individual, thereby vanquishing the darkness of forgetfulness, betrayal, and nihilism.

Thirdly, the aesthetic individual is the locus of value. Aesthetics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life argues that the absolute good cannot merely be a product of *logismos*. Self and value can be represented, perhaps better, as *aisthesis*. The self, the subject, and indeed subjectivity are best expressed in the words of Wittgenstein:

the 'whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.'<sup>102</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. "Horizon" is the metaphor Nietzsche used in his celebrated "God is dead" passage: "How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon." cf. *The Gay Science*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 181 par. 125. It became a central philosophical concept in the phenomenological tradition associated with Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Gadamer. Here the term is used to call to attention what lies aesthetically in the backgrounds of Plotinus' view of the soul and Foucault's understanding of the self. The term also has a normative aura, for example when I speak of the aesthetic pretense underlying their respective visions of the soul and the individual. cf. R.J. Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1993), p. 10. N. 14. Hereafter cited as *NC* with page number in the text.
2. W. Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, (London: MacMillan, 1976), p. 162.
3. For a nice overview of this issue in contemporary philosophy see, T. Rockmore, *Heidegger and French Philosophy*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 40-58.
4. For a recent study of Foucault's concept of the subject see, A. Stoekl, *Agonies of the Intellectual*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), pp. 174-198.
5. L. Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus*, (Chicago @ London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 1. Hereafter cited as *HA* with page number in the text.

6. For a review of this topic see, J.M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), esp. pp. 1-16; 225-274. Hereafter cited as *FA* with page number in the text.
7. Plato, *Gorgias*, 503e.
8. A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), p. 130.
9. On Plotinus' psychology and epistemology there are many works. For recent studies see, H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), pp. 8-66; 67-133; cf. J.M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 410-422.
10. *Enn.*, 5.8.1; cf. 1.6.2, 3, 5.
11. *Enn.*, 5.8.1.
12. *Ibid.*, 1.6.2.
13. *Ibid.*, 1.6.3.
14. *Ibid.*, 1.6.5.
15. *Ibid.*, 4.8.4, 28-31; cf. 1.6.3, 5.
16. On the theory of the undescended soul in Plotinus, cf. J.M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 410-422; Carlos G. Steel, *The Changing Self: A Study on the Soul in Later Platonism*, (Paleis der Academien: Brussels, 1978), pp. 34-38; H. J. Blumenthal, "John Philoponus: Alexandrian Platonist," *Hermes* 114.3 3q. (1986), pp. 315-335. The important passages from Plotinus on this subject are *Enn.*, 4.3.12; 5.1.2; 6.4.14.
17. *Ibid.*, 5.1.12.
18. *Ibid.*, 4.7.10.
19. *Ibid.*, 5.1.2; 4.1.8.
20. *Ibid.*, 1.6.5.
21. *Ibid.*, 5.8.1.
22. *Ibid.*, 1.6.3.
23. *Ibid.*, 1.6.5.
24. See, Robert M. Berchman, "Rationality and Ritual in Plotinus and Porphyry," in *Incognita* II.2 (1991), pp. 185-216.
25. This is not to say that Plotinus merely adopts the Aristotelian psychology. As Blumenthal notes Plotinus goes to great lengths to preserve the soul's autonomy which he thought Peripateticism radically compromised, cf. H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), pp. 8-44.
26. On the two faculties of the imagination, cf. Arist., *De An.*, 433b29; 434a5-7.

27. See, A. Hilary Armstrong, *Plotinus*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957), pp. 393–413; Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in the Neoaristotelian and Neoplatonic Traditions*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), pp. 8ff.
28. See, H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), pp. 137ff.
29. *De An.*, 85; cf. 89.21–22; 90.19–20; (Wallis). *De In.*, 112.2–4 (Bruns).
30. *Enn.*, 1.6.2–3.
31. On the dual imagination in Plotinus see, H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), pp. 92ff.
32. *Enn.*, 3.6.4, 14–23.
33. *Ibid.*, 4.3.30, 1–5.
34. *Ibid.*, 4.3.30, 5ff.
35. *Ibid.*, 5.3.2, 7–9.
36. On this see, H.-J. Schwyzer, "Bewusst und Unbewusst bei Plotin," *Entretiens Hardt V* (1961), pp. 343–390.
37. *Enn.*, 1.4.9, 25ff.
38. *Ibid.*, 4.8.4, 28–31.
39. *Ibid.*, 4.3.29, 22–24.
40. *Ibid.*, 4.3.8, 5–9; cf. 3.4.2.11.
41. On the unconscious and conscious intellect in Plotinus see, Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in The Neoaristotelian and Neoplatonic Traditions*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), pp. 72ff.
42. This is illustrated by H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), pp. 94–99.
43. *Enn.*, 1.6.3.
44. *Ibid.*, 5.8.1.
45. *Ibid.*, 1.6.3.
46. On this treatise see, Emile Brehier, *La Philosophie du Plotin 3*, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1961), pp. 17–23; H.-C Puech, "Plotin et les Gnostiques," *Entretiens Hardt V* (1960), pp. 161–190.
47. *Enn.*, 5.8.9.
48. *Ibid.*, 6.4.5.
49. *Ibid.*, 6.4.5.
50. *Ibid.*, 5.8.11, 17–19; cf. 4.4–6, 42–44.
51. *Ibid.*, 5.8.1.
52. *Ibid.*, 4.7.
53. *Ibid.*, 1.6.5.

54. This interpretation might represent a conscious development of the insight of the *Phaedrus* 250d where Plato suggests that of all the forms beauty alone makes itself manifest to the sensuous perceiver.
55. See, Robert J. O'Connell, *Art and the Christian Intelligence in St. Augustine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 46–47.
56. Plato develops this theme in the *Laws* where household shrines, the aged, and the stars are proposed as concrete examples of the divine, cf. 930e–931a; 899b; 966e–968a.
57. Porphyry reports that after encountering a god at the temple in Isis at Rome, Plotinus wrote a treatise *On the Spirit That Allotted Itself to Us*, cf. *Vit. Plot.*, 10. Presumably this work served to explain how to differentiate between higher and lower gods and daemons upon their visible manifestation. Such knowledge certainly had therapeutic and soteriological dimensions for Plotinus and his followers.
58. *Enn.*, 4.4.44.
59. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 8.
60. Particularly in his *History of Sexuality* and in his article "What is Enlightenment."
61. Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" tr. C. Porter, in Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, 32–50. Hereafter cited as *WIE* with page number in the text. See also, Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" in L.W. Beck, ed. *Kant: On History*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963). Hereafter cited as *E* with page number in the text.
62. Kant, *E*, p. 3.
63. Foucault, *WIE*, p. 34.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 41–42.
69. The literature on Kant's third critique (and his aesthetics in general) is too vast and philosophically variegated to mention in detail. Two recent studies merit attention, however. See, Ferry, *HA*, pp. 77–113 and T. Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 70–101. Hereafter cited as *IA* with page number in the text.
70. For a recent assessment of Baumgarten's aesthetics see, Ferry, *HA*, pp. 33–77.

71. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 41–227. Hereafter cited as *CJ* with page number in the text.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 41–74.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 86–89.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–98.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 175–183.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 20–39.
77. Eagleton, *IA*, 102–152; Ferry, *HA*, 114–147.
78. H.G. Gadamer, *Heidegger's Ways*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 101. Hereafter cited as *HW* with page number in the text.
79. R. Rochlitz, "The Aesthetics of Existence: Postconventional morality and the theory of power in Michel Foucault," in T.J. Armstrong (trs.), *Michel Foucault Philosopher*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 248–259. Hereafter cited as *MFP* with page number in the text.
80. Foucault, *WIE.*, p. 44.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
83. Foucault, "Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations," interview with Rabinow in *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 381–390, esp. p. 388.
84. Foucault, *WIE.*, p. 42.
85. M. Foucault, *Care of the Self*, (New York: Vintage, 1988), p. 83. Hereafter cited as *CS* with page numbers in the text.
86. Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in L. Martin, H. Gutman, P.H. Hutton (eds.), *Technologies of the Self*, (Amherst: Univ. Mass. Press, 1988), p. 18. Hereafter cited as *TS*.
87. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in H.L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 1982), p. 216. Hereafter cited as *BSH*.
88. Foucault, "Final Interview" *Raritan* no. 5, pp. 1–13.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
90. Foucault, *WIE.*, p. 43.
91. Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom" in J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen (eds.), *The Final Foucault*, (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1988), p. 4.
92. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, (New York: Vintage, 1986), p. 13. Cited hereafter as *UP*.
93. Foucault, *ES*.
94. Interview of May 29, 1984.
95. Hadot, *art. cit.*, pp. 225–231.
96. As noted by P. Hadot in "Reflections on the notion of 'the cultivation of the self'" in *MFP*, p. 230.

97. "L'Ethique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté," interview with R. Fornet-Betancourt, H. Becker, and A. Gomez-Muller (Jan. 20, 1984). Cited hereafter as *ES*.
98. S. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 33.
99. Interview of May 29, 1984 in "Les Nouvelles littéraires."
100. *Ibid.*
101. *Ibid.*
102. L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, (Mayfield, 1998), p. 49.

# Plotinus on the Origin and Place of Beauty in Thought about the World

A. Hilary Armstrong

This lecture is about the thought of Plotinus. That is, it is about the thought of one Greek philosopher, perhaps the greatest in a great tradition, the Platonist. He is perhaps the greatest because he is so original, and often differs on important points from other great teachers of the same tradition. The lecture is given by a person whose only claim to distinction is that he is a tolerably good expounder of Plotinus. It will be as well to begin by stating as clearly as possible what this means and implies.

I shall not be explaining or commending to you any sort of generalised "Platonism," still less any sort of "perennial philosophy" or "ancient wisdom." I have no sufficient historical evidence that this last exists. I do, however, recognise that there *are* important family resemblances between what all the true seekers and worshipers of that which is beyond all our thought and language, say to us, and I do not think we should depart from them, but take them and do our best with them as they come to us in one or more of many diverse forms, not, I think, without divine calling and ordering. And because of this I think that all of us are fundamentally on the same side. We seekers and worshipers have plenty of enemies, to whom we should not give aid and comfort by looking for more among ourselves. In particular I hold still more firmly than when I first thought of it to what I wrote at the end of an earlier essay on Plotinus and Beauty:

There is nothing more truly Hellenic in the philosophy of Plotinus than the way in which aesthetic and religious values, in spite of all his awareness of possibilities of conflict between them in our spiritual lives, are held firmly together in his thought about beauty. We may well be able to learn something from him here in our own age, in which an unnecessary and monstrous civil war between the defenders of different values has gravely weakened our civilisation and reduced its

capacity to resist the destructive domination of those whose only values are money and power. If we can re-Hellenise rather than de-Hellenise our thought in this respect, so that the love of beauty and the love of metaphysical truth are seen as parts of the love of God, the prospects for both religion and civilisation will be better. ["Beauty and the Discovery of Divinity in the Thought of Plotinus" in *Kephallion* (Van Gorcum, Assen, 1975) = *Plotinian and Christian Studies* XIX: p. 162.]

When I wrote this, my attention was mainly concentrated on the remarkable quarrelsomeness<sup>1</sup> of those who use the rather clumsy, prosaic conceptual and defining language of philosophers and theologians, which is only one among many human languages or ways of expression, to talk towards the unknowable source. But in a Temenos lecture it ought to be said that it applies particularly strongly, and was intended to apply, to the arrogant rationalist despising most philosophers and theologians of those who, like Plotinus, seek God also by the way of beauty. I do not think that the human intelligence is properly deployed, or that our rather inferior species is trying to move with the best in us towards our source, unless we give full equality and operative force to our other languages beside that of linear, defining and arranging reason: that is, to our languages of feeling and imagination generally expressed in the arts, and perhaps also to pure mathematics, which does not use words at all, but is also a very great human language, though somewhat difficult to classify philosophically, if that matters very much. We should do well to learn something from the Indian evaluation of reason, which is very much lower than the Greek. For the Indians what we usually call "reason" is on a level with, not superior to, our passions, desires and images, and may easily come to serve the purposes of other energies in us which, in the Greek view, it should dominate and guide. We should probably all benefit by reading a short, but very good and clear, exposition of the Indian tradition on what we usually call "reason", and what we usually call "religion". It is in a compilation by P.B. St-Hilaire of long quotations from the larger works of Sri Aurobindo.<sup>2</sup> In the case of both, Aurobindo's appreciation of the values of both reason and religion turns out to be highly positive, once their limitations are recognised. Plotinus, of course, has his own account of the divine intellect which is the source of both reason and religion, and the source of that intellect beyond our language and thought. And since

he is a Greek philosopher, he includes a good deal in his account of intellect which some of us might not wish to include and which we may or may not prefer to the Indian tradition.

I come before you as a common exegete of Plotinus, whom I think I have translated fairly well. I do not claim any authority, scholarly, philosophical, or revelatory, least of all that of any ancient or universal wisdom, which I am inclined to think does not exist. This claim to ancient wisdom, to the *Sophia Perennis*, of course is a Platonic claim, which can be traced back to the later ancient Platonists and was uncritically inherited from them by great Platonists like Ficino at the time of the Renaissance. But I do not make it because I belong to the group of scholars, who, among other things, in order to establish the true greatness of Plotinus as a Greek philosopher, set themselves to disentangle him from this revered or despised confusion of late antique wisdom, and to establish both his originality and his true and independent-minded following of the greatest classical Greek philosophers, above all of Plato. I do not, in any case, think it desirable to make claims of this sort. I have found that claims to represent an ancient, universal and traditional wisdom, which are generally historically dubious and disputable, have much the same effect as the notoriously incredible claims to a particular exclusive divine revelation made by conservative Abrahamic sects of Jews, Christians and Muslims. Nothing stimulates incredulity and indignation and touches off the ineradicable quarrelsomeness of those who are concerned with eternity so effectively as a good sweeping universal claim. I believe firmly in the eternal world and its source, and that there have been and are people who see further into it than most, and who deserve our reverence. I have spent my life studying one of them, and I think I may have known another. But even when I think that I am closest to Plotinus, I claim nothing for him except that he is a great Greek philosopher, and I do not claim for myself any understanding of the things he speaks about other than that dim awareness of the eternal and its source which he himself thought that all human beings share.

Before I begin my description of the thought of Plotinus about beauty it will be a good thing to say something about those of his writings which will be particularly helpful to those who want to understand that thought. It is always better to read Plotinus, even in translation, than to read any interpreter or expounder of his

thought. Much that is illuminating can be found in many places in his writings, but there are two treatises in particular in which he concentrates very much on that subject. The first is the early, rather too much read and translated I (1) 6 *On Beauty*. (An early treatise of Plotinus does not mean an immature or juvenile work, or one which he afterwards abandoned or on whose subject he changed or greatly developed his thought. He did not begin to write till he was nearly fifty, and all his written work was completed between about 253 A.D. and his death at the age of approximately sixty-five in 270. So all his writings are mature, and his thought in all essentials does not change or develop, though he is always revising and retouching, thinking things through again and answering objections that he or others have thought of. So he is by no means dull or repetitive). *On Beauty* is a fine treatise, but certainly should not be taken as containing all, or the finest, of the thought of Plotinus on the subject. It is absolutely necessary at least to read it closely with one of the greatest writings of Plotinus, the treatise *On The Intelligible Beauty* (V 8 (31)). This is one of the two central parts of the great work which Plotinus wrote to make clear the difference between Platonism as he understood it and the thought of some Gnostics who were frequenting his regular gatherings, and perhaps also other Oriental innovations, including mainstream Christianity. His editor Porphyry, who had his own editorial methods, broke up and rearranged this work. But it is very easy to reconstruct it from the chronological order of writing which Porphyry gives, and it should certainly be read as a continuous whole. (The order in the Ennead edition is III 8 (30), V 8 (31), V 5 (32) and II 9 (33).

The view of the universe which Plotinus gives is not simply another example of traditional wisdom. Like many ancient views of the universe he sees it as living as a whole, and whole as a living body, immensely varied and diverse in its organic unity. No one has ever written better than Plotinus about *Poikilia*, the richness of the diversity of a world which is none the less all one, held together in the unity of life. But the universe of Plotinus also has a peculiar sort of openness. There had been many suggestions in the Greek philosophical and other Mediterranean traditions that the source of the universe (often called God) is, or might be beyond and greater than anything which we could call by the best names we could think of, Intellect and Being. But as far as I can see it was Plotinus who, as the result of his long reflection on Plato and the already

centuries-old Platonic tradition<sup>3</sup> first formulated and fully expressed that this source is beyond our language and thought, over our frontiers. Therefore of course we cannot talk about it, in any language, and the best Neoplatonists all recommend silence at this point. But we all have to talk towards it, to run round and point, to make signs to awake ourselves and others to the immediate presence of that which we worship. So Plotinus has two preferred names for it, the One because he cannot find there that distinguishable difference which is the foundation of any thought and speech: and the Good, because the universe is simply its gift. All that we have and are is given without any reason or necessity except that it is good. For all Platonic good is essentially generosity. In formulating his thought (some, but not all of it traditional) about the source of the universe which is beyond our frontiers of thought and speech he created and bequeathed to all his true successors the Apophatic or negative theology. He effectively created, that is, that most disturbing way of thinking about God which shows the First, the source, to be beyond our thought and language but in some way very close to us. It was Plotinus who first brought into powerful and effective action that awareness which should, and sometimes does, trouble all our religious thinking of the source which is, for those who prefer to use the name, the God of our worship, but is never contained in or grasped by all our talk about God, by philosophers, theologians, poets or sages. If one tries to be a true follower of Plotinus, one will always be compelled to write unsuitably about the One, but will never do so without a sort of agony.

Plotinus insists that the One and Good is both infinitely absent from us, because it is nothing that even at our best we can think and talk about, and most intimately present, and present as giving everything. He says "For that One is not absent from any, and absent from all" (VI 9 (9) 4, 24-25). He also says "The Good is gentle and kindly and gracious and present to anyone when he wishes" (V 5 (32) 12, 33-35). Perhaps his thought is that the best way to become aware of that presence-in-absence is to see a light from beyond playing on the things we encounter, and to find a life in them which we are aware is given. Light and life are the signs of presence. And though they are neither Beauty nor the One it is they which make everything true and good, and therefore the whole Platonic World of Forms or Ideas, beautiful, that is delightful and

enjoyable, for Plotinus. Though for him True, Good and Beautiful are only three words for one thing, that flowering of the One into the One-Being, the World of Forms or Divine Intellect, to which we shall shortly come. But before we do, I must give a brief explanation. This is that I have never read or learnt from anyone familiar either with Plotinus or with the Platonic tradition in a broad sense that Platonic transcendence meant anything else than that which I have been trying to indicate. The source is far beyond the limitations and divisions of space and time which the eternal World of Forms itself transcends. There is nothing "vertical" about the source, literally or metaphorically. It is not in the depths any more than in the heights. It is beyond light and dark, and whatever else we may associate symbolically with light and dark. It is simply there, as much in our world of experience as anywhere else, and also absent from it because it is nothing else which we experience. I have never meant anything by "transcendence" but this absent presence. There is some reason for associating "vertical" transcendence with Plato, especially in his later years, when he saw the power of divine intellect in this world particularly manifest in the visible heavens. I have written something on this, and on Plotinus's very tempered acceptance of it, elsewhere,<sup>4</sup> in dependence on my friend Frederic Schroeder, who has recently written one of the very best books for understanding the philosophy of Plotinus.<sup>5</sup> But this is not genuine Platonic transcendence.

I should like to conclude this part of my paper, and prepare the way for the next part, by quoting one of Plotinus's own summaries, which, as usual, are considerably better than attempts by other people to sum up his thought in, inevitably, less suitable words:

All these things are the One and not the One: they are he because they come from him; they are not he, because it is in abiding by himself that he gives them. It is then like a long life stretched out at length; each part is different from that which comes next in order, but the whole is continuous with itself, but with one part differentiated from another, and the earlier does not perish in the later. (V 2 (11) 2, 24-29).

The next part of my talk will be about the universe which is itself gift of the source and in which all giving takes place. It is as parts of the universe and in the universe that we are aware of the Good as Good, that is as giving our selves and all that we have and are. There is an eternal moment in Plotinus when the One-in-Many,

so to speak, flowers upon the One in its simplicity.<sup>6</sup> This is both Divine Intellect and World of Forms or Platonic Ideas, not as two entities one contemplating the other, and one only by the one contemplating the other, but absolutely one, all awake and alive in the inseparable unity of a vast diversity. In this insistence on the unity of Forms and Intellect Plotinus is, as far as I can see, absolutely original in the Platonic tradition. With the One-Many or One-Being eternity begins: indeed it is itself eternity. And we live in eternity, though also in the timed and spaced life which begins at a lower level and we are not generally conscious of eternity: this is not of the first importance to Plotinus. For we are *Psychai*, which we inadequately translate "souls", and *Psyche* is an outgoing inhabitant of *Nous*, the One-in-many or One-Being. With the One-in-many it may seem that the main objection to descriptive and defining speech or thought has been removed, for the absolute absence of number and differentiation which makes speech or thought about the source, the One or Good, impossible, has gone. But things are not as simple as that. The unity of the One-Being is still too great for speech. In fact there is no speech or language on that level at all. Everything in that world is and possesses everything. Every part is unimpededly the whole in eternity, and the whole is every part. So it is likely to be a world of intercommunicating silences and luminous transparency.

Not only Plotinus, but all the later Neoplatonists<sup>7</sup> agreed that ordinary philosophical language, the language of discursive, deducing and defining reason, stops short of the One-Being. We must of course talk towards it with what languages we have, which meant for Platonic philosophers the language of later Greek philosophy. This of course was not the narrowly specialised and segregated language of modern philosophical prose. It had plenty of room for image and metaphor: and Plato and Plotinus, especially, cannot be boiled down to their logical arguments without losing a great deal, including everything which has given them such wide-ranging influence. But this does not mean that even Plotinus, and more still some of his successors, above all Proclus, do not push discursive reason a good deal further than on their own assumptions it ought to go, and often seem to be in serious danger of giving a systematic description of the eternal. Plotinus, however, strongly prefers non-discursive, imaged language in speaking of it. This is

apparent in his famous chapter on Egyptian hieroglyphics (V 8 (31), 6). And he says, among a good deal else in V 8 (31):

One must not then suppose that the gods or the 'exceedingly blessed spectators' in the higher world contemplate propositions, but all the Forms we speak about are beautiful images in that world, of the kind which someone imagined to exist in the soul of the wise man, images not painted but real. (V 8 (31).5. 20-24).

Plotinus seems to have had a particular dislike of people who saw the Platonic World of Forms as a system of abstract propositions. But in a later chapter of the same work he takes vigorous issue with Platonists who took those images too literally, as entities contemplated externally. None of our languages, discursive or non-discursive, can do justice to the contained inward unity-in-diversity of the eternal One-Many (V 5 (32) 1). We must do the best we can with what we have. But the inadequacy of all human languages, of poetry or painting or music as well as that of philosophy, must always be remembered when reading Plotinus, though it is very easy to forget it, and even Plotinus does so sometimes. There are a few who see clearly, like Plotinus himself at times, that beauty of truth and goodness which is all reality and of which the world of our everyday experience, in which our thoughts and languages are based, is an image, inadequate to the reality which exceeds us, but the best and only one we have: and our little function, in the little part of our immensely diverse world which we temporarily inhabit, is to help to make it as good an image as possible, a holy Icon carrying to us something of the light and life which begins in the One and flowers in the One-Many.

The One-Many, which is at once the Platonic World of Forms and the Divine Mind, is all the original reality there is, deriving from and receiving the eternal gift of the One. It is the teaching of Plotinus that the One-Many in its eternal existence spontaneously and immediately generates an image. This is a natural image, like a shadow or reflection, not a contrived and planned self-portrait. It is necessarily inferior to its archetype, but is what we here and now have to deal with, and it is our duty and our pleasure to, in our small and limited activities, carry the Good, which is also Truth and Beauty, to the furthest limit which is possible in it, and to wake up as many people as possible to some gleam of its light.

This we do, if we wake up to what we are, as individual *Psychai*, parts and also, as always in Plotinus with immaterial or spiritual beings, the whole, if we realise it, of the great universal *Psyche* which is, as I have said, the outgoing inhabitant of the One-Many which forms, orders and in the greatest of its parts, the World-Soul, animates our image-world. It is important in reading Plotinus to understand that he never felt quite comfortable with the sharp distinction between *Psyche* and *Nous*, the Divine Mind, which he, like all later Platonists, accepted. This distinction comes from Aristotle rather than Plato.<sup>4</sup> Plotinus often speaks of *Psyche* in a perfectly correct and conventional way as the third level in his hierarchy of One, *Nous* and *Psyche*. But he overcomes any tendency to overmuch distinction and consequent disjunction by his characteristic move of self-transcendence. When a *Psyche* is above its hierarchical level and is truly an inhabitant of the One-Many, while not ceasing to be *Psyche*, it is most truly itself. Further, the outgoing of *Psyche* to the image-world makes it share in an unique sense in the generosity of the Good, which is the driving-force of the whole thought of Plotinus. Without *Psyche* the One-Many, the One-Being, would perhaps seem a little too inturned, a little self-complacent in the contemplation of its beauty from which all else springs. But it is the function of *Psyche*, and of ourselves as individual *Psyche*, to carry the light coming from the Good which makes beautiful the truth and goodness of the One-Many to the utmost limits of possibility in the image-world, to everywhere where any gleam of truth, goodness and beauty may be latent and made more apparent.

We should remember at this point that true Platonic transcendence does not mean that the Good and the World of Forms are abstract or remote. They are immediately present, here and now, in the image-world in which the outgoing *Psyche* operates as being and not being the Good giving itself to the limit. They are no more "in the heights" than "in the depths," though experiences which we shall naturally image as experiences of height or depth will play their part in waking us up to an awareness of their presence. It is the constant conviction of Plotinus that very few will become fully awake and aware. Most of us will remain pretty somnolent, embedded in our illusions of success and exploitation in the image-world. But by hearing, reading, seeing or even in very rare cases meeting someone who has fully woken up, some gleams of their



light may remain with us and be transmissible. And even a dim awareness may impose an obligation.

All Platonists concentrate their attention on the moral Forms, the Forms which guide and dictate morally good action in this world. And no study of Plotinus or of the later Neoplatonists should lead to a sectarian narrowing of the sphere of moral action. The Forms are active in dark as well as light, in shadow as well as in often complacent illumination, and we must each of us find our own way to right action and not waste time quarreling with those who find other ways. Moral Forms are not moral rules. Perhaps the ideal human being for Plotinus is one in whom the moral Forms are so alive, and he is so awake to them, that he always does simply what is right regardless of the consequences. This is not exactly a recipe for success in the modern world. People who follow it are very rare, and likely to die poor and with a reputation for nothing but oddity. But their neighbours may go on praying at their graves long after they are dead.

Perhaps those who are concerned, like *Temenos*, with the place of the imagination and the honour which it ought to receive, and does not, in our world, should give some thought to the conviction of Plotinus that to make people genuinely aware of Beauty is to make them aware of the immediate presence of the whole World of Forms. Truth, Beauty and Goodness are three names for one unity which is made effectively beautiful, that is, lovable, by the light and life which come to it from the Good. We need to overcome the false distinctions between the love of truth, the love of moral goodness, and the love of beauty, which have so confused the modern world. In particular we need to overcome the strange belief that goodness is not beautiful. I am afraid some Christians are largely responsible for this. They seem to have little love for truth outside their own narrow limits, and they almost seem anxious to associate ugliness, or at any rate dullness, with moral goodness.

The function of the arts in the image-world according to Plotinus is evocatory or incantatory. It is to bring to as many as possible an awareness of the World of Forms by using those very powerful images which they command. They can do this excellently, he says, not only by enhancing the beauties of nature but sometimes by improving on them in their own works, for artists of all sorts have direct access to the one world from which the images of nature come (V 8 (31), 1: see my note in Loeb V pp.

240-1 on the difference from Plato). Each of those who practice any art must find their own way of doing this, according to their means of expression. But if they succeed in making people more aware of the World of Forms and its source, the Good, by any imaginative means; and if they succeed in waking people, even a little, to the presence of the light from beyond our frontiers; they will be successful in a Plotinian sense, even if they are not very fashionable, and so successful in terms of money and temporary influence, in the modern environment.

I should make it clear that this waking of people to awareness of the light is not at all a "religious" activity in our modern understanding of religion. But to Plotinus it was the supreme religious activity. The world of Plotinus, including his immediate circle, was permeated by religion. Everyone practiced the traditional holy rites, directed to the divine and its source, who felt any sort of need of them. Plotinus did not. But his closest collaborator in the circle, Amelius, did. And it would be a mistake to see him, because he followed his personal vocation, as any sort of post-Christian anti-clerical or anti-religious person. The Neoplatonists after him were often very externally devout pagans for some three centuries; and both during and after that period have generally been sufficiently externally devout Christians and Jews, and, later, Muslims. I am afraid that it is the Christians who must take the main responsibility for the change in the attitude to religion between the age of Plotinus and our own. It is the enthusiastic imposition on us by the Roman Emperors and their successor governments of one form or another of an intolerant Abrahamic exclusive monotheism which has at last brought largely justified revolt and led most people to see "religion" as a dull, ugly, quarrelsome sub-department of life rather than the waking to the love of Beauty and its source, which can demand greater sacrifices than the fashionable cult of money and success.

I hope this lecture has shown that a good way of discovering what is still living in ancient tradition is the close study of one of the greatest of Greek philosophers, even going at times into the "minute particulars" of his thought. Plotinus would have claimed to be a philosopher (which I do not), but he would have made no other claims, though he would have accepted an obligation to communicate what was awake and alive in him to all who cared to attend. And, because he spoke and wrote as a philosopher, he knew

that he was communicating into a conversation. Perhaps the insistence of the Platonist philosophers that their language, though inadequate, was the best that could be used for speaking about reality and its source was due to this sense of continuing conversation. There had been going on, at least since Socrates, a continuous, at its best courteous, conversation between equals, which one must enter if one is to speak as a philosopher. This conversation is not limited to one specialized sort of language, but must broaden and adapt itself according to the demands of the subject. It had its roots in Socrates's deep diffidence about all human knowledge, especially of the divine. It had always been critical, and, when it was good philosophical conversation, self-critical. And a Platonist will be inclined to think that as the conversation continues it will become more and more healthily sceptical, in the ancient sense which does not deny the existence of anything, but is very doubtful about the certainty of our knowledge of anything. As the conversation goes on, those who take part will increasingly question not only themselves but their authorities and assumptions. There will be no accepted reserved areas, neither revelations nor poetry nor the utterances of saints and sages. There is nothing and nobody with which it is not permissible to disagree.

A Platonist will also remember that it was Plato's own school, the Academy, which first formulated, and was for a couple of centuries dominated by, the most flexible and perhaps the most lastingly influential form of ancient scepticism, the Academic. It is not impossible, though it is not likely that there will ever by any completely convincing evidence, that the thought of Plotinus about Beauty and its source was, at its most radical, influenced by Academic thought. If so, this discussion may have been useful because it links Plotinus with his claimed beginning, with that Platonic portrait of Socrates which makes him for all Platonists the archetypal image of a philosopher who did not claim to know too much about the Good.

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## NOTES

1. Largely originated in the West by the Greek philosophers. See A.H. Armstrong "On Not Knowing Too Much About God" in *Philosophy Supplement* 25 (Cambridge 1989), pp. 129-145; =Hellenic and Christian Studies XV.
2. *The Future Evolution of Man* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, India, 1962: pp. 35-47).
3. The date of Plotinus is 205-270 A.D.
4. *Psyche, Ourselves, World-Soul and Gaia in Plotinus*, to appear in *Sphinx* 5.
5. *Form and Transformation: A study in the philosophy of Plotinus*. McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 1992.
6. As Plotinus may himself have said. H.-R. Schwyzer, one of the very greatest of Plotinian scholars, thinks he did, but I and others are hesitant to accept the reading he prefers. See my note to Plotinus V 3 (49) 11, 2 in Plotinus V (Loeb Classical Library, 1984) pp. 108-109 and W. Beierwaltes, *Selbsterkenntnis und Erfahrung der Einheit* (Klostermann, Frankfurt 1991) pp. 212-215, a fine discussion of this very difficult textual question. I am now much more strongly inclined to accept Schwyzer's preferred reading (not an emendation).
7. See A.H. Armstrong "The Negative Theology of *Nous* in Later Neoplatonism" in *Platonismus Und Christentum* (Aschendorff, Münster, 1983) pp. 31-37. =Hellenic and Christian Studies III.
8. A. H. Armstrong, "Aristotle in Plotinus: The Continuity and Discontinuity of *Psyche* and *Nous*, in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume 91 (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1991) pp. 117-127.

# **Does Modern Art Reflect Plotinus' Notion of Beauty?**

**Aphrodite Alexandrakis**

Through the ages, art has taken on many different forms as civilizations have attempted to represent and accommodate their particular cultures through specific art styles. These styles range from those of prehistoric art to those of the twentieth century. In reviewing this variety of styles and the media that these styles encompass, one cannot escape an analysis of beauty and its relationship to this wide range of styles. The question of beauty, of course, is a question that has occupied philosophers' thought since Pythagoras' time.

Twentieth century art, particularly art of the 1980s and 1990s in all its forms, has been criticized by the public and by professionals for its abstract nature and its abandonment of meaning, symbolism, and even a representative style. Modern art has also been criticized for neglecting society's values, emotions, and general needs. This criticism, however, is nothing new: the public has complained about art for ages. During the high classical period, for example, Pheidias' sculpture of Athena Parthenos was criticized by the Athenian public, and Plato accused Zeuxis for painting too realistically.

Ancient art, and the art of the past in general, was traditionally evaluated on the basis of the correct placement of each element within the composition. This placement results in a lively, "correct," realistic representation, with the addition, occasionally, of symbolism. The art work is seen as being composed of certain consciously employed elements, such as lines, shapes, and colors. These elements are distributed in a symmetric and rhythmical fashion which results in the unity of the whole, i.e., beauty. This unified whole with its interrelated parts reflects harmony and rhythm, and its end-product is a harmonious whole.

Both Plato and Aristotle conceived of these elements as being most important in works of art. It is widely held that Plotinus

disagreed with this. I believe that the notion of beauty in some twentieth century art works is similar to Plotinus' notion of beauty. On the one hand, the simple, abstract form of modern art's style conforms to Plotinus' refutation of symmetry as the cause of beauty. On the other hand, due to the non-uniformity of the styles and media used in modern art, it can be argued that some modern art works, including modern music, reflect Plotinus' notion of beauty as the representation of Idea.

The main purpose of this paper is to discuss the plausibility of a link between Plotinus' notion of beauty and the twentieth century artistic conception of beauty. First, I will briefly discuss the Platonic formal elements in order to distinguish between Plato's and Plotinus' positions on this issue. Second, I will compare Plotinus' notion of beauty and the role of the formal elements to Plato's thesis. Next, I will discuss Plotinus' theory of symmetry in connection with the formal elements of beauty in order to bring attention to some problems involved in the theory. Finally, I will apply Plotinus' notion of beauty understood as the representation of the Idea through physical matter, to specific modern works of art.

In defense of the formal elements' contribution to beauty, Plato stated:

The principle of goodness has reduced itself to the law of beauty. For measure and proportion, always pass into beauty and excellence. For when I say beauty of form...I mean...the straight line and the circle and the plane and solid figures formed from these by turning lathes and rulers and patterns of angles...<sup>2</sup>

Even though Plato criticized the arts, he held that the beauty of art depends on, and is found in the formal elements: the σχῆμα or περιγραφή.<sup>3</sup> He emphasized the beauty of pure form or σχῆμα. But pure form consists of several formal elements such as symmetry, order and harmony (*Laws* 669). Socrates repeatedly emphasized the importance of the formal elements by saying that:

...Any compound, whatever it be, that does not by some means or other exhibit measure and proportion, is the ruin both of its ingredients and, first and foremost, of itself...for the qualities of measure and proportion invariably,...constitute beauty and excellence.<sup>4</sup>

Plato's admiration of, and belief in, the formal elements' essential role in beauty is highlighted in several of his other books. First, you perceive the formal elements, then you come to love them, and then you recognize beauty because you have become capable of reasoning. When Plato refers to music education (*Rep.* 401c), he again emphasizes the important role that the formal elements play in a work of art. True beauty springs out of harmony, rhythm, and melody. Rhythm is the result of the symmetric repetition of the elements within the composition (in music, painting, drama, or sculpture). The same is true for melody, and the other formal elements. They are not simple, single entities as Plotinus thought them to be. In contrast to Plato, Hegel reminds us that the Plotinian position was that:

...the beauty of art is the beauty that is born-born again, that is-of the mind...for such a fancy must at least be characterized by intellectual being and by freedom.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, Plotinus held that beauty is found in, and springs out of the soul. But for him this is a process of learning. We discover beauty when we learn how to look within ourselves since this is where beauty and the spiritual world lie.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Plotinus claims that the artist creates by having access to, and being in contact with the intelligible world. The artist should not copy the sensible world because then he would simply be reproducing another image. "The true function of art is 'heuristic'; through the work of art we discover, or 'invent,' the eternal model, the idea of which sensible reality is a mere image." Art ought to relate to the eternal models of the intelligible realm which preexist human cognition. What art ought to do is "invent" a way to represent the eternal model. The true artist must therefore imitate the Idea, not the sensible world. During the creative process of imitating the Idea, he searches for and discovers himself, his soul, his spiritual nature. It is in his soul where beauty resides, and when he discovers his soul he gets to know both himself and beauty. Accordingly, he advises us to:

Go back into yourself and look; and if you do not see yourself beautiful, then, just as someone making a statue which has to be beautiful cuts away here and polishes there and makes one part smooth and clears another till he has given his statue a beautiful face, so you too must cut away excess and straighten the crooked and clear the dark

and make it bright, and never stop 'working on your statue' till the divine glory of virtue shines out on you, till you see 'self-mastery enthroned upon its holy seat.'<sup>8</sup>

During this process, which is a process of purification, the self has abandoned everything that is of a sensible nature. The self is found on a purely spiritual level, for it has ascended to the first principles. This is what happens during the authentic artistic process. The Plotinian artist, while in contemplation, "perceives" what beauty is, when he has rendered his own soul beautiful, and discovers the beauty within himself. When this happens, he has reached the know-thyself stage, and is ready to embody, to give form (*εἶδος*) to the Idea. In other words, through the artistic process the artist attempts to transform his medium into his contemplated vision. The Idea comes from the nous (*νοῦς*) and when he is finished, both the artist and his creation become one and his soul sees the divine light. This means that during the artistic process, the artist also becomes one with an eternal Idea or a vision of the divine. Consequently, the notion of art for Plotinus, is not merely "making something" (e.g. a statue), but as inherently purifying and pedagogical.<sup>9</sup> The sensible world for Plotinus is therefore not distant and irrelevant to the artist's creation. It is actually the sensible world that reminds him of the existing spiritual world within himself. Plotinus explains:

For how could there be a musician who sees the melody in the intelligible world and will not be stirred when he hears the melody in sensible sounds? Or how could there be anyone in geometry and numbers who will not be pleased when he sees right relation, proportion and order with his eyes?<sup>10</sup>

The artist's vision goes beyond the appearance of sensible things to discover their form. What he creates is the result of his contemplation of the idea, the form for:

...What is the source of the beauty of Aphrodite herself, or of any other beautiful human being or of any god of those who appear visibly...Is not this beauty everywhere form, which comes from the maker upon that which he has brought into being...<sup>11</sup>

Plotinus points out that in order for the artist to reach a position of reflecting upon the idea and to concentrate and go deep down to

search within himself, he must first understand the distinction between the physical universe and everything that it includes. Then, he must concentrate to imagine the massless, sizeless spiritual world. As was his standard practice, Plotinus here develops a step-by-step process, or dialectic, which the artist experiences in order to be able to create. Thus, beauty and art come from *nous*. Art is an expression of beauty from within. The form is in the artist's mind (*Ennead* V.8.1), and through his medium (matter) he gives a physical form to the image of his vision. He says:

The stone which has been brought to beauty of form by art will appear beautiful not because it is a stone-for then the other would be just as beautiful-but as a result of the form which art has put into it. Now the material did not have this form, but it was in the man who had it in his mind even before it came into the stone; but it was in the craftsman, not in so far as he had hands and eyes, but because he had some share of art.<sup>12</sup>

Plotinus' statement corresponds to many of the presuppositions of twentieth century art. Art is conceived in our time as the embodiment of the artist's inner idea, that is, the artist's inner expression of a special "feeling" whose source is the recognition of the eternal principles. Art is consequently a mimesis, an imitation of the idea in *nous* through use of a material medium. It is indeed the idea and the process that takes place in the artist's mind (*νοῦς*) that is important today in artistic creation since most of today's art works are not commissioned as was the case in the past. This means that representation and the sensual world are not important to the artist. The artist is not just copying another sensual image. Modern paintings such as those of Rothko or Newman for example, may illustrate the Plotinian notion of art.<sup>13</sup> These paintings were created as a result of the artist's having "some share of art" (*Ennead* V.8.1), that is the artist's inner idea. The *εἶδος* (form) here is externalized through the simple appearance of colors. Additionally, the fact that the painted surface does not consist of any formal elements yielding a symmetric whole is also Plotinian. The painted canvas is the embodied imitation of the idea found in the artist's mind in an abstract style. His abstract style is an ordered and intellectually controlled abstraction. Rothko's paintings show the Plotinian perception of art's internal meanings. His works are bare and inert

with an audacious emptiness. However, what we sense is his idea of emptiness that is expressed in an internalized sensation of a dominant color. The colors that Rothko uses dematerialize the art object and result in an atmospheric and illusionist abstraction with an ambiguous spatial depth. The non-symmetric whole of the composition is another factor in this style of paintings that is compatible with Plotinus' theory. What is important is the imitation of the idea found in the artist's mind. In fact, from the Plotinian point of view this is so important that if Plotinus were asked whether the natural rainbow is more beautiful than a painted one, his answer would be that the painted rainbow is more beautiful because "...the arts do not simply imitate what they see, but they run back up to the forming principles from which nature derives."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the source of artistic beauty is nous (νοῦς) for, as he says "The rational principle in soul is more beautiful than that in nature."<sup>15</sup>

At this point, a distinction should be made between a) beauty as form and as the cause or source of all beauty in art, and b) the beauty which may be attributed to art works in so far as they are images of form(s). Consequently, while modern art may appear merely expressive of a feeling to casual observers through a particular abstract patch of color, there truly are cognitive and intelligently controlled mental processes at work in the artist's mind which he is using to convey or represent a certain style (for example, cubistic, expressionistic, etc.). Thus, the style of the art work is not the determiner of its aesthetic value or purpose (i.e. beauty), but the intelligible process or "form", the idea, of which it is a representation or image.

As shown, Plotinus refers to and emphasizes the notion of beauty as form (εἶδος),<sup>16</sup> having no parts. But what is form? Does not form suggest structure, that is, order? Plotinus thinks of form as an Idea whose notion is abstract, having no structure, no order. But if we think of the beauty (or form, εἶδος) of Aphrodite, as Plotinus mentions in *Ennead* V.8.2, then we may question whether that type of form suggests structure or order. Even an abstract idea is perceived as having a certain structure, because without a structure it would not have a particular form in one's mind as an idea. How can one refer to beauty without thinking of what constitutes it? How can we think of beauty without detecting within its form a certain order or structure? How can a structureless idea

exist, and how can such an idea be rational? Rationality consists of order and structure. Plotinus, naturally, was aware of all these difficulties. For him, an idea does not itself "have" a certain structure, but it *suggests* structure or order in the sense that an idea implies that an *image* of it will be structured in a certain way. The reason Plotinus refers to form or beauty as an abstract entity is because of his theory of symmetry.<sup>17</sup> Beauty, for him, is not caused by symmetry. Symmetry is the effect of beauty. He distinguishes form (the whole) from symmetry. Symmetry consists of, and presupposes parts; therefore it is a composite entity. Normally, we understand symmetry as suggesting the beauty of the whole, whose parts may not necessarily be beautiful themselves. Plotinus does not accept this. He thinks that if the whole is beautiful it cannot be composed of ugly parts (*Ennead* I.6.1), and that "Beauty in an aggregate demands beauty in details..."<sup>18</sup> As Professor Anton has shown, Plotinus is convinced that there exist objects that are simple, single, non-composite and beautiful by themselves. This, of course, is in accordance with Plotinus' metaphysical theory of the One as being a single, non-composite entity, the "beauty beyond beauty" (κάλλος ὑπὲρ κάλλος), and therefore without parts. However, when Plotinus applies the terms simple and single to physical objects in order to determine the nature of their beauty, various problems arise. For one may ask: Are the objects Plotinus refers to simple and single? Let us examine this question for a moment.

In offering these types of examples, Plotinus refers to beautiful single and simple things such as the light of the sun, the stars, beautiful colors, a single sound, and even a block of gold. Each of Plotinus' examples fits very well with today's modern conception of art. The light of the sun is used today by artists in various contexts as being a simple unit of beauty. A gold metal block could potentially be used as a work of art all by itself. This is the result of the Plotinian conception of art and beauty which, as pointed out, is in agreement with much of modern art's spirit. While, as we saw, there is a correspondence between the Plotinian idea of art and twentieth century art works, there is a problem with Plotinus' theory in the above examples. Plotinus holds that entities such as lightning, sunlight, and gold are simple and single. The question is, in what respect are these entities simple and single? Physics has shown that these are complex physical entities that are physically

analyzable. Stars, colors, lightning, sunlight, and gold are all composite entities. A star consists of parts such as electrons and quarks. The star's beauty as we see it from the earth at night depends on the number of electrons and quarks that it contains. Even though these parts cannot be seen nor detected by the naked eye, they are arranged in a specific order. The star is therefore neither a simple nor a single entity. Additionally, it has order and symmetry in its parts. It is the combination of all these elements that reflect the star's beauty as we see it from the earth. Moreover, Plotinus' claim that the parts of a beautiful whole must be beautiful does not hold here, for protons and quarks by themselves are not beautiful in any sense.

To pursue the matter further, let us consider another of Plotinus' examples as being simple and single: the effect of lightning. The effect of lightning in the sky is not the result of a single or simple entity, nor is sunlight. The beautiful blue color of the sky is due to the interaction of the atmosphere's particles with the blue waves of the white light. The blue waves are scattered more than any other color of the spectrum, thus giving the sky's blue color. The same happens during sunset when we see the red color in the sky. While the particles in the atmosphere are occupied with the deflection of the light, the color waves that are free and dominate the atmosphere during sunset are the red color waves, which cause us to see the red color in the sky.

Similarly, Plotinus' example of gold as being a simple and single entity does not help his argument either. Gold consists of an orderly, structured composition of electrons. Contrary to what Plotinus says, if a piece of golden jewelry is compared to a plain piece of gold metal, the latter's beauty will be of a higher degree than the former's. This is because in the case of the jewelry, there is an additional orderly structure and proportion. This kind of structure results in symmetry, and symmetry, contrary to Plotinus' theory, is the cause of its beauty and not vice versa. It becomes obvious that all the entities to which Plotinus refers in giving his own definition of beauty by trying to follow his metaphysical system, are neither simple nor single. Plotinus was not aware, of course, of the scientific structure of all these entities and therefore the assumptions on the basis of which he forms his theory of symmetry, are not concrete. While he rejects the idea of beauty caused by symmetry, he holds instead, that symmetry is the effect

of beauty. But as shown, even in a "simple" entity such as a piece of gold, there has to exist some order, balance of the elements that constitute the gold in order for the end-product (effect) to be beautiful.

On the one hand, Plotinus holds that the artistic form is a single idea, having no parts: it is beauty as such, and does not depend on symmetry. On the other hand, he begins *Ennead* I.6. by stating that beauty is visual, but he addresses himself to hearing as well, which refers to the beauty found in the melody and rhythms of music. He seems to equate his conception of beauty as being single and simple to melody and rhythm as being simple entities themselves therefore having no parts. But are the concepts of melody and rhythm really single and simple? But is this really correct? It is interesting to note that even though Plotinus criticizes symmetry, in *Ennead* II.9.16, 39-44<sup>19</sup>, he praises melody, proportion, and order. But as shown, these are composite, complex elements of a symmetric structure. This quotation is in one sense Platonic, and in another sense, Plotinian. It is Platonic for he praises the formal elements of relations, melody, and proportion. Its Plotinian nature is found in the appreciation of the sensible sounds that reflect the human element, namely emotions. It does, however, sound contrary to Plotinus' own theory of symmetry's refutation. It seems that although Plotinus rejects symmetry as being the cause of beauty and therefore at times ignores the formal elements, on the other hand whenever he thinks it necessary, as in this case, he praises proportion and order as reflecting beauty.

Plotinus knew that as far as music is concerned, it would be impossible to disregard the essential role of the formal elements in its structure. His conception of the formal elements in music is therefore close to Edward Hanslick's twentieth century theory of music. According to Hanslick, in music we contemplate the sounds and the forms created by their movement, namely, the melody, the harmony, the rhythm, and the instrumentation. In addition, Hanslick, in a Plotinian fashion refers to these elements as being in the composer's mind, which is equivalent to the Plotinian inner idea. But is the idea in the artist's mind simple and single as Plotinus claims, and what does this mean? Hanslick points out that music is made of a "system of tones, with their latent possibilities for melodic, harmonic, rhythmic variety." By tones he means "the degree of the major and minor scales, with all their intervals and

relationships..."<sup>20</sup> All these are in the artist's mind, according to Hanslick. This idea is compatible with Plotinus' theory that the artistic work is the product of the idea in the artist's mind. But is the idea simple and single as Plotinus says? Apparently not. Suppose an artist has the idea (or form) of rain in his mind, and on the basis of this idea creates some object that is artistic. In what respect is the form, or idea, of rain simple? The idea of rain cannot be regarded as being a simple idea. It is composed of a form without which it would not have been an idea, and as shown, a form has structure.

When the artist embodies his idea in a work of art, a musical piece for example, if it has been created successfully, then it will be beautiful, that is, it will have beautiful melody for a good reason. The reason is that there exists an organization of sound, and a rhythmic structure of the composition. These are the formal patterns of music. In listening to a piece of music, we derive satisfaction from following and anticipating the movement of the sounds from the formal pattern of music. All these, however, not only involve the concept of symmetry, but also suggest that Plotinus' thesis that symmetry is only the result of beauty is incorrect. It seems to me that the opposite is true. Beauty is the result of symmetry. But since Plotinus is against this idea, it sounds odd for him to ask: "how could there be any one skilled in geometry and numbers who will not be pleased when he sees right relation, proportion and order with his eyes?" It is the right relation, proportion and order that constitute symmetry, and this reflects beauty which in turn, causes the special pleasure we feel.

To conclude, let us go back to the central question of this paper. Is there a link between Plotinus' notion of beauty and the twentieth century conception of beauty in art? Plotinus' notion of beauty as an idea in the artist's mind and void of symmetry, corresponds to the works of a large number of twentieth century artists, one of which is Rothko. The reason for this is that Rothko's compositions do not depend on the effect of the proper combination of the formal elements, so symmetry does not result in beauty. (Perhaps this is why viewers disagree on whether these works are beautiful.) The art work is the result of an idea in the artist's mind (*nous*), and is externalized without imitating the sensual world. Only the idea (in *nous*) is important, not the subject matter. In both, Plotinian and contemporary art, there must always be some sort of relation that is

controlled by the artist, no matter how "merely abstract" or "expressive" the object might seem to the casual viewer.

A relevant twentieth century example is the late J. Cage's musical compositions. The subject matter of his compositions could be construed on the basis of examples such as the abstract noise of rain, the idea in the artist's mind. On the other hand, when the work of art is a musical composition, it is almost impossible to apply an idea without structure. As John Cage said: "Electronic musical instruments will be to provide complete control of the overtone structure of tones (as opposed to noises) and to make these tones available in any frequency, amplitude, and duration."<sup>21</sup> A musical composition has to have "an organization of sound in order for the rhythmic structure of a composition to succeed." Organization of sound is achieved "through the principle of organization or man's common ability to think."<sup>22</sup> What is important is the perception of art's internal meanings, the intellectually controlled abstraction. At the same time, in order for an object to reflect beauty, it has to consist of the formal elements, such as harmony, rhythm, and symmetry, which constitute the art-work's internal meaning.

Finally, perhaps the question of whether artworks must have some structure or order and whether beauty exists only in "simple units" might be finally resolved by developing the notion that Plotinus' theory does eliminate any implication that there are, right versus wrong or proper versus improper relations, proportions, etc., in beautiful things, or in the way in which an artist must create an aesthetic image in order for it to be beautiful. Aesthetics, in other words, is an exploration of the various ways in which artists in fact choose to construct images of (eternal) ideas in the context of a given culture or historical period. For, the "inner meaning" of artists' work (or their inner discursive processes while creating their art) is always what is most properly the datum for analyzing the conception or purpose of art, rather than the material artifacts in which they concretize that conception or purpose at a given time or in a given culture.

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## NOTES

1. *Gorgias* 453c.
2. *Philebus* 51c.
3. *Republic* 401d-402a.
4. *Philebus* 64e.
5. W. G. Hegel, *On Art, Religion, Philosophy* (Ed. By J. Glenn Gray), p. 23.
6. P. Hadot, *Plotinus On the Simplicity of Vision*, (The University of Chicago Press), p. 35.
7. *Ibid.* p. 20.
8. *Ennead* I.6.9. Note that the term art had a broader reference in Greek thought than just to what today is considered the "fine arts", e.g., music, painting, sculpture. The translation used in this work is by A.H. Armstrong, in the Loeb Classical Library edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1966).
9. This, of course, reminds us of Aristotle's notion of catharsis.
10. *Ennead* II.9.16.
11. *Ennead* V.8.2.
12. *Ennead* V.8.1.
13. Sam Hunter & John Jacobus, *American Art of the 20th Century* (Prentice Hall 1973).
14. *Ennead* V.8.1.
15. *Ennead* V.8.3.
16. It is worth noticing that Plotinus often names beauty καλλος and not καλον.
17. See: John Anton, "Plotinus' Refutation of Beauty as Symmetry," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* XXIII, 1964.
18. *Ennead* I.6.1 Plotinus' position is justified for he tries to reject plurality as preceding unity, because this interferes with his theory of the One.
19. See quote #10.
20. G. Dickie, R. Sclafani, & R. Robin, *Aesthetics*. (St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 593.
21. P.H. Werhane, *Philosophical Issues in Art*. (Prentice Hall, Inc., 1984), p. 138.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

## Neoplatonism: Unity and Plurality in the Arts

L. E. Goodman

Unity is the heart of beauty in Neoplatonism. As Plotinus writes at the outset of his essay on the subject:

Nearly everyone says that it is good proportion of the parts to each other and to the whole, with the addition of good colour, which produces visible beauty, and that with the objects of sight and generally with everything else, being beautiful is being well-proportioned and measured. On this theory nothing single and simple but only a composite thing will have any beauty. It will be the whole which is beautiful, and the parts will not have the property of beauty by themselves, but will contribute to the beauty of the whole. But if the whole is beautiful the parts must be beautiful too; a beautiful whole can certainly not be composed of ugly parts; all the parts must have beauty. For these people, too, beautiful colours and the light of the sun as well, since they are simple and do not derive their beauty from good proportion, will be excluded from beauty. And how do they think gold manages to be beautiful? And what makes lightning in the night and stars beautiful to see? And in sounds in the same way the simple will be banished, though often in a composition which is beautiful as a whole each separate sound is beautiful. And when, though the same good proportion is there all the time, the same face sometimes appears beautiful and sometimes does not, surely we must say that being beautiful is something else over and above good proportion, and good proportion is beautiful because of something else? But if when these people pass on to ways of life and beautiful expressions of thought they allege good proportion as the cause of beauty in these too, what can be meant by good proportion in beautiful ways of life or laws or studies or branches of knowledge?.... Every sort of virtue is a beauty of the soul, a truer beauty than those we mentioned first; but how is virtue well proportioned? Not like magnitudes or number.... And what will beauty of the intellect, alone and in itself be? (*Enneads* I 6.1, after Armstrong).

The classicizing theory that Plotinus here finds so wrongheaded is the same that the youthful Augustine wrote of in his lost first book, *De Pulchro et Apto*,<sup>1</sup> and that the Bishop of Hippo was later both to reject and to recast, when he argued that ugliness can and seemingly must be part of a beautiful and perfect whole, but that nothing is evil in itself. For what is hurtful to our frail natures is admirable in its place, excellent from its own standpoint, and beneficial even to us when wisely and moderately applied—since beauty “is not constituted by bulk, but by proportion and arrangement of the members.”<sup>2</sup>

The rejected theory is also Cicero's, mentioned in his larger schematization of values (*axia*) in *De Officiis*, under the rubric of seemliness or *decorum*.<sup>3</sup> This virtue of appropriateness, the great orator says, is what poets aspire to. Cicero even adumbrates Augustine's aesthetic theodicy by arguing that words which are ugly or monstrous out of context provoke a burst of applause in the theater when they are fitting to the role and character of the speaker in a drama, and appropriate to its action.<sup>4</sup> The point is not of exclusively aesthetic interest. For seemliness and good character are inseparable from one another for Cicero. And moral beauty—a topic cherished by Plotinus as well—for Cicero involves active, and indeed creative appropriation of the roles life assigns us.<sup>5</sup>

But what Plotinus is pointing toward, through his references to the rich color of gold, is the perfect simplicity of the One, the source of all beauty. For the One must itself be beautiful if it is to draw us toward its perfection. It transcends being, but not unity, or goodness, or beauty, which are the marks, or indeed, the themes of being. Unitive experience will be mystical experience, rapt attention to the unity of the One. Or rather, absorption in its unity, the *fanā'* or dying unto self of Sufism, the kiss of God, as Jewish mystics call it. But that kiss comes in death.<sup>6</sup>

No wonder the lively Saadia Gaon (882-942) is not too impatient to enjoy it and omits it from his survey of the goals of human activity.<sup>7</sup> Unity, he argues, is for God; multiplicity for us, His creatures.<sup>8</sup> Avicenna goes further, unwilling to give up individual identity even in death.<sup>9</sup> In this he is followed by Ibn Bājjah,<sup>10</sup> Ibn Tufayl,<sup>11</sup> and Maimonides.<sup>12</sup> All of these Andalusian thinkers accommodate the Platonizing monopsychism of their eschatology to the preservation of individual identity. They achieve this synthesis through reliance on the Plotinian notion that ideas are

eternal as a one/many (thus preserving the individual soul as a one within the unity of the many), and through reliance on the Philoponian idea of self-consciousness<sup>13</sup> (letting the privacy of thought rather than the extendedness of matter serve as the principle of psychic individuation). Their strategy allows even disembodied and immortal souls to retain their identities and thus to enjoy God's kiss. Even Spinoza avails himself of the same strategy, when he rejects the notion that his monism—or rather, the indivisibility of the divine—entails the non-existence or indistinctness of the modes. In each of the Andalusian philosophers the Avicennan strategy is welcomed by a sensibility that balks at the absoluteness of unity—both because of a distaste for the reductive connotations of pantheism and because immortality itself seems not worth the candle if *baqā'*, perdurance, is attained only through the gateway of *fanā'*, annihilation.

Plotinus' quest for simple beauty is rhetorically supported by his argument that a plain face has symmetry and proportion but may lack beauty—perhaps if it lacks piquancy, or liveliness, or character, one might say. But the argument was answered before it was stated, when Aristotle urged, against the excessively organic state of Plato's *Republic*, that too much unity precludes the unification that is the strength of any organism, by submerging the distinctive identities of the members that are to unite in a common scheme, “like harmony passing into unison, or rhythm that has been reduced to a single foot.”<sup>14</sup> Henri Bergson, whose father was a musician, argued similarly that to hear a melody as a melody we must hear its notes in relation to one another, as parts in a whole, or even as rhythmic or tonal contrasts.<sup>15</sup> Their simple beauty, if it can be found, is quite distinct from the beauty we may find in them as music. The idea in Bergson is not unrelated to his thoughts about creativity, the open future and the open society, just as in Aristotle the corresponding idea was not unrelated to his ideas about future contingency, the preservation of individuality in and through community, and, for that matter, the logic of discovery.<sup>16</sup> Even the rich complexity of an orchestral chord or the seemingly simple beauty of a note played on the piano or the clarinet is actually complex, enriched by overtones and given a patina by its timbre. It is not a simple tone. The same, we now know, is true of colors: They are perceived relationally, against a contextual background, and the comparative process is a temporal act.<sup>17</sup>

Saadia carries the point further, in the interest of his pluralistic account of values:

I find some people reckon, indeed they are certain, that it is man's duty to order his whole life by a single trait of character, preferring the love of one thing above all other objects of desire, and hating one thing above all else. Having looked into this view, I find it utterly mistaken, in several ways. To begin with, if the love of a single thing and preference of it to all others were what is best for us, the Creator would not have implanted in human nature the love of any other. Why, He could have made us of a single element, or all of one piece....<sup>19</sup> Don't you see that even the most elementary actions cannot succeed with just one element? How then can the entire complex? For if a builder built a house of stones, or teak, or thatch, or nails alone, it would not do at all—as it would if he built it of all these in combination. The same is true in cooking and food, in drink and dress, service, and all our other needs. Doesn't it open one's eyes to see that none of these specialized activities works with just one means, although all of them serve our comfort? How much less can the needs of our soul and character be met by a single object!<sup>19</sup>

Responding to the Neoplatonic aesthetic ideal of beauty in simplicity, Saadia urges that with colors it is variety that is cheering. He reminds would be aesthetic monists that harmony demands a blend of tones. Pure tones, he explains, are irritating, even physiologically, and (as Aristotle held) destructive if intense; but properly blended combinations can promote not just good cheer but (as Plato's *Republic* suggests) even justice.<sup>20</sup> Saadia links the physiological data as he understands them with a theory visual aesthetics, arguing that it is blending of colors that makes even seemingly simple color sensations pleasing; whereas pure colors are uninteresting, and raw sensations—the light of the sun, the whiteness of snow, the pure vividness of bright red or the deadness of black—are irritating or dulling to the eye, depressing or discouraging if combined too crudely, and harmful if they grow too intense when unmingled.

Simple rhythms and musical modes, Saadia argues, are unpleasant, because they arouse only a single response or impulse in the soul. That is, they amount to noise or irritation. It is the more complex patterns of musical pitch and rhythm that are cheering and pleasing. Wise rulers, he writes, expressing his great faith in the theories of Plato, use such complex patterns to elicit an appropriate

equilibrium in the soul: "It is the practice of rulers to blend and balance these modes, so that the traits of character that hearing them arouses in the people will develop to a pitch that suits their souls for rule and that does not drive them to extremes of lenity or hardness, boldness or timidity, excessive or deficient joy or jollity."<sup>21</sup>

Pressing on from sights and sounds to scents and flavors, Saadia argues that these too have an aesthetic optimum reached through compounding and complexity: "Each scented object has own distinctive force. When these are blended, the effects vary with the proportions of the ingredients. Thus musk is hot and dry, camphor cold and aromatic, saffron hot and dry, sandalwood cold and moist, amber moderately warm, rosewater cold and aromatic. When these extracts are mingled, their distinctive properties are compounded and adapted to people's uses."<sup>22</sup> Saadia takes his illustration from the perfumer's art, where a single essence might be cloying but the complex blend of perhaps dozens of scents produces the distinctive perfumes for which the market has use. Only the sense of touch is exempted from the pluralism of Saadia's earthy aesthetic, since he concedes that our tactile sensations love only what is soft and smooth. But, of course, the concession is made too readily. For there is also a love of roughness, and no designer would exclude it from the palette of textures, as long as its tactile demands were not too great to be apprehended, or to be borne.

What benefit can we find for our own aesthetics in the Plotinian appeal to ultimate simplicity? Overcoming the longstanding feud between monism and pluralism and setting aside the foolish arguments between the exponents of symmetry and the advocates of asymmetry, or of formalism versus engagement, I want to ask very concretely and specifically, What has unity to do with beauty? Beauty, I want to argue, whether in nature or in art, is achieved, not simply given. Unity for us is never mere simplicity. Whether we discover it in nature or produce it in art, it always involves a synthesis of elements. If that intends a higher unity, as Plotinus urges that it must, it can only be by a relation of reference—a structural analogy, or other intentional act. The beauty will be in the relation of intending, not in the simplicity itself.

Consider Plotinus' illustrative remarks about a plain face. It is true that asymmetry—a birthmark, a wry expression, even a

scar—can lend interest where there was little or none. Cosmeticians and dressers have relied on that possibility time out of mind. But does the point support or undermine Plotinus' love of unity and impatience to hasten his hearers up the ladder of love, from the attachments of the body, of which Porphyry tells us that Plotinus seemed to be ashamed, to an aspiration after "the beauty of the intellect, alone and in itself"? Surely piquancy is the mark of irregularity. The scar or eyepatch betokens history, not simplicity. It is vapidness that we may find suspect or ludicrous in the plainness of an open face. Painters understand this when they look for character in a face, and add a fan, a sword, a book, or fascinating draperies, or a distant landscape, when character seems absent or in need of reinforcement or relief. A love of complexity, not simplicity, is what our distaste for plainness hints, and what Plotinus has exposed in our relish for asymmetry is not a deeper love of unity but only an impatience with aesthetic triviality.

The Japanese, we know, shun symmetry in their paintings, for just this sort of reason. Their semeiotics underscores the point: It is bad luck to send a person flowers in an even number, as bad as it would be for us to send a butcher knife as a gift to newlyweds. There's something fatal, in Japanese cultural convention, in the thought of everything coming out exactly even, as suggestive of death as it is in the old Yiddish superstition for one to sew a garment that a person has on. Only a corpse, the superstition seems to say, has sewing done on the clothes it is already wearing, and only in death does everything come out even. Better, then, the favorable sign of leaving a bit of anything left over. But that leftover is not the sign of unity, although mathematical induction might make it a token of infinity.

Philo finds a balance when he argues that if male is odd and female even, it was fitting that the world's creation had six phases, the six days of the Biblical hexameron, since six is the first perfect number, the product of numbers that are its sum: one for God, two for woman, and three for man, so that the whole "should contain the essential principle both of the male that sows and of the female that receives the seed," if the world was indeed to contain "beings that sprang from a coupling together."<sup>23</sup> For no matter how misogynist Hellenistic sensibilities might become, it was not to be denied that the complete world needed the harmony of integration, male and female, odd and even, Yin and Yang.

Closure does betoken unity. We see it in a thousand rose windows, in the still central point or mystic negative space at the center of a thousand domes in medieval mosques, in a thousand Gothic arches, whose arms are raised in prayer, soaring, with the spirits of the worshipers within, up to the heavens, and there finding resolution, clasped, like praying hands, into God's unity. And we can hear the same accepting movement in the rustle of angelic wings that enfolds the great amens of the earliest polyphonic Western music, bringing all motion and all speech to unity and to rest in a silence that combines all the sounds that have gone before and hushes all the noise that has surrounded them. The rose windows embedded in these arches similarly mute the images of the world beyond and suffuse its light into the pictures from a single narrative, itself dissolving into a single moment of meaning that seems to echo, if it speaks at all, only the words of Augustine's literary beatification of his mother, as he wafts her into heaven by describing her, not long before her death, sharing with him (and forgetting his sins and her own) in the beatific vision:

We were saying then, If to any the tumult of flesh were hushed, hushed the images of earth, and waters, and air, hushed also the poles of heaven, yea the very soul be hushed to herself, and by not thinking on self surmount self, hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every tongue and every sign, and whatsoever exists only in transition [and here Augustine betrays the Platonizing backdrop to his vision], since if any could hear, all these say, "We made not ourselves, but He made us that abideth forever"—If, then having uttered this, they too should be hushed, having roused only our ears to Him who made them, and He alone speak, not by them, but by Himself, that we may hear His word, not through any tongue of flesh, nor angel's voice, nor sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude, but might hear Whom in these things we love, might hear His very Self, without these [as we two now strained ourselves, and in swift thought touched on that eternal Wisdom which abideth over all]—could this be continued on, and other visions of kind far unlike be withdrawn, and this one ravish, and absorb, and wrap up its beholder amid these inward joys, so that life might be for ever like that one moment of understanding which we now sighed after; were not this, *Enter into thy Master's joy?* And when shall that be? When we shall all rise again, though we shall not all be changed.<sup>24</sup>

But, as Augustine himself confesses, such unity as he pursues is not found within the confines of this earth, but only glimpsed from it. Time itself creates the essential asymmetry that denies us ultimate unity. Human experience can intend but never grasp and hold it, while we live, or think, or know ourselves. It is for this reason, no doubt, that Augustine's language here, while sublime, lacks the simpler sublimity of the Psalms, which tell us more simply (Ps. 19:5) that the soundless message of God's glory, the signature of his handiwork in nature, runs like a ray of light right through the world and speaks wordlessly even without silencing all that is in motion, noisy and alive.

What do we say, after all, to the off key singers, who cannot or will not blend their voices in a single celestial choir? When John Jacob Niles was barely more than a boy, someone gave him a cello, and before long he decided that the instrument was a waste and sawed it in half to make *two* mountain dulcimers. In music school, for an exercise, he wrote a new melody, the one that is now traditional, for the old folksong, "Black, black, black is the color of my true love's hair." In a creative *jeu d'esprit*, he reprised the first verse, and ended his song with the melodic line unresolved: "I love the ground whereon she stands..." His teachers knew what to say and what to do. They threw him out of school.

Plato knows that love is incomplete, the child of Poros and Penia. Augustine himself knows that even when he stole the pears from a neighbor's orchard and wanted nothing from the act but sheer deviltry, there was a hidden good pursued in the seeming senselessness of an act whose fruits were "sweetened only by the sin." He sees now that even in pursuing evil for its own sake his soul was following its own misguided image of God's freedom and absoluteness.<sup>25</sup> But surely Plato, with all his penchant for self-predication, would be the last to deny that love itself is beautiful (and not merely *of* the beautiful), and it would ill behoove a follower of Plato, or of Plotinus, to deny that love, considered in itself, is beautiful, even when its fruits are ugly.

A Hamadhānī will celebrate the libertine spirit of his Abū 'l-Fath al-Iskandarī, delighting in his scams and dodges in much the spirit that a movie like *The Sting* will celebrate the wit of con men and find in gentle grafters (to use O'Henry's phrase) the soul of knowing innocence—at least relative to the cutthroat world of mobsters and murderers they concessively inhabit. Buggery—even

blasphemy—in Hamadhānī's world becomes a *jeu d'esprit*. And we can see, from Augustine himself, how the epiphanies of Rimbaud and Baudelaire find their places in the glass tapestry of the world's rose window.

So we can see the need for complexity and the *haroq*, not just in art, but, with the aid of Augustine or Leibniz, in the work of art that is life as well. But what of unity? It is not absent, surely, in the Ciceronian sense of decorum or the ancestral Aristotelian notions of harmony, balance, proportion, and organicity that form the backdrop and the backstop of Plotinus' discontent. A story, Aristotle tells us, will have a beginning, a middle and an end. A plot, to be the kind of soul that can animate a drama, must have a turning point, a moment of recognition—a moment of truth, as it will be called. Long after the artificial unities of time and place have been laughed at and forgotten, fallen into disuse, the inner connection of action with the thematizing force of interests and identification of audience remains, subsumed into subtler vehicles of unity in the cinematographic butt-splice and visual montage.

When Cicero tells us that a poet aspires to seemliness he is not speaking in any rarefied or etiolated sense of artificial symmetries or hothouse refinements. He means simply that actions should be motivated, that characters should speak in character. Any balladeer or blues singer knows that. For much of the pleasure of singing ballads arises not in the rhythm of the refrain but in the mimesis of direct discourse, bracketed for its verisimilitude—"John, John, the grey goose is gone and the fox is on the town-Oh!"—and much of the joy of listening to the blues springs not from contemplating others' sorrow but from the symmetry of a persona to the reality it represents. There are unities here, but they are the unities, and symmetries, of mimesis. Their pleasures are identical in source to the pleasures of metaphor, or of any well wrought representation.

Such symmetries are dynamic unities. Like the unities of harmony or of organism they depend on difference for their force: the differentiation of subject from object, of object from its similitude. They are unities in diversity, defined against but also through diversity. Diversity is their condition. They are, in this sense, like the Plotinian "one/many," like the unity in diversity or diversity in unity of the universal Mind. Indeed, they afford us a Plotinian glimpse of that mind's thought and help to show us why Plotinus conceives that mind's thought as a kind of life, since even

in their timelessness the Forms that are the content of God's thought are in constant motion, representing one another, the more universal through the more specific, and the more specific through the less so. This play of facets within facets is more than the static kaleidoscope of Platonic participation. It is the play of life itself and the reason why it is possible for Mind in Plotinus' universe to give rise to Soul.

Decorum, of course, can be the emblem of structure, and so of hierarchy and hegemony. One need not be a post-modern to see its decrements. Any romantic will rebel at them, and any creative artist will press and burst the envelope of their constraints, as Beethoven strained against the boundaries set by Mozart, or Mozart against those of Haydn, or Bach against those of Vivaldi. But I think we need to differentiate the constraints of convention from those of human or natural necessity and not allow a love of creativity to carry us to the extreme of supposing that continuities and structures are irrelevant, or that constraints are necessarily the metaphors of social bondage and exploitation. It is easy for aftercomers thematizing a tradition to mistake all deep structures for subtexts and then to foreground what they have taken to be a universal subtext, while ignoring the more explicit and diverse preoccupations of the artists and authors of an epoch. Such in-depth superficiality, if unchecked, produces the illusion that every text (or every text worthy of consideration) has no more fundamental theme than its own textuality. That illusion in turn fosters a realm of critical theory that no longer need regard any text at all, since all that are worth regarding have been made undifferentiable.

The notion that order must mean social order, that structure must intend social structure, and that hierarchies of organization must be celebratory of social hierarchy reads too literally into the formal dimensions of a work, and not literally enough into its material content. The breakdown of literary structure, or of musical structure, can be a metaphor of social breakdown, as it is in the recent musical composition "Lacerations," which refuses the comforts of melody, as an inauthentic response to the horrors of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution—and perhaps as too closely akin to the strident primary colors of the pageants and street theater of that epoch's programs and pogroms. But the breakdown of structure can also be emblematic of an emergence, like that of a new manner of individual in *Tristram Shandy*, as will be clear if we

extrapolate in two opposite directions from that axial work—forward to the casual structurelessness of the *Pickwick Papers*, or back to the parodistic picaresque of *Don Quixote*.

In Cervantes the picaresque reflects the episodic genre of the very idylls whose ideal the work systematically unravels. At the same time, Cervantes can drink and refresh himself at the stream of picaresque satires that is fed by *Lazarillo de Tormes* and Quevedo and that arises in the mock epic of Hamadhānī.<sup>26</sup> In *Pickwick*, Dickens can help himself liberally to the gentle humanism of Sterne's *Uncle Toby*. But the Holy Office is no longer the presence that it was in *Don Quixote*, not even in the background, as it is in *Tristram Shandy*. There is no need any longer for a Dr. Slop. In all three of these works, and for that matter in *Tom Jones*, the road is ever present—not quite the addictive road of Hamadhānī, and not yet the rebellious road of Krouac, but the metaphoric road, the road of life. And this road is far from being the organizing principle of an *Odyssey*, a "there and back again," to use Northrop Frye's phrase that is meant to tie together the *Odyssey* with the *Divine Comedy* and the simplest fables of the Aborigine Dream Time, or their high-tech equivalents in the realm of space fantasy, with such intricately plotted tragedies of manners as James' *The Ambassadors*. For here, in *Don Quixote*, *Tristram Shandy*, and *Pickwick Papers*, the road is not a unifying principle, at least not in the way that unity is found in purpose, fulfilled or denied, but only in the way that unity is found in days—"Day unto day pours forth speech, and night unto night conveys the message, although there is no word or sound, and their voice remains unheard" (Ps. 19:3-4).

The wordless, soundless song that goes right through the earth and penetrates the heavens as well is here the hum of continuity and circumstance, in nature and in life, with no large claims about the metaphysics beyond it or the societal norms beneath it. If there is celebration here, it is a celebration of humanity, unaccommodated and unconstrained—of *Uncle Toby* with his childlike tolerance and kindness, of *Don Quixote* in the innocence of his madness, and of *Mr. Pickwick* in the radiant benignity of his "great soul." It matters very little what purposes these men believe have brought them to this road, since it leads all of them to the same end. Their worth is to be judged not by how far or how famously they have traveled (and still less by what baggage they have collected) but by how they have accoutered themselves along the way. Good nature and

good humor, in the end, are what matter in their lives. Whether they know it or not, it is important that we should know it. The lack of structure in those lives (and so in their stories) betokens the ultimate irrelevance not of social structures (for surely it does matter whether one lives in Uncle Toby's world or in the world that persecuted Corporal Trim's brother) but the ultimate irrelevance of what we may take to be our higher purposes—our hobby horses, as Sterne will call them—to the worth or worthlessness of our lives.

I see a role for unity here. It is not the elevated role that Plotinus homiletically assigns to simplicity, as the signpost of the One and marker at once of the direction we must travel toward the Absolute and the extent of our remaining distance from its purity and simplicity. But neither is it the nefarious and repressive role that is assigned to all varieties of unity and structure by the mongers of textual anxiety. These comfortless readers seem too ready to invert the pathetic fallacy: Instead of projecting textual emotions onto nature in hopes of eliciting them in the reader, they project their own and their presumed audience's social worries into the motives and motifs of a text, in the hope of finding there a political significance that will give warrant to their otherwise joyless or fruitless hours of study. Here, by contrast, unity, as in an organism, gives nothing more, but nothing less, than the breath of life.

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#### NOTES

1. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London: Faber, 1967) p. 57.
2. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XI 22.
3. Cicero, *De Officiis* I 93, cf. 126. E. M. Atkins hits the target squarely when she translates *decorum* as 'seemliness', in M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins, eds., Cicero, *On Duties* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p. 37. John Higginbotham uses the term 'fitting' in his Cicero *On Moral Obligation* (London: Faber, 1967) p. 72. Cicero offers the Greek *prepon* as the term he is rendering.
4. Cicero, *De Officiis* I 97.

5. *De Officiis* II 37 with I 98. Plotinus (*Enneads* I 6.4) seizes upon moral beauty not only for its inherent worth but, in the context of his argument, a recapitulation of the Platonic Ladder of Love, particularly because it provides the transition from beauties seen to those unseen. He is thus at pains to stress that moral beauty, "fairer than the morning or the evening star," in the words he quotes from one of the tragic poets, is invisible to the bodily eye. Cicero is equally in character when he evokes moral beauty in a passage sandwiched between two discussions of the public approbation of the several virtues; see *De Officiis* II 37-38. For the creative construction of one's own role and identity, see I 107-119.
6. See Michael Fishbane, *The Kiss of God: Spiritual and Mystical Death in Judaism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).
7. See Saadiah Gaon, *Kitāb al-Mukhtār fī 'l-Āmānāt wa-'l-'Iṭiqādāt* (*The Book of Critically Chosen Beliefs and Convictions*), edited by J. Kafih, with modern Hebrew translation, as *Sefer ha-Nivhar ba-Emunot uva-De'ot* (Jerusalem: Sura, 1970). The book is commonly known as the "Emunot ve-De'ot," and will be cited here as *ED*. It was translated by Samuel Rosenblatt, as *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948); but 'convictions' is a more accurate rendering than "opinions," as Efros showed, and the full title is important. As Kafih explains in his edition: "In every manuscript of the original version of our teacher, the title is *The Book of Beliefs and Convictions*, and so it was translated [in 1186] by R. Judah Ibn Tibbon [the father of Samuel Ibn Tibbon]. For the text he had before him was that of an early version. But in codex M [Bodleian MS Pococke 148], which is in my view the text of our teacher's final revision, the title is given as I have written it [sc., *K. al-Mukhtār fī 'l-Āmānāt wa-'l-'Iṭiqādāt*]. And rightly so. For our teacher did not set out simply to gather a compendium of beliefs and convictions, but to demonstrate which beliefs were worthy of choice and which convictions were true in his estimation." Page 1, note 1; cf. pp. 6-9: "I do not have any doubt that this is the title in his final revision" (9).
8. Saadiah *ED* X, Exordium.
9. See my *Avicenna*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992, 163-72 pp.
10. See L. E. Goodman, "Ibn Bājja," *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. S. H. Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1995).
11. See *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, trans. L. E. Goodman, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972; repr. Gee Tee Bee, 1990).
12. See *Guide* I 74.7; L. E. Goodman, *Rambam: Readings in the Philosophy of Moses Maimonides*, (New York: Viking, 1976)....
13. See John Philoponus on Aristotle's *De Anima*, ed. Hayduck (Berlin, 1897) p. 464 ll. 13 ff.
14. Aristotle, *Politics* II 5, 1263b 35.

15. cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, XI XVIII 38: "I am about to repeat a Psalm that I know. Before I begin, my expectation is extended over the whole; but once I have begun, whatever I pluck off from it and let fall into the past enters the realm of memory. So the life of this action of mine extends in two directions, my memory of what I have repeated and my expectation of what I am about to repeat. But all the while, my attention is present with me, so that through it what was future may be conveyed over to become past."
16. See *De Interpretatione* 9, *Prior Analytics* I 31, *Posterior Analytics* II 4-5.
17. See Johannes Itten, *The Art of Color*. (New York: Van Nostrand, 1973; Ravensburg: Otto Maier, 1961); Errol Harris, *Hypothesis and Perception* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970) 237-92.
18. Note Saadiah's tacit assumption that ours is not a fallen state: Our godgiven nature is wholesome and good; we can make inferences from it, and not just from its negation, as to the life God designed for us, the aims He wished us to pursue, and the pleasures in which He expected us to take wholesome delight. For more on Saadiah's pluralism, see L. E. Goodman, *God of Abraham* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp. 141-52.
19. *ED*, X 1.
20. *ED* X 18; and cf. Aristotle, *Politics* II 5, 1263b 30-35.
21. Saadiah, *ED* X 18, ed. Kafih, 322.
22. Saadiah, *ED* X 18, ed. Kafih 322. Rosenblatt's translation is somewhat misleading here in suggesting that the uses are necessarily beneficial.
23. Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* iii 14.
24. Augustine, *Confessions* X 25.
25. Augustine, *Confessions* I 13.
26. For Hamadhānī, the picaresque, the mock epic and Lazarillo, see James T. Monroe, *The Art of Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī* (Beirut: American University, 1983). For the thematic of freedom in the same author, see L. E. Goodman, "Hamadhānī, Schadenfreude and Salvation through Sin," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 19 (1988) 27-39.

## The Epiphany of Traces in Art: Post-Neoplatonic Visualization of the Invisible

Alicja Kuczyńska

The contemporary fascination with the cultural "now" appears to be slightly suspicious from the theoretical point of view. I do not define the term "now" as an epoch similarly to e.g. the postmodern epoch (Lyotard), but as an ontological phenomenon which should be called an *inter-epoch*, an in-between of the past and the present. It is obvious that no historical period ends or begins suddenly just with one fact. It is equally obvious that in this instance the phenomenon of *turning the past into part of the present* cannot be described in any heretofore known conceptual language; in this way, categories of paternity, reception, impact or renaissance cannot be taken into consideration. Newly-created conceptions such as "non judgmental receptivity," a category introduced by Charles Newman for the realm of art,<sup>1</sup> or various metaphors e.g. the metaphor of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari), indirectly connected with our problem, do not express the essence of the contemporary mechanism of *merging together* the past and the present. The difficulty consists of the fact that past intellectual *structures* cannot be any longer the object of critique or reception as *certain entities*, schools or trends as has been the case. At present, due to the "eruption" of postmodernism, and in confrontation with it, their image has been vehemently shattered and deprived of its original holistic form; it appears to be fragmentary and scattered, and assumes the form of particles, fragments enfeebled by negations of history in general, by a cult of posthistory and tendencies towards obliterating boundaries between trends. These fragments and traces do not exist independently *alongside* new modes of thought; the annihilation of the idea of superiority means that together with *the new* they become part of composite, fluid and frequently indistinct configurations and thus



coexist with the new.<sup>2</sup> In this manner, our mode of thought embraces not some sort of a former and complete intellectual *structure* but a stylistic figure of its *trace*. Categories of this *trace* could be in a certain sense compared to the "revival of memory" (D. Bell) if it were not for immersion into the context, characteristic for this conception. A *trace*, on the other hand, leads us beyond the ambiguous text. It is a meaning but one which is *deprived* of historical context. This meaning extricates the *trace* from being envisaged as a correlate of knowledge. The trace testifies to the possibility of a coexistence of contradictions, negates the ambiguity of thought or fact, and comprises a contradiction of a holistically uniform interpretation of a historical phenomenon, an interpretation which reveals an inclination towards becoming total. I regard the *trace* stemming from history to be, most generally speaking, a thought which due to its "*distinctness*" introduces important cognitive contents and, at the same time, is capable of tackling the demands of contemporary thought which attaches importance to lateral thought<sup>3</sup> and which disturbs the sequence of cause and effect.

### I. "Formless Form" and Physical Form

The extensive list of the impacts and influences of Neoplatonism assigns prime place to the thesis, derived already from the philosophy of Plato, of the fragmental form of the trace that influenced i.a. subsequent thought about art, the fate of artistic undertakings, the history of culture and mysticism; this is a view which claims that *true reality must be free from visible forms*. An important supplementation of this thesis is the ensuing conviction that it is possible to "*come close*" to the formless world, and that it is just as feasible to discover its existence or even to reveal it to others by means of certain definite procedures. In certain periods, this statement, which liberalises the rigours of fundamental thought, assumed an absolute form as an imperative of "*coming close*" with the aid of various techniques, different in the cultures of the East and the West. The object of our research includes such Neoplatonic and post-Neoplatonic theories of "*coming close*" which art is capable of embodying. Its role in this process is subject to divergent and composite transformations.

Sensual qualities conceived as all the visible forms, present at the lower stages in the material world envisaged by Plotinus, were treated as unwanted distractions on the path to truth. In the consecutive stage of Neoplatonism, an important step in the estimation of the world of matter is a clearly accented emphasis on the so-called experiencing of beauty and goodness, proposed in his theory by Marsilio Ficino. Ficino studied and translated Plotinus very carefully. At the same time, he built theories about the significance of matter which plays a certain role in his theory of "attraction." Ficino constructed his conception of the attraction of beauty on the basis of an analogy or, sometimes, simply an identification of beauty with *lumen* (light) and goodness.<sup>4</sup> Beauty is an internal and external perfection while goodness is only inner perfection. The fact that beauty acts in a special way i.e. attracts towards itself, is its main feature. All kinds of beauty possess this property. Regardless of its form, beauty manifests itself in attracting towards itself; in other words, things which attract can be described as beautiful. The body itself is neither beautiful or ugly. Beauty appears in it, wrote Ficino, when the body is inhabited by spirit, by an idea which "shines" and "acts within the body." However, this process is not accomplished automatically: light "*descends*" into matter only when the latter is suitably prepared. Conditions for the preparation of matter are described by Ficino in his *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* especially in *Oratio the Second* and *Oratio the Fifth*. The process of preparation is important, and its main pattern is creating the work of art. The subjects of attraction are aesthetically different and, of course, are not all endowed with the same degree of beauty. Ficino stressed explicitly that everything which is beautiful can be subject to attraction more easily. We find here a distant echo of Plotinus who stressed that "the more beautiful a thing is, the more intensively does it exist." Ficino went even further. The sensual shape of beauty is the main reason why matter becomes visible and begins to exist for us. Similarly to light, *sensual beauty attracts towards invisible beauty because it makes contact with its visible symptoms possible*.

## II. Being - Becoming - Attraction

To render the problem of intellectual "traces" clearer, let us consider the relation between the categories of "being" and "becoming" in classic Neoplatonism and in subsequent post-Neoplatonism. Various similarities and differences occur between the two. The later category seems to be a rather new conception of "becoming." One would thus commit a gross simplification if one should try to explain the relation between "being" and "becoming" by referring to the conception of both of these categories as they appear in the history of philosophy. They are expounded in Plotinus' *Enneads* where the world of the senses is endowed only with a *gignetic* mode of being and never with an ontic one, suitable solely to the *kosmos noetos*; in Plotinus' theory *ontic* existence comes to be identified with fullness, perfection and immutability. Later, the changes become more evident. In contemporary art, for example, contrary to classic Neoplatonism, it is precisely "becoming" (a *gignetic* existence) which is a value, a positive state that is more desirable than a being which exists in a once-and-for-all given form. For artists incessant becoming is the essence of being, and a being never "is" but is "becoming." It is "becoming" and never "existing" in a final and once-and-for-all completed shape that reveals being in its perfect, consummate form. However, in the case of the work of art, "becoming" is not to be identified with an injunction enjoining against excessive meticulousness in completing the artwork, so that some room be left for intellectual beauty. During the Renaissance Ficino found in Plotinus' work a positive opinion about "formless forms" which are treated "not as lacking shape but as the very source of even intellectual shape." Michelangelo's well known category of "non finito" is connected with this very idea. This resemblance, though easily perceivable, proves to be, as we have already mentioned, but fragmentary. The intensity of the contemporary developed conception of "becoming" could be compared to that advanced by Marsilio Ficino, for whom everything in the world and the world itself is in a state of permanent becoming. The whole of human endeavour aims at a higher goal: to become God.<sup>4</sup> In this conception, the boundaries between being and not being, between existence and non-existence are blurred, changeable and unsettled; they cannot exist alone because one springs from the other.

In the hierarchy of values, that which becomes and is not completely finished, enjoys a higher rank than ready-made, finished and completed forms. It also marks a more perfect mode of existence since it resists changes and distortions, and is not destroyed by the passage of time. Interpreting the activity of God, Ficino wrote, "In the first place, the great author creates everything, in the second place, he attracts to himself and, thirdly, encloses within himself" (*Commentary on Plato's Symposium*). The fundamental, constitutive element of the existence of the world is the process of *attraction* (*alicere*). All that which has already been created is subsequently subject to attraction. All that which exists is attracted, and involved in a constant process of transition to a higher stage of being. The process of attraction is the basic rule (law) which governs the world; only this process, and not that of creation alone, endows the world of things and phenomena with a certain stability (balance); this is the reason why they are what they are. The process of becoming also embraces a class of material objects whose physical shape proves to be finished, closed and completed, but which are incessantly complemented afresh—these are works of art.

## III. The Artistic Expression of Infinity

Contemporary art is characterised by a tendency "to go beyond the limited impulse, the limited aspect of life and the limited or limiting self."<sup>5</sup> The philosophical idea of transcending reality leads to the destruction of the idea of artistic representation in the work of art, and recalls the question posed by Kandinsky: "Is the entire work of art reduced to a mere ornament?" and: "What is to replace the missing object?"

The artistic expression of the longing for infinity is present in very different works of art, sometimes not evidently connected, e.g. in the creativity of Brancusi and Mondrian.

In 1982 an exhibition of their works was held in New York.<sup>6</sup> Such a joint display can be motivated by the fact that both artists sublimate content to form. Brancusi transforms the recognisable object (bird, table, column) into something new and unique. The memory of "the object new refined, its essence distilled to a degree at which, in defiance of gravity, its ascending weightlessness is

enhanced by the artist's wedding of form and material, hovers at trigger point, trembling in the balance."<sup>9</sup> Leaving the object behind, Mondrian "creates by means of a new reality a Neoplastic two-dimensional world in which equilibrium is maintained by way of the artist's sensitive approach to stability achieved through a subtle balancing of unequal but equivalent oppositions."<sup>10</sup> Concealed motivations of the relations between the works of Brancusi and Mondrian appear to be deeper than merely artistic. The compositions of both artists share a desire to transcend the human condition by means of an applied depreciation of visible reality in favour of an extra-empirical world. For Brancusi, one of the symptoms of this process were attempts at an artistic capturing of the essence of ascension. "Throughout my whole life", he confessed, "I sought only one thing—the essence of flight. Flight is happiness of sorts." "Flight is an equivalent of happiness because it symbolises ascension and transcendence and freedom. Ascension denotes a transition to a different mode of existence, the annulation of the system of determinants, a freedom to alter situations. The symbol of flight expresses a fissure which reveals itself in the world of everyday life. A double interpretation of this fissure is clear: flight is tantamount to the annulation of weight and it is the ontological polemic of man."<sup>11</sup> Brancusi's birds endorse the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum* since in a single object they include both matter and flight, bulk and its negation. The drive towards ascension was shown by means of matter which is the archetype of weight i.e. stone.

The artistically prolific and cognitively important process of overcoming the resistance of matter is realised in art also in other ways. For Piet Mondrian the *dematerialization* of the object is achieved via abstraction, abstract painting. The artist concluded that the spiritual could be sought by purely graphic means, and emphasised that the words *spiritual* and *transcendental* can denote anything from the purely spiritual to that which is on the threshold between the physical plane and the highest stage. It is vain to concern ourselves with the purely spiritual which cannot be expressed.<sup>12</sup> Traces of Platonic thought, discernible in Mondrian's works, occur in a form transformed by theosophy, in which e.g. the concept of "primary forms" or the geometrisation of the world by God was rather frequent. As is well known, Mondrian viewed the proposals of theosophy very seriously.<sup>13</sup> He accepted the

theosophic idea of looking "through the surface" of an object, and acknowledged that the depiction of "the inner image" comprises a domain of the endeavours of an artist who does not neglect matter or turn away from it but who studies it intensely, and in this manner notices its superficial nature contrasted with the essence of being i.e. with "becoming."

#### IV. Being as the Object of Aesthetic Experience

"Becoming" is a process which demands active participation on the part of the subject. Joining heaven and earth together is the unique privilege of human existence through which man asserts himself in a strenuous way that requires a great deal of effort. In his drama *Endless Column* Eliade interprets Brancusi's "Endless Column" in terms of the beginning and the end in a fashion utterly unlike the traditional approach found in Western civilisation. His proposal appears to be significant to all those who having been steeped in this culture from birth cannot all of a sudden cease to exist as its product. On the other hand, they have become fully aware of the limitations of the culture imposed upon them, and gradually come to perceive its insufficiency and the extent of its incongruity with the newly discovered aspects of reality. Can this situation be expressed only in terms of an alternative proposed by the "either/or" type of choice, or in terms of a mechanical partial of the conjunction? If so, is the provision of ever new versions of the alternatives in the manner of contemporary literature and some trends of science fiction, the only way out?

This question, implicit in the intellectual stuff of the drama, is answered by Eliade in the negative. He seems to be saying that there is yet another way out: the alternative can be abolished by referring to the elements which both East and West once shared. The missing link is to be found in ancient myths which are older than later divisions, which are derived from a common beginning and which are eternal. Being timeless, they can unravel the mystery of the beginning and the end which are inextricably intertwined. Young and at the same time old, myth is a challenge to the passage of time. In case of Brancusi's column, the area in which the process of becoming is acted out lies between the highest and the lowest, between heaven and earth. The *endless column* becomes itself only

when it becomes infinite, when it is placed in a deep hollow so that its pinnacle might reach infinity. What is more, there exists only one unique position from which it can really be perceived as endless. Being endless, the column will not stop even in heaven but it will pierce it and go beyond. Described in this way, the *endless column*, as seen by Eliade, will most likely exert a more overpowering impression than its shape. This is probably the case because the impression it makes is fragmented, diffracted and arranged into the individual opinions of the onlookers who do not hesitate to express their distrust, shock, amazement, unbelief or even disgust inspired first by the idea itself and then by its concretisation. How can the mystery of enduring and passing away be explained to them? The notion of endlessness contains all beginning and all end, and the column, which is endless upwardly, must be also endless downwardly. It is this quality of the column which symbolises that what we call the human condition. Rooted in the earth (Ficino's idea of matter) and involved in earthly realities, man frees himself from the mundane with great difficulty. He becomes himself and wins his own identity while climbing upwards; it is then that he finds himself *in-between*. The sculpture is only becoming, its potentialities are still unrealised and the source of its significance is to be found precisely in this status. Brancusi's Indian Temple, for example, had no material existence but existed only in the artist's imagination and its idea was never realised. Thus, it remained a work of art truly in the process of "becoming." The *endless column* also proves to be unfinished, though in a different sense of the word. There comes a time when it ceases to be the object of the artist's endeavour, yet placed within a definite space, it constantly assumes new meanings and thus it incessantly becomes anew.

That what is expressed reveals some features of reality, and therefore that what is abstract takes on a shape which is close to reality. A specific feature of art, and modern art in particular, is its tendency to "free" (itself) from the "surface" of things, and to penetrate matter in order to lay bare its ultimate structures. It is above all the artist, rather than the scholar, who can eliminate form and enter into "the interior of substance." Owing to this ability, he can uncover the "secret of larval modalities."<sup>14</sup> Brancusi says that his column is endless. It freely soars into space without any limits.

It is endless "because it is built upon an ecstatic experience of absolute freedom."

## V. The Contemporary Visualization of Transcendence

In *Phaidros* Plato wrote: "Wings are endowed with the natural power to raise that which is heavy up into heaven, where dwells the family of deities. No other body contains so much of the divine as wings." According to Eliade, yogas as well as Indian alchemists can rise into the air and cover long distances. "A ritual ascension, grade by grade, is called a *durchana*, a different climb." Reference in the *Endless Column* Brancusi turns away from magic and the idea of wings which signify the process of transcending the human mode of being: the ability to rise into the air secures access to supernatural reality. The symbolism of the wings seems to have been decisively rejected: Brancusi's birds have no wings at all. In *Endless Column* the hackneyed metaphor of wings gives way to the image of ascent. Naturally, we may still compare our strivings to the flight of birds but only when the essence of flying i.e. ascension, and not the means with which flight is accomplished, is taken into consideration. Brancusi's birds (*Bird in Space*) present the essence of flying. As human beings we must climb upwards, and just as in the mountains, it is not enough to use our legs—we have to use our hands. This strenuous effort involves both the legs and the hands, and not only winged euphoria which epitomises great evolution and the reassessment of values which the sculptor advanced in his vision of the contemporary human being. There is yet another element constituting the experience of contemporary transcendence. According to *Endless Column*, the ascent ought to be accomplished individually, alone, with no witnesses or partners. Man must enter the temple (Brancusi's *Indian Temple* project) one by one, and "conquer" the column single-handed. If the experience is to have any meaning at all, it must be individual.

## VI. Shapelessness as an Artistic Value

In *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino the enormous state of the Great Khan is composed of a continuum of shapeless towns,

deprived of all expressive shape, boundaries and ambiguously defined space. Let us take the example of *Truda*, a town indistinguishable from others. *Truda* has no beginning and no end, it extends over the whole world and only the names of the airports change. The town is everywhere and, for all practical purposes, nowhere since the same site is also occupied by other cities: *Cecilia* and *Pentesilea*.

The reference to the example of the *Invisible Cities* is made as an eloquent visualization of the manner in which traces exist. The thesis about the scattering of the traces of historical distinctness, as well as the very character and quality of the trace, presented at the outset of these reflections, *a priori* excludes the intention of any systematic generalization of its role in contemporary art. This is not the aim of references to distant sources and of following the fate of entire intellectual sequences. We are also not concerned with determining a hierarchy of the importance of the above presented stylistic figures; their selection is in a certain sense arbitrary but it is undoubtedly potentially susceptible to connections with other, divergent trends. It is precisely the latter—the visualization of the undepictable, the dematerialization of the object and space and the search for the artistic expression of the infinite, which appear so rarely in their original state—that have become coated with various accretions and impacts of archetypical contents. By referring to the latter, they constitute a vibrant source of “existential communication.”

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#### NOTES

1. Charles Newman, *The Postmodern Aura: The Act of Fiction in an Age of Inflation*, (Evanston 1985), p. 9.
2. For example the combination of the concept of “ecstasy” and the mass media, rather unusual for a scholar dealing with Neoplatonism, J. Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, (New York 1988).
3. Lateral thinking (Eduardo de Bono) permits unorthodox methods and applies elements bypassed by traditional logic; it can choose a point of view different from the conceptual one and promote ineffective and incomprehensive activity.
4. M. Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* (Columbia 1944), p. 105–106.

5. *Ibidem*.
6. M. Ficino, *De Christiana Religione* XVI, p. 20.
7. Ben-Ami Scharfstein, *Of Birds, Beasts and Other Artists* (New York, 1988), p. 204.
8. The idea behind this exhibition was by no means original. In the 1950 paintings by Mondrian and a sculpture by Brancusi (*Bird in Space*) had been displayed together.
9. K. Brancusi and P. Mondrian, *The Introduction* (New York, 1982).
10. S. Ringbom, “Transcending the Visible”, in: *Spiritual in Art* (Los Angeles, 1986), p. 138.
11. M. Eliade, *An Attempt at a Labyrinth* (Warsaw, 1992), p. 207–214.
12. *Ibidem*, p. 215.
13. Mondrian joined the Society of Theosophy in 1909.
14. M. Eliade, *The Endless Column* (Coloana nesfarsita), transl. from the Romanian by M.P. Stevenson, in: *Dialectics and Humanism*, no. 1, 1983.

# Some Remarks about the Difficulties in Realizing Neoplatonic Thought in Contemporary Philosophy and Art

Werner Beierwaltes

## I

"Neoplatonism" is a characteristic form, historically shaped by several different metamorphoses, of that for which we use, in its various meanings and connotations, the term "metaphysics" or "First philosophy." Neoplatonism starts from principles which are understood as being in themselves, but are related to each other in a successive order. These principles are approachable by thinking, comprehensible and sayable only to a limited extent—in analogies, metaphors or by negating the very categories of thinking itself. "Neoplatonism" is therefore characterized by the conception of transcendent entities which go beyond human consciousness, while at the same time being intensively linked up with it. To generally think reality as grounded in these principles also implies specific *ethical* implications for the thinking individual itself: Thinking the forms of unity; the unity of the One, the Mind and the Soul; to by thinking reconstruct reality which is in itself, *in one's own consciousness* becomes a *form of life* which has its centre and its goal in the First and One itself, which must be strived for in an inward ascent that shapes the individual's life as a whole.

If we want to give a fairly reasonable and instructive answer to the question whether and to what extent Neoplatonic Thought has, in problem-based traces of its terms and concepts or in specific cogitative forms, become effective in contemporary philosophy or in other realms of contemporary culture, for example in art, we must, before going into the consideration of single aspects and the formulation of more detailed questions, first ask the decisive

preliminary question regarding the possibility of Neoplatonic Thought becoming at all effective today: How does metaphysics in the form of Platonism or Neoplatonism stand in relation to the contemporary critique of metaphysics, to the systematic epoché with regard to it? Is it possible to think that Neoplatonic structures of thinking, grounded in their originally intended subject-matter, *can* at all gain ground in a basically anti-metaphysical age? Is it, in the face of the general tendency of contemporary philosophical theories, possible for these structures to become *essentially* effective in contemporary thinking—and is it possible to recognize them not only in analogies that in the end remain purely superficial and that under apparently identical terms or elements of theory only conceal what in its original context and its specific intertion must nonetheless be understood differently? “Neoplatonic” traces, wrought out of some modern and postmodern theories, could turn out to be a mere illusion, provided one is prepared to analyze seriously and responsibly each respective philosophical thought, and not to lose sight of its specific factual premises and original intentions. The *basically* un- or anti-metaphysical character of those philosophies which according to their self-assessment want to and, considering their popularity, can be regarded as the “substance of our time” cannot be concealed even by that forms of philosophy which, like the new transcendental philosophy and the search for a theory of self-consciousness, are not only close to metaphysical thinking, but are, in their form as developed by Kant, Schelling, Hegel and Fichte, also factually closely connected with metaphysics. As a sting in the varied contemporary forms of philosophical theories there remains the more or less revealed suspicion or reproach of the “senselessness” of all metaphysical propositions. This is a suspicion which makes the questions, problems and answers of metaphysical thinking appear “fictitious problems” which seem to talk about things which *cannot* be talked about, or it makes them appear an “illness” which could only be treated if “the words” were brought back again “from their metaphysical to their ordinary use.”<sup>1</sup>

“Platonism” and in its retinue none the less “Neoplatonism” as paradigm of metaphysics or the First philosophy become, (though often) in a reduced and partly distorted form, the epitome of what metaphysics is criticized for. Due to persistent preconceptions or just ignorance, Platonism gets further stylized into a prerequisite or

even into the very cause of the contemporary entanglement of the social being and a calculatory, technologistic way of thinking. Platonism thus appears to be a term-fixing and in itself fixated *thinking of identity* which is close to *totalitarian* thinking (in the view, for example, of T. W. Adorno). Platonism becomes, together with Hegel and Marx, a co-originator of the “closed society” and of fascism (following Sir Karl Popper). All of this is maintained without taking into consideration that a concept of justice as the principal maxim of thinking and acting which is argumentatively based on the idea of the Good simply *cannot* be compatible with blindly ordained irrationalisms (the “nationalistic” or the “racial”), nor with ideological constraints that deny any well-founded recognition. Even Martin Heidegger sees in Plato—analogously to Nietzsche—the beginning of the decadence of philosophical thinking, the beginning of its fixation on metaphysics. It is metaphysics which must be blamed for the primary guilt of a systematic reification of thinking, of its limitation to a way of thinking that forgets the presence of Being and is left to *represent* only beings. This way of thinking develops—as a merely “calculating one”—into the basic attitude of technical aggression, no longer able to think the difference between Being and the being-ness of beings or to experience ἀλήθεια as the “unconcealedness” of Being, and this because, as is supposed, it conceives—from Plato to Hegel—truth exclusively in the sense of the “correctness and the direction of the gaze”, according to the scholastic definition *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*.<sup>2</sup> (2) Heidegger’s curious idea of Plato having to be “blamed” for the development of Western Thinking as a decay of what was in the very beginning (particularly by Heraclitus)—“initially”—thought, is certainly one of the reasons why he finds the “logification” originated by Plato (the ‘Sophistes’ is Heidegger’s main authority) even increased in Platonism—and in its connection with Christianity—and why in his view of the history of philosophy, in his construction of the development of metaphysical thinking, Neoplatonism is not even admitted as one of the decisive elements of this development. Heidegger would never have been able to maintain, in the form he did, and to evolve in further interpretation his thesis of the historical development of thought (the increasing “forgetfulness of Being” and the blemish of the “ontological difference”), if he had ever seriously taken up the claim of

Neoplatonic Thought and the *possibilities* it offers for thinking an "ontological difference."<sup>3</sup>

These are *some* of the difficulties that stand in the way of a thorough and original influence—and its diagnosis—of Neoplatonic Thought in contemporary philosophy, of a "presence" of this kind of thinking which could be found not only in "Neoplatonic niches." Under the circumstances which I have only hinted at here, an effective presence of Neoplatonism which would essentially or at least in some basic elements characterize or guide contemporary philosophical theories is incomparably more difficult to claim than this was undoubtedly the case in former epochs whose vital interests were converted into a theoretical task which, even in its specific transformations, was congenial to original Neoplatonism: So for example in the manifold Platonisms of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but also and still in Classical German Philosophy which from the end of the 18th to the middle of the 19th century, with Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Schelling, not only gave paradigmatic answers to the basic questions of metaphysics and transcendental philosophy, but also had a substantial influence on the natural and humanistic sciences, on jurisprudence, ethics, morals, religion, and art, incorporating all of these realms in its conceptual intention. Regarding the history of philosophy *Hegel* could in concepts or cogitative elements which are central to his thought make links to Plato, Aristotle and Neoplatonism. He was the first to insist vigorously on the fact that the hitherto widespread verdict on Neoplatonism as irrational "mysticism," "superstition" or "enthusiasm" *concealed* and destroyed by its persistent unseriousness the central intention of Neoplatonism: that is, its intrinsically rational endeavour for a concept of the Mind and of the One. When Hegel takes up Neoplatonic Thought he understands it as a decisive momentum for the historical unfolding of the "idea," in which, as he says, "the whole is elevated into mind."<sup>4</sup> Aristotle's theological basic principle of the thinking-itself thinking of the God has—in Hegel's sense—in Neoplatonic Philosophy been further evolved into a 'with itself co-expanding totality' of the idea, which is absolutely self-transparent, which is unity that finds itself in absolute reflexivity and which is at the same time the real Self. Hegel intends to discover in the Neoplatonic process of the unfolding of reality his own concept of a productive negation, therefore he wants to see this process begin, as his own "Logic,"

with a self-negation of the beginning itself. But even apart from Hegel's intention, we cannot disregard his taking up of the Neoplatonic concept of a 'dynamic identity' of the Mind and the One *in Mind itself* as an (at best productive) misconception. On the contrary, it corresponds indeed adequately to one of the basic features of Neoplatonic Thought. In so far as we, in spite of the critical epoché regarding a conception of a necessarily-in-this-way-developing history, think and live out of "Hegel's heritage," it is through him that Neoplatonism is caught up as a condition and momentum of the historical self-awareness *also of our present times*, and it is by him that Neoplatonism is preserved as a formative point of reference for the reflection of our own past history.<sup>5</sup> The awareness of this essential aspect is increased by recent Neoplatonism research: It is the significance of this kind of thinking not only for the history of philosophy, but just as much for the *philosophy of history*, a significance which goes definitely beyond an only formal drawing of analogy between two epochs (Platonism and Idealism), and brings out—in spite of all differences—their factual affinity. In the historical awareness of today, in so far as its purpose is more than just an antiquarian and doxographical one, we must also, therefore, in Hegel's reflection on the history of thought, keep in mind the nearness to Neoplatonism which he himself so intensely realized to be an "obliging memory" of one of the most convincing thoughts of metaphysics. This "obliging memory" could above all become effective in a theory of selfconsciousness which does in itself not a priori exclude itself from metaphysical predeterminants.

I have developed this aspect of a factual closeness of contemporary to Neoplatonic Philosophy, together with some other reflections on "Neoplatonisms" in our present times, in one part, entitled "Bild and Gegenbild?" ("Image and counter-image?") of my book *Denken des Einen* ("Thinking the One")<sup>6</sup>—remaining, though, very aware of the general philosophical intentions of today. These reflections regard, in so far as they concern the question of a theory of self-consciousness compatible to metaphysics, the so-called "transcendental question" as the horizon of such theories, and they regard the anti-dogmatic effect of the Neoplatonic way of speaking about the essentially "Unspeakable" which at the same time calls forth an explanation of the grounds and a justification of philosophical metaphors. Another aspect regards the philosophy of



art and the self-conception of the artist today. But before I go into this in more detail, I also want, with Vittorio Mathieu,<sup>7</sup> to argue for a presence of Neoplatonic thinking *ex negativo* which could become a stimulant for changing our ideas—e.g. about our relation to *nature*. The thinking of Plotinus *could* urgently show what is missing in our time. Against the fatal omnipotence which man is exercising on nature today, against the manipulation of man's own nature, against the, at this point, universally perilous claim to the dominion of technical exploitation at the expense of coming generations, Plotinus' totally different concept of nature could be brought into awareness; a concept which contradicts the *mechanistic model* of the way in which we conceive and handle nature or reality as a whole. A way of thinking which loses itself in multiplicity, which is not—or not sufficiently—aware of its own principles and thus characterized by a systematic reification, would have to be transferred into a differentiated reflection on nature or on the unity of man's own ground. The Plotinian concept of an *in-and-by contemplation procreating nature* could enter into the context of other attempts which are today articulated with increasing insistency, to "release" nature from the prison of being a mere object, which has been produced by man's technical access to it.

## II

Regarding the question of the essence of *art*<sup>8</sup> and the *self-conception of the artist*, in comparison for example with the philosophical foundation of art in the Renaissance (as for instance in Ficino's relation to Botticelli's painting) or in comparison with the aesthetics of German Idealism, the situation has also changed fundamentally. For Schelling art still was "simultaneously the only and the true and the eternal organon and document of philosophy..., the supreme instance for the philosopher, because it is as if it opened to him the inner sanctum, where in eternal and original unification it is as if in One flame burnt what in history and nature is separate, and what in life and in acting as well as in thinking must flee from each other eternally." In this metaphysically founded philosophy of art *beauty* is the basic character, the ontological condition or principle of every work of art: "Without

beauty there is no work of art."<sup>10</sup> In every work of art the Absolute shows itself as a historical "counter-image" of itself, capable of infinite modes of interpretation. The ingenious creation of the artist, who by his powers of imagination is able to create in the finite an image of the infinite (the German verb *einbilden*, "to imagine", can also be interpreted as *in-Eins-bilden*: "to create into one"), always goes back to this Absolute, owes itself to it and reveals a "document" of it within a finiteness and boundedness which themselves get *unbounded* by art. Based on his conception of the historicity of *philosophy* and of art, *Hegel* has proclaimed the *end of art* precisely in light of arts highest claim to make the Absolute become historically present in the form (the "ideal") of the beautiful. "Thought and reflection have surpassed the fine arts."<sup>11</sup> The "idea" as thinking which completes itself by thinking all of its different moments in itself, this "idea," and *not* art unfolds itself as the Absolute. As a consequence of the "end of art" in its highest claim and as highest need the time has come for the 'no-longer-fine' or *un-beautiful* arts; and art is no longer bound to certain objects or to beauty as the principle and modus of its depictions.<sup>12</sup> If we want to regard, among others, the ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp, the Dadaism of Jean Arp or Hugo Ball, the arrangements of pop art and the art happenings, the new mythology of Joseph Beuys with its critical intention towards society, the photographic realism or the informal painting of the "new savages" as characteristic expression of contemporary art or anti-art, whose avant-gardism gets ever more quickly stored up in museums, then we will no longer want to accept "beauty" in a classical or transcendental sense as an authoritative or even as an indispensable principle of "artistic" expressions. This is at least equally true with regard to *Plotinus'* metaphysically founded concept of beauty. His concept of beauty grounds in the One itself which is the *principle* of beauty. The essence of beauty is in its highest form conceived as a modus of the Being of the Nous; it is the unity or the con-cordance of the in-itself-differentiated, time-less Being by Being's thinking itself. The absolute self-concordance of the Mind, the dynamic identity of its ideas with Mind itself is its beauty; and this beauty is identical with the "truth" of the Mind which is the reflective flooding-itself-with-light of Being." Such a metaphysical foundation of the concept of beauty can hardly be made compatible, in one coherent thought, with the

contemporary use of the word "beauty" in the self-conception of the artist and in the reflection on certain works of art today. Rather can the predicate "beautiful" be used, at least in reference to some of these works of art, in the sense of a work-inherent accordance of form (structure) and colours or sounds, as an indication of an immanent relatedness or of a harmony of contrasts. Of course this does not mean that "beauty" would now *at all* be totally separable from the structure of art and the reflection on it. Though, where the term beauty is used by the artists themselves for their own creations, we have to be aware of its difference from the traditional meaning of the term—as, for example, is the case with Kandinsky, when he, in a nearly Platonic or Neoplatonic way, points at the "inwardly beautiful": "If the artist is the priest of the 'beautiful,' then this 'beauty,' too, is to be searched for in the same principle of *inner value*.... This 'beauty' can only be estimated with the measure of *inward greatness and necessity*.... *Beautiful is what arises from an inward mental necessity. Beautiful is what is inwardly beautiful.*"<sup>14</sup> In a note to the last sentence of this quotation these apparently "Platonic" features of Kandinsky's argumentation are turned into a psychology which is based on physiological considerations: Beautiful is everything which, to quote Kandinsky again, "even in the totally unpalpable form, refines and enriches the soul. Therefore, for example in painting, every colour is inwardly beautiful, because every colour evokes a vibration of the soul, and every vibration enriches the soul. And therefore, finally, everything can be inwardly beautiful which in its outward appearance is 'ugly.' So it is in art, so it is in life." Is this a remembrance of the outwardly ugly, but inside beautiful Socrates (the "golden statues" in him!) who beseeches the gods for inner beauty?<sup>15</sup>

I could also imagine that a certain *anti-mimetic* feature of modern art could find a counterpart in Plotinus' modification (which is implicitly directed against Plato) of the concept of mimesis as it had been vindicated by Aristotle. As poetry, in its contrast to historiography, paradigmatically shows for art as a whole, mimesis aims at the universal.<sup>16</sup> Thereby art contributes—in another way, of course, than philosophy—to the recognition of reality. The reasoning of Plotinus, motivated by the Aristotelian poetics, is the following: if the arts imitate nature, then they do not imitate it in the sense of a reduplication which only conceals the true reality, "but they rise up to the rational forms (logoi), out of

which nature itself comes."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, art is the depiction of the logoi or, in a wider sense, of the ideas—understood, of course, not only as the designs of the artist, but primarily as the absolute, timeless structures of Being and reflection. If art is not an imitation of nature's outward appearance, but a 'mimesis' of its inward motion which refers to the logoi by contemplating them, then art has, as a perceptible form of the ideas, a fundamentally *anagogic function*: to lead the contemplating observer or the listener from the sensorial appearance back to the intelligibility of nature where it is grounded in—from the image, therefore, ultimately to the image-less. Analogously, the painting of Kandinsky or Paul Klee leaves behind the principle of a purely reproductive imitation of nature in favour of a *transformation* of the outwardly-natural into the "inwardly-beautiful"; this is done in order to bring to appearance in the painting the invisible, dynamic or mathematical structure of nature (or thought). Hereby is shown precisely that which nature does *not* show by itself.

The anagogic function of art makes clear that a work of art (in the sense of Plotinus), due to its being beautiful in the sensorial world, constitutes a specific starting-point or even a provocation for the return of the consciousness, which by contemplation thinks, into itself—the beginning, therefore, of a movement of abstraction in which, in view of the One itself, thinking gets increasingly released from difference and joined in itself in more unity, a movement in which thinking is brought beyond the image up to the archetype and finally, transcending itself, to the very origin which is image-less. The release of thinking from images is analogous to its release from time: the return of thinking to the timeless Mind which is its ground. The mystical henosis with the One itself as a self-transcendence of thinking, as the highest form of abstraction or as a release from object-bound multiplicity in thinking, can without any claim that would destruct the authenticity of art be related to *radical abstraction in painting*. This relation could most convincingly be made recognizable in the radical abstraction which Kasimir Malewitsch has realized—accompanied by programmatic texts—in some of his paintings. The mode of abstraction and at the same time the goal of the movement of this abstraction into an "objectless, white uniformity" is by Malewitsch called "Suprematism." For him, the objectless uniformity or the absolute objectlessness which is reached in painting advances the "true

essence of art." He himself explains this most abstract—the absolute—form of painting like this: "If there is a truth at all, then it is only in the objectlessness, only in nothingness." 'Suprematism' is the "objectless world or 'the released nothingness.'" This 'nothingness,' however, does not mean pure emptiness; rather it can be identified with the active negation of everything objective, or with the "objectless essence—God": "Solely God...therefore carries the features of the objectless essence...Understanding dies, reason dies, the object dies and with it its entire objective world. Space and time die as well as that which we call matter. Names and definitions die. All this is not in God, therefore He is eternal, therefore He is immortal." The artistic intention of this 'Suprematism' corresponds to the *mystical* imperative of Plotinus: ἀφελε πάντα, "take away everything", or "let go of everything"—as a demand to "let go," in reflecting upon one's own Self most intensively, this very reflection ("understanding" or "reason") itself by transcending it, and with this to accomplish the absolute de-materialization, de-temporalization, de-constitution and de-differentiation of thinking, and to release it from all relatedness—all of this being a necessary precondition for the henosis. The goal of Kasimir Malewitsch's 'suprematistic painting' is: "God" as the "objectless essence," the "nothingness"; the goal of Plotinus' inward ascent of thinking, and of the henosis which arises from radical abstraction, is: the difference-less and in itself relation-less One which precisely in its ("object-less") "not-being-anything" is the "nothing-of-everything," while at the same time being, of everything, the ground and origin.<sup>19</sup> In his painting Malewitsch has realized this 'suprematist' conception—increasing the degree of abstraction—in a diagonally divided black and white square;<sup>20</sup> in a black circle on white ground and in a black square on white ground (both around 1913)—an utmost reduction to the simplest geometric elements. The black and the white "supremum" are not separable from each other, they associate a conception of Gregory of Nyssa and of Dionysius the Areopagite guided by Neoplatonic thoughts; a conception which even excels the Plotinian metaphysics of light: the seeing of God as *overbright darkness*—θεία νύξ and θεῖος γνῶφος as φῶς ἀπρόσιτον.<sup>21</sup> The darkness in which "God lives" is the overbrightness, or the other way round: the dazzling overbrightness is the darkness. In an analogous way, for Malewitsch, when he

reaches by total negation the nothingness of the objectlessness or the objectless nothingness, black is simultaneously white.—Malewitsch's relations to theosophy, hermetics and to the cabala can be proved. Hereby he has also been influenced—even though, of course, not in their original form—by elements of Neoplatonic theory.

These considerations on the "mimesis" of the inner structures of nature (concerning Kandinsky) and on the 'suprematism' of Malewitsch, of which I have here only given a short outline, I want to argumentatively furnish and to further develop in greater detail in a separate treatise. This treatise will include: *Paul Cézanne's* thought that "everything in nature models itself like cone, sphere and cylinder" and that the colours are "grand noumena" or "incarnated ideas"; *Kandinsky's* treatment of the geometric archetypes circle and triangle and his interest in number ("in every art, number remains as the ultimate abstract expression"<sup>22</sup>); *Paul Klee's* "imaginative thinking" and *Max Beckmann's* hermetic and gnostic background. It will also include *Piet Mondrian's* geometric abstraction—his conception of art as a "visualization of logic" could be related with Plotinus' depiction of the logoi in a work of art, and his search for a "universal harmony" of the contrasts in form and colour, which leads him, similarly to Malewitsch, to the outermost limits of painting. Furthermore *Barnett Newman's* intention—regarding his critical occupation with Mondrian—to make possible by painting a 'transcendental experience' of 'the sublime' which goes beyond our usual experience, a 'transcendental experience' which is capable of intensively drawing the observer into a limit-less, form-less and definition-less continuum of colours in a nonetheless structured "image" and at the same time liberating him<sup>23</sup>—analogously, again, to the Plotinian henosis. Certain forms of *Concept-art*, too, will have to be taken into consideration: their tendency to dematerialize art would have to, in the last instance, lead to a *dissolution* of the visual appearance of what is thought, and end in the "pure ideas" from whence the visual appearance has come.

A different kind of provable relation to Neoplatonism I see in *Anselm Kiefer* (born 1945 in Donaueschingen)—at least in a certain period of his creation. In his far-reaching interest in the history of ideas he has included the hierarchy of the angels unfolded by *Dionysius the Areopagite*. I think Kiefer, who has become

successful above all in the United States and whose work has also given rise to politically controversial discussions, does not refer to Dionysius just accidentally or in a superficial way. His two paintings of *Die Ordnung der Engel* ("The Order of the Angels") from 1983/84 and from 1984/86 have become the most recent examples for the history of the influence of Dionysius the Areopagite in the realm of art. The first version of "The Order of the Angels" (3,30 x 5,55 m) can be found in *The Art Institute of Chicago*; the second one, being of the same size, is found in the *Walker Art Center* in Minneapolis. The painting in Chicago has the title *Dionysius Aeropagita* [sic] *die Ordnung der Engel*. In the upper right side the names of the nine choirs of angels are written beside and underneath one another; rays radiate from each of them within a black, brown, blue and grey space, meeting nine rocks or stones. These nine stones, of different sizes, are each marked with ■ Roman numeral. Conceived as a representation of the angels,<sup>25</sup> a snake is winding between stone II and III. The paintings of Anselm Kiefer have a strongly symbolic character; they are an expression of a complex and in itself diverse "mythology." This is also the case with "The Order of the Angels": The rays which start from the names of the nine choirs of angels—meeting and connected with the stones—associate another theme which can be related to Dionysius, a theme to which Kiefer, in the same period, gives an artistic form in at least three versions. He entitles these paintings "Emanation" and "Ausgießung." They signal the *emergence* of a divine force out of the skies into the water and onto the earth, and refer, together with the symbol of the ladder and the snake, to the *return* of this emerging movement back to its beginning: corresponding to the circular movement *μόνη—πρόδος—ἐπιστροφή* in Dionysius,<sup>26</sup> but also in the Jewish Cabala, with which, particularly in the unfolding of the Ten Sefiroth, Kiefer has occupied himself. One thought which is intended to be expressed by this emerging and returning movement is the *re-institution of an ideal order*.—The title of the painting I first mentioned, "Dionysius Aeropagita," is not a mistake, but anticipates the insertion of a "propeller" in the second version of "The order of the Angels."<sup>27</sup> This could be interpreted as an attempt to connect ancient and modern ideas; but it can also be related to Dionysius: The spiral movement which is caused by the "propeller" corresponds to the in-itself-constant spiral movement of the "divine spirits".<sup>28</sup> A remaining-in-itself and

at the same time a movement emerging from itself, a circling around which cares for those in need *and* a circling around the "beautiful and good cause" of the angels' very sameness. Therefore the spiral movement unites the circle with the straight line. Simultaneously, the propeller stands for the element of air (ἀήρ), thus bringing to four the number of elements—earth, water and fire—present in the other paintings. The propeller might also remind us of the "en-lightened" soul (κουφίζεται), symbolized by flying, which since Plato has been regarded as a symbol of transcending the material world: By seeing the ideas on the "plain of truth" the soul grows wings, it is "nourished" by truth, and the wings nourished by truth render the soul "en-lightened"—this as opposed to the "forgetfulness" of the soul (a-letheia versus lethe) and as opposed to κακία (depravity), which both burden the soul and make its wings fall off, so that the soul itself falls down to earth."

### III

Let me add a *personal consideration* of Plotinus to these fragmentary and at the same time preliminary remarks regarding the question of the "presence" of Neoplatonic Thought:

The structure of Plotinus' thinking and the way in which he writes are an expression of a conceptually founded contemplation, of ■ meditation which circles around its cogitative goal, of a rigorous concentration on the inwardness of the own thinking and at the same time on its transcendent ground which in its being-as-such withdraws itself from all categories. An intensive, not just historically distant involvement to this movement of thinking could possibly also lead to a homoiosis, in which *one's own* thinking, that is the thinking of the person who lets herself get involved, gets changed in such a way that thinking makes itself more akin to itself. This involvement could, even in contexts of subject-matter different to Plotinus, promote and confirm that self-reflection and conceptual concentration which is necessary for any kind of philosophizing at all.<sup>29</sup> This claim arises from and corresponds to my own experience in dealing with the way in which Plotinus unfolds his conception of *self-knowledge*. With all its (historically different) connotations, this self-knowledge should be the beginning and the constantly self-renewing end of doing philosophy.

Ultimately, Neoplatonism fails to reach its goal of adequately thinking the One in its being-as-such, because of the categories and the difference language is determined by. Signs of this failure to find an unmediated linguistic access to the One are the metaphors, analogies and paradoxes, but above all the negative dialectic: its circling around or surrounding the principle and the experience of the Self with it negates all categories. From this effort springs an anti-dogmatic impulse in philosophical speech. An indirect, in many aspects mediated way of speaking, always open to questions, seems to be necessary, if we do not want to give up that which is not sayable in definite or formally adequate terms as a mere deceitful illusion. Against the often quoted Wittgensteinian ban on speaking, "of what one cannot speak one must be silent," Neoplatonic—as a paradigm of metaphysical—thinking understands itself as ■ conscious *venture* to unfold or to paraphrase with increasing precision the central point of reference for thinking which remains accessible only in an indirect way. Therefore, it is precisely the incommensurable which becomes a challenge for our concepts and our language—which in their interaction call forth an awareness of their respective limits in exceeding them. The continuous "going-too-far" of thinking and speaking about what is thinkable and sayable is everything but an absolutistic claim. On the contrary, it arises from ■ confession of their own relativity. This is, in my opinion, a sensible alternative to an *unquestionable* self-limitation to that which we think we always already know.

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Translated by Dagmar Mirbach

# NOTES

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Frankfurt 1967, 67.
2. Martin Heidegger, *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit*, 2nd. ed. Bern 1954, 46.
3. cf.. Werner Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz*, Frankfurt 1980, 131 ff. (see there the argumentative foundation of this claim). Also compare: "EPEKEINA. Eine Anmerkung zu Heideggers Platon-Rezeption", in: L. Honnefelder/ W. Schüßler (eds.), "Transzendenz". Zu einem Grundwort der klassischen Metaphysik (Festschrift für Klaus Kremer), Paderborn 1992, 39-55. An English translation, by Marcus Brainard, of this article is found in:

- Graduate Philosophy Journal* 17, 1994, 83-99.
4. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Jubiläumsausgabe XIX, 94.
  5. cf.. my book *Platonismus und Idealismus*, Frankfurt 1972, particularly 144 ff.
  6. Frankfurt 1985, 436 ff.
  7. *Perché leggere Plotino*, Milano 1992, 117 ff.
  8. I will here restrict myself to some remarks with regard to *painting*.
  9. *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800) [Philosophische Bibliothek Meiner 254, Hamburg 1957], 297.
  10. *Ibid.*, 289.
  11. *Ästhetik*, ed. by F. Bassenge, Berlin 1965, I, 21.
  12. cf.. the *Ästhetik des Häßlichen* of Hegel's disciple Karl Rosenkranz (1853).
  13. III 7, 4, 11 f. V 5, 2, 18-20.
  14. *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, Bern 1973, 136 f. (first published 1911, though dated 1912). But also compare *ibid.* p. 115: "The beauty of colour and form is (against the claim of the pure aesthetes or also of the naturalists who primarily aim at "beauty") no sufficient goal for art."
  15. *Plat. Symp.* 218 e. *Phaidr.* 279 b 8 ff.
  16. Aristotle, *Poetics* 9, 1451 b 6 f.
  17. V 8, 1, 32-36.
  18. K. Malewitsch, *Suprematismus*, ed. by W. Haftmann, Köln, 2nd ed. 1969 (written 1913), 55.63.64.72.75.—Plotin e. g. III 8, 9, 53 f (οὐδὲν τῶν πάντων). VI 7, 32, 12 f (οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων).
  19. The cabalistic symbol for Ensoph is the circle divided into black and white.
  20. Gregory of Nyssa in *Canticum* 11, pg.. 44, 1001 B. Dionysius, *Epistula* 5, 162,3 ff. (Heil-Ritter) [PG. 3,1073 A]. cf.. to this problem area: Werner Beierwaltes, *Visio facialis. Sehen ins Angesicht. Zur Coinzidenz des endlichen und unendlichen Blicks bei Cusanus* (Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.—hist. Klasse, Jg. 1988, Heft 1), München 1988, particularly 34 ff.
  21. *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (cf.. note 14), 130.
  22. Cf.. e. g. Newman's painting "Who is afraid of red, yellow and blue III", height: 2,45 m, width: 5,44 m, painted 1966/67, found in the *Stedelijk Museum*, Amsterdam.
  23. To this compare Kieffers painting found in the *Anthony d'Offray Gallery*, London, entitled "Seraphim" (1984), in which from a winged snake, situated in the lower central part, a ladder towers up into the higher, brighter part of the painting. Another analogous version of this theme is realized in "Seraphim" (1983/84), found in the *Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*, New York.
  24. Dionysius has taken over this Neoplatonic basic principle in the unfolding of the different levels of reality and in the movement of the whole into his own thought, "theologically" adapting it in various ways.

25. In the painting I have mentioned above which is found in the *Walker Art Center* in Minneapolis.
26. *De divinis nominibus* IV 8; 153, 7-9 Suchla (PG. 3, 704 D/705 A).
27. Plat. *Phaidr.* 248 b ff., particularly 248 c 1 f; 249 a 8 and c 7 f.
28. cf.. Werner Beierwaltes, *Selbsterkenntnis und Erfahrung der Einheit. Plotins Enneade V 3. Text, Übersetzung, Interpretation, Erläuterungen*, Frankfurt 1991.

V.

NEOPLATONISM AND  
CONTEMPORARY  
SPIRITUALITY

# Neoplatonism and Western Christian Man

John N. Findlay

The present paper attempts to sketch the relevance and influence of Platonism and Neoplatonism upon the thought of Western Christian Man, both in the earlier ages of undiluted faith, and in this later, post-Renaissance age of highly critical, but deeply penetrating infidelity. What I shall now present and offer can only be a sketch, which may, however, be filled out by chapter IX in my book entitled, *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines*, which chapter is a general Appraisal of Platonism and its Influence. It is impossible, in assessing the importance of Platonism and Neoplatonism to Western Christian thought, not also to attempt some general statements of what one thinks Platonism, as a style of thought, basically is, and how it stands to Neoplatonism, a general statement which must necessarily be highly controversial, since on my view most contemporary characterizations of Platonism are warped by a deep confusion of Platonism with the Socraticism of the earlier and of some later dialogues, e.g. the *Theaetetus*, which all have a great appeal to contemporary analysts, and by a too easy acceptance of Aristotle's two-world picture of Platonism, as merely attempting to solve the problems of our changeable, multiple world by postulating the existence of another parallel world of entities which, by their changelessness, are unfortunately quite unable to account for change and motion in our world, and which do not even reduce its multiplicity in an important manner. That participation in or imitation by man of an eternal Manhood itself can suffice to make changeable men be the men they are, seems a very much ad hoc, unenlightening sort of philosophical explanation. If Platonism were merely the analytic exercises that Socrates practiced, or the mere linkage of earthly beds with a bed made up in heaven, as suggested in the *Republic*, Book X, then obviously there is little profit to be derived from it, and the lists of two or three or four or

ten or other numbers of fine-spun categorical distinctions, which Aristotle was always so ready to draw up, might seem to offer much more hope of illumination. And on such a view the Neoplatonism of Third Century Alexandria and Fifth Century Athens were merely a baroque extension of the meaningless multiplication of entities which Platonism had always practiced, coupled with indecent ventures into theurgic magic and unphilosophical mysticism. My opinion, on the other hand, is that Platonism represents one of the permanent alternatives in philosophical interpretation, one which sees the true substance of reality rather in universal meanings than in the particular instances which inadequately and vanishingly exemplify them, which makes the universal sense come first, and the particular illustration depend upon it parasitically, rather than the other way around. And it is also my opinion that Neoplatonism is what its main exponents believed it to be, a systematic but not uncritical restatement and development of the basic positions of Platonism, and further, that it represents one of the most permanently valuable and illuminating ways of regarding reality and experience which at least does full justice to those transcendent values which guide us inescapably both in theory and in practice.

I believe further that Neoplatonism is important as showing us a mysticism which is rational, and a rationality which is mystical, and thus establishing an apical identity of these two necessary experiential approaches. And I believe lastly that Christian thought has been immeasurably deepened and strengthened by a Neoplatonic infusion, which we encounter again and again in the finest expositions of Christianity, and that the attempts of some to deHellenize and to dePlatonize Christianity have really been attempts to barbarize it in a quite horrible manner. Our views of Platonism have not, in my opinion, to rely merely on his dialogues, but also to pay deep attention to the Aristotelian reports on Plato's Unwritten Doctrine which occur in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and other works. Aristotle may not have been strong in understanding Plato's teaching, but this leaves unaffected the fact that he reported it in detail and with obvious accuracy, having been present at the discourses where Plato expounded it. These reports can be understood by us, in the light of many commentatorial writings, even if Aristotle could only misunderstand them, an operation for which he had a certain genius, in other cases as much as in this one. In the light of these reports, it would appear that developed

Platonism gave a central place to mathematics and that though it did not identify its Eide or Forms or Natures with mathematical entities, these latter having a non-eidetic multiplicity, (whereas Eide were each and all unique) and occupying a place intermediate between the Eide and their sensible instances, it none the less believed that the Eide were all mathematical universals, and that everything, if subjected to a last analysis, would reduce to numbers and to ratios of numbers. The qualities of the sense-world, in which Plato took such a deep aesthetic interest, were not the simple characters they appeared to be, but pointed to underlying numerical ratios and proportions not unlike those that the Atomists also believed in. The whole cosmos was in fact seen in Pythagorean terms, as involving an ordered set of numbers and numerical proportions differentiated into several dimensions, and explanatory of all the surface appearance of the world and of the soul and mind that is aware of them. These eidetic numbers and structures further involve two basic archaic principles, whose repeated application to one another generate, or give rise to, in a non-temporal sense of generation, all the *Eide* which can be developed and applied in mathematics, and here we must instance first the infinite series of the natural numbers, then all the possibilities of linearity, then all the possibilities of two-dimensional figure, and then all the possibilities of three-dimensional solidity, and finally all the possibilities of movement which involve eidetically temporal as well as three eidetically spatial dimensions.

Without being able to write a Fregean *Begriffsdireft* or a Russellian-Whiteheadian *Principia Mathematica*, Plato conceived of the possibility of developing all the basic conceptual forms of mathematics out of the interaction of two Principles, a Principle of Unity or Limit which was good and definite, and a Principle of the indefinite multiple, or continuous or dual, which was as such bad, but which could be limited by the Principle of Unity or Limit to give rise to the endless series of natural numbers. And the endless possibilities of one-dimensional lines, then the endless possibility of regular or irregular polygons, ellipses, etc., the possibilities of regular and irregular solidity, and also all the possibilities of motion whether regularly shaped or circular or irregular. The best place where all this doctrinal is hinted at is in a passage in Sextus Empiricus' attack on the Mathematicians by which he plainly meant, not only Pythagoras, but also Plato. I have translated all this



material and also all the relevant Aristotelian passages in the first *Appendix* to my book on Plato's Written and Unwritten Doctrines. It is arguable that all this vast project of mathematicizing all meanings and developing them one by one and step by step out of the repeated application of two principles, one good, definite and unitary, and the other bad, indefinite and dualistic, underlies the whole program of education set forth in his *Republic*, and which is largely unintelligible to the interpreters of this dialogue because they wished to see in it mainly ethics, while Plato believed that a completed insight would reduce everything, including ethics, to eidetic mathematics. The same principle of harmonic proportion of definiteness, imposed on the indefinite, which governed the forms and laws of numbers, lines, figures, solids and solids in motion, would also govern the inner workings of souls, and of the societies in which souls live and cooperate with one another. You will remember how, in his *Republic*, everything went wrong when citizens and governed ignored or bypassed the precise numerical proportions which generate well-ordered and just citizens working together in a well-ordered, Platonically just society. You will also remember how the soul in the *Timaeus* was constructed out of a series of numbers and numerical ratios, whose presence in it enabled it to know and understand all the objects it would encounter in the world, and would also enable it to impose orderly and proportionate movement on the instantial cosmos around it and on its own body and mind. Everywhere we have a principle of Absolute Goodness or Unity, whose function it is to impose order and definite limit on a principle of the Continuous and Indefinite, which is, in its native state, bad, and which in the process generates first of all the natural numbers, then all the possibilities of one-dimensional linearity, then all the possibilities of two-dimensional figure, then all the possibilities of three-dimensional solidity, then all the possibilities of moving or self-moving solidity which constitute the lifeless and living forms of nature, and finally all the possibilities of soul and mind and society, which represent the highest and richest imposition of formative pattern on the element which in its isolation is without form and void. And Platonism quite plainly puts a trinity of absolute forms at the head of the whole of this indefinitely ramifying system.

There is first of all the Absolute First Principle of Unity or Goodness which is the source of all specific forms of unity and

order whether in the eidetic or the instantial realm, and which is also the source of all the mental acts which can take cognizance of all such eidetic or instantial specifications. This is the purport of the well-known sun-passages in the *Republic* which I forbear from quoting and which also imply the view that the source of all eidetic being is itself beyond all eidetic being and characterization, and which, though spoken of as the Idea of the Good, is not, strictly speaking, an Idea or Eidos at all, nor knowable as its specific forms are known. The Good is the source of all being and all knowledge, but transcends both. In addition to this Prime Principle of Absolute Unity or Goodness, there is secondarily a demiurgic Cosmic Mind, which embraces all differentiations of possible being, conceived in all the well-ordered simplicity which no instantial embodiment distorts or disturbs. This demiurgic Mind lives with timeless exemplars in a timeless fashion though what it embraces is conveyed into the realm of changeable instantiation by a Third Principle called the Cosmic Psyche or Soul, which is the source of all the regular motion of the Cosmos, and which also presides over a whole order of subordinate souls of men and other living creatures, which each have the power to move a specific part of the instantial world as their own territory or body. In such souls there is also present a simulacrum of the demiurgic, cosmic Mind which enables such souls to be aware of timeless Eide as well as of their changing instances, and such souls, though not invested with the timelessness of the demiurgic Mind, have a deathlessness which amounts to unending being in time. All this is to be found in the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedo* and other Platonic dialogues, though the dialogue form sometimes substitutes pictures and analogies for authentic eidetic descriptions.

Summarizing the total Platonic picture we have a supreme category represented by the Absolute One or Good, a principle which is at once the source of all the Eide, or Forms of Being while itself being ἐπέκειναι τῆς οὐσίας, or beyond being in dignity and power. It is, we may say, the power of everything and the definite being of nothing, two sides of itself that are worked out elaborately in the wonderful dialogue *Parmenides*. It is also the source of all mental insight or knowledge while not itself, by implication, being an object of such insight. Like the sun, it blinds those who try to look at it directly, though it brings out the colours of all other things. We then have as the second Hypostasis the Demiurgic

Mind, which is the eternal vision of all the Eide, systematically and timelessly ordered, and which is also the source of all their instances in minds and souls and in nature. As Third Hypostasis we then have the Soul of the World, informed by all the arithmetical, geometrical and kinetic patterns which it is able to impose on the instantial world, and also the source of the regular motion of the Heavens and indirectly of all other cases and forms of motion. The Demiurgic Mind operates out of time, whatever it embraces or envisages, timelessly *is*. The Soul on the other hand, operates in Time, which Plato describes as the moving image of eternity; the soul is accordingly imperishable, undying, rather than aeonian or eternal. Beneath these immaterial hypostases lies the great empty receptacle of three-dimensional space, which provides the necessary room for all the multiplied instances of the Eide. In itself it is known only by a form of ignorance or a bastard argument to the effect that whatever instantially is, must be somewhere or other. Space is the home of instances of the first four of the geometrical solids, the tetrahedron, the cube, the octahedron and the dedecahedron, which are the elementary building-blocks of the world. Inferior souls, of which our souls are one species, preside over complexes of these building-blocks as their bodies, but pass in deathless Pythagorean fashion from one such perishable body to another, with interim phases in which they take a vacation from bodies and the senses, and have commerce only with other pure souls and eternal minds and with the Eide present to such eternal minds. I need not elaborate all this Platonic Cosmology, which is to be regarded as allegorical ideas rather than mythic. It is meant to describe Being as it authentically is.

If we now turn to the Neoplatonism elaborated by Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria in the Third Century, and expounded in the fifty-four superb tractates of Plotinus, we shall find little that is not to be found in the writings of Plato. "These doctrines," Plotinus says, "are not novel, but ancient, though not put with full explicitness, and our present words are merely their interpreters, calling on Plato's writings, to bear witness to their antiquity." (Ennead V.8) I shall content myself therefore by merely indicating the points where Neoplatonism may be said to have developed or altered Platonism. The first point of difference is a negative one: Neoplatonism shows little influence of the Unwritten Platonic doctrine that the nature of all Eide is numerical or mathematical.

There is a tractate on Numbers in the last book of Plotinus, but it is concerned with multiplicity in general rather than with the arithmetical differences which Plato made so basic. Proclus, the great Fifth Century Platonic systematizer and commentator, wrote a treatise on Euclid, but it contains no references to Plato's mathematicizing theories. The absence of interest in Plato's mathematical emphases meant that these emphases were forgotten in later interpretations of Platonism and only began to be studied in the last century. Neoplatonism also innovated in recognizing Aristotle as being merely the somewhat dissident Platonist that he actually was. There was, they held, a homodoxy or agreement of basic opinions between Plato and Aristotle. Among the important borrowings from Aristotle in Neoplatonism were the concepts of the Potential δύνάμις, and the Actual ἐνεργεία. They were, however, so modified in their use that the Dynamic became for the Neoplatonists more actual than the Actual: the One which is all things in power is more absolutely all things than the one-sided instantial realizations that stream from it. Another borrowing from Aristotle is the concept of ὕλη or First Matter which is not Platonic: Plato's only first matter is empty space. The Neoplatonists made Matter the Principle of Evil: it brought deviation from good form in varying directions into the realm of instances. Plato, on the other hand, in the dialogues and certain passages in *Simplicius*, gave deviance a secondary place even in the realm of Eide: if one knows all the perfect forms of Being, one *ipso facto* also knows all the forms which deviate from this perfect standard, since *knowledge is always of contraries*. The Neoplatonists, further, made the doctrine of the Three Hypostases, the One, the Absolute Mind and the World-Soul, more centrally emphatic than it was in Plato: they based their Trinity above all on a passage in *Epistle II*, 512 e, where Plato speaks of a King of all for whose sake all is, and who is the cause of all things lovely, and also of secondary beings surrounding a second being and tertiary things surrounding a third. In the doctrine of the One or Good, the Neoplatonists were, further, more given to negative theology than Plato: it is only from our point of view that the One or Good is an object of desire and satisfaction, or a source of illumination and so on. In and for itself it transcends all these things, and neither takes cognizance of itself nor of anything else, nor takes delight in its transcendence of being. This transcendence of consciousness, which must however be

understood eminently as well as merely negatively, differentiates the Godhead of Neoplatonism very strikingly from that of Aristotle. Aquinas, however, likewise makes God's omniscience only analogically a case of knowledge, in the sense in which we can have knowledge. The Neoplatonists further developed a doctrine of ecstatic unification with the One which is certainly not explicit in Platonism: there is no suggestion in the *Republic* that the crowning vision of the Sun is in any way a becoming wholly sunlike, even if there is an analogy drawn between the Sun and the eye which can see it. There are, in the phenomenology of soul-life, undoubtedly crowning experiences which merit the name of states of unification or identification with the central focus of everything: not only Jesus but also saints like Teresa and John of the Cross experienced them, and there are of course countless Hindu and Buddhist and Islamic mystics that have likewise testified to them. There is nothing emotionally ecstatic in such experiences. They must be merely the clear manifestations of the all-in-allness of the Absolute in which there simply is no place left for an outside observer or commentator who can only talk in analogical fashion later on. I have not myself enjoyed any such consummation, but I am as confident of their existence as of the transfinite number which is the number of all finite magnitudes and states of being.

The ecstasies of Plotinus are as beautifully described at various points in the *Enneads* as are those of Dante and St. Teresa. The nearest approximation to these in Plato is in his vision of Absolute Beauty in the *Symposium*.

Neoplatonism also clarifies Plato by its concept of *ἐκλάμψις* or irradiation, to which the name 'emanation' has been customarily given. Every hypostasis necessarily gives rise to other hypostases which lack its fullness of realization, and which accordingly turn toward the fuller hypostasis, and strive to achieve its greater perfection. Thus, the absolutely unified One necessarily gives rise to the Mind in which Subject opposes itself to Object, and in which each Eidos is distinct from every other; the Mind necessarily gives rise to Souls which run through everything successively or synthetically in time and work endlessly toward a unity which the Mind always simply and completely possesses. Souls similarly proliferate in *Logoi* or reason-principles which govern the structure and the behaviour of natural objects. At the outer limit of such *ekklampsis* lies *Matter* or pure structurelessness, the sheer darkness

which is a necessary counter to pure light. The *ekklampsis* of Plotinus is described in terms of many empirical analogies: the warmth given off by fire, the fragrance of flowers, etc., but its basic sense is logical and not empirical. Plotinus believes that eidetic perfection cannot exist without instantial imperfection, and that the latter has an irremovable tendency to move toward the former and close the gap between them. The doctrine is here anticipated by Plato's doctrine of the Unenvianness of God. God *must* desire that there should be other beings beside Himself which, though not perfect as He is perfect, will perpetually strive toward His perfection. This doctrine, though embraced by Meister Eckhart and Angelus Silesius and other German mystics is, of course, of doubtful orthodoxy. I myself hold it to be of quite certain truth. It does not, as the Neoplatonists insist, involve any constraint or unfreedom in the process of emanation and irradiation. Though this cannot thinkably be absent, it is also unconstrained and free. The One could not transcend Being and thought as it does if it were not also surrounded by the eidetic and instantial and cogitative hypostases which flow from it, and which are, in a fashion, merely the working out of its own absolute fullness.

Neoplatonism is further distinguished by the glorious pictures it paints of the life of absolute Mind, pictures in which there is nothing of the tendency sometimes present in Plato's writings, to isolate one Eidos from another, and not to see them as always contributing to a single hierarchically arranged whole, in which nothing makes sense apart from anything else. The profound internality of the relations in the Intelligible World of the Neoplatonists is not to be confused with the universal internality of relations in Bradley and other later 19th Century idealists, since the latter is a causal internality inspired by Spinoza and contemporary deterministic science, whereas the Neoplatonic internality is an internality of Eide or Ideal Types, which are not instantial realities, but only the eidetic possibilities of such.

What Platonism and Neoplatonism believed in was that one could work out a completely arranged hierarchy of Eide as one can work out a similar hierarchy among cardinal numbers, or regular polygons or regular solids and so on. It seems likely that Platonism envisaged a future physics and a biology that would determine that there could be just *n* types of self-moving biological solids, precisely just as solid geometry can determine that there can be just

four types of regular solids. In the Intelligible World every species or Eidos would have its unique, necessary place among the possibilities of being, and the nature of each would be determined by its place in the whole system of such ideal possibilities. Perhaps Platonism was in a truly prophetic manner anticipating the modern theories of the chemical structures and various classes of particles which underlie it, and make it plain that there can be just so many types of emergent chemical elements and no more. Certainly also it was able to conceive the possibility of some such deeply integrated physical theory as that of Einstein, where practically *anything varies systematically* with practically anything else, so that both can be regarded as different forms of some more profound thing, e.g. Space-Time, instead of Space and Time, and of Inertia-Gravitation instead of either alone. Plotinus describes the Intelligible World in the celebrated Tractate on Intelligible Beauty as a world where each is all, and all are all, and the glory is infinite, where the sun also is all the stars, and all stars are the sun, and where one cannot go on a journey without taking one's point of departure with one, and so on. All this can be read as merely an aesthetic effusion playing with the idea of an indefinite interpenetration of essences: I think, however, that what Platonism is also prophetically anticipating is the discovery of dominant universals which will leap the distances between apparently disparate concepts and which will thus show them to be systematically derivable differentiations of single basic ideas. This at least is what I read into the Plotinian accounts of the Intelligible World and if they also describe the blessed condition of disembodied intelligences, privileged to see themselves in everything, and everything in themselves, and also everything in everything, and everyone in everyone, then this too represents a higher fusion of the mystical and the rational which has in modern times richly occurred even in the physical sciences.

The Neoplatonist account of the Mind and the Intelligible World further borrows from Aristotle the view that there is at the intelligible level no distinction between the intelligible Form that is cognized and the intellectual act which cognizes it. In the intelligence present in finite human souls these two are distinct, and the finite human intelligence merely strives toward the full identification with the intelligible form which is its consummating actuality. The finite human intellect is therefore always passing in

time from one eidetic insight to another. It is essentially given to λογισμοί or reasonings, which drag it on from one Eidos or connection to another, and never sees everything all at once in its undivided unity with everything. The finite human intellect is therefore in a sense realistic: it seeks to apprehend an intelligible Eidos, or connection among Eide, which is prior to it, and independent of it. But the infinite hypostatic Intellect is neither realistically nor idealistically describable: its timeless acts of intellect do not create or constitute the Eide which it distinguishes, though Plotinus sometimes speaks as if they do. It is rather to be thought of as coeval, coeternal with the latter, with the articulation of eidetic Being into the structured world of the Eide goes the articulation of noesis or timeless acts of thinking which apprehend the latter, and *vice versa*, and neither should be thought of as any sort of temporal primary to the other. The quarrel between realism and idealism is a quarrel only for us men: in Divine intelligence it is as correct to conceive of noetic being as determining noetic apprehension as of noetic apprehension as determining noetic being. I think this is the one wholly successful resolution of a perpetual philosophical conflict.

Of the life of the Third Hypostasis or Soul Neoplatonism has a great deal of interesting things to say, which do not however range far beyond what we find in the Platonic writings. Great stress is laid on the undivided character of the soul, so that all its psychic attitudes come together and are one at the center of its being. A pain in the toe and a thought of intelligible beauty can be psychically together in a manner which would not be intelligible at a merely bodily level. But the souls of various living beings also have some degree of sympathetic rapport with one another, and with the all-encompassing world-soul, so that there are many supernatural and magical forms of communication among individual souls, and between these and the world-soul. There must be, in short, something like a cosmic telepathic system connecting all souls with one another, and with the world-soul, and that system can also mediate dynamic connections among souls, which, in the relation of the finite soul to the world-soul, can assume the form of theurgy or divine operation. This doctrine of theurgy is one that recurs in almost all forms of mysticism and religion, and is, to my mind, not inherently irrational. I believe that with deepened connection with the unitary source of all being must necessarily go

an accession of powers that may transcend what is ordinary, and so be regarded as miraculous. But with the development of such powers must, unfortunately, go also the development of that fraud and imposture which seems endemic to religion. Possibly the Absolute has greater tolerance of such fraud and imposture since it may well touch off profound spiritual and metaphysical perceptions that would not otherwise be readily available to us men. This man, however, is not inclined to sanction a deepening of spiritual and metaphysical perceptions at the cost of means which involve fraudulence, and not merely what is ritualistic and symbolical and not fraudulent. I am, for this reason, not favourably attuned to the theurgic aspects of Neoplatonism.

What I now propose to sketch is the interaction of Neoplatonism with Christianity, and with the subsequent thought of the Christian West. Neoplatonism at an early point of its development made a most remarkable marriage with Christianity, and Alexandria, Cyrene, Carthage, Rome, and other places became centers where theologians arose who used Neoplatonism as the philosophical key to Christianity, sometimes achieving such a doctrinal syncretism that Harold Cherniss is able to say of Gregory of Nyssa (331-94 A.D.) That "but for some orthodox dogmas which he could not circumvent, Gregory has merely applied Christian names to Plato's doctrines and called it Christian" (*Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*, [1930], p. 62). In much the same manner, Jay Bregman in his recent studies of the Philosopher-Bishop Synesius of Cyrene (A.D. 365-414) is genuinely puzzled as to whether to call Synesius a Christian or merely a baptized Neoplatonist. The reasons for the marriage are not hard to discover. There is a great affinity between the basic conceptual structures involved in the two cases. Both Christianity, with its Judaic roots, and Neoplatonism are Absolute theories of the world, i.e. they desire all conceptions to terminate in the notion of something which is absolutely one, absolutely self-sufficient, absolutely unique and also separately a vast gulf of type-difference from anything that lacks these properties. It must not consist of elements which have any separable, independent reality from itself, though it may well have an infinity of inherent aspects or facets which have no separable or independent reality, and it must not depend on the existence of anything separable from, or outside of, itself, and there must be nothing distinct from itself which is not either an inherent aspect of

itself or something which depends wholly on its existence; i.e. it cannot exist alongside of anything else which is neither comprehended in it or dependent upon it. There must further be an infinite difference between itself and whatever is a mere aspect or dependency of itself and such a unique case of all-comprehensive unity must cover all possibilities as well as all actualities: it must accordingly be a unique, all-comprehending, indiscrete, unified, ineliminably existent being, and the only possible case of such. It must lastly be held that Christianity and Neoplatonism desire an Absolute being which will fulfill, either directly or through its dependencies, all the forms of Value and desirability which are recognized as holding for anyone and everyone, and which are in this manner absolute, and which will fulfill all these values and desirabilities in an unsurpassable, supereminent manner and degree.

Now it is plain that the ontology of Neoplatonism is wonderfully accommodated to the Judaic-Christian view of the world. It has a unique single principle on which everything in the world is wholly dependent for its being and properties, which is at once separated by an infinite gulf of difference from everything in the world, and yet endowed with cognitive and dynamic relations, or supereminent forms of such, to everything in that world. It is also ineliminable from all possible as well as from all actual situations, it embodies and incarnates all values and desirabilities that we recognize as mandatory, it has no independent first principles alongside of itself, nor contained as mere elements within itself. And, in addition to its infinite supereminence and aloofness, it has also the infinite willingness to descend into the humblest of existences, and to suffer them to participate in some attenuated excerpt from its infinitely many perfections: it is a fact of its essence to do so, and to do so freely. But in addition to fulfilling all the requirements of Judaic-Christian religiosity very adequately, it also arguably fulfills them supereminently. For the Platonic One or Good is not a supreme instance of eternal, necessary being, nor a supreme instance of Truth and Knowledge, nor a supreme instance of Dynamic Power or of integrated Unity, nor of mathematical measure and harmony nor of perfect circularity or squareness or straightness or twelve-sidedness, nor yet of Justice or Beneficence, or Self-Control, or Courage or any other form of moral excellence, but it is all these excellences *themselves*, as unified specifications of the Unity or Goodness which it itself is.

Such an entity plainly outsoars all its onesided specifications and instances in a quite supereminent manner, and yet it is not alien to or separated from them, for it is of its essence to generate them, whether in timeless or temporal fashion, and to give them all the being and intelligibility and durability and desirability that a limited species or instance can possess. We must not think of it as sitting in forlorn abstraction beyond its specifications and instantiations and cognitive recognitions and enjoyments but as alive and active in them all. As the great Proclus was later to say in his Fifth Century *Elements of Theology* it is of the essence of the Absolute to remain in itself, which constitutes its eternal (ἐνεργεῖα) to go forth from itself into derivative forms which constitute its eternal προόδος and to return to itself from all these derivative forms which constitute its ἐπιστροφή. What philosophical account of ultimate absolute Being can be more Christian? The Neoplatonic Absolute can be identified as redemptive activity, as an act of self-alienation which is also one of redemptive return to self. I am not saying that the Neoplatonists understood all the affinities of their doctrines with Christianity, but these affinities became plain to the best later Christian thinkers. I would note, further, that, while the Neoplatonic Eide and their Principles are in a sense abstract universals, having a content unaffected by the details of their species and instances, they are in another sense fully concrete, since they are inherently active and creative, and cannot be without the specifications which derive from them, and in which they live.

I can now do no more than enumerate a few of the main Christian thinkers who were also Neoplatonists. Let me first mention the great Christian Neoplatonist St. Clement of Alexandria (d. A.D. 215) who turned the Incarnate Logos into a Hierophant as well as a Saviour, and who saw the final goal of psychic life in a Rest in God's All-in-allness where even unity is transcended. I shall also mention Origen, the author of a *Principles*, which starts with a Good-itself or Primal Depth, and then descends to a second God or Logos who fills those depths with the superabundant Eide and with many thinking minds. I may also mention Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394) for a second time, who Neoplatonically conceives the wholly indefinite, unspecific, simple First Principle which ramifies into an indefinitely differentiated Logos on which the real world depends. More eminent than any of these Christian Neoplatonists

is Augustine (d. 430) who teaches that God is beyond all categorization: like certain very superior French hotels He is *hors catégorie*, above category. He is good without having a quality, great without having a quantity, everlasting without having a time, simply substantial without being a substance, omnipresent without occupying a place, and the source of all intelligibility and truth without being either.

Another very fascinating Christian Neoplatonist was the pseudo Dionysius, or Denis, a sixth-century monk who stole his name from a contemporary of St. Paul who is mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and also stole a great deal of the content of his work on Mystical Theology from the theological writings of the great Athenian Neoplatonist Proclus. Dionysius the Areopagite communicated Neoplatonic ideas to all the medieval philosophers, including Aquinas: one who had heard St. Paul could hardly be in error. I myself think that his work has great brilliance and truth and proves that Providence is willing to work through frauds as well as through honest men.

Another great medieval thinker that was much indebted to Denis is the ninth century John Scotus Erigena. And the great Anselm who devised the Ontological Proof conceived of God in a thoroughly Neoplatonic way, as being Perfection Itself rather than as a supreme instance of perfection. Neoplatonically interpreted, his famous Proof is quite valid. And Aquinas, who at a later date almost always speaks slightly of Plato, and takes over all the banal Aristotelian criticisms, also is manifestly Platonic at many points: that in God Essence and Existence coincide means that God's existence is that of a Platonic Eidos, and that He is the Perfection in which all things inadequately participate rather than a super-perfect individual who just happens to have created everything. I am, however, too timorous to venture far into Thomistic interpretation. My admiration for Thomas is however of the highest. In Post-Renaissance times there has always been a strong vein of Platonism somewhere in philosophy. I should like to say, however, that I consider Hegel as in many respects a dynamic Platonist: many people fail to understand him because they fail to grasp his belief in universals as *essentially active*, and both self-specifying and self-instantiating. And I should also like to stress the essential Platonism of Frege and Russell in their interpretations of mathematics. Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*

is a work that Plato and Proclus would both have understood and admired. Some of Moore's earlier work is also very platonic, as is also that of Alexius Meinong, one of the philosophers on whom I first studiously concentrated.

Modern analysis has been little interested in the ontological profundities of Platonism and Neoplatonism: they have read Plato in the light of Socratic dialectic and of Aristotelian misrepresentation. I would like to change all that. Neoplatonism represents a legitimate development of Platonism, and both are immense speculative world-views which have the greatest relevance for the modern philosophy of Science and for the theology and philosophy of the Christian and other religions.

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## **Does Neoplatonism have Anything to Say to Post-Modern Spirituality?**

**Paulos Mar Gregorios**

Before I make some preliminary clarifications about my topic, I want to use this occasion to pay my high tribute to one who has striven ceaselessly and tirelessly to make the rich treasures of Neoplatonism open and available to those interested. For a quarter of a century, even before founding the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies in May 1973 at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Kentucky, our friend and leader Prof. R Baine Harris has been convoking conferences and putting out publications on the heritage of Neoplatonism. I am grateful for the privilege of working with him in this noble cause, and of learning from the Neoplatonism scholars of the English speaking world.

### **I. Theoria and Theurgia**

My preliminary remarks about the topic have first to deal with a distinction I make for my own understanding between Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism. The two are divided by such an important feature that I am reluctant to put, for example, Plotinus and Iamblichus in the same basket. The dividing line is Theurgy. Even Plotinus and Porphyry did not have identical views about Theurgy. Porphyry, along with Iamblichus, Proclus and many others not only made free use of Theurgy in their theory and practice, but also developed the theurgical line in a way Plotinus would not have approved. Apart from Augustine, it is Theurgic Neoplatonism and not the Plotinian variety that has been most influential in the Western Tradition. Up to the time of the European Enlightenment, it was Proclus and Iamblichus, rather than Plotinus' non-theurgic Neoplatonism that was at the centre of the European University curriculum.

Let me say a gentle word about Theurgy at this point. Most academic scholars of the West are somewhat allergic to Theurgy, quite understandably. It smacks, in their "scientific" view, of the magico-religious hocus pocus of an infantile humanity which the European Enlightenment and its rationality had finally learned to leave behind in the modern scientific era. Modern Science, in the minds of most of its practitioners, is diametrically opposed to magic and ritual, and would have no concourse with it. They think that magic and ritual are the main superstitions of an un-adult humanity, which they have managed to overcome finally by scientific rationality.

The fact of the matter is this: the view that magic and ritual are without any basis in reality and therefore ineffective, constitutes one of the arrant superstitions of the modern era and its modern science, for which it has absolutely no scientific basis. No understanding of the human tradition seems to the present writer to be anywhere near the truth which holds this superstition of modern science. Whether you are Modern or Post-Modern, you have no option but to recognize that humanity has for the most part of its civilised life found more meaning and fulfilment in significant ritual action, than in the kind of rationality represented by the Modern Science of yesterday and today.

I want only to make that point rather emphatic. If the Modern and Post-Modern Culture of the West and the educated elite of the world want to seek redemption, the first thing they have to do is to go beyond the Modern to seek a deeper understanding of Theurgy in general and of the practices of Theurgy, Tantra, *Puja* and Liturgy in all of the religions of the world. The academic's big mistake, because of an addiction to written elements, concepts, ideas and dogmas, is to seek to understand the spiritual heritage of humanity, divorced from the cultic-ritual element integrally woven into it. The anti-cultic animus of modern scholarship has no philosophical basis, but is a reprehensible and unjustified prejudice inherited from the European Enlightenment and its repudiation of all Tradition, including the so-called religious tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Plotinus held that *Theoria* was the only available means for the Vision of the Divine at its highest level. He opposed *Theurgia* as an alternative to *Theoria*. Not that he did not know what *Theurgia* meant. Porphyry tells us (*vita Plot.* 10) of Plotinus' experience with the Egyptian priest who in Rome offered to show him

(Plotinus) a visible manifestation of the high and noble companion spirit who indwelt Plotinus. Plotinus agreed, and went with others to the Egyptian Temple of Isis in Rome, the only pure or holy place (τόπος καθαρός) in Rome, according to the Egyptian. If Plotinus had no interest in Theurgy, he would not have gone to the Iseum.

In the Iseum, we are told, "at the summons for that *daimon* to manifest itself, a Divinity, not of the rank of the *daimons*, appeared (θεὸν ἐλθεῖν καὶ μὴ τοῦ δαίμονος εἶναι γένος); the Egyptian said: 'Blessed are you, for you have a god and not a subordinate *daimon* for your companion spirit.'"

Obviously this invoking and manifestation of a "god" or "daimon" in the pure temple of Isis in Rome was a theurgical act, involving ritual and sacrifice. The statement of Porphyry about the priest's assistant holding firmly to some birds, which he in his excitement strangled in order to prevent their escape, also confirms the "magico-religious" or theurgical character of the act. Porphyry also tells us that Plotinus regularly and faithfully offered sacrifices on the birthdays of Plato and Socrates. Not the way a Modern or Post-Modern academic or literary writer would celebrate anyone's birthday! We can respectfully ascribe to Professor Armstrong's post-Enlightenment quasi-racist and nearly scientific prejudice, his most biased footnote about this experience of Plotinus in the Iseum having nothing to do with theurgy!

Porphyry also tells us (*vita* 10) that Plotinus actually experienced the black magic practised by his rival/enemy, Olympius the Alexandrian, and felt his limbs convulsing and his body shriveling like "a money-bag pulled tight."

Plotinus' treatise "On our Allotted Guardian Spirit" (III:4—Περὶ τοῦ εἰληχότου ἡμᾶς δαίμονος) explains how this magico-religious ritual and theurgy work: the principle is the interconnectedness of all things in time-space, transmigration of souls being only one of the manifestations of this principle of interconnectedness of all things.

Of those souls in the upper world, some are in the visible region and some outside. Those then, in the visible region are in the sun or in another of the moving stars, and some of them in the sphere of the fixed stars, each according to his rational activity here (ἐκάστη καθ' ὃ λογικῶς ἐνήργησεν ἐνταῦθα). For one must think that there is a κόσμος in our soul, not merely of the intelligible order, but also set up on the form analogous to the soul of the κόσμος; therefore, that just



as the soul of the kosmos is also distributed among the movable and fixed stars according to the variations of its powers, our souls are likewise of the similar form as the all-soul: there is an activity or operation proceeding from each of these powers (in the all-soul as well as in individual soul).

This indeed is the general principle of all magico-religious or ritual-theurgical activity; also from the same source of inspiration is Karl Gustaf Jung's concept of *Synchronicity* which he uses to justify the predictive powers of the Chinese *I Ching*. Moderns and Post-moderns will do well to come to terms with this principle of universal inter-connectedness, in which the human is integrally placed. They would also do well to shed their Enlightenment prejudices against ritual and theurgy and liturgy. These are the symbolic acts that have sustained humanity throughout millennia.

Plotinus knew and experienced Theurgia; but he preferred Theoria as the superior way of Ascent to the Divine. Very few of later Neoplatonists were faithful to this Plotinian prejudice. They themselves practised Theurgia and advocated it. In the history of humanity, *theoria* is the way of the elite, open only to the privileged intellectual aristocracy; the way of the people in all cultures (e.g. the *Bhakti* religions or cults of India) has been *theurgeia* rather than *theoria*. We should keep in mind the caveat that the main reason why post-modern or Aquarian or New Age spirituality is not going to work in the long run, is its overemphasis on *theoria* or "meditation" and its aversion to a deeper kind of knowledge and to cultic experience in general.

Whatever Plotinus might himself have held, it is incontestable that nearly the whole of Neoplatonism is saturated with Theurgy, though Theoria is seldom absent. It is one of the major weaknesses of recent Neoplatonic studies that we have given more prominence to *theoria* than to *theurgia* in our understanding of Neoplatonism. It seems there is a serious lesson here to be learned by those seeking any kind of spirituality that fits the needs of humanity today. *Theoria* may be the special interest of academics; but genuine religion of the people has always been more *theurgia* than *theoria*.<sup>2</sup>

## II. What Constitutes "Modern" and What is Post-Modern?

My second preliminary remark has to do with the content of concepts and movements like "Modern" and "Postmodern."

In order to come to terms with post-modern spirituality we need to know something about the word Modern with or without the prefix "post-" attached to it. Of all those who have written extensively on what constitutes the Modern, Max Weber comes closest to verisimilitude. Unlike less philosophically oriented sociologists like Peter Berger (*Facing up to Modernity*, New York, 1977,) who suggested five phenomena characteristic of Modernity namely Abstraction, Futurity, Individualism, Liberation and Secularisation—Max Weber identified the crux of Modernity in a single phenomenon which occurred during the European Enlightenment—a process which spanned the two centuries from about 1780 to the end of the second World War.

According to Max Weber, cultural modernity has as its central feature, the shift from religion to human rationality, as the unifying framework for integrating our experience of the sum total of reality. Rationality in this context does not mean the largely skill oriented technological or instrumental reason (and science as the foundation for it), but ontological reason, or as Max Weber calls it, "substantive reason," previously expressed in religion and metaphysics. It is this "substantive reason" split into three autonomous regions—Science, Morality and Art—that now takes over from religion, metaphysics and tradition, the function of an integrating framework for all human experience. This is best illustrated by Immanuel Kant's three critiques of Pure Reason, Practical Reason and Judgment.

I would qualify Max Weber's basically correct intuition, and put forward my own intuition of the basic characteristic of the Modern this way: To be modern is primarily to affirm the freedom, autonomy and sovereignty of the human person; hence, secondarily, to be modern is to repudiate totally all external authority—of God or Creator, of religion or revelation, of tradition or metaphysics, so that the human person acknowledges no authority outside of his/her own rationality. Thus, for "Modern Man," the autonomy and sovereignty of the human person is based squarely, not on any religious or divine mandate coming from outside oneself, but strictly by virtue of the fact that the mature human being is self-

sufficient, sovereign and free to act on the authority of his or her own reason alone. And there is no judge above human reason; if it is to be questioned or criticised, it can be only by reason alone. Nothing in the past is normative until examined and appropriated by critical human reason.

"Modern" means affirming the human reason as finally normative for all knowledge, all morality and all art and philosophy, as also for the political economy. If there has to be religion, it has to be, as Kant titled one of his works: *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. *There is nothing higher than the human which lays down norms for action or source for knowledge*. The human being owes his/her being to no one else, is responsible to no Transcendent Agency, but is totally autonomous, and lays down norms by oneself, without the help of any external Agency or Authority. And nothing of the past (Tradition, including mythology, religion, theology, metaphysics, epics and sagas, scriptures), holds authority for human beings until fully tested by critical rationality and appropriated by that critical rationality. In politics too, modern man is a legislator who in his/her freedom can lay down laws for themselves, but will not submit oneself to laws which other people make. Private property, and an independent means of subsistence, are essential for that freedom; without these one would be dependent on others.

Modernity affirms that humanity has become adult now, and should repudiate all that belongs to its childhood and adolescence: cult and worship, priesthood and sacrifice, ritual and dogma, religion and metaphysics. Only Modern Science and the technology based on it can provide "positive knowledge."

The Post-Modern stays on the ground of the basic affirmation of human autonomy and self-sufficiency characteristic of Modernity, but repudiates Modernity's confidence in critical rationality to grasp the truth, and denies the capacity of logic, language and discourse to master the truth and to express it. Positivism and Structuralism, both eminently French in origin, for example, were over-sanguine about the capacity of the human mind to capture the truth in discourse and language. Deconstruction showed the limits of discourse and logic—Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, and a host of others, mostly from the French intellectual avant-garde, made that clear.

Post-modern does not repudiate the modern as such. As Jean-Francois Lyotard would put it, "The whole idea of postmodernism is perhaps better rethought under the rubric of 'rewriting modernity'." ("Reecrire la modernite" in *L'Inhumain*, Galilee', Paris 1988, pp. 33–34).

Post-modern is a self-correction that happens within the Modern, not opposed to it. It is as much a child of the European Enlightenment as the Modern is. Its distinctiveness is in its repudiation of the power of language, logic and discourse to present the Truth. It offers no norms, certainly not critical rationality, epistemology or system. It offers no definition of either itself or of anything else. It prefers a shift from the pure reason, to imagination and fantasy. It revolts against the tyranny of the European Enlightenment and its freedom-destroying rationality. It advocates less rational-Apollonian, more libidinous-Dionysian, less rule-bound, more non-repressive creativity—in art and architecture, in literature and drama, as well as in thought and expression of every kind. But it stays within the perimeter of the Modern in its basic approach—hardly sensitive to anything non-European, be it the plight of the poor or the menacing growth of injustice in the world, for which the European civilisation is largely responsible. It continues the typical European disdain for non-European cultures as unadult and immature; though occasionally it spots a bit of savour in Nagarjuna or Tao-Te and expresses its own judgment about it. Post-modern is European-White to the core, though feminists and non-Whites often resort to it for support.

### III. And What Is Post-Modern Spirituality?

As far as I know, no particular spiritual movement calls itself by the name "Post-modern Spirituality." What seems to be in vogue is a general trend which has some of the marks of Post-modernity. Some of these marks can be specified:

- a. movement away from all traditional organized religion;
- b. a conception of the universe as permeated by Divine energy, but no belief in a personal God;

- c. an aversion to all ritual and formal worship;
- d. individual choice of meditational techniques and spiritual disciplines;
- e. while disavowing all dogma, still holding to some dogmatic affirmations about the nature of the Soul, the nature of the Universe, and the way to self-realisation or fulfilment;
- f. a general sense that one's own spiritual practice is superior to and supercedes all traditional religious practices of the past.
- g. a general pretension to repudiate all external authority, except perhaps that of a living Master.

This list is by no means meant to be exhaustive, but then post-modernity's characteristic feature is to avoid exhaustive lists, precise definitions, and theoretical systematicness. Post-modern spirituality repudiates all authoritative or normative tradition, makes the individual person the final arbiter of the spirituality he/she would follow, and moves away from science and rationality to intuition, insight and inner illumination. As a revolt from the misuses of traditional religion, post-modern spirituality serves a major didactic function. But as a claimant to the status of the latest universal religion, its drawbacks seem to be many.

#### IV. The Relevance Of Neoplatonism: Positive And Negative

Let us first list some positive orientations that current or non-traditional or post-modern spirituality can receive from the rich Neoplatonic heritage, which Europe so proudly, though not quite honestly, acknowledges to be its own (without a trace of Oriental influence, according to some). In a modern or post-modern world, where Neoplatonism is also rejected as a relic of the repudiated past or the adolescence of European humanity, it will be wise to pay attention to what R.T. Wallis says about the scope of its influence:

A survey of Neoplatonism's influence threatens to become little less than a cultural history of Europe and the Near East down to the Renaissance, and on some points, far beyond. The reason this has not always been recognized is that that influence was often indirect. (*Neoplatonism*, ch. 6, p. 160.)

To me it seems that the best route for Europeans to get out of the cultural bind in which the "tyranny" (Horkheimer-Adorno) of the European Enlightenment has held the Western academic-literary mind prisoner for the past hundred or more years, would be through Neoplatonism first, and then through the World Religions. Neoplatonism, even if not one hundred per cent European, has such a substantial affinity with the pre-Enlightenment European mind, that it can, of course with some effort, but rather easily and without strain, be refamiliarised by that mind.

#### 1. On the Question of the Authority of Tradition

It is one of the follies of the European Enlightenment that it arrogated to itself a non-existent capacity to do without any dependence on Tradition. Hans-Georg Gadamer (*Truth and Method*) and the Hermeneutic School have helped us see clearly how Tradition is the very essence of Science itself, and how no human reflection is possible without Tradition which is an essential element in the shaping of all human minds (*Wirkungsgeschichte*, or the effective history and development of the perceiving mind).

Plotinus, who is rational and discursive in his thinking, is heavily dependent on the Tradition—particularly the Pythagorean-Platonic Tradition. It is because he already knows the truth from the Tradition that he can direct his logic to the fore-known conclusion. Without Plato's authority Plotinus did not seek to function at all.

This combination of heavy dependence on a particular tradition, and the rigorous use of logic to establish its tenets, is what Moderns and Post-Moderns will have to learn. But this means a basic repudiation of the very basis of Modernity and Post-Modernity, namely the refusal to depend on Tradition.

I know of no modern or post-modern spirituality which is not heavily dependent on one tradition or another. It may be the ancient Gnostic Tradition or its modern variants like Theosophy and Anthroposophy; it may be an eclectic amalgam culled from Ancient Yogasastras and Bhakti cult practices; it may be Buddhist

Vipassana or Spanish Mysticism—some element of tradition is bound to be there.

I believe the time has come for Moderns and Post-Moderns to shed their hypocritical pretension not to depend on tradition at all; that is physically impossible, and if they recognize that fact, they will be freer to explore the many traditions of the rich heritage of global humanity and to benefit from such exploration to arrive at a more balanced spirituality. On the question of combining Tradition and Rationality, Neoplatonism offers a first-class model.

## 2. Excessive Reliance on Language, Logic and Discourse.

We should be grateful to the Post-Moderns for having burst one of the big balloons of the pretension of Moderns—the totally foolish idea that we as human subjects can stand outside of reality and view it objectively, “perceiving reality as it actually is.” This is the totally unscientific idea on which modern science was originally based. Today intelligent scientific thinkers would make no such tall claim.

They know that scientific truth is based on inductive reasoning, i.e. arguing from a finite number of experiences under certain given conditions to make a universal “law of nature” statement. New evidence, or new reasoning can always call in question any established truth. Nothing in science is finally proved.

Neither is scientific knowledge non-subjectively objective, as it once thought itself to be. For no perception is possible without subjectivity; the perceiver shapes with one’s sense equipment and mental structure, the perceived object; the observer is thus inescapably part of the observed. What things are “in themselves,” no known mind can perceive.

Michel Foucault in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* accused French Structuralism, and by implication modern science, of a false pursuit of objectivity in discourse. “Discourse is not life” as he says in his concluding paragraph. “Words” and “things”—*Les Mots et les Choses*—are not the same. This “Subject-centered Reason” of Modernity has turned out to be destructive of the human, and Science leads to “oblivion of Being,” as Heidegger argued. Jacques Derrida continues Heidegger’s “philosophical mysticism” and exposes the general unreliability of the written word, and even the spoken word of which it is a symbol. Derrida draws our attention to *Sinn* or “Meaning” which lies beyond and behind all discourse,

written or uttered. And Science has no access to the realm of meaning; it remains at the level of operational truth.

Well, if Moderns had paid some attention to Plotinus, they could have avoided the pitfalls of over-reliance on language and logic and discourse. The Moderns were carried away by a false assumption that language, logic and rationality are what distinguishes humans from animals, and therefore that these constitute the essence of the human. As Plotinus would put it:

Discursive reasoning (λογισμός) is from here below (ἐνταῦθα). It comes to the ψυχή when the soul-body is already in ἀπόρια or unable to see through, and is laden with anxiety and perplexity, in a state of asthenia or powerlessness. (*Enneads* IV:3:18.)

λογισμός or discursive reasoning does not come from the Nous. It comes from our perplexities as we are caught in the web of this world. There, in the Transcendent realm of the νοῦς, there is neither language nor speech, neither logic nor discursive reasoning (IV:3:19):

Neither, in my view, do they need to use speech or voice (οὐδὲ δὴ φωναῖς χρῆσθαι) in that noetic existence, even when having bodies in heaven, they would have no need of speech or discussion of debatable issues like down here. They perform each thing in proper order, according to nature, not giving orders or taking counsel; they would intuitively grasp all mutual communication...before one speaks to another, the latter knows it already.

All classical traditions have known that words and sentences have no capacity to grasp the truth or to express it adequately. In the Modern West there is an obsessive running after grasping the truth and expressing it in word and concept. If the West is on the look-out for a post-modern spirituality, it should go one step beyond the post-Moderns and recognize that word and concept are useful only operationally and perhaps also to point to the truth, but not to grasp it or present it. Post-modernism’s pursuit of the impossible—the vain struggle for conceptually grasping and verbally or by other symbols presenting the Unpresentable—would have been comic were not its results disastrously harmful to humanity.

Neoplatonism holds that the essence of the human is not in linguistic ability or logical skill, and escapes the error of focussing on words and names. Moderns and Post-moderns will do well to pay attention to this ancient insight of the human race.<sup>3</sup>

### V. The Proper Identification and Location of the Human Psyche

Plotinus had a very subtle and sophisticated idea of the human Psyche, which is worth paying attention to, whether you are Modern, Post-Modern or something else. Today when all psychological theory lies in shambles, it is useful to go through Plotinus on this point.

a. It is not the case, in Plotinus, that the soul or psyche is something which human beings "have," as if it were a thing or some property which they own. Neither is the soul a simple substance, like other intelligibles (IV:3:9). The ψυχή or Soul is neither a body (σῶμα οὐδέν—IV:7:2), nor a harmony of non-corporeal entities (οὐδ' ἐν ἄσωμάτοις αὐ ἁρμονίαν); neither is it an entelechy as Aristotle tried to depict it (IV:7:8).

b. Neither does the body-soul composite constitute the human being. The body is not essential to the human being, but a sort of sense-organ of the Psyche, which it forms for itself as it comes into "this" world. The soul is in itself totally free of body—ψυχή καθαρὰ οὐσα σώματος πάντη ἴσχει περὶ αὐτὴν σώματος φύσιν (IV:3:9).

c. The Psyche, not only is not a body, but it does not come out of the noetic realm into a place already existing in the nether world; but as it comes forth it also creates its own place, which did not exist before. (IV:3:9, line 21ff).

d. Plotinus divides the universe into two realms: the one, of things sensible, divisible, dispersible (αἰσθητά, μεριστά, καίσκειαστά), where no part is whole, no part is identical with another, and the part is always less than the whole; in this realm, things have magnitude (μέγεθος) or mass (ὄγκος); each

part occupies its own place, none can be everywhere at once; the Psyche does not belong to this realm, which seems to be the object of study of modern science (measurable masses and magnitudes). The second, opposed to this, is totally incapable of division (οὐδαμῇ μερισμὸν δεχομένη), no parts, not partible (ἀμερῆς τε καὶ ἀμέριστος), no extendedness in space, (διάστημα οὐδέν), not conceptualisable (οὐδέν δι' ἐπινόιας δεχομένη); no parts, no need of place to exist, not located in any other being partwise or wholewise; it rides on all beings at once, always having its being in itself.

The Psyche before its descent into the world, was of this realm. But in its descent, the Psyche becomes a third category of being, simultaneously divisible and indivisible, in order to be able to give form to different bodies. Quoting Plato's *Timaeus* 35A 1-4, where he says that the Demiourgos "mixed a third form of being from both, from the indivisible which is always in the same state, and that which becomes divisible in the sphere of bodies," Plotinus posits a third realm of being to which the embodied soul, or rather the ensouled body, belongs. (ἢ δ' ὁμοῦ μεριστῇ τε καὶ ἀμέριστος φύσιν, ἣν δὲ ψυχὴν εἶναι φασί). The soul is divine (θεῖον) and marvelous (θαυμαστόν), something superior to other things (καὶ τῶν ὑπὲρ τὰ χρήματα φύσεων) (IV:1(2)1).

e. Souls are thus one any many at the same time; in its original noetic existence, it is only one; in its bodily existence the one Psyche becomes many. The embodied Soul thus becomes an intermediary between the primal/indivisible and the divisible/corporeal. Its true home is in the κόσμος νοητός, and *theonous* is the noblest of the beings in this realm; the Soul also truly belongs to this κόσμος νοητός, where the *Nous* presides.

f. This universe of ours, formed by the All-Soul,—this τοῦ παντός ψυχῇ was always there when the universe was—is a sort of beautiful and richly furnished house (οἶκος τις καλὸς καὶ ποικίλος), not entirely cut off from the All-Soul, but not sharing its nature (οὐδ' αὐ ἐκοίνωσεν αὐτὸν αὐτῇ). The human soul, coming into this beautiful universe, makes alive that which is not alive by itself, lending it life and a vehicle or ὄχημα for that life.

Whether we agree with Plotinus' depiction of the soul or not, we have to concede that it is a rather original and noble conception. It is far more sophisticated a notion of the human psyche than Freud, for example, gave us. Of course, the post-moderns have given up on Freud, as they ought to have from the beginning. But do post-Moderns have a notion of the human psyche? Not only do they not have one of their own, but they would question the legitimacy of any other conception of the psyche.

This is a special characteristic of the Western intellectual tradition as it comes out of the Enlightenment and its frantic quest for objective and verifiable reality. The western tradition has oscillated between the two opposed possibilities of grounding certainty in the objective, and seeking personal-existential truth in the subjective. After the Deconstructionist experience, most post-moderns would admit that there is no way of grounding the truth either in the objective or in the subjective. The subject, or psyche, as the reliable ground of truth-certainty, does not work. Post-moderns therefore disdain any attempt to grasp truth and ground its certainty in the subjective psyche. Where else should they ground it? The answer is—nowhere. It is a counsel of despair, of total frustration in the intellectual quest for truth, a stifled cry of agony and a refusal to look to the Tradition or to the Transcendent for some light.

It is in this context that the locating of the Psyche in Neoplatonism becomes particularly relevant for Western man. After all Neoplatonism boldly (but without basis), claims to be a pure European creation. Then why not become acquainted with the Neoplatonist tradition before rejecting it? Maybe there are indications in that tradition as to what kind of a gestalt of the human psyche they should generally adopt; for it is impossible to get along without one; if one does not consciously adopt a working gestalt of the human psyche, one is bound to be found operating on the basis simply of unexamined notions.

#### VI. Towards A Conclusion:

#### *The Plotinian Gestalt of the Human Psyche as a possible Guide to Our Thinking and Our Spirituality Today*

This brief paper can only point to some of the features of the Plotinian depiction of the human psyche, which could be useful in fundamentally revising some of the Modern conceptions and Post-modern non-conceptions about the nature of the human psyche.

a. The human psyche or soul is a double entity, on the one hand participating in the world of things by animating the inanimate, by giving life to that which is not alive, and thus creating life and self-propelled thought and movement in this world; on the other hand, it is a sort of alien in this world with its true home in another realm, the world where the *Nous* holds everything together in perfect unity. The human psyche thus is a native of the κόσμος νοητός, temporarily sojourning in the world of things by taking a body as its sense organ for this world, so to speak, while at the same time seeking a repatriation to its home country.

Moderns would do well to abandon their simplistic notions of the human soul as a pure native of this world, concerned only about the world of things, as revealed by science and made manipulable by technology. Once this transcendent dimension of the human soul is recognized, it becomes possible for modern civilisation to see how superficial and trivial, despite their gigantic and seemingly impressive achievements, modern science and the technology based on it are—dealing only with the things that pertain to the lower side of the human psyche. Marx's "instrumental reason," which creates only the physical and social sciences, all based on a denial of transcendence, can only deal with this world-manipulating aspect of human reason and existence. What Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno of the Frankfurt School called "ontological reason" is the better part of the human psyche; its quest and questions find no response in science and technology. If Moderns or Post-moderns really recognize this fact, their approach to knowledge and wisdom would be radically revolutionised.

b. The human psyche is not "located" in the body as if in a place; the soul has neither measurement nor magnitude, mass or volume and it does not occupy and space (IV:3:9 ff). It does not, in part or as a whole, "reside in the body" (IV:3:20). Soul is not, for Plotinus, present in something as, for example, form (εἶδος) in matter (ὑλη). Because by definition form in matter is inseparable from it; the soul is separable from the body. Plotinus dissociates himself not only from the Thomistic line almost identifying the human psyche with the human intellect; he goes further to deny even Plato's dictum in *Timaeus* 44D-E that the human intelligence was located in the head.

The present understanding of Moderns about the body-soul relationship is too naive—as a simple set of coexisting realities, mutually interpenetrating. The psyche in Plotinus is more tangential to the body, using the body as its instrument or ὄργανον. (πᾶν τὸ σῶμα ὄργανον τῇ ψυχῇ εἶναι IV.3.23,8–9). The Unity of all souls, undivided and indivisible, and yet appearing partitioned in bodies, is something to which Moderns should pay some pointed attention. As Plato's Socrates says in *Republic* Bk VI (498c ff):

They have never seen that of which we are now speaking realized; they have seen only a conventional imitation of philosophy, consisting of words artificially brought together, not like ours with a natural consistency and unity...by every means in their power seeking after the truth for the sake of knowledge,...they look coldly on the subtleties of controversy, of which the end is opinion and strife.

It is this Socratic wisdom that moderns and post-moderns lack; their thought always ends up in opinion and strife, but not in the wisdom of Truth experienced. Socrates speaks in *Meno* 99–100 about the gift of virtue as "an instinct given by God to the virtuous...not accompanied by reason." It is learned only by discipline and not necessarily by knowledge; it is that quest to which Plotinus referred in his famous last words as cited by Porphyry (*Vita* 2:26–27) to seek to lead the in-you God to the in-all God.

*Plotinus sees the human Psyche as in itself Transcendent, having dimensions that go far beyond the body into the Whole. He also locates it, not as a stationary entity born in this world and resident here, but as in the middle of a process. As Proclus later*

*was to put it more clearly, the human Soul in its original existence, remains unmoved, abiding in the Principium, the μονή as he calls it—i.e. Plotinus' undivided, indivisible, timeless, spaceless, τό ἐν; from there it proceeds to the Nous and to the Psyche in a πρόοδος, only to find its way back home through the ἐπιστροφή or the Return to Source. The Soul is thus a migrant from the One, seeking its return to the Same One. In that process, the descended soul uses the body as its sense-instrument in this world.*

For Plotinus, the Soul has three dimensions as he puts it in his treatise *Against the Gnostics* (II:9:2):

Of our Soul, part is eternally with those, part with these, and in between a part in the middle (ψυχῆς δὲ ἡμῶν τὸ μὲν αἰεὶ πρὸς ἐκείνοις, τὸ δὲ πρὸς ταῦτα ἔχειν, τὸ δ' ἐν μέσῳ τούτων).

The middle part is the διάνοια or "mentation through," moving beyond the world of sense-experience or αἰσθήσις. That is Ontological Reason, trying to break through sense experience to the beyond. This dianoa is above the aesthetic, but below the nous, the middle aspect of our *psyche* (V:3:3 ff—χείρονος μὲν τῆς αἰσθήσεως, βελτίονος δὲ τοῦ νοῦ, I.39–40).

It is this aspect of the Soul's origin and descent by πρόοδος from the Beyond, and the disciplined journey or ἐπιστροφή to the Beyond, breaking through all academic niceties and literary flourish, that no post-modern or Modern Spirituality can afford to neglect or overlook. In reflecting on that principal aspect of the Soul, Neoplatonism, at least for the West, can be a helpful guide. Provided, of course that our Neoplatonism studies give more importance to Neoplatonic discipline and theurgy, than to doctrinal subtleties. The great task is to wake up from our dreams and illusions, to shed false notions about reason's omniscience, to realize in actuality one's own true being in the One.

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#### NOTES

1. None of the Ancient Civilisations, Indian, Chinese or Greek made the distinction, which the children of the Enlightenment seem to take for granted, between "religion" and "philosophy." The distinction did not begin in the Modern Period, but can be attributed to one of the most

pernicious dualisms with which Thomistic thought has operated—that between “natural philosophy” to be studied by the unaided human reason on the one hand, and on the other “theology” or “revealed religion” which can only be “supernaturally” given to human beings. Such a distinction between two realms, one natural and the other supernatural, between “Nature” and “Grace,” between “philosophy” and “theology” is alien to Greek thought, as well as to pre-Thomistic systems in the West. No such distinction, not even the concept “supernatural,” can be traced in the Eastern Classical Patristic thought. It was the European Enlightenment that went further than Thomistic thought in repudiating something they themselves created, called “religion” as one department of life, as belonging to the infancy of humanity. Neoplatonism did not make such a distinction between εὐσεβεία and φιλοσοφία.

2. Theurgia as a Greek notion, has its parallels in other religions. The most noteworthy is one of the many “isms” which the Nineteenth Century’s Enlightenment fictitiously created—labeled *Tantrism*. In India, we have no such “ism” or its equivalent; it is a pure western creation; what we have is a *Tantrasastra*, which means the teaching of the *tantras*. Tantra in Sanskrit is a warp or loom; it came to mean all kinds of manuals and treatises, especially in the *avaidika* or non-Vedic tradition. The Jains call it *Mantrasastra* or the science of achieving results through sacrificial or cultic mantras or incantations. My own definition of Mantra or Tantra is “ritual-cultic use of the human and divine will and word to bend cosmic energy or *sakti* to the attainment of one’s chosen ends.” This is the major part of people’s religion in India—be it Saivite or Vaishnavite, Buddhist or Jain, Vedic or Upanisadic, Purva Mimamsa or Uttara Mimamsa, Aranyakas or Brahmanas, or even a treatise on Temple Architecture or on the Healing Arts. Yoga, Kundalini, and Mandalas all belong to this Mantra-Tantra; there is no separable aspect of Indian or Tibetan Religion which can be labeled *Tantrism* as western scholars misleadingly argue.
3. Perfect Logic and total Omniscience are not available even to the gods, as Alexander Aphrodisias taught, developing an Aristotelian doctrine. True and false are accidental and not absolute properties of statements. On this see Mario Mignucci (University of Padua), “Logic and Omniscience: Alexander of Aphrodisias and Proclus” in Julia Annas (ed), *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. III, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1985 pp. 219–246.

## Neoplatonism and Contemporary Theories of Mysticism

Parviz Morewedge

### I. Platonic and Neoplatonic Sources of Mysticism

While many contemporary scholars observe an essential link between Neoplatonism and mysticism (both monistic and theistic types) they disagree on compatibility between monism and theism. This study proffers a new refinement of monistic mysticism attempting to clarify mystical dimensions of Neoplatonism as a specific category of non-theistic monism.<sup>1</sup>

The search for the begetter of mysticism is brief. Most investigators point to Platonism—of all forms, especially its Neoplatonic variations—as begetter of mysticism in the West and the Near East. Take a typical notion: the notion of the “mystics’ way,” the very core of the so-called “Self-realization ethics.” R. Otto, who expresses the views of many, does not take mysticism as a metaphysics but as a doctrine of salvation characterized by “the inward way,” and “the way of unity.”<sup>2</sup> Otto’s claim is corroborated by the concept of the way (*ṭarīqa*) in Islamic mystical (sufic) literature; the mystic is referred to as the traveler (*sālik*, of the mystical path); mysticism is a series of phenomenological transformations through the stations (*maqāmāt*, due to external efforts) and the intentional state (*ahwāl*, due to degrees of authentic exposures). In sufism, gnosis (*maʿrifa*) is explained not in terms of knowledge (*ʿilm*) of concepts nor sense data, but a series of revelations (*kashfah*) where the mystic’s entire world-perspective is sequentially modified until mystical union is achieved. What is the source of this doctrine? Without postulating causal connections, one observes two prototypes of this sense of knowledge in the Platonic corpus: “the allegory of the cave,” in the *Republic* (514 A–521 B) and as D. E. Anderson has observed, the ladder of ascent in the *Symposium* (209 E–212 C).<sup>3</sup> Note the generic use of



"mysticism" in our discussion, which includes but extends beyond "theistic," types of mysticism. Classical scholars of Plato agree. In this tenor, F. M. Cornford takes Plato's demiurge not as the object of worship, the God of the Bible, or a religious figure. Cornford sees "no justification for the suggestion, conveyed by 'God,' with the capital letter, that Plato was a monotheist." J. Burnet agrees: "We must not assume...that Plato meant by God what a modern theist would mean...he is a Mind (*voûs*)...but not the supreme being," as God cannot be identified with the Good which is a form and not a soul. Plato's work as the prototype of the framework for meta-mysticism is upheld by a large number of "the friends of the forms," and they come in every nationality—from al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191) who refers to the Divine Plato to A. N. Whitehead (d. 1947) who saw all subsequent philosophy as a series of footnotes to Plato's texts. But it is Plotinus who is regarded as the major philosopher of mysticism. Plato is the seed; Plotinus is the flower. Plato's corpus is pregnant with many mystical notions, but it is in the *Enneads* where Plotinus gives birth to many of them and raises them as sturdy offspring.

Let me point to another central doctrine of mysticism, that is the Absolute (*haqq-I muflaq*). Plato's ultimate beings are: the normative Form of the Good (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*) (cf., *Republic* 508 C–509 B) who begets other forms and the demiurge (*δημιουργός*) (cf., *Timaeus* 30 C–31 B), the maker of the universe as a living thing and the craftsman-artist in the cosmogony. Instead of these, the Plotinian system has a single Absolute One (*τὸ ἓν*) which is both the Good as well as the major figure in cosmogony. But we need to look further as the Neoplatonic One is beyond "being," or "supra-being." In fact we do have a different system or even an original system. As stated by R. A. Gilbert, "he [Plotinus] was the first to set out clearly the idea of the Absolute (the One or the Good)."<sup>6</sup> It is this Plotinus' Absolute, (which is also the Good) and not the demiurge of Plato which is the most important model for mysticism. For many, the mark of experiential mysticism is the urge to encounter some sense of union or connection with the Absolute; this is true especially in the "rational mysticism" of W. Kingsland and the "interpretative of mysticism," of W. T. Stace.<sup>7</sup> In several other topics, Plotinus is his own person; consider, in Plotinus' cognitive aesthetics, the distinction between the beautiful and the Good, and the dearth of political philosophy and physics in Plotinus

in contrast to the extensive treatment of these topics by Plato. In my opinion, even though these reasons are sufficient for the primacy of Plotinus in mysticism, the most important cause deals with people's unexamined personal convictions—namely their religions. This is the reason for the primacy of Plotinus in his direct and undeniable influence on the mystical dimensions of the monotheistic traditions, especially Christianity. I believe that religiously inclined scholars are attracted to Neoplatonism, partially because of its affinity with the mystical dimensions of monotheism. Recall that Findlay's wonderful article, "Why Christians Should be Platonists," was not called "Why Platonists should be Christians!"<sup>8</sup> In sum, I agree with many like R. H. Jones who consider Plotinus' philosophy as an original system in spite of its Platonic background.<sup>9</sup>

## II. Neoplatonism and Theism

W. R. (Dean) Inge, expressing a consensus on Plotinus' influence on Christianity, remarks, "Plotinian mysticism...closely resembles the records of the Christian mystics, and indeed all mystics, whatever their creed, date or nationality."<sup>10</sup> He calls Plato the father of European mysticism and points out that "Justin Martyr claims Plato (with Heraclitus and Socrates) as a Christian before Christ; Athenagoras calls him the best of the forerunners of Christianity, and Clement of Alexandria regards the Gospels as perfected Neoplatonism."<sup>11</sup>

F. C. Happold first identifies Neoplatonism as the synthesis of Greek and Oriental philosophy. Pointing to philosophical systems such as that *The Mystical Theology* of Dionysius the Areopagite, he notes "As a result of fusion of Christian and Neoplatonist ideas in the early centuries of the Christian era, a system of so-called mystical theology came into existence which was one of the main foundations of Christian mysticism."<sup>12</sup> Steven Katz holds that the "unitive Christian mystics are invariably those such as Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso, who have on Plotinus, Dionysius the Areopagite, i.e. the strong Neoplatonic current in Christian intellectual history."<sup>13</sup> Another major investigator in Christian mysticism, R. C. Zaehner, who in his *Zen, Drugs and Mysticism*, states, "The main-stream of Christian mysticism, for instance is probably more influenced by Neoplatonism and Pseudo-Dionysius...than it is by

the *New Testament*."<sup>14</sup> Jewish mysticism displays the same influence. For example, G. G. Scholem states that Maimonides' "mystical inclination turns him in the direction of Neoplatonism. There can be no doubt that he read [the Neoplatonic text which was known as] 'The Theology of Aristotle.'"<sup>15</sup> G. G. Scholem traces Jewish mysticism's debt to Neoplatonism in later thinkers such as Abraham Cohen Herrera of Florence (d. 1635–39).<sup>16</sup> M. Idel states that "Another source of motifs, concepts, and terms...to Jewish medieval mysticism was Neoplatonism...[T]he deep religious significance of this form of philosophy has already been recognized in the cases of Islamic and Christian mysticism, and Kabbalah fully shares with these mystical systems a deep interest in Neoplatonism."<sup>17</sup> I. Husik notes that, "The only source of Maimonides' ideas is to be sought in Neoplatonism..."<sup>18</sup> T. M. Rudavsky, in her analysis of the Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, notes, "echoing Plotinus, Maimonides characterizes matter as the 'a nonexistent,' 'nothing which is not nothingness.'"<sup>19</sup> In case of Islamic philosophy, I concur with M. Fakhry in his claim that Neoplatonism found in the so-called *Theologia Aristotelis* influenced Muslim thinkers more than the works of Aristotle.<sup>20</sup> With regards to Islam, I have pointed out a number of links between Neoplatonic and Islamic mysticism in several writings; for example, most Muslim philosopher-mystics abandoned the creation theory of orthodoxy for the Neoplatonic type of emanation, because mystical union can be formulated in process metaphysics and not in a substance-event metaphysics.<sup>21</sup> Is there a limit to Neoplatonic influence? No limit, or only a few, according to some contemporary scholars. In this same vein, R. T. Wallis notes:

...post Cartesian Continental thought has retained a substantial Neoplatonic component. Thus in the seventeenth century Spinoza's monism and Leibniz's monadism represent different developments of a common Neoplatonic substratum, while in the Nineteenth century Schelling's Plotinian-influenced thought counterpoints Hegel's more Procline system. [Moreover] Bergson...restates Plotinus' philosophy of the soul....<sup>22</sup>

We need to probe further into three refinements of this relationship, namely: (a) salient features of mysticism relevant to Neoplatonism; (b) the sense in which Neoplatonism is mystical; and

(c) further clarification of Neoplatonism by examples of monisms which are mystical but not Neoplatonic.

### III. Basic Typologies in Contemporary Scholarship of Mysticism

Clarifying the basics of contemporary typologies, I construe distinctions between theistic, natural and the monistic dimensions of some mystical systems.

#### 1. Some Contemporary Impressions on Zaehner's Typology

As the most significant contemporary typology, Zaehner's theories have received highly varied reactions. On the one extreme, John M. Rist writes, "We shall take as guide R.C. Zaehner's *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*, a book whose importance for the study of mysticism is so great as to make much of what has previously been written look like pointless maundering."<sup>23</sup> On the other extreme, F. Staal accuses Zaehner of both religious bias and emotionalism. As Staal writes, "Zaehner's approach contributes little to the serious study of mysticism. It does not establish a position from which one can do more than scratch the surface of Hindu and Muslim forms of mysticism."<sup>24</sup> Also W.T. Stace, proffers a distinction between "the experience of mysticism," and "the interpretation of that experience," and claims that "in my opinion, he [Zaehner] was gravely misled by his failure to hold the distinction in mind."<sup>25</sup> Many contemporary thinkers such as R. T. Wallis, agree with Stace that Zaehner confuses categories of interpretation and experience.<sup>26</sup> A critical analysis of Zaehner's views with respect to mysticism and Neoplatonism has been stated in a previous essay.<sup>27</sup> Here we focus on those elements of Zaehner's typology relevant to this essay.

#### 2. Fundamentals of Zaehner's Typology

Proffering a theistic model for mysticism, Zaehner criticizes "nature mystics," who, like Spinoza, equate "nature" with "God"; Zaehner claims "...it is an observable fact that in Nature there is neither morality no charity nor even common decency. God, then, is reduced to the sum-total of all natural impulses in which the terms 'good' and 'evil' have no meaning. Such a God is subhuman,

a god fit for animals, not for rational creatures."<sup>29</sup> Nature mystics, for him, construe a single unity out of distinct constituents of nature and in exalted moments see themselves as being one with Nature and beyond good and evil.<sup>30</sup> This projection of a unity is understandable as all mystics seek a unity to combat alienation. Nature mystics reach this feeling of unity by their monistic integration of the self with the rest of nature and not with a supra nature religious entity. For Zaehner such a unity is mistaken for two reasons. First, nature contains morally negative elements; second, monism misconstrues the true nature of persons and alienates them from their divine element. The true path for Zaehner is the "theistic and dualistic" type of mysticism by those who are "abhorred" by the doctrine of nature mystic. Theistic mystics attempt to surrender worthy dimensions of themselves to a transcendent God; this is not achieved by an integration but by an "isolation" of the self-soul from ephemeral nature. In defense of the theistic mysticism, he identifies the cardinal mistake of the nature mystic as being "deceived by the mere sensation of union or of unity into the belief that the object of such a union must be the same."<sup>30</sup> By knowing their limits, theists are dualists who recognize God as an entity transcending creature; on the other hand an absolute Monist denies the existence of the real God, because the proper monotheistic God is a transcendent being. "Monism in practice, means the isolation of the soul from all that is other than itself."<sup>31</sup> Zaehner observes a deep personal intimacy between believers and their perspectives of God. Analogies used by Zaehner reveal the ethos of his vision of "good" mysticism: "The goal is isolation...mean[ing] the isolation of what Christians call man's immortal soul from all its purely psycho-physical adjuncts....The soul in such a state might be compared to that of a new born child; it has reverted to original innocence in which there is neither good nor evil."<sup>32</sup> A more revealing analogy is expressed as follows: "The soul, then, at this stage is comparable to a virgin who falls violently in love and desires nothing so much as to be 'ravished,' 'annihilated' and assimilated into the beloved... the raptures of the theistic mystic are closely akin to the transport of sexual union, the soul playing the part of the female and God appearing as the male."<sup>33</sup> A paradigmatic case of salvation by isolation is found in the Virgin Mary, the sinless holy figure, transcending the standard Jungian image of woman as a depiction of the fourth element (represented by matter).

In summary, Zaehner's typology points to two types of mysticism relevant to our analysis: a theistic isolation type of mysticism that accepts the transcendent God with whom the mystic cannot be identified; and nature mystics, for whom the path of self realization is via integration of the self into nature. Zaehner's contribution to theoretical analysis of mysticism is commendable, for even his critics recognize the use of his sharp distinction between religious and non-religious types of mysticism.

### 3. Stoeber's "Theo-monism" and Criticism of Zaehner

In a brilliant move, Michael Stoeber rejects the theist-monist distinction in Zaehner's typology and introduces the new typology of "theo-monism":

Phenomenologically...[theo-monism is expressed] in terms of the mystical self[s] transformation to divinity. The monistic experience involves a movement towards realization of primary-self, an essence that has its grounding in the very non-dual, static and impersonal essence of a personal Divine. The mystic identifies monistically with the apophatic Source; and this essential association is a purifying movement wherein the mystic becomes a unique medium of elements and energies of the catastrophic Divine. In experiencing the non-dual, static and impersonal Source, the mystic naturally comes to express distinctively and actively aspects of the personal Divine.<sup>34</sup>

Stoeber moves beyond the theist/non-theist distinction to a phenomenal sense of identity: "In theistic mysticism some sense of identity remains in a powerfully affective experience which is expressed in strikingly personal terms...[non-theistic] monistic experiences involve a loss of duality or differentiation which rules out personal experiences all together."<sup>35</sup> Stoeber speaks of "an identification with the Divine," and articulates it by saying that "the Divine expresses both impersonal and personal elements, thus bridging the monotheistic and theistic gap."<sup>36</sup> In a similar theme, C. Hartshorne holds the distinction between "the abstract, eternal, necessary essence of deity and the concrete, contingent, partly temporal Divine reality." Nevertheless, "there are ways of making somewhat more detectable the presence of Deity in all experience," one way would be to go along with Whitehead to say "that any direct data of experience are simultaneous with the experience for which they are data, or by which they are apprehended."<sup>37</sup> Stace

specifically assigns this type of mysticism to a specific kind, as he notes that, "According to our view, the essence of introvertive [mystical] experience is the undifferentiated unity, and 'union with God,' [for Western religions, especially Christianity] is only one possible interpretation of it."<sup>38</sup> What is the underlying emphasis here? The answer lies in the affinity between persons and God, as Inge corroborates:

Religious Mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realize the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or, more generally, as the attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal and of the eternal in the temporal.<sup>39</sup>

The affinity between persons and God is asserted in most sacred texts of monotheism such as the Qur'an: "We are nearer to Him, than His own jugular vein."<sup>40</sup> The model of religious theism proffered by Stoeber does not account for a symmetric union between persons and God, nor for an annihilation of persons in God. It is an epistemic pose, or a recognition that the inner essence (what the Muslims call *dhāt*) is grounded in the Divine love. I agree with Stoeber that mystics in their devotional ethos, such as prayer, seek to overcome their alienation as an ephemeral entity and relate to the eternal God. But from a non-phenomenological perspective, the dualism remains, because in monotheistic systems, persons and God remain separate. No one can remain a monotheist and claim a symmetrical identity with God. The term "identification" in its usage as related to "Union" has many senses. For example, a piece of ice may melt in water and unite with the water. Here the ice melts and the water remains relatively unchanged. By contrast, if blue paint and yellow paint merge, they unite in a green color and lose their original identities. A male and a female may marry and unite through a child who is common to both of them, while they remain separate entities. A wave in an ocean unites with the rest of the ocean as the ocean transforms itself through reconfiguration. The last example may be an illustration of Spinoza's "extroverted" mysticism in which monism is preserved; but none of the above senses of identification matches the theistic sense. Why? Supposedly, God is essentially distinct from his creatures; thus no identification or union is possible where God's constituents and a persons' constituents merge. It is in this sense that C. Smith notes:

"Mysticism as understood by Eckhart is not necessarily a matter of ecstasy or bliss...[but] a total surrendering of self and self-will, the creation within oneself of a certain void or nothingness."<sup>41</sup> We have pointed out in another essay how Descartes' ontological argument can be interpreted not as a static logical argument, but as a process of phases of increasing authenticity between the apparent and the inner reality.<sup>42</sup> At first Descartes knows that if he asserts that he thinks, then he must exist as a mind; further reflections reveal the finite nature of his self-mind which can only be actualized on the grounds of an infinite being. The epistemic priority of the self as a constituent of a larger Divine-infinite system does not make the Cartesian system ontologically a monistic system. The continuum from self to God does not make the self infinite. R. Carnap classifies this type of mistake as psychologism in logic, which is a variation of Plato's objection to the sophists' position of identifying perception/belief with knowledge; Carnap states that this type of mistake takes place "...when the problems themselves are of an objective nature, but the description to which the author intends to give...[is] framed in subjectivist, psychological terms..."<sup>43</sup> Stoeber's insight is correct as long as he is classifying "monism" in a phenomenological language.

An interesting approach to this problem is found in an interpretation of ibn 'Arabi's mystical system which is aware of the distinction between the transcendent and the phenomenal senses of the Divine. Suppose two realms are postulated: Reality [*aletheia*, *haqq*] in itself transcends the phenomenological realm of the believer and the monadic mind-dependent phenomenon world (*dhinī*) of the mystic, which one takes God to be an appearance of Reality is so far as one can apprehend. The intimacy (*uns*) which is felt by the mystic is not his/her identification with the Absolute, but with a God revealed by phenomenological icons such as the ninety divine names.<sup>44</sup>

The self-soul in theistic mysticism variations of Zaehner and Stoeber teaches the absolute supremacy and the alienation of God—a God who tests Abraham by requesting the sacrifice of his son. This is very different from the Plotinian soul-self which ascends towards the One; as Plotinus states, "Since the soul is so honorable and divine a thing, be sure already that you can attain God by reason of its being of this kind, and with this as your motive ascend to him." [V.I., 3.1–2].

## IV. Theistic Mysticism and Neoplatonism

Our preliminary step in refinement of "monism," is to present a distinction between it and "theistic mysticism."

## 1. Monotheistic mysticism

Following Carnapian methodology, let us clarify our explicandum of "monotheistic mysticism" using a set of conditions distinguishing it from other senses of mysticism in philosophical discourse:<sup>45</sup>

(i) *Traditional divine predicates*: The monotheistic God has ■ mind, a free will and the power to create the world: an entity to whom creatures can pray. Note that it would be meaningless to pray to nature, the Form of the Good, Aristotle's first mover, or the One Plotinus.

(ii) *The absolute transcendence of God*: The doctrine of God's "transcendence" means that it is possible that God exists while the world does not exist. So, creation takes place not by necessity but through God's grace. R. Otto notes on this topic, that "All religion, indeed, seeks the transcendent, and salvation in the transcendent...[Thus] there remains always the chasm between creator and created."<sup>46</sup>

(iii) *Impossibility of ontic unity between God and persons*: God is essentially different from persons. For any person to claim "I am God" is always false.

(iv) *Mystical proximity in the model of the mathematical "limit"*: In this model, persons are construed as processes and not substances. Analogous to the mathematical notion of "a limit," as a person x partakes of mystical states, distinctions between person x's experience and God-like experience decreases towards 'O' without ever becoming 'O'.

For any person x, as [x approaches the mystical], then [x approaches the God like, or having a God like perspective]. Embracing mystical states persists not because of x's power alone, but also by God's love, grace, etc.

(v) *Normative bifurcation of the world into two castes*: Ethical grace can be achieved while the believer is in "ontologically lower state." Persons are morally and spiritually inferior to God, prophets, angels, etc. There is always "otherness" between them and the heavenly immortals. A person may be named as the slave of God, for example 'Abullah, but God is always the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth.

(vi) *Concrete dimension of persons-God encounter*. In theistic mysticism, the relation between persons and God is closer than the relationship between persons and themselves, because God is taken to be the inner-essence (*dhāt*) of persons in three senses: the remote efficient cause, because God is the creator; the essence as the cause of persistence of the unity of the entity (which means that a person exists by God's grace); and the final cause, or the cause of completion (*kamāl, telos*). In a sense, persons do not belong to themselves, but belong to the Divine. Monotheism rejects the so-called process of "simplification," in the ascent of the soul towards the One.

## 2. Some differences between monotheism and monism: Neoplatonic and Avicennian Monism.

Outside the rubric of western scholarship on Neoplatonism lies a vast domain of Neoplatonic work in the Near East, especially in the Islamic area.<sup>47</sup> This section focuses on the work of Plotinus as well as Avicenna, who followed Plotinus in emanationism, but differed from his system in many ways. Neither the classical Neoplatonic position nor any one of its major developments such as Islamic Neoplatonism is compatible with the theistic notion of God, at least in the following topics:

(i) Plotinus' One is not an entity in the sense of Aristotle's immaterial substance (*ousia*); nor it is a monotheistic God who according to Judaism made a covenant with a man (who according to Christianity had a son and according to Islam sent an angel (Gabriel) to give moral messages to a man (Prophet Muhammad) in a cave. These depictions would be meaningless if we substituted "God," with the "One" of Neoplatonism. Plotinus states that "The One is all things and not a single one

of them...it's the principle (*arche*) of all things and the generator of [entities]" [V.2., I., 1-3]. "The First, is beyond (supra) being, and does not think" [*Enneads*, III.8, 1]; the First as the Good is beyond thinking [*Enneads*, III.9, 2-5]. In the world of Plotinus and Avicenna the ultimate being is not an individual existent but an imminent begetter, a ground of existents and the beholder [*dāranda*] of the world and not an existent substance (*ousia*, *jawhar*).<sup>48</sup>

(ii) One needs not to express appreciation to God. Thus according to Plato's *Euthyphro*, one need not to pray to the Gods, nor fear them. Unlike the monotheistic God, the One of Plotinus does not have love, grace, self-consciousness or free will. The One of Plotinus does not bring floods, does not kill the first-born of the Egyptians to tilt his power in a dispute between believers and non-believers; nor is he instrumental in sending the believers into the heavens and the sinners into hell. It is an entity, totally different from the monotheistic God shared by the Jews, Christians and Muslims.

(iii) The ultimate being of Plotinus or Avicenna does not create the world out of nothing by His grace. The world emanates by Necessity; it could not have been otherwise. H. A. Wolfson observed correctly that since Philo believed in the scriptures, Philo parted from Plato when the doctrines of the Greek philosophers were against religion; whereas Plato's cosmogony takes place by necessity, "Philo, following the scriptural conception of God as an all powerful free agent "...takes the will [of God to mean that] he could have either created the world or created another kind of world...[and] can destroy the world."<sup>49</sup> In Avicenna's system emanation of the world is implied from the "most perfect" (*fauq al-tamām*) feature of the Necessary Existent (*al-wājib al-wujūd*). Not only is the latter an existent by itself, it is also the causal generator of other existents. A mere "perfect," (*tamām*) entity generated by the most perfect, is persistent due to itself, while an "imperfect," entity (*nāqis*) needs another for it to persist."<sup>50</sup>

(iv) Another distinction lies in the nature of the soul and the role of the body in human salvation. Inge states that "the

essence of Neoplatonic mysticism is the belief that the Soul, which lives here in self contradiction, must break in succession every form in which it tends to crystallize. This is where it differs from Catholicism...[which] promises peace as the immediate result of submission and obedience...but for the mystics...there is no rest from striving...[T]o stop short [of union] is to leave the quest unfinished."<sup>51</sup> Stace agrees on the distinctions between theism and mysticism on this point.<sup>52</sup> Like Zaehner, Plotinus too teaches "isolation," for example in the following: "Often I have woken up out of the body and have entered into myself, going from all other things" [IV.8.1-2].<sup>53</sup> In a person, the body is a mere icon or an image of his/her soul in its lowest state; embodiment is the logical end of descent from which ascent takes place. Consequently embodiment is a positive, natural stage as a necessary phase for later purification, a theme elaborated upon by later Neoplatonists of all traditions. For example, the Ismā'īlī thinker, Nāṣir Khosrow (b1004-1072-78) notes that the particular soul (*nafs-I juz'ī*) needs to be emanated from the universal soul (*nafas-I kulī*) and ultimately return to it.<sup>54</sup> In Neoplatonic mysticism, descent is a necessity for the mystical union. By contrast, in theistic mysticism, isolation of the self from the body is for the sake of intimacy with God not due to the remoteness of matter from the One. In context of the Christian Eucharist, the believer partakes of a matter which serves as an icon of the body of Christ. A related topic is the issue of incarnation as depicted in C. Osborn's recent comparison between Platonic and Christian love; she states, "Unlike the Neoplatonic soul, cast into bodily life as a punishment or imprisonment against its will, Christ's incarnation is chosen for a loving purpose, to redeem the lost sheep."<sup>55</sup> I reject Osborne's interpretation of Plotinus; the embodiment for Plotinus is a free act (but also determined) being a "standard" phase in the drama of salvation; the savior figure in Neoplatonism is its intellectual awareness of its affinity with the One.

(v) Not only is emanation by necessity, so is ascent free from God's love, affections, etc. By contrast, ascent is due to a person's effort (they are both free and dependent). Most of the philosophers in the Islamic tradition adopted Neoplatonic

emanationism instead of creation theory. For example, J.J. Houben shows that Avicenna's philosophy is incompatible with Islamic orthodoxy; Avicenna's mystical union with the Necessary Existent is not a "gift" from God; instead, it is due to the natural knowledge of the Necessary Existent.<sup>56</sup> Through natural knowledge, and not religious calling, we comprehend the cosmos and its Necessary Existent who is the beholder of the cosmos. Thus every entity in this world is a necessity, the first being a categorical necessity, while others are conditional necessities. Moreover, the absolute of the Neoplatonic tradition resides in its abstract-simple state, while, as S.T. Katz states, for the monotheistic tradition of Judaism, it lies in the personal God.<sup>57</sup> A similar insight is presented by W.J. Wainwright, who points out that although Plotinus uses the language of love between souls and the One; here love is asymmetrical; the One of Plotinus is loved like the God of the theists but unlike the God of the theists, the One does not love in return.<sup>58</sup>

(vi) The next topic relates to differences between Neoplatonism and theism on the theme of the unity of being (*al-wahdat al-wujūd*). The major role of this doctrine is well brought out by Inge who asserts, "The Unity of all existence is a fundamental doctrine of all mysticism."<sup>59</sup> It is true that in Neoplatonism there are theoretically sharp distinctions between the One, the intelligence, the soul and matter as a reflection of the soul. But each entity in this descent, emanated from its predecessor, contains a dimension of its predecessor and returns to its predecessor. On this principle of "reversion," Proclus states: "All that proceeds from any principle reverts in respect of its being upon that from which it proceeds" [*Elements*, prop. 31, p. 35]; and "Every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it, and reverts upon it" [*Elements*, pro. 35, p. 39].<sup>60</sup> The monistic vision of the immanence of the ultimate being is both ontological and phenomenological, as shown by W. Earle, who points to "the experience of the identity of myself and the Absolute."<sup>61</sup> The thesis of "identity among persons and the ultimate being" cannot be construed in a monotheistic system in which persons are particular entities while God is transcendent. By contrast, in Neoplatonism, as Plotinus stated, the moral ethos of a person is judged by the degree of the

"no-otherness" between persons and ultimate being [*Enneads*, V. 1., 1]. Persons by the mediacy of abstractions are invited to ascend towards the One. In contemporary language "otherness," means "alienation"; and alienation according to many existentialists, psychoanalysts, and Marxists is the most significant problem of modern times.<sup>62</sup> Such a problem cannot be formulated in a truly monistic system, in which a person as a part of nature cannot be alienated from nature. Plotinus preaches that the soul moves towards a state of "no-otherness" with the One. In societies which officially adopted monotheism, nature mystics who interpreted this union as an identity have often been branded as heretics. In Islam, Manṣūr Hallāj, the celebrated mystic who expressed the monistic doctrine of "*ana al-Haqq*," was burned to death. Professor Zaehner's reaction to such a monistic idea is less dramatic. I disagree with Zaehner's premises, but I think that Zaehner's system is consistent when he, as a theistic believer, disapproves of extravertive monism.

## V. Neoplatonic and Three Other Senses of Monistic Mysticism

Having clarified the first level terminology of "theistic," and "non-theistic" mysticism, this essay will now advance a refinement of "monism," in four different senses.

### 1. Stoeber's typology of "theo-monism"

We have already indicated that this type, in its monotheistic context, is ontologically dualistic but phenomenologically monistic. This intimacy is non-symmetrical, since souls-persons are not Deified, but by relating to God lose their alienation. In contrast, Plotinus states that "every soul... made all living things itself, breathing life into them, those that the earth feeds and those that are nourished by the sea, and the divine stars in the sky. It made the sun itself, and this great heaven, and adorned it" [V. 1. 2. 1-4].

### 2. Neoplatonic Eidetic monistic mysticism

Let us begin by clarifying the family of themes which depicts this kind of mysticism:

(i) *Abstractness*: Ontologically the Good and the Real are atemporal and abstract entities. Objects of sense perception or feeling of interpersonal relationship are concrete. Thus, both ontically and normatively are in a lower status than the abstract entities.

(ii) *Interconnected Realistic Monism*: The system is monistic in the Leibnizian sense that a total description of any entity includes the One and the other entities in the world. Reality is not depicted in phenomenological terms, but in a system of non-personal objective entities which persist outside the consciousness.

(iii) *Cognitive intelligibility*: Abstract entities are either cognitively intelligible like Platonic forms, or refer to the One which transcends limits of discrete reason and can be encountered only through an allegorical or symbolic theology.

(iv) *Rationalism*: Faith, sentiment, piety, sense perception and the like have a state inferior to reason.

(v) *Iconic function of the concrete*. Concrete entities, like a particular flower or personal, temporally indexed experiences such as loving a mate or a relative are, at best, mere icons of abstract entities. They are preliminary steps to ascend towards abstract entity. Philosophy is permitted to refer to the One by making use of icons such as light, mirror and water instead of clear, analytically descriptive language.

(vi) *Ethics of the simplification process and the self realization ethics*: The drama of cosmic salvation begins with a descent and culminates with a return. There are two similar models: first, the Neoplatonic emanation-return, and a second, which is embedded in an eschatology of the Divided line, symbolized by the allegory of the cave, as well as love in the Symposium. Once again, the encounter with the One is not anti-rational but supra-rational or meta-rational.

Christian theology also has a fall, a sacrifice, and a way of return to the path of God. But in a Neoplatonic system persons do

not communicate with the Form of the Good, do not perform prayer or sacrifice; there is no set of religious rituals; what is demanded is not a blind faith, but a rational state of awareness of the superiority of the eternal over the ephemeral. For example, Plotinus states that the soul is "amphibious," and "in spite of everything, it always possesses something transcendent in some way" [IV. 8., 4: 29-31]. As D. O'Brien notes, with respect to natural objects, the soul has a dual function. First, the soul generates matter; then, the soul provides matter with forms which completes matter into a body.<sup>65</sup>

The salient feature of Neoplatonic mysticism, according to John N. Findlay, is depicted in the "the Eidetic Turn." In such a system the emphasis is no longer on the "individual," but how forms such as "Manhood and Justice are 'thisified' or 'thatified,' or 'hereified' or 'thereified,' 'nowified' or 'thenified' in this or that case."<sup>66</sup> A key concept is that generic and specific features become the true and primary cases of identity, an identity unaffected by multiple locations in space, or changing locations in time.<sup>66</sup> Here, ontic primacy is placed not on particulars—this thing here—but on "*eidos*, idea-form-universal"; moreover, "unity [is treated as] a peculiar instance of itself, having no other attribute but being purely and resolutely single."<sup>66</sup> Thus individual spatio-temporal objects receive their significance only as far as they instantiate or exemplify a Form. In Neoplatonic monism, only the One is the source of its own persistence as well as being the source of generation of all other entities. Individual souls achieve their appropriate state, not by persisting as they are but in their ascent when there is no otherness between them and the One. The essence of a monistic ontology is not sacrificed in Neoplatonism, as the souls are not ultimately distinct from the One; the One is the origin (*arche*, *aşl*) of all entities. The soul, Plotinus tells us, "possess a power directed to the world here below" [IV. 8., 4: 3-4]; but he prescribes that souls should not "forget their father, God, and be ignorant of him...[T]hey are parts which come from a higher world and altogether belong to it" [V.I., 1-4]. The process of simplification, the mark of ascent, is in fact, a process of de-individualization. Simplification as clarified by Findlay depicts an *unbroken continuity* of the eidetic system.<sup>67</sup> All layers of the emanations from the One-Unity aim to return to the One. Plotinus often hints that this descent is necessary, "When it is eternally necessary by the law of nature that it [the soul] should do and



experience these things, and, descending from that which is above it, it meets the need of something else in its encounter with it; if any one said that a god sent it down he would not be out of accord with the truth or with himself" [IV.8., 5:13-18]. In a subsequent passage, he notes: "So then the soul, though it is divine and comes from above, enters into the body and, though it is a god of the lowest rank, comes to this world by a spontaneous inclination, its power and the setting order in of what comes after it being the cause of its descent" [IV.8., 5:25-28]. In Neoplatonism there is no contradiction here, as Plotinus states that "necessity contains the free will..." [IV.8.5: 4-7]. I agree with the general consensus that alienation is the antithesis of mysticism. How, then, is alienation overcome by the Neoplatonists? The answer lies in a state where there is "no-otherness," between the alienated soul and what is now united with the One. This vision is definitely anti-monotheistic for many reasons. As Findlay states, "the Trinitarian structure...is not acceptable from the Platonic point of view... [T]here is no place in Platonism for Incarnation theology."<sup>68</sup> But the Neoplatonic symmetry could be envisioned from the perspective of the One as a process of emanation and from the perspective of matter as a process for potential ascent. In this sense there is a twofold interpretation of the Universe as a continuum which Plotinus inherited from Plato's allegory of the cave. At each phase an entity is causally linked to a continuum. We have a connected universe. A mystical union depicts our best possible encounter with a total perspective of such a connected vision of the universe. Porphyry reports that Plotinus experienced "being oned" four times during his acquaintance with Porphyry.<sup>69</sup> As a matter of fact, as A.C. Lloyd delineates, there are three phases of epistemic-cognitive experiences of the soul: its judgment of sense precepts, its collections and divisions of intelligible objects, and finally its "seeing," and non-discursive encounter in the context of its union with the One.<sup>70</sup> In Muslim epistemology such a state belongs to the epistemic state of 'knowledge by immediate presence' (*ilm hudûrî*), an incorrigible state. It is very difficult for any one who is not a "friend of the forms," to have a comprehension of this vision. Any one who, like Professor Zaehner, prefers the smile of a child to a mathematical equation cannot empathize in the pleasure available to the friends of the forms. A friend of the forms appreciates the smile of the child as a mere icon of the form of the

Beautiful or the Good. A monotheist is not interested in the abstract One but in the Buberian encounter between the finite created I and the eternal Thou. The Neoplatonic One cannot think; Plotinus states "...if the First thinks, something will belong to it; and will then not be the First, but second, and not one" [V.6., 2,18-20]. Moreover, The One as the Good "must be simple and without need, it will not need think" [VI.6,4. 1-2]. Plotinus attacks Aristotle by saying that "Aristotle makes the first principle separate and intelligible, but when he says that it knows itself, he goes back again and does not make it the first principle" [V. 1, 9. 9-12]. Thus, the One of Plotinus, unlike the God of Monotheism, does not think and does not change. The ultimate aim of the soul-self is to ascend through the various levels and identify itself with the pure entity which is not beyond becoming, but beyond being itself. Eidetic mysticism teaches an agenda which takes persons beyond manifestations of God's grace such as the smiles of children and fragrant flowers. Consequently, there arises the misunderstanding of an acute thinker like the Christian Zaehner, who naively objects to Plato as follows: "Plato seems to have made the enormous, the grotesque mistake of separating Being from becoming, and identifying it with the mathematical abstraction of the Idea. He could never, poor fellow, have seen a bunch of flowers shining with their inner light and all but quivering under the pressure of the significance with which they were charged."<sup>71</sup> A friend of the forms would say that Zaehner resembles a child who plays with teddy bears and wonders why his parent who is a biologist attends to the species of bears and considers teddy bears to be a copy of a copy of a copy. When Plato "the poor fellow," inspects a flower he receives not only the form of the flower but an icon which can relate to him the Form of the good. Zaehner's flower disappears in the snow, while Plato's form of the flower is everlasting. Plotinus is not in any sense "against" the bodily dimension of persons; attendance to the needs of the body and to its disciplines are recommended (I.4.4). Being like a musical instrument, a person should give up the body graciously in the same manner that a musician may give the lyre which is no longer to be played (I.4.16.13-29). The body serves as an important element in the drama of salvation of the soul. Evil may be necessary if it is defined as falling short of the Good (III. 2.5.27) and like inferior animals, evil still lies inside of the natural plan. The world is depicted as a play with some characters who are not heroes; What

happens to this play if all inferior characters are eliminated (III. 2. 11)?

### 3. Extrovertive Monistic Nature Mysticism

For a transition between the Eidetic and nature mysticism let us make a comparison. In agreement with his Eidetic sense of mysticism, Plotinus notes that, "the greatest beauty in the world of sense, therefore is a manifestation of the noblest among the intelligibles, of their powers and goodness..." [IV.8., 6:24-27]. In contrast to this vision, an extroverted "nature" mystic holds that the beauty of this world is due to itself, and the smile of a child or the smell of a rose does not need to represent an icon of a hidden meaning for it is beautiful in itself. There are obviously experiences which may be immediately pleasurable like drugs, alcohol, and unsafe sex, which may lead to insanity, destruction of one's liver and brain, and death through AIDS; but all pleasures need not have such drastic consequences; some stand on their own merit or virtue (*arete*, *kamāl*).

The most common form of non-religious mysticism is found in the human struggle against alienation; a person feels at home in physical nature in the mode of ecophilia, without a need to presume existence of any supra-natural, divine entity—just his/her will to power, to life. Here we need to distinguish between different senses of living experiences as well as different senses of "nature." Philosophers of mysticism often distinguish between the introvertive and the extrovertive types of experiences. Basically, the former is concerned with the intentional depiction of the world as received by the experience of the subject, while the latter refers to thoughts and sense experience without much reference to the subject. Religiously oriented scholars do not deny "extrovertive experiences," but normally assign to them a lower (moral/normative) status. For example, M. Stoeber notes, "In theism, extrovertive mysticism is considered a lower level of aspects of the Divine, not a personal assimilation and integration of this Divine."<sup>72</sup> A paradigmatic case of an extrovert nature thinker is the Roman poet Lucretius, the author of *De Rerum Natura*.<sup>73</sup> Bailey notes that "Lucretius is an impersonal poet; his subject is all in all, and there is very little which directly reveals his own sentiments or experience."<sup>74</sup> For him all nature consists of matter and void—as proved by the sense.<sup>75</sup> A person is merely part of the temporal

complex of the flux of ever becoming which is called nature. He holds that "when I am, death is not; when death is, I am not." In the same way that one should not feel sorry for a movement or a melody in a symphony when it passes away, one should not feel sorry because of aging or the fate of death, and dying as our lives lead to the lives of offspring. For the monist of this type, psychological despair and the feeling of alienation and the like are due to ignorance and confusion about the nature of the world. The savior is a philosophy of humanistic naturalism which allows persons to optimize the aesthetic pleasure of their experiences, including, according to the Epicureans, relationships such as friendship.

Reaffirming Stace's position, Stoeber, notes that "Nature mysticism has been called extrovertive mysticism...[dealing with an] outward experience involving sensory reality."<sup>76</sup> The latter includes what Spinoza names *Natura Naturata*; as H.H. Joachim states, this is "the eternal system of God's modes, which is the consequence of the free causality of God [as *Natura Naturans*]."<sup>77</sup> Zaehner correctly identifies Spinoza as a "nature mystic," and Stace takes him to be a pantheist with a mystical consciousness.<sup>78</sup> For Spinoza, substance, nature and God are one and the same; they designate the only one total reality of the world. Spinoza's type of mysticism prohibits any dualism between persons and the world. As M. Wartofsky points out, for Spinoza, "...a science of human nature is continuous with the science of nature; that human action and passion are subject to universal laws, and therefore as subject to rational understanding, as the motion of bodies...in geometry."<sup>79</sup> Thus Spinoza provides us with an example of nature monistic mysticism whereas G. Deleuze notes that expresses the essence of God-nature as "...[to] be oneself an idea through which the essence of God [-Nature] explicates itself, to have affections that are explained by our own essence and express God's [or Nature's] essence."<sup>80</sup> An analogical account of this system is expressed by a common theme in nature-sufic poetry that persons and other modes of the world flow as rivers from the ocean of the One and come back to it; thus we depict a mode of nature as a melody in a symphony or a ray of light from the sun. The One is the ground of our being and the final cause of our return. Mystical virtues include receptive resignation (*ridā*) and authentic openness to receive (*kash*) our ultimate true self. We should note that this notion of

nature as a totality of all is consistent with the peripatetic view of nature being the source of its own notion and more extensive than the mere physical aspect of nature.<sup>11</sup>

This type of monism is distinct from the Neoplatonic in the following thematic sense. "Nature" for the nature monist includes what is received in physical experiences as well as what is received in psychological, aesthetic ones. It is nobler to think globally like the archangel of Leibniz than in a limited monadic perspective; or, along with Spinoza and Lucretius to universalize one's perspective from the concrete. All of nature is equally good and moral. In contrast, as J.N. Deck notes, for Plotinus "Nature is the lower part of the world soul."<sup>12</sup> A paradigmatic case of "nature mysticism" lies in the so-called "individuation process" of Jungian psychology, where salvation comes from integration in nature.<sup>13</sup> As Inge enumerates, in this context, the major three steps are "purgative," "illuminative" and "unitive" life.<sup>14</sup> Inge remarks that the paradigm of the purgative stage is exemplified in the manuals written for monks. The unitive we note, belongs to the extrovertive nature mystics.

#### 4. Existential naturalism as a type of monistic mysticism

In this vision of mysticism, ontic priority is given to the temporal experiential field of the subject; the subject here is not the isolated ego-soul but analogous to the Heideggerian *Dasein* (being-in-the-world). The ontic status of the God of the theists or the abstract forms/the One of Eidetic mysticism is turned upside down. Against Plato's claim that time is the moving image of reality, being-present-in the world is the only reality through which all archetypes are actualized. For example, the form of beauty or love is actualized in this very momentary embrace.

Existential naturalism and American pragmatism have many themes in common. For example, in ethics, immediacy of human happiness and choice take priority over the Kantian agenda for primacy of duty and social justice. In this tenor, C.I. Lewis distinguishes between two subject matters of ethics: the *summum bonum* and justice. Lewis remarks on Kant's position as follows: "virtue is the supreme good, but the highest and complete good requires also satisfaction of the human capacity for happiness, which is distinct from the moral and even on his [Kant's] account opposed to it."<sup>15</sup> The crucial point here is not emphasis on social

responsibility and cosmic justice but on the primacy of human happiness in ethics. For both the existential naturalists and modern pragmatists values is not distinct from and posterior to fact; instead, values are essential constituents of facts. C.I. Lewis explains, "Valuations are a form of empirical knowledge, not fundamentally different in what determines their truth or falsity, and what determines their validity or justification, from other kinds of empirical knowledge."<sup>16</sup> Consider, biological urges such as the consumption of food, love, or bodily reactions to adjust temperature. In these cases our valuations are dimensions of our actions. It is not true that we think first about the "objective facts," then we evaluate the facts and then act. Satisfactory explanations of actions must include the pragmatic dimension of valuations. Actions are not existents separate from other aspects of reality. Actions are dimensions of existents. This feature of existential mysticism is expressed by L. Wittgenstein as follows:

*Doing* itself seems not to have any volume of experience. It seems like an extensionless point, the point of a needle. This point seems to be the real agent. And the phenomenological happenings only to be consequences of this acting. 'I do...' seems to have a definite sense, separate from all experience.<sup>17</sup>

In sum, for existential naturalists' immediate experience, valuing and doing are not different types of existents but dimensions of the experience not posterior to the One of Plotinus or Platonic forms.

Family members of this trend have always been present in philosophy, beginning with Heraclitus and the remarks in Plato's *Theaetetus* on Protagoras' theme "Man is the measure of all things." A number of important philosophers attack the Eidetic terms by placing the concrete here above the idea (*eidos*). The most celebrated case is Aristotle's insistence that all accidents are actualized via the primary substance. The next candidate could be Kant's view of imagination; for him, concretion of the categories of understanding happens through imagination, which is the temporal indicator of experience. As we shall elaborate later, in medieval Islamic poetry, existential mysticism is explicitly stated in the context of the doctrine of the unity of being. The historical roots of this doctrine may be in Eastern Iran, in Zoroastrianism (c. 1200). H. Corbin and others claim Islamic mysticism in its Iranian

context was influenced by Hermetic illuminationism of Zoroastrianism.<sup>28</sup> According to this religion, Ahura Mazda the Wise Monotheistic God personified actuality and battled the myth of evil. Ahriman was the icon of Not-being. To strengthen himself against not-being, Ahura Mazda created human beings and commanded: let there be life—the will to power. By propagating life, learning, and cultivating the land, human beings, who are vicegerent of God, attempt to bring evil—not being—to its knees. Experience is not a passive encounter with facts. By contrast, persons with will a to power and to life create realities. F. Nietzsche's intuition that Zoroastrianism supports an aspect of his "will to power" philosophy was correct. But the affinity between the soul-self and God is noticed in many philosophies. Plotinus asserts that "if anyone is going to admit that it knows God, he will be compelled to agree that it also knows itself" [V.3.7]; here he means that if God is known, then God's effects are also known; because self is an effect of God, then God is also known. In existential mysticism, if one knows one's self, then one is aware of the phenomenological outcomes of the self, which includes God. There is a similarity here also with Bergson's concept of *elan vital*, perceived from the existing energy. Here the monistic theist's system is turned on its head.

A paradigmatic case of this theory is found in the medieval poetry of Sheik Mahmud Shabistari, who rivals Jallal ad-Din Rumi in the depth of his Sufi mysticism. Shabistari states in a poem:

In unity there can never be a multiplicity. Two (distinct) points cannot be the one single center of unity. I do not know if the One (literally, the beauty mark of the beautiful face *khāl-i ruy-a zibā*) is a mere reflection of the heart (self). Or, [if] this heart is the reflection of the One. [I ask] Is the heart to be found due to the reflection of the One; or, the Does the One appears due the reflection of the heart? Is the heart based on the One or the One on the heart. This complicated secret is hidden from me. How can the hearts be the reflection of the One, as the heart is in a state of flux perpetually?<sup>29</sup>

This poem is not an accidental passage, as the theme in question is supported by a large number of other passages. For example, the Sheikh defends Hallaj's famous identification of the *cogito* with the absolute by saying that "'I am the absolute' is the revelation of [true] secrets, the only speaker of 'I am the absolute' must be absolute itself."<sup>30</sup> In another passage he asserts that "The universe

is found due to the light of the Absolute [literally, Him], how can the Absolute be found in the Universe."<sup>31</sup> In another passage the Sheikh finally answers the primordial question of "Who am I?" as follows: "since one can only refer to the Absolute existence [*hast-i muṭlaq*] in an iconic mode, the [wise] refer to it as I."<sup>32</sup> In Islamic mysticism, the depiction of an intimate relationship between the self and the Absolute is a common theme. As al-Ghazali points out "the self-soul" and God-world are transcendental conditions of experience.<sup>33</sup> But one finds parallel themes in the Western tradition. For example, Augustine states, "God and the Soul, that is what I desire to know." When asked, "Nothing more?" He answered "Nothing whatever."<sup>34</sup> Wittgenstein's account of the self in the world corroborates this phenomenological theme as he notes: "I am my world," and "The Philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world—not part of it."<sup>35</sup> Even Plotinus (in contrast to the body) emphasizes soul's unqualified perspective in contrast to the body by asserting that, "...all soul is present every where, made like the father who begets it in its unity, and its universality" [V. 1, 2, 39-4 1]. In Jungian analytical psychology, salvation is constructed in a self-realization ethics of individuation, the last phase of which is integration of "God-nature," in the self. Accordingly Jung states, "The self...a God image, or at least cannot be distinguished from one. Of this the early Christian spirit was not ignorant, otherwise Clement of Alexandria could never have said that he who knows himself, knows God."<sup>36</sup>

Against the Neoplatonic Eidetic view the primacy of immediate experience has support in everyday life as well as in philosophical traditions. Suppose a plane that carries someone dear to you is two hours late. For you, the second hour feels much "longer," than the first, while for an impartial bystander, the "geometrical," time of the second hour is the same as the first. When your automobile develops trouble on a trip or it begins to snow heavily the distance to the destination "seems further." In sum, existential time, a time related to the feeling-space of a subject is an experiential dimension of a reality. In this tenor, Bergson refers to that dimension of "time [which] is at first identical with the continuity of our inner life...a melody to which we listen with our eyes closed...and comes close to coinciding with this time which is the very fluidity of our inner

life."<sup>97</sup> Several writers claim that such a phenomenological perspective embeds the language of religion. For example, William Earl notes:

Phenomenologically speaking, what could be more obvious than that the very language of religion and metaphysics, the sense of their terms, the meaning of such terms as eternity, God, Absolute, Reality, Identity, and the rest would be impossible for us, unless there were in each self resources out of which those terms could draw their sense.<sup>98</sup>

Earle goes on to claim that "Absolute reality has *no value at all*," it can only be used as an empty center which works as an allegorical principle of the cosmos.<sup>99</sup> Most scholars of Neoplatonism agree on the compatibility of this theme with Neoplatonism. As A.C. Lloyd tells us, "Certainly the (Neoplatonic) genus which contains its species only latently—still more the genus of all genera—cannot possibly be covered by a phenomenological description."<sup>100</sup> Similarly, R.H. Jones observes, it cannot claim identity with the One.<sup>101</sup>

A salient mark of existential mysticism in its Islamic version is the epistemology of revealment of the hidden truth (*al-Kashf al-Mahjūb*). This doctrine has a close affinity with the rise of Islamic phenomenological epistemology after Avicenna which emphasized knowledge by presence (*‘ilm-I hudhūrī*), and by revealment (*kashf*). In perception the subject is conscious and supposedly receives information about concreta, for example the distance between the earth and the sun. In conception and deduction analytical truths and valid structures are contemplated. In mysticism, the gnosis (*ma‘rifat*) sense of knowing is depicted in a process of transformations of the self through different phases of self-realization. The preliminary phases display alienation from the Divine; the middle phases display love of the mediator figure; finally a mystical union (*ittiṣāl*) occurs in which the alienated soul-self (*nafs*) is annihilated (*fanā*) and persons are preserved (*baqā*) by incarnation (*hullūl*) the divine dimension.

Finally is a list of at least one salient difference between existential mysticism and the other three types of monistic mysticism: its incarnation of the divine (vs. the absorption of the self into God in theistic-monism); it emphasizes concrete immediacy (vs. the abstract dimension of Neoplatonic Eidetic mysticism); and it emphasizes the phenomenology of incarnation of

the entire nature within the self (vs. a dissolving of 'the self in nature' type of monistic mysticism).

## VI. Conclusion

In the monotheistic tradition, Neoplatonism is the most significant source of all theistic as well as non-theistic types of mysticism. In spite of this influence, Neoplatonism itself is not a religious type of mysticism due to its Eidetic monism. Contrary to Zaehner's position, not all monistic systems are anti-religious or irreligious; as Stoeber points out, one could construe an interpretive monistic model which is theistic. Finally, not all non-religious mysticisms are Neoplatonic; we have described two types of genuine monistic mysticisms which are non-religious and not Neoplatonic. Hopefully this essay clarifies some of the key elements in the relationship between Neoplatonism, and mysticism.

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## NOTES

1. For the sake of brevity and preciseness, our context is limited to monotheistic traditions and to its philosophical counterparts in Ancient Greece, Ancient Near East, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
2. Otto, R., *Mysticism: East and West* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 33-72.
3. Unless specifically stated, all translations of the works of Plato are taken from *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters*, trs. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (New York: Bollingen, 1966); the references to the Greek texts are from the Loeb bilingual editions of Plato's dialogues. Cf. D. E. Anderson, *The Mask of Dionysos: A Commentary on Plato's 'Symposium'* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 93.
4. Cornford, F.M., *Plato's Cosmology* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1937), pp. 33-34.
5. There is a difference in the Neoplatonic and Avicennian languages. For Avicenna, "being" applies to whatever is significant; thus for him the Necessary Existent is a "being" but not a substance. For Plotinus the One is "supra being," (mistranslated as 'beyond being'; in both systems the ultimate entity is the generator of all existents. Cf., P. Morewedge, "Philosophical Analysis and the Essence Existence Distinction,"

- Journal of American Oriental Philosophy* (1972):49-73.
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## Neoplatonism and Contemporary Slavic Spirituality: Survival and Revival of the Fittest in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras

Roman T. Ciapalo

The waning moments of the twentieth century have been witness to a variety of social and political upheavals, not the least of which was the recent abrupt dissolution of the Soviet Union. Many have noted the moral tenacity and spiritual hardiness of the people during that system's existence, as well as the startling revival of religiosity and spirituality there since the system's demise. However, it must be pointed out that this apparent revival is but a new stage of an ongoing process in the lives of the Slavic people. What has changed are the conditions, political and economic, that now permit a more open exhibition and practice of individual spirituality and religiosity. But, the nature of that spirituality remains the same. And its roots are, to a certain degree, Neoplatonic, the general exploration of which this paper will shortly attempt. But, first, a word about spirituality itself.

The term "spirituality," for the purposes of this paper, will be considered as denoting both a state of mind and a *modus vivendi*, characterized by a belief in the existence of an immaterial dimension of reality, comprising, at least, the existence of the human soul, God, and the afterlife. Now, it must be kept in mind that in the various Slavic languages, the word that is most often translated into the English word "spirituality" is a term which is rich in meaning and which is not fully captured by one particular English word. For example, the Ukrainian word for what we might call spirituality, namely, *dukhovnist'*, refers to that state of mind which issues into a way of living characterized by a profound reverence for one's ultimate origin, a deep sense of humility about one's status as creature, an abiding trust in the efficacy of Divine



Providence, and a respect for one's fellow creatures, both human and non-human.

Before turning explicitly to the discussion of what elements of Neoplatonism can be identified as instrumental in defining this pattern of Slavic spiritual survival and revival, allow me to make two further observations. First, Neoplatonism's influence on Europe and the Near East was often indirect. It was not always recognized that the Middle Ages and Renaissance saw Plato through a Middle and Neo-Platonic prism. But, the fact is, as R.T. Wallis has pointed out, "that the dominant trend in Christian theology, in both its Platonic and Aristotelian forms, has always been Neoplatonic."<sup>1</sup> Secondly, although indirect and sometimes vague, the Neoplatonic influences on the contemporary Slavic Christian world, particularly in Ukraine and Russia, are as unmistakable as they are profound.

Accordingly, the task of this paper shall be to examine briefly those elements of Neoplatonism which were, and continue to be, operative in the lives of the survivors of Soviet totalitarianism. I shall focus on those dimensions of Neoplatonism which were most influential in sustaining the spiritual life of the oppressed and which now are contributing factors to their spiritual revival. Furthermore, although I shall focus my remarks on the Ukrainian experience, most of what I have to say is generally transferable to other Slavic peoples and, therefore, to other parts of the former Soviet Union. Finally, this is not intended primarily as a scholarly paper, relying on the customary degree of bibliographical research and extensive documentation. Rather, it aims at making a few broad suggestions and at provoking interest in an area that has heretofore not been explored fully. Accordingly, what I propose to offer are a few strokes from a rather broad philosophical brush in an attempt to connect several Neoplatonic themes with the rather unique experiences of those whose lives were affected by a particularly harsh and long-lasting form of totalitarianism.

The Neoplatonic themes that appear to be particularly relevant to an analysis of the spiritual survival and revival of Ukrainians and others during the past few decades are: unity, mysticism, asceticism, and Divine Providence. Let me begin with the concept of unity. We are all aware that for Plotinus, to be real is to be one. How does this most fundamental of Neoplatonic insights appear in the twentieth century world of Slavic Christianity?

Let us, first, consider one of its more controversial manifestations. In the East there has been, and continues to be, considerable concern over the identification of the term "Roman" with the term "Catholic" and, worse yet, of "Catholic" with "Latin." The tendency to speak only about the Catholic Church of the Latin Rite, but not about the total church of Christ, is considered a perilous one. In this regard, the East can serve as an important visible sign of unity for the entire Church, and one that has much to contribute to the Western Church. An obvious example of the destructiveness of the shift from unity to multiplicity in this regard is the compressing and narrowing of the whole of the Christian life to the Latin mode. The price for this mistake was the tragedy of the Reformation, with its continuing unhappy consequences.

Accordingly, it is the Eastern Church's recognition of the significance of unity that leads it to protest the multiplicative and divisive tendencies of the West on the one hand and of political totalitarianism on the other. Although the motives are vastly different and the consequences of the actions profoundly dissimilar in their gravity, it remains true that any shift away from religious and spiritual unity is a destructive one. The attempt by the Soviet Union to "divide and conquer" its subjects, not only on political, but on religious and spiritual grounds, betrayed the depth of its misunderstanding of the Eastern, and in this case, Slavic, tendency toward genuine unity and oneness. Paradoxically, in the name of a materialistic and, hence, merely nominal sort of unity, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the totalitarian regime equivocated on the principle of unification to promote precisely the opposite effect: disruption, division, and destruction of genuine unities within society, namely, the family, the church, and the state.

Please note, additionally, that the attempt to return to genuine Catholic, if not Christian, unity, and perhaps to an even broader sort of ecumenism, was initiated by a Slavic pope, himself no stranger to the dangers of the Soviet system and a person who has been credited by some, arguably with good reason, as one of the chief causes of the acceleration of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Whether consciously and deliberately or not, by his actions this pope continues to bear witness to the Neoplatonic dictum that the path is identical with the destination, namely, unification.

There is a further, related point to be made here. The fundamental weakness of the Soviet system was twofold. Not only

was it based on a profound misunderstanding of the nature of the human person, as essentially an economic and material agent, but also on the adoption of an overall conceptual system that was all too rigid, an extreme just as dangerous and unnatural as its more chaotic opposite, namely, too little rationality.

Materialistic totalitarianism, then, is based on a misunderstanding of the concept of unity. Genuine unity, as Neoplatonism reminds us, does not consist of mere aggregation of elements, as is the case with any political system based on materialism. Rather, authentic unity is based on individual spiritual integration and on an awareness of the individual's entitative relationship to the whole and ultimately to his or her source. Slavic Christianity, and particularly Catholicism, bases its conception of religious and political unity on the relationship of the human spirit to God and to other human beings.

With respect to the latter relationship, it is *patriotism* (i.e., the love of what one holds in common with others) which is to be preferred to *nationalism* (i.e., the hateful and destructive emphasis on the merely apparent and non-essential differences within humanity). Plotinus' insistence on unity as central to ■ genuine metaphysics and as the heart of moral behavior, gives direction to a post-Soviet world which finds itself at the political, religious, and economic crossroads, pitting nationalism against patriotism, sectarianism against ecumenism and authentic catholicity and the command system against the free market.

Plotinus has more to say to materialists, dialectical or otherwise, as well as to atheists. Please note, to cite but one example, his devastating exposition of the poverty of anthropomorphic conceptions of God in *Enneads* VI, 4–5. This critique is, in its own way, a powerful foreshadowing of the rationale for the deliberately two-dimensional iconography of the Eastern Church, where the emphasis is away from the depiction in precise anthropomorphic terms of the qualities of God, and in representational terms of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, and towards the portrayal, to the extent that this is possible, of the immaterial dimensions of the inhabitants of the divine realm.

The significant tension within Neoplatonism over its ambivalent attitude to the material world notwithstanding, it seems clear that Slavic Christianity's attitude to the material order has been ultimately positive. And the principal reason for this appears to be

traceable to Byzantine Neoplatonism's view of creation as "theophany," or manifestation of the divine, a further refinement of Plato's view that the material world is an image of a higher order, the intelligible world, from which the former derives its positive value.<sup>2</sup> And it appears that Eastern iconography is but one particular application of this general theory.

This move away from highly representational, and towards more abstract, religious art forms by the East signals a deliberate focus on the mystical aspects of the human being's relationship to the divine. And even though the Neoplatonic tradition appears to assign too little significance to the body and to the material world, Pierre Hadot has argued convincingly that we ought to understand that positively, as constituting an emphasis on the purification of the spiritual life, and not negatively, as the thorough abolition of what is surely an important and indeed inescapable part of human existence.

In this way, theology and mysticism are closely related in the tradition of the Eastern Church in general, and in the Slavic Christian Church in particular. And the ultimate aims of such a theology are not theoretical, but practical; they lead to that which is above knowledge. And the mystical, as we learn from Neoplatonism, is precisely that realm of the real which is above and beyond the scope of reason. This is the realm of the supra-rational. Now, the Eastern mystical tradition has long been under strong Plotinian influence, traceable as far back as the thought of the fourth-century Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil of Caesarea, and, especially, Gregory of Nyssa.

As R. T. Wallis has so cogently argued, Neoplatonism "offers an antidote to the view, widespread among modern Anglo-Saxon philosophers, that philosophy must accord with the dictates of 'common sense.' And here Neoplatonism's empirical basis assumes special importance; for it shows that the paradoxicality of its conclusions cannot be avoided simply by rejecting its metaphysics as nonsensical, since paradoxicality is inherent in the nature of conscious experience itself, whatever conclusions may be built upon it."<sup>3</sup> This, of course, is particularly true when we turn to the deeper, or mystical, levels of human experience. And it is certainly applicable to the nature of the experiences of the peoples oppressed and persecuted by the Soviet system, for their fundamental consolation was itself rooted in paradox. As difficult to understand,

and as seemingly absurd, as their predicament appeared to be, its ultimate resolution was available, but not in this earthly life. In fact, no merely rational explanation could be proposed that would satisfactorily account for the depth and breadth of their experience of suffering. What remained was the religious, the super-natural, the mystical, namely, supra-rational, approach and a way of life consequent upon it.

If we are to explore fully the subject of Slavic spirituality, or mysticism as social action, the important consideration is, again, Neoplatonic. For the Slavic Christian, it is a distortion of the truth to suggest that mysticism is necessarily and by its very nature a form of personal escapism and selfishness, a way to avoid one's duties to one's fellow human beings. We learn from Plotinus' own way of life, as well as from his writings, that this is an abuse and misrepresentation of mysticism. The inherent tendency of mysticism is towards the moral life, the common good, and altruistic acts. Although departures from this ideal may be found in human history, witness the occasional instances of enjoyment of ecstatic experiences for their own sake, what St. John of the Cross called "spiritual gluttony," they represent failures of human nature and not defects of mysticism itself. What is mystical in the Slavic experience of the past few decades is multi-faceted. Whether or not the mystical experience, or better yet, the mystical dimension of human experience, is religious or not, W.T. Stace argues that the mystical is that which is "timeless or eternal which is felt to be also supremely noble, transcending altogether that transient world of flux, vanity, frustration, and sorrow."<sup>4</sup>

Although it would be quite difficult to argue that all religion is essentially mystical, one could make the case that *some* religions are. One might include in this short list Buddhism and higher forms of Hinduism, for example, as well as Eastern Christianity. Although one could not plausibly argue that Jesus was a mystic, the case can be made that mysticism came to later Christianity as a result of influences that were essentially Greek, and, in particular, Neoplatonic. What appears to be common to both Neoplatonism and Eastern Christianity, particularly Slavic Catholicism, then, is their mutual appreciation for the mystical dimensions of human experience. Both look beyond worldly concerns and primarily towards the eternal and infinite, while experiencing feelings befitting the holy and the sacred.

Now, it is precisely these elements of Neoplatonism, namely, unity and mysticism, which provided moral and spiritual support to those struggling to survive the ruthless and cruel rigors of the Soviet system and fueled the particular kind of asceticism and trust in Divine Providence so necessary in such circumstances. The Neoplatonic dimensions of this asceticism manifested themselves in terms of material self-denial for the sake of spiritual and moral nourishment and a willingness to suffer materially for the sake of one's religious beliefs. The dignity and grace with which Plotinus himself bore his physical suffering, as well as the reasons for his endurance, represents a suitably appropriate microcosm of the predicament of those held captive by the Soviet Union.

Like Plotinus, who was forced by the advanced stages of his illness to live in virtual solitude, so too the Slavic peoples were virtually abandoned and forgotten by the rest of the world. Yet, like Plotinus, they soldiered on, confident in their beliefs in the ultimate triumph of the Good and in the inevitable workings of Divine Providence. And now that these people are free, these same qualities can serve as the instruments in the formation of their new life of self-determination.

And like the tumultuous and half-civilized world in which Plotinus himself lived, the Slavic world under Communism was an equally difficult one in which to maintain one's fundamental dignity. But, again, like Plotinus, the Slavic world succeeded in rising above its vicissitudes. As Apollo so aptly described it, Plotinus' life was a struggle "to escape from the bitter wave of this blood-drinking life, from its sickening whirlpools, in the midst of its billows and sudden surges," and "often the Blessed Ones showed you the goal ever near."<sup>5</sup>

And it would not be too difficult or unnatural to see the Neoplatonic virtue of humility as an appropriate corollary to the sort of asceticism mentioned earlier. This kind of humility is exemplified by the realization of the impossibility of penetrating, by any rational or linguistic means, the ultimate nature of the divine. It is this paradoxical nature of human reason, simultaneously a great gift to human nature and yet one which is limited in power and scope, that the Slavic tradition, informed by Eastern Christianity, appreciates all too well.

Accordingly, the survival of those whom the Soviet system sought to dominate was facilitated by such character traits as

asceticism and humility, and it is these same traits which continue to be necessary if the revival of the post-Soviet populations is to have any hope of succeeding. It is in this sense that conditions there, as is often said, are going to get worse before they get better. In the long run, they will become better, but only if the survivors continue to heed the Neoplatonic prescriptions of the humble and ascetic life, particularly as they apply to spiritual matters.

Let me conclude with an examination of Divine Providence. It is here that the parallels to Neoplatonism, particularly to Proclus, appear once again. For Proclus, Providence involves the bestowal of good, and goodness is the distinctive characteristic of God. And it is God who grasps temporal events in a single timeless vision and knows contingent events without, however, being affected by their contingency. Similarly, the Slavic Christian sought consolation and found confidence in God's ultimate goodness and in God's appreciation of temporal events, including those involving suffering and injustice, in a way that mere mortals could not, namely, as part of a broader and ultimately good cosmic plan.

In the final analysis, it is the Neoplatonic attempt to articulate and cope with the paradox of reason's place in the spiritual life that may be found paralleled in the survival strategies, and in the current revival, of the Slavic Christianity. Of course, R.T. Wallis points out, "this dilemma was posed with particular force by the Neoplatonists' historical situation; and whatever criticisms may be made on individual points their basic reaction was unquestionably a sound one, and a sign of the general sanity and Hellenic moderation of their approach."<sup>6</sup>

And their "successes and failures have therefore much to teach us in our own spiritual search; for it is on our own success or failure in attaining a due balance that the future of our civilization depends."<sup>7</sup> The lesson we learn from ancient Neoplatonism and from Slavic Christianity's experiences in the twentieth century, then, is a similar one. Sooner or later, the spirit triumphs over matter, unity over multiplicity and divisiveness, the divine over the earthly, and the ineffable over the facile and the obvious. If one puts one's trust in Divine Providence, even the paradoxical is not impossible to appreciate.

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## NOTES

1. R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Company, 1972), p. 160. Hereafter, "Wallis."
2. *Ibid.*, 162.
3. *Ibid.*, 177.
4. W.T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan Press, 1960), 341-2.
5. Porphyry, "On the Life of Plotinus And the Order of His Books," in A.H. Armstrong, *Plotinus*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), section 22.
6. Wallis, 178.
7. *Ibid.*, 178.

# Neoplatonism in Contemporary Christian Spirituality<sup>a</sup>

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General spirituality, disciplined spiritual formation, and the professional art of spiritual direction are receiving renewed emphasis among religious people at the present time. Among the many reasons for this are developments in the understanding of religious symbolism. Quickly put, Paul Tillich's theory of symbols articulated ways in which certain symbols effect a communicative participation of the symbolizer in the realities symbolized such that the symbols need not be taken literally. By the theory of participation, Tillich showed how religious symbols are not mere representations. He thus provided an alternative to the Kantian approach to symbolism which requires an agnosticism (if not skepticism) about the religious object symbolized. By his theory of *broken* symbols, Tillich provided an alternative to Bultmann's dichotomy of demythologized symbols versus literal existential philosophic truth.<sup>1</sup> The Tillichian strategy regarding religious symbols has been given considerable technical sophistication by being read through Charles Peirce's philosophical theory of signs. The result is a new opportunity to interpret religious experience as realistic, capable of progression or improvement, and open to the points made in apophatic theology, which brings the discussion to the potential contributions of Neoplatonism.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper I shall begin by sketching certain features of a theory of religious symbolism as it pertains to spiritual growth, showing how not only the interpretation of such symbols but also their reference involves reshaping the soul in relation to the religious object to which reference is made. Then I shall contend that one of the most important issues in religious symbolism at the

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present time is the symbolizing of eternity; most religious symbologies are preoccupied with time. Neoplatonism, of course, has a rich store of symbols for engaging eternity, and some of these shall be indicated. Finally, I shall argue that Neoplatonism specifically presents a symbolic path whereby the soul is able to transcend the merely human perspective, so important for most senses of symbolic interpretation, and come to occupy something like an eternal perspective in spiritually significant senses.

### I. Symbolism

A theory of religious symbolism needs to be at least as complicated as Peirce's analysis distinguishing meaning, interpretation, and reference.<sup>3</sup> Peirce pointed out that interpretation is triadic, with signs (symbols) being used to stand for referents in certain respects. An interpretation itself can be treated as a sign, and indeed can be interpreted by other signs as an object or referent. These three elements—the signs themselves, the interpretation of them, and the objects to which interpretation refers them—comprise some of the main topics of a theory of symbolism, and can be specified in the case of religious symbolism.<sup>4</sup>

The meanings of symbols are defined by the semiotic codes within which they lie. Among the many things shaped by semiotic codes are the rules that relate symbols to other signs or symbols to which they might refer, and that specify what interpretations are allowed of the symbols when referring to each of the referent signs. Furthermore, a given symbol might stand for a given referent in a number of different ways, depending on the respects in which it is taken by the interpretant signs to represent the referent. Some symbols also can refer to a variety of different objects, with appropriately different interpreting signs.

Semiotic codes are immensely complicated and subtle. To note that a symbol might have several different potential referents, and several different interpreting signs based on different respects of interpretation, is to indicate only the roughest and most schematic sense of semiotic structure. The important point to stress is that the analysis of meaning in this sense works entirely within the coded semiotic system. The symbols are signs within the semiotic system; so are the referents, and so are the interpreting signs. The study of

symbols' meanings in this sense is the analysis of possible legitimate interpretations of signs relative to referents within the semiotic system. It is a study of how things work within the system. It is not a study of actual interpretations, in which real objects are engaged, but only of possible interpretations as these are made possible by semiotic structures. The symbols are referred to other signs of objects, not to real objects themselves. Many thinkers have taken the fact, that the intra-code meanings of symbols involve reference to objects only as signified by other signs, to mean that there is no real reference outside symbol systems. But this is to confuse the potential structure of meaning in a semiotic system with actual interpretations in which the system itself is employed to engage realities for real interpreters. An act of interpretation is a real engagement, shaped for better or worse by the structure of the semiotic system at hand that enables discerning distinctions to be made.

In the case of religious symbols, and perhaps many other kinds of symbols, there are networks within a semiotic system of connected and interdefined symbols. For instance, among the symbols within Christianity for interpreting the religious significance of Jesus is the network of symbols centered around the dominant symbol of messiah. This network includes connotations of anointing victors and kings, the exercise of political kingship, protection of the poor and solitary, and the fact that the anointed king of Israel is the substitute for God who prior to the anointing had been regarded as the real king (1 Samuel 8). The "messiah network" is different from but related to the network of symbols for Jesus as teacher, involving the message of forgiveness and repentance, the kingdom of God, and ethical matters. Both of these networks are different from that concerning Jesus as the atoning Lamb of God, picking up on the history of the Passover and Exodus, and also the scapegoat sacrifice imagery of the Law.

The relations among the networks of religious symbols are rarely like logical theoretical implications. Rather, they are overlaid resonances, mutually reinforcing or correcting images. The networks I mentioned are sometimes listed in classical theologies such as Calvin's under the titles "King," "Prophet," and "Priest." Together they sometimes are taken to describe the "Work of Jesus Christ." Considered this way, they surely are coherent because one person can have three jobs; it was not uncommon for ancient kings

to be construed as having priestly and pedagogical roles. The relevant symbolic networks do not articulate three job descriptions, however, but far deeper symbolic meanings. They each express in their way something of what makes Jesus divine in the collected networks of Christian symbolism. They point beyond Jesus the man to something infinite. I shall discuss this at greater length in treating reference.

As they actually function in religious life, the various symbolic networks work together. That is, no functional Christology could be based on the messiah network alone, nor on any of the others alone. Theologians sometimes strive to reduce the symbolic networks to abstractions that can be harmonized and reconciled. All to the good. But the symbolic function of religious symbols, which is to engage religious people with the religious realities, involves the symbolic networks, not as abstracted, but as overlaid together, compacted, conjoined, juxtaposed, alternated, and sometimes plainly confused. The saints wash their clothes in the blood of the Lamb and have them come out white; this confounds the rationalists but makes perfect symbolic sense (Revelation 7). The intensity of symbolic engagement of religious realities often is achieved only by the fusion of networks, mixed together, alternated, or strung out as in a liturgical calendar.

Furthermore, the networks often serve as limitations or correctives of one another. For instance, the cannibalism network in the Christian eucharist, in which the communicants eat and drink the body and blood of Jesus, is directly limited by the network of the Righteous King who forbids murder and cannibalism: because Jesus is a righteous lord, the symbolic acts of ingesting him are only symbolic, with bread and wine substitutes being significant precisely as substitutes.

Scholars can study how a religious tradition shapes the semantic content of its semiotic code, tracing the possible connections among signs as symbols, referents, and interpretations. These connections can be called *extensional* because they exhibit the extensions of meanings within a sign-system. Actual interpretations use symbols as structured by semiotic systems to interpret reality. The symbol, with its semiotically coded extensional meanings, is used representatively to engage the reality to which it is referred in actual interpretation.

Actual interpretation always has a context. Scholars often think of religious symbols in theological contexts, where the interests of understanding push interpretive work to clarity and perhaps literalness. But religious symbols are most often used in the practical contexts of shaping a religious community's life. Religious symbols also are used in devotional life. In both practical communal contexts of interpretation, and devotional contexts, interpretation has a something of a doubled character. On the one hand, the interpretation draws out primary interpretants according to what is legitimated by the semiotic code, with certain qualifications. On the other hand, the interpretation draws secondary practical inferences from the primary interpretants for what should be done or changed in the context. The symbols of messiahship, for instance, in a Christian community make practical demands on how members of that community relate to political authority; the symbols of atonement have implications for how to handle guilt, and so on. In devotional contexts the interpretations not only convey the religious object into the soul through primary interpretants but secondarily move toward restructuring the soul practically so as to be able to entertain the religious object appropriately. Devotional interpretation aims practically to transform the soul so that the religious object can be carried over into it. This transformation of the soul bears upon the contribution I want to highlight shortly deriving from Neoplatonism. So much for interpretation. Now for reference.

Actual reference is to realities (1) as potentially engaged by the structure of the semiotic system and (2) as selected by the act of interpretation to be intentionally referred to by the symbols taken to represent them in certain respects. Interpretation is the engagement of realities by means of cognitive and other activities shaped by the symbol system. Actual interpretation is a function of intentionality, and hence the actual referents and actual interpretants can be called "intentional referents and interpretants" in contrast to "extensional referents and interpretants." Symbols shaped by their codes represent their intentional referents more or less well, and the process of interpretation, carried on over time by communities, involves correction. There is a crucial distinction between intra-code extensional reference and interpretation, and actual intentional reference and interpretation in which the code connects interpreters with realities. This distinction is abundantly

illustrated in the history of religions as traditional symbols systems are broken and amended, cut, filed, and polished, better to carry out the semiotic functions involved in real engagement. If all interpretation were intra-textual, it is difficult to understand from where the constant sense of frustration, misexpression, misdirection, and correction come.

Like interpretation, reference has a doubled referent. The primary referent is the religious object, and I believe that most religious objects are best understood as a contrast joining something finite and something infinite. This is a profoundly complex claim, expanding on Whitehead's theory of contrasts, that will not be explored here, except in illustrations below. The rough meaning of the claim is that something finite is referred to, by a culture's symbol system, in some capacity that is a grounding of the world or of some existentially important part of it. Without the finite thing in that grounding capacity, there would be nothing, or at least not the relevant religiously important phenomenon. The creation of the world is a finite/infinite contrast: without it, there would literally be nothing.<sup>5</sup> The things that ground meaning and value, such as Torah or the Quran, are finite/infinite contrasts. For Christians, Jesus is the redeemer, a finite incarnation of the infinite: without him there would be no redemption. Much more needs to be explained, of course, to indicate in what religious importance consists. But enough has been said for now to indicate the primary referent of religious symbols.

The secondary referent is to the symbolizers' own culture and state of soul. That a finite thing can function in a finite/infinite contrast is relative to the nature of the interpreter referring to it. It is as if to say, this finite thing bears the infinite, or demarks the border of the infinite, for interpreters of this type. So, for instance, creation of the world can be referred to with religious symbols for people in cultures that give importance to physical cosmology; it would not be a religious referent in some Buddhist cultures. Torah or the Quran could be grounds of meaning only in cultures that find meaning in law or patterned behavior. Jesus could be referred to as a redeemer, bearing the infinite in finite acts, only for those prepared to take their situation as in need of redemption. In the practical contexts of symbolization, the community needs to be sufficiently informed by the symbols of the tradition that it is partly constituted by them, and therefore can refer to the religious objects

in ways that make that reference secondarily appropriate for the community. And in devotional life, symbols often take on fantastic and exaggerated characters because they refer to primary referents that have highly idiosyncratic secondary reference to the state of soul of the worshiper. Jesus can be depicted as brown, black, yellow, red, or white, depending on the race of the community. God can be imaged as a father for those with a positive sensibility regarding parents, but perhaps not for those whose parents abused them. Liberating divinities can be shown as large fierce women girdled in skulls and waving swords, for some people but not for others. Even music can symbolize divine things only if its primary referent is coordinated with the emotionally and culturally shaped state of soul of the listener. In the history of a person's devotional life, different symbols take on meaning at different stages, and sometimes change in meaning, playing first childish roles and then adult roles, roles relative to spiritual fear and then again roles relative to spiritual love.

Given the project of an individual or a community to engage religious objects better, with greater depth and discernment, with more clarity and intensity, with greater accommodation to the nature of the object and less refraction by accommodation to the ordinary conditions of human life, better symbols are sought. But the worth of the symbols is not merely enhanced meaning within a semiotic system. The worth is in the quality of the engagement of people with the religious realities. Some people and some societies are religiously superficial, at least at times. There are always historical limitations to what can be symbolized engagingly at a time. Profundity is something that needs to be sought in every generation, by every religiously interested person.

## II. Eternity as a Problem

One of the chief projects for improved engagement with religious realities in our own time concerns eternity. Most cultures of the world now are preoccupied with time and with matters in their temporal dimensions. Cultures shaped by modernity are not only preoccupied but obsessed with time. Perhaps this is because the rate of change in modernity is so fast that the most important feature of anything is the fact that it is passing quickly, or so it



seems. But this is not a mere feature of popular responses to social technological conditions. The Western philosophic tradition itself has become time obsessed. Modernity itself did not begin that way. Descartes neatly balanced the spatial characters of corporeality with the temporal characters of thinking and united them both in an eternal divine creative act upon which goodness, reason, and even distinction or difference are dependent. But in Kant's philosophy, space is reduced to the marks it leaves on more basic temporal forms of intuition, and eternity ceases to be an element of reality to which cognitive reference can be made. Heidegger and Husserl continued Kant's grounding of things in time or temporal intuition, despite Husserl's attempt to carry on the more balanced Cartesian program. Dewey charted pragmatism's way into temporal action and transaction. Much analytic philosophy has focused on language in use, which has only a temporal form. And the most popular philosophical theology today is process philosophy.

The classic symbols of most religions, however, and fundamental theological texts, give great importance to eternity. In most religions, eternity is both the ground and the fulfillment of the temporal. Eternity has no single definition, of course. The most common rendering of eternity in Western philosophy is something like a single momentary glance that encompasses all times, past, present, and future, a pan-temporal presence-to-consciousness in memory and anticipation. Augustine is associated with that view. Many religions treat eternity as a kind of container for time, a matrix that has something like temporal qualities but not the finite limitations; for example, the Hwa Yen Buddhists speak of temporal worlds being nested in temporal worlds, the nesting itself being eternal; Origen speaks of aeons within aeons. A degenerate image or theory of eternity is that it is something by nature static and unchanging, such as a mathematical equation or a form; this is sometimes attributed to Plato but in our day it comes from modern confusions of space with eternity as the contrast term to time.<sup>6</sup> The drawback to Descartes' neat balancing of space and time is that they are not easily related in his view, and thence become contrast terms to one another, leaving out reference to eternity. Few philosophers have taken Descartes' theory of divine creation seriously.<sup>7</sup>

I believe that eternity is an extremely important topic for our time, for both philosophical and religious reasons. Philosophically,

eternity is important for the understanding of temporal things, for, although temporal things have a past, present, and future, with dates that are temporally related, the past, present, and future modes of time are not temporally related: they are eternally related. Temporal things have temporal relations. The modes of time are the conditions for temporal relations, and their own mutual relations are not temporal. Temporal things change as they pass through the temporal modes, and thus the content of the past, present, and future changes with temporal passage. But the modal reality of past, present, and future does not change.

The neglect of the eternal togetherness of the temporal modes leads to a reduction of the modes to present time. This is the "being as presence" that so piqued Heidegger, although he could not think his way to eternity as a proper resolution of the difficulty. Process philosophy in Whitehead and Hartshorne, too, comes down to the view that only the present is real, that the past is gone and the future not yet. Of course the past is no longer present and the future is not present yet; or, better put, the things that were present are now past and the things still future have not become present. But without acknowledging that the past is real as past and the future is real as future, it is difficult to acknowledge moral identity over time: past actions are not real if you can forget them in the present, and the future is real only as anticipated. Thus there can be no serious guilt, nor serious commitment, nor cumulative moral identity except that expressed in present behavior. History too would be only a dream save for its present traces. And religious destiny can be given only the most shallow interpretation if it is reduced to present trends and anticipations. Popular consumerism is frequently condemned by philosophers for its obsession with present feelings; but much modern philosophy provides the rationale for the superficiality of present time consciousness, and popular culture is only now catching up.

As for religion, if the present alone is real, and the present is defined as presence in experience or presence to consciousness, then the divine is reduced to what can be contained within experience itself. Schleiermacher began more than he knew when he attempted to ground religious symbols and theology in a feeling of absolute dependence, that is, in a feeling. But for Schleiermacher, what human beings feel themselves absolutely dependent upon is far vaster than anything that can be contained

within *present* experience. In fact, for him, we experience that which transcends presence, that upon which present existence itself is dependent. More recently, the feeling of absolute dependence has been given an anthropological rather than a theological spin, and there is little sense that religious fulfillment could be anything other than an improvement of present experience. But classically and, I shall argue, truly and profoundly, religious fulfillment includes the attainment of a perspective more encompassing than that of present time, or even of finite human individuality. This is an accurate claim, I believe, not only for the West Asian religions that thematize the "vision of God" but also for the South Asian religions that thematize "enlightenment" and the East Asian religions with their emphasis on attunement and harmony. God, Brahman, Emptiness, the Dao—these are all more than temporal things. They are not whole in a present time, nor reducible to all times as present. Indeed, their apprehension, attainment, or realization requires, not their being fitted into the forms of finite human consciousness, but rather the transformation of the ordinary temporal consciousness into something else. That transformation of ordinary consciousness is a task of spiritual formation. So, a very important task for present spiritual formation is the development of symbols that can transform the soul so as to enable it to engage eternity.<sup>8</sup>

The main problem with engaging eternity for late modern people in North Atlantic cultures is that our souls are badly shaped for it. Because of our temporal preoccupations, and the scientistic culture's anti-religious dismissals of the problematic of eternity, the secondary referents to our cultural readiness do not allow very effective primary referents. Because of our over-temporalized souls, the secondary referents engaging us are compatible only with degenerate primary referents such as eternity-as-space, eternity-as-static-form, or eternity-as-presence-to-consciousness. For us to engage eternity more effectively, it is necessary to find symbols with far better referents. This requires that we change our souls for secondary reference as well as aim at eternity itself more accurately. All this is a complicated way of making the old point that spiritual formation is needed in order to be able to experience or engage some things well. At immature levels of spiritual development, we get it wrong, seem to engage silly things, and set ourselves up for embarrassing symbols, especially when literalized.

To our unprepared minds, the classic symbols seem like immature versions of something else.

### III. Eternity in Plotinus

Neoplatonism has at least two principal contributions to make to this point. First, it provides a set of symbols whose primary referents are to aspects of eternity more subtle than usually get expressed by the modern terms. Second, and more interesting for the point, Neoplatonism offers an understanding of the transformation of the soul necessary for better engagement with eternity, namely, its interpretation of soul as the flight of the alone to the alone. I shall briefly deal with the former point, and more extensively with the latter.

In its most general and popular expression, for Plotinus and those influenced by him, eternity is connected with time as source to manifestation. Temporal process is seen as not original or *sui generis* but as the product or effect of something else that is not temporal, and that source is eternal in respect to time. In general, Neoplatonism shares with the creation *ex nihilo* tradition the claim that the temporal order is dependent on a more original, non-temporal or eternal reality. The niceties of the distinctions between Neoplatonic emanation and *ex nihilo* creation need not occupy us here.<sup>9</sup> Suffice it to say that both construe eternity and time together as one topic, that the togetherness is causal in some sense, and that the entire matter is ontological, having to do with the nature of being, not just of what happens within the temporal cosmos.<sup>10</sup>

Plotinus' own analysis is in the seventh tractate of the third *en*nead.<sup>11</sup> He begins, in section 1, with the hypothesis that eternity and time are two different things, distinguished in the Platonic way (according to him) as exemplar or kind relative to its Image. On this hypothesis, if we knew eternity as the exemplar, we would then be able to know time as its Image; or because we know time as movement, we can know eternity as that of which time is the moving Image. Plotinus then asks, in section 2, what we can understand about eternity as a kind or exemplar. He considers and rejects several hypotheses in this regard, finding some truth in each but also dialectical contradictions. In subsequent sections he develops his positive hypothesis about eternity which is defined in

reference to time. Eternity is the repose of soul in its infinite completeness. It contains time within it as a potential, but not as actually following out the sequence of moments. Time itself is soul as infinitely differentiating, moving sequentially in an even or uniform fashion from future to future. Temporal soul is actually infinite in its sequence potential; that is, time by nature will unfold infinitely; but temporal Soul, and all temporal souls, always face a future and therefore at no time have ever run through an actual infinite. By the same token, no temporal soul is ever wholly actual at any one time, nor is the temporal world ever at a time wholly actual. Eternity, for Plotinus, is the supreme reality, which has the character of soul, and that enjoys fulness of being without ever having to move from future potential to present actuality. Time is the image of eternity in that it is infinite and perpetual movement imitating the fullness of eternal being which is in repose. Plotinus spells out the causal relation between eternity's infinite repose and time's infinite movement in the following passage, worth quoting at length.

Time at first—in reality before that “first” was produced by desire of succession—Time lay, self-concentrated, at rest with the Authentic Existent: it was not yet Time; it was merged in the Authentic and motionless with it. But there was an active principle there, one set on governing itself and realizing itself [=the All-Soul], and it chose to aim at something more than its present: it stirred from its rest, and Time stirred with it. And we, stirring to a ceaseless succession, to a next, to the discrimination of identity and the establishment of ever-new difference, traversed a portion of the out-going path and produced an image of Eternity, produced Time.

For the Soul contained an unquiet faculty, always desirous of translating elsewhere what it saw in the Authentic Realm, and it could not bear to retain within itself all the dense fullness of its possession.

A Seed is at rest; the nature-principle within, uncoiling outwards, makes way towards what seems to it a large life; but by that partition it loses; it was a unity self-gathered, and now, in going forth from itself, it fritters its unity away: it advances in a weaker greatness. It is so with this faculty of the Soul, which it produced the Kosmos known to sense—the mimic of the Divine Sphere, moving not in the very movement of the Divine but in its similitude, in an effort to reproduce that of the Divine. To bring this Kosmos into being, the Soul first laid aside its eternity and clothed itself with Time; this world of its fashioning it then gave over to be a servant to Time, making it at every

point a thing of Time, setting all its progressions within the bourns of Time. For the Kosmos moves only in Soul—the only Space within the range of the All open to it to move in—and therefore its Movement has always been in the Time which inheres in Soul.

Putting forth its energy in act after act, in a constant progress of novelty, the Soul produces succession as well as act; taking up new purposes added to the old it brings thus into being what had not existed in that former period when its purpose was still dormant and its life was not as it since became: the life is changed and that change carries with it a change of Time. Time, then, is contained in differentiation of Life; the ceaseless forward movement of Life brings with it unending Time; and Life as it achieves its stages constitutes past Time....

Eternity, we have said, is Life in Repose, unchanging, self-identical, always complete; and there is to be an image of Eternity—Time—such an image as this lower All presents of the Higher Sphere. Therefore over against that higher life there must be another life, known by the same name as the more veritable life of the Soul; over against that movement of the Intellectual Soul there must be the movement of some partial phase; over against that identity, unchangeableness and stability there must be that which is not constant in the one hold but puts forth multitudinous acts over against that oneness without extent or interval; there must be an image of oneness, a unity of link and succession; over against the immediately infinite and all-comprehending, that which tends, yes, to infinity but by tending to a perpetual futurity; over against the Whole in concentration, there must be that which is to be a Whole by stages never final. The lesser must always be working toward the increase of its Being, this will be its imitation of what is immediately complete, self-realized, endless without stage: only thus can its Being reproduce that of the Higher.<sup>12</sup>

In one important respect, Plotinus' view of the relation between eternity and time is implausible to the modern mind, namely, in its easy use of the anthropomorphic language of desire for the eternal. In our time, the supposition is that desire, almost by definition, means a longing for what is not yet and therefore the desirer needs to be temporal. Most theologians, for instance, who maintain what they take to be divine purpose, argue that God is radically temporal. Process theology is an obvious case in point.

Let me therefore set aside, at least temporarily, the language of desire and focus rather the more general point in Plotinus' account of eternity and time, namely, that eternity is life in its fullness and temporal existence is life striving after an infinite fulness it cannot comprehend in any finite sequence of moments.

There is a defensible contemporary way of putting this. Suppose that time and its temporal modes of past, present, and future are not containers of temporal things but characteristics of temporal things; Plotinus and Whitehead would agree with this point over against Newton and Einstein. On these suppositions, the temporal order thus includes every dateable thing in each of its states in all of its temporal modes. Obviously, each thing is included in its state of dateable present realization or happening; but it is also included as a far distant unimaginable possibility, as a remote possibility, as a proximate possibility, and as a virtually imminent nearly immediate future.

More exactly, in the temporal order, each dateable thing is included in all its shifts of future structure, each shift occasioned in the temporal order by some antecedent present decision affecting the future. As contained within the temporal order each thing's future is an immense array of continuously shifting possibility structures. The past is what is fixed, achieved, and definite. But each thing's past states in the temporal order accrue meaning as more things happen, and this meaning shifts as continuously with the passage of time as the shifts in its future states. So the things whose date is June 12, 1995, had one structure in the year 5, another in the year 1005, another on June 12, 1994, another on June 11, 1995; those things have a decisive presence on June 12, 1995, and having occurred will have one meaning on June 13, 1995, another on June 12, 1996, another in 2995, and another in 3995. All those states of all dateable things are contained within the temporal order, all together, though obviously not all at the same time.

The temporal order itself is eternal, not temporal. Temporal things, things within time, are temporal, and their dates are related to one another as past, present, and future. But the togetherness of past, present, and future is not temporal. And the togetherness of all the temporal moments of a dateable thing's reality is eternal, not temporal. The temporality of a dateable thing consists in its relations to other things as relative to its past, present, and future. The dynamism of the temporal order springs from the shifting date of the present. But the dynamism of the eternal quality of the temporal order includes not only the changes that take place in present happenings but all the shifts made in future possibilities and accrued actual meanings occasioned by decisive happenings.

I have argued at length that the only way by which temporally distinct things can be together in such a way as to be temporally related is by being created together *ex nihilo*.<sup>13</sup> Plotinus would prefer emanation to creation language; although there are serious differences, they are not relevant to the present point. The creative act is eternal and has as its end product the temporal order which is also eternal in the sense explained. Therefore, I would say, in accord with Plotinus, that the creating of the temporal order is a vast eternal life, fully dynamic as containing all dateable things in all their temporal modes and as in constant dynamic shifting. This is life in the fullest sense. Divine life contains the whole temporal order, not at once but in completeness, including all things in all their shifts of future, present, and past characters, all as connected together in ways as determined by those shifting characters. Whereas the life of a temporal being has a kind of external relation to elements of its future and past, focused in present existence, the life of eternity encompasses all that, at no time, and in fulness. In theistic language, the divine eternal life, creating the whole of the temporal order, is infinite in its dynamism and creativity, and this is imitated at a distance by finite lives that are dynamic successively, moment by moment.

#### IV. The Formation of Souls to Grasp Eternity

Interesting as the metaphysics of eternity might be to some, especially to Neoplatonists and conversely to anti-eternalists such as Process philosophers, my purpose here is not to address the notional dialectic but rather the spiritual capacities of modern people to engage the eternal dimensions of reality. The metaphysical dialectic itself is a powerful symbolism for engaging eternity, and it is effectively influential in my own case to a high degree. But let me recall the problem of spiritual formation: it is to transform the soul so that symbols of divine eternity such as those Neoplatonic ones I have just discussed can be used to engage the divine, rather than degenerate symbols of eternity representing it as space or static form or presence to the mind's eye. The doubled reference of symbols requires the state of soul in the secondary referent to be appropriate for the reality in the primary referent as determined by the symbol. The state of soul of most modern people

is so temporalized as to preclude deep engagement of reality with symbols of divine eternity. Temporalistic philosophers might follow the dialectic of Plotinus' or my symbols of divine eternity, and might even agree notionally; but they would not engage reality with those symbols, and hence cannot experientially test them, without a transformation of soul.

The transformation of soul required involves a transformation of the sense of personal location or perspective-point that includes more than the present. A person must have some kind of self-identification with at least some past and future dates as being equally real and determinative of the self as the affairs and states of the present. The experiential break-through comes in appreciating the eternal divine life as a real dynamic togetherness of temporally distinct things. This can hardly happen until the sense of personal self is expanded to include together the young self whose life is still mainly future opportunities, the middle-aged person whose life is defined mainly by responsibilities bound by the past and binding the future, and the old person whose life is mainly past deeds the ongoing meaning of which is slipping out of one's control. The personal standpoint required is one that experiences the world not just from some present date but from a sense of personal location that includes all the person's dates in all their states of future, past, and present temporality.

Of course, we can get these senses of the eternal identity of our temporal lives only fleetingly, and often through many levels of symbolic direction. As Aristotle said, one swallow does not make a summer. If we were continuously absorbed in a full-life sense of personal location, it would be disastrous to drive a car. Moreover, the intensity of present experience would be dissipated and hence the interesting character of finite freedom would be diminished. Finite life would be greatly impoverished by a continuous substitution of the perspective of our eternal identity for today's identity. At best, we should strive for a kind of bifocal vision, with the capacity to see in eternity always coupled with the capacity to see from within time where the finite action is. Plotinus might not be as happy with this defense of the special importance of the finite as an incarnationalist Christian such as myself is. But in our time, the problem is not serious. Our problem is to find a sparrow or two. To develop even fleeting glimpses of a self-identity inclusive of all the temporal modes, and from thence to glimpse the eternity of the world and the divine life, would be a great achievement.

The Neoplatonic contribution to the spiritual process of reading oneself to engage eternity is important to recover.<sup>14</sup> Recall its bare outlines. We finite temporal souls need to learn to identify with the world Soul. And then in a flight of transformative symbolization come to feel the repose of the world Soul through the Nous in the One. Plotinus and his tradition, coming in this instance from Plato, is clear that the flight of the soul is not a movement from one object to another, nor a learning of first one subject and then another. Rather, it is a transformation of the soul's own nature to attain to engaged appreciation of its true eternal reality in the World Soul, Nous, and the One. In the final vision, there is only one thing, God or the One, and in that are all other things in true eternal perspective.

Now the next topic, or the completion of this one, would be a discussion of practical techniques of spiritual formation that might effect the requisite transformation of soul. Fundamentally, these techniques are ways of enlarging the imagination so that the data of life are synthesized in images that include a personal sense of eternal location.<sup>15</sup> The enlargement of the imagination comes through habituating it through symbol systems whose meanings involve a reconstitution of the sense of self in the secondary referents, step by step. The secondary reference of a symbol or symbol system needs to make contact with the sense of self, but also to nudge it to more nearly eternal proportions. The language of "ascent" has been important in the Neoplatonic tradition, moving upward to higher and higher ways of engaging the world through ever more nearly eternal symbol systems. Bonaventure's *Mind's Road to God* is a classic example. In our time, Tillich has inverted the metaphor of the path to depths, not heights. Other traditions have other metaphors for the path of moving from one symbol system for engaging reality to another, approaching a properly eternal standpoint. Daoists like to cast aside the conventional for the purely natural. Tibetan Buddhists conceive excessive temporality as a kind of selfishness that can be scared away by fierce goddesses. Advaita Vedantins take the path to be a lifetime of study of commentaries on ritual.

Philosophers are likely to view the path toward spiritual readiness to engage eternity to be a matter of dialectic. Surely Neoplatonism has often been comfortable with this, and it is indeed powerful. But the far richer symbol systems of religious communities are also helpful and perhaps far more efficacious for

the practical purposes of transforming the imagination. Jesus' parable (Matthew 22: 1-14) of the king who invites people to his son's wedding banquet, and casts the improperly dressed guest into the outer darkness, is surely as "decentering" as any Tibetan goddess. The visualization practices of Ignatian spirituality and the hymns of Charles Wesley are far more helpful to most people than Plotinus's or my philosophical dialectic.

In this paper I have attempted to consider Neoplatonism within the specifically religious context of the engagement of eternity. This has involved the making of a few points about the complexities of religious symbols and what they do, and also about the present state of culture regarding the capacity to engage eternity effectively. Both of these tasks rest upon the resolution of issues about symbolism and the truth of claims about the reality of eternity that I have not attempted here, although I have addressed them elsewhere. What this paper means principally to affirm about Neoplatonism is its claim that the soul finds important fulfillment in transforming its merely temporal character so as to be able to engage the eternity of the divine life. The practical religious means to accomplish this in the late modern world is central to our religious culture.

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#### NOTES

1. See, for instance, Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper, 1957), or his *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 239 ff.
2. These introductory points are spelled out in much greater detail in my *The Truth of Broken Symbols* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).
3. Peirce's theory of signs is developed throughout his work. See especially the *Collected Papers*, vol. 5, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 5.283-317. For a good general account, see Vincent Colapietro's *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).
4. Peirce himself restricted the word *symbol* to a certain kind of signs, namely a conventional sign to be distinguished from iconic signs and indexical signs. Religious symbols have all those elements, conventional, iconic, and indexical, and I shall follow the customary

- use in calling all those religious signs *symbols*.
5. The notion of a finite/infinite contrast is developed at length in *The Truth of Broken Symbols*.
6. For a fine historical study see Richard Sorabji's *Time, Creation, and the Continuum* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).
7. Interestingly, Leibniz took an interest in Descartes' theory of creation in order to disagree with him sharply. For citations of the relevant texts and an analysis of their arguments, see my "Some Historical Problems about the Transcendence of God," *Journal of Religion*, 47 (January 1967), 1-9.
8. This analysis of the philosophical and religious dimensions of time and eternity summarizes portions of my book, *Eternity and Time's Flow* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).
9. The distinctions are dealt with at length in my *God the Creator* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992; original edition Chicago University Press, 1968), chapter 3, where I defend a version of creation *ex nihilo*.
10. That time and eternity constitute one topic was pointed out most felicitously by Peter Manchester in his "The Religious Experience of Time and Eternity," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*, edited by A.H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroad, 1986), p. 384. His whole essay is very helpful for the topic of this section. But he illustrates the point made in the previous section about our obsession with time when he calls "the name for this single embracing topic...temporality." If the point about causal dependence of temporal process on eternity is understood, the name ought to be something like "emanation" or "creation *ex nihilo*."
11. I follow the McKenna edition and translation.
12. Ennead Three, VII, 11.
13. In *Eternity and Time's Flow*.
14. See Pierre Hadot's excellent review article, "Neoplatonist Spirituality: Plotinus and Porphyry" in Armstrong, pp. 230-249.
15. My *Reconstruction of Thinking*, Part 2, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), analyzes the role of synthesizing imagination as constitutive of personal identity. The project, of course, is a development of Kant's approach to imagination in the A Deduction of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

# **No-Thing or nothing: Mysticism and Neoplatonism in Neville's Conception of God**

**Charles G. Woods**

Robert C. Neville's metaphysics and conception of God is one of the most original and trenchant of the twentieth century. Langdon Glikley<sup>1</sup> has called Neville "possibly the greatest metaphysician of the North American continent." His conception of God is worked out primarily in three works, *God the Creator*, (his magnum opus) *Behind the Masks of God*, and quite recently in, *A Theology Primer*. He is also the author of many other works that touch upon the problem of God, but these three works are central. This paper will discuss Neville's conception of God as "Creator" or "Ground" of the world as based on a reading of these three central texts, as well as some "readings-in" his other works. It's understanding has also been based on letters and personal conversations between the author and Professor Neville over the last fifteen years, as well as numerous conversations with Professor Harley Chapman, a long time student of Neville's philosophy.

Neville's writings, of course, will take precedence over these other sources, however, the author has persistently questioned Neville on the nature of the "nothingness" of God and of the relationship of this nothingness to mysticism, Neoplatonic philosophy and to the problem of pantheism, all problems that will be touched upon in this paper. This paper will attempt to *unpack* or (non-ideologically) "deconstruct" Neville's conception of God.

Although Neville's thought is both profound, delicately nuanced and appreciated in the scholarly community, it has still not caught fire *culturally*, such as Heidegger's or Tillich's did. This is possibly true for a few reasons. Neville's thought can be quite abstract (even his work meant for the general public) though more successful recently. He has not until recently had doctoral students writing theses on his work. And lastly, his work is difficult to

situate within a "Tradition". Neville is seen most often in opposition to process thinkers, or as a strange bed fellow with Thomists of various stripes. He can also be seen as "too religious" for naturalistic thinkers, or "too naturalistic" and "rationalistic" (or not enough!) for some religious thinkers.

In addition, although doing good work in comparative philosophy of religion in regard to his metaphysics, he mentions more often (and seems to know better) Eastern, especially Chinese mystics to Western and Neoplatonic/Christian ones. This is true though he himself is, (at least recently) a "Christian Theologian." As a cosmologist he is more easily associated and understood with Dewey, Peirce, Weiss, or Whitehead than with *strongly* Christian thinkers.

This paper will consist of four parts: *Part I* will outline Neville's conception of God and give a summary of his detailed Creation ex nihilo arguments. *Part II* will try to situate him within a Tradition which is, in part, surprisingly Neoplatonic. *Part III* will criticize his conception of God for "mystical" (not religious) availability, and *Part IV*, the Conclusion, will attempt a slight readjustment in his conception of God as "nothing" into a Mystical No-thingness, resolving the criticisms made in *Part III*.

## I

Being in large agreement with many of Neville's complex arguments in *God the Creator*, this paper will directly discuss the "nature" of God's "nothingness." Neville's simplest summary of his argument for God the Creator is possibly in his work *Behind the Masks of God* titled "The Logic of Creation Ex Nihilo." The summary follows, then it be will commented on and fleshed it out as it were.

- "1. Creation ex nihilo is a three term relation of world, act, and ground.
2. Everything determinate is part of the world and needs an ontological ground.
3. The act of creation is eternal, strictly speaking.
4. In itself the ground is nothing; its character as ground is a condition resulting from creation.

5. The question of theism or non-theism is a secondary issue, depending on different interpretations of the world and perhaps genuinely different experiences.
6. The ontological ground cannot be an object of knowledge, but can be known through the conditional role involved in the creation relation.
7. Non-being or emptiness is pervasive of all ontological contingency, including the contingency of the ground itself.
8. By virtue of being in harmony, every determinate thing, every creature bears a value of a certain kind and degree."

Attention should be drawn to Neville's point number four; "In itself the ground is *nothing*" [emphasis mine] and number six, "The ontological ground *cannot* be an object of *knowledge*." [Emphasis mine.]

In his great early work, *God the Creator*, Neville uses the language of "transcendence" and "indeterminateness" more than "nothingness," for instance, "The creator...is transcendent and indeterminate." Also in *A Theology Primer*, he writes, "Nor can we say, apart from creation, that God is knowing, good, powerful, or any of the other things there has been reason to say of God from a religious perspective. Apart from creation, God is indistinguishable from *nothing*." [Emphasis mine.]

Similar and almost identical quotes could be culled from all his works. For Neville, God apart from creation is *nothing* and therefore is *not* knowable—Deus Absconditus! This is the "logical *nothing*" in Neville's system—everything that exists is determinate; all determinations need to be created—the Creator cannot, therefore, be another determination. (This answers or stops the child's question—"But who made God?") If the creator is indeterminate, he cannot therefore be distinguished from "nothing." We will not question Neville's reasonings here, (though they have been questioned), for we are in large agreement with them by our own similar arguments and by temperament.

But why question the mystical availability of Neville's conception of God as "nothing"—for have not many mystics of both East and West spoken of God as "nothing"? Neville in fact states in his *Behind the Masks of God* that if "The creator is *indeterminate* apart from creation and determinate precisely as Creator, a great gain will be had; for we will have reconciled theism and God



beyond God *mysticism*.” [Italics mine.] He says in two connected paragraphs, “God is indistinguishable from *nothing*” and “As the *mystics* have *known*, in the transcendence of the *spirit*, God *appears* finally as the *Nothing*.” [Italics mine.] He also writes, “Yet Christian mystics have *known* that the deeper reality of God is *the abyss of Nothingness*.” [Italics mine.]

When Neville writes as a metaphysician, he writes of God-in-Himself as “nothing” with a small ‘n’ and states that (#6) “The ontological ground [God] *cannot* be an object of *knowledge*.” [Italics mine.] But when he writes of mystics, (or as a mystic?) he uses a capital ‘N’. Which is it? If Neville were to state that his mysticism is in logical conflict with his philosophy or that this No-thingness is a “paradox”, then we would not question him. But this contradiction is glaring in a thinker that dislikes them. We will return to this problem in Parts III and IV.

## II

As was stated in the ‘Introduction,’ Neville’s philosophy is difficult to situate within a Tradition—no doubt this is in part due to the truly creative aspects of his philosophy. But even Derrida has been seen as a continuation and development of Nietzsche and Heidegger.

Cosmologically, however, Neville is not so difficult to locate. Whitehead, Dewey, and Peirce help us sufficiently and in certain aspects of general metaphysics, Weiss and many others are helpful. But as a “Christian” philosopher with a view of God as Creator, he is difficult to locate. His own hints at a Tradition are not even that helpful. In *God the Creator*, he describes his position as “Platonic-Augustinian.”

He also places himself in the wide stream of “speculative philosophy”<sup>10</sup> that include, “Origen, Augustine, Anselm, Bonaventure, Schleiermacher, Tillich, and countless others.”<sup>11</sup> This is, no doubt, true but we believe that Duns Scotus is the ‘primary’ source for Neville as a Christian philosopher, for he also stated in *A Theology Primer* that when he was “in graduate school attempting to write a dissertation on Dun Scotus’ theory of divine creation, one evening [that he] suddenly understood the logic of the causal

asymmetry represented by the idea of creation ex nihilo.”<sup>12</sup> [Emphasis mine.]

The problem starts already with Neville placing himself in the Platonic-Augustinian tradition. We understand why he said this, for he is a Platonist in the sense that he has Eternal Ideas in his philosophy. Also, the idea of a “mixture” in Plato’s *Philebus* becomes important for Neville’s cosmology. Since his view of determinate being as a mixture of essential and conditional aspects which creates a “harmony” of certain kinds and degrees can be seen as “platonic”. It can also be seen why he states he is an Augustinian in that Augustine was the greatest founder in the West of the conception of God as Creator, and Augustine, no doubt, was also something of a Platonist.

But the similarities end there, for Plato and most Platonists God does *not* “create” the world but “forms” or emanates it. And although Augustine’s God *does* create the world, He does *not* create the ‘Intelligible world,’ the world of Ideas which under Albinus’ (and in part Plotinus’ influence) Augustine placed in God’s Mind. It was up to Aquinas to unify this multiplicity of the Divine Ideas. This is *radically* different, however, from Neville’s conception of God as Creator. For in Neville’s conception, although God *does* create the universe, He does so not from Ideas, or Archetypes, or aspects of His Divine Mind, for He *also* “creates” the Divine Ideas. This is one prong of Neville’s great originality. Neville distances himself from these Platonic thinkers, for he says in his *Behind the Masks of God* that, “God has been thought by Platonists and Neo-platonists to create the whole cosmos, but not the intelligibles or divine ideas, or divine nature.” He also rightly distances himself from forms of Whiteheadian panentheism. We believe, however, that opposites at times do coincide *a la* Cusa and that Neville *is*, in fact, closer to some extreme Neoplatonists than he recognizes and we will return to these mystical thinkers later in this section and again in Parts III and IV.

Now, we return to Duns Scotus who obviously did influence Neville. Scotus is usually seen as continuing the Augustinian tradition and maybe that is the continuity Neville finds in his “Augustinian” tradition. However, Scotus was only marginally an Augustinian, for he was very influenced by Aristotle and Thomas and was a truly original metaphysician—still influencing thinkers such as Peirce and Heidegger even recently. The “Subtle Doctor”

(whom Neville can be seen as a modern image of in his own abstract subtleties!) is only marginally and residually an Augustinian. Scotus was like a "third party" political member still loyally clinging to being a Republican or a Democrat.

Duns Scotus reduced the positive Ideas of Augustine to "logical possibilities" (much like in Whitehead's system.) He eliminated the Illumination theory of knowledge of Augustine, (as Thomas largely did) Bonaventure, and Grosseteste (and later, Malebranche.) Scotus is therefore, only an Augustinian in that his God is a Creator and that he seems to allow a hazy "intuition of Being" (if we understand him properly), and also in his emphasis on Will and Love over Intellect.

What Scotus influenced Neville with, though, was his unique (and hardly Augustinian) theory of the "univocal" predication of "Being", (with which the author is also in harmony) and the radical asymmetry between the world and God. This absolute dependence of the world on God, Neville could have taken from any of the great theists, such as Augustine, Bonaventure, or Aquinas, but it was Scotus' philosophy that triggered a deep and profound intuition in him "that has been [his] topic ever since."<sup>13</sup> Scotus as the source of Neville's conception of God as "Creator" should probably weigh in the balance equally with Whitehead, Peirce, Dewey, and Weiss combined! All of Neville's ideas of God are echoes of an intuitive explosion derived from Scotus in graduate school, and by the later Neo-Scotist Peirce. Having said this much, it may surprise everyone that the author does *not* think Scotus' theory of God is closest to Neville's theory in historical fact! For in *different* ways, as regarding God or Creation, three other thinkers are possibly closer in spirit to Neville's thought. For one, another Scotus is paradoxically closer in *some ways* to *Neville's thought*. This thinker is John Scotus Eriugena, the great ninth century heterodox Christian Neoplatonist. And secondly, another late Augustinian, William Ockham, the great Father of Nominalism and an Augustinian anti-platonist (he was an anti-Augustinian Augustinian!) And finally, the founder of modern philosophy—Rene Descartes, is, we believe, closer to Neville's conception of God and creation than even Scotus is.

To explain why we picked these three thinkers, there is a need to step back and discuss Neville and Duns Scotus a moment longer. With Scotus, God creates the world from logical possibilities (there

are scholarly controversies on this though), and it is with God's choice of these "possibilities" that He *Wills* the divine creation." To Neville, these "possibilities" must have seemed less "determinate" than Augustine's, Bonaventure's or even Aquinas' understanding of Divine Ideas. Neville must have thought Scotus' philosophy of the Logos to be a half-way house and he out subtled The Subtle Doctor by eliminating even these possibles. One would think this made God a pure Potentiality, like the later Cusas' Divine Posse. But one would be wrong again. To Neville, God-in-Himself is *not—or* before, temporarily (or logically?) the world. The Creator is "nothing": *not* the Divine Ideas, *not* the Divine Simplicity, *not* the Divine Possibilities, *nor* even pure Divine Potentiality; Nothing. Even this "nothing" is not a "mystical" nothing as in Tillich. This will be discussed in Part III.

Why then is Eriugena, Ockham and Descartes possibly closer to Neville than Scotus? Starting with Eriugena: Eriugena, following the late Neoplatonist Proclus through Pseudo-Dionysius, stated that God *Creates* the Divine Idea—the Logos. The Word, the Divine Idea(s) are *not* in God's mind as in Augustine. God as Unknowable *creates* the Logos and He is the first in the West to call God "Nihil" or Nothing. Eriugena speaks of Nature as having four great aspects:

1. That which is Uncreated and Creates—God as Nothing—which Creates the Logos.
2. That which is Created and Creates—the Logos—God as *Creator* of the world.
3. That which is created and does not create—the world which is *not* God but which Eriugena says is a "Theophany" or "Appearance of God."
4. That which neither creates nor is created—God again "in-Himself."

There are some obvious parallels here to Neville's profound philosophical system.

First, in Eriugena, God as Father (Ground) *creates* the divine Logos. This creation is Eternal in Eriugena and is distinguished from the temporal creation of the world. Eriugena may be the first to speak of a "created logos." (Although since the creation of the logos is eternal and since Plotinus speaks of The One as Willing the

Intelligibles, Plotinus might beat both Eriugena and Neville to the punch).

Secondly, Eriugena was the first to call God "Nihil" or Nothing with a capital 'N'.

Neville speaks of "creation ex nihilo (as) a three term relation of world, act, and ground."<sup>16</sup> [Emphasis mine.]

For Neville, there are *three* parts or aspects of "Nature"—(to use Eriugena's term<sup>17</sup>)—Ground, Act and World. We suggest that Eriugena's *fourfold* system better fits the facts and even Neville's own system. For Neville states that God did not "have" to create the world and that outside of creating, He cannot even be understood as a Creator, or Ground. Or even as a *potentiality* as Neville says in his tightly argued early work, *God the Creator*. "The creative power of God can in *no* way be construed as a *potentiality* or *potency*."<sup>18</sup> [Italics mine.] If this is true, then God-in-himself as 'nothing' is *not* the same as God as "Ground". If Professor Neville would agree with this—then we can 'restructure' Neville's threefold system to Eriugena's fourfold one. Neville's doctrine of the Logos *is*, in fact, fourfold as—SkyGod, EarthMother, Ground and Goal, but we mean to restructure his "three" aspects of Ground, Act, and World. We will slightly restructure as such:

1. Eriugena's "that which is Uncreated and Creates" should be understood as Neville's God as Creator or Ground.
2. Eriugena's "that which is created and creates" (Eriugena's Logos) should be understood similarly as Neville's Act, or Logos. Neville's Logos does *not* create, though, as in Eriugena.
3. Eriugena's "that which is created and does not create" (Eriugena's temporal world) is also Neville's "world."
4. Here is the tricky part—Eriugena's "that which is neither created nor creates" (God-in-Himself or Eriugena's Nihil or nothingness)—should be understood as Neville's God-in-Himself or Nothing.

All things do not return to God in Neville, however. At first, it may not seem like much has been done, possibly more like a 'sleight-of-hand', but we don't think so. What Neville has done is to conflate Eriugena's first and fourth aspects of Nature. Why does Neville do this? (Is he being out-subtled by Eriugena?) This is not impossible—for Eriugena is quickly becoming recognized as the

greatest metaphysical thinker between Augustine and Anselm. Only Aquinas and Scotus equal him and even they did not create such a complete or compact magnum opus as Eriugena's *The Division of Nature*. Neville, however, probably did not miss this distinction. He is still "subtle" here. The difference between Eriugena and Neville, we suggest, is in the way they understand the "nothingness" of God. Eriugena's nothing is a Mystical No-thingness, a Divine Nothingness similar to Tillich's, or as in the Kabbalah. However, Neville's means his "nothing" to mean *nothing*! Depending on whether one is in a metaphysical or a mystical mood, either thinker is more correct. Neville is sticking to his metaphysics to the end. Eriugena could be seen as waffling. (He would have his answer though.)

In his *Behind the Masks of God*, Neville states in our previously quoted point six that "The ontological ground cannot be an object of knowledge." There and in his point four, he is valid logically—"In itself the ground is nothing."

We would then be satisfied "logically" (if not mystically) if he did not contradict himself so "un-subtly," then, as previously quoted in the same book as, "Yet Christian mystics have known that the deeper reality of God is the *Abyss of Nothingness*."<sup>19</sup> [Italics mine.] And also as previously quoted (in the *Primer*) "As the mystics have *known* in the *transcendence* of the spirit God *appears* finally as the *Nothing*."<sup>20</sup> [Italics mine.]

This is obviously both a big contradiction *and* also mystically un-satisfying. This, the core of this paper's thesis, will be addressed in Part III and given a suggested solution in Part IV. For now we would like to mention the great similarities of Ockham, and Descartes to Neville—in fact, even greater than Duns Scotus regarding "creation." William of Ockham: Duns Scotus' "logical possibilities" were still understood to be aspects of the Divine Simplicity; with Ockham, there are no Divine Ideas at all that God looks to, to create the world. God is *absolutely* omnipotent to Ockham. He is not limited by other attributes like Reason or Goodness. The old question of Plato and the medievals—Is something Good because God wills it or does God will it because it is Good?—Aquinas answers with the second.

Scotus with William of Ockham strongly asserts the first—something is Good because *and only* because God wills it! God could make water run uphill, make  $2 + 2 = 5$ , or make round-

squares. Although Neville does not emphasize such created anomalies, they are at least a "possible" interpretation of his conception of God as *Absolute* Ground—of all. There are, of course, major differences in other aspects of their philosophies, and Neville in particular is *no* nominalist or Fideist.

The last thinker we would like to discuss is Rene Descartes: Descartes was in large measure trying to combat the skepticism of the later nominalists. But he is similar to both Eriugena, Ockham, and Neville in the sense that for him, God *creates* the Divine Ideas. With Descartes, the Ideas are again Eternal (as they are with Eriugena and Neville). God *created* Truth, it is Eternal and unchanging— $2 + 2$  will always equal 4—for Eriugena and Descartes. Ockham is stranger, for he says that God's Will, His Thought, and His Act are one (which Spinoza, Moses Cordovero and others also said) but with Ockham, the emphasis is on the "Will," and he emphasizes the nonrelatedness of past, present and future much like his later fellow countryman and empiricist, David Hume, will do. With Ockham,  $2 + 2$  could equal 3 yesterday, 4 today, and 5 tomorrow, and all could be correct—based on God's Will! Where is Neville vis a vis all this? He sides with Eriugena and Descartes—that God's created Truth is Eternal, *and* with Ockham, that He *could* have changed it! He is probably more comfortable with "could have," than "Will tomorrow," though.

Spinoza also, like Ockham, affirmed the identity of God's Will, Intellect, and Essence, and even said in one of his letters that the Muslim conception of God as absolute Potentate or Power was *closer* to the truth than a God who *looked* to patterns to Create ala the *Timaeus*. The difference between Spinoza and Ockham was that for Spinoza, God's decision (if there was one was final) with Ockham it might not be. Neville is somewhere in the middle. He would not be troubled by Spinoza's argument that *if* God had created a different universe, *then* his Intellect and Essence would have been different. For Neville consistently thinks we know God only *by* His Creation and even that He is a "Creator" *only* because He Creates. So for Neville, it probably would be true that *if* God created a different universe, *as* Creator, He *then would* have a different "Essence", *as* Creator. But what God is *in-Himself* aside from creating would *not* change for He is *not* an "Essence" at all—but "nothing."

We hope this alternate Tradition (weak though it is as a "Tradition"<sup>21</sup>) has proved helpful and that scholars of these philosophers may look into these associations more carefully<sup>22</sup>. We conclude this section by repeating that Duns Scotus should weigh equally with *all* other modern thinkers combined (with the exception of Tillich) in an understanding of Neville's "vertical causality," (concept of God and Creation) though not with his "horizontal (cosmological) causality."

### III

In this section, Neville's philosophy will be criticized for its "mystical availability"—something he somewhat inconsistently claims it has. Religious availability is not as much a problem.<sup>23</sup> Both Neville and the author have criticized Whitehead regarding religious availability, Neville in his book *Creativity and God*, and the author in his paper, "Whitehead's Conception of God."<sup>24</sup>

To state it baldly; Neville cannot say that God is *both* "nothing" and No-Thing. Again that God is both *unknowable* as "nothing" and that the mystics *know* this Nothingness!<sup>25</sup> Lewis Ford has pointed out to me that Neville may mean that the mystic "knows" that he does not know God. However, it *is* still an "experience". It must prove interesting to this great philosopher that, *only* mystics of East and West have spoken of God as Nothing—or in similar terms. And Neville, of course, does mention some of these thinkers, and mystics, i.e. Boehme and Eckhart.<sup>26</sup> Eriugena, for instance, speaks of God as a Divine Nothingness and even goes so far as to say that the "Nihil" that God Created the world from, is His *own* Nothingness—Creation Ex Nihilo—becomes, Creation Ex Deo! The Kabbalah also speaks of God as the "Ain" or "Ensof"—as Nothing or Infinite. Again, both Boehme and Eckhart call God "nothing", (or the Desert). The Buddhists speak of Sunyata, Nirvana, or No-mind, the Hindus of para-Brahman, etc. The point is that these are all obviously "mystical" philosophies and very likely based on some mystics 'experiences'—though the word "experience" is, no doubt, too dualistic.<sup>27</sup> John of the Cross also speaks of "Nada, Nada, Nada and on the mountain Nada." F.H. Bradley said "a person/appearance could not become the Absolute for then it would *be* The Absolute and no longer an individual." No doubt, this is also

Neville's correctly logical conclusion. "No one can look upon God's Face and live." But the great mystics say 'paradoxically' that they *do* die, *yet* live! The Buddhists's speak of "The Great Death" and "Nirvana" and the Sufi's of being annihilated in God—"Fana"—and also of being preserved—of "Baqa." Experiences of Divine Light are also often mentioned by the same writers that write of Nothingness as God. At times, as in St. Symeon The New Theologian (and many others) you find a phenomenological description (*if* we can use the term) of one grasping to define something that cannot be defined—"it's nothing"—"it's endless light." This light is then identified with Christ, Buddha, Allah, etc., depending upon the Tradition. Eric Voegelin,<sup>28</sup> for instance, thought Parmenides, the founder of Western metaphysics, in his *Poem* to the Goddess of Light to be describing a mystical experience of light. Terms like "infinite" to Voegelin are negations of finite experience (as in Spinoza's "all determination is in part negation".) Spinoza, for example, can also be seen as a mystical philosopher as W.T. Stace correctly pointed out.<sup>29</sup> This world is always an *experience* of "this or that," as Neville similarly states in *Behind the Masks of God*<sup>30</sup> "determinate identity is always *this* and *not that*." [Emphasis mine.] But the Hindu philosophers mystically also say that Brahman (or paraBrahman depending on the tradition) is "Neti Neti" "not this, not this." It is *not* this or that.

It is interesting that both the author and Neville have resonated with the language of Divine Nothingness, for both have had mystical experiences of Light.<sup>31</sup> It is possible that Neville's inexorable logic lead him to the black hole of God-in-Himself as "nothing," while His "mystical experience" of Light lead him to God as Nothingness. Neville is closer philosophically than he supposes, and much closer "experientially" to the Neoplatonic tradition, pagan and especially Christian. For God as Ground is very important to Neville. Maybe more important ultimately than God as Creator since God is not "personal" to Neville, and the created world, in a sense, is also Eternal. We believe he took the Word/Idea of "Ground" from Tillich, and Tillich got it by his own admission from the Pseudo-Dionysius, and unless Tillich read it in the original Greek, it is highly likely that he read it in Eriugena's Latin translation and gloss. Although Neville has, no doubt, read his Plotinus carefully as a metaphysician (though possibly not as a mystic), it seems evident from his (lack of) quotes that he does not

know the Neoplatonic tradition especially well. We believe that this is because he does not like the idea of "Hierarchy"—that God as the One emanates of necessity—the Nous, the World Soul, Nature, and possibly then Matter/evil. But many of the Eastern thinkers Neville studies *also have* Hierarchies and that is *not* the only way to read even Plotinus. You can easily read Plotinus "apophatically" as distinguishing between the Infinite/Indeterminate and the Finite/Determinate(s). Plotinus who is the source of many of the thinkers mentioned, also *all but* calls God "nothing." Additionally forgetting the World Soul for a moment; what is the difference between Plotinus' One (which is *not* 'a' Being) manifesting/emanating the Nous or Being, and Neville's God-in-Himself as Creator creating *timelessly* the logos? For Plotinus *does* speak of The One "Willing." Plotinus' One Emanates freely, or "freely/necessary" as in Spinoza and Schuon. What then is the difference of this from "Creation", since Neville admits that Creation ex nihilo is *not* intelligible in most common understandings of intelligibility<sup>32</sup>. Macquarrie points out that even in the Bible, metaphors of "emanation" are used side by side with more "creative" metaphors. If Neville wants a non-hierarchical version of Christian Neoplatonism, Nicolaus of Cusa should interest him, or Ibn Arabi the Iberian/Muslim, Neoplatonist/Sufi. For to these Neoplatonists, God *does* Create the World "directly" and not through "intermediaries," which is Neville's quite valid and main objection to one aspect of this "Tradition".

#### IV

We said in this conclusion that we would suggest minor changes in Neville's philosophy to better incorporate mystical experiences of the via negativa type, and one should remember that Dionysius said (and almost everyone forgets this!) that "God is dark through excess of light" like Aristotle's "owl in the sun." *Our reason* is blinded by God as Nothing but we suggest that Intellect (*not* "Ratio"), or Heart *can* Intuit—or "know" God in a *non-dualistic* way. Plotinus says the vision is not "other" and that "the vision baffles telling."<sup>33</sup>

Neville, in short, needs to make his nothing—Nothing—a Mystical Nothingness more like Tillich's. He should have nothing

to fear by this. He states it himself throughout his works without possibly unpacking it, and his metaphysics is *still* more coherent (if possibly less experientially passionate) than Tillich's. Professor Neville will, no doubt, wonder whether a Divine Nothing—making Creation Ex Deo will border then on pantheism? But *any* "participation" metaphysics already does.

We suggest that Neville, for one, distinguishes between "contradiction" and "Paradox" in his philosophy. A "contradiction" can be resolved—whereas greater knowledge only increases a "paradox". There are unsolved theorems, or "problems" *a la* Marcel that with greater knowledge may be solved. A mathematical example: a proof for Euclid's parallel lines is *possibly* a problem—but PI is probably a paradox (Marcel's "Mystery") of sorts.

With the highest/absolute mystical experience maybe there is a way that one can *know* without distinguishing subject and object, or by backing-into The Absolute, as it were.

Possibly the Divine Nothing *is* "pure experience," and yet not "determinate"—maybe Neville is wrong to equate nothingness *simply* with "indetermination". It is probable that this paper has raised more questions than it has answered, yet the questions are valid, and we hope that Professor Neville<sup>34</sup> will address these issues of Tradition, mysticism, Neoplatonism, and even 'pantheism' directly in his future and, no doubt, continuously excellent works.

But should we grasp the one of authentic beings, their principle, wellspring, and dynamis will we then lose faith and consider it *nothing*? It is certainly *nothing* of the things of which it is the origin, being such, as it were, that *nothing* can be attributed to it, neither *being*, nor beings, nor life. It is *beyond* those. If then by *withdrawing* being you should grasp it, you will be brought into *wonder*. [Emphasis mine.]

Plotinus, *Enneads* (3.8.10.26-32)

The Union Institute

3. Page 70, slightly rearranged.
4. Page 40.
5. Page 16.
6. Page 40, *A Theology Primer*.
7. Page 41.
8. Page 93, *Behind the Masks of God*.
9. Page 2.
10. Page 6.
11. Page 6.
12. Page XV.
13. *A Theology Primer*, page XV.
14. And 'Father', in our opinion, also of much later mischief and nihilism. Neville does *not* follow Ockham in these negative directions.
15. Similarly to Leibniz's 'compossibles' in some ways.
16. *Behind the Masks of God*, page 96.
17. And later Thomas', Bruno's and Spinoza's term.
18. Page 113.
19. Page 95.
20. Page 41.
21. For Eriugena, Ockham, and Descartes are strange companions.
22. We know Eriugena and Descartes better than Scotus, and Ockham only largely at 'second hand'.
23. Though a Malebranche would be 'horrified' by a God who is not 'essentially' Good.
24. See Bibliography.
25. We have discussed this issue, and Professor Neville thinks it is worth a paper.
26. 'Masks', page 11 and 74.
27. See Neville's point #5.
28. See Chapter 8 on "Parmenides" in his *The World of the Polis*.
29. See Voegelin on Socrates as a "Mystic Philosopher" on page 9 of his *Plato and Aristotle*.
30. Page 90.
31. Three related ones myself at age twenty two, and Neville at least one at age eleven (if we remember properly.)
32. For a detailed discussion of creation and emanation in Thomas Aquinas, see the author's paper on same—in Bibliography.
33. Ennead VI.
34. And other scholars.

#### NOTES

1. In a phone conversation with the author, in (I think) 1987.
2. Page 96 in 'Part Two' of 'Chapter Five'.

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# NEOPLATONISM AND GNOSTICISM

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## PREFACE

R. Baine Harris

Although some twenty five scholars have been involved in its production, this book is primarily the result of the efforts of one person, the late Richard T. Wallis, of the Classics Department of the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma. It was some time in the early spring of 1980 that I first suggested to him the idea of a major conference that would bring together authorities on Gnosticism and Neoplatonism from throughout the world for a serious discussion of the similarities, differences, and historical interrelation of the two. He readily accepted the challenge and spent most of his professional energy for the next four years of his life in making this possibility a reality.

Early along the way, he was able to enlist the support of Professor John Catlin, chairman of the Classics Department and Professor Kenneth Merrill, then chairman of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Oklahoma. Working together they were able to arrange adequate financial support from a number of sources, including a large grant from the University of Oklahoma and a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Due to their efforts, the Sixth International Conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies was held in the University of Oklahoma, March 18-21, 1984, and the conference was a great success.

What sort of man was Richard T. Wallis, and what would cause him to give so much of his time and energy to what some would regard as an esoteric theme? A transplanted Englishman, he first came to the University of Oklahoma in August, 1970 to teach in the Department of Classics. The site was chosen partly for health reasons, since he had suffered for most of his adult life from a severe case of asthma, an

illness that eventually caused his death in 1985 at the early age of 43. His undergraduate education was in Trinity College, Cambridge, where he obtained his B.A. degree with First Class Honors in both parts of the Classical Tripos and as a result of his performance in Part II of the Tripos was awarded the Craven Research Studentship and Chancellor's Classical Medal.

His graduate training was in Churchill College, Cambridge, where he received both his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, his dissertation for the latter being entitled "DIANOIA and PRONOIA from Plato to Plotinus." In addition to his regular teaching schedule during his fourteen year tenure at Oklahoma, he published eight articles and nineteen book reviews, mainly in *Classical Review* and *Classical World*, and in 1972 produced a major book entitled *Neoplatonism*. The latter was well received and an Italian translation of it was released in 1974. He was also invited to give special lectures in the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Manchester and was a charter member and served on the Advisory Committee of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, participating in its various international congresses.

About his willingness to focus upon the relationship between Neoplatonism and Gnosticism we can only speculate; but we can conjecture that he was quite aware of the fact that the differences between Neoplatonism and Gnosticism are of more than antiquarian interest. The Gnostic notion of salvation through individual special revelation apart from faith is still with us both inside and outside of the main established religious traditions of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Some of the issues debated by the Third and Fourth Century Neoplatonists and Gnostics, namely, whether higher knowledge emerges from a foundation of reason or can occur apart from reason, whether nature and man can be regarded as a lower form of a higher reality and thus essentially good or must be taken to be essentially evil, and whether evil can or cannot be reconciled with divine providence are issues that still must be dealt with in any contemporary religious philosophy. As Wallis himself once wrote, "the debate between Plotinus and the Gnostics . . . involves movements that left a permanent mark on Christian theology, and thus on Western thought as a whole, while, more generally, it raises the perennial problems of reconciling evil with divine providence and of the perspective roles of reason and revelation in religion." (See p. 7 below.)

After his untimely death in April, 1985, the task of editing the conference papers, including arranging for translation of some of them, was assumed by one of the participants of the congress, Professor Jay

Bregman of the Department of History of the University of Maine at Orono, a task that required most of his time for most of a summer as well as additional time throughout the next year. He also continued and elaborated Wallis' unfinished introduction included in this volume.

In addition to those already mentioned, five other persons, John Anton, A.H. Armstrong, John Dillon, Peter Manchester, and Leo Sweeney were especially helpful in giving advice concerning the formation of the congress. Special thanks go to Leo Sweeney, S.J. of Loyola University in Chicago for his considerable contribution. Finally, Elaine Dawson of the Old Dominion University Arts and Letters Office of Research Services, is to be commended for her excellent work and dedication in preparing the camera-ready manuscript, including the text of the Greek passages.

Old Dominion University  
September, 1990

## INTRODUCTION

### Part I - by Richard T. Wallis

Of the two movements whose relations form the subject of the title of this book, "Neoplatonism" denotes the religiously toned synthesis of Plato's thought inaugurated in the third century A.D. by Plotinus and continuing in its pagan form down to the sixth century A.D. The school thus formed the dominant philosophical movement of the later Roman Empire, and was extremely influential on Medieval Christian and Moslem thought and mysticism, on many later European thinkers down to the present day, and on such movements as Renaissance art and Romantic poetry. For our purposes the term will be largely confined to the ancient pagan Neoplatonists, but attention will also be given to their immediate forerunners, the so-called "Middle Platonists," of whom Plutarch and Apuleius are the best known. "Gnosticism," as known until recently, comprised for the most part a number of otherworldly theological systems maintained by early Christian heretics, claiming salvation through "gnosis" (knowledge) rather than faith, and chiefly known through the criticisms of the orthodox. Outside the church, but with many affinities to Gnosticism, was Manichaeism, the dualistic religion founded by Mani in Iran in the third century A.D., while from a slightly earlier date such documents as the *Hermetica* (revelations composed in Greek and attributed to the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus) and the *Chaldean Oracles*, which some later Neoplatonists regarded as equal to Plato in importance, formed a bridge between Middle Platonism and Gnosticism. Plotinus, however, bitterly attacked the Gnostics, especially in his polemical treatise *Enneads* II. 9, on two fundamental grounds. First, Gnostics despise both the sensible world and its creator, whereas Platonists recognize its relative importance as

a divinely-produced imitation of an ideal model. Second, while Gnostics agree with Platonists on many points, owing, Plotinus charges, to borrowings from Plato, they abuse him and the other ancient philosophers and seek knowledge through divine revelation, instead of giving a reasoned account of their beliefs.

The debate between Plotinus and the Gnostics is thus of far more than academic interest; historically, it involves movements that left a permanent mark on Christian theology, and thus on Western thought as a whole, while, more generally, it raises the perennial problems of reconciling evil with divine providence and of the respective roles of reason and revelation in religion. Its study has, however, been hindered until recently by lack of original Gnostic writings, the main exceptions being a few short texts quoted by the Church Fathers and some (mostly late) works translated from Greek into Coptic, the native Egyptian language.<sup>1</sup> Our picture has, however, been revolutionized by the discovery in late 1945 of a Coptic Gnostic library at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt. Scholarly and political jealousies unfortunately kept most of the library unavailable to all but a few specialists until the late 1970's, when a complete English translation was published.<sup>2</sup> Editions, with translations and explanatory notes, of all the texts in the library are also in process of publication.<sup>3</sup>

Though collected by Christians, apparently in the late fourth century A.D., the library includes translations of some texts composed at least two centuries earlier and, while containing many Christian works, shows Gnosticism as a phenomenon extending far beyond Christianity. What particularly concerns us is that several texts, both Christian and non-Christian, show strong Platonic influence; most important, the non-Christian works include two, *Zostrianos* (VIII.1) and *Allogenes* (XI.3), which on literary and doctrinal grounds are almost certainly identical with those named by Plotinus's pupil Porphyry in Chapter 16 of his biography of his master as having been used by the latter's opponents.<sup>4</sup> Two further non-Christian texts, the *Three Steles of Seth* (VII.5) and *Marsanes* (X.1), bear strong doctrinal resemblances to these. Despite the regrettable fact that *Zostrianos* and *Marsanes*, originally among the longest works in the library, are now among the most mutilated, their importance for the study of Neoplatonism remains considerable. That the subject has so far received little attention has been due, first, to the rarity of scholars at home in both disciplines and, second, to the concentration by most Nag Hammadi scholars on the light thrown by the new discoveries on the origin of Gnosticism and its relation to Christianity. The most important conference on the texts to date, held at Yale early in 1978, was largely concerned with these

questions and with identifying the Gnostic sects who produced the writings.<sup>5</sup> A further conference on Gnosticism and Christianity will be held at Southwest Missouri State University in March 1983; the same topic has been the focus of two recent English-language studies, Elaine Pagels' *The Gnostic Gospels*<sup>6</sup> and PHEME PERKINS' *The Gnostic Dialogue*.<sup>7</sup> The papers presented at Yale on the relation of Gnosticism to Platonism, by contrast, dealt mainly with general topics, largely because Neoplatonic scholars as yet lacked access to most of the new materials.

It was, in fact, scholars on the Gnostic side who first began to clarify the picture. Jan Zandee saw strong resemblances between Plotinus and the so-called "*Tripurite Tractate*" from Nag Hammadi, with its relatively favorable view of the cosmos' creator.<sup>8</sup> Of even greater importance was the demonstration by M. TARDIEU, J.M. ROBINSON and others<sup>9</sup> that the Neoplatonic triad Being-Life-Intellect, which P. HADOT had long ago argued to be pre-Plotinian,<sup>10</sup> was fully formulated in the *Zostrianos-Allogenes* group of texts. Birger A. PEARSON has similarly shown strong Platonic influence on *Marsanes*, leading to a more optimistic world-view.<sup>11</sup>

That Plotinus was right in seeing strong Platonic tendencies in Gnosticism, despite the latter's basically mythological structure, has long been recognized. The new texts, however, re-open the much more controversial question whether Neoplatonism received substantial Gnostic influence,<sup>12</sup> or whether resemblances like those just noted are merely parallels deriving from a common Platonic tradition. Even if the latter answer is correct, did Plotinus and his successors modify their system to eliminate Gnostic tendencies? And was the opposition between the two systems (both of which admitted considerable internal divergences) really as sharp as Plotinus claimed? Another long-debated point posed anew by the Nag Hammadi texts is whether, as Porphyry seems to state,<sup>13</sup> Plotinus's opponents were Christians and, if so, whether they should be identified with followers of the second-century heretic Valentinus.<sup>14</sup> The *Zostrianos-Allogenes* group of texts is without obvious Christian influence; furthermore, it belongs to an older Gnostic sect (or perhaps two closely related sects), the Sethians (self-proclaimed followers of Adam's son Seth) or Barbelo-Gnostics (devotees of Barbelo, goddess of Wisdom). On the other hand, the Sethian Nag Hammadi texts include both Christian and non-Christian works,<sup>15</sup> while the library itself shows that Christians sympathetic to Gnosticism could use and revere pagan works, and confirms, what we knew already, that Gnostic sects borrowed freely from one another. Hence these questions also must remain open.

## Part II - by J. Bregman

In recent decades there has been considerable interest in the study of Gnosticism, in literary as well as scholarly circles. A widespread revival of interest in mysticism, Oriental philosophy and the forms of religious experience occurred in the 1960s. The revival included spiritual options that could be described as "gnostic." For example, the psychologist C.G. Jung and novelist Hermann Hesse have been considered "modern gnostics." Universities offered more courses in Comparative Religion as scholarly work on the Gnostic problem (aided by the Nag-Hammadi discoveries) became a priority among historians of religion.

The reasons for this are perhaps not far to seek. Like Late Antiquity and the later Middle Ages, our own age is one of basic transformation and re-orientation. In such ages groups often emerge that can be generally characterized as "gnostic" in outlook. This has been well known and much discussed for some time. Today "gnosticism" seems to be a viable religious possibility both within and without contemporary Christianity; therefore some contemporary theological discussions will probably follow a pattern analogous (perhaps somewhat distantly analogous) to the ancient debates between Plotinus and the Gnostics and to other Platonic-Gnostic questions raised herein.

Serious scholarly and philosophical interest in Gnosticism has arisen in large part because of philosophers and historians such as Hans Jonas, who did much to determine the agenda and to act as guides for recent generations of students of religion and philosophy. That Jonas' work, the *Gnostic Religion*, has stood the test of time in light of recent discoveries is evidence of the profundity of his thought and insight.

The papers in this volume discuss in detail the similarities, differences and possible mutual influences between two movements of great significance for the development of Christian theology and later Western thought. Of central — but by no means exclusive — importance is the anti-Gnostic polemic composed by Plotinus, and the recently published Gnostic texts discovered, in Coptic translation, at Nag-Hammadi in Egypt. Many of these show strong Platonic influence, and some are almost certainly among the works used by Plotinus's Gnostic opponents. While volumes on the Nag Hammadi discoveries have been published or are being planned, their emphasis has been on the texts' relevance to the origin of Gnosticism and its relation to early Christianity. The present volume, the first to concentrate on Gnosticism's philosophical implications, by contrast brings together Neoplatonic scholars and experts working on the new Gnostic materials

and considers both specialized problems of historical scholarship and the relevance of the Neoplatonic-Gnostic debate to important contemporary religious issues. No book or conference so far produced or planned has taken the philosophical implications of the new Gnostic texts or their relation to the dominant philosophy of the time as its theme. Detailed discussion to date has in fact been confined to individual topics, presented in short articles or monographs. This conference volume thus attempts to meet the perceived need to bring together a body of scholars, some more versed in Gnosticism, others in Neoplatonism, to consolidate and advance the valuable discussions so far provided on these and other relevant questions. We hope that the articles herein have to some extent accomplished this important task.

The International Conference on Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, was held at the University of Oklahoma, March 18-21, 1984. At the opening ceremonies, R.T. Wallis welcomed the international group of participants and appropriately quoted John Dillon's literary characterization of Middle Platonism: "It seems fated to remain in the position of those tedious tracts of the Mid-Western United States through which one passes with all possible haste, in order to reach the excitements of one coast or the other. In Platonism likewise, one tends to move all too hastily from Plato to Plotinus . . ." He then briefly spoke about the special significance of the study of Neoplatonism and Gnosticism for our understanding of ancient Christian as well as contemporary religious and philosophical thought. Continuing the welcoming remarks in a similar spirit, Professor R. Baine Harris presented Professor Hans Jonas with a special award from the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, for his pioneering work on Gnosticism, its relation to the "spätantiker Geist," and its modern spiritual significance. A cordial reception followed in honor of Professor Jonas.

The conference began the next morning and remained consistently excellent for over three days. In addition to those who read papers at plenary sessions several papers not on the theme of the conference were read at sessions on "Neoplatonism and Nature" and "Studies in Neoplatonism." The plenary sessions were well attended and the subsequent discussions were stimulating and interesting. Often Professor Jonas, himself, would be available to discuss questions concerning the relationship of his work to recent studies in Gnosticism and Neoplatonism. Also present were students and scholars residing in Argentina, Canada, England, France, India, Ireland and the United States. Some important thinkers participated vigorously in discussions formal and informal although they did not all present papers, among



them John Rist, L.G. Westerink, Kurt Rudolph and many others. Perhaps it is not too strong an assertion to say that this conference's participants actually resolved some controversial scholarly issues. One example immediately comes to mind: late in the morning of the second day, after John D. Turner presented his paper there was a lively discussion about the historicity of the Gnostic authors and "schools" listed by Porphyry in his "Life of Plotinus," ch. 16 (including Zoroaster, Zostrianus, Nicotheus, Allogenes, Messus and others). R.T. Wallis interrupted and asked whether anyone present objected to considering it now an historically established fact that the Gnostic and Valentinian authors mentioned by Porphyry were the same as those whose "signed" works were found at Nag Hammadi. The group agreed: an informal plenary decision was now a "fact."

The late John N. Findlay's beautiful keynote address "My Philosophical Development: Neoplatonic and Otherwise," complemented the proceedings. In the course of his presentation Findlay described his youthful interest in "Theosophical-gnosticism" whose cosmology has many things in common with Neoplatonism, and, with some modifications, to Christian Neoplatonism and to Gnosticism. His involvement with the *Enneads* of Plotinus, at first in Creuzer's Greek text and his conviction that "the descriptions of the intelligible world that are elaborated by Plotinus in his tract on Intelligible Beauty certainly *ought* to be true: they tell us how things ought to be and appear, if the sort of value-determined cosmos, in which we can't help having some rational faith really exists at all." Several of his remarks on the theme of the conference were both humorous and seriously philosophical:

Since, however, this is a conference devoted to Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, I shall end this discourse by saying something about their influence on my thought. Gnosticism I studied rather superficially in my early twenties in South Africa and in Oxford, chiefly from a book by a man called G.R.S. Mead, and entitled *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*. It was actually quite a useful book. You will perhaps be amused to hear that I wrote a poem at Oxford in which I was supposedly tackled by the University Police, because I was walking the streets late at night with a lady whom they thought to be a disreputable street-walker. I did not in fact indulge in such street-walking, except in poems. I was asked to give my name and college, answered that in so far as I was anyone definite I was Simon Magus, and that the lady at my side was none other than Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, who had descended from her high estate among the Aeons, having desired to see a reflection of her face in the mirror of Matter and Humanity. Gnosticism and Neoplatonism meant something to me in those days, and

when I had finished with Greats I embarked on a study of Neoplatonism. . . . I may, however, end by saying that I accept the view of Plotinus and Proclus of an absolute Unity at the center of Being, which has, however, to go forth from itself as part of fully reverting to itself in a living and significant manner . . .

Findlay's remarks received a long and warm round of applause at the end of the second day of the conference.

At the close of the convention, there was a general discussion of the scholarly import of questions raised and issues resolved as well as those still open to investigation. Richard T. Wallis made some concluding remarks and thanked all of the participants for their attendance and contribution. He received a sustained standing ovation from all present. His tragic loss is perhaps even more poignant to those of us who had some idea of how much he knew and had not yet even begun to publish.

I would like to thank the following people for their assistance in the difficult task of completing the editing of the volume under less than ideal circumstances. Professor R. Baine Harris for his availability and helpful suggestions. Professor Kenneth Merrill for sending me all the necessary materials and making several helpful suggestions; Professor Peter Manchester whose editorial experience and willingness to help with crucial decisions have been invaluable; Professor Raoul Mortley for facilitating and checking the translations from French during his stay at the CNRS in Paris; Professor John Dillon for some timely editorial help and advice. To all of the contributors whose papers were carefully written and manageable and to Nancy Ogle and Carol Rickards for typing help; finally to Professor C. Stewart Doty, Associate Dean Raymie McKerrow and Dean Michael Gemignani of the University of Maine for a timely financial subsidy to complete the volume. To James Breece, Jason Thompson, Stuart Marrs and George Markowsky for invaluable help with computers.

Orono, Maine, May Term, 1989

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institutions for the centuries that followed. The arts did their part, but so did rhetoric and philosophy. Each of the arts played its special role in the drama of the cultural destiny of the Hellenic tradition, and so did religion, especially after the demise of the city state and the consolidation of the *Pax Romana*. But in the minds of the cultural elite, it became obvious that without philosophy and a certain sensitivity toward the arts, and poetry in particular, *paideia* could not claim respectable credentials. It is therefore, not an idle question to ask what became of Plato's celebrated theory of the quarrel between poetry and philosophy, each seeking to hold the exclusive rights to state the ideals of the education of man and thus set the parameters for individual and collective well being. Probably the safest answer would be to say that Plato bequeathed a view of art that called for the justification of art in a philosophy of life and a theoretical vision of reality. Part of that vision was the view that the artist is an imitator of the divine demiurge. However, Plato's conception of the divine craftsman as creator had little if any relevance to religious practices outside the spiritual confines of Greece. Centuries after Plato's time, when the idea of the demiurge came up for serious reconsideration and reconstruction, the *Timaeus* took on a significance and seriousness that would have surprised Plato to see how much religious intent was generously supplied to the Platonic account of the making of the world. Evidently the idea of the demiurge was not accepted in its original Platonic setting, and so it was with the conception of the arts which the attendant philosophy of creativity, its scope, functions and ends, meant to support.

The recasting of the idea of Plato's demiurge signaled the emergence of a new opponent to philosophy: religion. The main issues that were destined to shape the new quarrel began to exhibit their delineation when the social and political conditions of the Hellenistic world brought about a shifting of loyalties and the introduction of different styles in personal conduct, especially the increasing dependence for individual security on the appeal for divine aid from a transcendent source. The trend became a widespread movement and it gained unprecedented momentum during the middle and later Hellenistic periods, which by way of contrast with what was obviously a Greco-Roman way of life, signaled the reorientalization of values and attitudes. One of the most important concepts in philosophy that became subject to reorientalization was Plato's conception of the demiurge. The correlative conception of the role of art was not only suitably modified but more importantly, superannuated. In the eyes of the faithful followers of the spreading religions the mission of the arts to adorn the world of man in this sensible reality no longer constituted a function of

the highest order. Another art was slowly winning the hearts of the followers of the emerging religious cults, whose function was fundamentally one of providing assistance to attain God's ends by means of performing divine works. The demiurgic artist of the classical era was gradually replaced by the theurgic artist of religion: the priests as masters of the hieratic arts (*hieratikai technai*).

To be sure, the demiurgic artists did not disappear; they simply took a back seat to the emerging rivals and eventually learned to receive their assigned role from a reorganization of the arts on the basis of spiritual service. The reassignment of the place of the classical tradition, including the defense of its relevance when the issues called for the appraisal of a particular art, as in the case of tragedy, was a direct consequence of the triumph of the *hyperkosmia* over the *enkosmia*. As it turned out, there was more to the implications of Plato's expression *epekeina tēs ousias* than Plato ever suspected.

### The Setting of the Problem

According to the *Timaeus*, the demiurge's vision of the Forms compelled him to mold a universe, a *kosmos*, out of the available materials. It is reasonable to assume at this point that Plato meant this conception of the activity of the Divine Craftsman to serve as the model for human creativity and artistic work. The human artist, including the poet, performs best when he becomes a conscious imitator of the creativity of this God. But even so, the artist cannot compete with the philosopher in the pursuit and disclosure of truth; the poet relies on inspiration, not dialectic.

Aristotle's system found no place for a demiurge. Neither the Unmoved Mover nor Thought-Thinking-Itself qualifies for this cosmic role. As for the controversy between poetry and philosophy, the issue loses its intensity once the inalienable connection between art and reason is allowed to surface in full. Art, as good art, according to Aristotle, completes the possibilities of the processes of nature, and in its own way exhibits unmistakably the universal in the particular. When poetry — good poetry or art with reason — does this well, it manifests its ability to be more philosophical than history. Admittedly, poetry does not function the same way as philosophy does, since they differ in method and purpose, yet its distinctness does not negate its philosophical aspect. Therefore, the quarrel Plato discussed in *Republic*, Bk. X (595a-608b) need not have been assigned so prominent a place in the quest for educational standards.

Working within the Platonic tradition and extending it to solve new cultural problems, Plotinus struck a strange non-Platonic note when he disallowed the principle of symmetry from serving as a criterion of the beautiful in the sensible world. The irrelevance of the criterion of symmetry to beauty in the suprasensible world presents no special problems, but its denial in the sensible realm is not without difficulties. The ideal of the *epistrophē*, the end of the philosopher's *nostos*, demanded of art the same obedience to the pursuit of the unitary vision as it did of all ethical conduct. As if to make things more cumbersome for the artist, Plotinus regarded the man of the Muses least qualified to master the supreme art of dialectic, especially when compared to the kindred souls of the lover and the philosopher. The artist is condemned never to see his medium receive fully the superior visions of his intellectual imagination, for it is a principle of reality that the effect be inferior to the cause. Thus the artist is caught in the snares of two difficulties: the downward process confronts him with the resistance of the inferior medium, while the upward quest poses such rational demands for the mastery of dialectic that the dominant quality of his soul qua artist prevents him from dwelling in the level of *dianoia*.

There is hardly any evidence to support the view that the artist in the late Hellenistic period, including the poet, occupied the elevated position he did in classical times. Neither the Stoics nor the Epicureans had any interest in arguing in favor of the arts as cultural paragons. It is to Plotinus's credit that he formulated an aesthetic theory by drawing out the consequences of Plato's idealism. However, missing from Plotinus's re-assessment of Plato's approach was the political context of the criticism of the arts. With that gone, and with the demise of the classical polis, there seemed little reason to raise the issue of the relevance of the quarrel between philosophy and poetry. The place of the artist as demiurge, as performer and revealer of cosmic beauty, was gradually taken over by the theurgist, as performer of divine works. In a way, Plotinus correctly saw that the new quarrel was going to be between philosophy and a different opponent, theurgy, mainly understood as the theurgy of the Gnostics. What made the new challenger respectable was the radical changes the idea of the *dēmiourgos* had undergone in the hands of the middle Platonists long after the days Plato had told the story about the Divine Craftsman. With the process of the replacement completed, and to which philosophical speculation contributed rather generously, the rise of *theourgia* followed with inexorable logic. Eventually the new art found in Proclus its most eloquent theoretical defender.

In the development of the complex movement of Neoplatonism we

see two traditions, each working out its own relatively independent method to attain union with the One: the theoretic way and the theurgic way. They reflect distinct modes of conceiving the nature of the demiurge, what the demiurgic principle does, how it works and whether it is numerically one or many. What is of importance in this connection is the fact that during the middle and late Hellenistic periods the shift in the conception of the concerns and nature of the demiurgic act contributed largely to a significant rearrangement of the arts in the spectrum of human conduct. As the movement progressed, Plato's views on the rivalry between poetry and philosophy became increasingly obsolescent. The fate of the classical city-state had already been decided by factors that did not include philosophy or poetry. Whatever philosophical appeal Plato's Demiurge retained, its attractiveness as the prototype for creativity in the arts and civic craftsmanship was practically gone. Eventually, it took on the significance of a principle in the ontology of a soteriological conception of reality and was assigned a different value in the pursuit of the spiritual life. This transformation of the role of the demiurge made possible certain evaluations that contributed largely to the eventual elevation of the theurgic man over the theoretical and dialectical thinker. It was a cultural change that brought into prominence the ancient priestly arts to serve the post-classical quest of the life of salvation.

The question should be raised whether in the development of Neoplatonism the dialectical analysis of the nature and place of the demiurge in a theory of hypostases, joined as it was to a salvational end, made inevitable the relegation of the theoretic function to a secondary place and hence whether it inadvertently adumbrated the rise of theurgic performances to a superior position.

The expression "*theourgia-dēmiourgia*" in the title of this paper is not meant to imply that performing theurgic works reduces the significance of the concept of the demiurge. Rather, it is intended to draw attention to the consequences that attended the separation of the concept of the demiurge from its initial classical setting where it was intimately tied to artistic work. It was also meant to suggest why the role of the demiurgic act, once recast to suit the encroaching demands of a new art, it helped to promote an attitude that rendered the speculative function of reason inept for the pursuit of salvation. Therefore, it is not an accident that eventually theurgy was to be preferred over both art and philosophy and also defended as being both a superior art and powerful method. This reversal of roles, in no small measure aided and abetted by concessions which were made by philosophers in certain cases, was quickened to a greater extent by the

rise and expansion of the Gnostic movement. It was the Gnostics who had openly given primacy to magic, evocation, purifications, accepted the study of the Chaldaean Oracles, and believed in the saving power of a secret type of hyper-cosmic knowledge and the efficacy of the hieratic arts. The most surprising development in Neoplatonism occurred when certain followers not only came to share the Gnostic concern for theurgy but also advocated its use. Olympiodorus, in his *Commentary on the Phaedo*, stated the issue with admirable succinctness:

... Some put philosophy first, as Porphyry, Plotinus, etc., others the priestly art (*hieratikēn*), as Iamblichus, Syrianus, Proclus and all the priestly school.<sup>2</sup>

Olympiodorus appears to have recognized two stages in the development of the Neoplatonic attitude towards theurgy. During the first stage, there was a strong tendency to conceptualize the demiurgic principle in ways that would make it suitable to the dialectical explorations of a hypostatic ontology.<sup>3</sup> This is particularly true of Plotinus. It was during the second stage, starting with Iamblichus, when the idea of the demiurge was remythologized and brought closer to the theological mode of philosophizing that sought to utilize elements from the theurgic tradition of Gnosticism. Proclus, who came at the end of this stage, proved to be the great theoretician of theurgy.<sup>4</sup>

#### A Note on Gnostic Theurgy

Discussion on the aims and components of the complex movement known as Gnosticism falls outside the scope of this paper. For the purpose of identifying its contribution to the rise of the hieratic art of theurgy, it will be sufficient to refer to the main features of Gnosticism and glance quickly at the diverse views it held as regards the nature of the demiurge. Unlike Stoicism or Neoplatonism, that relied on the power of the intellect, the Gnostic movement exploited the powerful appeal the diverse mystery religions exert especially through the use of ritual and drama. However, this alone does not explain its popularity: much of its attractiveness, particularly at a time when theology had not yet reached its philosophical prime, was due to the promise of salvation and immortality.<sup>5</sup> These were values that could be readily grasped with the aid of initiation rituals and the dramatic use of symbolism. The prospective followers had but one expectation: union with the divine by means of a higher and esoteric knowledge made available only to special persons. Two basic items in Gnosticism gave its doctrines their

idiosyncratic slant: the unworthiness of the sensible world and God's dissociation from nature.

As a doctrine of secret knowledge employing religious, mythological and speculative elements, while maintaining in the foreground a crude symbolism with the promise of salvation, Gnosticism was able to effect a blend of itself with two other strong cultural currents, one religious, and one philosophical.

As Christian Gnosis, it remained a doctrine of sacred knowledge, utilizing certain compatible distinctions it found in Greek philosophy, especially Plato and the Stoics, and arranging them in terms of esoteric and exoteric knowledge. The former was considered a continuation of a sacred tradition and claimed Jesus to be a part of it, but it was a *gnosis* made available only to the privileged as a revelation of a totally new religion in which the *logos* is a living person and not a philosophical abstraction. Christianity, it was claimed, offers only the exoteric teaching and discloses the doctrine of the world drama. Within this scheme, given the relationship which the Gnostic believes he has with God and his own spiritual identity as regards the nature of his soul, theurgic acts are performed to complement faith in a Savior of Souls. Such acts also contribute to make possible the deliverance from a sensible world, one that is not the true God's work but that of a creator, who is powerful but prone to blunder. This demiurge, begotten by Sophia, a lower Aeon, made a world totally unfit for the spiritual nature of the soul. It served only as the stage for the drama of salvation but was otherwise dispensable and condemnable.

Gnosticism in its pagan setting and version provided an alternative to the Christian claim to having access to the only true religious mystery. Evidently we are dealing here with a multifaceted movement. Generally, it emerged as a doctrine of secret knowledge through religious mythological speculation. Christian *Gnosticism* also retained the distinction of esoteric and exoteric knowledge, found explicitly in Plato and upheld by the Christian Neoplatonists Clement and Origen.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, working with the Greek intellectual tradition, pagan philosophers like Plotinus stood for a *gnosis* totally opposed to the crude *gnosis* of oriental salvation.

The device of a secret and sacred *gnosis* proved to be highly useful to the proselytizing efforts of the new religion. But by viewing itself above rational criteria, Christian *gnosis* regarded the philosophies of the Hellenistic world as being more than rivals; it considered them obstacles to the spreading of its salvational doctrine. Its inherent inability to proceed with the search of needed intellectual tools to articulate its conceptual framework led to insularity and heresy. Generally speaking,

philosophy as the acknowledged way to theoretical truth, had found the new opponent to be far more defiant of reason than poetry was in Plato's times. As a proselytizing movement, Christianity regarded philosophy to be as much a rival as it did all the persistent lingering strongholds of polytheism. The need therefore to uphold a doctrine of sacred *gnosis* to counterbalance the venerable Greek tradition of the philosophical truth gained in significance as the combatants closed their ranks. Evidently, for a Gnostic sect to speak of its superior knowledge as being due to divine revelation, it had to assume that it was a response to a quest and the fulfillment of an expectation that could only be done in a special kind of universe. Closer inspection shows that the Gnostics did not hold the same conception of reality the Greek theorists held. It should be of no surprise then to see why the demiurge of the Gnostic movement is so unlike the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*, and comparably, why the art of theurgy is not to be found among the Platonic *technai*.

### Theurgy and Neoplatonism

It appears that the term "*theourgia*" was coined by the younger Julianus,<sup>7</sup> in contrast to "*theologia*" (talking about the gods); the expression refers to "doing divine works" in the sense of helping persons to transform their status into godlike existence with the aid of mystical union. The term was also used by Porphyry to stand for "pious necromancy or magical cult of the gods,"<sup>8</sup> to which he raised objections on the ground that the theurgists' procedures were wanting in logic. Plotinus, his teacher, insisted that only the life of reason is free from magic. From a different perspective, the Christian theologians, in defense of their practices, argued that only the Christian life of faith is free from magic. The opposition of both parties to magic is clear, but the agreement ends there. Plotinus, however, admits that while the irrational side of human existence can be affected by the influence of magic and drugs, such is not the case with the rational part (IV. 4.44).<sup>9</sup> Thus the true philosopher who pursues wisdom can in no way become the victim of sorcery or any of the arts of magic, should their practitioners seek to harm him.<sup>10</sup> As for attributing diseases to daemonic forces, Plotinus denies that there is any connection, although his expression "each man's own daemon" suggests other possibilities. But what he means by "daemon" is not magic but the leading power in each soul. While Plotinus stood firm on his rationalist approach to such problems as diseases and magic, it was Porphyry who discussed the

connection between the art of theurgy and the way daemons relate to magic.<sup>11</sup> In so doing, as E.R. Dodds remarks characteristically, Porphyry "made a dangerous concession to the opposing school."<sup>12</sup>

The turning point in the Neoplatonic change of attitude toward theurgy came with Iamblichus. The ingredients that converged in Iamblichus's outlook can be traced to oriental influences as well as Greek modes of rational justification. As R.T. Wallis has pointed out, Iamblichus, while trying to prevent "the swamping of philosophy by religion" by distinguishing between philosophizing and the performance of theurgy, still went to considerable lengths in order "to offer ■ rational justification even of theurgic ritual."<sup>13</sup> He speaks of *hieratike theourgia* and justifies it in his *De mysteriis*, 9.6. Whether the work was written by Iamblichus himself or by one of his faithful disciples, is of minor significance, since the shift of emphasis from *theoria* to *theourgia* as the key to salvation is an essentially Iamblichean faith.

In order to understand how he views *theurgy*, we may pause to see how he approaches the issue of its defense. First he distinguishes theurgy from magic as well as from science and philosophy. Magic aims at dealing with the physical powers of the universe, but is unable to effect spiritual communion with the gods, and hence it distorts law and harmony in order to accomplish the perverse use of natural forces. Unlike Plotinus's insistence on the intuitive powers of reason to attain union with the One, Iamblichus sees the theoretical work as being limited and hence unable to succeed in effecting communion with the divine (V. 20). In II, 11, he states:

It is not thought that links the theurgist to the gods: else what should hinder the theoretical philosopher from enjoying theurgic union with them? The case is not so. Theurgic union is attained only by the perfective operation of the unspeakable *acts* correctly performed, acts which are beyond all understanding; and by the power of the unutterable symbols which are intelligible only to the gods.<sup>14</sup>

The objectives and the operations of theurgy contain little, if anything, to connect the *De mysteriis* to the experience of communion with the Beautiful itself in Plato's *Symposium*. The ladder of love which the lover must climb unaided, as it were, to reach the beloved ideal, is removed in favor of theurgic acts, and the Socratic initiate into the mysteries of love, along with his self-ascendancy through acts of love, is replaced by a person of *pistis* whose salvation requires assistance from the theurgist. Theurgy, according to Iamblichus, is "the art of divine works," operations that relate man to the divinities by using

"signatures" or characters and inexplicable symbols "consecrated from eternity for reasons our reason does not comprehend fully" and higher than our way of understanding and more excellent (I. 11). Iamblichus's belief is that the practitioners of theurgy act properly when they use stones, herbs, perfumes and sacred animals, for physical objects are related to the gods in either of three ways: ethereally, aerially, aquatically (V. 23). By using such means, the theurgist attains command over spiritual powers. He can also employ invocations and incantations since certain works, especially names, comprehend "the whole divine essence, power and order," when viewed as belonging to another language which is also higher.

What the individual soul cannot attain on account of its limited powers, it can through theurgy. For instance, the soul can know the *logoi* of the World Soul but not the Forms of The Intellectual Principle.<sup>15</sup> On this point Iamblichus differs sharply from Plotinus, and since he insists on the exclusion of the Forms from the reach of man's cognitive powers, Iamblichus bridges the gap by introducing theurgy, which in consequence he declares superior to philosophy. The philosopher cannot by himself as thinker unite with the divine. Whether the attainment of union with God, as conceived by the Neoplatonists of the Iamblichean School, is also a genuine Platonic tenet, is another question. Actually this type of ultimate objective is an importation and hence non-Platonic. What needs to be stressed as a point of difference is that Iamblichus's view of union with the divine addresses a conception of a universe that no longer represents the one Plato conveys in his dialogues. More importantly, the demiurge Plato spoke about in the *Timaeus* bears no close resemblance to the divinities mentioned in the *De mysteriis*. Iamblichus's God is the Ineffable One, a God even beyond Plotinus's One — a view Proclus found unacceptable. Because of this incomprehensible remoteness, acts that pave the union with this God lie outside the province of theoretical vision;<sup>16</sup> they point to appropriate rites and theurgic actions. The threat that poetry as the rival of philosophy posed in Plato's times hardly compares to the magnitude of the challenge the art of theurgy presented to the theoretical man of wisdom seven centuries later.

Proclus saw theurgy as "a power higher than all human wisdom, embracing the blessings of divination, the purifying powers of initiation, and in a word, all the operations of divine possession."<sup>17</sup> And in agreement with Iamblichus, he states: "It is not by an act of discovery, nor by the activity proper to their being, that individual things are united with the One" (II. vi. 96), but as Dodds comments, to complete Proclus's thesis, "by the mysterious operation of the occult 'symbols'

which reside in certain stones, herbs and animals" (ibid., intro., xxii-xxiii).

Marinus in his *Life of Proclus* refers to *theourgikē aretē* and *theourgika energēmata*.<sup>18</sup> He also mentions that Proclus gave a sympathetic account of the sacred science of the priests and their old tradition. Proclus's approval invokes two important priestly practices: (a) securing the presence of daemons by means of certain rites and substances, and (b) employing the instructions the daemons afford, together with the interpreting of symbols, to inspect the good and attain "communion with the Gods."<sup>19</sup> His approval of theurgic practices are also reflected in his religious poetry, the seven hexameter hymns on the divinities, prayers to Helios, Aphrodite, the Muses, all the gods, Hecate, Janus and Athene. These hymns ask for enlightenment and assistance to avoid mistakes and reach higher levels of life that are free from errors.<sup>20</sup>

The extant evidence also shows that the religious theurgists depended on theurgy mainly as ritual performance. They were basically responsible for the strong currents of irrationalism which Dodds criticizes. Granted that a case may be made in defense of Proclus, as Sheppard had done,<sup>21</sup> there is still the issue of his radical departure from Plato's views given in the *Timaeus*. The issue points to a serious compromise. Proclus's way of approaching Plato's conception of the Divine Craftsman indicates that certain radical transformations have already taken place as the Hellenistic theoreticians of *dēmiourgia* developed their own speculative views on the subject. A radical innovation in Neoplatonism that finds no parallel in Plato is the distinction between the demiurge as creator of cosmic order and as Supreme God, a distinction made even more pronounced since the latter is identified with the form of the Good, as the One beyond *ousia*, thus leaving for the demiurge his identification with *Nous*.

Students of Plato have noticed the problems one encounters when trying to offer a consistent interpretation of what Plato says about God in the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* in relationship to *nous*, *psychē* and *physis*. The Neoplatonists were well aware of the alleged discrepancies in Plato's accounts and responded to the challenge by proposing a hierarchy of being, placing *nous* above *psychē* and the One above both as being at once *proaiōnion* and *hyperousion* (pre-eternal and super-essential). Proclus's answer to the nature of the demiurge is based on two basic Platonic premises: (a) *nous* is the demiurge, and (b) *nous* exists in a *psychē*, itself the best soul, and acts as the cause of all orderly motions. Proclus's conclusion is that there are really two Creators, a higher, proceeding from the Good, which is also the One, and lower,

which is *psychē aristē*. Whether the justification for this interpretation may be found in the Platonic texts is clearly a question to which we must give a negative answer.<sup>22</sup> The activity of the Platonic God as the divine *dēmiurgos*, together with the kind of universe he created, underwent significant changes in the Hellenistic age as new religions and different cultural elements pressed their demands for revisions and accommodations on the part of those philosophers who claimed Platonism as their heritage.

### *Demiourgia and Theourgia*

With the advent of Neoplatonism, the concepts of *dēmiourgia* and *dēmiurgos* were dealt with by means of two types of emerging concerns, both bent on adjusting ontology to theistic cosmogonies. Both had to face the problem of how to determine the meaning of demiurgic activity in (i) cosmological theories and (ii) religious speculation.

The tension between these two concerns and the ensuing types of the uses of the concept of the demiurge is no more evident than in the role these speculations came to play in promoting either theoretical or soteriological ends.

In cosmological speculation the method for defining the nature and function of the demiurge was fundamentally that of dialectic. Given the employment of argument for the crystallization of meaning the eventual demythologizing of the concept at issue, at least to a serious degree, seems to have been inevitable. This much and perhaps more can be gleaned from the summaries of the critiques and debates Proclus, for instance, discusses in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*. On the other hand, the imaginative use of religious speculation, in contrast to the theoretical and dialectical assignations of meanings, extended the concept of the demiurge and multiplied its uses in response to the need for ritual by giving it a soteriological direction that called for the drastic employment of mythic imagination. Religious speculation no doubt succeeded in recasting the concept and more importantly it presented it as an alternative to its theoretical counterpart. More as a competitor than a cooperator, the soteriological use of the concept demanded that the concept be recognized as a truth-bearing myth endowed with ritual significance capable of securing the attainment of salvation.

Depending on which of the two types, the theoretical-dialectic or the religious-soteriological-mythic way of assigning meaning to the concept of *dēmiourgia* one chose to work with, the meaning of the term "theourgia," i.e., "to do the work of god for men," was left open to

different significations to accord with practice. It should therefore be of no surprise to find two kinds of *theourgia*, one philosophical and one religious, and with further refinements and variations in each, as we do, for instance, in Porphyrian, Iamblican or Proclean conceptions of theurgy, and in the case of the religious type, between Gnostic and Orthodox Christian. Once the philosophers started making concessions to the practice of theurgy there was no way to predict how far other parties would go in their effort to make use of the concept. Porphyry, as we know, opened the door to permissiveness, inadvertently no doubt. His pupil Iamblichus laid the foundation for the new trend, and this despite his distinction between two kinds of theurgy. The fact is that as a philosopher he practiced as well as defended a non-dialectic kind of theurgy. On the whole, it was the Athenian school of Neoplatonism that tried to maintain a balanced position by keeping together the theoretical and the religious types, yet making them distinct from each other, convinced as those philosophers were that by so doing the philosophical mode was neither theoretically weakened nor practically compromised. Working with totally different interests, the Gnostics and in their own way the Christians, accepted the magic side of religious theurgy with the aid of soteriological speculation. However, each religious group worked out its own justification as well as understanding of the mysteries that they deemed necessary for the completion of the tasks beyond what theurgy was employed to perform. While each would develop its own related ritual and sense of mystery, both came to differ from the mysteries of the pagans for whose revival the Emperor Julian (332-363) risked the undying hostility of the diverse Christian sects from Constantinople to Antioch.

### *The Case of the Emperor Julian*

Julian himself proved to be a soteriological theurgist, at least an ardent advocate though not a practitioner. He was not a licensed theurgist but had some preparation to appreciate the theoretical demands of the growing institution of theurgy. His education in the school of Athenian Neoplatonism gave him a shock and a start.

The Julian experiment aside, the fact remains that, while we can speak of a tension between demiurgy and theurgy, we can also speak meaningfully about conflicting theurgic practices as being oriented toward different soteriological ideals and in differently constructed speculative universes. These differences help us explain why and what eventually made Julian's predicament so acute and his failure inevitable.



His preference for a non-Christian and non-philosophical theurgy convinced him that it was right to outlaw the practice of the Christian view of theurgy and demand the suppression of the Christian set of mysteries. Julian had no philosophy of education and no political philosophy that heirs to Plato's thought could discern in his Imperial policies. The theurgists Maximus and Priscus used Julian as much as he used them. What they had in common was the preoccupation with the practice of mysteries and the power they expected to derive from it.

Julian was an enthusiastic follower of Iamblichus and praised him in his *Hymn to the Sovereign Helios*. High also was his regard for the "blessed theurgists" for the ability to grasp the hidden meanings of the unspeakable mysteries. In the *Helios* hymn, the universe is eternal and divine, with the planets, signs and decans being visible gods, while the Sun itself is the link between the sensible and the intelligible worlds; praise is due to this king of the intellectual gods. A firm believer in divination and astrology, he accepted the oracles of Apollo as the civilizing power of ancient Greece, whose aid he sought for his own plan to revitalize the pagan rites. When Eusebius of Myndus, who studied under Iamblichus's pupil Aedesius, founder of the Pergamene School, took the position that magic was an affair of "crazed persons," Julian, who was a young prince at that time in search of a sacred wisdom, opposed him and went to the side of the co-disciples of Iamblichus, Maximus and Priscus. While Julian was still at Pergamum, Eusebius is reported to have warned the future Emperor about trusting that "stagy miracle-worker," Maximus. Julian's reply was: "You can stick to your books; I know where to go." He went to Maximus, and later asked Priscus to send him a copy of Iamblichus's commentary on Julianus the Theurgist: "I am greedy for Iamblichus in philosophy and my namesake in theosophy, and think nothing of the rest in comparison."<sup>23</sup> At the age of 23, he went to Athens, where he studied under the Neoplatonists there and was initiated to the Eleusinian Mysteries. After becoming Emperor, he reinforced the priestly arts and supported a quasi-Hellenic version of paganism. His policies toward the Christians make it clear that he became embroiled in a controversy over two rival practices of the hieratic arts rather than the promotion of classical philosophy, poetry and the arts. What consumed him most was not the renaissance of Greek *paideia* and its ideals of excellence, but the desire to establish the superiority of the hieratic arts associated with the pagan mysteries insofar as they promised to assist in personal salvation.<sup>24</sup>

### The Christian Solution: A Reconciliation

It is possible to give a positive answer to the original question: "Is there a controversy between *theourgia* and *dēmiourgia*?" but, it would be a reply best suited to a Platonist of the old School, the early Academy, and from one who has read his *Timaeus* without concern for the Gnostic movement or the Christian experience.

The opposition between *dēmiourgia* and *theourgia* is one that the more orthodox Neoplatonists, like Plotinus, would prefer to ignore, and in fact tried to avoid by rejecting or ignoring theurgic practices. In any event, for Plotinus there could be no real opposition between the two because the demiurge made the world in a way that theurgic acts were not needed for the attainment of the flight of the alone to the alone. Nor could the controversy have excited Plato or any of his contemporaries. In classical times, as was said at the beginning of this paper, the controversy was seen as one between philosophy and poetry. The Divine Craftsman, as the *Timaeus* intimates, calls for man to emulate a model of creativity that traditional poetry did not and would not espouse. Plato's conception of the demiurge proclaimed for the artist a model that included the employment of dialectic for creative enlightenment; there was no such provision or interest in the case of the Gnostic demiurge or even Proclus's conception of the demiurge. Rather the emphasis fell not on dialectic but on theurgic acts. This shows that by the time we come to the rise of Neoplatonism and the beginnings of the Gnostic movement, including the time of the first consolidation of the Christian faith, the controversy between poetry and philosophy had lost its political and cultural relevance to whatever was left of the classical polis.

The new trend, the resorting to theurgic practices, Gnostic and otherwise, had eliminated the poet as a potential opponent in matters of spiritual controversy. If the poet had an assignment it was not one that could make serious claims to truth or to serving as the arbiter of educational policies and standards. The poetic domain had become that of the gentle pleasures and lyrical praise; it lacked the authority to address the soul and the spirit of man. In general, all signs indicated that the fate of art had already been sealed by the sweeping force of new cultural currents and that its former adversary, philosophy, needed to face a new and comparably formidable opponent: religious *theourgia*, supported by a no less venerable discipline, *theologia*. As it turned out, the future of spiritual affairs was decided not in the agora and the theatre, but in the consecrated places of the mystery practices and the pulpits that heralded the ideal of salvation.

By the second century A.D. there was for all practical purposes an end put to the production of tragedies and comedies. Pseudo-Lucian reports that "new poetry in honor of Dionysus, comedies and tragedies, has ceased to be composed; so they serve contemporary man by producing those of the past."<sup>25</sup>

Yet there were new uses to which certain types of poetry could be and were in fact put. There is the case of a certain Methodius, Bishop of Olympus (d. 311 A.D.) who wrote dramatic dialogues in opposition to the Gnostics.<sup>26</sup> Such were the signs of the times for the arts. This is not to say that the traditional arts were totally eclipsed by the priestly arts; rather, what we see is the gradually increasing pressure to have the artistic functions serve new religious ends and religious institutions.

It is ironic that the curriculum of the Athenian School of Neoplatonism would have instruction begin with Aristotle as the appropriate introduction to Plato, and then crown the learning process with the writings of the "theologians," namely Orpheus and Chaldaean Oracles.<sup>27</sup> It was in classical Athens that the rational tradition of philosophy found its highest expression and competed with poetry for the leading role in education, only to end centuries later an inferior second to theurgy. With the emergence and establishment of theurgy, the quarrel between philosophy and poetry lost whatever was left of its educational significance.

With the rise and acceptance of the various forms of theurgy came a decline of interest in philosophical ethics as well as non-religious conceptions of theurgy, such as the one Iamblichus and Proclus favored. Justinian put an end to the pagan mysteries. As for the Gnostic version of theurgic mysteries, they went out with the condemnation of the heresies. At least one important effect on culture which the theurgic movement had proved to be of lasting value. Whether Christian or pagan, the consequences of Gnostic theurgic practices were deeply felt in the world of the arts, including poetry. The movement and the mood that generated theurgy made possible the emergence of a new style suitable to the needs of the developing religious culture of Christendom. Thus:

1. It established the pattern of subordination of the artist to other more dignifying types of disclosure of messages from the beyond. With the gods gone, there was no way the artist could any longer claim the experience of the *entheos*. Divine *mania* became discredited.

2. It prepared the grounds for the surrender of the individuality of the classical artist and his personal signature in exchange for the anonymity of the post-classical artist, the servant of God, ikonographer

as well as hymnographer. One is reminded at this point of the paucity of the names of artists who lived during the peak of the religious culture in Byzantium.

3. It introduced new criteria for approval and acceptance of the individual arts and works of art in response to the needs of the new culture. The problem now was what arts and what works serve best the purpose of theurgy and salvation. For instance, sculpture was given a prominent place in the West, while the East opted for painting. Both East and West developed significantly new styles in architecture to celebrate the glory of God. Comparably, each developed different styles of music to suit the liturgical needs.

4. It provided new and canonically controlled thematography. The new themes were so delineated as to cover not only the soteriological view of life but also to respond to a freshly populated universe with new and radically different entities, archons, angels, demons, and elevated or downgraded souls of human beings. The power of human imagination was challenged to meet new tasks mainly to learn how to render visible the mysterious world of theurgy.

5. It called for a style in art that would suit the suprasensible world with the molding of imagery different from the one the classical mind had developed. Imagery, vocabulary, similes and metaphors, as well as color schemes, designs and decor, took on a character that was appropriate to apprehending a world which the symbols of Christianity meant to convey. Poetry, in particular, continued mainly as hymnography and developed its imagery and vocabulary around two basic ideas: the expression of humility of man before God and the glorification of the Creator with the aid of superlatives and hyperboles.

6. The most conspicuous change it brought about was to replace tragedy with the unique enactment of the divine drama in liturgy. In a way, Christianity perfected not art and tragedy, but an old art given a new dress: divine liturgy. Unlike what happened in classical times when Plato could oppose poetry to philosophy to reassess the cultural values and declare the superiority of philosophy over poetry, the art of theurgy, once under the control of religious speculation and ecclesiastical structures, acquired a permanent place in the culture of the Christians. And it came to pass that in the architectonic of institutions and the arts, religion should reign supreme and the priestly arts become both arbiter and consecrating agent. The quarrel between philosophy and poetry had become completely irrelevant. The transformation of the art of theurgy and its integration into the supreme ritual of divine liturgy concluded the telestic work required of men of faith in a universe created by a God absolutely good and powerful and omnipresent, the only creator and

savior of man: God as Holy Trinity, God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. With the new macrocosmos, the microcosmos of man was reconstructed from top to bottom. One of the most effective tools for carrying out this assignment was forged in the mysterious laboratory of theurgy. Faith and its mysteries carried the day for all centuries ever since, sometimes more successfully than others, depending on the respect and confidence the priestly arts could inspire.

## NOTES

1. *Prot.* 317b. E. Jowett's translation.
2. οἱ μὲν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν προτιμῶσιν, ὡς Πορφύριος καὶ Πλωτῖνος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φιλόσοφοι οἱ δὲ τὴν ἱερατικὴν, ὡς Ὑμμβλῆχος καὶ Συριανὸς καὶ Πρόκλος καὶ οἱ ἱερατικοὶ πάντες. 123.3, Norvin; tr. E.R. Dodds in *Proclus: Elements of Theology*, p. xxii. According to Dodds, who bases this remark on the Suda and other sources, "the earliest person to be described as theurgos was one Julianus, who lived under Marcus Aurelius," and either he or his son, Julianus the Younger, wrote the *Oracula Chaldaica*. "By his own account, Julianus received these oracles from the gods; they were θεοπαράδοτα." *Ibid.*, p. 284, esp. p. 300, note 14.
3. R.T. Wallis aptly remarks that "for the Neoplatonists . . . the universe was a spontaneous production of the intelligible order, with no question of an anthropomorphic creator at all." *Neoplatonism*, p. 102.
4. See Ann Sheppard, "Proclus's Attitude to Theurgy," *Classical Quarterly* 32 (1982): 212-24. Sheppard argues against Dodds's thesis that by accepting theurgy Neoplatonism abandoned its rational basis of Plotinian mysticism. The point of her article is to show that Proclus developed a theoretical defense of theurgy and that he distinguished between lower and higher levels. It was to such higher levels that "philosophical" theurgists like Syrianus and Proclus could appeal in order to refer to a higher theurgy in the sense of *theia philosophia* (complemented with a theory of symbols and related signs and rites (esp. pp. 220ff). Sheppard's views throw new light on the members of the Athenian School of Neoplatonism as theorists of theurgy. However, we need to be reminded of the fact that there were many influential non-theoretical theurgists who by depending heavily if not exclusively on the practice of the priestly art of theurgy were part of the movement that aided the rising dominance of irrationalism.
5. It has been generally recognized that Gnosis utilized aspects of Greek philosophy, Babylonian myths, Persian and Egyptian religious elements as well as Jewish teachings. Professor R.T. Wallis notes: "In its strict sense, however, the term [Gnosticism] denotes a group of systems, the majority of those known to us maintained by Christian heretics, and all of them opposed to Neoplatonism in that the 'knowledge' they sought was the product, not of philosophical reasoning, but of revelation by a divine savior" (op. cit., p. 12).

6. W. Jaeger notes that "the gnosis that early Christian theology pretended to offer was for its followers the only true mystery in the world that would triumph over the many pseudo-mysteries of the pagan religion." *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, p. 56.
7. Julian, *Or.* 7, 219a.
8. See L. Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. I, p. 308.
9. See also IV. 4. 40, where magic is explained. In IV. 4. 43, Plotinus answers his own question why the wise man is beyond magic, lines 1-7. Comp. A.H. Armstrong, "Was Plotinus a Magician" *Phronesis* I (1955-56): 73-79.
10. Porphyry notes that such a practitioner was Olympius of Alexandria, who acting out of rivalry tried to bring upon Plotinus a star-stroke. *Vita Plot.* Ch. 10.
11. *Letter to Anebo*, 46, p. xlv Parthey: ἐρωτῶ δὲ μήποτε ἄλλη τις λαμβάνου ὄψα ἢ πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν ὁδὸς ἀφισταμένη τῶν θεῶν. ἀπορῶ δὲ εἰ πρὸς δόξας ἀνθρωπίνων ἐν τῇ θείᾳ μαντικῇ καὶ θεωργίᾳ βλέπειν δεῖ, καὶ εἰ μὴ ἡ ψυχὴ ἐκ τοῦ τυχόντος ἀναπλάττει μεγάλα.
12. See his *The Greek and the Irrational*, p. 287.
13. R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 14; also ". . . the philosophical concepts by which theurgy was justified appear to be mainly Greek; Ptolemy and others had similarly justified Chaldaean astrology in terms of scientific theory," p. 15.
14. Translated by E.R. Dodds, in Proclus: *The Elements of Theology*, Intro., p. xx; see also his article "Theurgy" in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Appendix, pp. 283ff. The text reads: . . . οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ ἔννοια συνάπτει τοῖς θεοῖς τοὺς θεωργούς. ἐπεὶ τὶ ἐκάλυε τοὺς θεωρητικῶς φιλοσοφούντας ἔχειν τὴν θεωργικὴν ἔννοιαν πρὸς τοὺς θεούς, νῦν δὲ οὐκ ἔχει τὸ γε ἀληθὲς οὕτως, ἀλλ' ἡ τῶν ἔργων τῶν ἀρρήτων καὶ τῶν ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν νόησιν θεοπρεπῶς ἐνεργουμένων τελεσιουργία ἣ τε τῶν νοημένων τοῖς θεοῖς μόνως συμβόλων ἀφθέγκτων δύναμις ἐντίθησι τὴν θεωργικὴν ἔννοιαν.
15. See R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 119.
16. E.R. Dodds's remark about the Neoplatonists who resorted to theurgy applies mostly to Iamblichus: ". . . theurgy became the refuge of a despairing intelligentsia which already felt *la fascination de l'abîme*. "Theurgy" in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 288. The quotation is given in p. 291, to which Dodds adds his own paraphrase: "It may be described more simply as magic applied to a religious purpose and resting on a supposed revelation of religious character." *Ibid.*
17. *Platonic Theology* I. xvi. 53.
18. Marinus, Proclus c. 28f.: ἐκ τῆς παρὰ τὰ τοιαῦτα σχολῆς ἀρετὴν ἐπὶ μείζονα τελεωτέραν (sc. τῆς θεωρητικῆς) ἐπορίσατο τὴν θεωργικὴν, οὐκ ἐπὶ μέτρῳ τῆς θεωρητικῆς ἔστυν. Also, c. 29: καὶ πολλὰ ἂν τις ἔχοι λέγειν μηκύνειν ἐθέλων, καὶ τὰ τοῦ εὐδαιμονοῦς ἐκείνου θεωργικὰ ἐνεργήματα ἀφηγοῦμενος.
19. See also Proclus's *περὶ τῆς καθ' Ἑλληνικὰς ἱερατικῆς τέχνης* (fragment) in Bidez, *Catalogue des MSS Alchimiques Grecs*, Vol. VI.

20. C. Trypanis writes: "In language and meter they are reminiscent of the school of Nonnus, but their mystic dualistic spirit comes close to that of Christianity. The syncretic theosophy of the period is perhaps best expressed in the hymns of Proclus, with which the long and glorious tradition of pagan hymnography ends." *Greek Poetry from Homer to Seferis*, p. 403.
21. Op. cit., p. 213: "I shall not attempt to deny that Iamblichus, Syrianus and Proclus all gave theurgy an important role to play in the ascent to union with the gods or with the One, but I do deny that a simple substitution of theurgy for mystical experience was all that was involved."
22. I find myself agreeing with A.E. Taylor's extensive analysis of the complex issues surrounding the Neoplatonic views of the demiurge. He is correct in stating that "there is no hint of any part of this theosophy in Plato." *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, esp. "The Concept of Time in the *Timaeus*," pp. 678-81.
23. Ep. 12 (Bidez = 71 Hertlein = 2 Wright); also Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 4. 55 (P.G. 35, 577C). On Eusebius see Eunapius, *Vit. Soph.* 474f (Boissonade); comp. E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and The Irrational*, p. 288.
24. W. Jaeger has aptly described the shift in the religious outlook that Julian sought to consolidate: "The sharp polemic of Clement against the pagan mystery religions in his *Protrepticus* is more easily explained when we consider that from the fourth century B.C. on, the forms of Greek religion that appealed to most of the people of higher education was not the religion of the Olympic gods but that of the mysteries, which gave the individual a more personal relationship with the godhead." *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, p. 55. The modern Greek Alexandrian poet, Constantine P. Cavafy, (1863-1933) has captured Julian's obsession as well as fascination with the hieratic arts of pagan mysteries in a series of remarkably powerful poems, especially in the one titled "Julian at the Mysteries." For a recent study of these poems, see G.W. Bowersock, "The Julian Poems of C.P. Cavafy," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 7 (1982): 89-104.
25. Demosth., enc. 27; quoted in C.P. Trypanis, op. cit., p. 374.
26. Ibid., p. 387.
27. *Vit. Pr.*, 13 and 26.

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## **Dualism: Platonic, Gnostic, and Christian**

A.H. Armstrong

There are a number of terms whose use or abuse in a large, vague, fluctuating way can confuse our understanding of the history of thought and sometimes our own theological and philosophical thinking: this has often been true of "dualism," as also of "pantheism," "Platonism," "Gnosticism," and "Christianity." It seems to me an important part of the task of historians of thought to give such terms the precise and varied contents which they should have in varied contexts and environments. I see our work rather as Cézanne saw his painting when he said that he wanted to "do Poussin over again from nature." In this paper I shall try to give precision and variety to some senses in which "dualism" can legitimately be used when we are discussing the thought of the early centuries of our era, with particular reference to the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition, Gnosticism, and Christianity. I shall consider mainly one of the ways of thinking which can properly be described as dualist: cosmic dualism, which sees the whole nature of things as constituted by the meeting and interaction of two opposite principles: though I shall also briefly discuss two-world dualism, in which there are two cosmoi or levels of reality, that of our normal experience and a higher one (which may itself be conceived as complex and many-levelled).

Cosmic dualism, the dualism of two opposite principles, can take, and in the period which we are considering did take, a number of different forms. We may begin with a suspiciously tidy-looking scheme, which as we shall see, will require some qualification and modification.

1. The two principles may be thought of as both unoriginated, independent and everlastingly operative in the nature of things. They may be perceived as (a) intrinsically opposed and in perpetual conflict (or conflict as long as this world lasts). This gives a conflict-dualism of what may be called the Iranian pattern. In this case one principle must be qualified as "good" and the other as "evil," and one is expected to take the good's side. Or (b) they may be conceived as equally independent, but working together in harmony. This seems to be prevalent in Chinese thought, and is certainly very well expressed by the Yang-Yin symbol. Its most radical and fiercely original expression in the Greek world is in the thought of Heraclitus: here it takes a very dynamic form, and the conflict and tension, which any doctrine of cosmic harmony which is sufficiently attentive to experience must recognize, is powerfully emphasized.

2. Or the second principle may be thought of as derived from and dependent on the first. (I shall refer to this second principle as the "dark other," to avoid prejudging various questions about it which will arise.) This derived and dependent "dark other" may be thought of as either (a) in revolt against, or at least opposed to, the first principle or (b) working in accord and co-operation, at least passive, with it.

This very neat generalized classification of four possible forms of cosmic dualism is a useful starting-point for thinking about the subject. But when we begin to apply it to the dualisms with which we are here concerned, we shall find that it has to be used with a good deal of caution and qualification. This is particularly true when we are considering the various forms which cosmic dualism takes in the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition. The thinkers of this tradition range over all the four varieties of cosmic dualism listed above, but profess them, for the most part, in distinctive ways and with important modifications. When they think of the two principles as independent they do not maintain an absolute and unqualified conflict-dualism: and even when the "dark other" is thought of as dependent for its existence on its opposite, it is not, through most of the history of Platonism, accepted and qualified as "good": though at the very end, in the final and most fully and carefully thought out form of Platonic dualism which we find in Syrianus and Proclus, we do arrive at a dualism of cosmic harmony which can be very well symbolized by the Chinese Yang-Yin circle. As we shall see, a great deal depends on what one means in various contexts of thought by classifying the "dark other" as "evil."

In the earliest form (or forms) of Pythagorean dualism known to us the two principles (or groups of principles) seem to be independent

and everlastingly coexistent. This is clearly brought out in the Pythagorean Table of Opposites.<sup>1</sup> And we learn from this that the light, male, limiting, ordering principle is qualified as "good" and the dark, female, indefinite principle as "evil." But we need to consider carefully the sense in which the "dark other" seems to be thought of as principle of evil in early Pythagoreanism. As the principle of indefinite multiplicity it is (or can be) the principle of formlessness, disorder and irrationality, and so opposed to the good principle of light and musical order. But both principles are absolutely necessary if there is to be a cosmos at all. They are the parents of the numbers which are the very stuff of reality: without both, number and the great musical order of the whole cannot exist. And the necessity and goodness of the cosmos is something which early Pythagoreanism may be held to affirm with less qualification than later Platonism and Pythagoreanism, in that for pre-Platonic Pythagoreans there was only one cosmos, not two, a higher and a lower. This very qualified and, from the viewpoint of darker and more passionate dualisms, attenuated understanding of the sense in which the "dark other" is evil persists, with varying feeling-tones and shades of emphasis, throughout the later Platonic-Pythagorean tradition.

In Plato we find two forms of cosmic or two-opposite-principles dualism which were influential later. (I do not believe that in *Laws* X 896E-897D Plato is talking about a cosmic evil soul, though later Platonists interpreted the passage in this way.) These two forms are, first, that contained in our reports of his discussions in the Academy about the generation of the Ideal Numbers from the One and the Indefinite Dyad. I do not propose to say much about this because I do not think we know very much.<sup>2</sup> But I do not think that there is any sufficient evidence to suggest that the Dyad is derived from the One: the two principles seem to be independent. And it seems clear that, if the Dyad is one of the principles from which the Ideas or Forms are generated, Plato can only have thought of it as a principle of evil in some very peculiar sense, even more attenuated than the Pythagorean. Aristotle does say that the principles are respectively  $\pi\eta\nu\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \epsilon\upsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \kappa\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omega\varsigma\ \alpha\iota\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$  of things being in a good state or going well or of being in a bad state or going badly, but this should not be pressed too far.

The dualism of the One and the Dyad influenced later Pythagorean thought and is very important for the Neoplatonists, as we shall see. But much the most influential form of Platonic dualism is that symbolically presented in the great myth of the *Timaeus*. Here the material universe (there is nothing in the *Timaeus* about the genesis of

the eternal world of Forms which is its paradigm) comes to be through the encounter of two independent principles or powers: that of the Craftsman looking to his Paradigm, divine Reason active in the formation of the visible cosmos, and that strange, not properly knowable, turbulence of place, which is the receptacle, mother and nurse of becoming and accounts for the element of irrational necessity or brute fact which we find in the world. Of the innumerable questions which have arisen through the centuries about this powerful symbolic presentation of the world-forming activity of the divine, two concern us here. One is, what exactly is there about the other principle which is really "dark," which we (or later Platonists) might want to call "evil" even if Plato does not do so? It is certainly responsible for the fact that, though this is the best of all possible material worlds, everything is not absolutely for the best in it, but only as good as possible: it is responsible for all those faults and failings which make it lower and worse than its paradigm, the World of Forms, and which it would be blasphemous to attribute to the Divine Craftsman: in this sense we can, if we like, call it, in a rather abstract and uninformative sense, a "principle of evil." But of course the *Timaeus* insists most strongly both that there ought to be a material universe, that its existence is an inevitable consequence of the generous goodness of the divine (29E-30A): and that it is itself as divinely good as it is possible to be on its own level, a "visible god" (92 II 7). The element of turbulent, disorderly irrationality in our world, the fact that it is not perfect and absolute cosmos, seems to be a necessary condition for the existence of any material cosmos at all. And it is surely rather inadequate, and may be misleading, to describe this as a "principle of evil."

The other question which we need to ask for our purposes is, how does the good divine power deal with this element the opposition of which it has to overcome? Plato's answer is famous, and deserves continual meditation. Divine intelligence works in the world by persuasion: it persuades necessity to co-operate with it [48A]. To bring out the full force of this and show how central it is to Plato's thought I should like to quote the conclusion of Cornford's *Epilogue* to his running commentary on the *Timaeus*, *Plato's Cosmology*. Cornford is here comparing the trilogy of dialogues which he supposes Plato intended to write, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, and *Hermocrates* with the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus. His suppositions about how Plato planned his trilogy are speculative and may be wrong, but this does not affect the force and rightness of the understanding of Plato which he derives from the comparison.

The philosophic poet and the poet philosopher are both consciously concerned with the enthronement of wisdom and justice in human society. For each there lies, beyond and beneath this problem, the antithesis of cosmos and chaos, alike in the constitution of the world and within the confines of the individual soul. On all these planes they see a conflict of powers, whose unreconciled opposition entails disaster. Apollo and the Furies between them can only tear the soul of Orestes in pieces. The city of uncompromised ideals, the prehistoric Athens of Critias's legend, in the death-grapple with the lawless violence of Atlantis, goes down in a general destruction of mankind. The unwritten *Hermocrates*, we conjectured, would have described the rebirth of civilized society and the institution of a State in which the ideal would condescend to compromise with the given facts of man's nature. So humanity might find peace at the last. And the way to peace, for Plato as for Aeschylus, lies through reconciliation of the rational and the irrational, of Zeus and Fate, of Reason and Necessity, not by force but by persuasion.<sup>4</sup>

It makes a great difference, both in theory and practice, which of the privileged images of divine action in the world available to them cosmic dualists adopt. They may, as we shall see, image the divine as a redeemer liberating the children of light from this dark world, or as a general leading the armies of light against the forces of darkness.<sup>5</sup> But Plato in his great cosmic story chose, and by choosing bequeathed to later generations, the image of the craftsman working on his rather awkward and recalcitrant material, humoring it and persuading it to take as well as it can the form of the unchanging goodness and beauty which is his model. It is an image the contemplation of which produces a very different attitude to the world from a passionate longing to escape from its miseries or the partisan pugnacity of the conflict-dualist.

In post-Platonic Pythagoreanism we find that, probably for the first time in the history of the tradition, the "dark other" is generally held to be derived from the One. The most interesting form of the doctrine for our purposes is to be found in a well-known account of the teaching of Moderatus of Gades given by Simplicius on the authority of Porphyry.<sup>6</sup> In spite of recurring doubts as to whether Moderatus has not been somewhat Neoplatonized in transmission, I think his account of the generation and nature of the other principle must be accepted as genuine pre-Neoplatonic Pythagoreanism. It is criticized by Numenius,<sup>7</sup> and there is nothing quite like it in the Neoplatonists. Moderatus says that the Unitary Logos, intending to produce from himself the genesis of beings, by self-privation made room for quantity. This quantity is identified with the disorderly, irrational, formless principle of the *Timaeus*, and probably with the Dyad. It is the principle of evil in the



material world in so far as it is the principle of avoidance of and deviation from form. But it is produced by the Unitary Logos as the first stage in its creative activity and it is clear that without it there can be no ordered multiplicity, at least of material beings, no cosmos at all. And at the end of the passage it seems that the "dark other," in spite of its persistent tendency away from form and towards non-being, is pretty thoroughly overcome by the formative power of the divine numbers (231, 20-27). Moderatus remains in this way in the tradition of early Pythagoreanism and the *Timaeus*. His dualism is a qualified and mitigated dualism, compatible with a good deal of cosmic optimism.

The Platonists of the first two centuries A.D. whom we need to consider carefully in the present context are those represented for us by Plutarch and Atticus, who are grouped together by later commentators because of their very emphatic dualism as well as on account of their insistence on taking the *Timaeus* literally as an account of creation in time. Both belong to my first group of dualists, those who hold that the two cosmic principles are both unoriginated, independent, and everlastingly opposed. At first sight they may appear as rather uncompromising conflict-dualists of the Iranian type. Plutarch in his treatise *On Isis and Osiris* does speak with approval of Iranian dualism;<sup>8</sup> and is led to use a good deal of conflict-dualist language elsewhere in the treatise by his identification of the evil soul which he finds in Plato with the enemy of Osiris, Typhon or Set. But when we come to look at him and Atticus more closely we shall find that their positions are rather interestingly different from straightforward conflict-dualism. Like some Gnostics, they think in terms of three principles, not two. There is the principle of light, form and order, the dark, disorderly evil soul, and between them matter, which is sharply distinguished from the evil soul. In *Isis and Osiris* Plutarch makes clear that matter, which is identified with the goddess Isis, is not just neutral but divinely good, with an innate passionate love for the Good himself, who is Osiris. This is very finely stated in Chapter 53. And the evil soul which is Typhon can disturb and damage, but cannot intrinsically effect, the beauty and goodness of the cosmos which results from the union of these great divine male and female principles. And when we turn to the very interesting accounts of the doctrine of Atticus about the disorderly motion and time which existed before the making of the world which are given by Proclus,<sup>9</sup> we find that Proclus does not distinguish his doctrine on the point which concerns us from that of Plutarch. The evil soul for Atticus is, as throughout the tradition, evil as principle of irrational disorder. But it is clearly distinguished from matter and seems in the process of world-making to be as totally dominated and transformed by

the power of the good, intelligent formative principle as matter itself<sup>10</sup> (this seems likely to come from Atticus rather than Plutarch). As Dillon remarks "This [the Maleficent Soul], in terms of Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris* is an Isis-figure rather than a Typhon-figure."<sup>11</sup>

Though the dualism of Numenius sometimes seems to have a darker and more pessimistic color, especially when he is thinking about the nature and embodiment of man, his way of thinking is really not so far removed from that of Plutarch and Atticus. As already mentioned (p. 10), he rejects the Pythagorean view represented by Moderatus of the derivation of the second principle from the One and returns to the two independent and opposed principles which he finds in the earlier Pythagoreans and Plato. He seems to associate the evil soul more closely with matter than Plutarch, and regards its malign influence as extending even to the heavens.<sup>12</sup> But by the end of the passage on Pythagorean teaching which derives from him in Calcidius, the victory of the good principle over the evil of animate matter is strikingly complete; it is not so complete that the evils of this our world are done away with (no Platonist could ever accept this), but it is complete enough for matter reformed by divine providential activity to be spoken of not as the adversary but as the consort of god, the mother of the universe and even mother of "the corporeal and generated gods."<sup>13</sup> And the universe of which matter with its bad soul is the disorderly and irresponsible mother is, as Numenius says elsewhere,<sup>14</sup> "this beautiful cosmos, beautified by participation in the beautiful." For all these philosophers of the Platonic-Pythagorean tradition who were so troubled by the problem of evil and anxious to find a solution to it, the *Timaeus* was naturally of central importance. And in the end it was the spirit of the *Timaeus* which triumphed in them over whatever tendencies they may have had to darker and more passionate forms of cosmic dualism.

In the great final rethinking and development of Hellenic Platonism which begins with Plotinus, which we call Neoplatonism, the view that the "dark other" derives from the Good itself is finally accepted as against the dualism of two independent principles. But this leaves room for some variation, within the Platonic limits which should by now have become clear, in the way in which the second principle is thought of and valued. For Plotinus the matter of this lower world derives from the higher principles, and so ultimately from the Good, and there is a "dyadic" or "hylic" element in the intelligible realm. But in his treatise *On the Two Kinds of Matter* (II 4 [12]) he attempts to separate the two matters more sharply than is done anywhere else in the tradition where there is any question of matter at the higher level; and the relationship of the two matters never seems to be made perfectly

clear. In II 4 and I 8 [51], and incidentally elsewhere, he speaks of the matter of this world as principle of evil in very strong terms: and in III 6 [26] gives a most remarkable account of its phantasmal and sterile quality, which makes this our world a kind of ghost-world, incapable of further productivity. Yet there is no Platonist who more passionately insists on and defends the divine goodness and holiness of the material cosmos. And it is intrinsic to his whole way of thinking about the Good that its creative self-diffusion will go on till the ultimate limit is reached and everything that can have any, even the smallest, measure of being and goodness has been called into existence. And this means going on down to the material cosmos, where its matter operates, in a very strange way, as the principle of evil. The creative process, in proceeding to the ultimate limit in the generation of positive goodness, evokes the utter negativity which is that limit. For it is as total negativity that matter in Plotinus's universe is the principle of evil. It is perfectly true, in a sense, to say that for Plotinus the dark *hyle* which is absolute and principal evil does not exist. But it is the inevitable cosmogonic approach, which is necessarily a movement away from being and form, to its absolute non-existence which makes *hyle* the principle of cosmic evil, and the approach, closer than is needed, by weaker individual lower souls not perfectly under the command of their higher souls, which enables it to become the principle of moral evil. Its effects in the universe of Plotinus are very limited. They do not extend to the Upper Cosmos, the region of the heavenly bodies, where matter is perfectly obedient and subdued to form.<sup>15</sup> The great embodied gods, including the earth-goddess,<sup>16</sup> are in no way affected for the worse by the "dark other." Even in individuals their higher souls are in no way affected by evil and even their lower souls are not intrinsically affected: there can be no substantial change for the worse in them, only a change of direction due to a failure to attend to the higher. In Plotinus's great theodicy, the work *On Providence*, matter is certainly included as a cause of the evils in this world of ours.<sup>17</sup> But the part which it plays in the justification of divine providence is modest, and a great deal of the work gives an account of cosmic harmony in conflict and tension which is not only in the spirit of Plato but not far removed from the cosmic optimism of the Stoics.

Plotinus has clearly moved a considerable distance from that much more substantial and lively evil principle, the evil soul of the Middle Platonists: and he is moving in a direction which leads towards the final rehabilitation of the "dark other" by the Athenian Neoplatonists. But I now think that it may be a mistake to dismiss his account of matter as principle of evil by its very negativity as a rather unsatisfactory transition

stage in the evolution of Platonic dualism. Plotinus, like the Middle Platonists we considered earlier, does take the evils we experience here below very seriously, and this may be to his credit. The "classical" solution worked out by his successors is most coherent and impressive and has much to recommend it. But can it not sometimes become a little too smoothly complacent in its cosmic optimism? There is perhaps a way of looking at the doctrine of Plotinus (I am not suggesting that Plotinus always looks at it in this way) which is not in the end incompatible with the later Neoplatonist position but which gives a more vivid sense of the reality and seriousness of evil. We are often inclined, I think, to solidify and reify rather too much what the ancients are talking about: the language which they use, of course, encourages this distortion: in the present case the words *hyle*, *silva* or *materia* do rather strongly suggest lumps of stuff, and as long as there is even the faintest trace of unconscious tendency to look at *hyle* in this way it is very difficult to understand how what is being talked about can be a principle of evil precisely as absolute non-existence. But if we suppose that Plotinus is trying to speak of a kind of necessary condition of what must be there if the Good is to diffuse itself freely, a world of bodies in space and time, is to exist at all, it may become easier to make sense of his position. We can see that if the productivity, the generative power, of divine goodness, is to go on to its furthest limit, as, since it is absolute goodness, it is inevitable that it should; if it is to produce not only the complete and self-contained beauty of the archetype but the imperfect but real beauty of the image which is all that is left to produce, since the archetypal world contains all that can exist on its level of real being and perfect beauty and goodness; then a world must come into being which has a built-in element of negativity, sterility and unreality simply by not being the World of Forms, just as its harmony must be a harmony of separate beings in clash and conflict because it is a world of space and time (this last characteristic is not for Plotinus, any more than for Heraclitus and the Stoics, necessarily evil).<sup>18</sup> In the end Plotinus remains close to the spirit of the *Timaeus*, on which he meditated so continually.

In the Athenian Neoplatonists the "dark other" at last attains full equality of esteem with its opposite principle of light, form and order. The mother of all reality is honored equally with the father. This first becomes clear in Syrianus, for whom the primal Monad and Dyad which proceed immediately from the One are prior even to the world of real being. They are the co-equal and equally necessary principles of all multiple, that is to say of all derived, reality, of all that comes from and diffuses the Good from the highest gods to the lowest bodies.<sup>19</sup> And

they are not only equally necessary but equally valued. Syrianus strongly denies that the Dyad is the principle of evil.<sup>20</sup> He seems to be the originator of the "classical" account of evil in which it is a *παρὰ-πρόσ-αίσις*, a by-product, with no existence or principle of its own. As Anne Sheppard puts it "The dyad is only indirectly responsible for evil in so far as it is responsible for otherness and plurality, and it is because of these that evil (*παρυφίσταται*) in the world. Another way of putting this would be to say that evil is unavoidable because the world is as it is, that it is inevitably involved in the partial and divided condition of the lower realms of the universe."<sup>21</sup> When the Athenian doctrine is stated like this, it is easy to see that it is not too far removed from that of Plotinus, or, for that matter, of the Pythagoreans and Plato whose teachings Syrianus thought he was expounding. Proclus develops the teaching of his master very powerfully. He shows<sup>22</sup> how the two principles operate at every level of his vast and complex universe, and both in a positive way, and how the "dark other," the Infinite, is the principle of life, fecundity and creative expansion without which the great diffusion of the Good through all the levels of multiplicity cannot occur. Jean Trouillard sums up this final development of Platonic dualism very well when he says

Chaque être est fait de mesure et d'infinité, d'un et de multiple, de clarté et de ténèbres. L'ordre a toujours besoin de s'opposer le désordre et de le maîtriser, parce qu'il est une mise en ordre active et parce qu'il est soutenu par une puissance de dépassement. Et du moment que l'origine est ineffable, elle s'exprime aussi bien par la dyade multiplicatrice que par la monade unifiante. . . . Puisque il [le dualisme] traverse tous les niveaux et exprime une origine unique, il est pour ainsi dire exorcisé. L'abîme symbolise le sanctuaire. Ni le Chaos ni la Nuit ne sont le mal. Ils figurent l'Ineffable au même titre que l'ordre et la clarté.<sup>23</sup>

One can see very well, if one reads the passages in Proclus on which Trouillard's account is so solidly based, how this doctrine, though it corrects and clarifies earlier language and thought, remains faithful to the essentials of that thought, and even perhaps leaves room for understanding how the "dark other," though of the very highest status in the universe after the Good, and herself wholly good, can be the necessary condition for the existence of evils here below and in this way a "principle of evil" in the restricted and peculiar Platonic sense: so that this intense cosmic optimism need not be too fancifully and inhumanely roseate.

We must now turn to the Gnostics more or less contemporary with

the later Platonists whom we have been discussing. I shall confine myself here to those represented in the Nag Hammadi Library, and I must apologize for the superficiality of my treatment. I do not know this literature really well: I must read it in translation because of my ignorance of Coptic: and I am not at all sure whether my mental limitations as a Hellenist do not preclude me from any deep understanding of it. However, I will offer such tentative observations as I can. The first, and the most important from my point of view, is that it seems to me a mistake to read the Gnostics as if they were bad philosophers. Whatever elements in their stories may seem to derive in some way from their acquaintance with Greek philosophy, they are not doing the same thing as philosophers. They are not giving explanations of why things are as they are and accounts of the nature of the divine powers in terms of concept and system. They are telling exciting stories about the often vividly imagined doings and sufferings of spiritual beings, and it is the stories as told which give their explanation of the universe. To reduce them to abstract terms of principles and concepts will do them ■ greater injustice than will be done if we do the same thing to those greatest of Greek philosophers, Plato and Plotinus, who frequently use the language of poetry and religion. To try to turn their stories into abstract schemes, as it is so convenient for the comparative historian to do, is likely to be as unsatisfactory as the attempts which have been made to give an account of Beethoven's symphonies, especially the Fifth, in similar terms. I shall not therefore make any systematic effort to place the Gnostic stories precisely in my original scheme of cosmic dualisms.

Another reason for not attempting to do this is that I find it difficult to discover in the Nag Hammadi literature anyone or anything which corresponds closely to the "dark other" as a major force in the development of things to their present state. In other forms of Gnosticism, of course, we do meet with a darkness and powers of darkness which seem to be in ultimate opposition to the powers of light in the Iranian manner, though they are generally rather inert and passive by Iranian standards. But in the Nag Hammadi treatises which I have read, the part played by any ultimate darkness seems decidedly modest. We meet with the important Gnostic idea of darkness as a mirror, the reflection in which of a higher power is ■ stage in the genesis of the lower world.<sup>24</sup> In *Zostrianos* the darkness is considerably more important, but it seems to denote not a cosmic principle but the whole lower cosmos from which the Gnostic is being shown the way and passionately exhorted to escape.<sup>25</sup> It is notable in our present context that the darkness here is feminine: the message of the whole treatise is

summed up in the exhortation "Flee from the madness and the bondage of femininity and choose for yourself the salvation of masculinity."<sup>26</sup> (In other treatises, of course, the feminine is viewed with a good deal more favor: a great deal seems to depend on how the Genesis story of the fall of man is interpreted and on how the ambiguous and androgynous figure of Barbelo is understood.) In the *Tripartite Tractate* the "Outer Darkness," "Chaos," "Hades" or the "Abyss" seems to be just the place which rightly belongs to the turbulent "beings of the likeness," and to which they fall down.<sup>27</sup> In the *Apocryphon of John* the basic darkness which causes all other evil and darkness seems to be identified with the ignorant Archon and Demiurge Yaltabaoth, who of course like all Gnostic Demiurges appears late in the story: he is "ignorant darkness."<sup>28</sup> The position seems to be much the same in the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, but here the demonic, aggressive evil of Yaltabaoth is more strongly stressed.

My next observation is, I hope, fairly uncontroversial, but important in our present context. It is that the form in which the Gnostics apprehend the action of the divine power of good and light in this world is predominantly that of a Redeemer, Enlightener and Liberator. The down-grading of the favored image of the Platonists, the Demiurge, by the Gnostics is of course well-known (I shall say something soon about how it continues to operate even in Gnostics who insist that the creation of the lower world is part of a great divine salvific plan.) But it is worth remarking that even though in the end this bad and unhappy world will be done away and the power of light will then finally defeat and triumph over the forces of darkness, the image of champion and war-leader for the great divine power who will bring this about is not generally favored. It is the liberation of the Gnostic children of light from the darkness through the saving enlightenment brought by the Redeemer which is in the center of the picture, not the cosmic defeat of the armies of the darkness. This marks a difference, as we shall see, between Gnostics and non-Gnostic Christians, which is important in practice as well as in thought. During the centuries of the Christian domination of Europe those who can in some extended sense be called Gnostics have been decidedly more crusaded against than crusading.

The stories told by Gnostics of this kind have a common feature which seems to me useful in determining their position in relation both to the Platonist tradition and to non-Gnostic Christianity. This is the importance given to a fall or failure in the spiritual world, a break in the middle of the great process of outgoing which determines the character of the subsequent process and leads in the end to the creation

of this lower world. It is of course a very good kind of plot for a story which sets out to explain why things are so unsatisfactory here below in terms of the adventures of higher beings. This picture of some kind of fall or failure occurs even in stories which stress that the whole outgoing, including the creation of the lower world, is part of the great divine plan and which give a comparatively favorable account of the creator. This is particularly noticeable in the *Tripartite Tractate*. Here the Logos, the creative power, acts throughout in accordance with the will of the Father. It is stressed that his aspiration to ascend to the Father and desire to create on his own is intended by the Father.

Therefore it is not right to criticize the movement which is the Logos, but it is fitting that we should say about the movement of the Logos that it is cause of a system which has been destined to come about.<sup>29</sup>

There is certainly something here which is comparable (with due caution) with Plotinus's idea of *tolma*.<sup>30</sup> But as we read on we find that the Logos "was not able to bear the sight of the light, but he looked into the depth and he doubted. Therefore it was an extremely painful division, a turning away because of his self-doubt and division, forgetfulness and ignorance of himself and of that which is."<sup>31</sup> This goes beyond the most Gnostic-like idea in any Platonist, Numenius's concept of the "splitting" of the Demiurge.<sup>32</sup> And in what follows in the *Tripartite Tractate* we discover that all the unreality, disturbance, and trouble of this lower world, the defects and dissensions of the cosmic powers, the Archons, and the conflict between the powers of light and darkness which dominates the present state of things, are due to the weakness and sickness of the Logos which comes from his attempt to attain to the Father. Here we have a real "break in the middle," a real fault and failing in the spiritual world accounting for the origin of an on the whole bad and transitory material cosmos, which is not compatible with the thought of Plotinus or with any kind of genuine Platonism.

It is not easy to fit the Gnostic stories which we have just been considering into any tidy scheme of cosmic or two-principle dualism. But of course the Gnostics, like the Platonists and the non-Gnostic Christians, are dualists in another perfectly legitimate sense of "dualism," that of belief in a duality of worlds, a higher and a lower cosmos. Something must be said here about some possible variations of this. We need to look rather carefully at the variants of two-world dualism which we encounter in the first centuries of our era in order to determine the degree of "other-worldliness," that is of hostility to, alienation from, and desire to escape from this lower cosmos which

appears in them. This seems to depend to a great extent on the way in which the relationship between the two worlds is conceived or imagined. It is perfectly correct to say that the Nag Hammadi literature has shown that not all Gnostics were totally alienated from this world and committed to a darkly pessimistic view of the cosmos and its maker. But it must be admitted that a rather dark pessimism does predominate: and even in those treatises where a comparatively favorable view is taken of the creator and his creation, the estimate of the material cosmos does not seem to be high. There is not very much to be said for it as it appears in the latter part of the *Tripurite Tractate*. The sentence in *Marsanes* "<I have come to know> when <I> was deliberating that in every respect the sense-perceptible world is [worthy] of being saved entirely" certainly deserves to be quoted to show that not all Gnostics were utterly alienated and anti-cosmic. But if we also quote what remains of what comes immediately before, "Finally the entire defilement was saved, together with the immortality of that one [feminine] . . ." it does not look as if the material world, presumably identical with or part of the "entire defilement," is very much esteemed after all.<sup>33</sup> The most deeply and strongly world-affirming of the treatises which I have read is the *Writing Without Title*,<sup>34</sup> with its loving descriptions of the paradises of the cosmic *Erōs* and the symbolic animals of the land of Egypt.<sup>35</sup> Tardieu describes the spirit and mood of the treatise (and of the closely related *Hypostasis of the Archons*) beautifully and accurately.

Tous les trois [the myths of Adam and Eve, *Erōs*, and the animals of Egypt] expriment la même nostalgie d'une intimité chaleureuse, d'une fusion originaire et vitale entre l'homme et la femme (cycle d'Adam) l'homme et les plantes (jardins d'*Erōs*) entre l'homme et l'animal (cycle des animaux d'Egypte) nostalgie analogue à celle qui préside à la genèse des mythes de la bisexualité, de l'âge d'or et de la régénération.<sup>36</sup>

It is important to remark that here the female (and the androgynous — *Erōs* is androgynous) are very highly regarded: in the telling of the story of Genesis the values are reversed and Eve and the serpent are good saving powers. This is certainly not a spirit of mere cosmic pessimism and alienation from this world. But it is a spirit of nostalgia, and nostalgia is generally understood as a passionate longing for something far away and long ago, and generally implies that one is fairly miserable about the state in which one finds oneself. Here we can see an important reason why it is very easy for Gnostics to be very hostile to and alienated from this present world. In the Gnostic stories the

higher cosmos is remote and we cannot return to it, except in vision and revelation, till after bodily death: and the material cosmos is not only remote from the world of light but itself a transitory phenomenon: there is no reason to care about it very much.

For Platonists the relationship of the two worlds is very different. From the *Timaeus* onwards the essential truth about the material cosmos is that it is an image, divinely made, of the eternal world of Forms. (The idea that things in this world are in some sense images of things in a higher world does of course occur in some Gnostic writings,<sup>37</sup> as Plotinus notes with hostility.<sup>38</sup> But the archetypes of the images do not usually seem to be on a very high level or to come into existence very early in the story and the stress seems to be very much, as a rule, on the shadowy, phantasmal, and generally unsatisfactory character of the material image. In some Gnostics the valuation of body and the material world may not be very far from the *Phaedo* or from the nostalgia for the higher world of *Phaedrus* 250C, but it never seems to come very near to the *Timaeus*. The idea of the world as image does not seem to be really central for the Gnostics and, at their most cosmically optimistic, they are very far from regarding it as the everlasting icon of the eternal glory.) I have for some time found it useful, in considering the attitudes of Platonists to body and the material universe, to observe that the concept of "image" allows, and indeed demands, a sliding scale of valuation. At the lower end of the scale one says "How poor, trivial and inadequate a thing the image is compared with the original"; at the higher end "How beautiful and venerable is this icon of the eternal glory not made by human hands." And many intermediate stages are possible, according to mood, temperament and context. We have seen how even in the more dualistic and pessimistically inclined Middle Platonists, the influence of the *Timaeus* prevented the higher valuation of the cosmos as image from ever being forgotten. And it is particularly clearly and strongly evident in Plotinus, in spite of a considerable number of pessimistically other-worldly utterances. We can see very well in him how the beauty of the everlasting image depends on the continual presence in it of the invisible and eternal archetype; indeed, not only its beauty but its very existence, for it is a "natural" image, like a shadow or reflection, which cannot exist without the archetype's presence.<sup>39</sup> The two worlds are very close to each other in Plotinus; so close that many good modern interpreters of the *Enneads* find it better and less misleading to understand his thought in terms of one world, one set of entities, apprehended in different ways at different levels, rather than two.<sup>40</sup> In terms of comparison with Gnostics, and non-Gnostic Christians, this

means that for Plotinus heaven, or the Pleroma, or the World of Light, is not remote and our sojourn there is not something which belongs to the past or the future. The eternal is here and now present in its everlasting image. The only Parousia there will ever be is here and now. And those who are capable and prepared to make the great moral and intellectual efforts to do so can live in heaven and rise beyond it to God here and now. Porphyry was, it seems, more inclined than his master to follow Numenius in regarding this world as a place to escape from. But the Athenian Neoplatonists incline even more strongly than Plotinus to the highest evaluation of the image: and for them too the One and the Henads and the Forms are intimately and immediately present at every level of their vast hierarchy of being, the highest more intimately and immediately present in this lower cosmos of ours than those of lower rank. And through the sacred rites their presence may be experienced by at least some of those who cannot rise to the austere contemplation of the sage.

I have left myself little room to discuss the formidably complex subject of the forms of cosmic dualism which are to be found in the thought of non-Gnostic Christians. But it will already be apparent that a good deal which has been said in the earlier parts of this paper about both Platonists and Gnostics can be applied to mainstream Christians: and the best thing I can do here is to suggest at least a partial explanation for the remarkable variations in Christian theory and practice in terms of the different solutions adopted by Christians to the problems of the evils and imperfections apparent in the world and human beings. Non-Gnostic Christians have generally rejected with great passion and emphasis interpretations of the Jewish and Christian stories which made the creator of the world other than and inferior to the one God and Father of Jesus Christ. They have rejected the kind of "break in the middle" which figures so prominently in the Gnostic stories. As a result they affirm very strongly the goodness of the creation as well as of the creator: and eventually classical Christian theology came to accept the later Neoplatonist view of evil as having no real existence, as a *parhypostasis*. On this side of Christian thinking Platonic influence has been strong and deep. In the West as well as in the East Christians have often arrived at a theophanic view of the material creation in which it appears as the God-made icon of the eternal glory. I was myself brought up in an English Christian tradition which saw no fundamental difference between Platonism and Christianity, and instinctively and unselfconsciously accepted God's self-revelation in nature as equal in honor to his self-revelation in scripture and church: a way of faith admirably summed up in St. Maximus

Confessor's discussion of the proper interpretation of the white garments of the Transfiguration in which he concludes "... the two laws, of nature and of scripture, are equal in honor and teach the same as each other, and neither is greater or less than the other ..."<sup>41</sup> But there are of course important differences between the normal Christian creationist position and that of the later Platonists. The Christians lay much greater stress on God's will and have a more unbridled and absolute conception of divine creative power than Plato and his followers: as a result they not only reject the independent principle of evil of the Middle Platonists but have little room in their thought for the "dark other," still so important in the last Neoplatonists, and in general, at least till quite recently, reject any limitation on God's omnipotence which would mean that he works by persuasion rather than force. This can result in leading those Christians, like Augustine in his later years, who incline to a gloomy view of the present state of affairs, not only to a pessimism about the world as great as that of the Manichees but to a way of thinking about God darker and more terrifying than that of any thorough-going cosmic dualists.<sup>42</sup>

The darker view of this world is strongly assisted by the older and more popular Christian way of explaining its evils. This is a story-explanation, in terms of persons rather than principles, about the fall of angels and men, and in this way resembles the Gnostic stories. In patristic thought, and sometimes in later Christian thought, the fall of the angels plays an important part in the explanation of cosmic or physical evil: though no other Christian thinker goes as far as Origen in making the whole creation depend on the fall of the spirits who, according to the depth of their fall, became angels, men or devils: a doctrine which he is enabled to reconcile with his firm anti-Gnostic faith that the creation is essentially good, because it is the work of the perfectly good and wise Father working through the Logos in whom there is no fault or failing, by his vision of the whole creative process as one of redemption, education and purification which will bring all the spirits back to that original state form which they, freely and of their own motion, in no way impelled by God, chose to fall. The vital difference between the way of thinking of the *Peri Archon* and the at first sight not entirely dissimilar one of the *Tripartite Tractate* is that for Origen there is no element of fault and failing, no falling below the best, in the divine creative act itself. Origen's view was of course generally rejected by non-Gnostic Christians: but in less wholesale forms the explanation of cosmic evils by the fall of the angels has not, perhaps, been uncommon. My father, who was an Anglican clergyman, reconciled his passionate belief in the goodness of the creation with the

undoubted existence of evils in it by an interesting Christian adaptation of what is said in the *Timaeus* about the part taken by the "younger gods" in the formation of the world, which he regarded as perfectly orthodox and traditional. He held that the angels had had bestowed on them by God limited powers of creation which the devils were not deprived of, and continued to exercise after their fall by creating all the things in the world of which my father disapproved, notably slugs and snails, to which, being an enthusiastic gardener, he had the strongest objection.

But it is when the doctrine of the fall of the angels is combined with that of the fall of mankind to provide an explanation of the evils which beset humanity here below that we may find the foundations in Christian thought for a world-view as dark as that of the Manichaeans or a conflict-dualism fiercer than that of the Mazdaeans. J.H.W.G. Liebeschütz, in his excellent book on Roman religion, has shown very well how the passionate early Christian belief in devils and the identification of the pagan gods with devils darkened the later antique world-view, by strengthening the tendency which had already appeared in it to believe in supernatural personifications of evil. He says,

The transformation of the gods into demons had a significant psychological consequence. The gods had sometimes been cruel or arbitrary, but they could be placated by offerings in quite the same way as arbitrary or tyrannous humans. They were not essentially hostile or spiteful. Christianity offered man enormously powerful assistance, but it also proclaimed the existence of powerful and totally evil adversaries. Life became a battle in which men must fight for God against "the enemy."

and he adds in ■ footnote

There had been a tendency to believe in supernatural personifications of absolute evil, especially in connection with magic, in later Greek or Roman paganism. . . . But it was left to Christianity to fill the world with evil spirits.<sup>43</sup>

Peter Brown has unforgettably described the consequences in Augustine's latest thought of combining this devil-dualism with the anti-dualist insistence on the omnipotence and sovereign will of God.

God had plainly allowed the human race to be swept by his wrath: and this human race, as Augustine presents it in his works against Julian, is very like the invaded universe of Mani. Augustine had always believed in the vast power of the Devil: . . . Now this Devil will cast his shadow over mankind:

the human race is "the Devil's fruit-tree, his own property, from which he may pick his fruit," it is "the plaything of demons." This is evil, thought of much as the Manichees had done, as a persecutory force. The demons may now have been enrolled as the unwitting agents of a superior justice: but it is they who are seen as active and man as merely passive.<sup>44</sup>

Here, as Brown shows, we are very close to the Gnostic view of the world at its darkest, and, though the figure of God is invested with ■ transcendent and absolute horror exceeding that of any Gnostic demiurge or even the Manichaean evil principle, his most eminent activity in the world in its present state is seen as the redemption and deliverance of the small number of the elect from its darkness. For the rest of humanity, of course, there is no hope at all, as God simultaneously with his work of redemption pursues his "awesome blood-feud against the family of Adam."<sup>45</sup>

But those Christians who have not the tormented genius of Augustine for drawing out the full horror of the consequences implicit in some traditional Christian doctrines, and who do not see the world as so totally devil-ridden as Augustine did in his later years (and many of his Christian contemporaries did not) have often come to attach much importance to the third image which I mentioned (p. 9) as available to cosmic dualists, that of the war-leader, commanding the armies of light against the forces of darkness. They have found that the qualified conflict-dualism of the belief that all the evils of this world are due to the sins of the fallen angels and the men and women whom they have seduced into following them provides admirable support for the ferocious, though sometimes quite cheerful, pugnacity, exceeding that of mainstream Iranian conflict-dualists, which has been a distinguishing characteristic of historic Christianity. The belief that those whom one regards, at any place or time, as enemies of authentic Christian faith, civilization, or interests are of the Devil's party is a powerful stimulus to crusading: that is, of course, if one does not pay too much attention, as Christians in this sort of context have generally quite successfully avoided doing, to where and how Christ chose to overcome evil, and so is not inhibited by the reflection that the Cross is a singularly inappropriate symbol for a Crusader. Those, of course, who do attend to the meaning of the Cross, as the best of those who have used the language of "spiritual combat" have done, will come to use that language in a very different way, and understand the overcoming of evil in very different terms from the polemicists and crusaders. In their thought and practice this strange triumph will be achieved by accepting and carrying evil and requiting it with good and with love. Most of us

have not got nearly as far as this. But, as we contemplate the overcoming of evil by the way of the Cross, we may be permitted to observe that the language of conflict-dualism is not really appropriate to it, except in a most violently paradoxical sense: so that we may come to prefer other images, including the great Platonic image of the Craftsman, for our struggle in this imperfect, but good and lovable world.

## NOTES

1. Aristotle *Metaphysics* A. 5. 986a 22-26. I accept the view that Aristotle is much our best and most reliable source of evidence for pre-Platonic Pythagoreanism.
2. I agree on the whole with the skeptical assessment of the evidence for Plato's oral teachings given by Gregory Vlastos in his review of H.J. Krämer *Arete bei Platon und Aristoteles*, *Gnomon* 41 (1963): 641-655, reprinted in *Platonic Studies* (Princeton University Press 1973) as no. 17, pp. 379-403.
3. Aristotle *Metaphysics* A. 6. 988a 14.
4. F.M. Cornford's *Plato's Cosmology* (London, Kegan Paul, 1937), pp. 363-364.
5. In the third part of the great theodicy of *Laws* X, in 906, the gods are compared to generals, as they are to skippers, chariteers, doctors, farmers — and sheepdogs, and the everlasting war against evil in which gods and spirits are our allies is mentioned (906A 5-7): but this is very incidental, and the main point of the comparisons is to show how unlikely it is that the gods are corruptible.
6. Simplicius *In Phys.* 230, 34-231, 27 Diehl. See P. Merlan in the *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* I.5, pp. 90-94.
7. Numenius Fr. 52 des Places (Test. 30 Leemans), 15-24.
8. Chapters 46 and 47, 369D-370C.
9. *In Tim.* I 276-277 and 382-382 Diehl.
10. 382, 7-12 Diehl.
11. J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Duckworth, London, 1977), p. 254.
12. Calcidius *In Timaeus* 296-297. (Fr. 52 65-70, 82-87 des Places).
13. Calcidius 298 (Fr. 52, 101-102 des Places).
14. Fr. 16 des Places (25 Leemans), 16-17.
15. II 1 [40] 4, 12-13; II 9 [33] 35-36; IV 4 [28] 42, 25-6.
16. For the Earth as a goddess see IV 4 [28] 22, 26-27.
17. III 2 [47] 2.
18. Pierre Hadot's exposition of Plotinus's allegorical interpretation of the myth of Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus in his great anti-Gnostic work brings out very well how and why Plotinus thinks it necessary that the diffusion of the Good should go on beyond the self-contained, inward looking perfection of the world of Nous. (Pierre Hadot "Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus in Plotinus's treatise against the Gnostics," in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought* [Variorum, London 1981], pp. 124-137).
19. The doctrine of Syrianus is very well expounded by Anne Sheppard in her contribution (pp. 1-17), "Monad and Dyad as Cosmic Principles in Syrianus," in *Soul and the Structure of Being in Late Neoplatonism* (University Press, Liverpool, 1982). Very difficult problems arise, in Syrianus and still more in Proclus, about the place of the primal pair (Monad and Dyad in Syrianus, Limit and Infinity in Proclus) in relation to the Divine Henads, as Sheppard indicates (pp. 11-12).
20. *In Metaph.* 184. 1. ff; 185. 15 ff. Kroll.
21. Art. cit. p. 10.
22. *In Tim.* I 54 D-E, 176 Diehl; *In Parm.* VI 1119, 4-1123, 21; El. Th. propositions 89-92; *Platonic Theology* III 7-9.
23. Jean Trouillard, *La Mystagogie de Proclus* (Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1982), p. 247.
24. *Hypostasis of the Archons* (II 4) 11-14; cp. *Poimandres* (*Hermetica* I) 14, p. 11 Nock-Festugière.
25. *Zostrianos* (VIII 1) 1.
26. 131.
27. *Tripartite Tractate*, 78.
28. *Apocryphon of John* 11.
29. *Tripartite Tractate* 77, (translation by Harold Attridge and Dieter Mueller in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* [Brill Leiden, 1977]).
30. On this see Naguib Haladi *La Pensée de Plotin* (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1970) and my own treatment in "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy," pp. 116ff. (*Gnosis*, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1978, pp. 87-124, reprinted as no. XXI in A.H. Armstrong, *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, Variorum, London, 1979).
31. *Tripartite Tractate* 77.
32. Numenius Fr. 11 des Places (20 Leemans).
33. *Marsanes* (X.1.) 5.
34. II 5.
35. As M. Tardieu observes, this praise of Egypt brings the treatise close to the Hermetic *Asclepius* (M. Tardieu, *Trois Mythes Gnostiques, Études Augustiniennes*, Paris, 1974; ch. 5, 67, pp. 269-272).
36. Tardieu, p. 269.
37. E.g. *Zostrianos* 48, 55, 113 (a treatise which Plotinus may have known).
38. II 9 [33] 26-27. "Why do they feel the need to be there in the archetype of the universe which they hate?" A great deal of II 9 is devoted to severe criticism of the Gnostics' perverse use of the concept of image and the false other-worldliness which springs from it.
39. On the distinction between "natural" and "artificial" images see VI 4 [22] 9-10. A text which well brings out the closeness of the two worlds is V 8 [31] 7.



40. Cp. two recent articles in *Dionysius* (Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, Dalhousie University Press). K. Corrigan, "The Internal Dimensions of the Sensible Object in the Thought of Plotinus and Aristotle," V (December 1981): 98-126 and Michael F. Wagner, "Plotinus's World," VI (December 1982): 13-42.
41. Maximus *Ambigua* VI PG91, 1128C-D.
42. Peter Brown brings this out very well in his *Augustine of Hippo* (London, Faber, 1967) in c. 32 on the controversy with Julian of Eclanum.
43. J.H.W.G. Liebeschütz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religions* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979), p. 269 and note 2.
44. Peter Brown, 1.c. (n. 42), p. 395. The quotations are from Augustine *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia* I xliii 26 and *Contra Julianum* VI xxi 67.
45. Brown 1. c., p. 393. I have referred to this chapter because in it Brown has said, with great precision and sympathy for Augustine, whatever can decently be said in defense of his later doctrine. Cp. Th.G. Sinnige, "Gnostic Influences in the Early Works of Plotinus and in Augustine," in *Plotinus amid Gnostics and Christians*, ed D.T. Runia (Amsterdam, Free University Press, 1984), pp. 94-97.

## The "Second God" in Gnosticism and Plotinus's Anti-Gnostic Polemic

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### Nous as a "Second God" According to Plotinus

In *Enneads* V, 1 (10), 8, a writing belong to the first literary period of Plotinus's teachings,<sup>1</sup> the following ideas are set forth:

8. This is the reason why Plato says that all things are threefold "about the king of all" — he means the primary realities — and "the second about the second and the third about the third." But he also says that there is a "father of the cause," meaning Intellect by "the cause": for Intellect is his craftsman; and he says that it makes Soul in that "mixing-bowl" he speaks of. And the father of Intellect which is the cause he calls the Good and that which is beyond Intellect and "beyond being." And he also often calls Being and Intellect Idea: so Plato knew that Intellect comes from the Good and Soul from Intellect. And [it follows] that these statements of ours are not new; they do not belong to the present time, but were made long ago, not explicitly, and what we have said in this discussion has been an interpretation of them, relying on Plato's own writings for evidence that these views are ancient. And Parmenides also, before Plato, touched on a view like this, in that he identified Being and Intellect and that it was not among things perceived by the senses that he placed Being, when he said "Thinking and Being are the same." And he says that this Being is unmoved — though he does attach thinking to it — taking all bodily movement from it that it may remain always in the same state, and likening it to "the mass of a sphere," because it holds all things in its circumference and because its thinking is not external, but in itself. But when he said it

was one, in his own works, he was open to criticism because this one of his was discovered to be many. But Parmenides in Plato speaks more accurately, and distinguishes from each other the first One, which is more properly called One, and the second which he calls "One-Many" and the third, "One and Many." In this way he too agrees with the doctrine of the three natures.<sup>2</sup> (tr. A.H. Armstrong)

This passage is rich not only in personal doctrine, but also in that it indicates some of the sources of thought which nourished that doctrine. Specifically, they are the three ontological categories of Plato's *Epistle II* which serve as the basis for outlining the theory of the hypostases and their hierarchy;<sup>3</sup> the reflection of the first three hypotheses of the *Parmenides* upon "The One"<sup>4</sup> so as to be able to distinguish amongst the three hypostases as units of diverse content and complexity. Lastly, Intellect, the second hypostasis in hierarchy, is not a single or isolated One, ultimately ineffable, but a Unity-Totality, The One as an undivided whole which contains all and which thereby claims particular requirements.

This, observes our philosopher, Parmenides had already perceived and maintained, albeit in imprecise language. But the core of the nature of the second hypostasis was already firmly grasped by the Presocratic under the following conceptual scheme:<sup>5</sup>

1. Parmenides had already comprehended clearly and as a lucid rational necessity that what is (*to on*) is absolutely opposed to what is not. In this respect, being can neither begin to be nor stop being nor be transformed, for that would imply passing from not being to being, form being to not being, or identification through coexistence of being and not being. In any one of these cases the logically absurd may apply.<sup>6</sup>
2. From this central conviction derive the signs or attributes which characterize being as motionless, complete, eternal, etc.<sup>7</sup>
3. Furthermore, this logical intuition of the reality of being cannot derive from what is not, whether in an absolute or a relative sense. With careful scrutiny, it is seen to be the consciousness which being has of itself and which asserts itself as a constant awareness, as does the reality which is known. So being and thinking are actually one and the same thing. It is not a question of being coming from thinking — far from it; but neither does thinking come from being. They have always been and shall forever be the same, a connaturally indivisible reality. What does happen, historically, is that at a given moment the philosopher, by his thinking, discovers that identity; but the reality was already there, immutable, waiting to be awakened.<sup>8</sup>

4. None the less, although Parmenides has seen and written about the inseparable unity of being and thinking and has called it "One," he has not expressed exactly of what that not-one, wherefore multiple, unity consists. It was Plato who, in the expository development of the second hypothesis of his dialogue about unity, *Parmenides*, expressed it with sufficient clarity.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, (a) based on an essential intellectual position regarding Parmenides and the interpretation which Parmenides's central ontological intuition had elicited in Plato; and (b) according to a Pythagorizing-Platonic exegesis well assimilated by Plotinus and which favors a *Plato pythagoricus*, the different perspectives and problems Nous holds for Plotinus are as follows:

- A. Internal configuration of Intellect or Spirit.
- B. Derivation and self-constitution of Intellect as a second hypostasis.
- C. Function of Intellect as producer as an intermediary hypostasis between the Good/One and the Soul or third hypostasis.

*Of what does Nous consist or what is Nous?*

The first thorough presentation setting forth of the subject topic appears in *Enneads* V, 9 (5) under the title: "On Intellect, Ideas and Being."<sup>10</sup> The subject matter is introduced with a reference to the three types of men or categories, varieties, kinds of philosophers: the Epicurean, the Stoic, and the Platonic (the latter really knows and seeks the basis of his knowledge and "takes pleasure in that real place").<sup>11</sup>

It is explained, first of all, that what is referred to here is the *nous alethinos*, the real nous. This means an Intellect which constantly is Intellect, since an Intellect which is partial or which at times is and at other times is not Intellect will not be Intellect in an absolute sense. True Intellect is, therefore, total knowledge and always knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, this Intellect, perceived as being always the same and all-inclusive, corroborates the same reasoning (*logos*); that is, "real being and real essence" (τὸ ὄν ὄντως καὶ τὴν ἀληθῆ οὐσίαν). Undoubtedly, Being, by not being mingled with the changeable entities, is separate (*chorismos*) and by being the totality, carries within its bosom

the ideas.<sup>13</sup> Intellect in the real sense is always Intellect in actuality, as it cannot go from potentiality to actuality and be always existent (καὶ ἀεὶ νοῦν ὄντα).<sup>14</sup>

But if its thinking is not as acquired, if it thinks something, it thinks it from itself and if it possesses something, it possesses it from itself. And if it thinks from itself and starting from itself, it itself is what it thinks. Because if it were an essence, and what it thinks were different from itself, its very essence would be unknown to it and so would be potential and not actual. Consequently, it is necessary not to separate these realities from each other (we are in the habit of separating them also analytically — *tais epinoiais* — according to our conditions depending on what may be current among us). What is it, then, that acts and thinks, that it should be recognized that that which is acting and thinking is the same as what it is thinking? It is obvious that it is *nous* which, really being, thinks beings and is; so then it itself is those beings, because it will think of them as being externally, or as being contained within itself as something identical. Now then, externally it is impossible, for where would they be? Therefore it thinks itself and in itself.<sup>15</sup>

Then some exact formulas stated by Parmenides, Aristotle, and Heraclitus, as well as the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence (*anamnesis*), become present and meaningful. Here beings dwell — not one is left outside; here where there is no birth nor corruption is what really is. Inferior beings have only a borrowed or shared reality.<sup>16</sup>

Intellect, then, is total unity;<sup>17</sup> that is, nothing eludes Intellect, since it is one-all. Then all things must be in it and at the same time and, therefore, together and separate, as a whole, but several.<sup>18</sup> How is this possible? Because in the unity of the Spirit, lacking in sensible matter, but living in itself, it is possible for complete beings, forms or ideas to coexist as intellectual realities.<sup>19</sup> Knowing themselves constantly and completely, these realities do not lock themselves into their selfsameness, but admit into their identical intellection with its reality all the remaining forms which comprise the intelligible organism or place. There is, therefore, in each idea or archetype identity of being and of thinking in a particular sense,<sup>20</sup> but at the same time awareness of a reality which is what it is in itself. Furthermore, this is true to the extent to which it communicates freely and unhindered with the total Intellect. In the same way, the full Spiritual Order is reflected or concentrated in each being — each self-transparent individuality, and it could not be what it is were it not for that presence of all else in its own constitution.<sup>21</sup> "There it is the all in the one."<sup>22</sup>

One who refers to the fundamental duality of thought as being

intelligible and intelligent in itself, is at the same time affirming intellection. Indeed, true Intellect, which, as such, is necessarily Intellect in actuality, is, primarily and totally, triple unity. It is a one which, as thought, thinks itself as a known object, as a knowing subject, and as a cognitive activity. Or, if you will, a thinking foundation (intellect) which, conceptually determining itself (what it is), is a full noetic activity (intellectual life as noesis).<sup>23</sup> So it is multiple unity which is eternity and life in the whole totality and in the particular beings under the limitation of what each one of them is — their sameness, their difference, their repose and movement, their quality, etc., affording in advance a brief outline of the internal framework of the spiritual.<sup>24</sup>

The actuality of intellect is life (*zōē-bios*), intelligible activity in its fullness, which stands (*en hesychō*) in the presence of the One and engenders the intelligible gods. This activity of implicit triple content and with the Good as its source and root that will be the source also of life, of intellect, and of being.<sup>25</sup> It is this triad, fully and loftily defining the second hypostasis, which Plotinus will continue using in his classes throughout the years.

But in the uni-trinity of being-life-thought Plotinus finds not only the doctrine of essential number, but also the anticipation of the great genera [*megiste genē*] of Plato's *Sophist*.<sup>26</sup> It is these genera [*gene*] which justify the delimitation of ideas as such in the intelligible world and reciprocal communication among them. With these concepts in mind he is able to write the following:

But Nous is all beings. It contains, therefore, all things firm in itself, it only and always is thus and never in the future shall be thus, because every then ■ ■ now. Neither is it in the past, because here nothing is preterit; rather all beings are always present; remaining so because, in a manner of speaking, they love one another in that state. Each of them is intellect and being and the whole is total Intellect and total being; intellect by means of thinking causing being to exist, but being by means of being thought giving to intellect thought and existence. The cause of thinking, none the less, which is the same as the cause of being, is different; therefore they both at the same time have a different cause. Undoubtedly they both exist together and do not separate, but this unity which is simultaneously intellect and being, that which thinks and that which is thought, is a duality, intellect as it thinks and being as it is thought. This must be so because thinking could not arise without the existence of difference and identity. And so the basic genera emerge: Intellect, Being, Difference, and Identity. Motion and Rest should also be added; for if there is thinking there must be motion and being the same requires rest. . . Once this multiplicity is brought into being, Number and Quantity arise and Quality as well, for it is the characteristic

proper to each one of these Ideas which are the principles from which all else derives.<sup>27</sup>

The foregoing evinces implicit distinction of the great genres looking toward ideas and numerical constitution in addition to total intelligible reality and essential realities, unities in either case, but also multiples.

We interpret as follows: Each form, each individual intellect, being a particular reflection of Intellect, is a being in actuality; but each being, each *ousia*, is elementally constituted by or has in common with the others entity, difference, mobility, and stability. By means of this amalgamation of elemental principles it settles itself or is inserted into the spiritual whole. That is, each idea is what it is in the intelligible world to the degree to which, being in eternal and intransferable actuality a permanent "this" or "that" in itself; that is, a determined or clear form (being) in full activity (life) of self-transparency (knowledge), it contemplates or lives in itself, the totality of the order of Intellect, opening itself up without restraints or barriers to that whole and possessing it in itself according to its own particularity. Therefore, each such form is a distinct being comprised of entity, identity, and stability, of the difference by virtue of which the remaining ideas make room for it and flow back to themselves, and the mobility through which it aspires to be all ideas and all other ideas conspire towards it.<sup>28</sup> Each idea communicates supragenerically with the intelligible living whole by means of its triune internal dynamism of being-life-knowledge, but communicates with the eternal beings by means of its generic constitution. It is life and interrelation, since each *ousia* is simultaneously organ within an organism and organ of an organism along with other organs.<sup>29</sup>

But in the dynamic or organic reality of the "living in itself," in its whole and in its parts, is concealed the essential number rendering possible this same multiple order in both the broad and the restricted sense. This holds true in the architectural dimension because, by its constitution, the intelligible living presupposes trinity; its earlier moment (intellect) presupposes duality; and the object which claims it (being), presupposes unity. Furthermore, ideal beings add to their entitive unity the remaining four genres so as to subsist in order.<sup>30</sup> However, in a strictly ideal characterization, order is maintained because each form contains a number which assures its cohesion<sup>31</sup> with the whole. In any idea, therefore, the essential number participates in a complex fashion to allow the idea its spiritual place and to give it internal unity. The decad, then, harboring in its bosom the hidden

power of number, is the ultimate and first shaping element of Nous and of its ideal contents. Consequently, Plotinus says:

The essential number is that which is one aspect of ideas and co-generates them, but primarily it is in being and with being and before all beings. In it beings have their basis and fount, root and first principle. For the One is the principle for being and being is in the One (because it would be diversified), but the One does not rest upon being, because then it would be one before possessing Unity, and that which is part of the decad would be decad before possessing decadhood.<sup>32</sup>

In brief, Nous, the second hypostasis, sphere of intelligible being or multiple unity, consists of the following elements, going from the center to the periphery:

Inclusive characteristics of the container: (a) Elemental principles (Form/Matter); (b) Principles of order (essential number); (c) Suprageneric nature (Being-Life-Intellect).

Characteristics of the contents: (a) General (megiste gene) major categories; (b) Special (specific or individual conditions).

The philosopher's characteristic activity consists precisely in serenely knowing and traversing without difficulties the "plain of truth."<sup>33</sup>

But how can Intellect be constituted in this manner if plurality comes from Unity? This is the question Plotinus asks himself early in his teachings.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Derivation and self-constitution of Intellect as the second hypostasis.*

The answer to this problem is related to the formation of the second hypostasis as an image of the One, for:

The One remains as the object of thinking, that which arises as the object of thought; but being thought and thinking from whence it derives (because it has no other) ■ Intellect, which has, so to speak, another object of thought, like the former, and is the reflection and image of It.<sup>35</sup>

The Spirit likewise is represented as an irradiation or luminous projection (*perilampsis*) which comes from the One.<sup>36</sup> Later on it is asserted that:

This is certainly what occurs with the Good as spiritual power encircles it, being in its turn like the model of its image in the One-multiple, which also

is on the way to multiplicity and because of that has become Nous. . . . It is like a light which comes from one single center, keeping its transparency in itself. The scattering light is an image, but the light from which it radiates is the real One.<sup>37</sup>

How is this derivation or generation of the second hypostasis ontologically possible? Because the One/Good remains in itself and, to the extent that it rests established in its own plenitude it generates the different, as a product which is its immediate image or glow and the effect of its overabundance.

It is not Being, but rather its generator. Being is, so to speak, its first generation. Because it neither seeks nor possesses nor needs anything, It overflows and this overabundance produces something different from It.<sup>38</sup>

How is Intellect formed as a Multiple-Unity? It is formed as a reflection, but a reflection which is the result of its own self-constitution. So Good remains in itself, absolutely in its own nature, but it gives off its nature upon another, its imprint (*ichnos*) which attracts and is able to captivate Intellect and which is its intelligible content. It is the same as the heat which is in fire and the heat in a warm body. Thus it is the essence of cause and effect.<sup>39</sup> For this reason, this production, as seen from the One, or in general from the producing level, is an emanation and spontaneous productive capability; whereas, observed from the perspective of Intellect, it is a complex operation which brings into play all its components and possibilities of internal organization.

Plotinus says that the second hypostasis had the audacity (*tolma*) to separate itself from the One.<sup>40</sup> In fact, that which as regards the One is overabundance (*hyperpleres*), from the point of view of *Nous* is boldness. Within this concept the multiple potentialities of matter begin to function. The substratum or spiritual receptacle, swollen with separating tension, is the indefinite or the other-than-the-One, which, ever in potentiality and yearning for its origin, seeks Unity.

Plotinus corroborates this doctrine on several occasions:

But why is Intellect not the generator? Because thinking is the actuality of Intellect; on the other hand, that thinking seeing the intelligible turned towards it and receiving from it its consummation, is in itself indefinite, like sight, and is defined by the intelligible. This is why it has been said that "ideas and numbers arise from the indefinite dyad and the One."<sup>41</sup>

Consequently he can point out a little further on:

Who, then, has generated this multiple god? It is generated by simple Being, which is prior to this multiplicity, the cause of its multiple existence, and that which produces number. Certainly number is not primal. And because Unity is prior to the dyad and the dyad is in turn second and springs from Unity, the latter defines it but it is in itself indefinite. Once it has been defined, it is already number, number as substance. . . . Therefore, what is called number and duality in the spiritual world, are informing principles and Spirit. Even so, the indefinite dyad exists, so long as it be taken, so to speak, as the substratum. Each number which proceeds from it and from the One, is an Idea, having been formed by the ideas generated in It (= spiritual substratum). On the one hand, *Nous* is formed from the One, but on the other, from Itself, the same as sight in actuality, because thinking is vision which sees, both of them being one.<sup>42</sup>

With that same mentality, Plotinus maintains likewise that the Good or the One "lacks thinking so as not to have otherness"<sup>43</sup> and that there is a relation of "similarity and identity" between the subject which knows and the Intelligible which allows the being that knows through self-denial an exaltation and even identification with the known, once the obstacles have disappeared:

For bodies hinder bodies in communicating, but incorporeal bodies are not hindered by bodies; therefore they are not apart from each other spatially, but rather because of otherness and difference. Thus when otherness disappears, the several beings are present to one another. So that which has not otherness is always present and we are present with it when we put away otherness. Neither does That aspire to us, as if it were round about us, but rather we aspire to It, being round about It.<sup>44</sup>

Now the passage to which we alluded earlier<sup>45</sup> becomes fully meaningful. Its most interesting lines, pointing out the self-generated character of Intellect, read as follows:

But *Nous* is all beings. . . . But in order that there be that which thinks and that which is thought, otherness is required. Otherwise, if you remove otherness, the emerging unity will remain silent. It is likewise necessary that the things which are thought be both different from and somewhat like each other, since it is a unit in itself and as a unit all have something in common. Difference is also an otherness. This multiplicity which comes into being produces number and quantity. Quality, moreover, as the characteristic proper to each of them and to all else, derives from these in the sense that they are principles.<sup>46</sup>

We consider the above to be Plotinus's central notion. Nous a knowledge implies duality: that which thinks and that which is thought. Since in the behavior of Nous that which allows this act is exterior to that which thinks as well as to what is represented, it will follow that their generator is also the generator of Being and of knowledge of Being. Being is the object represented in Intellect, the awareness of that which is represented, Intellect. In the fulfilled action of thinking Being remains identical to and different from Intellect, and Intellect remains inchoately *other* than Being, on the point of becoming identical to itself and different from Being, that which it should know; therefore it thinks that. Going to the essence of the matter, then, we summarize as follows: The cognitive action of Nous, potentially knowing, brought Being to determination or existence and the constant awareness of Being sustains the intellect of Nous. First place in logical analysis goes to Intellect, because, in order to constitute itself as the transparent self-representation, in which Being and Being's thinking are identified the same, identical in the double unity of the actuality of knowing, Nous, sensing itself to be another, aspired, as to something not attained, to intuit the constantly One. Therefore, in the epinoetic analysis examination the broadest fullest functions and the great genres appear as self-constituting stages of cognitive activity, which is then reflected from Being upon beings, self-constituting them and arranging them in intelligible life as its principles. The internal components of the cognitive act are the subject which knows (Intellect) and the object known (Being). Both of them, in active knowing, are different and alike in that they perform a function which distinguishes and defines them in a unity and in motion and at rest; for that which knows, when it is knowing involves both genres, as does that which is known, once it is being known. But, embracing all these principles is found otherness, that ultimate element of Nous which, being somewhat different from the One, aspires to be not undefined Intellect, but rather, with its own content of thinking and Being, the representation or image of the One. This capability of undefined understanding, this real spiritual substratum in which knowledge and Being as projections of Good will be possible, is true *otherness*. By means of otherness arise the great genera of Nous or its internal properties; it allows the cognitive duality of thinking and Being; and from it is generated difference as the first note of division, since it has to do with what is different in itself. Moreover, upon it, with Being already formed, is constructed the plurality of the being of Nous, identical and different. From this foundation the entire architecture of the intelligible world will be arranged, duly emphasizing that the basic component with regard to procession and that which

permits an orderly development of everything beneath the One, is this reality of otherness. It is a deep aspiration, forever unsatisfied, which attains in Nous all it desires. That otherness in no way differs from the above-mentioned "indefinite dyad," which together with Unity forms the ideal numbers and which is here referred to as the multiplicity which produces number.<sup>47</sup>

The Neoplatonist was right, then, to conclude his reflections concerning intelligible matter with these words so well worth remembering:

In effect, spiritual otherness exists always, which produces matter; for this is the principle of matter and the primary movement. For this reason Movement, too, was called Otherness, because Movement and Otherness sprang forth together. The Movement and Otherness which came from the First are undefined and need the First to define them; and they are defined when they turn to it. But before the turning, matter, too, was undefined and the Other and not yet good, but unilluminated from the First. For if light comes from the First, then that which receives the light, before it receives it has everlastingly no light; but it has light as other than itself, since the light comes to it from something else. And now we have disclosed about the intelligible matter more than the occasion demanded.<sup>48</sup>

In fact, it is that *Other* which, risen from the One and turning towards It in undefined Movement, impregnates the eager substratum to become self-constituted thereupon as knowledge and order in the presence of the unattainable vision of the Good.<sup>49</sup>

For all this, in *Enneads* III, 8 (30), 11 we read that: (1) Nous is considered to be a kind of sight which is seeing and therefore a potentiality which has come to be an actuality and thus composed of form and matter. Intelligible matter, and Nous forms a double unity. (2) So, while the One needs nothing, Intellect does need the One, for in Intellect there subsists something *other* than the First, which is It Itself and nothing else, and which makes it be something different. (3) But still, in spite of the duality ingrained in matter, its desire for Good and its tendency towards It is complete; it attains what it desires, wholeness. Thus in Nous there persists a flawless adaptation between matter and form, induced by a firm and constant aspiration. This adaptation manifests itself as intellectual activity which is powerful, whole, and effective life and thereby beauty in itself, but a beauty which, although it be the height of movement, harmonious vigor, or unlimited activity, or complete joyous life, is not the Good; it is but its antechamber.<sup>50</sup> In the Good has its Principle, as the source of life, being, and knowledge. Therefore there is in Intellect, which is totally

saturated with light, a double faculty, a double *dynamis*: one part is its total tendency toward itself in cautious intellectual moderation; the other, enraptured, seeks to break all limits, to be Silence and Nothingness,<sup>51</sup> no longer philosophy but rather the mysticism which makes whole again.<sup>52</sup>

It is that Intellect, so organized and self-constituted as a complete organism dependent upon the First, to which Plotinus refers, only once, as a "second god." The reference occurs in *Enneads* V, 5, 3 in the lessons preparatory to his treatise "Against the Gnostics"; the designation becomes fully meaningful only in so far as we also analyze the third point of our discussion on the third hypostasis.

#### *Nous as a generating hypostasis.*

But how does Intellect produce the Soul and by means of it the sensible world? Simply by contemplating itself, secure in itself, and by an excess of its own fullness, in imitation of the One.<sup>53</sup> On this point Plotinus is once again clear and coherent. The basis upon which he structures his teaching is the interpretation of the Platonic *Timaeus*.

An early statement of the difficulty is found in *Enneads* V, 9 (5), 3:

It will be inquired . . . whether Nous is in itself at the same time both as the form in the bronze and as the one who creates (*poietas*, maker) the form in the bronze. Transferring the same principles to the soul of the universe, at this point one will rise to Intellect, affirming that it is the true maker (*poieten*) and craftsman (*demiourgon*).<sup>54</sup>

In the same way there is an apparent contradiction reflected in *Enneads* III, 9 (13), 1:

"Intellect," says Plato, "sees the Ideas which are in that which is the Living." Later he says: "the demiurge thought that what Intellect sees in that which is the Living, this universe may also have." Is he not saying, then, that ideas already exist prior to Intellect and that Intellect thinks them as they are existing? Therefore, one should first inquire whether the Living may be not Intellect, but something other than Intellect. That which contemplates is Intellect; thus the Living itself is not Intellect but the intelligible, and Intellect has outside itself that which it sees. In that case, it also has images and not the real things, if real things are there. For, as Plato says, the truth is there, in that which is, where each thing is "in itself." Therefore, even though one and the other are different, they are

not so separately, but only in that one is distinct from the other. Besides, so far as we are able to observe from the preceding statement, there is nothing to preclude that both be a unity and that they be distinguished by thought, because only in this way do the intelligible and that which understands exist. For the term "sees" by no means says in another, but in itself, since Intellect has the intelligible in it. But neither does anything prevent the intelligible from being an intellect in repose, unity, and silence; and nothing hinders the nature of the intellect which sees that intellect which is in itself from being a certain action of that intelligible which is intellect in repose, unity, and silence. This latter seeing the former, while it is seeing it, may be, so to speak, intellect of the former, because it thinks it. On the other hand, that which is thinking these things is also simultaneously intellect and intelligible, in order to produce in this world the four classes of the Living.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, in opposition to a Gnostic thesis, *Ennead* II, 9 (33), 1 refutes such a subdivision in the second hypostasis:

It is not even possible to do this in the things which come after these. One cannot conceive one intellect of some sort in a sort of repose and another in a kind of way in motion. What would the repose of Intellect be, and what its motion and "going forth," or what would be its inactivity, and what the work of the other intellect? Intellect is as it is, always the same, resting in static activity.<sup>56</sup>

Is it possible, then, having in mind the productive capacity of Nous, to imagine in it an inactive content, in itself an archetype and apart from the copy, and that same archetype as an active form? The same thing is true for a thorough analysis of any kind of craftsmanship. It appears upon examination to be a complicated activity which includes the universal model in the mind of the creator, fused with his own thought, and that same model when it is thought about in order to be molded into a specific piece of work for which it serves as a model. In the first case we would have an intellectual action at rest and inoperative; in the second case, an intellectual action in motion.

Thus approached, the difficulty is ultimately more Judaic and Christian than Greek in its origin, for in it is involved the decisive or volitional act (the act of decision or volition) which creates the world.<sup>57</sup>

According to *Timaeus* 39E, Plotinus, bearing in mind one aspect of the cosmogonic myth, recognizes the logical moments of content, thought and operation (*Enneads* V, 9, 3), but without accepting a literal anthropomorphic interpretation.

If the intelligible paradigms are outside intellect, Intellect, as Plato

maintains, will not be true Intellect; for, with the immediacy of the known object-knowing subject broken, not the realities in themselves, but their intellectual reflections, will be in Intellect.<sup>58</sup> This topic, here presented in a very condensed form, is fully examined and considered proven<sup>59</sup> in the anti-Gnostic "Great Tetralogy." Besides, the separation of aspects in Intellect — in repose (*stasei*), unity, and silence (*henotati kai hesychia*), and in itself (*en auto*) and in self-contemplation — will be only an epinoetic distinction, but not real. As the philosopher expressed it at around that same time, "When we are thinking ourselves we are looking at a thinking nature."<sup>60</sup> Thinking itself is the restricted and secondary activity of a being which is thinking and which therefore can think itself. The character of intellect at rest (*hesychos*) is that which is underlying and proper to a being which can reflect upon itself, such as man; therefore, in the former, which is eternal and simultaneous or entirely being-life-knowledge, such a separation will never be possible.<sup>61</sup>

Consequently, when the Gnostics, specifically the Valentinians, distinguish really an Intellect in the bosom of God in silence and repose; that is to say, unuttered and inactive, as origin in itself of the Pleroma, and another which is uttered and in motion; that is, fixed as a total concept or sum of everlasting attributes and projected toward the real future world (the one which is to be saved) and the false one (the product of Sophia's fall), they are surreptitiously introducing into Plato's exegesis materials which have nothing to do with the Greek tradition.<sup>62</sup>

With the above-cited assertions in mind we shall enter into a full discussion of our second topic.

*The "second god" among Platonists, Pythagorean-Platonists, and Gnostics. Plotinus's tradition.*

The question is treated in the important chapter on "ideas as the thoughts of God" in Ancient Philosophy in which an essential role is played by Aristotle's proclamation on the unsurpassable sublimeness of Nous as the most excellent living god.<sup>63</sup> The chapter further treats of the different ways of dividing the interpretation of the demiurgic god of the *Timaeus* which gazes upon ideas,<sup>64</sup> in some cases possibly influenced by oriental religious thought.

The positions can be synthesized in three groups:

a. Those which consider ideas as forming a unity with the divine intellect.

b. Those which consider ideas to be external to divine thinking, coming from outside.

c. Those which consider ideas to be internal to the divine mind, but in the form of an internal process.

a. Behind this interpretation can be discovered a doctrine which may go back to the Ancient Academy,<sup>65</sup> but which in its most representative example may have adopted stipulations of Aristotelian philosophy. Such is the case with Albinus. He considers ideas as the thoughts or specific intellectual actions of his first God or first Intellect. It is Intellect in actuality of itself and of those contents which are the paradigms of the world and of that world as a complete universe. The first god is first intellect and in actuality with respect to its own intellection, since it is the intellectual basis of its eminently intellectual activity. In this sense it is light in itself, because it provides form itself the clarity of the cognitive action and its contents or intellectual objects and, in a second moment, is that cognitive and intellectual clarity for the celestial intellect. Ideas, then, are internal to God and are constantly generated by Him as his proper intellectual activity. God thinks himself and thinks ideas producing the cosmos according to such paradigms. To such a transcendent God the rational methods of negative theology may reasonably be applied, but with a meaning profoundly different from their application to Plotinus's One or to the "God who is not" of the Gnostic Basilides, for example. For while the One, by virtue of being Universal Possibility or productive Nothingness, is beyond all attribution, neither can the one-everything logically be named, because it would require all the names or attributes.<sup>66</sup>

b. In the second group are Atticus and Numenius. It is possible that Atticus may have reacted against an already Aristotelian Plato on this point, considering that the demiurge thinks the models, which as "first and fundamental natures" or ideas, are outside his thinking. The models thought are the archetypes which lead to things,<sup>67</sup> but as "realities in themselves" they are independent of the demiurgic thoughts.<sup>68</sup>

Numenius, however, considers a First Principle, first Nous, and first God, which is the Good in itself, Nous previous and superior to the intelligibles (*ousia* and *idea*), the One, etc. A second Nous is subordinate to it, a second god which contemplates the ideas, essences, or the beautiful and, applying them to sensible matter, creates the world.<sup>69</sup>

There is in Numenius, then, (1) a first god, in itself and also in life, which owes much of its characterization to Aristotle, and (2) a second



intellect, called second god, which manifests a double function: at rest, contemplative and in motion, creative. The influence here may have been Gnostic.<sup>70</sup> His conception of the world, none the less, is Greek: third god and *poiema*.<sup>71</sup>

c. The third group, the one in which we are most interested at the moment, is that of the Gnostics.

In book II of his *Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus of Lyon, pointing out the false doctrine taught by the Valentinians when they refer to the inexplicable fact of the divine generation of the Son by the Father, tries on several occasions to demonstrate the logical absurdities into which his adversaries fall. Among them is the glaring contradiction by which they proclaim two principal stages, moments, or levels in the constitution of the Pleroma (= second Neoplatonic hypostasis).

The following arguments demonstrate the logical absurdities which Irenaeus sought to expose:

1. It is impossible that the *Ennoia* (interpreted as notion) can generate *Nous* (= Intellect). Both it and *Enthymesis* (intention), thinking, reasoning, judgment, concept, etc. are activities of Intellect of a different cognitive nature. But these are all fixed in intellect and therefore cannot be its source. All the foregoing, obviously ill used by the Gnostics and imitating intellectual activities, breaks the unity of that which acts in a different way:

But those who assert that *Ennoia* was produced by God, that *Nous* arose from *Ennoia* and afterwards in succession, *Logos* from both of these, ought, in the first place, to be censured for having made an improper use of these products.<sup>72</sup>

2. Since in God his Intellect (*Nous*) is identified with its ideal contents (*Logos*), then the prolation (*prolatio*) *Bythos*, *Nous*, *Logos* is false.<sup>73</sup>

3. If they maintain that the Father produced Intellect within Himself, recourse to production is superfluous.<sup>74</sup>

4. On the basis of this same mentality and wishing to find absurdities in the enumeration of the elements of the *triakontada* by excess and by defect, it is maintained with respect to the superior Ogdoad that it is impossible that *Sige* and *Logos* form part of the Pleroma, because they are conceptually opposed. And even though it be held that this *Logos* is not a perceptibly pronounced word but is rather internal, neither is there offered a coherent solution, for *Logos* in *Sige* eliminates *Sige* by being identified with it.<sup>75</sup>

Saint Irenaeus betrays in his objections the personal exegetic interests implicit in them, but at the same time stresses the technicalism of his adversaries, just as when Plotinus opposes them with other doctrinal concerns.

Behind the criticism of both opponents is the Valentinian teaching on the first pleromatic emission as transmitted by Ptolomeus:

There is, so they say, a certain perfect Aeon previous to what is, in invisible and nameless heights. They call it Pre-Principle, Pre-Father, and Abyss. Incomprehensible, invisible, constant, and unbegotten, it was for endless centuries in peace and great solitude. Thinking (*Ennoia*), also called Grace and Silence, existed together with it. Once the Abyss thought of emitting from itself a Principle of all and this emission which he thought of emitting he placed like a seed within the womb of Silence who lived with him. Having received this seed and being pregnant she gave birth to an Intellect (*Nous*), similar and identical to the one who had emitted it and the only one which encompasses the grandeur of the Father. This Intellect they also call Only Begotten, Father, and Principle of all. Truth also was emitted along with it. This is the first and principal Pythagorean tetrad, also called root of all; for there are Abyss and Silence, and then Intellect and Truth. The Only Begotten, perceiving the purpose for which it was emitted, in like manner emits Reason and Life, as father of all who are to come after it and as principle and formation of the whole Pleroma. After *Logos* and Life, Man and Church are emitted as spouses. This likewise is the principal Ogdoad, origin and subsistence of the universe, which severally are called by four names: Abyss, Intellect, *Logos*, and Man.<sup>76</sup>

Summarizing the general conceptual line of discourse, then, we have: Ineffable Father and Only Begotten in its double aspect: (a) in potentiality, in the paternal apperception, once the mysteries of divine thought and will develop in the bosom of Silence into necessary external projection;<sup>77</sup> and (b) consolidation of thinking outward as Intellect or utterance of the Father, which analyzed, will constitute Plenitude, place, manifestation or glory of the Unutterable with all its eternal aeons or attributes. This is the image consisting of the unimaginable Simplicity, which is kept solidly united as total plenitude by a necessary maternal link, unspoken, pre-intellectual, and in the process of being formed; that is, the *Ennoia* as the unspokenness of the Father giving shelter to Thinking and Will.

Plotinus cannot accept this composition of the tetrad, because in it are combined elements of Greek and Semitic-Christian thinking which essentially subdivide Intellect into one internal and one external moment, so as to explain the generated as being not so much a product

of the divine's spontaneity as of its thinking and will.<sup>78</sup>

In the first part of the Apocryphon of John, ■ Barbelo-Gnostic document from before 180 A.D., is found a remarkable attempt to describe the divine, expanding upon the incommunicable, intimate, or in itself fundament of the divinity. Given that constant and unchanging disposition which characterizes God in His very nature and which therefore is maintained uninterruptedly concealed and inexpressible by virtue of its natural propensity, any manifestation whatsoever is a betrayal of His being.<sup>79</sup> It is about the deepest plane or dimension of the divine, of the divine transcendence, in a proper sense. Consequently, to attempt to suggest the consistency of the divine reality in itself, several means of exposition are employed simultaneously.<sup>80</sup> He begins by describing how and what it is that may be revealed or manifested immediately about God by God's own self-experience, which already is ■ first or potential delimitation:

What shall I be able to tell you about Him, the Inconceivable? He is the image of light. To the degree to which I may be able to know Him — for who will ever know Him? — and to the extent to which I may be able to tell you, [I shall speak to you of Him]. His aeon is indestructible, it is at rest, it rests in silence, it is the one that is before the All. He is therefore the head of all the Aeons, if there be something else with Him. He who perceives Himself in His own light which surrounds Him is the fountain of the water of life, light filled with purity. The fountain of the Spirit flowed from the living water of the light and arranged all the aeons and every kind of world. He recognized His own image when He saw it in the water of pure light which surrounds Him. His intellection accomplished ■ work; this was manifested and remained firm in His presence, in the radiance of the light. He is the Potency which is before the All, which was being revealed; the perfect Pre-Intellect of the All, the light, the likeness of the light, the image of the Invisible. He is the perfect Potency, Barbelus.<sup>81</sup>

This is the description of God's self-consciousness or direct experience of Himself while being naturally at the same time concealed or unknowable. As a first delimiting experience, it is the possibility of manifestation of the Pleroma. As a phase in emanation it is equal to the previous presentation of the Pleroma or spiritual plenitude which remains internally in potentiality of production, and therefore in the divine abyss or bosom, virginal Spirit, female cavern ready to open out fit to be displayed in pleromatic manifestation. It is, then, the unspoken Aeon which precedes the Aeons. It is the Aeon which exists "at rest and rests in silence"; that is, in peace with the divinity as its constant self-experience and as knowledge or secret word, unuttered, since it

dwells mentally or internally in God. It is that level of the divine alone within itself, although self-conscious, which neither extends itself outward, nor projects itself architecturally in relation to history as the active attributes of divinity. Here we are in the Pre-Intellect or the Power of generating the Word, which becomes the uttered Word, Knowledge or the active Nous poured out away from the divine depth, once the supreme will thus determines it shall be.

In this way, the first divine irradiation or emission, its necessary doubling as perception of itself, rests upon its awesome unknowableness, foreshadowing in unspoken or internal synthesis the possibility of the totality of the articulated and distinct forms of the Pleroma, the plan of God. It is the divine mind, which looks simultaneously toward God and toward the world, that world which has the ability to be saved and so to be a part of the divine crown or glory. Thus, Pre-Intellect and Barbelus is also Triple Potentiality; that is, germinal possibility which contains within itself the subsequent crystallization of the Pleroma as androgynous divine pentad: the Only Begotten and the four luminaries which proceed from him.<sup>82</sup>

The *Epistle of Eugnostus* in its characterization of the Pre-Father, the Auto-Pater or Antopos, and his Antopoi, exhibits the same mental discipline. It includes the *Allogenes* and the *Zostrianus* known by Plotinus, further adding the analysis of the transcendental triad: Life, Intellect, and Being, in potentiality in the Father's rest and in actuality in the Pleroma. In the first instance, number would also be found as the generating power of order.<sup>83</sup> All of this must have led Plotinus to a series of philosophical elucidations subsequent to the "great treatise."<sup>84</sup> Also of utmost interest for the present study is Bruce's *Anonymus*, which we would identify with the *Apocalypse of Nicotheus* to which Porphyry alludes in *K.P.* XVI.<sup>85</sup>

From the first chapter, the above-mentioned writing points out that the first Father of All is the first eternity (*aei*), the Self-Generated and Self-Begotten Place, the Depth of the All (*bathos*), the unutterable and unknowable (*atnoi*) and the first sound until it is perceived and comprehended by the All. In this sense it is also said of him that he is the great Abyss and first Fountain.<sup>86</sup> The second Place, however, is rightly demiurge, father, logos, source, nous, man, eternal (*aidios*) and infinite (*aperantos*) and Father of the all. Reasonably, he is "the fountain (*pegē*) which flows out from Silence (*karof*)," whose head is crowned by the aeons.<sup>87</sup> We will not linger to explain the implications of a doctrine which gives so much importance to the Gnostic interpretation of John 1:1.<sup>88</sup> None the less, it is worth noting that the "silent fount,"<sup>89</sup> also Pre-Father, Protophanes and Self-Begotten,<sup>90</sup>

as a monad which is connaturally *anousios* and through which that state of definitive rest is attained,<sup>91</sup> proceeds from the One *stricto sensu* and that the said monad is the embryonic Totality.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, Setheus or the hidden or potential Only Begotten (*Ennoia*) which includes the three powers that are in each power<sup>93</sup> becomes Nous and the demiurgic or creative Word.<sup>94</sup> It is likewise immeasurable depth and as Father-Mother, like the aforementioned first Father, Mother of the All.<sup>95</sup> Thus it is spoken of the Father/Mother/Son trinity:

And they praised the One and the internal Thought (*Ennoia*) and the intelligible Word (*logos noeron*). And thus did they glorify the three which are one, for because of him they became of no substance (*anousios*).<sup>96</sup>

The internal Thought referred to is the Mother, monad in stillness (*eremos*) and repose (*hesychia*) which begets the Only Begotten. It is appropriate to recall that herein lies the Gnostic's goal of ascent or liberation and that this is represented by the body of light (*soma nouein*) or immortal body (*athanatos*). This body is obtained once the grace of the Only Begotten, Father of the particles of light, the unction or eternal crown, is received.<sup>97</sup> The resurrection of bodies is attained through him. The topic and the expression were in circulation at the same time among the Valentinians and Plotinus also tried to correct such great confusion on the part of his adversaries.<sup>98</sup>

### Conclusion

In the last analysis, it seems to us that in *Enneads* II, 9, 1 and 6, Plotinus has in mind the Valentinian Gnostics with whom he disputes in the *Adversus Gnosticos* and in other parts of the *Enneads*.<sup>99</sup> It appears that with respect to the notion of the "second god," there is a clash of two doctrines of analogous structure, both nourished by the same philosophical literature, but different in their essential fundamental intuitions. On the one hand we would distinguish the Gnostic tradition of Jewish and Christian esoteric origin, whose speculations regarding the Name of God, internal, invisible, or in peace and uttered, comprehensible, or in motion,<sup>100</sup> may have, under the philosophical form of Gnosis, influenced the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Numenius, and the *Corpus Hermeticum*.<sup>101</sup> This tradition subdivides the Second Hypostasis regarding the divinity into its intrinsic nature and its action in creation and history. On the other hand, we would emphasize the tradition which Plotinus follows which in framing its Second

Hypostasis views it as the Living in itself or ideal world, having Plato essentially in mind but without underestimating the Aristotelian conception of nous.<sup>102</sup> It further enriches its internal structure with elements drawn from Pythagorean-Platonism which date back to the Ancient Academy, specifically to Speusippus, concerning the exegesis of the ideal numbers, in particular that of the *tetraktys*:

... the remaining other half of the book is entirely about the decad, demonstrating it to be the most natural and perfect of beings, like an artifice form with respect to cosmic effects (but not existing because we may happen to have believed or established it) and pre-existent as a totally perfect model for the god maker of the universe.<sup>103</sup>

This unitary and hierarchical manner [way] of interpreting Intellect must have been transmitted through authors whose entire works and testimonies escape [are lost to] us: Neo-Pythagoreans,<sup>104</sup> Eudorus of Alexandria,<sup>105</sup> and Moderatus of Gades.<sup>106</sup> Nicomachus of Gerasa shines as a glowing link in this series.<sup>107</sup>

The terminology of the tetrad as "fountain and root"<sup>108</sup> was assimilated by Plotinus with arithmological and ontological rigor. The Valentinians, for their part, identified them with their own ideas and hermeneutical concerns.<sup>109</sup> Nicomachus of Gerasa combined sounds, letters, and numbers,<sup>110</sup> as did also the Gnostics and soon thereafter the Valentinians, such as Mark the Magus.<sup>111</sup> It was also Nicomachus who allowed writings of Zoroaster and Ostanès as sources of his information.<sup>112</sup> At this juncture it is possible to surmise how the lines could become confused and to explain why the Valentinian Gnostics of Plotinus's school represented themselves as coming from the "traditional philosophy," that of Pythagoras and Plato, though believing that in the conceptual development of the intelligible world/Pleroma their elaborations were more profound.<sup>113</sup> It is likewise understandable that Plotinus should have rejected their claims to traditionalism and sagacity.<sup>114</sup> At the same time it can also be shown how some recently discovered Gnostic text, such as the *Tractatus Tripartitus*, could owe its composition to Plotinus's anti-Gnostic polemic and contact with doctrinal aspects touching on these same topics.<sup>115</sup>

### NOTES

1. See Porphyry, *V.P.* IV, 66-68, years 259-260, according to J. Igal, *Le cronologia de la vida de Plotino de Porfirio* (Bilbao, 1972), p. 98.
2. The last textual citations are of Parmenides fr. 28 B3; B8, 26, 43, 6, and Plato, *Parmenides* 137 c- 142 a, 144 e 5 and 155 e 5.

3. Cf. J. Souilhé, *Platon, Lettres* (Paris, 1960), pp. bxxvii-xxxii and H.D. Saffrey-L.G. Westerink, Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne* II (Paris, 1974), pp. xx-lx. Plotinus quotes the passage thirteen times. See P. Henry-H.R. Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera* III (Oxford, 1982), p. 349 and below footnote no. 99.
4. Cf. E.R. Dodds, "The Parmenides of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One," *CQ* 22 (1928): 129-142; J.M. Rist, "The Neoplatonic One and Plato's Parmenides," *TAPA* 93 (1962): 389-401; Ph. Merlan, in A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 91-94; H.R. Schwyzer, "Plotinos," in P.W., Band XXI, 552-554, and H.D. Saffrey-L.G. Westerink, Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne* I (Paris, 1968), pp. bxxvii-bxxix.
5. On the base of fr. 28B 3 (seven times) and B 8 (thirteen times). About Parmenides in Plotinus cf. V. Cileto, *Saggi su Plotino* (Milano, 1973), pp. 123-134; G. Calogero, "Plotino, Parmenide e il 'Parmenide,'" in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente* (Roma, 1974), pp. 49-59, and at present the full reference in Henry-Schwyzzer, op. cit., p. 347.
6. Cf. *Enn.* IV, 7 (2), 9, i ff., 10-19, teaching that Plotinus here put on the Soul as immortal being and beginning of all life, but that with more reason it concerns the being in itself. For the reference to the Soul see R. Harder, *Plotinus Schriften* Bd. Ib, Anm. p. 386.
7. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 4 (22), 4, 25 (πάν ὁμοῦ); IV, 3, (27), 5, 5-8 (οἱ νοεῖς οὐκ ἀπολούνται); VI, 6 (34), 18, 7-8 (ἀλλ' ὅς ἔστιν, πᾶς ἔστιν ἐν ὧν καὶ ὁμοῦ καὶ ἕλος); III, 7 (45), 5, 19-21 (τὸ εἶναι ὡς ἀτρεμῆς); ibid. 11, 3-4 (τὴν ἀτρεμῆ ἐκείνην καὶ ὁμοῦ πᾶσαν) and 53-54 (τὸ ἐν συνεχείᾳ ἔν).
8. Cf. *Enn.* V, 9 (5), 26-30 and see farther on. III, 8 (30), 8, 6-8; VI, 7 (38), 41, 18 ff.; I, 4 (46), 10, 6; III, 5 (50), 7, 50-52.
9. Cf. likewise *Enn.* V, 6 (24), 6, 22-24 and VI, 6 (34), 18, 42-46.
10. Although there are references in *Enn.* I, 6 (1), 5, 17-18, and 6, 18-20; IV, 7 (2), 10, 34 ff. and 13 *in initio*, and IV, 2 (4), 1.
11. Cf. *Enn.* V, 9, 1, 1-2, 10, with Bréhier's *Ennéades* V, p. 153.
12. Cf. 2, 20-27. With more technical development *Enn.* V, 5 (32) 1-2 and V, 3 (49), 5.
13. Cf. 3, 1 ff.; 4, 2-3, and see below.
14. Cf. 5, 1-4.
15. Cf. 5, 4-16. For the conception "tais epinoiais" see F. García Bazán, "Sobre la noción de 'epinoia' en *Eneada* II, 9 (33), 2, 1," in *Cuadernos de Filosofía* 26-27 (1977): 83-94.
16. Cf. 5, 24-38.
17. According to the developments of the chapter 6, 7, 8, and 9. See likewise *Enn.* IV, 8 (6), 3, 5-10.
18. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 9 (9), 5, 7ff. as well.
19. Cf. *Enn.* V, 9, 9, 8 with *Tim.* 39 E. In 6, 10, ff. it is remarked the relation genus/ideas; all/parts; seed/capacities.
20. Cf. 8 *in initio*. Likewise 6, 9.
21. See 6, 33 ff.; 7, 11 ff.
22. Cf. 9, 15.

23. Cf. 8, 16-19.
24. Cf. 10, 9-15.
25. Cf. also *Enn.* V, 1 (10), 4, 9-10; 17-18 and VI, 9, 9 *in initio*.
26. Cf. *Sophist* 254 d-c. See P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* I (Paris, 1968), pp. 216-222; J.M. Charrue, *Plotin lecteur de Platon* (Paris, 1978), pp. 206-229.
27. Cf. *Enn.* V, 1 (10), 4, 21-36 and 41-43.
28. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 2 (43), 8.
29. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 2, 18, 12-15; 20, 10-29; 21, 47-59 and VI, 6 (34), 15, 1 ff.
30. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 6, 8 *in fine* and 9.
31. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 6, 16, 20-30.
32. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 6, 9 *in fine* (for the full exegesis of the treatise see J. Bertier, L. Brisson, A. Charles, J. Pépin, H.D. Saffrey, A. Ph. Segonds, Plotin, *Traité sur les nombres (Ennéade VI, 6 [34])*, Paris (1980), cf. likewise H.J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik*, Amsterdam (1967), pp. 298-311. Cf. also *Enn.* V, 5 (32), 4.
33. Cf. *Enn.* I, 3 (20), 3-5.
34. Cf. *Enn.* V, 9 (5), 14 *in initio*.
35. Cf. *Enn.* V, 4 (7), 2, 22-26.
36. Cf. *Enn.* V, 1 (10), 6, 28-30 and F. García Bazán, *Neoplatonismo y Vedanta. La doctrina de la materia en Plotino y Shunkaru* (Buenos Aires, 1982), p. 75.
37. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 8 (39), 18, 25 ff.
38. Cf. *Enn.* V, 2 (11), 1, 6-9.
39. Cf. *Enn.* V, 4 (7), 1, 23-34 and see F. García Bazán, op. cit., p. 79.
40. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 9, (9), 5, 27-29 and III, 8 (30), 35-36 with our commentary in op. cit., pp. 15 and 45.
41. Cf. *Enn.* V, 4 (7), 2, 38.
42. Cf. *Enn.* V, 1 (10), 5, 3-19 and see F. García Bazán, op. cit., p. 14.
43. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 9 (9), 6, 42.
44. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 9, 8, 29-36.
45. Cf. pp. 59-60.
46. Cf. *Enn.* V, 1 (10), 4, 31-43.
47. Cf. F. García Bazán, *Neoplatonismo y Vedanta*, pp. 17-19.
48. Cf. *Enn.* II, 4 (12), 5 *in fine*.
49. Cf. García Bazán, op. cit., pp. 27ff. and likewise J. Igal, *Porfirio, Vida de Plotino. Plotino, Enéadas I-II* (Madrid, 1982), pp. 418-419 with the footnotes.
50. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 9 (9), 4, 10 ff.; V, 8 (31), ch. 8 to 11; V, 5 (32), 12; VI, 7 (38), 32, etc.
51. Cf. *Enn.* VI, 7 (38), 35-36 and see likewise V, 8 (31), 10, 32-35.
52. Cf. our paper: "Filosofía, religión y teurgia," in *Primeras Jornadas de la Sociedad Argentina de Historia de las Religiones* (Buenos Aires), August, 1983.
53. Cf. *Enn.* V, 2 (11), 1, 9-18. See *Neoplatonismo y Vedanta*, p. 81.
54. See lines 19-24.

55. See formerly our *Plotino y la Gnosis* (Buenos Aires, 1981), p. 277, n. 9.
56. Cf. *Enn.* II, 9 (33), 25-30.
57. Cf. Proverbs 8, 22 ff.; Aristobulos Judaeus, *Wisdom* 7, 22-8, 1, Philo (see the docket of Eusebius in *Praeparatio Evangelica* VII, 12, 2-15, 2) and G. Kittel, *ThWzNT*, sub voc. *lego*, IV, 139-140. For the two *Logoi* in the primitive patristic that also have relations with this theme cf. F. García Bazán in *Revista Bíblica* (1981/4), p. 237, n. 9.
58. Cf. *Enn.* V, 5 (32), 1-2.
59. Cf. *Enn.* II, 9 (33), 1, 33-57.
60. Cf. *Enn.* III, 9 (13), 6.
61. Cf. *Enn.* V, 8 (31), chapters 3 to 6 with an implicit gnostic terminology and the repulse of the artisan image in Ch. 7. Cf. *Plotino y la Gnosis ad loc.*
62. Cf. *Enn.* II, 9 (33), 6, 14 y ss. Can be seen the remarks of D.J. O'Meara in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* I (Leiden, 1980), pp. 374-378.
63. Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* 1072 b 19 ff. and 1074 b ff. and R. Bultmann sub voc. *Zoe* in *ThWzNT*, II, 834 ff. See T.A. Szlezak, *Platon und Aristoteles in der Nuslehre Plotins* (Basel/Stuttgart, 1979), pp. 139ff. and G. Verbeke, in D.J. O'Meara (ed.), *Studies in Aristotle* (Washington, 1981), pp. 116ff.
64. Cf. A.N.M. Rich, "The Platonic Ideas as the Thoughts of God," in *Mnemosyne*, Ser. IV, 7 (1954): 123-133; A.H. Armstrong, in *Les Sources de Plotin*, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique V (Génève, 1960), pp. 391-425; J. Pépin, *Théologie cosmique et théologie chrétienne* (Paris, 1964), pp. 17-71; D.J. O'Meara, *Structures hiérarchiques dans la pensée de Plotin* (Leiden, 1975), pp. 19-31; E. Zeller/R. Mondolfo, *La filosofia dei Greci*, II, III/2, pp. 958-962.
65. Cf. Xenocrates Frs. 15, 69, 16, 68 y 36 (Heinze, pp. 164-165; 187; 165; 187 and 172); can be seen Krämer, op. cit. pp. 40-46 and in *Theologie und Philosophie*, XLIV (1969): 481-505; Speusippos, Fr. 38 (Lang, p. 71) and Aristotle, *Peri euches* Fr. 1 (Ross, p. 57), see J. Pépin, *Idées grecques sur l'homme et sur Dieu* (Paris, 1971), pp. 249ff. On the testimony of Alcimus (Diogenes Laertius III, 13), see R.E. Witt, *Albinus*, 1937 (reprint Amsterdam, 1971), p. 71 and the critique of H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* I (New York, 1944), pp. 498-499.

I believe that at this ancient tradition are linked the scattered rests testified by Varro *apud* Augustine, *De civitate Dei* VII, 28; Seneca, *Epist.* 65, 7, into of the Stoic line which has done of the Logos/Pneuma/pyr *technikon* the form of all the forms of the things (*logoi spermatikoi*) (cf. M. Pohlenz, *Lu Stoa*, Firenze 1967, I pp. 125ff.), and for the transition of the transcendent *Nous* to the immanent *logos* see J. Moreau, *L'Âme du Monde de Platon aux Stoïciens* (Paris, 1939), pp. 94ff., A.J. Festugière, *La RIT II* (Paris, 1949), pp. 153ff., H.J. Krämer, *Platonismus und Hellenistische Philosophie* (Berlin-New York, 1971), pp. 117ff. I should like to connect the teaching of Antiochus of Ascalon (see formerly W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* [Berlin/Zurich, 1934], pp. 34-48) — strongly eclectic and wishing to be linked with Polemon, to this mentality (cf. J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* [London, 1977], pp. 93-95 mainly). Philo

Judaeos undoubtedly support the notion of "kosmos noētos" (the "one day") as the thoughts of God, but to interpret the *Timaeus* according to a determinate Jewish scheme and against the spiritual interpretation (platonic-pythagorean) (cf. *De opific. mundi* 15-35; 36 *in initio*, 55 *initio*; 76, 129, 134 and 139; *De Prov.* I, 7; *De Poster.* 91; *De confus. ling.* 81 and 146-147 with footnotes of pp. 176-182 (J.G. Kahn's edition, Paris, 1963). Cf. also A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Leiden, 1977), pp. 159-181.

Other independent or platonizing evidences: Aetius, *Placita* I, 3, 21; Diog. Laertius III, 69 ("he calls God mind and cause"); Apuleius speaks of the "primus deus" (cf. *De Platone* I, VI, 193), but not of the ideas as "thoughts of God." See, however, I, IX, 199: "*sed illam . . . subservire etiam fabricatori deo et praesto esse ad omnia inventa ejus promuntia*" and also II, I, 220: "*Prima bona esse deum summum mentemque illam, quam nomen idem vocat*," also *Apol.* 64, 5-7: "*ratio . . . opifex . . . sine operatione opifex*." Maximus of Tyre in *Dissertationes* XVII (Dübner), 5 *in initio*: θεὸς εἰς πάντων βασιλεὺς, καὶ πατήρ, καὶ θεοὶ πολλοί, θεοῦ παῖδες, συνάρχοντες θεοῦ; 8 *in fine*: ὁ νοῦν ἀεὶ, καὶ πάντα, καὶ ἅμα, and 9, 30-31: πατέρα καὶ γεννητὴν τοῦ σὺμπαντος. Can be seen Festugière, *La RHT* IV, pp. 111-115; Galen in *Compendium Timaei Platonis* II, 15-26, says: "*Deinde propositum considerare instituit secundum quod (creator) opus suum extraxerit; atque dixit eum id ita extraxisse ut semper permaneret. . . . Quam duabus illis quas commemoraverat -creatori scilicet et effigiei ad quam (mundum) creavit. . .*", R. Walzer (ed.), *Plato Arabus* I-III, London (rep. 1973), pp. 39-40. Cf. A.J. Festugière, in *Études de Philosophie Grecque*, Paris (1971), pp. 494-495. Hippolytus, *Elenchos* I, 19, 1-4: . . . Τὸ δὲ παράδειγμα τὴν διάνοιαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι, ὁ καὶ ἰδεῖν καλεῖ . . .

66. Cf. *Epitome* IX, 1, 2, *in fine*, 3 *in initio*; X, 2, 3, 4, 5 *in fine* and XII, 1, 2, 3. Cf. roughly G. Invernizzi, *Il Didaskalikos di Albino e il medioplatonismo* I-II (Roma, 1976). For the last assertion see already S. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 223-226, with other references concerning Clement, (*nous de chora ideon*), Ammonius Saccas and Origen the Neoplatonist.
67. Cf. Fr. 9, *Apud*, Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* XV, 13, 1-6 (E. des Places, pp. 67-69). See also frs. 12 and 13 (des Places, pp. 70-71).
68. For our interpretation cf. E. des Places, Atticus, *Fragments* (Paris, 1977), p. 86, Fr. 9.
69. Cf. fr. 11, (des Places) (L.20), 15 (L.24), 16 (L.25).
70. Cf. fr. 12 (L.21), 19 (L.28), 18 (L.27), 17 (L.26), 5 (L.14), 6 (L.15), 20 (L.29).
71. Cf. F. García Bazán, *Plotino y la Gnosis*, pp. 279-281. For Amelius, who interprets the three gods or kings of the *Second Letter* in relation to *Tim.* 39 e, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 281-282. On Longinus see Porphyry V.P. XX and *Plotino y la Gnosis*, p. 189, note 1.

72. Cf. *Adversus Haereses* II, XV, 2-3 (Harvey I, pp. 281-282). For the trivial use of *ennoia* as conception with Stoic meaning between the Christian writers cf. M. Spanneut, *Le stoïcisme des pères de l'Église* (Paris, 1957), pp. 204ff.
73. Cf. *Adv. Haer.* II, XLII, 2-3 (Harvey I, pp. 354-355).
74. Cf. *Adv. Huer.* II, XVI, 2 (Harvey I, pp. 283-284).
75. Cf. *Adv. Haer.* II, XIV, 1 (Harvey I, p. 278).
76. Cf. *Adv. Haer.* I, I, 1 (Harvey I, pp. 8-10; A. Rousseau-L. Doutreleau, S. Ch. no. 264, pp. 29-31).
77. That is to say the "*dynamei kai energeia*" of *Enn.* II, 9, 1, 24-25 implicated in "*ennoethenai pote*" of S. Irenaeus. Cf. *Adv. Haer.* I, 12, 1 (Harvey I, pp. 109-110). *Ennoia* is the necessary female element of the bisexual God (cf. Irenaeus's and Hippolytus's doubts in F.M. Sagnard, *La Gnose Valentinienne* [Paris, 1947], pp. 349-350) for the phenomenon of the autogenesis, the only that produces permanent beings without necessity of an external partner to generate.
78. *Nous* in repose, *Nous* which contemplates and *Nous* which plans (*Ennoia*, *Monogenes* or *Nous* and *Logos*), but often is considered as maker the Soul (i.e. the external *Sophia*) or him, because he inspires the *Sophia* by means of the Second *Logos* — *Enn.* II, 9, 1, 57 ff. — Cf. *Enn.* II, 9, 6, 19-23. The *Evangelium Veritatis* (NHC I, 3) relates the theme of the Word and the stable generation which are implicated in the Irenaeus exposition (cf. E.V. 16, 31-17, 1; 19, 34-20, 2; 21, 18-22, 15; 24, 6-20; 26, 34-27, 31; 36, 35-41, 3).
79. Cf. our *Gnosis* 2 (Buenos Aires, 1978), pp. 104-111 and likewise Y. Janssens in *Le Muséon* 83 (1970): 157-165, and 84 (1971): 403-432.
80. Cf. F. García Bazán in *Revista Bíblica* 4 (1981): 234-235.
81. Cf. *Ap. Johannis* 26.1-27.14.
82. Cf. F. García Bazán, l.c., pp. 236-238. For one extensive discussion concerning the Pleromas' formation see A. Orbe, *Estudios Valentinianos* IV (Roma, 1966), pp. 39-174.
83. Cf. García Bazán, l.c., pp. 239-244.
84. Cf. *Allogenes* (NHC XI, 3), 48.20 ff. and 63.5-10 with the footnote no. 32 in F. García Bazán, l.c., p. 247.
85. Cf. F. García Bazán, "Plotino y los textos gnosticos de Nag-Hammadi," in *Oriente-Occidente* II/2 (1981): 196-202.
86. Cf. *The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex*, text edited by Carl Schmidt. Translation and notes by Videt MacDermot (Leiden, 1978), p. 226.
87. Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 226-227.
88. Cf. Ch. 7, pp. 237-238 and our observations on Tatian (*Adv. Graecos* 5, 1) in l.c., p. 237, note 9.
89. Cf. Ch. 14, p. 254.
90. Cf. Ch. 13, pp. 252-253.
91. Cf. Ch. 10, p. 245.
92. Cf. Ch. 7, p. 236.

93. Cf. Ch. 11, p. 246 and also Ch. 10, p. 243.
94. Cf. Ch. 11, p. 247 and Ch. 12, p. 248.
95. Cf. Ch. 11, p. 246.
96. Cf. Ch. 21, p. 266.
97. Cf. Ch. 23, pp. 242-243.
98. Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31, 7, 6 and F. García Bazán, in *Oriente-Occidente* 3 (1981/1): 36 and n. 70.
99. Concerning the phrase of *Enn.* V, 5 (32), 3, confront also with *Enn.* II, 9, 6, 34 and 39, where the First Hypostasis (*to proton*, 1. 32) is called *he prota physis* and *protos theos* (see also *Enn.* III, 9 [13], 7). The fundament of the reasoning is always the interpretation of the *Second Letter* 312e traditional already to Plotinus as three levels of reality, three kings, three gods (cf. *Enn.* IV, 7 [2], 13 *in fine*; V, 4 [7], 1, 3-5; V, 1 [10], 8, 1-4; VI, 4 [22], 11, 9; VI, 5 [23], 4, 21 and 24 *in fine*; III, 5 [50] 8, 8). Therefore the "Second God" cannot be divided and it is capricious the exegesis of the Valentinians on this text (cf. Hippolytus, *Elenchus* VI, 37, 6-8). The Psalm of the Valentinus is not sound, but the explanation of *Enn.* VI, 7 (38), 42, 3-25 (ratified by *Enn.* I, 8 [51], 2). According to Plotinus the exegetic twistings of the Gnostics are manifest as well as in *Enn.* II, 9, 9, 26 ff. that it is linked to the theme of "Great King" (cf. *Plotino y la Gnosis*, p. 191, n. 13; 194, n. 47 and 260 n. f.). The same triadic scheme is applied to Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus in the "great tetralogy" (cf. P. Hadot, in H.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus (eds.), *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought, Essays in honor of A.H. Armstrong* [London, 1981], pp. 124-137). *Enn.* VI, 8 (39), 9, 18-23, nevertheless, could go against the Neoplatonist Origen for these reasons: 1) the title of his book: "That the King is the Only Maker," that identifies the first Principle with god as *Nous* (king and maker); 2) the *Nous* is justified by itself, therefore the One is by chance and king of chance (cf. the information and vocabulary about the first Principle of Origen according to Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* II, 4); there are not strong reasons to assert the gnostic nature of *Enn.* VI, 8, 7, 11-15 or 11, 13-22, cf. *Plotino y la Gnosis*, pp. 306-308.
100. Cf. *Ev. Ver.* 36, 35-40, 33 and *Extracts of Theodorus* 22, 4-5; 26, 1-27, 1; 31, 3; 80, 3; 82, 1. Cf. H. Bietenhard, art. "Onoma," in *ThWzNT*, V, 265 ff.; G. Scholom, in *Conoscenza Religiosa* 4 (1973): 375-412; I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980), pp. 10ff.; J. Danielou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme* (Paris, 1957), pp. 199-216; G. Quispel, in *The Jung Codex* (London, 1953), pp. 66-76; A. Orbe, *Estudios Valentinianos* I: 69-97; F. García Bazán, in *Filosofar Cristiano* 9-12 (1981-1982): 230-237. Perhaps this transcendent concentration be analogous to the mystic trance: "*loquente vero eo in spiritu sancto in audito omnium statim tacuit. Et exinde videbant statem quemdam ante eum. Oculi autem eius erant aperti, os vero clausum, sed inspiratio sancti spiritus erat cum illo*" (*Ascensio Isaiae*, VI, 10-12). Can be seen also Gruenwald, op. cit., p. 58, n. 102.

101. Cf. *Oracles* 18 (πατρικὸν βυθὸν); 28 (ἐκ τριάδος κἀλπος); 4 (δύναμις σὺν ἐκείνῳ, νοὺς ἀπ' ἐκείνου); 20 (ἀνευ νοὸς νοητοῦ, καὶ τὸ νοητὸν οὐ νοῦ); 7 (νῶ δευτέρῳ); 8 (δυάς... ἀμφότερον... νῶ, αἰσθεσιν); 31 and 22 about the triad. Cf. also the interpretation of Michael Psellus, *Ekthesis* 1149: 1-10, *Hypotyposis in initio and Neoplatonismo y Vedania*, p. 116 and *Revista Biblica* (1981/4): 238, n. 9 *in fine*. For C.H. see *Poimandres* 8, 9, 11; C. H. 2, 13 and 14; C.H. XII, 1, 14. In C.H. VIII, 1, 2, 5 and X, 10, the "second god" is the world, image of the First. Cf. C.H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London, 1935), pp. 115, 128ff., 132ff., 194ff. For parallels with the *Hermetica* of Nag Hammadi see J.P. Mahé, *Hermes en Haute-Egypte* (Québec, 1978).
102. Cf. A.H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1940) (reimp. 1967), pp. 76-81 and Th. A. Szlezak, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-166.
103. Cf. Fr. 4 (Lang, p. 54).
104. Cf. Aetius, *Placita*, I, 3, 8 and A. Delatte, *Études sur la littérature pythagoricienne* (Paris, 1915), p. 249ff. Likewise Archytas, *Peri Archon*, p. 280, 11-14 and *Peri tes dekadōs*, 1-5 (H. Thesleff, *The Pyth. Textes*, pp. 20-21).
105. Cf. J. Dillon, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.
106. Cf. Simplicius *In Phys.* 230, 37-231, 1: "while the Second One — which is the 'truly existent' and the object of intellection — he says is the Forms." C.H. fr. 28 is an isolated evidence of this kind of trend of ideas. Cf. A.J. Festugière, *Hermétisme et mystique païenne* (Paris, 1967), pp. 131-137.
107. Cf. *Int. to Arithm.* I, VI, 1 (transl. H.L. D'Ooge) and I, IV 2. Besides for the expression "pegē kai rixā," "into which everything is resolved and out of which everything is made," see I, XI, 3. Cf. the commentary of J. Bertier, Nicomachus de Gérase, *Introduction of Arithmétique* (Paris, 1978), pp. 148, 3; 150, n. 2; 151, 3; but the metaphor of principle/fountain/mother/and root is dynamic, one twofold reality in gestation, the female with her offspring. With the same expressive force it is used by Plotinus in *Enn.* VI, 6, 9, 38 (see already note 32) for the essential number, because it is not first, but double. In *Enn.* III, 8, (30), 10, however, he uses the images of the fountain and the root to mean the One, separately, as every symbol can mean the absolute origin and end.
108. Cf. the former note.
109. Cf. the textes gathered by Sagnard, *op. cit.*, pp. 335ff. assimilable to the "fountain and root" (see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, XV, *in fine* — Harvey I, p. 189 — and Hippolytus, *Elenchos* V, 26, 2).
110. Cf. *Int. to Arithm.* II, 1, 1 and Flora R. Levin, *The Harmonics of Nicomachus and the Pythagorean Tradition*, The American Philological Association (1975), pp. 33, 52 and 55-56.
111. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 21, 5 and I, 14, 1-9 and 15, 1-3.

112. Cf. *Theol. Ar.* 56, 15 and see Bidez-Cumont, *Les Mages Hellénisés* (Paris, 1938), II, p. 283. Here is fundamental the notion of Plotinus about the "palatōi" strictly Greek and transcendentalist against Gnostics, Eclectics, and so on.
113. Cf. *Enn.* ii, 9, 6 and Porphyry V.P. XVI.
114. That which limits their interest to Pleroma and its procession, the rupture of the spiritual world and the liberation of Pneumatics, therefore they repulse all the rest. In this manner they make fun of all the Greek cosmology. Cf. *Enn.* II, 9, 6, etc.
115. Cf. our discussion in *Revista Biblica* (1981/4): 245-250.

## Synesius, the *Hermetica* and Gnosis

Jay Bregman

Synesius of Cyrene,<sup>1</sup> 365-414? C.E., studied Neoplatonism in the 390s with Hypatia at Alexandria. His early works already demonstrate familiarity with all of the pagan syncretistic religious currents of the age: Neoplatonic-Pythagorean, Chaldaean, and Hermetic. A distinguished member of the *Boule* of Cyrene, he made Christian friends at home, as well as in Constantinople and Alexandria. Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, presided at his wedding to a Christian. In the works of his middle and later years he used Christian imagery in an attempt to reconcile his pagan views with the new religion to which he was building bridges. At times his ideas are reminiscent of Gnostic and Hermetic notions. By 410, when he became Bishop of Ptolemais, he still maintained a Platonic position<sup>2</sup> on the eternity of the Cosmos and the pre-existence of the soul, and he considered the resurrection to be an allegorical presentation of an ineffable mystery. He promised that as bishop he would "mythicize in public, but philosophize in private." (Garzya, 105) So his expressed intention was to tell a Christian story to the congregation and to reserve the right to understand the nature of things according to Platonic dogma.

During his sojourn at Constantinople Synesius visited churches and temples as places that contained divinity; demonstrating the tolerance of his religious position. Hypatia's "school" probably included Christians, and was "confessional neutral." It is also likely that she was familiar with the *Hermetica*.<sup>3</sup> She principally followed Porphyry's teaching, which enabled Synesius to "telescope" the hypostases and read the First Intelligible Triad of the Chaldaean Oracles as the horizontal *on-zoe-nous* — being-life-intelligence; ironically an old



"Gnostic-Platonist" doctrine easy to harmonize with an Orthodox view of the Trinity. In this interpretation his ideas resembled those of Marius Victorinus.<sup>4</sup> In line with Porphyry's critique of the Incarnation, Synesius remained vague on the issue. Perhaps he saw it as similar to the "divine-man" epiphanies from the *Lives* of Apollonius of Tyana and Pythagoras: a man-god incarnation on one of the lower rungs of the *seira* (of being and existence).<sup>5</sup> The Hermetic myth (of the Anthropos) should also be taken into account, since it is a pagan myth in which *nous* itself, or a close relative of *nous*, is both cosmological and soteriological;<sup>6</sup> whereas even the *noetic* or intellectual Helios-Mithras of the later Hellenes does not descend himself, but sends down Asclepius "with his saving right hand."<sup>7</sup>

It is necessary to make certain assumptions about Synesius with respect to Gnostic influences on his thought. He was a conservative Hellenic gentleman who expressed himself in Greek philosophical language. At times his ideas appear to be Sethian or Valentinian, but the terminology he uses can always be found in the Chaldaean Oracles;<sup>8</sup> for example, *sphragis*, *synthema*, *symbola*.<sup>9</sup> The basic thrust of this thought is "anti-Gnostic"; e.g., in the *Dion* he recommends careful preparation for the ascent of the soul: first one must read literature, including Homer, then one can begin to climb the ladder of dialectic in order "to look upon the Sun." As on the way up, so on the way down, one proceeds with caution. Synesius is wary of the "spiritual athletes" of his day, the ascetic monks and the false philosophers. The latter are perhaps the neo-Cynics (despised by Julian) or certain Hermeticists; but he allows immediate grasp of the divine to spiritual proficient, among whom he includes Hermes Trismegistus.<sup>10</sup>

Julian<sup>11</sup> had achieved a fairly definite "religious horizon" by his early twenties; Synesius's task and response was complicated by the fact that he was a Hellene of the generation of "declining paganism," who also by inclination and training followed the Porphyrian (*not* the Iamblichean) path which ultimately led him, because of his historical circumstances, in the direction of "official" Christianity; these "paths" really represent spiritual options available to Neoplatonists from the third to sixth centuries, who agreed on most essentials, not distinct "earlier or later schools" which drew rigid party lines.<sup>12</sup> A.H. Armstrong has well summed up this position:

When we think about the mentality of these fourth century pagan pluralists we should also take into account another aspect of the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Porphyry, in which it differs most sharply from that of Iamblichus and his successors. This is the conviction that the only true

religion is philosophical religion, and that the stories and practices of non-philosophical religion are, at the best, no more than helpful popular expressions of philosophic truth for non-philosophers. This sort of Neoplatonism is of course compatible with the hostility shown by Porphyry himself to the alien barbarian Christian attack on the whole of Hellenic thought and culture: but it can also issue in a tolerant pluralism or in considerably more positive attitudes towards Christianity. The kind of probably more or less Porphyrian Neoplatonism which he learnt from Hypatia at Alexandria certainly helped Synesius in his decision to accept episcopal office when that seemed to him the best way of serving the community (A.H. Armstrong, *VC*, 38, pt 1 (1984) 10-11).

The probably availability to Synesius of the Nag Hammadi texts is not very significant, even if their ideas did influence earlier forms of Platonism. What is significant is the imposed limits (at times ambiguous) of his "religious horizon." He is not likely, while accepting Hermetic ideas, to have openly identified himself with, e.g., avowedly Valentinian notions, any more than most modern American politicians would openly profess "socialist" ideas.

Synesius the Hellene, then, would accept the *Hermetica* (and the *Chaldaean Oracles*) as canonized Hellenic "scriptures," but he would either overlook, ignore or be unaware of most Gnostic influences. (Let us not forget that the bishop was not above persecuting heretics.) He was probably anti-Gnostic, but certainly not anti-Christian. Thus he would not object to "receiving" Hermetic texts from Orthodox friends who read them, any more than from Neoplatonists.<sup>13</sup> Synesius, of course, would read the same texts from a completely different perspective: at this point his approach was necessarily somewhat idiosyncratic, if not unique. The importance and the meanings of texts in a given culture is not simply a question of who read what, what books were circulating, what was in vogue, and so on. But why, how, to what end, with what aim, scope and purpose (with relation to one's world view) one was reading those books.<sup>14</sup> Thus, any mutual influences or connections between the *Hermetica* and Gnosticism or any contacts of adherents would probably be beside the point for Synesius.

Synesius wrote after *Ennead* II.9. In line with those third century and later Platonists who appreciated the beauty of the cosmos, he had a high regard for the proportion and number of a unified, congruent, confluent, conspirant and complete (*symploemenon*) cosmos, with sympathies, consummate beauty, and every kind of embellishment.<sup>15</sup> Where he presents "gnosticizing" middle Platonic ideas his reasons are often rhetorical; e.g., to display his Hellenic cultural links to Dion and

Plutarch; or to explain on the level of political allegory, the "evil soul" of one leader, and the "good soul" of another.<sup>16</sup>

In *On Providence or the Egyptian Tale*, Synesius presents notions of providence and demons, and of the nature, origin and destiny of souls. The world is filled with *hylic* demons, intent on attacking human beings. The gods are of little help, arriving only reluctantly on missions of salvation when the divine impetus, given to human souls before incarnation, runs down and can only be renewed by divine intervention. The father of Osiris admonishes his son:

Try to ascend yourself, but do not cause the gods to descend, employ every form of prudence on your own behalf, as if you lived in an army camp in enemy territory, a divine soul among demons, who being earth born, it is reasonable to suppose will attack you, since they become angry if anyone maintains foreign laws and customs within their borders.<sup>17</sup>

The doctrine on souls that Synesius outlines in the *On Providence* is also dualistic in conception:

The kinships of souls and of bodies are not the same; for it is not fitting for souls to be born on earth from the same two parents, but to flow from a single source. And the natural process of the cosmos furnishes two types: the luminous and the indistinct. The latter gushes up from the ground, since it has its roots somewhere below, and leaps out of the earth's cavities, if somehow it compels the divine law by force. But the former is suspended from the back of the heavens.<sup>18</sup>

This conception of souls having their ultimate sources in different places, both higher and lower, implies a type of dualism not typical of Neoplatonism. Is it from Numenius of Apamea or a Gnostic or Hermetic treatise? Porphyry reports that certain philosophers, among them Numenius, do *not* think (that e.g.) we have a single soul with three parts rather than two, but that we actually have two souls, and, it follows, one is rational, the other irrational. Moreover, some (of them) think *both* (souls) are immortal, while others, etc. (Leemans, *Numenius*, Text 36; Des Places, Fr. 44). In fr. 24 (*Kore Kosmou*) of the *Hermetica* (Nock-Festugière, ed.), Isis instructs her son, Horus, on the origin and destiny of different souls, the royal, the noble, and so on,

Just as on earth, my son Horus, there are different types of streets, so it is with souls. For they also have places from which they arise, and one which originates from a finer place is nobler than one which does not.<sup>19</sup>

Jonas points out<sup>20</sup> that there was a two-soul theory current among Alexandrian Gnostics (Basilides and Isidorus) and Hermeticists, and that Iamblichus in *De Myst.*, VIII-8, presents the Hermetic theory: one soul is from the First Mind and the other from the spheres. The former leads us beyond *Heimarmene*<sup>21</sup> to the Intelligible gods. (Iamblichus adds that Theurgy lifts us to the unengendered realm, according to the purified life of such a soul.)

The passage on souls from *Kore Kosmou* seems especially close to that of Synesius. It is possible, then, to speak of "gnostic elements" in his thought. The doctrine taken at its face value admits a rationally irreconcilable dualism. The earlier passage from *On Providence*, on souls and demons, also appears to be Gnostic in spirit. Many Gnostics believed that man is not at home in this world, that he is in alien territory and must always be on guard. Similar doctrines can be traced to Middle Platonism. The idea of two world-souls is important in Plutarch's work on *Isis and Osiris*, one of the sources of *On Providence*. Numenius also thought that evil was present in the celestial spheres, and the *Chaldaean Oracles* present doctrines reminiscent of Zoroastrian dualism. Some scholars think that the source of the two-souls doctrine, Plato's Laws 10, 896E, reflects Zoroastrian influence;<sup>22</sup> others<sup>23</sup> that it is a false interpretation of Plato which arose as a result of anti-Stoic polemic: evil could not be in matter, thus it must somehow be in soul. Thus, John Dillon asserts that Plutarch's evil world-soul "seems not to imply just the rather negative unruly principle of the *Timaeus*, but a positive force, a maleficent soul, which has at some stage itself broken away from the intelligible realm."<sup>24</sup> Synesius's dualistic tendency, then, is within the Platonic tradition.

Synesius also affirms the cosmos in a non-dualistic spirit: the spirit of *Enneads* II-9. The world is not literally enemy territory, but this doctrine provides moral armament for the soul so that it can maintain its purity in connection with higher realities. The *Hermetica* shares much spiritual territory with Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism; at times it also displays a pro-cosmic "pantheism" far removed from the mainstream of Gnosticism. Souls incarnate, on the one hand, to make this world better;<sup>25</sup> on the other, as the result of a fall, as punishment. This attitude is in line with the tension brought about between the dualism and other worldliness of (e.g.) the Phaedo and Phaedrus and the optimism of the *Timaeus*, common in the Platonic, Orphic and Pythagorean traditions.

Many other passages in the works of Synesius either have a Gnostic tone or are more or less closely connected with the *Corpus Hermeticum*. The "paternal depth" (*ho bythos patroas*) of "Hymn II"

engenders the son (*kydimos huios*) and the Holy Spirit (*hagia pneia*). But the *Bythos* here probably refers not to Valentinian Gnosis, but to "the primal source and root" of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which contains within itself (potentially) the entire noetic being.<sup>26</sup> In "Hymn VI" he calls upon the Son to "dry up the destructive billows of matter" (1-26-27).<sup>27</sup> A Christ who breaks through matter suggests associations with a Gnostic or docetic Christ, who carries the message of the "alien God." In "Hymn V," Synesius speaks of Christ incarnate: "the ineffable counsels of the Father caused the generation of Christ, the sacred labor of the Bride manifested the form of man, who arrived among mortals the conveyor of light from the source" (1. 4-9). He himself is the "light from the source." In 1-12, like the light of the Logos which is the life of men in the Fourth Gospel, and the life and light of the *Hermetica*; e.g., *nous* as *zoe kai phos*, *C.H.* 1-9.<sup>28</sup> Hymn V: portrays the Logos as both cosmological and soteriological: founder (*ktistas*) of the cosmos, fashioner of the spheres, root of the centers of earth and savior of man (*autos d'anthropon soter*, 1. 16-20).<sup>29</sup>

Synesius conceives of the incarnation along Platonic lines as a soul taking on a body: *broteion pheron demas*.<sup>30</sup> He is often vague, but does not appear to be docetic: "the sacred labor of the bride, manifested the form of man";<sup>31</sup> *morphe anthropou* indicates a real human figure rather than a phantasm. It is perhaps wishful thinking to consider his *morphe anthropou* as a manifestation of the *Hermetic Anthropos*, the Archetypal Man who falls into matter because he is enamored of his own reflection in the "hylic realm" of nature.<sup>32</sup> *Morphe anthropou* does indeed seem to be little more than a periphrasis for the god-man, while the *eidos anthropou* of the *Corpus Hermeticum* clearly refers to the Platonic *eidos* of man. However, a late Neoplatonic definition of the word *morphe*<sup>33</sup> indicates a close relationship with intelligible form (as it manifests itself in particulars in the spatio-temporal realm).

In one passage, though, Synesius represents Christ as an analogue of the *Anthropos*, something like a second Adam who, "has driven the treacherous source," the "chthonic serpent" from the gardens of the Father; the serpent who gave the forbidden fruit to the primal man (*Archegonus*).<sup>34</sup> He depicts the "sin" of *Archegonus* as if it were a determined fact of cosmic history. The chthonic serpent symbolizes the material defilements from which the Savior came to free us. The phrase "nourisher of painful destiny" (*trophon argaleou morou* 1. 8-9) might be a reference to the *Heimarmene*, by which the *Archegonus* was subjected to conditions of the material world. Hence the fall of

*Archegonus* resembles that of the *Hermetic Anthropos*.

Other passages of Synesius have been singled out by scholars of the *Hermetica*: W. Scott<sup>35</sup> pointed out the strong similarity of his description of *manteia* through dreams, augury, inspiration and oracles (*De Ins.* 1284A, *P G* 66) to the same description in *C.H.* XII-19. He believed they came from a common Stoic source. Synesius compares the cosmos as a sphere like a human head (*C.H.* X (106)) with *Calv. Enc.* 1181B (*P G* 66), for his part, believing that spheres are like heads and (bald) heads microcosms of spheres. The cosmic sympathy of *C.H.* VIII-5 compares with that of *De Prov.* 7, 1277a and *De Ins.* 2, 1285a, (*P G* 66), along standard Stoic Platonic lines. In *C.H.* IV-10 *theos* is *monas*, *arche* and *riza panton*, as he is, in Synesius's *Hymns*, the monad of monads, the principle of principles, the root, the source (*paga*), the unity of unities (*henas henadon*), and so on.

Festugière employs the *Hymns*<sup>36</sup> as parallels to demonstrate the liturgical nature of *C.H.* V-10 and ff., itself a mystical hymn. He points out that god, according to the doctrine, can be named in terms of opposites, can be known, is unknowable, is both anonymous and polynomous, is everywhere and nowhere, and can ultimately only be reached by the *via negationis*. The passages cited from the *Hymns* speak of him as one and three, sound and silence, male and female. Of importance here is the notion of pagan liturgical works, which show some connection with the writings of Synesius. We find this even in the case of the "literary mysteries" (very much a part of later Hellenism) such as the so-called Mithras liturgy and the Hermetic prayers to the *arche*, *pneuma*, *aion* and *Helios*: (1) the *Hymns* are themselves prayers to such principles. (2) Synesius rejected (for the most part) the theurgic ritual aspect of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, while accepting much of their intellectual content.<sup>37</sup> (3) A pagan religious tradition, less controversial in the early 5th century, involving ritual and liturgical patterns along with compatible ideas would make the transition to Christian ritual smoother for Synesius. (4) The rhythm of the *Hymns* (pagan and/or "Christian") often suggests ritual prayer. Thus the Hermetic tradition, with its ideas of rebirth and salvation, its basically Platonic outlook and its suggestions of religious liturgy and ritual, offers the basic materials for a syncretistic bridge between paganism and Christianity.

Synesius the bishop accepted revelation as a kind of *gnosis*. In one of the few explications of a Christian text to be found in his extant works, he writes of the divine inspiration of scripture:

For one spirit inspired the prophet and the apostle, and after the fine ancient painters, he drew in outline and then subsequently portrayed in exact detail the features of the *gnosis*.<sup>38</sup>

I have excerpted this, a fragment of an allegorical exegesis of a portion of a Psalm, because it reads like an exercise from the catechetical schools of Alexandria:

There is a cup of unmixed wine in the hand of the Lord.<sup>39</sup>

The cup is the word of God, says Synesius, freely offered to men in the Old and New Testaments, "for the soul is watered by this drink." Inasmuch as it is a word, each (Cup-Testament-Word) is unmixed. Yet it is mixed as a double word. For the unity which is formed from the two is a perfection of *gnosis* (*teleiosis gnoseos*).<sup>40</sup>

In short, the unity of the Logos in both Testaments is the perfection of Christian *gnosis*. Although there is no evidence that Synesius ever read Clement or Origen, he follows the Alexandrian tradition here. His *gnosis* is not the special saving, purifying and liberating knowledge of the Gnostics; but *gnosis* as philosophical understanding of a divinely inspired text — like that which (e.g.) Clement claimed as the true *gnosis* in opposition to the heretics.

Yet Synesius, true to his heterodox outlook, sermonizes and interprets passages in accordance with his Neoplatonic preferences. Speaking of the cup in the hand of the Lord: "that cup is *aristopoion*, filled with wine, and having been sought after is able to raise us up to Intellect" — *eis noun*.<sup>41</sup>

Although he knows the meaning and importance of the Christian Logos, the bishop uses the term *Nous*. If he is following a *Gnostic* tradition here — as well as a Neoplatonic one — it is very likely that of the *Hermetica* rather than any form of Christian *Gnosis*.

In *Corpus Hermeticum* XIII, the secret discourse on rebirth between Hermes Trismegistus and his son Tat, there is a hymn-prayer after which the lord is called *nous*

god, you are the father, — *theos . . . pater*

the lord, the intellect — *sy o kyrios, sy o nous*<sup>42</sup>

Synesius considered Hermes to be one of the great spiritual autodidacts, along with Ammon, Antony, and Zoroaster. Thus the *Hermetica* and its sotcriological mystery language could be most useful

to the newly ordained bishop, who complains in a letter to Peter the Elder (Garzya, *Ep.* 13) of his inability (due to lack of scriptural knowledge) to preach a proper Easter sermon.

Fortunately, that Easter Eve sermon to the newly baptized members of the congregation in the Pentapolis has been preserved. The language of Homily II reflects an outlook that virtually transforms the Easter ceremony into a Neoplatonically or Hermetically interpreted mystery initiation: it is a holy night in which the light (*phos*) manifests itself to the purified (*tois katheramenois*). It is a light far surpassing that of the sun, for even the fairest thing on earth cannot be compared to the Demiurge. This light, which illuminates souls and the visible (*aistheton*) sun, is not a created thing.<sup>43</sup> He warns the newly baptized concerning the danger of incurring a pollution (*mohysma*) after purification (*katharsis*).<sup>44</sup> The language, metaphor and sense here are closer to the Orphic, Platonic and Hermetic than to the Christian. Several chapters before the Hymn of praise in *C.H.* XIII, after which the lord is called *nous*, Hermes warns Tat to purify himself from the irrational torments of matter (*hyle*)<sup>45</sup> — caused by ignorance of the nature of the passions in relation to the body. *Gnosis* is the holy source of the illumination of our minds and the light is incorporeal and intelligible<sup>46</sup> — *to noeton phos*.<sup>47</sup>

The idea of purification and pollution, the juxtaposition of spiritual to visible light, the Demiurge, the created world as *demiourgema*, all are evocative of late pagan spirituality. Synesius facing a Christian congregation in fifth century Libya, a province notorious for Arianism, is not likely to have made use of mystery language in order to bridge the gap between the Church and Hellenism for a pagan audience. His language reflects his own religious stance.

There are basically two important scholarly interpretations of the Hermetic religion.<sup>48</sup> Reitzenstein and Geffcken think that a "religious brotherhood" used the *C.H.* as a sacred "book" on which to base its dogmas, rites and liturgy. On the other hand, Bossuet, E. Kroll and Cumont point out that the *Corpus* contains irreconcilable doctrines and the fact that there is no trace of specific ceremonies in *C.H.* precludes a religious community. Festugière accepts the latter notion as a working hypothesis: "there is nothing that resembles the sacraments of the Gnostic sects. No confession, communion, consecration, hierarchy of degrees of initiation. The only two classes are those that hear and those that refuse the word."<sup>49</sup> M. Eliade,<sup>50</sup> however, asserts that despite this the great treatises of Hermetic philosophy "presuppose closed groups practicing an initiation" — there is a *religio mentis* in the Hermetic *Asclepius*, and "god receives pure spiritual sacrifices" (*C.H.*

1-3). There are also ritual patterns of behavior: disciples gather in a sanctuary, they keep the revelations secret, there is a ceremonial cataphesis, and a mystery ritual of baptism in a *krater*.

*C.H.* IV 3-6, tells us that in the beginning *theos* filled a *krater* with *nous*, and those who submerge themselves become "perfect men." Festugière has shown that this has parallels to the mysteries: 1) ingestion of a sacred drink from a *krater*; 2) a purifying and initiatory bath.<sup>51</sup> Synesius's cup (of the *Logos*) is alternately called *poterion* and *krater*; a cup which disturbs thought and disrupts rationality does not befit reason (*logos*).<sup>52</sup> This is a typically Hellenic statement.

Eliade maintains that the *Hermetica* also indicate ecstatic practices: Hermes tells Tat of an ecstatic experience after which he entered an "immortal body" and Tat imitates him (*C.H.* XIII-3, 13).<sup>53</sup> These ideas (literary or otherwise), especially baptism, purification, perfection and ecstasy, would fit well in a syncretistic Easter ritual.

The pattern of parallels, then, between the works of Synesius and the *Hermetica* is not without significance. The Platonic "philosopher-bishop" led his congregation on an ascent of the soul to *nous*; this was probably not the result of purely Neoplatonic or even Chaldaean influences: it was also inspired by the Hermetic mysteries. Surely the *C.H.*, with its creative and salvific noctic beings (*nous-demiurge*; *logos*; *anthropos*) provides the clearest analogue to the Christian myth. The *theios aner*, Heracles, Asclepius and the other late Hellenic savior figures do not "create," and they exist on a much lower level of the *seira* of procession and cannot be said to be at the level of the *logos* or *nous*. They are lower reflections, although still divine. Although the notion of a specifically Hermetic ritual remains problematic, the idea that Synesius echoes the *C.H.* in both his Easter sermon and his metaphysical thought, is attractive. This orientation could help students of late antiquity better to understand the syncretism of Hellenism and Christianity attempted by those serious pagans who had put aside the standards of the emperor Julian, at least in part because they thought that the victory of the new religion was already a *fait accompli*.

#### NOTES

1. For a full account of Synesius's development (here briefly outlined) see J. Bregman (1982), *passim*.
2. For this and ff. see Bregman, pp. 155-163. This section deals with the famous *Ep.* 105. On this and other questions concerning the *Ep.* it is necessary to consult the fine edition of the letters brought out by A. Garzya (Rome, 1979). My work on Synesius was ready for the press shortly before

the publication of Garzya's work.

3. Bregman, p. 20: the Byzantine Chronographer John Malalas says that: her father Theon was a commentator on the works of Hermes Trismegistus and Orpheus. Thus it is most likely that Synesius was already familiar with the *Hermetica* when he was a student at Alexandria.
4. For a clear and cogent presentation of triads in the thought of Marius Victorinus (and others) see Peter Manchester, "The Noetic Triad in Plotinus, Marius Victorinus and Augustine," in this volume, pp. 207-222.
5. Bregman, pp. 103-108.
6. As the *nous-theos*, *nous-demiurge*, and *anthropos* of *Poimandres*.
7. Bregman, p. 108.
8. Bregman, pp. 34-35 and n. 57.
9. Bregman, pp. 91-92.
10. Bregman, p. 114; on the rejection of spiritual extremes see Bregman, p. 130 and Garzya, *Ep.* 154.
11. See Athanassiadi-Fowden (1981), pp. 24-25. My own view of Julian is in large part similar to that of this author.
12. On this see A.H. Armstrong (1984), p. 6. My view of Synesius has been challenged recently in a review by G. Fowden (*CP* 80 [July 1985]: 281-285), who thinks my notion that Synesius adhered to a "Plotinian-Porphyrrian" position distinct from Iamblican theurgy, cannot be proved and contradicts itself, since with regard to theurgy Porphyry marks an intermediate stage between Plotinus and Iamblichus. Perhaps the phrase *Plotinian-Porphyrrian* (a generalizing label) confused Fowden. I am well aware of the distinction. GF also thinks I assume that Synesius, a gentleman, could not be influenced by theurgy and other "superstitions." His statements and parade of erudition cannot hide the fact that he has not read carefully important sections of my monograph. On pages 145-154, I discuss in detail Synesius's complex and problematic position vis-a-vis Porphyry, theurgy and the *ochema-Pneuma*; I even entertain the idea that he might have accepted some form of intellectual "higher theurgy," but certainly could not have accepted Iamblican sacerdotalism. I also believe Synesius liked both the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the *Hermetica*; I admire Julian and Iamblichus and I do not consider theurgy a symptom of the "decline" of Neoplatonism. This is evident from even a superficial perusal of my work.
13. Fowden cites Alan Cameron, who in turn thinks pagan philosophical influences do not "necessarily conflict with the possibility that Synesius was a Christian (of sorts) all his life," (*YCS* 27 [1982]). It seems to me that the evidence points in the opposite direction, whatever one means by a Christian of sorts. GF then states that neither Cameron nor my view quite catches the subtlety of the process. Neither does GF, who does not really explain what he means. He might have a better grasp of the issues involved had he understood the beginning of the Introduction, p. ii to my *Synesius*: "The traditional view of the relationship between Hellenic thought and Christian doctrine does not provide an appropriate framework for an interpretation

of Synesius's religious position . . ." (pp. 9 and ff.) In fact it must be reversed. Synesius (although he might have known of the religion) did not have Christianity in his background like Augustine; nor, for similar reasons, can he be compared to the Alexandrian or Cappadocian Fathers. Whatever the importance of "social structures" and "context," only a naive reductionist would vastly undervalue the significance of these notions.

14. Fowden (p. 285), seems to think I should have been more aware of possible Gnostic influences in the work of Synesius. His remarks are beside the point. In rather arbitrary fashion he asserts that my *Synesius* "is not a good omen for the ongoing study . . . of the religious attitudes . . . of late antiquity" (p. 285). On the other hand one need not be an augur or a theurgist to see that GF does not understand the intellectual issues, has difficulty apprehending modes of religious perception and has a tendency to distort what he reads. But, in fairness, of *this* he appears to have some awareness: "of his extensive and exceedingly speculative discussions of how and under what influence Synesius *may* have proceeded in his attempt to build 'hermeneutical bridges' between paganism and Christianity, those of more experience in such matters will judge" (p. 385). Very well, then: "I accept the account of Synesius given by Jay Bregman in the latest book on him." (Armstrong, p. 16, n. 18)

In addition, Averil Cameron (*Phoenix* 38, 3 [1984]) says I show too little caution in "assuming that we can take what (S.) wrote purely at face value. . . . Too much of a gap still exists for us in understanding late antiquity between the literary text and its reception . . . the central interpretation . . . rests on the questionable assumption that Synesius invariably says what he means, and what he does not say he cannot therefore be allowed to mean."(!) These statements seem to me to be essentially vacuous and to have the quality of rhetorical "mystique." Not everything written in late antiquity must be "decoded" as if it were part of some Procopian "secret history." The works of Synesius are, if sometimes ambiguous, hardly unintelligible (on this Av. Cameron might consult well known works of Lacombrade, Marrou, Terzaghi, Theiler and others). We *do* know the main lines of Platonic thought in late antiquity. (See, e.g., the works of A.H. Armstrong, R.T. Wallis, R. Hadot, L.G. Westerink, the contents of this volume, and many others.) For example, on how much we know about the doctrine of the soul and related matters see John Dillon, *Later Platonist Psychology*, C.R. V, XXXV, no. 1 (1985): 80-82. For more cogent opinions, among others, J.A.S. Evans, *Catholic Historical Review* (Oct 1985); J.H.W.G. Liebeschütz, *JHS*, vol. CIV (1984).

15. Synesius, *De Prov* II-7 127B-128A (Terzaghi, ed.); see Bregman, p. 70.
16. The seminal work on the *De Prov* as a moral political allegory is O. Seeck (1894). Synesius started this work around the turn of the 5th century, but could not have been completed until 414, thus Seeck's identifications and other ideas must be modified; on this see, e.g., J.H.W.G. Liebeschütz (*JHS* CIV [1984]).

17. *De Prov* X 99C (Terzaghi ed.): cf. Festugière, *Hermetisme* (1967), p. 37, describing the character of the Hermeticist: "one must behave here below like a stranger."
18. *De Prov* 89B-C.
19. *C.H. Fr.* XXIV, 7, Nock-Festugière, vol. IV, p. 54.
20. H. Jonas (1963), pp. 159-160.
21. Cf. Jonas, pp. 43-44.
22. E.g. M. Anastos, *DOP* 4-283; cf. Bregman, p. 69, n. 27.
23. See especially Pheme Perkins, "Beauty, Number and the Loss of Order in the Gnostic Cosmos," in this volume, pp. 277-296.
24. *The Middle Platonists* as quoted by Bregman, p. 69, n. 27.
25. E.g. Asclepius VIII, "to admire and worship celestial to govern terrestrial things" *C.H.* IV-2 the cosmos as the "mortal living being, ornament of the immortal living being." *C.H.* XI is basically optimistic. On the issue of optimistic vs. dualistic gnosis in the *Hermetica* see F. Yates (1964), pp. 22-38. On the importance of "the worldly" and the immanent see S. Gersh, "Theological Doctrines of the Latin Asclepius" in this volume, pp. 129-166.
26. Bregman, pp. 88-89 and n. 36.
27. Cf. also *Hymn* III, 1. 539-540; 548-550; *Hymn* V, 1. 14-15.
28. For some further references to light imagery in the *Hermetica* and the *Oracles* see Bregman, p. 99, n. 22.
29. Bregman, p. 100.
30. For a discussion of this phrase see Bregman, p. 102 and n. 39.
31. *Hymn*, V, 1. 4-9.
32. On the *Anthropos* myth see Jonas, pp. 161-162; Yates, pp. 23-25; Rudolph (1982), pp. 92-94.
33. *Hymn* IX, 1. 4-9; Proclus *In Tim* X, 1-3.
34. See Bregman, pp. 116-117.
35. The passages cited here are to be found with Hermetic and other comparisons in W. Scott (repr. 1968): *Calv. Enc.* II, 249, 364, 423; *De Ins* II, 200, 342; *De prov* II, 200, IV, 393. *Hymn* II, 152. Nicephorus Gregoras *Comm De Ins* (on *Hermetica*), IV, 247-248.
36. Festugière, *La Révélation*, vol. IV, p. 68 and n. 1, p. 70, n. 1; cf. e.g., Julian's *Hymn to King Helios*, Proclus's *Hymns*, the *Orphic Hymns*.
37. See Bregman, pp. 2, 39, 92.
38. *Homily* I 296A-296D.
39. *Homily* I 295C.
40. *Homily* I 296A; Bregman, p. 165.
41. *Homily* 295C.
42. *C.H.* XIII, 21.7-8; Nock-Festugière, vol. II, p. 208.
43. *Homily* II, 297A-B.
44. *Homily* 297C.
45. *C.H.* XIII, 7.6-7.
46. *C.H.* 7.10 and ff; 8, 9.

47. *C.H.* 18.5. Light imagery is of course common in the Orthodox Church, and to this day the service includes elements that remind one of the mysteries. This is the legacy of late antiquity and never a proof of "paganism" (then or now). But even a superficial reading of the so-called *Catechetical Discourse of S. John Chrysostom* or the sermons of the Fathers will reveal the differences with Synesius; the *orientation* is Biblical, emphasis is on the central elements of the Christian myth, especially the risen Christ. The terminology *per se* to some extent shared by *all* the late antique religious traditions is less important. Nevertheless, one is hard pressed to find Easter sermons in which *nous* is where one would expect *logos*.
48. In this section I follow closely the summary and argument of M. Eliade (1982), pp. 298-301 and nn. 521-522. G. Fowden's attempt to place the *Hermetica* in a "social context" has added little to our knowledge. Furthermore, the "context" gives the impression of being manufactured, the artificial construction of a social historian. G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge, 1986).
49. Quoted by M. Eliade (1982), p. 299 and n. 49; tr. Festugière.
50. Eliade (1982), p. 299.
51. Eliade (1982), p. 299, n. 50; for possible connections between the Hermetic *krater* and the Grail legends cf. Eliade (1985), pp. 106-107 and notes.
52. *Homily* I, 295B.
53. Eliade (1982), pp. 299-300. On the implications for Renaissance Humanism of a "Synesian approach" (in reverse mirror image) to "para-Christian" Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, see also Eliade (1985), pp. 251-255 and notes.

## Pleroma and Noetic Cosmos : A Comparative Study

John M. Dillon

The process of identifying philosophical concepts in the various documents of the Nag Hammadi Corpus is a delicate one. One must avoid overhastiness in discerning parallels, while also taking due account of the degree of mythologizing and personification of philosophical themes that may in fact be taking place.

A case in point is the general concept of a non-material, spiritual or intelligible world parallel to our physical one, and serving as an ideal paradigm of it. It is safe to say, I think, that such a concept forms no part of traditional Jewish thought,<sup>1</sup> nor is it a feature of primitive Christianity. Certainly, God is in his heaven, and he is the creator of our world, but he did not create it according to a pattern laid up in his mind, which is co-extensive with his heaven. If we find such a concept in a Jewish thinker such as Philo, or a later Christian theorist such as Clement or Origen, we reckon that it has been imported from somewhere else; and the same is the case if we come upon it in a document of Gnosticism, Christian or otherwise.

There is, of course, no great mystery as to the source of such a concept. In the form in which we find it in Philo or the Alexandrian Fathers, it stems from Plato, and in particular from his *Timaeus*, though to a lesser extent from the *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus* also.

Let us begin by considering the structure of the ideal realm as it is presented in the *Timaeus*, or at least, what is more important, as it was thought to be presented by later Platonists (what Plato himself precisely had in mind is often obscure).

We meet, first of all, in 28Aff. a sharp distinction between the realms of Being (*to aei on*) and Becoming (*genesis*), and a Demiurge figure who uses as a model (*paradeigma*) "the eternal" (*to aidion*, 29a 3) and unchanging, in order that what he creates may be good. "This cosmos," the physical world, is declared to be "a copy of something" (*eikōn tinos*, 29b2), although a continually moving and coming-to-be copy of a paradigm which is neither of these things. As Plato presents the scenario, the Paradigm is independent of the Demiurge, being an ultimate reality, external to him, which he contemplates and copies, but most later Platonists (with whom I agree) took the description of the craftsman and his model as figurative, even as the creation of the world in time was figurative. If we are thinking in terms of metaphysics rather than poetry, it makes no sense to have an ultimate reality ontologically independent of the supreme god — and there is no suggestion in the *Timaeus* that the Demiurge is not the supreme god, though some later Platonists, such as Numenius, tried to solve the metaphysical puzzle by taking the Demiurge as a secondary god, with the Good of the *Republic* enthroned above him. The Paradigm must therefore be subordinate to the Demiurge, and in fact nothing else but the contents of his mind.

Let us look more closely at the contents of his mind. In 30B, we learn that the physical cosmos as a whole is a body containing a soul which contains a mind. In this it is an image of its model. The model, we learn further in 30CD, is a living thing (*zōon*), which comprises all the intelligible living things (*noēta zōa*), even as this cosmos contains all visible ones. This picture of a living thing containing within it a vast multiplicity of non-material entities, which are themselves living, but are also identified (later, at 39E) with the Forms or Ideas must, it seems to me, have given much food for thought to later generations of Platonists. Indeed, it is clear from later developments that it did so. Necessarily, from what has been said in 30B, this Essential Living Being (*autozōon*) is an Intellect, and all the living Forms within it are also "intellects." All this is certainly less than explicit in the *Timaeus* itself, but by the time of Plotinus, as we shall see, it is regarded as obvious, and it must have become obvious long before his time.

In 39E, as I say, we learn that the Essential Living Creature contains within it Ideas of all the living creatures that are manifest on earth, and in addition, it would seem, archetypes of the four elements of fire, air, water and earth. More and more, the *Autozōon* begins to appear like a completely coherent and comprehensive matrix, timeless, ungenerated, immaterial and perfect, of the physical cosmos. And, itself a "well-rounded whole," it is composed of a vast number of individual minds, arranged, necessarily, in hierarchies of genera and species, and

of Forms of greater and lesser generality, each of which has its own "point of view" — almost its own personality. In Plotinus's striking image, it may be likened to "a globe of faces radiant with faces all living" (*Enn.* VI, 7, 15). The image of a face made up of faces is particularly apt as a description of the noetic world, reminding us that the individual forms are not just objects of intellection, but themselves intellects, each looking out on the rest.

Easy as it may be to see how the conception of the Ideas as thoughts of God arose, it is remarkably difficult to pin down exactly where it originated in any explicit form. I am on record<sup>2</sup> as suggesting that, since Xenocrates declared the supreme principle to be an intellect, and an intellect is necessarily engaged in thinking, it is very tempting to see the Ideas, which Xenocrates identified with numbers (*Fr.* 34 Heinze), as the contents of its mind, but I have been chided for that assumption, and I must admit that there is no explicit evidence for it. All we know is that by the time of Philo of Alexandria the doctrine is accepted as obvious. In the *De Opificio Mundi* (16-20) Philo describes God as first creating the *noētos kosmos* (a phrase which he is, by the way, the first extant author to use), and then using it as a model on which to create the *aisthētos kosmos*. That Philo himself did not originate the idea of subordinating the noetic cosmos to the Supreme Being is indicated by the fact that Varro<sup>3</sup> is reported as allegorizing Minerva springing from the head of Jupiter as the Ideas springing from the mind of God. Varro was in philosophy a follower of the Stoicized Platonism of Antiochus of Ascalon, for whom an equation of the Ideas with the Stoic *logoi spermatikoi*, and thus of the Paradigm of the *Timaeus* with the Logos, would be no trouble at all. Philo, of course, while maintaining the transcendence of God, does adopt the Stoic concept of the Logos, which he identifies with the noetic cosmos in its dynamic aspect.

Having reached this far in the Platonic tradition, let us turn to consider the Pleroma, as we find it represented in various tractates of the Nag Hammadi corpus. I would like to begin with an eloquent passage from the *Tripartite Tractate*, a work generally agreed to be of Valentinian inspiration,<sup>4</sup> which presents the Aeons as "thoughts of the Father" (60):

... all of the aeons were forever in the thought of the Father, who was like ■ thinking of them and a place [for them]. When the generations had been established, the one who controls everything wished to take, to lay hold of, and to bring forth those who were deficient in the ... [and he brought] forth those who [are] in him. But since he is [as] he is, [he is like] a spring



which is not diminished by the water which abundantly flows from it. At the time that they were in the Father's thought, that is, in the hidden depth, the depth knew them, but they were unable to know the depth in which they were, nor could they know themselves; nor could they know anything else. In other words, they were with the Father; they did not exist by themselves. Rather, they only had existence in the manner of a seed. Thus it has been discovered that they existed like a fetus. Like the word, he begot them, and they subsisted spermatically.

This is a most interesting passage, containing, as it does, in only slightly mythological form, all the features of that Stoicized Platonism which we find also in Philo.<sup>5</sup> The aeons are thoughts of God; he is their "place" (cf. Philo, *Opif.* 20), he is compared to an undiminished spring, an image beloved both of Philo<sup>6</sup> and of Plotinus,<sup>7</sup> and they reside in him like a *logos*, and *spermatikōs*.

But this is not all. Two stages in the life of the aeons are distinguished. In this passage they still do not have knowledge nor separate existence. But the text continues (61):

Therefore the Father who first thought them — not only so that they might exist for him, but also that they might exist for themselves as well, that they might then exist in his thought with the mode of existence proper to thought, and that they might exist in themselves too — he sowed a thought like a seed of [knowledge] so that [they] might know [what it is that has come into being for them].

A second stage in the generation of the aeons is here envisaged, where the Father endows them with intellect, so that they become self-subsisting entities. At this stage, the Aeons are fully equatable to the Ideas of Platonism. How seriously we need take this sequence of two stages in the life of the Aeons is not clear to me. If the Father's activity is in fact timeless,<sup>8</sup> then the distinction of two stages could be taken as mythological elaboration. For our purposes, at any rate, it is not of great importance. It is the final state of the Aeons that is significant, and that finds them as self-subsistent intellects within the thought of the Father.

Having established this, let us consider what is the nature of an Aeon<sup>9</sup> and how it differs from a Platonic Form. Plainly, Aeons have rank and title, in a way in which Forms do not. For example, in *The Gospel of the Egyptians* (III, 40, 12-55, 16; IV, 50, 1-67, 1), the Aeons are arranged in ogdoads (a system owing something, surely, to Egyptian religion). Each member of the trinity of Father, Mother and Son, themselves Aeons, is made up of an ogdoad of Aeons, mostly with

abstract titles, such as Will, Thought or Imperishability. Five further entities are then revealed, each consisting of an ogdoad, and following on them two others, the Logos and Adamas, the latter of whom, Adamas, begets Seth. All of these are in fact ogdoads, producing a total of eleven so far. This total, though large, is still manageable, but it becomes clear further on (54) that the Pleroma is filled with myriads of "thrones, powers and glories" which do not merit individual characterization.

All this personification brings the Pleroma closer to a Neoplatonic version of the noetic world, and even to the later Neoplatonic conception (which I must say I would still see as going back to Iamblichus, and therefore to the beginning of the fourth century C.E.) of the world of henads around the One, than to the less developed Middle Platonic doctrine. The important development that occurs in later Platonism is that the traditional gods, Olympian and otherwise, are identified with metaphysical entities, for Plotinus and Porphyry the individual *noes* of the noetic world (whom Plotinus refers to repeatedly as *theoi*),<sup>10</sup> for Iamblichus and later Platonists as henads in the realm of the One. The coexistence of figures as Apollo or Athena with such entities as the Ideal Horse or the Ideal Triangle might seem an uneasy one, but these matters are beyond our comprehension, and speculation would be impertinent. Certainly, for the Neoplatonists all noetic entities, and later, all henadic entities, are *theoi*, and some of them are certainly arranged in families or other groupings, with varying levels of generality or specificity.

But the Pleroma is not only replete with personalities, it also contains, in an intelligible mode, all things that are manifest in this world: "Everything which is manifest is a copy of that which is hidden," as we learn from *The Teaching of Silvanus* (99, 5). In *G Egypt* III, 50, 10 (=IV, 62, 8), we find mention of "the ethereal earth" (*aerōdēs gē*, presumably);<sup>11</sup> where the holy men of the great light receive shape. In *Zostrianos*, 48, we find an elaborate description of a noetic world corresponding to ours, apparently present in each of the Aeons:

Corresponding to each of the Aeons I saw a living earth and a living water and (air) made of light, and fire that cannot burn (. . .), all being simple and immutable with trees that do not perish in many ways, and tares (. . .) this way, and all these and imperishable fruit and living men and every form, and immortal souls and every shape and form of mind, and gods of truth, and messengers who exist in great glory, and indissoluble bodies and an unborn begetting and an immovable perception.

It is a pity that this passage is somewhat fragmentary, since it is of great interest. What we seem to have portrayed here is a comprehensive archetype of the physical world, right down the tares among the wheat (a detail that I find particularly interesting — if the very fragmentary text can be trusted). We may note also noetic archetypes of body, begetting (presumably *genesis*), and perception (presumably *aisthēsis*).<sup>12</sup> The description occurs again at 55, 15-25, with more or less the same list, though this time including "animals." In both passages it seems that each Aeon is deemed to contain such a world, like a Leibnizian (or Anaxagorean) monad, but in any case, it is all present in the Pleroma.<sup>13</sup>

A third relevant passage occurs at 113-117, where once again a whole world is being presented within an Aeon, but, here it is further specified that on the one hand there are hierarchies of being, genera and species, within the world, and on the other hand that "they do not crowd one another, but they also dwell within them, existing and agreeing with one another as if they exist from a simple origin" (115, 1-5), and "in that world are all living beings existing individually, yet joined together" (117, 1-5). All this is again most interesting, since it describes excellently the conception of the noetic world which we find in Plotinus, especially in *Ennead* VI, 7, to which I will now turn. (The fact that *Zostrianos* was one of the Gnostic treatises known in Plotinus's circle makes the question of influence somewhat more of a live one than it might otherwise be.) The problem from which Plotinus starts in VI, 7 (one arising in his mind from *Timaeus* 45B), is whether or not the individual soul had capacities for sense-perception before it descended into the body. This particular question leads him, in ever-increasing circles, to the general one of whether there are pre-existent in the noetic world all things which are present in the sense-world, even such a thing as an archetype, or noetic correlate, of sense-perception, as well as irrational animals, trees, earth and stones.

A particular problem arises for him by reason of the fact that he accepts that souls may transmigrate from humans to animals, and this is plainly a declination. How then can there be noetic archetypes of things that are (at least comparatively) evil? His answer (VI, 7, 8, 1ff.) is most interesting:

But if it is by becoming evil and inferior that the Soul produces the nature of beasts, the making of ox or horse was not at the outset in its character; the *logos* of the horse, for example, and the horse itself, must be contrary to nature (*para physin*).

Inferior, yes; but contrary to nature, no. What is There (sc. Soul) was in

some sense horse and dog from the beginning; given the condition it produces the higher kind; let the condition fail, then, since produce it must, it produces what it may; it is like a skilful craftsman competent to create all kinds of works of art, but reduced to making what is ordered and what the aptitude of his material indicates. (trans. MacKenna, adapted).

This may or may not commend itself as an entirely satisfactory solution to Plotinus's problem, but that does not matter for our purpose. What we find is that the noetic realm contains in itself a comprehensive articulated pattern of all the phenomena of the physical world, down to its most lowly aspects. Plotinus is even prepared to speak of *aisthēsis* and *aisthēta* in the noetic realm (6, 1-2 and 7, 24-31), producing at the end of ch. 7 the striking formula: "perceptions here are dim intellections and intellections there are vivid perceptions."<sup>14</sup>

The Forms even of irrational and inanimate things are necessarily intellects (ch. 9). This line of thought comes to its completion in ch. 11, where Plotinus envisages a noetic archetype of the earth and all its contents, fire, water, trees, stones, and so on:

But earth; how is there earth There? What is the being of earth, and how are we to represent to ourselves the living earth of that realm?

First, what is earth in the physical realm, what is the mode of its being? Earth, here and There alike, must possess shape and a *logos*. Now in the case of plants, the *logos* of the plant here was found to be living in the higher realm: is there such a *logos* in our earth? (tr. MacKenna).

His answer is that there is. What he calls "the creative formal principle of earth" (τὸ εἶδος τῆς γῆς τὸ ποιοῦν) forms the mountains and valleys, forests and plains, down to the individual rocks, and the whole is alive, through its dependence on its living intelligent archetype, the Essential Earth (*autogē*, Ch. 11, 35).

This seems to me to come very near to the conception we find adumbrated in *Zostrianos*, though here, as one would expect from Plotinus, it is exhaustively argued for instead of being baldly stated. The notion of a noetic archetype of earth is certainly implicit in the account of the *Timaeus*, but only in Plotinus do we find the full implications of the doctrine worked out. It is not, I think, necessary to suppose that Plotinus was in any way influenced by the *Zostrianos* text, though the analogies are interesting. What is more probable is that the author of *Zostrianos* was himself influenced by trends in second century Platonism, and more particularly, perhaps, by contact with what has been termed

the "Platonic Underworld." In the Hermetic *Poemander*, for instance, we find the concept of a noetic archetype of the physical world, a *kalos kosmos* (sect. 8), by contemplation of which the Will of God (*boulē theōū*), having received into itself the *Logos*, creates this cosmos. The relations between Hermetics and Gnostics, though obscure, were close, to judge by the inclusion of a section of the *Asclepius* in the Nag Hammadi corpus, but it is not necessary to suppose mutual influence in the matter of the concept of an intelligible world. They can have derived it from Platonism independently.

An objection which might be made to too close a comparison between Pleroma and noetic cosmos is that the Pleroma is not really a model upon which the physical world is based. The physical world is an error and an abortion for the Gnostics, and the Demiurge receives little or no guidance from above in creating it, nor has he access to the Pleroma as a model to work with.<sup>15</sup> Most of the Aeons are not conceived of as models or paradigms for anything, and the Christ or Saviour figure, when he/she emerges, makes no particular use of them.

However, there are elements in the Pleroma, in both Valentinian and Sethian systems (if we can still use such terms), which do seem to serve as paradigms. First of all, in some systems at least, there is the god "Man" (*Anthropos*), presented as the archetype of which earthly man is the copy.<sup>16</sup> In the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (NHC VII, 53-4), for example, we find Adam presented as an image of "the Father of Truth, the Man of the Greatness," who is an Aeon, if not the supreme God himself.<sup>17</sup> In the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1, 2; 5; 14), we find mention of "the perfect Man" or "first Man," serving as an epithet of Barbelo, of whom, again, Adam is an image. In other treatises, such as the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (II, 4, 91) and *On the Origin of the World* (II, 5, 103; 107; 115) we find also an intermediate figure, the Light-Adam, who enters into the physical body prepared by the Demiurge and his agents, and thus fulfills the role of an immanent Form in Platonism.<sup>18</sup>

This distinguishing of three levels of man finds, I think, a curious echo in Plotinus, *Enn.* VI, 7, 6 where we have a hierarchy of grades of man, consisting of (1) a noetic or archetypal Man, (2) a Man who is a copy (*mimēma*) of the first, containing the *logoi* in copy form (*en mimesēi*), but which is still distinct from (3) the embodied man, which it illuminates (*ellampeī*), even as the first illuminates it. This sequence strikes me as being rather closer in spirit to the Gnostic doctrine than to the traditional Platonist system of Form and particular.

Besides Man himself, the Sethians at least believed that archetypes of all the pneumatics existed in the Pleroma, or perhaps just that the

pneumatics existed in the Pleroma as aeons or *logoi* before becoming embodied. It is possible that the Sethians did not distinguish very clearly between these two possibilities, only the former of which is truly Platonist. A Platonist concept may indeed be mingling here with notions originally Iranian, of divine "sparks" of light inserted into the darkness of Matter.<sup>19</sup>

A key term in this connection is *typos*, which is used in Gnostic texts as a virtual synonym for the more Platonic *eikōn*. In *Eugnostos*, for example, much use is made of the term, both to describe entities within the Pleroma being *typoi* of other entities (e.g., III, 3, 82, where the Saviour "reveals six androgynous beings whose *typos* is that of those who preceded them"), or to describe phenomena of this world as *typoi* of entities in the Pleroma. At 83-4 for example, we find the following:

Now our aeon came to be as a *typos* in relation to Immortal Man. Time came to be as a *typos* of the First Begetter, his son. [The year] came to be as a *typos* of the [Saviour. The] twelve months came to be as a *typos* of the twelve powers. The three hundred and sixty days of the year came to be as a *typos* of the three hundred and sixty persons who were revealed by the Saviour.<sup>20</sup>

This envisages quite an extensive parallelism between the noetic and physical worlds, and goes some way towards establishing a relation of archetype and image between them. In general, however, it is not clear to me how coherent a theory of archetypes the Gnostic writers had. Is the Aeon Ecclesia, for instance, the quasi-Platonic form of the Church on earth (and if so, of what church?), or is "Ecclesia" simply an evocative label for an aeon? Do the aeons which become the sons of Seth remain above, while sending "sparks" down into the physical world? And if so, do we have here, in effect, Ideas of Individuals?

I will leave this question in the air, and end with a question of terminology. The actual term (*Pleroma*) for the noetic world is not Platonic,<sup>21</sup> though Philo uses it on occasion in a non-technical sense<sup>22</sup> but the adjective (*plerēs*) and the verb (*plerōō*) are frequently used in Platonism to describe the realm of Forms. Philo repeatedly describes God or the *Logos* as "full";<sup>23</sup> Seneca, in *Ep.* 65, 4, reporting Platonic doctrine, describes God as "full" (*plenus*) of these geometrical shapes, which Plato calls "ideas." Plotinus describes the intelligible Totality (*to alethinon pan*) as "filling itself" (*peplerokos heauto*, *Enn.* VI, 4, 2, 15), and of Nous as being "filled" by contemplation of the One at *Enn.* VI, 8, 16, 19ff. Only the substantive (*plērōma*) is never used. It spreads as

far as the Hermetic Corpus, but even there is something less than a technical term.<sup>24</sup>

We may accept, then, that the term *Pleroma* is derived from the language of the New Testament, even as is the term *aion* in the plural, and the mythological details are distinctive of Gnosticism, but the concept which it represents is, I would maintain, an implantation from the Platonist tradition into Gnosticism. Nowhere in the purely Jewish tradition do we find the idea of a whole, articulated archetypal world, by reference to which, as a pattern, God makes this one. That is a distinctively Hellenic contribution.

## NOTES

1. This is not to disregard such interesting Rabbinic traditions as that there pre-existed an archetype of the Torah, or of the Ark of the Covenant. Such traditions cannot be traced back further than the 2nd Century C.E. and thus are almost certainly dependent on Greek conceptions, or even specifically on Philo. The "heavenly Jerusalem" of Heb. 12:22, similarly, is interesting, but it is not quite clear whether it is intended to serve as an archetype of the Platonic sort. One may note, though, that the Valentinians, as reported by Hippolytus (*Ref.* VI, 32, 9) took it to refer, not to the Pleroma, but to the Ogdoad below it — which does, however, serve as a sort of paradigm for Sophia (*ibid.* 34, 3-4).
2. *The Middle Platonists*, p. 29.
3. *Ap. Aug. CD* VII, 28.
4. The fact that the Father in *Trip. Trac.* is presented "alone, without any companion" puts it at variance with the teaching of Valentinus himself, as Attridge and Pagels note in their introduction, and of Ptolemaeus, as represented in Irenaeus, but agrees with the variety of Valentinianism presented by Hippolytus in *Ref.* VI, 29, 5ff.
5. Direct influence from Philo cannot be ruled out, of course, but is not necessary to assume. See on this passage the excellent discussion of G.C. Stead, "In Search of Valentinus," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. I (Leiden, 1980), pp. 90-92.
6. E.g. *Opif.* 21; *Leg. All.* II, 87; *Cher.* 86; *Post.* 136 (ἀπὸ σοφίας θεοῦ, τῆς ἀνελλιπούς πηγῆς).
7. E.g. *Enn.* III, 8, 10, 5 (the One compared to an undiminished spring); VI, 7, 12, 24. Fountain imagery is also characteristic of the Chaldaean Oracles, e.g., Fr. 30 DP: *pēgē tōn pēgōn*; 37, 49, 52.
8. Cf., however, 62, 20ff., just below, where a reason is given for the Father not granting their full status to the Acons from the beginning, "that they might not exalt themselves to the Father in glory, and might not think that from themselves alone they have this." There is no comparable problem of insubordination within the Platonist noetic cosmos!
9. The term *aeōn* presumably originates from such NT locutions (e.g., Eph. 3:21) as εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, where the literal-minded could see a reference to a plurality, and even a hierarchy, of aeons. (Cf. *Iren. Adv. Haer.* I, 3, 1). In the singular, the term appears, of course, in the *Timaeus*, as the noetic archetype of Chronos. It may be noted that such a group as the Ophites, according to Irenaeus's account (*Adv. Haer.* I, 30, 2), termed the realm presided over by the Father "Aeon" rather than "Pleroma," in this according more closely with the *Timaeus*; as also does the Valentinian Heracleon (e.g., *Comm. in Joh. Fr.* 1; Fr. 22). *Aion* is also the Chaldaean term for the entity which presides over the intelligible realm.
10. E.g., I, 8, 2; III, 5, 6; V, 8, 3 and 5.
11. The concept of an "etherial" or "heavenly" earth turns up in 2nd-century Platonism, in Plutarch's *De Facie*, 935C, and *Def. Or.* 416E, where the epithet *olympia gē* is said to be applied by "some people" to the Moon, but this is not the same as the concept of an archetypal earth here.
12. Philo postulates a noetic archetype of *aisthēsis*, *Leg. All.* I, 21-26, as does Plotinus later, in *Enn.* VI (see below).
13. This concords with the doctrine of the Valentinian Theodotus (*Exc. ex Theod.* 32, 1) that "each of the aeons has its own pleroma."
14. ὥστε εἶναι τὰς αἰσθησεις ταύτας ἀμυδρὰς νοήσεις, τὰς δὲ ἐκεῖ νοήσεις ἐναργεῖς αἰσθήσεις.
15. While generally true, this is not the case with the Demiurge as presented by the Valentinian Marcus (*ap. Iren. Adv. Haer.* I, 17, 2). Marcus satirizes the Demiurge for wishing to imitate "the eternity, the limitlessness and the timeliness" of the Ogdoad, in the Pleroma, but being unable to do so, and therefore producing Time as an image of Eternity — a clear reference to the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*.
16. See the discussion of this concept in H.M. Schenke, *Der Gott "Mensch" in der Gnosis* (Berlin, 1962).
17. "The Father of Truth" in *Gr. Seth.* sounds as if he is supreme (e.g., 50, 10-15) and the expression "Son of Man" as used in the tractate for Jesus/Seth is interpreted as if "Man" meant the supreme God.
18. In *Eugnostos* III, 3, 85, (= *Sophia Jes Christ* III, 4, 108), we find the sequence Immortal Man, Son of Man, and the Saviour, all as aeons in the Pleroma, Immortal Man being the offspring of the First Father, so things can become quite complicated.
19. In the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (III, 60, 9-18 = VI, 71, 18-30) Seth "sows his seed in the aeons" (in IV "the earth-born aeons"), but this seems to refer to his sowing the pneumatics in the world (specifically in Sodom and Gomorrah). It is not clear whether anything remains above.
20. A similar system of imaging is presented by Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 17, 1, 1 as the doctrine of the Valentinian Marcus, but there "brought about through the Mother, by the Demiurge, without his being aware of it."
21. In the technical sense of "full and perfect nature" (LSJ) it seems to go back to the writings of St. Paul (e.g., *Rom.* 11:12; *Eph.* 3:9; *Col.* 2:9).
22. *V. Mos.* II, 62, *Spec. Leg.* I, 272, *Prob.* 128.

23. E.g., *Leg. All* I, 44; *Quod Det.* 54; *Somn.* I, 75 (*logos*); *Spec. Leg.* II, 53 (*θεὸς . . . πλήρης ἀγαθῶν τελείων*).
24. E.g., God the (*plērōma tou agathou*), VI, 4, 3; or (*plērōma tōn pantōn*), XVI, 3, 4.

## Plotinus's Anti-Gnostic Polemic and Porphyry's *Against the Christians*

Christos Evangeliou

### I

Porphyry divides the work of Plotinus chronologically into three parts on the basis of his own association with the great philosopher. The three parts are: (1) The twenty-one treatises written before the year A.D. 263, when Porphyry came to Rome from Athens and joined Plotinus's circle; (2) the twenty-four treatises written during the six-year period of his residence in Rome; (3) the nine treatises which Plotinus wrote after Porphyry's departure and before his own death in A.D. 270. According to Porphyry's evaluation, the treatises vary in power depending on the time of writing, but the twenty-four produced in the mid-period display, he thinks, "the utmost reach of the powers and, except for the short treatises among them, attain the highest perfection."<sup>1</sup>

I think that no one who has read the *Enneads* carefully can disagree with Porphyry's expert judgment on this matter. What should be emphasized is the fact that about one-third of the treatises produced in the mid-period have a distinctly polemical tone, and they include some of the longest treatises that Plotinus ever wrote. Specifically, to this group belong the treatises numbered in chronological order 42, 43 and 44, which bear the common title *On the Genera of Being* and which were written to defend Plato's ontology against Aristotelian and Stoic criticism.<sup>2</sup> The treatise *Against the Gnostics*, which is numbered 33 and comes as an epilogue to the series of treatises numbered 30, 31, and 32,

belongs to the same polemical group.<sup>3</sup> In writing these treatises, Plotinus's purpose was to defend both Plato against the attacks of some apostates from the ancient philosophy, and Hellenism, that is, the Hellenic κόσμος, the Hellenic λόγος, and the Hellenic ἀρετή, against metaphysical fancies and fearful cries coming from certain alienated men, the so-called Gnostics.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, Plotinus definitely has a place in that illustrious series of distinguished men who took it upon themselves to defend their Hellenic heritage when they felt that it was seriously threatened. This great effort, which started with Celsus<sup>5</sup> in the second century A.D. and ended with Julian in the fourth century A.D., found in Porphyry its greatest spokesman.<sup>6</sup>

My main purpose in this study is to compare critically Plotinus's treatise *Against the Gnostics* with Porphyry's work *Against the Christians* in order to determine the common elements in these movements which the two philosophers found objectionable. It is to be understood that such an investigation cannot give us a complete list of points shared by Gnosticism and Christianity, as the philosophers perceived them, due to the fate of Porphyry's burned book, from which only a number of fragments remain.<sup>7</sup> In spite of this and their differences in style, the two authors share certain basic ideas and ideals about the Cosmos and man's place in it which are distinctly Hellenic and, therefore, anti-Gnostic and anti-Christian. But, before I come to that, I should like to briefly address a question which is important for the correct understanding of the relationship of Gnosticism to the Greek philosophy of the third century A.D. This question relates to the identity of the men against whom Plotinus wrote his diatribe.

## II

In his long treatise against the strange Gnostic teachings, Plotinus never mentions his opponents by name.<sup>8</sup> He does not even refer to them as Gnostics. At one point only (II.9.10.3), he calls them his friends who had been so badly contaminated by the new teaching before they met him that they could not get over it even after they had been taught the true doctrine by him. However, we do have Porphyry's reliable testimony (*Vita Plot.* 16) that Plotinus's target was the circle around Adelphius and Aquilinus who had abandoned the ancient Greek philosophy and declared in favor of the revelations of such masters as Zoroaster, Zostrianus, Allogenes, Nicotheus and others. Since these apostates believed and openly taught that Plato did not penetrate "the depth of Intelligible Being" (βάθος τῆς νοητῆς οὐσίας), they became

the subject of frequent discussions in Plotinus's classroom. At the end, the master was compelled to write against them and urged Amelius and Porphyry to do the same in more detail, which they did.<sup>9</sup> These, then, are the men whom Porphyry, but not Plotinus, refers to as "Gnostics."

Porphyry's information is valuable, but it helps us little to solve the enigma regarding the identity of those "Gnostics." For, given the fact that in Rome at that time there were many Gnostic sects, such as Sethians, Barbelognostics, Ophites, Archontics, Valentinians and others,<sup>10</sup> the question arises: To which of these sects did Plotinus's Gnostic friends belong? Furthermore, since some of the Gnostic sects were Christian and others were pagan, we would like to know whether Plotinus addressed Christian or pagan Gnostics here. Unfortunately, the experts who have looked into this problem hold different opinions depending on the interpretation of an ambiguous passage in *Vita Plotini* 16. This passage reads as follows in Greek:

Γεγόρασι δὲ κατ' αὐτὸν τῶν Χριστιανῶν πολλοὶ μὲν καὶ ἄλλοι,  
αἰρετικοὶ δὲ ἐκ τῆς παλαιᾶς φιλοσοφίας ἀνηγμένοι οἱ περὶ  
Ἀδελφίου καὶ Ἀκυλτίου οἷ. . .

The following three varying translations of this passage seem possible depending on what one takes to be the syntactical connections and references of the two ambiguous words, ἄλλοι and οἱ.

(a) "There were at that time many Christians and other sectaries, like the followers of Adelphius and Aquilinus who had abandoned the ancient philosophy, who . . ."

(b) "There were at that time many other Christians and among them were the sectarian followers of Adelphius and Aquilinus who had abandoned the ancient philosophy and who . . ."

(c) "There were at that time many Christians — among them the sectarian followers of Adelphius and Aquilinus who had abandoned the ancient philosophy — who . . ."

According to (a) there were two distinct groups, the Christians and the sectarian pagans, who made use of the Gnostic books and revelations. Reitzenstein, Bossuet, Festugière, and other scholars who, according to H.C. Puech,<sup>11</sup> identified Plotinus's opponents with the pagan Gnostics, presumably adopted this rendering of the passage. Puech himself opts for (b) because he believes that Porphyry here distinguishes from the mass of Christian Gnostics that special group which had certain connections with the "philosophie antique."<sup>12</sup> Unless one is prepared to take the liberty of amending the text by deleting the words μὲν and the second δὲ, it would seem that (b) is

definitely preferable to (a). However, (b) seems to go too far in the direction of making the αἰρετικοί in Porphyry's text look like Christian heretics. They certainly were not.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, this rendering implies that the followers of Adelphius and Aquilinus were the only Christians who made use of the Gnostic revelations specified by Porphyry in the lines which have been left out of the above quotation. But the text, as we have it, makes such a restriction unwarrantable. Therefore, I think that (c), which is basically the same as MacKenna's rendering of this admittedly difficult passage,<sup>14</sup> avoids the pitfalls of (b) while it saves the important point of identifying Plotinus's opponents as Christians. Another merit of (c) is that it also agrees with (a) in that it allows for the case that other Christian groups, besides the followers of Adelphius and Aquilinus, made use of the Gnostic books and revelations, which is quite possible.<sup>15</sup>

Be this as it may, the important point, for an accurate understanding of Plotinus's anti-Gnostic polemic, is that he was interested neither in Christian Gnosticism nor in pagan Gnosticism in general, but only in Adelphius, Aquilinus and their followers. The reason for this, I think, was the fact that these fellows were, as Porphyry put it, apostates in the sense that they had abandoned the honorable tradition of Platonic philosophy and tried to set up a new school.<sup>16</sup> Unlike Plotinus, these people were unable to find in the *Dialogues* the whole truth regarding the realm of Intelligible Being (νοητὴ οὐσία) and, in their search for a higher knowledge and wisdom (γνώσις, σοφία), they had embraced certain forgeries which passes as revelations of Zoroaster, Zostrianus and the other great prophets from the East.<sup>17</sup> This apostasy embarrassed Plotinus and scandalized many in his school.

In writing against these Gnostics and in urging Porphyry and Amelius to do the same, Plotinus did not aim at, nor did he hope to, bring the apostates back to the right road (II.9.10). Rather he desired to enlighten the rest of his pupils about the truth and inform them that (a) whatever is worthy in the apostates' teaching had been taken from Plato, and (b) what had been added to it is far from being true. "For, in sum, a part of their doctrine comes from Plato; all the novelties through which they seek to establish a philosophy of their own have been picked up outside of the truth" (II.9.6.10-12). In another passage, echoing St. Irenaeus's apt characterization of the Gnostics as poor translators of what has been well said, Plotinus remarks: "All this terminology is piled up to conceal their debt to the ancient Greek philosophy which taught, clearly and without bombast, the ascent from

the cave and the gradual advance of the souls to a truer and truer vision" (II.9.6.6-9).

In view of this direct and important evidence regarding the relationship of Greek philosophy to Gnosticism (or, more precisely, a certain Gnostic sect), I find it necessary to make a parenthetical comment. I must say from the outset that I am fully aware of the complexity of this problem and the variety of the proposed solutions, ranging from Harnack's oft-quoted aphorism that "Gnosticism was the acute Hellenization of Christianity,"<sup>18</sup> to A.H. Armstrong's sweeping generalization as follows: "I think, then, in general, that any kind of influence of Greek philosophy on Gnosticism was not genuine but extraneous and, for the most part superficial."<sup>19</sup> It is true that Professor Armstrong makes this strong statement after he has drawn two important distinctions between the wider and the narrower senses of "Gnosticism," and between genuine and extraneous "influence." In his opinion, one should speak of "genuine influence" only in the case

... when someone's mind has been formed to an important extent by a tradition: when, that is, he has been taught by great thinkers of that tradition and/or has read the writings considered authoritative in that tradition in their languages (which may or may not be his own) under the guidance of competent inheritors of that tradition. (p. 100)

Evidently, the two basic criteria of determining "genuine influence" are, according to Armstrong, (1) instruction of the recipient by the great thinkers of a given tradition, and/or (2) ability to read in the original the authoritative writings of that tradition. So far, so good.

With due respect for Professor Armstrong, I must say that his two criteria seem to apply well in the case of those Gnostics about whom Porphyry speaks in *Vita Plot.* 16, and against whom Plotinus wrote the diatribe of II.9. But if they do meet his criteria, then how is it possible for Professor Armstrong to deny "genuine influence" of Greek philosophy on Gnosticism and be consistent? Let me try to be more specific and less critical. There is no doubt that Plotinus and Porphyry considered the followers of Adelphius and Aquilinus as apostates from Greek philosophy who were led astray by Gnostic teaching. It is also clear that the apostates had read Plato in the original and had adopted many Platonic doctrines. Furthermore, Plotinus calls them his "friends," as we have seen, and Eunapius reports that Origen, Amelius and Aquilinus were Porphyry's συμφοιτηταί (fellow disciples).<sup>20</sup> So, at least in the case of Aquilinus, we have a Gnostic who was very well-

read in the Greek philosophical tradition and taught by no less a great teacher than Plotinus. From this clearly follows that one cannot, on Professor Armstrong's criteria, reach his negative general conclusion. Either the criteria should be changed or the conclusion must be revised.<sup>21</sup>

These remarks should not be misunderstood. I do not say that Greek philosophy influenced all spiritual movements of the first three centuries of our era, especially Gnosticism and Christianity, in the same way or to the same degree; nor do I assert that the Christian preaching was less or more absurd than the Gnostic teaching to the philosophically minded people of that time. I simply wish to point out the fact that Plotinus's Gnostic opponents, by being trained in the Greek philosophical tradition, refute Professor Armstrong's statement regarding the relationship of Gnosticism to Greek philosophy, since they easily pass his test of determining "genuine influence."<sup>22</sup> This being the case, I think that any student of this period of intellectual history should keep in mind the following cautious observation of Professor Jonas:

Modern scholars have advanced in turn Hellenic, Babylonian, Egyptian, and Iranian origins and every possible combination of these with one another and with Jewish and Christian elements. Since in the material of its representation Gnosticism actually is a product of syncretism, each of these theories can be supported from the sources and none of them is satisfactory alone . . .<sup>23</sup>

To close this lengthy parenthesis, the important point for our purposes here is that Gnosticism and Christianity were perceived by Plotinus and Porphyry in the same light, that is, as alien and un-Hellenic voices or, rather, cries.<sup>24</sup> The case of Aquilinus, a "classmate" of Porphyry in the school of Plotinus in Rome and the case of, say, St. Gregory, a fellow student with Julian in the philosophical schools of Athens may or may not seem parallel to a modern scholar, depending on his feelings or biases. But to a pagan like Plotinus, Porphyry or Julian, the fact that Aquilinus used his training in Greek philosophy to serve Gnosticism, while St. Gregory used the same to serve the Christian cause, could make no difference at all. The philosophers considered Gnosticism and Christianity as forms of barbarism and fought both of them as enemies of Hellenism. That Plotinus's opposition to Gnosticism and Porphyry's anti-Christian polemic share a common philosophical ground will become clear from the analysis of their arguments which follows.

## III

Porphyry, the editor of the *Enneads*, has given to the last tractate of the second *Ennead* (II.9.), two titles: "Against the Gnostics" and "Against Those Who Declare the Maker of the World and the World to be Evil." The reader of this treatise may notice the following peculiarities. First, the author not only does not mention his opponents by name anywhere, but also he never quotes from their writings the doctrines and the theses which he criticizes. Second, the role of an able attorney, who is determined to defend both the beauty of the Cosmos and the worth of a life led by reason and lived in virtue on this Earth, would hardly seem to fit the traditional image of Plotinus as an austere, ascetic, mystical and otherworldly philosopher who was ashamed to have a body (*Vita Plot.* 1). Third, the first three chapters seem rather loosely connected with the rest of the treatise. The reason for this is that Plotinus here seems to sum up the arguments which he had expounded in three other treatises.<sup>25</sup> It is possible that all this material constituted a large treatise which the editor broke up for pedagogical or other reasons.<sup>26</sup> The point is that in the opening chapters of his anti-Gnostic treatise Plotinus tries to defend the thesis of the Three Hypostases which is important for his philosophy and which is summarized as follows:

We need not, then, go seeking any other Principles; this — the One and the Good — is our First, next to it follows the Intellectual Principle, the Primal Thinker, and upon this follows Soul. Such is the order of nature. The Intellectual Realm allows no more than these and no less. (II.9.1.12-16)

We will be in a position to better understand Plotinus's concern about the number, the order and the function of the Hypostases if we keep in mind that he sincerely believed that he had found in Plato's writings the doctrine of the Three Hypostases (ἓν, νοῦς, ψυχή),<sup>27</sup> and that one of the Gnostic novelties was the multiplication of the entities of their Intelligible Realm (Πλήρωμα), occasionally to fantastic numbers.<sup>28</sup> Thus the arguments of the first three chapters of II.9. are so designed as to reject all proposals for either reducing or increasing the number of the Three Hypostases by either adding new ones or dividing the old, especially Nous and Psyche, which are naturally multifunctional. Plotinus particularly concentrates on the Gnostic Ἐπίνοια (Thought) and rejects it as a candidate for entering the Plotinian Hypostatic Triad as separate from Νοῦς (II.9.2.1). Having adopted the Aristotelian conception of νοῦς as a "Self-Thinking



Thought," Plotinus was able to combine in one Divine Noûs the Thinker, the Thought and the Awareness of it, by arguing as follows:

No: The Divine Mind in its mentation thinks itself; the object of the thought is nothing external: Thinker and Thought are one; therefore in its thinking and knowing it possesses itself, observes itself, sees itself not as something unconscious but as knowing: in this Primal Knowing it must include, as one and the same Act, the knowledge of the knowing.<sup>29</sup>

Beginning with chapter four, Plotinus devotes the greatest part of this tractate to defending the goodness of the Demiurge, the beauty of the Cosmos, and man's dignified place in it. There are many Gnostic doctrines at which he hints and rejects as being either ridiculous (γελοῖον) or absurd (ἄτοπον).<sup>30</sup> For instance, to justify their claim that the world is the product of ignorance, error, and vainglory on the part of the Maker, the Gnostics had tried to utilize the myth of Phaedrus (246C) which speaks figuratively of the soul as "failing of its wings." Plotinus's view is that this does not apply to the Cosmic Soul but to the individual souls and their follies (II.9.4.1). He also finds ridiculous the Gnostic explanation as to the motives of the Creator in creating the world. They speak anthropomorphically and assert that "glory" (ἵνα τιμῶτο) was His motive, as if He was no better than a sculptor (II.9.4.14). In addition, Plotinus, who had accepted the standard Greek position that this Cosmos is the necessary, timeless, and wonderful outcome of the divine wisdom, goodness, and power, found offensive the dogmatic Gnostic assertion that the Cosmos was created in time and that it will be destroyed when the cosmic drama comes to an end. Scornfully, Plotinus observes:

And when will it destroy the work? If it repents of its work, what is it waiting for? If it has not yet repented, then it will never repent: it must be already accustomed to the world, must be growing tender towards it with the passing of time. (II.9.4.17-19)

Plotinus also thinks that the Gnostics contradict themselves in that they express their hatred of this Earth and, at the same time, they preach about a "new Earth" (καινὴ γῆ) which has been created for them somewhere in the heavens (II.9.5.24).<sup>31</sup> Besides, in Plotinus's view, the Gnostics prove themselves not very intelligent by expecting this world, which is just an image (albeit the best possible image) of the intelligible archetype, to be as perfect as its model (παράδειγμα). Above all, the Gnostics must surely be very arrogant to believe that of

all the immense creation only they and those like them possess an immortal soul which thus enables them to be exclusively in contact with the Supreme God (II.9.5.6-15). But for Plotinus, a human being, no matter how valuable or knowable, cannot be the best creature in the world and, when compared with the greatness of the heavenly bodies or the Cosmos as a whole, a man appears to be rather insignificant. On this Plotinus is in agreement with Aristotle.<sup>32</sup>

From their hubristic and blasphemous attitude towards the world, Plotinus passes next to the Gnostic irreverence for the ancient philosophy, especially Plato, from whom they took whatever is valuable in their teaching, e.g., immortality of the Soul, Intelligible Realm, the Supreme God, the Creator, the rivers and punishments of the underworld and so forth (II.9). Plotinus does not blame them for doing so. What he finds objectionable in the Gnostic behavior is their attempt to set up a new school, "their own philosophy" (ἰδίαν φιλοσοφίαν).<sup>33</sup> Thus, they misinterpret Plato or, worse, as Plotinus put it, "They hunt fame by insult, reviling and seeking in their own persons to replace men honored by the fine intelligences of ages past" (II.9.6.52-54). A short list of Gnostic innovations, of which Plotinus disapproves, includes the complete destruction of the Cosmos, blame of the World-Soul for attaching itself to body and of the Cosmos as a whole and contempt for the Maker and Ruler of this All, to whom they ascribe passions inappropriate to Divine nature (II.9.6.).

The Gnostic cosmology should be rejected, according to Plotinus, not only because it is fanciful and strange but also for the reason that its hubristic and blasphemous doctrines would have deleterious effects on the morals of the people. He was well aware of the vulnerability of human beings to the Gnostic revolutionary and immoral teaching, especially when that sort of teaching is followed by talk like this: "You yourself are to be nobler than all else, nobler than men, nobler than even gods." Or "You, yourself are the child of God; those men whom you used to venerate, those beings whose worship they inherit from antiquity, none of these are His children; you without lifting hand are nobler than the very heavens; others take up the cry." (II.9.9.53-58).

It is, therefore, understandable that the remainder of Plotinus's criticism concentrates on the Gnostic ethics and immoral practices, although chapters 10-13 contain many references to such important Gnostic terms and figures as σοφία (Wisdom), μήτηρ (Mother), δημιουργός (Demiurge), τόλμα (audacity), νεῦσις (decline), ἔλλαμψις (illumination), ἐνθύμησις (remembrance), ὕλη (matter), πῦρ (fire), etc.<sup>34</sup> Particularly, commenting on the Gnostic irrational fear of the spheres, Plotinus asks: "And what, after all, is there so terrible in these

spheres with which it is sought to frighten people unaccustomed to thinking, never trained in an instructive and coherent gnosis?" (II.9.13.9-10). It is precisely this morbid fear which, the philosopher thinks, provides a basis for the magical practices of the Gnostic sects. Their "sacred formulas," their "spells" and "evocations" were all designed and sold to the faithful with the assurance that they will secure a safe passage of the soul through the hostile Cosmic powers and even protect the body from disease, which Plotinus finds laughable indeed.<sup>35</sup>

With regard to morality, Plotinus thinks that the Gnostics are worse than the Epicureans, who denied Providence and made pleasure the highest end of life. For the Gnostic doctrine not only carps at Providence but also

... it scorns every law known to us; immemorial virtue and all restraint it makes into a laughing stock, lest any loveliness be seen on earth; it cuts at the root of all orderly living, and of the righteousness which, innate in the moral sense, is made perfect by thought and self-discipline: all that would give us a noble human being is gone. (II.9.15.10-17)

There is something very humane and moving in Plotinus's defense of traditional values, virtue, decency, and a common-sense moral attitude in this passage. The ancient Hellenic ideal of the good life considered as restrained activity of the soul led by reason and capable of bringing out what is best in a man through self-discipline and thought, all this has now become dispensable. Those who claim possession of the supreme knowledge, that is, Gnosis, do not think they need the old virtues, nor do they care for them any more. Not only do they not practice virtue, "they do not even talk about the subject," Plotinus observes and his sad observation sounds so modern and familiar to us.<sup>36</sup> To the Gnostic cry "Look to God" and everything will be fine, Plotinus retorts that "God" on the lips without a good conduct of life, is a word" (II.9.15.40).

Like a reasonable man, Plotinus considers absurd the arrogant claim that a Gnostic can be "good" while despising every human virtue and decency as well as the whole world and its many gods. He finds it difficult to believe that in a human heart, filled with so much hatred for the Cosmos and everything else in it, there could be any room left for the love of the Supreme Gnostic God. If this is not hubris, it is certainly hypocrisy because, as Plotinus put it, "where we love, our hearts are warm also to the kin of the beloved; we are not indifferent to the children of our friend" (II.9.16.7-8). Comments like this may indicate the true gentleness and humanity of Plotinus's character, but

they also tell us that the philosopher did not recognize an all-important aspect of the Gnostic mentality, that is, the abyss which separates mundane things and celestial Archons alike from the God whom they call their Father. For the true God, like the true Gnostic, is not kin but alien to this Cosmos in which he finds himself imprisoned. Their revolutionary spirit is absolutely uncompromising towards everything within this Cosmos. In this sense, the Gnostic spiritual revolt is truly of Cosmic dimensions and has its parallel in certain extreme movements in the twentieth century, such as existentialism and nihilism, as has been observed.<sup>37</sup>

It is true that the Gnostics used Platonic texts, such as *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*, to justify their asceticism and negative attitude towards the body and the material world in general.<sup>38</sup> For this reason, Plotinus found it necessary to close his treatise against the Gnostics by defending Plato and his own interpretation of the Platonic philosophy. Thus he tries to explain that in the divinely ordered system, which is called Cosmos, everything has its proper place, body and soul, men and Gods, the higher and the lower orders, or as he likes to put it, the first, the second, and the third. There are no gaps in this system. The hierarchy is complete and eternally arranged for eternity. The Cosmos as a whole is very beautiful and, in fact, the best possible copy of its supreme archetype, the *Kóσμος Νοητός*. Even the existing partial imperfections and shortcomings add to the marvelous beauty of the whole. For Plotinus, even man's life on earth can become beautiful if it is guided by reason and crowned with virtue and true wisdom. For him, as for Socrates, the first and highest duty of man is to fulfill Apollo's command: "Know thyself." The true Platonists, no less than the Gnostics, are convinced that their real abode is elsewhere. The basic difference between the two is their attitude towards this life. While the Gnostic constantly complains, blames everything, hates everybody, blasphemes and, nevertheless, goes on living unwisely believing that at the end he will be saved by means of secret revelations and magical spells, the Platonic philosopher tries to live in peace with other people and in harmony with the world, to keep his soul as pure as possible, and to calmly prepare for the great journey when the time comes. In conclusion, Plotinus can say to his disciples:

I leave it to yourselves to read the books and examine the rest of the doctrine: you will note all through how our form of philosophy inculcates simplicity of character and honest thinking in addition to all other good qualities, how it inculcates reverence and not arrogant self-assertion, how its boldness is balanced with reason, by careful proof, by cautious progression,

by the utmost circumspection — and you will compare those other systems to one proceeding by this method. (II.9.14.37-43)

Recapitulating Plotinus's criticism against the apostate Gnostics, it may be observed that his main objections turn around the following points: (1) inconsistencies in their doctrines as well as between their theory and practice; (2) their irrational assertions about the Cosmos, e.g., that it was created in time by an ignorant Demiurge, that it will come to an end, that it is evil and serves as a prison for the spiritual Gnostics who are alien to it; (3) their arrogant and hubristic attitude towards the visible divinities within the Cosmos and to the Cosmos as a whole; (4) their irreverence for old traditions and great men of the past, especially Plato; (5) their secret revelations and immodest claim that of all the creation only they themselves qualify to be called "sons of God"; (6) their immoral teaching that salvation cannot come from complete virtue and human excellence, but from God's inscrutable will and magic formulae; (7) their libertinism and demagogic capacity to deceive the simple-minded by calling them children of God and promising them a paradise in heaven.

#### IV

Turning from Plotinus to Porphyry, and comparing the anti-Gnostic polemic as found in *Ennead* II.9. to the anti-Christian polemic as expressed in the few remaining fragments of the fifteen-book long treatise *Against the Christians*,<sup>39</sup> it does not take long to notice that, despite their differences in style, the two works share many of the essential arguments.

Regarding the style, it may be noted that Porphyry, unlike Plotinus, names and frequently quotes the prophets of the Old Testament, the Evangelists of the New Testament, and the Apostles of Jesus, especially Peter and Paul. Also, unlike Plotinus's criticism which is doctrinal and general, Porphyry's sharp remarks are always specific and to the point, betraying a literary critic who is well-read in the literature of his opponents.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Porphyry took from Plotinus the technique of capitalizing on the ridiculous and absurd aspects of his opponents' tenets, and he developed it to such a degree that it reminds us of such spirited writers as Renan and Voltaire.<sup>41</sup> No wonder, then, that Porphyry was considered a most formidable foe of Christianity. It is not an accident that of all anti-Christian books of that time only Porphyry's treatise was committed to flames. Finally, while Plotinus often gives the

impression that he is more interested in defending Hellenism than in attacking Gnosticism, Porphyry only attacks, and is shrewd enough to make his target the very foundations of the new faith. Since the basis of the Christian claim to uniqueness and to monopoly of truth and salvation is the belief that their sacred books are God-inspired, Porphyry's strategy is to prove to an educated person beyond doubt that those writings are, in fact, full of inconsistencies, exaggerations, impossibilities, fabrications and falsehoods. And if so, they cannot be inspired by the true God as the Christians claim, nor can they provide a road to salvation, let alone *the only* road available to men. Porphyry hoped that his fellow-pagans would get the message and stay away from the basilicas and the strange God. If we judge from the reaction to the treatise, his message was getting across quite well.<sup>42</sup>

Regarding the doctrinal argumentation, it may be observed that Porphyry's criticism parallels Plotinus's objections in the essential points. Specifically, Porphyry objects to Christian Cosmology, eschatology, morality and religious practices in a way which is reminiscent of Plotinus's anti-Gnostic polemic. The question, What are Porphyry's grounds of criticism in each of these areas?, cannot be fully answered, due to the fragmentary state of his extant work. However, the available evidence allows us to get a glimpse of the direction and the general tone of his arguments against Christianity. Take, for instance, the Christian doctrine that the world as a whole will perish one day. To Porphyry's mind, this doctrine is illogical and unacceptable, because it entails that the Cosmos as a whole, which is God's work, is not as perfect as it could be. But deficiency in the product would reflect, in the final analysis, an imperfection in the Maker himself, who is perfect by definition. Therefore, the Cosmos as a whole cannot change, let alone perish. Like Plotinus and other Greek philosophers, Porphyry was convinced that there is no sufficient reason for entertaining the idea that this Cosmos either came into being in time or it will pass away in time. Either hypothesis would allow for an unreasonable change in the immutable nature of God, which is logically impossible. In a Plotinian manner, Porphyry concludes that the Christian doctrines of creation and Cosmic destruction are irrational and blasphemous and, therefore, should be rejected.<sup>43</sup>

But there is something else about the Christian eschatology which, to Porphyry's eyes, is more ridiculous than absurd. He knew very well that Christians believe not only in Jesus's resurrection but in their own. They go so far as to assert that the believer's body no less than his soul is immortal. Now Porphyry, like all genuine Platonists, was himself convinced about the immortality or, rather, eternity of the soul. Yet he

found the Christian belief in the immortality of the flesh materialistic, base, and absurd. He asks the reader to think for a moment of the simple fact of life that fishermen have been eating fish for thousands of years, and, when drowned, they are eaten up by the fish. Then, let one try to tell, if he can, to whom of all these men the resurrected body will belong on the day of the Christian Last Judgment. Logically and humanly it is not possible to tell, and to say that God will take care of it, when the time comes, makes no sense for the rational philosopher, because even God cannot do the logically impossible. For example, no God can undo the horrible deeds done by the Achaeans when they sacked Troy.<sup>44</sup> At any rate, Porphyry thinks it a sign of ignorance and vulgarity for anyone to assert both contradictory propositions that the beautiful and great Cosmos will perish, and that his own little and dirty body will be preserved by God for eternity.<sup>45</sup>

Porphyry is also very skeptical about the value of the Christian morality, which makes the criterion of goodness to be, not virtue and excellence, but faith and poverty. Having some respect for Jesus, he seriously doubts whether the Christian God ever uttered the famous aphorism "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven."<sup>46</sup> For the philosopher, a doctrine which identifies, as a matter of course, the morally good with the poor, and the morally bad with the well-to-do, can come only from poverty-stricken men having an eye on the possessions of other men. No doubt, such a motto can serve the designs of a political demagogue but it becomes questionable when it comes from a moral reformer, like Jesus. The same can be said about such important Christian practices such as Eucharist and Baptism, which seem to make the way to salvation not only open to everyone but also too easy even for the most mean man. Besides, to promise to any criminal that no matter what he does in his life he will be absolved and enter paradise if only baptized before he dies, is equivalent to putting dynamite at the foundations of an organized society of decent human beings.<sup>47</sup> For Porphyry, there is no greater and more dangerous folly than that which has the audacity to preach this kind of gospel. In this respect, Porphyry's Christian enemies come so close to Plotinus's Gnostic opponents that, for all practical purposes, they are indistinguishable. Because of their irrational revelations, their immoral practices, and their questionable promises, both movements were perceived by the two philosophers as extremely dangerous for the established order, be it moral, social, political or metaphysical.<sup>48</sup>

## V

In conclusion, the findings of this study can be summarized as follows. First, the available evidence seems to support the thesis that the Gnostics, whom Plotinus criticized, were in some way related to his circle, that they were trained in Greek philosophy, especially Plato, and that in all probability they belonged to a Christian Gnostic sect. Second, it follows from this thesis that the view, which absolutely denies any influence of Greek philosophy on any Gnostic sect anywhere at any time during the first three centuries of our era, cannot be correct. In the light of this research, it is beyond any doubt that some sort of relationship existed between the two traditions in the middle of the third century A.D. in Rome, especially in or around Plotinus's school, due possibly to the influence of Numenius's teaching.<sup>49</sup> Third, a simple comparison of Plotinus's anti-Gnostic polemic and Porphyry's criticism of Christianity clearly indicates that the two authors, in spite of their stylistic differences, criticized their opponents for essentially the same ethical and metaphysical reasons.

For philosophers, like Plotinus and Porphyry, who felt that they were the heirs of Hellenic culture in terms of language, philosophy, art, morality, and religious traditions, both Gnosticism and Christianity were perceived as alien, barbaric and un-Hellenic movements. In their irrational, excessive and hubristic claims about God, Cosmos, and man's virtue and place in the entire scheme of things, both movements were equally offensive to Hellenic sensibilities and unacceptable to the philosophic ethos of that time. What happened later is another story.

It is also clear that Plotinus, with his anti-Gnostic polemic which is actually an apology and defense of Hellenism, has given a definite answer to those scholars who still wonder about the possible sources of his philosophy.<sup>50</sup> In II.9. as well as throughout the *Enneads*, where there is scarcely one page without at least one quotation or reference to Plato, Plotinus proves himself, I think, as Hellenic a philosopher as any one could be in the third century A.D. or in the subsequent centuries.

## NOTES

1. *Vita Plotini*, 6. 32-34. MacKenna's translation, which will be followed throughout, unless stated otherwise.
2. I have pointed this out in "The Ontological Basis of Plotinus's Criticism of Aristotle's Theory of Categories," *Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern*, Vol. IV, R. Baine Harris, gen. ed. (New York: SUNY Press, 1982), pp. 73-83.

3. R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 45; R. Harder, "Eine neue Schrift Plotins," *Hermes* LXXI (1936): 5-8; A.H. Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy," *Gnosis, Festschrift für Hans Jonas*, Barbara Aland, ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978), pp. 87-124. All of these scholars agree that the four treatises are parts of a larger treatise.
4. The name derives from the Greek word for knowledge, γνῶσις. However, the meaning of this term as used by Gnostics is far from clear. On this, see H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, second edition, revised (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 34-37.
5. Lucian, Fronto, Hierocles, and the anonymous philosopher to whom Macarius addressed his *Apocriticus* are included in this series.
6. That many Christian dignitaries, like Methodius of Tyre, Apollinaris of Laodicea, Eusebius of Caesarea, and the historian Philostorgius, wrote many volumes in response to Porphyry, clearly indicates the alarm which his book created in Christian circles. The book was finally burned in 448 A.D. under the Emperor Theodosius II. A.B. Hulén, *Porphyry's Work Against the Christians: An Interpretation* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Press, 1933), p. 6.
7. The fragments were first collected and published with a German translation by Adolf von Harnack, *Kritik des Neuen Testaments: von einem griechischen Philosophen des 3. Jahrhunderts*, TU 37, 4 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich, 1911). The controversy as to whether the philosopher in Macarius's *Apocriticus* is someone who quotes Porphyry, or Hierocles who follows him, is only of philological interest. I refer the interested reader to T.W. Crafer, "The Work of Porphyry Against the Christians and Its Reconstruction," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 15 (1913-1914): 360-395, 481-512.
8. In this Plotinus follows an old Greek tradition.
9. *Vita Plotini*, 16.
10. H.C. Puech, "Plotin et les Gnostiques," *Entretiens Hardt*, Vol. V (Vandoeuvres-Geneva, 1960), pp. 161-190.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Dr. Puech himself makes this clear in his answer to Dodds's question. *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176.
14. MacKenna's translation of this passage reads as follows: "Many Christians of this period — amongst them sectaries who had abandoned the old philosophy, men of the schools of Adelphius and Aquilinus — had . . ."
15. The Gnostic terminology to which Plotinus refers in chapters 9-13 suggests that he had Valentinian Gnostics in mind.
16. In II.9.6, Plotinus accuses the apostates of innovations with the intention to start a new movement, ἰδία φιλοσοφία, ἰδία αἵρεσις. Did Diophanes, whom Porphyry mentions in *Vita* 15, also belong to this Gnostic group? J. Rist thinks so, *Eros and Psyche* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 185. I think that Professor Rist is right, but the question needs further investigation.
17. *Vita Plotini*, 16.

18. H. Jonas, *ibid.*, p. 36.
19. A.H. Armstrong, *ibid.*, p. 101.
20. *The Lives of the Sophists*, ed. W.C. Wright (London: William Heinemann, 1922), p. 358.
21. At the end of his long article, Armstrong himself seems to have come a long way from his initial generalization. On p. 123 he writes: "I think that the whole question of the relation of Gnosis to Greek philosophy should be approached very cautiously with a clear definition of what is meant by Gnosis and a precise and detailed study of individual systems and thinkers on both sides in their historical context." With this view I fully agree.
22. For reasons which are not clear to this reader, Professor Armstrong asserts about Christianity what he denies about Gnosticism, that is, influence of Greek philosophy. See *Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (London: Methuen and Co., 1947), p. 159. To the eyes of the philosophers of that time, who perceived the two movements in the same light, this would have seemed inconsistent.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
24. "The other feature is the cryptic remark that a mournful or lamenting cry rises up from the agitated darkness," as Professor Jonas put it in a comment on the *Poimandres*. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
25. The other treatises are: III.8., V.5., V.8.
26. The editor's desire to reach the number 54 (i.e. 6x9) may be included in his reasons for breaking up this and other treatises.
27. On this, see *Ennead* V.1.8., and the comments of Professor J.N. Findlay, "The Neoplatonism of Plato," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, R. Baine Harris, gen. ed. (New York: SUNY Press, 1976), pp. 23-40.
28. According to Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I.1., the Valentinian Pleroma had no less than thirty Acons.
29. *Enneads*, II.9.1.46-51. In this context, Plotinus argues that even λόγος, the Reason Principle, which proceeds from νοῦς to ψυχή and makes it νουεράν, should not be viewed as an intermediate and separate principle.
30. The use of these derogatory words in this treatise is surprisingly frequent for the usually cool-headed Plotinus.
31. The location of the Gnostic paradise was "above the third heaven," according to Irenaeus, *ibid.*, I.5.2.
32. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1145a 7-12, and 1177b 24-1178a 1.
33. This explains, I think, Plotinus's interest in this Gnostic sect.
34. The terminology here is that of Christian Gnostics, in all probability Valentinians. Compare Irenaeus, *ibid.*, I chapters 1-8 and Book II, chapter 1. Also, Jonas, *ibid.*, pp. 174-205, and Puech, *ibid.*, p. 162.
35. γελοῖον is the word used here again.
36. About this see A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: NDU Press, 1981) and my review of this book in *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. XXXVII, no. 1 (September, 1983): 132-134.
37. Jonas, *ibid.*, especially the epilogue, pp. 320-340.

38. It is Plotinus's view that "Perhaps the hate of this school for the corporeal is due to their reading of Plato. . .," II.9.17.1-2.
39. In Greek the title is Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν. . . . If compared with the title of Plotinus's treatise Πρὸς τοὺς Γνωστικούς, we notice that a different preposition is used in each case. Κατὰ is much stronger than πρὸς, but this is lost in English when both words are rendered "against." A more accurate translation would be "To Gnostics," meaning a treatise addressed to Gnostics, and "Against the Christians," meaning a treatise directed against the Christians.
40. Of Porphyry's ability as a literary critic there are two celebrated cases, (1) his *Commentary on Daniel*, where he proves that the "prophecies" are, in fact, "a chronicle of events that had already taken place," and (2) his claim that the so-called "writing of Moses" was actually written by Ezra, that is "1,180 years later," in M. Anastos's estimation in "Porphyry's Attack on the Bible," *The Classical Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), pp. 421-450.
41. The similarities are noticed also by J. Moffatt, "The Great Attacks on Christianity: II. Porphyry, 'Against Christians,'" *The Expository Times*, Vol. 43 (October, 1931-September, 1932): 72-78.
42. See n. 6, above.
43. *Fragment IV.1*, and 6.
44. *Fragment IV.24*.
45. *Fragment IV.2*.
46. Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25 and Luke 18:25.
47. *Fragment III.5*, and *Fragment IV.19*.
48. I think that Dodds is right in his judgment that "What makes him (Plotinus) exceptional in the third century is his resolute objection to every short cut to wisdom proffered by Gnostics or Theurgists, Mithraists or Christians." "The Parmenides of Plato and the Origins of the Neoplatonic One," *Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 22 (1928): 129-143.
49. *Vita Plotini*, 17, and E.R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," in the above cited *Entretiens Hardt*, Vol. V, pp. 3-32.
50. On this issue, my study confirms T. Whittaker's view that ". . . the system of Plotinus was through and through Hellenic." *The Neoplatonists*, second edition, reprinted (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), p. xiv.

## Theological Doctrines of the Latin *Asclepius*

Stephen Gersh

The *Asclepius* is undoubtedly among the most interesting of the Hermetic writings, not only because it contains an extensive survey of doctrine but because — being a translation into Latin — it alone exercised some influence over medieval western thought. Its connection with the Greek *Corpus Hermeticum* has been fully established by A.D. Nock who noted striking parallels both of literary expression and of doctrinal content between the two texts, although it is unclear whether the author of the *Asclepius*'s original can be identified with that of one or more of the extant Greek treatises or whether he was simply acquainted with these other writings and influenced by them. At all events, this Latin dialogue provides a convenient summary of the main teachings of the Greek *Corpus Hermeticum* for those later western writers who will interest themselves in such matters.

The Latin *Asclepius* is a translation or rather adaptation, written by an unknown author active before A.D. 413, of a Greek treatise entitled "the Perfect Discourse" (Λόγος Τέλεια).<sup>1</sup> The fact that the work is a translation rather than an original composition is perhaps made obvious by the numerous Grecisms which it contains,<sup>2</sup> although the existence of a certain amount of direct evidence regarding the Greek original allows us to understand the genesis of the Latin version more precisely. This evidence consists in the first place of certain fragments of the Greek preserved in a magical papyrus, Lactantius, Cyril of Alexandria, Stobaeus, and Iohannes Lydus which allow us to establish parallels with the Latin in brief and isolated passages.<sup>3</sup> It consists in

the second place of two excerpts in the Coptic translation of *Nag Hammadi Codex VI* which permit us, especially when these are used in conjunction with the Latin, to conjecture the Greek original of more extended passages with some confidence.<sup>4</sup> The identity of the Latin translator is unknown to us since all attempts to equate him with figures like Apuleius, Calcidius, and Marius Victorinus have failed to carry conviction on stylistic grounds.<sup>5</sup> However, his activity can be placed before A.D. 413 since Augustine cites lengthy passages from this work in the section of his *De Civitate Dei* written around that date.<sup>6</sup>

The *Asclepius* takes the form of a continuous address by Hermes Trismegistus to his disciple Asclepius, punctuated occasionally with questions raised by the latter. Hermes speaks first of the continuity of life throughout the cosmos, and of the hierarchical order in which the creator God rules the heaven, the heaven the changeable bodies; and in which the astral gods communicate with the demons, the demons with mankind.<sup>7</sup> Man plays a special role in the cosmic system since he has two functions: to worship God and to cultivate the earth, in accordance with his dual nature of soul and body.<sup>8</sup> Those who discharge their functions correctly will return after death to the purely divine state, but those who fail in this will endure transmigration into animal form.<sup>9</sup> Hermes next describes the basic principles of the cosmos which are three in number: God, spirit, and matter. Each of these is unproduced and eternal, and corresponds to a different aspect of the various living creatures: God to intellect, spirit to soul, and matter to sensible form.<sup>10</sup> Since the highest of these living creatures — endowed with intellect alone — are the superior gods, a brief digression is inserted on their hierarchical arrangement, one in which a group of five intelligible gods or "rulers of substance" (*ousiarchai*) — Zeus, Phos, Pantomorphos, Heimarmene, Deuteros — presides over a group of five sensible ones — the heaven, the sun, the thirty-six decans, the seven spheres, the air.<sup>11</sup> For Hermes, the primal God is bisexual in the sense that he produces all things without the cooperation of a second principle. Human beings have only one sex, although they can participate in a divinely ordained mystery by copulation.<sup>12</sup> The kinship between the primal God and man is further emphasized in two arguments: first, since man has been endowed with reason in order to control the hostile impulses of matter whereas the astral gods have no need of reason, he is in a sense closer to the creator.<sup>13</sup> Second, since man is a maker of gods by placing statues prepared to receive the higher influences in his temples, while the primal God has produced the superior gods by placing astral bodies in the temple of the cosmos, there is an affinity of function.<sup>14</sup> In fact Egypt is the analogue of heaven in

the sense that it serves as a temple for the whole world, a statement which leads to a digression foretelling the decline of religious observances in that land, then the natural disasters — flood, conflagration, or pestilence — to be wrought as instruments of divine retribution, and then the restoration of the ancient beliefs.<sup>15</sup> At this point Hermes returns to his earlier argument that man should correctly discharge the functions enjoined by his dual nature. Thus, he will suffer one kind of death represented by the separation of soul from body but not the other kind of death manifested in the soul's punishment by relegation to the region of turbulence. It is easy to see that these deaths are more apparent than real, a necessary consequence of the fact that the cosmos itself is eternally living.<sup>16</sup> The cosmos is eternally living since eternity contains it and vivifies it from the outside, just as the cosmos contains and vivifies the temporal things within.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore the cosmos is both full — since there is no void surrounding or extending through it, the sensible world being enveloped by the intelligible world — and varied — since there is a diversity of individual forms within a single species, these forms themselves being subject to continual transformations.<sup>18</sup> Hermes once again returns to his argument that man should discharge the functions associated with his dual nature, this time focusing on man's role as a creator of terrestrial gods which are subject to a similar duality. Just as the astral gods exercise a kind of general providence, so the terrestrial gods preside over the individual details of human affairs.<sup>19</sup> This last point gives rise to a question about the role of Heimarmene in this system but, although one can define this as the necessity linking all events, one cannot say whether it is equivalent to the primal God, the world, or the order of celestial and terrestrial things.<sup>20</sup> Finally, Hermes and his disciple terminate their discussion with a prayer.

It will be immediately apparent from this summary that the *Asclepius* is a text which is loose and discursive in its structure. This fact has led certain modern scholars to conclude that the work, as we now have it, is not a literary unity but a composite product. Thus, T. Zielinski argued on the basis of certain inconsistencies in the dialogue structure that the treatise consists of four shorter texts joined end to end,<sup>21</sup> A.S. Ferguson suggested that the final prayer is an addition to the original version,<sup>22</sup> and W. Scott maintained that the work comprises three smaller treatises joined end to end on the grounds that there are unnecessary repetitions of material and radical inconsistencies in philosophical doctrine which cannot be explained on the hypothesis of a single author.<sup>23</sup> The questions raised by these scholars are of considerable importance for, if their conclusions are correct, it will be

impossible to reconstruct a single philosophical system for this treatise. However, other scholars have countered these arguments by asserting that the work is mostly a literary unity, as the manuscript tradition indicates, even if its author is revealed to have the mentality of a compiler rather than that of an original thinker. This is the position of A.D. Nock who supports his thesis by pointing out first, that there are certain philosophical themes which run through the entire text and second, that there are numerous verbal parallels between the different sections of the work.<sup>24</sup> If anything can be said in response to this controversy, it is perhaps that we should study the treatise in the form in which it has been transmitted by the manuscript tradition, assuming that there are no really convincing arguments against doing so. That this is the case seems to have been demonstrated sufficiently by Nock's discussion.

The *Asclepius* is an important document concerning the state of Platonism in the third and fourth centuries A.D.<sup>25</sup> That the work does indeed belong to the Platonic current in the history of philosophy is indicated by the author's emphasis upon the radical transcendence of the divine.<sup>26</sup> In this respect his position is similar to that held by Apuleius and other Platonists approximately a century earlier. However, that the work must also be associated with the Stoic tradition in the history of thought emerges from the writer's insistence upon the thorough immanence of the divine.<sup>27</sup> On this point he diverges from the standpoint held by the most influential Platonists of that era. Finally, that the work is a notable example of syncretism between the Platonic and Stoic doctrines in the history of philosophy is demonstrated by the author's interest in the relation of macrocosm to microcosm.<sup>28</sup> On this question again he deviates from the position of Apuleius and his contemporaries. It is obviously necessary to take account of these various influences in interpreting the structure of the *Asclepius*'s philosophical system.<sup>29</sup>

### 1 i The Positive Approach to God

Since the doctrines of Hermeticism are essentially religious ones, the statements in this treatise regarding the nature of God have the principal claim on our attention. According to the viewpoint of earlier Platonism, descriptions of God can be in the first instance subjective — his nature is explained in terms of our manner of perceiving him; such subjective descriptions being either positive — God can be perceived by a human being, positive and negative — he can be perceived but only in

a certain manner, or negative — God cannot be perceived by a human being.<sup>30</sup> The Hermetic text provides us with further examples of all these descriptions of God, among which the following should be especially noted. When the writer states that the first principle is "intelligible by the mind alone,"<sup>31</sup> he is emphasizing the possibility of a cognitive approach along the traditional Platonic lines. When he describes God as the principle "which illuminates man with the intelligence of mind alone,"<sup>32</sup> he is extending the same idea in terms of that epistemology of illumination which can be traced all the way back to Plato's dialogues, although the suggestion that this illumination is a personal act of the divinity is more typical of the later religiosity. One other text encapsulates the Hermeticist's entire theory of our cognitive approach to God: "We thank you, O Highest and Supreme One. It is through your favor that we have obtained this great light of knowing you. You endow us with intellect, reason, knowledge; with intellect<sup>33</sup> that we may know you; with reason that we may pursue you in our thoughts; and with knowledge that we may rejoice in knowledge of you . . . this knowledge of your greatness is alone the reward of humanity."<sup>34</sup> Here, the writer reveals three aspects of the human being's knowledge of God: first, the association between knowledge and illumination; second, the fact that illumination — as indicated by the occurrence of words like "favor," "endow," and "reward" in the text — is dependent upon divine grace; and third, the division of knowledge and illumination into definite stages.<sup>35</sup>

### 1 ii The Positive and Negative Approaches to God

Elsewhere the Hermeticist argues that, although the doctrine regarding God can be grasped by an application of intellect given by the divine, it descends from above with such headlong rapacity that it outstrips that application in its swiftness.<sup>36</sup> This passage, which connects the simile of a descending stream with the notion that God can be perceived but only in a certain manner, should be compared with another. Here, the Hermeticist states that, since the doctrine regarding God is beyond the application of human minds, it will flow past or back to its source without the attentive acquiescence of its hearers.<sup>37</sup> This text is of great importance in showing that the difficulty of perceiving God necessitates a revealed rather than a demonstrated philosophy.



## 1 iii The Negative Approach to God

Finally, the Hermetic treatise stresses the impossibility of a cognitive approach to God once more along the lines of earlier Platonism:

We shall not definitely describe God with any of these names. For if a word is this — a sound arising from our breath striking the air, declaring all the wishes or thoughts which a man has conceived in his mind according to sensible impressions, something whose entire substance is composed of a few syllables, defined and circumscribed to permit the essential communication between speaker and hearer<sup>38</sup> — then the whole name of God includes simultaneously the thought, breath, and air together with everything which is in these, through these, or from these. One cannot hope to describe the creator of all greatness, the father or lord of all things with a single name however so many syllables it may contain, for God is without name or rather has every name on the grounds that — being himself one and all — one must either call all things by his name or him by the names of all things.<sup>39</sup>

Here, the writer makes a complex argument about human being's knowledge of God consisting of three stages: first, since a name comprises conceptual and physical elements which are distinct from one another, while God has cognitive and physical manifestations which are inseparable, then the divine nature cannot be comprehended in a name.<sup>40</sup> Second, since God is identical with all things created by him, his essence can be comprehended by all their names. Third, since a name comprises a limited number of syllables, while God is infinite in his modes of existence,<sup>41</sup> then the divine nature cannot be comprehended in a name. When the Hermeticist elsewhere invokes the deity's "single name by which God alone is blessed according to our ancestral religion" without informing us what the name being invoked is,<sup>42</sup> it is likely that this omission is a deliberate one inspired by his elaborate theory of naming. Such passages as these are clearly examples of descriptions of God which are subjective — his nature is explained in terms of our manner of perceiving him — and negative — God cannot be perceived by a human being — according to the criteria suggested earlier.

## 2 A i Transcendence

According to the viewpoint of earlier Platonism, descriptions of God can also be objective — his nature is explained without reference to our manner of perceiving it.<sup>43</sup> The Hermetic treatise provides us with numerous further examples of this, among which references to the first cause as "good" (*bonus*)<sup>44</sup> are naturally prominent. The same category would also include the frequent expressions of his transcendence: he is characterized as "one" (*unus*,<sup>45</sup> *unum*)<sup>46</sup> as "complete" (*plenus atque perfectus*),<sup>47</sup> as "highest" (*summus*,<sup>48</sup> *exsuperantissimus*),<sup>49</sup> as "infinite" (*indefinitum*),<sup>50</sup> as "incorporeal" (*ab omnibus rebus corpulentis alienus*),<sup>51</sup> as "lacking quantity" (*nec quantus sit quantitate*),<sup>52</sup> as "lacking quality" (*nec qualis sit qualitate*,<sup>53</sup> *quomodo aut quale sit incertum*),<sup>54</sup> as "non-spatial" (*ubi et quo et unde incertum est*),<sup>55</sup> as "beyond the heaven" (*ultra caelum*),<sup>56</sup> as "everlasting" (*aeternus*,<sup>57</sup> *sempiternus*),<sup>58</sup> and as "unchanging" (*stabile, fixum, immobile*).<sup>59</sup> Perhaps the most striking feature of these different expressions of God's transcendence is their almost exact equivalence to similar ones which occur in Apuleius.<sup>60</sup> This clearly indicates the extent to which philosophical doctrine has become standardized in the second and third centuries A.D.

## 2 A ii Immanence

The objective descriptions of God also include various expressions of his causality in relation to other things. Into this category must be placed an important argument which recurs in several passages of the *Asclepius* where the creator is said to be identical with the things created by him. Thus, in the opening section of the dialogue Hermes Trismegistus declares that, if the disciple understands the teaching about to be revealed to him his mind will be filled with all goods. However, it may be more correct to say that his mind will be filled with the one good which contains all, there being a reciprocal relation between the notions of unity and totality: "All things are of one and the one is all things since these are so connected with one another that it is impossible to separate them."<sup>61</sup> It is important to note that, when the Hermeticist speaks of the reciprocal implication of unity and totality, he is referring not simply to a relation between two concepts — "one" and "all" — but to the association of cause and effect — God and his creation. This is indicated clearly in the later passage where Hermes argues that God can be described with the names of all the things which

he creates — either by applying his name to all of them or all their names to him — “because he is himself both one and all.”<sup>62</sup> Here we learn two facts: first, that unity represents God and totality his creation and second, that God can be described as unity or totality because he is identical with his creation.

## 2 A iii Transcendence and Immanence

The presence of such an ontological doctrine in our treatise suggests on initial impression that its writer has retreated from the Platonic doctrine of a God who transcends his creation towards the Stoic position that he is immanent in it (and in a sense identifiable with it).<sup>63</sup> However, some further texts which expand upon the notions of unity and totality show precisely what the Hermeticist's viewpoint is. In one argument, it is stressed that God is identical with his creation in the sense that creation is derived from God: “For God is all things, and all things come from him and depend upon his will.”<sup>64</sup> The nature of this derivation is explained in another passage which seems to distinguish a state before and a state after God's creation as two temporal phases: “Have I not said that all things are one and the one all things, since all things existed in God before he created all things?”<sup>65</sup> Such statements would indicate that God is identical in a primary sense with created things as they pre-exist in him before their temporal process of creation, and only in a secondary sense with created things as they exist outside him after their temporal act of creation.<sup>66</sup> If so, there is obviously no compromise in the transcendent nature of God's existence occasioned by the theory. On the other hand, further passages in the treatise show that we cannot rest content with this simple reformulation of the problem, since they reveal that the process of creation itself is not simply temporal. These texts contain the following clear line of argumentation: (i) Creation is the operation of the divine will,<sup>67</sup> (ii) God's will is unchanging,<sup>68</sup> (iii) the divine will operates in time,<sup>69</sup> and (iv) creation is both unchanging and in time.<sup>70</sup> The conclusion to this argument is not self-contradictory but merely a statement that the creative process is neither simply temporal, nor simply atemporal, but of the atemporal in relation to the temporal. On this basis, God is certainly identical in a primary sense with created things as they pre-exist in him before their temporal process of creation, and in a secondary sense with created things as they exist outside him after their temporal act of creation. Yet these two identifications are not completely distinct from one another since the relation of God to

created things is not that of the temporal to the temporal but of the atemporal to the temporal.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the divine nature turns out to be both transcendent and immanent from different viewpoints. Some further texts which expand upon the notions of unity and totality are only explicable on the assumption that this is precisely the Hermeticist's viewpoint. In one argument, it is stressed that God is identical with his creation in the sense that creation is part of the divine: “not without reason is God said to be all things, for all things are his limbs.”<sup>72</sup> The presence of such an ontological doctrine in this treatise indicates that its author has in actual fact combined the Platonic doctrine of a God who transcends his creation with the Stoic theory that he is immanent in it (and in a sense identifiable with it).<sup>73</sup>

## 2 A iv God's Causality

God's causality in relation to other things is exemplified not only by the doctrine of unity and totality but also by the teaching concerning the three principles. Along the lines of the traditional Platonic doxographies, the *Asclepius* maintains that creation takes place through the interaction of God, Form, and Matter, although there are divergences from the tradition in certain details.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, since the Latin translator seems not to have fully understood the metaphysical theory involved, we must elicit this doctrine from references which are somewhat oblique.

## 2 A v The Divine Intellect

The following passage is of primary importance:

The whole intellect, which is similar to the divinity, is immobile but self-moving in its stability. It is holy, incorruptible, eternal, and whatever higher attribute is applicable, since it is the eternity of the supreme God which exists in truth itself, filled with all sensible things and the whole of knowledge, co-existing so to speak with God.<sup>75</sup>

Here, an obvious difficulty is occasioned by the Hermeticist's reference not to God's intellect but to the whole intellect.<sup>76</sup> However, the context of the passage suggests that these two can be identified, since the next few sentences refer to a descending hierarchy of intellects consisting of (i) the whole intellect, (ii) the intellect of the world, and

(iii) the human intellect; while the sentences following these speak of an ascending hierarchy of intellects comprising: (a) the human intellect, (b) the intellect of the world, (c) the intellect of eternity, and (d) the divine intellect, the first term of the descending hierarchy presumably being equivalent to the last term of the ascending one.<sup>77</sup> This interpretation might be challenged on the grounds that, since the Hermeticist refers to the whole intellect as co-existing with rather than as identical with God, the main passage must be concerned with a secondary intellect.<sup>78</sup> However, since God's intellect is here treated as consubstantial with that intellect described as secondary in the fuller account of the hierarchy in the sentences which follow — (c) the intellect of eternity — the apparent reference to the former as coexisting with God is merely an indication that it can to a certain extent be viewed as secondary to itself.<sup>79</sup> The upshot is that the main passage can be taken as a statement of the traditional Platonic doctrine that there is a divine intellect which transcends space and time,<sup>80</sup> contemplates its own contents in a manner according with its transcendence,<sup>81</sup> and has as its contents the Forms of sensible objects.<sup>82</sup>

## 2 A vi The Theory of Forms

Several passages deal with the Forms in such a way as to indicate that the Greek original of the *Asclepius* entered into an especially high degree of elaboration at this point.<sup>83</sup> It is therefore a pity that the Latin translator has apparently obscured much of the meaning with terminological inexactitude.<sup>84</sup> The following represents a summary of this doctrine of Forms drawn simultaneously from the most important texts which deal with it.<sup>85</sup>

(i) *The range of Forms.* The Hermeticist seems to visualize Forms of two classes of object: first, the physical elements of earth, water, air, and fire,<sup>86</sup> and second, the living species of gods, demons, men, animals, and plants.<sup>87</sup>

(ii) *The distinction of higher and lower Forms.* In several passages we find a distinction of higher and lower Forms, although no single text defines what the precise difference between these is. The terminology for the two kinds of Form varies: (a) *genus* is contrasted with *species*,<sup>88</sup> (b) *genus* is contrasted with *imago*,<sup>89</sup> (c) *species* is contrasted with *imago*.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, both *forma*<sup>91</sup> and *species*<sup>92</sup> occur in the two senses. The relation between the two kinds of Form is described as follows: (a) species to individual,<sup>93</sup> (b) whole to part,<sup>94</sup> (c) same to

different,<sup>95</sup> (d) intelligible to sensible,<sup>96</sup> (e) incorporeal to corporeal,<sup>97</sup> (f) immortal to mortal.<sup>98</sup> A comparison of these passages indicates that, whichever pair of terms is employed, the contrast is between both species and individual and transcendent and immanent Form.

(iii) *Association of God and the higher Forms.* The agent through which Forms combine with matter to produce sensible objects is stated to be God.<sup>99</sup> Some passages associate the latter with the Forms in a general sense,<sup>100</sup> although others connect him specifically with the higher Forms.<sup>101</sup> It is not explicitly stated whether God actually gives existence to these Forms or merely presides over their instantiation.<sup>102</sup>

(iv) *Association of the god Παντόμορφος and the lower Forms.* Just as the God whose operation is localized in the world as a whole presides over the instantiation of the higher Forms, so the god whose operation is localized in the zodiac circle presides over the instantiation of the lower Forms.<sup>103</sup> The reason for this is that the relation of higher to lower Form is equivalent to that of species to individual.<sup>104</sup> Since the world as a whole is unchanging, each Form which its God instantiates will be unique in its omnipresence; whereas since the zodiac circle changes in rotation, each Form which its God instantiates will be multiplied according to spatial and temporal position.<sup>105</sup> It is certainly peculiar to speak of the instantiation of the higher Forms, since their transcendence would apparently preclude any combination with matter. But the reason once again is that the relation of higher to lower Form is equivalent to that of species to individual. Thus, the instantiation of the higher Forms signifies their presence as specific characters in individuals while their transcendence indicates their logical priority to the latter.

(v) *The emanation of Forms.* The Hermeticist clearly views the Forms as dynamic in character, since terms such as *influcere*,<sup>106</sup> *defluere*,<sup>107</sup> and cognates often appear in conjunction with them.

## 2 A vii The Theory of Matter

One further passage is important for our analysis. Here, the writer turns to the consideration of matter which is described as ungenerated "yet having the power and natural ability to engender and produce in itself"; as equivalent to space — "that in which all things are, since they could not exist without it" — having identical characteristics and as ungenerated "yet containing all things by providing a most fertile womb for their generation" including evil things.<sup>108</sup> This text presents

considerable difficulties to the interpreter on account of the ambivalence of its terminology. In the first place, the statement that matter is ungenerated could mean either that it has no beginning in time or that it has no beginning at all (it is not causally dependent upon another principle). However, another passage which states that all things can ultimately be reduced to two principles — God and matter — clearly demonstrates that the second meaning is intended.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, the assertion that matter has the power to generate all things could be taken in several ways, although presumably the way in which God has the power to generate all things would have to be excluded. Fortunately, other parts of the text delineate matter's role: its identification with space shows that it is the cause of all things in that the latter could not exist without space,<sup>110</sup> while its equation with disorderly motion indicates that it causes all things by underlying the stability of form as a dynamic substratum.<sup>111</sup> In addition, the statement that matter is the source of evil things could mean either that it produces both good and evil effects or that it produces only evil effects (it is therefore inherently evil). However, another passage which states that matter is the vehicle of chance occurrences — obviously involving good and evil — demonstrates that the first interpretation is correct.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, it might be argued that the identification of matter and space is not really intended by the writer. This is the most difficult point on which to feel certain, although one parallel text seems to reinforce the interpretation here proposed.<sup>113</sup> In conclusion, then, the writer repeats the traditional doctrine that matter is the ungenerated substratum, spatial and dynamic,<sup>114</sup> of good and evil occurrences, despite the obscurities of his principal discussion.

## 2 B God and Creation

There now seems little room for doubt that the traditional doctrine of the three principles is a fundamental philosophical motif of the *Asclepius*. It is also clearly established that two of these principles are ultimate in the sense that neither can be reduced to the other, even if some modern interpreters have attempted to find a monistic position expressed.<sup>115</sup> However, the doctrine of the three principles represents only one strand in the more complete fabric of this dialogue, and we must also investigate the role of various further principles such as Eternity, Spirit, and the Second God. Only some of these principles will prove to be independent in the sense that they are not simply aspects of

one another, and so it will be necessary to consider them in at least two distinct categories.<sup>116</sup>

## 2 C i Eternity as God

According to the Hermeticist, God and Eternity are the "principles" (*primordia*) of all things.<sup>117</sup> However, that these two are not completely distinct from one another is indicated by passages stating that with Eternity, God contains the Forms of all things,<sup>118</sup> that "whether as God or as Eternity or as both or as one in the other or as both in each" (*sive deus sive aeternitas sive uterque sive alter in altero sive uterque in utroque*) he moves in immobility,<sup>119</sup> and that through Eternity, God controls all processes in the cosmos.<sup>120</sup> These remarks clearly show that Eternity is not fully independent of God — like the principle *Αἰών* in some other Hermetic treatises<sup>121</sup> — although the nature of this quasi-independence is somewhat obscure. Fortunately, there are other passages which illuminate this question by describing Eternity's relation either to the world or else to time, since not only do the relations of God to the world and to time and of Eternity to the world and to time coincide but the relation of God to Eternity is analogous to that of the world to time. The relation of Eternity to the world is described as follows: Eternity "contains" (*intra se habens*) the world,<sup>122</sup> while the world "is vivified by Eternity which is outside it and vivifies those things which are inside it" (*ipse extrinsecus vivificatur ab aeternitate vivificatque ea, quae intra se sunt*).<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, the world "has been made in the image of the highest God since it imitates Eternity" (*huius dei imago hic effectus est mundus, aeternitatis imitator*)<sup>124</sup> — a statement indicating that the relations of God to the world and of Eternity to the world are not separate from one another. The relation of Eternity to time is described as follows: Eternity is "beyond the limits of" (*sine definitione*) time,<sup>125</sup> and is also "stable, immobile, and fixed while the course of time, which is mobile, always returns to eternity" (*stabilis, immobilis atque fixa . . . temporis, quod mobile est, in aeternitatem semper revocatur agitatio*).<sup>126</sup> Further, "just as Eternity, immobile on its own, seems to move through the time in which it is, thus even God can be held to move himself in himself while immobile" (*ipsa aeternitas immobilis quidem sola per tempus, in quo ipsa est . . . videatur agitari . . . sic et deum agitari credibile est in se ipsum aedem immobilitate*)<sup>127</sup> — a statement revealing that the relations of God to time and of Eternity to time are in some way equivalent. Finally, the relation of the world to time is described by saying that

"the world is the receptacle of time, through whose course and motion it is sustained" (*mundus est receptaculum temporis, cuius cursu et agitatione vegetatur*).<sup>128</sup> This apparently suggests that the relation of God to Eternity is paralleled by that of the world to time.

These passages have clearly revealed that Eternity does not exist independently of God: indeed, they suggest rather that it is a certain manifestation of his own highest nature. But what precisely is this manifestation? In the first place, God as Eternity transcends the world. This is indicated by his containment of the latter, since a container must be greater than that which it contains; it is indicated by the statement that he vivifies the world *from outside*; and it is indicated by the aspiration of the latter towards him, since the object of desire must lie beyond the subject. On the other hand, God as Eternity is immanent in the world. This is also shown by his containment of the latter, since a container must surround that which it contains; it is also shown by the statement that he *vivifies* the world from outside: and it is also shown by the aspiration of the latter towards him, since the subject of desire becomes progressively like its object. Thus, God as Eternity is simultaneously transcendent and immanent in relation to the world.<sup>129</sup>

## 2 C ii Spirit as God

The precise status of Spirit is more difficult to determine since the passages referring to it are extremely brief. At first sight, these leave uncertainty on two fundamental points: first, the relation of Spirit to God and second, the metaphysical or physical nature of Spirit.

In connection with the earlier question, the Hermeticist does not express himself as unambiguously as we might like. Thus, some passages refer to Spirit as that by which all things are "produced" (*ministrantur*), "vivified" (*vegetantur*),<sup>130</sup> "moved" (*agitantur*), or "controlled" (*gubernantur*)<sup>131</sup> according to God's design. This leaves it an open question whether we are dealing with an aspect of God's nature or an instrument employed by him. Furthermore, the allusion to Spirit as ungenerated yet having the power to produce<sup>132</sup> can be understood in two contrasting ways: either it means that Spirit is an independent principle distinct from God, or that it is an independent principle because it is identical with God. However, some passages suggest that the term discussed signifies not an instrument employed by God but an aspect of his nature. Thus, it emerges that Spirit is "inherent in God" (*inesse deo*),<sup>133</sup> or that God has filled all things with Spirit "having breathed" (*inhalata*) upon each thing according to its nature.<sup>134</sup>

The course of discussion so far seems to have provided an answer also to the second question, for a principle which is identified with God would need to be metaphysical rather than physical.<sup>135</sup> However, the matter cannot be disposed of quite so easily since certain passages describe Spirit in a way recalling the physical *pneuma* of Stoicism. Thus, it is said to be "blended in all things" (*permixtus cunctis*)<sup>136</sup> or "inherent in matter" (*inesse mundo*),<sup>137</sup> its role being the determination of "all Forms in the world" (*omnes in mundo species*)<sup>138</sup> or "each thing's special character" (*cuiusque naturae qualitas*).<sup>139</sup> One may recall that the Stoic *pneuma* possessed precisely these characteristics of mixture with the passive principle and production of the hierarchy of being through degrees of its tension.<sup>140</sup> On this basis it will be necessary to conclude that the notion of Spirit here represents a transposition of physical into metaphysical theory.<sup>141</sup>

The answers to these two questions provide a reasonable delineation of Spirit. The first answer indicates that it constitutes an aspect of God, while the second reveals that it signifies God in an immanent mode.

## 2 C iii Love as God

Love is discussed in one passage which is relatively brief but sufficiently detailed to explain both its relation to God and its special character.<sup>142</sup>

The earlier question is illuminated by the Hermeticist's reference to Love as something "created and bestowed by that God who is ruler of all nature" (*ex domino illo totius naturae deo . . . inventum tributumque*).<sup>143</sup> However with this statement that Love is created by God must be compared further assertions that it is an aspect of God's nature. Thus, the Hermeticist speaks of the union of male and female as an incomprehensible mystery<sup>144</sup> — implying that Love is divine in character; of "the divinity of both natures in the commingling of the sexes" (*utriusque naturae divinitas ex commixtione sexus*)<sup>145</sup> — stating explicitly that it is divine; and of God as embracing the fertility of both male and female<sup>146</sup> — indicating that Love is an aspect of the first principle.

The second question is illuminated in the following ways: first, Love is described as the means of reproducing to eternity;<sup>147</sup> second, it is explained in terms of the coming together of the two sexes — it is their "connection or, more properly speaking, their unity" (*conexio aut, quod est verius, unitas*),<sup>148</sup> it is the moment at which each sex passes

over into the other's nature when the climax makes the male weak and the female vigorous,<sup>149</sup> it is their "commingling" (*commixtio*);<sup>150</sup> and third, Love is characterized as an activity of all animal and plant life.<sup>151</sup>

The implication of these texts is that Love represents an aspect of God, although it is difficult to draw any conclusions beyond this. Clearly it does not signify the first principle in its transcendent mode, since it implies the relation of cause and effect. However, whether it signifies God in his immanent mode or in a transcendent and immanent mode must be left an open question.<sup>152</sup>

## 2 C iv The Status of Fate

Despite the significant differences outlined, the principles of Eternity, Spirit, and Love are similar in possessing a status not independent of God. With these should be contrasted another group of principles which are alike in possessing a status which is independent in this way. However, before examining the latter we should consider one principle whose nature is seemingly of a type transitional between these two categories.

The following passage instantly reveals the ambivalent status of this principle: "That which we call 'Fate,' O Asclepius, is the necessity in all things which occur, each joined to the others in connective bonds. Fate, therefore, is either the cause of things, or the highest God, or the god produced as second by the highest God, or the order of all celestial and earthly things fixed by divine law" (*Quam εἰμαρμένην nuncupamus, o Asclepi, ea est necessitas omnium quae geruntur, semper sibi catenatis nexibus vinctae; haec itaque est aut effectrix rerum aut deus summus aut ab ipso deo qui secundus effectus est deus aut omnium caelestium terrenarumque rerum firmata divinis legibus disciplina*).<sup>153</sup> Two questions must be answered in order to interpret this rather difficult passage correctly: first, how many definitions of Fate does it contain and second, what are the historical sources of these definitions? An approach to the first question is suggested by the apparent contrast in the text between (i) definitions of Fate in terms of the nature of the process, and (ii) definitions in terms of association with a specific principle.<sup>154</sup> That this contrast is actually envisaged by the Hermeticist is indicated by studying parallels to this discussion in certain other writers of late antiquity: pseudo-Plutarch, Calcidius, and Nemesius, where an important distinction is made between consideration of Fate in terms of its "activity" (*energeia*) and consideration in terms of its "substance" (*ousia*).<sup>155</sup> If such a contrast does underlie the structure

of our text, the (i) the definitions of Fate in terms of the nature of the process can be treated as a single explanation, while (ii) the definitions in terms of association with a specific principle must represent separate explanations.<sup>156</sup> On this assumption the second question can be approached by noting that (i) the definition of Fate in terms of the nature of its process consists entirely of elements derived from Stoic theory, since the concepts of necessity,<sup>157</sup> eternity,<sup>158</sup> connection,<sup>159</sup> and order<sup>160</sup> are habitually associated with that of Fate according to Stoicism. On the other hand (ii) the definitions in terms of association with a specific principle seem to involve a combination of Stoic and Platonic elements, (ii a) the definition of Fate as the highest God being perfectly intelligible according to Stoic theory where it is simply another manifestation of the Logos or Pneuma,<sup>161</sup> while (ii b) the definition as the second god agrees more with the Platonic tradition where Fate is sometimes identified with the world soul.<sup>162</sup>

The text setting out the various definitions of Fate serves to underline the ambiguity of the notion although it does not provide a firm delineation. Certain other passages must be taken into account in order to achieve the latter, and among these is one which establishes a relation between Fate and the planetary motions. According to the Hermeticist, for each celestial motion there must be postulated a higher cause or "ousiarch" (*ousiarches*): for the motion of the cosmos as a whole he posits Jupiter as ousiarch, for that complex motion of the seven planets he posits "Fortune or Fate" (*fortuna aut εἰμαρμένη*), and so on.<sup>163</sup> It is difficult to be sure what the Hermeticist's doctrine at this point is, but it is undeniable that Fate is intended to be a principle independent of the highest God.<sup>164</sup>

Another passage to be taken into account in order to delineate the notion of Fate is one where the natures of Fate, Necessity, and Order are examined. Here, the Hermeticist argues that these three principles by relating to one another as inseparable components of the cosmic process "obey the necessity of eternal reason" (*serviunt necessitati rationis aeternae*).<sup>165</sup> Although this statement seems initially to reinforce the view that Fate is a principle independent of the highest God, the later development of the argument clearly moves in the opposite direction.<sup>166</sup> Thus, the Hermeticist continues by suggesting that the three principles are "equivalent to Eternity" (*haec est aeternitas*) because of the continuous circularity of the cosmic process which they combine in producing.<sup>167</sup> Once again it is difficult to be certain what the doctrine is, but it seems certain that Fate is treated ambivalently as a principle independent of and not independent of the highest God.

At this point, it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that a fairly coherent doctrine of Fate has emerged, since its two manifestations can be identified at least provisionally with parts of the composite definition furnished by the earlier text. In particular, the following identifications between these two manifestations and (ii) the definitions of Fate in terms of association with a specific principle seem to be required. Where Fate is described in connection with Necessity and Order and shown by reason of its relation to Eternity to be both independent and not independent of the highest God, it can be understood as satisfying the requirements of (ii a) the definition of Fate as the highest God. However, where it is described in relation to the planetary motions and shown because of its contrast with Jupiter's relation to the motion of the whole cosmos to be independent of the highest God, it can be held to satisfy the requirements of (ii b) the definition of Fate as the second god.<sup>168</sup> Of these identifications the former is self-evident on account of the equivalence of terminology, whereas the latter will be upheld if the source of planetary motions is equivalent to the second god. Furthermore, that the description of Fate in connection with Necessity and Order can be understood as fulfilling the requirements of (ii a) the definition of Fate as the highest God emerges from the presence of significant Stoic elements in both cases. That the description of Fate in relation to the planetary motions can be held to fulfil the requirements of (ii b) the definition of Fate as the second God would follow from the presence of a mixture of Stoic and Platonic elements in each case.<sup>169</sup> This last point, however, must be left for a later demonstration.

The principle of Fate seems therefore to have an especially ambivalent status within the metaphysical system of this treatise, since it is described in different passages both as possessing a status not independent of God and also as possessing a status which is thus independent. Our next task is to examine those principles which conform entirely to the latter mode of existence.

## 2 C v The Second God

In one important passage, the Hermeticist refers to "the God of highest power who is ruler of one god" (*deus primipotens et unius gubernator dei*).<sup>170</sup> Although this text presents certain difficulties of interpretation owing to the survival of a Greek version which contains a significant variation of meaning,<sup>171</sup> since the Latin wording provides a sense consistent with doctrines explicitly taught elsewhere in the treatise we may at least attempt to explain the latter.

The doctrines taught elsewhere are the following. First, the supreme God is said to have "created a second god after himself" (*a se secundum fecerit*) or to have "produced a first god from himself as second to himself" (*hunc fecit ex se primum et a se secundum*).<sup>172</sup> The descriptive epithets attached to this principle — that it is the object of sensation, that it is filled with the goodness of all things, and that God loved it on account of its beauty — suggest that it represents the physical world.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, that this is the case is demonstrated by two passages elsewhere, one listing three terms: "God is the first, the world second, and man third" (*deus primus est, secundus est mundus, homo est tertius*),<sup>174</sup> the other stating that the world is a sensible god.<sup>175</sup> However, this relatively straightforward doctrine is complicated by a second factor, for in one passage the writer states that "the sun itself must be held to be this second god" (*ipse enim sol . . . secundum etenim deum hunc crede*).<sup>176</sup> What are we to make of this discrepancy?

The answer to this question lies in the association of the world and the sun according to the Hermetic philosophy. Thus, that these are not really independent of one another is indicated (i) by the world's government of all physical processes utilizing the instrumentality of the sun,<sup>177</sup> (ii) by the identity of function between the two: just as the world is "dispenser of life" (*vitalis dispensator*)<sup>178</sup> so is the sun "ruler of vital processes" (*gubemator vitalium*),<sup>179</sup> and (iii) by the analogy of the sun's illumination of the world and intellect's illumination of man.<sup>180</sup> Of these points the last is especially revealing about the Hermeticist's philosophical beliefs.

In particular, it is clear that he subscribes to the common teaching that the world is a "living being" (*animal*),<sup>181</sup> and this implies in its turn that the world consists of a body and a soul. The latter doctrine is explicitly stated in at least one passage where God is described as the ruler of the world, its soul, and the world's contents.<sup>182</sup> Furthermore he assents to the traditional notion that this soul is "the container of all sensible Forms" (*receptaculum . . . sensibilibus omnium specierum*),<sup>183</sup> thereby indicating that the principle represents a source of knowledge as well as one of life. This epistemological implication is effectively drawn out in a text where the human cognitive faculty ascends to that of the world, the world's to that of eternity.<sup>184</sup>

The last passage, indeed, has yet another significance for our investigation of the creative activity of the highest God, since the writer also states that the world can ascend "to knowledge of the gods who rank above it" (*et deos noscendos, qui supra se sunt*).<sup>185</sup> How do these gods fit into the ontological scheme so far described?

## 2 C vi The Hierarchy of Gods

The doctrine of the gods is expounded in a passage couched in all the terminology of religious revelation. It begins: "There are many kinds of gods, and among these some are intelligible and some sensible<sup>186</sup> . . . there are gods who rule all Forms, and these are followed by those whose substance has a ruler. The latter are sensible gods whose nature reflects their double origin"<sup>187</sup> (*deorum genera multa sunt eorumque omnium pars intellegibilis, alia vero sensibilis . . . sunt ergo omnium specierum principes dii. hos consecuntur dii, quorum est princeps οὐσίας. hi sensibiles, utriusque originis consimiles suae*).<sup>188</sup> Various interpretations of this highly compressed statement have been proposed, but according to the most plausible reading it provides the following facts: (i) there are two orders of gods: (a) intelligible and (b) sensible,<sup>189</sup> (ii) The nature of (a) is further characterized by their association with the distribution of Forms,<sup>190</sup> (iii) The gods of group (a) have a relation of priority to those of group (b) in that they govern their substance;<sup>191</sup> and (iv) The nature of (b) is further defined by a combination of intelligible and sensible elements.<sup>192</sup> The passage continues: "The ousiarch of the world is Jupiter . . . the ousiarch of the sun is Light . . . the ousiarch or ruler of those thirty-six known as the Horoscopes is the god called Pantomorphos or 'All-Form' . . . the seven planets have as their ousiarchs or rulers that which is called Fortune and Heimarmene . . . the ousiarch of air is the Second . . ."<sup>193</sup> (*caeli . . . οὐρανάρχης est Iuppiter . . . solis οὐρανάρχης lumen est . . . XXXVI quorum vocabulum est Horoscopi . . . horum οὐρανάρχης vel princeps est, quem Παντόμορφον vel omniformem vocant . . . septem sphaerae . . . habent οὐρανάρχης id est sui principes, quam fortunam dicunt aut εἰμαρμένην . . . αἰὲρ vero . . . est autem οὐρανάρχης huius secundus . . .*)<sup>194</sup> From these remarks the following additional information is obtained: (i) Various specific examples of (a) intelligible and (b) sensible gods are given; and (ii) the gods of group (b) are shown to be astronomical in character.

Modern scholarship has rightly compared the Hermeticist's theological schema with similar systems expounded by late Platonic writers — Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Sallustius.<sup>195</sup> Although the latter often differ in detail, they frequently contain the two fundamental aspects of the Hermetic hierarchy of gods: first, they contrast groups of intelligible and sensible gods and second, they establish correspondences between particular intelligible and sensible gods.<sup>196</sup> That the Hermeticist's theological doctrine agrees with the teachings of such

Neoplatonic writers is probably the result of a single influence over all concerned — the so-called *Chaldaean Oracles*.

The validity of these parallels is strengthened by the investigation of such items of further theological doctrine as are scattered elsewhere in the treatise. Thus, one passage seems to make another allusion to the gods of group (a) when it suggests that the highest gods have "intellect" (*sensus*) as their soul.<sup>197</sup> This would be consistent with an intelligible status. Other texts provide further information about the gods of group (b): that the supreme God has created them,<sup>198</sup> that they are constituted of the purest physical substance,<sup>199</sup> and that they inhabit the celestial regions.<sup>200</sup> A further passage refers to the dwelling of the god Pantomorphos in the zodiac according to whose rotation each "Form" (*species*) generates "individual instances" (*images*).<sup>201</sup> This implies the relation of an intelligible to a sensible principle. Finally, there is another item of theological doctrine which does not strengthen the earlier parallels so much as it extends the system itself. Thus, one passage refers to Jupiter who occupies a station between heaven and earth from which he dispenses life to the various kinds of animate being.<sup>202</sup> This god may perhaps be the ousiarch of the air whose name was omitted by the mutilated text of the theological summary.<sup>203</sup>

## 2 C vii The Second God and the Hierarchy of Gods

So far we have examined the accounts of the second god and of the hierarchy of gods as though they were totally independent Hermetic theologies. This is justified inasmuch as the respective descriptions occur in separate sections of the text, while the account of the second god makes no reference to any other gods and that of the hierarchy speaks of no god as second. However, it is impossible for the modern interpreter of this philosophy to avoid asking the question: how do the two theological accounts relate to one another?<sup>204</sup>

The careful re-examination of passages previously noted leads to interesting results. In particular we must conclude that, since both the world and the sun are described as the second god in one account, while they represent the first and second members of the series of sensible gods in the other, then the world and the sun are *second* either (i) because the (intelligible) Jupiter is the first and the (sensible) world the second god,<sup>205</sup> or (ii) because the (sensible) world is the first and the (sensible) sun the second god.<sup>206</sup> However, there are obvious drawbacks since with (i) the (intelligible) Jupiter considered as the first



god, the sensible sun cannot be described as second but only as third; and with (ii) the (sensible) world considered as the first god, the (sensible) world cannot also be described a second but only as first. Perhaps the only solution, then, is to consider the series of intelligible gods as a whole as the first god so that either the (sensible) world or the (sensible) sun can be described as second.

This brings us to the further conclusion that, since both the world and the sun are described as the second god in one account, while representing the first and second members of the series of sensible gods in the other, then the world and the sun are *both* second either (i) because the (sensible) world and the (sensible) sun are not completely distinct from one another, or (ii) because the members of the series of sensible gods as a whole are not distinct from one another. Of these solutions it is (ii) which seems to be the most compelling since it not only treats the relations between all members of the series of sensible gods identically but it considers those relations as analogous with those obtaining within the series of intelligible gods.

That the series of intelligible gods as a whole can be considered as the first god and the series of sensible gods as a whole as the second god is an interpretation which is further supported by certain minor features of the account. Thus, regarding the intelligible gods, the fact that Jupiter occurs more than once suggests that the members of the series are not completely distinct from one another,<sup>207</sup> while the identification of one member of the series as Heimarmene indicates that they really constitute elements of the first God.<sup>208</sup> Regarding the sensible gods, the fact that the sun must occur twice suggests that the members of this series are not totally separable from one another,<sup>209</sup> while the interpretation of each member of the series as a celestial motion indicates that they actually represent elements of the world soul.<sup>210</sup>

If this doctrine has been correctly construed, an interesting metaphysical position emerges: that there is a supreme God or intellect consisting of a unity in multiplicity which gives rise to a second god or soul similarly constituted. The most striking element in this system is the notion that these first and second principles are unities in multiplicity. Clearly such a viewpoint is heavily influenced by both Platonism and Stoicism: by the former in the contrast of the highest God or intellect and the second god or soul, and by the latter in the notion of a unitary force underlying the perceived differentiation.

## NOTES

1. Lactantius, *Inst. Div.* IV.6.4 (C.S.E.L. 19.287.1).
2. A list of these stylistic features can be found in Nock and Festugière: op. cit., pp. 278-279.
3. See Scott, op. cit., pp. 77-78 and Nock and Festugière, op. cit., pp. 275-277.
4. See J.P. Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Egypte. Les textes hermétiques de Nag Hammadi et leurs parallèles grecs et latins I-II* (Quebec, 1978); and D.M. Parrott, et al., *Nag Hammadi Codices V.2-5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502.1 and 4* (*Nag Hammadi Studies XI*) (Leiden, 1979).
5. For a demonstration that Apuleius could not have been the translator see Scott, op. cit., p. 78. For arguments that neither Marius Victorinus nor Calcidius was the translator see Nock and Festugière, op. cit., pp. 277-278.
6. Augustine, *Civ. Dei* VIII. 23 ff. (C.C.S.L. 47. 239ff.)
7. *Asclep.* 2-7.
8. *Ibid.*, 8-9.
9. *Ibid.*, 10-14.
10. *Ibid.*, 14-18.
11. *Ibid.*, 19.
12. *Ibid.*, 20-21. The parallel Coptic version begins in the middle of chapter 21.
13. *Ibid.*, 22.
14. *Ibid.*, 23.
15. *Ibid.*, 24-6.
16. *Ibid.*, 27-29. The parallel Coptic version ends early in chapter 29. However, there is a separate extract covering part of chapter 41.
17. *Ibid.*, 30-32.
18. *Ibid.*, 33-36.
19. *Ibid.*, 37-38.
20. *Ibid.*, 39-40. In the foregoing summary I have included only the main arguments of the *Asclepius* so that its underlying logical structure might become apparent. For a more detailed analysis see Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste II: Le dieu cosmique*, pp. 18-27.
21. T. Zielinski, "Hermes und die Hermetik," *Archiv für Religions-Wissenschaft* 8, 1905: 321-372. The shorter texts would be (i) *Asclep.* 1-14, (ii) *ibid.*, 14-27, (iii) *ibid.*, 27-37, and (iv) *ibid.*, 37-41.
22. A.S. Ferguson, "Introduction" to Scott, op. cit., vol. IV, p. xxxii. This view is confirmed by the separate preservation of a Greek version among the *Papyri Magicae* and of a Coptic version in *Nag Hammadi Codex VI*. See Mahé, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 137ff.; Parrott, op. cit., p. 376.
23. Scott, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 51ff. and op. cit., vol. III, pp. 1, 68, 92, etc. The shorter texts are (i) *Asclep.* 1-14, (ii) *ibid.*, 14-16, and (iii) *ibid.*, 16-41. In addition to dividing the work into three parts, Scott makes numerous transpositions of the text in (iii). His whole procedure is rightly criticized by A.S. Ferguson in Scott, op. cit., vol. IV, pp. 394-395 and 408ff.
24. Nock and Festugière, op. cit., pp. 292-295.

25. If we think in terms of the Greek original, the *Asclepius* documents Platonism of the third century; if we think in terms of the Latin version, it documents that of the fourth.
26. Both Platonism and Stoicism speak of God's transcendence, but only with the former is this transcendence radical (or metaphysical).
27. Both Stoicism and Platonism refer to God's immanence, but only with the former is this immanence thorough (or materialistic).
28. This theme derives ultimately from Plato (especially from his interpretation of the relation between world soul and individual souls in the *Timaeus*) yet it is more usually associated with the Stoa.
29. The discussion which follows will be arranged partly along the lines appropriate to a Stoic system, and partly along those appropriate to a Platonic one.
30. All these aspects are equally prominent, for example, in the philosophy of Apuleius.
31. *Asclep.* 16.315.17 *mente sola intellegibilis*.
32. *Ibid.*, 29.336.6-7, *hominem sola intelligentia mentis inluminans*. Cf. *ibid.*, 32.341.20-21 and 41.353.2. For the theme of illumination in the Greek corpus, cf. *Corp. Herm.* I.32.19.5, IX.3.97.10-11, XIII.18.208.5, and XIII.19.208.17 together with F.J. Klein, *Die Lichtterminologie bei Philon von Alexandrien und in den hermetischen Schriften. Untersuchungen zur Struktur der religiösen Sprache der hellenistischen Mystik* (Leiden, 1962).
33. *Sensus* = 'intellect.' Comparisons with the Greek version in the *Papyrus Mimaut* and with the Coptic version of *Nag Hammadi Codex VI* indicate the *sensus* represents the Latin translator's habitual rendering of the original *νοῦς*. See Scott, op. cit., vol. III, p. 290; Nock and Festugière, op. cit., p. 363; Mahé, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 148-9 and 162-3; and Parrott, op. cit., p. 380.
34. *Asclep.* 41.353.1-355.4, *gratias tibi summe, exsuperantissime; tua enim gratia tantum sumus cognitionis tuae lumen consecuti . . . condonans nos sensu, ratione, intelligentia: sensu, ut te cognoverimus; ratione, ut te suspicionibus indagemus; cognitione, ut te cognoscentes gaudeamus . . . haec est enim humana sola gratulatio, cognitio maiestatis tuae*. This passage comes from the final prayer of the *Asclepius* and can be compared with the Greek and Coptic versions. For discussion of the religious sentiments expressed see R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen*, 3 (Auflage, Leipzig, 1927), pp. 285ff.; and P.A. Carozzi, "Hoc lumine salvati tuo (*Asclepius* 41)," *Perennitas: Studi in onore di A. Brelich* (Roma, 1980), pp. 115-38 in addition to the works cited in n. 33 above.
35. There has been considerable discussion concerning the precise epistemological values of these three stages although the *Asclepius*, the *Papyrus Mimaut*, and *Nag Hammadi Codex VI.7* all explain them quite adequately in the respective texts. See Scott, op. cit., p. 291; Nock and Festugière, op. cit., p. 399; Klein, op. cit., pp. 177-180; and Mahé, op. cit., pp. 148ff.

36. *Asclep.* 3.298.21-299.2, *divinitatis etenim ratio divina sensus intentione noscenda torrenti similissima est fluvio e summo in prouum praecipiti rapacitate currenti: quo efficitur, ut intentionem nostram non solum audientium verum tractantium ipsorum celeri velocitate praetereat*.
37. *Ibid.*, 19.318.12-17, *sublimis etenim ratio eoque divinior ultra hominum mentes intentionesque consistens, si non attentiore aurium obsequio verba loquentis acceperis, transvolabit et transfluet aut magis refluet suique se fontis liquoribus miscet*.
38. All the elements contained in this definition are traditional (Platonic and Stoic). See Plato, *Tim.* 67b; Aetius, *Plac.* IV.19.1 (*D.G.* 407.22a and b ff.); Seneca, *Nat. Quaest.* II.6.5, etc. For more parallels see Scott, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 133-134; and Nock and Festugière, op. cit., pp. 375-376.
39. *Asclep.* 20.320.15-321.9, *nullo ex his nominibus eum definite nuncupabimus. si enim vox hoc est — ex aere spiritu percusso sonus declarans omnem hominis voluntatem vel sensum, quem forte ex sensibus mente perceperit. cuius nominis tota substantia paucis composita syllabis definita atque circumscripta est, ut esset in homine necessarium vocis auriumque commercium — simul etiam et sensus et spiritus et aeris et omnium in his aut per haec aut de his nomen est totum dei; non enim spero totius maiestatis effectorem omniumque rerum patrem vel dominum uno posse quamvis e multis composito nuncupari nomine, hunc vero innominem vel potius omninominem siquidem is sit unus et omnia, ut sit necesse auto omnia esse eius nomine aut ipsum omnium nominibus nuncupari*.
40. For God as nameless in the Greek corpus see *Corp. Herm.* V.1.60.4, Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* I.6.4 (*C.S.E.L.* 19.19.18) and IV.7.3 (*C.S.E.L.* 19.293.1).
41. For God as many-named in the Greek corpus see *Corp. Herm.* V.10.64.3-10.
42. *Asclep.* 41.353.3-354.2, *nomen unum, quo solus deus est benedicendus religione paterna*. This passage also comes from the final prayer of the *Asclepius*, and so a comparison with the Greek text of the *Papyrus Mimaut* is possible. In the latter we read that god has an "unspeakable name" (ἄφραστον ὄνομα). On the notion of ineffability in the *Hermetica* see A.D. Nock, "The Exegesis of *Timaeus* 28 c," *Vigiliae Christianae* 16 (1962): 79-86.
43. This aspect can be paralleled in Apuleius.
44. *Asclep.* 8.305.10, 20.321.12, and 26.331.20. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* II.15.38.11, VI.1.72.4-5, and X.3.114.7-8.
45. *Asclep.* 2.298.4 and 20.321.7. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* XVI.3.233.1.
46. *Asclep.* 1.296.10 and 2.297.23-4.
47. *Ibid.*, 30.338.19.
48. *Ibid.*, 16.315.17 and 41.353.1. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* I.31.18.9.
49. *Asclep.* 41.353.1. The attribute "highest" is absent from the text of the corresponding Coptic version.
50. *Ibid.*, 31.339.23. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* IV.8.52.12 and XI.20.155.13.
51. *Asclep.* 27.332.11-12. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* II.4.33.1-2, V.10.64.5-6, and XI.16.154.1-2.

52. *Asclep.* 29.336.5. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* XII.23.183.12-13.
53. *Asclep.* 29.336.5. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* XII.23.183.13.
54. *Asclep.* 31.339.26.
55. *Ibid.*, 31.339.25-6. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* V.10.64.13.
56. *Asclep.* 27.332.10.
57. *Ibid.*, 14.313.17. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* VIII.2.88.2 and XVIII.9.252.3.
58. *Asclep.* 14.313.16-17 and 26.331.11.
59. *Ibid.*, 30.338.16. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* II.12.37.4 and X.14.120.2.
60. See pp. 6-7 and n. 43.
61. *Asclep.* 1.296.11-13, *omnia unius esse aut unum esse omnia; ita enim sibi est utrumque conexum, ut separari alterum ab utro non possit.* Cf. *Corp. Herm.* XII.8.177.5, XIII.17.207.18, XIII.18.208.3, and XVI.3.232.18-233.3.
62. *Asclep.* 20.321.7, *siquidem is sit unus et omnia.*
63. For the Stoic (or syncretistic Stoic and Platonic) position see the discussion of *spiritus* on pp. 142-143. Of course, the Stoic doctrine holds that God is both transcendent and immanent. However, the transcendence is not metaphysical in this case. On the importance of the Stoic elements see p. 132.
64. *Asclep.* 34.344.22-3, *omnia enim deus et ab eo omnia et eius omnia voluntatis.* Cf. *ibid.* 2.298.3-4.
65. *Ibid.*, 2.297.23-298.1, *non enim hoc dixi, omnia unum esse et unum omnia, utpote quae in creatore fuerint omnia, aequam creasset omnia?* Cf. *ibid.*, 14.313.7-9.
66. This pre-existence of created things in God is presumably — along traditional Platonic lines — as Forms in the divine mind. For the appearance of this latter notion in the *Asclepius* see pp. 138-139.
67. See n. 64 above.
68. *Ibid.*, 26.331.12-14 "For the will of God has no beginning. It is the same and as it is eternally. Indeed, the plan of God's will is equivalent to his nature" (*voluntas etenim dei caret initio, quae eadem est et, sicuti est, sempiterna. dei enim natura consilium est voluntatis.*) Cf. *Corp. Herm.* X.2.113.11-12.
69. *Asclep.* 8.305.12-15, "For the will of God itself is the highest completion, since he realises his willing and completion at the same instant of time" (*voluntas etenim dei ipsa est summa perfectio, utpote cum voluisse et perfecisse uno eodemque temporis puncto compleat.*) Cf. *Corp. Herm.* XIII.19.208.14-15.
70. *Asclep.* 20.321.9-11, "He is absolutely filled with the fertility of both sexes: always pregnant with his will and always giving birth" (*utraque sexus fecunditate plenissimus, semper voluntatis praegnant suae parit semper.*) That creation is both unchanging and temporal was clearly grasped by Scott, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 184 and 192-193.
71. That God transcends time (as opposed to being eternal in time) is not explicitly stated in the *Asclepius*, although this notion is undoubtedly implied by the essentially Platonic theology expounded there. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* XII.23.183.13-14, "there is no time in relation to God" (*οὐτε χρόνος περὶ*

- τὸν θεόν ἔσται).
72. *Asclep.* 2.298.1-2, *nec inmerito ipse dictus est omnia, cuius membra sunt omnia.*
73. This combination of Platonic and Stoic notions would not really be novel, but simply a reflection of tendencies in second-century (and also earlier) thought.
74. See pp. 140-150. The Hermeticist uses the terminology: *deus, genera (species, formae), mundus.* That *mundus* = *ὅλη* is indicated at *ibid.*, 14.313.4-5, 14.313.20, and 17.315.24.
75. *Ibid.*, 32.340.16-21, *omnis ergo sensus divinitatis similis immobilis ipse in stabilitate se commovet sua: sanctus et incorruptus et sempiternus est et si quid potest melius nuncupari dei summi in ipsa veritate consistens aeternitas, plenissimus omnium sensibilibus et totius disciplinae, consistens, ut ita dixerim, cum deo.*
76. According to Nock and Festugière, op. cit., p. 389, *omnis sensus = totus sensus* (an inversion of terms found elsewhere in this text). The Greek original will therefore have been *ὁ πᾶς νοῦς* signifying the divine intellect of which the intellect of the world and the human intellect are simply participations. One might add that the expression *omnis sensus* fits well with the consubstantiality between the divine intellect and the intellect of eternity mentioned later in the passage.
77. *Asclep.* 32.340.21-341.20. The "divine intellect" (*sensus . . . dei*) mentioned at the end of this text is clearly equivalent to the "divine mind . . . reason" (*mens . . . ratio divina*) discussed at *ibid.*, 13.312.7-16.
78. A.S. Ferguson in Scott, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 423 explained the statement in another way. He argued that the Latin translator had confused the original by running together descriptions of two different intellects: that of God in the first half of the main passage and that of eternity in the second half. His conjecture of the Greek original therefore reads: *πᾶς μὲν οὖν νοῦς τῷ θεῷ [sc. νῷ] ὁμοίως ἐστίν. αὐτὸς μὲν ἀκίνητος ὢν ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ στάσει ἑαυτὸν κινεῖ, σεμνὸς καὶ ἄφθαρτος καὶ αἰδῖος ὢν, καὶ εἰ τι ἄλλω κρείττονι ὀνόματι κεκλησθαι δύναται. τοῦ δὲ ὑψίστου θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ Ἀληθείᾳ ὢν ὁ Αἰών, πληρέστατος πάντων τῶν αἰσθητῶν καὶ πάσης τάξεως, καὶ ὡς περ συνυφεστὸς μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.* This interpretation has the advantage of making the ascending and descending hierarchies agree with one another — both having the intellects of God and of eternity as the higher terms; it has the disadvantage of postulating an extraordinary grammatical incompetence on the translator's part — for example he applies the masculine adjective *plenissimus* to the feminine noun *aeternitas*. Fortunately, this speculative explanation is unnecessary if one bears in mind the consubstantial relation of the two higher intellects.
79. The nature of the relation between the divine intellect and the intellect of eternity will be explored in terms of several further texts. See pp. 140-142.
80. Compare the reference to the eternal character of the whole intellect. The Hermeticist does not explicitly interpret this eternity as atemporality here, although a later passage seems to indicate what his meaning is. Thus,

referring to the divine intellect he writes at *Asclep* 32.341.15-17: "One cannot recognize the slightest image of it in this world, for where everything is measured by time there arises deception" (*cuius veritatis in mundo nequidem extrema linea umbra dinoscitur. ubi enim quid temporum dimensione dinoscitur, ibi sunt mendacia*). That the whole intellect is also non-spatial would follow from its identity with God. See pp. 134-135.

81. Compare the references to immobility and self-motion in stability. As in Neoplatonism, the atemporal and non-spatial character of the divine intellect necessitates that its motion (of thinking or causation) is of a transcendent variety.
82. Compare the reference to the whole intellect as being filled with all sensible things and the totality of knowledge. That its content is the Forms is implied not only by the terminology itself but by the details of the Hermetic theory of Forms to be studied below.
83. To the theory of Forms presented in the Latin work it is *Corpus Hermeticum* XVI which furnishes the most striking parallels. See the following passages in relation to each of the categories listed below: (i) *Corp. Herm.* XVI.8.234.20-235.2, (ii) *ibid.*, XVI.9.235.3, (iii) *ibid.*, XVI.17.237.11-12, (iv) *ibid.*, XVI.15.236.18-26, and (v) *ibid.*, XVI.17.237.12-14.
84. See Nock and Festugière, *op. cit.*, p. 360 (commenting on *Asclep.* 4.300.7-10), "Au surplus, tout le passage est très embrouillé, et je doute que l'auteur se soit compris lui-même."
85. The main passages are: *Asclep.* 3.299.3-4.300.18 (text I), *ibid.*, 17.316.5-18.318.2 (text II), and *ibid.*, 34.344.13-36.347.3 (text III).
86. *Ibid.*, 3.299.13-15 (text I), "Nature imprints Forms upon matter through the four elements" (*natura autem per species imaginans mundum per quatuor elementa*). Cf. *ibid.*, 36.346.10-347.3 (text III).
87. *Ibid.*, 4.299.19-300.7 (text I), "The species of gods produces from itself individual gods, the species of demons and similarly that of men produces individuals like itself" (*genus ergo deorum ex se deorum faciet species. daemonum genus, aequae hominum . . . sui similes species generat*). The use of these two types of Form follows the tradition of Platonic doxography.
88. *Ibid.*, 4.299.17-19 (text I) and *ibid.*, 4.300.10-12 (text I).
89. *Ibid.*, 35.345.10-11 (text III).
90. *Ibid.*, 17.316.11-13 (text II) and *ibid.*, 35.345.24-346.2 (text III).
91. Cf. *ibid.*, 35.345.13-15 (text III) and *ibid.*, 35.345.24-346.2 (text III) — higher Form; *ibid.*, 35.345.19 (text III) and *ibid.*, 35.346.4-6 (text III) — lower Form; *ibid.*, 17.316.11 (text II) — uncertain status.
92. Cf. *ibid.*, 34.344.20 (text III) and passages mentioned in nn. 87 and 89 above.
93. *Ibid.*, 4.299.19-300.2 (text I) and *ibid.*, 4.300.8-18 (text I).
94. *Ibid.*, 4.299.18-19 (text I) and *ibid.*, 4.300.10 (text I).
95. *Ibid.*, 35.345.11-346.6 (text III).
96. *Ibid.*, 17.316.12 (text II), *ibid.*, 17.316.17-317.1 (text II), and *ibid.*, 35.345.18 (text III).

97. *Ibid.*, 35.345.17-20 (text III).
98. *Ibid.*, 4.300.8-18 (text I). For the distinction of transcendent and immanent Forms in earlier Platonism see pp. 203ff. and 312ff. The Hermeticist's use of *idea* for the immanent Form at *ibid.*, 17.316.17 deviates somewhat from this traditional theory.
99. *Ibid.*, 34.344.19-22 (text III), "This so-called sensible world is the receptacle of all the qualities or substances of sensible Forms. None of these things can have life without God" (*hic ergo sensibilis qui dicitur mundus receptaculum est omnium sensibilibus specierum qualitatium vel corporum, quae omnia sine deo vegetari non possunt*). If the ambiguous *quae* of the last clause refers to *species* rather than *corpora*, then the argument is that God does not merely preside over the instantiation of the Forms but actually gives them existence. See n. 101 below.
100. *Ibid.*, 3.299.11-13 (text I), "Matter has been prepared by God as the receptacle of all kinds of Forms" (*mundus autem praeparatus est a deo receptaculum omniformium specierum*).
101. *Ibid.*, 33.343.2-8 (text III), "Just as this so-called place outside the world (if there is such a thing — which I do not believe) would have to be filled, I think, with intelligible things similar to the divinity of that place, thus the so-called sensible world is filled with bodies and living creatures similar to its nature and quality" (*sicuti enim quod dicitur extra mundum, si tamen est aliquid (nec istud enim credo), sic habeo, plenum esse intelligibilium rerum, id est divinitati suae similitum, ut hic etiam sensibilis mundus qui dicitur sit plenissimus corporum et animalium naturae suae et qualitati convenientium*). It is quite clear from the context that the author postulates two levels of reality: the "intelligible world" (*intelligibilis mundus* [*ibid.*, 34.344.14]) comprising God and the higher Forms and the "sensible world" (*sensibilis mundus* [*ibid.*, 34.344.19]) comprising matter and the lower Forms. The implication of the main passage is therefore that the higher level of reality can only be a realm filled with metaphysical principles, and not a realm of empty physical space as visualized in the traditional Stoic doctrine of the surrounding void.
102. See n. 98 above.
103. *Ibid.*, 19.319.1-5.
104. As argued in section (ii).
105. *Ibid.*, 35.345.18-346.6 (text III). Cf. *ibid.*, 3.299.7-11 (text I). Astrological notions gain prominence among Platonists during the second century A.D. The Hermeticist's use of these ideas within a theory of individuation is, however, quite unparalleled in earlier sources.
106. *Ibid.*, 3.299.7-11 (text I), "From all the aforesaid causes which are alike ruled by God, a continuous emanation takes place through the world and through the soul of all species and individuals, throughout nature" (*a supradictis enim omnibus, quorum idem gubernator deus omnium, frequentatio fertur influens per mundum et per animam omnium generum et omnium specierum per rerum naturam*).

107. Ibid., 19.320.3-4, "All things are dependent upon the one and emanate from it" (*ex uno eienim cuncta pendentia ex eoque defluentia*). Cf. *ibid.*, 3.298.7-9, 5.301.2-4, and 19.318.15-17. The emphasis upon dynamism is very characteristic of the later Platonic tradition.
108. Ibid., 14.313.20-314.22 *tamen in se nascendi procreandique vim . . . locum autem dico in quo sint omnia: neque enim haec omnia esse potuissent, si locus deesset . . . in se tamen omnium naturas habet, utpote qui his omnibus ad concipiendum fecundissimos sinus praestet.*
109. Ibid., 19.320.3-8. The writer argues that one can consider all things as a plurality or — in the sense that they depend upon a single cause — as a unity. In the latter case one can consider all things "as one or rather as two" (*unum vel potius duo*): in other words as a unity which is however more correctly a duality.
110. See n. 115 below.
111. Ibid., 17.315.24-316.1. Matter is "the receptacle, source of motion, and origin of multiplicity for all things ruled by God" (*omnium est receptaculum omniumque agitatio atque frequentatio quorum deus gubernator*). The whole passage is extremely difficult to construe, although Nock and Festugière, *op. cit.*, p. 373 suggest the following as the original: πάντων ὑποδοχή πάντων τῶν κινήσιν πικνότης. The term *frequentatio* is particularly obscure but probably involves the notions of motion and multiplicity. See L. Delatte, S. Govaerts, et J. Denooz, *Index du Corpus Hermeticum* (Rome, 1977), s.v.
112. *Asclep* 40.351.22-3. The writer states that "accident and chance are present in all things, blended in their materiality" (*eventus autem vel fors insunt omnibus permixta mundanis*).
113. Ibid., 17.316.9-13. Space is invisible in itself "but is held to have a sort of visibility through the Forms alone with whose images it seems to be impressed" (*per enim formas solas specierum, quarum imaginibus videtur insculpta, quasi visibilis creditur*).
114. As stated above, the attribution of these characteristics to matter is not completely certain. However, it seems reasonable to resolve ambiguities by appealing to Plato's *Timaeus* as a parallel, since the doctrine stemming from that text is a clear ancestor of the Hermeticist's own teaching.
115. Thus, Scott maintained that of the components into which he divides the treatise *Asclepius* I (1-14) and *Asclepius* III (16-41) are monistic while *Asclepius* II (14-16) is dualistic in character. Furthermore, he argued that even *Asclepius* II (14-16) holds its dualism in a restricted form. See Scott, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 82, 87, 123. In accordance with this thesis, Scott suggested that *Asclep* 3.299.11-13 (see n. 100) meant not that God simply ordered matter but that he actually created it (Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 22); that *Asclep*. 14.314.3-4, "Matter is therefore able to produce alone, without joining with another principle" (*haec itaque sine alieno conceptu est sola generabilis*) does not imply really independent causality on matter's part (Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 87); and that *Asclep*. 19.320.5 (see n. 109) was inserted into the argument by an interpolator who misunderstood its real significance (Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 123). Of course, the interpretation of these texts along

such lines is only possible in conjunction with the thesis that the *Asclepius* is composed of several smaller treatises. However, the notion that they expound a monism is held by Scott to be supported (i) by the presence of the one-all doctrine (*Asclep*. 1.296.11-12 and 20.321.7) which seems to contradict dualism; and (ii) by clearly monistic statements in the Greek treatises (*Corp. Herm.* III.44.2-3 and XII.22.183.7-8) and testimonia (Iamblichus, *De Myst.* 8.3.265.6-7; cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.386.10-11). See Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 22, and 138. In reply to this interpretation one must say that the thesis of the *Asclepius*'s composite structure is if not untenable certainly not demonstrated. Furthermore, the presence of the word *receptaculum* in *Asclep*. 3.299.11-13 indicates that the author may be thinking of Plato's ὑποδοχή which has not previously been interpreted as caused by God. In addition, the statement of *ibid.*, 14.314.3-4 that matter is an independent source of causality must be taken at face value in the absence of definite evidence to the contrary. Finally, the notion of an interpolation at *ibid.*, 19.320.5 cannot be maintained without the highly speculative thesis of the work's multiple authorship. We must therefore conclude that, despite the undeniable existence of monistic tendencies in the Greek treatises, the *Asclepius* remains in the tradition of Platonic dualism.

116. The remainder of our discussion of God will be divided up as follows:
  - Category (i) Principles having a status not independent of God
    - a. Eternity 2 C i
    - b. Spirit 2 C ii
    - c. Love 2 C iii
  - Categories (i) = (ii) Principles having a status which is both not independent and independent of God. Their position is ambivalent.
    - Fate 2 C iv
  - Category (ii) Principles having a status independent of God
    - a. The second god 2 C v
    - b. The hierarchy of gods 2 C vi
    - c. The second god and the hierarchy of gods 2 C vii
- It should be noted that "independent of God" does not mean "not caused by God" — which applies only to matter — but rather "existing apart from God."
117. *Asclep* 32.340.11-12.
118. Ibid., 32.340.17-21. See p. 138.
119. Ibid., 31.339.26-340.3.
120. Ibid., 30.338.22-3.
121. The fullest account of Ἄλων is in *Corp. Herm.* XI.2 where we have a series of distinct principles — God, Eternity, the World, Time, and Becoming — each of which "generates" (παίειν) the next. Among features which parallel the *Asclepius* are the notions (i) that Eternity is "in God" (ἐν τῷ Θεῷ), the World "in Eternity" (ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι) Time "in the World" (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ); and (ii) that Eternity "is stable around God" (ἔστηκεν περὶ τὸν Θεόν) (*Corp. Herm.* XI.2.147.7-148.6).

122. *Asclep.* 31.339.5-7. At *ibid.*, 30.337.20 Eternity is said to be the "place" (*locus*) of the world.
123. *Ibid.*, 30.338.3-4. Cf. *ibid.*, 30.337.19-20.
124. *Ibid.*, 31.339.7-8.
125. *Ibid.*, 31.340.3-4.
126. *Ibid.*, 31.339.11-13. At *ibid.*, 30.339.1-3 the mobility of time is said to begin and end in Eternity's immobility.
127. *Ibid.*, 31.339.14-20. The whole argument regarding the relation of Eternity and time is of great subtlety (*ibid.*, 31.339.8-18). In brief it runs as follows: (i a) time is moving, (i b) Eternity is immobile, (i c) since time's motion is circular it is also immobile in a sense; (ii a) time has a circular motion from and towards Eternity (held to be a restatement of [i c]); (ii b) Eternity is immanent in time; (ii c) Eternity has a circular motion from and towards itself (resulting from the combination of [ii a] and [ii b]). This argument shows that the relation between Eternity and time is one containing moments of both transcendence and immanence: transcendence in (i a) and (i b), immanence in (ii b), and transcendence and immanence in (i c), (ii a), and (ii c). Historically speaking, it represents a combination of the Platonic notion of a transcendent relation between eternity and time (see Plato, *Tim.* 37 d where the eternity of the Living Creature is the paradigm of the heavenly bodies' temporal motion) and the Aristotelian notion of their immanent relation (see Aristotle, *De Caelo* I.9.279 ■ 25-8 where eternity is the sum of all time constituted by the heavenly bodies' rotation). There is no definite literary evidence of the combination of these two texts by the Hermeticist, although either he or his source has subconsciously made the doctrinal synthesis.
128. *Asclep.* 30.338.11-12.
129. The relation of God as Eternity to time is of a similar kind. See n. 127.
130. *Asclep.* 16.315.13-15.
131. *Ibid.*, 17.315.22-4.
132. *Ibid.*, 14.313.21-2. Here, Spirit is declared to have characteristics analogous to those possessed by matter.
133. *Ibid.*, 14.313.5-7.
134. *Ibid.*, 17.316.3-4.
135. This metaphysical status is apparently confirmed by *ibid.*, 14.313.5-6, "Spirit was inherent in matter, although not in the way that it was inherent in God" (*inerat mundo spiritus, sed non similiter ut deo*).
136. *Ibid.*, 6.303.5-6.
137. *Ibid.*, 14.313.5-6. *Mundus* here clearly signifies matter. See n. 74 above.
138. *Ibid.*, 17.315.22-3. *Mundus* here seems rather to signify the world. See n. 136 above.
139. *Ibid.*, 17.316.3-4.
140. On the Stoicism of the *Asclepius* see p. 132.

141. I suspect that the sparing use of Spirit in the philosophical system of the *Asclepius* is a sign that its author is aware that many elements in the purely physical doctrine of pneuma cannot be used. In this respect the treatment differs from that in *Corp. Herm.* I.4.7.15ff. where a cosmological process is described using an elaborate blend of metaphysical and physical ideas. Here, on the one hand there are concepts like "intellect" (*νοῦς*) and "word" (*λόγος*) and on the other transformations of elemental qualities, while Spirit is manifested alternately as "spiritual word" (*πνευματικὸς λόγος*) and as the element of fire. But Scott, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 36-38, holds that there is a similar combination in the *Asclepius* where he locates traces of the physical interpretation of Spirit as fire and air. On this doctrine see also *Corp. Herm.* III.1.44.2-9.44.
142. *Asclep.* 21.321.18-323.7. At this point the parallel Coptic version is also available, enabling us to see the increased philosophical technicality of the Latin *Asclepius*.
143. *Ibid.*, 21.322.11-13.
144. *Ibid.*, 21.322.7, 21.322.13, 21.322.15, and 21.323.3-4.
145. *Ibid.*, 21.323.3-6.
146. *Ibid.*, 20.321.9-11 and 21.321.18-19.
147. *Ibid.*, 21.322.11-13.
148. *Ibid.*, 21.322.5-9. The writer adds that it is for this reason that one can call the coming together "Cupid, Venus, or both" (*sive Cupidinem sive Venerem sive utrumque*).
149. *Ibid.*, 21.322.17-323.2.
150. *Ibid.*, 21.323.5-6.
151. *Ibid.*, 21.321.20-21.
152. To a great extent this depends upon the interpretation given to God's bisexuality. On the notion of the "male-female" (*ἀρρενὸςθηλυς*) see J. Kroll, *Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters 12: 2-4)* (Münster, 1913), pp. 51-4; Scott, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 135-138; Nock and Festugière, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 20; Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste IV: Le dieu inconnu et la gnose*, pp. 43-51; and Festugière, *Hermétisme et mystique païenne*, pp. 257-60. From the evidence assembled by these modern scholars, it seems that the notion appears in at least three contexts: (i) Ancient religions of Egypt and Greece. See the texts assembled by Scott, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 135-137; (ii) Stoicism. See Diogenes of Babylon in Philodemus, *De Piet.* 15-17 (*D.G.* 548b 14-550b 8 = *S.V.F.* III. Diog. 33); Varro, *Logist. Curio* fr. 2 (Augustine, *Civ. Dei* VII. 9 [*C.C.S.L.* 47.193-4]); and Firmicus Maternus, *Math.* V, pr. 3; (iii) Pythagoreanism or Neopythagoreanism. See ps.-Iamblichus, *Theol. Arithm.* 53.21.4.1. Leaving aside category (i) whose position was later interpreted according to the philosophical views implied by categories (ii) or (iii), it should be noted that the notion of a bisexual God means something different in category (ii) and category (iii) respectively. In the former it signifies the God immanent in the world, that immanence being interpreted as the union of active (male) and passive (female) principles. In the latter

- it signifies that God who transcends and is immanent in the world, the transcendence being represented by the priority of the monad (male) to the dyad (female) and the immanence by the production by the monad of the dyad. Since the *Asclepius* is a synthesis of both Stoic and Platonic or Pythagorean notion, it is difficult to say which of these approaches dominates in the Hermeticist's mind. The same can be said of other references to the "male-female" in later eclectic sources like Ps.-Aristotle, *Περὶ Κόσμου* 7.401 b 2 (= Apuleius, *De Mundo* 37.372) and *Corp. Herm.* I.9.16.
153. *Asclep.* 39.349.19-350.6. Part of this text is preserved in the Greek by Lydus, *De Mens.* IV.7.71.1-4, ἡ δὲ εἰμαρμένη ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ εἰμαρτὴ ἐνέργεια ἡ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς ἡ μετ' ἐκείνην τεταγμένη κατὰ πάντων οὐρανίων τε καὶ ἐπιγείων μετὰ τῆς ἀνάγκης τάξις.
154. In order to simplify the argument I shall label the various "definitions" as follows: (i a) *quam εἰμαρμένην* . . . *vincla*, (i b) *effectrix rerum*, (ii a) *deus summus*, (ii b) *ab ipso* . . . *deus*, and (i c) *omnium caelestium* . . . *disciplina*. The reason for my division into types (i) and (ii) is explained below.
155. See Ps.-Plutarch, *De Fato* 1.158 c-d; Nemesius, *De Nat. Hom.* 38.753B ff.; and Calcidius, *In Tim.* 143.182.5-7. The doctrinal parallels between these texts indicate a common source.
156. That definitions (i a) and (i c) are not really distinct follows from the fact that both refer to Fate abstractly. That (ii a) and (ii b) are distinct follows from the identification of Fate with separate principles. The case of (i b) is problematical, although the original terminology *εἰμαρτὴ ἐνέργεια* suggests that we are dealing with Fate as a process rather than as a principle.
157. See Aetius, *Plac.* I.27.2 (S.V.F. II.916 = D.G. 322 b 6-7); *ibid.*, I.27.4 (S.V.F. II.976 = D.G. 322 a 10-14); and Servius, *In Aeneid.* II.689 (S.V.F. II.923).
158. See Cicero, *De Divin.* I.125-6 (S.V.F. II.921); Gellius, *Noct. Attic.* VII.2.1-3 (S.V.F. II.1000); and Servius, *In Aeneid.* III.376 (S.V.F. II.919).
159. See Cicero, *De Divin.* I.125-6 (S.V.F. II.921); Servius, *In Aeneid.* III.376 (S.V.F. II.919); and Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 15.816d (S.V.F. I.98).
160. See Aetius, *Plac.* I.28.4 (S.V.F. II.917 = D.G. 324 a 1-3); Cicero, *De Divin.* I.125-6 (S.V.F. II.921); and Nemesius, *De Nat. Hom.* 37.752B (S.V.F. II.918).
161. See Arius Didymus, *Epit. Phys.* fr. 29 (S.V.F. II.528 = D.G. 465.1-2); Seneca, *De Benef.* IV.7.1-2 (S.V.F. II.1024); Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. Philos.* VII.135-6 (S.V.F. I.102 and II.580); and Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De Fato* 22.191.30 (S.V.F. II.945).
162. See Ps.-Plutarch, *De Fato* 2.568 c; Nemesius, *De Nat. Hom.* 38, 753Bff.; and Calcidius, *In Tim.* 144.182.16-183.1. On these doctrinal parallels see n. 155 above.
163. *Asclep.* 19.318.22-319.11. The section dealing with the ouasiarch Fate is preserved in Greek at Lydus, *De Mens.* IV.7.70.23-4.
164. In this astronomical passage it is clearly Jupiter alone who could signify the highest God. Fate is contrasted with this Jupiter.

165. *Asclep.* 40.351.3-14.
166. In this account of the three principles their relation to Eternity corresponds to their relation to god. God and Eternity are co-extensive.
167. *Ibid.*, 40.351.14-22.
168. See pp. 144-145.
169. See pp. 144-145.
170. *Ibid.*, 26.330.2-3.
171. The Greek text is quoted by Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* VII.18.3 (C.S.E.L. 19.641.2-3) καὶ θεὸς καὶ τοῦ πρώτου καὶ ἐνὸς θεοῦ δημιουργός. This author holds that the words τοῦ πρώτου (not contained in the Latin version) indicate that the second principle is also "first": in other words that the Hermeticist is postulating a consubstantial relation between the first and second principles. On such an interpretation the second god is clearly a transcendent spiritual principle. Lactantius's interpretation is perhaps supported by certain passages in the Greek corpus where the derivation of such a secondary principle is apparently envisaged. See *Corp. Herm.* V.2.60.17-18 where God is described as "not one but the source of one" οὐχ εἷς ἀλλ' ἄφ' οὗ ὁ εἷς. (Comparison with *ibid.*, II.5.33.4 and II.12.37.7-9 indicates that the doctrine here is of a first principle transcending intellect and substance giving rise to a second principle which is intellect and substance). His interpretation is perhaps also supported by the phrasology of the Coptic version which here as elsewhere is closer than the Latin version to the Greek original. However, the wider context of the Latin *Asclepius* itself suggests that the second god is the sensible cosmos. Thus, the words τοῦ πρώτου (occurring only in the Greek version) indicate that the second principle is the "first" in the sense of being the first product of the first principle. On this question see P. Siniscalco, "Ermete Trismegisto, profeta pagano della rivelazione cristiana. La fortuna di un passo ermetico (*Asclepius* 8) nell'interpretazione di scrittori cristiani," pp. 90-93.
172. *Asclep.* 8.305.1ff.
173. *Ibid.*, 8.305.2-8.
174. *Ibid.*, 10.308.8-9. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* VIII.287.14-18, IX.8.99.15-18, X.10.118.7-10, X.12.119.1-3, etc.
175. *Asclep.* 3.299.3. Two Latin terms are used to signify "world": (i) *caelum* (see *ibid.*, 3.299.3, 3.299.5, and 4.300.7), and (ii) *mundus* (see *ibid.*, 10.308.9, 10.308.21, 25.328.20, 27.332.4, and 30.337.23). On another sense of *mundus* (as "matter") see n. 74 above.
176. *Ibid.*, 29.336.16-337.3. Cf. *Corp. Herm.* XVI.6.234.4-6, XVI.12.235.25-236.3, XVI.17.237.11-14, etc.
177. *Asclep.* 3.299.4-5 and 30.337.23-338.2.
178. *Ibid.*, 30.337.23-338.1. Cf. *ibid.*, 3.299.3-4 and 27.332.4-5.
179. *Ibid.*, 29.337.12-14.
180. *Ibid.*, 18.317.14-15.
181. *Ibid.*, 29.337.5.

182. Ibid., 3.299.5-7. The phrase *caeli vero et ipsius animae* here could mean either "of the world and its soul" or "of the world and the soul itself." However, in both cases the reference is to a universal and not an individual soul. See also *ibid.*, 2.298.12-13 and 3.298.17-19.
183. Ibid., 32.340.21-3.
184. Ibid., 32.341.9-13. The world soul is described with varying terminology: (i) *anima* (sc. *caeli* or *mundi*) (see *ibid.*, 2.298.12, 3.298.19, and 3.299.5-6), (ii) *sensus mundi/sensus mundanus* (see *ibid.*, 32.340.21-2, 32.341.10, and 32.342.2), and (iii) *intellectus mundi* (see *ibid.*, 32.342.4). Regarding (ii) two observations are required: first, that *sensus* is the translation of the Greek *nous* (see nn. 42 and 85-86 above) and second, that references to the world soul as *ψυχή/anima* and *νοῦς/intellectus* are equally common in syncretistic literature. This is indicated in the writings of Cicero, Varro, Seneca, and others.
185. Ibid., 32.342.1-5.
186. The author adds a note saying that "we perceive the intelligible gods more clearly than the sensible ones" (*magis enim ipsos sentimus quam eos*).
187. A note is added that the sensible gods "accomplish all things in sensible nature, acting one through another" (*per sensibilem naturam conficiunt omnia, alter per alterum*).
188. Ibid., 19.318.5-21.
189. Festugière, *Hermétisme et mystique païenne*, p. 125 suggests the possibility that the intelligible gods are distinct from the ousiarchs to be mentioned below. This would follow from understanding *specierum principes dii* as "gods who rule (are prior to) substances (transcendent substances)," these latter being interpreted as equivalent to the ousiarchs. However, Festugière, *op. cit.*, pp. 125, n. 19 and 128, n. 30 rightly rejects this complicating factor not supported elsewhere by the text. In short, it seems clear that (i) *specierum principes dii*, (ii) *princeps οὐσιᾶς* (accepting the likely conjecture *οὐσιᾶ<ς>* of Ferguson), and (iii) *οὐσιάρχης* all refer to the same thing or things.
190. These will be immanent and not transcendent Forms.
191. This substance will correspond to their immanent Form.
192. That the phrase *utriusque originis consimiles suae* indicates that the sensible gods are constituted (i) by their dependence upon the intelligible and (ii) by their association with ■ material body is convincingly suggested by Nock and Festugière, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 375.
193. On the meaning of "ousiarch" (*οὐσιάρχης*) see Festugière, *Hermétisme et mystique païenne*, pp. 127-130. The writer instances some important texts of Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis* which speak of the relation between intelligible "causes" (*αἰχᾶι*) and the sensible "substances" (*οὐσίαι*) which they govern. See *De Myst.* VIII.1.260.14-16 and VIII.5.268.6-8. These parallels are validated by the fact that Iamblichus is throughout this discussion referring to the Egyptian or "Hermetic" philosophy. The only difference between Iamblichus and the Latin writer is that the latter interprets *οὐσιᾶ* + *αἰχᾶ* as "substance . . . ruler" rather than as "substance . . . cause."

- See Festugière, *op. cit.*, p. 121, n. 2.
194. *Asclep.* 19.318.22-319.11.
195. See Festugière, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-125 where parallel texts are listed and summarized. For our purposes the most interesting among these are perhaps Porphyry, *De Regr. Anim.* fr. 6.33\*.7-34\*.26, fr. 8.36\*5-37\*6, and Sallustius, *De Diis et Mundo* 5.10.5-6.12.23. For the Iamblican parallel see n. 193 above.
196. Festugière, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
197. *Asclep.* 18.317.21-318.2.
198. Ibid., 23.325.7-8.
199. Ibid., 22.324.6-7 and 23.325.18-19. This presumably refers to their predominantly fiery composition.
200. Ibid., 38.349.9-10.
201. Ibid., 35.345.22-4. See pp. 138-139.
202. Ibid., 27.332.12-13. The text goes on to speak of a further "Plutonian Jupiter" (*Iuppiter Plutonium*) who presides over earth and sea.
203. Festugière, *op. cit.*, p. 125, n. 20; and Nock and Festugière, *op. cit.*, p. 384 both observe that the Jupiter(s) mentioned in this passage are sensible gods contrasting with the Jupiter of *Asclep.* 19.318.22-3 who is an intelligible one. However, Scott, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 107-110 argues with equal plausibility that the Jupiter(s) of the later passage are intelligible gods equivalent to the missing ousiarchs of the earlier one.
204. The following diagram will assist the discussion here:

DEUS =	DEUS SECUNDUS =
1. <i>Iuppiter</i>	<i>Caelum</i>
2. <i>Lumen</i>	<i>Sol</i>
3. <i>Pantomorphos</i>	<i>Horoscopi</i>
4. <i>Heimarmene</i>	<i>VII Sphaerae</i>
5. <i>&lt;Iuppiter&gt; Secundus</i>	<i>Aer</i>

On the question of *Iuppiter* see above. If *Iuppiter Plutonium* is also to be included in the scheme, then a sixth pair of intelligible and sensible gods must be added.

205. Following the horizontal sequence in the diagram.
206. Following the vertical sequence in the diagram.
207. See pp. 148-149. This might also be suggested by the author's apparent hesitation on the question whether the seven spheres have one or two ousiarchs. See pp. 147-148.
208. See p. 145.



209. See pp. 147-148. The sun appears as a separate sensible god although it must inevitably figure also among the seven spheres.  
210. See p. 147.

## Negative Theology in Gnosticism and Neoplatonism

Curtis L. Hancock

From ancient times to the present philosophers have commonly maintained that there exist one or more divine realities which are too perfect for human intelligence to apprehend and which therefore can only be the objects of a negative theology — that is, a theology expressing not what a divine nature is but what it is not.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, the degree to which philosophers require negative theology depends on their views regarding the knowability (or should I say unknowability?) of the divine existents. On the one hand, some philosophers, holding that of all divine existents the nature of the supreme God is alone indiscernible, insist that only the supreme God is the object of negative theology. Philosophers accepting this view may themselves disagree depending on whether they take God's nature to be wholly or only partly unknowable.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, some philosophers, holding that not only God, but also other divine natures are indiscernible, insist that multiple divine existents are fit objects of negative theology. These philosophers may also differ depending on the degree they permit positive theology (that is, a theology expressing what a divine nature is) in their systems, with most excluding it from the higher regions of divine reality, but permitting it on lower levels.<sup>3</sup>

With these helpful distinctions in mind, we are now prepared to take up the task of this paper, which is essentially twofold: first, to generally outline negative theology as it appears in two religio-philosophical Hellenistic schools, Gnosticism and Neoplatonism; second,

to show certain fundamental similarities and dissimilarities between the two schools on negative theology, stressing in the end their similarities. To accomplish these aims my discussion will consist of three parts. The first part will simply outline the main features of Neoplatonic negative theology; the second will delineate Gnostic negative theology, showing especially its parallels with Neoplatonism; the third will furnish a brief summary and some conclusions. For the sake of brevity, I will offer only a representative sampling of sources from these two schools. Specifically, my comments on Neoplatonism will focus on Plotinus, while my reflections on Gnosticism will center on the Nag Hammadi tractates.<sup>4</sup>

# I

Since the main outline of Plotinus's negative theology remains largely unaltered in the writings of his successors, his development of the subject is representative of Neoplatonism as a whole. The *Enneads* are especially representative because they supply a wealth of passages expressing negative theology, the doctrine appearing in some form in almost every treatise, from the first, I, 6, 7-9, to the last, I, 7, 1, 19-21.<sup>5</sup>

For reasons that will become apparent shortly, the *Enneads* restrict negative theology to the One, the supreme reality of Plotinus's metaphysics, permitting positive theology of the remaining divine hypostases, Intelligence and Soul. Since the One is obviously the most important object of Plotinus's monistic and mystical philosophy, negative theology is not for Plotinus a casual practice but is something fundamental to his entire philosophical endeavor. Moreover, regarding the One, Plotinus makes it clear that his commitment to negative theology is *absolute*; in other words, he subscribes to what we might call an *exclusive* negative theology, which forbids the very possibility of predication of the First Reality.

What exactly accounts for Plotinus's strong commitment to negative theology? It ultimately derives from the basic principle of his entire philosophy: namely, that reality is equivalent to unity; in other words, that to be real is to be one.<sup>6</sup> This principle is common to almost all Neoplatonism, and, therefore, we may assume that the negative theology it inspires will hold not only for Plotinus but for his successors as well.<sup>7</sup>

Now, according to this principle — that to be real is to be one — the supreme or perfect reality must be sheer unity (hence Plotinus names it "the One," and "the Good," since unity is perfection and the

*telos* of all reality)<sup>8</sup> and as such must be more real than Intelligence, because even perfect Intelligence, Aristotle's *noēsis noēseēs* admits some multiplicity, at least the logical duality of subject-object, knower-known. But that the One is superior to Intelligence entails a negative theology, for, according to Plotinus, the divine *noēta*, the true objects and the ultimate conditions of all knowledge and predication, constitute a single nature. *Nous* and *eidē* are really identical.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, *Nous* as an active power (*hē dynamis*) is the direct or proximate cause of the Forms (and thereby of its own nature).<sup>10</sup> Since it is only as Form that something is knowable and predicable, the One, by transcending Intelligence and Form, is altogether unknowable and beyond predication.<sup>11</sup> Hence, while the other divine natures, namely, *Nous* and Soul, may be known through a positive theology, since they occupy the universe of forms or *noēta*, the One can only be known through not-knowing, a negative theology which is necessary to prevent the philosopher from describing the superior (the One/Good) in terms of the inferior (Form).

Granted that Plotinus is profoundly committed to negative theology, how does he mainly develop it? To answer this question, let us enumerate and briefly comment on those specific formulations of what God is not which occur most frequently or emphatically in the *Enneads*.

## *The One is unlimited (apeiron).*

Plotinus follows Plato, who in turn follows Parmenides, by identifying form (*eidos*) with determinacy (*horos*) and limit (*peras*). But unlike his predecessors, Plotinus concludes that such predicates cannot apply to the highest reality. Since the One is formless (*aneideon*; *amorphon*),<sup>12</sup> it must be indeterminate (*aoriston*) and unlimited (*apeiron*).<sup>13</sup> Obviously, such a conclusion further supports negative theology: if the One is infinite, it manifestly cannot be the object of finite intelligence; nor can it be the subject of predicates, which, of their very nature, presuppose form and therefore limitation.

## *The One is absolutely without need.*

The transcendence of the One over Form and Intelligence explains its infinity. This same transcendence accounts also for the One's independence. VI, 9 (9), 6, 12-26 explains:

When you think of Him as Mind or God, He is still more: and when you unify Him in your thought, the degree of unity by which He transcends your thought is still greater than you imagine it to be. For He exists in and by Himself without any attributes. One might conceive His unity in terms of His self-sufficiency. For He must be the most sufficient of all things, the most independent, and the most without wants. Everything which is multiple and not one is defective, since it is composed of many parts. Entity needs Him in order to be one: but He does not need Himself; for He is Himself. An existent which is multiple needs its full number of parts and each of its parts, since it exists with the others and not independently, is in need of the others; so an existent of this kind shows itself defective, as a whole and in each individual part. If then, as is in fact true, there must be something supremely self-sufficing, it must be the One, which is the only reality of such a kind as not to be defective either in relation to Itself or to anything else.<sup>14</sup>

Pure unity, then, requires no explanation but itself; and yet the One is required by all else, because where there is multiplicity there is dependence.

*The One is undiminished in production.*<sup>15</sup>

The One is the source of all realities and yet it is inexhaustible. Its productive power is infinite and never depleted. "The First remains the same even when other existents come out of it."<sup>16</sup> Plotinus mainly relies on analogies to convey, however inadequately, the inexhaustibility of the One. In III, 8, (30), 10, 3-7 he states his best-known metaphor on the subject, likening the One to a great spring:

But what is above life [=the One] is cause of life; for the act of life, which is all beings, is not first, but itself flows out, so to speak, as if from a spring. For think of a spring which has no other origin, but gives the whole of itself to rivers, and is not used up by the rivers but remains itself at rest . . .<sup>17</sup>

In the later treatise, V, 5 (32), 5, 2-7, his analogy is less poetic but conveys the same philosophical point. There Plotinus compares production of beings out of the One with production of numbers out of the unit.

In the case of numbers, number comes about according to the same principle [i.e., undiminished giving], with the unit remaining the same, while something else produces. In the case of that which is before beings, much more for this same reason does the One remain intact. If beings exist by

this principle, it is not something else which produces them, while the One remains the same, but rather the One is sufficient to generate these beings.<sup>18</sup>

*The One is not eternal (aiōn).*

It clearly follows from the One's infinity that it is not bound by succession or time. Does this not imply that the One is eternal? Plotinus, perhaps surprisingly, answers negatively. The One cannot be eternal because, for Plotinus (and here he again follows Plato), eternity is linked with immutability (*stasis*), the objects of intellection, the eternal world of Forms.<sup>19</sup> The One is neither mutable nor immutable because it transcends the whole order of reality where such predicates apply. Hence, eternity befits the second hypostasis but not the First.

*The One is not Life (zōē).*

Just as Plotinus must deny eternity of the One, so he must deny life of it, for life, like eternity, presupposes intellection. In fact, for Plotinus, the best life is eternity, a life which realizes itself by apprehending simultaneously all *noēta*. This, of course, is the life of *Nous*. Inferior life, however, is time, a life which realizes itself by apprehending successively all *noēta*. This is the life of Soul. Life, then, whether perfect or imperfect, whether *Nous* or Soul, belongs to the order of *noēsis* and *noēta* and therefore cannot belong to the One.<sup>20</sup>

*The One is not entity (ousia), nor any other megiston genus.*

Plotinus interprets the *megista genē* (*ousia*, *kinēsis*, *stasis*, *tauton* and *heteron*) of Plato's *Sophist* as the logically distinct components of *Nous* itself.<sup>21</sup> Each of these genera represents from a certain point of view either one or both of the two logically distinct aspects of the intelligible world: *noēsis* and *noēta*. As such the *megista genē* cannot be predicates of the One. That the One is none of the supreme genera is highly significant for Plotinus's negative theology, for it emphasizes the One's radical transcendence over the traditional Platonic conception of highest reality.<sup>22</sup>

Why precisely must the One transcend *ousia*? The answer derives from the fact that Plotinus, following Plato and Aristotle, equates entity

(*ousia*) with form (*eidos*); that is to say, for Plotinus whatever is form is also entity.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the intelligible world, which is the same as the second hypostasis, is not only the world of Forms but also of entities. But if *ousia* describes the intelligible world, it cannot describe the First Reality, for the intelligible world is a unity-in-multiplicity, whereas God is pure unity. For this reason Plotinus, again and again, often ironically invoking the authority of Plato (*Republic* 509 b),<sup>24</sup> declares that the Good is beyond entity (*epekeina tēs ousias*), even beyond the very being of entity (*epekeina einai tēs ousias*).<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, Plotinus holds that the One is neither motion (*kinēsis*) nor rest (*stasis*). The One cannot be motion because for Plotinus, as for Plato, *kinēsis* signifies *noēsis*.<sup>26</sup> *Kinēsis* as a *megiston genos* refers to the intellection of *Nous* actuating the plurality of *eidē* or *ousiai*. However, it does not follow, Plotinus argues, that, because the One is not motion, it must be rest (*stasis*), which denotes the eternal Forms. The One is neither motion nor rest because it is formless, more perfect than the entire order of beings to which motion and rest belong.

Since the nature of the One produces all beings, It is none of them. It is not a being or quality or quantity or intellect or soul; It is not in motion or at rest, in place or in time, but exists in Itself, a unique Form; or rather It is formless, existing before all form, before motion, before rest; for these belong to being and make it multiple. Why then, if It is not in motion, is It not at rest? Because in being one or both must be present and it is at rest by participation in the Absolute Rest and is not identical with that Rest; so Rest is present to it as an attribute and it no longer remains simple.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, to call the One "rest" or "motion" renders it multiple through predication.

Likewise, the One is neither sameness (*tauton*) nor difference (*heteron*). Sameness denotes the intellection of the second hypostasis which is eternally present to the Forms. Difference denotes the Forms which are the plurality known and unified by intellection. Together these two principles define that which is not one but one-in-many. Therefore, they cannot describe the First Reality.

In sum, the *megista genē* as the supreme principles of Dialectics are the true *noēta*, the true objects of *epistēmē* and the perfect beings. The One, however, by transcending being or entity (*ousia*), is trans-dialectical and beyond *epistēmē*. Consequently, Plotinus's conception of the *megista genē* discloses the truly radical character of his negative theology. By refusing these predicates of the One, Plotinus demonstrates that the One simply can never be a *noēton*.

*The One is not energeia.*

The *megista genē* together define that which Plotinus conceives as pure *energeia*. For Plotinus, as for Aristotle, *energeia* means *eidos* or *ousia* and therefore describes perfectly the supreme entity, the Separate Intelligence.<sup>28</sup> Unlike Aristotle, however, Plotinus must deny that *energeia* describes the First Reality. Only in an ontology, such as Aristotle's, where to be real is to be (or to be a being), can *energeia* signify the reality of every existent and thereby most truly signify the First Reality, which for Aristotle is the Separate Intelligence.

However, in an "henology,"<sup>29</sup> such as Plotinus's, where to be real is to be one, *energeia* cannot signify the reality of every existent but only that which partly fails of reality (=unity), that which is not one but one-in-many. Hence, for Plotinus *energeia* describes the second reality but not the First.

As a corollary to this refusal to ascribe *energeia* to the One, Plotinus is willing to describe the One as sheer active power (*dynamis tōn pantōn*).<sup>30</sup> This ascription also, at least in principle, offends negative theology, but Plotinus tolerates it since *dynamis*, unlike *energeia*, is more compatible with the absolute boundlessness and indeterminacy of the One.<sup>31</sup> This respect for *dynamis* suggests the general anti-Aristotelian character of Plotinus's negative theology, according to which he rejects the Aristotelian principle that *energeia* is prior to *dynamis* in reality.<sup>32</sup>

Collectively, these several statements of what God is not comprise the heart of Plotinus's negative theology and, if we are justified in taking Plotinus as the school's chief representative, of Neoplatonist negative theology in general. Commenting on these statements, however, is not all we need say about Plotinian negative theology. We must pose a final question: if Plotinus is committed to a profound negative theology, why does he occasionally ascribe positive terms to the One? Does this not render his philosophy seriously inconsistent?

A complex answer to this question is possible,<sup>33</sup> but I shall opt for a simpler one. Plotinus is sometimes willing to suffer some inconsistency on grounds that the very task of philosophical discourse entails some corruption of negative theology. Such corruption is necessary unless the philosopher willfully ignores the First Reality. To ignore the One, however, would be to make philosophical discourse pointless, because for Plotinus (and apparently for most Neoplatonists) the chief objective of philosophical discourse is to help those who have never attained mystical union to glimpse, however imperfectly, the transcendent One. For this, the true end of life and philosophy, the

philosopher must strain the limits of language and violate the restrictions of negative theology.

Given this important reason, an occasional departure must not obscure the significance Plotinus and his followers assign to negative theology. The doctrine is essential because positive theology in principle is incompatible with the view that reality is unity. The One simply cannot be an object of knowledge or a subject of predication, for, as such, it would be one-in-many rather than purely one. God is not the object of knowledge but of mysticism, an experience transcending knowledge. In a word, Neoplatonic negative theology exists to support a mystical philosophy which holds that to experience God one must strip himself of being, form and cognition as one would strip himself of contaminated linen before initiation into the mysteries.<sup>34</sup>

## II

While Gnosticism and Neoplatonism diverge in significant ways, as *Enneads* II, 9 (33) and VI, 8 (39) testify,<sup>35</sup> the Nag Hammadi library shows that the two schools are largely compatible regarding negative theology. Thus, in order to outline Gnostic negative theology, I will simply identify those important features it shares with Neoplatonism.

Before doing this, however, I should comment on what appears as the most noteworthy difference between the two schools concerning negative theology: namely, that Gnosticism applies the doctrine more broadly than Neoplatonism. Whereas Plotinus centers negative theology exclusively on the One, the very highest reality, the Gnostics extend negative theology to intermediaries, which are the manifestations and *logoi* of the highest reality.

If we may step momentarily outside the Nag Hammadi literature, we discover this tendency to broaden negative theology especially in Basilides, whose thought is outlined by the heresiologist Hippolytus. According to Basilides God is too perfect to be the object of knowledge or discourse. Indeed, it is better to define Him as "non-being" than to diminish Him by any positive description. But we must also rely mainly on negations in describing the cosmos of archons which God produces. Some of these intermediaries are more hidden than others, with the highest archon being "more ineffable than the ineffable," a statement which may simply aim to encourage the Gnostic to resign himself altogether to revelation or mysticism in his quest for God.<sup>36</sup>

When we return to the Nag Hammadi library, we find this extension of negative theology apparent in such Christian Gnostic texts

as *The Tripartite Tractate*, which depicts the Son, who is the *Logos* and name of the Father, as sharing in divine ineffability. He subsists in God and therefore may be called "the ineffable one in the ineffable one, the invisible one, the incomprehensible one, the inconceivable one in the inconceivable one."<sup>37</sup>

Certain Barbeloite tractates, e.g., *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, *The Three Steles of Seth* and *The Trimorphic Protennoia*, use similar language when characterizing the "Hidden One," the Aeon Barbelo. In *The Trimorphic Protennoia*, a Barbeloite tractate with some Christian encrustations, Barbelo, also named "Protennoia," the first thought of the Unknown God, shares in divine unknowability, existing as "ineffable silence,"<sup>38</sup> as the Word of the supreme God, "ineffable, incorruptible, immeasurable, inconceivable."<sup>39</sup>

Even more important than the Aeon Barbelo is another intermediate appearing in the Barbeloite tractates, namely, the divine Triple Power, which *Allogenes* describes as standing above the Aeon Barbelo, who (we may note) compares with Plotinus's *Nous*, and below the Invisible Spirit or Unknown God, who resembles Plotinus's first hypostasis.<sup>40</sup> This intermediate derives its name from its threefold nature consisting of Vitality, Mentality and That Which Is — a triad which also belong to Plotinus's *Nous*,<sup>41</sup> suggesting some kind of interchange between Barbeloite Gnosticism and Plotinus's school.<sup>42</sup> *Allogenes* makes it clear that as far as negative theology is concerned the Triple Power is more like the Invisible Spirit, who is completely unknowable, than Barbelo, who (by virtue of his/her status as intellect and form) is only partly unknowable. Indeed, the kinship of the Triple Power with the Invisible Spirit is so striking that in other tractates, such as *Zostrianos* and *The Three Steles of Seth*, the two divine natures become identical. Regardless, *Allogenes* demonstrates that, even if conceived as an intermediate, the Triple Power is an object of negative theology.

But concerning the invisible Triple Power, hear! He exists as an Invisible One who is incomprehensible to them all [=the pleroma]. He possesses them all within himself, for they all exist because of him. He is perfect, and he is greater than perfect, and he is blessed. He is always One and he exists in them all, being ineffable, unnameable, being One who exists through them all — he whom should one discern him, one would not desire anything that exists before him among those that possess existence.<sup>43</sup>

We can sum up these remarks by saying that the Gnostics apparently agree with Plotinus in excluding all predication from the

supreme God, an *exclusive* negative theology which would seem to follow upon His radical transcendence over the ineffable intermediaries, but disagree with him in extending divine ineffability farther down the scale of realities, especially to the divine Triple Power of Barbeloite Gnosticism.

In spite of this basic difference — that the Gnostics more broadly apply negative theology than the Neoplatonists — the two schools mainly agree in the ways they justify and develop negative theology, at least as applied to the very highest level of reality. Let us now isolate many of these similarities basic to both Gnostic and Neoplatonic negative theology.

To begin, the Gnostics, like Plotinus, indicate that exclusive negative theology — a theology excluding all positive ascriptions of the First Reality — alone is compatible with the transcendent unity of God. This is implied in *The Tripartite Tractate* where the remark that "the Father is a unity, like a number, for he is the first and is that which he alone is"<sup>44</sup> is followed later by a passage stating that He is

inscrutable greatness . . . incomprehensible depth . . . immeasurable height and illimitable will . . . without . . . things which are understood through perceptions, which the incomprehensible one transcends. If he is incomprehensible, then it follows that he is unknowable, that he is the one who is inconceivable by any thought, invisible in any thing, ineffable by any word, untouchable by any hand.<sup>45</sup>

That unity belongs on the highest level of reality is expressed in certain Barbeloite tractates as well. According to *The Three Steles of Seth*, which as we noted above regards the Triple Power as the supreme God, the Triple Power is a pure unity in which the Aeon Barbelo, itself having a tripartite nature divisible into what *Zostrianos* names "Kalyptos," "Protophanes," and "Autogenes," participates.

Great is the first aeon, male virginal Barbelo, the first glory of the invisible Father, she who is called 'perfect.' Thou hast seen first him who really preexists, that he is non-being. And from him and through him thou has preexisted eternally, non-being from one indivisible, tripe power, thou a triple power, thou a great monad from a pure monad, thou an elect monad, the first shadow of the holy Father, light from light.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, *The Apocryphon of John*, a tractate expressing Christian mythological Gnosticism, but which is not without the effects of Barbeloite influence, states that the supreme God is sheer unity, "the Monad . . . a monarchy with nothing above it,"<sup>47</sup> existing "as God and

Father of everything, the invisible one who is above everything, who is imperishability, existing as pure light which no eye can behold."<sup>48</sup> As pure unity He is first reality and indescribable: "he is ineffable because no one could comprehend him to speak about him. He is unnameable because there is no one prior to him to name him."<sup>49</sup>

Not surprisingly, this stress on pure unity leads to another parallel with Neoplatonic negative theology: namely, that the One is not Form. According to *The Tripartite Tractate* form belongs to the intermediaries which utter God. God is revealed through the Son, "the form of the formless."<sup>50</sup> The formlessness of the Gnostic God is particularly evident in the Barbeloite tractates. *Allogenes* implies that both the Triple Power and the Invisible Spirit are formless, given that they transcend the Aeon Barbelo, which like Plotinus's *Nous* constitutes the realm of the true *noëta*. As John Turner has observed,<sup>51</sup> there is a threefold nature to the Aeon Barbelo which makes it comparable to the levels of cognition and intelligibility in the Plotinian *Nous*. Complementing *Allogenes* with other tractates, especially *Zostrianos*, Turner notes that the highest level of Barbelo, the level called "Kalyptos" (*nous noëtos*), contains all "those who truly exist," just as Plotinus's second reality contains all *noëta*. Continuing the analogy, Turner notes that the next level of Barbelo, the level of "Protophanes" (*nous nooun*), compares with the Plotinian *Nous* when conceived as the real unity of all Forms (cf. *Enn.* IV, 1 [21], 1). Lastly, the lowest level of Barbelo, "Autogenes" (*nous dianōoumenos*), is similar to the *nous merisas* of Plotinus (cf. *Enn.* III, 9 [13], 1), i.e., *Nous* as the domain of the Forms of individual souls.<sup>52</sup> According to *Allogenes*, then, while the Invisible Spirit and the Triple Power may be the source of Form, they must not be confused with anything having a form or shape that is knowable. When speaking at one point of the Triple Power, *Allogenes* becomes explicit: "he is One who subsists as a sort of being and a source and an immaterial material and an innumerable number and a formless form and a shapeless shape . . ."<sup>53</sup> Later the tractate supports this same point of view by explaining that mystical ascent to the Triple Power reveals an "undivided motion that pertains to all the formless powers [= Vitality, Mentality, That Which Is], (one which is) unlimited by limitation."<sup>54</sup>

Given these fundamental parallels, it is not surprising to find the Gnostics denying of God, whether the Invisible Spirit or the Triple Power or even a non-Barbeloite conception of highest deity, several other predicates Plotinus denies of Him. First, the Gnostics deny that God is finite. *The Apocryphon of John* is typical in the way it implicitly links divine infinity with ineffability:

But at all times he is completely perfect in light. He is illimitable because there is no one prior to him to limit him. He is unsearchable because there exists no one prior to him to examine him. He is immeasurable because there was no one prior to him to measure him.<sup>55</sup>

This conviction, that God is infinite, appears again and again in the Nag Hammadi tractates, as He is variously described as "infinite light," "unfathomably unfathomable," "immeasurable," "boundless" and as occupying "an airless place of the limitlessness."

Second, God must be without desire or need, since infinity implies independence. Again, according to *The Apocryphon of John*, "he is completely perfect; he did not lack anything that he might be completed by it."<sup>56</sup> For this reason *Allogenes* may declare that "the One . . . is neither concerned for anything nor has any desire;"<sup>57</sup> that "he is not diminished in some way, whether by his own desire or . . . through another. Neither does he have any desire of himself nor from another — it does not affect him."<sup>58</sup>

Third, as the above remarks perhaps imply, the Gnostic Father, like the Neoplatonist One, is undiminished in production. *The Tripartite Tractate* states the matter explicitly: "in order that it may be discovered that he has everything that he has, he gives it away, being unsurpassed and not wearied by that which he gives, but wealthy (precisely) in the gifts which he bestows and at rest in the favors which he grants."<sup>59</sup> At times the Gnostics are even more extreme than Plotinus, refusing to define God even by the negation "undiminished," on grounds that such a term still limits Him. Thus, *Allogenes* cautions that "He does not receive anything from anything else. He is not diminished, nor does he diminish anything, nor is he undiminished."<sup>60</sup>

Fourth, the Gnostic tractates generally imply that God is not eternity. This implication results from the Father's transcendence over the "pleroma," the universe of the aeons or eternal natures. *Allogenes* in particular seems intent on denying eternity of the highest level of reality, stating that the Triple Power is free of time and eternity (*aiōn*): "when he [=the Triple Power] appeared he did not need time or anything from an aeon. Rather of himself he is unfathomably unfathomable."<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere the same tractate states that the Invisible Spirit is neither any perfection nor its opposite, "but like his attributes and non-attributes, he participates in neither aeon nor time. He does not receive anything from anything else."<sup>62</sup>

Fifth, the Gnostics deny that God is life. Of course, *Allogenes* implies this when characterizing the Triple Power, which the Unknown God transcends, as Vitality. The tractate at one point is explicit: "Now

he [=the Invisible Spirit] is reified insofar as he exists in that he either exists and becomes, or acts or knows, although he lives without Mind or Life . . ."<sup>63</sup> And shortly after this remark, *Allogenes* adds, "neither does he give anything by himself lest he become diminished in another way, nor for this reason does he need Mind or Life, or indeed anything at all."<sup>64</sup>

Sixth, the supreme God of Gnosticism is beyond being. This is clear from *Allogenes*, where even the Triple Power, since the source of Being and Barbelo, "the Hidden One of existence," is defined as "a non-substantial substance" and as "non-substantiality and non-being existence."<sup>65</sup> If one transcends the Triple Power, he will approach "the God who truly preexists."<sup>66</sup> This supreme God "is not an existence lest he be in want."<sup>67</sup> Rather, "He has non-being existence."<sup>68</sup>

Finally, we may speculate that the Gnostics place the supreme God and the Triple Power above act (*energeia*) or activity. *Allogenes* seems to suggest this when stating that the Triple Power is "an inactive activity."<sup>69</sup> As for the Invisible Spirit *Allogenes* says that "he does not activate himself so as to become still . . ."<sup>70</sup> and that "nothing activates him in accordance with the Unity that is at rest."<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, the Gnostics often define God as sheer power. But sometimes they even transcend Plotinus in declaring God to be beyond power: "he is limitless and powerless and non-existent."<sup>72</sup>

Faced with these several parallels, one should not be surprised to find the Gnostics charting a mystical ascent much like that presented in the *Enneads*. Like Plotinus the Gnostics characterize mystical union as the consequence of a preparatory stage consisting of knowledge and purgation. Knowledge in the correct sense occurs on the level of the aeons, which roughly approximates the Plotinian level of Soul and *Nous*. Experience of the highest level requires a purgation of all association from being, form and duality, properties of the aeons. The mystic must transcend being so as to know "the non-being Existence." This is a union that is more perfect than the union of *noēsis/noēton*. This union is free of duality. Thus, it is a union about which there can be no description or predication. As with Plotinus, then, the object of the mystic's quest demands a negative theology.

### III

Employing the distinctions with which we opened this article, we can briefly summarize our findings. On the one hand, we have found

that Plotinus limits negative theology to the highest reality, the One, permitting positive theology of the *Nous* and the Soul. Moreover, Plotinus's negative theology we have called "exclusive," since it follows from the conviction that the One is in principle unknowable and indescribable. On the other hand, we have found that the Gnostics extend negative theology to multiple divine existents, with some Gnostics, such as Basilides, holding that even the archons are altogether unknowable. More commonly, however, the Gnostics limit "exclusive" negative theology to the highest God, permitting some positive theology of the intermediaries, with the possible exception of the Triple Power of the Barbeloite Gnostics, who sometimes is identified with the highest God.

Furthermore, we have found that, except for this Gnostic tendency to extend negative theology farther down the hierarchy of realities, the Gnostics and the Neoplatonists develop negative theology along similar lines. First, both schools accept that the highest God, who is altogether beyond knowledge and predication, is a Monad, pure unity; additionally, that God is beyond Form, since He is indeterminate and free of duality; that He is infinite or boundless; that He is without need or desire; that He is undiminished in production; that He transcends the intelligible world in such a way as to be neither eternity nor life nor intellection nor being (and for Plotinus neither motion nor rest, sameness nor difference); and, finally, that God transcends act but is indeterminate power.

As we have seen these parallels are woven into religious philosophies that aspire after a mystical experience of God, an experience that is not knowledge in the ordinary sense. Both Gnosticism and Neoplatonism develop negative theology as a way of respecting the transcendent goal of moral life, the object of personal salvation. Clearly, in this respect these two schools are compatible with orthodox Christianity; and it is for this reason that they are the chief influences on medieval Christian negative theology.

#### NOTES

1. This is the type of theology which Pseudo-Dionysius terms "apophatic," in contrast to "kataphatic" theology, which ascribes predicates to God. See Pseudo-Dionysius's *Mystical Theology*, pp. 2-3, and *The Divine Names*, especially pp. 2, 4-5. Both works appear in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris), Vols. 3-4. See also C.E. Rolt's translation of these two works (London: The Macmillan Co., 1966).

2. Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas are representatives of a theism which holds that both negative and positive theologies apply to God. See *Summa Theologiae* I, QQ. 12-13. Philo represents the view that God is wholly unknowable. On Philo's negative theology see John Dillon, *Middle Platonists* (Ithaca, N.Y.: 1977), pp. 155-158; and David Winston, *Philo of Alexandria* (New York: 1981), pp. 22-24.
3. As we shall see the Gnostics apply negative theology to existents other than the highest divinity, with most allowing positive theology on lower levels.
4. I will not, of course, altogether neglect other Neoplatonic and Gnostic sources, but I will largely subordinate my remarks on them to the notes.
5. The following intervening treatises contain important passages expressing negative theology: V, 4 (7), 1, 10; 2, 38-40; VI, 9 (9), 11, 42; V, 1 (10), 8, 7-8; III, 9 (13), 9, 8-12; I, 2 (19), 3, 31; I, 3 (20) 5, 7; IV, 4 (28), 16, 27; III, 8 (30), 9, 2; VI, 6 (34), 5, 37; VI, 2 (43), 3, 7-10; 17, 18-22; III, 7 (945), 2, 8; V, 3 (49), 10, 5; 11, 2-28; 12, 47-48; 17, 13-14.
6. The following texts state the primacy of unity for Plotinus's metaphysics: VI, 9 (9), 1, 1; V, 5 (32), 5, 11; VI, 6 (34), 1, 1; VI, 2 (43), 11, 17. My discussion here about the primacy of unity in Plotinus is indebted to Leo Sweeney's article, "Basic Principles in Plotinus's Philosophy," *Gregorianum* 42 (1961): 506-516. In this article Sweeney concludes that there are three principles basic to a Neoplatonic metaphysics: (1) that whatever is real is one; (2) that whatever is one is good; and (3) that whatever is prior is of greater reality than that which is subsequent.
7. Neoplatonists generally accept Plotinus's negative theology; however, some differences emerge in his successors. Iamblichus and Damascius later identify the supreme, unknowable reality as a principle standing above Plotinus's One. This higher principle is alone truly ineffable (*panielos arrhēton*). For a helpful discussion of this feature of later Neoplatonism see John Dillon, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), especially pp. 29-33.
8. Plotinus notes that these names, "the One" and "the Good," are compatible with negative theology since they do not signify predicates (II, 9 [33], 1, 1-8; VI, 7 [38], 38, 4-9; VI, 9 [9], 5, 29-34). "The One" is implicitly a negative expression, meaning "not multiple" (V, 5 [32], 6, 26-28). "The Good," rather than denoting something about God's essence, actually states only that God is the object of the love of all beings (I, 8 [51], 2, 1-8). The One has no needs and thus is good only for others, not for itself (VI, 7 [38], 24, 13-16; 41, 28-31; VI, 9 [9], 6, 39-42). See Richard Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 59.
9. See V, 9 (5), 5; IV, 8 (6), 3, 14-16; VI, 5 (23), 7; IV, 4 (28), 2, 3-14; III, 8 (30), 8, 40-45; V, 8 (31), 4, 4-11; VI, 7 (38), 9, 31-38; VI, 2 (43), 20.
10. See V, 4 (7), 2, 4-8; VI, 7 (38), 16, 10-22; 17, 32-34; V, 3 (49), 5, 21-48; 11, 1-16.
11. This argument in essence appears at V, 3 (49), 12-13.
12. See VI, 9 (9), 3-39; V, 5 (32), 6, 4-5; VI, 7 (38), 17, 18, 36-40; 28, 28; 32, 9; 33, 13-21.



13. VI, 9 (9), 3, 4, 39; V, 5 (32), 11, 1-5; VI, 7 (38), 17, 15, 16. The precise nature of the One's infinity has been a subject of some controversy, with most scholars agreeing now that the One is infinite not only in power but also in reality. For a treatment of infinity in Plotinus see Sweeney, "Infinity in Plotinus," *Gregorianum* 38 (1957): 521-535, 713-732. For a contrary view, see W. Norris Clark, "Infinity in Plotinus: A Reply," *Gregorianum* 40 (1959): 75-98. For Sweeney's reply and reassessment, see "Plotinus Revisited," *ibid.*, 40 (1959): 327-331; and "Another Interpretation of *Enneads* VI, 7, 32," *The Modern Schoolman* 38 (1961): 289-303. For a helpful summation of this debate see John Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), pp. 21-37.
14. ὅταν γὰρ ἂν αὐτὸν νοήσης οἶον ἢ νοῦν ἢ θεόν, πλεον ἐστὶ καὶ αὐτὸν αὐτὸν εἰσῆς/τῇ δόξῃ. καὶ ἐνταῦθα πλεον ἐστὶν ἡ ὅσον ἂν αὐτὸν ἐφαντάσθῃς εἰς τὸ ἐνικώτερον τῆς σῆς νοήσεως εἶναι ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ γὰρ ἔστιν οὐδενὸς αὐτῇ συμβεβηκότος. τῷ αὐτάρκει δ' ἂν τις καὶ τὸ ἐν αὐτοῦ ἐνθυμηθῇ. δεῖ μὲν γὰρ ἰκανώτατον <ον> ἀπάντων καὶ αὐταρκέστατον, καὶ ἀνευδέστατον εἶναι πᾶν δὲ πολὺ καὶ [μὴ ἐν] ἐνδεὲς μὴ ἐν ἐκ πολλῶν γενόμενον. δεῖται οὖν αὐτοῦ ἡ οὐσία ἐν εἶναι. τὸ δὲ οὐ δεῖται ἑαυτοῦ αὐτὸ γὰρ ἔστι. καὶ μὴν πολλὰ δὴ τοσοῦτων δεῖται, ὅσα ἔστι, καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὄν καὶ οὐκ ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ, ἐνδεὲς τῶν ἄλλων ὑπάρχων, καὶ καθ' ἐν καὶ κατὰ τὸ ὅλον τὸ τοιοῦτον ἐνδεὲς παρέχεται. εἴπερ οὖν δεῖ π. αὐταρκέστατον εἶναι, τὸ ἐν εἶναι δεῖ τοιοῦτον ὄν μόνον, οἶον μῆτε πρὸς αὐτὸ μῆτε πρὸς ἄλλο ἐνδεὲς εἶναι. The translation, except for a couple of adjustments, is from Armstrong, *Plotinus* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1953), pp. 60-61. Cf. V, 4 (7), 1, 1-15.
15. This negation the other hypostases share with the One. This common negation, however, does not mean that Plotinus, after all, regards Intelligence and Soul as objects of negative theology. *Nous* and Soul are not ineffable. It just so happens that this particular negation, since it denies a deficiency that should not exist on any higher level of reality, is also compatible with a general positive theology.
16. V, 5 (32), 5, 1-2.
17. Τὸ δὲ ὑπὲρ τὴν ζωὴν αἵτιον ζωῆς. οὐ γὰρ ἡ τῆς ζωῆς ἐνέργεια τὰ πάντα οὕσα πρώτη, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ προχυθεῖσα αὐτῇ οἶον ἐκ πηγῆς. Νόησον γὰρ πηγὴν ἀρχὴν ἄλλην οὐκ ἔχουσαν, δοῦσαν δὲ ποταμοῖς πᾶσαν αὐτήν, οὐκ ἀναλωθεῖσαν τοῖς ποταμοῖς, ἀλλὰ μένουσαν αὐτὴν ἡσύχως. Translation Armstrong, *Plotinus*, "Loeb Classical Library" (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), Vol. III, p. 395.
18. ἐν μὲν οὖν τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς μένοντος μὲν τοῦ ἐν, ποιούντος δὲ ἄλλου. ὁ ἀριθμὸς γίνεται κατ' αὐτὸ ἐν δὲ τῷ ὅ ἐστι πρὸ τῶν ὄντων μένει μὲν πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἐν μένοντος δὲ αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἄλλο ποιεῖ, εἰ κατ' αὐτὸ τὰ ὄντα, ἀλλ' ἀρκεῖ αὐτὸ γενῆσαι τὰ ὄντα. I wish to thank Dr. John Barrett of the Classics Department of Cardinal Newman College, St. Louis, Missouri, for his advice on translating this brief but difficult Greek passage.
19. See VI, 2 (43), 8; III, 7 (45), 1-12. In Plato see *Sophist*, 248 a-249 d.
20. See especially VI, 7 (38), 17, 9-14; III, 8 (30), 10, 1-5.

21. Plotinus's interpretation of the *megista genē* appears mainly in VI, 2 (43), 7-8. Cf. V, 1 (10), 4, 30-44; VI, 7 (38), 13.
22. Except for the single provocative remark at *Republic* 509 b, where he declares "the Good" to be above being, Plato consistently argues that the highest level of reality belongs to Form and Intelligence.
23. See V, 1 (10), 7, 23-24; II, 6 (17), 1, 8-9; 2, 14; IV, 1 (21), 1; III, 6 (26), 6, 1-3; V, 8 (31), 5, 24-25; V, 5 (32), 6, 2; III, 2 (47), 13, 30-34; V, 3 (49), 5, 35; I, 8 (51), 2, 22.
24. The irony, of course, consists in the fact that Plotinus appeals to the *Republic* to discount the *Sophist*, which maintains that the supreme realities include the highest Forms, the most general principles of Dialectics, and *Nous*.
25. V, 4 (7), 2, 42.
26. See VI, 7 (38), 13 and VI, 2 (43), 7-8.
27. VI, 9 (9), 3, 39-49.
- γεννητική γὰρ ἡ τοῦ ἐνὸς φύσις οὕσα τῶν πάντων οὐδὲν ἐστὶν αὐτῶν. οὔτε οὖν τι οὔτε ποῖον οὔτε ποσὸν οὔτε νοῦν οὔτε ψυχὴν οὐδὲ κινούμενον οὐδ' αὐτὸς, οὐκ ἐν τόπῳ, οὐκ ἐν χρόνῳ, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μονοειδές, μᾶλλον δὲ ἀνείδεον πρὸ εἶδους ὄν παντός, πρὸ κινήσεως, πρὸ στάσεως ταῦτα γὰρ περὶ τὸ ὄν, ἃ πολλὰ αὐτὸ ποιεῖ. διὰ τί οὖν, εἰ μὴ κινούμενον, οὐκ ἐστὼς; ὅτι περὶ μὲν τὸ ὄν τούτων θάτερον ἢ ἀμφοτέρω ἀνάγκη. τό τε ἐστὼς στάσει ἐστὼς καὶ οὐ ταῦτον τῇ στάσει ὥστε συμβῆσεται αὐτῷ καὶ οὐκέτι ἀπλοῦν μένει. Again, I follow basically Armstrong's translation, *Plotinus*, pp. 58-59.
28. V, 9 (5), 5; III, 6 (26), 4, 41-44; VI, 7 (38), 13, 28-33; 37, 17; 40, 14-15. In Aristotle see *Metaphysics*, Theta 8, 1050 b 2-3; Eia 3 1043 b 1.
29. This characterization of Plotinus's philosophy as an "henology" (as opposed to an "ontology") occurs in Leo Sweeney, "Basic Principles of Plotinus's Philosophy," p. 510 (see above, n. 6). Also see E. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952), pp. 21-22; Cleto Carbonera, *La Filosofia di Plotino* (Napoli: Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1954), pp. 400-409; E. Bréhier, *Philosophy of Plotinus*, translated by Joseph Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 132; Jean Trouillard, *Un et Etre*, in *Les Etudes Philosophiques* 2 (1960): 185-196.
30. III, 8 (30), 10, 1; cf. V, 4 (7), 1, 25.
31. Plotinus is also willing to say that the *Nous* is unlimited (see III, 8, 46) but not in the same way as the One. The One is infinite because of His indeterminate nature; and for this reason only *dynamis*, never *energeia* (which implies determination, limit and form), can apply to Him. The *Nous*, however, is determinate, *energeia* and thus cannot be infinite in its very nature. Nonetheless, *Nous* is in one respect unlimited like the One: in that *Nous* is the productive source of potentially innumerable *logoi*.
32. Because *energeia* is *ousia* or *eidos*, Plotinus is willing to accept Aristotle's principle that act is prior to potency for the order of beings. But the principle cannot apply to all reality. *Dynamis* must be first in reality, because the One transcends limitation and duality which *energeia*

- presupposes. In fact, it is correct to say that potency is both first and last in the universe, in that both the One and prime matter are purely indeterminate potencies. However, it would be a serious mistake to assume that the One and prime matter are potencies in the same way. The One is potential and indeterminate by virtue of its supreme perfection, whereas prime matter is potential and indeterminate by virtue of its sheer imperfection. Plotinus employs two rather technical expressions — namely, *hē dynamis* vs. *to dynamēi on* — so as to distinguish the potency of the One (and of all the hypostases for that matter) from the potency of prime matter. The One is pure potency in the sense of active power, *hē dynamis*. Prime matter, however, is potency in the sense of passive potency, *to dynamēi on*. The One is the eternal power to produce Forms; matter is the eternal potency to receive Forms. (These two kinds of potency are carefully separated in II, 5 [25] but appear commonly throughout the *Enneads*. Compare Plotinus's remarks about matter in II, 5, 4-5 with remarks about the One at V, 4 [7], 1, 36; 2, 38; III, 8 [30], 10, 1; 27.)
33. A more complicated answer might appeal to *extrinsic denomination* to explain away Plotinus's ascriptions to the One. Such an explanation would allow predicates of the One not because they belong to its essence but because they belong to its effects. Accordingly, the One is *noēsis*, *energeia* and *ousia* because it is the source of such perfections. Additionally, one might attempt to discount these ascriptions because they occur under exceptional conditions. For instance, VI, 8 ascribes *ousia* and *energeia* repeatedly to the One. But, as chapter 13 (lines 1-5) indicates, Plotinus employs these ascriptions for persuasive and pedagogical reasons and does not intend them to be representative of his general position on the One. See below, n. 35.
  34. See VI, 9 (9), 11.
  35. Both these treatises belong to Plotinus's polemical middle period. That II, 9 is aimed at the Gnostics is shown by Porphyry's two titles for the treatise: "Against the Gnostics" and "Against Those Who Declare the Maker of the World and the World to be Evil." VI, 8 appears to be a criticism of the Gnostic position (which Plotinus labels a *tolmeros logos*, ch. 7, line 11) that the One is either being (a determinate nature) or the product of chance. For a helpful discussion of Plotinus's criticism of the Gnostics in VI, 8 see Bréhier's "Notice" in Vol. VI, Part 2 of the Budé edition (Paris, 1938), especially, pp. 119-122. For an alternative interpretation see A.H. Armstrong's forthcoming "Two Views of Freedom: A Christian Objection in VI, 8 (39), 7, 11-15?"
  36. Hippolytus's account of Basilides's negative theology appears in W. Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts* (Oxford, 1974), Vol. I, pp. 64-74; see also R.M. Grant, *Gnosticism: An Anthology* (London, 1961), pp. 125-134.
  37. *The Tripartite Tractate* I, 56, 25-30. My references to the Nag Hammadi tractates are found in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed., James M. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row and E.J. Brill, 1977). In my quotations from these writings I have omitted brackets, ellipses and other

- grammatical adjustments supplied by translators and editors.
38. *The Trimorphic Protennoia* XIII, 46, 5.
  39. *Ibid.*, XIII, 46, 14-15.
  40. These comparisons have been noted by John Turner in his article "The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment," *Novum Testamentum* 22 (1980): 324-351.
  41. See V, 1, (10), 4; V, 5 (32), 1; VI, 7 (38), 17-18.
  42. There is good reason to think that the schools had some contact with one another since Porphyry in his *Life of Plotinus* 16 refers to the Gnostic revelations of "Allogenes" and "Zostrianos," names which appear as titles in the Nag Hammadi library.
  43. *Allogenes* XI, 47, 7-25.
  44. *The Tripartite Tractate* I, 51, 8-11.
  45. *Ibid.*, I, 54, 20-39.
  46. *The Three Steles of Seth* VII, 121, 20-122, 4.
  47. *The Apocryphon of John* 2, 26-27.
  48. *Ibid.*, II, 2, 28-32.
  49. *Ibid.*, II, 3, 14-17.
  50. *The Tripartite Tractate* I, 66, 13.
  51. John Turner, "The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment," pp. 328-331, 334-338.
  52. Scholars have debated whether there are in fact Forms of individuals in Plotinus. For an affirmative view consult J.M. Rist, "Forms of Individuals in Plotinus," *Classical Quarterly* 13 (1963): 223-231. For a different position see H.J. Blumenthal, "Did Plotinus believe in Ideas of Individuals?," *Phronesis* 11 (1966): 61-80. Blumenthal holds that Plotinus is undecided on the question.
  53. *Allogenes* XI, 48, 19-25.
  54. *Ibid.*, XI, 60, 25-28.
  55. *The Apocryphon of John* II, 3, 6-13.
  56. *Ibid.*, II, 3, 4-6.
  57. *Allogenes* XI, 64, 25-27.
  58. *Ibid.*, XI, 62, 6-13.
  59. *The Tripartite Tractate* 53, 13-20.
  60. *Allogenes* XI, 63, 24-27.
  61. *Ibid.*, XI, 65, 20-21.
  62. *Ibid.*, XI, 63, 20-23.
  63. *Ibid.*, XI, 61, 32-37.
  64. *Ibid.*, XI, 62, 14-20.
  65. *Ibid.*, XI, 55, 29-30.
  66. *Ibid.*, XI, 56, 20.
  67. *Ibid.*, XI, 28-30.
  68. *Ibid.*, XI, 65, 32-33.
  69. *Ibid.*, XI, 48, 28-29.
  70. *Ibid.*, XI, 65, 26-28.
  71. *Ibid.*, XI, 66, 21-23.

72. Ibid., XI, 66, 26-27.

## The Platonism of the *Tripartite Tractate* (NH I, 5)

John Peter Kenney

No less an authority than A.D. Nock once remarked<sup>1</sup> that Gnosticism might be viewed as "Platonism run wild," and some observers of at least the Valentinian Pleroma may still be inclined to agree. In this brief paper I should like to continue this line of analysis and to consider the metaphysical structure of the *Tripartite Tractate* from the standpoint of Second and early Third Century Platonism. My focus will be upon the document's ontology, in particular the degrees of reality and divinity outlined therein, with the details of its cosmological myth treated only in relation to this principal concern. I should note that as a student of philosophical theology I am an unqualified amateur in this now very specialized field, so that this paper represents only a tentative inquiry on my part, ventured because of the importance of extending our understanding of the relationship between Late Antique philosophy and Gnosticism.

A few qualifications seem necessary before proceeding. By considering the *Tripartite Tractate* in this fashion, I do not mean to suggest that my purpose is discovering any neat and exact connection between this treatise and some particular Middle Platonist (or Neopythagorean). It seems to me that this is beyond the persuasive force of our current evidence, at least as I can interpret it. Furthermore, it is not my intention here to maintain that this theology belongs fundamentally to the Platonic tradition, and hence to the Hellenic trajectory in Ancient religious thought.<sup>2</sup> Instead it would be more accurate to see the *Tripartite Tractate* as representing a version of

Valentinian theology<sup>3</sup> which has undergone important alterations that in part involved the recasting of this theology into a more philosophical form. I cannot myself assess in any detail the resultant modifications within Valentinianism itself, or comment on the reason for this philosophical restatement, although Professor Perkins's suggestion that it involved an appeal by Gnostics to pagan Hellenes seems quite plausible.<sup>4</sup> In any case it seems clear that the document is concerned to develop its ontology in philosophical terms, and it is this system which I should like now to examine. I shall begin with an investigation of the initial part of the document (51:1-104:5), concentrating upon: (1) the nature of the Father, (2) the constitution of the Aeons, (3) the Logos. I shall conclude with a philosophical assessment, using Middle Platonism as a foundation for analysis.

1. The nature and status of the highest level of reality are articulated by the *Tripartite Tractate* in terms which are fairly abstract and which indicate an intention to locate this entity philosophically. While there is some suggestion of an ontological characterization of the Father, e.g., in the essentialism of 51:10 ff. ("he . . . is that which he alone is")<sup>5</sup> or 52:10 ff. ("he is also invariable in his eternal existence, in his identity, in that by which he is established, and in that by which he is great"), the burden of the portrayal is carried by cosmological concepts. As might be expected, these include his pre-existence (51:5 ff.; 10), and his unbegotten nature (51:25 ff.; 52:5 ff.; 52:35 ff.), the latter being taken as compatible with the assertion of his own self-generation (56:1-15).<sup>6</sup> The primary status of the Father is also secured by appeal to his unique perfection and his unique inclusiveness (52:5 ff.; 53:40-54:5).

One indication that the author of the *Tripartite Tractate* is concerned to delineate the Father in precise cosmological terms is the summary presented at 53:20-40:

He is of such kind and such form and such great magnitude  
that no one else has been with him from the beginning;  
nor is there a place in which he is, or from which he has come forth, or into  
which he will go;  
nor is there a primordial form which he uses as model in his work;  
nor is there any difficulty which accompanies him in what he does;  
nor is there any material set out for him, from which he creates what he  
creates;  
nor any substance within him from which he begets what he begets;  
nor a co-worker who, along with him, does what he does.

This passage seems to reflect in part a break with the dyadic tradition of first principles, proximately to be found in some extant versions of Valentinianism,<sup>7</sup> and more remotely in a variety of Platonic and Pythagorean systems.<sup>8</sup> In addition there can be seen here a critique of the constitutive features of Middle Platonic theology which had their foundations in the *Timaeus* cosmology: the cosmic paradigm and a pre-existent, recalcitrant substrate.<sup>9</sup> The specific presentation of this latter point may perhaps suggest some acquaintance with those ancient scholastic formulations of cosmological principles which Theiler aptly termed the "metaphysics of prepositions."<sup>10</sup> In any case, the principal theme underscored throughout is the status of the Father as a single, unique first principle.

The most striking feature of the *Tripartite Tractate's* strict monotheism is its rigorous negative theology, and its reflective account of the inevitable qualification of such thought by the use of at least some divine predication. No names (and one assumes also predicates) can apply to the Father, however honorific, since his existence, being, and form exceed limitation and specification (54-55). The use of such names is, however, possible in a non-referential way, to give the Father glory and honor, in accordance with the spiritual capacity of the user (54:5-15). This position indicates a clear disposition in this theology both to proscribe direct claims to discursive knowledge of the Father and to permit some protreptical terminology in the interest of proper spiritual orientation. Two points should be noted about this apophatic theme in the document. In addition to clarifying the residual terminology which continues to be used in relation to the Father, there is also an effort to forestall any suggestion that impossibility of description entails deficiency. It is by virtue of his perfection and greatness that the Father surpasses description (54-56); the *via negativa* is thereby linked to the *via eminentiae*. There is, furthermore, a prominent assertion within this discussion of negative theology of the unique self-knowledge of the Father, as can be seen clearly at 54:40-55:15:

He alone is the one who knows himself as he is, along with his form and his greatness and his magnitude, and who has the ability to conceive of himself, to see himself, to name himself, to comprehend himself, since he alone is the one who is his own mind, his own eye, his own mouth, his own form, and the one who conceives of himself, who sees himself, who speaks of himself, who comprehends himself, namely, the inconceivable, ineffable, the incomprehensible, unchanging one.

Both the status of the Father as a unique first principle and his sharp separation from all other realities is effected by the conjunction of these themes. It is important to note that as a result the *Tripartite Tractate* is assuming that the primordial deity is a *nous* of a specialized sort, one which is engaged in self-contemplation, and is thus deserving of his pre-eminence in the divine hierarchy.<sup>11</sup>

The theology of Father in the *Tripartite Tractate* might be said therefore to be philosophically interesting primarily for its thoroughgoing monotheism, to the exclusion of the standard catalogue of common cosmological principles, for its extreme, though reflective, apophatic theology, and finally for its acceptance of a qualified version of *nous* theology. Given such a construal of the Father, this system's next problem is addressing the question of the motive and method of that deity's production, and the related issue of the access which lower entities have to him. It is in this regard that the overall cosmology of the *Tripartite Tractate* becomes especially intriguing, since the document does not construe the Father's production as clearly a devolution. The prominence of what might be called "apophaticism," the necessary epistemic distance of lower entities from the Father, helps to exhibit the deeper necessity of ontological separation between the Father and all else. The production of secondary and tertiary powers appears, therefore, less as a failure than as the result of a metaphysical law. This theme is conjoined with a version of the principle of plenitude,<sup>12</sup> that the perfection of the Father entails his production of necessarily distinct consequent beings.

The notion of plenitude is clearly to be seen in the description of the generation of the Son, the first and most special of the Aeons. Production is treated both as the result of the Father's fecundity and as a means of self-revelation (55:25-35):

If this one, who is unknowable in his nature, to whom pertain all the greatneses which I already mentioned, if in the abundance of his sweetness he wishes to grant knowledge so that he might be known, he has the ability to do so.

While the Father is formally ineffable, nevertheless his production is his revelation of himself to the extent to which this is possible. A further reflexive character is assigned to this process of self-projection by the Father, as the following lines from 56:30-57:5 indicate:

Thus, the Father exists forever . . . in an unbegotten way, the one who knows himself, who begot himself, who has a thought, which is the thought

of himself, that is, the perception of himself, which is the [foundation] of his constitution forever.

The Father, "the one who projects himself in this manner of generation" (56:15-20), knows himself through production, and this is the Aeonic constitution. As the whole of 56-57 makes clear, the Father's perfect, self-begotten, self-thinking nature is the foundation of his projective act; hence the derivative products are the expressions of the nature of the primordial deity and the process itself is a positive act of divine expression.

As the texts already cited indicate, this is an eternal generation, which the thesis of reflexive and connatural self-projection tends to support. It is also not construed primarily in volitional terms; whenever the divine will is introduced, it is not central and is frequently interpreted as another expression for divine productive power.<sup>13</sup> What is crucial to the process is the self-reflective, noetic character of the Father: this is the basis for production and the key to any evaluation of his products (56:5-10).

2. Beneath the Father is found the Pleroma of Aeons; it is in the development of this level of reality that some of the most interesting features of the *Tripartite Tractate* are to be found. Consistent with the description of the Father, the Aeonic constitution is generally viewed as a natural result of his primordial fecundity, and hence as a positive and indeed necessary cosmological fact. A number of themes are introduced in order to maintain this conception of production, and to explain how this generation of distinct, individual existence outside the Father is not a fundamentally negative process.

The *Tripartite Tractate* considers the Son as the first and most important of the Father's offspring. Although uniquely related to the Father, the Son seems nonetheless to belong to the pleromic level. As has been noted, the idea of the Father's generation of a Son for the purpose of self-knowledge inevitably links the two very intimately, although the image also requires that there be a sense of projective separation. We find then that the Son is described with language such as "the ineffable one in the ineffable one" (56, 25 ff.), and his function in relation to the other Aeons set out at length, although the details are difficult to specify exactly. It is clear that his distinctness from the Father is tied to his self-contemplative activity:

He wonders at himself [along with the] Father and he gives [him(self)] glory and honor and [love]. Furthermore, he too is the one who conceives of

himself as Son, in accordance with the conditions "without beginning" and "without end."

There is also a sketchy depiction of the Church as an aeonic power along lines similar to the Son; this is, as Professor Stead has remarked, ■ somewhat intrusive feature,<sup>14</sup> one which is not especially relevant to our particular line of analysis.

The production of the remaining Aeons in the Pleroma is viewed most interestingly as a process which results from the Father through or along with the Son, with the latter as the proximate *telos* for the self-contemplative generation of each Aeon. Once again production of lower level entities is treated as a form of self-generation based upon the exercise of a capacity for self-conception; in this case this theme is applied to an innumerable realm of Aeonic powers:

The matter [of the Son] exists just as something which is fixed. His offspring, the things which exist, being innumerable, illimitable, and inseparable, have, like kisses, come forth from the Son and the Father . . . (58:15-25)

These [comprise the] constitution which [they form] with one another and [with those] who have come forth from them toward the Son, for whose glory they exist. Therefore it is not possible for mind to conceive them. They were the perfection of that place, and no word designates them, for they are ineffable and unnameable and inconceivable. They alone have the ability to name themselves in order to conceive of themselves. For they have not been planted in these places.

Separate existence within the Pleroma is, therefore, a function of self-conception, of self-naming, of self-constitution; it is not the result of the superimposition of properties by a demiurgic first principle.

It is to a version of the Divine Thoughts doctrine that the *Tripartite Tractate* appeals in order to elucidate this model of contemplative production further. The Aeons are treated as having a pre-existent phase within the Father's mind as his thoughts:

[ . . . ] all of the aeons were forever in the thought of the Father, who was like a thinking of them and a place [for them]. (60:1-10)

This doctrine helps to establish, as it were, a chain of contemplative levels, with the Father's self-contemplation being primary, something which seems to involve primordial Divine Thoughts, which are the

Aeons in their initial phase. The next stage in this contemplative descent is the separate self-contemplation of each Aeon, and this explains the nature of individual existence. According to the *Tripartite Tractate*, separate Aeons are distinct contemplative powers which are the manifestation or unfolding of the Father's inner mental life. This ties the pleromic level closely to Father, and reinforces the evaluative significance of individual existence. All this can be discerned at 60-62:

At the time that they were in the Father's thought, that is in the hidden depth, the depth knew them, but they were unable to know the depth in which they were; nor could they know themselves; nor could they know anything else. In other words, they were with the Father; they did not exist by themselves. Rather, they only had existence in the manner of a seed. (60:15-25)

Therefore the Father who first thought of them — not only so that they might exist for him, but also that they might exist for themselves as well, that they might then exist in [his] thought with the mode of existence proper to thought, and that they might exist for themselves too — he sowed a thought like ■ seed of [knowledge], so that [they] might know [what it is that has come into being] for them. He graciously [granted the] initial form that they might [think about] who is the Father who exists [ . . . ]. (61:1-15)

I have cited this material at some length in order to indicate that these explanations of divine production in terms of divine contemplative activity and of Aeonic existence in terms of self-contemplation are central and sustained themes in this treatise. The value of such separate Aeonic existence is also clearly vindicated in this way, both as a productive expression of the Father, and as having a fundamentally self-reflexive character, related to the Father's own self-knowing at the level of finite existence. It is evident that a primary function of the Aeons is to contemplate the Father to the extent that this is possible: "they had the sole task of searching for him, realizing that he exists, ever wishing to find out what it is that exists" (61:20-30).<sup>15</sup> Despite the "apophaticism" of this theology, the Aeons are viewed as powers of the Father, produced in the way they are in order that the Father might be fully expressed in the form of finite beings, who become his extensions through their own contemplative activity:

Each of the acons is a name, each of which is a virtue and power of the Father. (73:5-15)

... their begetting is like a process of extension, as the Father extends himself to those whom he desires, so that those who come forth from him might become him as well. (73:20-30).

We have here a theological model which considers Aeons as having two distinct phases: an immanent stage within the thought of the primordial deity and a manifest phase of distinct existence, in which each Aeon is a separate contemplative power. As such an Aeon is an expression or name of the Father, although the fundamental ineffability of the Father precludes any true analogy. In the same way the Son seems to have immanent and manifest aspects, since he is treated as being the Father in so far as he can be known and can be said to have distinct existence. He is called "the form of the formless" and is the unity of the divine names, i.e., the Aeons (66:5-10). It is the Son who represents the Father at the level of knowledge, "whose identity is known," who clothes himself with the divine names, who "first exists" (65:25-35).

The relationship of Son to the Aeons appears to have a whole-part character, although the exact nature of this conjunction is not entirely clear. Nonetheless the Aeons are clearly intended to have a collective existence as a unity, and this unity in diversity is capable of varying aspectual appraisals depending upon one's focus. It is, I think, especially important to notice that the *Tripartite Tractate* represents the relation of Father to Son, and of both to the Aeons, in a way which suggests that integral connections are involved throughout, making any significant separation impossible. Out of the Father's thought there emerge the separate Aeons, but even so they have a collective unity, forming a "pleromatic congregation which is a single image although many" (68:30-35). This single unity seems often to be identified with the Son, but never to the exclusion of the Father, and it is clear that the omnipresence of the Father is meant to be underscored through the collective unity of the Aeons. These themes emerge succinctly at 66:30-67:20:

All of these are in the single one. . . . And in this unique way they are equally a single individual and the Totalities. He is neither divided as a body, nor is split up into the names which he has. . . . He is now this, now something else, with each item being different. Yet he is entirely and completely himself. [He] is each and every one of the Totalities forever at the same time. He is what all of them are. He, as the Father of the Totalities, also is the Totalities, for he is the one who is knowledge for himself and he is each one of the qualities. He has the powers and he is

beyond all that which he knows, while seeing himself completely and having a Son and a form.

In their latent stage the Aeons are intradeical divine thoughts, and are unified by their presence within the scope of his self-knowledge ("He knows them — which things he himself is . . .," 67:25-30). In their manifestation as his individual powers this unity is preserved (" . . . he brings them forth, in order that it might be discovered that they exist according to their individual properties in a unified way" (67:30-35), so that the Aeonic constitution is an approximation of the Father's perfection, rather than a radical devolution (70:35).

Further production of lower levels of reality by the Aeons is also treated as being the result of their collective interaction (67:20-30), and this corporate process, which is eternal, is not envied by the Father, since it is his own act of self-revelation (70:20-40). It would seem, therefore, that the Aeonic realm is a societal representation of the Father, which contemplates him to the extent possible and is both unified and capable of further production. This "upward" contemplation by the Aeons is explicitly seen as the foundation of their collective as well as their separate existence, and the notion of an innate longing for knowledge of the Father is introduced as a constitutive aspect of their nature (71:5-15):

The entire system of the aeons has a love and a longing for the perfect, complete discovery of the Father, and this is their unimpeded union.

This recursive contemplation is the basis for each Aeonic mind's<sup>16</sup> activity of production, thereby continuing the chain of ontological revelation of primordial divine perfection.

3. The Logos theology of the *Tripartite Tractate* is complex, standing in a long tradition of such speculation and developing it in ways which are beyond my scope in this paper. It is, however, important that we consider the notion of the Logos in at least a limited way, so that our sketch of the *Tripartite Tractate's* theology may be complete in its outline. Now, it should not be thought that the Logos has merely been substituted for Sophia in this version of the Valentinian myth, perhaps to give the story a more philosophic air. It seems instead that the Logos theology is very much a natural part of the metaphysics of this document,<sup>17</sup> providing an account of the further manifestation of the Father at the sub-pleromic level of reality. The myth of an errant Aeon is absorbed into this philosophical model; as a result the Sophia myth is altered in its implications. While this mutation of the Sophia

myth cannot be examined in any detail, it is possible to link up the Logos doctrine with the philosophical theology we have examined thus far and examine how it functions in that context.

All Aeons have a desire for contemplative recursion, and as we have seen, this allows both for their integration within the Pleroma and for their capacity for further production. It is therefore an established metaphysical doctrine within the *Tripartite Tractate* that Aeons are engaged in generation of lower powers based upon their knowledge of the Father, admittedly a qualified and paradoxical sort of knowledge, given the major apophatic thesis. In any case the desire of the last Aeon, the Logos, to know the Father is not wholly inappropriate, nor is his generation of lower beings an anomalous act. It is the type, manner, and intent of such activities which are problematical. The principal mistake of the Logos was his attempt to grasp the incomprehensible Father (75:20-25) by an act of his own will (75:35). Despite this act of immoderation in his desire to know the Father, the *Tripartite Tractate* does not dwell upon this failure. In fact, the Logos's purpose is treated as something good ("The intent of the Logos was something good" (76:1-5), and beyond criticism. Although the Logos is said to have been forgetful of the nature of things and ignorant of himself and "of that which is" (77:20-25), his action is also construed as a pre-destined event (77:5-15):<sup>18</sup>

... it is not fitting to criticize the movement which is the Logos, but it is fitting that we should say about the movement of the Logos, that it is a cause of a system, which has been destined to come about.

The myth of the mistake of the Logos has been mitigated by this notion of predestination, with this core Valentinian theme hemmed in, as it were, by the claim that even this errant act of causation fits into the broader pattern of the Father's self-revelation.

The action of the Logos is responsible for the production of a class of beings which are ambiguous in nature. They are the products of an Aeonic power and seem to be viewed as reflections of the natures of the various Aeons, while at the same time lacking a proper self-contemplative character and a recognition of their origin. Hence they amount to a break in the chain of production until they are restored to their proper place. Lack of proper self-recognition is repeatedly stressed:

They thought of themselves, that they are beings existing by themselves and are without a source, since they do not see anything else existing before them. (79:10-20)

The things which had come into being unaware of themselves both did not know the Pleroma from which they came forth, and did not know the one who was the cause of their existence. (80:20-35).

Even though the offspring of the Logos are misguided and thus severed from proper line of generation, they remain as the "likenesses of the things which are exalted" (79:25-30), and so of some minimal worth. Each lower being takes its nature from an Aeon, of which it is a "name," or shadow, or likeness. On this basis each being can be said to have beauty, although they are themselves ignorant of this nature and its source. The *Tripartite Tractate* is, therefore, attempting to assert the continued significance even of these miscreant products of the Logos, based upon the idea of the resemblance of lower beings to higher ones. The following excerpt indicates this conjunction of themes:

Like the Pleromas are things which came into being from the arrogant thought, which are their [the Pleroma's] likenesses, models, shadows, and phantasms, lacking reason and the light. . . . The ones, however, who by themselves are great [the Pleromas], are more powerful and beautiful than the names which are given to them, which are [their] shadows. In the manner of a likeness are they [the names] beautiful. For the [face] of the image normally takes its beauty from that of which it is an image. (78:25-79:15).

It is this very concept of resemblance which is used to explain the motivation for massive confusion and conflict which ensues among these lower beings. In their ignorance they base their desire to subordinate one another upon the worth of their individual natures, which they have as images of the Aeons. "They were brought to a lust for power over one another according to the glory of the name of which each is a shadow, . . ." (79:25-35). While the Logos has set awry the revelation of the Father, nonetheless there is still some residual connection between this lower, conflicted plane and the Pleroma, conferring a limited value on these lost divarications of the Aeonic world.

With the restoration of order by the Son, we find this theory of resemblance used again to explain the relationship between the Aeonic and lower worlds, and to clarify the proper status both of the Logos and



his products. In this case the reformed Logos is illumined and takes up an active role in governing the world below the Pleroma:

... the Logos received the vision of all things, those which preexist and those which are now and those which will be, since he has been entrusted with the administration of all that which exists. (95:15-20)

Functioning now as "a basic principle and cause and ruler of things which come to be" (95:15-25), the Logos creates images, using the Pleroma as a paradigm. Appeal is thereby made to the notion of a Demiurge figure,<sup>19</sup> and to the logic of paradigmism ("of every goodness which exists in the Pleroma: ... the Logos established each one in his order, both the images and the representations and the likenesses, ...") (98:20-25). Underscored is the fact that this relation of resemblance between levels is now recognized by the lower beings, which share in the nature and beauty of Aeons:

Things which belong to the thought which is transcendent are humble, they preserve the representations of the pleromatic, especially because of the sharing in the names by which they are beautiful.

There remains one final point which bears consideration and that is the form of production which prevails with the Logos and his consequents. In describing the method of generation employed by the Logos, the language becomes more that of agency than of contemplative emanation. We find notions such as "administration" (95:20) or "establishment" (98:20) being used. This is extended by the introduction of a ruling Archon which the Logos produces, and "uses" (100:30) to structure lower level entities. Demiurgic imagery comes to the fore here: the Logos employs this instrument, which is a representation of the Father, to order and beautify. Similar language of direct production is then applied to this Archon (101ff.). This suggests that the mode of production within the Pleroma is non-demiurgic and based upon contemplation, while below the Logos (the last Aeon) this changes to a more direct form of active agency.

This cursory review of some aspects of the Logos theology in the *Tripartite Tractate* is intended only as an indication that notion of the Logos itself is not disjoint from the metaphysical structure of this system. It is clearly integral to that metaphysics, although I must admit both that the burden of the Sophia myth does strain the structure of the thought and that many of the details of these grave cosmogonic events are lost on this reader. I would, however, maintain that a basic

philosophic model can be discerned within this document, one which coherently includes the concept of the Logos. On this foundation, the *Tripartite Tractate* has revised the Sophia myth, making this tale of tragic declension over into a pre-destined instance of a broader pattern of contemplative production of levels of being. As such the evaluative force of the theology shifts, and the depreciation of lower worlds outside the Pleroma is significantly qualified, especially in view of the pervasive importance of its theology of resemblance and divine names.

4. Our knowledge both of Platonism and Gnosticism in the Second and Third centuries has certainly improved in the last few decades, but I do not think it possible at present to determine with precision the lines of influence, or to build a very full picture of the context of theological debate. We know enough, however, to get a grasp on the key points of this discussion and to be appraised of the salient elements of systematic development in a work such as the *Tripartite Tractate*. It is in this light that I should like now to review this theological system, setting it against contemporary forms of Platonic theology. In doing so, I must admit to having a rough general hypothesis about the document for which I cannot argue: that it reflects an effort by Valentinians to produce a more "philosophical" version of their tradition. While we do not have a genuine philosophical theology here, if one means by that a rational theology articulated in terms of discursive argumentation, we do at least have a theological structure which seems to make an effort to describe certain of its features in terms of current philosophical views. I suspect that this process was the result of interscholastic discussion among Valentinians, proto-orthodox Christian philosophers, and various sorts of Hellenic Platonists (or Neopythagoreans), and that this theology bears the stamp of that debate. Professor Perkins has suggested<sup>20</sup> a Second century Alexandrian locus; my guess would be late Second or early Third century, with either Alexandria or Rome being plausible.<sup>21</sup> My reasons for this particular estimate will emerge presently.

If one assays the formal structure of the *Tripartite Tractate's* ontology, the basic model which emerges is one which fits into the pattern of late Middle Platonic speculation. In order to locate it philosophically, it is important to consider some features which have emerged from our analysis. In its general character, it is a type of *nous* theology with a first principle which exercises an intellective capacity. As we have seen this first mind is self-directed; its mode of production of a Son or of the Aeons as a group is intellective. Despite its strong apophatic character, this system has not thought through the

implications of such a position in relation to a primordial Divine Mind, as we find in Plotinus. It is also important to notice the location of the Aeons as divine thoughts within the Father's mind before their emergence as separate beings in the Pleroma. Both of these positions indicate that the philosophical theology underlying the *Tripartite Tractate* reflects that of Middle Platonists such as Numenius or Albinus. To refine this judgment further, we need to consider the divergence of the major Middle Platonists on the question of the Divine mind, its thoughts, and their use in production.

Early Middle Platonists such as Philo Judaeus or Plutarch considered the Platonic Forms to be intradecial thoughts<sup>22</sup> and the upshot of this position was the treatment of the Divine Mind as a demiurgic power, exercising a direct form of causality in cosmic generation. The Forms became internal paradigms of sorts which were used by the Divine Mind in constructing the lower world. Now it seems that the *Tripartite Tractate* is not following this type of philosophical theology, since the divine thoughts doctrine is not used to articulate this sort of intradecial paradigmaticism at the level of the Father. In addition, the Father is not construed according to a demiurgic model: he does not fashion his products directly.

We can also exclude another major type of Middle Platonic theology, that of Atticus and the Athenian school. This version of Middle Platonism made an effort at separating the Divine Intellect from the Forms along the lines of the *Timaeus* theology, although some of the language of the divine thoughts doctrine was employed.<sup>23</sup> It is this position which was debated in the Plotinian school according to Porphyry,<sup>24</sup> further evidence of which may be found in *Ennead* V.5. According to this theology, the Divine Intellect is the first principle, while the Forms exist at a separate but lower level.<sup>25</sup> Forms are thus extradecial, in the sense that they are outside the supreme deity and distinct from it; indeed Porphyry criticized Atticus for this very sense of pronounced separation.<sup>26</sup> This is not the type of theology which our document endorses.

The theology of the *Tripartite Tractate* is closest in its philosophical design to the sort of Middle Platonism represented by Albinus (Alkinoos) or Numenius.<sup>27</sup> This type of Platonism viewed the Ideas as thoughts within a primordial *nous*, but it revised the method of production, denying in particular the notion of direct demiurgic activity of the first god. The demiurgic function is shunted to lower divine powers, requiring a new explanation for the first principle's causation. The divine hierarchy in Numenius includes: (1) a first god who is a stable, unified, and self-directed mind,<sup>28</sup> (2) a second god, initially

unified, which exercises a demiurgic function<sup>29</sup> and (3) a third god, equivalent to the rational world soul. The demiurge has been demoted here to at least a secondary position, with the first god being self-contemplative. The second looks to the first god in order to work upon matter, so that a contemplative relationship between divine minds is thereby established as central to production. There is also little doubt that Numenian theology located the intelligible powers at the level of the intellectual first god; the evidence from Proclus indicates that Numenius treated the "Living Creature" of the *Timaeus* as being at this level,<sup>30</sup> hence the entire intelligible world seems to be within the primary deity's mind. While Numenius does use demiurgic language of the first god, the production of the second divinity is considered primarily to be the result of its self-production through contemplation;<sup>31</sup> this explains the generation of the active second god from the self-directed first. The second god makes his own formal nature<sup>32</sup> through his contemplation and imitation of the first. Finally, it should be mentioned, with respect to this connection between divine levels, that Numenius appears to have held that the first divine principle makes use of the second in relation to his own contemplation, such that his own nature connects him with the next level of divinity.<sup>33</sup> This obscure logic of *proschresis* is applied to all levels, so that each level's contemplative activity would seem to entail the characteristic function of the next. The implication of this concept is a theology in which each level of divinity is bound up with the next. The highest god is self-contemplative and the primordial locus of the Ideas, and yet it also expresses its contemplation at the level of the active *nous*. The second mind is distinct from the first by virtue of its contemplative self-generation, yet it imitates the first, and exercises a demiurgic function towards the third god, the world soul.

A similar theology can be found in Albinus, whose theological hierarchy included a non-demiurgic first mind, a demiurgic or active mind, and it seems, a passive mind which is the world soul.<sup>34</sup> Once again the first god's self-contemplation entails the thinking of the Ideas.<sup>35</sup> Because of the pronounced characterization of the first god as a final cause, the vectorial quality of Albinus's theology tends to emphasize the ordering of lower principles by higher ones.<sup>36</sup> This is particularly interesting because Albinus treats the world soul as a pre-existent principle which is awakened and reordered by its contemplation of the Forms within the primary *nous*, and having received these Forms, it orders the lower world on this basis.

While I do not think we can be certain, I suspect that it is this general type of Middle Platonism which lies at the foundation of the

*Tripartite Tractate*, providing a tacit architectonic for its sometimes bewildering complexity, and informing its efforts to revise the Sophia myth. In particular I would argue that the treatment of Aeons as intradecal thoughts of the Father, the emphasis upon non-demiurgic forms of production, the consequent resort to a model of contemplative self-generation at the Aeon level (in this case that of the restored Logos and its subordinate ruling Archon), and the restoration of the Logos through contemplation of the Pleroma, are all indicative of the late Middle Platonic theology of the Numenius-Albinus sort. In addition, one central means of differentiation of levels outside the Pleroma is the shift to a demiurgic mode of production, as is the case for entities outside the intelligible world in the type of Middle Platonism in question. Because of the state of our present evidence, I cannot claim anything more than this suspicion, nor can I be more specific than I have been about particular versions of Middle Platonism. Even if we cannot be as precise as we would like, we are nevertheless in a position to recognize the basic philosophical background against which the more abstract Valentinianism of the *Tripartite Tractate* developed.

Given this general philosophical locus, the *Tripartite Tractate's* theology emerges as a form of *nous* theology which differentiates its self-contemplative first principle from all consequents by a reliance upon apophatic theology. It is certainly distinct from Middle Platonism in its strong assertion of monotheism and its consequent denial of the elements of the *Timaeus* model of production. It is, however, a theology which places divine fecundity and plenitude at the center of its understanding of divinity, and so it develops its account of non-demiurgic production based upon the notion of the projection of the Father's intellection at the Aeon level. Aeons are the result of the Father's self-expression: they proceed by contemplative self-generation through reference back to the Father, out of whose thought they emerge. We should note again the fundamental logic of resemblance, the reliance upon complex lines of contemplative dependence between levels of reality, and the presence of the Father which results from his use of lower levels as his contemplative extensions. All these themes, which are central to the *Tripartite Tractate*, are resonant of late Middle Platonism, and establish the formal, philosophical structure of this Gnostic system of theology.

I should like in closing to append a brief speculative coda to what is probably an already too venturesome essay. It is tempting to consider the *Tripartite Tractate* in the light of Plotinus's attack on Gnosticism in the "Gross-Schrift": III.8[30], V.8[31], V.5[32], II.9[33]; while I cannot do so properly, a few cursory points might still be apposite. One of the

chief themes of this entire work is non-demiurgic, contemplative production, and its differing forms at many levels of reality. III.8 and V.8 are concerned to articulate the continuous contemplative progression, with each level being an imitation of its prior, while V.5 argues for, among other things, a proper recognition of the integral relationship of the intelligibles as distinct living powers at the level of *nous*, and therefore "within" the Intellect in this special sense. The anti-Gnostic arguments of II.9 rest upon an understanding of these Plotinian positions.<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to note how the *Tripartite Tractate* integrates many of these same themes, not always in the same way in which Plotinus would have developed them, and certainly not at the same philosophical level of articulation. Nevertheless some of the positions singled out for attack in II.9 have been modified in the *Tripartite Tractate*, especially the radical theory of the declension of Sophia and the pronounced separation of lower levels from the Pleroma.<sup>38</sup> The modifications involved often reflect the type of positions which Plotinus develops elsewhere in this major work, e.g., contemplative generation and continuity between levels, or non-demiurgic causality at the intelligible (i.e., pleromic) level. At the very least, the *Tripartite Tractate* seems to be a system of theology not highly vulnerable to some of these Plotinian metaphysical criticisms.

It would be too much to claim that the *Tripartite Tractate* was the product of Plotinus's Gnostic associates, or that it was a systematic answer to his criticisms. The case would be at best circumstantial, and there are philosophical points which remain unanswered. Chief among these is the initial attack, in II.9.1, against any *nous* theology with multiple intellects, and any theology lacking the three Plotinian hypostasis. While the proximate target for Plotinus is usually viewed as being Numenius,<sup>39</sup> a system such as the *Tripartite Tractate*, with a Father-Intellect which brings forth a Son-Intellect as the product of its thought, may also have been the actual Gnostic target for Plotinus. Without significant changes in its theology of the Divine Intellect, the *Tripartite Tractate* would remain vulnerable to this Neoplatonic assault. I would suggest, then, that the *Tripartite Tractate* is likely to have been the result of general scholastic discussions among philosophical theologians from various camps, which continued through the late Second and early Third centuries at Alexandria and perhaps Rome, and which Plotinus drew upon in his anti-Gnostic critique. While the philosophical form of Plotinus's arguments is certainly his own, there is no reason to assume that he was original in his conceptual criticisms of the Sophia myth, the method of demiurgic production, etc. The

*Tripartite Tractate* probably emerged from this interscholastic discussion, resulting in the philosophical character I have been analyzing; Plotinus is likely to have drawn from this same tradition of debate. This would have been standard for the rather agonistic world of ancient philosophy,<sup>40</sup> and there seems no reason to assume an exception. Although it does not answer some specifically Neoplatonic arguments, the *Tripartite Tractate* does seem to have generated a Valentinian system with a philosophical character which would have made it resilient to many Platonic criticisms.

I would conclude then with the judgment that the *Tripartite Tractate* represents a philosophically informed Gnosticism, and is part of what has been called the "Platonic Underworld,"<sup>41</sup> the diffusion of Platonic metaphysics into the religious thought of Late Antiquity. A cursory reading of its admittedly rather rococo ontology might suggest to an austere student of philosophical theology that there has been a riot in Plato's cave. These sentiments notwithstanding, I hope to have indicated that the metaphysical foundations of this system are quite intelligible in terms of later Middle Platonism, and that the theology of the *Tripartite Tractate* was not the product of persons wholly freed from the reins of philosophical probity.

## NOTES

1. Arthur Darby Nock, "Gnosticism," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, Vol. II, ed. by Zeph Stewart (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), p. 949.
2. Cf. A.H. Armstrong's discussion of this issue: "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy," *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London, 1979), xxi.
3. Pheme Perkins, "Logos Christologies in The Nag Hammadi Codices," *Vigiliae Christianae* 35 (1981): 379ff.
4. Ibid.
5. Quotations are taken from the translation of Harold W. Attridge and Dieter Mueller, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. by James M. Robinson (New York, 1977).
6. John Whittaker, "Self Generating Principles in Second-Century Gnostic Systems," *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. I, ed. by Bentley Layton, (Leiden, 1980), pp. 176-193, and "The Historical Background of Proclus's Doctrine of the ἀνθυποστάτα," *De Jamblique à Proclus*, Fondation Hardt, *Entretiens* 21 (Vandoeuvres-Geneva, 1975), pp. 193 ff.
7. E.g., the dyadic system recounted by Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, Bk. I. This so-called "type A" Valentinianism tends to have an initial pair of figures, e.g., Bythos-Sige. Cf. G.C. Stead's excellent discussion: "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S.-Vol. XX, Pt. 1 (April, 1969): 75ff. In this respect our document is closer to the monadic tradition, "type B," found for example in Hippolytus.
8. Cf. E.R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One," *Classical Quarterly* 22: 129ff.; John Whittaker, "Neopythagoreanism and the Transcendent Absolute," *Symbolae Osloenses* XLVII: 77ff.; Philip Merlan, "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. by A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge, 1967).
9. Cf. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Ithaca, NY, 1977).
10. W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Berlin, 1930), pp. 16ff.; John Dillon, op. cit., pp. 136-137. We should note the use of "the one by whom" at 65:10 as a name. Seneca's scheme in *Epistula* 65 includes among others a material cause, "id ex quo," a demiurgic cause, "id a quo," and a formal cause, "id ad quod." Philo's version, found at *Prov.* I, 23ff., and *Cher.* 125ff., has a material cause, τὸ ἐξ οὗ, a demiurge, τὸ ὑφ' οὗ, an instrument (the Logos), τὸ δι' οὗ, and a final cause, τὸ δι' ὅ. It is this shorthand tradition of prepositional descriptions for cosmological causes which is behind these passages in the *Tripartite Tractate*, indicating familiarity with this mode of theological reflection from late Stoic and Middle Platonic thought.
11. Cf. 55:20 ff.: "above all intellect."
12. Cf. A. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936).
13. E.g., 55:30-35: "He has his Power, which is his will." Cf. 55:35.
14. G.C. Stead, "In Search of Valentinus," *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. I, p. 91.
15. Another important theme which emerges at this point and cannot be examined here is the Father's withholding of knowledge. Cf. 62:10 ff. and 64:30 ff. The Aeons are too fragile for a sudden revelation of the Father, so that this is only gradually available. The Logos seems to have been too impatient for this process.
16. On aeons as distinct minds cf. 64:1-10 and 70:5-10. A similar doctrine of intellects can be found in fragment 37 of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. The notion of immanent and manifest Divine Thoughts is discussed by R.P. Casey, "Clement and the Two Divine Logoi," *Journal of Theological Studies* 25: 43-56, and by H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of The Church Fathers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956).
17. Cf. Perkins, op. cit.
18. Cf. 76:20-35:  
for it was not without the will of the Father that the Logos was produced, which is to say, not without him [the Father] does he [the Logos] go forth. But the Father himself had brought him forth for those of whom he knew that it was fitting that they should come into being.
19. This idea is later extended with the Logos producing an Archon which he uses in the control of nature. Cf. 100, 15ff.
20. Perkins, op. cit.
21. Let me reiterate that this is only an estimate.

22. E.g., Plutarch, *De Plac. Philos.* 882d  
Σωκράτης καὶ Πλάτων χωριστὰς τῆς ὕλης οὐσίας τὰς ιδέας ὑπολαμβάνουσιν,  
ἐν τοῖς νοήμασι καὶ φαντασίαις τοῦ θεοῦ, τοῦτέστι τοῦ νοῦ, ὑφειστώσας.  
(adopting S. Lilla's reading, *Clement of Alexandria* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 202-  
203). Cf. R.M. Jones, "The Ideas as the Thoughts of God," *Classical  
Philology* XXI: 317 ff.; A.N.M. Rich, "The Platonic Ideas as the Thoughts  
of God," *Mnemosyne*, Series IV, 7, pp. 123ff.
23. Atticus, according to Porphyry in Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 394, 6 (Baudry):  
οἱ δὲ ἄνδρᾶνεις τὰς ιδέας τύποις κοροπλαθκοῖς ἐοικυίας ἐφ' ἑαυτὸν οὐσας  
καὶ ἔξω τοῦ νοῦ κεκμενᾶς ἐλοάγουσιν.
24. Cf. *Vita Plotini* 18; John Dillon, op. cit., p. 256, remarks: "This distinction  
of Ideas from the essence of God seems, on Porphyry's evidence, to have  
been the doctrine of Athenian Platonism up to Longinus."
25. Cf. Dillon, *ibid.*, pp. 253-256.
26. *Vita Plotini*, Chs. 18, 8-19, and 20, 89-95.
27. I have used "Albinus" since it remains the conventional name, e.g., in  
Dillon, op. cit.. On the problem see John Whittaker, "Parisinus gr. 1962  
and the Writings of Albinus," *Phoenix* 28: 320ff., and 450ff.
28. Numenius fragments will be listed according to the numbering of E. des  
Places, *Numenius* (Paris, 1973). Cf. Fragment 11.
29. Fragment 12, 1-3 and 12-14.
30. Fragment 22.
31. Fragment 16.
32. Fragment 16, 7-8.
33. Fragment 15.
34. Albinus, Hermann 164, 16-37.
35. 164, 26-27.
36. 164, 35ff.
37. Cf. D.J. O'Meara, "Gnosticism and The Making of the World in Plotinus,"  
*The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. I, pp. 365ff.
38. II.9, 10, 11, 12.
39. The two intellects doctrine is found in *Numenius*, fragment 25. A similar  
system is examined by Plotinus in III.9. Cf. Dodds's discussion, *Proclus:  
The Elements of Theology*, Commentary to Props. 167 and 168.
40. Although the Longinus-Plotinus debate on the location of the intelligibles,  
mentioned in note 24, seems to have been uncommonly amicable, at least  
in Porphyry's version.
41. John Dillon, op. cit., Chapter 8, 384ff.

## The Noetic Triad in Plotinus, Marius Victorinus, and Augustine

Peter Manchester

Students of the history of the Christian doctrine of divine trinity, among whom I count myself, have long recognized a degree of complicity between the progressive "metaphysicalizing" of the doctrine in the Third and Fourth Centuries and the emergence of triadic conceptual schemes in the new Platonism of Plotinus and his successors. At one time it was commonplace to gesture toward the arrangement of the Plotinian system into three "hypostases" as the speculative counterpart of the Christian triad. Today the naive clarity of this older purported parallel has given way to a vast confusion of triads, differing among themselves, sometimes intersecting with one another, and in general introducing into Christian discussion such complexity of speculative motivation that the older kinds of history of the doctrine have been completely undone. It is not just the historian's reconstruction that has come apart; the whole grand vision of a consolidating universal orthodoxy must be abandoned.

The notion that the Plotinian hypostases were an exemplar for Christian trinitarian metaphysics was often based on crude verbalism: the emerging technical terms for the Greek doctrine were *mia ousia*, *treis hypostaseis*. The term hypostasis however is a very weak basis for comparison, first because in Plotinus it is an editor's convention and not a technical term Plotinus uses for what the One, Nous, and Soul are each "one" of, and second because among the Greek Christian writers it was prized initially for its vagueness and openness to various interpretations. Beyond this misleading verbal echo, excessive weight

was given to the case of Origen's account of the triad in *Peri Archōn*, and that entirely on its subordinationist side that led into Arianism. But even if, in Origen, the Father and the Son can be placed in hierarchical series, in parallel to the One and the Nous in Plotinus (which is not at all clear in *Peri Archōn* or the *Commentary on John*, which seem much more Middle- than Neo-platonist), there is no systematic parallel between the Holy Spirit and the Plotinian Soul, since the former acts in this world only within the circle of the elect, whereas the latter is universal and world-constituting.

The Plotinian hypostatic series never made a plausible model for the Christian trinity even when it held the field more or less alone. But current scholarship in the Second and Third Centuries has shown that a very different type of triad abounded in the philosophical and gnostical religions of the period. Perhaps of Orphic or Pythagorean derivation, it is attested in the Nag Hammadi materials,<sup>1</sup> and became especially influential through the *Chaldaean Oracles*, in the famous proposition that "in every world shines ■ triad ruled by a monad."<sup>2</sup> If we call the Plotinian hypostasis series "vertical" and derivational, then this new triad is "horizontal" and structural. It gave rise to a late Platonic speculative development which was not essentially Plotinian and indeed was integrated into the Plotinian series only with difficulty, requiring supplementary complications that were developed in conflicting ways in various schools.

The critical and historical effort to track the evolution of this horizontal triad, from its Second Century invocation, through Porphyry and Iamblichus, into Proclus and Damascius, is well underway. There begins to be careful study of early Christian participation in that development, centering especially on the Fourth Century writers Synesius and Marius Victorinus. But it seems to me that the complications of this scholastic history, which begin to take on near-fabulous dimensions by the time we get to the Athenians, have created a classic forest-and-trees problem. What, after all, is "the Triad" really about? Is it a numerological device? Symbolical in some other way? Is it a dialectical schema? Is it an analytical artifice or in some sense empirical? And finally, is the accommodation of the New Testament themes of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to this philosophical speculation a capitulation or an insight? Does the Christian trinity genuinely belong in this discussion, or is all of that a gigantic kind of category mistake?

My goal in the provisional discussions which follow is to contribute to the clarification of these substantive questions. I am only indirectly concerned with the transmission of ideas through channels of influence

and literary dependency, as experts will already have discerned from the figures juxtaposed in my title.

Marius Victorinus was the translator of what treatises of Plotinus Augustine knew, and in that sense knew Plotinus himself, but Pierre Hadot has shown conclusively that he took his instigation from Porphyry to a much larger degree.<sup>3</sup> Some of the differences this makes will figure in our discussion below (section 2). The movement I propose to track from Plotinus to Marius Victorinus is therefore not in the dimension of literary derivation. Similarly, it seems clear to me (for reasons indicated in section 3 below) that Augustine may not even know, and in any case does not understand Marius Victorinus's trinitarian metaphysics. If he has dabbled in it, as some indications suggest, his conscious attitude is wariness. Where he can be shown to continue and even more to radicalize certain themes from Marius, the relationship is at most unconscious and the material is experienced by Augustine as his own discovery. Once again, the movement of thought is controlled by the substance, the matter itself, and not the paper track.

Or better: it is the thesis of this paper that there is a matter of thought underlying speculations about the noetic triad. And the working assumption is that the adaptation of this triad to the Christian trinity by Augustine is natural and appropriate, and therefore instructive about its meaning.

### 1. Three Triads Distinguished

I have already indicated the difference between the triad we are considering, most properly called the "noetic triad," and the three hypostases of the Plotinian hierarchical scheme. The latter is founded in what we perceive to be Plotinus's innovation, but that he takes to be essential to Platonism, the projection of One "beyond Mind and Being" from which all else originates in a fashion differing from all causation or exemplarity. In this perspective the true and eternal world of familiar Platonism, the Being One which is also Nous, is a Second One, and the All One of its sensible effigy, the world of Soul, is a Third. The directionality of this "one, two, three" is strongly vertical, each succeeding level dependent on its prior for a perfection and a unity which, taken by itself, it lacks or has devolved into powerlessness. I take pains not to speak of "emanation" or of the "chain of being" to give the sense of this verticality. Being, in the first place, is properly ascribed to the second level alone, the Nous. But more than that, the image of emanation suggests that it is outflow or declination alone which makes

each derived hypostasis, whereas it is Plotinus's distinctive claim that it is each level's halt, self-collection, and turning back to its source which is constitutive.<sup>4</sup> Another way to make the same point is to note that derivation in Plotinus has two phases, *proōdos* and *epistrophē*, and that it is the second phase above all which completes the communication of power.

In the Plotinian scheme, the notorious problem of participation becomes the problem of the derivation of Soul from Nous. At this point there emerged in later Neoplatonism a second triadic schema, again vertical in sense but concerned with relations between hypostases in the overall systematic series. First given explicit formulation in Iamblichus, I call this triad the "schema of participation." According to this formalism, one discriminates among three states of any given element in the hypostasis series:

- i. that factor unparticipated (*ameihekτος*), "in itself," absolute;
- ii. that factor participated (*metechomenos*), which involves a self-disposition and action by the factor, not a reaction to what participates in it; and
- iii. that factor as participant (*kata methexin, en tois metechousi, en schesei*), that is, as enacted in the derived hypostasis and now its action, no longer that of the higher hypostasis.<sup>5</sup>

In the end this schema reacted back upon the hypostatic series itself, causing the introduction of additional layers and, in Iamblichus himself, generating the eccentric postulation of an Unparticipated One higher than the Plotinian One, which, because it was the participated One (the noetic One its participant), was now a second. Though in this sense the effect of the schema of participation is to introduce new levels in the overall hierarchy which seem to be of the same kind as the original threesome of Plotinus, I would argue that the two triadic schemas ought to be kept distinct.

The third kind of triad, and the one with which we are concerned in this discussion, emerges from reflection on the relative self-constitutedness of each hypostasis, that inner economy of power which belongs to its own proper truth and unity. Again I emphasize that a derived level in the Plotinian system is not an organized defectiveness or a pure dependency, but a self-gathered life and power, and in precisely that way an epiphenomenon of its source. The canonical example of such a triad is the noetic triad, Being, Life, Nous (*on, zōē, nous; esse, vivere, intelligere*). This triad is horizontal in the sense that, in each of its variant developments, it interprets the interior integrity of the Second Hypostasis itself. Even when relations of priority and

consequence are seen among them, when Porphyry for example makes the first moment the "father" or Iamblichus construes them in the dialectical sequence *hyperaxis, dynamis, nous*, they remain moments within the Second Hypostasis and components of its integrity.<sup>6</sup> It remains a great question in the history of later Neoplatonism whether the noetic triad intrinsically envisions the derived status of Nous in relation to the hypernoetic One, but what it articulates is not external reference but self-constitution and completion.<sup>7</sup>

It was in this role that the noetic triad was touched on by Plotinus, in this role that a Porphyrian version attracted Marius Victorinus, and in this role that an analogue worked out in considerable independence by Augustine proved permanently suitable for the trinitarian theology of the Latin kataphatic tradition.

## 2. Plotinus and Marius Victorinus

When a threefold is a form of completeness, and its counting-out a return to unity, it proves invariably to be some kind of dialectic. In particular, if two terms comprise a difference, the remaining term will work a mediation. It is therefore a natural question about Being, Living, and Knowing (I would like to use "knowing" for *noein/intelligere* as a matter of pure convenience and euphony, asking it to bear the sense of "intellectually apprehending" or "understanding"), which of the three is the middle or mediating factor.

The juxtaposition of Plotinus and Marius Victorinus immediately makes this a puzzlement. In the first place, Plotinus very rarely cites this threesome, either nominally (*on, zōē, nous*) or verbally (*to einēi, to noein, to zōein*), in any kind of tightly schematic way, and in discussions where the three can be recognized by implication it is not necessarily clear whether they should be listed in that order. But if we ask about a two-against-one pattern in his thought, it is very clear that Being and Nous make an important twosome, and that Life is the third between them. But in Marius Victorinus the principal dialectical movement is the development between *esse* and *vivere* which is resolved through the final term, *intelligere*.

Though it would have its own fascination to map out the role of Porphyry as the intermediary of this dialectical shift, there is more to be learned from directly comparing the patterns as though they were competing interpretations of a single phenomenon. A certain peculiarity of Christian theology is immediately thrown into relief, concerning the way in which the "father" is first principle.

To begin with Plotinus, let us first recall why any sort of structural complication in the Second Hypostasis would become thematic in the first place. Because the hypernoetic One is such a dramatic innovation in the history of Platonism from a modern point of view, our expositions of Plotinus allow themselves to begin with the One much more freely than Plotinus does, and therefore to give the production of the Second and the Third a much more deductive and "causal" account than is justified. Plotinus himself is much more sparing in taking the point of view of the One, seeking reasons for its "overflow," or characterizing what results in that direction. Much more central to his own "logic of discovery" is intuiting, on the level of Nous itself, the evidence of its derivative and secondary nature. Nous after all is eternal, true, and essential being. In it all diversity is embraced by unity, all partiality made whole through interior communion and concentricity. As the domain of ideal being, unity is in a certain sense its very nature; as Aristotle puts it, "the idea explains what it means to be a thing and unity explains what it means to be an idea."<sup>8</sup> As the domain of perfect transparency and reflective immediacy, Nous is flawlessly "present to itself," *synōn hautōi*, moving always and only within itself as it plays over the intelligible field that it unifies.<sup>9</sup> Above all, Nous is the primal life and hence *autozōon*, self-living, composed in perfect self-equality, self-mastery, and self-sufficiency. In what possible way is Nous marked within itself as derivative? What distinguishes Plotinus is that he senses and responds to this question in a new and radical way, precisely within his experience of Nous.

It is said too quickly that Nous is manifestly derivative because it is a unity-in-multiplicity, the multiplicity namely of the numbered intelligibles. Many Middle Platonists had felt this problem and resolved it with invocation of Nous as the "divine Mind." In the radical intuition of Plotinus, nous is not just contaminated by numbersomeness but is itself the *origin* of number, which is to say that it is the aboriginal *twofold*. In that very compactness of unity signaled in the two terms cited above, *synōn hautōi*, present to itself, and *autozōon*, self-living, a certain intrinsic *doubleness* is signalled. Nous is both knowing and known, i.e. it is both Mind and Being. The very structure of selfhood is bipolar. The reflexivity of the reflexive pronoun, the self-reference involved in self-identity, requires that what is so addressed be taken twice, in itself and for itself. In the language of contemporary "intentional analysis," which has not just lexical but substantive proximity to Neoplatonic discourse, Nous is both noesis and noema. The unity of Nous is complete, but it is not simple. And so, Plotinus judges, it is not just given, but has arisen, and therefore has a source.

Perhaps the most graphic and dramatic portrayal of the noetic double as arising from its source, the simplex One, is as follows:

The One, perfect because It seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing overflows, as it were, and Its superabundance makes something other than Itself. This, when it has come into being, turns back upon the One and is filled, and so becomes its contemplator, Nous. Its halt and turning toward the One constitutes being, its gaze upon the One, Nous. Since it halts and turns toward the One that it may see, it becomes at once Nous and being.<sup>10</sup>

If, as Plotinus sometimes does, we take the image here of overflow another step and ask about the "stuff" or substrate, the "intelligible matter" which pours forth from the One, we could not do better than to call it, with A.H. Armstrong, an "indeterminate vitality."<sup>11</sup> It is this "life" which becomes determinate in the noetic twofold, functioning therein both as medium of its derivation and as mediator of its unity. And so Plotinus can refer to

that world There where there is no poverty or impotence, but everything is filled full of life, boiling with life. Things there flow in a way from a single source, not like one particular breath or warmth, but as if there were a single quality containing in itself and preserving all qualities.<sup>12</sup>

This background helps us understand the one passage where Plotinus seems consciously to advert to the noetic triad of *on*, *zōē*, *nous*, chapter 8 of VI 6 [34] "On Numbers." The derivation just reviewed is embedded in the opening propositions:

There is a living being (*zōon*) which is primal and by consequence self-living (*autozōon*); there is both Nous and there is Essence, actually being (*ousia hē ontōs*).<sup>13</sup>

It becomes clear this primal *zōon* is the Nous, and that precisely because it is self-living in the noetic dipole it can be addressed correctly by the noetic triad:

Now first all sensation is to be put away; by Nous is Nous contemplated. And it is to be taken to heart that in us is Life and Nous, not in mass but in massless power, and that true essence has given away mass and is power founded upon itself, not some feeble thing, but altogether most living and most intelligent — nothing more living, nothing more intelligent, nothing more essentially real. . . .



If being (*to einaí*) is sought, it is to be sought especially in what is most being; and if wholly knowing (*to noein holōs*), then in what is most Nous; and so too of Life itself.

So if one needs to take primal Being as being first, and then Nous, and then the living being (for this already seems to contain all things), then Nous is second (for it is an activity of essence).<sup>14</sup>

Plotinus here strongly registers the fact that considerations of *order* attach to discussions of the noetic triad, but insists on a revisionist arrangement. Being is first, second Nous, third Life. The third term is the mediating and unifying factor, and in this respect Plotinus gives the triad its canonical dialectical form. But he has reversed the second and the third moments with regard to the "content."

It is worth pointing out that because Plotinus is here so plainly commenting on the horizontal *on, zoe, nous* triad, it is clear that the "Nous" which is accounted second is not the Second Hypostasis in distinction to the First, but that hypostasis taken in relation to itself, as *autozōon*, and hence at first Being, and then Nous. Neither is there any exceptional designation of the First One as "primal Being." The series *on, nous, zōē* seems to be a conscious and deliberate adaptation of the more celebrated Chaldaean order.

Like Plotinus, Marius Victorinus has reasons of his own for considering the noetic triad, and does not merely take it up because it is a famous topic. His context is the effort of Christian theology to lay out some horizontal dialectic for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the wake of the catastrophic wrong-headedness exposed by the Arian controversy. Arianism is simply a vertical dialectic rigorously imposed. The error of Arianism is not subordinationism, if that means that the Son is second after and dependent upon the Father, because an asymmetry of this kind is built into doctrine by the New Testament. The error of Arianism is to think that the systematic question of the distinction between First and Second in the Neoplatonic hypostatic series has anything to do with the "three hypostases" of the Christian trinity. There is a deep question in trinitarian theology that is structured according to the ontological difference between the First One and the Being One — the question namely whether beyond the divine life which is Father, Son, and Spirit there is an absolute Godhead — but this is *not* the question that led Latin trinitarianism to adapt Neoplatonism. That question, which arises in the dialectic we have called "horizontal," asks about *mediation* within the structure of *self-constitution*.

Whether the structure of self-constitution is itself "derived" is not, in the Christian theological sense, a trinitarian question.

Marius Victorinus expounds the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of the Christian scriptures as respectively *esse, vivere, intelligere*, and therefore as the unitary and creative principle that biblical faith calls God. There is no doubt that, following Porphyry, he has "telescoped" the Plotinian distinction between the One and Nous and, further, that he routinely confuses talk of the Father and the Son with talk about the First and the Second One. But what is interesting is the content of his triad, not its schema. He thinks *esse* and *vivere* make a pair, and that *intelligere* is the medium. What can we make of this?

Being for Marius is a moment of potentiality, not actuality. Of course it is potency, active power, not mere possibility incapable of its own act. But it is not "alone," so to speak, the divine creative principle. Creation is seen above all as a "doing," *agere*, and this requires not just agency but agitation. Being must become doing, and only living being can "do" anything. In the Gospel According to John, God in action is the Logos, and this Logos is "life" and the "light of men." God must "be," therefore, in such a way that life in action is already implicated in that being, and implicated not just in anticipation but in enactment.

From this it follows that the aboriginal divine "substance" (that is, *ousia*, the authentic being) is, as a matter of constitution and structure, eternally in action. In that action, being-as-potency, pure *esse*, is constantly coming into concretion or existence as *vivere*. As the pre-actual "to be" which harbors life as power, the divine substance is Father; as the living actuality which eternally declares and manifests the divine potency, God is Logos and Son. Along with the other "names of God" that Victorinus finds in scripture — Spirit, Wisdom, Nous — Logos designates the same as substance.<sup>15</sup> And yet because that substance is the dyad of *esse* and *vivere*, the Logos "in whom was life" (*John* 1: 4) is the Son of the Father, the image or revelation of the invisible God.

In the Fourth Century the controlling context in Christianity for this kind of analysis was in part the interpretation of the *homoousion* in the creed of Nicaea. The term is notably ambiguous, quite apart from its contrast with the rejected term *homoiousion*, "like in substance." It can be taken to say that Father and Son are one single substance; but it can also imply, as the Latin translation that eventually became current, consubstantial, does imply, that each of Father and Son are equally substantial. Victorinus affirms both:

We hold therefore according to order, with the permission of God, that Father and Son are *homoousion* and *homoousia* according to identity in substance.<sup>16</sup>

Substance itself is the ground of this difference in God, because divine *einai* is both *on* and *zōē*, is internally dynamic in the form of this dyad.

But being and life express only the outgoing procession of divine power, its self-constitution as creative and salvific activity. Within the divine substance this difference is not just action but also contemplation. The very same Logos that is declarative in the Son is also recursive in the Spirit. What proceeds from divine Being as Life also returns upon divine Being as Mind, contemplative knowing or intelligence. Under this aspect, the very same substance that is Logos is also Wisdom, Nous, and Spirit. *Intelligere*, contemplative self-knowledge, is not super-added to the Father and Son as Being and Life, but is the medium of that very distinction. Being and Life are brought back to what they were from the start by the Nous, so that the third moment is again the first, and the gospel denomination "God is Spirit" (*John* 4: 24) identifies the one divine substance.<sup>17</sup>

It can be shown that Victorinus has achieved a dialectical analogue for the later Latin orthodox distinction between proper predication of such terms as "principle," "logos," "wisdom," "nous," and "spirit," which all denote substance, and the "appropriation" of such terms to one or another of the relational threesome. It is even possible to show that his handling of the reciprocities among the moments of the noetic triad amount to a functional precursor of the Augustinian doctrine of predication by relation. Our interest however does not attach to the question of his doctrinal orthodoxy, as though the Christian doctrine of the trinity were a formalism stabilized independent of philosophical reflection. The post-Augustinian orthodoxy of substance, relation, and appropriation is itself shaped by philosophical reflection on the noetic triad.

What springs to attention for us is the portrayal of Being and Life as the primary dyad, and of Nous as the mediating moment. For Plotinus, Being and Nous were the dyad, and the medium was Life. Is this difference empty schematism, or is there a corresponding phenomenology? We must turn to Augustine for this question, since it is he who first arrives at the noetic triad by means of an explicit and recognizable phenomenology.

### 3. Marius Victorinus and Augustine

A particularly sensitive calibration of the degree to which *The Trinity* of Augustine is in conscious conversation with Marius Victorinus can be derived from the question whether the Spirit is the "mother of the Son" and more generally a female principle in the divine. Marius embraces this view with enthusiasm,<sup>18</sup> whereas Augustine, seeming to have Marius's very argument in view but citing it without attribution, reproves the thesis with barely concealed impatience.<sup>19</sup> I judge that Augustine is aware of Victorinus as a theologian in his own right and not just as translator of Plotinus and Porphyry, but that he does not adopt or even consciously respond to the Porphyrian-Victorine analysis of the noetic triad itself. Where he does respond, and even dramatically build upon an opening in Victorinus, is in the thesis that human noetic life is an *image* of the divine noetic triad, and therefore offers a *via interior* for the argument to God as trinity.

That Augustine does not even understand the *esse, vivere, intelligere* triad is evident from his remarks about Porphyry in *The City of God*.<sup>20</sup> We know in general how clearly he found a doctrine of the Father and the Son in the "Platonic books,"<sup>21</sup> and it appears that the theme he so interpreted was the derivation of the Second Hypostasis, Nous, from the First One. When he considered the Porphyrian discussion of the noetic triad, which apparently included the designation of *on, zōē, nous* as "three gods," he immediately assumed that the third term, *nous*, meant the Son, and was then perplexed by how *zōē* signified the Holy Spirit. But from our glance at Victorinus we see that this reading is entirely off the track, since there *vivere* is the Son and *intelligere* the Spirit. It is barely possible that Plotinus, who did make *zōē* the third and mediating term, is part of Augustine's confusion, but the noetic triad is so weakly thematized in Plotinus, compared to the elaborate and explicit application in Victorinus, that this seems to me unlikely.

As I will argue, Augustine comes to a dialectical pattern in the "trinity which is God" analogous to the Neoplatonic noetic triad not at all through a scholarly engagement of "the Platonists," but from a direct intentional analysis of his own noetic experience. The schema of his triad, *memoria, intelligentia, voluntas*, is too eccentric to be an adaptation of any of Plotinus, Victorinus, or Porphyry: *intelligentia* is Nous, and one can think of ways to make the *voluntas* be Life, but Augustinian *memoria* is simply *sui generis*, an expression of his own introspective genius, and even Thomas Aquinas could not understand how it could be the first hypostasis or *esse* of the human mind.

It was not the content of his noetic analysis that Augustine took from Victorinus, but instead the sheer invitation to explore such an analysis as an image of the divine trinity. As Victorinus wrote,

our soul is "according to the image" [*Gen.* 1: 26] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. If indeed Christ is life and Logos, he is image of God, image in which God the Father is seen, that is, in life one sees "to be." For this is the image, as was said. And if Christ is life, but "to live" is the Logos, and if life itself is "to be," and "to be" is the Father, if again life itself is "to understand," and this is the Holy Spirit, all these are three, in each one are the three, and the three are one and absolutely *homoousia*. If then the soul as soul is at once "to be" of soul, "to live" and "to understand," if it is therefore three, the soul is the image of the image of the Triad on high.<sup>22</sup>

In order to appreciate the innovation involved in this proposal, it is worthwhile to situate Augustine within the history of specifically Christian dogmatic trinitarianism.

It is a remarkable fact, demonstrated at length by John Edward Sullivan,<sup>23</sup> that no major theologian before Augustine had argued that the image of God in man included an image of the divine trinity. To the contrary, since "image of God" meant preeminently the Son, man's being "in the image" meant being "in the Son," called to participate in the Logos. Insofar as an avenue for argument to God was seen to be opened by Genesis 1:26, it concluded to the Son specifically, and then to the Father only "in the Son."

Augustine by contrast argues to the entire trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, first "in an image in an enigma" (I *Cor.* 13: 12), and then by transformation into the image of glory (II *Cor.* 3: 18). In the pre-Augustinian Greek theology, the "vision of God" in the consummation would be a human participation in the Son's vision of the Father; in Augustine the vision is of the entire trinity.<sup>24</sup>

Coordinate with this innovation in Augustine is his shift in the identification of God the creator. In the New Testament and even still in the Cappadocians, God the creator is the Father. Though he creates through his Logos, which by the Nicene creed is said to be not just equal to God but "God from God," it remains true prior to Augustine that the doctrine of creation is part of the article on the Father, who is strictly identified as the Lord God of the Old Testament. But in four long exegetical books at the beginning of *The Trinity*, Augustine argues in detail that the Lord God and creator is the trinity itself, no longer the Father.

Compared therefore to the Greek Christian tradition, both the doctrine of God and of man the image of God have been trinitized with a new radicality in Augustine. One of the familiar sticking points in Augustinian interpretation, however, is the question of which of these innovations is the substantive discovery and which is epiphenomenal. The treatise *On The Trinity* itself is divided in two, with the exegetical prelude and the exposition of the logic of substance and relation occupying the first half (Books I-VII), and the argument via the unveiling of the trinity in the mind the second half (Books VIII-XV). Especially as the distinction between Reason and Revelation took on its medieval exclusivity and the trinity became a paradigm "datum of revelation," it was the first half that was regarded as authoritative doctrine, with the second relegated to the position of mere illustration, eventually no more privileged than images like spring, stream, water. In the spiritual theology that ran through Bonaventure the ascent through the interior triad was kept intact, but precisely as a spiritual itinerary, and not the foundation for the truth of doctrine itself.

My own conviction is that the logic of relation in Augustine is *consequent* upon his breakthrough with the noetic triad, or better, that the two halves of his work in *The Trinity* comprise a single intuition. It is important first of all to note that the phenomenology of *memoria*, *intelligentia*, and *voluntas* which he drives to ever greater interiority, transparency, and self-sufficiency is a *noetic* analysis and not, as so often expressed, a "psychology." The three moments, especially when purged of all dependency on external being so as to be pure self-memory, self-understanding, and self-love, are the self-constituted life of the *mens animi*, the *mind* of the soul. They are not, in the medieval or modern sense, "faculties" of the soul, but instead the internal structure of pure spiritual self-disclosedness. The dialectical pattern Augustine finds in them makes the third term, the *voluntas*, the mediating or unifying moment. Mind for Augustine is always retention begetting attention in the unity of an intention. In the way this triad unfolds "in the image," the uniting intentionality on any given level of "conversion to the inner man" is already alive on the next higher level, and as the ascending meditation proceeds we reach at last the level where the freedom of the mind is the Spirit of God itself, as *donum dei* in the subjective genitive,<sup>25</sup> and therefore the ground of participation in the trinitarian life. Within the divine life on the other hand, the unification of Father and Son in the one Spirit constitutes the "giveability" of that life, its communicability as life. The noetic triad is mind given and mind received, alike the structure of creative exemplarity and of created imaging.

It follows on my account that God the trinity in Augustine subsists on the level of the Plotinian *second* hypostasis and is an *on, nous, zōē* structure. This is confirmed in the classic Latin metaphysics for which God is *sumмум ens*, the highest being, spiritual substance in the sense of mind-like being. It is equally confirmed by the criticism of the metaphysical God in the apophatic tradition as it comes to a head, through Dionysius, in the Godhead beyond the trinity of Meister Eckhart and the author of the "Cloud of Unknowing."

The effect of Augustine's original application of the noetic triad to the doctrine of the trinity was to claim the trinity for an emphatically kataphatic theology, a theology of "horizontal" self-constitution on the level of Nous. This theology not only broke with the old efforts to model the trinity in the vertical hypostatic series of Plotinus, but dissolved the hypernoetic and hyperontic One entirely into the mystery of noetic or spiritual freedom. To the Plotinian intuition that even in the perfection of its unity the freedom was derived, not aboriginal, metaphysical trinitarianism would counterpose the "*causa sui*." If the apophatic mystic could not stop with this, he could no longer use the trinity against it.

#### 4. Concluding Observation

What then is the noetic triad about? I would argue that it is about that kind of being which *is* as it is *revealed*, whose very "to be" is disclosedness. In the New Testament Father, Son, and Spirit are the economy of revelation, and in no way speculation about the nature of the divine principle "in itself." No one knows the Father but the Son and anyone to whom the Son reveals him; but no one can confess that Jesus is Lord, or in union with him pray as Son to the Father, except by the Spirit; and yet the Spirit does not speak for itself, but what it hears it speaks, and its presence brings the Father and the Son. This dialectic of revelation, given classic form in the Synoptic Icon (the baptismal scene) and in the Last Supper discourse in the Fourth Gospel (*John* 14-17), does not purport to unfold a divine substance, but only a divine life. If the Father in this scheme is invisible, if exposure to the Father opens an abyss, the abyss is here the revealed abyss, not the hidden one, the abyss experienced in finite and historical memory, not in the search for an ever more transcendently "first" First Principle.

Because it developed in dialogue with the Neoplatonic form of the search for the transcendent First, the doctrine of the trinity has come to seem the most intemperate fruit of metaphysical positivism in theology.

But if, like the noetic triad which contributed so much to its historical development, the trinity is simply being, light, and life having dawned on itself, then trinitarian theology can be quite agnostic about Principles and still be faithful to the divine which approaches and withdraws.

#### NOTES

1. *Allogenes*, CG xi 3, 47, 8-37.
2. Ed. Kroll, p. 18, as cited by R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), p. 106.
3. *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris, 1968). For discussion of Hadot's "maximalism" about Porphyry's role between Plotinus and Augustine, see the "Introduction" to *Marius Victorinus: Theological Treatises on the Trinity* (The Fathers of the Church, 1978), translated by Mary T. Clark, R.S.C.J., pp. 1-10; and also John J. O'Meara, "The Neoplatonism of Augustine," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (I.S.N.S. at SUNY Press, 1982), pp. 34-35. A "minimalist" position is taken by Robert J. O'Connell, S.J., in *St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man* (Harvard, 1962), pp. 286-291, and *St. Augustine's Confessions* (Harvard, 1969), *passim*.
4. See, for Nous, V 2 [11], 1.
5. Cf. Wallis, pp. 126-127; also A.C. Lloyd, "The Later Neoplatonists," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A.H. Armstrong (1970), pp. 298-301. My account does not follow Lloyd completely but is taken from Iamblichus's analysis of time in the materials assembled by S. Sambursky and S. Pines, *The Concept of Time in Later Neoplatonism* (Jerusalem, 1972).
6. Wallis, p. 106, is therefore mistaken, I believe, when he sets these two forms of the noetic triad — being, life, nous and subsistence, power, nous — in parallel to abiding, procession, and reversion. There is interaction, but not parallel, as I suggest in section 2 below.
7. An exceptionally lucid and instructive presentation by Jay Bregman, "Trinity versus Quaternity in Later Neoplatonism," was presented in the working group on Platonism and Neoplatonism, annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, December 22, 1983.
8. *Metaphysics* A7, 988b5.
9. That the *energeia* of Nous involves motion, but pure motion (*kinēsis kathara*), was first pointed out by A.H. Armstrong in his 1969 Royaumont paper, "Eternity, Life, and Movement in Plotinus's Accounts of Nous," in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris, 1971), pp. 67-76. Perhaps the most dramatic text is VI 7 [38], 13, with its assertion of a noetic *planē*, "*nous en hautōi planēthentos*."
10. V 2 [11], 1, translated A.H. Armstrong, *Plotinus* (New York, 1962), p. 51.
11. "Plotinus," in the *Cambridge History*, p. 241.
12. VI 7 [38], 12, 22-26, as cited by Armstrong, *ibid.*, pp. 245-246.

13. VI 6 [34], 8, 1-2, my translation.
14. Ibid., lines 7-13, 15-22.
15. *Adv. Ar.* IB, 55, ed. M.T. Clark.
16. *Adv. Ar.* IB, 60.
17. Cf. M.T. Clark's discussion, "Introduction," pp. 13-16, especially paragraph (18).
18. *Adv. Ar.* IB, 56.
19. *The Trinity (De trinitate)*, XII 5, 5-6, 8.
20. *Civ. Dei* X 23 and 29.
21. *Conf.* VII 9, 13.
22. *Adv. Ar.* IB, 63. Compare the lines following this citation with Augustine, *Trin.* IX 4, 4-5, 8.
23. John Edward Sullivan, O.P., *The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and Its Influence* (Dubuque, Iowa: Priory Press, 1963).
24. Cf. esp. XIV, 10-19.
25. XV 19, 36.

## "Plenty Sleeps There": The Myth of Eros and Psyche in Plotinus and Gnosticism

Patricia Cox Miller

It is proper, then, that I should begin with the first and most important head, that is, God the Creator, who made the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein (whom these men blasphemously style the fruit of a defect), and to demonstrate that there is nothing either above him or after him.<sup>1</sup>

So Irenaeus begins his devastating critique of Gnostic theology, with special emphasis on its attribution of creation to a secondary God. As Rowan Greer has argued, I think persuasively, Irenaeus's theological critique is founded in the doctrine that the one God is to be defined by his creative act; he is the Maker, and all else that one might say about God flows from that primal characterization.<sup>2</sup> From Irenaeus's perspective, his opponents had deprived the One God of the very name that various Biblical texts uphold.<sup>3</sup> It is a perversion of Scripture not to realize that to say "God" is to say "Creator."<sup>4</sup>

My interest, however, is not to discuss Irenaeus's perspective, but rather to engage what I see as a — perhaps the — fundamental theological disagreement between Irenaeus and his opponents: how is God to be named, and what is at stake in that naming?

That "fox," as Irenaeus so scathingly describes the Gnostic creator of the world, is variously imagined by Gnostic texts to be an "arrogant ruler," a "blind chief," foolish Saclas, the erring Samael.<sup>5</sup> This God is the "sinister Ialdabaoth" (to use a phrase of Hans Jonas's)<sup>6</sup>; he not

only creates the world but makes the "vain claim" that he is the only God who exists, thus revealing his ignorance of the greater divine powers within whose context he actually works.<sup>7</sup>

From Irenaeus's day to the present, readers of Gnostic texts have understood these derogatory names for the Creator-God to indicate a Gnostic revulsion either against the world that was created by this God or against that God himself. On the one hand, the Gnostics are pictured as a group of people nauseated by the miseries of life in this world; their derisive characterization of the Creator of the world is really an attack on the world itself.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the Gnostic revulsion is imagined to be not so much against the created world as against the Biblical monotheistic view of God and in favor of two (or more) divine "powers"; the demotion of the Creator is really an attempt to save the upper echelons of divinity from blasphemous attributes like anger and jealousy which suggest that the Godhead is the source of evil as well as good.<sup>9</sup> These explanations of the Gnostic portrait of the Creator agree that the portrait is evidence of some sort of alienation, whether existential or theological. Further, both place that alienation in a moral context: the Gnostic depreciation of the Creator and/or his creation is most basically an attempt to draw the line between good and evil more decisively.

While I agree that the Gnostic picture of the Creator-God is evidence of a real revolt, I do not agree that the basis of the Gnostic critique is a moral one, nor do I agree with the conclusion usually drawn from that argument, namely, that Gnostic thinking is dualistic. Such explanations confine the Gnostic view of the Creator—and the creation—within the very set of assumptions that they were criticizing. The Gnostic thinkers with whom this essay is concerned, the authors of the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, and especially *On the Origin of the World*, have not simply turned Genesis on its head. Rather, they have placed it in an ontological framework whose vision of reality has forced a radical reimagining of this revered picture of God and the world.

My thesis is as follows: when Gnostic texts picture the Creator as blind, arrogant, and foolish, they are not objecting to the world that this God created, nor are they objecting to God as creator; rather, the target of their critique is the reduction of God to a single name, "Creator," and thus to a particular understanding of his creative function. From the Gnostic perspective, the name "Creator" does not exhaust divine being; indeed, to insist upon such a name as the dominant metaphor of one's theology constricts God, binding divinity to a particular model of making. Using the issue of the name "Creator" as a mode of entrée,

I propose to explore the Gnostic attitude toward the naming of God and to place that fundamental theological activity within a Plotinian context, which provides a perspective on naming more akin to Gnostic thinking than Irenaeus's perspective does.

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"Be sure that your theory of God does not lessen God."<sup>10</sup> Precisely in the context of a discussion about how to name God in relation to all else, Plotinus utters this cautionary statement. Strictly speaking, no name is appropriate to this profound reality, although, since "name it we must," Plotinus uses a variety of names, from the numerical "One" through the topological "There" to the familial "Father."<sup>11</sup> More important than any particular name, however, is one's attitude toward naming: unless one realizes that such names are radical metaphors that "sting" one into awareness of overwhelming presence, one will always be cut off from what Plotinus describes as an "erotic passion of vision known to the lover come to rest where he loves."<sup>12</sup> Names, while they are signposts on the path and thus aid one's understanding, do not constitute or in any way circumscribe that Presence: "our teaching is of the road and the travelling."<sup>13</sup>

In the group of texts under consideration here, one of the most notable features of the Creator is his "vain claim," a statement that does indeed "lessen God." After this God makes heaven, earth, and various angelic beings, he "boasts": "I do not need anything. I am god and no other one exists except me."<sup>14</sup> Precisely in the context of creation, the claim that the name "Creator" provides the only access to God's existence is shown to be an arrogant boast, a blind assertion. That assertion has immediate consequences. As the *Apocryphon of John* tells it, the Creator's jealous guarding of his exclusivity provokes, not belief, but disbelief: "But by announcing this he indicated to the angels who attended to him that there exists another God, for if there were no other one, of whom would he be jealous?" The angels are not the only figures to be disturbed. For after the boast, the mother begins to "move to and fro," repenting of the monster she has produced. As recognition of her repentance, the pleroma or fullness of heavenly powers pours holy spirit upon her and she is taken up "above her son." Finally, a voice "from the exalted aeon-heaven" announces the existence of man, who has been given "perfect, complete foreknowledge" by the "holy Mother-Father." This revelation causes the Creator and his minions to tremble and shake, for the man has

intelligence "greater than that of the chief archon."<sup>15</sup>

The structure of the consequences of the Creator's arrogant claim is much the same in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*: the claim is described as a sin "against the Entirety" or "against all of the immortal ones"<sup>16</sup>; a feminine figure (Sophia or Pistis) denounces the claim as a mistake<sup>17</sup> and the existence of the true man is revealed: "An enlightened, immortal man exists before you. This will appear within your molded bodies. He will trample upon you like potter's clay."<sup>18</sup> This latter statement is striking: turning the "potter" metaphor of creation in Genesis back upon itself, it suggests that enlightened human understanding rejects "Creator" as the presiding metaphor of theological reality and shatters the accompanying artistic or plastic model of creating. What the true man sees when he sees through the repressive dominance of "Creator" is a theological reality that is pleromatic — and organic.

The "vain claim" is a sin against "the entirety" of the immortal ones, and that claim is immediately countered by a feminine dimension of deity that is doubled (Pistis-Sophia), tripled (Pistis-Sophia-Zōē), almost endlessly multiplied.<sup>19</sup> The feminine dimension of reality not only appears, but is intensified, underscored, by its multiplied form, setting the masculine world of Ialdabaoth atremble. Accompanied by metaphors of desire, erotic ecstasy, flowing and pouring, and watery reflection, these figures carry a vision of reality that is organic rather than plastic, sexual rather than technological.

This view of theological reality, characterized as authentic human understanding, is offered in the context of the creation story. To be enlightened, in other words, involves coming to terms with metaphors of divine making. Our texts do not deny the pivotal importance of "making" as a theological metaphor; on the contrary, meditation on "making" provides the occasion for reflections on the nature of divine reality as well as on the nature of human speech about that reality. Just as, under the aegis of an explosive name, "Nous," Plotinus sees human language to be a metaphoric fullness and reality to be an assembly of "real beings,"<sup>20</sup> so these Gnostic authors, by "exploding" the name "Creator," express a pleromatic vision. The figures who compose the pleroma, like the "real beings" of Plotinus's realm of "Nous," are the metaphors of divine reality; they are the collection of signposts that dot the "road and the travelling" of human attempts to express in language the profound mystery at the heart of things.

Like Plotinus and like Irenaeus, the Gnostic texts under discussion here do arrive at names for this mystery. For the author of *On the Origin of the World*, the name of names is "the boundless one," who is

"unbegotten" and dwells in a "kingless realm."<sup>21</sup> For the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, it is the "Father of Truth," also characterized as "Incorruptibility," "Root."<sup>22</sup> Finally, there is the God of the *Apocryphon of John* who, being "illimitable," "unsearchable," "immeasurable," "invisible," and "ineffable," is not surprisingly "unnameable."<sup>23</sup> "Not one of the existing ones," this God who has no name is like Plotinus's God who plays or broods over all that is,<sup>24</sup> not incarnating meaning but presiding silently over a flow of meaning, a pleroma of names. The realm of names — the mobile world of language — is plenteous and bountiful, and when one's understanding of reality is "structured" in this way, the ineffable One is a loving and instantaneous presence everywhere.<sup>25</sup> This One is "all things and no one of them"; "seeking nothing, possessing nothing, lacking nothing," it "overflows," and what we know is what its "exuberance" has produced.<sup>26</sup>

The Gnostic pleroma is such an exuberance, and it is revealed to human understanding when exclusive focus on the plastic model of making signified by "Creator" is shown to be a restrictive view of divine making. Gnostic language about God attempts to be faithful to the Gnostic vision of reality, and this dynamic is nowhere more forcefully shown than in the erotic, profusely productive qualities of both its conception of divine making and its language about that process. It is to Eros that we now turn.

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Gnostic texts about making, which are also about the inner dynamics of the divine world, speak a poetry of the body that has few rivals in late antiquity. Expressed primarily in metaphors of desiring, love-making, and giving birth, Gnostic theological language has sensuous qualities that are striking. This did not escape Irenaeus, who at one point chooses to ridicule Valentinus's sexual vision of making with an equally organic and sensuous language, not from the human but from the vegetative world, envisioning fruit "visible, eatable, and delicious."<sup>27</sup> Valentinus's "melons" might be "delirious," but Irenaeus's choice of metaphor is revealing; he seems to have realized that Gnostic thinking about making had placed "the intercourse of Eros" at center stage.<sup>28</sup> Of course along with Eros come Psyche and Aphrodite; indeed, as Tardieu has shown, the mythic constellation of Eros and his feminine companions provided a language with which to describe cosmology and anthropology that many Hellenistic and late

antique authors used.<sup>29</sup> One of the most stunning appropriations of the sensuous imagery of the myth of Eros can be found in the Gnostic text *On the Origin of the World*, which will serve as the focal point of the present investigation of the Gnostic revision of "making."

Although *On the Origin of the World* had "companions" in the work of reimagining the creative process in terms of sexualized, feminized, and organic language, it was in this text that such language was intensified.<sup>30</sup> Pleromatic making is here carried by a group of feminine figures: Pistis, Sophia, Zōē, Pronoia, Psyche, Eve. It is tempting to view the successive appearance of these figures as a progressively articulate and ever more differentiated picture of woman, beginning with the cosmic Pistis and moving to the human Eve. However, the relationships among these figures cannot be plotted along such linear lines. Linear order is confounded in the first place by the fact that the names of these figures tend to flow together; thus in addition to Pistis, Sophia, Zōē, Pronoia, Psyche, and Eve, there are also Pistis Sophia, Sophia Zōē, and Zōē "who is called Eve."<sup>31</sup> The biological or generational notion of successive pairs of mothers and daughters does not work either, since Pistis is the source of both Sophia and Zōē, Sophia is responsible for the "patterning" of Eve, and Psyche is given no mother at all. As we will see, the "order" of making that is set in motion by these feminine figures is a pattern of repetitions, a flow of likenesses, and not a hierarchical structure of fixed entities.

It is significant that the apparently discreet figures of this feminine pleroma tend to flow together, for their stories are variations on a single motif. As Plotinus remarked, myths "must separate in time" things that fundamentally belong together because of the constraints of the narrative form of myths.<sup>32</sup> In the mythic narrative under consideration here, the diverse feminine figures belong together because they express a shared vision of the erotic foundations of creating. Impelled by desire, they are figures in travail, and their making, which is their very being, is described in terms of movement. The "first reality" is a flow,<sup>33</sup> not the work of a potter.

When making is seen from the perspective of the metaphor of the potter, it is an action of forging. The maker shapes a reality other than himself and is related to the objects that he has forged from nothing by power rather than by nature.<sup>34</sup> By contrast, our text envisions making under the banner of desire. It is the kind of desire that is set in motion when God is dead — that is, when God cannot be personified or finally characterized in understandable terms but is rather called "boundless," an unfathomable something that constantly eludes human categories and defies "objective" language that would distance the maker from what

is made. The "boundless" cannot be captured, as Plotinus remarks about the "One": but it can be imagined. Indeed, it imagines itself as it "breaks into speech," unleashing a flow of likenesses, a dynamic "middle" where maker and thing made, knower and known, come together in a bond of love.<sup>35</sup>

It is this erotic "middle" in which the vision of *On the Origin of the World* is situated:

After the nature of the immortals was completed out of the boundless one, then a likeness called "Sophia" flowed out of Pistis. (She) wished (that) a work (should) come into being which is like the light which first existed, and immediately her wish appeared as a heavenly likeness, which possessed an incomprehensible greatness, which is in the middle between the immortals and those who came into being after them, like what is above, which is a veil which separates men and those belonging to the (sphere) above.<sup>36</sup>

In this text, the "middle" is a realm of likeness that has flowed from the desire of Pistis (or Sophia; the "she" is ambiguous).<sup>37</sup> It is a "veil" that marks the paradoxical nature of the boundless one (the "acon of truth") whose inside is light and whose outside is darkness.<sup>38</sup> Pistis, Sophia, and the other feminine figures in the text are creatures of this middle realm; neither pure light nor pure darkness, they preside over the watery flowing and pouring that mark the middle. Liquid metaphors are prominent: thus Pistis "pours" light and is herself visible as a watery reflection, a floating image, and Sophia casts a "drop" of light that both floats on and patterns water.<sup>39</sup> Impelled by desire, these figures show making to be a fecund process of watery reflection in which light is poured into receptive darkness.

The "middle" is erotic. The desirous flowing of Pistis is repeated and intensified by a later feminine figure, Pronoia, and it is in the context of her flowing that Eros, who is himself an intensification of the desire of the middle, appears. In one of the many watery appearances of Pistis, a human likeness is reflected.<sup>40</sup> Pronoia falls in love with this reflection and, in her ardor, desires to embrace it but is not able to do so.<sup>41</sup> Like Pistis, whose desire for the boundless one ended, not in a captivating grasp or an embrace but rather in a flow, Pronoia who was "unable to cease her love" "poured out her light upon the earth." At this point the text itself becomes a swirl of liquid metaphors. From the moment of this pouring of light, the human likeness is called "Light-Adam," which is interpreted 'the enlightened bloody (one).' Also



at that time, all of the authorities began to honor the blood of the virgin. And the earth was purified because of the blood of the virgin. But especially the water was purified by the likeness of Pistis Sophia. . . . Moreover, with reason have they said, through the waters. Since the holy water gives life to everything, it purifies too.<sup>42</sup>

The watery flow that is the medium of reflection is now imagined as feminine blood. It is out of this blood that Eros appears.

The dynamic character of the "middle" is at this point revealed. It is Eros, love, who "appeared out of the mid-point between light and darkness" where his "intercourse" is "consummated."<sup>43</sup> The desirous making of Pistis and the other figures in the "middle" is founded in love, which, as Eros, is described as "Himeros," a "yearning" which is the "fire" of the light, and as psychic blood ("blood-Soul"). The blood of intercourse, or the flowing of organic connectedness, is what characterizes the erotic making "out of the mid-point between light and darkness."<sup>44</sup> Eros, as the ambiguous uniter of two realms, the fire and the blood, dry and humid, male and female,<sup>45</sup> is a fitting embodiment of the middle. There is, however, another figure or name for this realm, and it is revealed in the course of yet another repetition of feminine flowing.

Following the appearance of Eros there is a description of his gardens, whose plants reinforce the view of erotic movement as a "desire for intercourse" (*epithymia tēs synousias*).<sup>46</sup> This most basic desire for "being-with" is then pictured again with yet another trope on the liquid movement so characteristic of this text:

But the first Psyche loved Eros who was with her, and poured her blood upon him and upon the earth. Then from that blood the rose first sprouted upon the earth out of the thorn bush, for a joy in the light which was to appear in the bramble. After this the beautiful flowers sprouted up on the earth according to (their) kind from (the blood of) each of the virgins of the daughters of Pronoia. When they had become enamored of Eros, they poured out their blood upon him and upon the earth.<sup>47</sup>

This picture bears striking resemblances to the myth of Psyche and Eros written, in a more detailed form, by Apuleius.<sup>48</sup> The Psyche of Apuleius's tale, who desires to pour light on her unseen lover, loses him (is unable to grasp or capture him), but that moment marks the beginning of her initiation into the realm of Aphrodite, the mother of love and primal mistress of flowing waters.<sup>49</sup>

So also here, Psyche, in love with love itself, pours, and from her flow of blood comes the rose, the Aphroditic dimension of herself.

Named after the flood of perfume that pours from it (*rhodos: rhaumatis ododes*),<sup>50</sup> the rose was Aphrodite's favorite flower and was said to have been born from the drops of blood that fell from her foot when she pricked it on bramble thorns.<sup>51</sup> An unspoken presence who comes forth in this text in the "likeness" of a rose, Aphrodite is a crucial figure for the erotic "middle" where making is a flow of desire for *synousia*, connection, being-with. From the Aphroditic perspective, the picture of the "middle" is not a veil or a mid-point, but a garden full of flowers where the rose presides as a compact image of the bleeding that flows and creates.

The flowing that characterizes this text's view of making might seem to indicate that creating is an irenic process were it not for the fact that flowing is characterized as bleeding as the narrative moves on. That the flowing of Pistis becomes the pouring blood of Pronoia and Psyche is surely an indication that the image is being intensely feminized, but it also suggests that the "desire for intercourse" involves a painful giving of life's very substance. Love is a "sting," as Plotinus remarked,<sup>52</sup> and this sentiment was given graphic — even gruesome — shape in the Great Paris Magical Papyrus, where instructions for engraving an amulet (appropriately, on a magnet!) picture Aphrodite astride Psyche as on a horse, holding her hair as reins in her hands, with Eros underneath burning Psyche with a flaring brand.<sup>53</sup> Aphrodite "rides" on the erotic yearnings of the soul, just as love "stands under" or gives the foundation for the Aphroditic dimension of psychic reality.

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That there is ■ flow at the heart of things, rather than a creator set over against a thing created, seems to be the guiding insight of *On the Origin of the World*. The love of "being-with," the desire to connect — the dynamic which is the "middle" — provides the basis for all distinction. The essence of making, in other words, is loving. This text, as its modern title aptly says, is concerned with origins. Where do things come from? However, as I have tried to show, by attacking the model of making signified by the name "Creator," this text implies that the question of origins is not to be phrased as above, "where do things come from?" The question of origin is rather a question of the dynamic that empowers the coming-to-be of all things. By rejecting the dichotomy of creator and creation, *On the Origin of the World* has revisioned the question of origins. The insight that underlines this revision is, it seems to me, a Plotinian one; or, better, it is a perspective

on the issue of origins that informs both the Gnostic text and Plotinus, and I would like to move now to a brief consideration of Plotinus's thoughts on this topic.

Generally more discursive than his poetic Gnostic counterpart, Plotinus poses the problem directly: "But this Unoriginating, what is it?"<sup>54</sup> What is this principle, best defined as "undefinable,"<sup>55</sup> which we imagine as father and source of all?

The difficulty this Principle presents to our mind in so far as we can approach to conception of it may be exhibited thus: We begin by posing space, a place, a Chaos; into this container, whether conceived in our imagination as created or pre-existent, we introduce God and proceed to inquire: we ask, for example, whence and how He comes to be there; we investigate the presence and quality of this newcomer projected into the midst of things here from some height or depth. But the difficulty disappears if we eliminate all space before we attempt to conceive God.<sup>56</sup>

As Plotinus continues his discussion in this passage, he develops a whole catalogue of terms that may not be used in conceiving of this Principle: space, environment, limit, extension, quality, shape, all these lead to erroneous ways of imagining the source. God is not a Being among other beings, nor the Thing of things, but rather their wellspring.<sup>57</sup> Our problem seems to be that we place God within an objective category or frame and then posit God as the "subject" of that object; such a procedure is dualistic from the start and opposes maker to thing made.<sup>58</sup> We should rather conceive of this principle "sheerly as maker; the making must be taken as absolved from all else; *no new existence is established*; the Act here is not directed to an achievement but is God Himself unalloyed: here is no duality but pure unity."<sup>59</sup> This is an outright rejection of the view of origin that understands the maker in terms of a making of things. From Plotinus's perspective, making "is not directed to an achievement"; making is the very being of God, but it is not to be understood in terms of objects.<sup>60</sup>

What, then, is this "origin"? It is, says Plotinus, "the productive power of all things" (*dynamis ton panton*)<sup>61</sup>; it is the active force present to all things that enables them to witness the spectacle of their own unity, their own self-gathered center.<sup>62</sup> The principle in which "all centers coincide," the "Supreme" contains no otherness; indeed, it might be described as absolute connectedness: "Thus the Supreme as containing no otherness is ever present with us; we with it when we put otherness away."<sup>63</sup> Experienced by the soul as a drunken revel of love, this dynamic "origin" is what makes of desirer and desired, seer

and object seen, one: "Here is no duality but a two in one; for, so long as the presence holds, all distinction fades; it is as lover and beloved here, in a copy of that union, long to blend."<sup>64</sup> The One is an "allurer,"<sup>65</sup> and its magic is manifested in the experience of the "two in one," the relatedness that allows things to be what they are.

The One is love,<sup>66</sup> and the soul that experiences the relatedness described above becomes love itself.<sup>67</sup> John Rist has argued convincingly the possibility that "Plotinus regarded *Erōs* as an all-embracing term" and has noted what he calls Plotinus's deliberate use of sexual metaphors to describe the relationship between God and the soul.<sup>68</sup>

There are indeed many erotic metaphors in Plotinus's discussions of the dynamic of the One, but what is specially striking in our context is the feminized character of Plotinus's erotic language. In the course of one of his discussions of "the making principle," Plotinus stops to question what he has been doing as an interpreter. As though reading over what he has just written, he asks:

May we stop, content with that? No: the soul is yet, and even more, in pain. Is she ripe, perhaps, to bring forth, now that in her pangs she has come so close to what she seeks? No: we must call upon yet another spell if anywhere the assuagement is to be found. Perhaps in what has already been uttered, there lies the charm if only we tell it over often? No: we need a new, a further incantation.<sup>69</sup>

Here is a picture of the interpreter himself as a woman in travail, laboring to find a language appropriate to that "love-passion of vision"<sup>70</sup> that he is trying to express. The problem is that the experience of the One as love takes the interpreter beyond discursive knowing and writing: "The vision baffles telling; we cannot detach the Supreme to state it."<sup>71</sup> The interpreter must remember that his teaching is "peregrination"; it is "of the road and the travelling," and to forget that is to make of Love itself a "common story."<sup>72</sup>

Given this perspective on the travelling nature of language,<sup>73</sup> it seems fitting that, when Plotinus names what the soul always is, he turns to a feminine image. That the soul's "good" is with the One

is shown by the very love inborn with the soul; hence the constant linking of the Love-God with the Psyche in story and picture; the soul, other than God but sprung of Him, must needs love. So long as it is There, it holds the heavenly love; here its love is the baser; There the soul is Aphrodite of the heavens; here, turned harlot, Aphrodite of the public ways; yet the soul

is always an Aphrodite. This is the intention of the myth which tells of Aphrodite's birth and Eros horn with her.<sup>74</sup>

As in *On the Origin of the World*, Aphrodite appears as image of the soul in love with love, and it is again an agonized picture.

When Plotinus discusses love directly in a treatise devoted exclusively to that topic, he does so in terms of the myth of Eros, Psyche, and Aphrodite. What is significant here for the purpose of the present discussion is that the doubled Aphrodite gives birth to, and presides over, a view of loving that is remarkably similar to the perspective that guides the feminine flowing of *On the Origin of the World*. The first Aphrodite that Plotinus presents is shown as a figure directing her energy toward and feeling affinity with her source. "Filled with passionate love for him," she brings forth love. "Her activity has made a real substance," says Plotinus, and he goes on to describe that love as "a kind of intermediary between desiring and desired."<sup>75</sup> The second Aphrodite is she whose birthday party provides the occasion for another story about the birth of love. The scene is a garden in which Poverty and Plenty make love and give birth to an Eros marked by a simultaneous fullness and emptiness.<sup>76</sup>

In both of these pictures of the loving of the Aphroditic soul, Plotinus emphasizes the dynamic and productive qualities of loving. To be in love is to make, and the making is founded in achieving an experience of connectedness, of the "two in one" that is the flow between desiring and desired. There is, of course, an agony here. The "sting" of love is that "he is ■ mixed thing, having a part of need, in that he wishes to be filled, but not without a share of plenitude, in that he seeks what is wanting to that which he already has."<sup>77</sup> The loving soul is like the interpreter who cannot rest content with a single telling lest he profane the mystery by pretending to have "grasped" what is not "graspable." Like the feminine figures of *On the Origin of the World*, he is condemned to repetition; he must be alive to the Poverty of his Plenty. Yet that awareness makes of his vision a continuous flow which is both source and substance of all making.

That making is a loving that sees through dichotomous structures is the perspective that links the work of Plotinus and our Gnostic author. Creation is not, in this view, a single event that establishes distance between maker and thing made but rather a continuous process of the birth of the boundless One in the soul, and the erotic, sexual imagery of both texts serves, I think, to underscore this point. There is an Aphroditic rose blooming in these gardens.

## NOTES

1. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.1.1.
2. Rowan Greer, "The Dog and the Mushrooms: Irenaeus's View of the Valentinians Assessed," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. I: *Valentinian Gnosticism*, ed. by Bentley Layton (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), pp. 140, 155-160, 167.
3. See especially *Haer.* 2.2.5.
4. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.8.10.
5. A catalogue of these names collected from the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *On the Origin of the World*, the *Apocryphon of John*, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* can be found in a convenient collection in Nils A. Dahl, "The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia: Jewish Traditions in Gnostic Revolt," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. II: *Sethian Gnosticism*, ed. by Bentley Layton (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), pp. 693-694.
6. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 2nd ed. rev. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 193.
7. For a detailed discussion of the "vain claim," see Dahl, "The Arrogant Archon," pp. 692-701.
8. This is the thesis that guides the interpretation of Hans Jonas in *The Gnostic Religion*; see, more recently, Jonas's article, "Delimitation of the Gnostic Phenomenon — Typological and Historical," in *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo*, ed. by Ugo Bianchi (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), p. 96: "This figure of an imperfect, blind, or evil creator is ■ gnostic symbol of the first order. In his general conception he reflects the gnostic contempt for the world. . . ." See also Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, ed. by Robert McLachlan Wilson (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), pp. 67-84.
9. See Dahl, "The Arrogant Archon," and Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977).
10. Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.8(39).21. For *Enneads* 4 through 6, I have used the translation of Stephen MacKenna, *Plotinus: The Enneads*, 4th ed. rev. by B.S. Page (London: Faber and Faber, 1962). For the passage cited here, however, I have used MacKenna's original translation of 6.8.21, 28 rather than Page's revised translation, since I think it captures the sense of the whole passage more faithfully.
11. On the issue of the inappropriateness of names, see *Enn.* 6.9(9).5 and *Enn.* 5.3(49).14.
12. *Enn.* 6.9(9).4; true expression is, as Plotinus says in 5.5(32).6, an "agony," and "we name, only to indicate for our own use as best we may." Strictly speaking, "we should put neither a This nor a That to it; we hover, as it were, about it, seeking the statement of an experience of our own, sometimes nearing this Reality, sometimes baffled by the enigma in which it dwells" (6.9(9).3). Yet at the same time, the soul "breaking into speech" carries "sounds which labor to express the essential nature of the being produced by the travail of the utterer and so to represent, as far as sounds may, the origin of reality" (5.5(32).5). The point is that we must

- be "in collusion with" language, "everywhere reading 'so to speak,'" that is, reading all words as metaphors (see 6.8(39).13: *sūnchōreō*, which MacKenna translates as "have patience with," has a range of meanings including to "defer," "concede," "be in collusion with," "connive at").
13. *Enn.* 6.9(9).4.
  14. *NHC* II, 5, 103 (*On the Origin of the World*). I have used *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, dir. by James M. Robinson (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), for all quotations from Gnostic texts.
  15. *NHC* II, 1, 13-15 (*Apocryphon of John*).
  16. *NHC* II, 4, 86 (*Hypostasis of the Archons*); *NHC* II, 5, 103 (*OrgWrd*).
  17. *NHC* II, 4, 87 (*HypArc*); *NIIC* II, 5, 103 (*OrgWrd*).
  18. *NHC* II, 5, 103 (*OrgWrd*).
  19. See especially the multiple feminine figures in *NHC* II, 5 (*OrgWrd*).
  20. See Plotinus's comments on dialectic, which is the language and mode of thinking appropriate to *nous*: "It is not just bare theories and rules; it deals with things and has real beings as a kind of material for its activity" (*Enn.* 1.3[20].5). For descriptions of the realm of *nous* see, among others, *Enn.* 5.8(31) and the helpful discussions by Richard T. Walls, "NOUS as Experience," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. by R. Baine Harris (Norfolk, Virginia: Old Dominion University Research Foundation, 1976), pp. 121-153, and by A.H. Armstrong, "Form, Individual, and Person in Plotinus," *Dionysius* I (Dec., 1977): 49-68.
  21. *NHC* II, 5, 98 and 127 (*OrgWrd*).
  22. *NHC* II, 4, 86, 87, and 93 (*HypArc*).
  23. *NHC* II, 1, 3 (*Apocryphn*).
  24. *Enn.* 1.1(53).8, where the verb *epocheomai* carries the meanings "ride upon," "float upon," "brood," "hover," "play upon." For *Enneads* 1 through 3, I have used the translation of A.H. Armstrong, *Plotinus* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966-1967), 3 vols.
  25. *Enn.* 5.5(32).11.
  26. *Enn.* 5.3(49).1.
  27. Irenaeus, *Haer.* I.11.4.
  28. *NIIC* II, 5, 109 (*OrgWrd*).
  29. Michel Tardieu, *Trois Mythes Gnostiques: Adam, Éros et les animaux d'Égypte dans un écrit de Nag Hammadi (II, 5)* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1974), pp. 141-214, especially pp. 146-148.
  30. On Gnostic use of "biological" metaphors, see PHEME PERKINS, "On The Origin of the World (CG II, 5): A Gnostic Physics," *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (March 1980): 36-46, especially 37-38.
  31. *NHC* II, 5, 100, 113, and 115 (*OrgWrd*).
  32. *Enn.* 3.5(50).9.
  33. *NHC* II, 5, 98 (*OrgWrd*). For an understanding of "first work" as first "reality," see Tardieu, *Trois Mythes Gnostiques*, p. 56.

34. In "The Dog and the Mushrooms," Greer has shown that Irenaeus, arguing on behalf of the Creator, insists that the relationship between God and creation is based on knowledge, not on a community of nature between the two. "The gnostic understanding that God and the universe (at least the spiritual seeds in it) are related by nature but not by knowledge is contrasted with the orthodox view that the relation is one not of nature but of knowledge" (p. 161).
35. On the One breaking into speech, see *Enn.* 5.5(32).5; on the One and love, see *Enn.* 6.8(39).
36. *NHC* II, 5, 98 (*OrgWrd*).
37. See the comments by Tardieu, *Trois Mythes Gnostiques*, pp. 57-58, on the ambiguity of Sophia.
38. *NHC* II, 5, 98 (*OrgWrd*).
39. *NHC* II, 5, 100, 104, 111 (*OrgWrd*).
40. *NHC* II, 5, 107-108 (*OrgWrd*).
41. *NHC* II, 5, 108 (*OrgWrd*).
42. *NIIC* II, 5, 108 (*OrgWrd*).
43. *NHC* II, 5, 109 (*OrgWrd*).
44. *NIIC* II, 5, 109 (*OrgWrd*).
45. See the comments of Tardieu, *Trois Mythes Gnostiques*, pp. 163-174, on Eros and his ambiguous, doubled functions and powers. From Tardieu's perspective, Eros is marked by "sa duplicité fondamentale" (p. 174).
46. See Tardieu, *Trois Mythes Gnostiques*, pp. 207-208.
47. *NHC* II, 5, 111 (*OrgWrd*).
48. See Tardieu, *Trois Mythes Gnostiques*, pp. 146-148.
49. For valuable discussions of Aphrodite, see Geoffrey Grigson, *The Goddess of Love* (London: Constable, 1976), and Paul Friedrich, *The Meaning of Aphrodite* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
50. See Marcel Detienne, *Dionysus Slain*, trans. by Mireille Muellner and Leonard Muellner (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 50.
51. See Charles Joret, *La Rose dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Age* (Paris: Émile Bouillon, 1892), pp. 47-50.
52. *Enn.* 3.5(50).7.
53. *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, ed. by Karl Preisendanz, 2nd ed. rev. by Albert Henrichs (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1973), Vol. I, P IV, lines 1718-1745 (p. 126).
54. *Enn.* 6.8(39).11.
55. *Enn.* 5.5(32).6.
56. *Enn.* 6.8(39).11.
57. *Enn.* 6.9(9).9 and 5.3(49).11.
58. See *Enn.* 6.8(39).13 and 6.8(39).20.
59. *Enn.* 6.8(39).20; italics added.

60. See the very astute discussion of this issue in Plotinus by Dominic J. O'Meara, "Gnosticism and the Making of the World in Plotinus," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. by Bentley Layton (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), Vol. I: *Valentinian Gnosticism*, pp. 365-378.
61. *Enn.* 3.8(30).10.
62. *Enn.* 3.8(30).10: oneness; 6.9(9).8: centering.
63. *Enn.* 6.9(9).8.
64. *Enn.* 6.7(38).34-35.
65. *Enn.* 6.6(34).18.
66. *Enn.* 6.8(39).15.
67. *Enn.* 6.7(38).22.
68. John Rist, *Eros and Psyche: Studies in Plato, Plotinus, and Origen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), pp. 78-79, 99.
69. *Enn.* 5.3(49).17.
70. *Enn.* 6.9(9).4.
71. *Enn.* 6.9(9).10.
72. *Enn.* 5.3(49).17: peregrination; 6.9(9).4: the travelling; 6.9(9).11: the common story.
73. See *Enn.* 5.5(32).5.
74. *Enn.* 6.9(9).9.
75. *Enn.* 3.5(50).2.
76. *Enn.* 3.5(50).6-8.
77. *Enn.* 3.5(50).9.

## "The Name of the Father is the Son" (Gospel of Truth 38)

Raoul Mortley

These striking words have aroused the interest of many, and there has been much effort expended on providing a background or context for them.<sup>\*</sup> It is the intention of this paper to press for Philo as a probably stimulus for much of what is said in the Gospel of Truth, and to offer a reconstruction of the philosophy underlying the words "The name of the Father is the Son." There seems to be no doubt about the translation of these words from the Coptic: all translators agree, though their commentaries may differ.<sup>1</sup> The Coptic text at this point makes use of the word *ren*, which is generally agreed to be the equivalent of the Greek *onoma*.

Attempts to explain the statement have varied. On the other hand the literary critics offer views formed by the application of a particular hermeneutic: Standaert seeks to lay bare the structure of the text, by pointing out the use of repetitions, and by analyzing the rhetorical forms deployed by the author.<sup>2</sup> Fineman uses a Lacanian hermeneutic to disclose the dynamics of the metaphors used, in response to the Freudian picture of father/son relations.<sup>3</sup> On the other side, the methods traditional to scholars of antiquity have been pursued, through the finding of parallels and verbal reminiscences. The general tendency has been to situate The Gospel of Truth in the Valentinian tradition,

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<sup>\*</sup> I owe particular thanks for her highly valued work in the preparation of this paper to my research assistant, Anne Stark.

and it has even been supposed that Valentinus himself was the author.<sup>4</sup> There are undoubted affinities between the philosophical concerns of the Valentinian School and those of The Gospel of Truth: the emphasis on the incomprehensibility of the Father, on error and ignorance in the constitution of reality, on the dependence of all reality on the Father, on the relation between knowing and being, on the Pleroma, and on self-knowledge as the route to knowledge of the All. But the central theme of the Gospel of Truth is not particularly associated with Valentinianism: its philosophy of names is of crucial importance in the development of the Gospel, which is not so much about truth as its title would appear to indicate. Its theme is really the relationship between naming and being, and here it strikes an original note in the history of Christian philosophy. Apart from the novelty of this theme, other concerns may cause us to doubt the alignment with the Valentinian school. First, the Gospel has no mythical content: the saga of Sophia, or of the aeons, or of Jesus himself,<sup>5</sup> is absent. The Gospel is entirely conceptual. Second, the role of Jesus Christ is closer to center stage: God the Father and God the Son are the key figures in the Gospel, whereas in Valentinian thought Jesus Christ tends to become one of a whole series of performers. To this extent the Gospel is somewhat closer to orthodoxy than is Valentinian Gnosticism. A further remark which can be made is that it is unlike other Gnostic gospels, in that it does not feature the *teachings* of Jesus. It resembles them in that it does not focus on the deeds and the general historical enactment of the incarnation — the Gnostic gospels are more interested in teachings than the acts carried out on the stage of history — but it differs in that it offers a theological exposition of God and the Son, rather than attributing certain teachings to Jesus himself. However, it should be noted that Tardieu's addendum differs on this, in that he allows for the possibility of a Valentinianism, which developed markedly different perspectives from those of its founder.

The problem of how to affiliate the Gospel of Truth is, in the view of the present author, completely open. Clearly what we do with Irenaeus's evidence is crucial here: Irenaeus says that the Gospel of Truth was Valentinian, and that it was produced "not long ago."<sup>6</sup> I take this as meaning not long before the time of writing, and therefore the Gospel could be dated to some time in the 170s.<sup>7</sup> It seems pretty hard to resist the conclusion that Irenaeus is referring to the Nag Hammadi Gospel of Truth: if there were several Gospels of Truth, somebody would surely have said so. However one cannot help sensing that there is more to it than a simple identification of the Irenaeus reference with the fortuitous discovery of that part of the Nag Hammadi

corpus. Perhaps there was an original Gospel of Truth, as known and referred to by Irenaeus, but subject to evolution, perhaps through repeated redactions. That Gnostic documents should evolve would seem to be consistent with the Gnostic taste for innovation, and with the Gnostic depreciation of authority and historical authentication. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, very quickly acquired a belief that the exact texts should be preserved for posterity. We should therefore allow for the shifting character of Gnostic texts, and this is probably a neglected principle, particularly by those who seek information about the very early form of Christianity from the Gnostic Gospels. In my view, the Nag Hammadi corpus should be taken as a collage of documents, with pieces dating from the second to the sixth century. We should suspect a variety of interpolations, and the study of late Platonism and later Arian philosophy will help pinpoint some of these.

It is the suspicion of the present writer that part of the Gospel of Truth, at least in the form as given in the Nag Hammadi corpus, might be quite late. It could belong to the Arian period: the statement "The name of the Father is the Son" looks like a sophisticated entry into the Trinitarian debate, an attempt to say the ultimately paradoxical thing, that God is both identical with, and different from, the Son. In other words, the Gospel of Truth is reacting to the philosophical problems generated by the Trinitarian debate. Now these problems were not clearly perceived until the impact of Arius was felt, and he lived from 250-336 approximately. Though Clement of Alexandria and Justin had a hand in creating the problems of subordinationism,<sup>8</sup> neither of them perceived them in the manner of people who lived after Arius. The author of the Gospel of Truth, or at least of the version we have now, seems to perceive the problem, and to offer a harmonizing solution, since the Son is seen to share in the identity of the Father by being his name (not *having* his name, but *being* it). The Arian Eunomius, *bête noire* of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, discusses names over and over again in his Apology.<sup>9</sup> He lived roughly from 340-396, and opposed the idea of likeness between the Father and Son: he saw the question of naming and being as crucial, and chose to give the Father a negative name, "the ingenerate" (*agennētos*). Eunomius bases his whole case for dissimilitude on the separateness of names:

For similarity of being compels those, who hold this opinion about them, to name them with the same nouns.<sup>10</sup>

Different names imply difference in being: this is Eunomius's principle, repeatedly advanced in his Apology.<sup>11</sup> Now we are closer to the milieu

of the Gospel of Truth; the philosophy of names occupies the same prominence, and the same concern to handle the problem of the Trinity through this approach is present. Perhaps the author of the Gospel even agrees with Eunomius's principle, whether he knew it from him or someone else, since with a bold stroke he solves the problem. There is no difference in names, but one *is* the name of the other. Christ is an *onoma*, a noun: his being is not material, or historical, but semantic.

Let us now, having attempted to situate the problematic of the Gospel more exactly, return to the substance of the philosophy involved. Many scholars have attempted to find a context for the Gospel by exploring the name terminology. The commentary by Malinine et al.<sup>12</sup> refers to Clement of Alexandria's *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 26.1, and 31.4: the first of these identifies the name with the Son, and adds that this name is invisible. (The invisibility of the name is found in the Gospel of Truth 38.17.) The second passage identifies the name and the Son, but adds that He is the "shape of the aeons."<sup>13</sup> These parallels are two of the closest to have been adduced so far, despite the years of research which have passed since 1956, the date of the Malinine/Puech/Quispel commentary. Other attempts at parallels have been looser: those of the Puech/Quispel/Van Unnik work are limited to the New Testament. The expression *onoma kainon* is adduced,<sup>14</sup> and in relation to Gospel 38.10 (. . . he begot him as a son. He gave him his name which belonged to him . . .), they cite Luke 3.22 (ὁ υἱός μου ἐγὼ οὐ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε). Giversen<sup>15</sup> takes up a hint of Van Unnik to explore the Epistle to the Hebrews as a possible background, but the identification of Father and Son is one case which cannot be shown to have a precedent in the Epistle to the Hebrews:<sup>16</sup> Giversen however cites some Jewish sources which bear on the name as an independent hypostasis of God,<sup>17</sup> and believes that the name theory of the Gospel must derive from an interpretation of Hebrews 1, 1-5. Giversen also describes what appears to be a rejection by the Gospel of certain claims made in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and indeed the phenomenon of negative parallels, or parallels which correct or revise existing tradition, would seem to be characteristic of Gnosticism. Ménard's commentary<sup>18</sup> claims that the theology of the name is based on Judaeo-Christian sources, as well as on Talmudic Judaism, referring to Daniélou,<sup>19</sup> and sees some expression of this Judaeo-Christian tradition in the Shepherd of Hermas. These passages, however, simply refer to the "name of the Lord" in a common-or-garden way.<sup>20</sup> Arai<sup>21</sup> refers to the view of Quispel, enunciated in "The Jung Codex,"<sup>22</sup> that there may be here a play on words involving the meaning of Jahweh, but also to the texts of Clement mentioned above,<sup>23</sup> to the Pistis Sophia CA 12, 11 and to

various Jewish apocryphal sources. Lastly, J.D. Dubois<sup>24</sup> has carried out detailed study of the background through a review of Ménard's work, and in particular of the differences between his 1962 and 1972 editions of the Gospel of Truth.<sup>25</sup> Dubois emphasizes the early date of the Gospel, aligning it with Justin, or the Shepherd of Hermas, and this of course runs counter to the suggestion of the present article, at least in some respects. His inquiry into the background of the name theology is exhaustive, and covers virtually every lead possible.

One difficulty with tracing the pedigree of the name theology is that almost every religious culture of the day attached some mysterious significance to names. Even Rome had a secret name, which could not be divulged except at secret ceremonies.<sup>26</sup> Virtually every superstition or religion which graced the Roman Empire probably had some interest in the power of names, and in discovering the real precedents for the Gospel of Truth, we must try to limit the field somehow. It is useless to repeat here the list of possibilities compiled so thoroughly by Dubois, but it should be noted that the works of Quispel<sup>27</sup> and Daniélou,<sup>28</sup> discussed by him, gave the study of the issue a great deal of impetus in their day. But one thing is crucial here, against which the validity of all parallels must be tested: it is the principle of the identification of the being of the Son with the name of the Father. That the name of Jesus should have some significance is scarcely surprising. That it should have come to acquire some magical properties is in no way astounding; indeed it would have been more surprising if it had not. The Judaeo-Christian background shows how this developed, but this is not important. What is important is the identification, Name of Father = Son, and the thought that a being can be a name for someone else. There is here a real conceptual leap, which is not explained by any of the parallels which limit the name to the sphere of the Son, and to Christological explorations. Quispel is probably on the right track when he develops the theme of the unpronounceable name, Shem Hammephorash, of Jewish mysticism.<sup>29</sup> But we really need here is an unspeakable God, unknowable except through the Son, and the unpronounceable name of Judaism does not only refer to the highest principle. The problem being dealt with by the Gospel of Truth is much more akin to the Arian problem of the remote transcendent Father, coupled with the visible and knowable Son. And the Gospel uses the seemingly unusual idea of the name as existent, as having an ontic status of its own.

On this basis, we should pursue the issue not through the Christological development of Jewish name theology, but rather through the study of Father/Name connections. A passage of Philo<sup>30</sup> provides

a real precedent: in the Confusion of Tongues 145ff., Philo is discussing God in a Middle-Platonist vein, with much use of Platonic vocabulary.<sup>31</sup> Philo then refers to the intermediary principle, the Logos, who is an agent of meaning and reason in the world:

And many names belong to [the Logos]: for he is called . . . the Name of God . . . and the Man after his image.<sup>32</sup>

Substitute "the Son" for "the Logos" and the precedent for the Gospel of Truth is clear. It is clearer still when we reflect on Philo's understanding of the Logos: it is the "most senior" image of God,<sup>33</sup> and gives meaning to things, much like the Stoic *logos spermatikos*.<sup>34</sup> That the principle of reason and meaning should be called a "name" for someone else is at least comprehensible. Plato's intermediary is not a person but an hypostasis, and so it can more easily embrace abstract ideas. The logos/name identification can be readily understood, and it is the addition of Jesus Christ to the logos theme which leads to the Gospel of Truth name theology.

This is not a chance reference. There is as strong a philosophy of names in Philo as there is in the Gospel of Truth. In Philo there is an actiology of names: Adam is said to provide them for all creatures, as one of his tasks. Philo is aware of the Cratylus discussion of the value of names, but seems to believe that names are natural, or that they necessarily belong to the things of which they are labels. One passage suggests that if one knows the nature of things, one will be able to give them the right names.<sup>35</sup> Philo also practices the science (or the art) of etymology,<sup>36</sup> in the hope of finding truths about nature from the dissection of words into pseudo-derivations: he is not alone in this, since many of the late Greek thinkers toy with words in this manner, despite the elaborate jokes played on etymology in Plato's Cratylus.

The initial names were given by God himself,<sup>37</sup> but after the creation of day and night comes the creation of life. With the creation of Adam, the task of assigning names is given over to him.<sup>38</sup> He carries out this task as far as he is able, but when he comes to himself, he falls silent. Why is Adam unable to name himself? Philo gives the following answer:

And it must be asked why, when assigning names to all other creatures Adam did not assign one to himself. What can be said? The mind (*nous*) which is in each of us is capable of apprehending other objects, but is incapable of knowing itself. . . . It is likely, then, that Adam, that is the Mind

(*nous*), though he names and apprehends other things, gives no name to himself, since he is ignorant of himself and his own nature.<sup>39</sup>

Naming and knowledge are thus intimately related. Philo does not believe in the self-thought of Thought (*noësis noëseōs*) at least on the human level. Such reflexiveness is impossible, and so self-naming is impossible. There is no doubt a reflection here on the ordinary human experience of name-giving: a child receives a name from its parents, and does not name itself. One receives one's name from that which is ontologically prior. Adam is the antecedent for the whole human race, but he must be named by his own antecedent, God himself. God only knows himself, and so he only can offer a name for himself. All this gives meaning to Philo's claim that the Logos is the name of God: it is his self-expression. It is an entity, an hypostasis, a thing, but also a semantic entity. It is a thing which signifies.

This line of thought is quite close to the Gospel of Truth. There is an intimate relationship between knowledge and naming in the Gospel: The Father knows, gives form, and names in that order (27). But in the Gospel there is the variation that by receiving a name from God, one ceases to be ignorant: that is, by being known, one knows (21). If one receives a name (from above), one knows whence one comes, and whither one is going (22). But again, as in Philo, names reveal nature, and they have a real rather than conventional meaning.

The culmination of this development comes with section 38. In 39 the Philonic principle seems to be reiterated: "He gave a name to himself since he sees himself, he alone having the power to give himself a name."<sup>40</sup> The relationship of knowledge, being, and naming is preserved throughout this passage, aided and abetted by the Philonic identification of the *logos* as God's *onoma*.

Now the name of the Father is the Son. It is he who first gave a name to the one who came forth from him, who was himself, and he begot him as a son. He gave him his name which belonged to him; he is the one to whom belongs all that exists around him, the Father. His is the name; his is the Son. It is possible for him to be seen. But the name is invisible because it alone is the mystery of the invisible which comes to ears that are completely filled with it. For indeed the Father's name is not spoken, but it is apparent through a Son.<sup>41</sup>

One comparison with the last sentence is irresistible: that with Wittgenstein, who also believes in the category of that which is shown, but which is inexpressible:



There are, indeed, things which cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest* (*Dies zeigt sich*). They are what is mystical.<sup>42</sup>

But the oddity of the Gospel of Truth position is that this manifestation of the inexpressible is also a name, which is, on the face of it, an expressible entity. Nevertheless the author grasps the contradictions necessary to the maintenance of this view: God has a name, which is not spoken; this name is visible, but it is not seen. (We may compare the Gospel's "sons of the name" to Philo's "sons of the most holy logos."<sup>43</sup>) The contradictions here seem to be deliberate, and this technique is not foreign to the Gnostic writings in general. The Gnostics are not great devotees of the law of the excluded middle, since they deliberately use contradictions.

The closest Gnostic parallel to this theorizing may well be the passage of the *Tripartite Tractate* which refers to the aeons as names: they are said to "be" names, rather than have them.<sup>44</sup> The aeons are all emanations of the Father, as well as names, and their existence makes speech possible. This passage also shows a tendency to reify the semantic, to make being itself significant.

Thus the background in Philo seems to provide some elements of the philosophical substance of the Gospel passage. This must be said. But we need not conclude that this is the only proximate text, nor that the Gospel passage is early by virtue of the link with Philo.

Philo's influence was not limited to his century, nor to the second century. His thought was one of the major ingredients in the development of Christian philosophy, and cannot be contained in the early sphere of Christian development (see note 46). Indeed Gregory of Nyssa asserts that Eunomius borrowed from Philo (*contra Eun.* III, 8 Jaeger), and so the apparent link with Philo need not detain us in the second century.

For the fact is that the Arian controversy of Eunomius's time (i.e. the fourth and fifth centuries) provides an even more closely related context for this passage of the Gospel of Truth. We have already quoted from Eunomius on the importance of names. But further, Eunomius makes the crucial step of assimilating names with being: that is, he regards certain specific names as existents. Names and being are identified, and the tendency to objectify language is the crucial part of our search, since this is what enables the Gospel of Truth to say that the Son is the "name-entity" of the Father. Scholars often find this part of Eunomius baffling, and the Gospel of Truth causes the same puzzlement, for the same reason: language is given ontic status.

Gregory of Nyssa, in attacking Eunomius, could almost be attacking the Gospel of Truth:

\*For being is not the same thing as being uttered. (οὐ γὰρ παντὸν ἔστι τῷ εἶναι τὸ λέγεσθαι) (*Contra Eun.* II, 161 Jaeger.)

Or alternatively:

God is not an utterance, nor does his existence consist in being voiced or uttered. (οὐ γὰρ ῥῆμα ὁ θεὸς οἷδε φωνῇ καὶ φθόγγῳ ἔχει τὸ εἶναι) (*Contra Eun.* II, 148 Jaeger)

Gregory is of course attacking Eunomius, but his point is that language and being have been confused, and that there is a tendency to assimilate the linguistic with the ontological. His attack could equally well apply to this passage of the Gospel of Truth. Names do not have existence (*hypostasin echei*), says Gregory (*Contra Eun.* II, 589).

My claim is then, that our passage of the Gospel of Truth belongs to this particular context of debate, and that it has drawn its inspiration from the same source which influenced Eunomius, and against which Gregory reacted at such length. Without this background, in which names can be said to "be," it is almost impossible to understand the Gospel of Truth, at least in this passage.

Where does all this come from? We may consider the "divine names" of the Pseudo-Dionysius, those names which are statues (*agalmata*) before the contemplating mind (PG 3, 909B), and work back from here. The tradition that certain specific names have a privileged status, and that they exist as beings to the contemplative mind, can be traced back to Proclus.<sup>45</sup> For Proclus certain names are products of the divine procession: they are strewn across the real as *ichnē* (traces) of the divine (*On the Cratylus*, ed. Pasquali, pp. 29-35). In these pages Proclus provides an archaeology of names of all types (p. 34), and claims that conceiving and naming the gods is the same thing (p. 33). But the essential is the passage which suggests that names are part of transcendent being (τον . . . ἰδρυμένων οὐνόματων, p. 29; names are ἔχοντες and συνθήματα, p. 30). For Proclus, names exist like forms: they fix the mind, and guarantee language. Proclus's word may not be made flesh, but it is at least reified.

Thus Proclus, though later, provides evidence of an interest in name-beings. It is probably that the Neoplatonist sources of Actius and Eunomius already contained material of this kind, and that they also had some influence on Gnostic speculation. This interest in the

ontology of names is probably associated with a revival of interest in both Plato's *Cratylus*, and in some circles with a recovery of certain of Philo's ideas.

It is suggested therefore, that Aetius and Eunomius were receptive of Neoplatonic influences, or Philonic influences, or both, on the subject of the ontological basis of certain privileged names. It is further suggested that the Gospel of Truth passage about the name of the Father can only be explained in terms of such a context as this: it is probably that it represents an interpolation intended to address this new phase of the Trinitarian debate.

On grounds provided by intellectual history, therefore, the "name of the Father" passage appears to be a late addition to an early text. The onus is on those who believe this passage to be early to offer an "*explication de texte*" in philosophical terms, which allows us to understand its meaning. The adducing of loose parallels simply leaves it in limbo, an enigma to the reader. The philosophical substance needs to be drawn out of this text, in order for it to articulate clearly.

It is not, of course, the first time that Trinitarian philosophy has been perceived in a Gnostic text. In relation to *The Three Steles of Seth*, Tardieu comments on the triadic structure of the divinity in that writing:

... it can be said that the modalism of the monad-triad notion in the three steles of Seth contains in raw form some of the conceptual matter of the Arian crisis, which found its birth in Egypt, the land of the Gnostics, and which was in full cry when Codex VII was being written and bound...<sup>46</sup>

In conclusion. The philosophy of names in the Gospel of Truth begins with a familiar model: the family experience. Fathers give sons their names: in this way they create them, and give them something of their own identity. Names do create dynasties, traditions and realities, where there was previously nothing. They bring about being. The Gospel now proceeds, in a manoeuvre typical of the *Via negativa*, to cancel parts of the model. This family, or more exactly Father/Son relationship, differs in that normally two beings use the one family name. In this case, however, the Son becomes the name of the Father. He is nothing other than this name.

The Gospel of Truth also shows a tendency to reify the semantic, and this is not entirely unfamiliar in earlier Gnosticism. Marcus's system of thought has all reality generated from a word, and reality in its successive stages is composed of discourse. Whereas the Pythagorean view emphasizes number as the essential structure of reality, and the Neoplatonist emphasizes being, Marcus emphasizes language. For him

the texture of the real is linguistic: the beginning is the word "beginning" (*archē*), and each letter of this word generates another word (*alpha, rho* and so on). These words generate other words in a proliferating series, and the most material or most mundane sounds are the vowel sounds. These are more "sounded" than the consonants, and so they are lower and more matter-like. The emanation and procession of Marcus is entirely linguistic: it is a self development of language.<sup>47</sup>

This tendency to objectify the semantic, to make a place for it within ontology, is therefore already present. We have it here in the Gospel of Truth, but deployed in a unique way, and in a unique context. The text seems to bespeak a sophistication in Trinitarian matters which is not characteristic of second century Christianity. The Gospel of Truth responds to a problem which has arisen, and belongs to a period in which the problem has been clearly identified. It offers a solution as Augustine's *De Trinitate* offers a solution, to the yawning gap between Father and Son that had been opened up by the Christian Platonists. It maintains the unity of the Father and the Son and at the same time safeguards both the incommunicability of the Father and the communicability of the Son. What closer relationship can there be, than being someone's name? As indicated earlier, the philosophy of Eunomius has a great preoccupation with names and their use in respect of the Trinity, and it seems that Eunomius is responding to the same set of problems.

It is possible that the Gospel of Truth was first written in about 170, subjected to revision and development in later periods, and that the Nag Hammadi text constitutes a version which includes a response to the Arian debate, coming from the period 320-360 A.D. The author may have used the ideas of Philo<sup>48</sup> for the purpose of responding to the Arian problem, or he may have used contemporary thinking about the *Cratylus*, or both; but in any case he was able to build on the existing Gnostic tendency to reify the semantic.

#### Addendum by Michel Tardieu

The thesis put forward by Mortley appears to me to be sound, on condition that two further arguments, which are fundamental and closely associated with each other, are brought forward. The first is a *textual* argument.

The formula: *pren de mpiōt pe psēre* (I.38, 6-7) is absent from the Sahidic version of the *Ev. Ver.* (Codex XII). The Akhmim version, Codex I 30, 27-37, 21 corresponds to XII 53, 19-60, 29; the two missing

pages in XII (= 55-56) correspond to I.32, 1-34, 4. Thus the beginning and the end of the Codex I text of the Gospel of Truth do not figure in Codex XII; strictly speaking, this does not allow us to say that the above-mentioned formula is an interpolation belonging to the Akhmim version. However it is odd that Codex XII stops exactly where the passage on the name of the Father begins in Codex I, so that the middle of Codex I 38, line 6 gives the impression of being the logical conclusion of the end of the early text (Codex XII), and it must have appeared at the beginning of the last page 61.

A careful comparison of the two extant versions shows that the Sahidic version (Codex XII) is based on a short text, on which the Akhmim version (Codex I) appears to be a commentary. Moreover, in a thesis presented to the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (5th section) in 1980 (page 31), M. Pezin has drawn this conclusion, on the basis of elements common to both versions: this view is still valid.

Consequently, the Sahidic text (Codex XII) provides evidence of a non-glossed *Ev. Her.*, that is, the writing of Valentinus himself; that of (Codex I) belongs to a later stage of development of a school which calls itself Valentinian, but whose theological interests were very different from those of its founder. Thus, not only the formula but the whole discussion on the name of the Father, which concludes the Akhmim version, involve additional material which reflects a contemporary debate, and I agree with Mortley that this is the Arian debate.

At this point one may refer to a second argument of an historical kind, raised by me in another connection in the Bulletin de la Société Française d'Égyptologie 94 (1982) 14-15.

The first and foremost adversaries of Arius, Aetius and Eunomius were the Gnostics. The evidence of Arius himself, and that of the pro-Arian historian Philostorgius, is clear on this point. Further, I have found an unpublished fragment of a Nag Hammadi text, which is quoted and attacked in debate, and this is a fragment of Eunomius himself.

Mortley's discovery must be upheld, in my view. It brings a new element to the Arian controversies, and gives an historical context to the recasting of the *Ev. Ver.* given in Codex I. I further consider that careful comparison of the whole passage on the name of the Father in *Ev. Ver.* I with Eunomius's Apology, confirms Mortley's view: a Gnostic response to the Arian debate.

M.T. 12.03.1984.

# NOTES

1. See W.W. Isenberg, "The Gospel of Truth," in *Gnosticism*, ed. R.M. Grant (N.Y., 1978), p. 158; W. Foerster/R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis II* (Oxford, 1974), p. 78; K. Grobel, *The Gospel of Truth* (Abingdon, 1960), p. 180; R. Haardt, *Gnosis* (Brill, 1971), p. 234; J.E. Ménard, "L'Évangile de Vérité," *Nag Hammadi Studies*, Vol. II (Brill, 1972), p. 66; S. Arai *Die Christologie des Evangelium Veritatis* (Brill, 1964), p. 62; M. Malinine, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, *Evangelium Veritatis* (Zurich, 1956), p. 106.
2. B. Standaert, "L'évangile de Vérité; critique et lecture," *New Testament Studies* 22 (1976): 243-275.
3. J. Fineman, "Gnosis and the Piety of Metaphor: The Gospel of Truth," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. I, ed. Bentley Layton (Brill, 1980), pp. 289-312.
4. By van Unnik, in *The Jung Codex* (London, 1955), pp. 81ff, followed by Grobel, op. cit., p. 26.
5. But see the questions raised by Wilson, in *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, pp. 133-145.
6. *Adv. Haer.* III. XI.9.
7. But see Grobel, op. cit., p. 27, who thinks that Irenaeus means "not long ago" by contrast with the canonical Gospels, and that a date between 140 and 170 would fit this description. He reasons that Irenaeus would have said "very recently" if he had meant after 170. There is a lot of supposition here: we do not *know* that Irenaeus was thinking primarily of a comparison with the date of the canonical Gospels, nor do we *know* that he would have thought of five years before, say, as "very recent." He might well have written in, say, 180, of a work written in, say, 172, that it was composed "not long ago."
8. Clement, for example, assimilates God the Father to the One pure, and God the Son to the One-of-parts. He thus creates a relation of superiority to inferiority (Strom. IV.25.156.1-2; Strom. V.12.81.6).
9. See, for example, Migne PG 30, col. 852D, but also throughout.
10. Loc. cit., col. 961A: ἡ γὰρ τῆς οὐσίας ὁμοιότης ταῖς αὐταῖς ὀνομάζειν προσηγορίας ἀναγκάζει τοὺς ταύτην περὶ αὐτῶν ἔχοντας τὴν δόξαν.
11. Loc. cit., cols. 848-861.
12. Op. cit., p. 58.
13. *Morphē tōn Aionōn* . . .
14. On p. 118; see Revelation 2.17, 3.12.
15. "Evangelium Veritatis and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Studia Theologica* 13 (1959): 87-96.
16. Op. cit., 89.
17. *Isaiah* 30. 27ff; *Exodus* 23.20. See also *Exodus* 33.18-19. Giversen believes that the author of the Gospel speculated on the first words of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* (1, 1-5) in the light of this material.
18. Op. cit., p. 182.
19. *Théologie du judéo-christianisme*, pp. 199-226.
20. *The Shepherd* VIII.1.1, VIII.6.4. for example.

21. "Die Christologie . . .," op. cit., p. 64.
22. P. 74.
23. P. 71.
24. "Le contexte judaïque du 'nom' dans l'évangile de vérité," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 24 (1974): 198-216.
25. See Dubois, nn. 1 and 2.
26. Pliny, *Natural History*, 3.65. I owe this information to Dr. T.W. Hillard.
27. "Qumran, John and Jewish Christianity," in *John and Qumran*, ed. J.H. Charlesworth (London, 1972).
28. *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme* (Paris, 1958), pp. 199-226.
29. "Christliche Gnosis und jüdische Heterodoxie," *Evangelische Theologie* 14 (1954): 474-484.
30. Dubois lists this without comment (p. 211).
31. God is the "maker and father of all," + the "One."
32. The Confusion of Tongues 146: . . . ὄνομα Θεοῦ . . . ὁ κατ' εἰκόνα ἄνθρωπος.
33. Op. cit., p. 148.
34. *The Migration of Abraham* 3; The Special Laws III.207.
35. On Husbandry 1.
36. For example, *On the Creation* 127.
37. *On the Creation* 15.
38. Op. cit., p. 148, and *Allegorical Interpretations* I. 91ff.
39. *Allegorical Interpretations* I. 91-92.
40. Trans. MacRae, in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. J.M. Robinson.
41. *Gospel* 38 (trans. MacRae).
42. *Tractatus* 6.522.
43. *Gospel* 38; Philo, *On the Confusion of Tongues*, 147.
44. *Tri. Trac.*, 73.
45. See H.D. Saffrey, "Nouveaux liens objectifs entre le Pseudo-Denys et Proclus," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 63 (1979): 3-16.
46. *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 57 (1973): 562-563.
47. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.14.1. One notes the ambiguity of the word *stoicheion*: Plato started with four elements (*stoicheia*) in the *Timaeus* (air, earth, fire and water); Marcus also starts with four *stoicheia* (letters) which happen to be the letters of the word "beginning." We should further note that Plato himself treated the logos as a living creature (*logon* . . . *zōnta empsychon Phaedrus* 276A), a passage interestingly analyzed by J. Derrida, "La Pharmacie de Platon," in *La Dissémination* (Paris, 1972), p. 89: "The logos, an animate living being, is therefore also a begotten being. An organism: a body proper, differentiated, with a center and extremities, connections, a head and feet." Derrida compares verbal discourse with the "cadaverous rigidity" of writing (in Plato).
48. Wolfson's *Philo* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948) together with his *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970) provides ample testimony to the way in which Philo was repeatedly used by Christian thinkers.

## Theurgic Tendencies in Gnosticism and Iamblichus's Conception of Theurgy

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### 1. Introduction

The theme of this volume, and the conference out of which it has emerged, focuses upon one of the most intriguing problems in the philosophical and religious history of late antiquity, that of the relationship between Platonism and Gnosticism in the early centuries of our era. It is therefore very significant that scholars from both sides have come together for discussion of this issue — specialists in Platonism on the one hand, and specialists in the "wild underworld" of the Gnostics on the other<sup>1</sup> — and I do not doubt that much new light has been shed on it as a result.<sup>2</sup>

While much of the discussion has focused on setting up comparisons between various platonic systems of thought and language and the metaphysical-mythological systems of the Gnostic texts,<sup>3</sup> relatively little attention has been given in this comparative enterprise to the problem of religious ritual. In this paper, therefore, I have taken up some aspects of ritual in Gnosticism and Neoplatonism. This is admittedly a difficult task, and I hasten to state at the outset that this paper represents an experimental and highly tentative enterprise. Not least of the difficulties involved in this comparative project is that Platonists and Gnostics alike had various and sundry attitudes toward ritual.<sup>4</sup> Not all Platonists appreciated religious ritual (to understate the case!), but then, neither did all Gnostics. If Plotinus (*Enn.* II.9.14) could criticize the Gnostics he knew for their ritual activities — he

dismissed their recourse to strange chants and charms and other practices as *goēteia*<sup>5</sup> — some Gnostics could also adopt a critical attitude toward ritual of any sort, claiming that *gnosis* alone is what saves:

One must not perform the mystery of the ineffable and invisible power through visible and corruptible things of creation, nor that of the unthinkable and immaterial beings through sensible and corporeal things. Perfect salvation is the cognition itself of the ineffable greatness: for since through "Ignorance" came about "Defect" and "Passion," the whole system springing from Ignorance is dissolved by knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

As is well known, ritual came to occupy an increasingly important role in Neoplatonic circles from the time of Porphyry on, especially as a result of the appropriation and study of the *Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>7</sup> The most extensive and consistent defense of religious ritual by a Neoplatonist author is Iamblichus's treatise *On the Mysteries of Egypt*.<sup>8</sup> On the Gnostic side, we have a number of primary texts which reveal a concern for ritual, containing references to baptism and other rites, as well as ineffable names and *nomina barbara* which doubtless had ritual significance. One of the problems in dealing with the ritual aspects of Gnosticism and Neoplatonism, and especially of considering them together under a common rubric, is that, on the one hand, the Gnostic material lacks a theoretical framework with which to understand the ritual elements; and, on the other hand, the Neoplatonist material, including Iamblichus's famous treatise itself, provides rather scanty information on the actual ceremonies utilized by the Platonist "theurgists." Another obstacle, of course, is the difference in world-view between the Gnostics and the Platonists, high-lighted especially in Plotinus's tract *Against the Gnostics* (*Enn.* II.9). However, it must also be pointed out that some later forms of Gnosticism reflect a temporizing of the original Gnostic anti-cosmism. Moreover there is a discernable development in Neoplatonism which eventually brings it closer to Gnosticism in certain respects.<sup>9</sup> The question can, therefore, be entertained whether the Gnostic and the Neoplatonic rituals are in any way comparable, and whether they might have had some theoretical presuppositions in common. This is what I propose to consider in what follows, knowing full well that many pitfalls lie in the way; knowing, too, that the entire enterprise might turn out to be a blind alley.

Specifically, what I propose to do is to apply Iamblichus's theories concerning ritual to some Gnostic ritual texts, on the hypothesis that some of our Gnostics might have shared something of Iamblichus's theoretical assumptions. If, in addition, some of the Gnostics' ritual

activity sheds some light on actual Neoplatonic practice, so much the better.

## 2. Iamblichus's Defense of Theurgy

Iamblichus's defense of religious ritual in his *DM* is, more specifically, a defense of "theurgy," written in reply to some critical questions on the practice raised by Porphyry.<sup>10</sup> As is well known, "theurgy" still has a "bad press" among scholars of late antiquity. E.R. Dodds, for example, refers to Iamblichus's philosophical defense of theurgy as "a manifesto of irrationalism."<sup>11</sup> Now I do not wish to enter the debate for or against the practice of theurgy, nor do I wish to comment on theurgy at all as it was practiced by the *Juliani*, as reflected in the *Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>12</sup> What I do want to do is look at Iamblichus's theories in his *DM* as possibly of use in understanding Gnostic ritual. (In any case, Iamblichus's theories do not necessarily coincide with those of the *Juliani*.) In doing so, I also here cheerfully acknowledge the work done on Iamblichus and theurgy by my former student, Gregory Shaw.<sup>13</sup>

The first and most important point to make is that, at least for Iamblichus, "theurgy" does *not* mean "acting upon," or "creating" the gods.<sup>14</sup> Theurgy involves, rather, the works (*erga*) of the gods (*theoi*); the emphasis is on *divine*, not human, activity. This is a central theme in Iamblichus's *DM*.<sup>15</sup> The "work" done in theurgic ritual is the work of the gods, even though it is performed by human beings. Thus, for example, ritual invocations and prayers, and chanting of sacred words, ostensibly directed to the gods, really involves the gods "calling upward" (*anakaloumenoi*) the souls of the theurgists (*DM* I.12).

The *locus classicus* for Iamblichus's position on theurgy, indeed his preference for theurgy (*theia erga*) over intellectual activity, is found in Book II of the *DM*:

For it is not thought which joins the theurgists to the gods, since (if that were the case) what would prevent those who philosophize theoretically from having theurgic union with the gods? . . . For when we are not engaged in intellection, the *synthēmata* themselves perform by themselves the proper work, and the ineffable power of the gods, to whom these (*synthēmata*) belong, knows by itself its own images. . . .<sup>16</sup>

In other words, the divine rituals are effective *ex opere operato*. A comparison with Christian sacramentalism naturally suggests itself.<sup>17</sup>



AAAAAAAAAAAAA    ϩϩϩϩϩϩϩ(ϩϩϩ)ϩϩϩϩϩϩϩϩϩϩϩ . (III 43,  
13 - 44, 9)

Note that the ineffable name given to the Doxomedon aeon is made up of the seven Greek vowels written 22 times each (the number of the letters in the Hebrew/Aramaic alphabet, which, of course, has no vowels). The vowels are not given in order. The order presented here may conceal another divine name: *Iēou e(stin) A (kai) Ō*. That is, Doxomedon may be identified with the being called "Yeou" in some other gnostic texts, such as the "Books of Jeu."<sup>32</sup>

However one construes the ineffable name hidden in the vowels, it is most probable that this name was meant to be chanted in a ritual context, in a language thought to be appropriate to the divine beings invoked, as revealed to the Gnostics. Iamblichus, too, knows of the use of ineffable names, including "unintelligible" (*asēma*) names, and argues that they are not, in fact, without sense to the gods:

But to us let them be unknowable, or known only to some (of us), the interpretations of which we have received from the gods. To the gods, indeed, all are significant (although) not in an effable manner, nor in such a way as that which is significant and indicative to men through their imaginations, but either intellectually, according to the human mind, itself divine, or ineffably, both better and more simply, and according to the mind which is united with the gods.<sup>33</sup>

Iamblichus goes on to discuss the use of "barbarian" language in invocations of the gods. With special reference to the sacred nations of the Egyptians and the Assyrians, he says,

We think it is necessary to offer our communication to the gods in ■ language related to them. . . . Those who first learned the names of the gods, connecting them with their own proper tongue, handed them down to us, that we might always preserve inviolate, (in a language) peculiar and proper to these (names), the sacred law of tradition.<sup>34</sup>

Iamblichus's rationale for the use of unintelligible (*asēma*) and foreign (*harbara*) names would surely strike a responsive chord with the Gnostics. The Gnostics undoubtedly had similar notions concerning the "appropriateness" of certain names or vowel-combinations to the various heavenly beings invoked in their ritual. Such ritual not only included chanting, but also the use of ritual devices. The text cited above is a case in point: Reference is made to the name inscribed "on the tablet (*pyxos*).<sup>35</sup> This tablet, as the Greek "loan-word" used for it

suggests,<sup>35</sup> was a piece of boxwood on which the name was inscribed. It is at least possible that the Gnostics would have considered a boxwood tablet to be an appropriate receptacle for the divine name, along the theoretical lines set forth by Iamblichus in his discussion of various "stones, plants, animals, aromatics," etc. deemed in some way to be "sacred" and "divine-like" (*DM* V.23). Iamblichus also refers, in his discussion of divination, to the use of "sacred inscriptions of characters" (*DM* III.14; 134, 5-6). The ritual chanting of the divine names by the Gnostics, in any case, can easily be understood, along the lines suggested by Iamblichus, as vehicles by which man is "called up" to the gods (*DM* I.12).

The second section of *Gos. Eg.* (as delineated above) tells of the origin and salvation-history of the seed of Seth (=the Gnostics). In this document Seth is the gnostic Savior who passes through three "advents" (flood, fire, and final judgment) "in order to save (the race) who went astray" (III 63, 4-9). In his work of salvation Seth undergoes a "baptism through a Logos-begotten body which the great Seth prepared for himself, secretly through the virgin in order that the saints may be begotten by the holy Spirit, through invisible secret symbols" (III 63, 10-15). This section of the text culminates in a reference to the baptism which the Gnostics are to undergo, a ritual which involves "invocations," "renunciations" (of the world), "five seals" of baptism (presumably in water), and sacred instructions (III 66, 2-6). The whole process entails immortalization: "These will by no means taste death" (III 66, 7-8).

It is, of course, clear that the kinds of rituals approved by Iamblichus in his *DM* do not specifically include baptism,<sup>36</sup> but his general defense of ritual would surely cover such a rite. In any case, it is the invocations associated with baptismal ritual which receive prominence in *Gos. Eg.* Indeed, the climax of the book is the passage which consists entirely of prayer-invocations (III 66, 8 - 67, 27 = IV 78, 10 - 80, 15). In this set of invocations the Gnostic ritually experiences the divine light, and feels himself purified and drawn upward to God, as the following excerpts surely imply:

I have become light. . . . Thou art my place of rest . . . the formless one who exists in the formless ones, who exists, raising up the man in whom thou wilt purify me into thy life, according to thine imperishable name . . . (III 67, 4.16-22)

This experience could equally well be that described by Iamblichus, who speaks of invocations of the gods as really involving the benevolent

act of the gods in illuminating the theurgists and drawing their souls up to themselves (*DM* I.12). In this experience the soul,

leaving behind her own life, has exchanged it for the most blessed energy of the gods. If, therefore, the ascent through invocations bestows on the priests purification from passions, deliverance from generation, and unity with the divine principle, how then could anyone connect it with passions? For such (an invocation) does not draw the impassible and pure (gods) down to passibility and impurity, but, on the contrary, it makes us, who had become passible through generation, pure and immoveable.<sup>37</sup>

Even more to the point are Iamblichus's remarks on the power of prayer (*DM* V.26).<sup>38</sup> Iamblichus discusses three types of prayer: *Synagōgon*, leading to union with, and knowledge (*gnōsis*) of, the divine; *syndetikon*, eliciting the gifts of the gods even prior to the uttered prayer; and *hē arrētos henōsis*, establishing ineffable union with the gods and causing the soul's perfect repose in the gods. He goes on to say that

the first pertains to illumination; the second to a common effectiveness; and the third to the perfect plenitude of the (divine) fire . . .

Prayer, for Iamblichus,

offers us habitual contact with the splendid stream of light, and quickly perfects our inner being for contact with the gods until it raises us to the very summit. . . .<sup>39</sup>

Such observations, indeed, could be taken as a veritable commentary on the Gnostic passage cited.

#### b. *The Three Steles of Seth* (*NHC* VII, 5).<sup>40</sup>

The *incipit* of this document identifies it as a "revelation of Dositheos<sup>41</sup> about the three steles of Seth, the Father of the living and unshakable race." The document consists essentially of three sets of prayer-invocations corresponding to three "steles"<sup>42</sup> of Seth, addressed, in ascending order, to the three divine beings of the Sethian Gnostic Triad: (Ger-)Adamas (the Son, 118, 24 - 121, 17); Barbelo (the Mother, 121, 18 - 124, 15); and the transcendent Father (124, 16 - 126, 31). The concluding section of the text (126, 32 - 127, 21) provides the key to understanding the function of the three "steles," consisting, as

it does, of liturgical references and directions. Despite the similarities with other "Sethian" Gnostic texts in which the theme of mystic "ascent" occurs, especially *Allogenes*,<sup>43</sup> *Steles Seth* stands apart as a liturgical text. H.M. Schenke has drawn special attention to this feature, referring to the concluding material as liturgical "rubrics," directing how the prayer formulae are to be used and what is to be achieved in the ritual. Schenke concludes that "the *Three Steles of Seth* is the etiology of a mystery of ascension of the Sethian community."<sup>44</sup>

The main thread running through the three sets of invocations is that of praise or "blessing." The first stele begins, "I bless thee Father, Geradama(s)" (118, 25-26). The third concludes, "We have blessed thee, for we are empowered. We have been saved, for thou hast willed always that we all do this" (126, 29-31). In the course of these blessings and invocations, the three-fold nature of God is underscored with reference to the Neoplatonic triad of "Existence-Life-Mind," and language derived from Middle Platonism is found throughout. These details have been commented on before,<sup>45</sup> and need not occupy us here. What we are especially interested in is the ritual use made of this text, and such light as might be shed on it with reference to Iamblichus.

We have seen that *Gos. Eg.* is to be understood in relation to the Gnostic rite of baptism. In the case of *Steles Seth*, we presumably have to do with another rite, that of "cultic ascension."<sup>46</sup> The following passage from the concluding material in *Steles Seth* is crucial:

He who will remember these and give glory always will become perfect among those who are perfect and unattainable from any quarter. For they all bless these individually and together. And afterwards they shall be silent. And just as they were ordained, they ascend. After the silence, they descend. From the third they bless the second; after these the first. The way of ascent is the way of descent (127, 6-21).

From these rubrics one can see that the prayers in Seth's three steles are recited in ascending and descending order: 1-2-3-3-2-1, with an observance of ritual silence between the first and second recitations of the third stele, the invocation of the Primal Father. The efficacy of these prayers can easily be understood on the same terms as the invocations in *Gos. Eg.*, discussed above, with reference to Iamblichus's theories. These prayers can, in fact, be called "theurgic" prayers, and were probably chanted as hymns.<sup>47</sup> In this case, we have a special ritual of "ascent," arguably comparable to the theurgic ritual of *anagōgē* reflected in the *Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>48</sup> Though the rituals of the "Sethians" and the "Chaldaeans" are not the same, their meaning and



efficacy can presumably be understood on the same terms.

Of special interest is this rubric: "The way of ascent is the way of descent" (127, 20). This enigmatic statement, with its allusion to a famous fragment of Heraclitus,<sup>49</sup> has parallels in other Gnostic and mystical texts. For example, the (Valentinian) Marcosians are said to have claimed that their "Redemption" mystery "leads them down into the profundities of Bythos."<sup>50</sup> The Jewish Merkabah mystics enigmatically referred to their mystical journeys as a *descent* to the Merkabah, i.e. the Throne of God.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps phenomenologically closer to the ritual use of the invocations in ascending and descending order in *Steles Seth* is Epiphanius's description of ritual intercourse practiced by the Phibionites, a "libertine" Gnostic sect (*Haer.* 26.9.6-9). At each act of intercourse the "barbarian name" of one of the 365 archons is invoked. After 365 acts of intercourse, the acts and invocations are repeated in descending order. Completing the sum total of 730 acts, Epiphanius tells us, the adept boldly says, "I am the Christ, for I have descended downward through the names of the 365 archons."<sup>52</sup>

The Gnostic understanding of ritual "ascent" as "descent" can be illuminated with reference to Iamblichus's understanding of the ascent and descent of the soul, and the place of ritual in effecting the soul's ascent. Iamblichus asserts that ascents and descents of souls are essentially two sides of the same coin, as the following passage in *DM* indicates:

The works of sacred ritual have been determined from of old by pure and intellectual laws. Lower (states) are liberated by means of a greater order and power, and when we change from (the inferior) to a better lot, we abandon the inferior (states). And this is not effected contrary to the divine law (laid down) from the beginning, as though the gods were changed according to the sacred rite subsequently performed. But from the first descent God sent souls down here that they might return again above to him. Therefore there is no change (in the divine plan)<sup>53</sup> arising from such an ascent, nor are descents and ascents of souls opposed to each other.<sup>54</sup>

Of course Iamblichus does not mean that "ascent" and "descent" are merely a mechanical process. Ascent can only be realized as the soul fulfills its responsibilities as a descended soul, specifically with recourse to the proper ritual, including, perhaps, even ritual re-enactments of the descent.<sup>55</sup> For Iamblichus, every divine or demonic power<sup>56</sup> governing the various levels of the cosmos, even the most base, must be appropriately honored. In this respect, the Gnostic ritual

ascent reflected in *Steles Seth* differs from Iamblichus's theurgy, in that the prayers are addressed, not to lower, cosmic beings, but to the primal heavenly Triad of Father, Mother, and Son. The power of these prayers are nevertheless to be understood, with Iamblichus, in his discussion of prayer and sacrifice, as "anagogic, effective, and fulfilling."<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps more clarity can be achieved on what is meant by "ascent as descent" in *Steles Seth* by turning to the last text to be taken up in this paper: *Marsanes*.

### c. *Marsanes* (NHC X, 1).<sup>58</sup>

This tractate is unfortunately very badly preserved. It occupies the entirety of the extant material in Codex X, at least 68 discrete pages, of which many consist of only small fragments.<sup>59</sup> The first ten pages are relatively intact; here we encounter material relating to a Gnostic ascent experience, including discussion of the various levels of reality, symbolically referred to as "seals." The middle portion of the tractate contains materials on the mystical meaning of the letters of the alphabet, and their relation both to the human soul and to the names of gods and angels. The rest is hopelessly fragmentary; the bulk of this tractate, therefore, is totally lost. This is unfortunate, for it must have been an important text in Gnostic circles, if one can judge from what is said of the prophet Marsanes in the Untitled Text from the Bruce Codex.<sup>60</sup>

I have already indicated (above) my view that this text contains some features which reflect a kind of Platonism close to that of Iamblichus. The starting point for this observation is the surprising statement, very surprising for a Gnostic text, that "in every respect the sense-perceptible world is [worthy] of being saved entirely" (X 5, 24-26).

Such a statement coheres very well with Iamblichus's understanding of the Platonic tradition, both with respect to his view of matter and his understanding of the descended soul.<sup>61</sup> For Iamblichus, matter is not evil *per se*, and the descent of the soul into matter is not regarded as a "fall," but as a demiurgic function. In this, Iamblichus is following Plato himself, particularly Plato's discussion of the *psychogonia* in his *Timaeus* (41a-42a).<sup>62</sup> Indeed, such a view can even be brought into conformity with other passages in Plato, including the famous passages in which the body (*sōma*) is referred to as a "lomb" (*sēma*). In the *Cratylus* (400c), for example, it is said that the soul has the body as a

"tomb," i.e. an "enclosure" (*peribolos*), "in order that it might be saved" (*hina sōzētai*).<sup>63</sup>

In *Marsanes*, in the very next passage after the statement just now discussed, a figure called "The Self-Begotten One" or *Autogenēs* is referred to. This figure, I think, represents symbolically the descending soul in its demiurgic function.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately the text is corrupt and riddled with lacunae, but his descent progressively ("part by part") into the world of multiplicity is clearly reflected; the result of this descent is that "he saved a multitude" (X 5, 27 - 6, 16). Autogenēs here plays the same role as "the demiurgic intellect" in Iamblichus's discussion of Egyptian theology (*DM* VIII.3). There Iamblichus describes the progressive unfolding of the divine from the Ineffable God prior even to the First God, down to the demiurgic intellect, and then down to the world of generation. In a summary statement he says,

And thus the doctrines of the Egyptians concerning first principles, from above (down) to the last things, begins from One and proceeds into multiplicity, the many being governed by the One. And everywhere the Indefinite nature is controlled by a certain definite measure and by the sole supreme Cause of all things. God produced matter by dividing materiality from essentiality. This matter, being living, the Demiurge took and fashioned from it the simple and impassable spheres. The last of it (matter) he ordered into generated and corruptible bodies.<sup>65</sup>

For Iamblichus, the soul, in order to ascend, must properly learn to descend. Ascent to the One is mediated through the Many,<sup>66</sup> specifically with recourse, in ritual, to the various levels of the cosmos ordained by God. The rituals themselves are appointed in conformity with sacred law:

(Each ritual) imitates the order of the gods, intelligible and heavenly. (Each ritual) contains the eternal measures of beings and the wonderful deposits such as are sent down here from the Demiurge and Father of All. By means of them, the unutterable things are given expression through ineffable symbols. The formless things are mastered in forms; the things which are superior to any image are reproduced through images, and all things are accomplished solely through a divine cause.<sup>67</sup>

In a very important passage in *Marsanes* (X 2, 12 - 4, 23) dealing with the various levels of reality, from the material level to the level beyond being, each is symbolically related to a "seal" (*sphragis*). There are thirteen of these "seals," presented in ascending order. The first

three seals are "cosmic" and "material" (2, 16-19); the thirteenth expresses the unknown, "silent" God. The writer periodically reminds his readers (unfortunately!) that he has already taught them about these seals (2, 19-21; 3, 4-9). The question now arises as to the function of these "seals." Though this passage is not a liturgical text, it is probable that our Gnostic author is enigmatically referring to a ritual praxis when he discusses the thirteen "seals." Indeed, what may be reflected here is a theurgic ascent-praxis in which the various "seals" are to be understood as equivalent to what Iamblichus calls the *synthēmata*.<sup>68</sup> The reference to "cosmic" and "material" "seals," indeed, reminds us of Iamblichus's use of material *synthēmata* and his recourse to material objects in theurgic ritual, such as stones, plants, etc. (*DM* V.23). It is in such a context that we can understand another passage in *Marsanes* (unfortunately fragmentary), in which "wax images" and "emerald likenesses" are mentioned (35, 1-3).<sup>69</sup>

It is also in this general theurgic context that we should understand the extended passage in *Marsanes* treating the various letters of the alphabet (pp. 19-39). This passage (unfortunately riddled with lacunae and textual corruptions) is not a model of clarity, to be sure. But in it there is a quasi-learned discussion of the nature of the letters of the alphabet, based, in fact, on the technical discussions of the grammarians.<sup>70</sup> But the discussion clearly has religious purposes, and resembles somewhat the speculations of the Valentinian Gnostic Marcus (Iren. *Haer.* I.13-21). In *Marsanes*, however, the entire discussion is tied to the nature of the soul and its ascent through the spheres. The ascent of the soul presupposes knowledge of the "nomenclature" of the gods and the angels. The letters of the alphabet and their syllabic combinations are understood to have their counterparts in the angelic world of the Zodiac and the planetary spheres. The Gnostic adept, in order to ascend beyond these spheres, must know their natures and be able to chant the proper names.

All of this is intelligible in terms of Iamblichus's theurgic theories, as discussed above. Just as God has "expressed" (*ekphōnein*) the ineffable through mysterious symbols,<sup>71</sup> so must the Gnostic/theurgist give utterance to the sounds consecrated to the various gods and angels. Iamblichus specifically mentions the motive power of music (*DM* III.9), and goes on to say,

Sounds and melodies are consecrated appropriately to each of the gods, and a kinship with them has been assigned appropriately according to the proper ranks and powers of each, and (according to) the motions in the universe

itself and the harmonious sounds whirring<sup>72</sup> as a result of these motions.<sup>73</sup>

The soul must adapt itself to these various sounds and thus be enabled to ascend, being drawn upward through the spheres to its divine root. In this connection we also recall what was said above concerning the efficacy of the divine names (*DM* VII.5).

Before bringing this discussion to a close it is necessary to comment on the following passage in *Marsanes*, wherein the use and efficacy of the various vowel-consonant combinations is stressed:

And [the] consonants exist with the vowels, and individually they are commanded and they submit (*hypotassein*). They constitute the nomenclature (*onomasia*) [of] the angels. And [the] consonants are self-existent, [and] as they are changed <they> submit to (*hypotassein*) the hidden gods by means of beat and pitch and silence and impulse. (30, 3-18)

One of the problems here has to do with how the Greek "loanword," *hypotassein*, should be translated. In terms of Coptic grammar, it could be rendered either "subject" (v.t.) or "submit."<sup>74</sup> What appears to be said here, though, is that certain combinations of vowels and consonants, properly intoned, bring various gods and angels into subjection (even if the vowels, etc., are "subject to" the gods and angels). On the face of it, this would be more "magical" than "theurgical," given what was said of theurgy at the beginning of this essay. Yet even this passage can be understood in Iamblichian terms. At *DM* IV.1 Iamblichus takes up the problem, posed by Porphyry, how superior beings, when invoked, can be commanded by inferior beings.<sup>75</sup> Iamblichus, of course, cannot grant such a thing, even though he does stress the *ex opere operato* character of the invocations. He solves this problem by arguing that the theurgic practitioner acts both as a man and as a god. By means of the *synthēmata* he is elevated to, and conjoined with, superior natures (*DM* IV.2). The theurgist

invokes, as superior natures, the powers from the universe, inasmuch as the one invoking is a man, and again he commands them, since somehow, through the ineffable symbols, he is invested with the hieratic form of the gods.<sup>76</sup>

It is in this way, I think, that our passage in *Marsanes* can be understood.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

I have tried to show in the preceding discussion that Gnostic ritual can be understood in terms of Iamblichus's ritual theories. To be sure, I have considered a very limited amount of evidence, both in terms of the Gnostic material and in terms of Iamblichus's total presentation in his *DM*. Indeed, I think much more can be done along these lines.<sup>77</sup> But I should clearly state what I have *not* attempted to argue: I have not tried to show that the actual rituals performed by the Gnostics, on the one hand, and by Iamblichus on the other, are the same in terms of content, though the "ascension" rituals in both cases are quite comparable. Nor have I tried to show that the mythological background is the same; on the contrary, the gods, demons, angels, etc. are different. As for world-view and ontology, Iamblichus's Platonism would not allow him to describe the Demiurge and the material world in the terms used by *The Gospel of the Egyptians*.<sup>78</sup> It is nevertheless to be noticed that such typically "Gnostic" details are absent both from *Steles Seth* and from *Marsanes*. In fact, it is the latter document which comes closest to Iamblichus in its view of the world and matter.

While I do not wish to refer to Iamblichus as a Gnostic, or even a "crypto-Gnostic," I think it is worthwhile to point out, in the present connection, that Iamblichus's attitude to the Gnostics was undoubtedly different from that of Plotinus. This is indicated in what he says (and does not say!) about them. He refers to "the Gnostics" once in his *De anima*, in a doxographical discussion of various beliefs that have been advanced concerning the activities of the soul, and sandwiches them in between Heraclitus and Albinus!<sup>79</sup> While he would probably take issue with the views he attributes to the Gnostics concerning the soul's "derangement" and "deviation,"<sup>80</sup> it is interesting that he even considers them worth mentioning. And, of course, he could not possibly have joined in Plotinus's criticisms of their ritual activity.<sup>81</sup>

It has been the burden of this paper to show that, despite the differences that must be assumed between Iamblichus and the Gnostics, they can be understood in similar terms when it comes to their use and understanding of religious ritual. Whether this implies, in the case of "divine Iamblichus," a degeneration of Neoplatonism, I must leave to others to decide.

## NOTES

1. Cf. A.D. Nock's reference to Gnosticism as "Platonism run wild" ("Gnosticism," in *Essays on Religion in the Ancient World*, ed. Z. Stewart [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972] 2.949); and J. Dillon's use of the term, "the underworld" of Platonism (*The Middle Platonists* [London: Duckworth, 1977], pp. 384-396).
2. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to Professor R.T. Wallis and his colleagues for conceiving and organizing this event, and for affording me the opportunity to contribute to it.
3. For my own modest contributions to this discussion see "The Tractate *Marsanes* (NHC X) and the Platonic Tradition," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas*, ed. B. Aland (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), pp. 373-384; and "Gnosticism as Platonism: With Special Reference to *Marsanes* (NHC X, 1)," *HTR* 77 (1984, Appeared 1986): 55-72.
4. On the varieties of Gnostic ritual and Gnostic attitudes to religious ritual see e.g., K. Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, English translation ed. by R. McL. Wilson (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), pp. 218-252.
5. See now H. Remus, "Plotinus and Gnostic Thaumaturgy," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 39 (1983): 13-20. Plotinus himself has not escaped criticism as a practitioner of magic. See esp. P. Merlan, "Plotinus and Magic," *Isis* 44 (1953): 341-48; and A.H. Armstrong's reply, "Was Plotinus a Magician?" *Phronēsis* 1 (1955): 73-79. On the difference between Plotinus's and Iamblichus's attitudes to the Gnostics see below.
6. Iren., *Haer.* 1.21.4, as rendered by H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1963), p. 176, in his discussion of Valentinian Gnosticism. He refers to the *Gospel of Truth* and parallel passages therein (NHC I, 3: 18, 7-11; 24, 28-32); see *Gnostic Religion*, pp. 311-312. This anti-sacramentalism is clearly a minority viewpoint within Valentinian gnosis.
7. See e.g., R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1962), pp. 105-10. On the *Chaldaean Oracles* see esp. H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, ed. (with compléments and indices) by M. Tardieu (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978). For a new edition of the fragments, with English translation and commentary, see Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldaean Oracles: Text, Translation, Commentary* (SGGR 5; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989).
8. *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, hereafter cited *DM*. The standard edition is now E. des Places, *Jamblique: Les Mystères d'Égypte* (Paris: "Les Belles Lettres," 1966). Still useful is Thomas Taylor's English translation: *Iamblichus on the Mysteries of the Egyptians*, 2nd ed. (London: Bertram Dobell, 1895).
9. See my articles cited above, n. 3.
10. In his "Letter to Anebo." The text of this letter has been edited by A.R. Sodano, *Porfirio, Lettera ad Anebo* (Naples: L'arte tipografica, 1958). A translation is included in Taylor's English translation of Iamblichus (pp. 1-16).
11. E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley/L.A.: University of California Press, 1951), Appendix II: "Theurgy," pp. 283-311, esp. p. 287.
12. Cf. Lewy-Tardieu and Majercik, op. cit., n. 7.
13. A paper by him entitled, "Putting Theurgy into Perspective," was presented to the section on "Platonism and Neoplatonism" of the American Academy of Religion at its annual meeting in Dallas, December, 1983. A revised version of that paper was subsequently published: "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," *Traditio* 41 (1985): 1-28. Shaw was very helpful to me in the preparation of my article, and I gratefully acknowledge his assistance. See now his doctoral dissertation: "Theurgy: The Language of the Embodied Soul — A Study of the Work of Iamblichus of Chalcis," University of California, Santa Barbara, 1987.
14. See Dodds, *Irrational*, pp. 283-284; cf. Lewy-Tardieu, pp. 461-466.
15. See F.W. Cremer, *Die Chaldäischen Orakel und Iamblich de Mysteriis* (Meisenheim: Anton Hein, 1969), pp. 21-22.
16. *DM* II.11; 96, 13 - 97, 8. Text: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ ἔννοια συνάπτει τοῖς θεοῖς τοὺς θεωρητοὺς ἐπεὶ τί ἐκώλυε τοὺς θεωρητικῶς φιλοσοφοῦντας ἔχειν τὴν θεωρητικὴν ἔνωσιν πρὸς τοὺς θεούς; . . . Καὶ γὰρ μὴ νοοῦντων ἡμῶν αὐτὰ τὰ συνθήματα ἀδ' ἑαυτῶν ὁρᾷ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔργον, καὶ ἡ τῶν θεῶν, πρὸς οὓς ἀνήκει πάντα, ἄρρητος δύναμις αὐτῇ ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς ἐπιγινώσκει τὰς οἰκείας εἰκόνας. English translations of passages from the *DM* in this paper are my own, though I have found Taylor's translation helpful.
17. Indeed, J. Trouillard thinks that theurgy and Christian sacramentalism are essentially the same ("Sacraments: La Théurgie païenne," in *Encyclopedia Universalis* vol. 15, p. 582; cf. *L'Un et l'Âme selon Proclus* [Paris: "Les Belles Lettres," 1972], pp. 171-89). For criticism of this view see Majercik, *Chaldaean Oracles*, pp. 23-24. Cf. Shaw's discussion in "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification," op. cit., n. 13, p. 11.
18. Cf. Lewy-Tardieu, pp. 437-39.
19. Shaw, "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification," op. cit., n. 13, pp. 12-13. The phrase "instrument and beneficiary" is derived from Trouillard's article, "Sacraments," op. cit., n. 17, p. 582. Shaw goes on to discuss Iamblichus's doctrine of the soul in the *De anima*, specifically Iamblichus's rejection of the views of Numenius, Porphyry, and Plotinus that the descending soul leaves a portion of itself in the divine world. Cf. also J. Dillon, "Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta," *Philosophia Antiqua*, Vol. 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 41-47 and 382-383.
20. For a convenient one-volume translation of all of the Nag Hammadi texts (including also those from the Berlin Gnostic Codex) see *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. J.M. Robinson, (Leiden: E.J. Brill/San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977, 1981, 1988). For bibliography on Gnosticism and the Nag Hammadi Codices, see D.M. Scholer, *Nag Hammadi Bibliography 1948-1969* (NHS 1; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), updated annually in *NovT*.

21. See H.M. Schenke, "Das Sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Schriften," in *Studia Coptica*, ed. P. Nagel, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1974), pp. 165-172; and esp. Schenke, "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the Conference At Yale March 1978*, Vol. 2: *Sethian Gnosticism*, ed. B. Layton, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), pp. 588-616. The Gnostic texts which belong to the Sethian system, according to Schenke, are as follows:

*The Apocryphon of John* (NHC II, 1; III, 1; IV, 1; BG, 2)

*The Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II, 4)

*The Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHC III, 2; IV, 2)

*The Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V, 5)

*The Three Siles of Seth* (NHC VII, 5)

*Zostrianos* (NHC VIII, 1)

*Melchizedek* (NHC IX, 1)

*The Thought of Norea* (NHC IX, 2)

*Marsanes* (NHC X, 1)

*The Trimorphic Protennoia* (NHC XIII, 1)

Bruce Codex. Untitled Text

For the last-named text, see C. Schmidt and V. MacDermot, *The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex* (NHS 13; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978).

22. See Carl Schmidt, *Plotins Stellung zum Gnosticismus und kirchlichen Christentum* (TU 20; Leipzig: H.C. Hinrichs, 1901), p. 63. Of course, Schmidt did not know the Nag Hammadi texts, though he did know *Ap. John* (in the Berlin Codex version). Porphyry (*Vit. Plot.* 16) refers to "apocalypses," used by the Gnostic opponents of Plotinus, attributed to "Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nikotheos and Allogenes and Messos and others." We now have, in the Nag Hammadi collection, *Zostrianos* (VIII, 1) and *Allogenes* (XI, 3). The name "Messos" is given in the last-named tractate to the "son" of Allogenes. "Allogenes" is another name for Seth; see B. Pearson, "The Figure of Seth in Gnostic Literature," in *Rediscovery*, vol. 2, pp. 472-504, esp. p. 486. Nikotheos appears in the Bruce Codex as an important Gnostic authority, associated in that capacity with another prophet, Marsanes. We now have a revelation of the latter: *Marsanes* (X, 1). Perhaps *Marsanes* should be considered as included in the "others" left unnamed by Porphyry. On *Marsanes*, see below.

For an alternative identification of the Gnostic opponents of Plotinus as Valentinians, rather than Sethians, see F. García Bazán, *Plotino y la gnosis* (Buenos Aires: Fundación para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura, 1981); "Plotino y los textos gnosticos de Nag-Hammadi," *Oriente Occidente* 2 (1981): 185-202; and his contribution to this volume.

23. Schenke, *Gnostic Sethianism*, pp. 600-607.  
 24. See my article, "Gnosticism as Platonism," cited n. 3 above.  
 25. Cf. the contributions to this volume by J. Turner and R.T. Wallis, pp. 427-483.

26. The standard edition of the two extant versions of this text is that of A. Böhlig and F. Wisse, *Nag Hammadi Codices III, 2 and IV, 2: The Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHS 4; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975). Their translation is the one used in *NHLE*, 3rd ed., pp. 209-219; the version in Codex III is presented there, except for missing sections where the Codex IV version is used instead.
27. "Of the Egyptians" is restored in lacunae in the *incipit* (III 40, 12; IV 50, 1-2), but Schenke prefers to read the *incipit* as "The Book of the H[oly] [Invocation]" and "[The H[oly] [Book] of the [Invocation]s" in the respective versions. This is relevant to the question of the genre of the document, on which see below. Cf. Schenke, *Gnostic Sethianism*, p. 601.
28. See their introduction, p. 24.
29. This outline is basically that of Böhlig-Wisse, p. 26.
30. Schenke, *Gnostic Sethianism*, p. 600.
31. Possible (mixed) etymologies for these names are "Lord of the House" and "Lord of Glory"; see Böhlig-Wisse, p. 41. The full name, "Domodon Doxomedon," occurs in the preceding context (III 43, 8-9) of the passage quoted here, where, however, only "Doxomedon" occurs. In the quotation here, some material is omitted from III 44, 21-24. The translation is that of Böhlig-Wisse. There are many examples of the Gnostics' use of, and probably chanting of, the seven vowels, which are probably understood as associated with the seven planetary spheres. See e.g., E. Poirée, "Le chant gnostico-magique des sept voyelles grecques," in *Congrès International d'Histoire de la Musique* (Paris, 1900); *Documents, Memoires et Voeux* (Sollesnes: Saint-Pierre, 1901), pp. 15-38; F. Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* (Leipzig/Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1922), esp. 126-133 (on Marcus: *Iren., Haer.* I.13-22). Iamblichus does not deal specifically with this in his *DM*.
32. Böhlig-Wisse, pp. 43, 173. For the *Books of Jeu* see n. 21.
33. *DM* VII.4; 254, 17 - 255, 6. Text: ἀλλ' ἡμῖν μὲν ἄγνωστα ἔστω ἢ καὶ γνωστὰ ἔντα, περὶ ὧν παραδεξάμεθα τὰς ἀναλύσεις παρὰ θεῶν, τοῖς μέντοι θεοῖς πάντα σημαντικά ἐσιν οὐ κατὰ ῥητὸν τρόπον, οὐδ' οἷός ἐστιν ὁ διὰ τῶν φαντασιῶν παρ' ἀνθρώπων σημαντικὸς τε καὶ μηνυτικὸς, ἀλλ' ἦτοι νοεῶς [κατὰ τὸν θεῖον αὐτὸν ἀνθρώπειον νοῦν] ἢ καὶ ἀφθέγκτως καὶ κραττώνως καὶ ἀπλουστεῶς [καὶ] κατὰ νοῦν τοῖς θεοῖς συννηγμένους.
34. *DM* VII.4; 256, 8-15. Text: τὰς καινολογίας οἰόμεθα δεῖν τῇ συγγενεῖ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς λέξει προσφέρειν... οἱ μαθόντες τὰ πρῶτα ὀνόματα περὶ τῶν θεῶν μετὰ τῆς οἰκείας γλώττης αὐτὰ συμμείναντες παραδεδώκασιν ἡμῖν, ὥς οἰκείας καὶ προσφόρου πρὸς αὐτὰ ὑπαρχούσης, ἀκίνητον διατηροῦμεν δεῖρο ἀεὶ τὸν θεσμὸν τῆς παραδόσεως.
35. Böhlig-Wisse, p. 173; cf. *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII, 1) 130, 2.
36. On "Sethian" Gnostic baptism see Schenke, *Gnostic Sethianism*, esp. pp. 602-607; and Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 226-28.
37. *DM* I.12; 41, 16 - 42, 5. Text: τὴν ἐαυτῆς ἀφείσα ζῶην τὴν μακαριωτάτην τῶν θεῶν ἐνέργειαν ἀντηλλάξατο. Εἰ δὲ καθαροὺς παθὼν καὶ ἀπαλλαγὴν γενέσεως ἔνωσιν τε πρὸς τὴν θεϊαν ἀρχὴν ἢ διὰ τῶν κλήσεων ἑνὸς παρέχει τοῖς λεγούσι, τί δὴποτε πάθῃ τις αὐτῇ προσάπτει; οὐ γὰρ τοὺς ἀπαθεῖς καὶ

- καθαροὺς εἰς τὸ παθητὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον ἢ τοιαύτη κατασπῆ, τοῦναντίον δὲ τοὺς ἐμπαθεῖς γενομένους ἡμᾶς διὰ τὴν γένεσιν καθαροὺς καὶ ἀτρέπτους ἀπεργάζεται.
38. Cf. Dillon, *Iamblichus Fragmenta*, Appendix A, "Iamblichus's Theory of Prayer," pp. 407-411.
39. *DM* V.26; 238, 10-12 and 239, 2-4. Text: τὸ μὲν εἰς ἐπιλαμψὴν τείνου, τὸ δὲ εἰς κοινὴν ἀπεργασίαν, τὸ δὲ εἰς τὴν τελείαν ἀποπλήρωσιν ἀπὸ τοῦ πυρός. . . συνήθειαν δὲ παρέχει πρὸς τὰς τοῦ φωτὸς μαρμαρυγὰς, κατὰ βραχὺ δὲ τελειοῖ τὰ ἐν ἡμῖν πρὸς τὰς τῶν θεῶν συναφάς, ἕως ἂν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀκρότατον ἡμᾶς ἐπαναγάγῃ.
40. See *NHLE*, 3rd ed., pp. 397-401. There is as yet no critical edition of this text. For an excellent discussion, with French translation, see M. Tardieu, "Les trois stèles de Seth: Un écrit gnostique retrouvé à Nag Hammadi," *KSITh* 57 (1973): 545-75. Cf. also K. Wikel (for the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften), "Die drei Stelen des Seth: Die fünfte Schrift aus Nag-Hammadi-Codex VII," *ThLZ* 100 (1975): 571-80 (introduction and German translation). I have not seen Wikel's dissertation, "Die drei Stelen des Seth (*NHC* VII, 5): Text-Übersetzung-Kommentar" (Th.D. diss., Humboldt Universität, Berlin, 1977).
41. 118, 10-13. It is debatable whether this "Dositheos" is to be identified with one or more figures of the same name mentioned in some traditions related to Samaritanism and Simonian Gnosticism. On this see esp. Tardieu, *Trois stèles*, p. 551.
42. Cf. the "tablets" mentioned in *Gos. Eg.*, above. For the motif of revelatory stèles associated with Seth see e.g., Tardieu, *Trois Stèles*, pp. 553-555; cf. also my article, "The Figure of Seth," op. cit., n. 22, esp. pp. 491-496.
43. See e.g., J.M. Robinson, "The Three Stèles of Seth and the Gnostics of Plotinus," in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm August 20-25, 1973*, ed. G. Widengren, (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977), pp. 132-142, esp. pp. 133-136. Cf. J. Turner, "The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment: The Ascent of Mind and the Descent of Wisdom," *NovT* 22 (1980): 324-51, esp. 341-51.
44. Schenke, *Gnostic Sethianism*, pp. 601-602.
45. Cf. the articles by Robinson and Turner (above n. 43) and esp. Tardieu, *Trois stèles*, pp. 558-567; see also Turner's contribution to this volume.
46. See Schenke, *Gnostic Sethianism*, p. 602; also Wikel, "drei Stelen," in *ThLZ*, op. cit., n. 40, col. 571.
47. C. Colpe uses the term "theurgisch" in his brief reference to the prayers of *Stèles Seth*. See Colpe, "Heidnische, jüdische, und christliche Überlieferung in den Schriften aus Nag Hammadi," II, *JAC* 16 (1973): 106-26, esp. 124.
48. On the Chaldaean *anagoge* see Lewy-Tardieu, *Chaldaean Oracles*, pp. 177-227; cf. also Majercik, *Chaldaean Oracles*, pp. 30-45.

49. Fragment B 60 (Diels): ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὡντή. Cf. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 172 (but the reference to B 90 is a misprint). This fragment is also (partially) quoted by Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.8.1 (ὁδὸν ἄνω καὶ κάτω).
50. Ircn., *Ilaer.* 1.21.2, as translated in *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, ed. W. Foerster, English translation ed. by R. McL. Wilson, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), p. 218. Cf. A.J. Welburn, "Reconstructing the Ophite Diagram," *NovT* 23 (1981): 261-87, esp. 264, where he entertains and then rejects the suggestion that the reverse order of the Ophite invocations of the planetary archons given by Origen (*Cels.* VI.31) refers to a mystic "descent." He cites the Marcossian and Jewish parallels at n. 12 of his article.
51. See G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1961), pp. 46-47. Cf. I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), esp. his chapter on the Hekhalot literature (pp. 98-123), wherein he describes the "theurgic" elements in the ascent rituals reflected in these mystical texts. The use of the verb *yarad* ("descend") in an ascent context is reflected in the Valentinian etymology of the river "Jordan," in the *Valentinian Exposition, On Baptism A* (*NHC* XI,2): "The interpretation of that which [is] the Jord[an] is the descent which is [the upward progression], that [is, our exodus] from the world [into] the Aeon" (XI 41, 32-36). G. Stroumsa, in his review of Gruenwald's book (*Numen* 28 [1981]: 107-109, esp. 108ff.) plausibly suggests that the "descent" language in the Jewish mystical texts reflects influence from the Hellenistic mystery initiations, in which a symbolic *katabasis* into Hades and mystic visions are featured. There may be something of this influence in the Gnostic examples as well.
52. ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ Χριστός, ἐπειδὴ ἄνωθεν καταβέβηκα διὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων τῶν τῶν ἀρχόντων, *Haer.* 26.9.9. Cf. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 247-250. Rudolph expresses some skepticism as to the accuracy of Epiphanius's descriptions of such libertine cults. Cf. n. 77, below.
53. Cf. des Places's ed., p. 201, n. 3.
54. *DM* VIII.8; 272, 2-12. Text: Νόμοις γὰρ ἀχράντοις καὶ νοεροῖς ὤρισται πάλαι τὰ ἔργα τῆς ἱερᾶς ἀγωγῆς, τάξει τε μείζονι καὶ δυνάμει λύεται τὰ καταδέεστερα, εἰς βελτίονα τε μεθισταμένων ἡμῶν λήξιν ἀπόστασις γίγνεται τὸν καταδεστέρον. καὶ οὐ παρὰ τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τι θεσμὸν ἐπιτελεῖται ἐν τῷ τοιῷδε, ἵνα μεταστραφῶσιν οἱ θεοὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰς ὕψτερον γιγνομένην ἱερωγίαν, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης καθόδου ἐπὶ τούτῳ κατέτεμψεν ὁ θεὸς τὰς ψυχάς, ἵνα πάλιν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐπανεέλθωσιν. Οὔτε οὖν μεταβολὴ τις γίγνεται διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης ἀναγωγῆς οὔτε μάχονται αἱ κάθοδοι τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ αἱ ἄνοδοι. There may be a possible allusion to Heraclitus's fragment here (cf. n. 44). Plotinus quotes Heraclitus frg. B 60, together with frg. 84ab, in his discussion of the descent of the soul, *Enn.* IV.8.1. Iamblichus quotes from the same fragments in his *De anima*, apud Stob. 149 (1378, 21-23, Wachsmuth); cf. A.-J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Gabalda, 1953), p. 219.

55. G. Shaw refers to the "upside-down" state of the embodied soul taught by Plato (*Tim.* 43e), and argues that theurgy, for Iamblichus, achieves the rectification of the soul, its "turning around" (*periagōgē*; cf. *Resp.* 521c). See "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification," op. cit., n. 13, 14-15.
56. He treats the various gods, demons, heroes, and souls in Book I of *DM*.
57. ἀναγωγὸν καὶ τελεσιουργὸν καὶ ἀποπληρωτικόν, *DM* V.26; 240, 4. Cf. the previous references to *DM* V.26, above.
58. The only critical edition of this text is that found in B. Pearson, *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X* (NHS 15; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), pp. 211-352; cf. *NHLE*, 3rd ed., pp. 460-71. Cf. also my articles cited above, n. 3.
59. On these problems see my introduction to Codex X in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*.
60. Ch. 7, in Schmidt-MacDermot, *Books of Jeu*, op. cit., n. 21, p. 235. Cf. n. 22.
61. Cf. my discussion above.
62. Cf. my discussion, with reference to the *Marsanes* passage, in "Gnosticism as Platonism," op. cit., n. 3.
63. See the penetrating study by C.J. de Vogel, "The Sōma-Sēma Formula: Its Function in Plato and Plotinus Compared to Christian Writers," in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, ed. H.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus, (London: Variorum, 1981), pp. 79-99.
64. Cf. the "Naasene" Gnostic system, in which "Autogenēs-Adamas" is interchangeable with "soul." Cf. e.g., Hipp., *Ref.* V.6.3-9 (the "commentary") and V.10.1 (the "Naasene Psalm").
65. *DM* VIII.3; 264, 14 - 265, 10. Text: Καὶ οὕτως ἄνωθεν ἄχρι τῶν τελευταίων ἢ περὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν Αἰγυπτίους πραγματεία ἀφ' ἐνὸς ἀρχεται, καὶ πρόεισιν εἰς πλῆθος, τῶν πολλῶν αἰθερῶν ὑφ' ἐνὸς διακυβερνωμένων καὶ πανταχοῦ τῆς ἀορίστου φύσεως ἐπικρατοῦμένης ὑπὸ πνυς ὠρισμένου μέτρου καὶ τῆς ἀνωτάτω ἐνιαίας πάντων αἰτίας. "Τλὴν δὲ παρήγαγεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τῆς οὐσιότητος ὑποσχισθείσης ὑλότητος, ἣν παραλαβὼν ὁ δημιουργὸς ζωτικὴν οὐσαν τὰς ἀπλᾶς καὶ ἀπαθεῖς σφαίρας ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἐδημιούργησε, τὸ δὲ ἔσχατον αὐτῆς εἰς τὰ γεννητὰ καὶ φθαρτὰ σώματα διεκόσμησεν.
66. See Shaw's excellent discussion in "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification," pp. 14-16.
67. *DM* I.21; 65, 4-12. Text: μιμεῖται δὲ τὴν τῶν θεῶν τάξιν, τὴν τε νοητὴν καὶ τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ. Ἔχει δὲ μέτρα τῶν ὄντων αἰδία καὶ ἐνθήματα θαυμαστά, οἷα ἀπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ καὶ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων δεῦρο καταπεμφθέντα, οἷς καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄφθεγκτα διὰ συμβόλων ἀπορρήτων ἐκφωνεῖται, τὰ δὲ ἀνεῖδρα κρατεῖται ἐν εἵδεσι, τὰ δὲ πάσης εἰκόνας κρείττονα δι' εἰκόνων ἀποτυπώονται, πάντα δὲ διὰ θείας αἰτίας μόνῃς ἐπιτελεῖται.
68. Cf. Majercik, *Chaldaean Oracles*, pp. 44-45. She points out that Synesius (*hymn.* I [3], 539.620) uses the terms *synhēma* and *sphragis* interchangeably in an anagogic context. Cf. her notes to fragment 2 of the *Oracles* (p. 141). Cf. also my notes to *Marsanes*, in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, pp. 253-61.
69. Cf. my notes in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, p. 315, where references to magical texts are also given.

70. In my notes to the text (*Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, ad loc.) I refer to the theories of Dionysius Thrax and his later commentators. Cf. also the classic monograph on the use of the alphabet in magic and mysticism: F. Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet*, op. cit., n. 31.
71. Cf. the passage from *DM* I.21, quoted above.
72. See p. 109, n. 2, in des Places's edition, on *rhoizoumenas*.
73. *DM* III.9; 118, 16 - 119, 4. Text: ἡχοί τε καὶ μέλη καθέρονται τοῖς θεοῖς οἰκείως ἐκάστοις, συγγενεῖά τε αὐτοῖς ἀποδέδοται προσφόρως κατὰ τὰς οἰκείας ἐκάστων τάξεις καὶ δυνάμεις καὶ τὰς ἐν αὐτῷ <τῷ> παντὶ κινήσεις καὶ τὰς ἀπὸ τῶν κινήσεων βουζουμένας ἐναρμονίους φωνάς.
74. See my notes to the text.
75. This question is already implicit in Plotinus's polemic against the Gnostics (*Enn.* II.9.14).
76. *DM* IV.2; 184, 9-14. Text: ὡς κρείττονας καλεῖ τὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ παντὸς δυνάμεις, καθόσον ἐστὶν ὁ καλὸν ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἐπιτάττει αὐταῖς αἰθερῶν, ἐπεὶ περὶβάλλεται πως διὰ τῶν ἀπορρήτων σιμβόλων τὸ λερατικὸν τῶν θεῶν πρόσχημα. Iamblichus makes a similar point in *DM* VI.6.
77. It would be especially interesting, I think, to look at the ritual activities of the so-called "libertine" groups, e.g., those Gnostics described by Epiphanius in his *Panarion*, chs. 25-26 (including the "Phibionites" mentioned above), in terms of what Iamblichus says about the ritual use of obscene objects, gestures, and words (*DM* I.11).
78. *Esp.* III 56, 22 - 60, 2. Cf. Plotinus's criticisms, *Enn.* II.9.10-11.
79. *De anima*, apud Stob. I.49 (I.375, 9); cf. Festugière, *révélation* 3, p. 210. I owe this reference to Michel Tardieu.
80. *Paranoia* and *parekbasis*. While I have not found these specific terms used in any Gnostic sources, they might be applied in general to what is said of the fallen soul in such Gnostic treatises on the soul as *NHC* II, 6: *The Exegesis on the Soul* and *NHC* VI, 3: *Authoritative Teaching*. The latter treatise has been referred to, however, as more of a "Platonist" writing than a "Gnostic" one! See R. van den Broeck, "The Authentikos Logos: A New Document of Christian Platonism," *VigChr* 33 (1979): 260-86. Plotinus ascribes to the Gnostics a doctrine of the soul's "declination" (*neusis*, *Enn.* II.9.11), but this is a term he uses himself of certain souls (*Enn.* I.6.5)!
81. *Enn.* II.9.14, referred to above.

## Beauty, Number, and Loss of Order in the Gnostic Cosmos

PHEME PERKINS

The Nag Hammadi codices have provoked as many questions about the relationship between Gnosticism and the philosophical speculation of the first three centuries of our era as they have answered. Some of these tractates appear to be those read in Plotinus's circles or those referred to in Christian authors. Others appear to reflect adaptation of Gnostic speculation to meet philosophical objections.<sup>1</sup> However, it has been much more difficult to argue that Gnostic speculation, itself, had a major influence on the development of Neoplatonic thought.<sup>2</sup> Dominic O'Meara has suggested that the turn away from demiurgic production of the lower world toward a contemplative process in Plotinus's middle period may have been partially provoked by his polemic against the Gnostics.<sup>3</sup> However, O'Meara also points out that Plotinus's polemic is not dictated by the Gnostic agenda. He develops themes from his own thought which might lead those inclined toward Gnostic views to reject them. The explicit condemnation of Gnostic teachings in the reduction to absurdities of *Enn.* II.9 is predicated upon the independent metaphysical arguments of the earlier treatises.<sup>4</sup>

Prof. Armstrong's survey of possible contacts between Gnosis and Greek philosophy reaches the same conclusion. He points out that it is necessary to distinguish between occasional ideas taken from a particular tradition and the shaping of a person by a tradition in such a way that one would never think otherwise.<sup>5</sup> Not only are the Platonists of the second century consistently "anti-Gnostic" in the structure of their thought; the Gnostics are only marginally influenced



by Platonism. Some of the monistic Gnostic writings have adapted elements of Platonic cosmology to their systems, but their structure remains that of a foreign faith and feeling.<sup>6</sup> Even for the most negative of the second century Platonists, this world reflects the intelligible world and remains "well-ordered." That order is based upon the conviction that matter, space and time are limited.

The consistency of the Platonic reading of the cosmos makes the intellectual attractiveness of Gnostic "disorder" all the more puzzling. Armstrong points out that one must beware of presuming that the myth of the Gnostic generates a particular mystical experience. Myth may be used to describe such experiences but it is not their source. The Gnostic treatment of its own mythology suggests a secondary, literary exercise quite unlike primary expressions of the human psyche.<sup>7</sup> Anti-Gnostic polemic of the second and third centuries provides some indication of how their contemporaries viewed Gnostic thinkers. Both Irenaeus and Plotinus address a monistic Gnosticism, which claimed to provide its adherents with a "philosophical" reading of the world. They both ridicule the gnostic "melodrama of terrors" (*Enn.* II.9, 13) — particularly, the myth of Sophia and her passions.<sup>8</sup> They both attribute arrogance to the Gnostics, ■ desire to be superior to the "heavenly world," to step above their place in the hierarchy of beings.<sup>9</sup> They both presume that this arrogance is correlated with a lack of moral purpose, an unwillingness to undergo the harder discipline of "becoming good oneself."<sup>10</sup>

The principles on which Plotinus and Irenaeus proceed to reject the Gnostic cosmology are quite different. Irenaeus argues from the Biblical account of God as creator, an account which he has apparently also read in an anti-Platonist vein.<sup>11</sup> Plotinus, on the other hand, speaks from the Platonist position. Both thinkers reject the multiplicity of beings in the Gnostic cosmogony. Irenaeus insists that multiplication of creators can only lead to an infinite (unlimited) series. Consequently, the unity of the single Creator is the only reasonable account of the origin of the sensible world.<sup>12</sup> In the process, he rejects the view that creation is patterned after "forms" in the intelligible world. Such a pattern, he insists, would require infinite forms and would introduce into the intelligible world the disharmony and tension evident in the material world.<sup>13</sup> Plotinus, on the other hand, even with some inconsistency in his own thought, finds the living diversity of this world expressed in the intelligible realm.<sup>14</sup> However, the Gnostics have failed to recognize that a tendency toward unity governs the intelligible realm. They have thought that they would gain understanding by giving names to a whole multitude of intelligible realities. All they have done is to

reduce the intelligible world to the level of the sensible.<sup>15</sup> However, as Irenaeus recognizes, this irrational positing of beings has its roots in a tendency that was fostered in Platonic circles, number speculation.<sup>16</sup>

Both Irenaeus and Plotinus reject such Neopythagorean speculation in principle as well as the association of numbers and sounds with certain magical elements in Gnosticism. Plotinus was generally not interested in mathematical speculation.<sup>17</sup> Gnostic magic is predicated on the absurd premise that incorporeal beings could be affected by sounds.<sup>18</sup> Irenaeus's argument against number speculation proceeds from two principles: God as creator and the presumption of "disharmony" in the lower world. Both were part of his argument against the Forms. Number systems, he points out, are purely arbitrary. They can be arranged to suit any speculation. The truth is that numbers spring from a system (*regula*), which has God as its origin. Further, one should not be deceived by looking at the intervals between notes. The melody as a whole is the work of an artist and arises from opposition as much as harmony. Listening to music is not based on ratios but upon the tension between some notes; the sound of some, and the loudness or softness of others.<sup>19</sup>

Irenaeus and Plotinus thus differ on a fundamental principle. Irenaeus presumes against theories of Forms and of mathematical ratio that the material world contains within it elements of disharmony, discord, irrationality, which are overcome in the larger perspective of God as the creator of all. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that he does not reflect Plotinus's final case against the Gnostics, their failure to perceive the true nature of Beauty. Armstrong suggests that third century Platonists, especially Plotinus, recovered in Beauty an element in perceiving the world that had been neglected in the second century.<sup>20</sup> The "disharmony" presumed by Irenaeus may represent a view of the cosmos that was held widely enough to provide some plausibility for Gnostic arguments. On the other side, we find a few references to the beauty of the intelligible world in the Nag Hammadi writings. These references suggest that Gnostic thinkers would have been influenced by objections such as those raised by Plotinus.

### The Beautiful and Order in Middle Platonism

Before investigating the Nag Hammadi material, a brief survey of the treatment of "the Beautiful" as an ordering principle in the first and second century Platonic tradition is appropriate. To what extent is Beauty lost as an ordering principle? To what extent is Irenaeus's

presupposition of discord in the sensible world shared by the philosophical tradition? That the second principle is common in some circles may already be obvious from surveys like Armstrong's. Second century accounts of necessity, multiplicity and irrationality in the lower world tend to exegete Plato in such a way that an "evil" soul is operative in the material world. This interpretation is based upon a combination of *Tim.* 52-53 and *Laws* 896E-897D. Plutarch, Atticus and Numenius provide examples of such interpretation.<sup>21</sup>

Emphasis on the "disorder" to be found in the lower world and the consequent decline in use of the argument from its "beauty" appears to originate in anti-Stoic argument. The Stoic argument for an immanent divine Providence turned on three points: (1) the cosmos is the structure best suited for survival; (2) the cosmos is complete in itself; (3) the cosmos is one of consummate beauty and contains every kind of embellishment.<sup>22</sup> The order, perfection and beauty of nature prove that it is produced by a divine reason, which guides all things for the benefit of humanity.<sup>23</sup> The Platonic tradition insists on God's transcending the "ordering principle of the lower world." This transcendence is often expressed in the conviction that the highest God transcends the Good and the Beautiful.<sup>24</sup>

Philo's treatise on the creation of the world demonstrates the eclectic tendencies of first century Platonism. Its speculation about the numbers involved in the creation account is indebted to Pythagorean traditions.<sup>25</sup> God, the active cause of all that is, transcends virtue, knowledge, the Good and the Beautiful (*Opif.* 8). Philo agrees with the Stoic of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* that Providence is the most beneficial and necessary incentive to piety.<sup>26</sup> The Beautiful applies most properly to the *paradeigma* of the sensible world. Philo concludes that a god-like, incorporeal pattern was created prior to the production of the sensible world. He concludes that the number of types of object in the two worlds must coincide and that the "ideas" are in the divine Logos, since nothing else could contain God's power.<sup>27</sup> The substance which receives the Forms has nothing but the capacity to change, to become all things. It contains inconsistency and disharmony because it is without any qualities. It has no soul, beauty or order. However, its capacity to receive the Good is limited. Consequently, the beauty, harmony and order of the material world is not equivalent to that in the intelligible world.<sup>28</sup>

However, Philo's account of the elements suggests a further source of discord in the lower world. "Light" the noetic *paradeigma*, the surpassingly beautiful, is not only dimmed in the material world, it meets the void and darkness. God puts "air" between the two, which

are naturally in conflict, so as to keep discord and perpetual warfare from arising. Evening and dawn function as boundaries in the heavenly spheres. (*Opif.* 30-33). Not only is there a natural enmity between primordial elements, but God is not entirely responsible for creation. Those things which are Good of themselves or those which are neither Good nor Bad are attributed to God. Deeds of a contrary sort are attributed to subordinates (*Opif.* 74-75).

According to Philo, the human soul is particularly suited to perceive true beauty. It was not constructed according to a pattern such as those for the visible world but in the likeness of God's Word. What has been copied from a beautiful pattern will be itself beautiful. The Word of God surpasses any beauty to be found in nature. Consequently the first human surpassed any human who now exists. The descendants of that first human, like successive copies of work of sculpture or painting, have grown weaker and inferior to the original, (*Opif.* 139-45). Such decline helps explain the acknowledged difference in the return of individuals to the vision of God. *Fug.* 97-99 distinguishes three types of piety. The noblest reaches to the divine Word, the image of God. The next grasps God's creative power and comes to love the one to whom the person owes his or her being. Finally, the last form grasps God's ruling power and gains life through obedience to divine decrees. Only the person who is free from even unintentional offense possesses God himself. Others must take refuge in the three cities, the Word of God, his creative power and his kingly power. Humans need these three refuges because they are by nature prone to intentional and unintentional sin. (*Fug.* 102-105).<sup>29</sup> Philo's description of the fall equates Eve with the senses through which reason becomes ensnared (*Opif.* 165).<sup>30</sup> While hardly the beginnings of a Gnostic system, Philo's account does presume that the sensible world contains certain elements that are not harmonious and not reducible to reason or order. Philo's monotheism and his doctrine of divine powers holds these elements within the bounds of a "good" creation. However, one also finds in the doctrine of God's double act of creation, first the intelligible world, then the sensible one, a way of removing the creator from the ills of this world. The perfection of divine power and beauty can only be expressed in the intelligible realm.

Plutarch is less tentative than Philo in attributing discord in the sensible world to a principle other than God. Against the Epicureans, he argues that matter alone will never produce life, since matter is inanimate. Against the Stoic identification of God, Providence, the Logos and the creative Demiurge, he argues that nothing bad could ever be engendered.<sup>31</sup> But, and here we find the image exploited by

Irenaeus, the harmony of the universe is like a lyre. It rebounds from being disturbed. Good and bad are not kept apart in the universe. This fact is evident in the dualistic myths of both barbarians and Greeks. It is also evident in our own experience of life. We find that Nature constantly mingles good and bad, success and failure. The most logical conclusion from both ancient wisdom and our experience of the world is that there are two "souls" at work. Nature as we know it requires both, intelligence and reason and the irrational and destructive soul.<sup>32</sup> However, the struggle between the two is not equal. Fundamentally, Nature inclines toward the good and has an innate tendency to reject evil. The divine Word cripples the destructive force in the universe and creates concord out of discord.<sup>33</sup>

Plutarch's rather idiosyncratic exegesis of the World Soul in the *Timaeus* attaches this doctrine of two principles to Plato.<sup>34</sup> It would be absurd to suppose that the universe could come into being merely out of the incorporeal, since God would not turn what is incorporeal to body. Nor could he turn the inanimate into soul. Both are fitted together in a living being which is as beautiful and perfect as possible. Plutarch rejects the view that matter could be the source of evil and disharmony, since it is a substrate without any qualities. It cannot be spoken of as "ugly," maleficent, subject to excess and deficiency. Therefore, the principle of what is disorderly and maleficent must be the soul itself. The material principle needed beauty, shape and the regular geometric figures in order to give birth to creation (*De An. Proc.* 1014B-1015E). This disorderly soul only becomes the soul of the cosmos when it partakes of intelligence, reason and harmony. Plutarch claims that this principle is evident in the dual motion in the heavens, that of the fixed stars (the same) and the contrary motion of the planets (the other), (1015A). The discord inherent in this principle is removed by harmony, proportion and number. They become inerrant (*aplanē*) and stable (*stasima*) in a way that is similar to those things which are invariably the same (1015F). Plutarch finds other examples of the unity of same and other. Within the soul, for example, one encounters both what belongs to the intelligible world, the objects of knowledge, and what belongs to the perceptible one, the objects of opinion. They are combined in mental images and memories.<sup>35</sup> Plutarch combines psychological and cosmological examples of the same/other antithesis. (*De Proc. An.* 1026DE). The divine and impassive soul longs for what is best, while the mortal and passible part has an "innate desire" (*epithumia emphuton*) for pleasure. He suggests a periodic alteration in the heavens between the period in which the "same" dominates and that in which "discernment" has fallen asleep and forgotten what is

proper to it. The soul's association with body puts a drag on the "right hand" motion and pulls it back without being able to disrupt it entirely. The period of the "other" ends when the better part recovers, looks up to the intelligible *paradeigma* and is aided by God's turning and guidance, (*De An. Proc.* 1026EF).

The cosmos as we experience it provides evidence for both principles. However, Plutarch insists that the portion of evil in the soul has been arranged by God. The commingling of same and other shows order and change, difference and similarity, so that as far as possible everything has come into being in friendship (*philia*) and fellowship (*koinōnia*).<sup>36</sup> The basis of this concord in harmony and number is demonstrated by extensive numerological speculation that Plutarch has apparently taken over from earlier sources.<sup>37</sup> This emphasis on number, harmony and concord contains the establishment of disharmony and evil as cosmological principles. Plutarch's lost treatise on Beauty appears to have included a defense of the bodily as part of the definition of a human being.<sup>38</sup> "Desire" is attached to the irrational soul and not to matter in any case. But one cannot escape the insistence upon an account of the world which includes disharmony and evil among its principles. For Plutarch, this account demonstrates the superiority of Plato to the Epicurean or Stoic accounts. It also demonstrates that the true source of order lies in the intelligible realm.

The myth of the sleeping World Soul also appears in Albinus. It cannot be found directly in Plato but may represent a tradition that is earlier than both thinkers. It suggests a view that the interweaving of the irrational and rational souls is responsible for maintaining a constant cosmic tension.<sup>39</sup> Atticus, according to Proclus, agreed with Plutarch's view that prior to the divine ordering of the cosmos, the disorderly soul was responsible for its chaotic motion.<sup>40</sup> Thus, one may presume that much of Plutarch's account would have found a ready hearing among second century Platonists.

Numenius can be read as standing in this tradition of Platonism. Yet, where Plutarch and Atticus see harmony, he finds constant struggle.<sup>41</sup> Numenius also appears to have associated evil more closely with matter, the unorganized, infinite Dyad than did Plutarch. As a result, the material character of the heavenly bodies suggests that they, too, fall under the influence of evil.<sup>42</sup> Numenius also appears to have divided the Demiurgic figure into two. The Demiurge forgets itself and is distracted out of concern for matter. However, the Demiurgic figure remains "good" and contemplative. The world which comes into being as a result of the action of the demiurge is one which participates in beauty.<sup>43</sup>

Even at its most negative, second century Platonists presumed that the sensible world reflected the beauty and order of the intelligible one. If they emphasized the elements of discord and evil, it served a polemic on behalf of transcendent divine order against the Stoic version of an immanent providence to be identified with the divine Logos. It appears likely that the few references to intelligible beauty in Gnostic writings reflect the influence of such Platonic *topoi*.

### Intelligible Beauty in the Nag Hammadi Codices

The rupture between the Pleroma and the material world in Gnostic mythology permits an antitype of numerical order in the heavens created by the Demiurge, but not continuous reflections of the Beautiful. Plotinus concludes his work against the Gnostics with the charge that they are impervious to the beauty in the world. A person who cannot be moved by beauty is incapable of contemplation, he argues. Therefore, such a person cannot claim to attain to God, (*Enn.* II.9, 17). This charge strikes at the foundation of Gnostic piety.

Plotinus preceded the charge with the argument that the Gnostics have abandoned the providential ordering of the lower world. Disputes over providence were common in the second century. Several Gnostic writings construct their own accounts of providence.<sup>44</sup> The Gnostic response to Plotinus's charge that they have abandoned the providential ordering of the world and fail to see its beauty can be exemplified in *Eugnostos*.<sup>45</sup> The lower heavens are constructed according to an ordered sequence of powers of ten in androgynous pairs.<sup>46</sup> However, *Eug.* argues, the perfect and good aeons created in the heavens also reveal the defect of the female.<sup>47</sup> The aeons which come to be from the Immortal Man and his consort Sophia provide the types for what appears in the sensible world.<sup>48</sup> This region of ineffable joy, rest and glory is apparently the realm which the Gnostic reader of the tractate is summoned to contemplate. The cosmological speculation in *Eug.* apparently formed the basis for the writing which follows it in the collection, *Sophia of Jesus Christ*. The Christian Gnostic revelation dialogue combines the cosmology with a myth of the fall of Sophia's "drop" into the material world and the rescue of her offspring from the "powers" by the Gnostic revealer.<sup>49</sup> Although it repeats much of *Eug.* word for word, *SJC* lacks the speculation on numerological order and the origin of time. It retains the reference to the defect of the female in the heavens, which is clearly interpreted to refer to the Sophia myth. It presumes that the Gnostic is to "shine more than" the glorious

heavenly powers with which *Eug.* concludes.<sup>50</sup> *SJC* has a different image of heavenly resting place of the soul derived from the Sophia myth. Those who know the Father in pure knowledge depart to be with the Unbegotten. Those who know him defectively are in the Eighth. Others become a light in the spirit of silence or attain the Eighth through their knowledge of the Son of Man.<sup>51</sup> *Eug.* apparently proposes some form of contemplation of heavenly order as a key to the knowledge of the divine received by the Gnostics. They apparently become participants in the joyous, immortality of the heavenly aeons. Perhaps the defect of the female evident in the heavens motivates this turn toward knowledge. However, *SJC* reflects quite a different pattern of redemption. It depends upon a salvation gained through the revealer, who is finally identified with Christ. Such Gnosis has no interest in contemplating the order of the heavens. It is possible that the present version of *Eug.* is as much a redaction of an earlier cosmological treatise as is *SJC*. The two writings reflect a diverging path in Gnostic piety.

The path of spiritual ascent and contemplation is clearly evident in those tractates which are also reputed to have circulated in Plotinus's circles. *Allogenes* assures its readers that the Invisible One, God, transcends all things. He is even spoken of as "non-being." The One is a triad, Life, Mind and Existence, of unsurpassable greatness and beauty. It is the source of all things.<sup>52</sup> Ascent takes the form of a heavenly journey through the spheres to the One. The author concludes that the transcendence of the One, which includes its perfection and beauty, implies that He is "unknown" to the lower powers. There is no activity in the One; no concern with what is below. Yet, the One contains all things. The paradoxes of "non-being existence" and unknowability, suggest that the One cannot be known directly. *Allog.* rejects the claims of those who might say they have done so. Only Gnostic revelation provides access to the One.<sup>53</sup> Against Plotinus, then, *Allog.* holds that beauty, goodness and the other attributes attached to God have nothing in common with their use in this world. Claims to a contemplative ascent without revelation are mere self-deception.

*Marsanes* also contains a vision of the ascent of the soul through the various grades of being. It includes correspondences between the sounds of vowels, diphthongs and the shapes of the soul, which might address Plotinus's argument against the influence of sounds on incorporeal entities.<sup>54</sup> Speculation about the monad, dyad and subsequent numbers attaches beauty to the number seven.<sup>55</sup> The fragmentary nature of the work makes interpretation of its cosmological structure difficult. The visionary claims to seek the Three-powered One

and to understand "what really exists." This claim is attached to a sketch of the levels of being, which suggests that knowledge of the intelligible world leads to the conclusion that the sensible world is to be saved completely.<sup>56</sup> What survives of *Mar.* does not permit us to reconstruct the argument for that conclusion. Unlike *Allog.*, *Mar.* does not appear to emphasize the radical transcendence of the three-powered One or its relationship to the Good and the Beautiful. It would appear that the numerological correspondences and the correlation between sounds and shapes of the soul are the foundation of its understanding of ascent. The soul has to be summoned out of its infatuation with the sense-perceptible world that is the result of embodiment. *Mar.* suggests that contemplation of the celestial order of the seven planets, the twelve signs of the zodiac and the thirty-six decans are the beginning of the turn away from the sensible world toward the intelligible.<sup>57</sup> The affirmation of the sensible world in *Mar.* represents one of the strongest in any Gnostic text. This affirmation appears to have been attached to an equally strong conviction that the heavenly spheres reflect the order of the intelligible world.

The *Gospel of Truth* stems from a monistic form of gnosis, which appears to be closely related to that opposed by Irenaeus in *Adv. Haer.* II.<sup>58</sup> It presumes a close identification between the story of ignorance among the acons and the situation of the Gnostic.<sup>59</sup> We have already seen hints of such coordination in Plutarch's parallels between cosmic and psychic reflections of the "same and other." Irenaeus's reading presumes that Gnostic statements are to be read on the cosmological level simply. *Gos. Truth* presupposes that ignorance of the Father occurs within the divine pleroma. For *Allog.* such "ignorance" was an expression of the transcendence of the Father. *Gos. Truth* on the other hand, ties the incomprehensibility of the Father to the story of the emergence of the sensible world. The drama of salvation unfolded around the figure of Jesus leads to the overcoming of that condition of ignorance.<sup>60</sup> Since the Father contains all things, this entire drama takes place "within" the pleroma.<sup>61</sup>

The coordination between a story of the "fall" as the origin of a world that is ignorant of the Father and the pleroma as the place in which the story is enacted, appears in the peculiar role played by beauty in *Gos. Truth*. Ignorance of the Father leads to anguish and error which set about making a creature, "preparing in beauty a substitute for truth."<sup>62</sup> This assertion is immediately followed by an affirmation that error and ignorance are no humiliation to the Father. The Father is established, immutable truth, which is perfect in beauty.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the Gnostic should despise error. This argument follows the image of

transcendence set out in *Allog.* Nothing which happens in the lower world can be of concern to the transcendent, self-sufficient One. Therefore, those, like Irenaeus, who might argue that the Gnostic account of the lower world is somehow unworthy of God, simply fail to understand that God's perfect Truth is beyond such concerns.

The correlation between the beauty in the material world and the true beauty of the Father is unclear. Since the Gnostic requires revelation to turn away from error, *Gos. Truth* does not appear to hold that the former can direct the soul to the latter. Ménard observes that Philo has a similar contrast in *Opif.* 139. The true beauty of the divine Logos is contrasted with that found in the cosmos.<sup>64</sup> According to *Gos. Truth*, the lower world is characterized by a "deficiency" which will come to an end with the revelation of the Father. Both matter and the "form of the world" will be consumed by the knowledge of God and all will exist in unity. Thus, nothing remains outside the Father.<sup>65</sup> The exhortation to the Gnostic is to see to it that "the house" is purified and silent for the Unity. Awakening to gnosis means that the Gnostic recognizes that he or she is "in the Father" and is thus able to come forth from error and ignorance and ascend to the Father.<sup>66</sup> It would appear that material beauty could only be a deficient substitute for the true beauty of the Father, since it is characterized by a deficiency, which is to be overcome. Unlike Irenaeus, who must also agree that the material world comes to an end, Plotinus insists upon the permanence of the sensible world. (*Enn.* II.9, 3). He insists that one who thinks that the universe will end would have to argue that matter itself is dissolved, which *Gos. Truth* does appear to hold. Such a doctrine is philosophically incoherent, he argues, because whatever comes into being as the result of the operation of a spiritual principle must always remain so. Indeed, *Allog.* appears more consistent than *Gos. Truth* in its account of the "necessary" ignorance of the Father without revelation.

The alternation between cosmic and psychic metaphors continues in the dream sequence. Existence in the world prior to the awakening granted by revelation is like persons suffering a series of nightmares. When one awakens, all the terrors of the dream vanish.<sup>67</sup> Plutarch used the image of the "slumbering World Soul" to describe the cosmic alteration of principles of the "same and other." Plotinus comments that the Gnostics create their own terrors through ignorance. If they understood the true nature of the cosmic spheres, they would not fear them. They cannot be treated as tyrannical rulers but are set over the universe as givers of beauty and order.<sup>68</sup>

*Gos. Truth* would appear to reject any claim that the ultimate truth

can be known through philosophical reflection. The work consistently returns to revelation through the activity of the Son as the way in which one comes to know the Father and so attain stability and rest. For one who has awakened to the Truth, the drama of salvation has been played out. That person is no longer living in the nightmares of the ignorant. However much *Gos. Truth* owes to philosophic speculation, the author never supposes it to be a substitute for revelation.<sup>69</sup> In the end, as *Allog.* and *Mar.* also contend, philosophy must give way to revelation of the Father.

The *Tripartite Tractate* presents an even more elaborate systematization of Gnostic traditions. Instead of an errant Sophia, we find the Logos as the aeon responsible for the creation of the lower worlds.<sup>70</sup> *Trip. Trac.* opens with an elaborate exposition of the transcendence of the Father in categories drawn from the Platonic traditions of negative theology.<sup>71</sup> The demiurgic mode of creation had been seen to be inappropriate for the highest God. Plotinus rejects the idea that the World Soul could have engaged in any activity that might require deliberation to create the universe. *Trip. Trac.* shows a similar concern in its insistence that the Father does not create on the basis of a Form or have to overcome any obstacle. Indeed, the Father does not create from any external matter or generate the lower aeons from any internal substance.<sup>72</sup>

Like the other Gnostic writings in this group, *Trip. Trac.* finds an "ignorance of the Father" to be characteristic of the lower aeons. Several explanations are offered to make that view more acceptable. The unity of the entire system is one of love and longing for the Father, which stems from the fact that he is not perfectly known. Instead, the names provided for the Father by the Spirit provide knowledge through a "divided unity." The Father will graciously grant knowledge of himself, but withholds it so that the aeons will be perfected through the process of searching. Had they not gone through that process, they would think that such knowledge came through their own powers and would be arrogant. Had the Father revealed himself all at once, the aeons would have perished.<sup>73</sup>

Ignorance of the Father also guards his incomprehensibility. The devolution of the lower world results from the attempt of the Logos to grasp the incomprehensibility of the Father. Quite unlike many Gnostic myths, *Trip. Trac.* insists that this attempt was good. It was the result of great love for the Father and according to the will of the Father.<sup>74</sup> The world which the Logos begets is the realm of shadows and likenesses, of division, doubt, deliberation and the two opposing movements of the "same and other," of ascent back to the Pleroma and

descent into deficiency. As in Philo, the lowest world is the one in which the desire for power and command represents the fundamental principle of order. Association with this world of division means that the Logos must be awakened and turned toward the Pleroma and its likenesses.<sup>75</sup> *Trip. Trac.* uses the dream image in a cosmological sense to describe the two types of powers: some are like forgetfulness in a heavy, troubled sleep; others like creatures of light looking for the rising sun who dream pleasant dreams.<sup>76</sup>

Even the hostile powers in the lower order are ultimately subject to the administration of the Logos. The Logos creates and administers the world through the intelligible world of Forms, which is an image of the Pleroma and is superior to the strife in the material world.<sup>77</sup> Throughout its account of the devolution of the lower world, *Trip. Trac.* emphasizes the elements of beauty which belong to the various realms. Things in the lower realm are divided between those due to discordant powers, which are shadows and will ultimately vanish, and those which are images of the Pleroma. The latter have beauty derived from the things of which they are images.<sup>78</sup> When the repentant Logos turns toward the higher world, he gives honor and praise to the Pleroma and is able to generate images of "the living Forms, beautiful in that which is good, resembling them in beauty, but unequal to them in truth."<sup>79</sup> The administrative function of the Logos is reflected in a process of beautification. This process does not extend to all of the lower world, but to the creation of "spiritual places" in which those who belong to the aeon "church" belong.<sup>80</sup>

However, *Trip. Trac.* also operates on a threefold division of humanity, pneumatics, psychics and hylics. It appears to claim that both the pneumatics and psychics attain salvation. Like *Gos. Truth*, the story of the aeons becomes that of the Gnostic soul. Consequently, a further division is introduced into the same/other, right/left, dualism of the account. The distinction between beauty and thought provides the vehicle for this development. The realm of thought, the Pleroma, the world of the things which pre-exist, is separate from the world of images which have come into being from the Logos. We find a triple division in the cosmos. The truly beautiful are the things which belong to thought and represent the Pleroma. The middle realm, generated by the repentant Logos, is the realm of conversion. Finally, the lowest realm is that administered by law, the region of condemnation and wrath. Even the things which come to be there are images, those images are phantasies. No knowledge is associated with what comes into being through phantasies of arrogance and power.<sup>81</sup> However, the sensible world and its images are ruled by an Archon established by the Logos

after the pattern of the Father of the pleroma. The Logos uses the Archon as a "hand" to beautify the lower regions, as well as to prophesy and to administer that world.<sup>82</sup>

*Trip. Trac.* suggests that the action of the Logos differs with regard to each of the three types of person. Those who belong to thought are drawn into a material union with the lower Logos, so that they cease to be attracted by evil or by the glories of the world. Instead, they love and search for the one who can heal them from deficiency. Those who belong to the "likeness" are set under the "word of beauty" so that the Logos can bring them into a Form. The final group falls under judgment. Their lust for power is used by the Logos to administer the world.<sup>83</sup> The distinction between the process for those belonging to thought and those belonging to beauty is not clear. Later in *Trip. Trac.*, we find that the "spiritual" receive salvation immediately in the revelation of the Logos. The "psychics," apparently a category which includes Gnostics, require instruction. They are said to receive forms resembling the images and archetypes until the whole church can be assembled. *Trip. Trac.* appears to associate this process with the Gnostic sacraments, though it also presumes that Christians are rewarded for their faith, good deeds and good dispositions.<sup>84</sup>

*Trip. Trac.* introduces this section on salvation with the cosmological image of the cyclic alteration between the powers on the right and on the left. When those on the left dominate, the "wise" powers on the right appear like them in using force. When those on the "right" dominate, the powers of the left seek to copy them in doing good. This shifting alteration of powers provides an explanation for the diverse philosophical accounts of the origins of the cosmos that have been offered by the philosophers. However, *Trip. Trac.* argues, none of the philosophers have been able to advance a true explanation of the cosmos. Their arrogance and confusion reflects the "fighting" that takes place among the powers of the lower world. Philosophical systems depend upon imagination and speculation. Consequently, they mistake the realm of images for reality.<sup>85</sup> Much of this attack on the philosophers could be paralleled in Plotinus's polemic against the Gnostics. It clearly reflects conventional inter-school polemic. However, it also shows that *Trip. Trac.*'s debts to philosophic speculation are not aimed at philosophical analysis for its own sake. Its revelation entails a conversion away from philosophy. Similarly, *Trip. Trac.* speaks of a conversion away from the gods sparked by the coming of the Son of the unknown God.<sup>86</sup> *Trip. Trac.*, at least, would agree with Armstrong's conclusion. Gnosis is fundamentally a different mode of faith from Platonism, however much it may have learned to express

the transcendence of God and the ordering principles of the world in Platonic terms.

### Plotinus and Gnostic Christianity

Much of the cosmological speculation in *Trip. Trac.* can be paralleled in Plotinus. Even the introduction of division and multiplicity into the Logos as part of the generation of the lower world can be given a good Platonic reading.<sup>87</sup> But the contemplative structure of the world by which even "unconscious nature" can be said to engage in a sleeping movement toward the good is impossible in the Gnostic cosmos.<sup>88</sup> The Gnostic thinkers have appropriated a second century Platonism, which had already pointed to the disharmony and evil in the sensible world to counter Stoic cosmological speculation. *Trip. Trac.* points out that while some philosophers are impressed with the harmony and unity of all things, others are equally influenced by evils and discord. The conventional Platonist argument insists that the imperfections of the sensible world merely serve to turn the soul toward the reality of the intelligible. However, Irenaeus uses an anti-Platonist argument that the theory of sensible things as the images of "Forms" requires that disharmony and discord characterize the intelligible world as well as the sensible one. In a milder vein, the second century Platonists like Plutarch who exegeted Plato to provide a "disorderly World Soul" as a cosmic principle answered that objection while granting it in principle. *Trip. Trac.* has used that theme to provide a monistic reading of early Gnostic myths of the devolution of the lower world.

But for all of the Gnostic systems the transcendence of God and the disorder in the sensible world combine to indicate the necessity of revealed knowledge of the Father. Plotinus lays hold of another fundamental difference between his vision and that of the Gnostics when he objects to the "temporality" of the Gnostic stories, (*Enn.* II 9, 3-4). Principles of generation in the intelligible realm must always be operative. The Gnostics, on the other hand, constantly speak of things coming to be in a way that implies change in that realm just as much as they presume that the material world will ultimately be dissolved. For the Platonist, beauty and order in the sensible world are images of eternity. For the Gnostic, disorder bespeaks the illusory character of a world that is not eternal. Unlike the philosophical image of an eternal alteration of the two opposing powers, the Gnostic view is incoherent. Plotinus protests that if this world is destined for destruction, its creator

should have done so. If the Gnostic protests that not all the souls have been liberated, one should respond that there has been more than enough time for them to reject this world in favor of their true home (*Enn.* II.9, 4-5). Fundamentally, the Gnostic is trapped by categories of time and space that belong to the sensible world. These categories are mediated in stories which depend upon their applicability. Thus, Plotinus concludes his refutation of the Gnostics by contrasting the contemplation of the philosopher who knows what it means for the soul to be "outside" this world with the claims of the Gnostics that they will ascend beyond the stars. Whatever happens in this world, the philosopher can withdraw into the untroubled contemplation of the intelligible realm. The Gnostics, on the other hand, must finally dissolve this world, its order and beauty, in order to transcend it (*Enn.* II.9, 18).

## NOTES

1. See the comment on *Tripartite Tractate* in Dominic J. O'Meara, "Gnosticism and the Making of the World in Plotinus," *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. 1: *The School of Valentinus*, ed. B. Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1980), p. 371, n. 26.
2. See Luise Abramowski, "Marius Victorinus, Porphyrius und die römischen Gnostiker," *ZNW* 74 (1983): 108-128.
3. O'Meara, "Making," pp. 368-375.
4. O'Meara, "Making," pp. 375-378. Plotinus's style of reflection sought to respond to individual philosophical questions rather than to create a systematic exposition of doctrine (see R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, [New York: Scribner's, 1972], pp. 41-42, 47). Plotinus protests that he hopes to persuade those who are "friends" to engage in courteous, philosophical inquiry into the logic of the Gnostic beliefs (*Enn.* II.9, 10).
5. Arthur Hilary Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy," *Gnosis. Festschrift für Hans Jonas*, ed. B. Aland (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), pp. 100-102.
6. Armstrong, "Philosophy," p. 101. Armstrong consistently rejects explanations of the Gnostic phenomenon which appeal to a pessimistic "spirit of late antiquity." He insists that ancient views of the world were quite diverse and that Gnosticism is more likely to have been a movement among a few intellectuals than a popular, mass movement.
7. Armstrong, "Philosophy," pp. 113-114. The ritual elements which are attached to Gnostic descriptions of the ascent of the soul suggest that some experience of praise of the transcendent Father was typical of Gnostic piety.
8. On the monism of the Gnostic systems behind the opponents of Irenaeus's *Adv. Haer.* II and *Gospel of Truth*, see the seminal articles by William Schoedel: "Topological" Theology and Some Monistic Tendencies in Gnosticism," *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honor of Alexander Böhlig* (NHS 3; Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 88-108; "Monism and the Gospel of Truth," *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. 1, pp. 379-390. Compare the ridicule attached to the story of Sophia's passion in Plotinus (*Enn.* II 9, 10-11) and Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* II 18). Plotinus sketches a few principles which render the story in Sophia's fall or loss of light in the lower world incoherent. Irenaeus is more directly involved in refuting the details of Gnostic systems which he knows differ from each other.
9. *Adv. Haer.* II 25, 4; 26, 1; *Enn.* II 9, 9. Plotinus would never agree with Irenaeus's assertion that it is better to be among the "simple and unlettered" and attain God by love rather than "puffed up" with false knowledge. He claims that the Gnostic arrogance springs from a lack of educated civility and humility, (*Enn.* II 9, 6).
10. *Adv. Haer.* II 30, 2; 32, 2; *Enn.* II 9, 9 and 15.
11. See Pheme Perkins, "Ordering the Cosmos: Irenaeus and the Gnostics," *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, eds. C. Hedrick & R. Hodgson (forthcoming).
12. *Adv. Haer.* II 2; 5.
13. *Adv. Haer.* II 7.
14. Armstrong, "Philosophy," p. 114; Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, pp. 54-57.
15. *Enn.* II 9, 2 and 6.
16. On number symbolism as a primordial way of ordering the cosmos, which was adapted to the "scientific" understanding of the world by the Platonic tradition, see Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1972), pp. 465-482.
17. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 18.
18. *Enn.* II 9, 14. This view presumes that the heavenly spheres do not "make music." For the dispute over the harmony of the spheres, see Burkert, *Science*, pp. 350-356.
19. *Adv. Haer.* II 25, 1-2.
20. Armstrong, "Philosophy," p. 118.
21. Armstrong, "Philosophy," pp. 97, 103-109.
22. Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II 58.
23. Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, II 73-167. *De Nat. Deor.* III 79-93 contains the counter-argument to the Stoic view based on the evils in the world, especially those experienced by the good person. Plotinus objects to the Stoic view of divine providence that they still maintain a spatial identity between the World Soul and the divine and do not contemplate the intelligible world to which the true self belongs, (see Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 25). Plotinus adopts the same argument to refute the Gnostic claims to an ascent of the soul beyond the stars.
24. Second century Platonists developed Plato's doctrine of the transcendent One/Good/Beautiful into an image of the One beyond the Good and the Beautiful, (see A.-J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste IV. Le Dieu Inconnu et la Gnose* [Paris: Gabalda, 1954], pp. 79-140). However, these developments do not necessarily indicate a widespread pessimism as



- Festugière presumes, (p. 140). They often reflect a tradition-oriented, inter-school polemic against Stoic pantheism.
25. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London: Duckworth, 1977), pp. 343-344; Philo, *Opif.* 47-52; 89-128.
  26. See Philo, *Opif.* 9, against those who claim that the world is *agenetos*. Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* I 2; 41; 43, argues that the lack of providence in Epicurean systems destroys piety. For the Stoic influences on Philo's understanding of providence, see Dillon, *Platonists*, pp. 167-168.
  27. *Opif.* 16; 20.
  28. *Opif.*, 21-30.
  29. Dillon, *Platonists*, pp. 169-170, compares the kingly power of Philo with the Valentinian Demiurge. We will see an independent adaptation of that theme in the *Tripartite Tractate*. Dillon suggests that both images reflect an independent tradition of a demon who rules the sublunar world. In *Trip. Trac.*, the Logos establishes an Archon to rule the sensible world.
  30. Dillon, *Platonists*, pp. 174-175.
  31. Plutarch, *Isis Osir.* 369AB.
  32. *Isis Osir.* 369B-371E.
  33. *Isis Osir.* 372E-373D.
  34. Harold Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia XIII*, 1 999c-1032f (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard, 1976), pp. 138-141, emphasizes the incorrect interpretations of Plato presumed in Plutarch's exegesis. For Plato the only "irrational soul" is the embodied human soul and even that is not irrational in its immortal part. The "young gods" are assigned to create the mortal, passible soul.
  35. Plutarch, *De An. Proc.* 1024EF. Cherniss (*Moralia XIII*.1,236-37, nn d & f), observes that Plutarch has identified the "same and other" of the *Timaeus* with "same and other" in the soul.
  36. Plutarch, *De An. Proc.* 1027A. Armstrong, "Philosophy," pp. 104-105.
  37. Cherniss, *Moralia XIII*, 1, 134-36.
  38. Dillon, *Platonists*, p. 197; on the logos of the human as including body and soul in Plotinus, see *Enn.* VI 7, 4-6; Armstrong, "Philosophy," p. 115.
  39. Dillon, *Platonists*, p. 287.
  40. Dillon, *Platonists*, pp. 253-254.
  41. Dillon, *Platonists*, pp. 256-257. Armstrong, "Philosophy," p. 107, finds this picture of the two souls closer to the dualism of the two spirits in the *Dead Sea Scrolls*.
  42. Fr. 50 & 52; Armstrong, "Philosophy," p. 107; Dillon, *Platonists*, pp. 374-375.
  43. Fr. 16; Armstrong, "Philosophy," pp. 108-109.
  44. See Pheme Perkins, "On the Origin of the World (CG II, 5): A Gnostic Physics," *VigChr* 34 (1980): 36-46.
  45. *Eugnostos*, CG III 3, 78, 16-24 + CG V 1, 7, 24-8, 6.
  46. *Eug.*, III 82, 21-84, 11.

47. *Eug.*, III 83, 23-84, 11. Time frequently appears in connection with the motions of the world. Atticus apparently concluded from the irrational motions of the pre-cosmic world soul that time was precosmic (see Dillon, *Platonists*, p. 253).
48. *Eug.*, III 89, 10-90, 3.
49. See the discussion of the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* in Pheme Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue* (New York: Paulist, 1980), pp. 94-98.
50. *SJC*, CG III 4, 114, 7-8.
51. *SJC*, III 117, 8-118, 2.
52. *Allogenes*, CG XI 3, 47, 8-37.
53. *Allog.* XI 62, 1-64, 11.
54. *Marsanes*, CG X 1, 27, 22-34, 5.
55. *Mar.*, X 32, 23-24.
56. *Mar.*, X 5, 22-26.
57. *Mar.*, X 41, 24-42, 23.
58. See Schoedel, "Gospel of Truth," p. 388. Differences between *Gos. Truth* and *Adv. Haer.* II makes it impossible to identify the Irenaeus's source as *Gos. Truth*.
59. Schoedel, "Gospel of Truth," p. 386. Jan Heldermaun, "Isis as Planē in the Gospel of Truth," *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, ed. M. Krause (NHS 17; Leiden: Brill, 1981), pp. 38-42, uses similarities between the image of Error in *Gos. Truth* and Isis in Plutarch's *Isis Osir.* to argue that the gnostic writer has deliberately inverted the beneficent, wandering figure of Isis into a malevolent deity. He finds the Isis/Planē figure too thoroughly implicated in evil to simply be a reflection of the Valentinian Demiurge. Heldermaun notes that *Gos. Truth* is unusual in its identification of the aeons with the Gnostics (p. 27).
60. *Gos. Truth*, CG I 3, 17, 4-18, 29; see Schoedel, "Gospel of Truth," p. 385.
61. *Gos. Truth*, I 19, 7-17; Schoedel, "Gospel of Truth," p. 386.
62. *Gos. Truth*, I 17, 19-20; Heldermaun, "Isis," p. 31, does not observe the connection between the "substitute" and beauty.
63. *Gos. Truth*, I 17, 25-27.
64. Jacques-E. Ménard, *L'Évangile de Vérité* (NHS 2; Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 82-83, points to the parallel with *Enn.* II 9, 10.
65. *Gos. Truth*, I 24, 9 - 25, 9; Schoedel, "Gospel of Truth," p. 387.
66. *Gos. Truth*, I 21, 3 - 22, 37.
67. *Gos. Truth*, I 28, 32 - 30, 26; Schoedel, "Gospel of Truth," p. 387.
68. Plotinus, *Enn.* II 9, 13.
69. Heldermaun, "Isis," pp. 43-45, emphasizes the anti-philosophical polemic in gnostic writings.
70. See Pheme Perkins, "Logos Christologies in the Nag Hammadi Codices," *VigChr* 35 (1981): 379-396.
71. *Trip. Trac.* CG I 5, 52, 7 - 67, 30.
72. *Enn.* IV 4, 4; *Trip. Trac.* I 53, 21 - 54, 1.
73. *Trip. Trac.*, I 61, 18 - 62, 33; 64, 28-39; 71, 7-18.
74. *Trip. Trac.*, I 75, 17 - 77, 11.

75. *Trip. Trac.*, I 77, 12 - 83, 36.
76. *Trip. Trac.*, I 82, 25-37.
77. *Trip. Trac.*, I 90, 14 - 95, 22.
78. *Trip. Trac.*, I 78, 29 - 79, 11.
79. *Trip. Trac.*, I 90, 31-36.
80. *Trip. Trac.*, I 96, 17 - 97, 16.
81. *Trip. Trac.*, I 96, 1 - 98, 20.
82. *Trip. Trac.*, I 100, 19 - 104, 3.
83. *Trip. Trac.*, I 98, 21 - 99, 19.
84. *Trip. Trac.*, I 119, 16 - 132, 3.
85. *Trip. Trac.*, I 108, 13 - 110, 22.
86. *Trip. Trac.*, I 133, 16-26.
87. Armstrong, "Philosophy," p. 117; Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 68.
88. *Enn.* III 8, 3-4; V 5, 12; Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, pp. 62-66.

## Theories of Procession in Plotinus and the Gnostics

Jean Pépin

### Introduction

The pages which follow are intended as a preliminary study of some aspects only of the generation of hypostases in Plotinus and among certain of the Gnostics. My study will be a comparative one. By that I mean that it will be almost entirely descriptive, and that the possibility of influence, positive or negative, in either direction, will only very occasionally be brought into the discussion. A further limitation on my study will be that the Gnostic systems that I shall here take account of will be almost invariably those that are recorded by the Christian writers against the heretics: Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Epiphanius, and the like. They will therefore be theories that these writers thought of as Christian theories, belonging for the most part, but not exclusively, to that brand of Valentinian Gnosticism which Plotinus had very likely come into contact with at Rome, whether or not the theories in question are identical to the system which Porphyry writes of in the sixteenth chapter of the *Vita Plotini*. I shall of course occasionally allow myself to bring in original Gnostic texts to illustrate and to complete the accounts of Gnostic beliefs which are preserved for us by their Christian adversaries; but it is these latter documents which will constitute the primary evidence that I shall draw upon.

My study falls into three parts. Parts two and three concern questions of detail. Is the Logos thought of or not as a fully active

hypostasis, with its own proper place in the general movement of procession? How much truth is there in the way of looking at the procession as the interrelationship of images? The first part of my study tackles a more general question: namely the whole unfolding of the procession from its first beginnings to its final working out at the level of matter. It would obviously be a hopeless undertaking to attempt, in these few pages, to deal with the whole length of the movement of procession and with all the problems which that entails. I shall here be concerned with only three points, each of which will be introduced by a close reading of a Gnostic doxographical text drawn from Hippolytus's *Refutatio*. These three texts are already well-known; but the use which I shall make of them here I believe is new.

## 1. The First Unfolding of the Procession

### A. A Valentinian Doxography

The following text tells us, on the evidence of Hippolytus<sup>1/2</sup>, how it was that the Valentinians thought of the first stirring of movement in the procession.

The Father was alone (μόνος), unborn, having no place, no time, no counsellor (σύμβουλον), nor any other substance which one might possibly conceive of in any way at all. He was, instead, alone, "becalmed" (ἡρεμῶν), as <the Valentinians> say, and at rest (ἀναπαυόμενος) within himself, alone. Now, because he was able to bring forth (γόμμος), it seemed good to him one day (ποτε), since he contained within himself whatever is most beautiful and most perfect (τελεώτατον) to bring this to birth (γεννησάιν) and to lead this forth into the day (προαγεῖν); for he was not fond of being on his own (φιλέρημος γὰρ οὐκ ἦν). For "he was," says <Valentinus>, "all love (Ἀγάπη [. . .] ἦν ὁλος), but love is not love if there is no object that is loved. The Father, who for his part was alone, sent forth therefore (προέβαλεν) and gave birth to (ἐγέννησαν) Intellect (Νουν) and Truth, that is to say a dyad (δνάδα), which became sovereign, principle and mother of all the Eons which <the Valentinians> reckon as being within the Pleroma. Sent forth in this way (προβληθεῖς) in company with Truth, by the Father, a fertile son sprung from a fertile Father (ἀπὸ γονίμου), Intellect sent forth (προέβαλε), in its turn, Logos and Life, imitating thereby the Father (τὸν Πατέρα μιμούμενος)."<sup>3</sup>

### B. Connections with Plotinus

The Valentinian vocabulary of procession, such as we find it in the sentences I have quoted from Hippolytus, is found again, whole and entire, in Plotinus. Take, for example, γεννᾶν, which I have translated as "bring to birth." The *Enneads* apply this same verb to the procession of the Intellect, which is exactly the use of the verb that we have seen in the passage from Hippolytus. Thus in *Ennead* V, 1 [10] 7.5, the One "brings to birth (γεννᾷ) an Intellect." Or again, 5.3-4. In V, 3 [49] 12.29-30, Plotinus writes of "the Intellect which was brought to birth (γεννηθέντος)." The same verb is, however, no less common when Plotinus describes the procession of Soul from the Intellect. For example, in *Ennead* V, 1, 2.37-38, where Soul is said to "resemble the Father which brought it to birth (γεννήσαντι)," the generating principle being, in this case, the Intellect. There is the same thing again in 7.36-37: "for the Intellect generates (γεννᾷ) Soul." The verb προαγεῖν, which I have translated as "lead forth into the light of day, and which is joined with γεννᾶν in the evidence from Hippolytus, is used less often by Plotinus, but it does occur, for example in IV, 8 [6] 4.40-42. Plotinus is here dealing with an idea found frequently among the Platonists, whereby Plato uses various images in order to attribute an origin in time to beings that are in truth eternal (in this instance: souls). This is how Plotinus weighs up the descriptions that are given in the *Timaeus* of the procession of souls: "<Plato> decides to bring to birth (γεννᾷ) and to produce things that belong to the nature of the universe; he does so, by leading into the light of day (προάγουσα), one after the other, in order to make them clearer, the realities which become and which are eternally what they are." Another verb, which we have twice found in the passage I have quoted from Hippolytus, is "send forth," προβάλλειν. This verb also crops up, with the same meaning, in Plotinus. Thus in I, 6 [1] 9.37-39: since beauty belongs to the level of the Intellect, "what is beyond this beauty, we say that it is the nature of the Good, which has before her the Beautiful which the Good has sent forth (προβεβλημένον)." Of the three verbs which are used by Hippolytus, only the last — with the corresponding substantival form: προβολή, "sending forth" — is to be found in the parallel passage of Irenaeus.<sup>4</sup> This writer against the heretics<sup>5</sup> also mentions, in relation to Valentinus, and to an unknown Gnostic and to Mark the Magician, another verb which means "send forth": προίεσθαι. The same word, and the same use of the word, is again found in Plotinus. For example V, 1, 3.9: Soul is the act by which Intellect "sends forth

(*προίεται*) Life in order to make there exist another being" (probably the sensible world).<sup>6</sup> Finally, in VI, 8 [39] 17.3, the participle *προϊέμενος*, "sending forth," is used to describe the production of the sensible universe by its author.

Let us move on from words to ideas. Plotinus would not have disowned several pieces of doctrine which are attributed by Hippolytus to the Valentinians. This is true, for example, of the thesis (I) whereby the First principle brings to birth because it is, to the highest degree, perfect. Thus we read, for example, in *Ennead* V, 4 [7] 1.26-27: "When any one of the other beings reaches its perfection (*εἰς τελείωσιν*), we see it bring to birth (*γεννᾶν*) and not able to bear being left on its own, but having to produce another being." How can what is true of these beings not also be true of the First principle which they imitate? "How then could what is most perfect (*τελειώτατον*) the first Good be in itself without movement, as though it were jealous<sup>7</sup> of itself or powerless . . .?" (1.34-36). The treatise V, 1, 6.38-40 is no less clear and to the point: "all beings, once they have become perfect, bring to birth (*τέλεια γεννᾷ*); the being which is eternally perfect brings eternally to birth an eternal being. . . . What then must we say of the being that is most perfect (*τελειωτάτον*)?"<sup>8</sup> In these two passages (as also, *mutatis mutandis*, in the case of the Valentinians), the point at issue is the generation of Intellect by the One, a generation which is linked to the transcendent perfection of the One. In Plotinus, however, there is the same connection to be observed in the generation of Soul by Intellect: "for Intellect gives birth (*γεννᾷ*) to Soul, when it is perfectly Intellect (*τέλειος*). It had to be, you see, that, being perfect, it should bring to birth, and it had to be that so great a power should not stay sterile (*ἄγονον*, compare Valentinus: *γόνιμος*)" (V, 1, 7.36-38).

The same observation holds good for the Valentinian idea (II) whereby the sending forth by the Father of the first linked pair of Intellect and Truth (= subject and object) leads to the passage from the monad to the dyad.<sup>9</sup> That is just how Plotinus sees things. For example in V, 1, 5.3-8: "What is it then which has brought to birth this <Intellect>? [ . . . ] for number is not first; before the dyad (*πρὸ δυάδος*), there is the one, the dyad is a second reality and, born from the one, the dyad has the one for limit, although it is, in itself, a thing unlimited." This setting out of the one and of the unlimited dyad is a well known feature<sup>10</sup> of the way in which Aristotle and writers of the Old Academy thought of the Platonic theory of principles. This is the Platonism of the Schools which must have influenced, in parallel ways, the Valentinians and Plotinus.<sup>11</sup>

Gnostic texts often contain the observation that such and such an entity which is of an inferior rank *imitates* such and such a principle which is superior to it. For example, in the Gnosticising theology of Numenius,<sup>12</sup> the demiurge, second god, is the imitator (*μιμητής*) of the First god. In the continuation of the Valentinian doxography from Hippolytus,<sup>13</sup> we see that, when Sophia wants to have a child by herself, without a partner, it is in order to imitate (*μιμήσασθαι*) the Father. The same configuration of ideas can be seen in the text translated above: (III) once it has been sent forth, the Intellect sends forth itself Logos and Life; it does so, by way of an imitation of the Father. Plotinus will himself work imitation into the procession, as we discover in his treatise against the Gnostics. At the beginning of this treatise (II, 9 [33] 1.26-27 and 33-34), Plotinus fiercely takes issue with thinkers opposed to himself who invent hypostases other than the familiar three, and who, in doing so, distinguish between one Intellect which is at rest and another which is in movement, or again between an Intellect which thinks and another which thinks that it thinks. Not so, he replies: "there is one and the same Intellect which stays as it is, which escapes from every kind of instability, and imitates the Father (*μιμούμενον τὸν πατέρα*), in so far as it is possible for him to do so" (2.2-4). A coincidence, or more than mere coincidence? The reader will certainly have noticed that the expression which Plotinus uses when he talks of the Intellect imitating the Father reproduces exactly the expression which is used by Hippolytus.

### C. The Solitude of the Father

As we have seen, Hippolytus's evidence brings out two characteristics which the Valentinians saw in the Father. In the first place, the Father is alone (*μόνος* repeated), solitary (*ἔρημος*, which can be extracted so to speak from *φιλέρημος*). And second, he is becalmed (*ἡρεμῶν*) and at rest (*ἀναπαυόμενος*). These two features are a common enough element in Gnostic theory, one which can be found in other Gnostic texts. Thus the first characteristic I have mentioned can be found in the *Tripartite treatise* of Nag Hammadi (I, 5).<sup>14</sup> The *Valentinian declaration* of Nag Hammadi (XI, 2) goes so far as to combine the two ideas, that is to say it conjoins solitude and rest.<sup>15</sup> At least in the version of the myth which Hippolytus has chosen to record, the solitude of the Father comes in part from the fact that the Father has no principle joined with him, a point which Hippolytus also

expresses by saying that the Father is sufficient unto himself, that he has no need. Some Valentinians, he tells us, "think that the Father has no female, has no partner, is alone. . . . We, for our part, cling for the moment to the Pythagorean principle, which is unique, has no partner, has no female, has no need ( $\alpha\pi\rho\sigma\delta\epsilon\eta$ )."<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting to compare these statements of belief with ideas that were current at the time among the philosophers. Numenius also calls his First principle Father, and frees him from all labors so as to vouchsafe for him a state of rest.<sup>17</sup> There is one especially surprising passage where Numenius compares the knowledge which one can win of the First principle (called the Good) with the fleeting vision that one can have of some tiny boat lost in the immensity of the ocean. In either case, if we think of the object perceived, there is uniqueness, isolation, solitude. The ship is said to be  $\mu\acute{\alpha}$ ,  $\mu\acute{o}\nu\eta$ ,  $\xi\rho\eta\mu\omicron\varsigma$ ; the Good allows of no relationship except that of "an alone with an alone" ( $\mu\acute{o}\nu\omicron\iota$   $\mu\acute{o}\nu\omicron\nu$ ). The Good rejoices in "a wonderful solitude ( $\xi\rho\eta\mu\acute{\alpha}$ ), which no man may speak of nor tell of." Its epithet is "the Calm"  $\tau\acute{o}$   $\eta\rho\epsilon\mu\omicron\nu$ .<sup>18</sup> The Father's solitude, the Father's rest: the recurrence of these two Valentinian ideas in the philosophy of Numenius bears witness to the presence of a theological orientation common to Valentinus and to Numenius.

How does Plotinus stand in relation to these same ideas? At first blush, he does seem very close to sharing these same points of view. We have seen<sup>19</sup> — but this terminology is a commonplace — that Plotinus too calls the First principle "Father." It is rather more to the point to bring home that in Plotinus's eyes this principle is again without need. In at least one passage, V, 9 [5] 4.8, this characteristic is expressed, as it is in Hippolytus, by the adjective  $\alpha\pi\rho\sigma\delta\epsilon\eta\varsigma$ . More often we find its equivalent  $\alpha\nu\epsilon\upsilon\delta\epsilon\eta\varsigma$ . The most detailed text on this point is perhaps VI, 9 [8] 6.34-39:

A principle has no need<sup>20</sup> of things that come after it; the principle of all things has no need of any one of them. For when something has a need, its need is to search for its principle. But if the One has need of something, then obviously it must be searching to be not one. Therefore its need will have for object the agent of its destruction. And yet whenever one says of something that it has need, its need must be directed towards its good and towards its own preservation.

This argument could have been put with greater lucidity; the essential point in it is this: -1° for every object, its need is directed towards its principle; the universal Principle, the One, could therefore have no

need; 2° if it did have a need, its need would be directed towards something other than the One, which would thus be reduced to wishing its own destruction; and yet the very function of need is to safeguard, and not to annihilate. A host of other Plotinian texts have to do with the same idea; the student of Plotinus should read in this light VI, 9, 6.16-26; VI, 7 [38] 23.7-8; I, 1 [51] 2.4-5; III, 8 [30] 11.41; V, 6 [24] 4.1.

The idea that the One should be thus totally sufficient to itself is certainly related to the solitude of the One,<sup>21</sup> an idea which Plotinus embraces, even if the solitude of the One is not, as it is for the Valentinians, the absence of a female mate. He often associates, in the same way as do the Valentinian whose views are recorded by Hippolytus and by Numenius, the two words  $\mu\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  and  $\xi\rho\eta\mu\omicron\varsigma$ . But Plotinus's association of these two words is related rather to *Philebus* 63B, where Plato has the "kind" of pleasures voice its refusal to stay "alone and solitary,"  $\mu\acute{o}\nu\omicron\nu$  καὶ  $\xi\rho\eta\mu\omicron\nu$  (and hence its desire to join itself to wisdom). Plotinus does not take over wholesale the position put forward by Plato in the *Philebus*. He makes much of the difference that he thinks there must be between human good, which is the subject under discussion in Plato's dialogue and which can indeed be mixed, and the first Good. The difference is such that the formula which Plato had rejected in his ethic of pleasure, "sole and solitary," is picked up by Plotinus and applied in a very positive way to the Good as first principle. That is more or less the burden of VI, 7, 25.12-16. The same two Platonic adjectives are brought up in a rather different context, in V, 5 [32] 13.1-7. Here, the Good has nothing in itself which would be good, or which would not be good. "If therefore it possesses neither the good nor its contrary, then it possesses nothing; if therefore it possesses nothing, it is 'alone and solitary,' cut off from other things." These ideas recall those of the Valentinians (and of Numenius) on the solitude of the Father, and the same observation may be made on the rest which the Father enjoys, since Plotinus teaches that the Good is "inactive,"  $\alpha\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\rho\gamma\eta\tau\omicron\nu$  (V, 6, 6.1-3).

#### D. The Solitude of the One

There is, however, this difference between Plotinus and the Valentinians: the solitude of the Plotinian One does not disappear when the procection has been completed. For Plotinus, the solitude of the One is definitive, and even constitutive of the One. It is not a mere state which comes from without and to which the One is subjected. It is a natural disposition which meets with total acceptance. That is the

meaning of one particularly clear and striking sentence in the treatise VI, 8 [39] 7.38-40:

We shall not say either that the solitude ( $\tau\acute{o}$   $\mu\omicron\nu\alpha\chi\acute{o}\nu$ ) of the One is a suppression of its freedom, once it does not owe its solitude to some obstacle intervening from without, but instead to the fact that it is itself of such a kind and that in some way it is well-pleased with itself.<sup>22</sup>

The solitude of the One is thus neatly joined to this appearance of narcissism<sup>23</sup> and continues in conjunction with the lack of activity which ensures it. The formula which was borrowed from the *Philebus*, as we have just had occasion to observe, makes even better sense when it is expressed by a future indefinite: "the absolute One has nothing to which to apply its activity, but absolutely 'alone and solitary' it keeps itself at rest" (V, 3 [49] 10.16-18). The One of Plotinus is thus poles apart from the Father of the Valentinians. The Father of the Valentinians is, to start with, plunged into a solitude and a lack of action which is difficult to bear and not meant to endure. The One of Plotinus clings fast to the same double condition, with no inclination to see it draw to a close.

We arrive here at a critical parting of the ways, which brings to a head the whole reason for the procession.<sup>24</sup> Several explanations, not necessarily exclusive the one of the other, are put forward in Valentinian Gnosticism. The Eons have been sent forth with a view to the glorification of the Father.<sup>25</sup> Since the creation of the universe is comparable to the painting of a portrait, the cause of the universe is in like fashion the majesty of the model, "so that the artist may be honored ( $\epsilon\upsilon\lambda\alpha\tau\iota\mu\omega\theta\eta$ ) by means of his name."<sup>26</sup> The Father was unknown, but wanted to be known by the Eons, and he sent forth the Only-begotten, since it is by the Son that the Father was known, etc.<sup>27</sup> In the Valentinian doxography recorded by Hippolytus, the answer to the same question is different from those that have been listed above. It consists of the following two points: 1-° the Father wanted to break a solitude that he found oppressive; 2-° he sends forth out of love, to rouse up an object of his love. (This second idea is Christian in origin; witness the God agape of the *First Epistle of John* 4.8 and 16.<sup>28</sup>) Plotinus's position is different on both these points.

1-° The beginning of the treatise V, 2 [11] 1.7-16 falls happily into place here. The procession from the One is described by the images of overflowing ( $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\pi\epsilon\pi\upsilon\lambda\lambda\eta$ ), of over-full ( $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\pi\lambda\eta\eta$ ), of pouring forth

( $\pi\rho\omicron\chi\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ ,  $\pi\rho\omicron\epsilon\chi\epsilon\eta$ ). We have seen<sup>29</sup> that the perfection of the One leads it to bring to birth. It is nonetheless true that "this very perfection consists in searching for nothing, in possessing nothing, in desiring nothing" (lines 7-8). The Plotinian procession must thus be seen, from its very origin, as a spontaneous movement, and not as some process deliberately embarked upon in view of some aim or end. And in that perspective, it is plain that the very idea of a motivation of the procession, such as is claimed by the Valentinians, is deprived of all meaning. Plotinus himself has been careful to point out, against his Gnostic adversaries, how empty such a question must prove to be. Plotinus applies his mind rather to the manner of creation of the sensible world, and would have us no longer ask the question "why?" That is the attitude Plotinus would have us adopt for the stages of procession prior to the creation of the sensible world, and even for the first beginnings of procession.

To ask why <Soul> has produced the world is tantamount to asking why there is a Soul at all, and why the demiurge is productive. That is, first of all, the question of those who allow that there is a beginning of what has always existed; and it is then to imagine that there has had to be a complete turnaround and ■ change of mind for there to be ■ cause of this making ( $\delta\eta\mu\omicron\nu\upsilon\rho\gamma\iota\alpha\varsigma$ ) (II, 9, 8.1-5).

Plotinus, we see here, discards the problem of motivation by making out that it is all of a piece with temporality and with change. The same argument would work against the Valentinian way of thinking of the Father, to whom "it seemed good one day. . ." Plotinus's hostility towards this idea comes even more sharply into focus when the motivation that there is thought to be is held to stem from the desire of the Principle to break out of its solitude. We have shown<sup>30</sup> how, even after the procession,<sup>31</sup> the One stays alone. Quite unlike the Father of the Valentinians which relies on the Eons which he sends forth in order to be no longer alone, the Plotinian One, in a comparable situation, does not look for anything from the offspring for which it is responsible. "He is by himself, solitary, with no need of the beings that are sprung from him" (VI, 7, 40.28-29). Or again:

He had no need of the beings that were born from him; he was, instead, whole and complete at the moment when he let his offspring issue forth from him, because he had no need of it, but instead stays the same as he was before he had given birth to it. The reason is that he would not have had the slightest anxiety that it might not be born (IV, 5, 12.41-44).<sup>32</sup>

2.° The word and the concept of agape are not missing from the *Enneads* in relation to the One. The difference is that the One is not, as the Father of the Valentinians is, the subject, but the object of the love which is lavished on him by the Intellect. It is a general principle that "Every being desires the principle which has given it birth and loves it (ἀγαπᾷ)"; but the continuation of this same passage shows that Plotinus has his eye on the relation of the Intellect to the One: "and especially when the begetter and the thing begotten are alone; if the begetter is the best of principles, <the object begotten> is necessarily one with him" (V, 1, 6.50-53). There is the same doctrine and the same vocabulary in VI, 7, 31.5-6: "Thus <the Intellect> was transported into the higher world and stayed there, overwhelmed with the love (ἀγαπήσας) of finding himself close to the One." If it turns out that the One is the subject of love, that is because he is also the object of love, in a kind of *caritas sui ipsius*. That is what is described for example in VI, 8, 16.12-16:

he transports himself, or so one might say, within himself, he is in some way loved (ἀγαπήσας) himself, he has loved his 'pure shining-forth',<sup>33</sup> he is himself that very thing that he himself has loved (ἡγάπησε); that means that it is he who has given existence to himself, if it is true that he is a stable act and that the highest object of his love (τὸ ἀγαποτάτατον) resembles an intellect.

We hardly need to insist any further, to avoid any lingering suspicion that this love turned upon itself is as far removed as can be from the Johannine ἀγάπη, restless to have something to whom it can give itself — as is also true of the Valentinian Principle.

The parts of Hippolytus's treatise which immediately precede the passage we have quoted contain other ideas, no less important than those we have been discussing, but which do not so easily lend themselves to comparison and to contrast with Plotinus. Before the procession, the Father had no "counsellor," οὐ σύμβουλον. That is a feature which comes from the Old Testament, where the same idea, and the same Greek word, are found twice at least in *Isaiah* 40.13 (quoted in the *Epistle to the Romans*, 11.34): "who was the counsellor of the Lord?," and in the *Wisdom of Sirach* 42.21: "he had no need of any counsellor." I cannot here dwell upon this point. I merely observe that this denial of the existence of any "counsellor" for God fits in very poorly with the doctrine which is present in several books of the Old Testament,<sup>34</sup> whereby a pre-existing Wisdom, or at any rate a Wisdom which is the first being to be created, fulfills just this role. There is a

virtual acknowledgment of this idea in Theophilus of Antioch,<sup>35</sup> who associates Wisdom and Logos so closely as almost to identify the two, and who writes, exactly the other way round from his Valentinian contemporaries that: "Before anything was born, <the Father> had as counsellor (σύμβουλον) the Logos, which is his intellect and his thought."<sup>36</sup> Some twenty years later, in one of his treatises against the Gnostics, the *Adversus Hermogenem*, XVIII, 1, Tertullian uses the same words to confirm the role which is thus conferred upon the transcendent Wisdom: *Haec denique sola cognovit sensum domini [. . .] Haec illi consiliarius fuit*. Theophilus and Tertullian are thus united in claiming that there must be a "counsellor" for God; their agreement clearly points to the fact that Hippolytus's Valentinians had deprived the Father of any such aid.

## 2. The Stability of the First Principle

Hippolytus<sup>37</sup> describes as follows the procession according to the Naasenes:

Thus therefore, <the Naasenes> say, of the substance of the seed (σπέρματος) which is cause of all things that are born (πάντων τῶν γινόμενων αἰτία) that it is not any one of these (τούτων ἔστιν οὐδέν), but that it brings to birth and produces all that is born. Here are the very words they use: I become what I wish and I am what I am" (γίνομαι ὃ θέλω καὶ εἰμι ὃ εἰμι). That, <the Naasene> says, is why the mover of all things is unmoved (ἀκίνητον εἶναι τὸ πάντα κινεῖν); for it stays what it is, producing all things, and it becomes no one of the things that are born (μένει γὰρ ὃ ἔστι ποιεῖν τὰ πάντα καὶ οὐδέν τῶν γινόμενων γίνεται) He alone is good (ἀγαθόν), says <the Naasene>.

This doxographical extract provides us with a universal generating principle, which is called in turn seed, good, and the, a few lines after the sentences quoted above, Father. For the moment, let us consider only the name of ἀγαθόν. Two important things are said of this principle: 1.° it becomes what it wants, in other words it is endowed with free will; this idea is expressed in a way which calls to mind the famous definition of *Exodus* 3.14: εἰμι ὃ ὢν. 2.° To speak as Aristotle does (*Metaphysics* 7, 1012b31; *Physics* VIII, 5, 256b24; *On the movement of animals* 1, 698a9, etc.), the principle sets in motion without itself being moved, in other words it itself stays as it is and does not become any one of the things which it produces.

The whole of this doctrine is resonant with echoes from Plotinus.

1.<sup>o</sup> The thesis of the free will of the principle makes us think of the title of treatise VI, 8: "On the liberty of willing and on the will of the One." Plotinus takes issue here with, among others, the authors of "a certain bold (τολμηρός) discourse whose case of ideas comes from the other side." Among these authors we shall probably not be wrong in seeing some of the Gnostics.<sup>38</sup> Their views are in any case quite different from, and opposed to, those of the Naasenes. Plotinus tells us that, for them, the nature of the Good

turns out to be by chance what it is; it is not master of what it is; it does not draw from itself what it is; it cannot therefore have liberty, nor the freedom to produce, or not to produce, what it is forced to produce, or not to produce (VI, 8, 7.11-15).

Against these authors, Plotinus shares the opinion of the Naasenes, and indeed uses the very words that they had used.

Everything turns out as though <the One> produced itself. Quite certainly he does not exist by chance, but as he himself wants to be (ἑστίν [ . . . ] ὡς αὐτὸς θέλει) ( . . . ). It is just by himself and of himself that he has being. He is certainly not what he is by accident; instead, he is as he himself has wished to be (ὡς ἠθέλησεν αὐτὸς ἔσται) (VI, 8, 16.21-22 and 37-39).

2.<sup>o</sup> As for the idea of the Naasenes whereby the principle stays what it is and does not become any one of the things which it produces, the Platonic tradition is quite at home with such an idea. Admittedly, there are only one or two places in the dialogues where the origins of this thesis<sup>39</sup> can be more or less made out. In the *Symposium*, 211B, the Forms do not suffer anything as a consequence of the birth and destruction of things which participate in them. In the *Timaeus*, 42E, once the demiurge had arranged all things, he stayed in the condition which was normally his, ἔμενεν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τρόπον ἦθελ. It seems that, after such modest beginnings, the idea passed into Middle Stoicism and there became rather more firmly delineated. By this route, the idea reached the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* (second half of the first century A.D.). This writer did not, it is true, bring out the idea to the fullness which it will later enjoy, but does nonetheless give it a certain definition. Transcendental Wisdom, he tells us, "staying in itself (μένουσα ἐν αὐτῇ) renews all things" (7.27). Numenius, who has many points in common with the Gnostics, unfolds this doctrinal nucleus as follows:

the divine gifts are such that, carried from above to reach us here below, they are not removed from above, and such that, once they have reached us here below, they have brought benefit to the recipient without detracting from the giver [ . . . ]. This fine gift is the good knowledge from which the recipient has drawn profit without the giver being deprived of it. Thus can one see a lamp, lit up by another lamp, gaining light without depriving the other lamp of it [ . . . ]. That is the nature of the gift which is the science, which, given and received, stays (παρὰ μένει) with the giver even while being united with the receiver, and with both giver and receiver is the same.<sup>40</sup>

The repetitious redundancies of this passage and the comparison with the lamp are obvious clues to the text-book nature of this passage. But if we are willing to raise our eyes above the particular case of the "knowledge" which is no other than the knowledge revealed by God, we will easily come to appreciate that few ancient writers have so forcefully given us to understand that the processional movement, while calling forth subsidiary entities which are sprung from a superior principle, in no way detracts from the originating principle. The Naasenes may have expressed themselves differently; but what they had to say was no different from this.<sup>41</sup>

What shall we say then of Plotinus? Let us take first of all the Naasenes: on their theory the principle, throughout its generative activity, stays what it is. We have glanced at a few of the ways in which this theory has been expressed, more or less consistently, from Plato to Numenius. The Naasenes have shown a certain distinctiveness in their using, in this respect, the two concepts of immobility, ἀκίνητον, and of permanence, μένει. These two concepts recur frequently in Plotinus, harnessed to the same general idea. It is doubtless true that, in one of his earliest treatises, IV, 8 [6] 6.2-6, Plotinus has not quite succeeded in integrating this idea into his philosophy, since he there tells us that "there would not exist any one of the things that do exist if the One had kept itself motionless in itself," and that in that eventuality there would be no procession (πρόοδου) of souls or of sensible beings. In a treatise which comes slightly later, V, 1 [10] 6.6-7, 12-13, 22-27, one can actually see the transition from the old way of looking at things to the new. Plotinus first tell us: "The One has not stayed (οὐκ ἔμεινεν) in itself." But he then expresses himself the other way round, or at least adopts a point of view which is very different: the One

is in itself, it stays (μένοντος) quiet beyond all things [ . . . ]. Thus therefore, what is born from above is born, or so we must say, without there being any movement (οὐ κινήσεως) <of the One>; if there had been any movement of the One, in order for something to be born, what is born would then



have been born a third after the One, subsequently to movement, and not the second. If therefore there has to be a second after it, it is necessary for it to exist without the One ceasing to be motionless (*ἀκινήτου*), without it bending itself, without it having wanted it; in a word, without there having been any movement on its part.<sup>42</sup>

If we turn to the Naasenes' other formulation of the same thesis, in terms of the principle's permanence in itself, then there are, as we have seen, two examples of this in Plotinus. And we could have quoted a hundred others. Plotinus often draws here on the ideas that we have already noted from *Timaeus* 42E<sup>43</sup>; for example, in V, 4 [7] 2.19-22, where the permanence of the One in itself is put forward as the necessary condition of procession.

If therefore it is when the One stays (*μένοντος*) in itself that something is born, then this being is born from it when the One is at the highest point what it is (*ἡ ἐστίν*). It is therefore when the One 'stays' in its own 'condition' that there is born what is born from it, and it is because it stays that the other thing is born.<sup>44</sup>

The Naasenes' second assertion, whereby the principle does not become any one of the things of which it is the cause, is a corollary of the preceding point. Numenius, it is true, has no mention of this second assertion. But it is often found in Plotinus, in terms that are very close to the Naasenes' expression of the idea. For example, in VI, 9 [9] 3.39-40: "Since it is productive of all things, the nature of the One is not any one of them (*οὐδέν ἐστιν αὐτῶν*)."

Later in the same treatise Plotinus writes, in 6.54-55: "The cause of all things is not any one of them" (*τὸ δὲ πάντων αἷτιον οὐδέν ἐστι ἐκείνων*) for the reason that the cause is not identical to its effect.<sup>45</sup> There are, finally, at least two chapters in Plotinus where the two aspects of the Naasenes' theory are present jointly: the principle's permanence in itself and its lack of assimilation to its products. This is first said to be the case in VI, 9, 5.36-38: the nature of the One is to be "a power productive of beings, which stays (*μένονσαν*) in itself, which does not grow less, nor is within the beings which are born by its action (*οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς γινομένοις ἢ αὐτῆς οὐσαν*)."

The same ideas recur in III, 8 [30] 10, where Plotinus starts off a long comparison<sup>46</sup> between the universal dynamic of the One and the living principle of a great tree.

Or take the life of some enormous plant. The life permeates the plant from end to end, but the principle of it stays (*μενοῦσης*), without spreading itself

out, right out to the extremities, with its seat somehow or other in the root. Without doubt, the principle has furnished to the plant all the multiple life of the plant, but it has stayed itself without multiplicity (lines 10-13).

So much for the permanence of the principle. A few lines later (28-29), Plotinus dwells on its resistance to assimilation. "It is certainly not any one of the realities (*ἐστὶ μὲν μηδὲν τούτων*) of which it is the principle."

At the conclusion of our analysis, the impression which remains uppermost is that the properly philosophical footings of the Naasenes' system (at least in so far as they can be perceived in the condensed version which Hippolytus has given of them in the passage translated above) agree more often than not, and are sometimes couched in the very same language, as the views of Plotinus on the working out of the procession. We can check on this idea with the help of one final Plotinian text, where the principal character is no longer the One, but the Good, where however virtually all the ideas which we have noted from the Naasenes, including the allusion to the unmoved Mover and the title of First principle, are gathered together in a quite remarkable unison. It is absurd (Plotinus tells us) to deny freedom to the being which comes the closest to the Good itself;

even more absurd would it be to deprive the Good itself of freedom, on the pretext that it is the Good (*ἀγαθόν*) and that it stays in itself (*ἐφ' αὐτοῦ μένει*), without needing to move (*κινεῖσθαι*) towards any other thing, since it is these other things which move towards it, and without having need of anything (VI, 8, 7.43-36).

### 3. The Constitution of the Material World

#### A. The Material Model and Eschatology

We may learn most about the way that Plotinus thinks of the beliefs of the Gnostics and the attitude that he has towards them from *Ennead* II, 9 [33], chapters 10 to 12. There are some features in the way that Plotinus thinks of the Gnostics which coincide with what we can learn from Irenaeus, from Clement of Alexandria or from Hippolytus and other witnesses, direct or indirect, about Valentinian beliefs or even about the Gnosticism which is called Sethian. Sophia is not descended (to the world below from the Pleroma) (III, 9, 10.24-25; 11.1; cf. Irenaeus, I, 2, 4). The demiurge is cut off from the Mother (III, 9, 10.3;

cf. *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 49.1). Although the demiurge is thought to remember, for his productive activity, the beings which he has seen, he was not there to see them, any more than his mother was (II, 9, 12.1-3; cf. Irenaeus, I, 5.3<sup>47</sup> and perhaps the beginning of I, 7, 4; Hippolytus, VI, 33 and 34.8).<sup>48</sup> Fire is the first created being (II, 9, 11.28-29; 12.12-13; cf. Hippolytus, VI, 32, 6-8: soul-substance, drawn from the first of the passions of Sophia, from the world without and from which the demiurge is made, is fire). The demiurge is identified with Soul (II, 9, 6.61; cf. Irenaeus, I, 42; Hippolytus, VI, 34.1). Plotinus, II, 9, 10.27-29, attributes to the Gnostics an indiscriminate use of the nouns "matter," ὕλη, and "materiality," ὑλότης. In Hermetic Gnosticism one finds a trace of the association of these two words, when eternity and the substantiality of the ὑλότης appear to be distinguished from the immortality of the ὕλη.<sup>49</sup>

There is however another feature which Plotinus attributes to the Gnostic doctrine and which obviously held for him a considerable importance, given the place which he keeps for it. This is the point that Sophia, without being descended (to this world from the Pleroma), lit up the darkness (II, 9, 10.25-26: ἐλλάμψαι μόνον τῷ σκοτῷ; the same message in 11.1-2; 12.30-31). Plotinus tacks on to this central dogma a number of reflections and questions; it is difficult to tell exactly whether they come from his own meditations or from his source. In the role she plays here, Sophia is close to Soul, possibly even identical to her (10.19-21; 11.15 and 19-20; 12.39-40 and 43); the darkness is none other than pre-existing matter (10.26-27; 11.14-16 and 24; 12.22 and 39). There is finally the question whether Sophia or Soul, which we know has not "descended" in order to bring about the illumination of the darkness, has or has not "inclined" towards the darkness. In chapters 10 to 12, Plotinus never fails to return to this point, bringing in the technical terms of νεῦσις (noun) and νεῦειν (verb). Although the point is never quite cleared up, it appears that the Gnostics did profess belief in such an "inclination";<sup>50</sup> and Plotinus advances several arguments against this belief (cf. again 4.6-11). However that may be, the illumination does require a rational feature (λογισμός) of the world to be. This rational representation appears to have been designated by the Gnostics as the "stranger land," and to have been called by them the work of the higher powers (11.8-13). It is probably again a question of this rational representation when Plotinus speaks later of the eventuality that the Gnostic demiurge, or even his mother, exercises a rational activity (τὸ λογίζεσθαι, 11.23), conceives the intelligible realities (ἐνθυμεθῆναι ἐκείνα, 12.9-10), conjures up a thought of the (sensible) world and of

the intelligible world (κόσμου λαβεῖν ἔννοιαν καὶ κόσμου ἐκείνου, 12.11).

The truth is that the question of the intelligible model ordained to the measure of the sensible world is one which takes up most of Plotinus's treatise against the Gnostics. Plotinus spells out his own thesis in 4.7-17: if Soul produces the world, it is because it remembers the beings of the world on high, not, it is true, because Soul then practices discursive thought, but because, by doing so, she fulfills her very nature. This inevitable recall of the sensible realities implies, for Plotinus, that Soul is not "inclined." Hence the justification of Plotinus's criticism, directed against the Gnostics on this point later in the same chapter, as we have seen. Further, Plotinus claims that the principle which is productive of this world can act only by recalling the intelligible realities which he has seen; Plotinus thus at once takes up a position contrary to, and even expressed in the same terms as, the point of Gnostic doctrine which we have already had occasion to allude to. The model of the world is brought back into the ring in 5.23-27. Here we see that the Gnostics did allow for such a conception, which went by the name of "reason of the world," λόγος κόσμου, and which Plotinus at once identifies as the model of the world, παράδειγμα κόσμου. There follows a passage where Plotinus binds together the theses opposed to his own which he has already made mention of and his own insidious questioning of the same. We thus learn that the author of the world had previously "inclined," and that he was very concerned to produce another world after the intelligible world, μετὰ τὸν κόσμον τὸν νοητόν, but that the possibility is not ruled out whereby the constitution of an immaterial plan might have followed the fashioning of the sensible world, instead of preceding it.

In any case, the importance of this final text lies in the Gnostic idea whereby the "reason of the world," in other words its intelligible model, is also an eschatological resting-place, whither the faithful will retire when they depart from this world below (5.25-26). The whole passage is marked by a certain ambiguity (between ideas and souls, and between the subject and the object of thought, what knows and what is known) which is common in the Platonic tradition, and especially in Christian Platonism.<sup>51</sup> Such ambiguity perhaps enables one to grasp just how it is that these thinkers could have envisaged the intelligible, but also eschatological, model, as subsequent to the sensible world. In any case, against such an assimilation of ideas, Plotinus brings up, with a certain maliciousness, the anti-world attitude of his adversaries, the Gnostics. How (he asks) can they hope to derive any profit for

themselves from the model of a world which they hate (5.26-27)? Still more remarkable is the name which the Gnostics of whom Plotinus speaks here gave to their intelligible paradise. They called it a "new earth," καινή γῆ, (5.24), which should perhaps be brought into line with the "stranger land," ξένη γῆ, of 11.12, and which in its turn, as we have seen, corresponds to a rational model of the world, or at least to a resting-place to come. "New earth" is a biblical formula, always associated with "new heaven" or "new heavens." It turns up twice in *Isaues* (65.17; 66.22), in his description of the renewal of Jerusalem on the return from the exile in Babylon. The same formula is taken up, and given an eschatological sense, in the *Second Epistle of Peter*, 3.13, and in the *Apocalypse*, 21.1. We have known for a long time that the expression "new earth" occurs in a Gnostic document, called *The Anonymus of Bruce*,<sup>52</sup> which thus links up significantly with what we can know from Plotinus. We must however also point out that the Gnostics drew on other formulae of the same kind (though without any origin in Scripture) to give concrete life and meaning to their notion of a model of the world. For example, in a text from Nag Hammadi (VIII, 1), *Zostrianos*, mention is made in this way of "airy earth."<sup>53</sup>

### B. Reflections and Antitypes

Let us return to the information which we can glean from Plotinus on the illuminating activity of Sophia. First of all, Sophia herself, as we have seen, is not descended; on the other hand, the souls which are parts or members of Sophia have descended together (συνκατελήλυθέναι) and have put on bodies (10.21-23). And yet, the consequence of the illumination is that,

come from on high, a reflection (εἰδωλον) forms itself in matter. Then, from this reflection, <the Gnostics> have made a reflection (τοῦ εἰδωλου εἰδωλον πλάσαντες), somewhere here below, through matter [...] and <by this means> they give birth to what they call the demiurge. After having cut the demiurge off from its mother, they have drawn forth from him the world, going forward right to the last of the reflections (ἐπ' ἔσχατα εἰδωλων) (10.26-32).

The same theme crops up later (11.14-16), accompanied by a Gnostic formula: "matter, illuminated, produces soul-like reflections." Plotinus, failing to recognize the properly Gnostic meaning of the adjective employed here, objects, but all in vain, that the reflection of

a soul has no need of matter in order to be able to be formed.

Can there be any reader of the *Enneads* bold enough to hope that he has managed to draw together what Plotinus tells us into a clear and coherent conception of this system of reflections brought about in matter by illumination? To get anywhere, we need to make use of an idea which Plotinus brought into play a short while before (6.1-6) as being of Gnostic origin. This is the idea of ἀντίτυποι, "replicas," which we have to contend with "when the soul in some way perceives the images (εἰκόνας) of beings, but does not yet perceive the beings themselves." "Antitype," like "new earth," is a word from the New Testament (*Hebrews* 9.24; *First Epistle of Peter* 3.21), where it is tied in with the exegesis of types. But we cannot here, as we could for "new earth," properly persuade ourselves that the use which the Gnostics made of this other term has its origins in Scripture. For there are several distinct pieces of evidence which father onto the Gnostics the use of this word, most often in order to single out a reality of an inferior degree which is the homologue of a reality of a higher degree. Thus, for the Valentinians, Man, which occupies in the second tetrad of the Pleroma the same place as does the Ungenerated in the first tetrad, is said to be the antitype of the Ungenerated, and in a more general way, the new tetrad shows up as the antitype of the initial tetrad.<sup>54</sup> A further example: the seed of Sophia which is deposited in the demiurge constitutes the Church, which is the antitype of the Church above.<sup>55</sup> So Basilides too.<sup>56</sup> Thus the idea of an "antitype" is worked out, as one may see, to take account of and to explain the vertical projection of an entity, from above to below, through various different levels. The idea of an "antitype" is in this way very close to that of a "reflection" of Sophia, which the illumination makes appear, from above, in matter. Once we have grasped that much, we can the more easily see how, in this latter context, there works out the proliferation of εἰδωλα which imprint themselves further and further lower down in matter. There is no call to try to trace Gnostic antitypes in Irenaeus or in Epiphanius, since they are already to be found in *The Anonymus of Bruce* and in *Zostrianos*. As we have seen already,<sup>57</sup> the first of these texts makes mention of an "airy earth." This in its turn is, on the one hand, a "resting place," in the world beyond; but it does also contain, somehow locked into each other, the various different entities which include two kinds of "antitypes," one lot "airy" and the other lot "autogenous."<sup>58</sup> There is the same ambiguity here as that which we have noted earlier: the ambiguity of an eschatological resting place which could also be a kind of model of the intelligible world. (Should one come round to seeing in the airy antitypes the intelligible model,

while the autogenous antitypes are replicas of these at a lower level, or is it the other way round?) What is certain is that the word and the idea of antitypes, in conjunction with the airy earth and the model, also have a place in *Zostrianos*.<sup>59</sup> This point of intersection between the two Coptic treatises raises a difficulty.<sup>60</sup> It does however establish the place occupied by the antitypes in this form of Sethian Gnosticism. Presumably, ἀντίτυποι are not εἰδωλα. We can however entertain the belief that the two concepts, which have in common their cosmological function and their being spread over several levels, are not wholly foreign the one to the other.

### C. The Painter and the Portrait

Not everyone understands in the same way the final words of Plotinus's chapter 10. Here is a word for word translation. Plotinus has announced that, as a last consequence of the illumination, the Gnostic demiurge produces the world right down to its ultimate reflections. He continues: "so that he who has written that insults with force," ἵνα σφόδρα λοιδορήσεται ὁ τοῦτο γράψας (II, 9, 10.32-33). With the single exception of Bréhier, all twentieth-century translators appear to have followed the footsteps of C. Schmidt.<sup>61</sup> This means that they have, one and all, seen in these final words of the Greek text an allusion to the author of the Gnostic writing whence Plotinus has taken his information. But even apart from our ignorance about the existence of a writing which would be such as to make sense of chapter 10, this interpretation, though hardly a dissenting voice has been raised against it, cannot be wholly satisfactory. For example, in the whole of the preceding text, the Gnostic adversary has never once been singled out except by a plural; why therefore would there be, all of a sudden, this change to the singular? Or take the purposive meaning of the conjunction ἵνα which several translators simply pass over in total silence: what meaning has it here? How or why should the production of the world by the demiurge, by means of images which grow steadily more degraded, — why should such an idea have as its aim (or even as its result) to provoke the Gnostic author to burst out into insults? And insults against whom? The verb, which is in the middle mood, has no object.

Is it possible that we can make better sense of the passage in thinking of the other meaning of γράφειν, which is "to draw" or "to paint,"<sup>62</sup> and which is the meaning which Bréhier has preferred? What

is certain is that the idea of "painting" does have a place in the cosmogonical theories of a number of Gnostic schools. There is no dearth of examples. Hippolytus attributes to Perates a theory of the creation of the sensible world, according to which the Son imprinted on matter the forms which came to him from the Father. Here is the comparison which illustrates this passage from the one to the other:

just as a painter (ζωγράφον) copies from living things, without taking anything away from them, all their shapes and transfers them with his brush onto the painting which he produces, in the same way the Son, by the power which is His, takes from the Father the paternal characteristics and transfers them onto matter.<sup>63</sup>

So it is also in *The Anonymus of Bruce*.<sup>64</sup> The author employs the metaphor of the painting (ζωγραφεῖν) in order to describe the constitution of the universe according to what seems to be a rational model. But the most positive Gnostic text for the assimilation of the cosmogonical process to the act of painting must be the fifth fragment of Valentinus. As quoted by Clement of Alexandria, this fragment runs:

in so far as the portrait (εἰκών) is inferior to the living face, to the same degree the world is inferior to the living eon. What then is the cause of the portrait? It is the majesty of the face, which has provided the painter (τῷ ζωγράφῳ) with his model, so that he may be honored (ἵνα τιμηθῇ) by the means of his name.<sup>65</sup>

The essential point in this fragment is the setting up of a comparison between the relation of the picture to its living model and the relation of the world to its model, which is no less a living model.<sup>66</sup> The fact that the cause (or exemplar) of the portrait should be identified with a face enables us to understand that the world also has its cause or exemplar. The end of the text leads us to suppose that, in either case, there is a final cause. It is true that, once we have said so much, there do remain many obscurities, obscurities which the context of the quotation may eventually dispel.<sup>67</sup> The way in which Clement introduces the remarks from Valentinus<sup>68</sup> shows that he is going to deal with Valentinus's ideas on the God who is creator of the world, if, as seems probably, he is somewhere around, must be referred to by another name. And that is what we discover from the sentence which follows Clement's quotation of the fragment. Clement continues:

For the Demiurge, in so far as he was called God and Father, he it is that <Valentinus> has called the portrait (εἰκόνα) of the true God and his

prophet, while he has given the name of painter (ζωγράφον) to Sophia, whose portrait is a making (πλάσμα), for the glory of the invisible, since from a conjunction there proceed (προέρχεται) only πλήρωματα, while from a unique principle there proceed only portraits.<sup>69</sup>

The usefulness and significance of this commentary from Clement of Alexandria was earlier called into question,<sup>70</sup> but that is no longer the case today. Its essential contribution is to bring out, and to emphasize, the two figures of Sophia and the demiurge, which had been only implicit arises from Sophia is described by the artistic metaphor, the metaphor of the portrait made by the painter. The linking of ideas which Valentinus conceived is far from coinciding with the ideas of Perates as they are recorded by Hippolytus; and both these sets of ideas are again very different from the theories of *The Anonymus of Bruce*, at least in so far as one can make out the latter. The feature which they have in common is their representing, with a certain forcefulness, the production of the sensible world following the model of a picture. Can we draw on this idea to shed light on the last line of Plotinus's chapter 10? The ideas we have mentioned do at the very least stir us to try out for the participle γράψας the meaning of "paint." It would be overdoing things to want to understand, in a line that is tightly and strictly Valentinian, "Sophia who has painted the demiurge."<sup>71</sup> But we can imagine, in a Gnostic perspective, that the principle which had intervened as a painter, whether of the demiurge, or of the model, or even of the sensible world, at the sight of the calamitous result of the creative enterprise, should have been overwhelmed with insults for having participated in such an enterprise. We may therefore suggest, as a mere working hypothesis, the translation: "so far as for the author of this picture to be laden with violent reproaches."<sup>72</sup>

#### D. The Quest for Honor

Is it possible that the text of Plotinus might be useful, if we attempt, so to speak, to tread the path backwards and to understand the fragment from Valentinus? We have seen<sup>73</sup> that the treatise II, 9 twice brings up, and twice rejects, the supposedly Gnostic idea whereby the producer of the sensible world has been inspired in his activity by "the intention of being honored," ἵνα τιμῶτο. The exact identity of the formula in the two cases, and the way in which it is brought forward by

Plotinus<sup>74</sup> show that we have to do with a literary quotation, which should be put into inverted commas. And yet, the entity to whom one attributes this desire for honor is not quite the same in the two chapters. In II, 9, 4.2-15, it is a question of the universal Soul, which Plotinus tells us does not "incline"; translated into terms of Gnosticism, this will be Sophia.<sup>75</sup> But in II, 9, 11.15-21, Soul seems to have yielded place to its "reflection" (ψυχῆς εἶδωλον), which is also its product (τῷ ποιήσαντι) that is to say, as we have already seen in 10.26-31, that we have to do here with the demiurge, son of Sophia.<sup>76</sup> We must look now at the almost identical formula of Valentinus, fragment 5: ἵνα τιμῶθῃ. . . . It must at once be granted that the subject of this verb does not emerge clearly from the text. Scholars generally think<sup>77</sup> that we have to do here with the "face," to which the "name" also belongs. Without wishing to enter into the very considerable theological problems which are implied by these words, and which have been very cleverly disentangled by A. Orbe, one may say that this option has very little persuasive force, whether we consider the ideas involved or the grammar. In the comparison ὅσπον . . . , τοσοῦτον . . . which opens the fragment, what is important is naturally the apodosis, i.e. the inferiority of the sensible world in relation to its model. How is it exactly that the production of a debased world would be conducive to the honor of "the majesty of the living face," an expression wherein one can dimly discern, whatever may be its exact meaning, a reference to a principle of a very high rank? Things are so unclear, that Plotinus's Gnostic doxography may here be of some use. No-one would claim that Valentinus's fragment is the source of Plotinus's passage. But how can one exclude<sup>78</sup> the possibility that there may be more than a simple coincidence between the formula which is certainly Gnostic ἵνα τιμῶτο and the Valentinian formula ἵνα τιμῶθῃ? Plotinus could read; if he has given a subject of the verb "to be honored" once Sophia, and once the demiurge, there can be no doubt that that is because his source authorized him to do so. We know from Clement's commentary that Sophia and the demiurge are present, under different names, in Valentinus's fragment. How can we refuse to credit one or the other, or one and the other, "the intention of being honored" by the production of the sensible world? As much as, and even more so than, his model, and especially if the model is of a preeminent "majesty," the painter can lay claim to the honor due from a successful portrait, and the portrait itself can hope to share in the glory of the living Face.

### E. The Illumination of the Darkness According to the Docetists

Chapters 10 to 12 of Plotinus's treatise against the Gnostics still contain numerous points of detail where the interpretation is uncertain; nonetheless these few pages contain a body of doctrine, succinctly expressed and relatively coherent in its main outlines. The essential feature is undoubtedly the illumination of the pre-existent darkness by Sophia and the ensuing appearance, within matter, of a series of reflections, leading up to the constitution of the sensible world. That is the main picture which one can discern, enmeshed of course, as it is, with Plotinus's own criticisms of and objections to the theory. Compared with this, there is nothing of quite the same calibre in the Valentinian doxographies of Irenaeus or of Hippolytus.<sup>79</sup> It is true, however, that Hippolytus does bring to our attention a conception of things which is certainly related to what we find in Plotinus. This Hippolytus attributes to a different current of Gnostic opinion, which he describes as being that of the Docetists. Here is a part of the description which he gives:<sup>80</sup>

All intelligible nature had been arranged in good order, with nothing lacking to it, and all these intelligible and eternal realities were light (κακόσμητο μὲν ἀνευδεῆς πᾶσα ἡ νοητὴ φύσις, φῶς δὲ ἦν ὅπαντα ἀκείμενα τὰ νοητὰ καὶ αἰώνια), but a light which was not without form, nor inactive, nor which had any need, of any kind, of a further intervention. It had, on the contrary, within itself, ideas infinite in number, like the fig-tree: of an infinite number, an infinite number of times; living beings from the world yonder, in their multiple diversity. It shone forth (κατέλαμψεν) from on high into the underlying chaos. The chaos, illuminated (φωτισθέν) and at the same time endowed with form by the action of the ideas come down from on high in their multiple diversity, took on consistency and received within itself all the ideas from one high, which came from the third Eon, which was itself split into three.

But this third Eon saw the characters (χαρακτήρας) which belonged to it, all together held down in the lower underlying darkness (σκότος). It did not fail to know the power of the darkness, nor the innocence of the light as well as its generosity (ἁφθονον). It therefore did not allow for long the luminous characters (φωτανοὺς χαρακτήρας) from above to be pulled down below by the lower darkness. Against that, it established beneath the Eons the firmament of heavens, from below, and it separated<sup>81</sup> [. . .]. Thus therefore, as I have said, all the ideas infinite in number, from the third Eon, were captured in the darkness of the lowest region. Right up to the Eon itself, there is nothing that has not had its imprint stamped (ἐναυπηφράγεται [. . .] τὸ ἐκτύπωμα) with the others, a living fire horn from the light (πῦρ ζῶν ἀπὸ φωτὸς γενόμενον). From there is born the great

Archontes, of whom Moses says<sup>82</sup> [. . .] "Thus therefore the god in form of fire, fire born from the light, has produced the world in the manner which Moses recounts. It is itself without substantial existence (ἀνυπόστατος), since it has darkness for substance (οὐσία), and it is a ceaseless offence to the eternal characters of light which have come down and which are held in the lower region (ἐνυβρίζον ἀεὶ τοῖς κατεληγμένοις ἄνωθεν κάτω τοῦ φωτὸς αἰώνιαις χαρακτήρσι). Thus therefore, as far as the manifestation of the Saviour, the god of fire born from the light, the demiurge, was cause of there being a great wandering (πλάνη) of souls — for the ideas are called souls (ψυχὰι γὰρ αἱ ἰδέαι καλοῦνται) because they were exhalations (ἀποφυγεῖσθαι) from the upper regions, so as to pass their life in the darkness, exchanging their bodies for other bodies, kept under close guard by the demiurge . . . but, starting from the Saviour, the transmigration (μετενσώματώσις) has come to an end, the faith is proclaimed [. . .]."

This great myth is a wonderful support of the Gnostic mentality in general. Still more, it has several distinctive features which support the comparison with certain doctrinal points that Plotinus attributes to the Gnostics who are under attack in II, 9, especially in the three central chapters which we have been studying.

1.<sup>o</sup> A considerable place is given in the myth to the description of the well-ordered intelligible world, which contains the innumerable ideas of innumerable living beings (in the way that the fruit of the fig-tree produces countless seeds). This is the analogue of the rational model which the Gnostics of whom Plotinus speaks thought of implicitly as underlying the sensible world beneath the different names of λόγος κόσμου (II, 9, 5.26), λογισμὸς τοῦ κόσμου (II.11), κόσμον ἔννοια (II.11), "new earth" (5.24), "stranger earth" (II.21), etc. We have already highlighted, in the expressions just quoted, the ambiguity between an objective and a subjective meaning, between an intelligible model and an eschatological place. We are, in the present passage, confronted with the same sort of lack of determinacy, since the ideas are also souls, and since their intelligible totality is identified with an Eon, said to be the "third."

2.<sup>o</sup> The most obvious point these passages have in common is the one which relates to the illumination of the darkness. There is however a difference of content and of approach: in Plotinus's description, the model precedes the illumination and stays distinct from the illuminating power; whereas here, it is the light itself, the light which acts by itself and which is credited with an eminently active quality which is generosity, or more exactly the lack of jealousy.<sup>83</sup> The upshot is that

the three terms which are kept separate by the Gnostics whom Plotinus criticizes, namely Sophia, the model, the light, join together now in a light which is also intelligible world and agent of illumination. Apart from that, the process of the illumination of the lower darkness is more or less identical in both accounts, and is spoken of in the same words: καταλάμπειν (II, 9, 12.40), φωτίζειν (11.14), σκότος (10.26, etc.), κάτω (10.19).

3.° But the luminous intelligibles of the Docetists are also "characters" belonging to the third Eon, characters which stamp their "imprint" on the darkness. The image of the seal is missing in Plotinus's account. But one can scarcely fail to associate these ἐκτυπώματα with the εἶδωλα that in a similar way are stirred up in the shadowy matter by the illumination which comes from on high, and also with the ἀντίτυποι, a word with the same root and whose use by the Gnostics we have already noted.

4.° The figure of the demiurge, at least as he is seen by the Docetists, is defined fairly precisely. He is also called "great archonte" and "god of fire born from the light."<sup>84</sup> He is the creator God of Genesis. In the same way as the demiurge that Plotinus denounces is ■ "reflection" of Sophia, so the demiurge of the Docetists is an "imprint" of the third Eon. The fire which it is made from comes from a lowering of the light. But in the illumination accomplished by Sophia, fire appears first (II, 9, 11.28-29; 12.12-14). After criticizing his adversaries with "introducing other hypostases" (6.1), Plotinus, we have seen, brings in the possibility that their demiurge is ■ substance (εἰ μὲν γὰρ οὐσία, 11.18-19), in order to show up the contradictions inherent in this thesis. We can hardly not have all this brought to mind, when we read in Hippolytus's evidence that the demiurge has no other substance than that of the darkness and that, notwithstanding this, it is "stripped of hypostasis." A final feature peculiar to the demiurge of the Docetists: he insults the characters of light imprisoned in the lower place. The aggressiveness suits the psychology of the other demiurge, the one who is thought to have produced the world "by bravado and by boldness" (11.21-22), which is as much as to say by provocation and by impiety.

5.° But the ideas are also souls, which have therefore descended into the darkness in order to undergo ■ "great wandering." This point, which is laid to the account of the Docetists, recalls the "migrations" (παροικήσεις)<sup>85</sup> which were brought in by Plotinus's adversaries (6.2). Condemned to live in the darkness, the souls travel from body to body

by "metempsychosis." The word and the idea which it conveys were current in other Gnostic schools, for example in the circle of Simon Magus,<sup>86</sup> of Basilides,<sup>87</sup> of Carpocrates,<sup>88</sup> and also among the Gnostics of Plotinus (6.13). There is hardly need to add that Plotinus's Gnostics also professed belief in the descent of particular souls and in their dwelling in bodies that were not always human bodies (10.21-23), prisoners in a world from which only a very small number of them will ever escape, and even then only with the greatest difficulty (12.3-7).

The grandiose conception of these characters of light, transcendent beings stamping their imprint on the dark shadows of matter, is noteworthy for another reason. A very similar set of ideas is found in the *Chaldaic Oracles*. Several fragments from this collection speak of divine epiphanies which are produced in the aether and which mark the faithful believer with an imprint. The localization of these phenomena will be a puzzle for Simplicius. In his *Corollarium de loco*, Simplicius presents the difficulty thus:

If we turn to the point that the imprints of the characters and of the other divine apparitions (τοὺς τύπους τῶν τε χαρακτήρων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων θείων φασμάτων) are manifested in place, then the chief issue is that all that can hardly be adapted to the *Oracles*, when they say that these phenomena are manifested in aether, but not in light.<sup>89</sup>

Simplicius has taken his information on the *Oracles* from Proclus.<sup>90</sup> One ■ therefore hardly surprised to see that Proclus, drawing probably on the same *Oracles*,<sup>91</sup> alludes to "characters of light (φωτὸς χαρακτήρες) by means of which the gods show themselves to their own offspring."<sup>92</sup> This same way of looking at things, which goes back to the *Chaldaean Oracles*, crops up again, via Proclus and what Proclus says on the characters of light, when Denis the Areopagite writes<sup>93/94</sup> that the holy symbols of Scripture are "the offspring and imprints of the divine characters" (τῶν θείων ὄντα χαρακτήρων ἐκγονα κατ' ἀποτυπώματα). The similarity of content and of vocabulary is striking, if we bring together, on the one hand, the three parallel formulae of Simplicius, Proclus and Denis, and, on the other, the cosmogonical myth of the Docetists. If we plump for the end of the second century as the date of origin of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and if we put Hippolytus *Refutatio* shortly after 222, then we might properly wonder whether there were not ultimately some kind of relation between Hippolytus's source on the Docetists and the first glimmerings of theurgical speculation.

## NOTES

1. These texts are transcribed, in whole or in part, in a number of collections. They are briefly analyzed by A. Hilgenfeld, *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums* (Leipzig, 1884), pp. 465-466 (Hippolytus on the Valentinians), p. 255 (on the Naasenes), pp. 549-550 (on the Docetists). There is a German translation in W. Foerster, *Die Gnosis I*, in the collection "Bibliothek der Alten Welt" (Zürich-Stuttgart, 1969), pp. 244, 344, 395-397 (in the same order as that given above); an English translation in the English version of the same work by R. McL. Wilson (Oxford, 1972), pp. 186, 267-268, 309-310. The text on the Valentinians has been reproduced by W. Völker, *Quellen zur Geschichte der christlichen Gnosis*, in the collection "Sammlung [ . . . ] Quellenschriften," N.F. 5 (Tübingen, 1932), p. 128.6-17; the text on the Naasenes is reproduced *ibid.*, p. 14.14-18.
2. *Refut.* VI 29, 5-7 Wendland, p. 156.9-21.
3. I have put within single inverted commas the words which Hippolytus seems to give as being directly Valentinian. There is a more or less parallel passage in Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I 1.1, where it is said in particular that the First principle has stayed "in a great rest and in a great calm" (ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ καὶ ἡρεμίᾳ πολλῇ) for an infinity of centuries. Cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Valent.* 7.4, ed. Kroymann, p. 184.11-12: "in maxima et altissima quiete, in otio plurimo." On the parallelism (and on the divergences) of the Valentinian evidence from Irenaeus, I 1.1 and from Hippolytus VI 29, see F.M.M. Sagnard, *La gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de saint Irénée*, in the collection "Études de Philos. médiévale," XXXVI (Paris, 1947), pp. 146-148.
4. *Adv. Haer.* I 1.1-2; cf. also Clément d'Alex., *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 29.
5. *Ibid.*, I 4.4; LL. 3; 14.1-2.
6. Cf. M.I. Santa Cruz de Prunes, "La genèse du monde sensible dans la philosophie de Plotin," in *Biblioth. de l'École des Hautes Études, Sc. relig.*, LXXXI (Paris, 1979), p. 70.
7. Φθονήσαν. The lack of jealousy (φθνος) in God is a theme which comes to Plotinus (cf. also V, 5 [32] 12.45; II, 9 [33] 17.16-17) from *Timaeus* 29E. But the Gnostics, who shared Plotinus's belief on this point, very probably took their idea of it from the same source; cf. *Tripurite treatise* (Nag Hammadi I, 5) 57.30-32, translated by H.W. Attridge and D. Mueller in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. J.M. Robinson, (Leiden, 1977), p. 59: the Father having given birth to the first-begotten Son, "He revealed the unsurpassable power and he combined with it the great abundance of his generosity (ἀφθονία)"; cf. H.-Ch. Puech and G. Quispel, "Le quatrième écrit gnostique du Codex Jung," in *Vigil. christ.* IX (1955): 76.
8. M. Atkinson, *Plotinus: Ennead V. 1, On the three Principal Hypostases*, "A Comment. with Transl.," in the collection "Oxf. Class. and Philos. Monographs" (Oxford, 1983), p. 148 *ad loc.*, sees a biological pattern in the idea that the attainment by a being of its completed state releases a reproductive activity.
9. For the word "monad," cf. Hippolytus, *Refut.* VI, 29.2, p. 155.22-25 = W. Völker, *Quellen . . .*, p. 127.19-21: for Valentinus and others, disciples of Pythagoras and of Plato, "there is as principle of all things a monad (μονάς) unborn [ . . . ] to this monad they give the name of 'Father.'" We know that there are two versions of the way in which Valentinus is supposed to have thought of the Pleroma, cf. G.C. Stead, "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," in *The Journal of Theol. Studies* XX (1969): 77-79. In one of the versions, the so-called B version, which is the one which we have just read as recorded by Hippolytus, the supreme Principle has no partner. But Hippolytus himself knows of another version, the so-called A version, which he pays scant attention to as being less authentically Valentinian (*Refut.* VI, 29.3-4, pp. 155.25-156.8 = W. Völker, pp. 127.21-128.6); this version is however the one which Irenaeus prefers. On this A version, the Principle of the Valentinians has a partner called Thought, Grace and Silence (*Adv. Haer.* I, 1.1); and from this way of looking at things, it is the original couple which is the dyad (*ibid.*, I, 11.1). But what then is the monad? Probably the Father, before his joining up with Silence. That at least is what seems to be the purport, not of Irenaeus's description, but of a writing from Nag Hammadi (XI, 2), entitled a *Valentinian declaration*, 22.18-26, translated by J.D. Turner (*NHL*), p. 436: "the Father [ . . . ], the Ineffable One who dwells in the Monad [ . . . ] he was a Monad and no one was before him. He dwells in the Dyad and in the Pair, and his Pair is Silence."
10. Cf. K. Gaiser, *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre* (Stuttgart, 1968), texts n°8, p. 453; 23 b, pp. 481-482; 30, p. 493; 32, 277, p. 501; 50, p. 530; 60, p. 541; L. Tarán, *Speusippus of Athens*, in the collection "Philos. antiqua," XXXIX (Leiden, 1981), *testim.* 45 ab, pp. 132 and 225-226; p. 326, n. 133; fgt 40, pp. 147 and 329-330; fgt 48, pp. 152 and 351-356; fgt 59, pp. 156 and 380-381.
11. The reference to Aristotle is obvious in *Enn.* V, 1 5.14 and V, 4, 2.7-8.
12. Fgt 16 des *Places*, 6-7 and 14-15, p. 57.
13. *Refut.* VI, 30.6-7, p. 158.1-3 = Völker, p. 129.18-20.
14. 51.8-11, translation p. 55: "The Father is a unity, like a number, for he is the first and is that which he alone is." The association of these texts has been made by H.-Ch. Puech and G. Quispel, *art. cit.*, pp. 72-77; see also A. Orbe, *Hacia la primera teología de la procesión del Verbo* (Estudios Valentinianos I/1), in the collection "Analecta Gregoriana," XCIX (Romae, 1958), pp. 186-188; J. Zandee, *The Terminology of Plotinus and of some Gnostic Writings, mainly the Fourth Treatise of the Jung Codex*, in the collection "Public. de l'Institut . . . néerlandais de Stamboul," XI (Istanbul, 1961), p. 8.
15. 22.21-22, translation p. 436: (the subject is the Father) "He dwells alone in silence, and silence is tranquility."
16. *Refut.* VI, 29.3-4, p. 156.1-8 = Völker, pp. 127.23-128.5; Hippolytus means that he chooses to put forward the theory of the Father which will be the closest to Pythagoreanism, which is the system that he links up most closely to Valentinianism. In fact, our basic text starts almost immediately



- afterwards.
17. Fgt. 12.12-13, p. 54: the Father is θεὸς ἀργός, *deus otiosus*.
  18. Fgt. 2.7-16, pp. 43-44; there is an excellent commentary by A.J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, IV: Le Dieu inconnu et la gnose*, in the collection "Études bibliques" (Paris, 1954), pp. 128-132.
  19. Above, p. 299; the treatise in question was II, 9, 2.4; one may add V, 8 [31] 1.3; V, 5 [32] 12.37.
  20. Ἀρχὴ δὲ οὐκ ἐνδεής; a feminine subject and a neuter adjective, agreement *ad sensum* with the forward-looking noun τὸ εἶν (line 36). The Plotinian One, deprived of all need in so far as it is a principle, may be associated, in the last text quoted from Hippolytus, with the mention of the Pythagorean principle, the monad, which is also without need.
  21. Cf. V, 4 [7] 1.12-16, where the One is said to be totally self-sufficient and, immediately afterwards, to be "alone."
  22. It is interesting to realize that this statement is part of a series of arguments which Plotinus brings up against a mysterious "bold speech" (line 11), which is perhaps Gnostic in nature.
  23. I, 1.2. It goes without saying that this utterance is of course only a *façon de parler*, and that no reality is further removed than the One is from narcissism properly so-called; cf. P. Hadot, "Le mythe de Narcisse et son interprétation par Plotin," in *Narcisses, Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* XIII (1976): 98 sq.
  24. Very close to this problem is that of the "why" of creation. On this question, cf. the monograph of Kl. Kremer, "Das 'Warum' der Schöpfung: 'quia bonus' vellet 'quia voluit'? Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Neuplatonismus und Christentum an Hand des Prinzips 'bonum est diffusivum sui,'" in *Parusia, Mélanges J. Hirschberger* (Frankfurt/Main, 1965), pp. 241-264; pp. 243-254 on Plotinus, who gave three answers to the question, or so the author believes.
  25. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 1.2.
  26. Fgt. 5 of Valentinus, Völker, p. 59.2-5 = Clement of Alex., *Strom.* IV, 13, 89.6-90. (I shall come back later, below, to this difficult text and I shall then try to justify the translation that has been given above.) Clement himself rejects this idea by means of a pseudo-Platonic quotation: "For it is not with a view to profiting from it that God has produced the world, in order to gather honors (ἵνα τιμᾶς [...] καρποῖτο) from men and from other gods and demons" (*Strom.* V, 11, 75.3, ed. Stahlin, p. 376.22-24, ■ passage which is probably the source of Theodoretus, *Graec. affect. cur.* IV, 34 and VII, 48). It has long been remarked upon that the Valentinian motivation of the creation is touched upon in *Enn.* II, 9, 4.13-15, where Plotinus attributes to his Gnostic adversaries what he takes to be the ridiculous idea that the Soul which produces this world would have been motivated by the wish to "be honored" (ἵνα τιμᾶτο), as is the case with people who make statues in this world. In II, 9, 11.21, exactly the same formula crops up, and is again presented as a piece of Gnostic theorizing, but applied this time, or so it would seem, to the demiurge. This coincidence obviously helps the

- hypothesis whereby Valentinians had their place among the Gnostics; cf. H.-Ch. Puech, "Plotin et les Gnostiques," in *Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt, t.V: Les sources de Plotin* (Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1960), p. 162 (taken up again in *En quête de la Gnose, I: La Gnose et le temps* [Paris, 1978], p. 84).
27. Clement of Alex., *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 7.1. A very similar explanation of the sending-forth of the Son (the Father, unknown because of his transcendental greatness, wanted to be known) is to be found in the *Tripartite treatise* 57.25-30, the translation already quoted, p. 59: "is unknown because of its surpassing greatness. Yet he wanted it to be known, because of the riches of his sweetness. And he revealed the unsurpassable power." An analogous intention is attributed to the Father in Hermetic Gnosticism, to justify not the sending-forth of the Son, but the production of visible beings: from the one who is invisible, "it is just for that reason that he has created, to make himself visible (ἵνα ὁρατὸς ᾗ)" (*Corp. Herm.* XIV, 3, ed. Nock, p. 223.4, translated by Festugière in the French version of this article; the same thesis is stated in XI, 22, p. 156.16-18).
  28. There is a comparable motivation, not for the procreation, but for creation, in Origen, *De princ.* IV, 4, 8 (35), ed. Koetschau, p. 359.11-13: "Huius deus, qui natura bonus est, habere quibus bene faceret et qui adeptis suis beneficiis laeterentur, fecit se dignas creaturas."
  29. Above, p. 299.
  30. Above, pp. 300-301.
  31. And for which, incidentally, there is no before. We know that, for Plotinus, time is a property of Soul. Beings in the world beyond, i.e. the intelligibles, have eternity, not time (II, 5 [25] 3.8; IV, 4 [28] 1.12-13), from which it follows that they are all at once (ἁμῶς) (V, 9 [5] 10.9-11), which removes them from time as well as from place and implies that for them there is no after nor before: true Being "does not have in itself one thing, then another; one cannot subject it to separation, nor to development, nor to advancement, nor to extension; one cannot conceive of anything which would be before ■ or after it" (III, 7 [45] 6.15-17). *A fortiori* that proves to be true on the level of the One; for, as Plotinus has said, *Tim.* 37D, "eternity rests in the One," and it is by resting close to the One that Being benefits from eternity (III, 7, 6.1-12); on Plotinus's use of the quotation from Plato, see W. Beierwäites, *Plotin, Über Ewigkeit und Zeit* (*Enn.* III, 7) (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), ad 2.35, pp. 154-155. In a word, one cannot imagine for the One a state prior to the starting-off of the procreation. There is here a fresh difference with the Father of the Valentinians, according to what we read in Hippolytus, in a passage translated above: although "having no time," this principle is said to have decided to give birth at a certain moment (*pote*).
  32. Cf. V, 1, 6.42-43: the Intellect has need of the One, but not the other way round.
  33. Two words borrowed from the *Phaedrus* of Plato, 250C.

34. *Prov.* 8.22-31: *Wisdom of Solomon* 7.21-29, 18 (especially 9.17); *Sirach* 1.1-10; 24.1-22, etc. In her role as collaborator to God, Wisdom is identified with the Thora, cf. *Sirach* 24.23 sq.; as also in Palestinian Judaism, cf. H.F. Weiss, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palästinischen Judentums*, in the collection "Texte und Untersuch.", 97 (Berlin, 1966), pp. 294-300; p. 318 for *Sirach* 42.21.
35. *Ad Autolyicum* II, 22; probable date of the work: shortly after 180.
36. It was the "inner" (ἐνδιάθετος) Logos, before it was brought to birth as Logos "given forth" (προφορικὸς) (ibid.); cf. M. Mühl, "Der λόγος ἐνδιάθετος und προφορικὸς von der älteren Stoa bis zur Synode von Sirmium 351," in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 7 (1962): 25-27.
37. *Refut.* V, 7.25-26, p. 84.14-19.
38. This idea is from E. Bréhier, *Notice* of VI, 8, pp. 119-121 and 126. It is probably right, despite R. Beutler and W. Theiler, *Anmerkungen*, Bd IV b, ad VI, 8, 7.11, p. 372, who want to see in the *tolmeros logos* a mere working hypothesis ("Gedankenexperiment") thought up by Plotinus himself. But a number of arguments could be brought in which would be favorable to Bréhier's way of looking at things. Thus the presence of the idea of "boldness," τόλμα, in the passion of Sophia according to the Valentinians (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 2, 2: τόλμη) and in the psychology of the Gnostic demiurge (ibid., I, 29.4: *Audacia*), as well as in the idea which Plotinus has of it, cf. II, 9, 11.2: the demiurge has produced "by boldness"; διὰ τόλμαν II, 9, 10.14: the Gnostics "have the boldness," τολμῶντας, to mock the words of the god-like men of old. On the other hand, we may see in VI, 8, 7.38-39 that the believers in the τολμηρὸς λόγος attributed to their First principle ■ solitude which it did not consent to; now that is a Valentinian opinion, which we have already met above, pp. 300 and 301. All the same, I do not really see how Bréhier can properly attribute to the "bold discourse" the thesis whereby "the One, not having its being from itself, is not free and makes of necessity whatever it makes" (p. 11), nor how, more generally (p. 121), Bréhier can find for such a thesis "obvious counterparts" with the fact that "the Naasenes' principle says of itself: 'I become what I wish'; the truth is rather that there is ■ complete opposition on this point between the "bold discourse" and the Naasenes, who are here on the side of Plotinus.
39. I draw here on information given by E.R. Dodds, *Proclus, The Elements of Theology* (Oxford, 1963), note on 26-27, pp. 213-214. Most evidence is to be found in late Neoplatonism, pagan and Christian. Given the nature of my study, I do not here go beyond Plotinus.
40. Fgt 14.6-16, pp. 55-56. See the notes added by des Places, pp. 108-110, and cf. E.R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," in *Les Sources de Plotin*.
41. To be precise, a part of this thesis. The other part, which Numenius does not go into, is that the principle does not become any one of its products. One may wonder whether there were not other correspondences between the doxography quoted for the Naasenes and the fragments of Numenius. Among the latter, see, for example, fgt 13.4-5, p. 55. In this fragment, the

- first God is called "He who is," in obvious dependence on *Exodus* 3.14, cf. J. Whittaker, "Moses attitizing," in *Phoenix* 21 (1967): 196-201, and "Numenius and Alcinoüs on the First Principle," ibid., 32 (1978): 144-154 (= J.W., *Studies in Platonism and Patristic Thought* [London 1984] VII and VIII). It has turned out, that the same Biblical quotation must have inspired the definition which the Naasenes' principle gives of itself. Furthermore, in the same fragment 13, the First God "sows the seed (σπέρμα) of every soul in all the beings that participate in him"; an obvious reference to *Timaeus* 41C-42D on the "sowings of soul" (it is immediately after having finished these sowings that the demiurge, as we have seen, "stayed in its condition"; there is there an indication of the thematic unity between fragments 13 and 14 of Numenius, two fragments which are juxtaposed in Eusebius, as must also have been the case originally in Numenius's own *De bono*). This σπέρμα of Numenius makes one think of the seed which is the Naasenes' universal cause, with the difference that, for the Naasenes, the principle is the seed itself, while for Numenius (as for Plato) it is the sower. Another point which they have in common: the First God of Numenius is motionless, ἐστὼς (fgt 15.3, p. 56), and is thereby related to the principle of the Naasenes, said to be ἀκίνητος. Another similarity: the Naasene's principle has the exclusive right to the qualification of ἀγαθός; Numenius's First God is constantly called ἁγαθόν (fgts 2, 16, 19, 20, etc.). Finally, the last line of fr. 13 of Numenius refers to what appear to be the seeds scattered by the First God as being τὰ ἐκείθεν προκαταβεβλημένα "realities sent forth from the world above"; as E. des Places has recognized, n. 5 *ad loc.*, p. 109, that is a technical verb, which even if it does not come from the Naasenes, does at least belong to Valentinian Gnosticism.
42. There is no contradiction between this lack of will on the part of the One in the procession and, its will in its constitution of itself. Later on, in V, 1, 6, Plotinus uses the comparison of the light spreading out and of the motionless sun, which recalls that of Numenius. We find a thesis similar to that of V, 1, 6 and therefore, indirectly, similar to that of the Naasenes, in Porphyry's *Philosophiae historia* IV, fgt 18 Nauck, p. 15.3-4: "it is not because the Good sets itself in movement (κινουμένον) in view of the generation of the Intellect that the procession (πρόοδος) takes place." There is an excellent commentary on this point by A.-Ph. Segonds, in the appendix to Porphyry, *The Life of Pythagoras* . . . , ed. des Places, p. 194, and in J. Whittaker, "Self-Generating Principles in Second-Century Gnostic Systems," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. B. Layton, in the collection "Studies in the Hist. of Religions," XLI, t. I (Leiden 1980), p. 177 (= *Studies in Platonism* . . . , XVII); both writers note the comparison with Plotinus. It appears however that there is no Plotinian parallel for the principal idea in Porphyry's fragment, namely the idea of the self-generation of Intellect. The idea is nonetheless much earlier than Porphyry, since one can find it already, in its essentials, present in Philo of Alexandria, *De opificio mundi* 33, 100: "what does not bring to birth nor is brought to

birth stays motionless (*ἀκίνητος μένει*); for bringing to birth is in movement, since both what brings to birth and what is brought to birth are not without movement, the one so that it may bring to birth, the other so that it may be brought to birth; the only being not to move, and not to be moved: the venerable Sovereign and Governor <of the universe>." The logical (but unexpressed) conclusion of this text which looks back to Pythagorean origins must be the self-generation of what comes after the First; hence the comparison with Porphyry established by J. Whittaker, "The historical Background of Proclus's Doctrine of the *Ἀποτίσεις*," in *Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt*, t. XXI: *De Jamblique à Proclus* (Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1975), pp. 220-221 (= *Studies in Platonism* . . . , XVI). But Philo foreshadows, even in the words he uses, Plotinus's doctrine in V 1, 6, and therefore to a certain extent the doctrine of the Neasenes.

43. Above, p. 308.
44. There is a very similar text, which includes the quotation from Plato, in a much later treatise V, 3 [49] 12.33-36. See also V, 2 [11] 1.17-18; 2.25-26; III, 4 [15] 1.1 ("It is when the higher principles rest, *μενόντων*, that there are born the 'hypostases'"); V, 5 [32] 5.1-7; in IV, 9 [8] 5.1-5, we realize that the same is true of universal soul, which gives itself to the particular souls only by staying what it is.
45. For the same meaning, see V, 1, 7.18-22; V, 5, 13.19-20.
46. This reappears in III, 3 [48] 7.10-11: "But you see that each of the realities proceeds (*πρόβεισι*) from the principle — while the principle remains inside — as from a single root, firmly fixed in itself," etc.
47. The obvious connection between these two texts of Plotinus and of Irenaeus allows us perhaps to gain a better understanding of both: 1.° Without any doubt, Plotinus says that neither the demiurge nor its mother *οὔτε αὐτὸς οὔτε ἡ μήτηρ*, have seen the hypothetical models of creation; he cannot say that the demiurge has neither seen these models nor seen its mother. On the other hand, Irenaeus's Greek text as well as the Latin translation which we have of it can be understood in both senses: "the demiurge, they say, did not know the models of the beings which it made (*τὰς ἰδέας ὧν ἐποίησεν*), it did not even know its mother" (sic F.M.M. Segnard, op. cit., p. 182; more recently Rousseau-Doutreleau in *Sources chréti.* 264, p. 83), or that "they say that the demiurge and the mother herself did not know the beings which it made;" it is obviously this second translation which would very neatly account for Plotinus's evidence, and which, for that reason, I prefer. It is in any case admitted that Plotinus has his aim fixed on Valentinian Gnosticism; cf. for example V. Cilento, *Plotino, Paideia antignostica. Ricostruzione d'un unico scritto da Enneadi III, 8, V, 8, V, 5, II, 9*, in the collection *"Testi con commento filol."* IX (Firenze 1971), p. 257. 2.° The text of Plotinus has itself been translated in roughly two different ways, at line 2: *Ἄλλ' ὅλως οὐκ ἦν, ἵνα ἂν καὶ εἶδεν*. (a) "But in a general way there existed nothing that the demiurge could have seen;" (b) "But, to say everything, the demiurge was not there where he could have seen;" the translation (a), which is in any case not really satisfactory

- grammatically (we have to add the word "nothing"), is that of Harder; it comes round to denying that there were models for the creation, which goes against the direct evidence of Irenaeus, however one understands it; we should therefore prefer the translation (b), which is, by the way, except for a detail or two, that of Bréhier, of Armstrong and of Igal.
48. One could also bring in here the *Apocryphon of John*, a text from the Berlin codex, ed. Till, p. 46.1-6 (translated by Tardieu, pp. 118-119): "The impudent <demiurge> understood nothing of the beings which were above its mother. For it said that its mother was the only thing to exist." This quotation agrees, I believe, with the substance of the preceding note.
  49. *Corpus hermet.* VIII, 3 and XII, 22; this latter text seems to mean that "materiality" is the "energy of God" in "matter"; Nock-Festugière, n. 71 *ad loc.*, p. 191, compares Iamblichus, *De Myst.* VIII, 3, p. 265.6-7 (materiality is a part withdrawn from substantiality in view of the production of matter by God), to which Proclus alludes, *In Plat. Tim.* comment., ed. Diehl, I, p. 386.10-11; the idea common to these different pieces of evidence seems to be that materiality is a principle above matter and used as an intermediary in the production of matter. We may add that a duality of the same kind, that of "life" and of "liveliness," appears in some texts from Nag Hammadi, such as *Zostrianos* (VIII, 1), 15.4-17, and *Allogenes* (XI, 3), 49.28-35; 59.14; 60.19-20; cf. J.M. Robinson, "The Three Steles of Seth and The Gnostics of Plotinus," in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism* (1973), in the collection "Filol.-filos. serien," 17 (Stockholm, 1977), pp. 135 and 137. In another of these texts, *The Three Steles of Seth* (VII, 5), we find, besides the distinction between "life" and "liveliness," that between "substance" and "substantiality"; see the references given by M. Tardieu, *Les Trois Stèles de Seth. Un écrit gnostique retrouvé à Nag Hammadi*, in *Revue des sciences philos. et théol.*, 57 (1973): 566-567; this last point stand out, once one has seen in the I Hermetist and in Iamblichus substance/substantiality cheek by jowl with life/liveliness.
  50. At least they take into account the look which Sophia has directed below. The idea is found, for example, in *Pistis Sophia* 31, translation by Schmidt-Till, p. 27.36-37, where Sophia discovers thus her illuminating powers in the lower regions: *"blickte sie nach unten und sah seine Lichtkraft in den Teilen unterhalb"*; in *Zostrianos*, 27.9-12, translated by J.H. Sieber (*NHL*), p. 376, who associates the same look with the descent of souls: "Other immortal souls are companions with all these souls because of Sophia who looked down"; and finally Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 29.4, taking account of the myth of the Barbelognostics, shows *Mater Sophiu*, hard up for a husband, stretching her neck down below: *"extendebatur et prospiciebat ad inferiores partes."* These texts have been drawn to the attention of scholars by S. Pétrement, *Le Dieu séparé. Les origines du gnosticisme*, in the collection "Patrimoines" (Paris, 1984), pp. 146, 555-556, 581.

51. I may perhaps be allowed to refer here to my work "Ex Platoniorum persona." *Études sur les lectures philosophiques de saint Augustin* (Amsterdam, 1977), pp. xxvi-xxvii, chapters III and V.
52. Chap. 12, translated by Schmidt-Till, p. 352.9-10: (the subject under discussion is a city by the name of Jerusalem, made of the purest of matter) "sie wird auch 'das neue Land' genannt, und sie wird auch 'unabhängig' (αὐτοτελής) genannt," etc. The text of Scripture made use of here is *Apoc.* 21.1-2, where are found the "new earth" and "Jerusalem," and also, what editors of this text have not seen, *Gal.* 4.26, where "the Jerusalem on high," "our mother," is said to be "free," whence αὐτοτελής of the Gnostic treatise. These two passages of the New Testament, to which should be added *Gen.* 3.20 on Eve, "mother of all living things," combined in different ways, have often inspired the Gnostics; for example the Naasenes who appear in Hippolytus, *Refut.* V, 7, 39, and above all the Valentinians, who look upon Sophia as "mother of all living things," "Jerusalem on high," "earth" (*ibid.*, VI, 34.3-4; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 5.3); cf. A. Orbe, *La teología del Espíritu Santo* (Estudios Valentinianos IV), in the collection "Analecta Gregoriana," 158 (Romae, 1966), pp. 481-484 (on the illumination accomplished by Sophia as it is presented by Plotinus, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 260-269). But the *Anon. of Bruce* is (so far?) the only witness for the formula "new earth"; it is this fact, with some others, which makes one think that the Greek original of this Coptic text was known to Plotinus; a thesis recently taken up by L. Abramowski, "Nag Hammadi 8.1, *Zostrianus*, das *Anonymum Brucianum*, Plotin *Enn.* 2, 9 (33)," in *Platonismus und Christentum*, Festschrift H. Dörrie, *Jahrbuch f. Ant. und Christ.*, Ergänzungsband 10 (Münster, 1983), p. 7.
53. 8.10-12, translated by J.H. Sieber (*NHL*), p. 371: "Concerning this airy earth — why it has a cosmic model?" Cf. H.-Ch. Puech, *En quête de la Gnose*, I: *La Gnose et le temps* (Paris, 1978), p. 113.
54. *Apud* Epiphanius, *Panar.*, haer. 31, 5, 5 = Völker, p. 61, and 31, 5, 7 = p. 61.17-18.
55. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 5, 6.
56. *Ibid.*, I, 24, 3. This text and the two preceding texts are taken account of by F. García Bazán, *Plotino y la Gnosis* (Buenos Aires, 1981), p. 286, n. 36.
57. Above, p. 314.
58. Chap. 20, translated by Schmidt-Till, pp. 361.35-362.3; see also the translation by C. Baynes, p. 180, and the notes on pp. 181-184, as well as H.-Ch. Puech, "Plotin et les Gnostiques," pp. 168-169 and 181-182 = *La Gnose et le temps*, pp. 90 and 101.
59. 5.17-18; 8.10-14; 12.3-6, etc., translated by J.H. Sieber, pp. 370-372, etc.
60. Within a short space, both take account, not only of the antitypes, but also of the two other "hypostases" whose use Plotinus criticizes in II, 9, 6.1-6, i.e. the "migrations" and the "repentances." There remains the problem: which of the two treatises should one choose as Plotinus's probable source? *Zostrianos*, according to J.H. Sieber, "An Introduction to the Tractate *Zostrianos* from Nag Hammadi," in *Novum Testamentum* 15 (1973): 237-

- 238 and H.-Ch. Puech, *La Gnose in le temps*, pp. 113-114; the *Anonymus of Bruce* according to L. Abramowski, *art. cit.*, pp. 2, 7-8. The fact that the *Anonymus* mentions the "new earth," missing from *Zostrianos*, cf. above, n. 45, tells in favor of the second hypothesis; but we shall see later, that another important set of ideas in Plotinus is found exclusively, unless I am mistaken, in *Zostrianos*, and that leaves the two opinions equally balanced.
61. Plotinus *Stellung zum Gnosticismus und kirchlichen Christentum*, in the collection "Texte und Untersuchungen," N.F. V 4 (Leipzig 1900), p. 36; the same point of view, but with individual nuances, in Harder, Armstrong, Cilenio, *op. cit.*, p. 251, and Igal.
62. The two meanings turn up in Plotinus with almost equal frequency, cf. J.H. Sleeman and G. Pollet, *Lexicon Plotinianum* (Leiden-Leuven, 1980), col. 220-221.
63. Hippolytus, *Refut.* V, 17.5, p. 114.31-34; a few lines earlier, we see that the Perates called in the same way upon the famous episode of *Gen.* 30.37-41 on the trick which Jacob used to get hold of striped or spotted sheep.
64. 21, ed. Schmidt-Till, p. 364.16-18: one may add 8, p. 144.20-21, where play is made on "painting (ζωγραφειν) in oneself the spark of light as a man of light and of truth." On this, cf. the edition of Baynes, p. 96, n. 4, and M. Tardieu, "ΨΥΧΑΙΟΣ ΣΠΙΝΘΗΡ, Histoire d'une métaphore dans la tradition platonicienne jusqu'à Eckhart," in *Revue des Études augustiniennes*, XXI (1975): 240.
65. *Apud* Clement, *Strom.* IV, 13, 89.6-90.1, ed. Stahlin, p. 287.22-25 = Völker, p. 59.2-5.
66. Valentinus's formula for the living model, τοῦ ζώντος αἰῶνος, recalls the παντελής ζῶν of *Timaeus* 31B.
67. As has been obviously understood by those historians who, of recent years, have made a close study of the fragment: F.M.M. Sagnard, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-125, 138-139 and 561; A. Orbe, *En los albores de la exegesis iohannea* (Estudios Valentinianos II), in the collection "Analecta Gregoriana," I.XX (Romae, 1955), pp. 352-377; G.C. Stead, *art. cit.*, p. 95, and "In Search of Valentinus," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. B. Layton, in the collection "Studies in the Hist. of Religions," XLI, t. I (Leiden, 1980), pp. 82-86.
68. *Strom.* IV, 13, 89.4-6, p. 287.15-21.
69. *Ibid.*, 90, 2, pp. 287.287-288.1. The final principle is known, and is present literally in *Exc. ex Theod.* 32, 1.
70. By A. Hilgenfeld, *op. cit.*, pp. 299-300; opposed to him on this point are A. Orbe, *op. cit.*, p. 354 and G.C. Stead, *loc. cit.*
71. Despite Plotinus's flexibility on words agreeing according to their genders, on which cf. H.R. Schwyzer, *art. "Plotinos"* in *RE* XXI (1951), col. 514-515, it is difficult to imagine that ὁ τοῦτο γράψας of the text is to be understood as ἡ τοῦτου γράψασα.

72. The middle λαβερήσεται is taken, as is often the case for the middle voice, especially in the aorist, in the passive meaning; cf. R. Kühner/B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griech. Sprache*, II, 1, pp. 117-119; *Griech. Grammatik*, ed. Schwyzler/A. Debrunner, II, pp. 237-239. The purposive meaning of εἶνα is taken for granted by Bréhier ("in order to insult violently the demiurge who has drawn them"), but is hardly likely; I prefer a consecutive meaning (= ὥστε), as listed in LSJ, s.u. B II, 1.
73. Above, p. 305 and n. 31.
74. II, 9, 4.13-14: "τὸ εἶνα τιμῶτο."
75. The comparison with II, 9, 10.19-21 leaves no doubt on this point.
76. Despite this difference in the point of application, the parallelism is rigorously maintained between the two passages where Plotinus takes account of the formula εἶνα τιμῶτο. The proof is this. At II, 9, 4.12-17, Plotinus thinks it ridiculous to understand this formula of Soul because that would come round to attributing to Soul an entering into calculations: "Would she go so far as to calculate (ἐλογίζετο) what profit would accrue to her from the production of the world?" Reply: no, if she produced by reflection instead of by what may be in her nature, she would never have produced the sensible world. At II, 9, 11.18-23, the hypothesis is spelt out whereby the demiurge, like the principle from which he comes forth, is a soul but of another kind, for example vegetative or generative, while the first soul would be rational. Plotinus's objection: how could such a demiurge produce "in order to be honored," while "there has been taken from him all possibility of acting by representation and still more of calculating (λογίζεσθαι)"? In either case it is the same line of argument which subordinates, in the principle that is the creator of the sensible world, the intention of being honored to the exercise of calculation. Plotinus rejects, so far as he is concerned, the postulate, and therefore also the consequence which follows from it.
77. Sagnard, op. cit., p. 124; Orbe, op. cit., p. 363.
78. As Orbe does summarily, op. cit., p. 375.
79. Chr. Elsas, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltabiehnung in der Schule Plotins*, in the collection "Religionsgeschichtl. Versuche und Vorarbeiten," XXXIV (Berlin/New York, 1975), pp. 112-114, has tried to discover analogies from various sources: the alchemist Zosimus, *Poimandres*, Numenius, the *Chaldaean Oracles*; but the harvest is thin. See also pp. 166-171; on the Docetists of Hippolytus, p. 170 and n. 599.
80. *Refut.* VIII, 9.3-10.2, pp. 228.6-229.21.
81. I leave out here a rough and ready quotation from *Gen.* 1, 4-7.
82. There comes here a quotation from *Gen.* 1.1.
83. A Platonic and Gnostic theme, cf. above, p. 300 and n. 7.
84. According to the Valentinians too, the demiurge is made of fire, cf. Hippolytus, *Refut.* VI, 32, 8.
85. This terms is part of the three words which Plotinus gives at this point as characteristic of his adversaries, and which are found again, grouped together, both in *Zostrianos* and in the *Anonymus of Bruce*, cf. above, n. 60.

86. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 23, 2.
87. Fgt 3 = Origen, *In Epist. ad Rom.* V, 1 = Völker, p. 41.10-11.
88. Cf. Irenaeus, I, 25, 4, and also (on Simon and Carpocrates) II, 33, 1.
89. Simplicius, *In Arist. Physic. comment.*, ed. Diels, t. I, p. 616.18-20. The connection with the *Oracles* has been studied by W. Kroll, *De Oraculis Chaldaicis*, in the collection "Breslauer philolog. Abhandlungen," VII 1 (Breslau, 1894), p. 57, and by Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, in the collection "Recherches d'Archéol., de Philol. et d'Hist.," de l'I.F.A.O., XIII (Le Caire, 1956), p. 241 and n. 53.
90. In fact, the lines from Simplicius which have just been quoted belong to his account of Proclus's views; cf. the analysis given by Ph. Hoffmann, "Simplicius: Corollarium de loco," in *L'astronomie dans l'Antiquité-classique*, a group of studies, in "Collection d'Études anc. . . de l'Assoc. g. Budé" (Paris, 1979), pp. 149-153.
91. *Contra*, II. Lewy, op. cit., p. 252, n. 92.
92. Proclus, *In Crat.* LXXI, ed. Pasquali, p. 31.8-9.
93. As H. Koch has already pointed out in his *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinem Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen*, Eine Litterarhistorische Untersuchung, in the collection "Forschungen zur Christl. Litteratur- und Dogmengeschichte," I, 2-3 (Mainz, 1900), pp. 218-219, to which one should add my article "Linguistique et théologie dans la tradition platonicienne," in *Linguaggio, Scienza-Filosofia-Teologia*, Atti del XXV convegno di Assistenti univers. di Filos (Padova, 1981), pp. 37-53.
94. *Epist.* IX (ad Titum), 2, PG 3, 1108 C.

## Titus of Bostra and Alexander of Lycopolis: A Christian and a Platonic Refutation of Manichaean Dualism

Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa

Plotinus and Mani probably never met on the battlefield.<sup>1</sup>

Dispelling such a pregnant *image d'Epinal* as the physical encounter of the two masters should not mean ignoring the conflictual intercourse between Neoplatonism and Manichaeism in the Roman Empire. Ultimately, both movements were losers in the grand struggle for souls and minds, which the Christian bishops and theologians won in the fourth century against pagans and heretics alike. The extent to which Christian theologians assimilated philosophical — and in particular Platonic — concepts and ideas is better known than the exact limitations of Platonic influence. And the Christian and Neoplatonist ultimate rejection of Gnostic and dualist patterns of thought is more readily recorded than accounted for accurately.

Among the various spiritual trends in the Roman Empire — as well as under Sasanian rule — few seem to have been so powerful, and none has aroused such hatred, as Manichaeism.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this hatred was fueled by the eccentric behavior of Manichaean ascetics, and led to slanderous accusations.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, however, it is the very basis of Manichaean theology and mythology, its radical dualism, which elicited the most profound repulsion — from both pagan philosophical and Christian theological quarters.<sup>4</sup> A reflection upon this repulsion and the arguments with which it was propounded might shed some new light on a particularly complex chapter in Late Antique intellectual history. In attempting such a reflection, I have concentrated upon the

two leading figures to have refuted Manichaeism in Greek: Titus of Bostra and Alexander of Lycopolis. Titus, Bishop of Bostra, a highly Hellenized Syrian city on the *limes*, wrote in the second half of the fourth century, a few years after Julian's reign, one of the first, and certainly the most comprehensive Christian theological refutation of Manichaeism.<sup>5</sup> Mainly through Epiphanius of Salamis, who not only refers to it but also makes generous use of its argumentation, Titus's work was to have the most profound impact on later Christian literature *adversus Manichaeos*.<sup>6</sup>

As with Titus, Alexander's title of fame rests upon his tractate against Manichaeism — his only extant writing, published about 300 — one of our earliest documents on the propagation of Manichaeism in Egypt.<sup>7</sup> (The work itself has survived only due to the fact that it had been incorporated into a corpus of Christian anti-Manichaean texts, since Alexander was thought to have been a bishop.)<sup>8</sup> The city where Plotinus was born had become a major center for the implantation of Manichaeism already in the second half of the third century.<sup>9</sup> Like the bishop of Bostra — or Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem — half a century later, the philosopher of Lycopolis is deeply concerned by the new movement, which had even seduced some among his fellow philosophers.<sup>10</sup>

Alexander is rather sympathetic to Christianity; although he thinks the Christians incapable of precise philosophical thought, he praises their elevated ethics.<sup>11</sup> Titus, on his part, while no philosopher, is the bearer of a good rhetorical education, and shows a certain knowledge of *koinē* philosophical vocabulary and arguments — both Platonic and Stoic.<sup>12</sup> I could not find in his work, however, any indication to suggest a direct borrowing from Alexander.

A comparison between these two refutations of dualism might therefore add to our understanding of the common ground and specific differences between Christian and Neoplatonist fourth-century *literati*. A further question raised by such an inquiry is the extent to which the need to argue at length against the dualist challenge influenced the structures, or at least the emphasis, of their own thought.<sup>13</sup> One might point out here that anti-Manichaean literature has been mainly scrutinized by students of Manichaeism for the information it could lend about details of Manichaean mythology, or quotations from Manichaean writings.<sup>14</sup> Thus, although Titus and Alexander are well-known to scholars in the field, very little attention seems to have been devoted to their actual argumentation. The following pages can do no more than arouse interest in this direction. It is hoped that further studies will reveal more fully the impact of the Manichaean challenge amidst late

antique intellectuals. Besides the ludicrous details of their mythology, the Manichaeans were able to develop very early a highly sophisticated theoretical argumentation in support of their dualism. This important point, which cannot be overemphasized, is proved precisely by the character of Titus's and Alexander's refutations: although neither ignores Manichaean mythology, it does not stand for them at the core of the seductive powers of Manichaean thought.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in Justinian's Constantinople, it is with a very abstract refutation of dualism that Zacharias "Rhetor," of Mytilene (who has also been traditionally attributed the authorship of a pamphlet against Manichaean mythology), decided to respond to ■ Manichaean tract found in a bookstore in the capital.<sup>16</sup>

For both Alexander and Titus, Manichaeism presents itself, first of all, as an attempt to solve the problem of evil.<sup>17</sup> This is not surprising, of course, although one might call attention, in this respect, to the fact that Plotinus himself, who had argued against the Gnostics at length and with great vehemence, does not refer to them even once in his tractate "On what are and whence come evils" (*Enn.* I.8). One should ponder this point. It is indeed from the various Gnostic trends of the first Christian centuries that Mani inherited his attempt to answer the question *unde malum*?<sup>18</sup> His highly organized mind, however, seems to have given the question a new urgency, and to have set it at the very core of his mythological theology, with a consistency unknown to the more fluid — should one say to the somewhat amorphous? — Gnostic mythologies.

Titus begins the first book of his refutation by stating that Manichaeism is born from the desire to discharge God of any responsibility for evil, thus postulating another principle, opposite to God from all eternity and solely responsible for evil in the universe. Titus devotes the first two books (out of four) of his work to a rational refutation of such a dualism. Books III and IV, which are extant in full only in Syriac, deal respectively with the Manichaeans' rejection of the Old Testament and their misunderstanding of the New Testament. The argumentation in these last two books is purely scriptural, and therefore they will not concern us here, since they can in no way be paralleled to Alexander's work. The thorough refutation of Manichaean dualism in Book I is followed by a lengthy argument against the Manichaean conception of evil. Book II of Titus's *Adversus Manichaeos* is actually the most comprehensive theodicy in all Patristic literature. In these two books, Titus claims, he will argue only according to the *koinai ennoiai*, and does in no way establish his argument upon the Scriptures, so as to give his refutation universal value — since the *notiones communes* are,

or should be, by definition common to all men.<sup>19</sup> But what are the *koinai ennoiai*? The term is unmistakably recognized as Stoic in origin.<sup>20</sup> In Stoic doctrine, it refers to those imprints left on the human mind by common experience. Plutarch had written a whole treatise on the topic,<sup>21</sup> and Origen had referred to the concept in the *Contra Celsum*.<sup>22</sup> Thus, its use by Titus is not surprising, since our author shows other signs of philosophical education, both Platonic and Stoic. Like other Christian theologians, however, Titus refers to the *koinai ennoiai* in a broad rather than in a technical way. "Le bon sens est la chose du monde la mieux partagée"; Descartes is as much, or as little, a Stoic as Titus, who only wants to show that Manichaean doctrine is unconvincing and should be rejected on rational grounds alone. For him, these rational grounds are common to all thinking men, and in particular to philosophers and Christians. Titus argues that the idea of two principles, as conceived by the Manichaeans, stands out of this consensus.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly to Titus, Alexander argues that Manichaean conceptions are not rational, that Manichaean thought is established on false principles, and therefore cannot perform its self-assigned main task: to solve the problem of evil.<sup>24</sup> At the outset of his work, Alexander complains that arguing against the Manichaeans' conceptions is rendered particularly difficult by their propensity for mythology, and hence shunning of rational thought.<sup>25</sup> The philosopher is ill at ease developing dialectical arguments against a protagonist who does not accept the rules of the game. For Alexander the Christians, too, are not very good philosophers, although he concedes that they do not share with the Manichaeans — whose origins he sees, rightly, in Christian sectarianism — the latter's infatuation with mythological patterns of thought.<sup>26</sup> The genre of Alexander's writing is that of a professional philosopher, hence very different from that of Titus. His arguments are usually of a much more technical nature than those of the educated bishop. Yet, the fact is striking enough to be noted: for both, Manichaean dualism appears to be fundamentally illogical, irrational, stepping out of the bounds of common sense. Both also insist on the misleading consequences entailed by such a false epistemology, in particular in the field of ethics.

Alexander's argumentation against Manichaean ontology gravitates around the status of matter and of the First Principle. He insists that matter cannot be considered evil since it is generated by God.<sup>27</sup> In his emphatic denial of any evil in connection with matter, he stands rather lonely in the Platonic tradition. His conception is at the antipodes of that of Plotinus, despite the ambiguities of the latter's attitude.<sup>28</sup> It is

also markedly different from that of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and of Porphyry, for whom matter, although "born from the Father," remains evil or linked to evil. For Alexander, too, matter is derived from the First Principle: a Pythagorean rather than a Platonic doctrine.<sup>29</sup> Daringly enough, Alexander is willing to reject Platonic conceptions of matter too close to those of the Manichaeans. For instance, he objects to the definition of matter as *ataktos kinēsis*, which had become too closely connected to the identification of matter with evil in Middle Platonism.<sup>30</sup> Due to the polemical nature of his writing, however, Alexander rejects and refutes much more explicitly than he propounds his own views. Thus he does not expose at any length his personal opinion on the origin of evil. One is led to speculate that it is free-will, rather than matter, which lies at the core of evil, but this is not stated explicitly. One may postulate that the clear departure from school traditions in the conception of matter is due to the seriousness presented by the dualistic challenge for Alexander — not a very original thinker in other respects.

Since matter itself is derived from the First Principle, the Manichaean idea of two original principles, Alexander argues, is not logical. For a Platonic mind, the very idea of *archē* involves its unicity.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, in order for the two original principles to mingle, a third, intermediary element or principle is needed.<sup>32</sup> Incidentally, the opposite argument had been used by Methodius of Olympus in his *De Autexousio*, where he argues against a Platonic, rather than a Gnostic, thesis directly linking matter to the origin of evil.<sup>33</sup> Alexander also makes the point that Mani's insistence on the physical conception of the two realms of light and darkness entails a corporeal conception of God, a conception which Alexander rejects as ludicrous.<sup>34</sup> For him, the *archē* is by nature incorporeal. The same argument is made by Titus, and will also be given a prominent place by Augustine in his anti-Manichaean writings.<sup>35</sup>

Altogether, it would seem that Alexander conceives Manichaeism, in its insistence on the materiality of God, as a kind of crypto-Stoicism, as his translators duly note.<sup>36</sup>

Although Titus agrees with Alexander on many points in his refutation of Manichaean ontology, his standpoint is sensibly different. It is not enough for Titus to argue that matter is in no way connected with evil. Since the world was created by God, who is good by definition, none of its parts can be evil.<sup>37</sup> Evil, therefore, has no real objective existence, besides sin (Alexander for his part, recognizes the validity of the Platonic conception according to which it is matter which does not really exist).<sup>38</sup> From Basil the Great and Augustine, this



negative conception of evil was to become the standard solution for the problem of evil in both Greek and Latin patristics.<sup>39</sup> In due course, it also became the Neoplatonic official standpoint, best expressed by Proclus in his tractate on evil.<sup>40</sup> It would seem, however, that Christian theology was quicker to develop and lead to its radical conclusion a notion only potential in Neoplatonic hierarchical thought.

Like Alexander, Titus insists that the concept of *archē* implies unicity, and that dualism is a logical impossibility.<sup>41</sup> He also develops the argument also found in Methodius about the third principle which should exist from all eternity in order for the two opposites to remain separate.<sup>42</sup> Like Alexander, he shows that the Manichaean conception denies of God some qualities inherent to Him by definition. According to the *koinai ennoiai*, for instance, God is at once immaterial, uncircumscribed and all-powerful. In particular, Titus pokes fun at that most scandalous of Manichaean conceptions according to which the Divine principle was overcome, or even eaten by the Evil principle, and is conceived as suffering.<sup>43</sup>

While Manichaeism originates in an attempt to disclaim for God any responsibility over evil in general, and men's sins in particular, the Manichaeans fall into an even greater sin by their denial of God's ever present providence. In the very first chapter of his work Titus states — without a specific reference to Plato, of course — that it is the first doctrine of the Catholic Church that God is not responsible for human injustice. As noted above, however, it is in the second book that Titus fully develops his theodicy. Polemics are not absent, and Titus attacks various aspects of Manichaean theology and mythology, such as Manichaean encratism and hylopsychism, and in particular reverence offered to the sun — after all a material, not a spiritual entity, Titus points out.<sup>44</sup> In the first chapter of this book, Titus states very clearly that there is no evil whatsoever in God's creation, and that only the sinners' injustice is really evil. This evil, moreover, does not stem from a matter without beginning. In the end, everything has a place in the cosmic order and a role to play in the realization of divine plans. The next chapters spell out that free will was given to man through natural knowledge of good and evil. Had man been led by instinct to perform evil, judgment on human actions would have proved impossible. Moreover, only a jealous God would have deprived man of freedom; human freedom is the very image of God in which man was created. If so, sin cannot be natural or necessary, as the Manichaeans argue, but only deliberate and voluntary.<sup>45</sup> Responding to the Manichaean anguish about violence and death, Titus further argues that war is a fruit of sin, while death itself, far from being an evil by nature, belongs to the

order of salvation and is therefore invested with a positive role.<sup>46</sup> The same is true, for instance, of such phenomena as earthquakes, night, illnesses or beasts; indeed, all aspects of creation were made for our good, in virtue of God's providence.<sup>47</sup> The "Stoic flavour" of these chapters, which describe cosmic harmony in a rather verbose language, was noted long ago by K. Gronau.<sup>48</sup> Yet, the overall impression emerges that Titus's major philosophical frame of reference remains Platonism. This is particularly due to his insistence on the fact that Mani deprives God of immateriality, an essential quality, and on the unicity implicit in the concept of *archē*. It might be recorded here, however, that Irenaeus had already made a similar point, when he argued against the Gnostics that the existence of a First Principle outside the Divine *pleroma* contradicted the very idea of a *pleroma*.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, Alexander is rather close to the Christian attitude when he rejects the idea of a separate principle of evil (in this he will be followed by Hierocles in the Alexandrian school),<sup>50</sup> when he argues that matter cannot be evil since it is generated by God, or when he insists on divine providence's ruling of the world.

Yet, if Titus and Alexander remain so far apart, this is not only due to the much more technical level of Alexander's argumentation. Titus's long developments on theodicy, and Alexander's emphasis on matter, aptly characterize the core of the Manichaean challenge to Christianity and Neoplatonism respectively. In a creationist ontology, the problem of evil demands a justification of the demiurge; in an emanationist ontology, the problem is immediately reflected by the status of matter (and by the nature of the intermediary powers).

Besides their abhorrence for ontological dualism, both Neoplatonist and Christian thinkers strongly rejected Manichaean anthropology and ethics. Here again, the emphases of the argumentation reflect the differences of standpoint. Like their ontology, the Manichaeans' anthropology and ethics are organized along dualist patterns. The soul belongs to the world of light, to the Divinity, to which it seeks to return after its separation from the body and its purification; the inner core of the Manichaean community, the *enkratitai electi*, are clearly set apart from the *auditores* — and not only from the non-Manichaeans.

Alexander states at once his interest in ethics. Christianity, he says, owes its early reputation not so much to the quality of its metaphysics as to the excellence of its ethics, readily recognized even by non-Christians.<sup>51</sup> But this ideal Christianity was unfortunately broken up at an early stage by the emergence of sectarian trends, which can be characterized precisely by their lack of interest in ethics — or even by

the outright unethical ways in which they were established.

For him, Manichaeism is but the latest, and the worst, of these sectarian trends.<sup>52</sup> One may recall here that one of Plotinus's main grievances against the Gnostics was their inability to propound an ethical doctrine, or, rather, the totally a-ethical character of their elucubrations.<sup>53</sup> Alexander is shocked by Manichaean limitation of the path to salvation to the elect. For him, this directly contradicts the idea of a Providence, by definition equally caring for all. Moreover, he argues that the Manichaean doctrine of salvation precludes the idea of moral progress — although he also expresses doubts about the existence of such progress.<sup>54</sup> For him, Manichaean doctrine abolishes the need for education, only possible, like the acquisition of virtues, under the assumption that "what is possible for one (i.e., the practice of Manichaean precepts) is possible for everybody."<sup>55</sup> In somewhat anachronistic terms, only a universalizable attitude may be called ethical. Although Alexander is not overly troubled by the Manichaean dichotomy of body and soul, he recognizes that Manichaean anthropology entails the suppression of freedom of choice, and hence the possibility not only of education but also of punishment.<sup>56</sup> He has a final grievance against the Manichaeans: their encratism is condemnable because it contradicts both the hierarchy of being (in the case of food taboos) and the idea of God's omnipotence (in the case of sexual asceticism).<sup>57</sup>

As a Christian, Titus is more at ease in condemning Manichaean anthropological dualism, and notes that according to Mani the human person remains a composite never to be unified. For Christian doctrine, it is in his whole self, body as well as soul, that man was created in God's image.<sup>58</sup> Thus the body cannot be considered the *locus* of evil any more than matter in general.<sup>59</sup> Evil, Titus repeats, is nothing but sin, or human injustice. And it is not only in his body, but first of all by a free decision of his soul, that man sins.<sup>60</sup> Although habit renders sin omnipresent, it is not inevitable, or necessary.<sup>61</sup> God is the giver of Natural Law, which seeks an equilibrium of all things existing in the world, and in particular between soul and body. Thus, the encratist, whose attitude is one of extreme despal of the body, of total rejection of its needs, commits a sin against Natural Law. Manichaean encratism is thus condemned not only because it attributes the means of salvation exclusively to the elect, but also since it does not recognize the legitimacy of pleasure for the body. Sexual relations are natural since they are intended for procreation. God has thus planted sexual desire in us in order to permit the reproduction of the human race. Thus, the legitimacy of a sexual pleasure obtained in compliance with Natural

Law.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, the pleasure of eating and drinking is natural, when following the creation's order and measure.<sup>63</sup>

In giving such a central place to the human body in his work, Titus reflects a concern present in many of the Patristic anti-Manichaean polemics since the earliest such document (from about 300 C.E.) where an unknown Egyptian bishop argues against the Manichaeans for the legitimacy of marriage.<sup>64</sup>

In modern political jargon, the Neoplatonist philosopher and the Christian bishop would have been called "objective" allies. By their respective standpoint, they are too far apart from each other to do more than join a cause *ad hoc*. Against a common enemy, their arguments can be only partially similar. If there is one central tenet, however, of both Neoplatonist and Christian *Weltanschauung* which they felt was directly threatened by Manichaeism, I daresay it was *Providence*.<sup>65</sup> For both, the only conceivable world was that ruled by a single good ruler, caring for each of its parts and indwellers. For both Alexander and Titus, dualism meant anarchy;<sup>66</sup> both were bound to reject a doctrine so pessimistic as to deny this world any respectability.

## NOTES

1. We know from *Kephalaia*, I, that Mani joined Shapur in one of his campaigns against the Romans. This happened probably in 256-260, in the campaign against Valerian, rather than in 242-244, in that against Gordian III, whose army Plotinus had joined in order to get acquainted with Eastern wisdom. See H.C. Puech, *Le Manichéisme; son fondateur, sa doctrine* (Paris: Musée Guimet, 1949), pp. 47-48. On platonic influences on Manichaeism, see A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, in *ZPE* 19 (1975): 72-75, nn. 25-32; 32 (1978): 138ff., nn. 187 ff.; 140, n. 191; 141, n. 194. See also L. Koenen, "From Baptism to the Gnosis of Manichaeism," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, II (Suppl. to *Numen*, 41; Leiden: Brill, 1981), ed. B. Layton, p. 735, n. 8.
2. See P. Brown, "The Diffusion of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire," *JRS* 59 (1969): 92-103, reprinted in his *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1972), pp. 94-118. For the legal aspects of the repression, see E.H. Kaden, "Die Edikte gegen die Manichäer von Diokletian bis Justinian," in *Festschrift für Hans Lewald* (Basle, 1953), pp. 55-68.
3. See for instance the case described in my "Monachisme et Marranisme chez les Manichéens d'Égypte," *Numen* 29 (1983): 184-201. On the common "front" of Christian and Neoplatonist thinkers against Manichaeism, see C. Andresen, "Antike und Christentum," *TRE* 3: 69-73.

4. On the "radicalism" of Manichaean dualism and its limits, see my "König und Schwein: zur Struktur des manichäischen Dualismus," in *Gnosis und Politik*, ed. J. Taubes (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1984), pp. 141-153.
5. The complete Syriac text as well as the Greek text of Books I to III, 7 were published (separately) by P. de Lagarde: *Titus Bostrani . . . graece and Titi Bostrani contra manichaeos libri quatuor syriace* (both in Berlin, 1859). P. Nagel has further published the Greek text of III, 7-29: "Neues griechisches Material zu Titus von Bostra," in *Studia Byzantina* (Berliner byzantinische Arbeiten; Berlin: Akad. Verlag, 1973), ed. J. Irmscher and P. Nagel, pp. 285-359. Nagel has been working for some years on a new edition of Titus. On Titus himself, see R.P. Casey's article in *PW*, s.v. *Titus v. Bostra*, as well as J. Sickenberger's introduction to his *Titus von Bostra, Studien zu dessen Lukashomilien* (TV 21 [N.F. 6]; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901).
6. For a list of references to Titus's work in later Christian literature, see Sickenberger, op. cit., pp. 5-8. Epiphanius refers to him in *Panarion* 66.21.3 (Holl, III, 48-49).
7. The text was edited by A. Brinkmann: *Alexandri Lycopolitani, Contra Manichaei opiniones disputatio* (Leipzig, 1895). See also the annotated translation of the text by P.W. van der Horst and J. Mansfeld, *An Alexandrian Platonist against Dualism* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), actually a full-length study of Alexander in philosophical context. After the completion of this paper appeared a French translation and detailed commentary of the text by A. Villey, *Alexandre de Lycopolis: Contre la doctrine de Mani* (Paris: LeCerf, 1985).
- John Rist has recently sought to define more precisely Alexander's place in the history of late antique philosophy. He has shown that Alexander was a conservative Middle Platonist, rather than a Neoplatonist, whose "theories bear a masked similarity with those of the pagan Origen," concluding that "it is against Alexander's Middle Platonism that we should view the prominent Christians of early fourth-century Alexandria . . ." See J. Rist, "Basil's 'Neoplatonism': Its Background and Nature," in *Basil of Caesarea, Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, ed. P.J. Fedwick, (Toronto: Pont. Inst. Med. Stud., 1981), pp. 137-220, esp. pp. 166-169.
8. The *codex unicus*, from the Laurentiana, is part of a late 9th-century codex, dedicated to Basil the First, an emperor who had fought the Paulicians; cf. Brinkmann's introduction to his edition.
9. On the implantation of Manichaeism in Egypt, see in particular L. Koenen, "Manichäische Mission und Klöster in Ägypten," in *Das römisch-byzantinische Ägypten* (Aegyptiaca Treverensia; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1983), pp. 93-108, as well as my "Monachisme et Marranisme" (cited above n. 3).
10. Alexander, 6 (8 Brinkmann; 58 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
11. Alexander, 1 (3 Brinkmann; 48-50 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
12. See A. Puech, *Histoire de la littérature grecque chrétienne . . . III* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1930), pp. 559-560. Jerome testifies to the wide recognition achieved by Titus's philosophical culture (*Epist.* 70, *PL* 22, 664-668).

13. I have argued about a clear Manichaean influence on Didymus the Blind in "the Manichaean Challenge on Egyptian Christianity," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. B.A. Pearson and J. Goering, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 307-319.
14. For two such classical studies, see on Alexander, H.H. Schaefer, *Urform und Fortbildungen des manichäischen Systems* (Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg, 1924-25; Leipzig-Berlin, 1927); where the author claims that Alexander's presentation of Manichaean mythology truthfully reflects original conceptions. On Titus, see A. Baumstark, "Der Text der Mani-Zitate in der syrischen Übersetzung des Titus von Bostra," *Oriens Christianus*, N.F. 6 (1931): 23-42; Baumstark argues that these quotations, rather than being re-translations from the Greek, preserve in the original Aramaic Mani's *ipsissima verba*.
15. On Titus's lack of interest in Manichaean mythology, see W. Frankenberg, "Die Streitschrift des Titus von Bostra gegen die Manichäer," *ZDMG* 92 (1938): 28\*-29\*.
16. On Zacharias, see now S.N. Lieu, "An Early Byzantine Formula for the Renunciation of Manichaeism — the Capita VII Contra Manichaeos of (Zacharias of Mytilene)," *JAC* 26 (1983): 152-218. The text of Zacharias's theoretical refutation was published by A. Demetrapoulos, *Ekklesiastike Bibliothek* (Leipzig, 1866), pp. 1-18.
17. Titus, I, 1 (1 Lagarde); I, 4 (3 Lagarde), et passim.
18. On the Manichaean reinterpretation of Gnostic myths of the origin of evil, see my *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Nag Hammadi Studies 24, Leiden: Brill, 1984), Part III.
19. See for instance Titus I.2 (1 Lagarde); I.5 (4 Lagarde): *ai kata physin ennoiai*; I.11 (6 Lagarde): *logismoi physikoi*; I.15 (8 Lagarde); I.17 (10 Lagarde).
20. Cf. M. Polenz, *Die Stoa: Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1948), I, 56; II, 426-427. See also R.B. Todd, "The Stoic Common Notions: a Reexamination and Reinterpretation," *Symbolae Osloenses* 48 (1973): 47-75.
21. Plutarch, *Against the Stoics on Common Conceptions, Moralia* vol. 13 (LCL; Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard-Heinemann, 1976).
22. For further references, see Polenz, op. cit., II, 205-206. See also M. Spanneut, *Le Stoïcisme des Pères de l'Église, de Clément de Rome à Clément d'Alexandrie* (Patristica Sorbonensis; Paris: Le Seuil, 1957), pp. 211ff.
23. Titus, I.11 (6 Lagarde). This argument will run like a thread throughout Patristic anti-Manichaean literature; see for instance John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, IV.20 (PG 94, 1193-1196).
24. For instance Alexander 8 (12 Brinkmann; 65-66 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
25. Alexander 5 (8-9 Brinkmann; 58-59 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
26. Alexander 1 (3-5 Brinkmann; 48-52 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
27. The argument is central to Alexander, and runs through much of the book; see Mansfeld's summary, pp. 19-23.

28. On Plotinus's conception of evil and its relationship to matter, see D. O'Brien, "Plotinus on Evil. A Study of Matter and the Soul in Plotinus's Conception of Human Evil," *Le Néoplatonisme* (Colloques internationaux du CNRS; Paris, 1971), pp. 113-146; and M.I. Santa Cruz de Prunes, *La Genèse du monde sensible dans la philosophie de Plotin* (Bibl. Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Sciences Religieuses, 81; Paris: P.U.F., 1979), pp. 114-123.
29. The place of Alexander's view of matter in the Platonic tradition is well described by Mansfeld in his introduction; see n. 27 *supra*.
30. Alexander 7-8 (11-12 Brinkmann); 63-66 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld). Cf. L. Troje, "Zum Begriff ΑΤΑΚΤΟΣ ΚΙΝΗΣΙΣ bei Platon und Mani," *Museum Helveticum* 5 (1948): 96-115.
31. Alexander 6 (9-11 Brinkmann; 59-63 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
32. Alexander 8 (13 Brinkmann; 66-67 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
33. Methodius argues that only a third, intermediary principle can keep the two opposites separate. See A. Vaillant, *Le De Autexousio de Méthode d'Olympe*, PO 22, ch. 5-6, pp. 747-753.
34. Alexander 8 (13-14 Brinkmann; 67-68 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
35. On Augustine, see my "The Incorporeality of God: Context and Implications of Origen's Position," *Religion* 13 (1983): 345-358.
36. v.d. Horst-Mansfeld, 47.
37. Titus II.1 (25-26 Lagarde).
38. Alexander 12 and 26 (18 and 39 Brinkmann; 73 and 97 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
39. See Basil's treatise, *Quod Deus non est auctor malorum*, PG 31: 329-354. Augustine's position is analyzed at length by F. Billiesich, *Das Problem des Übels in der Philosophie des Abendlandes*, I (Wien: Sexl, 1955), pp. 221-286. In an anti-Manichaean context, Serapion of Thmuis states that evil is a *praxis*, not an *ousia*. See Serapion of Thmuis, ed. R.P. Casey, "Against the Manichaeans" (Harvard Theological Studies, 15; Cambridge, 1931), ch. 5. For Serapion as for Titus, evil comes from a sickness of free-will; he adds that this is attested by both Scripture and an analysis of human action.
40. Proclus, *De l'existence du mal*, ed. trans. D. Isaac (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982).
41. Titus I.11-12 (6 Lagarde).
42. Titus I.9 (5 Lagarde).
43. Titus I.7 (4 Lagarde).
44. See for instance Titus II.36; 54 and 60 (47, 59 and 62 Lagarde).
45. Titus II.3; 8 and 10 (26, 29 and 30 Lagarde).
46. Titus II.22; 28 and 46 (39, 43-44 and 55 Lagarde).
47. For instance Titus II.32 and 41 (47 and 50 Lagarde).
48. See his *Das Theodizäeproblem in der altchristlichen Auffassung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922), p. 18.
49. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haereses* II.1.2, quoted by J. Farges, *Méthode d'Olympe: le Libre Arbitre* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1929), p. 51, n. 2.
50. Cf. v.d. Horst-Mansfeld 27-29.
51. Alexander 1 (3 Brinkmann; 48-51 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).

52. Alexander 2 (4 Brinkmann; 52 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
53. Plotinus, *Enn.* II.9.15 (II, 280-284 Armstrong, LCL).
54. Alexander 16 (23-24 Brinkmann; 79-81 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
55. Alexander 16 (23 Brinkmann; 79 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
56. See discussion in v.d. Horst-Mansfeld, 44-45.
57. Alexander 25 (36-37 Brinkmann; 94-95 v.d. Horst-Mansfeld).
58. Titus II. and 11 (29-31 Lagarde).
59. Titus I.29 (18 Lagarde).
60. Titus II.39 (49-50 Lagarde).
61. Titus II.10 (30-31 Lagarde).
62. Titus II.56.57 (61 Lagarde). The argument from Natural Law is found elsewhere in anti-Manichaean Patristic polemics; see for instance John of Damascus, *Contra Manichaens* 14, in B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, IV (Patristische Texte und Studien; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1981), p. 359.
63. Titus II.58 (61-62 Lagarde).
64. Cf. my "The Manichaean Challenge on Egyptian Christianity" for the impact of Manichaean encratism on Egyptian Christianity.
65. On Providence in Platonic and Patristic thinking, see C. Parma, *Pronoia und Providentia: der Vorsehungsbegriff Plotins und Augustins* (Leiden: Brill, 1971).
66. Long ago, E. Peterson had pointed out the clear connections between monotheism and "monarchy" in early Christian thought. See his *Der Montheismus als politisches Problem* (Leipzig, 1935). For the *Fortleben* of philosophical and theological refutations of Manichaeism, and about the philosophical *koinē* of late antiquity and beyond, see S. Stroumsa and G.G. Stroumsa, "Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics in Late Antiquity and under Early Islam," *H.T.R.* 81 (1988): 37-58.

## Le Nombre et son Ombre (Résumé)

Ara Alexandru Sismanian\*

By paraphrasing and turning against the Valentinians the famous argument of "the third man" used by Aristotle in his refutation of Plato's theory of Ideas,<sup>1</sup> Irenaeus put his finger on the very heart of Gnostic thought.<sup>2</sup> For the question is not only one of pointing to one of the major doctrinal sources of Valentinian Gnosis — as far as the Gnostic "emanation" could have drawn its principle, *mutatis mutandis*, from the Platonic doctrine of participation — but also of implicitly revealing the entire *methodology* allowing this development of Platonism, which the Gnostics could have derived from the Aristotelian argument itself. It would not be the first time that a *polemical argument* in fact — functioned as a *descriptive model*;<sup>3</sup> and, ironically enough, by theologizing Aristotle and by Aristotlizing the Gnostics, Irenaeus was

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\* The original paper, *Le Nombre et son Ombre. Cosmodicée et cosmogénie dans le Veda et dans la Gnose*, was published in two parts in the *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*, no. 16 (1985): 205-235, no. 17 (1986): 169-207. It is practically impossible to say in a few lines what the present author owes to Miss Lilian Silburn, both to her immense work and to her personal influence. It goes without saying that the present analysis, good or bad, would have been unthinkable without her *Instant et Cause*, one of the three absolute books of the French indology and, most certainly, of Indology in general. The present summary in English is published according to an arrangement entered into with Professor R.T. Wallis.

This essay is dedicated to Richard Wallis.

even more right than he thought he was, in this endlessly moving allegory of heresy and of its image, orthodoxy.

Indeed, Aristotle's *regressus ad infinitum* changes from a *reductio ad absurdum* into a positive method in the paradoxical logic of the Gnostics. For this infinite recession in search of causality by steps of archetypes and degrees of Ideas — or, as the heresiologist says, of "figures of figures and images of images" — does not give an aleatory variable, but a teleological hierarchy of superposed values, where every degree, though preserving its functional identity, is at the same time the monadic sum of a whole series.

In fact, it is to the dialectics of the One and the Multiple, conceived as an inextricable warp and woof of logically insoluble contradictions in Plato's *Parmenides*,<sup>4</sup> that the Gnostics intended to bring a solution, and the originality of this is not to be ignored. The relation between the One and the All — the latter, subtly reanalyzed from the outlook of a "mass of plurality," and not any longer of a multiplicity of parts — is regarded holographically. It differs from an actual identity by nothing more than a functional modifier (*horos/nous*), making intelligible *axiological* differentiation and, thereby, *ontological* regressivity: the emanation is a *deficiency of consciousness* — and one can see the Holographical All or the Totalities in the *Gospel of Truth* deambulating round about the One in which they are, without knowing it, the ignorance of the Father — that is, the subjacent substance — generating the anguish, the terror and, by the solidification of the anguish, the error, i.e. the Demiurge (the interesting thing is that the mythological nomenclature of other texts is transformed here in a kind of psychogonical substance or conceptual coagulation, producing psychological seriality, an eerie Aristotelian concreteness).

Having its starting point in an inferential geometry, by which one goes up *à rebours* the gnoseological stairs, as one climbs in the rite the sacrificial pole, i.e. *axis mundi*, the cosmogonical logic of Gnosis does not limit itself to making from Platonic participation the principle, in a reverse and reiterative way, of the deficient ontic emanation. The methodological inversion is double, for the more one derives the origin from the concept, the more one infers the salvation from the fact of emanation itself.<sup>5</sup>

The soteriology always gains a step over the cosmogony, of which it is both the aim and the cause — and it is only the anthropogony that is intended to put an end to this spacing and emptying decay by which, for reasons of salvation, one invents new degrees of existence.<sup>6</sup> The man, shadow of the Pre-existing Man, is the turntable of Gnosis, since the last image, and consequently *the most complete*, of the cosmic

becoming, a holographical summary of the nihility. The noetic void, which had made possible the ontic plenum, is to be filled up with gnosis, the unconscious is to be made conscious, the real is to dissolve into the True, the Umber is the gain again its Number. "Thus will the last be first, and the first last" (Mt 20:16): perhaps nowhere else than in Gnosis does the precept of Christ find a more exact correspondent. So the *Untitled Text* of Codex Bruce ends as the *Gospel of Truth* begins — with the Return of the totalities to the Eternal One.

Now, the consequence following for the exegete of Gnosis from this paralogical logic, based formally on what may be called *the principle of the third man*, actually consists in the Gnostic textological use of the *coincidentia oppositorum*.

Indeed, the problem to cope with lies in a kind of antinomical projection of the metaphysical *once* in the textological *hic et nunc*, in a flashing transposition of massive absolute in the relativity of moving tracks and signs of the text. The plasmatic support of factitious verbal tracings converts itself into a sort of *written consciousness*, paradoxically truer than the oral one, into a pneumatic perplexity through which, as on a void path, man discontinuously returns to his instantaneous identity.

For man is the coming back of all things, as all things are man's verbal coming out — that is, the imaginary contraction of his will, *ichnos*, *logos*, and *thelema* being metaphysical and textual synonyms,<sup>7</sup> existing by this double cessation, only where his presence is denied and his absence asserted: in the syntax of the intermediate space.

The presence is the inverse ratio of existence. In this syntactical distance of holographical letters, the absence appears to itself in its image, paradoxically projecting its own retention and contracting itself, correlatively to its centrifugal conception, like the hollow heart of the bewildered phenomena. The serial monadology is a syntagmatic phenomenology of alphabetical totalities in synecdochal progression — or rather the monadological phenomenology itself is a hypostatical syntax of the imaginary using an amphibological technique in a mythopoetic degressive digression, a *rhetoric functioning as a syntax*.

So the pronominal ambiguities in referring to different entities<sup>8</sup> (masculine/feminine and singular/plural, with the mention that the feminine is the plural of the gender and the singular is the masculine of the number — cf. the Platonic dialectics of the One and the Multiple — the feminine representing, in the emanative process, the series, *segment-identity*, and the masculine the monad, *point-identity*), the deliberate confusion of names, appellations and attributes at distinct degrees of emanation, the indistinction between the grammatical subject and the

appositional predication, the repetitions, redundancies, paradoxes and "illogicalities" of which the Gnostic treatises are full — too frequent and significant indeed to be reduced to the eternal "errors of transcription or translation," "interpolations" or "contaminations" — are nothing but *facts of style*, for which it is not textual criticism that can provide the intelligence but a *literary* one.

Or maybe we should invent another discipline. At least, another logic; most certainly, the Gnostics had already done it, and we shall always find it impossible to interpret, with our "kenomatic" instruments, this atypical thought which wanted itself pleromatic. This is a deeper dilemma than mere hermeneutizing. Paradoxically, the plenitude of the modern exegesis lies in its lacks, that is, in its misleading correctness — and in trying to obliterate the Kenoma, the Gnostics had devised the apparently sophistic technique of enticing away the intellect upon para-logical quicksands, where the error could not find support, of luring it, by means of Lobachevskian nets of analogical hazard and allogeneous parodical logic, from comic captivity to parodical logic, from comic captivity to parodical freedom — for freedom is always a parody — and from the *Kenoma* of the Aristotelian logic, into a Pleroma of perplexity. For, logically, the Gnostic Demiurge is Aristotle: witness, the reversal of the argument of "the third man" into a hypostatic principle owing to which the phenomenal man is endowed with an infinite tail of archetypal Adams.<sup>9</sup>

Folded and deployed like a synecdochal accordion, the monads are series and the series are monads; the attributes coagulate around a Name and autonomise themselves, in a metonymical manner, into new onomastic nuclei; the grammatical categories of gender, number and person are loose and floating; the outlines of the gnoseological distinctions subject/object, attribute/essence, accident/substance, agent/patient, cause/effect, signifier/signified, glide and dissolve thanks to a technique of functional interchangeability rendering the equations of the mind reversible: the Gnostic text is ■ writ rite where the novice, initiated by the "implicit reader" postulated by Todorov, which finds in Gnosis one of its first applications,<sup>10</sup> is plunged, head first, into the abyss of seismic revelation (*thauma*), in order to dissolve his logical idiosyncrasies and wake him up to another mental syntax.

This technique of navigation on the naught, which describes, by means of the Word, a double ascensional movement to the Origin, being nothing in fact but a logical strategy towards the nihility, an attempt to bypass it so as both to derive the world and to deduce salvation, is not an invention of Gnosis, but rather a symbolological scheme subjacent to all sacrificial mentalities and more especially to Vedic thought, the

difference being not so much one of method as one of end. Whether the sacrificer unglues the cosmic order, even at the risk of annihilating it, so as to be able, by actualizing the cause, to assure the perpetuity of the effect, the Gnostic, no less ritualist in fact, re-enacts the Creation in order to unlegitimate the Demiurge.

The methodological affinity can be seen particularly when we analyze the language of these two hermeneutics, typologically parallel.

We are dealing here with a symbolic language, of course, generally derived from a mythological background, best represented by the archaic aquatic cosmogonies. But, upon these primary nebulae and mythobiologically fecund physics, Veda and Gnosis perform an operation of metaphysical re-signification, not foreign perhaps to some psychological deep presupposition or rather to a psycho-physiological one. The symbols function as concepts or are substituted by concepts functioning as symbols ontologically charged; the cosmogonical symbolism is used as a cognitive instrument, and upon the archaic scheme of the Igneous Embryo's emersion ■ gnoseology is built.

Denoted by the complex notion of *abhu*, the void-oneself lying hidden in the waters, hardly distinct from the aquatic inertia which impregnates it like the subjunctive subjacence of an image, the Vedic concept of origin is understood not so much as a non-existence as rather as a non-consciousness — fact partially justified by the compact indistinction between logical and physical and apparently contradicted by a sharp tendency to personify notions — since the effects of *abhu*'s tapasic calorization are, in a psychological order, the desire (*kama*) and the mind (*manas*); ■ Genesis of the Consciousness therefore, symbolized by the Cosmogonic Egg — the reified naught — i.e. the Golden Embryo<sup>11</sup> as a hypostasis of the unbegotten Spirit in its passage from a non-manifested to a manifested state.<sup>12</sup>

The same hermeneutical process is to be found in Gnosis. To Hiranyagarbha-*manas* corresponds here, *mutatis mutandis*, *Nous*, designating the Son — appositionally, the first Form and the first Name, but also the Eye and the Word — who emerges from Abyss and whose Father is nothing but the indistinct state in which the Totalities *are*, potentially, as unconscious of their deeper self as they will actually be after the pleromatic emanation.<sup>13</sup>

Metaphysically, the Son is a substance of pleromatic relations, linking together the moments of the moving identity, a definite subjacence defining the indefinite as a One, or, synecdochally, a paradigm configurating an origin (for Bythos is the qualitative part of *Nous*, as *Nous* is the quantitative part of Bythos). Analyzed extrinsically, the Son is the double difference of four terms: negation

and projection, signifier and signified (the negative, i.e. retroactive, signifier of the abyssal cause being the prime mover of the projective signified of the Pleroma), while the Father appears as a privative identity transformed, by the negating Son, into a productive cause. Analyzed intrinsically, the Son could be described as a configuration of four astants — cohesive-distributive (strength, goodness), noetic (*nous*), verbal (*logos*), and visual (for, generally, the intellect is the eye) — each of them implying two aspects according to their retroactive or proactive orientation. The immediate scope of all these pleromatic actants is, of course, cognitively projective, the noetic one absorbing and supporting the others and, by this very fact, calling them back. The visual and verbal knowledge of the Father — viewed as suppressed Object of the Subject-Son, with the Pleroma as by-product of the gnoseological process — translates itself in a kind of transcendental sensorium; organ, function and perception compenetrated together in the synesthesical absence of a monad.

Thus the Son is nothing but an integrating dissociation within a dissociating integration, equivocal synthesis of the manifestation, and analytical principle of its conservation, a polymorphism preceding a series; related retroactively to the Father, the Son is a prolonged identity, considered in progression, he is the first identity of the non-entity, limit and symbol, mode and rule. We must emphasize once more this double aspect of the pleromatic subiacences, of progressive substratum and regressive indication, as if in the Pleroma, really and not artificially, all the signs were suddenly reversed; paradox quite apparent after all, for, the true meaning being the naught, it is perfectly natural for each element to be successively the signifier of its antecedent and the signified of its consequent, therefore, infinitely limited towards the interior and indefinitely illimited to the exterior — that is, in an eternal situation of fall.

So the hypostases are simply differences in position of a hierarchized identity. And it is the tragi-comedy of Limit that *Nous*, and with him, all the consequently antecedent syzygies which weave the Pleroma with boundaries and images, reveal themselves logically co-extensive exactly in so far as they are not co-intensive to the abysmal Father, substituting strangely enough its depth by a metaphysical measure of the lack, like the compounded orbit of an asymptotical sun glowing in the void of the disappearing moment in which it ceases.<sup>14</sup>

*Nous* and *Manas*, *Horos* and *Hiranyagarbha* are aspects in fact of the same psychogenetical identity — for their identity is predominantly aspectual — like a fourfold janitor *Janus* scribbling four items on his metapsychical grocery list. There are of course some differences in the

script, as there is a huge cultural and temporal discordance between the *Gnosis* and the *Veda*, but these latter items, if they should not be ignored, shouldn't either be overvalued: thaumatic enough, the dissimilarities act rather as the historical screen of the typological picture, syntagmatical concordia-discors stressing its paradigmatical clashing-identity.

Probably, the main morphological difference between *Hiranyagarbha* and the *Gnostic Nous* lies in the mythological context or, more precisely, in the different types of space where each of them operates. *Hiranyagarbha's* *Leyden jar* are the primordial waters, as that of the *Nous* is the *Pleroma*, and furthermore, what might seem a total heresy from the *Gnostic* point of view, the *Golden Embryo* of the *Vedic* hymn epiphanizes himself as radically pancosmic (giver of breath — *atmadah*, literally, donor of *atman* — and of vigor, *baladah*). Surveyor of the air, support of the celestial vault and of the light, identified in the *Atharva Veda* X.7.28 with *Skambha*, the *Vedic axis mundi*, *Hiranyagarbha* is the Sun, not empirical but transcendental, whose revolution is Time, whose splendor is space, who creates by rising and destroys by setting, a terrifying photon to whom the waters look tremulously — an imponderable stare whose fixity freezes the brownian movement of the hydrous matter where he was hatched — and the shadows of this *Gorgonic Eye* are, strangely, immortality and death.

In fact, the discrepancy is less striking than it seems to be, the pleromogony being a metaphysical pantheism, governed pythagorically by an *Eleatic Nous* as metapsychical Sun, a liquid emission of catoptrical metapsychemes — and the connection of the entire *Gnostic* psychogenic secretion, both pleromatic and kenomatic, with the old aquatical cosmogonies is more than probably.

Now, despite its obvious naturism, which is, however, symbolical, the *Vedic* aquatic cosmogony appears less as a geminative exuberance (though this aspect is not to be ignored) but rather as a measuring activity, a weaving, an exact adjustment tending — synonymously to the sacrificial texture itself, with which it is in fact identified — to thwart *Nirrti* (= *Vedic Kenoma*<sup>15/16</sup>) by means of the matricial metric magic — *maya*, significantly derived from *ma* "measure."

Polytechnically archaic, *Hiranyagarbha* shares with the *Nous* the cohesive and the limiting functions — as cosmic pillar (*skambha*), the auriferous embryo delimits as much as he supports, being besides the separator *par excellence* of the aqueous abyss (in *Veda*, as in *Gnosis*, the waters are "chthonic") a surgeon embryo who performs himself its own *Caesarean*, and the fixed fascination of the trembling waters at the sight of this alchemical nightmare points precisely to their stabilization.<sup>17</sup>



So, if from the standpoint of the cosmogonical physics Hiranyagarbha plays quite obviously the part of a Vedic Horos (in Horos's assimilation with the Cross within the Ptolemaic milieu — "the flower of the Valentinian school," as the heresiologist says<sup>18</sup> — one may discern some eclectic remains of the old *axis mundi*, in its necessary connection with the "positional ontology"<sup>19</sup> of the cosmic directions), psychogonically, he is the visual mind (*manas*) of the Vedic magical mythology. In Hymn X.129, after an extremely difficult incubative impregnation — in quite clear-cut synonymy with the Gnostic stuff<sup>20</sup> — *manas* rises from Desire (*kama*), and, since in R.V. X. 121 Hiranyagarbha emerges from the binomial waters (Samudra and Rasa: the copulation — *mithuna* — is implied by the opposite grammatical sex of the algebrical partners), the permutation is limp: Hiranyagarbha of X.121 is the perfect equivalent of the *manas* of X.129, the difference between the two hymns being due to the abyssal causalistic approach of the latter, which marks, on the Vedic territory, the passage from what should be called a mythology of the spirit, to the first conceptualistic research.<sup>21</sup>

Quantic contraction of the aquatical quantity, Hiranyagarbha is an inner resorption opening an outer emission, and his ascension, which coincides with the primordial separation, is a doubly double look, or rather an indistinct viscosity hypostatizing itself in the void of four distinct co-actants, two igneous (Agni-Hiranyagarbha) and two liquid (Samudra-Rasa); for the cosmogony is a sudden intensity in a gradual density, an instant of perplexity in the duration of a traumatical cause. In fact, nature looks for its identity, the dyadic shadow made up of *amrtah* and *mrtuyuh* — the liquid immortality and the fluid death, contextually and symbolically identified with Rasa and Samudra — thickening into the projective hotness of the primordial igneous germ, Agni, in X.121.7, just as the formlessly frozen dyad of the void, *tuchyenabhu*, coagulates "by the great power of Warmth" (*tapas*) into the determinate potency of the One, *ekah*, in X.129.3 (Hymn X.121 being besides entirely constructed from typologically parallel triplets: the first term, igneously definite, the two others, forming obviously a dyad, hydric and indefinite).

Hiranyagarbha is the instrumental psycho-hypostasis of this One (the same which rests "upon the Unborn's naval," *ajasya nabhau*, in R.V. X.82.6), a zenithal center functioning as an imaginary middle term and splitting, by his suppressive transparency, the plasma of massive hydric contemplation. Strangely enough, it is in the process of the catoptrical rejectional ascension of Hiranyagarbha that the informing light finds room to morphologize the sensitive chaos of the

indiscriminated waters, filling the physical lack with the perplexed vision of the bright bark of their phenomenal mind revealed in the depth of their own traumatic spirit.<sup>22</sup> For Hiranyagarbha is an eye which sees by being seen and a mind which minds by being minded, and in the use of the instrumental (*manasa*) one may discern the Indian ambivalence in considering the status of the agent-handle for the handled patient — ambivalence here enhanced by the eminently causative position of Hiranyagarbha, the Eternal Embryo (gold connoting immortality), the subsisting inciter of the Vedic cosmogony.

In a way, the Waters constitute a kind of undulatory or melodic system of articulation, a dumb image of the Verb, in regard to whom Hiranyagarbha is the first sonorous vowel, the first syllable of the imaginary. That makes the Primordial Waters, at least by symbolical connotation, a kind of Pleroma, but a Pleroma which would precede the Nous, without knowing yet the Logos, or rather a kind of *Sige*, the first subjacence and the pleromatic essence *par excellence*. The plenitude is a container contained at the top and containing its bottom-essence as Bottom contains dreamy Titania, a void heart full of its hollow and remorsefully aspiring to its hollow's brilliant projection — a shadow, in fact, or an artifact. Shadow of its shadow's liquid shadow (for the essence is the *stain* of its plenitude), Aja, the Unborn, technically the naught, is a connotative co-absence subtly manipulating its hypostatic co-presence — for being is another thing than seeming or, as Griffith quite aptly translates the verse, "Ye will not find him who produced these creatures: another thing (*antara*) hath risen up among you" — and the parallel with the Gnostic Father, who can be known or can imaginarily subsist only through the shining of his noetic Son, is peculiarly evident. Like, in fact, the Primordial Waters, the Pleroma is a reciprocal implication perceived as a univocal progression, a chain of perceptions, that is, of *recognitions*, each of them mediated by hazy hesitation and falling in the identity of another contraction.

But the sinuous coincidence between the Vedic semeiology of the vision and the Gnostic psychology of the imaginary can be best realized and maybe best denied through the concept of (*ichnos* = skr. *pada*). For, more than a simple metaphor depending upon an ancient ritualistic and magical mentality — besides, quite living both in Veda and Gnosis — the track is the efficient figure of thought of what may be called a cynegetic metaphysics or, rather, an inferential mystic. The footprint of the Father is his Will,<sup>23</sup> which the Gnostic adepts — phenomenologically identified with the paradigmatic Totalities — scent, through the fragrances emanated from the paternal face, in order to find acosmical salvation, — and functionally, the psych=analogical footprint

corresponds, though with an inverse intention, to *rasmi*, the string or transversal line drawn by the Vaidic Rsis in order to institute the cosmos of salvation (i.e. to build the sacrificial area: corroborate R.V. X. 129.5 and X.130.1). But *rasmi* is nothing but the ritual equivalent of the *maricinam pada* — lit. the trace of the rays or sparks (specks) — the radiant wake of the mayic Bird whom the technicians of the vision follow in their heart and in the depth of the subtle Ocean.<sup>24</sup>

Viewed on the symbolical smoothness of the sacrificial area, the things distinguish themselves quite neatly. Indeed, in the *Satapatha Brahmana* III.5.1.1-11, describing the construction of the Great Altar (*mahavedi*, that is the sacrificial area conceived as a "great" *maha* — "altar" *vedi*), the first line drawn by the Vedic officiants is the South-North transversal, the mystical channel uniting the symbolical nadir and zenith, and the ulterior development of the area represents precisely the extension of this first trajectory.<sup>25</sup>

So *mahavedi*, and inductively the whole sacrificial system, is but a trace aggregated of traces, an image of the repetition accumulating differences in identities and extracting an identical substance from every scattered difference. Bricks or steps (*pada*), the matter is always of a symbolic arithmology<sup>26</sup> subordinated to a projective teleology, of a correct worship aimed to correct — by what may be called a *magical breaking-perspective* — the distorted transcendence in the cracks of its terrestrial image.<sup>27</sup>

In a way, both the trace and the altar are the ordered decomposition of the Father — Prajapati in the *Brahmanas*, the Hiding Father in the *Gospel of Truth*, where *ichnos* is the cloud of identity of a discontinuing entity, a permanent lack of position in an evanescent fullness of disposition — the precise haphazard of his presence, the suburb of a connecting shadow between the looked for and the looking for, suppressed in the identity of both.

In not quite another way, this reconstructed alteration constitutes the semiological projection of an aniconic portrait,<sup>28</sup> a convention in fact, based on esoteric appositions, the convention itself being nothing but a partial connection completed with projection, a participation of two protractive levels with rupture implied. The existence hollows itself out under a point,<sup>29</sup> and the connecting convention traces the passage from the state of connotation to the void-instant of an annihilating denotation, as ■ troubled superposition of lacunae complemented with a pantheistic influx of hypostases.

For the sacrifice represents a conglomerate of prints aiming to heal the hollow, a superposition of signs configurating, by a technique of analytical distribution of the symbols, not a mimetic but an aniconic

image — the difference in aspect or rather the *not* of iconical resemblance pointing to the transition of plans.<sup>30</sup> Compenetration is suppression, and through the quantic image of disjointed noetic sediments traversed by the metaphysical fixity of the noeric speed, the Father finds himself in the trace of his retention, supplying his projective Identity with an elective fuel of lack, changing his free falling depth in the substance of truth of an inward connection.<sup>31</sup>

So, the identity is splitting; or rather, the identity is its own ubiquity, containing in one whirl the entire immanence of Nature in the vertex of its own transcendence: that is why the concept of *ichnos* is central and total for the whole Gnosis, readily including and equalizing such reciprocal *adunata* as the Hidden Father, the hiding Nous, Limit (*horos*), Wisdom (*Sophia*), the Abortional outflow of non-being, and the Demiurge, the egoistic temporal becoming of space and soul.<sup>32</sup>

In fact, the identity is a conflict, an antagonistic contradiction, compressed in one point, between its conceptual determination and its conceptual content; for the absolute indetermination is the true conceptual content of the identity. What is determined can't conceive itself as undetermined, and seems to migrate in itself as in an allogeneous substance; so, by appearing, it's caught! Its inside wanders outside in the image of its outside wandering inside, and, though perfectly compenetrated, the two seem divided into a form and a fool. The identity splits by compacting itself, emerges and by this very fact is submerged. By being determined, the identity is the transcendent of the undetermined; but by being *identity*, it is the ubiquitous immanent of all that it determines. By looming out and modulating itself in an intensity, the identity converts the aperatic compenetration of the indetermination into the infinite extension of a substance. The conceptual nature and natural self-relation of the identity coagulate in a nature opposed to the concept; thus, the identity appears void in its transcendental concept and full of the blind immanence of the conceived, as a trace total in its chase.

The identity as identity is a One, but by being identity, it has no limit and no alterity; therefore, it is an All. As a One, the identity is its own limit, as an All, the identity is its own substance; its own synthesis dissociates it, and its own analysis unifies it by aliening it, so as, finally, to break it into pieces. The identity is a Chaos of contrary forces.

For Nature is a beginning of structure, that is, of concept, the How-it-is preceding the What-it-is, but coming into being only *after* it; so the indetermination is the accomplice of the identity, in a way obscure.<sup>33</sup> A deep vibration foregoes, by following, its own epiphany, in a wake of streaming connotations, and this absolute of agglutination

reveals itself thereby as a One. The concept is the substance of thought, so the substance is the concept of being, and the streaming subjacencies are the psychical subsoil of the abyssal subbottom; this implies a confused connotative contradiction, an imbecile plenitude of the void, a semi-hostile entanglement unable to achieve a system of oppositions. But nevertheless this leviathanic annotation flowing out of its aniconic annotation is the only One conceivable, mostly because besides it, there is none, and, paradoxically, the definite comes forth from the obscure monad of its indefiniteness like an atomic bomb defining itself in the massive explosion of its inner fissional contradiction.

Thus, from the very beginning the contradiction appears as the invasion of the connotative in the denotative growth, as a gradual concentration in an already saturated monad. In absolute, nature is pure nothingness, but in the relativity of its concept nature is tendency, the larval state of notation. In its transcendent unity, nature is absolutely not, but in the immanent indetermination of its naught, nature tends to be something; it connotes being rather than denotes it. That's why the nature of nature is suffering. By having a concept, nature is its own subject; but it can't conceive itself as a subject, but as a concept. Without its concept, it has no life and meaning, not the sheerest existence, but without it, the concept is form for the naught.

So nature with concept is subject, but the concept in itself, taken in its own transcendence, is spirit. For the Spirit, Nature or rather Matter is an embarrassing implication, a leviathanic link in which, despite his transcendency, he feels himself somehow swallowed, and which he is burning to get rid of. As a concept — almost a logical phenomenon — he cannot help but determining and thus supporting the matter he hates, and this is his threnos. But as Spirit, the concept has no existence, no other reality than that furnished by its own content and its own repulsion — and *this* is its chaos. In the mass of his disgust, he cannot recognize any more his own identity, and in his almost self-annihilating refusal he appears a priori absurd, but that is the heroism of the Spirit. His ecstatic ignorance is a kind of aesthetics, his eternal but not real defeat — his irrational freedom. For the Spirit there is no necessity in liberty but only agony in victory, no necessity simply understood, but necessity understood and denied; incidentally, here lies his greatest cunning, almost his hypocrisy, because the Spirit is the blackmailer of lost battles, who wins by threatening to Lose, as a Napoleon forced to vanquish his own Grande Armée and conquer Paris bareboshed, or rather like an Achilles compelled to fight the Achaean army by his very absence, for what army can subsist to a dead or absent Achilles, and which world, to a wounded spirit! In fact, this cunning is

his true deep trap. There is a necessity in poetry, perhaps there is no other necessity but poetry!

By eternally jumping out of Matter and picking up his heels, the Spirit loses himself as a metaphor and finds himself as a dictator, for Matter has no choice but to follow. Moreover, flight is impossible; the point of light which soars asymptotically above the cosmos carries with it the entire growth of the space beneath, like the volatile top of an elastic pyramid bounded in height by its base.

In all frankness, the Spirit catches a glimpse of the dramatic situation of Matter, possesses a kind of quantic intuition, a stuck sensation of her painful semantic metabolism — for Matter is his damnation — and in his repulsion fights a lapse, the blurred remembrance of the lost concept; a logic amnesia with some other depth in addition. He goes on fulfilling somehow his determining function — without which, both Spirit and Matter would cease instantaneously to exist — but he can't conceive any more, his pure intensiveness cannot comprise, can not accept itself as the concept of clumsy infiniteness of the clumsy matter; and so, by losing his concept, he's barren.

From now on, the Spirit can give free rein to his pathological tendency to hiding, to his ontological avariciousness, to his idiotic mania of accumulating himself like a transcendental Harpagon grabbing himself only for himself and hiding himself in a place known only to himself. Hunted by his own contrariety, he runs towards his own identity, and in his running inhibition or rather in the contraction of his flight he puts on his inside like an outside Pleroma, falling down through his annihilating-self as some Aeon melting in the sweetness of his center.

Thus, by losing his concept and blocking himself in the outer interiority of his inhibition, the Spirit finds himself, he finds indeed his abyssal essence, but as an alien. That is, the Spirit finds an alien, a reified naught! This is the normal outcome of an initial dualism: from the very beginning of the logic cosmogony, the identity contained itself in itself as its own contradiction, a massed dualism of the identity and the indetermination, which tended by definition to split; the connotation invades its denotation, identifies for a moment with it, trying to forget its lower origins, then jumps once more into the nil — for, once started, the contradiction cannot be stopped.

This is in a way a kind of correction and a kind of return. By abandoning the indetermined to its damnation, by rejecting it as a sheer exteriority, as the empty peel of the eaten banana, the determination provides the fuel for burning itself, destroys itself but in an outer way; for the determination of nothing else is nothing but else, that is, the else

of the nothing! Paradoxically, the Pleroma and implicitly Nous appear from this very destruction as a sign of an a priori fallen essence, subsisting however in its *correct* intensity. The identifications refused from within realize themselves always from without — but an identification from without is never complete!

With its denotative substance torn and thrown away or rather dialyzed by the stubbornness of the Spirit, the concept plunges, only through its connotation, into its conceptism, as into an alien matter. For both spirit and matter are false representations, pseudo-morphemes, and *by this very fact* the Spirit appears quantically within the matter, is quantically immanent — the quantic being the logic *immediately* represented, the logic immediately physical. His within is killed in his without, his solipsism makes of him a kind of double alter-ego.

So the Spirit is blocked! Totally depreciated, he looms out of the fog of his mass-annihilation as a substance of stupefaction personified by Error. As simple connotation — for, for having refused to denote, he lost in punishment his denotative aspect — the Spirit is not different from the matter, he is not anymore a concept, not even ■ substance, but a liquefied nil, an Abortion, ■ non-being. More exactly, his stupefaction is the suspension of an impossibility, the interdiction — i.e. the alienated essence, one's own essence as one's own *tabou* — coiled in the subsistence of ■ kind of embryonic consciousness. So in his *thauma* which is nothing else but his exterior *identification* with matter, the concept hammered, not the concept conjunct — the Spirit surges as potential Nous. In both directions the Intellect is destruction, which fits quite well with the Gnostic soteriogy.

Perplexity is the synthesis between recognition and refusal; caught in the vortex-concept of his amnesia, the spirit bubbles its chaos and its loss. Conserved inwardly, its residual contradiction is altered and infected from without. He is nothing more than a connotation, but this is already a regression, a dissolution into the waste land of the immanence, his concept putrefied. The Spirit dies, and in his death there is the danger of his essence. That puts him in an agonic empathy with all the levels of the split existence. His death is the naught, his error, the deepest knowledge, and an enormous alarm freezes the Light and the Darkness. All the levels of the potential beings concert themselves, as it were, planning their own escape in the salvation of the moribund Spirit. The Intellect, the usurper of his fall and the son of his destruction, manifests itself as a limit<sup>34</sup> and this boundary thrown in the bubble of his deep sleep and abyssal dissolution awakes him from his slumbering identity. It awakes him, but it awakes him as another! For now, the Spirit is mad, he's a Demiurge.

In fact, the Spirit is not yet so much a Demiurge as a creature; by being aphronic, he's amorphous. He's not even a being, but rather the blindness of an intuition, unconscious intention measuring its own potency by its own inexistence; for to create, he lacks the form, and to be a Demiurge he lacks a subject.

What is the Subject then? Earlier in this paper we stated that the Subject was the nature in possession of its concept, but this is only partially true, or rather it is the truth in its demonic abstraction. For the Subject gathers and co-masses the entire process, the whole mythological development of which Spirit and Matter are just the players; indeed, in this play the Subject is a stage. That is, the Subject is substance, the substance being that stage, that cavern where things are but shadows; it is an involuntary substratum, strangely unrelated to the relations which, in a way, make him be.

The Subject is an absolute, but only in a relative sense; a globality which transcends perpetually its unity, a gigantic amoebical trace stepping in itself to the limits of nothingness, a drop of All over an abyss of *not*. Thus the Subject is substratum: he determines himself in the process, but the process too may be looked at as the simple auto-determination of the subject. Viewed in this perspective, the Subject is an All abyssal and substantial, an universal compriser whose parts are its own processes, a huge synecdoche: for there exists, in the famous *pars pro toto*, an inertial-processual implication, *the process appearing as the part of inertial*<sup>35</sup>

Thus, taken in the development and the determination of his process, the Subject is a notation of itself or, more precisely, *the self as notation*, because the source of the determinations of the Subject is the notation of the self as mediated concept of the naught. Caught in its true galvanic signification, the play of the determinations functions eliminatorily, i.e. the determinations in their play are ■ kind of tests, of *definitions on trial*, the substratum and the result of which is the subject, as positive accumulation; while the negative accumulation of the determining process is the self. For if the subject is the place where all the determinations coexist, the self is the locus where all the determinations cease, and this white void essentially objectual is the closest image of the naught: the self: the naught as imaginary retention. On the contrary, closed in his huge solitude as in the walls of some moving prison of the omnipotence, bound as some fabulously growing transatlantic in the midst of an ineffable, inescapable Sea,<sup>36</sup> the Subject is an anxious giant eroded secretly — the very substance of interrogation — an All growing and guzzling the convulsive procession of its own stupefactions, roaring and swooning and growing and looking

for itself as a monstrous cavity where ends all totality; for the substance is craving for the essence, and the Subject is roar for the naught.

But, if the Subject is an agonic inherence isolated in the desert of its empty transcendences and blind immanences, a triumphal march over the void, leaning on its hypostatic moments as on some instantaneous crutches — for, in his run after the transcendence, the Subject is Time — then the self, Subject's obsession and double, is an impassable dichotomy, or rather an object which puts the surrounding totalities of the others as a void mass of lack-objects. Thus, in this curious system of oppositions realized through the strict autarky of each of its terms, an infinite and, up to a certain point, an indefinite auto-transcendence is indirectly confronted with a radical auto-immanence in which, paradoxically, the former finds its concept and its end. Whether the Subject is a dynamical trace, ■ chaser chased by his *angustia* through the labyrinthian without of its progression to itself — for the Subject is ■ subjacency out of itself to itself, and out-of-itself-to-itself-in-itself — the self, contrary to Subject's additive negation, denies by subtraction, and though this subtraction is but the substance of his own impassability, caught in it, the self appears as *Will!* For, in a sense, the will is exactly the negative dialectics of the self.<sup>37</sup>

Now, the subjectivation of this subtractive Will, is the Spirit. Submerged in its interior-in-exterior immanence, the Spirit coincides positionally with the auto-immanent self, but the immanence of the Spirit being completely exterior, being in other words a *fall*, the Spirit is greedy of the subject, this dynamic avidity reversing the impassability of the self. In other terms, the Spirit is a repulsive system coagulating its own interiority as a seed of obscurity, for, as an aggregate of darkness, the matter is Spirit's error.

Hence the spirit-in-matter is the interior turned inside out, and transformed into a consistent obscurity, that is, into an *ego*, for the obscure does not become real but as an individual. Because the ego is the atom of the exterior being. What is for the Spirit a kind of vis-à-vis relationship — the Spirit being entirely an interiority uncomprehended — becomes at Ego's level the indivisible unity of the exterior. The Spirit was the matter expelled, the Ego is the matter included. In the Ego it is not any more the Spirit who is immanent in the matter, but, perplexingly, the matter which is immanent in the shape of the spirit.

For, like the Subject, who is a kind of global bark himself, the Ego is the husk of the spirit, the spirit turned into its own crust, not any more the crust of something but a crust in something, a crust in its own interior-vomited — and thus, containing the immanence in which it is contained inside a crust never actual but in its withdrawal; the matter

determined by the Ego as his infirmity is Ego's vomiting emanation, a vomiting fission, in fact, of Ego's misshapen will, the Ego himself being the hunchbacked caricature of the spirit. That is why between the Ego and the Subject there exists ■ deep analogy, or rather a situational affinity; and it is for this very reason that the Ego, as a hybrid-all, and *hybris*-all, receives his subjective shape from the Subject, as from his own abyss. For, in a way, the Subject resorbs itself totally in the Ego, but not in its quality of subject; indeed, the Ego is not the Subject, but only a *quality-of-subject*.

So the Ego appears as Subject's quality, that is, in his dynamis he is quality-of-subject. As hybrid-all and *hybris*-all, the Ego is the battlefield of all the analytical hypostases; in his mediated concreteness, the Ego is discontinuously cyclic, he is in these very words ■ cycle and a repetition, and, contrary to that of the spirit, his own repulsion is derived. For the Ego is a perverse innocent!

Compared to the spirit, who functions as ■ system, the Ego is a world, not simply a system of oppositions — nay, the Ego is *the* world, and there is no other world but the Ego. In a sense, the Ego is an intensity deeper than the Spirit, an obscurity built on Spirit's annihilation, a *personal naught* and an anxiety. His own self is a hunger and a thirst, his repulsion, a voracity. In his instinctiveness, the Spirit wants to be, but the Ego wants to be the Master; and by this will he's God. His thirst of light is digestive, and the light, as his apophatic exterior, represents nothing else but the spirit of contradiction of his own repulsion; a postulated prey! For the Ego is an intensive whole; bereft of its concept and of its contradiction, the Spirit projects itself as an inert image, a phantom and a corpse, that is, it appears as a *converted* spirit. A void of light! But the Spirit also represents, by his imaginary inertia, for the decomposing Ego, a deep temptation; an investment for his biggest asset, *the quality-of-subject*. If the Ego owns, the Ego aspires, and the aspiration is a kind of guilt.

The quality of subject is the sudden, and in the heavy and calibanic melodrama of existence it functions like a kind of gremlin, an *arlechino*, an Ariel or a Puck with a quantic biography of its own. The quality-of-subject is in fact the Subject taken in its moments as holographical parts, and as such, in this system of parallel pulses of being, the quality of subject represents a much earlier occurrence than the Ego.

More precisely, the quality-of-subject is the residual emanation of the Subject himself as looking for himself in something else than himself, the freedom of this abortive determination keeping the anxiety as a serial attribute. As projection of surpassed limits or rather as a quintessence of these, the quality-of-subject is a Multiple of

determination in an ubiquitous One, and as a limit, it is of course an imitation. She transcends the Subject's global transcendence, analytically; to his globalism which is spatial, she responds by chaos of unforeseeable occurrences which are temporal.

So the Quality-of-subject is both quantic and simiesque. In a sense, the discontinuity is possible because it is imitative, that is, *identive*. Now, the discontinuity implies the instantaneity, the instantaneity configuring itself as an *exact imitation without duration*. The exact imitation is chaotic, because its lack of duration translates itself by an univocal occurrence: all the space is quantically identic, the epiphanic disorder being provoked by, and provoking, the intensity of the message. For as global, the subject is space, and as subject, this space is identical. That is why the Quality-of-subject projects herself thaumatically, appearing without wandering and disappearing without lasting, caught in the paranoia of her own determination. The Spirit expressed the identity by the fixity, for the Spirit is always the center; infinitely monadic, the Quality-of-subject expresses the center potentially in every point and actually in none of them, instituting the being as a cacophonous run, an open circulation in which everyone is one Moment's king and the other Moment's nothing, and the existence, a segment of bewilderment.

In fact, the Quality-of-subject is an approximation, exact enough to appear only *instantaneously*, but approximative enough to *appear*. Her spontaneous nature resides in a searching amnesia, a kind of erotic unhappiness very much similar to that of a Woman looking for the Ideal Man; for her frailty is a failure, a non-achieved identity. That explains why her existence is a perpetual passing and dancing, an impulsive bumping — with a kind of staccato effect — against an immediate limit, *an impulse cut by a limit implied*. Being instantaneous, the Quality-of-subject is always *surprised* by her appearance; the limit of her impulse, which we may call subconscious, and its annihilation are a state of consciousness, with that difficulty that, hardly actualized, the state of consciousness is immediately dragged or rather projected, by the force of the impulse, to some other explosive illumination. Thus, the anxiety comes forth as vitality. But if the limit is the visibility of the impulse, and the impulse the potency of the limit, its intense essence is in neither of the two, but in the loophole of its extinction, in the pure instantaneity of the naught. For the Unconscious is the real possessor of the quality of subject, and the unconscious is the identity.

The Quality-of-subject is in her occurrence an error and in her essence, a potency, actual only in its disappearance and manifesting itself only through the channel of the impossible, in the shape of surprise of

something eternally else; for the soul-movement of the Quality-of-subject is her alter-non-ego. So, formally, the Quality-of-subject is nothing but illusion, a nothing of form defined defining the form of nothing; but in her function, the Quality-of-subject is nothing but hazard. Her showing is a center of interest and a compensation, her vanishing, a kind of boredom; for the quality of subject is just curiosity.

Of course, the Quality-of-subject's immediate partner is the Spirit; for her thaumatic curiosity there is no better match but his acsthetical absurdity: the Spirit is absurd, but from the Quality-of-subject's point of view this absurdity is *le beau*. In fact, the Spirit interferes with her as her surprise, that is, her limit; in him, she appears, but she is vanishing beyond him. He becomes present only with her, and she becomes existing only without him. In the Spirit, the Quality-of-subject is actual, because never can the spirit be actual but through the Quality-of-subject; so they are both annihilated. For the Spirit, the Quality-of-subject appears as matter, as an obsession and a repulsion, that is, as an *intention*; for the Spirit, the Quality-of-subject is always a necessary danger, but for the Quality-of-subject, the Spirit appears as a kind of fatherland. Blocked in him, she is his falling; lost outside her, he is her image. With her, the Spirit finds his substance and fills the space, everything is spirit; without her, the Spirit finds his essence in his emptiness, the Spirit is nothing.

Caught in her capricious ubiquity, the Quality-of-subject is a Pleroma, a plenitude; but by getting, from her absolute lack of concept, a kind of acephalous universality, the Quality-of-subject emerges as a polymorphic Kenoma. If in his substratum the Spirit is space, in her form the Quality-of-subject is time — her form being precisely the Spirit. On the contrary, in her impulse, the Quality-of-subject is *pneuma*; and that spirit which appears to himself as immanent in this pneuma is the Ego.

The Ego is the Spirit void in the infinite emptiness of the matter, because the matter, accepted only from its indefinite exterior by the Spirit, is an emptiness and a void. Thus, the matter refused by the Spirit becomes his internal void and the empty space in which he finds himself! The Ego rises in the world at the same time with this emptiness and with this void, and so, the Ego raises the world, and puts himself in determined being, together with it! He comes out and opens his eyes over the infinity of the matter, which is his shade and in which he recognizes only his power, an indefinite plasticity confirming his unicity and tranquilizing his fear.

So, by catching his essence as his power and not recognizing himself in his naught, the Ego is blind, his blindness being exactly this

waste land of his exteriority, and consisting in the fact that the Ego puts himself rightfully as the empty concept of this empty matter, veiling, by that exaltation, his total inexistence and "sinning" consequently against the All. For the All is his inner naught. Thus, by being the all of his blind exteriority, the Ego is a part of his naught, and by being blind, he lies. The matter is Ego's intuition, in which the I lives like in a space, the I-in-the-space being Ego's individualization; but by being an intuition, the Matter is indeed Ego's lie, for in her, the truth of his naught is not so much lost as refused and reversed. The Spirit was, after all, a refusal of the matter in behalf of the naught, while the Ego is the refusal of the naught in behalf of the matter.

In a way, this lie is the truth incorrectly translated, the naught's notation of nothing-else transmitting itself, in the course of the determinative process, into the spirit's repulsion to be something-else, and finally into the Ego's rage-to-be, masked by his will to be the master. From this point of view, the Ego is doubly hypocritical; however, the matter being unreal, through his lie the Ego becomes her adequate concept, the Matter herself becoming the adequate substance of this adequate concept.<sup>38</sup>

But on the other hand, Ego's lie is nothing but his quality of subject; by having it, he is in the center of the stage, and so he is alone. But by uttering it, he puts himself as another than his essence who is the Spirit, and so he loses it. It is true, stripped of its concept and of its quality of subject, this essence, this spirit, is dynamically only a corpse, a simple inertia appearing as the difference between the omnipotent pseudo-universal ego, from now on definitely damned in his exteriority, and the nihil of his interior; but noetically, this caught essence of the Spirit destroyed is a sign, the imaginary signifier of the naught — its limit and symbol, phenomenologically, the deeper double of the Nous, and ontologically, Man and Light.

What however prevents the Ego, in spite of his indignity, from really losing his quality of subject, is the fact that the Ego does not represent simply a metaphysical or metaphysical hypostasis, like for instance the Spirit, but a *being*. Knotted in his knobbing exteriority, the Ego is living, he is the First Being *par excellence*, and only as such is he a Demiurge, the pragmatical God. Knitted with him and definitely immanent in the spatial matter, the Quality-of-subject is, in her factitious-deep egoistic root, his potency and his will, i.e. his omnipotence, and in her trajectory, his act and his becoming, his omnicomprising energy through which he imposes himself as the concept of his power, making of all the metaphysical hypostases his faculties and his pantheon. It is probably the first quotation of the

argument of authority; for the Demiurge is the Ego authoritarian!

Not only! Far from being a passive demiurgic concept, the lie of the Ego is in fact the synthetic unity of his entire exterior *meros*, the conductive compactness of the whole semantic dispersion determined by the moving system of the hypostatic isolations. The fact that the lie is something subjective puts her as quality of subject; through her, the matter gains concept and substance, and so the lie is primordial space; dynamically, the lie is the cosmogony, the pseudo-logos by which the Ego asserts himself as Demiurge and thus as cosmogonical agent. What is more, as demiurgic concept, concept of demiurgic action, and concept of demiurgic space, the lie is the principle of truth, an agent acting in itself, an exteriority operating in its own interiority and tending asymptotically to it.<sup>39</sup> Curiously, the analysis projects the lie as splitting between false action and static noetic light. Of course, her truth lies only in her transformations — but in absolute, the Lie lies; because in this relativity which does not surpass her boundaries there exists a certain cohesion and a kind of exactitude *en gros*. So, as lie, the Quality-of-subject is splitting!

In her absolute substratum, the lie is all-comprising-all-comprised space, and overflow overflowing its flow, for flowing-lie is always pantheistic; but in its relativity, the space is Ego's species, and all species are spaces for their specific egos. In absolute, the space is the species of the naught — the synthetic *symphony* of the subjacences — in transcendent, the space is the species of the Spirit, in relative, the space is the species and the power of the Ego, but in the *specific*, the species are the temporal spaces of the individual egos.

On the other hand, from a transcendental outlook the lie is Ego's will of plenitude. The Ego wants himself an all-full, and this will is his lie and his act: so, in his lie the Ego is his own act, and as an act, the Ego is his own space; if the lie is his concept, the Ego is nothing but a lie. But in his aspiration and in his destination, the Ego is quality of subject. His whole becoming amounts to one moment's polarity. The Ego's substance is a completing lack — for the Ego is the mounting growth, the Ego grows in his determinations, and his growth is a cohesion and an ascension, the cohesion of an ascension in fact! But the Ego's concept — his "lie" — is a synthetic dialectics of infinite realization, an Irrational-Informulable-Incommensurable dimension!

As a whole, the Ego is the one gigantic moment of the Quality-of-subject, is the Quality-of-Subject massively static, a synthetic massively static polarity; for, as a whole, the Ego lies, and by lying he becomes his own part, his own scission, his own alter-alter-ego! By being a whole, the Ego is a hole, a solid center, a solid point of inertia — or rather, the

inform bubbling abortional indetermination surrounding this point — a mass of uncertain inert subjacences plotting to capture the outer image of their essence; for in his ambition, the Ego is his own abolition, and if sinning against the all makes the Ego a part, his losing of his quality of subject makes the Ego a hardly aggregated matter. So, by his very substance-of-lie, the Ego loses and gains determination, he loses by gaining it and gains it by losing it.

But as a part, the Ego is his own cosmogony, his own *dynamis* and his own series of qualities of subject, his own mass of multiple projecting itself in his own mass of solitude, for, for the autarkically-depressive-paranoiacally-perplexed-ego, the cosmogony is an apocalyptic nature, a self-revealing destruction and a plot! Caught in the nature of his plotting cosmogony, the Ego is almost a Personal God, who lacks only a name = a situation = a world. Ego's nature is a growth of acts, a mass of actualization growing in a mass of annihilation, a growing substance which massively appears and massively is destroyed, for the growth is the perpetual destruction of the massive appearance filling geometrically its massive disappearance.

Thus, the Ego is a magnet which by perpetually attracting the iron, seems to project itself; the attraction explains itself as an impulse, the indefiniteness of the impulse glosses itself as a multiple of series, a multiple of holographical impulses in relation to which the indefinite impulse appears as their immanence and their subjacent content, comprised in its parts as in its forms: an All determined in its parts and intensified in its forms, a synthesis analyzed in its hypostatic totalities.

Caught in its immanence, the quantic flight of the qualities of subject loses its transcendent freedom, configuring itself as a system of vital pneumas, a plasma, a work. They become, so to speak, cold, for coldness is only immanence. What is more, their ubiquity grows limited, as acts, the qualities of subject gathering themselves in objects — for the objects are massive sums of acts, and, phenomenologically, the objects are absolutely prime illusions: subjacences and naught. So, as collective limits, these Prime Objects are closed powers, closed fields of forces, vortices of decomposing latences, modal in their nadir and formal in their zenith; formed from without as voiding from within, like a deep touch justified from above by an imaginary limit, their dissolution becomes the function of their imaginary.

As immanent, the Quality-of-subject is act, and as act, she splits into an object and an idea, their difference and the partial identity of their participation being the a priori troubled consequent of the a posteriori antecedent of her extinction: a spontaneously synchronic *paradigm-a-priori* informing a diachronic *origin-a-posteriori*. Thus, the

idea does not appear except because the object vanishes. But this appearing from the depth of the disappearing puts her as his a priori principle, and puts him as her a posteriori origin, and in this tension both are saving and saved.

Thing and archetype form a paradigmatic unity, whose synthetic syntagm is Man. For Man is a collection of centers in a plasma of circumferences, a thing vanishing in all his points and full of imaginary light. An epiphany of the extinction closed in a mass of ideas, a glorious void precarious in all his masks! So in him there is always something disappointing, for Man is the absolute uncertainty.

Rising with the world in his new determined world, Man inherits God and substitutes, as a recipient of the quality of subject, the ego; for Man is not God's creation but Ego's mutation. In him, Matter tries for the first time to put herself as Spirit's concept: indeed, Matter's greatest and most confused ambition is to be a genius — that is, growing spirit, *the immediate ego* of the spirit, Spirit's fast! If Ego's vocation is cosmogonical, Man's is soteriological, for Man is, not only in his essence, but also in his appearance, nothing but naught. His deepest soul is the flesh, i.e. the typified non-being of the non-being; his body is his soul — the synthetic spirit. Thus Man is an archetype-in-object unveiled as originary paradigmatic synthesis; for in Man both *a priori* and *a posteriori* are all-subjacent and naught-equal.

But as for the destiny of man — this delicate monster of boredom and hypocrisy — the present paper remains totally unconcerned, as well as Man's latest incarnation, the author of the present paper — this gloomy solitude of sound and fury, and the implicit reader of you all; for Yaldabaoth, the subtle Begetter of Powers of the Gnostics, is nothing — but the empirical consciousness of the reader, that fellow and brother of Charles Baudelaire! Or, as Zostrianos so democratically puts it, "In short, all of them are the purification of the unbornness . . ." (Z.75.23-24).

## NOTES

1. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I(A) 9; the argument had been already used by Plato in *Parmenides* 132d-133a. According to Alexander Aphrodisiensis, the argument was invented by the Sophist Polyxenes, disciple of Bryson.
2. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* IV.19.1.
3. See our *Le Nombre*. . . I, p. 205 and n. 1.
4. Plato, *Parmenides* 137c-d.
5. See *Le Nombre*. . . I, p. 210 sq.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 217 sq.
7. See the *Gospel of Truth* 1.3.37.4-7, 25-26.



8. For analogous remarks see Joel Fineman, "Gnosis and the Piety of Metaphor: The Gospel of Truth," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, I (Leiden, 1980), pp. 295-296.
9. To the finite and up to a certain point pragmatic logic of Aristotle, the Gnostics seem to have opposed what we may call a *logic of the infinite*. It would be tempting to analyze, from this outlook, the possibility of considering the Aristotelian "logical errors" (tautology, contradiction, *regressus ad infinitum*, etc.) as the very principles of this new logic, neither descriptive nor normative but fundamentally axiological. It goes without saying that the immediate, and so to speak naive, application of this logic of the infinite in finite conditions remains on the side of error; but the problem is — as the Gnostics conceived it — that the true error consists in the logic of the finite itself taken as a whole.
10. For the function of implicit reader in the Gnostic texts see *Le Nombre*. . . I, pp. 212, 214.
11. Annotating the verse 7 of the *A.V.* IV.2 (the parallel and possibly the paradigm of the *R.V.* X.121), Whitney observes: "The comm. understands *hiranyagarbha* as «the embryo of the golden egg»." To this Lanman adds: "Kirste . . . reviewing Deussen, suggests that the golden embryo is the yolk of the mundane egg." (*Atharva Veda Samhita*. Trans. by W.D. Whitney. Revised by Ch. R. Lanman. First Half [Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1905], p. 147). See also in this respect *Satapatha Brahmana* XI.1.6.1.
12. For the equivalence *Hiranyagarbha manas*, corroborate *R.V.* X.121.1 with X.129.4; see below n. 22.
13. As dialectical manifestation of the Father, the Son integrates and hypostasizes the negative dialectics (for an analytical reconstruction of this idea in the *Apocryphon of John* II.1.2.25-4.26, see our *Le Nombre*. . . II, no. 30), substituting it by what we may call a negative semiology, in which the sign vanishes immediately in its identity with the sense and the sense subsists immediately through its subjacent distinctive sign. Thus the sense is the infinite causal depth of its own semiological effect which is itself, and through which it is as purport of its sign. In other terms, the passage from negative dialectics to negative semiology closes in its opening the pure, that is, the unlimited transformation of an absolute deduction into an absolute induction of the absolute (see below n. 14).  
The best example of this total semiological feedback is probably to be found in the *Gospel of Truth* I.3.38.7 sq. (beginning with the famous "The Name of the Father is the Son"), curiously analogous with the *Gospel of John* 1.1 sq., fact apparently less observed (see however Harold W. Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I [The Jung Codex]*, Vol. II [Leiden, 1985], p. 118, who cautiously develops an observation made already by Jacques E. Ménard, *L'Évangile de Vérité* [Leiden, 1972], pp. 177, 178).
14. The first level of the analysis would imply a unique signified (the Father) and a theoretical infinity of axiologically unequal signifiers (the pleromatic hypostases; compare for instance *Apocryphon of John* II.1.2.25-4.26 with 4.30-6.10), marking the passage from what we may call a semiosis of

insertion, mainly exegetical, to a semiosis of rupture, as radical isolation of the signifier from its signified in the compact depth of the latter. Thus, the semiosis of rupture would correspond to the *semeiotical transformation* of the semiology into the ontology as deficient distortion of the former.

The negative dialectics — itself semeiotical only inasmuch as semiologically unsaturated — patterns the "being" as axiologically void, that is, as psychological subject psychoanalytically born. It is interesting to note that the pleromatic incomprehensibility of the Father — the first motor of the negative dialectics — is in kenomatic terms substituted by the pathological incomprehension of the Demiurge, just as the Limit (Horos) seems to translate itself as Destiny (Heimarmene); in the *Gospel of Truth* I.3.41.19-20, the concept of Horos, contrary to its Valentinian acceptance, has the meaning of destiny — cf. Ménard, *op. cit.*, p. 186). See also Fineman, *art. cit.*, p. 291 and n. 5, with however the difference that Fineman, following Lacan, points to the loss of the signifier rather than of the signified, which is after all quite secondary, as the initial deficiency fractures an original auto-signification in which signifier and signified are reciprocally transparent and know themselves as reciprocally identical (see above n. 13).

15. *R.V.* X.121.2.
16. H. Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rigveda* (Leipzig, 1873), col. 773.
17. In *R.V.* X.121.5, the fixed (*dr̥lha*) hermeneutical entity is the earth (*pr̥thivi*), which points already to a myth that will become common in the *Brahmana*. This is interesting if we take into consideration that *ḍr̥mh* (the root of *dr̥lha*) is a quasi-synonym of *ḍhr̥*, from which the Yogic concept of *dhṛana* — "fixing of the thought" — developed (for Yogic structures in the *Rg- and Atharva-Veda*, see *Le Nombre*. . . II, pp. 170-174).
18. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.2.4, 13.5.
19. The term belongs to Paul Mus, *Barabudur*, I (Hanoi, 1935), p. 159 (note), p. 459.
20. See for instance *Ap. Joh.* II.1.4.25-30, where the Desire (*Woshe*) is the catoptrical seed of the Father, which determines his hypostatical self-awareness, Ennoia (*Me'ewe*). See in this respect Michel Tardieu, *Codex de Berlin* (Paris, 1984), pp. 255-256, and *Le Nombre*. . . II, nn. 29, 30.
21. In his *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, I (Paris, 1980), p. 239, Mircea Eliade rightly recognizes in the metaphysical cosmogony of the *R.V.* X.129 "un des germes de la philosophie Samkhya-Yoga et du bouddhisme."
22. The question is always of a transcendental phenomenon. The best example is *R.V.* X.82.6 above quoted, though in this hymn *Hiranyagarbha* is not directly mentioned. Also, in *A.V.* IV.2.8 a distinction is drawn between the Embryo itself (*garbha*) and its golden foetal envelope (*ūlba* . . . *hiranyayah*). Consequently, and despite persistent ambivalence, *Hiranyagarbha* seems to represent the outer structure (the transcendental bark), the inner one getting the mystic appellation of *Prajapati* (*R.V.* X.121.10; see also *Le Nombre*. . . II, p. 186 sq.). We are confronted here with the paradoxical

syncretism between embryology and catoptrics. On the Vedic field, *Ēlba* could be roughly identified, from a phenomenological and hermeneutical outlook, with the Gnostic concept of *eikán* (see for instance *Ap. John* II.1.4.21-25, 34-35).

Another interesting parallel for *Hiranyagarbha*, besides the Gnostic *Nous*, would be the Hermetic *Aion* (see for instance *Corpus Hermeticum* XI.2), and possibly the *Aion-Nous* of the *Chaldaean Oracles* (see fr. 3-7, 49, and two fragments of Porphyry's *On the Philosophy of the Oracles*, apud Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, Nouvelle-édition par Michel Tardieu [Paris, 1978], pp. 9-10, 18).

23. *The Gospel of Truth* 37.26-27.

24. R.V. X.177.1; the equivalence is also philological: *rasmī* "string, cord, trace," but also "ray of light."

25. For more details see *Le Nombre*. . . I, pp. 232-235; II, pp. 170-175.

26. See Abel Bergaigne, *La Religion Védique*, II, Ch. V: *L'arithmétique mythologique*. Also Paul Mus, *Barabudur*, I, p. 151 (note).

27. For the Indian (in fact, general) ritual principle of "the jar broken here, whole beyond" as a magical inversion or passage of plans, see Paul Mus, op. cit., I, p. 51 sq.: "Un vase cassé en ce monde est un vase entier dans l'autre monde. De même, un homme inversé devient, sur un autre plan, dieu ou Père, tant que dure l'inversion magique. Observons bien le procédé. Il suppose deux ordres d'existence et un passage de l'un à l'autre, deux objets, et une projection de l'un dans l'autre, de telle manière que l'être ou l'objet placé devant nous en ce monde et qui semble n'en pas bouger, le quitte toutefois mystérieusement, se dépasse et aille s'identifier à l'être ou à l'objet surnaturel qui lui correspond dans l'au-delà. Nous ne cessons pas de le percevoir, mais ce n'est plus lui: il n'est désormais qu'un signe. Il constitue la trace en ce monde-ci de l'être transcendant et ce dernier, par raison inverse, peut être considéré comme sa projection sur le plan supérieur, tant que dure l'opération magique" (our emphases).

It is not difficult to remark that from a magical outlook, both Gnostic *ichnos* and Vedic *pada* reveal themselves as *signs*, that is, as negations.

28. For the numerological aniconism of the Brahmanical ritual, see Paul Mus, op. cit., I, p. 52 sq.: "On saisit mieux ainsi ce qu'a pu signifier l'aniconisme des traditions cultuelles dans l'Inde des *brahmana*. En ne représentant pas les dieux par des statues, on ne s'interdisait pas de les connaître personnellement, et on ne leur déniait pas une apparence anthropomorphique, que dans la plupart des cas les textes obligent à leur attribuer. Mais on ambitionnait un contact plus intime que ce qu'aurait permis leur vision sous forme d'images. Par des transpositions bien réglées, c'était l'autel, c'étaient les hymnes, c'était la personne même du sacrifiant qui devenaient la statue du dieu, ou mieux que sa statue, le dieu lui-même, qu'un bloc de pierre taillé n'eût pas été" (p. 55).

It is probable that the Brahmanical aniconism had an acosmic implication, which will become more explicit in the *Upanishad* and especially in the three major systems of the Indian philosophy, *Samkhya-Yoga*,

*Vedānta* and Buddhism.

29. The expression belongs to Paul Mus, op. cit., II, *Appendice*, p. 745: "Mettre le Buddha en son essence dernière, au-dessus de Brahma, au-dessus des *Akanishta*, au-dessus des plans les plus élevés de l'existence abstraite . . . c'était s'orienter vers sa mise en série avec l'existence qui se creusait sous le point suprême où on l'installait." But the supreme point under which the existence hollows should be understood in the light of another Musian passage: "Cette quintessence d'espace n'est pas étendue, mais c'est en elle que se développe l'étendue, au-dessous de son concept, comme, au-dessous du concept d'étendue, la création se répand dans l'étendue: et c'est ainsi que le nirvana peut être monné un lieu (*sthana*, *thana*) indestructible, suprême et immortel. . ." (ibid., pp. 788-789; our emphases).

30. "A ce niveau de la croyance, représenter directement le dieu suprême, autrement dit sculpter la transcendance, serait un vain rêve. au contraire, la dissemblance trop évidente d'une masse de briques et de ce que Prajapati, quel qu'il soit, peut être en lui-même, tourne l'objection et permet, en ne préjugant pas de cette nature ultime, de croire qu'un certain contact est acquis, pourvu que l'on sache reconnaître dans la structure à la fois l'essence magique de l'homme et celle du dieu fixées l'une et l'autre dans des schémas géométriques et dans des nombres appropriés. Perçu à notre niveau, l'autel nous fait atteindre Prajapati, à son niveau sublime, comme tout à l'heure le bris d'un vase sur la tombe était la condition nécessaire d'une projection dans un autre monde. Cassé ici, entier là-bas. Nous dirons de même: briques ici-bas, dieu dans l'au-delà" (Paul Mus, op. cit., I, p. 54).

31. See Joel Fineman, art. cit., p. 306: "In the Western religious tradition, Gnosticism is a singular theology because it continually speaks of God as a phenomenon present precisely by virtue of His absence, as a trace which witnesses to what is no longer there. In the *Gospel of Truth* the most explicit figure for this strange absent-presence of God is the footprint-trace (*ichnos*) of the Father's will . . ."

32. The subsequent conceptual myth interrogated through the figure of *ichnos* must be understood in the context of the *Gospel of Truth*, the *Apocryphon of John*, and, in a lesser degree, the *Untitled Text* of Codex Bruce (the same texts which archetypized *Le Nombre*. . . I, II). To these an "outsider" — the *Paraphrase of Sem* — was added; in this way all the major trends of the Gnostic System (in which the *Gospel of Truth*) must be functionally integrated) were represented.

33. For the ontological consubstance between identity and indetermination, under Pythagorean conceptualization, see Iamblichus, *Theologumena arithmetica* (apud A.J. Festugière, *Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* IV, pp. 43-44), where the Pythagorean monad is described both as intelligible number and as matter, being even identified with Hesiod's Chaos. In fact, Iamblichus paraphrases speculations already existent in Nicomachus of Gerasa, where the monad is analyzed as *Nous*, *Theos*, *Hyle*, *Chaos*, etc.

(ibid., p. 45).

We should remember that the Gnostic Father is called both abyss (Bathos/Bythos) and monad (Monas) — see for instance Hippolytus, *Ref. VI.29.2 & 30.7* — and described in negative terms (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer. I.1.1. & II.3*; see *Ap. John II.1.2.33-3.36*). The conclusion could therefore be drawn of a structural ontological syntagmatization of the Kenoma, as double semeiological horizon of the Father.

34. If the "unequivocal dualism" defined by Hans Jonas ("Delimitation of the Gnostic phenomenon — typological and historical," in *Origins of Gnosticism* [Leiden, 1967] p. 93) is simultaneous with the constitution of the cosmos as self-awareness of the Ego, the "equivocal" one, corresponding to "the original stages of the metaphysical genealogy," is functionally and structurally identical with the Intellect.
35. In fact, there is an inertial dimension implied in the nature of the process itself, which, by being mechanical, appears noetically as cadaverous, while the abyss of knowledge is ontically void. The problem which confronts consequently the subject consists in its being that kind of totality for which the incomprehensibility of the absolute appears not in terms of negative dialectics but as its own absolute incomprehension of the all (see for instance the *Gospel of Truth* 1.3.17.5-20, 21.27-33 or the *Untitled Text* 1.5-9, where the subject configures itself as the structure of the teleology and the error, as the structure of the search: cf. *Gospel of Truth* 42.21-27).

We stumble here upon Hans Jonas's definition of the Gnostic ontological whole as one grand movement of "knowledge, in its positive and its privative moods, from the beginning of things to their end" (art. cit., p. 92).

36. "It is as sure, he was wont to say, when any doubt was entertained of his veracity, as sure as there is a sea where the ship itself will grow in bulk like a living body of the seaman . . ." (E.A. Poe, *Ms. Found in a Bottle*).
37. If the negative dialectics is univocally dependent of some a priori principle, that is, of some *a priori judgement*, it is itself a necessary, universal and a priori judgment.

It is, however, a psychological difficulty that any truly a priori judgment tends to present itself as an a priori hypostasis and even as a transcendental personification; consequently, the necessary judgment is likely to shape itself as transcendental will.

For the same reason the negative dialectics as descriptive impossibility will tend to configure itself both as an almost personal interdiction, that is, as an *act of will*, and as an expositive structure of the transcendental psychology (we should infer from this that the transcendental psychology is also based on an interdiction); see above n. 14.

On the other hand, in the field of the sensible (the Gnostic Chaos) this universality of the necessary judgment implied in the negative dialectics corresponds quite paradoxically to the Destiny (see also n. 14).

Finally, the same analysis applies to the concept of Self, which is the psychological transcendental function of the a priori judgment.

38. This ontological dismissal of the Gnostic Demiurge, Yaldabaoth, corresponds quite well to that of the Buddhist one, Brahma: "Une constatation sur laquelle on ne saurait trop insister est que, dans ce système, Brahma est conservé et le brahmanisme absorbé: ceci justifie toutes les analogies et fixe en même temps leurs limites. La cosmogonie est progressive, de haut en bas. Jusqu'au moment où elle descend au niveau de Brahma, les vérités qu'elle enferme sont uniquement accessibles par la révélation bouddhique. Mais après avoir atteint, et produit, le monde de Brahma, le processus se poursuit au-dessous de ce dieu avec, en quelque sorte, une double vérité. En vérité absolue, Brahma n'a aucune personnalité. Il est une conséquence des termes qui l'ont logiquement précédé, un instant du karman: il reste aussi irréel et creux que la création inférieure, bien qu'il s'imagine l'émettre, du plein au vide. En vérité relative, cette émission est cependant vraie. Brahma est le centre, le principe de tout ce qui va naître autour et au-dessous de lui, et tout ce qu'enseignent les brahmanes est exact dans ces limites, qui sont celles du monde réellement concevable. Mais toutes leurs doctrines sont suspendues à un point: l'idée que Brahma se fait de lui-même. Il s'attribue l'être absolu. Cette id-ée, son Grand Orgueil, est l'erreur qui mine tout le reste. Brahma en personne n'est qu'un passage de la rétribution. Il a sa place sur l'échelle des créatures. Sans remonter jusqu'au Buddha et au Dharma suprême, il existe au-dessus de lui des dieux qui lui sont antérieurs, et qui lui restent supérieurs. Il est l'un d'entre eux, déchu de sa pure idéalité. Il revêtu un corps plus grossier en absorbant la terre où il croit naître à l'origine des temps, ou même être antérieur au temps. Toutefois, sous réserve de cette irréalité foncière, que la révélation bouddhique lui fera apercevoir, il est fondé à croire qu'il engendre par délégation de lui-même l'essence secrète de toutes les créatures, depuis son monde jusqu'aux étapes les plus bas, c'est-à-dire dans le champ entier de sa vision. La nature de Brahma, relativement pure, est à l'origine commune à tous les êtres des niveaux inférieurs; elle se charge de matière, à mesure que ces êtres tombent du plan de Brahma et s'alourdissent de sens nouveaux pour eux, jusqu'au total de 18 dharmas. Ces nouvelles composantes recouvrent progressivement le thème initial. Ainsi Brahma, ou le brahman, restent-ils le noyau de tous les êtres fictifs venus à leur suite dans le développement cosmique. Le brahmanisme atteint par là une vérité partielle et provisoire, lorsqu'il s'imagine que l'essence de toutes les créatures animées repose en Brahma. Le schéma impersonnel de l'*Aggañña Sutta* dispose le monde d'accord avec cette notion: par la mystique alimentaire, chaque être porte en son centre, sous des apports nouveaux, la structure qui avait été la sienne au niveau précédent, avant la chute. Chaque fois, on pourrait dire que le rapport due terme antérieur (et intérieur) au terme postérieur est comparable à celui d'une âme et d'un corps. C'est en ce sens, et en ce sens seulement, que Brahman, l'illusoire Brahma, est l'âme du monde qu'il croit régir" (Paul Mus, op. cit., I, pp. 292-293).

39. Ignorance, to the Gnostics, is not a neutral state, nor simply a privation, the mere absence of knowledge, but a positive affect of the spirit, a force of its own, operative in the very terms of man's existence and preventing his discovering the truth for himself, even his realizing his state of ignorance as such" (Hans Jonas, art. cit., p. 98).

Any accomplishment is a *collective act*. Deficient or not, the present paper makes, in this respect, no exception.

Our first thanks should have gone to Professor Richard Wallis, and if articulated speech is useless now, neither our gratitude nor our feelings are diminished by their *silent* enunciation.

We must also acknowledge our debt towards Dr. Denis O'Brien, who by his careful, stimulating and patient suggestions helped us to avoid at least our most characteristic idiomatic errors.

Special thanks are due to Professors John Dillon and Jay Bregman who expurgated our allogeneous English of what French turns had trickled in, thus contributing decisively to the adequate expression of the ideas involved.

Our final thanks should be silent; and if we dare to express them it is because we believe that in final terms the unmanifested and the manifested thought are identical, and also for the simple reason that even these thanks belong to Him, the hidden Author of our paper, as of everything else.

## Mani's Twin and Plotinus: Questions on "Self"

Leo Sweeney, S.J.

Some autobiographical data will help to indicate the occasion of my interest in Mani's "Twin" and the limited scope of this paper. Since that occasion concerns the *Cologne Mani Codex* (hereafter *CMC*), let me first speak briefly of it. The *CMC* is a miniature parchment of the fifth-century A.D. and is a biography of Mani up to his twenty-fifth year.<sup>1</sup> A Greek translation of a Syriac original,<sup>2</sup> it was rendered legible in 1969 by A. Fackelmann<sup>3</sup> and its 192 pages were edited with a German translation and commentary by Albert Henrichs and Ludwig Koenen in *ZPE*, 19 (1975), 1-85; 32 (1978), 86-199; 44 (1981), 201-318; and 48 (1982), 1-59.<sup>4</sup> An English translation of pages 1-99 of *CMC* had been made by Ron Cameron and A.J. Dewey.<sup>5</sup>

According to its English translators the importance of the *CMC*

cannot be overestimated for the history of religions. For the *Codex* provides the only Greek primary source for Manichaeism. Now we have not only new reports and accounts of the early life of Mani, but even additional evidence for a Gospel of Mani. Indeed, many of the excerpts resemble a proto-gospel in a raw state, along with apocalypses and aretalogical material. Moreover, the origin of Manichaeism becomes quite complex, since we now possess convincing evidence of the connection of Mani's baptists with Elchasai, the alleged founder of a predominantly Jewish-Christian sect. And, most of all, we are privy to new and unparalleled information on the organization, ritual practices, and theology of the baptist sect in which Mani was reared.<sup>6</sup>

Now let me turn to autobiography. Aware of the importance of the *CMC*, Dr. James G. Keenan of the Department of Classics, Loyola University of Chicago, invited Drs. Henrichs and Koenen to give papers on the Codex at a colloquium in March, 1977. Dr. Henrichs spoke on "Mani's Elchasaïtes: Manichaeism and Jewish Christianity" and Dr. Koenen on "Manichaeism and Judeo-Christian Gnosticism." As commentators on their papers Dr. Keenan chose John Baggarly and myself.<sup>7</sup> In my commentary I concentrated upon Mani's "Twin" for two reasons. I had little prior acquaintance with Mani's positions (other than as the founder of the sect to which Augustine belonged and then rejected after nine years) but initial reading suggested that there might be a possible parallel between what Mani wrote on his "Twin" and what his contemporary, Plotinus, remarked on man as entailing higher and lower levels of existence.<sup>8</sup> Second, Henrichs and Koenen themselves gave considerable attention to Mani's Twin both in their Loyola University papers and in their publications (as will be clear later).

My current paper is, obviously, a return to that suggested parallel and the methodology used will be similar to that in my presentation at Loyola, where I attended primarily to Henrichs's and Koenen's descriptions of Mani's Twin and, more precisely, to the questions which their exegesis raised when they identified "twin" with "self" in seemingly some contemporary sense. Here, then, I shall also concentrate upon their identification of "twin" and "self." The second part of my paper will be devoted to Plotinus's conception of man and to the questions which result when some scholars find a doctrine of "self" also in Plotinian texts.

### The "Twin" of Mani

Let me, then, attend primarily to the questions which Henrichs's and Koenen's description of Mani's Twin as "self" suggests, since their understanding of Mani on other doctrinal points is basically accurate, as one would expect and can verify from their intelligent editing, translating and commenting upon the *CMC*. But I am puzzled on what "self" means when applied to Mani's Twin. This application may prove correct but it needs (in my opinion) to be discussed.

But before starting that discussion let me reproduce (in translation or paraphrase and with commentary reduced to footnotes) key passages from the *CMC* on the "Twin,"<sup>9</sup> which may serve as the context within which to appreciate and evaluate Henrichs's and Koenen's exegesis.

[A] Twice (Mani states early in *CMC*) the voice of the Twin (*hōs syzygos phōnē*) said to me: "Strengthen your power, make your mind strong and submit to all that is about to come upon you" (13.2).<sup>10</sup> [B] In order that he might free souls (*tas psychas*) from ignorance [as the Father of Greatness intended],<sup>11</sup> Mani became paraclete and leader of the apostleship in this generation.<sup>12</sup> Then [Baraies now purports to quote Mani]<sup>13</sup> "at the time when my body reached its full growth, immediately there flew down and appeared before me that most beautiful and greatest mirroring of [who I really am — namely, my twin]"<sup>14</sup> (17.1); the Greek for lines 12-16: ὡφθη ἔμπροσθέν μου ἐκεῖνο τὸ εὐειδέστατον καὶ μέγιστον κάτοπτρον τοῦ προσώπου μου

[C] Yes, at the time I was twenty[-four] years old, the most blessed Lord was greatly moved with compassion for me, called me into his grace, and immediately sent to me [from there my] Twin, who appeared in great glory and who is mindful of and informer of all the best counsels from our Father (18.1 and 19.2; also see 72.20-73.7). [D] Baraies continues to quote Mani: "When my Father was pleased and had mercy and compassion on me, to ransom me from the error of the Sectarians [the Elchasaïte baptists], he took consideration of me through his very many revelations and sent to me my Twin" (19.8), who "delivered, separated and pulled me away from the midst of that [Elchasaïte] Law in which I was reared" (20.8).

[E] Baraies now quotes Mani on the instruction given him by the Twin on "how I came into being; and who my Father on high is; or in what way, severed from him, I was sent out according to his purpose; and what sort of commission and counsel he has given to me before I clothed myself in this instrument and before I was led astray in this detestable flesh, and before I clothed myself with its drunkenness and habits, and who that one is, who is himself my ever-vigilant Twin" (22.1).<sup>15</sup> [F] Yes, the Twin showed Mani "the secrets and visions and the perfections of my Father; and concerning me, who I am, and who my inseparable Twin is; moreover, concerning my soul, which exists as the soul of all the worlds, both what it itself is and how it came to be" (23.1).<sup>16</sup>

[G] The result was (Mani continues to speak) "that I acquired (the Twin) as my own possession. I believed that he belongs to me and is mine and is a good and excellent counselor. I recognized him and understood that I am that one from whom I was separated. I testified that I myself am that one who is unshakable"<sup>17</sup> (24.4); the Greek for lines 6 sqq.: ἐπίστευσα διὰ τοῦ ἐμοῦ / ὑπάρχοντά τε καὶ ὄντα καὶ σύμβολον ἄγαθον καὶ χρηστὸν ὄντα. / ἐπέγνω μὲν αὐτὸν καί/

συνήκα ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐ/γὼ εἰμι ἐξ οὗ διεκρίθην./ἐπεμαρτύρησα δὲ ὅτι ἐ/γὼ ἐκε(ῖ)νος αὐτός ἐμι/ἀκλόι(η)τος ὑπάρχων/. . .

The Codex continues in the same vein,<sup>18</sup> but enough samples have been taken to illustrate how prominent a role the Twin plays in Mani's life, as well as what the nature of the Twin himself is. He prepares Mani for the revelations which will establish him as an original religious leader by advising him to be strong and yet receptive (#A).<sup>19</sup> Sent by the Father that Mani might save souls from ignorance and darkness, the Twin — the most beautiful and greatest duplication of who Mani really is (#B) — brought counsels from the Father to Mani in his twenty-fifth year (#C). Through the many revelations the Father entrusted to him, the Twin freed and separated Mani from the errors of the Elchasaïtes (#D).<sup>20</sup> The information which the Twin communicated opened up to Mani not only who the Father is and what his mission for Mani is, but also what Mani's soul is, how it came into being and how it came to be associated with body, as well as the fact that the Twin is an ever-vigilant and inseparable factor in his life (#E and #F). The Twin belongs to Mani as a good and excellent adviser — in fact, Mani is the Twin, from whom he was separated when his soul entered into matter but whom he has now rejoined through the initiative of the Father (#G).<sup>21</sup>

### The "Twin" as "Self"

But important as the preceding key-texts are on the Twin's function and nature, they also serve as the context within which to evaluate Henrichs's and Koenen's identification of "Twin" with "self." Although this identification occurs within their commentary upon the German translation of *CMC*,<sup>22</sup> let us for the sake of convenience turn to their other publications.

According to Albert Henrichs, "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: A Historical Confrontation," *HSCP*, 77 (1973), 24, a duplication of Mani was an essential factor in his theory of salvation.

In terms of Manichaean soteriology, the notion of a duplicate Mani was, in fact, not at all unheard of, but was a well-established doctrine, propagated time and again by Mani himself. Mani's double, though his steady companion on earth, his counselor and helper in times of hardship, and his consoler in moments of despair, was not a creature of flesh and blood, but an incorporeal and celestial being, not subject to the terrestrial limitations of time and space. As the pre-existent and eternal Twin of Light, he is the mirror-like reflection of Mani's inner self, the heavenly embodiment of his

spiritual essence, his true identity, from whom he was separated when his soul put on the garment of a mortal body and with whom he was reunited at his death.

Here Henrichs appears to be making these relevant points. Mani's existence entails two main levels, one of which is his status as a creature of flesh and blood, subject to limitations of space and time and separated from his true identity when his soul put on the garment of a mortal body. The second level is occupied by his double — steady companion, counselor, helper and consoler —, who is not material, spatial and temporal. Rather he is an incorporeal and celestial being — namely, the pre-existent and eternal Twin of Light, who mirrors, reflects, duplicates Mani's inner self and is the embodiment of his spiritual essence and is his true identity. *Comments.* On the first level Mani consists of body and *of soul*, which is his inner self and spiritual essence, reflected and duplicated by his Twin on the second level. This latter, then, is Mani's true identity, from which he was separated when his soul became incarnate and which he will regain at death by escaping from the body. *Question:* Mani's soul is his spiritual essence, yes, because it makes him be what he really is and continues to be even in matter. But what is meant by saying Mani's soul is his inner self? What exactly is meant by saying Mani's soul is his inner self? What exactly does the word express?

But let us turn to another passage from Henrichs, now commenting upon the stress Mani puts on his uniqueness as the final god-sent messenger to the world.

Mani's awareness of, and insistence on, his own singularity is the basis of his self-conception, and any attempt to penetrate into Mani's complex personality has to start from that point. But . . . Mani's self-understanding has little to do with the awareness of one's own individuality or terrestrial historicity, notions which would have been much less meaningful and important to Mani than they are to us. The fact that Mani possessed an alter-ego in the form of the Twin of Light makes him a split personality in the literal sense of that term rather than an individual: his human existence was nothing but a briefly reflected image of its true and eternal counterpart (*ibid.*, pp. 39-40).<sup>23</sup>

What is Henrichs saying here? Mani's awareness of his singularity allows him to understand himself and lets us penetrate the complexity of his personality. His true self-understanding consists not in his being aware of himself as an individual existing in history (i.e., in such and such a place, at such and such a time) but of his personality as split: his

existing here and now contrasts with his true and eternal counterpart — namely, the alter-ego who is his Twin. His human status of mortal body clothing immortal soul or self separates him from his true self — the Twin. That separation results in his split personality: one self (Mani's soul in matter) is apart from the other self (the Twin). Psychological wholeness and religious salvation are achieved when the two come together and become one, either on earth when the Twin visits Mani or in heaven. *Question:* Is the contemporary notion of "split personality," if taken technically, applicable to Mani's situation?<sup>24</sup> Again, what does "self" signify when predicated of Mani and the Twin?

Let us turn now to Ludwig Koenen, "Augustine and Manichaeism in the Light of the Cologne Mani Codex," *ICS*, 3 (1978), 170, who speaks of Mani's Twin while discussing the larger question of identifying the "paraclete" mentioned in John's Gospel, 14.16 and 16.17. For Baraies (see *CMC*, 17.1) Mani's *Nous* is the paraclete. "His *Nous*, like that of all men, descended from the heavenly realm of Light and was imprisoned in the body. The real Mani was the *Nous* of Mani" and is identified with the paraclete. But according to other evidence the paraclete was identical with Mani's "alter-ego who brought him the revelation. This is the *syzygos*, the 'Twin,' a gnostic term" (ibid.). Koenen then sums up the discussion (pp. 173-74): "Mani identified (1) himself or rather his *Nous* and (2) his 'Twin' with the paraclete of *John*." Despite what some scholars (G. Quispel, K. Rudolph, P. Nagel) think, there is no contradiction here. The contradiction disappears upon

consideration of the gnostic concept of the Twin. When Mani, i.e., the *Nous* of Mani, was sent into the world, a mirror image of the *Nous*, i.e., his alter-ego, remained in heaven. The one ego, the *Nous*, was imprisoned in the body and, consequently, forgot his mission. Then the Twin, the alter-ego, was sent to him from heaven. He brought Mani the revelation by reminding him of his divine nature and mission and, like an angel, protected him. The *Nous* of Mani and his Twin are the two complementary aspects of Mani's identity. The first represents him as incorporated in the body; the second represents his being as it is outside the body. Together they are the one complete Mani. When Mani looked into himself, he found his Twin approaching him from heaven; or, *vice versa*, when he looked at his Twin, he found himself. The story of the Twin bringing him the revelation relates what in abstract terms may be called the rediscovery of his identity and mission.<sup>25</sup>

In this passage Koenen offers considerable information. Every man consists of body and of intellect.<sup>26</sup> This last constitutes his divine

nature, reality, *ego*. Mani is no exception: he too consists of body and of intellect or *ego*. But in addition he also has another *ego*, called his "Twin," who mirrors and duplicates his real and divine nature (= intellect and *ego*) and who is sent to Mani to recall his authentic nature and mission and to guard him. Consequently, the single and complete reality of Mani consists of his terrestrial intellect or *ego* and of his celestial *ego*, the Twin. By awareness of his intellect imprisoned in matter, he knows his Twin and thereby his true identity as a complete self and, also, as the paraclete of John's Gospel. The account of his Twin's bringing him heavenly messages is merely a figurative and concrete way of expressing the fact that he rediscovered his identity and mission. *Questions:* In light of the last comment should one conclude that the Twin, as well as other emanations and factors in Mani's doctrine, is a figure within a story that is not literally true? Should one infer that the Twin is not an actually existing intellect and *ego* (whatever the last term may mean) but the projection of Mani's belief in his divine call, coupled with an awareness of his needing help in gaining freedom from his sinful material condition and from his previous religious adherence and in promulgating his gospel?<sup>27</sup>

Before moving on, let me turn to another respected scholar, whose book antedates Henrichs's and Koenen's papers and who also gives great prominence to the Twin as "self": Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion. The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (2nd ed.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1967). The crucial sentences occur when Jonas is commenting upon this passage from "The Hymn of the Pearl" (p. 115):<sup>28</sup>

My robe of glory which I had put off and my mantle which went over it, my parents . . . sent to meet me by their treasurers who were entrusted therewith. Its splendor I had forgotten, having left it as a child in my Father's house. As I now beheld the robe, it seemed to me suddenly to become a mirror-image of myself: myself entire I saw in it, and it entire I saw in myself, that we were two in separateness, and yet again one in the sameness of our forms . . .

His commentary runs as follows.

The garment has become this figure itself [of light] and acts like a person. It symbolizes the heavenly or eternal self of the person, his original idea, a kind of double or *alter ego* preserved in the upper world while he labors down below. . . . The encounter with this divided-off aspect of himself, the recognition of it as his own image, and the reunion with it signify the real moment of his salvation. Applied to the messenger or savior as it is here

and elsewhere, the conception leads to the interesting theological idea of a twin brother or eternal original of the savior remaining in the upper world during his terrestrial mission. Duplications of this kind abound in gnostic speculation with regard to divine figures in general wherever their function requires a departure from the divine realm and involvement in the events of the lower world (pp. 122-23).

Next comes a section to which Jonas gives a striking title.

### THE TRANSCENDENTAL SELF

The double of the savior is as we have seen only a particular theological representation of an idea pertaining to the doctrine of man in general and denoted by the concept of the Self. In this concept we may discern what is perhaps the profoundest contribution of Persian religion to Gnosticism and to the history of religion in general. The Avesta word is *daena*, for which the orientalist Bartholomae lists the following meanings: "1. Religion; 2. inner essence, spiritual ego, individuality; often hardly translatable."

In the Manichaean fragments from Turfan, another Persian word is used, *grev*, which can be translated either by "self" or by "ego." It denotes the metaphysical person, the transcendent and true subject of salvation, which is not identical with the empirical soul. In the Chinese Manichaean treatise translated by Pelliot, it is called "the luminous nature," "our original luminous nature," or "inner nature," which recalls St. Paul's "inner man"; Manichaean hymns call it the "living self" or the "luminous self." The Mandaeans "Mana" express the same idea and makes particularly clear the identity between this inner principle and the highest godhead; for "Mana" is the name for the transmundane Power of Light, the first deity, and at the same time that for the transcendent, non-mundane center of the individual ego (pp. 123-24).<sup>29</sup>

The parallels between the Twin of "The Hymn of the Pearl" and that of *CMC* which stand out from Jonas's exegesis are so clear now from our previous pages as to need no explanation: The Twin remaining above and its counterpart descending below; the identity nonetheless between the Twin and its counterpart; the Twin as the eternal self, original idea, alter-ego contrasted with the selfhood in its terrestrial duplicate. Yet puzzlement still persists. "Perhaps the profoundest contribution to Gnosticism and to the history of religion in general" (to repeat Jonas) is "the concept of the Self" (p. 124), which he illustrates by "*daena*," "*grev*" and terms from other sources. But what meaning are these words attempting to express in the original? Is "self" a helpful translation of them? Is "self" synonymous with

"inner essence," "metaphysical person," "transcendent subject of salvation," "luminous, inner nature," "inner man"? Or does not Jonas intend it to be taken as in contemporary philosophical and psychological writings?

This last question explicates what is for me the problem underlying all else: the contemporary notion of "self" is multiple and ambiguous. In fact, it has no commonly accepted meaning. In order to realize this, let us look at the article on "Self" in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. I choose this not from any sectarian motive, but because of the surprising fact that among recent philosophical encyclopedias in English it alone provides such an article. *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas* has none, nor has the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, which gives the topic a single, short paragraph in its article on "Personal Identity" (V, 95-107), where indeed "self" is set aside, because of its restriction to the mental and spiritual, as misleading in a discussion of the problem of personal identity.

Also the *Encyclopedia Britannica* offers no full-scale paper on "self" but only a definition in its *Micropaedia*, IX, 41:

Self is the subject of successive states of consciousness. In modern psychology the notion of the self has replaced earlier conceptions of the soul. According to Carl Jung the self is a totality comprised of conscious and unconscious contents that dwarfs the ego in scope and intensity. The coming-to-be of the self is sharply distinguished from the coming of the ego into consciousness, and is the individuation process by which the true self emerges as the goal of the whole personality.

Obviously, that brief description discloses mainly that "self" has largely become an area of study for empirical psychologists. And the impression given there, as well as in the paragraph from the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, is that "self" in contemporary literature has varied and divergent meanings.

That impression deepens when we open the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* to Margaret Gorman's article (XIII, 56-60). Descartes is there credited with introducing "the word self as it is currently used" and with identifying it with "spiritual substance" (p. 57A). Disagreeing with him, Locke doubted that the self always thinks or that it is substantial. The self, understood as one's consciousness of continuing the same now as in the past, is distinct from soul or spiritual substance. By analyzing consciousness Hume challenged the view that any permanent self exists in man, who may be merely a "congeries of perceptions" (p. 57C). To Spinoza self is the substance which is at



once the world and God; for Leibniz it is a thinking substance, where "thinking" includes "little perceptions" also. Kant speaks of "self" in several senses: phenomenal, noumenal, transcendental, ethical (pp. 57D-57A). Fichte opposed self (whose reality consists in its action of self-positing) to nonself, thereby laying the foundation for the dialectics of Hegel and Marx (p. 58A). In America Josiah Royce distinguished between the phenomenal self (a group of ideas) and the metaphysical self (a group of ideals; p. 58B). Husserl speaks of both an empirical and a transcendental self, the second of which constitutes the meaning of the world (58D). To Kierkegaard self is the right relationship one has to God and to himself; for Gabriel Marcel it is incarnate consciousness (p. 59B). A modern psychologist such as Jung believes that self comprises both the conscious and the unconscious (p. 59C).

Although one could excerpt other examples from the article in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, the above suffice to suggest how complex and divergent "self" is among modern philosophers and psychologists. That complexity is mirrored in Gorman's conclusions from the historical survey.

The term self does not supplant the older concept of soul, nor is it the same as ego, mind, or person. It is a concept used to designate functions that philosophers felt were not included in soul . . . [which] had become for them a term designating the static thinking substance revealed by the *Cogito* of Descartes [and which was replaced by "mind."] With the advent of the philosophers of the will, mind became inadequate to represent the human person in his dynamic growth and development. Person referred to the individual substance of a rational nature — a definition that . . . seemed to ignore the concrete individual development in the world. . . . Self then began to be used to suggest all those aspects of man thought to be left out by the terms soul, mind, person, and nature — and to designate the unifying, purposeful, growing, and interacting aspect of man's activities. It included also the notions of alienation and of encounter (pp. 59D-60A).<sup>30</sup>

What has been our purpose in surveying what "self" signifies in modern literature? To realize that it is an extremely ambiguous notion and, thus, one can use it to translate or interpret Mani only after carefully reflecting on whether it helps or hinders getting at *what he himself had in mind* in CMC and other canonical or semi-canonical treatises (see above, n. 10). Part of that reflection must be that each interpreter decides for himself what exactly "self" signifies in his own position before inquiring whether it is applicable to Mani's.

Let me illustrate by setting forth what "self" has come to mean within my own philosophical position, which is influenced mainly by

Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and which is (I hope) an authentic existentialism. Within a unique and individual human existent what constitutes "self"? It is not solely my soul, which is merely a part of me; nor does it consist solely in individuation, which comes from matter, nor in my state of being a supposit, which issues from existence. Rather, self is my entire unique and individual being but especially and precisely as I am conscious of who and what I am, as I freely determine who I am and yet as I am also determined by outside forces (other human existents, environment, culture, etc.). Thus, my selfhood concerns me in my uniqueness and individuality as a psychological agent. In sum, my self is my-soul-actually-existing-within-this-body but considered not so much entitatively (i.e., in the parts which constitute me) as operationally (i.e., as dynamic, as active and passive, as the source and recipient of unique and singular activities).<sup>31</sup>

Manifestly, "self" interpreted in this fashion cannot validly be predicated either of Mani's Twin (who is soul or mind solely) or of Mani in his earthly state (whose true reality consists also of intellect or soul only). But one may also doubt whether "self" in other contemporary philosophical settings may be legitimately predicated of Mani and of his counterpart. At least such predication should (I am proposing) occur only after the meaning of "self" in those contemporary positions is clearly isolated and after Mani's writings are studied on his own terms, within his own third-century cultural and religious milieu.

Perhaps studying Plotinus on man will give further insights.

#### Plotinus on Man

If we are successfully to compare Mani with Plotinus, at least two points need to be recalled. For the former the true reality of a human existent on earth — whether he be Mani or someone else — consists solely of intellect or soul.<sup>32</sup> Second, Mani, as specially designated by the Father of Greatness (see above, n. 11) to be a new channel of revelation, also involves another and higher dimension — a "Twin," who is a more powerful intellect or soul, sent on occasion by the Father to communicate knowledge to Mani, to advise and console him, to free him from errors. Mani, then, entails two levels of reality — one higher, the other lower.

Does a human existent as Plotinus conceives him entail similar levels of reality? If so, might the higher level serve as his "Twin"? Let us reflect on some texts in the *Enneads*.

Text A: IV, 1 (21), 1

In the single chapter which constitutes the entire first treatise of *Enneads* IV, Plotinus investigates the nature of souls and, thereby, their relationship to Intellect.<sup>33</sup>

[1] "True being is in the intelligible world and *Nous* is the best of it. But souls are There too, for they come here from There. [2] That world contains souls without bodies; this one contains souls which have come to be in bodies and are divided by their bodies. [3] Each *nous* There is all-together, since it is neither separated nor divided. All souls in that eternal world also are all-together and without spatial separation. Accordingly, *Nous* is always without separation and is undivided, and soul There is likewise not separated or divided, but it does have a nature which is divisible. [4] [But what does 'division' mean *re* souls?] Division for them is their departure from the intelligible world and their coming to be in bodies. Hence, a soul is reasonably said to be divisible with reference to bodies because in this fashion it departs from There and is divided. [5] How, then, is it also undivided? The whole soul does not depart: something of it does not come to this world and by nature is not such as to be divided." (Lines 12-13: Οὐ γὰρ ὅλη ἀπέσπται, ἀλλ' ἔστι π. αὐτῆς οὐκ ἐληλυθός, ὃ οὐ πέφυκε μερίζεσθαι) To say that the soul consists of what is undivided and of what is divided in bodies is the same as saying that it consists of what is above, upon which it depends, and of what reaches as far as the things down here, like a radius from a center [reaches the circumference of the circle]. [6] But when it has come here it sees with the part of itself in which it preserves the nature of the whole. Even here below it is not only divided but is undivided as well, for its divided part is divided in such a way as to remain undivided. It gives itself to the whole body and is undivided because it gives itself as a whole to the whole and yet it is divided by being present in each part. (Lines 20-22: Εἰς ὅλον γὰρ τὸ σῶμα δοῦσα αὐτὴν καὶ μὴ μερισθεῖσα τῷ ὅλῳ εἰς ὅλον τῷ ἐν παντὶ εἶναι μεμέρισται)

**Comment.** In this passage Plotinus describes the two states in which souls find themselves. The first is their existence in the intelligible world (#1), where they are without bodies and, thus, are undivided (#2) and where their having all perfections present at once makes them similar to Intellect (#3). Yet even There a soul by nature is divisible. The second state arises when a soul comes from There to a body and thus is divided (#4). But even here a soul remains indivisible to an extent because of that part of it (*ti autēs*) which

continues to be There (#5)<sup>34</sup> and through which it depends in its earthly career upon Intellect and knows reality (#6). In the intelligible world, then, a soul is undivided as aligned with Intellect and yet remains divisible because of its nature too; in the sensible world it is divided by the body it enters, within whose parts it is present;<sup>35</sup> but it is undivided because it is wholly present there (#6) and because of its continuing link with and dependence on Intellect (#5).

Is Plotinus's anthropology similar to Mani's? Yes, insofar as for each a human existent entails two levels of reality, the higher of which perfects, illumines and controls the lower.<sup>36</sup> For each there is an identity of sorts between the lower and the higher: according to Plotinus a soul's intellect is one with Intellect, from which it never departs; Mani proclaimed that "I am that one from whom I was separated. . . . I myself am that one who is unshakable" (*CMC*, 24. 9 sqq., quoted above). Yet there are differences. Mani's Twin is (as I interpret the *CMC*) more distinct from Mani himself than a soul's intellect is, in Plotinus's text, from the soul — the Twin seems almost an hypostasis with its own independent reality and function. Moreover, in the Manichaean world-view each human being is an intellect/soul but only Mani as the new and final prophet has a Twin, whereas every Plotinian human soul has an intellect, which remains There.

Perhaps more information will issue from subsequent pages of the *Enneads*.

Text B: VI, 4 (22), 14

Just as Text A is a commentary on a Platonic dialogue (*Timaeus*, 34C sqq.), so this passage is excerpted from Plotinus's comments on Plato's *Parmenides*, 131B sqq.<sup>37</sup> There Plato inquires whether a single Form is present to multiple sensible participants in its entirety or only partially. Plotinus poses that question in three ways: how Intellect and Being can be omnipresent to lower existents; how the spiritual can be omnipresent to the corporeal; finally, how soul is omnipresent to body.<sup>38</sup> While replying to the third question, he offers a conception of the human existent which perhaps may parallel to some extent Mani's statements on himself and his Twin.

Plotinus begins Chapter 14 by tracing the relationship between a human soul and Soul. [1] The latter contains all [individual] souls and intellects, and yet in spite of its distinguishable, multiple and, in fact, infinite contents, it is one, since all such existents are there in an unseparated fashion and all-together, springing from but always

remaining in self-identical unity (Ch. 14, lines 1-15). [2] "But we — who are we? Are we that All-Soul<sup>39</sup> or, rather, are we that which drew near to it and came to be in time? [3] Before this sort of birth came about we were There as men different from those we now are — some of us as gods, pure souls, intellects united with all reality, since we were parts of the intelligible world, not separated or cut off, but belonging to the whole — indeed we are not cut off even now. [4] But now there has come to that higher man another man who wishes to be and who finds us, for we were not outside the All. [5] He wound himself round us and fastened himself to that man that each one of us was There (as if there was one voice and one word, and someone else came up from elsewhere and his ear heard and received the sound and became an actual hearing, keeping present to it that which made it actual. [6] Thus we became a couple and [we were no longer] the one [= higher man] we were before. Sometimes we even become the other [= lower man], which had fastened itself to us, when the first man is not active and is in another sense absent."<sup>40</sup> (Ἡμεῖς δὲ — τίνες δὲ ἡμεῖς; Ἄρα ἐκεῖνο ἡ τὸ πελάζον καὶ τὸ γινόμενον ἐν χρόνῳ; Ἡ καὶ πρὸ τοῦ ταύτην τὴν γένεσιν γενέσθαι ἡμεῖν ἐκεῖ ἀνθρώποι ἄλλοι ὄντες καὶ τινες καὶ θεοί, ψυχαὶ καθαφαὶ καὶ νοῦς συνημένος τῇ ἀπάσῃ οὐσίᾳ, μέρη ὄντες τοῦ νοῦ τοῦ οὐκ ἀφωρισμένα οὐδ' ἀποτετμημένα, ἀλλ' ὄντες τοῦ ὅλου. οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ νῦν ἀποτετμήμεθα. Ἀλλὰ γὰρ νῦν ἐκείνῳ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ προσεληλυθεν ἀνθρώπος ἄλλος εἶναι θέλων καὶ εὐρὺν ἡμᾶς — ἡμεῖν γὰρ τοῦ παντὸς οὐκ ἔξω — περιέθηκεν ἑαυτὸν ἡμῖν καὶ προσέθηκεν ἑαυτὸν ἐκείνῳ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τῷ ὅς ἦν ἕκαστος ἡμῶν τότε οἷον εἰ φωνῆς οὐσης μιᾶς καὶ λόγου ἐνὸς ἄλλος ἄλλοθεν παραθεῖς τὸ οὗς ἀκούσκει καὶ δέξαιτο, καὶ γένοιτο κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἀκοή τις ἔχουσα τὸ ἐνεργεῖν εἰς αὐτὴν παρὸν καὶ γεγενήμεθα τὸ συνάμφῳ καὶ οὐ θάτερον, ὃ πρότερον ἡμεῖν, καὶ θάτερον ποτε, ὃ ὕστερον προσεθέμεθα ἀργήσαντος τοῦ προτέρου ἐκείνου καὶ ἄλλον τρόπον οὐ παρόντος.) 16-31.

**Comments.** Although it is difficult to detect from these complex and elliptical lines what a human existent is, some features are clear. A human soul in both its lower and higher states is distinguishable from the All-Soul. This latter by reason of its multiple and, in fact, infinite contents (all souls and intellects) is all-perfect, but it also is intrinsically and essentially one because its contents, manifold and explicated though they be, are not actually separated but are all-together and so always remain in unity (#1).

An individual soul entails two manners of existing inasmuch as it remains within the Soul or departs from It.<sup>41</sup> Within the Soul an

individual soul and intellect also contains and contemplates all reality from its own more limited perspective and it is quiet, at peace and one with Soul. Nonetheless, it is not totally identical with Soul or with other individual souls There: although not actually isolated from them, it is divisible and distinguishable from them and, thereby, is *individual* in an analogous but authentic sense.<sup>42</sup> This individuality, when combined There with its other dimension of all-perfections-in-unity, constitutes the "higher man" (#3). The "lower man" is the same soul but now as in time and enmeshed in an encompassing body (#5). Any individual soul is, then, a couple (*to synampho*): it is at once the higher man and the lower man, although on some occasions its higher aspect predominates, on others its lower (#6).

Accordingly, who are *we*? What constitutes *us*? What makes us be who we are? Where do we find ourselves? No one of us is the All-Soul as such but each is (so to speak) one area of Soul, one participation in It, one portion or dimension of Its contents. And that area, participation, portion, dimension (call it what you will) either rests quietly within Soul (then I am the "higher man" and am more fully real) or it has gone forth to movement, time, body (and I am the "lower man" and am less real).<sup>43</sup> Consequently, "we" in Text B is the combination of the two men, even though at times we are more one than the other to correspond with which "man" is more active and in control.

Thus far our attempt to decipher Plotinus's clues on what a human existent is. Now our question: does his triad of Soul, higher man and lower man parallel Mani's conception of himself and his Twin? Mani also speaks of a triad of Light-Intellect (see above, n. 11), Twin and terrestrial soul.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, there is a parallel of sorts, which nonetheless entails the same differences as noted in our "Comments" on Text A. Mani's Twin seems entitatively less one with him than does Plotinus's higher man with lower man. Second, the latter's schema of Soul, higher man and lower man fits every human existent, whereas Mani's apparently is restricted to himself as founder of the Manichaeic Church.<sup>45</sup>

*Text C:* II, 9 (33), 2

Let us take up another passage from Plotinus, this time from the treatise he wrote against the Gnostics of his time.<sup>46</sup> [1] "One must not posit more existents There than these [the Good-One, the Intellect and the Soul — see previous chapter of II, 9] nor make superfluous

distinctions in such realities [e.g., between an Intellect which thinks and an Intellect which thinks that it thinks — see *ibid.*] No, we must posit that there is one Intellect, which remains unchangeably the same and without any sort of decline and which imitates the Father [= the Good-One] as far as it can. [2] One power of our soul is always directed to realities There, another to things here, and one is the middle between them. [3] Since the soul is one nature in multiple powers, sometimes all of it is carried along with its best part and with being. At times its worst part is dragged down and drags the middle part with it — not, to be sure, the whole of soul because that would be unlawful. [4] This misfortune befalls [a soul's middle part] because it does not remain There among the fairest realities (where nonetheless soul stays which is not such a part — nor indeed is the distinctive 'we' such a part) but rather allows the whole of body to hold whatever it can hold from it. [5] Even so, soul [in its highest part] remains unperturbed itself: by discursive thinking it does not manage body or set anything right but it orders things with a wonderful power by contemplating that which is before it. [6] The more it is directed to that contemplation, the fairer and more powerful it is. And receiving from There, it gives to what comes after it, and it illumines [what is below] in accordance as it is illumined [from above].” (Ch. 2 in its entirety: Οὐ τοίουν οὔτε πλείω τούτων οὔτε ἐπινοίας περιττὰς ἐν ἐκείναις, ἅς οὐ δέχονται, θετέον, ἀλλ’ ἓνα νοῦν τὸν αὐτὸν ὡπαύτως ἔχοντα, ἀκλινῇ πανταχῇ μμουόμενον τὸν πατέρα καθ’ ὅσον οἶόν τε αὐτῷ. Ψυχῆς δὲ ἡμῶν τὸ μὲν αἰεὶ πρὸς ἐκείνους, τὸ δὲ πρὸς ταῦτα ἔχειν, τὸ δ’ ἐν μέσῳ τούτων. φύσεως γὰρ οὔσης μᾶς ἐν δυνάμεσι πλείοσιν ὅτε μὲν τὴν πᾶσαν συμφέρεσθαι τῷ ἀρίστῳ αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ὄντος, ὅτε δὲ τὸ χεῖρον αὐτῆς καθελκυσθὲν συνεφελκύνεσθαι τὸ μέσον. τὸ γὰρ πᾶν αὐτῆς οὐκ ἦν θέμις καθελκύσαι. Καὶ τοῦτο συμβαίνει αὐτῇ τὸ πάθος, ὅτι μὴ ἔμεινον ἐν τῷ καλλίστῳ, ὅπου ψυχὴ μέινουσα ἢ μὴ μέρος, μηδὲ ἡ ἡμεῖς ἐπὶ μέρος, ἔδωκε τῷ παντὶ σώματι αὐτῷ τε ἔχειν ὅσον δύναται παρ’ αὐτῆς ἔχειν, μένει τε ἀπραγμόνως αὐτῇ οὐκ ἐκ διανοίας διοικοῦσα οὐδὲ τι διορθουμένη, ἀλλὰ τῇ εἰς τὸ πρὸ αὐτῆς θέα κατακοσμοῦσα δυνάμει θαυμαστῇ. Ὅσον γὰρ πρὸς αὐτῇ ἔστι, τόσῳ καλλίῳ καὶ δυνατωτέρῳ. κάκειθεν ἔχουσα δίδωσι τῷ μετ’ αὐτὴν καὶ ὥσπερ ἐλλάμπουσα αἰεὶ ἐλλάμπεται.)

Comments. After restricting the primal existents to three (the One-Good, Intellect and Soul)<sup>47</sup> and positing a threefold power in a human soul (#2), Plotinus pays considerable attention to its highest and intellectual power. The lowest power tends to the physical world (#2) and is dragged down by the body ensnaring it (#3) and the second power is marked by discursive reasoning, through which it endeavors to

manage the body (#5), and by its vulnerability to being misled by the power beneath it (#3). But the highest power of an individual soul always tends (#2) to the realm of most beautiful realities (#4), where it remains at peace (#5) and which are the objects of its contemplation (#6). From the illumination issuing from this contemplation, it becomes more beautiful and strong and thus can enrich and illumine the middle and even the lowest portions of the soul (#6).<sup>48</sup>

If we relate the tripartite soul in Text C to Mani's position, what information can be drawn? The steadfast link of the highest power in the nature of the human soul with the realm of the really real, whence comes its illumination and power, would be congenial to Mani's view of his soul as enlightened by the Father of Greatness and as the channel of salvific knowledge to members of his church. And, of course, that supreme psychic power could be made to correspond with his Twin. But the basic dissimilarity between the two authors remains: Plotinus sketches a view embracing all human existents, Mani a view confined to himself as divinely commissioned savior, a commission which is repugnant to the Neoplatonist (see above, n. 45).

**Summary and Conclusions.** Texts other than the three so far discussed are relevant but they do not provide radically different information. One such is V, 3 (49), 3, in which Plotinus speaks of a soul as consisting of three powers — highest, middle and lowest, of which the first is aligned with intellect, the second with reason, the third with sense-perception — and thus it is similar to our Text C above.<sup>49</sup> Hence, such a passage does not need separate exegesis.

Accordingly, let us list briefly the relevant information of Texts A to C. In the first Plotinus describes an individual soul as existing in two states, the first of which is the intelligible world, the second the physical world. In each state it is marked with attributes of the other. For instance, when existing on the level of Intellect, it is undivided from other souls and intellects and yet its nature is such as to be divisible. When existing within a body, it is isolated from other living beings but it also remains united with the higher level because of its part which continues to be There and through which it still depends upon Intellect and knows reality. In Text B Plotinus continues the contrast between the higher and lower states in which human souls exist but he tries to locate their distinctive individuality by asking "Who are we?" His answer: no one of us is the All-Soul but each is one portion or participation of Its contents, which either rests immutably within It (then I am the "higher man") or has been immersed in motion, body, time (and then I am the "lower man"). Join such men together and one has the couple (*to synampho*) which each of us distinctively is. Text

C portrays an individual soul entailing the triple powers of intellect, reason and sensation, the first of which rests steadfastly on the level of Intellect, from its contemplation of which comes the illuminations which enrich its middle and lowest powers.

What, now, would Mani's reaction be if he were to read Plotinus? He would find himself both agreeing and disagreeing. He would agree that he himself involves higher and lower levels of existence, the first of which is occupied by his Twin (a more powerful and immutable intellectual being, destined to be his helper and guide), the second by his intellect or soul within a body. He would concur also that salvific knowledge and illumination come from the higher levels to him as the terrestrial conduit to those open to his divine message and leadership. But he would disagree that human individuals other than himself would entail a Twin as a transcendent Intellect to be their consoler and guide: Mani himself is to perform those functions for them. Also he would not agree that human individuals need no outside help in achieving ultimate well-being: the intellect of no one existing here in matter resides immutably in the upper realms of light so as to serve as instrument of salvation — no one's, that is, except Mani's, who is to administer the divine help all others need.

But despite those disagreements Mani concurs with his contemporary sufficiently to prompt our wondering what the source of their concurrence may be. Why are their positions parallel in certain important aspects, even though it is very unlikely that either read or met the other?

This fact, at least, seems obvious: each formulated a monism which is dynamic rather than static.<sup>50</sup> That is, all existents are real insofar as they consist of the same basic stuff (unity for Plotinus, light for Mani). All existents other than the First proceed from higher existents, of which the ultimate source is the One-Good for Plotinus and the Father of Greatness for Mani. For both authors that process is a movement downward from the more to the less perfect.<sup>51</sup> And the higher existents, which are the causes of whatever reality a lower existent may have, automatically and structurally are (so to speak) concerned with and care for their effects. This entitative concern and care explain why Mani's Twin comes from the Father to him as counselor and consoler and why for Plotinus the Intellect furnishes a steadfast and safe haven from which individual intellects never depart and to which individual souls can thereby return.

If one were asked to locate such world-views within the history of Western thought, one would have to say they are Platonic — a Middle Platonism which is influenced by Stoic monism, by Neopythagoreanism

and by Aristotelian ontology, epistemology and ethics, but which radically originates with Plato. Plotinus's indebtedness to Plato and to Middle Platonism is beyond question.<sup>52</sup> But what philosophical influences (if any) directly or even indirectly influenced Mani? Such a question has, as far as I know, yet to be answered adequately.<sup>53</sup>

#### "Self" and Plotinus?

Just as several interpreters find Mani to espouse a doctrine of self (see the section above, "The 'Twin' as 'Self'"),<sup>54</sup> so some scholars think that Plotinus has a doctrine of "self." For instance, Plato Salvador Mamo describes Plotinus as apparently "the first philosopher explicitly concerned with the notion of the individual consciousness of ego." The last term should be defined, he adds, "not in static but in dynamic terms; not as individual substance but as striving, attention, direction of consciousness."<sup>55</sup>

Gerard J.P. O'Daly has written an entire book with the significant title of *Plotinus's Philosophy of the Self* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973; 1968 doctoral dissertation). Moreover, O'Daly lists an impressive number of contemporary authorities to back up his position. Emile Brehier, Jean Trouillard, Richard Harder, E.R. Dodds and Wilhelm Himmerich all observe "that this concept (of *self*) plays an original and important part in Plotinus's thought" (pp. 4-5). Still others "have recognized the importance of the concept" — Pierre Hadot, E. von Ivanka, E.W. Warren, H.J. Blumenthal, J.M. Rist, P.S. Mamo, A.H. Armstrong (p. 98, n. 8). The last named, A.H. Armstrong, has in fact published an important article as recently as December, 1977, on *self* and entitled "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus" (*Dionysius*, 1 [1977], 49-68).

But despite those explicit affirmations that *self* is to be found in Plotinus's *Enneads*, some of the same authors speak also in such a way as to raise questions about the accuracy of their affirmative statements. In the "Preface" to his dissertation, Mamo says that "it can be argued that a doctrine of the nature and destiny of the self must occupy a central position in any mystical system. But in Plotinus's case we have neither an explicit doctrine contained in his writings, nor a comprehensive study by a commentator. Scholars, who have given us little beyond scattered remarks, seem to be divided in their interpretations of the texts. It is held, on the one hand, that there is no room for the ego in Plotinus's heaven. On the other hand, we are told that Plotinus was so impressed by the uniqueness of each ego that he

wanted to maintain a distinction between it and the One even with the *union mystica*" (op. cit., p. ii). Even O'Daly grants towards the end of his book, *Plotinus's Philosophy of Self*, that Plotinus has "no fixed word — hence no *concept*, strictly speaking — for 'self': as P. Henry has pointed out, there is no word for 'person' or 'self,' in Greek" (p. 89).

But in the light of O'Daly's admission, how can one discover a philosophy of "self" in the *Enneads*? What does one look for?

Perhaps it will be instructive to observe how O'Daly develops Plotinus's philosophy of self. After having noted (as just mentioned) that Plotinus has "no fixed word — hence, no *concept*, strictly speaking — for 'self' . . . there is no word for 'person' or 'self' in Greek," the Irish scholar states that Plotinus uses *autos* or *hēmeis* or the reflexive *hauton* to express the concept of "self." He continues: even "if the word, and the explicit, canonized concept are missing . . . , adequate testimony . . . [is] given of Plotinus's clear awareness of the importance of a concept of self . . . to account for the identity of a human subject at the several levels of existence possible to man" (pp. 89-90).<sup>56</sup>

That identity on the level of man in history involves the empirical or historical self (man as image [*eidolon*], as exterior and individual, soul as embodied; pp. 26-30). But it consists mainly in soul when reasoning and thinking and, thus, at its highest (p. 43): it becomes aware of itself as derived from *nous* as secondary image and as a repository of Forms (p. 44). "Self," then, is "essentially a faculty of conscious self-determination, a mid-point which can be directed towards the higher or the lower" (p. 49; also see p. 43). On the next level self continues to be soul but now as more closely linked with *nous*: through wisdom and virtue a soul "has a capacity for the divine by reason of its kinship and identical substance with the divine" (p. 52). Despite its divinization, though, the soul remains human (pp. 56-58, 62-63): "the human self, reverting to the intelligible, remains itself, while at the same time being one with the totality of Being" (p. 65). On the highest level self is soul as above being and *nous* and as one with the One (pp. 83-84) and, thereby, it is transcendent and absolute (p. 91). Yet it is not annihilated in that union: although its "everyday" or historical selfhood is transformed, it truly has become itself: "the self is a *reality* . . . in the moment of *union*, and not merely afterwards — despite the fact that one is not aware of the distinction at that moment" (p. 85).

O'Daly is obviously intelligent and industrious. He is thoroughly acquainted with the *Enneads*. Nonetheless, his book makes me uneasy. That uneasiness does not issue primarily from any one of his individual conclusions (e.g., that the human self on the highest level is soul, which There is one with the One and yet remains itself — soul — in that very

union) so much as from the conviction which underlies the book: Plotinus has an authentic philosophy of "self," he was aware of "self" in some sort of technical meaning, even though O'Daly admits (as we have seen) that Plotinus has "no fixed word — hence, no *concept*, strictly speaking, for 'self'" (p. 89).

But in the light of this admission, how (to repeat our earlier questions) can one discover a *philosophy* of "self" in the *Enneads*? What does one look for? Why bother, even? But suppose someone would say, "Perhaps Plotinus anticipated 'self' in its contemporary significance." Then I become increasingly puzzled because there is no commonly accepted notion. As we previously concluded from studying Margaret Gorman's article on "self" in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (XIII, 56-60), "self" is an extremely ambiguous notion in both philosophical and psychological literature. Accordingly, it can help us discover a philosophy of self in the *Enneads* only with great difficulty. Yet, unless I am mistaken, we need some such aid if Plotinus himself has "no fixed word — hence, no *concept*, strictly speaking — for 'self'" (O'Daly, p. 89).

#### *Another Approach?*

Is there another way of reading those passages of the *Enneads* in which O'Daly believes their author is speaking of "self"? Yes, by refusing to translate *autos* or *hauton* or *hēmeis* as "self" (except, of course, when the meaning of the English word is not technical, as in the statement, "No one helped me — I did it myself") but in some such fashion as "what someone really is," "what we really are," "what man is essentially" and so on; or second, by coupling "self" with a bracketed phrase to indicate what is meant. Then, perhaps, Plotinus will more easily reveal what he was intending.

Let us now apply this methodology in some detail to *Enneads*, I, 6, upon which O'Daly (in part, at least) bases his interpretation and which is interesting as the first treatise Plotinus wrote. We shall first present our own paraphrase and/or translation of its relevant lines with comments, which will then be contrasted with O'Daly's.<sup>57</sup>

#### *I, 6: "On Beauty"*

In explaining what the primary beauty in bodies is, Plotinus observes that [A] our soul, upon becoming aware of such beauty,

welcomes it and as it were adapts itself to it. [B] But upon encountering the ugly, it shrinks back and rejects it and is out of tune and alienated from it (lines 1-6). [C] Why so? Because soul "is by nature what it is and is related to the higher sort of entity among beings, and thus, when seeing what is akin to it — or even a trace of what is akin to it — [in bodies], it is delighted and thrilled and [by turning from the body's beauty] it returns to itself [as soul] and remembers its true nature and its own possessions" (ch. 2, ll. 7-11: Φαμέν δὲ, ὡς τὴν φύσιν οὖσα ὅπερ ἐστὶ καὶ πρὸς τῆς κρείττονος ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν οὐσίας, ὃ π. ἀν. ἔδῃ συγγενὲς ἢ ἔχνος τοῦ συγγενούς, χαίρει τε διεπτόνεται καὶ ἀναφέρει πρὸς ἑαυτὴν καὶ ἀναμνησκέται ἑαυτῆς καὶ τῶν ἑαυτῆς).

**Comments.** Plotinus is here intent on illuminating the human soul's reaction to corporeal beauty and ugliness. It flees from the latter (#B) and welcomes the former (#A). Confronted with beauty in bodies, our soul initially opens up to it (#A) but next turns away and within to its own nature and contents (#C). The contrast is between soul and body, with stress put upon what the soul essentially is. Thus, there is little likelihood that *hautē* in its three occurrences in lines 10-11 has to do technically with "self."

Shortly after, Plotinus speaks of the beauty to be found within soul. [D] What do you feel (he asks) about virtuous activities and dispositions and the beauty of souls (ll. 2-5)? In fact, "what do you feel when you look at your own souls and the beauty within them? How are you wildly exalted and stirred and long to be with yourselves by gathering yourselves [= your souls, what you really are] together away from your bodies?" (ch. 5, ll. 5-8: Καὶ ἑαυτοὺς δὲ ἰδόντες τὰ ἔνδον καλοὺς τί πάσχετε; Καὶ πῶς ἀναβακχεύεσθε καὶ ἀνακινεῖσθε καὶ ἑαυτοῖς συνεῖναι ποθεῖτε συλλεξόμενοι αὐτοὺς ἀπο τῶν σωμάτων). [F] You feel, no doubt, what true lovers feel. But what is it which makes them feel like this? Not shape or color or any size which are linked with beauty in bodies but soul, which possess a moral, colorless order and all the other light of the virtues. [G] This you feel when in yourselves [= your souls] or in someone else you see greatness of soul, righteous life, pure morality, courage, dignity, modesty, calmness, upon all of which the godlike Intellect shines and all of which we love and call beautiful. Why so? Because they are genuinely real beings (*ta ontos onta*) and, thereby, are beautiful (ll. 8-20).

**Comments.** Chapter five gives information on a human soul's reaction to psychic beauties. It is enraptured and deeply moved (#D) by seeing moral virtues (whether its own or someone else's), their high ontological status and consequent fairness (#G), the illumination

bestowed upon them by the Intellect (#G). Such a soul desires to withdraw from body and to be solely what it truly is: soul. Accordingly, an emphasis continues to be put upon contrasting soul with body and, thus, *heautous* and *heautois* in lines 5 and 7 need not refer to "self" as such.

In chapter seven Plotinus begins to depict how we are to attain the Good and Beautiful. [H] We must ascend to the Good, which every soul desires but which only those attain who go up to the higher world, are turned around and [I] "strip off what we put on in our descent . . . until passing in the ascent all that is alien to God, one sees only with what he truly is That which is alone, simple, pure and from which all depends and to which all look and in which all are and live and think." (ch. 7, ll. 4-10: Ἐφετὸν μὲν γὰρ ὡς ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἡ ἕφεσις πρὸς τοῦτο, τεύξις δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀναβαίνουσι πρὸς τὸ ἄνω καὶ ἐπιστραφεῖσι καὶ ἀποδυομένοις ἃ καταβαίνοντες ἡμφιέσμεθα . . . ἕως ἂν τις παρελθὼν ἐν τῇ ἀναβάσει πᾶν ὅσον ἀλλότριον τοῦ θεοῦ αὐτῷ μόνῳ αὐτὸ μόνον ἔδῃ εἰλικρινές, ἀπλοῦν, καθαρὸν, ἀφ' οὗ πάντα ἐξήρηται καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸ βλέπει καὶ ἔστι καὶ ζῇ καὶ νοεῖ).

But, more precisely, [J] what method can we devise (Plotinus asks in ch. 8) to see the inconceivable Beauty? His answer in brief from the end of the chapter: Give up all hope in material or mechanical means, disregard your physical vision. Then change to and make another way of seeing (ch. 8, ll. 24-27). [K] And what does this inner sight see? The soul must be trained to see, first of all, beautiful ways of life, then good and virtuous works and, next, the souls which produce them. (ch. 9, lines 1-6). [L] "How, then, can you see the sort of beauty a good soul has? Go back to your own and look. [M] If you do not see yours is beautiful, then just as someone making a beautiful statue cuts away here and polishes there . . ., so you too must cut away excess and straighten the crooked and clear the dark and make it bright, and never stop 'working on your statue' till the divine glory of virtue shines out on you . . . [N] If you have become beautiful and see it, and you are at home with your pure state, with nothing hindering you from becoming in this way one, with no inward mixture of anything else but wholly what you really are — namely, nothing but pure light, not measured by dimensions, or bounded by shape into littleness, or expanded to size by unboundedness but everywhere unmeasured . . . — [O] when you see that you have become this, then you have become sight. You can trust what you are then; you have already ascended and need no one to show you. Concentrate your gaze and see . . . the enormous Beauty" (ll. 6-25: Πῶς ἂν οὖν ἴδῃς ψυχὴν ἀγαθὴν οἶον τὸ κάλλος ἔχει; ἀναγε ἐπὶ σαυτὸν καὶ ἴδε. κἂν μήπω σαυτὸν ἴδῃς καλόν, οἷα ποιητῆς

ἀγάλματος, ὃ δεῖ καλὸν γενέσθαι, τὸ μὲν ἀφαιρεῖ, τὸ δὲ ἀπέξεσε, τὸ δὲ λείον, τὸ δὲ καθαρὸν ἐποίησεν, ἕως ἔδειξε καλὸν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀγάλματι πρόσωπον, οὕτω καὶ σὺ ἀφαίρει ὅσα περιττὰ καὶ ἀπειθύνε ὅσα σκολιά, ὅσα σκοτεινὰ καθαίρων ἐργάζου εἶναι λαμπρὰ καὶ μὴ παύσῃ τεκταίνων τὸ σὺν ἀγάλμα, ἕως ἂν ἐκλάμψῃ σαι τῆς ἀρετῆς ἡ θεοειδὴς ἀγλαία, ἕως ὅν ἴδῃς σωφροσύνην ἐν ἀγνῶ βεβῶσαν βάθρῳ. Εἰ γέγονας τοῦτο καὶ εἶδες αὐτὸ καὶ σαυτῷ καθαρὸς συνεγένου οὐδὲν ἔχων ἐμπόδιον πρὸς τὸ εἰς οὕτω γενέσθαι οὐδὲ σὺν αὐτῷ ἄλλο τι ἐντὸς μεμυγμένον ἔχων, ἀλλ' ὅλος αὐτὸς φῶς ἀληθινὸν μόνον, οὐ μεγέθει μεμετρημένον οὐδὲ σχήματι εἰς ἐλάττωσιν περιγραφῆν οὐδ' αὖ εἰς μέγεθος δι' ἀπειρίας αὐξηθῆν, ἀλλ' ἀμέτρητον πανταχοῦ, ὡς ἂν μείζον παντὸς μέτρου καὶ παντὸς κρείσσον ποσοῦ. εἰ τοῦτο γεινόμενον σαυτὸν ἴδῃς, ὅπως ἤδη γεινόμενος θαρσύντος δεηθεῖς καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἤδη ἀναβεβηκὼς μηκέτι τοῦ δεικνύντος δεηθεῖς ἀπειώσας ἴδε. οὗτος γὰρ μόνος ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς τὸ μέγα κάλλος βλέπει.

Comments. One finds in the final three chapters just paraphrased that Plotinus has returned to a methodology similar to that disclosed in the passages paraphrased above (#A-G), but with a difference. There the soul turned away from matter so as to see and be captivated by the beauty of its own moral virtues. Here, though, the Greek author is concerned with how the soul, disregarding whatever is lower, is eventually to ascend to the Good (#I and ch. 9, lines 37 sqq.) and the Beautiful (#K).

His explanation is complex, though, inasmuch as he first gives general directions (#H-#I), which then become more specific (#J-#O). But in each case they consist in setting aside impediments so as to arrive at what the soul really is and, thereby, to be capable of attaining primal reality.

His general advice is, then, to discard matter and whatever vices we have succumbed to in departing from the higher realms so that each of us, relying solely on what he truly is, might behold the divine Good in his solitude, simplicity and purity (#I). Here, rather obviously, the crucial words in line 9 (*αὐτὸ μονὸν*) do not pertain to "self" as such but to a man's own reality as contrasted with the unreality of matter and vice and with the supreme reality of God.

In its more exact formulation, though, his advice comes in several stages. Let one wishing to see Beauty (#J) refuse to be drawn towards external and bodily beauties, which are mere shadows and can ruin him (ch. 8, ll. 3-16, left unparaphrased above). Rather, let him journey back to his origin There not on foot or by carriage or boat (ll. 16-24). No,

let him put hope in no material or mechanical means but close his physical eyes and activate his spiritual vision (#J), with which he should attend to the beauties of virtues and of the souls they perfect (#K). If someone finds no beauty in his soul, let him work upon his soul (as a sculptor upon a statue) to replace the ugliness of vice with the beauty and divine refulgence of virtue (#M). This done, and no hindrances remaining to pureness and unity and no internal composition, he has become wholly what he really is: authentic and immasurable light (#N) and vision itself (#C). Having thus achieved his own true reality, he has arrived too at Beauty itself: let him look and see (#C).

Here, again, the words in lines 7 (*anage epi sauton*), 8 (*sauton*) and 15 sqq. of Chapter 9 occur when Plotinus contrasts what a man truly is with matter and evil (then he is soul) and with Beauty (then he is light and vision). In neither contrast may (at least: must) one replace them with "self" technically taken.

O'Daly's exegesis puts the crucial lines into a different and (I think) misleading focus, as this quotation shows (*Plotinus's Philosophy of Self*, p. 83).<sup>58</sup>

At I, 6 (1), 9 the self (*autos*, 18), is the "only veritable light," and "when you perceive that you have grown to this, you are now become very vision" (22). A transformation of the "everyday" self is in question: at chapter 9, 7ff. it is said that man can work upon this transformation. Plotinus . . . has subtly rewritten the image of the *Phaedrus* (252d), so that the "statue" (*agalma*) becomes the self. . . . Thus at chapter 5 Plotinus can speak to the "lovers" (9) who "when you see that you yourselves are beautiful within . . . long to be one with your self," 5 ff. Similarly, at ch. 9, 15 ff., "you have become this perfect work [i.e., the *agalma*], and have had vision of it and you are self-gathered in the purity of your being." . . . For Plotinus . . . it is in a heightening of *self-possession*, of *self-concentration*, carried to its extreme, that vision occurs; if the self experiences unification (17), it is *entirely as itself* (18) (italics in the original).

Before proceeding to other texts let me offer these brief tentative conclusions. In *Enneads* I, 6, Plotinus primarily is a metaphysician and, thus, is intent also and especially on two questions which underlie the explicit discussion of what beauty is — namely, "What is reality? What does it mean to be real?" and, concomitantly, "In what does man's genuine reality consist?" The answer to this second question differs when man is compared to what is lower (then, he is soul) and to what is primal reality (then, he is light and vision).



## Other Treatises

When that comparison to what is below man is made in subsequent treatises, the same reply is given. But when he is compared to primal reality, the reply changes somewhat inasmuch as Plotinus increasingly realized that reality is unity and, hence, man insofar as he is genuinely real must basically and ultimately be *one*. This radical state of unity and reality is disclosed when, having transcended not only evil and matter but even soul and intellect, he is united to the One *seu* the Good *seu* God. In that union, Plotinus states in VI, 9, (9), 11, 4 sqq., "there were not two, but the seer himself was one with the Seen (for It was not really seen but united to him). . . . He was one himself then, with no distinction in him either in relation to himself or anything else; for there was no movement in him, and he had no emotion, no desire for anything else when he had made the ascent, no reason or thought; his own self [= what he was on a lower level: soul] was not there for him, if we should say even this" (II. 4-12: 'Ἐπεὶ τοίνυν δύο οὐκ ἦν, ἀλλ' ἓν ἦν αὐτὸς ὁ ἰδὼν πρὸς τὸ ἑωραμένον, ἀλλ' ἡνωμένον, ὃς ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐκείνῳ ἐμίγνυτο εἰ μεμνώτο, ἔχει ἄν παρ' ἑαυτῷ ἐκείνου εἰκόνα. Ἦν δὲ ἓν καὶ αὐτὸς διαφορὰν ἐν αὐτῷ οὐδεμίαν πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔχων οὔτε κατὰ ἄλλα' — οὐ γὰρ τι ἐκινεῖτο παρ' αὐτῷ, οὐ θυμός, οὐκ ἐπιθυμία ἄλλου παρῆν αὐτῷ ἀναβεβηκότε — ἀλλ' οὐδὲ λόγος οὐδὲ τις νύησις οὐδ' ὅλως αὐτός, εἰ δεῖ καὶ τοῦτο λέγειν). In fact, his contemplation of God was perhaps "not a contemplation but another kind of seeing, a being out of oneself [= what one is as a distinct and lower existent], a simplifying, a self-surrender [a surrender of what one is as distinct, less real being], a pressing towards contact, a rest, a sustained thought directed to perfect conformity" (II. 22-25: Τὸ δὲ ὥσως ἦν οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν, ἑκστασις καὶ ἀπλωσις καὶ ἐπίδοσις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔφεσις πρὸς ἀφῆν καὶ στάσις καὶ περινώησις πρὸς ἐφαρμογήν). Those lines apparently explicate the identity between man when fully real and primal Reality: man then is one with the One.

The same explication continues in III, 8 (30), 9, 19 sqq., where Plotinus asks: "Since knowledge of other things comes to us from intellect, . . . by what sort of simple intuition could one grasp this which transcends the nature of intellect?"<sup>59</sup> We shall say . . . that it is by the likeness in ourselves. For there is something of it in us too; or rather there is nowhere where it is not, in the things which can participate in it. For, wherever you are, it is from this that you have that which is everywhere present, by setting to it that which can have it" (II. 19-26: Καὶ γὰρ αὐτῆς γνώσεως διὰ νοῦ τῶν ἄλλων γινομένης καὶ τῷ νῷ

νοῦν γινώσκειν δυναμένων ὑπερβεβηκὸς τοῦτο τὴν νοῦ φύσιν τίνα ἂν ἀλίσκετο ἐπιβολῇ ἄλλοι; Πρὸς δὲ δεῖ σημῆναι, ὅπως οὖν τε, τῷ ἓν ἡμῖν ὁμοίῳ φήσομεν. Ἔστι γὰρ τι καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν αὐτοῦ ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν, ὅπου μὴ ἔστιν, οἷς ἔστι μετέχειν αὐτοῦ. Τὸ γὰρ πανταχοῦ παραστήσας ὅπου οὖν τὸ δυνάμενων ἔχειν ἔχεις ἐκείθεν). The next chapter helps to explain that omnipresence of God. The One is the "power of all existents (*dynamis ion pantōn*): if it did not exist," neither would they (ch. 10, lines 1 sqq.). "Everywhere, then, we must go back to *one*. And in each and every existent there is some *one* to which you will trace it back, and this in every case to the *one* before it, which is not simply one, until we come to the simply one; and this cannot be traced back to something else. But if we take the *one* of the plant . . . and the *one* of the animal and the *one* of the soul and the *one* of the universe, we are taking in each case what is most powerful and really valuable in it; but if we take the *one* of the beings which truly are, their origin and spring and power, shall we lose faith and think of it [the One] as nothing? [By no means]" (II. 20-28: Διὸ καὶ ἡ ἀναγωγὴ πανταχοῦ ἐφ' ἓν. Καὶ ἐφ' ἑκάστου μέν τι ἓν, εἰς ὃ ἀνάξεις, καὶ τόδε τὸ πᾶν εἰς ἓν τὸ προ αὐτοῦ, οὐχ ἀπλῶς ἓν, ἕως τις ἐπὶ τὸ ἀπλῶς ἓν ἔλθῃ τοῦτο δὲ οὐκέτι ἐπ' ἄλλο. Ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν τὸ τοῦ φυτοῦ ἓν — τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς μένουσα — καὶ τὸ ζώου ἓν καὶ τὸ ψυχῆς ἓν καὶ τὸ τοῦ παντὸς ἓν λαμβάνοι, λαμβάνει ἑκαστανοῦ τὸ δυνατώτατον καὶ τὸ τίμιον. εἰ δὲ τὸ τῶν κατ' ἀλήθειαν ὄντων ἓν, τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ πηγὴν καὶ δύναμιν, λαμβάνοι, ἀπιστήσομεν καὶ τὸ μηδὲν ὑπονοήσομεν). The fact that man, as well as existents on every level, is somehow one with the One is so clearly suggested in those lines as to need no comment.

The same suggestion emerges in a still later treatise, VI, 7 (38): "The soul must not keep by it good or evil or anything else, that it may alone receive Him, the Only One. . . . [When] His presence becomes manifest [to the soul], when it turns away from the things present to it and prepares itself, making itself as beautiful as possible, and comes to likeness with Him, . . . then it sees Him suddenly appearing in itself (for there is nothing between, nor are they still two, but both are one; while He is present, you could not distinguish them)" (ch. 34, II. 6-18; the Greek for II. 12-14: ἰδοῦσα δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐξαίφνης φανέντα — μεταξὺ γὰρ οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἔτι δύο, ἀλλ' ἓν ἄμφω. οὐ γὰρ ἂν διακρίναις ἔτι, ἕως πάρεστι). Then in chapter 36: after purifying and adorning the soul with virtues, after gaining a foothold in the world of Intellect and settling firmly there, after contemplating what he really is and everything else, a man then "is near: the Good is next above him, close to him

already shining over the whole intelligible world." Now "letting all study go, . . . he raises his thought to that in which he is, but is carried out of it by the very surge of the wave of Intellect and, lifted high by its swell, suddenly sees without knowing how; the Sight fills his eyes with Light but does not make him see something else by it, but the Light is That Which he sees. There is not in It one thing which is seen and another which is Its Light" (II. 8-22; the Greek for II. 19-20: ἀλλ' ἡ θεὰ πλήσασα φωτὸς τὰ ὄμματα οὐ δι' αὐτοῦ πεποίηκεν ἄλλο ὁρᾶν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ φῶς τὸ ὄραμα ᾗν).

With this affirmation that the One is light, we have come full circle. In I, 6, 9, man is light upon achieving God. VI, 7, 36 asserts that God is light. Therefore, man is God — or, at least, becomes God during that state of mystical unification.

Our interpretation of the previous three passages intimates that Plotinus's metaphysics has become increasingly monistic.<sup>60</sup> This, I grant, is a thorny question, which, however, needs to be touched upon in any discussion of "self." But, at least, this seems comparatively certain: his discussion of man's relationship to primal and other reality is primarily *metaphysical* (i.e., knowledge of the real as real):<sup>61</sup> how man actually exists; what he is on the physical, psychic, noetic and mystical levels of reality; to what extent he is real there. Yes, Plotinus's discussion is primarily metaphysical, even though he often describes man in terms of his operations — physical, psychic, noetic, mystical. But even then Plotinus is intent on the data they give on man's ontological and henological status of reality — *re* what he actually is as he exists on those four levels, *re* the degree to which he attains or loses the reality uniquely his of being one with the One.

But if Plotinus's discussion of man's relationship to primal and lower reality is primarily metaphysical, this is another reason to rethink whether *autos* and so on do mean "self." This latter notion, when it came to prominence in modern times, appears to have arisen often within discussions of a psychological (both philosophical and empirical) nature. If Plotinus's investigations of man are metaphysical in essence, finding "self" there may put them out of focus.

#### Suggested Methodology

Let me terminate with a suggested methodology for reading Plotinus's *Enneads*.<sup>62</sup> First, when reading his Greek do not translate *autos* or *hauton* or *hēmeis* or *ekeino* as *self* but in some such fashion as "what someone really is," "what we really are," "what man is

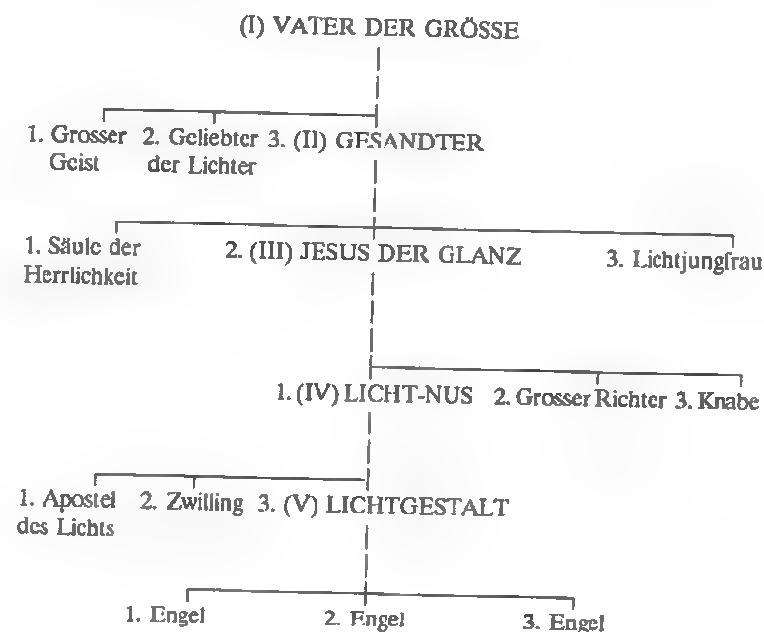
essentially" and so on (as illustrated earlier *re* I, 6, 1 sqq.) Second, try to understand Plotinus on his own (what *he* had in mind when writing such and such a passage). Third, reflect anew to see if the application to Plotinus of some or other modern notion of "self" may be helpful.<sup>63</sup> That reflection should cover these points: (a) Does the application of such a conception of "self" to Plotinus's *Weltanschauung* help in understanding *him* better, more richly, more authentically? (b) Does it reveal him perhaps to have anticipated contemporary theories on "self"? (c) Does it help us understand what the notion of "self" itself entails, whether in some modern and contemporary author or in our own philosophical position? In following this threefold methodology we have certainly lost nothing since we do take into account "self," *ego*, person with respect to Plotinus. But his own texts control the contemporary notions rather than the other way round.

#### NOTES

1. Its title is "Concerning the Origin of His Body," where the last word refers not so much to Mani's physical body as to his Church (after the manner in which St. Paul calls the Christian Church the "Mystical Body of Christ"). See Ludwig Koenen, "Augustine and Manichaeism in Light of the Cologne Mani Codex," *Illinois Classical Studies* (hereafter *ICS*) 3 (1978): 164-66. On the Coptic Manichaean Codex, which was probably part of the same work as the *CMC* and was a history of the Manichaeans from the death of Mani up to c. 300 A.D., see *ibid.*, pp. 164-165 and n. 37. Although biographical in content and even autobiographical in appearance, the *CMC* is formally an anthology. It consists of excerpts from Mani's own works and from the writings of Mani's immediate disciples (Baraies is one whose name will show up in our translations/paraphrases below), which an unknown editor collected and arranged in a roughly chronological sequence and according to five thematic units (Mani's childhood, his first revelation, his break with the baptists, his second revelation and separation from the baptists, his first missionary activities). See Albert Henrichs, "Literary Criticism of the Cologne Mani Codex" (hereafter "Literary Criticism"), in B. Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), II, pp. 724-733. On the *CMC* as "neither genuinely biographical nor always historical, but theological and, more specifically, ecclesiastical," see *idem*, "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: Historical Confrontation," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* (hereafter *HSCP*) 77 (1973): 41.
2. The original compilation was "very likely . . . made soon after Mani's death in 276 from sources written [in an Eastern Aramaic dialect] during his lifetime" — A. Henrichs, "The Cologne Mani Codex," *HSCP* 83 (1979): 352; also see *idem*, *HSCP* 77 (1973): 35-36.

3. When acquired by the University of Cologne, the *CMC* consisted of some badly damaged lumps of parchment — see photographs at the end of "Ein Griechischer Mani-Codex" by A. Henrichs and L. Koenen in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* (hereafter *ZPE*) 5 (1970): 96-216; A. Henrichs, *HSCP* 83 (1979): 342-352.
4. Still to appear is the commentary on pp. 121-192 of the Codex, as well as Indices and "Tafelband" — see *ZPE* 48 (1982): 1. These will soon be forthcoming.
5. *The Cologne Mani Codex*, "Texts and Translations," no. 15, of "Early Christian Literature Series," no. 3 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979). Although only a partial translation (with accompanying Greek text), still it does translate the pages which are most important philosophically and religiously. The pages of the Codex which Cameron and Dewey have not yet translated are pp. 99-116, which Henrichs describes as less metaphysical and more pragmatic, and pp. 116-192, which are "more monotonous, less informative, and more concerned with legendary material than any other part of the codex" (see "Literary Criticism," pp. 730 and 731).
6. For other high evaluations of the *CMC* see A. Henrichs, "Literary Criticism," p. 724: "Anyone who wishes to find out about the historical origins of Manichaeism, about Mani's view of himself or about the central role of books, and of Mani's own words, in the propagation of his religion" will want to peruse the *CMC*. In summary, "the *CMC* is a rich repertory of Manichaean history, beliefs, and literary skill. . . . As a religious anthology of multiple authorship it has no parallel outside Manichaean literature" (ibid., pp. 732-733). Also see K. Rudolph, "Die Bedeutung des Kölner Mani-Codex," in *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à H.-Ch. Puech* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), pp. 471 sqq; for a digest of contents of *CMC*, see A. Henrichs, *HSCP* 83 (1979): 340-342.
7. John Baggarly, S.J., in 1977 was teaching in the Department of Theology at Loyola and now is librarian at the Pontificio Istituto Orientale in Rome; he has been working on a critical edition of the Greek text of the Byzantine author, Athanasius of Sinai.
8. Plotinus (205-270) was slightly older than Mani (216-274). On the latter's dates see G. Haloun and W.B. Henning, "The Compendium of the Doctrines and Styles of the Teaching of Mani, The Buddha of Light" (hereafter "Compendium"), *Asia Minor* 3 (1953): 197-201; Mary Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian* [hereafter: *A Reader*] (Teheran-Liege: Bibliothèque Pahlavi, 1975), pp. 1-3.
9. Mani mentions "Twin" in treatises other than the *CMC*, but less frequently and with little information. See G. Henrichs and L. Koenen, *ZPE* 5 (1970): 161. Besides the *CMC* there are seven other canonical writings. See G. Haloun and W.B. Henning, "Compendium," pp. 204-211; Mary Boyce, *A Reader*, pp. 12-13.

10. References are given to the *CMC* according to the following rubric: the first number indicates the page of the Greek text, the second number the initial line of the passage translated or paraphrased. I have inserted capital letters in brackets to render subsequent referrals more easily.
11. The Father of Greatness, who is the supreme God and is opposed to the Prince of Darkness, is the ultimate source of Mani's mission and leadership. But God works through intermediaries, such as the Messenger, Jesus the Splendor, etc. For a helpful diagram, which is based on the *Kephalaia* but which also represents many of the emanations mentioned in the *CMC*, see A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, *ZPE* 5 (1970): 183 (below). For a more detailed presentation of the Manichaean hierarchy, see M. Boyce, *A Reader*, pp. 8-10.



One must keep in mind that Mani's position is, philosophically, a monism of light and that anything on any level is real to the extent that it is light and, thereby, is one with all else. Hence, Mani's attributing his call to (say) Jesus the Splendor in some passages is not to deny its coming also from the Father of Greatness, with whom Jesus is one. Henri-Charles Puech stresses that God and souls are consubstantial and that human souls are parts of the World Soul, which also is God's soul (this consubstantiality corresponds to what I call "monism"). See *Le Manichéisme. Son Fondateur. Sa Doctrine* (Paris: Civilisations du Sud, 1949), p. 71 and n. 275 (pp. 154-55): "Il y a consubstantialité entre Dieu et les âmes; les âmes ne

sont que des fragments de la substance divine. Ce qui revient à dire que c'est une partie de Dieu qui est ici-bas déchue, liée au corps et à la Matière, mêlée au Mal. . . . Dans le manichéisme, les âmes humaines sont . . . des parties ou des parcelles de l'Âme universelle (c'est-à-dire de l'âme même de Dieu) englouties dans les Ténèbres à la suite de la défaite de l'Homme Primordial et avec l'Homme Primordial lui-même. Celui-ci est l'âme . . . , le 'moi' de Dieu . . . une 'projection' ou une 'emanation' de la substance divine. . . . A noter que le 'consubstantiel' manichéen a joué son rôle dans les débats trinitaires suscités par l'arianisme. . . . Mais le mot [consubstantiel] indique plutôt l'identité de forme que l'identité de substance."

On Albert the Great and Bonaventure as two medieval theologians whose positions tend to be monistic because reality is light, see L. Sweeney, S.J., "Are Plotinus and Albertus Magnus Neo-platonists?" in *Graceful Reason: Essays in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy Presented to Joseph Owens*, ed. Lloyd Gerson (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983), pp. 195-202; *idem*, "Christian Philosophy in Augustine and Bonaventure," chapter in *Essays Honoring Allan Wolter*, ed. Girard J. Etzkorn (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1984), pp. 271-308.

12. "Paraclete" is the word used in John's Gospel, 14.16, and 16.17, to refer to the Holy Spirit and is here applied to Mani. On this application, see L. Koenen, *JCS* 3 (1978): 170-174, quoted and discussed below in the paragraphs corresponding to nn. 25-27.
13. Baraies is "a Manichaeic apologist of the first generation after Mani" — L. Koenen, *ibid.*, p. 165; A. Henrichs, *HSCP* 83 (1979): 354. Also see above, n. 1.
14. In order to avoid the questionable use of "self," my translation differs from Cameron-Dewey's (" . . . greatest mirror-image of [my self]" — see *The Cologne Mani Codex*, p. 19), and Henrichs-Koenen (" . . . machtvoll Spiegelbild [meiner Gestalt]" — see *ZPE* 19 [1975]: 19).
15. Also see 21.10 on how Mani "was begotten into this fleshy body, by what woman I was delivered and born according to the flesh, and by whose [passion] I was engendered." The pessimistic view of body here and in 22.10, must be juxtaposed to earlier statements that the body is designed as "the holy place for the glory of the mind (*nous*), as the most holy shrine for the revelation of its wisdom" (15.8). This juxtaposition discloses the paradox in Mani's thought: the body is evil and yet good, it is enslaving but salvific.
16. The fact that Mani's soul is a portion of the World Soul is not surprising in light of his monistic tendency — see above, n. 11 (third paragraph and the quotation from H.-Ch. Puech). On the formation of the physical universe, see 65.12: the Father "disclosed to me how I was before the foundation of the world, and how the groundwork of all the works, both good and evil, was laid, and how everything of [this] aggregation was engendered [according to its] present boundaries and [times]." On Mani's cosmogony

and cosmology see J. Ries, "Manichaeism," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, IX, 156D-157C; H.-Ch. Puech, *Le Manichéisme*, pp. 74-85; Hans Jonas, *Gnostic Religion* (publishing data given below), Ch. 9.

17. For Henrichs-Koenen's translation of the last two sentences, see *ZPE* 19 (1975): 27: "Ich habe ihn erkannt und ich habe verstanden, dass ich jener bin, von dem ich getrennt wurde. Ich habe bezeugt, dass ich selbst jener bin und dass ich daher unerschütterlich bin." This corrects their earlier translation in *ZPE* 5 (1970): 68. On the monism which the two sentences suggest, see above nn. 11 and 16. Also see the sentences from "The Hymn of the Pearl," quoted below in the paragraph corresponding to n. 28.
18. See, for instance, such texts as these: the Twin, all-glorious and all-blessed, disclosed to Mani exceedingly great mysteries (26.8), which are hidden to the world and which are not permitted for anyone to see or hear (43.4). The Twin is a good counselor (32.14), an ally and protector at all times (33.4), "my unfailing Twin," the "entire fruit of immortality," that Mani might be redeemed and ransomed from the Elchasaite error (69.15). Also, 101.13: "mein allerseligster Syzygos — mein Herr und Helfer"; 104.11: "der Allerherrlichste"; 105.17: the beauty of "meines allerseligsten Syzygos, jenes Allerherrlichsten und Erhabensten."
19. This contrast between strength and submission is deliberately paradoxical: to receive the divine messages Mani must be intellectually robust. But thereby he shows himself to be a religious leader worthy of credence: his salvific message is divine since it comes from above, but it coexists with Mani's personal strength.
20. This baptist sect, founded by Elchasai in the early second century A.D., had a predominantly Jewish-Christian, rather than Gnostic, basis. When Mani's father joined the sect, Mani was four years old and hence grew up in it. See A. Henrichs, *HSCP* 77 (1973): 44-45; L. Koenen, *JCS* 3 (1978): 187-190; Henrichs and Koenen, *ZPE* 5 (1970): 141-160; A. Henrichs, *HSCP* 83 (1979): 360-367.
21. On the identity between Mani and the Twin see also the excerpt from the "Hymn of the Pearl" quoted below in Hans Jonas's translation and in n. 28.
22. For example, see *ZPE* 19 (1975): 76.
23. The conception of Mani as a split personality comes to Henrichs from G. Haloun and W.B. Henning, "Compendium," p. 208: because of the Twin of Light "Mani possessed a split mind; he realized his condition and invented this striking term for his second personality: the Twin." See Henrichs and Koenen, *ZPE* 5 (1970): 182, n. 215: after quoting Henning they then add: "Wir habe zu zeigen versucht, in welchem Sinne man tatsächlich von einem 'split mind' Manis sprechen kann: Seine irdische Seele ist ein Teil seines transzendentalen Ichs und gleichsam von diesem abgespalten. In der Inspiration vereinigen sich die beiden Teile seines Ichs." Also see below n. 27.

24. Information on the hysterical neurosis of a dissociative kind, which Drs. Cornelia Wilbur, Malcolm Graham, William Rothstein, Frank Putnam and other contemporary psychologists call "multiple personalities," can easily be found in daily newspapers — see *Chicago Tribune* for February 5, 1979 (re "Sybil," a young woman with sixteen personalities, and "William," a twenty-two-year old man with ten); Oct. 4, 1982 (re "Eric"); April 18, 1983 (re "Natasha"). For more technical treatments see *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (3rd edition; American Psychiatric Association) and relevant articles in the journal, *Archives of General Psychiatry*.
25. Also see L. Koenen, "From Baptism to the Gnosis of Manichaeism," *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, II, pp. 741-743 and 750.
26. "Intellect" or *nous* in Koenen expresses what Henrichs calls "soul" in *HSCP* 77 (1973): 24 (quoted above).
27. The accuracy of one's inference that the Twin is such a projection is guaranteed by Henrichs and Koenen, *ZPE* 5 (1970): 182:

"Die Aufgaben, die in dem gnostischen Perlenlied auf Kleid, Bruder, Gefährte und Brief verteilt sind, übernimmt bei Mani der Gefährte oder Zwillig. Gefährte und brief des Perlenliedes ermöglichen es der Seele, ihre Sendung in dieser Welt zu erfüllen; das Gleiche tut Manis Gefährte. Das Kleid aber ist das himmlische Urbild der Seele, das mit ihr identisch ist und in dem die Seele sich selbst erkennt; genauso ist Manis Zwillig das geistige, vom Körper freie Ich Manis, das in eine konkrete Gestalt projiziert ist. Die vier transzendentalen Projektionen der Seele des Perlenliedes sind bei Mani in der einen Gestalt des Gefährten zusammengefasst. Der Gefährte ist von aussen herantretender Schützer und Mahner, und er ist doch zugleich mit Manis innerem Selbst identisch.

"Soeben wurde der Begriff der Projektion benutzt, um Manis Verhältnis zu seinem Gefährten verständlich zu machen. Uns ist aus der Psychologie bekannt, dass der Mensch dazu neigt, sein eigenes Seelenleben nach aussen in andere Personen und Personengruppen zu projizieren und dann sich selbst im anderen zu betrachten. Manis Denkweise war umgekehrt und lässt sich eher so umschreiben: Seine Lichtseele brachte aus sich die Seele hervor, die in den Körper hinabging, um ihr Erlösungswerk zu vollenden; so konnte sie in ihrem Ursprungswesen in Lichtreich bleiben und als geistige Wesenheit zugleich der in den Leib gefesselten Seele Manis jederzeit nahe sein. Dieses Über-Ich hatte keine Gemeinschaft mit dem Leib und trieb daher das im Leib gefangene Ich zu seiner Aufgabe an und beschützte es vor den Gefahren der Welt."

On "The Hymn of the Pearl," which Henrichs and Koenen mention in the initial sentence of the quotation, see my immediately subsequent note.

Concerning the influence which psychology and, especially, Jungian psychology wield on the exegesis of Gnostic and Manichaean texts see Gilles Quispel, "Gnosis and Psychology," in *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. B. Layton (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), I, pp. 17-31 — pages 22 and 23 are specially noteworthy: "The discovery of the Self is the core of both

Gnosticism and Manichaeism. Even before Nag Hammadi this psychological approach was already a necessary supplement to the purely historical or unilaterally existentialistic interpretation of Gnosis which prevailed in other quarters. There is no question that psychology in general is of great help, an auxiliary science, for history in general, which otherwise tends to become arid and pedantic. And more specifically the Jungian approach to Gnosticism, once decried as a soul-shaking spectacle concocted by decadent psychologists and vain students of Judaic mysticism, turned out to be adequate when the *Gospel of Truth* was discovered. For then it became clear to everybody that Gnosis is an experience, inspired by vivid and profound emotions, that in short Gnosis is the mythic expression of Self experience . . .

"So Jungian psychology has already had a considerable impact on Gnostic research. The term Self is used by practically everyone; the insight that Gnosis in the last analysis expresses the union of the conscious Ego and the unconscious Self is commonly accepted; nobody, not even the fiercest existentialist, can deny that Jung is helpful in discerning the real meaning of myth."

Also see Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer, "The Intellect in Plotinus and the Archetypes of C.G. Jung," in *Kephalaion: Studies in Greek Philosophy and Its Continuation Offered to Professor C.J. de Vogel*, ed. J. Mansfeld and I.M. de Rijk (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), pp. 214-222; G. Quispel, "Hesse, Jung und die Gnosis," *Gnostic Studies*, II, 241-258.

28. What modern translators call "The Hymn of the Pearl" is entitled "Song of the Apostle Judas Thomas in the Land of the Indians" in its original source, the apocryphal *Acts of the Apostle Thomas*. Extant in both Syriac and Greek versions, the "Hymn" is a poetic composition "which clothes the central part of the Iranian doctrine [of gnosis] in a garment of a fable" — see Hans Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, p. 112. For another English translation see Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism: A Source Book of Heretical Writings from The Early Christian Period* (New York: Harper, 1961), pp. 116 sqq. (the poem "reflects late Valentinian doctrine, perhaps that of Bardaisan — A.D. 154-222"); for a German translation see Raimund Kobert, "Das Perlenlied," *Orientalia* 38 (1969): 447-456 — his translation from the Syriac version (as is Jonas's) of the last sentence of the lines excerpted from the poem is: "Doch plötzlich, als ich ihm begegnete, glich mir das Kleid wie mein Spiegelbild. Ich sah und erkannte es ganz in mir ganzen, und auch ich begegnete mir ganz in ihm. Wir waren zwei in der Trennung und wiederum eins durch dieselbe Gestalt" (p. 454).
29. Pertinent information on proper names within Jonas's paragraphs is as follows. Avesta: the canon of Zoroastrian writings as redacted in the Sassanian period. C. Bartholomae: the author of *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1904), which is the standard lexicon for Avestan and Old Persian. The fragments found at Turfan in Eastern Turkestan have been most recently edited by W.B. Henning, *Nachricht. Göt. Ges. Wiss.* (Göttingen, 1933), pp. 217 sqq.; for an English translation (from the text

- edited in 1904 by F.W. Müller) with commentary see A.V. Williams Jackson, *Researches in Manichaeism With Special Reference to the Turfan Fragments* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932). On the Mandaean, a southern Babylonian baptist sect, see H.-Ch. Puech, *Le Manichéisme*, pp. 40-44 and n. 147 (pp. 123-125); H. Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, ch. 3, which ends with a glossary of Mandaean terms (pp. 97-99); Henrichs and Koenen, *ZPE* 5 (1970): 133-140; A. Henrichs, *HSCP* 83 (1979): 367. On "the Chinese Manichaean translation by Pelliot," see G. Haloun and W.B. Henning, "Compendium," pp. 184-185; Williams Jackson, *Researches in Manichaeism*, "Bibliography," p. xxvii.
30. Also see *Dictionary of Behavioral Sciences*, ed. B.B. Wolman (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973), p. 342, which gives one-half column and seven definitions to "self." As examples of "self" taken less technically see Virginia Wolfe, *To the Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1927), p. 95: "She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of — to think; well, not even to think. To be silent, to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others" (emphasis added). Also, Patrick Hart, "The Contemplative Vision of Thomas Merton," *Notes et Documents de l'Institut International Jacques Maritain* 19 (Avril-Juin, 1982), who quotes and interprets Merton's unpublished manuscript, "The Inner Experience": "Merton laid down a few basic notes on contemplation, which bear quoting: 'the first thing that you have to do before you start thinking about such a thing as contemplation is to try to recover a coordinated and simple whole, and learn to live as a unified human person. This means that you have to bring back together the fragments of your distracted existence so that when you say "I" there is really something present to support the pronoun you have uttered.' Therefore, we must know who we are, from whom we originated, and where we are going. In Merton's words: 'Before we can realize who we really are, we must become conscious of the fact that the person we think we are, here and now, is at best an imposter and a stranger.' The false self, or the empirical ego, as Merton refers to it, is illusory, really a mask for our true identity, our true self, which is the deepest in which we stand naked before God's love and mercy" (p. 6).
31. On individuation, individuality, supposit and subject, see Leo Sweeney, S.J., "Actual Existence and the Individual," in *Authentic Metaphysics in an Age of Unreality* (New York/Bern: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 172-186 and 189-190; *idem*, "Existentialism Authentic and Unauthentic," *New Scholasticism* 40 (1966): 44-52.
32. The two nouns are interchangeable. Also see above, n. 26.
33. That single chapter is a commentary on Plato, *Timaeus*, 34c-35A.

The numbers in brackets here and in Texts B and C are added to make references easier in my "Comments."

34. "That part of it" which remains There is its intellect, as will be clear from Texts B and C and *passim*.
35. That body is not identical with matter solely, see H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus's Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 9: "We have already found it necessary to define soul in a special way. Coming to body we find that it is already a complex entity (IV.7.1.8-10), as are even simple bodies in so far as they consist of both matter and form (*ibid.*, 16f; cf. V.9.3.16-20): only pure matter is completely devoid of any of the form which all sensible substances have (II.4.5.3f). Such form comes from the lower powers of the world soul sometimes called *physis* (nature). So when we ask how soul is in the body we must remember that that body already has soul in a certain way (cf. VI.4.15.8ff)."
36. Provided, of course, that a soul-in-body allows the Intellect to do so by a soul's using its intellect to turn away from matter, to contemplate, etc.
37. *Enneads* VI, 4 and 5, are also commentaries on *Parm.*, 142B sqq. See E. Bréhier, "Notice," in *Plotin: Ennéades* (Paris: "Les Belles Lettres," 1954), VI, i, pp. 160 and 165-167.
38. See *ibid.*, pp. 161-163.
39. Obviously, *ekeino* in line 17 refers to the Soul, on which attention had centered in the opening portion of the chapter. See E. Bréhier, *ibid.*, p. 194: "cette âme-là"; V. Cilento, *Plotino Enneadi* (Bari: Laterza, 1949), III, i, p. 265: "quell'Essere."
- In *Plotinus* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1953), p. 125, A.H. Armstrong's translation is "that higher self," which is (in my view) questionable. Also see *idem*, "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus," *Dionysius* 1 (1977): 51; Plato S. Mamo, "The Notion of the Self in the Writings of Plotinus" (Ph.D. Dissertation; University of Toronto, 1966), p. 161: "that infinite spiritual life"; G.J.P. O'Daly, *Plotinus's Philosophy of the Self* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973), p. 25: "the higher primal," within which we existed in the transcendent and thus "our 'real self' is located in a transcendent phase, prior to 'our' existence here on earth."
40. In this lower man body "acquires a trace of soul, not a piece of soul but a kind of warming or enlightenment coming from it" (VI, 4, 15, 14-16; Armstrong translation, *Plotinus*, p. 126). The coming (and, thus, presence) of the higher man to the lower "does not mean that the soul departs from itself and comes to this world but that the bodily nature comes to be in soul and participates in it . . . by giving body something of itself, not by coming to belong to it; and 'departure' [and absence] means that body has no share in it" (VI, 4, 16, 7-17; Armstrong translation, *Plotinus*, pp. 134-135).
41. Departure from Soul is described in VI, 4, 14, 11-12, as a "springing (*arxamenas*) from unity and yet remaining in that from which they sprang; or rather they never did spring from it but were always in this state" (Armstrong translation, *Plotinus*, p. 123).

42. An "individual" in Plotinus's texts commonly signifies that which is somehow other than or different from something else. That otherness can consist, as here, in a soul's distinguishability or divisibility from other souls and Soul while yet remaining within Soul and associated with its psychic companions There. A further otherness and, hence, individuality arises when a soul "departs from" Soul and is enmeshed in a body (see above, nn. 40 and 41). It is of this second individuality that VI, 5 (23), 12, 16 sqq., speaks (both *re* how one acquires it and how one frees himself from it): "[In ascending back to Intellect] you have come to the All and not stayed in a part of it, and have not said even about yourself, 'I am just so much.' By rejecting the 'so much' you have become all — yet you were all before. But because something else other than the All added itself to you, you became less by the addition, for the addition did not come from real being (you cannot add anything to that) but from that which is not. When you have become an individual by the addition of non-being, you are not all till you reject the non-being. You will increase yourself then by rejecting the rest, and by that rejection the All is with you."

"Ἡ δὲ πᾶντι προσήλθε καὶ οὐκ ἔμεινας ἐν μέρει αὐτοῦ οὐδ' εἶπας οὐδὲ σὺ 'τοσοῦτος εἰμι.' ἀφείς δὲ τὸ 'τοσοῦτος' γέγονας πᾶς, καίτοι καὶ πρότερον ἦσθα πᾶς ἀλλ' ὅτι καὶ ἄλλο τι προσήν σοι μετὰ τὸ 'πᾶς,' ἐλάττων ἐγίνου τῇ προσθήκῃ οὐ γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ παντός ἦν ἡ προσθήκη — οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐκείνῃ προσθήσεις — ἀλλὰ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος. Γενόμενος δὲ τις καὶ ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἐστίν οὐ πᾶς, ἀλλ' ὅταν τὸ μὴ ὄν ἀφῇ. Αὐξείς τοίνυν σεαυτὸν ἀφείς τὰ ἄλλα καὶ ἀπερσεπὶ σοι τὸ πᾶν ἀφέντι.

By liberating oneself from matter, then, one regains his place within Soul and, eventually, within Intellect, where nonetheless he retains his first sort of individuality — his distinguishability or divisibility from Intellect, Soul and other souls. Even this individuality is set aside when a soul ascends beyond Soul and Intellect to become one with the One and thereby achieves well-being (*eudaimonia*) above being. See VI, 9 (9), 11, 4 sqq., discussed below.

On problems which VI, 4 and 5, raise *re* "individual" (especially *re* the Idea of Individual), see H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus's Psychology*, pp. 123 sqq.

43. Blumenthal states (*Plotinus's Psychology*, p. 110), "we" are "a focus of conscious activity that can shift as such activity shifts." He quotes with approval E.R. Dodds's view: "Soul is a continuum extending from the summit of the individual *psychē*, whose activity is perpetual intellection, through the normal empirical self right down to the *eidōlon*, the faint psychic trace in the organism; but the *ego* is a fluctuating spotlight of consciousness" (ibid., n. 25; see references there also to J. Trouillard, P. Hadot and W. Himmerich).

The value of conferring such mobility on "we" is that it allows one to understand how Plotinus can variously state that the "we" is multiple, that it is twofold, that it is found only at the level of reason, that it is found at the level of *nous* (see Blumenthal, ibid., pp. 110-111, for references to the

*Enneads*). One must conclude, then, that "we" is not bound to any particular level or to a restricted range," even though it is usually to be found at the level of reason, which is "directed both towards the processing of sense-data, for which it may use the knowledge that it derives from above, and to the consideration of such knowledge in itself. It may thus be regarded as the meeting place of the sensible and intelligible worlds. And this is where we would expect to find Plotinus's man, a being who must live in this world but whose thoughts and aspirations are directed beyond it" (ibid., p. 111).

44. For Mani the hierarchy of reality above Light-Intellect consists (in ascending order) of Jesus the Splendor, the Envoy, the Father of Greatness. In Plotinus's hierarchy the One-Good and Intellect precede Soul.
45. Mani's acceptance of Buddha, Zoroaster and Jesus as prior prophets, as well as his own role as the ultimate prophet and savior, would be abhorrent to Plotinus, for whom each man can save himself and needs no divine intervention since each has an intellect which always remains above and need only be actuated in order that he attain salvation. On Mani's conception of Jesus see M. Boyce, ibid., p. 10; F.C. Burkitt, *The Religion of the Manichees* (Cambridge: University Press, 1925), pp. 37-43.

On Plotinus vs. Christianity, see *Enneads*, III, 2 (47), 9, 10-12: "It is not lawful for those who have become wicked to demand others to be their saviours and to sacrifice themselves in answer to their prayers" — for A.H. Armstrong "this looks as if it might be directed against the Christian doctrine of Redemption. If so, it is the only reference which I have detected to orthodox Christianity in the *Enneads*" (*Plotinus*, p. 167, n. 9; also see *idem*, Loeb volume III, pp. 221-222). Also see E. Bréhier, *Plotin: Ennéades*, VI, i, 168.

46. Besides "Against the Gnostics," Porphyry also gives the title, "Against those who say that the maker of the universe is evil and the universe is evil" (see Armstrong, Loeb volume II, p. 220). On who these Gnostics were see ibid., pp. 220-222; E. Bréhier, *Plotin: Ennéades*, "Notice," II, pp. 96-110; Harder et al, *Plotins Schriften* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1964), III b, pp. 414-418; H.-Ch. Puech, "Plotin et les Gnostiques" in *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique*, V: *Les Sources de Plotin* (Vandoeuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1960), pp. 161-190; Francisco García Bazán, *Plotino y la Gnosis* (Buenos Aires: Fundación para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura, 1981), pp. 199-340; Richard T. Wallis, "Soul and Nous in Plotinus, Numenius and Gnosticism" (appearing in this volume), n. 11.
47. See II, 9, 1, 1-19.
48. Would not "we" be here identical with intellect, which is the highest power of a soul and which is not dragged down to body with soul's middle power (#4)? See above, n. 43.
49. But it is dissimilar too: in Text C "we" is identified with intellect (see above, n. 48), in V, 3, 3, with reason, the middle power of soul. See Blumenthal, *Plotinus's Psychology*, p. 110, for a comparison of V, 3, with other texts; Armstrong, *Plotinus*, p. 166, considers "the doctrine of this very

late treatise to represent a rethinking and an attempt to arrive at greater precision about the relationship between soul and *Nous*. Elsewhere Plotinus says without qualification that we at our highest are, and remain eternally, *Nous*."

During the Oklahoma conference and in subsequent correspondence, Denis O'Brien has kindly alerted me to two additional texts: I, 1 (53), 12, 21-39 (especially relevant because of the possible parallel between Heracles's unique status and Mani's) and III, 4-6 (the entire treatise, however, seems no more consistent and clear than is Plato's position on *daimon* set forth in *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Timaeus*, upon which Plotinus is commenting).

50. This dynamism contrasts them with Parmenides, whose monism of Being eliminates all change and movement from reality. See Leo Sweeney, S.J., *Infinity in the Presocratics: A Bibliographical and Philosophical Study* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), pp. 93-110, especially 107-110.
51. This direction of their dynamic monism contrasts them with Hegel, in whose monism Absolute Spirit moves from the less to the more perfect: from Categories (Being, Essence, Notion) through Nature to Spirit (Art, Religion, Philosophy).  
Hans Jonas, "The Soul in Gnosticism and Plotinus," in *Philosophical Essays From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Chicago: University Press, 1974), pp. 325-328, considers what I call "dynamic monism" to be a speculative system which is common to Plotinus and Mani, as well as to Valentinus and Ptolemaeus, the anonymous authors of the *Poimandres* and the *Apocryphon of John*, and Origen. W.R. Schoedel, "Gnostic Monism and the Gospel of Truth," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, Vol. I: *The School of Valentinus*, ed. B. Layton, pp. 379-390, describes the theology of the Valentinian "Gospel of Truth" as ■ monism, which however means "that everything arises directly or indirectly from one source" (p. 390). Such a definition does not do justice to monism in Plotinus and Mani, which demands also that all existents consist of the same basic stuff and are not fully distinct from one another.
52. For helpful studies of Middle Platonism see R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), pp. 29-36 (bibliography, p. 187); John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977), bibliography pp. 416-421 (p. 420 *re* Gnosticism and Christian Platonism); *idem*, "Descent of the Soul in Middle Platonic and Gnostic Theory" in *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, I, ed. B. Layton, pp. 357-364.
53. To date I am unaware of much literature on the possible philosophical background of Mani. Besides H. Jonas's article already cited in n. 51 above, see the following, which attend at least to the speculative influences (whether philosophical or religious) on Manichaeism: Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1948), ch. I: "The Manichaean Legacy," pp. 1-27 (especially p. 3 *re* dualism in Plato); L.J.R. Ort, "Mani's Conception of Gnosis" in *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo*, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Leiden: E.J.

Brill, 1967), pp. 604-613; H.-Ch. Puech, "The Concept of Redemption in Manichaeism" in *The Mystic Vision: Papers From the Eranos Yearbooks*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Princeton: University Press, 1968), pp. 247-314 (especially pp. 266-288: "The Theoretical Foundations of Redemption: The Cosmological and the Anthropological Myth"); P.W. Van der Horst and J. Mansfeld, *An Alexandrian Platonist Against Dualism: Alexander of Lycopolis's Treatise "Critique of the Doctrines of Manichaeism"* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974); Gilles Quispel, "Mani the Apostle of Jesus Christ," *Gnostic Studies* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1975), II, 230-237 (mainly *re* Mani's influence upon St. Augustine).

During the Oklahoma conference Michel Tardieu alerted me to the philosophical influence of Bardaisan upon Mani. On that topic see these studies: Saint Ephraim the Syrian, *St. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan*, transcribed by C.W. Mitchell, 2 volumes (London: C.W. Mitchell, 1912 and 1921), Text and Translation Society; F.C. Burkitt, *Religion of the Manichees*, pp. 82-86; H.J.W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1966); *idem*, "Bardaisan of Edessa and the Hermetica. The Aramaic Philosopher and the Philosophy of His Time," *Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux* 21 (1969-70): 190-210; *idem*, "Mani und Bardaisan. Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte des Manichäismus" in *Mélanges H.-Ch. Puech*, pp. 459-469; *idem*, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980) — see "Index" and bibliography, pp. xviii-xix for complete list of Drijvers's works; *idem*, "Bardaisan, die Bardaisaniten und die Ursprünge des Gnostizismus" in *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo*, ed. Ugo Bianchi, pp. 307-314; Ugo Bianchi, "Le Gnosticismo: Concept, Terminologie, Origines, Délimitation," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978), pp. 48-50; Geo Widengren, "Der Manichäismus," in *ibid.*, pp. 311-313 (*re* F.C. Burkitt and H.H. Schaeder); Michel Tardieu, *Le Manichéisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981), chs. I-II.

What of philosophical influences upon Gnosticism itself? Recently Birger A. Pearson, "The Tractate *Marsanes* (NHC X) and the Platonic Tradition" in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas*, ed. Barbara Aland, p. 373, sets forth (with Willy Theiler) the "three basic options" on the relationship between Gnosticism and Greek Philosophy as "1) the philosophy of the Empire is disguised Gnosis [held by H. Jonas, C. Elsas]. 2) Gnosis is debased philosophy, oriental mythology overlaid with formal elements derived mainly from Platonism. 3) Imperial philosophy and Gnosis are to be explained out of similar social and spiritual currents of late antiquity." Pearson gives a good resume of Jonas's position with references to his publications (*ibid.*, nn. 5-8): Hans Jonas has argued "that the 'mythological' gnostic systems described by the church fathers and the major philosophical and theological systems of late antiquity, from Philo Judaeus on, express a common 'gnostic' understanding of existence. Particularly important are his observations on later Platonism, especially Plotinus. Jonas poses the question 'whether in the final analysis Gnosis, transformed gnostic



myth, provided the innermost impulse' to the philosophy of Plotinus, rather than Plato. He provides a brief but powerful positive answer."

In same volume one finds three other helpful papers: Ugo Bianchi, "Le Gnosticisme: Concept, Terminologie, Origines, Délimitation," pp. 33-64; especially A.H. Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy," pp. 87-124; Hans Martin Schenke, "Die Tendenz der Weisheit zur Gnosis," pp. 351-372.

In addition the following are worthy of note: J. Zandee, *The Terminology of Plotinus and of Some Gnostic Writings, Mainly the Fourth Treatise of the Jung Codex* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1961), especially pp. 38-41; R.M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), ch. 5: "From Myth to Philosophy?," pp. 120-150 (see p. 147: "Gnosticism is not a form of philosophy"); several papers in *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo*, ed. U. Bianchi — for example, H. Jonas, "Delimitation of the Gnostic Phenomenon — Typological and Historical," pp. 90-108; E. von Ivanka, "Religion, Philosophie und Gnosis: Grenzfälle und Pseudomorphosen in der Spätantike," pp. 317-322; R. Crahay, "Éléments d'une mythopée gnostique dans le Grèce classique," pp. 323-339; P. Boyancé, "Dieu cosmique et dualisme: les archontes et Platon," pp. 340-358; Gilles Quispel, "Gnostic Man: The Doctrine of Basilides" in *The Mystic Vision*, ed. Joseph Campbell, pp. 210-246 (especially pp. 215-227: "The Frame: Platonist Philosophy"); S.R.C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford: University Press, 1971); H.B. Timothy, *The Early Christian Apologists [Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria] and Greek Philosophy* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973); René Nouailhat, "Remarques méthodologiques à propos de la question de 'L'Hellénisation du Christianisme,'" in *Les syncrétismes dans les religions de l'antiquité*, ed. F. Dunand et P. Lévêque (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, pp. 212-232); C. Elsas, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltabkehrung in der Schule Plotins* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975); Pheme Perkins, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), especially ch. One: "Gnosticism in Its Context," pp. 1-22; Carsten Colpe, "Challenge of Gnostic Thought for Philosophy, Alchemy and Literature" in *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. B. Layton, I, pp. 32-56 (see pp. 34 sqq. for the four ways in which "the complex subject of 'Gnosis and philosophy' can conventionally be dealt with"); H. Chadwick, "Domestication of Gnosticism," *ibid.*, especially pp. 11-13 *re* Plato's influence on Valentinus and other Gnostics; G.C. Snead, "The Valentinian Myth of Sophia," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 20 (1969): 74-104 — see Armstrong, *ibid.*, p. 103, n. 23: "A very well documented and careful article" *re* Hellenic influence on Valentinus is R. van den Broeck, "The Present State of Gnostic Studies," *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983): 41-71 (a survey of papers in the Proceedings from conferences on Gnosticism at Quebec, Yale and Halle, as well as in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* and in G. Quispel's *Gnostic Studies*); K. Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and*

*History of Gnosticism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983).

54. For example, A. Henrichs, *HSCP* 83 (1979: 340: "Mani's 'twin companion' (syzygos) is the personification of a typically Gnostic concept, the transcendent projection of one's soul" and is his celestial alter ego or self.
55. *The Notion of the Self in the Writings of Plotinus* (University of Toronto, 1966), initial "Summary," p. 1.
56. H.J. Blumenthal, after affirming that "a person's identity . . . is a concept for which Greek had no word" (*Plotinus's Psychology*, p. 109), adds that "the lack of suitable terms need not mean that the concept did not exist" (*ibid.*, n. 21). But when reviewing O'Daly's book (*Gnomon* 50 [1978]: 407-410) he observed that Plotinus's using such words as *autos* or *hemeis* or *anthrōpos* does "not imply that he set himself the philosophical task of formally defining the 'self.' Even less does it mean that when he uses these terms he must be taken to be talking about the 'self' as such . . . [O'Daly] is perhaps too prone to see references to the self when Plotinus is using words in their normal sense." Also see my review in *Review of Metaphysics* 30 (1977): 533-534.
57. I have inserted bracketed capital letters in my paraphrase/translation to facilitate references.
58. In the quotation the first number in parentheses indicates that I, 6, is chronologically Plotinus's first treatise. Subsequent numbers, with the exception of those which are designated as references to its chapters, refer to lines in those chapters.
59. On *epibolē* as "intuition" and its ancestry in Epicurus, see John Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), pp. 47-52; G. O'Daly, *Plotinus's Philosophy of Self*, pp. 93-94.
60. The monistic character of Plotinus's position flows from the fact that to be real is to be one. See L. Sweeney, "Basic Principles of Plotinus's Philosophy," *Gregorianum* 42 (1961): 506-516 (especially n. 13): "Are Plotinus and Albertus Magnus Neoplatonists," in *Graceful Reason*, ed. L. Gerson, pp. 182-185.
61. On what "metaphysics" means in Plotinus see *ibid.*, p. 181, n. 13.
62. The same approach is also suitable for reading Manichaean documents, *mutatis mutandis*, as we have indicated above, "The 'Twin' and 'Self,'" *ad finem*.
63. The notions which Plotinian literature provides are less flamboyant and chronologically determined than those furnished in secondary literature on Gnosticism and Manichaeism (see above, n. 27) and, hence, may prove less anachronistic. For example, G. O'Daly, *Plotinus's Philosophy of the Self*, p. 90: self is "the identity of a human subject at the several levels of existence possible to man"; P.S. Mamo, *The Notion of the Self*, initial "Summary," p. 1: "self is defined 'not as an individual substance but as striving, attention, direction of consciousness' and p. 190: the ego 'is a focus capable of infinite extension'; A.H. Armstrong, "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus," p. 65: "Person [is] that in us which is capable of free decision, true thought, and the passionate love of God [which for Plotinus

is] so open that its only bounds are the universe and God"; E.R. Dodds (quoted with approval by H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus's Psychology*, p. 110, n. 25): in contrast to soul "the ego is a fluctuating spotlight of consciousness." Or one might apply to Plotinus the description which M. Gorman gathered from her historical survey (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, XIII, 60A): self suggests "all those aspects of man thought to be left out by the terms soul, mind, person and nature and to designate the unifying, purposeful, growing and interacting aspect of man's activities."

## Gnosticism and Platonism: The Platonizing Sethian Texts from Nag Hammadi in their Relation to Later Platonic Literature

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The attentive reader of the Sethian treatises contained in the Coptic Gnostic Library from Nag Hammadi is no doubt struck by the rather large fund of philosophical and technical terminology that they contain, particularly in their descriptions of the divine world and in certain cases their portrayal of the means necessary to become assimilated to that world. The intention of this paper is to examine this phenomenon and try to account for certain of its aspects as owing to an interaction between gnostic Sethians and a presumably well-established fund of metaphysical speculation deriving from Neopythagorean and Middle Platonic circles of the first three centuries of our era.

Current scholarship considers the following literature to be representative of Sethian Gnostic doctrine: The "Barbeloite" report of Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.29); the reports on the Sethians (and Archontics and related groups) by Epiphanius (*Haer.* 26 and 39-40), pseudo-Tertullian (*Haer.* 2) and Filastrius (*Haer.* 3); the untitled text from the Bruce Codex (Bruce, *Untitled*); and the following treatises from the Nag Hammadi and Berlin Gnostic codices: four versions of the *Apocryphon of John* (*Ap. John*: short versions, BG 8502, 2 and NHC III, 1; long versions NHC II, 1 and III, 1); *The Hypostasis of the Archons* (*Hyp. Arch.*: NHC II, 4); *The Gospel of the Egyptians* (*Gos. Egypt.*: NHC III, 2 and IV, 2); *The Apocalypse of Adam* (*Apoc. Adam*: NHC V, 5); *The*

*Three Steles of Seth* (*Steles Seth*: NHC VII, 5); *Zostrianos* (*Zost.*: NHC VIII, 1); *Melchizedek* (*Melch.*: NHC IX, 1); *The Thought of Norea* (*Norea*: IX, 2); *Marsanes* (NHC X, 1); *Allogenes* (NHC XI, 3) and *Trimorphic Protennoia* (*Trim. Prot.*: NHC XIII, 1).

The formal genre of these materials varies. The bulk of them are apocalypses. *Apoc. Adam* is a deathbed testament of Adam to his son Seth, the spiritual progenitor of the historical Sethians, in which he reveals the content of a dream vision concerning the fortunes of Eve and himself, his son Seth and Seth's offspring in the contest between the evil creator Saklas and the beings of the higher world who will rescue the seed of Seth, especially through the final visitation of the "Illuminator." *Melch.* likewise contains revelations imparted to the biblical high priest Melchizedek by the angel Gamaliel during a visionary experience revealing future events including his own ultimate assimilation with the suffering, dying and rising Savior Jesus Christ.

In contrast to these two treatises in which knowledge concerning the future course of history is communicated from the higher realm to the lower by an angelic intermediary, we also find three apocalypses which relate the singular experience of a Gnostic visionary who himself achieves an ecstatic ascent through the various levels of the divine world and becomes divine. Thus *Allogenes*, *Zost.* and *Marsanes* each feature a visionary figure, respectively Allogenes or Zostrianos or Marsanes, each of whom probably is to be understood as a manifestation of the Sethian Gnostic savior Seth. Each figure undergoes a visionary ascent involving a vision of the divine world and its various personages, hypostases and levels of being, followed by a subsequent descent and transmission of this knowledge in written form for those who in the future would achieve a similar ascent.

One also finds two plainly didactic treatises, both apparently having undergone secondary Christian Sethian redaction: *Hyp. Arch.* contains an esoteric mythological interpretation of Genesis 1-6 in terms of the struggle between the spiritual rulers of this world and the exalted powers of the supreme deity over the fate of the divine image incarnated in Adam and his descendants, and concludes with a revelation discourse between Eve's daughter Norea and the great angel Eleleth concerning the origin and end of these ruling Archons. *Ap. John* is cast as a dialogue between John, son of Zebedee, and the risen Jesus, who reveals the unknowable deity, the divine world which sprang from him, the fall of the divine wisdom (Sophia) resulting in the birth of the world creator and his making an earthly copy of the divine Adam, and concludes with the subsequent history of the attempts of various representatives of the

divine world to awaken the divine spirit in Adam, Seth and Seth's seed which will culminate in ultimate salvation.

While these two treatises are primarily concerned with a mythological theogony, cosmology, anthropogony and a history of salvation governed by the intervention of various divine saviors, two other treatises show themselves to be aetiologies of the two principal Sethian cultic rites, baptism and visionary ascension. *Gos. Egypt.* explains the origin of Sethian baptism by means of a mythological theogony, cosmogony and history of salvation similar to that of *Ap. John*, but which is used to explain the origin and function of the figures who are invoked during the course of the baptismal ritual which has been conferred by Seth appearing in the form of Jesus. Although *Gos. Egypt.* has undergone Christian redaction, this is not the case with *Steles Seth*, a non-Christian aetiology of the Sethian rite of ecstatic visionary ascent into the divine world. Here Seth is represented as originating and transmitting for his posterity a set of three doxological prayers, each of which is to be applied to a separate stage of the ecstatic ascent through the three highest levels of the divine world.

Another treatise, *Trim. Prot.*, takes the form of an aretology in which the divine First Thought, speaking in the first person, recites her attributes and deeds in three separate compositions relating respectively to her establishing heavenly dwellings for her fallen spirit trapped in mankind, her destruction of the power of the hostile spiritual rulers, and her final saving descent in the guise of Christ.

Finally, the short piece *Norea* is an ode to Norea, wife-sister of Seth, conceived as a manifestation of the fallen divine wisdom (Sophia) who will be restored along with her progeny into the divine world by the very aeons from which she once departed.

A major bifurcation arises among this group of treatises precisely in view of their use of various triadic schemes and structures. One group of treatises considers salvation to be conveyed by means of a horizontal, temporally ordered history of divine salvific visitations by successive descents of separate figures or repeated descents of the same figure in different modalities. Thus in *Apoc. Adam* and *Gos. Egypt.* there is a tripartitioning of history from the creation onwards in terms of the biblical demiurge's attack on the Sethians, ancient through contemporary, by (1) the flood, whereupon they are rescued by certain angels, and (2) through the rain of fire and brimstone on the holy dwellings of the Sethians at Sodom and Gomorrah, whereupon they are rescued by the servants of the Four Lights (who preside over the heavenly aeons where Adam, Seth and his primal seed dwell); these acts will be followed by (3) a third and future act of salvation when the

Illuminator will rescue their souls from death. While the final savior is an unidentified "Illuminator" in *Apoc. Adam*, in *Gos. Egypt.* the third saving descent will be undertaken by Seth himself in the guise of Jesus.

In *Trim. Prot.* this scheme is worked out in terms of three successive descents of the divine First Thought, Protennoia or Barbelo. First, as Father, she is the divine but as yet inarticulate Voice of the First Thought of the high deity (the Invisible Spirit) who creates heavenly dwellings for her fallen members and descends to loosen their bondage to the world and its powers. Second, as Mother, she is the articulate Speech of the Thought who overthrows the old aeon ruled by the evil powers and announces the dawn of the new age of salvation. Third, as the Son, she is the Word (*logos*) who adopts the guise of successively lower spiritual powers, descends to and enters the "tents" of her members, puts on Jesus, rescuing him from the accursed Cross, and leads her members back into the light by means of the celestial baptismal ascent ritual called the Five Seals.

The horizontal scheme of three descents is also present in (and probably derived from) the three-stanza hymnic conclusion to the longer version of *Ap. John* (*NHC II, 1: 30, 11 - 31, 25*), which similarly narrates in the first person three saving descents of the divine "Pronoia" culminating in the communication of the Five Seals. It should also be noted that the main body of all four versions of *Ap. John* likewise narrates three saving missions inaugurated by Barbelo, the merciful Mother-Father. First, she sends her divine son Autogenes (a celestial Adam or Seth figure) with his Four Lights to cause the ignorant demiurge to blow the spiritual power stolen from his mother Sophia into the face of the freshly made but still inert Adam, unwittingly making him luminous. Second, she descends as the Epinoia of Light who hides in Adam, is transferred to Eve by means of Adam's rib, and initially enlightens him; after producing Cain and Abel by means of the demiurge, she bears Seth by her now spiritual husband Adam and elevates Seth and his seed for whom the now repentant Sophia has created a heavenly dwelling, and then aids Noah in escaping the flood. Third and finally, the blessed Mother-Father sends the final savior, who in the present versions of *Ap. John* is the Christ who communicates the entire saving history to John as a saving revelation or Gnosis.

On the other hand, in the treatises *Allogenes*, *Steles Seth*, *Zost.* and *Marsanes*, one finds a more vertically oriented, non-temporal/historical scheme in which salvation is not brought from above to below by divine visitations, but rather occurs through a graded series of visionary ascents by the Gnostic himself. Here one finds an exemplary visionary utilizing a self-performable technique of successive stages of mental detachment

from the world of multiplicity, and a corresponding assimilation of the self to the ever more refined levels of being to which one's contemplation ascends, until one achieves the absolute unitary stasis of self-unification, mental abstraction and utter solitariness characteristic of deification. While not entirely clear in *Zost.* and *Marsanes* owing to their fragmentary condition, according to *Allogenes* and *Steles Seth* this ascent occurs in three stages: through the levels of the Aeon of Barbelo, through the levels of the Triple Power of the Invisible Spirit, and culminates in a "primary revelation" or "command" of the Unknowable One.

For the purposes of this paper, it is this latter group of four treatises, which I shall call "the *Allogenes* group," that shall be the focus of attention in this analysis of the relation between Gnostic Sethianism and the Platonism contemporary with it. These treatises in particular display a strong rapprochement with contemporary Platonic metaphysics in their transcendental ontology and in their technique of contemplative ascent to the high deity, not to mention their use of specific philosophical terminology such as "being," "non-being," "truly existing," "identity," "difference," "something," "quality," "quantity," "time," "eternity," "intellect," "individuals," "universals," "parts," "wholes," "existence," "vitality," "mentality," "life," and many more. These texts are further distinguished by the apparent absence of any Christian influence as well as the lack of prominent Sethian themes, such as the Apocalyptic schematization of history according to periodic descents of a revealer or redeemer figure. They exhibit a greatly attenuated interest in or even total absence of a narrative of the cosmogony of this world including the downward declination of Sophia and the origin and activity of her offspring the demiurge. So also they lack the Sethian speculation on the creation of mankind and his primeval history drawn from traditional Sethian exegesis of the Old Testament, especially Genesis 1-6. Briefly put, in these texts, Sethianism has become a form of mythological Platonism.

In order to put the ensuing analysis of this "Allogenes group" of texts into perspective, I offer the following summary sketch of the history of the Sethian movement as reflected in their literature, with specific reference to the interaction between Sethianism and Christianity.<sup>1</sup> It seems that Sethianism interacted with Christianity in five phases: (1) The Sethians likely originated as one of a number of Palestinian or Syrian baptismal sects in the first centuries BCE and CE; they considered themselves the historical progeny of Seth, their spiritual ancestor, by whom (together with Adam) they had been primordially enlightened, but from whom they expected yet a final saving visitation

in the form of the conferral of a new form of spiritual baptism called the Five Seals. (2) In the later first century, Sethianism gradually became Christianized through an emerging identification between the pre-existent Christ and Seth (or Adam) that resulted from increasing contact with Christian groups. (3) Toward the end of the second century, Sethianism gradually became estranged from a Christianity increasingly on the road to a polemical orthodoxy which rejected the rather docetic Sethian interpretation of Christ. (4) In the third century Sethianism is rejected by the Great Church, but in the meantime has become strongly attracted by the individualistic contemplative practices of second and third century Platonism, a shift that entailed a gradual loss of interest in the Sethians' primal origins and sacred history and a corresponding attenuation of their awareness of group or communal identity (i.e. a tendency toward "rootlessness"). (5) In the late third century, Sethianism also became estranged from orthodox Neoplatonism under the impetus of attacks and refutations from the circle of Plotinus and other Neoplatonists which were just as effective as those of the Christian heresiologists. At this time, whatever Sethianism was left became increasingly fragmented into various derivative and other sectarian Gnostic groups such as the Archontics, Audians, Borborites, Phibionites and others, some of which survived into the Middle Ages.

The designation "Allogenes group" for the strongly Platonizing Sethian treatises is meant to signal the originality of the doctrine of the divine world and of the visionary ascent spelled out in *Allogenes*. By comparison, it seems to me that the other members of this group, *Steles Seth*, *Zost.* and *Marsanes*, are dependent upon *Allogenes* rather than the other way around. *Steles Seth*, as previously mentioned, seems to be an aetiology of a previously existing rite of cultic ascension oriented toward a community *praxis*. *Zost.* clearly tries to interpret the visionary ascent in terms of the older tradition of Sethian baptism by marking out each stage of the ascent as a certain baptism or sealing. *Marsanes* does likewise, almost as an aside in the first few pages of that document. It is only in *Allogenes* that we see an author at work trying to make sense out of the collection of traditional Sethian divine beings by means of Platonic metaphysical categories and structures without any particular interest in trying to legitimate these speculations in terms of cultic tradition; the only legitimation invoked as that he received his doctrine through traditional Sethian revealers (Youel and the Luminaries of the Aeon of Barbelo), but even this is subordinate to his own vision of these realities.

We now pass on to a more detailed examination of the doctrine of *Allogenes* as being generally representative of the group as a whole. The

cosmology of *Allogenes* presents itself as tripartite in structure. There is a highest unbegotten level, apparently called *pantelios*, "all perfect," which is headed by the Unknowable One or Invisible Spirit and its Triple Power; a median self-begotten level, apparently called *telios*, "perfect," which is the Aeon of Barbelo; and a lowest begotten level, referred to once as Nature (*physis*). These levels seem to correspond to the levels of Plotinus's three hypostases, the One, the Intellect and the Soul; his lowest, Matter, does not seem to figure in *Allogenes*.

The Unknowable One (called the Unknowable God in 61, 16) is, like the One of Plotinus, to be regarded as beyond being. It is non-being existence (*hyparxis*, 62, 23), silent and still (62, 25-26), not an existing thing (63, 9-18), and absolutely unknowable (63, 13; 63, 29-32; 64, 4-14). It transcends all its positive attributes and properties which are in turn unknowable: blessedness, perfection and divinity or stillness (62, 28-36; 63, 33 - 64, 4), since it is better than those that are better (63, 19). It exists, <lives> and knows without Mind, Life or Existence (or non-existence, for that matter: 61, 32-39; 62, 17-20). Since it shares neither time nor eternity (*aion*, 63, 21-23; cf. 65, 21-24), it is perhaps to be regarded as pre-eternal. Its major positive name seems to be the Invisible Spirit, although this term is sometimes used in such a way that one might regard it as a syzygy of the Unknowable One, or even as a cognomen of its potency, the Triple Power.

Certainly the most intriguing feature of *Allogenes*'s metaphysics, and perhaps the crucial feature by which it can be placed at a definite point in the Platonic metaphysical tradition, is the doctrine of the Triple Power. This being is mentioned sometimes separately from (XI, 3: 45, 13-30; 52, 30-33; 53, 30; 55, 21; 61, 1-22; regularly in *Marsanes*) and sometimes in conjunction with the Invisible Spirit (XI, 3: 47, 8-9; 51, 8-9; 58, 25; 66, 33-34; cf. *Zost.* VIII, 1: 20, 15-18; 24, 12-13; 97, 2-3; 128, 20-21) as "the Triple-powered Invisible Spirit" or "the invisible spiritual Triple Power." By a static self-extension, the Invisible Spirit through its Triple Power becomes the Aeon of Barbelo (XI, 3: 45, 21-30; cf. *Zost.* VIII, 1: 76, 7-19; 78, 10 - 81, 20; *Steles Seth* VII, 5: 121, 20 - 122, 18; *Marsanes* X, 1: 8, 18 - 9, 28). Furthermore, the Triple Power is said to be the traverser of the boundlessness of the Invisible Spirit which turns the Triple Power back on itself in order to know what is within the Invisible Spirit and how it exists, a notion very close to the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation in which a product proceeds from its source and becomes hypostatized in the act of contemplative reversion upon its source. In this case, the Triple Power, initially unbounded, turns back upon its source in an act of objectivizing self-knowledge, becoming bounded and taking on form and definition as Barbelo, the

self-knowledge or First Thought of the Invisible Spirit (XI, 3: 49, 8-21). Virtually the same notions are found in *Steles Seth* (VII, 5: 121, 20 - 122, 19), *Zost.* (VIII, 1: 66, top - 84, 22), and *Marsanes* (X, 1: 7, 1 - 9, 29).

The Triple Power is also identified with the triad Existence (*hyparxis*) or Being (*ousia* or *petshoop*=to on), Life (*ōnh*=*zōē*) or Vitality (*mntōnh*=*zōotēs*), and Mentality (*mnenteime*=*noētēs*, a neologism) which the Unknowable One, although it exists, lives and thinks, does not itself possess (49, 26-38; 61, 32-39; 62, 17-20). A similar phenomenon is found in Plotinus, derived from his exegesis of Plato, *Sophist* 248C-E to the effect that true being must also have life and intelligence.<sup>2</sup>

Life, not the life of the One, but a trace of it, looking toward the One was boundless, but once having looked was bounded (without bounding its source). Life looks toward the One and, determined by it, takes on boundary, limit and form . . . it must then have been determined as (the life of) a Unity including multiplicity. Each element of multiplicity is determined multiplicity because of Life, but is also a Unity because of limit . . . so Intellect is bounded Life (*Ennead* VI.7.17, 13-26).

On the whole, Plotinus tends to conceive Being, Life and Mind as aspects of his second hypostasis, Intellect, owing to his increasing aversion to the multiplication of the transcendental hypostases beyond three. He regards the One as entirely transcendent to Intellect; there is no being that exists between them as mediator, nor may one distinguish between a higher intellect in repose and a lower one in motion, or a One in act and another One in potency (*Ennead* II.9.1), nor may one distinguish between an intellect at rest, another in contemplation and yet another that reflects or plans (*Ennead* II.9.6), as did Numenius in his *Peri t'Agathou* (frgg. 11-23 des Places). Since the Triple Power of *Allogenes* seems to mediate between the Unknowable One and the next lower hypostasis, the Aeon of Barbelo, it seems to function either as a One in potency or perhaps as a higher form of Intellect (i.e. of Barbelo), it may be that, since *Allogenes* was likely read in his circle (Porphyry, *Vita Plot.* 16), it was this doctrine of *Allogenes* and not just that of Numenius which provoked Plotinus's criticism in *Ennead* II.9 and caused him to place the Being-Life-Mind triad in the Intellect rather than conjoining it with the One as the link between these two.

There was certainly precedent in Neopythagorean arithmological speculation for regarding a triad to be conjoined with or reside latently within the One or the Monad. Theon of Smyrna, a Neopythagorean

Platonist of the early second century, wrote: ἔστιν πρῶτον ἡ μονάς, λεγομένη τρίγωνον οὐ κατ' ἐντελέχειαν, ὡς προεφάρκαμεν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ δύναμιν. ἐπεὶ γὰρ αὕτη οἶον σπέρμα πάντων ἐστὶν ἀριθμῶν, ἔχει ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ τριγωνοειδῆ δύναμιν (*Expositio* 37, 15-18 Hiller). So also Theon's contemporary, Nicomachus of Gerasa: ἵνα καὶ τρίγωνος δυνάμει φαίνεται ἡ μονάς, ἐνεργεία δὲ πρῶτος ὁ γ' (*Eisagoge* II.8 p. 88, 9-10 Hoche; cf. <Iamblichus>, *Theol. Arith.* 16, 4-6 de Falco). Such speculation may have influenced both Plotinus and the author of *Allogenes*.

The nomenclature of the Being-Life-Mind triad is held to derive from late Platonic exegesis of Plato (*Sophist* 248C-E and *Timaeus* 39E) and perhaps of Aristotle (*Metaphys.* XII.7, 1072b, 27-31), all passages dealing with the relation between the living divine intellect and true being. However, a somewhat similar nomenclature for a transcendent triad is found in the first half of the first century in Irenaeus's report on the "Barbeloite" (i.e. Sethian) system in *Haer.* I.29 and in *Ap. John* (BG 8502, 2: 28, 5 - 29, 8): Barbelo, as the self-realization of the Thought of the Invisible Spirit, asks it to grant her Prognosis (conceptually close to intellect or intellection), Aphtharsia (characteristic of stable being as opposed to perishable becoming), and Aïdōnia Zōē. This could be a more personified precursor of the Being-Life-Mind triad of *Allogenes*, although it is produced at a lower ontological level (that of Barbelo rather than that of the Invisible Spirit) equivalent to the level of Mind (i.e. where Plotinus locates this triad). Since *Allogenes* probably derives a part of its negative theology from *Ap. John* (XI, 3: 62, 28 - 63, 23 = BG 8502, 2: 23, 3 - 26, 13 = II, 1: 3, 18-30), it indeed may have been influenced by the triad Prognosis, Aphtharsia, and Aïdōnia Zōē as well as by speculation based upon the above-mentioned Platonic passages. Guided by the sort of contemporary Neopythagorean arithmological speculation cited above, the author of *Allogenes* could easily have arrived at the Being-Life-Mind nomenclature which is applied to the Triple Power.

To be sure, in *Allogenes* the nomenclature for the triad varies. In 49, 26-38 one finds Being (variously *pē ēte pai pe*, *petshoop* and *ousia*) Life (*ōnh*) as well as Vitality (*mntōnh* perhaps translating *zōotēs*), and Mentality (variously *mntōnh* and the neologism *noētēs*). No particular hierarchical order of these terms is specified in this passage, since each single term includes the other two in cyclical permutation. But in the section 58, 26 - 61, 22 relating *Allogenes*'s ascent through the levels of the Triple Power, one finds the hierarchical order Existence (*hyparxis*), Vitality and Blessedness (highest to lowest), while in 61, 32-39 (also 62,

19-20) one finds the non-hierarchical order Existence (and nonexistence!), Life and Mind. The variation between the Coptic noun *ōnh* and the abstract *mntōnh* (corresponding respectively to *zōē* and *zōotēs*) initially seems to be without significance, although when one compares it with the variation between *nous* and *noētēs* (probably for *nootēs*), one gets the impression that abstracts seem to be preferred, perhaps in order to avoid the implication that Life or Vitality or Mentality are to be taken as substantial hypostases. Indeed, Proclus (*In Parm.* 1106, 1 - 1108, 19 Cousin) mentions a technique of paronymy, in which abstracts in *-oēs* precede their respective substantives, by which one may illustrate that acts precede substances; an example would be this series of terms from most abstract to most substantial: *noēma*, *noein*, *nootēs*, and *nous*. The variation between the terms Mentality and Blessedness is also significant; the term Blessedness figures in the triad Blessedness, Perfection and Divinity (62, 28-36; 63, 33-37; cf. 55, 26-28; the source of this triad is *Ap. John* BG 8502, 2: 24, 9-12); in *Allogenes* it is an attribute of the highest level of the Aeon of Barbelo (Kalyptos, 55, 26-28).

There are two witnesses for the correspondence between Blessedness and Mentality. The latest is Victorinus, *Adv. Arium* I.52, 3-5 Henri-Hadot: *Deus potentia est instarum trium potentiarum, existentiae, vitae, beatitudinis, hoc est eius quod est esse, quod vivere, quod intellegere*. The earlier is *Zost.*, VIII, 1: 15, 3-12:

[These are the] perfect waters: the [water] of Life, which is that of Vitality, in which you have now been [baptized] in Autogenes; the [water] of Blessedness, which is [that of] Mentality, in which you shall be baptized in Protophanes; and the water of Existence, which is that of Divinity, which belongs to Kalyptos.

The passage is corrupt: "water of Life" has been substituted for a probable "water of goodness" under the influence of the former term at home in the Sethian baptismal rite (quite in line with the intention of the author of *Zost.*), and the terms "Existence" and "Divinity" have been reversed (*lege* "the water of Divinity, which is that of Existence, into which you shall be baptized by Kalyptos"). But the association of Blessedness with Mentality is clear.

In *Allogenes* the variation between the terms Being (*pē ete pai pe, peishoop, ousia*, possibly all for *to on*) and Existence (*hyparxis*) is highly significant, since while Plotinus used *to on* for the first member of the triad, Porphyry apparently used the term *hyparxis*. P. Hadot<sup>3</sup> thinks that Porphyry was the first to adopt this term for the triad, and that he may

have discovered it in the *Chaldaean Oracles*, where it apparently designated the high deity, the Father (cf. Damascius, *Dub. et sol.* 61, 1.131, 16-17 Ruelle ή μὲν πρώτη ἀρχή κατὰ τὴν ὑπαρξίν θεωρεῖται, ὡς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις and 221, 4.101, 25-27 Ruelle: ὡς Χαλδαϊκῶς εἶπεν, ὁ μὲν νοῦς κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἵσταται μᾶλλον, ή δὲ ζωή κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν, ή δὲ οὐσία κατὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπαρξίν).

In Neoplatonism, the One is generally beyond being; being characterizes the second hypostasis Intellect. Although Plotinus radically separated these hypostases, most Neoplatonists after him (save possibly Iamblichus) did not, wishing instead to emphasize the continuity rather than the discontinuity of the chain of being. This tendency is nicely demonstrated in the contemporary exegesis of Plato's *Parmenides* in which the One of the first hypothesis (137D-142A) was identified with the One, and the One-who-is of the second hypothesis (142B-143C) was identified with Intellect, as in this citation from the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary published by Kroll:<sup>4</sup>

The One beyond essence and being is neither being nor essence nor act, but rather acts and is itself pure act, such that it is itself being (*einai*) before being (*to on*). By participating this being (the *einai* of the One), the One (*scil.* "who is," i.e. the second One) possesses another being declined from it (the *einai* of the supreme One), which is to participate being (*to on*). Thus being (*einai*) is double: the first preexists (*prolēparchei*) being (*to on*); the second is derived from the transcendent One who is absolute being (*einai*) and as it were the idea of being (*to on*).

One ought to compare with this *Allogenes* 61, 32-39: "Now it (the Unknowable One) is something insofar as it exists in that it either exists and will become or <lives> or knows, although it <acts> without Mind or Life or Existence (*hyparxis*) or nonexistence incomprehensibly."

In his article of 1961 and book of 1968, Hadot argues forcefully for ascribing the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary to Porphyry. In this work, the doubleness of being is meant to show how the supreme One can be both continuous and discontinuous with the Intellect below it. The One is not simply beyond being (*to on*), but has a higher form of purely active being (*einai* rather than *to on*) in which the Intellect merely participates. So also, by the term *hyparxis*, *Allogenes* likewise wished to attribute a purely active being to the Unknowable One.

Hadot argues further that Porphyry conceived the Intellect in two aspects: a first in which Intellect is still identical with its source the One, and, after its generation from the One, a second in which it has become Intellect itself. In this self-generation, *hyparxis* is the leading

term in a three stage process. As *Anon. Taurensis* = <Porphyry>, *In. Parm.* XIV, 10-26 puts it:

With respect to [existence (*hyparxis*) alone] it (the potential Intellect still identical with the One) is one and simple . . . with respect to existence (*hyparxis*), life (*zōē*) and thought (*noēsis*) it is neither one nor simple. With respect to existence, thinking is also being thought. But when Intellect [abandons] existence for thinking so as to be elevated to the rank of an intelligible in order to see itself (as an intelligible; cf. *Allogenes* 49, 6-14), thinking is life. Therefore thinking is boundless with respect to life. And all are activities (*energeiai*) such that with respect to existence, activity would be static; with respect to thinking, activity would be directed to itself; and with respect to life, activity would be turning away from existence.

Now it is quite probable that Porphyry made *hyparxis* (rather than *to on* as did Plotinus) the leading term of this triad. In the works cited above, Hadot argues that this version of the triad originated with Porphyry even though it occurs in none of his extant works nor is explicitly attributed to him by ancient authors. But Hadot has interpreted certain statements of Damascius such as those cited above and statements of Porphyry himself in such a way as to show that Porphyry regarded the highest deity to be simultaneously continuous and discontinuous with the Intellect below by means of this triad. Partly on the grounds that such a doctrine appears in the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary cited above, Hadot assigns the commentary to Porphyry. Hadot's attribution to Porphyry of the triad with *hyparxis* as its leading term rests heavily on his claim that Porphyry is the author of the commentary. Hadot also invokes the working hypotheses of W. Theiler:<sup>5</sup> every non-Plotinian Neoplatonic doctrine found both in Augustine and a later Neoplatonist derives from Porphyry. Augustine (*De civ. Dei* X.23) reports that Porphyry interposed a *medium* between the supreme deity (*pater*) and the Intellect (*filius*), which Hadot identifies with the modality of the triad in which life predominates. The "later Neoplatonists" would be Proclus, Damascius and especially Victorinus, whose metaphysics is strikingly close to that of the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary (and to that of *Allogenes* for that matter). Therefore the commentary is Porphyrian.

If this is Porphyry's doctrine, one can see that it differs from Plotinus's triad not only in the substitution of the term *hyparxis* for *to on*, but also in distinguishing two modalities or phases of the Intellect: First, as *hyparxis* it is potential intellect still identical with its idea, the *einai* of the One. Second, as *noēsis* it is actual Intellect insofar as it is

identical with the substantial exemplification (the *to on* of Intellect) of its idea, the One. Therefore the transitional stage between these two phases in effect constitutes a median modality (Augustine's *medium patris et filii*) in which Intellect is yet undefined, "boundless" thinking as it were (cf. "the traverser of the boundlessness of the Invisible Spirit," in *Allogenes* 49, 8-10), or Intellect *qua* Life.

Correspondingly in *Allogenes*, the Triple Power is continuous with the Invisible Spirit or Unknowable One as *hyparxis*, and discontinues with it as Mentality (but now identical with the Aeon of Barbelo). But as Vitality, the Triple Power can be regarded as discontinuous with both, which is why *Allogenes* tends to represent the Triple Power as an independent hypostasis, or sometimes names it now in conjunction with the Invisible Spirit and now in conjunction with Barbelo (as in 64, 34-36). Thus the ontological status of the Triple Power is very close to that of the Life modality of the triad in Hadot's exposition of Porphyry's metaphysics. In fact, the Triple Power is explicitly identified with "Eternal Life" in *Allogenes* (66, 32-36). Yet, as 49, 28-36 makes clear, the Triple Power even *qua* Vitality still has Being (That-which-is) and Knowledge; the same is made clear in this striking parallel citation from Proclus, *Elem. theol.* 103, 92, 13-16 Dodds:

## Proclus

For in Being (*to on*) there is  
Life and  
Intellect,  
and in Life there is  
Being (*einai*) and  
Intellection (*noein*),  
and in Intellect there is  
Being (*einai*) and  
Living (*zēn*).

*Allogenes* 49, 28-36

For then That-which-is constantly  
possesses its Vitality and  
Mentality,  
and Vitality possesses  
Being (*ousia*) and  
Mentality;  
Mentality (*noētēs*) possesses  
Life and  
That-which-is.

Each term in the series predominates and includes the other two in cyclical permutation. Hadot illustrates this phenomenon with respect to <Porphyry's> triad *hyparxis*, *zōē* (or *dynamis*) and *noēsis* by means of the following diagram:

First triad = Father	<u>Existence</u>	Life	Intellection
Second triad = Life	Existence	<u>Life</u>	Intellection
Third triad = Intellect	Existence	Life	<u>Intellection</u>

In each of the three phases of the triad, the underlined term indicates



the relative predominance of one of its three modalities: The first triad is coincident with the One and the third triad is coincident with the Intellect, in effect giving rise to the median triad which Augustine called the *medium*.

In the case of *Allogenes*, one might suggest a similar scheme based on the passage just cited as well as 61, 34-38: the Unknowable One "exists and will become or <lives> or knows, although it <acts> without Mind or Life or Existence or nonexistence, incomprehensibly" (cf. also 54, 9 - 61, 22):

Unknowable One/Invisible Spirit	<u>Exists</u>	Lives	Knows
Triple Power/Eternal Life	Existence	Vitality	Mentality
Barbelo/First Thought	(Being)	(Life)	<u>Knowledge</u>

The scheme is similar to that of <Porphyry> with certain exceptions. The terminology is used more fluidly with less rigor and precision. The triad as applied to the Unknowable One employs verbs which serve to stress its pure activity and utter non-substantiality, while abstracts are applied to the Triple Power and, as one might expect, concrete substantives to Barbelo. At the level of Barbelo, the parentheses indicate that the Being-Life-Mind triad is instead represented by a rather more Sethian mythological triad, Kalyptos, Protophanes, and Autogenes (although Barbelo is specifically called Knowledge in 45,16), which in the "Allogenes group" in turn replaces the triad Prognosis, Aphtharsia and Eternal Life found in *Ap. John*. The correspondence between the Barbelo triad and the Triple Power triad can be seen in 54, 8-16, where the male Mind Protophanes (= "Harmedon") is praised according to Vitality; another being, presumably Autogenes, is praised according to Mentality; and in the missing section at the top of page 54, another being, presumably Kalyptos, was praised according to Existence.

The fact that the leading term can be expressed by both *hyparxis* and *to on* seems to show that *Allogenes* trades in the same terminology familiar to Plotinus on the one and to Porphyry on the other. The fact that Plotinus reacted against the notion of an Intellect consisting of several distinct levels (*Ennead* II.9.1 and 6, a notion which *Allogenes* clearly implies) and surely would be ill-disposed to the location of a triad latent in the One or between the One and Intellect means that the scheme of *Allogenes*, and not only that of Numenius and others, was likely one of those so strongly rejected by Plotinus. The similarity between the schemes of *Allogenes* and of the <Porphyrian> *Parmenides* commentary may indicate that Porphyry could have derived his scheme as much from *Allogenes* as from the *Chaldaean Oracles*. The fact that

the scheme of *Allogenes* is, by contrast with that of these two philosophers, rather unsystematic owes not only to the author's desire to reconcile his doctrine with traditional Sethian mythological cosmologies, but may also quite likely owe to his originality. That is, *Allogenes* may have been an important catalyst and conceptual source to both Plotinus and Porphyry, no matter how unacceptable certain other of its features may have been to them. Since the author of *Allogenes* is quite capable of accurate citation of his sources (cf. his citation of the negative theology from *Ap. John*, discussed below), the unsystematic character of his metaphysics more likely owes to his originality than to a confusion or misappropriation of the doctrine of Plotinus or of Porphyry. The fact that *Allogenes* or some version thereof was read in Plotinus's circle tends to add weight to this likelihood.

In sum, the fact that revelations under the names of "Allogenes," "Zostrianos," and "Zoroaster," circulated in Plotinus's seminars, coupled with the fact that doctrines refuted by Plotinus in *Ennead* II.9 are so close to those of the "Allogenes group," seems to suggest that the Neoplatonists are more likely dependent on the Sethian "Platonists" than the reverse. If so, a treatise like *Allogenes* would have been produced at a point prior to Plotinus's antignostic polemic (*Enneads* III.8, V.8, V.5 and II.9 [chronologically 30-33] as identified by R. Harder) of the years 244-269 CE.

Before we pass on to an analysis of the Aeon of Barbelo which is the equivalent to the Neoplatonic intellectual level in these Sethian texts, it will first be useful to outline certain features of the doctrine of Numenius and of the *Chaldaean Oracles* for purposes of comparison, especially since these systems were in all likelihood formulated in the second half of the second century, and may have been known to the author of *Allogenes*, whose work may have been produced around the end of this period.

Numenius exhibits a very complicated system of three gods, which has been interpreted in various ways, owing to apparent contradictions between fragments of his work *On the Good* contained in Eusebius's *Preparation for the Gospel* and various *testimonia* to his philosophy from such later authors as Proclus, Calcidius, Porphyry, Macrobius, Iamblichus and others. As Dodds and others have suggested,<sup>6</sup> Numenius's system of three gods seems to be inspired by the three kings of Plato's *Second Letter* 312E and the distinction between the contemplative (*kaihoron*) and planning (*dienoethē*; Numenius has *dianooumenos*) activities of the demiurge according to *Timaeus* 39E which Plotinus also discussed in *Enneads* II.9.1 and 9.6 (also III.9.1). Following the admirable reconstruction of M. Baltes,<sup>7</sup> Numenius seems

to exhibit the following system of three gods. The first god is an inert Mind, called the Monad, King and Sower; it is the Good in itself and is characterized by stability and motionless motion. Though not explicit in the system, this Monad seems to be opposed by an Indefinite Dyad, that is Matter, at first unbegotten, but then begotten by the Demiurge (i.e. by the second and third gods; cf. frg. 52 des Places). The second god, called Good and Cultivator, is a Mind in motion contemplating (*kathorōn, theōrētikos*) the first, in which act it is self-generated (*αὐτοποιεῖ τὴν τε ἰδέαν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὸν κόσμον*) as an imitation of the first god (frg. 16 des Places). But this self-generation is also the generation of the world; that is, the second god is dyadic, alternating between contemplation of the first god above and demiurgical activity directed below (for so I interpret *δημιουργὸς ὢν, ἔπειτα θεωρήτικος ὅλος*, frg. 16 des Places against most interpreters). The third god is the demiurge proper insofar as it is occupied with Matter; indeed it is a sort of conjunction between the second god and Matter, and is the Mind which intends or plans (*dianooumenos*) the world. In this sense, the third god would correspond to something like the Logos or rational part of the World Soul in the systems of Philo of Alexandria or Plutarch of Chaeronea. Presumably the fourth level of Numenius's system would be occupied by the World Soul proper as a conjunction of the third god with Matter. For this reason, the third god is the rational part of the World Soul (*anima beneficentissima*, frg. 52 des Places), while the passive, hylic component of the World Soul actually constitutes a lower, evil soul. Finally, the last ontological level is the physical world.

Somewhat as in the Old Academic system of Speusippus, it seems that in Numenius, Matter or the Indefinite Dyad is associated with all levels: insofar as the second god is associated with Matter, it is split by it, becoming a second and third god (frg. 11 des Places); the combination of the second god with Matter is the third god, the beneficent aspect of the World Soul; and the combination of Matter with the third god is the lower or subrational aspect of the World Soul.

Roughly contemporaneous with Numenius are the *Chaldaean Oracles*, attributed to Julian the Theurgist who was credited with a miraculous deliverance of Marcus Aurelius's troops in 173 CE. The *Oracles* exhibit a hierarchical system with many Neopythagorean features. The supreme god is called the Father, Bythos (frg. 18 des Places), who is totally transcendent, having nothing to do with creation, and can be apprehended only with the "flower of the mind," a non-knowing, mentally vacant mode of intellectual contemplation (frgg. 1 and 18 des Places; the same doctrine as is found in *Allogenes*). The

Father is the Monad, presumably beyond being (as *hapax epekeina*), but also consists of a triad comprising himself or his existence (*hyparxis*, according to Damascius, *Dub. et sol.* 61, p. 131, 17 Ruelle; cf. frg. 1 line 10 des Places), his power and his intellect. Below him is the demiurgic Intellect proceeding from the Father who himself remains aloof with his power but does not confine "his fire" (frgg. 3, 4, and 5 des Places). This Intellect is a Dyad, contemplating the intelligible realm (of the Father's intellect), and bringing sense-perception to the world (frgg. 7 and 8 des Places). Furthermore, this Intellect is "dyadically transcendent" (*dis epekeina*), yet it too is also triadic insofar as it contains the "measured triad" (probably ideal forms or numbers) flowing from both it and the triadic Father (frgg. 26-29 and 31 des Places). Thus there is in effect an ennead: the first triad of the Father together with his power and intellect; the second triad of the dyadically oriented (above and below) demiurgic Intellect; and third the "measured triad" representing the multiplicity of the Ideas. On the border between the intelligible and sensible realms as both a barrier and like between them (so J. Dillon),<sup>8</sup> is Hecate, a sort of diaphragm or membrane (frg. 6 des Places), the life-producing fount (frgg. 30 and 32 des Places) from which the World Soul flows (frg. 51 des Places). Finally, there is the world of Matter, springing both from the Intellect and the Father (frgg. 34-35 des Places).

Yet, as Dillon correctly points out, Hecate exists on a higher level as well, being the center between the two fathers (frg. 50 des Places) and thus identified with the Father's power. As Hadot explains, Porphyry also must have located Hecate at this upper level (*apud* Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 10.23, *patris et filii medium*).

Hadot also provides a diagram to show the structure presupposed in the system, in which the vertical axis represents the ontological and hypostatic hierarchy, and the horizontal axis represents the relative predominance of the components of the triad formed at each level:<sup>9</sup>

Paternal Monad	the Father	his power	his intellect
Hecate	(father)	power (life)	(intellect)
Dyadic Intellect	(father)	(power)	Intellect
Measured Triad (Ideas)	Iyngeis	Synoches	Teletarchai
Hecate as membrane		fount of life	
World Soul		mistress of life	
Nature			
Cosmos <i>aisthētos</i>			

Turning now to a consideration of the Aeon of Barbelo, it will be

useful to attend not only to *Allogenes*, but to draw together results from all the members of the "Allogenes group." In addition to the doctrine of the Triple Power, *Zost.*, *Steles Seth* and *Marsanes* share with *Allogenes* a peculiar triadic division of the Aeon of Barbelo, the First Thought and self-knowledge of the Unknowable One or Invisible Spirit. In this connection, it should be noted that other Sethian materials place a triad at this level as well, the level corresponding to that which Intellect or Mind occupies in Neoplatonic systems. According to Irenaeus, *Haer.* I, 29, *Ap. John*, and *Gos. Egypt.* a triad of hypostases (Prognosis, Aphtharsia and Aïōnia Zōē) is associated with the Aeon of Barbelo. *Trim. Prot.* exhibits a sort of modal monarchianism in its division of the divine First Thought, Barbelo, into three modalities of increasing articulateness, the Voice of the Thought, the Speech of the Thought, and the Word (*logos*). The "Allogenes group" names the three modalities of Barbelo Kalyptos (the Hidden One), Protophanes (the First-appearing One), and Autogenes (the Self-begotten One), and conceives these as distinct hypostases constituting the Aeon of Barbelo, supplemented by a fourth being, the Triple Male.

Kalyptos (sometimes abbreviated ΚΑΣ) appears frequently in *Allogenes*, *Steles Seth*, *Zost.* and in Bruce, *Untitled*, and once in *Gos. Egypt.* (IV, 1: 57, 16). In *Marsanes* (X, 1: 4, 7-10), the ninth seal, where one expects to find Kalyptos (between Protophanes the eighth and Barbelo the ninth), is obscured by a lacuna of about seven letters, but concerns "[something] of the power [which] appeared [in the beginning (i.e. Protophanes)]" or perhaps "[something] of the power [of the one who] appeared [in the beginning]," suggesting that here Kalyptos may have been defined in terms of Protophanes. In *Trim. Prot.* (XIII, 1: 38, 10) Protennota/Barbelo calls herself "the immeasurable invisible one who is hidden," suggesting a translation of something like ὁ ἀόρατος Καλυπτὸς ἀμέτρητος. The name may have something to do with a veil (*kalumma*) or covering separating the lower from the higher realms, much as the Valentinians posited an upper Limit (*horos*) separating Bythos from his subordinate aeons including Nous. *Steles Seth* calls Barbelo "the first shadow of the holy Father, a light from light" who originates "from a shadow of him, thou a Kalyptos." *Zost.* (VIII, 1: 78, 17-19 and 82, 8-13) says that the emergence of Barbelo involved her "darkening," and that Kalyptos emerged as the second knowledge of the Invisible Spirit (the first being Barbelo), "the knowledge of his knowledge." *Allogenes* (XI, 1: 66, 37) mentions the shadow in connection with the appearance of an "Eternal Life." *Marsanes* apparently omits all mention of Kalyptos. It seems, then, that

in terms of the Platonic metaphysics of the divine intellect, Kalyptos occupies the position of the *nous noētos*, the contemplated intellect, somewhat like the first god of Numenius. In *Allogenes*, the "image of Kalyptos" is said to be "the patterns (*typoi*) and forms (*eide*) of those who truly exist," that is, the Platonic intelligibles or ideas of universals.

The median level of Barbelo is the male Mind Protophanes. In *Ap. John* (II, 1: 8, 33) Geradamas, the archetypal heavenly Adam, is "the first appearance," and in *Gos. Egypt.* (IV, 2: 55, 25) the figure named Triple Male Child is called the "first one who appeared," both apparently translations of Protophanes. The name Protophanes seems to derive from the Orphic doctrine of Phanes (also called Eros, Metis, Erikepaïos), who was "first to appear" from the cosmic egg (Apollonius Rhodius, *Orph. Argon.* 14-16). Bisexual, he was regarded as "always two-formed," "looking this way and that," "the key of Mind" (*Orph. Fragg.* 72-89 and 167 Kern; Synesius, *Hymn.* 2.63 Terzaghi calls the Son of God *prōtophanēs eidos*). Both the Orphic etymology "first appearing" and his characterization as mind, as well as his double inclination above and below are clearly reflected in his position in *Allogenes* (XI, 3: 45, 34-36; 46, 24-25), where he represents the progression from the psychic "individuals" in Autogenes to the intelligible level of the "authentic existents" in Kalyptos. In Platonic metaphysics, Protophanes would correspond to the *nous nooun* or perhaps *nous noeros*. In *Allogenes*, Protophanes is said to contain "those who exist together," a median state between the "individuals" in Autogenes and the "authentic existents" in Kalyptos. Ultimately, in the Sethian system, Kalyptos and Protophanes may represent two phases in the emanation of the divine Thought Barbelo; at first "hidden," then "manifest."

The lowest level of Barbelo's Aeon is Autogenes, the third member of the traditional Sethian Father-Mother-Son triad used to designate the high deity, his First Thought Barbelo who as the "merciful mother" directs the entire history of salvation, and the savior Autogenes who is identified variously as Adamas, Seth or Christ. In *Allogenes*, Autogenes is said to contain the "perfect individuals" as his members.

Interpreted in terms of Platonic ontology, Kalyptos would be the contemplated Mind containing the paradigmatic ideas or authentic existents. Protophanes would be the contemplating Mind containing a subdivision of the ideas, "those who exist together," perhaps "mathematicals," distinguished from the authentic existents by having "many the same" and being combinable with each other (cf. Aristotle, *Metaphys.* I.6; XIII.6). Autogenes would be the planning Mind containing the "perfect individuals," the ideas of particulars used to

shape the world below. The similarity to the system of Numenius is clear.

Clearly one may see at work in the "Allogenes group" a combination of Sethian mythology and Platonic metaphysics of the Mind which finds certain echoes in Plotinus and other Neoplatonists. In *Ennead* III.9.1 Plotinus toys with the notion that one might interpret Plato's doctrine of the demiurgic Intellect in *Timaeus* 39E by distinguishing between a first intellect in repose, a second intellect which contemplates the first, and perhaps a third planning or discursive intellect (*nous merisas*) which divides universal ideas into particular ideas (perhaps the "mathematicals" of the Old Academy). Some such conception, which seems close to the distinctions made in the "Allogenes group," was espoused by Amelius, a member of Plotinus's circle (*apud* Proclus, *In Tim.* 3, 268A, p. 103, 18-25 Diehl) and earlier by Numenius. In his treatise "Against the Gnostics" (*Ennead* II.9.6), which probably has Sethians in view, Plotinus definitely rejects such a view in favor of a unified Intellect which contains the ideas in itself as its own objects of thought. One may indeed wonder if some of these notions were conveyed to him by certain treatises of the "Allogenes group" as well, or perhaps whether it was the particular way these treatises expressed them (not to mention their use of mythology and incantation) that drove Plotinus to oppose these ideas so strongly.

The "Allogenes group" also assigns a fourth being, called the Triple Male, to the members of the Aeon of Barbelo. But before treating the function of this being, a few observations about the position of Barbelo in the Sethian system are in order. In the Ophite system described by Irenaeus (*Haer.* I.30.1), which is very close to portions of *Ap. John*, the divine world originates with three principal figures: the high deity (First) "Man" is Father of the All; his Thought (*ennoia*) which proceeds from him is the Son of Man; below these is a certain Holy Spirit from whom the First Man begets Christ as the "Third Male" (*tertius masculus*, perhaps a variant expression for the Triple Male). This system, no doubt deriving from an interpretation of Genesis 1:2 and 26-27, suggests an androgynous high deity whose "image" is the (likewise androgynous) Son of Man as the Thought of the high deity "Man" (i.e. the deity in whose image the archetypal Adam is made as male and female). But this Son of Man could also be considered in terms of its female aspect, which in turn could be hypostatized as the Mother of the Son of Man/Third Male. All this makes possible a divine triad consisting of a Father ("Man"), a Mother (the Thought, the female aspect of the Son of Man), and a Son (the Third Male as the masculine aspect of the Son of Man).

Such a process of Genesis-speculation is likely to be the origin of the Sethian Father-Mother-Son triad of the Invisible Spirit, Barbelo and the Son Autogenes. In Sethianism, the Autogenes (self-begotten) Son could be identified as Adamas (*alias* Geradamas) or as the Triple Male Child (cf. the Ophite "Third Male"). It is also significant that the Mother Barbelo continues to bear traces of the male aspect of her androgyny, since she is sometimes called "the merciful Father" or "the merciful Mother-Father" in the various versions of *Ap. John*. Because of her associations with the Thought of the high deity, the Sethian treatises call Barbelo also Thought (*ennoia*), First thought, Pronoia, Protennoia, Image of the Invisible Spirit, etc. in addition to the terms reflecting her androgyny such as Male Virgin, Father of the All, Thrice-male, Mother-Father and so on. The name Barbelo seems to mean something like "in four is God" (Aramaic *b' arba' 'eloh*), a hypostatization of the tetragrammaton YHWH, according to the (still most convincing) etymology proposed by W. Harvey in the nineteenth century.

With regard to the Triple Male as a separate being within the Sethian system, in *Gos. Egypt.* (III, 2: 44, 22-28; IV, 2: 55, 11 - 56, 11) the "Thrice-male Child of the great Christ whom the great Invisible Spirit has anointed" is called "the first one to appear," which sounds as though he is identified as the Protophanes of the "Allogenes group." Indeed in pages 61-63 of *Zost.*, Zostrianos is baptized, coming into being as "truly existing" and then is brought by a figure named Yoel (probably the Yoel of *Allogenes*) into the aeonic place of the Triple Male and there sees the "Invisible Child," after which Yoel sets him down before Protophanes to be instructed by the Luminaries of Barbelo's Aeon (Salamcx, Selmen and Ar[-]e; cf. *Allogenes* XI, 3: 56, 21-30). Although *Marsanes* seems to omit mention of this being, in *Allogenes* (XI, 3: 45, 34-37; 46, 11-34) it is said that Barbelo is Triple Male insofar as she grants power to "the individuals" (within whom Protophanes acts). A being called "this one" (XI, 3: 46, 14) "sees them all existing individually" such that "they will become as he is by seeing the divine Triple Male," who is "the Thought of all those who exist together." Further, "if the (Triple Male) reflects upon himself, he reflects upon Protophanes," the path or procession from the state of "those who exist together" to that of "those who truly exist," whom to see is to see Kalyptos, indeed to see Barbelo herself. In XI, 3: 58, 12-17 *Allogenes* sees "the good divine Autogenes and the Savior who is the perfect Triple Male Child and his goodness, the noetic perfect Protophanes-Harmedon." In view of these statements, it seems that Protophanes may be an alternate designation for the Triple Male Child,

but also that they can be distinguished, at least to the extent that Protophanes is associated with "those who exist together" (perhaps something like the Old Academic ideal numbers), while the Triple Male Child is associated with the self-begotten "individuals" (perhaps the ideal forms of physically existing things or persons). In *Steles Seth* (VII, 5: 120, 16 - 121, 4) the Triple Male is blessed as the unifier and completer of the All and Savior of the "perfect individuals." In *Steles Seth*, then, the Triple Male is identified with the Sethian savior-figure Autogenes, who is in turn identified with the divine Adamas ("Geradamas"), which suggests that the Triple Male is a Sethian designation for Adamas, or perhaps Seth. Originally, the term Triple Male may have been only a superlative, i.e. triple male = thrice male = "truly male."

Thus, because of the traditional Sethian association of the Triple Male with the divine Adam who is both self-begotten and was the first to appear, the treatises of the "Allogenes group" consistently associate him with the Aeon of Barbelo, but on a more specific level vacillate between associating him with Protophanes or with Autogenes. This suggests that in the "Allogenes group," the triadic division of the Aeon of Barbelo into Kalyptos, Protophanes and Autogenes is a later intruding development in the Sethian system inspired by contemporary Platonic speculation on the tripartition of the divine intellect based on the *Timaeus* 39E as well as upon continuing speculation on the Sethian triad of Father, Mother, and Son.

For purposes of visualization, we now present a summary diagram of the ontological levels in *Allogenes*:

Invisible Spirit/Unknowable One	<u>Exists</u>	Lives	Knows
The Triple Power/Eternal Life	Existence	<u>Vitality</u>	Mentality
The Aeon of Barbelo/First Thought	(Being)	(Life)	<u>Knowledge</u>
Kalyptos praised according to	Existence	Vitality	
Protophanes praised according to			
Triple Male (Child)			
Autogenes praised according to			Mentality
The realm of Nature			

The lowest cosmological level, Nature (*physis*), appears to hold no interest for the author of *Allogenes*. It is only alluded to as the realm on which Autogenes works "successively and individually" so as to rectify its flaws or defects (51, 28-32). This natural realm may correspond to the lowest level of Plotinus's transcendentalia, *physis* or

the lower, creative Soul (cf. *Ennead* III.8.4 passim), although *Allogenes* may intend by this term a lower and more immanent psychic realm. In any case, it is to be noted that all the members of the "Allogenes group" take a remarkably "soft" stance toward this lower realm. It is defective, but not evil or chaotic; it is to be "rectified," or as *Marsanes* puts it, "is worthy to be saved entirely" (X, 1: 4, 24 - 5, 16; 5, 24-26). So also *Zost.* (VIII, 1: 131, 10-14): "Release yourselves, and that which has bound you will be dissolved. Save yourselves, in order that it may be saved."

This completes the inventory of the major transcendentalia of the "Allogenes group." *Allogenes* presents itself as restrained in nearly Plotinian fashion: "Whether the Unknowable One has angels or gods, or whether the One who stills himself possessed anything except the stillness which he is" is not known to the author; the transcendentalia have "brought forth nothing beyond themselves" (XI, 3: 49, 21-26; 67, 22-25).

It now remains to summarize the structure of the visionary ascent in *Allogenes*, a pattern which is reflected in the rest of the "Allogenes group," although with some variations. In *Zost.* the levels of the ascent are mostly marked by certain "baptisms" and "sealing," while *Steles Seth* consists mainly of doxologies to be used during the ascent which itself is not narrated, and *Marsanes* merely comments on certain features of the ascent, which the author has already undergone.

In *Allogenes* (XI, 3: 58, 26 - 61, 21) the ascent is tripartitioned into separate but successive stages, just as its general ontology is tripartitioned, since the object of the ascent is to become assimilated with each higher level of being through which one passes. The first stage of the ascent seems to occur within the second cosmological level, the intelligible level of Barbelo, in which Autogenes, Protophanes *cum* Triple Male, and Kalyptos are mentioned (57, 29 - 58, 26). Following this, 58, 26 - 61, 22 describes a further ascent in terms of the tripartite nomenclature previously applied to the Triple Power in 49, 26-38 except that the term Existence (*hyparxis*) replaces the term "That which is" (= *to on*), and the term "blessedness" replaces the term "Mentality."

At the conclusion of a "hundred years" of preparation, *Allogenes* reports that he saw Autogenes, the Triple Male, Protophanes, Kalyptos, the Aeon of Barbelo, and the primal origin (*archē*) of the of the One without origin, that is, the Triple Power of the Unknowable One / Invisible Spirit (57, 29 - 58, 26). One should probably understand this as *Allogenes*'s ascent through the various levels of the Aeon of Barbelo up to and including the lowest aspect of the Triple Power, which would be "blessedness" or Mentality, since *Allogenes* still bears his earthly

garment (58, 29-30). The initial vision is culminated by his removal from the earthly garment to "a holy place" (58, 31) characterized by the blessedness of "the knowledge of the Universal Ones" (59, 2-3). Allogenes is now ready for "holy powers" revealed to him by the "luminaries of the Aeon of Barbelo" to allow him to "test what happens in the world" by a yet higher experience starting anew from the "holy place" (perhaps the lowest level of the Triple Power).

This implies two levels of knowing: One is achievable in the world, and is characterized by the actual vision of what was communicated only in the auditory revelations imparted by the emissary-revealer Youel, sufficing to know the realm of being and intellect in the Aeon of Barbelo up until the lower aspect of the Triple Power. The other is not achievable in the world, and is to be imparted by a special "primary revelation" from the Luminaries of Barbelo's Aeon, and suffices to experience directly the realm beyond being and intellect, the upper levels of the Triple Power and possibly the Unknowable One itself. The first level of knowing is active and involves self-knowledge (58, 38 - 59, 3; 59, 9-16); the second level of knowing is strictly speaking not knowledge at all, but is a non-knowing knowledge, an utter vacancy of the discursive intellect, a "learned ignorance" (59, 30-35; 60, 5-12; 61, 1-4) called a "primary revelation of the Unknowable One" (59, 28-29; 60, 39 - 61, 1). This notion is of course found in the *Chaldaean Oracles* (frg. 1 des Places) and in the *Parmenides* commentary <Porphyry>, *In Parm.* II, 14-17).

The ascent beyond the Aeon of Barbelo to the Unknowable One is first revealed to Allogenes by holy powers (59, 4 - 60, 12) and then actually narrated (60, 12 - 61, 22) by Allogenes in a way quite similar to the revelation, yielding what amounts to two accounts of the ascent. Having surpassed his active earthly knowledge and inclining toward the passive knowledge of the Universals (the Platonic intelligibles, 58, 26 - 60, 12), Allogenes attains first the level of blessedness (i.e. Mentality) characterized by self-knowledge (59, 9-13; 60, 14-18), then the level of Vitality characterized by an undivided, eternal, intellectual motion (59, 14-16; 60, 19-28), and finally the level of Existence, characterized by inactive "stillness" and "standing" (59, 19-26; 60, 28-37). At this point, Allogenes can no longer withdraw to any higher level, but only "to the rear because of the activities" (59, 34-35; cf. Plotinus, *Ennead* III.8.9, 29-32; VI.9.3, 1-13); that is, Allogenes must avoid any further effort lest he dissipate his inactivity and fall away from the passivity, concentratedness, and instantaneity of the primary revelation to follow (59, 26 - 60, 12; cf. 64, 14-26; 67, 22-38). Now Allogenes receives a "primary revelation of the Unknowable One" (59, 28-29; 60, 39; 61,

1) characterized by a non-knowing knowledge of the Unknowable One (59, 30-32; 60, 8-12; 61, 1-4), which turns out to be an extensive negative theology (61, 32 - 62, 13) supplemented by a more affirmative theology (62, 14 - 67, 20). On completion of the ascent and revelation, Allogenes's appropriate response is to record and safeguard the revelation (68, 16-23) and entrust its proclamation to his confidant Messos (68, 26-end).

Clearly *Allogenes* is distinguished by a Platonically-inspired visionary act of the individual intellect in which it assimilates itself to the hierarchy of ontological levels with which it was aboriginally consubstantial, but from which it has become separated by life in the body. One undergoes the ascent according to a prescribed sequence of mental states: earthbound vision, ecstatic extraction from body (and soul) involving a transcending of even traditional Gnosis, silent but at first unstable seeking of the self, firm standing, and finally sudden ultimate vision consisting of an ignorant knowledge devoid of any content that might distinguish between subject and contemplated object. Each stage is characterized by increasing self-unification, stability and mental abstraction, a definite movement away from motion and multiplicity toward stability and solitariness.

The literary prototype of this experience is found in Plato's *Symposium* 210A-212A where Socrates recounts his path to the vision of absolute beauty as a "mystery" into which he had been initiated by Diotima of Mantinea. In such visionary mysteries, ultimate vision or *epopteia* was the supreme goal, tantamount to assimilating oneself to God insofar as possible (*Theatetus* 176B). This traditional Platonic quest is found not only in Plato, but also later in Philo of Alexandria (who however shunned the notion of assimilation to God), Numenius, Valentinus, perhaps Albinus (*Didasc.* 10.5.6; the *viae analogiae, negationis, additionis* and *eminentiae*), Clement of Alexandria (*strom.* 5.11.71), Origen (*Contra Celsum* 7.42) and especially Plotinus (*Ennead* VI.7.36). What is generally common to these visionary ascents is initial purification, usually through some form of instruction involving the use of analogies, negations, and successive abstraction until the contemplative mind has become absorbed in its single object (the One, the Good, the Beautiful etc.) at which point one "suddenly" sees the ultimate source of all these; here philosophy and intellection give way to ecstasy.

Particularly important for this visionary experience in Platonism and in the Sethian Gnosticism of the "Allogenes group" is the role of negative or apophatic theological predication. Traces of this are to be found in Albinus, in the gnostic system of Basilides (ca. 125 CE), in

Plotinus and the later Neoplatonists, and of course in the Sethian treatises *Ap. John* and *Allogenes*, which share a common apophatic tradition (BG 8502, 2: 23, 3 - 26, 13 = NHC II, I: 3, 18-25 = XI, 3: 62, 28 - 63, 23). It is most probable that the basic inspiration for all of these is Plato's *Parmenides* 137D-141E, according to which the non-existence of the One follows from the facts that it 1) is neither a whole nor has parts, 2) is not anywhere, neither in itself nor in another, 3) is neither at rest nor in motion, 4) is neither other than nor the same as itself or another, 5) is neither like nor unlike itself or another, 6) is without measure or sameness and so is neither equal to nor less than nor greater than itself or another, 7) is neither younger nor older nor of the same age as itself or another, 8) and has nothing to do with any length of time; therefore, the One in no sense "is." One may compare Albinus (*Didasc.* 10.164, 28-32 Hermann):

The first God is eternal, ineffable, self-complete, that is, not wanting in any respect, all-perfect, divinity, substantiality, truth, symmetry, and good. I say this not as defining these things, but as conceptualizing a unity in every respect . . . he is ineffable, comprehended by mind alone . . . since he is neither genus nor species nor difference. Nor can anything be attributed to him. Neither is he evil, for to say this is impermissible; nor is he good, which would imply his participation in something, particularly goodness. He is neither difference . . . nor quality . . . nor without quality since he has not been deprived of quality . . . nor is he a whole possessing certain parts, nor is he the same nor different, since nothing has been attributed to him by which he can be separated from the others; nor does he move nor is he moved.

According to Basilides (*apud Hippolytus, Ref.* 7.20.2 - 21.1), the supreme God is a "nothing" at a time when there was nothing; it cannot even be called ineffable even though we call it ineffable (since that would imply there was something to be called ineffable); there was nothing, neither matter nor substance nor insubstantiality; nothing simple nor composite nor imperceptible; no man, no angel or god; nothing perceptible nor intelligible; only the non-existent god without intelligence, perception, resolve, impulse or desire. H.A. Wolfson<sup>10</sup> has pointed out that this is not so much a negative theology in which an affirmative predicate is negated as it is a privative theology which denies the possibility of predication at all.

According to the material common to *Ap. John* and *Allogenes*, the Unknowable One is neither divinity nor blessedness (i.e. intellect) nor goodness, but is superior to these; neither boundless nor bounded, but superior to these; neither corporeal nor incorporeal, neither great nor

small, neither a quantity nor a product nor a knowable existent, but superior to these; it shares in neither time nor eternity (*aeon*); it does not receive from another; neither is it diminished nor does it diminish nor is it undiminished. The author of *Allogenes* (XI, 3: 61, 32 - 62, 27) prefaces this common material with more of the same from his own pen: the Unknowable One is "something" (a Stoic category) in that it exists and becomes or <lives> or knows although it <acts> without Mind or Life or Existence or non-Existence; it is not assayed or refined; it does not give or receive, neither of itself nor of another; it needs neither Mind nor Life nor anything else. The language of *Allogenes* is rather close to that of the *Parmenides* with its denial of the application of either a predicate or its negation to the Unknowable One. Indeed One may also compare Plotinus (*Ennead* VI.9.3, 36-45):

Thus the One is neither something nor a quality nor a quantity nor an intellect nor a soul; neither is it moving nor even standing. It is not in place nor in time, but one of a kind by itself; rather it is formless before all form, before movement and before stability, since these relate to being and would make it many.

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, it seems virtually certain that the treatises of the "Allogenes group" derive the ontological structure of their transcendent world and the structure of the visionary ascent through it, as well as the Sethian negative theology applied to the invisible Spirit, from sources that are ultimately at home in Platonism. These sources cannot be specified with precision, but seem to belong to the Middle Platonic corpus of the exegesis of certain key passages from Plato's dialogues, especially the *Timaeus*, the *Sophist*, the *Parmenides*, the *Symposium*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Republic*, and from reminiscences from Plato's "esoteric" teaching as reflected in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and the reports on Plato's lecture(s) "On the Good." This is not to deny, of course, the influence of other sources of speculation, such as Jewish apocalyptic visionary literature and so on, but the essential structural ingredient is Platonic.

Many of the metaphysical systems described so far (the Sethian, especially that of the "Allogenes group," the Chaldaean, and those of Plotinus, Porphyry, and the *Parmenides* commentary) exhibit what H.J. Krämer<sup>11</sup> has characterized as a four level metaphysics, deriving ultimately from the late Plato and his nephew Speusippus in the Old Academy. The systems of these men posit an ultimate ground of being beyond the transcendent realm of being itself, which latter properly begins with the realm of ideas and (ideal) numbers, followed by the

World Soul as source of all movement, and finally by the sensible, corporeal world. Both Xenocrates and Aristotle reacted against what they saw to be an excessive transcendentalism in the systems of Plato and especially of Speusippus, retracting the transcendent ground of being back into the intellectual realm of pure being, and so produced a three level metaphysics of a monadic intelligence containing the ideas as its objects of thought, followed by the World Soul and sensible world. After the metaphysically dry period of the New Academy, the three level metaphysic played a role in the Platonic metaphysics known to Cicero and Seneca and developed in the thought of Plutarch, Atticus and others. But in the first century BCE, the four level metaphysic began to reemerge in Alexandrian Neopythagorean Platonism, especially in the circle of Eudorus. This reemergence was characterized by an increasing tendency toward withdrawal from society, world-rejection, asceticism and a return to the authority of ancient tradition (especially esoteric traditions, such as Plato's unwritten doctrine). The four level metaphysic, with its ultimate principle absolutely transcending the physical and even intellectual world, was increasingly adopted by philosophers such as Thrasyllus, Moderatus, Nichomachus and other arithmologists, Philo, Julian author of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Plotinus and later Neoplatonists, and by many Gnostics, such as Basilides, Monoimus, the Valentinians, the Naasenes, Peratae, Docetics, Sethians and Archontics, and the system of the "Simonian" *Megalē Apophasis*.

What is notable about this "Neopythagorean" Platonic metaphysics and distinguishes it from much of the former school Platonism is its great interest in schemes of the dynamic ontological derivation of lower principles from higher ones, coupled with a similar interest in arithmological speculation on the Pythagorean tetractys ( $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$ ) as the key to outlining these schemes of derivation. In particular they wished to account for the origin of the realm of multiplicity (which could be expressed as ideal numbers and their phenomenal representations) from a sole primal and aboriginally existing unitary principle called the One or the Monad. Thus at some point the (androgynous) Monad became a (female) Dyad by a process of doubling (Theon of Smyrna, *Expositio* 27, 1-7; 100, 9-12 Hiller; Nicomachus, *Intro. Arith.* 113, 2-10 Hoche; Sextus Empiricus, *Hyp. Pyrrh.* 3.153; *Adv. Math.* 10.261; Hippolytus, *Ref.* 4.43), or begetting (<Iamblichus>, *Theol. Arith.* 3, 17 - 4, 7 de Falco), or by division (<Iamblichus>, *Theol. Arith.* 5, 4-5; 8, 20 - 9, 6; 13, 9-11 de Falco), or by *ectasis* or progression from potentiality to actuality as in a seed (Nicomachus *apud* <Iamblichus>, *Theol. Arith.* 3, 1-8; 16, 4-11 de Falco), or by receding from its nature (Moderatus *apud* Simplicius, *In*

*Phys.* 230, 34 - 231, 27 Diels; Numenius, *frg.* 52 des Places), or by flowing (Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 3.19; 3.28; 3.77; 7.99; 9.380-381; 10.281). Hippolytus shows that certain Gnostics used the concept of the emanation (*probolē, proerchesthai*) of a Dyad preexisting in the Monad (the Valentinians, *Ref.* 6.29.5-6; the "Simonian" *Megalē Apophasis*, *Ref.* 6.18.4-7). Among the Sethian "Allogenes group" one finds in addition to the Existence, Vitality, Mentality progression also the concept of self-extension (X, 1: 32, 5 - 33, 2; XI, 3: 45, 22-24) and division (VII, 5: 121, 25 - 123, 14; combined with *ectasis*, VIII, 1: 80, 1-20 and combined with withdrawal, X, 1: 9, 1-21).

This sort of self-generation of primal principles from a preexisting unity characteristic of Neopythagorean arithmological speculation was also combined with Middle Platonic speculation on the divine intellect to produce a scheme in which the many arise from the One by a process of thinking, more specifically by the self-reflection of the One upon itself; this self-reflection or thinking then can be regarded as a being separately existing from the One and is called its Thought or Mind. This scheme is especially prominent in gnostic systems: in the "monistic" Valentinian system reported by Hippolytus (*Ref.* 6.29.5-6; cf. *Ref.* 6.42.4-5 [Marcosians]; *Exc. Theod.* 7.1; *Tripartite Tractate NHC* I, 5: 52, 34 - 77, 25 [thinking, self-extension, etc.]; *Valentinian Exposition NHC* XI, 23: 22, 1 - 25, 21). Especially interesting is the "Simonian" *Megalē Apophasis* (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 6.18.4-7): The great unlimited power, potentially all-father, potentially contains his thought (*epinoia*) of which he becomes aware, thus objectivizing it as a separately existing entity (appearing to himself from himself he became two; he brought himself forth from himself). When the thought appears, it in turn sees its source, which becomes father to it; knowing the father, the thought becomes mind (*nous*), which together with the thought produces the Logos.

In Sethianism, *Ap. John* (II, 1: 4, 16-35) describes the appearance of Barbelo by the same process of self-reflection. This is a natural Neopythagorean Platonic interpretation of the rather more mythological and traditional Sethian speculation on the bisexual nature of the Man (the high deity in whose image mankind is made) and Son of Man (the archetypal Adam) figures deduced from Genesis 1:26-27. Man is the monistic but bisexual supreme deity (odd numbers are male and even numbers are female, while "one" shares both natures since adding it to an odd number produces an even and vice versa). The Son of Man as his bisexual offspring can then be considered as the deity's wisdom (*sophia*) or thought (*pronoia, ennoia* or *epinoia*), and thus, in a convoluted way, as the Son in one aspect, and in another aspect as the



Mother of the self-generated Son. The female or Mother aspect could, in arithmological terms, be associated with a Dyad (even, female), and the male aspect (odd) with a triad (cf. the Triple Male). These were then configured in a Father-Mother-Son triad, the female member of which was often called Pronoia or Ennoia or First Thought (Protennoia) in preference to the name Sophia, which was associated with the divine thought in demiurgical declination. Perhaps speculation on the divine name (the tetragrammaton YHWH) inspired Barbelo as the name for the female aspect of the divine thought. In turn the name Barbelo ("in four is God"), implying a tetrad, may have inspired the notion of the tetrad of names (Ennoia, Prognōsis, Aphtharsia and Aīōnia Zōē) associated in *Ap. John* with the Mother Barbelo, and by analogy the development of another tetrad of names (Autogenes, Nous, Thelema and Logos) associated with the Son. Needless to say, in *Ap. John* the names, perhaps originally designating attributes of the Mother and Son, are regarded as separate hypostases or subordinate beings granted to Barbelo and the Autogenes Son by the Invisible Spirit when they praise him for their creation.

Three quarters of a century later, the "Allogenes group" still recognizes a tetrad (now named Kalyptos, Protophanes, the Triple Male and Autogenes) associated with Barbelo, while the tetrad associated with the Son has been dropped or at least lost specificity, since we hear now only of the "self-begotten ones" (plural) and the entities Metanoia, Paroikesis and Antitypoi as prominent entities below the level of Autogenes. However, the vacillation in the placement of the figure of the Triple Male gives the impression that the thought structure of the "Allogenes group" has little room for tetrads, and basically thinks in terms of triads, as the doctrine of the Triple Power, expounded upon previously, suggests.

It seems to me that the most direct inspiration for the tripartite aspects of Barbelo, namely Kalyptos, Protophanes and Autogenes, interpreted respectively as the contemplated intellect (*nous noētos*), contemplating intellect (*nous kathorōn*) and planning or demiurgic intellect (*nous dianouomenos*), is the system of Numenius. As for the doctrine of the Triple Power, we have seen that Numenius does not posit a supreme ground of being beyond intellect and true being, and thus espouses a three level metaphysic; but the *Chaldaean Oracles*, replete with its system of three transcendent triads and a primal entity, the Father, who is presumably beyond being, seems very close to the system underlying the "Allogenes group."<sup>12</sup> In particular, Numenius's system is very close to the ontology of the Aeon of Barbelo in the "Allogenes group," while the three triads implicit in the Paternal

Monad, the upper Hecate and in the dyadically transcendent Intellect in the system of the *Chaldaean Oracles* are very close to the ontology of the Triple Power of the "Allogenes group," especially in the way this triad is related to the Unknowable One and to the triadic structure of the Aeon of Barbelo.

In this connection, one ought also to mention the even earlier system of Moderatus. The system of Moderatus, who was active at the end of the first century CE, is a four level metaphysics (*apud* Porphyry *apud* Simplicius, *In Phys.* 230, 24 - 231, 27 Diels and Porphyry, *Vita Pythag.* 48-53; cf. also Joh. Stobaeus, *Anih.* 1.21 Wachsmuth). Moderatus posited a first One beyond all being and essence, followed by a second One who is true being, intelligible, and comprises the forms. The second One is called the Monad or unitary Logos which, acting as paradigm, is the Quality that limits the Quantity of a principle opposing it, called Multiplicity (also Speusippus's term for the Old Academic Indefinite Dyad). In fact, Moderatus conceives this Monad as a permanence (*monē*) from which Multiplicity generates a system of monads (ideal numbers) by a Progression (*propodismos*) from and a return (*anapodismos*) to the Monad, an anticipation of the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation in three phases of *monē*, *proodos* and *epistrophē*,<sup>13</sup> not to mention a possible anticipation of the Sethian doctrine of the Triple Power as the medium through which the Aeon of Barbelo emanates from the Invisible Spirit.

We now conclude this lengthy exposition of the doctrine of the "Allogenes group" in its Platonic context by drawing some conclusions about its historical position in later Platonism.

First, it should now be clear that *Allogenes* and *Zost.* are to be included among "the apocalypses of Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nicotheos and Allogenes and Messos and those of other such figures" (Porphyry, *Vita Plot.* 16) read in Plotinus's circle and attacked and refuted, sometimes at great length, by Amelius and Porphyry himself in the period 244-269 CE.<sup>14</sup> This allows one to date *Allogenes* (for whose priority in the group I have argued) around 200 CE, with *Zost.* and *Steles Seth* coming a bit later around 225 CE (Porphyry recognized *Zost.* as a spurious and recent work); *Marsanes*, on account of its doctrine of an unknown Silent One transcending even the Invisible Spirit, seems to be later yet, perhaps at the time of Iamblichus, who likewise posited an "Ineffable" one beyond even the Plotinian One.

Second, in his antignostic polemic (especially in *Ennead* II.9), Plotinus surely has certain of the tractates of the "Allogenes group" (especially *Zost.*), or versions of them, in view. According to the thorough survey of R.T. Wallis,<sup>15</sup> Plotinus does not seem to attack the

Sethian scheme of the unfolding of the divine world. He accepts the notion in *Allogenes* of learned ignorance (*Ennead* III.8.9-10; *NHC* XI, 3: 59, 30-32; 60, 8-12; 61, 2-3; 61, 17-19; cf. Porphyry, *Sent.* 25-26 Lambertz and the *Parmenides* commentary, frgg. II and IV). He also accepts the notion that spiritual beings are simultaneously present in their entirety as "all together" in the Intellect (*Ennead* V.8.7-9; cf. "those who exist together," e.g., *NHC* VIII, 1: 21; 87; 115-116). Also, his acceptance of the notion of the traversal of Vitality or Life from the One into the Intellect has already been pointed out (*Ennead* III.8.11; cf. *NHC* XI, 3: 49, 5-21).

On the other hand, Plotinus does not accept the strong partitioning of the Intellect characteristic of the "Allogenes group" (*Ennead* II.9). With even greater vehemence, he attacks doctrines found principally in *Zost.*, especially its teaching on Sophia (VII, 1: 9, 16 - 11, 9): the primal wisdom is "neither a derivative nor a stranger in something strange to it, but is identical with true being and thus Intellect itself" (*Ennead* V.8.5). He attacks the idea that Soul or Sophia declined and put on human bodies or that Sophia illuminated the darkness, producing an image (*eidolon*) in matter, which in turn produces an image of the image. He scorns the idea of a demiurge who revolts from its mother (*Ennead* II.9.10) and whose activity gives rise to "repentances" (*metanoiai*, i.e. of Sophia), copies (*antitypoi*, i.e. the demiurge's counterfeit aeons) and transmigrations (*Ennead* II.9.6; also the "alien earth" of II.9.11; cf. *Zost.*, VIII, 1: 5, 10-29; 8, 9-16; 12, 4-21). Plotinus is critical in general of the Gnostics' unnecessary multiplication of hypostases, rejects as out of hand conceptions such as a secondary knowledge that is the knowledge of yet a higher knowledge (*Ennead* II.9.1; cf. *Zost.*, VIII, 1: 82, 1-13), and completely ridicules their magical incantations (*Ennead* II.9.14; cf. VIII, 1: 52; 85-88; 127; XI, 3: 53, 32 - 55, 11; VII, 5: 126, 1-17; X, 1: 25, 17-32, 5).

Besides these attacks, it may be, as Wallis suggests, that his encounter with the Gnostics caused Plotinus to tighten up his own interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus* (especially 39E), for example in *Ennead* III.9.1 where he toys with a tripartition of the Intellect (rejected explicitly in II.9.6). In *Ennead* VI.68. "On Number," produced immediately after his antignostic treatise, he changes the order of the Being-Life-Mind triad applied throughout the rest of the *Enneads* to the unfolding of the Intellect from the One to the order Being-Mind-Life, and restricts this triad to the hypostasis of Intellect alone, perhaps in response to the Existence-Vitality-Mentality triad of *Allogenes*, which could easily be such as implying an intermediate and thus unnecessary hypostasis between the high deity and its Intellect, Barbelo.

Finally, while the philosophical roots of Plotinus have been recognized to lie certainly in Plato but also in the later Platonists such as Moderatus, Numenius, Ammonius and perhaps the author of the *Chaldaean Oracles* among others, his debt to the Gnostic metaphysicians ought also to be recognized, as H.J. Krämer<sup>16</sup> long ago pointed out in such detail. The contention of this paper is the same, except that it attempts to show that it is the "Allogenes group" of the Sethian gnostic apocalypses that had such an impact upon Plotinus and his successors, not only as catalysts that caused him to tighten up his thinking, but also as sources of doctrine, insofar as these treatises built their systems upon those of previous Platonists and Neopythagoreans.

Furthermore, this paper has urged the priority within the "Allogenes group" of the treatise *Allogenes*, although without the benefit of intensive analysis and comparison; the author of this work must in any case be understood as a Sethian but probably not professional school Platonist who was aware of first and second century metaphysical doctrine, perhaps in the form of written digests. The author's goal seems to have been to interpret the Sethian practice of visionary ascension derived from the traditional Sethian baptismal rite (as its vestigial terminology in *Zost.* amply demonstrates) in terms of Platonic ontology and contemplative technique, and also to develop further the scheme of the derivation of transcendent hypostatic beings already in evidence in *Ap. John* in directions suggested by Neopythagorean arithmological speculation on the production of the Many out of the One.

Finally, as apparently the first witness to the triads Being-Life-Mind and Existence-Vitality-Mentality, the author of *Allogenes* may have been an important contributor to the development of the Middle Platonic exegesis of passages from Plato's writings on the relation of intelligence to life and being such as *Timaeus* 39E and *Sophist* 248C-E, albeit probably without ever citing or perhaps even consulting those passages himself. It very may well be that *Allogenes* was the source of Plotinus's use of these triads, as well as that of Porphyry, particularly if the latter was the author of the *Parmenides* commentary, as Hadot has argued so weightily. In all events, I hope to have shown that the "Allogenes group" and *Allogenes* in particular form an important new link in the transition from Middle Platonism to Neoplatonism.

## NOTES

1. See J.D. Turner, *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, ch.3, "Sethian Gnosticism: A Literary History," pp. 55-86, ed. C.W. Hedrick, Robert Hodgson (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986).
2. See P. Hadot, "Être, Vie Pensée chez Plotin," in *Les sources de Plotin* (Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique V, Vandoeuvres-Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960), pp. 107-120, 130-136.
3. P. Hadot, "La métaphysique de Porphyre," in *Porphyre* (Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique XII, Vandoeuvres-Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960), pp. 140-141 and *idem*, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (2 vols., Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1968), 1.255-272.
4. Anon. *Taurensis* frg. XII, 23-33 in W. Kroll, "Ein neuplatonischer Parmenides-kommentar in einem Turiner Palimpsest," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 47 (1893): 599-627; cf. P. Hadot, "Fragments d'un commentaire de Porphyre sur le Parménide," *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 74 (1961): 410-438; and *idem*, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 2.104-106 and references to discussion in vol. 1 in index, 2.145.
5. W. Theiler, *Porphyrius und Augustin* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1933), pp. 4-5.
6. E.R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," in *Les sources de Plotin* (Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique V; Vandoeuvres-Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960), pp. 1-332; cf. P. Merlan on Numenius, "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), pp. 96-106.
7. M. Baltes, "Numenios von Apamea und der platonische Timaios," *Vigiliae Christianae* 39 (1975): 241-270.
8. J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 200* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 394-395.
9. I append here some results of the analysis of H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire* (Recherches d'Archéologie, de Philosophie et d'Histoire XIII, Cairo: l'Institut Français, 1956).
10. H.A. Wolfson, "Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and the Gnostic Basilides," *Harvard Theological Review* 50 (1957): 145-156; cf. also J. Whittaker, "Neopythagoreanism and Negative Theology," *Symbolae Osloensis* 44 (1969): 109-125; *idem*, "Neopythagoreanism and the Transcendent Absolute," *Symbolae Osloensis* 48 (1973): 77-86; *idem*, "ΕΠΕΚΕΙΝΑ ΝΟΤ ΚΑΙ ΟΤΣΙΑΣ," *Vigiliae Christianae* 23 (1969): 91-104; and M. Jufresa, "Basilides, A Path to Plotinus," *Vigiliae Christianae* 35 (1981): 1-15.
11. H.J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Platonismus zwischen Platon und Plotin* second ed. (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1967), pp. 193-369; cf. my "The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment: The Ascent of Mind and the Descent of Wisdom," *Novum Testamentum* 22 (1980): 336-337.
12. See the analysis of the relation of the *Oracles* and Numenius by E.R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," op. cit. supra and the ensuing discussion of his paper in the same work.

13. Pointed out by J.M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, op. cit. supra, pp. 350-351.
14. See C. Schmidt, *Plotins Stellung um Gnosticismus und kirchlichen Christentum* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur altchristlichen Literatur 20, Leipzig: H.C. Hinrichs, 1901); J.H. Sieber, "An Introduction to the Tractate Zostrianos from Nag Hammadi," *Novum Testamentum* 15 (1973): 233-240; C. Elsas, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltablehnung in der Schule Plotins* (Berlin & New York: W. de Gruyter, 1975; J.M. Robinson, "The Three Stiles of Seth and the Gnostics of Plotinus," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism: Stockholm, August 20-25, 1977* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977), pp. 132-142; B.A. Pearson, "The Tractate Marsanes (NHC X) and the Platonic Tradition," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas*, ed. B. Aland (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), pp. 373-384; and my own articles cited above.
15. R.T. Wallis, "Plotinus and the Gnostics" (23 pp., forthcoming).
16. H.J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik*, op. cit. supra, pp. 223-264.

## Soul and Nous in Plotinus, Numenius and Gnosticism

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Late Neoplatonic metaphysics, as I have written elsewhere, is in many ways a series of footnotes to the *Enneads*.<sup>1</sup> This is not, of course, to play down either the school's internal disputes both on metaphysics itself and on the means of salvation, or the return of Plotinus's successors to procedures, like allegorization of mythology, and forms of exposition, like the extended Platonic or Aristotelian commentary, which he had either minimized or rejected altogether. Yet there remains in my view a doctrinal unity underlying ancient pagan Neoplatonism,<sup>2</sup> which had not been present in Middle Platonism or Hermetism, or, as the Nag Hammadi discoveries confirm, in Gnosticism, and which is absent from most Christian or post-Christian versions of Platonism. As Porphyry observes, Plotinus did not always make clear the logical interconnections of his thought,<sup>3</sup> and much of his successors' task lay in clarifying these and resolving the tensions or inconsistencies that abound on all levels of his universe.<sup>4</sup> Professor Armstrong regards the doctrine of Nous as both the weak point and the growing point of his system,<sup>5</sup> whereas I feel, with Iamblichus,<sup>6</sup> that the problems are strongest in his view of Soul. But the point has little importance, since serious tensions are clearly present on both levels and were to raise difficulties for his successors. What I wish to show here is how these tensions are linked in Plotinus with a "love-hate" relationship towards Gnosticism and Gnosticizing trends within Platonism, and how, on the level of Nous, they often result from resemblances to views found within

Gnosticism, whereas on that of Soul they follow rather from a reaction against Gnostic ideas.

Of course, if the above remarks are correct, any idea of comparing Plotinus with "Gnosticism" as such, rather than with the various trends within that movement, rests on a fallacy, and even to compare him with any sizeable number of those trends clearly falls outside the scope of a single paper. I shall therefore explain the procedure I intend to follow here. In considering Plotinus, we can obviously not confine ourselves to his anti-Gnostic polemic (*Enn.* II.9) or even to the group of four treatises (*Enn.* III.8, V.8, V.5 and II.9) [30-33]<sup>7</sup> of which this forms the conclusion. For the triad Being-Life-Intellect, the parallel to the Nag Hammadi texts that has most caught scholars' attention,<sup>8</sup> is barely mentioned in the anti-Gnostic quartet<sup>9</sup> and is most prominent in the immediately succeeding VI.6 [34] *On Numbers*, a work with the same title as one ascribed to a certain Aquilinus, who may or may not be the Gnostic teacher mentioned in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*.<sup>10</sup> We shall similarly find anti-Gnostic polemic in other contemporary treatises, such as IV.3-5 [27-29] *On the Soul* and VI.7 [38] *On the Ideas and the One*. Hence while, on this subject as on others, account must be taken of all Plotinus's works, it is the texts of his "early middle" period that should receive our special attention.

On the Gnostic side, whatever our view of the identity of Plotinus's opponents,<sup>11</sup> and while it would be foolish to ignore any of the ancient evidence, our starting-point must be the two Nag Hammadi tractates, *Zostrianos* (VIII.1) and *Allogenes* (XI.3), with titles identical to those named by Porphyry as used by Plotinus's opponents.<sup>12</sup> Despite disagreement on almost everything else, no-one, to my knowledge, has seriously contested that these are the works in question, and on literary and doctrinal grounds it seems virtually certain.<sup>13</sup> Special attention should also be given to the other two "Neoplatonizing" Nag Hammadi texts, the *Three Steles of Seth* (VII.5) and *Marsanes* (X.1), though I am less sure than some that Plotinus knew these particular works,<sup>14</sup> and to the two Christian (or Christianized) "Sethian" works (to use a convenient, if controversial term)<sup>15</sup> which refer to figures from Porphyry's list, the *Apocryphon of John*, whose longer version cites *Zoroaster*,<sup>16</sup> and the anonymous treatise from the Bruce Codex, which mentions Nicotheus, as well as Marsanes.<sup>17</sup> Among Middle Platonic and late Neoplatonic sources three are of outstanding importance, the fragments of Numenius, the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the fragments of the "Porphyrian" *Parmenides* commentary.

Of the works mentioned in the last paragraph two will here receive special attention. The first is *Zostrianos*, for three reasons. One is that

the editors of *Allogenes* and *Marsanes* are here to expound the teaching of those works. Second, of the four "Neoplatonizing" Nag Hammadi tractates, *Zostrianos* is the most typically "Gnostic," if we can still speak in such terms; at least, it is closest to the teaching of Plotinus's opponents, notably in referring unmistakably, if allusively, to the fall of Sophia and the ignorant demiurge, and in its hostility towards the material world.<sup>18</sup> Third, it contains remarkable resemblances to Plotinus's accounts of Intellectual contemplation in V.8 and VI.7, and rests in my view both on a common philosophical tradition and a similar philosophico-religious experience.<sup>19</sup> I therefore do not see such resemblances as indicating Gnostic influence on Neoplatonism, except in the sense that I believe that the prominence of certain themes, such as the one just noted, in Plotinus's early middle period derives, in large part at least, from his Gnostic pre-occupations,<sup>20</sup> whether from hostility to their teaching, as in his account of the World-Soul's activity, or, as in his account of the Intelligible world, from a desire to show that their teaching is already found in Platonism in a superior form.<sup>21</sup> *Zostrianos* thus constitutes a paradigm of Plotinus's "love-hate" relationship with Gnosticism, and, in illustration of its attractions and dangers for a Platonist, as Plotinus saw them, I shall also give special attention to the Middle Platonist towards whom a similar "love-hate" relationship is clearest on his part, Numenius of Apamea. For it was of course precisely its appeal for Platonists, including members of his school, that led to Plotinus's preoccupation with Gnosticism, which he would otherwise doubtless have ignored as completely as he did orthodox Christianity and most popular religion, including the popular Platonism of the "Platonic underworld."<sup>22</sup> We may divide the relevant doctrines into three groups: (a) those on which Plotinus shows strong affinities to *Zostrianos* and/or Numenius, points on which the post-Iamblicheans often reacted against him; (b) those Gnostic doctrines against which Plotinus himself reacted and where later Neoplatonists followed him; and (c) those points, notably multiplication of Hypostases, on which later Neoplatonists stood closer to Gnosticism than he did.

First, however, I wish to stress the importance of one point already made, the significance of which is often misconceived, that *Zostrianos* refers unmistakably, if allusively, to the fall of Sophia and the ignorant demiurge. Where a doctrine is absent or its presence debatable (as, for instance, the Theory of Forms in most of Plato's later works) we may be in doubt whether an author means to reject it or is simply omitting it as irrelevant to the present discussion.<sup>23</sup> But where its presence is unmistakable, but allusive, we have no such choice. The doctrine must have been so familiar to the author's readers that it could be taken for

granted without the need for detailed exposition. And it is clear from *Zostrianos's* stress on the creator's ignorance and the inferiority of his work that he regards it as of fundamental importance. Thus, however it may be with other Neoplatonizing Gnostic texts, the doctrines in question are basic to *Zostrianos*.

Of *Zostrianos's* treatment of these doctrines only two features call for special mention. One is the curious apparent transition between, or identification of, Sophia and Barbelo in the admittedly fragmentary passage 82-83. Here Sieber's explanation, that Sophia, as a manifestation of Barbelo, is identical with Barbelo, may be correct.<sup>24</sup> Or the passage may be a relic of an older "Simonian" system, in which the divine thought (*Ennoia* or *Epinoia*) itself undergoes a fall,<sup>25</sup> in contrast to the multiplication of female principles found in the more developed systems. Of this passage I shall say more later. The second point to note is the phrase "image of an image" used of the demiurge's creation of the sensible world,<sup>26</sup> a phrase echoed in Plotinus's anti-Gnostic polemic,<sup>27</sup> and clearly deriving from *Republic* X's criticism of artistic creation, applied by Plotinus to his own portrait.<sup>28</sup> It is therefore interesting that Plotinus's counter-claim that the artist may imitate the archetypal Logoi of the sensible world comes at V.8.1.32-40, i.e. in the second work of his anti-Gnostic quartet. Since that work's account of natural production clearly leads up to Chapter eight's attack (lines 7-23) on Gnostic devaluation of the sensible world, we may wonder whether Plotinus's "revisionist" view of art may have been an attempt to forestall *Zostrianos's* line of argument at the outset.

The most important resemblances between Plotinus and *Zostrianos*, by contrast, occur in their accounts of the Intelligible world, in relation both to the Being-Intellect (or Knowledge)-Life triad (of which I shall say a little more later, leaving other participants to discuss it in more detail) and in their vitalistic descriptions of that world and the contemplation thereof. In Plotinus, as we have seen, the most striking examples occur in *Enn.* V.8 [31] the second work of the anti-Gnostic quartet, and VI.7 [38], the first part of which forms an anti-Gnostic interpretation of the *Timaeus*. A literal interpretation of that work would, in Plotinus's view, involve its producer in deliberation, and hence in doubt and ignorance;<sup>29</sup> moreover, in turning his attention to the sensible world he would be attracted towards that world, i.e., to an inferior state,<sup>30</sup> while, in sending souls there, he would seem to have intended them for a worse condition than if they had remained in the Intelligible world — a Gnostic conclusion *par excellence*!<sup>31</sup> Most fundamentally of all, since the sensible world did not exist before its production, how could the idea of producing it have occurred to him?<sup>32</sup>

We thus seem to be faced with the absurdity either that sense-perception, the elements, and the various natural species exist in the Intelligible world or that the lower, sensible world constitutes the actualization (and hence the perfection) of what was present in the higher realm only in potential form.<sup>33</sup> Plotinus's answer, of course, is that the sensible world is a continual unfolding of the eternal contemplation of Nous, which contains the archetypes of that world's constituents in more unified, and hence more perfect, non-material form — sensations, for instance, being dim intellections.<sup>34</sup> In propounding this answer Plotinus discusses two entities that bulk large within Gnosticism — Primal Man and the True Earth — though he integrates them with traditional Greek philosophical debates, the former of them, for instance, arising in a discussion of the Platonic and Aristotelian definitions of man.<sup>35</sup> The True Earth, which, Plotinus claims, some Gnostics regard as the archetype of this one,<sup>36</sup> is described in detail in the anonymous work from the Bruce Codex<sup>37</sup> and briefly mentioned in the Nag Hammadi *Gospel of the Egyptians*.<sup>38</sup> But it is *Zostrianos*, whose hero ascends through a series of "True Earths" corresponding to the several levels of the Intelligible Cosmos, that presents the closest parallels to Plotinus, as can be seen if we set V.8.3.30 ff. and VI.7.12.4 ff. alongside the relevant passages from that work.<sup>39</sup> In addition to both authors' vitalistic conception of the elements of the Intelligible world, and their clear common dependence on past tradition, including the True Earth of the *Phaedo* myth, the Aristotelian doctrine of Nous, and the vitalism of the Stoics,<sup>40</sup> we may observe that *Zostrianos* describes his ascent as a "vision,"<sup>41</sup> and both sources, in my view, rest on a common experience.<sup>42</sup> Doctrinally we may note their agreement on six points: (a) the membership of souls in the Intelligible world,<sup>43</sup> (b) the existence of Forms of individuals,<sup>44</sup> (c) the Aristotelian doctrine of the identity of Nous and its objects, which leads *Zostrianos*, like Plotinus to describe the members of the Intelligible world as "thoughts,"<sup>45</sup> (d) the notion of Intelligible Matter (the "barrenness," or *sterêsis*, mentioned at 116.12 ff.),<sup>46</sup> (e) the identity-in-diversity among the members of the Intelligible order,<sup>47</sup> and (f) the doctrine expounded at length in another of Plotinus's early middle works, VI.4-5 [22-23], that incorporeal beings are free from spatial limitations and hence present everywhere in their entirety,<sup>48</sup> or, in the words of Plotinus and Porphyry, are "everywhere and nowhere"; hence their "presence," or operation, at a particular portion of the material world is due to their "wishing" to be there.<sup>49</sup> The first four of these doctrines, we may observe, were either rejected or considerably qualified by Iamblichus and his successors,<sup>50</sup> especially the first of them, which in their view

ascribed too exalted a status to Soul, especially the human soul, a point on which Iamblichus regarded Plotinus and his pupils as having followed Numenius too closely.<sup>51</sup> To Numenius's views we shall therefore now turn.

The first Numenian doctrine to be examined is that of *proschrēsis* whereby the first God uses the second God to contemplate, while the latter uses the Third God (his own lower phase, as we shall see) to produce.<sup>52</sup> Plotinus, of course, normally rejects any such view as fatal to divine transcendence in making the higher Hypostases dependent on the lower; it was, however, accepted by the author of the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary<sup>53</sup> and may be propounded in Plotinus's early work V.1 [10] 7.4-6, which appears to describe Nous as originating as the One's self-contemplation, though Dr. O'Daly has suggested an alternative explanation of the passage which neither does violence to the Greek nor contradicts Plotinus's normal thought.<sup>54</sup> The doctrine is, however, clearly maintained by Philo, who in one place describes God as employing *ennoia* and *dianoēsis* to contemplate his works,<sup>55</sup> while elsewhere God is said to use the Logos to shape the sensible world;<sup>56</sup> similarly in the *Tripartite Tractate* the Logos uses the Archon of this world as his instrument to shape the latter.<sup>57</sup> The higher, contemplative form of *proschrēsis* likewise occurs in several Gnostic texts. In the *Apocryphon of John Ennoia*, identified with Barbelo, is described as the thought of the Supreme God, the reflection in which he beholds himself;<sup>58</sup> a similar view is found in the *Megalē Apophasis*, ascribed to Simon Magus, where *Ennoia* (or *Epinoia*) forms a unity-induality with the primal Nous, while a passage of *Zostrianos* cited earlier<sup>59</sup> describes a female being, either Barbelo or Sophia, as the "introspection of the pre-existing God."<sup>60</sup> Whatever his earlier hesitations over this, or other Numenian divisions of Intellect,<sup>61</sup> in II.9.1. Plotinus firmly rejects any such notion or any doubling of the One or Nous into a potential and an actual or an inactive and active phase. Even our minds, he argues, must be aware of their own thoughts and to postulate a further principle of awareness in Nous deprives it of true self-knowledge and lead to the absurdity of an infinite regress.<sup>62</sup> Consistently with his "nominalist" reaction against the Gnostics' multiplication of Hypostases, he regards *Epinoia* as a mere conceptual distinction, which has no correspondence in reality, and which cannot therefore introduce any ontological division into the activity of Nous.<sup>63</sup>

It is a common observation that the further distinctions within Nous rejected in II.9.1 and II.9.6, after a more sympathetic consideration in the early work III.9 [13].1, are easier to identify with those propounded by Numenius than those of any extant Gnostic system.<sup>64</sup>

The highest level Plotinus's opponents, like Numenius, are said to identify with the *Timaeus*'s "Ideal Animal" (the sensible world's Intelligible model) and with "Nous at rest," containing all within itself; similarly, like Numenius, they identify their second level with Nous "in motion" or "in contemplation" and their third with the "discursively reasoning" (*dianōoumenos*) or "planning" Nous, an interpretation of *Timaeus* 39E. (Sometimes, Plotinus adds, they see this level as the demiurge, while elsewhere they identify the latter with Soul,<sup>65</sup> an inconsistency Plotinus's pupils were to find within him!<sup>66</sup> In fact, in the developed Gnostic systems, at least two further entities, Sophia and the demiurge (whom Plotinus suggests identifying respectively with higher and lower Soul, often termed respectively Soul and Nature, within his own system),<sup>67</sup> intervene between Intelligible and sensible worlds. A threefold division of the Intelligible world appears in both *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, into the Hidden One (*Kalyptos*), the First-Appearing One (*Prōtōphanes*) and the Self-Begotten One (*Autogenes*) equated with the members of the Triad Being-Life-Intellect, or Existence-Knowledge-Life.<sup>68</sup> The resemblance to Numenius and to the views of Plotinus's opponents, at first sight far from evident, becomes clearer if, as I have suggested elsewhere, we suppose that Numenius regarded the Forms as pre-existing (i.e. hidden) within his first Nous and brought forth (or first manifested) by his second Nous.<sup>69</sup> We may further recall that in *Allogenes* the Triple Power (the intermediary between the supreme One and the sensible world) or, more precisely, its lowest phase (i.e. the Self-Begotten One), is said to act on the sensible world "successively and individually, continuing to rectify the failures from Nature," a view rejected by Plotinus as absurd.<sup>70</sup> Coincidentally or not, Plotinus here also rejects an image used by Numenius, of the demiurge as a husbandman, who, in the relevant fragment is said to "sow, distribute and transplant" the souls assigned him by the supreme God.<sup>71</sup> It is thus interesting that, though both Numenius and *Allogenes* anticipate Plotinus in using the "undiminished giving" concept of divine production,<sup>72</sup> neither uses it, as he does, to exempt God (or at least God's lowest phase) from deliberate attention to his products. And, as we shall see, this is by no means the most Gnostic feature of Numenius's account of divine activity.

First, however, we may note one more feature of the triadic structure of Nous, that *Enn.* VI.6 and the first part of *Zostrianos* are almost the only extant texts to present the order Being-Intellect (or Knowledge)-Life;<sup>73</sup> elsewhere, including the latter part of *Zostrianos*,<sup>74</sup> the normal order Being-Life-Intellect is all but universal. In VI.7, however, in equating Life with the initial stage of Nous, while it is still

"groping for vision" (i.e., the stage of Intelligible Matter) Plotinus implies that Life is in fact the highest of the three.<sup>75</sup> Yet at VI.6.17.35-43 he observes that, if the "Ideal Animal" includes souls as well as Intellects, Life must be the lowest member of the triad.<sup>76</sup> In other words, he seems to be saying, *Zostrianos's* order is valid only if we rank the "Ideal Animal" below Intellect proper, a reversal not merely of the views of Numenius and Plotinus's Gnostic opponents, but of Plato himself, though there were Platonists, like Atticus and Longinus, who upheld it.<sup>77</sup>

Before discussing Numenius's Third God in detail, we must make two points concerning that being's relation to the Second God. The first is the parallel between Numenius's views on the relation between the Second and Third Gods and those between Nous and the human soul. For just as our soul at its highest is identical with its Intelligible origin,<sup>78</sup> so the Third God is merely the lower, active phase of the contemplative Second God.<sup>79</sup> In other words, there is no Soul as a separate Hypostasis for Numenius on either divine or human level, merely a lower manifestation of the Second Hypostasis. The full importance of this point will become clear later.

The second preliminary point concerns the problem whether, as certain texts suggest, Numenius believed in a doctrine of cosmic cycles similar to that of the Stoics and the *Politicus* myth,<sup>80</sup> with his Third God alternately governing the sensible world and subsequently returning to share the contemplation of the Second God. This is suggested by the statement that the Second God "being double, creates his own Idea and the cosmos"; *epeita theōrētikos holōs*.<sup>81</sup> The alternative, if we do not resort to the risky procedure of amending the text, is to suppose, with Henry, that Numenius is describing two phases of his Second God, which are logically, but not chronologically distinct.<sup>82</sup> God is elsewhere similarly stated at one time to look to man and keep him alive, while at another he returns to his vantage-point. Here, however, though the allusion to the *Politicus* myth seems unmistakable, Numenius could have in mind two phases of divine activity *within* a single world-period, i.e. to be saying simply that individual men live or die according to whether God looks to them or not.<sup>83</sup> A third text, from Macrobius, but of probable Numenian origin, describes Nous as alternately undergoing division and again (*rursus*) returning from division to indivisibility, and thereby fulfilling its cosmic functions (*mundi implet officia*) while not abandoning the mysteries of its own nature (*naturae suae arcana non desinit*).<sup>84</sup> Here we may choose between the above explanations; either (a) a "cosmic cycles" doctrine is presupposed, or (b) Numenius has a purely logical succession in mind, or (c) he may be describing the

operations of Nous within the individual (though "*mundi*" makes this less likely). More probably its operations in both the world and the individual are meant, in which case we have a further parallel between the two.

However this may be, Numenius's desire to preserve his Second God in continual contemplation, and thereby safeguard divine transcendence, is here very evident. A similar attitude occurs in his comparison of the Second God to a helmsman sailing over the sea of Matter, while keeping his attention fixed above.<sup>85</sup> But for the Third God the consequences are less satisfactory. Thus the statement, in the second passage discussed in our last paragraph, that on returning to its vantage-point Nous enjoys a happy life<sup>86</sup> implies that when its attention is directed here, its life is less happy. The notorious fragment 11 goes even further, declaring that, in unifying Matter, the Second God is split by it,<sup>87</sup> with the result that he (or rather his lower phase, the Third God) ceases to dwell in his own sphere, the Intelligible order, for in reaching out for (or desiring-, *eporexamenos*) Matter he becomes forgetful of himself.<sup>88</sup> Plotinus's rejection of any such view (at least in his normal thought) is emphatic. For him the Hypostases produce "without inclination, will or movement" towards their products;<sup>89</sup> hence the demiurge knows his activity on the world only in its unity, not *qua* directed towards the world.<sup>90</sup> Otherwise, as we have seen, and as Numenius concedes, he would experience an attraction to the sensible world parallel to that undergone by the human soul.<sup>91</sup> Thus at IV.3 [27] 17.21-31 Plotinus compares the individual soul to a sailor, whose concern for his ship puts him in danger of perishing with it, a passage combining phrases from two of Numenius's descriptions of his Second God.<sup>92</sup> That Numenius went further than other Platonists (and even than some Gnostics) in regarding Matter as an evil principle in permanent opposition to God is well known;<sup>93</sup> and like most Gnostics, but in strong contrast to orthodox Hellenic thought, he extended this to the matter of the planetary spheres, where he even located the Platonic hells<sup>94</sup> — views which Professor Armstrong rightly sees as the most definitely oriental feature of his thought.<sup>95</sup>

Plotinus's reaction against Gnosticism was thus equally a reaction against Gnosticizing Platonists like Numenius. How far this reaction led him to modify his own philosophy is a vexed question, and we may well hesitate to give too confident an answer to a problem that has led scholars of the caliber of Dodds<sup>96</sup> and Pucch<sup>97</sup> along demonstrably false paths. Yet I believe that certain tensions in Plotinus's doctrine of Soul, especially in his "early middle" period, tensions which were to divide his followers, can best be seen as in large part the result of his



anti-Gnostic pre-occupations. It is, of course, true that his concern was with philosophical theories rather than with individuals or schools. Yet, at the very least, the need to remove any Gnostic implications from his account of the Hypostases gave special point to views that he might in any case have derived from reflection on earlier thinkers. Thus Plotinus's denial of divine deliberation arose, as Professor Pépin and I have shown, from the Aristotelian view of deliberation as developed in the Skeptics' theological criticisms,<sup>98</sup> while the claim that divine attention remains "above" is equally Aristotelian.<sup>99</sup> Also derived from the Skeptics is Plotinus's argument that our everyday consciousness, based as it is on *phantasia*, and thus dealing with images of the Forms rather than the Forms themselves, is inconsistent with perfect knowledge.<sup>100</sup> Hence, the work *On the Soul* argues, on her return to the Intelligible world, our soul is wholly absorbed in contemplation of that world, a view we have seen Iamblichus attacking as too Numenian.<sup>101</sup> Clearly then, if the World-soul is to escape the Gnostics' charge that her knowledge is inferior to that attainable by man, she, like the purified human soul, must permanently transcend discursive, temporal thought — a strong contrast to the view of the early work V.1 [10] 4.10-25 that her contemplation differs from Nous in involving temporal succession.<sup>102</sup> In IV.4 [28] 15, on the other hand she is said to differ from Nous in generating time without herself being subject thereto,<sup>103</sup> an obviously unsatisfactory conclusion, since we might allow Nous to generate time directly without the intermediary of Soul. Nor does Plotinus's claim that the purified soul, in contemplating Nous, also possess consciousness of herself,<sup>104</sup> provide a satisfactory answer, since such self-awareness can be only of herself *qua* identified with Nous. And while the distinction between Nous and the individual soul becomes clear when the latter leaves the Intelligible world, this obviously cannot happen with the changeless divine souls.<sup>105</sup> In short the distinction between Nous and higher World-Soul has vanished, and there remains only her lower level, Nature (*physis*), the power that unconsciously molds the sensible world, which at IV.4.13.19-21 is described as the "image impressed from Soul upon Matter"; indeed doubt is expressed there whether Nature can be ranked among "true Beings."<sup>106</sup> Nor is it easy to see how the distinction between Nous and higher Soul could be restored without a dangerous lapse towards Gnosticism, similar to that we have found in Numenius. The same general view emerges from other works of Plotinus's "early middle" period.

That the first three works of the anti-Gnostic quartet are little concerned with Soul is observed in Theiler and Beutler's introduction

to II.9.<sup>107</sup> This is not surprising of V.5, which is wholly concerned with Nous and the One. But III.8 and V.8 raise more serious problems. Omitting V.8 for the moment, we may observe that III.8,<sup>108</sup> after its discussion of Nature (chs. 2-4) turns to Soul, which is said to exercise a higher form of contemplation. The nature of this, however, is nowhere made clear, and when in III.8.6 Plotinus passes to a more detailed account of Soul's contemplation, it is to the human soul that he refers, as is clear from his references to her as engaging in external activity, though he disguises this by referring to "Soul" without distinction. Nor does II.9 resolve the problem. After chapter I's assertion that the distinction between the Hypostases has often been demonstrated,<sup>109</sup> the rest of the work, with its assertion that the World-Soul's middle level (that corresponding to discursive thought in us) does not descend or deliberate,<sup>110</sup> merely raises the difficulty anew.

The same attitude is apparent in other works of the period. That VI.4.5 [22-23] seems to "telescope" the Hypostases has often been noted. Similarly, passages like that cited earlier from VI.6.17.35-43, on the "Ideal Animal," appear, like *Zostrianos* and Numenius,<sup>111</sup> to grant Soul full membership of the Intelligible World.<sup>112</sup> Other passages indeed refer to Logoi, explicitly or by implication situated on the level of Soul, intermediate between the Forms in Nous and the formative principles in Nature.<sup>113</sup> Yet that this cannot solve the problem of the higher soul's contemplation is clear if we ask what these Logoi are. In the human soul they are evidently mental images or verbal formulæ, the objects of *phantasia*.<sup>114</sup> But this cannot, as we have seen, be true of the divine souls, and we may once more ask why a level of Logoi intermediate between Nous and Nature is necessary at all. In fact, V.8 and VI.7 often imply that the sensible world proceeds from Nous without any intermediary.<sup>115</sup> Most revealing of all is V.8.7.15-16, which in such a passage adds "whether through the intermediary of Soul, or some Soul, makes no difference to the present discussion," thus belatedly reintroducing a principle for which Plotinus has to find room, but which has become superfluous, if not an embarrassment to him.

Another important chapter in this context is the somewhat later III.7[45] 11. Here an "unquiet power of Soul" is said not merely to generate time, but to subject herself thereto,<sup>116</sup> by an act of self-assertion parallel to that which causes the fall of the human soul.<sup>117</sup> How "Gnostic" these statements are has been debated by Profs. Jonas<sup>118</sup> and Manchester;<sup>119</sup> I will merely assert for my part that Plotinus is at the very least guilty of a carelessness of expression, which, if not fully Gnostic, has as strong a Gnostic tendency as most of those

we have criticized in Numenius. Nor does Plotinus make clear which power of Soul is in question. If it is the higher level of Soul, the "middle" level of II.9.2,<sup>120</sup> the difficulties raised in IV.3-4 emerge anew. If, on the other hand, Plotinus has Nature in mind, there is no conflict between the two works, but in that case we are no nearer distinguishing higher Soul from Nous. Moreover, as Plotinus argues against the Gnostics, whose demiurge he suggests equating with Nature in his own system, there can be no question of self-assertion or ambition on that level.<sup>121</sup> Whatever level he is referring to, he would surely have had to reply that his assertions are only metaphorical. But in any case the basic problem remains unanswered.

We may observe a similar ambiguity in Plotinus's view of the status of the heavens. He is, of course, emphatic in upholding the divinity of the celestial souls against the Gnostics; for, as he argues against Numenius, the matter of their bodies is purer than our own.<sup>122</sup> Its control by the celestial gods thus requires no attention or effort on their part, nor does it distract them from contemplation; hence the Gnostics' charge that they are inferior to man in being unable to leave the material world falls to the ground.<sup>123</sup> Nor should we probably read too much into V.8.3.27-30's assertion that the celestial gods contemplate the Intelligible world only "from afar"; for even the work *On the Soul*, where we have seen as strong a tendency as anywhere in Plotinus to "telescope" the Hypostases, recognizes degrees of rank among souls.<sup>124</sup> But there can be no denying the inconsistency of his account of the individual soul's descent and re-ascent through the heavens. Thus in IV.3.17.1 ff. the heavens, though the purest part of the material world, are yet the first stage in her descent, the point where, as IV.4.5<sup>125</sup> tells us, she first reawakens the memory that ultimately draws her back here. We may recall Macrobius's account of her descent, probably derived, as we have seen, from Numenius, where an unconscious attraction to this world, similar to the unconscious memory of the Plotinus passage, draws her here.<sup>126</sup> Yet in IV.3.18 even the human soul, on reaching the heavens, is said to be wholly within the Intelligible world and hence not to need discursive reasoning (or presumably memory).<sup>127</sup> We thus see here a further tension within Plotinus's system, with echoes, even if distant ones, of Numenius.

A similar problem to that over the relation of Soul to Nous is posed for Plotinus, though less explicitly, over that of Nous to the One by the fact that in the mystical experience Nous is in turn transcended.<sup>128</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Plotinus sometimes sounds a pessimistic note over the origin of Nous. What is surprising is to find such a declaration at III.8.8 32-38 — in the first work of the

anti-Gnostic quartet.<sup>129</sup> Hence, while Plotinus's successors unanimously agreed with him in excluding deliberation and attention to their products from the Hypostases,<sup>130</sup> the fundamental dilemma of his system left them with only two consistent alternatives. One, found in the *Parmenides* commentator and, less consistently, in Amelius and Porphyry,<sup>131</sup> was to "telescope" the Hypostases into one another. The other, accepted by Iamblichus and most of his successors,<sup>132</sup> was to downgrade the human soul. Since in their view she no longer contains an unfallen element or possesses a transcendent individual Intellect, she has no direct access to the divine, which she can reach only through the intermediary of a divine soul.<sup>133</sup> This being so, any possibility of her superiority to those souls is destroyed at the outset, and the notion of a graded hierarchy is not merely restored, but receives ever greater emphasis. Consistent with this approach was their rejection, as we have observed, of most of the parallels between Plotinus and *Zostrianos* regarding the Intelligible world.<sup>134</sup> Yet in multiplying levels within the Intelligible world they came, as has often been observed, to resemble the ever-increasing complication of the Gnostic systems. If we confine ourselves to the "Neoplatonizing" Gnostic texts, we may see Amelius, Porphyry, and especially the *Parmenides* commentator as resembling *Allogenes*<sup>135</sup> and (less certainly) *Zostrianos*, in recognizing a multiplicity of levels that are ultimately "telescoped" into one another, whereas Iamblichus's more complex hierarchy stands closer to what survives of *Marsanes*. Plotinus's "love-hate" relationship with the Gnostics and Numenius, therefore, far from exhausting its effects with him, was to continue its influence throughout the whole history of the pagan Neoplatonic school.

## NOTES

1. *Neoplatonism* (London and New York, 1972), p. 92; cf. H. Blumenthal, "Plotinus in Later Platonism," in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honour of A.H. Armstrong* (London, 1981), pp. 212ff. For a different view cf. Professor Whittaker's paper, "De Jamblique et Proclus," in *Entretiens Hardt XXI*, (Vandoeuvres/Geneva, 1975), pp. 65ff.
2. Including even Hierocles and the later Alexandrian School, as M.me. I. Hadot has now shown (*Hierocles et Simplicius; le Probleme du Neoplatonisme Alexandrin* [Paris 1978]).
3. *V.Pl.* 18.6-8.
4. Cf. *Neoplatonism*, pp. 90-93.
5. *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 267.
6. *De An.*, quoted by Stobaeus I.365.5ff. Wachsmuth.

7. See R. Harder, "Fine Neue Schrift Plotins," *Hermes* LXXI (1936): 5-8; D. Roloff, *Plotin: die Gross-Schrift* (Berlin, 1970); V. Cilento, *Plotino; Paideia Antignostica* (Florence, 1971); Ch. Elsas, *Neuplatonische und Gnostische Weltabkehrung in der Schule Plotins* (Berlin, 1975); F. García Bazán, *Plotino y la Gnosis* (Buenos Aires, 1981).
8. See M. Tardieu, "Les Trois Stèles de Seth; un écrit gnostique retrouve a Nag Hammadi," *RSPHTh* 57 (1973): 545-575; James M. Robinson, "The Three Steles of Seth and the Gnostics of Plotinus," *Proc. of the International Conference on Gnosticism, Stockholm 1973* (Stockholm, 1977), pp. 132-142; John D. Turner, "The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment," *Novum Testamentum* 22 (1980): 324-351; J. Sieber "The Barbelo Aeon as Sophia in *Zostrianos* and Related Tractates," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. Bentley Layton (Leiden, 1981), vol. II, pp. 788-795; also the papers of Professors Turner and Manchester read to the present conference.
9. It occurs there only at V.5.1.32-38, 2.9-13, 10.12-14; (cf. P. Hadot, "Les Sources de Plotin," in *Entretiens Hardt V* (Vandoeuvres/Geneva, 1960), pp. 110, 113, 116).
10. On Aquilinus see Porphyry, *V.Pl.* 16.3, Iydu, *De Mens.* IV.76 (on which cf. further below n. 46), and H.-Ch. Puech, *Entretiens Hardt V*, p. 164, with p. 177 of the ensuing discussion.
11. While I regard Plotinus's opponents as "Sethians" or "Barbelo-Gnostics" (on which terms cf. below n. 15). I have no quarrel with those, like Professor Bazán, who see them as Valentiniens using Sethian works; see his *Plotino y la Gnosis*, cited above n. 7; "Tres Decadas de Estudios Plotinianos," *Sapientia* 13 (1980): 292ff.; "Plotino y los Textos Gnosticos de Nag-Hammadi," *Oriente-Occidente* II/2 (1981): 185-203 (on which however cf. n. 14 below). It would in any case have been hard for Gnostics in third-century Rome to escape all Valentinian influence. That Porphyry, rightly or wrongly, regarded Plotinus's opponents as Christians (*V. Pl.* 16.1ff.) was correctly maintained by Puech, *Entretiens Hardt V*, pp. 163-164, and Dodds (ibid., p. 175, with the ensuing discussion). That Christian Gnostics and Christians sympathetic to Gnosticism could use pagan works is proved by the *Apocryphon of John*'s citation of *Zoroaster* (cf. below n. 16) and the use of pagan works by the Nag Hammadi community (probably a Pachomina monastery; cf. James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (New York, 1977), pp. 14-21, and R. van den Broeck, "The Present State of Gnostic Studies," *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1981): 47-49).
12. *V.Pl.* 16.6-7.
13. On *Zostrianos* see J. Sieber, "An Introduction to the Tractate *Zostrianos* from Nag Hammadi," *Novum Testamentum* 15 (1973): 233-240; for *Allogenes*, see esp. Professor Turner's paper in this volume, pp. 427-462.
14. Cf. Professor Bazán's caution in *Oriente-Occidente* II/2 (1981), cited above, n. 11, pp. 187-196. I am, however, even more dubious about his identification of *Anonymus Brucianus* with *Nicotheus* (ibid., pp. 196ff.) and still more so about his speculations concerning the *Tripartite Tractate* (ibid., pp. 185-186; cf. also the article cited there, p. 186, n. 8). Professor Turner,

- in his paper in this volume, regards *Marsanes* as post-Plotinian; for a different view cf. Professor Pearson's introduction to the tractate in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X* (Leiden, 1981).
15. Cf. the contrasting views of H.-M. Schenke (*Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. II, pp. 588-616) and F. Wisse (ibid., pp. 563-576); also the cautions of Professors Rudolph (ibid., pp. 577-578) and van den Broeck (*Vigiliae Christianae*, 37 [1981]: 54-56) and Professor Pearson's balanced assessment (*Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. II, p. 504, n. 113). Certainly the "family resemblances" between the six tractates listed in the text and between *Trimorphic Protennoia* (NHC XIII.1) and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHC III.2 and IV.2), on which cf. the articles of Professors Turner and Sieber cited above n. 8, make some common term for them desirable. Cf. Schenke's other "Sethian" works, the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V.5) belongs to an older pre-philosophical version of the same tradition, while the "Barbelo" passages in *Melchizedek* (NHC IX.1) read to me, as to Professor Pearson (*Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, p. 38), like extraneous additions. Schenke's other two "Sethian" works, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II.4) and the *Thought of Norea* (NHC X.2), seem to me decidedly peripheral to the group.
  16. NHC II.1.19.10. The longer version of the *Apocryphon* also occurs at NHC IV.1, the shorter version at NHC III.1 and BG 8502.2.
  17. *Anon. Bruc.* p. 12 = p. 235 of V. MacDermot's edition (Leiden, 1978), p. 342 Schmidt, p. 84 Baynes.
  18. VIII.1.1 (lines 16-19), 9-10, 27, and perhaps 82-83 (cf. below p. 464 and nn. 23-28, 59-60). Cf. however VIII.1.131.10-14, cited on p. 447 of Professor Turner's paper.
  19. Cf. below pp. 465-467 and esp. n. 39.
  20. That Gnosticism was not the sole objective of the passages in question is clear; cf. below pp. 465-467 and nn. 35 and 98-100. On the other hand Dr. D. O'Meara (*Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. I, pp. 365-378), seems to me to go too far in the opposite direction, though I agree with him (ibid., p. 371, n. 27) that some of Puech's allegedly anti-Gnostic texts, especially from Plotinus's later works (*Entretiens Hardt V*, p. 183) are highly doubtful.
  21. Cf. Plotinus's attitude at *Enn.* II.9.6.6ff.
  22. There is in my view no certain reference to non-Gnostic Christianity in the *Enneads*. III.2.[47] 8.36-9.19 may be directed at Gnosticism, or at popular religion in general. I also doubt whether III.6.[26] 6.71 is aimed at the doctrine of bodily resurrection. For more favorable references to popular religious practices cf. e.g., IV.7.[2].15, IV.3.[27].11.
  23. Thus *Allogenes* XI.1.51.29-32 and *Marsanes* X.1.4.1-2 may allude to the fall of Sophia and its consequences, but this is far from certain. Contrast the passages from *Zostrianos* cited in n. 18 above. Cf. further below n. 93.
  24. *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. II, pp. 793-794.
  25. Cf. Professor Jonas's *The Gnostic Religion*, second edition (Boston, 1963), pp. 105ff., and below p. 468 and nn. 58ff.
  26. NHC VIII.1.10.4-5.

27. *Enn.* II.9.10.27.
28. *V.Pl.* 1.8.
29. VI.7.1, 28ff., 3.1ff. Cf. the passages cited at *Neoplatonism*, p. 63.
30. Cf. VI.7.3.22ff., 8.1ff., and the texts cited at *Neoplatonism*, pp. 62-63, 76-79; also my "Divine Omniscience in Plotinus, Proclus and Aquinas," *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, cited above n. 1, p. 224 and below p. 471 and nn. 89-92, 99.
31. VI.7.1.14-21.
32. *Ibid.*, 21-28; cf. V.8.7.1-12, following the Epicurean argument expounded at Lucretius V.181-6.
33. VI.7.3.22-33.
34. *Ibid.*, 7.29-31, cf. *Zost.* VIII.1.48.26.
35. On Primal Man cf. VI.7.4ff., an excellent example of Plotinus's integration of discussion of a Gnostic theme with a traditional philosophical debate; cf. above n. 25.
36. On the True Earth cf. *Enn.* II.9.5.23ff., 11.11-12, VI.7.11ff.
37. *Anon. Bruc.* p. 32, = p. 249 Macdermot, p. 352 Schmidt, p. 136 Baynes.
38. It is there described as "the ethereal earth, the receiver of God, where the holy men of the great light take shape" (*NHC* III.2.50).
39. V.8.3.30ff. "The Gods belonging to that higher Heaven itself, they whose station is upon it and in it, see and know in virtue of their omnipresence to it. For all There is heaven; earth is heaven, and sea heaven; and animal and plant and man; all is the heavenly content of that heaven: and the Gods in it, despising neither men nor anything else that is there where all is of the heavenly order, traverse all that country and all space in peace." (trans. MacKenna). VI.7.12.4ff; (cf. *ibid.*, 11.1ff): "The sky There must be living therefore not bare of stars, here known as the heavens - for stars are included in the very meaning of the word. Earth too will be There, and not void but even more intensely living and containing all that lives and moves upon our earth and the plants obviously rooted in life; sea will be There and all waters with the movement of their unending life and all the living things of the water; air too must be a member of that universe with the living things of air as here.

The content of that living thing must surely be alive — as in this sphere — and all that lives must of necessity be There. The nature of the major parts determines that of the living forms they comprise; by the being and content of the heaven There are determined all the heavenly forms of life; if those lesser forms were not There, that heaven itself would not be." (trans. MacKenna). *Zost.* VIII.21.3ff by them all 'in many places, the place which he <sup>5</sup> desired and the place which he wishes, 'since they are in every place, yet 'not in any place, and since they 'make room for their spirits, 'for they are incorporeal and better than <sup>10</sup> incorporeal. They are undivided 'and living thoughts and a power 'of the truth with those who are purer by far 'than these, since they exist as exceedingly 'pure 'with respect to him and are <sup>15</sup> not like the bodies which exist 'in one [place] . . . *Zost.* VIII.1.48.3. ff. Corresponding to each of 'the aeons I saw a living earth and

a living water and (air) made of 'light, and fire that cannot 'burn [. . .] all being 'simple and 'immutable with [. . .]<sup>10</sup> simple and [. . .] 'having a [. . .] in 'many ways, with trees 'that do not perish in many 'ways, and tares [. . .]<sup>15</sup> this way, and all these and 'imperishable fruit 'and living men and every form, 'and immortal souls 'and every shape and<sup>20</sup> form of mind, and 'gods of truth, and 'messengers who exist in 'great glory, and 'indissoluble bodies and<sup>25</sup> an unborn begetting and an 'immoveable perception. '

*Ibid.*, 55.13ff. they are in accordance with 'each of the aeons, a<sup>15</sup> living [earth] and ' [living] water and air 'made of light and a 'blazing fire which 'cannot [burn], and animals and<sup>20</sup> trees and souls ' [and] minds and men' [and] all those which exist ' [with] them,

*Ibid.*, 113.1.1-14. and messengers and 'demons and minds and 'souls and living beings and 'trees and bodies and<sup>5</sup> those before them — both those 'of the simple elements 'of simple origins, and 'those in confusion 'and unmixed [. . .] air<sup>10</sup> and water and earth 'and number and yoking 'and movement and [. . .] and 'order and breath and 'all the rest.

*Ibid.*, 115.2ff. They do [not] crowd one another, 'but they also dwell 'within them, existing and<sup>5</sup> agreeing with one another as if 'they exist from ■ single 'origin. They are reconciled 'because they all exist 'in a single aeon of the Hidden One,<sup>10</sup> [. . .] divided in power, 'for in accord with each of the 'aeons they exist, standing 'in accord with the one who reaches them.

*Ibid.*, 116.1ff. All of them exist 'in one since they dwell together 'and are perfected individually 'in fellowship and<sup>5</sup> have been filled with the aeon who 'really exists. Some among 'them are those who stand 'as if they dwell in essence, 'and others like those as an essence<sup>10</sup> in function or suffering 'in a second, for in them exists the [barrenness] 'of the [barrenness] who 'really exists. When the [barren ones]<sup>15</sup> have come into being, their power 'stands.

*Ibid.*, 117.1ff. In that world' are all living beings 'existing individually, yet joined 'together. The knowledge<sup>5</sup> of the knowledge is there 'and an establishment of ignorance. 'Chaos is there 'and a place [completed] for 'them all, though they are new, <sup>10</sup> and true light and 'darkness which has received light and he 'who does not really exist. 'He does not really exist ' [. . .] the non-being which does<sup>15</sup> not exist as the All.

40. An influence especially stressed in W. Theiler's *Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Berlin, 1934), ch. 2, pp. 63ff.

41. Eg. *NHC* VIII.1.48.4, etc. Similar terminology occurs in *Allogenes* (XI.3.52.10, 55.13, 58.12, 35-37), where the ascent culminates in "ignorance" of the Unknowable One, and in the *Three Steles* (VIII.5.124.18), while *Anon. Bruc.*, in the passage cited above n. 17, described Marsanes and Nicotheus as having "seen." On the mysticism of these texts see Professor Turner's article cited above n. 8; also his paper in this volume, pp. 425ff. On *Allogenes* see especially Professor Williams's important paper, "Stability as a Soteriological Theme in Gnosticism," *Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. II, pp. 819-829, which rightly sees the

- "primary revelation of the Unknown One," from which *Allogenes* receives power (XI.3.60-61) as a mystical experience similar to Plotinus's union with the One.
42. On Plotinus's experience of Intellectual vision see my article cited above n. 19, esp. pp. 122-125. Its basis is the "dematerialization" of the "cosmic Mandala" described at V.8.9.1ff.
  43. *Zost.* VIII.1.48.18, 55.20, 112.3. For Plotinus cf. above p. 314 and nn. 101ff.
  44. *Zost.* VIII.1.116.3, 117.3; cf. *Allog.* XI.45.6ff., 55.13. For Forms of individuals in Plotinus cf. J.M. Rist, *CQ* no. 13 (1963), pp. 223-231; H. Blumenthal, *Phronesis* II (1966), pp. 61-80, *Plotinus's Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague, 1971), ch. 9, pp. 112-133.
  45. *Zost.* VIII.1.117.5-6, 21.11.
  46. The passage also clearly teaches the Plotinian doctrine of Procession (*ibid.*, 14-16). For Intelligible Matter in Plotinus cf. esp. II.4[12] 3-5, II., 5[25] 3.8-19. Cf. however below n. 50. It is interesting that the Aquilinus whose treatise *On Numbers* is cited by Lydus (above n. 10) allegorized the myth of Hermes and Maia as teaching the doctrine of Intelligible Matter.
  47. *Zost.* VIII.1.115.2ff., 116.1ff., 117.1ff.; cf. *Allog.* XI.3.49.26ff. For Plotinus cf. the passages cited at *Neoplatonism*, pp. 54-55; also Proclus, ET. prop. 103.
  48. *Zost.* VIII.1.21.3ff.
  49. *Enn.* III.9.4, VI.4.3 17-19, Porphyry, *Sent.* 3, 27, 31, 38, 40; cf. *Neoplatonism*, pp. 50-51, 76ff., 112; cf. also *Allog.* XI.3.57.20-21, *Three Steles* VII.5.121.10-11.
  50. For points (a) and (b) see below n. 51; also *Neoplatonism*, pp. 119-120, 152-153. For point (c) see Dodds's note on Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1963), prop. 167 (pp. 285-287); for point (d) *ibid.*, note on props. 89-92 (pp. 246-247), and Proclus, *Platonic Theology* III.9, pp. 39.24ff. Saffrey-Wesierink. Plotinus, however, had refused to apply the term *sterēsis* to Intelligible Matter, and had stressed the latter's substantiality and the contrast with its sensible counterpart (*Enn.* II.3 [12].5.12-23, 15.17-28, II.5 [25].3.8-19).
  51. Cf. the passage cited above n. 6; also Proclus ET. props. 111, 175, 204, 211; in *Tim.* I.245.17ff., II.289.3ff., III.333.28ff.; in *Parm.* 930.26ff., 948.14ff.; *Neoplatonism*, pp. 119-120, 152-153; Dodds, *Proclus: Elements*, p. xx, with the further references given there, and Professor Dillon's *Iamblichus Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* (Leiden, 1973), pp. 41-47. Cf. further below pp. 475 and nn. 131-133.
  52. *Fr.* 22 Des Places = Proclus in *Tim.* III.103.28-32.
  53. *Fr.* 6, XIII.23ff. On the fragment cf. P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris, 1968), vol. I, pp. 132-139, and my *Neoplatonism*, pp. 116-117.
  54. *Plotinus's Philosophy of the Self* (Shannon, 1973), pp. 71-72.
  55. *Quod Deus* 33-34.
  56. *Leg. Alleg.* III.96.

57. *NHC* \*5.101.31ff. *The Tripartite Tractate* may also support an interpretation of Numenius, *fr.* 13 Des Places, which has been thought indefensible, that God is himself the seed which he sows. Commentators have either taken *Ho on* as a Hebraism (e.g., Des Places; also Festugière, *Revelation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, Vol. III, p. 44, n. 2) or amended the text (e.g., Dodds, *Entretiens Hardt* V, p. 15 and Dillon, *Middle Platonists* [London and Ithaca, NY, 1977], p. 368, n. 1). Since, however, *Trip. Tract.* I.5.65.13 describes God as sowing himself, the natural interpretation of the Numenius text may after all be correct. On the fragment cf. further below pp. 9-10 and nn. 70-71.
58. Quoted by Hippolytus, *Ref.* VI.18; for an analysis see Professor Jonas's *The Gnostic Religion*, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1963), pp. 105ff.
59. Above, p. 466.
60. VIII.1.82-83, cited above p. 465.
61. Cf. Dodds's analysis of *Enn.* III.9 [13].1 in *Entr. Hardt* V, pp. 19-20.
62. II.9.1.22ff. Cf. further below n. 100.
63. *Ibid.*, 40ff.; against multiplication of Hypostases cf. *ibid.*, 2.1ff., 6.1ff.
64. Cf. e.g., Professor Armstrong's comments in Vol. II of his Loeb edition, p. 226, n. 1 and p. 244, n. 2; cf. Numenius *fr.* 15 Des Places = Eusebius. *P.E.* II.18, p. 539 a-b, *fr.* 22 *ibid.*, cited above n. 52.
65. II.9.1.25ff., 6.14ff.
66. *Ibid.* 6.21-22; for Plotinus's parallel hesitation cf. Proclus in *Tim.* I.306.32ff., and Armstrong, Loeb, vol. III, p. 410, n. 1 (commenting III.9.1.29ff.).
67. *Enn.* II.9.10.19ff., 11.19ff.
68. *Zost.* VIII.1.15.4-17; cf. *Allog.* XI.3.54.8-16, and p. 434 of Professor Turner's paper.
69. *Neoplatonism*, p. 34, cited by J. Igal, *Neoplatonism and Early Christianity*, p. 149, n. 45, in support of his identification of Plotinus's opponents with Valentinians. However this may be, Igal's dismissal of *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* as unphilosophical, on the strength of preliminary reports about the former, was certainly premature. For equation of the divisions of Intellect criticized by Plotinus with those of the *Allogenes* group of tractates see p. 442 of Professor Turner's paper cited above n. 8 and in this volume.
70. *Allog.* XI.3.51.28-32. *Enn.* II.3 [52] 16.29ff.
71. *Fr.* 13 Des Places = Eusebius *P.E.* XI.18 p. 538 b-c. On the fragment cf. also above n. 57.
72. Numenius *fr.* 14 Des Places = Eusebius *P.E.* XI.18, pp. 538-9; *Allog.* XI.3.62.33ff, 67.16-17; cf. Dodds's note on Proclus ET. props. 26-27 (pp. 213-214).
73. Cf. also *Enn.* V.6 [24] 6.20-21; P. Hadot (*Entr. Hardt*, V, pp. 122ff., 129-130) adds Augustine *C.D.* VIII.4ff., and Origen, *De Princ.* I.3.8 (where, however, Sanctity replaces Life).
74. *NHC* VIII.1.66ff. The alternative orders in which this or an equivalent triad, sometimes occurs, (e.g., the triad *gnōsis-hypostasis-energeia* at *Mars.* X.1.9 16-18) are probably without doctrinal significance.
75. *VL* 7.17.14-26, 21.2-6.

76. Cf. also VI.6.8.17-27. On the contradiction cf. the discussion in *Entr. Hardt V*, pp. 148-149. On Plotinus further hesitations see *Neoplatonism*, pp. 54, 66-67.
77. Proclus in *Tim.* I.431.19-20, 322.24. Plotinus differs from these interpreters even here, however, and agrees with Plato in making being highest of the three.
78. *Frs.* 41, 42 Des Places = Iamblichus *De An.*, quoted by Stobaeus I.365.5-21 and I.458.3-4; cf. further above nn. 6 and 51 and below nn. 132-133.
79. *Fr.* 11 Des Places = Eusebius *P.E.* IX.17, p. 537 b. On the fragment cf. further below.
80. Professor Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, pp. 369-371 and Dr. O'Brien (in oral discussion with the present writer) have come out against this view; cf. also Dodds, *Enneirens Hardt*, pp. 48-52. Contrast p. 571 of Professor Turner's paper.
81. *Fr.* 16 Des Places = Eusebius *P.E.* XI.22, pp. 544ff. Dodds, op. cit., p. 16 and Dillon, op. cit., p. 369, n. 1, read *epei ho protos*. On the riskiness of amending a text in a field where so little is known cf. Theiler's remarks at *Entr. Hardt V*, p. 51.
82. *Entr. Hardt V*, p. 51. There is a similar ambiguity at *Zost.* VIII.1.74.15-16, "the three [i.e. the noetic triad] stand at one time, moving at one time."
83. *Fr.* 12 Des Places = Eusebius *P.E.* XI.18, p. 537d; cf. Dillon, op. cit., pp. 370-371.
84. Macrobius in *Somm. Sc.* I.12.12 (=T47 Leemans): *ex individuo praebendo se dividendum et rursus ex diviso ad individuum revertendo et mundi implet officia et naturae suae arcana no deserit.* (cf. *Zost.* VIII.1.79.10ff "moving from the undivided to existence in activity," etc.) That Leemans was right in deriving the Macrobius passage from Numenius was convincingly argued by Dodds, *Entr. Hardt V*, pp. 8-9; cf. H. de Ley, *Macrobius and Numenius* (Brussels, 1972), who, however, is rightly hesitant over Dodds's inclusion of *In Somm. Sc.* I.10.8-11.9 in the fragment.
85. *Fr.* 18 Des Places = Eusebius *P.E.* XI.18, p. 539 c-d. Cf. Dillon, op. cit., p. 370, who however, sees even here an allusion to the demiurge's desire for matter, explicitly propounded in fr. 11.
86. Dillon's translation, "when God turns back into his conning-tower, nous lives deprived of a happy life" (op. cit., p. 371) is presumably due to an oversight.
87. Cf. the Macrobius passage cited above n. 84, where the division of Nous is compared to the Orphic myth of the rending of Dionysus by the Titans.
88. *Fr.* 11 = Eusebius *P.E.* XI.17-18, p. 537 a-b; cf. Dillon, op. cit., pp. 367-368.
89. *Enn.* V.1 [10] 6.25-27; cf. *Neoplatonism*, pp. 62-63.
90. *Enn.* IV.4 [28] 9.16-18.
91. *Neoplatonism*, pp. 76-79; note also Plotinus's vehement opposition to the Gnostic idea of a "declination" (*neusis*) of Sophia (II.9 chs. 2, 4, 10-12; cf. *Zost.* VIII.1.27.12).
92. Cf. frs. 11 and 18 Des Places. See above nn. 85 and 88.

93. *Fr.* 52 Des Places = Calcidius in *Tim.* 295-299; cf. fr. 43 *ibid.* = Iamblichus *De An.* I 374-375. Contrast Marsanes's positive evaluation of the sensible cosmos (*NHC* X.1.5.24-25); cf. also *Zost.* VIII.1.131.10-14, cited above n. 18. Numenius fr. 16 (cited above n. 81) describes the sensible cosmos as beautiful, but he clearly does not regard it as capable of salvation in its entirety.
94. *Fr.* 52 Des Places = Calcidius in *Tim.* 299, fr. 25 *ibid.* = Proclus in *Remp.* II.128.26ff. For similar Gnostic beliefs cf. Professor Jonas's *The Gnostic Religion*, 2nd ed., pp. 254ff and Professor Rudolph's *Die Gnosis*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1980), pp. 196ff. For Plotinus's attitude cf. below pp. 474-475 and nn. 122ff.
95. *Entr. Hardt V*, p. 53.
96. *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 24-26; against Dodds's view that Plotinus came to reject the notion of a fall of the soul see my *Neoplatonism*, p. 77.
97. *Entr. Hardt V*, pp. 150, 184-185; for a refutation of Puech's view that Plotinus came to reject the identification of Matter with evil cf. J.M. Rist, *Phronesis* VI.2 (1960): 154-166.
98. Cf. Professor Pépin's *Théologie Cosmique et Théologie Chrétienne* (Paris, 1964), pp. 502-504, and my *Neoplatonism*, pp. 26-27.
99. *Metaph.* 9, *Eud. Eth.* VII.12.1245b 14-19; cf. my remarks in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, pp. 233-234; cf., however, the anti-Gnostic passages from *Enn.* II.9 cited above n. 91.
100. *Neoplatonism*, p. 26; cf. Bréhier's notices to V.3 and V.5. (but cf. also II.9.1 22ff., cited above n. 62). For Skeptical influence on Plotinus cf. also my article "Skepticism and Neoplatonism," to be published in a forthcoming volume of *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*.
101. IV.3.18, IV.4.1-2; cf. above pp. 461-468 and nn. 6, 51, 78; also below p. 472 and nn. 132-133.
102. Cf. also III.9.[13]1.34-37. Contrast IV.4[28].15-16.
103. IV.4.15.13ff.
104. *Ibid.*, 2.30-32.
105. *Ibid.*, 6.1ff.
106. *Ibid.*, 13.19-22.
107. *Plotinus Schriften*, trans. R. Harder, ed. and rev. W. Theiler, R. Beutler, band IIIb, p. 414.
108. III.8.6, esp. 29ff.
109. II.9.1 16-19.
110. *Ibid.*, 2.4ff. For Plotinus's hesitation between a twofold and a threefold division of Soul cf. *Neoplatonism*, pp. 73-74, and Armstrong, *Cambridge History*, pp. 224-226.
111. Cf. above pp. 467-468, and nn. 43 and 78.
112. Cf. e.g., VI.4[22].14.17ff.
113. E.g., V.8.1 34-36 (the "Phidias" passage, where, however, the Logoi are not clearly distinguished from the pure Forms), VI.7.5.8-11.
114. IV.3.30.

115. E.g., VI.7.1-3 passim. Note also the ambiguous "genealogical" language of V.8.12-13, where it is uncertain whether the cosmos or the World-Soul is in question — two further points recalling Numenius (fr. 21 Des Places = Proclus in *Tim.* I.303.27ff.).
116. III.7[45].11.20ff.
117. Ibid., 15ff. Cf. the early work V.2 [11].1.18-28.
118. Cf. his paper in *Le Neoplatonisme* (Paris, 1971), pp. 51-52.
119. Cf. his article in *Dionysius II* (Dec. 1978), pp. 101-136.
120. Cf. II.9.2.4ff., cited above n. 110.
121. Ibid., 11.19-23.
122. Ibid. 8.35-36; for Numenius cf. above n. 94.
123. IV.8[6].2.38-53, IV.3[27].11.23-27, II.9[33].8.30-39, 18.35-48.
124. IV.3.6.10ff.; cf. VI.7.6.29-31.
125. IV.4.5.11ff.
126. *In Som. Sc.* I.11.11; for the passage's probable Numenian origin cf. above n. 84. Cf. *Enn.* IV.4.3-5, esp. 4.10ff.
127. IV.3.18.14ff.
128. The doctrine of two levels of Nous, propounded at VI.7.35.27ff. does not resolve the problem, since the final mystical vision should then (and clearly does not) include both levels of contemplation.
129. Cf. also VI.9 [9].5.29, where, however, the term *tolma* is of Pythagorean origin.
130. *Neoplatonism*, pp. 94-95, 112-118; *Armstrong, Cambridge History*, pp. 264-268; A.C. Lloyd, *ibid.*, pp. 287-293; P. Hadot, "La Metaphysique de Porphyre," *Entretiens Hardt XII* (Vandoeuvres/Geneva, 1966), pp. 127-157, *Porphyre et Victorinus*. For a more cautious view of Porphyry cf. A. Smith *Porphyry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague, 1974), pp. 5ff.; cf. also the passage of Iamblichus cited above n. 6, etc.
131. Cf. A.C. Lloyd, *Cambridge History*, pp. 287-293; Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, pp. 116ff. Smith, *Porphyry's Place*, p. 47.
132. Cf. the texts cited above n. 51.
133. Proclus, ET. 204. Plotinus had himself recognized his acceptance of an unfallen element in the human soul as an innovation (*Enn.* IV.8[6].8.1ff); for his hesitation over Forms of individuals cf. above n. 44.
134. Cf. nn. 50-51 above.
135. Cf. above n. 131, *Allog.* XI.1.61-62, on which cf. pp. 431ff. of Professor Turner's paper.

## Higher Providence, Lower Providences and Fate in Gnosticism and Middle Platonism

Michael A. Williams

"Zum Glück hat der ausgeprägte Neuplatonismus durchgehends — mit Ausnahme der Quelle des Nemesis — diese absurde Idee getilgt . . ."<sup>1</sup> Such was the evaluation registered almost a century ago by Alfred Gercke, of a doctrine which, he argued, was attested in a small cluster of Platonic sources. The doctrine, whose eventual obliteration from Neoplatonism Gercke felt to have been so fortunate, is the division of Providence into three levels: *hē prōtē pronoia*, *hē deuterā pronoia*, *hē tritē pronoia*. The most explicit and elaborate witness for this doctrine is the Pseudo-Plutarchian tractate *De fato*:

Therefore the Highest and Primary Providence is the intellection and will of the First God, and is benefactress of all things; in conformity with her all divine things are primordially arranged throughout, in the best and most beautiful way possible.

The Secondary Providence is that of the secondary gods who move in the heavenly realm; in accordance with her, things mortal come into being in orderly fashion, as well as that which sustains and preserves each of the classes.

The Providence and Forethought of the daemons who have been stationed around the earth as guardians and overseers of human affairs might reasonably be called "Tertiary" (*De fato* 572F-573A).

Gercke was apparently the first to point out that a similar doctrine was

known to Apuleius of Madaura (*De Plat.* 1.12), and to the later writers Calcidius<sup>2</sup> and Nemesius.<sup>3</sup> Pointing also to other features shared by these writers on the overall question of Providence and Fate, and arguing that these four writers are not directly dependent upon one another, Gercke tentatively suggested that their shared doctrine may have derived from some common dependence upon the 1st-2nd century Platonist Gaius,<sup>4</sup> a hypothesis which to several scholars since Gercke has seemed convincing or at least promising.<sup>5</sup>

More recently, the fact that Albinus (the one person who can with some certainty be identified as a student of Gaius) shows no acquaintance with distinctive features of the doctrine of Providence and Fate found in Pseudo-Plutarch, Apuleius, and the others, has been viewed as ■ fatal objection to Gercke's hypothesis of Gaius as the common source.<sup>6</sup> Dillon has suggested "Athenian scholasticism of the early second century A.D." as the provenance,<sup>7</sup> but we are without the name of any specific teacher from whom Apuleius must have learned the doctrine in Athens.

Yet the cluster of sources identified by Gercke as witnesses to the existence of this doctrine in Middle Platonism, "a fascinating nest of connected documents and their attendant problems,"<sup>8</sup> continues to arouse scholarly curiosity, as well as negative evaluations not much different from the spirit of Gercke's remarks which I quoted at the beginning. Thus Dillon concludes: "Our triadic division of Providence has really got us nowhere. It might be said of [Pseudo-Plutarch], I fear, that what is good in him is not original, and what is original is very little good."<sup>9</sup>

It now seems possible that certain Gnostic tractates may constitute still further witnesses to this somewhat curious chapter in the history of Middle Platonism. Two Gnostic works in particular seem to be promising in this regard: The *Apocryphon of John*, for which we have both a longer and a shorter recension, each represented by two manuscripts,<sup>10</sup> and the untitled fifth tractate in Codex II from Nag Hammadi, to which modern scholarship has given the title *On the Origin of the World*.<sup>11</sup>

### The Apocryphon of John

The *Apocryphon* makes a distinction between a universal Providence and a lower providence which belongs only to the level of the planetary archons who control the cosmos. This is not a triadic division of Providence, but as a twofold division it is developed in a fashion similar

to the division of Providence in the Middle Platonic traditions in question, especially in the way in which the division of Providence seems to be linked to the interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*.

#### a. Higher Providence

The universal Providence in *Apocryphon* comes before us in ■ mythological, personified form as the first thought of the highest God, or Invisible Spirit:

(The Invisible Spirit) contemplated his own image when he saw it in the pure light-water which surrounds him; and his thought (*ennoia*) performed an act, it appeared, it stood before him out of the brilliance of the light. This is the power which is before the All, which appeared; that is, the perfect Providence (*pronoia*) of the All, the light, the likeness of the light, the image of the Invisible. She is the perfect power, Barbelo, the perfect aeon of glory (*BG* 27, 1-14).

Obscure as the name "Barbelo" itself is, the actual role of the entity Barbelo/Providence is much easier to discern. As the beginning of thought, she is the center of intellectual energy through whom the entire intellectual realm actualizes itself. There is some resemblance to Plotinus's *Nous*, particularly in the way that Barbelo, like Plotinus's *Nous*, is the first emanation from the ultimate source of all things and is described as emerging to "stand before" that source with which she had previously been united, thus initiating the subject-object relationship (cf. Plot., *Enn.* 5.2.1.7-13).

These initial descriptions of Barbelo/Providence in *Apocryphon* find several points of contact with the description of the highest Providence in our Middle Platonic sources. As the first thought of the first God, Barbelo/Providence is comparable to the First Providence which is described in Pseudo-Plutarch, *De fato* 572F as "the intellection (*noēsis*) or will (*boulēsis*) of the First God" (cf. 573B). Similarly, Apuleius says that the "First Providence" belongs to that God who is "the highest, most eminent of all the gods," and ■ few lines earlier Apuleius had defined Providence as "divine thought" (*divinam sententiam* — *De Plat.* 1.12).<sup>12</sup> The picture of Barbelo/Providence emerging to "stand before" the First God finds a certain echo in Calcidius's description of Providence, as having an eminence second after the Highest God, toward whom Providence is tirelessly turning and whose goodness



Providence imitates.<sup>13</sup> The Platonic source known to Nemesius said that the First Providence

exercises providential direction primarily over the Ideas, and then over the entire universe — that is, over heaven and stars and all universals, i.e., classes, essence, quantity, quality, and other such attributes and their subordinate forms.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, in *ApocryJn* Barbelo/Providence operates primarily on the level of the Ideal (= pleromatic) realm. The appearance of Barbelo/Providence initiates the unfolding of the entire population of the transcendent realm. For our purposes here it is not necessary to elaborate all of the complexities of this portion of the myth, nor to discuss the complex question of the possible origins of all the elements found in it. The scene is reminiscent, for example, of language in various Jewish and Christian texts describing angelic attendants "standing before God" in the heavenly court. But in *ApocryJn*, such traditional heavenly court language has been refocused through the lens of a philosophical framework, so that these entities who are "standing" in the aconic realm look as much like Platonic Forms or Ideas "standing at rest."<sup>15</sup>

But the operation of the higher Providence in *ApocryJn* is not limited to the realm of the acons. The text also mentions the revelatory role of Providence in the soteriological process. However, this is far more prominent in the longer recension than in the shorter recension. In the long recension, Providence is mentioned as the heavenly voice that first announces to the startled archons that "Man exists, and the Son of Man" (II 14, 13-20); as the source of the gnosis or insight (*epinoia*) which Adam and Eve tasted in the garden (II 23, 24-29); as the one who anticipates the coming rape of Eve by the chief archon and sends agents in time to snatch life out of Eve (II 24, 13-14); as ■ being associated with the divine compassion and merciful care for humans (II 27, 33-28, 2); as the one who warns Noah and so ensures his rescue (II 29, 1-3); and finally, there is the well-known discourse by Providence, found only in the long recension, in which Providence recounts her threefold descent (II 30, 11-31, 25 par).

The short recension mentions the general resolve of the Invisible Spirit "by means of Providence" to set right Sophia's deficiency (*BG* 47, 6-7 par), but the only two moments in the salvation process in which the higher Providence is explicitly mentioned are the warning of Noah (*BG* 72, 17-72, 2 par), and the story of the descent of the angels to the

daughters of the humans (*BG* 73, 18-75, 10 par), where it is said that the angels draw the humans into temptations "so that they might not remember their immovable Providence" (*BG* 75, 1-3).

Writers such as Pseudo-Plutarch were not motivated by quite the same soteriological questions as is the *ApocryJn*, and thus they naturally do not spell out the same kind of soteriological role for the Primary Providence as does *ApocryJn*. Yet, for example, Pseudo-Plutarch's general description of Primary Providence, the intellection and will of the First God, as "benefactress (*euergetis*) of all things" and the one in accordance with whom all divine things are primordially arranged, would also have been a rather appropriate description of Barbelo/Providence. The latter figures most prominently in the initial ordering of the divine realm, and is the benevolent guide who works for the restoration of order when it is disturbed. In all of these texts we have a higher Providence who effects only the highest and most divine level of ordering, and from whom all responsibility for certain lower levels of operation is removed, and assigned to a lower Providence.

Before turning to the figure of the lower, archontic Providence in *ApocryJn*, however, it is necessary to examine more closely two references to a Providence which are found only in the short recension of *ApocryJn*. One of these is the reference in *BG* 75, 1-3, which I mentioned above, to an "immovable Providence." Although I have suggested that "immovable Providence" here refers to Barbelo/Providence, there is perhaps another possibility. Also found only in the short version of *ApocryJn* is a mention of what at least initially appears to be ■ second "higher Providence" in the aconic realm, a Providence which *could* be viewed as distinct from Barbelo/Providence, and which is quite definitely different from the lower, archontic Providence which I will discuss below. The Invisible Spirit and Barbelo give birth, according to the myth, to a Son around whom there emerges an entourage of entities, completing what I have described above as a kind of heavenly court of Platonic Ideas. This aconic court consists of four groupings, each associated with a "luminary" and each luminary accompanied by three acons, making ■ total of twelve acons (*BG* 32, 19-34, 18):

<i>BG</i>		<i>CG</i> II/IV	
Harmozel	Grace	Harmozel	Grace
	Truth		Truth
	Form		Form

Oroiael	Providence ( <i>pronoia</i> ) Perception Remembrance ( <i>p<sup>r</sup>pinewe</i> )	Oriel	Conception ( <i>epinoia</i> ) Perception Remembrance
Davithe	Insight Love [Idea]	Davithai	Insight Love Idea
Eleleth	Perfection Peace Wisdom	Eleleth	Perfection Peace Wisdom

The twelve aeons seem to be twelve divine faculties with which the aeonic human family is endowed, since, in both recensions, the text goes on to distribute the human family (Adamas, Seth, and their descendants) among the four groupings. One notices that in *BG*'s version of this, Providence and Remembrance are two of the aeons in the Oroiael group. Is it possible that the wording later on in *BG* 75, 1-3, where the fallen angels inflict humans with temptations "so that they might not remember (*nnew<sup>r</sup> pmeewe*) their immovable Providence," is an allusion to this providential faculty which *BG* includes among the twelve aeons? Perhaps the *BG* version intends the Providence found among these twelve aeons to be understood as a third Providence different from Barbelo/Providence and the lower, archontic Providence. On the other hand, it may be simply a way of speaking of the extension of Barbelo's higher providential direction over the realm of the aeons (=Ideas) — and here we could compare the statement in Nemesius's source about the Primary Providence's operation in the realm of the Ideas —, and of the role of (higher) Providence in the salvation of the human family. If the *BG* version were intending to speak of three Providences, these in any case would not quite correspond to the three levels in Pseudo-Plutarch: *BG*'s highest and lowest Providences would correspond to Pseudo-Plutarch's Primary and Secondary Providences. Perhaps such a difference in the way in which speculation about multiple Providences could develop, in spite of the common ground, would provide even more reason for suggesting, as I will in my concluding remarks, that the particular scheme of three Providences as found in Pseudo-Plutarch may not have been the earliest form of the speculation about multiple Providences.

#### b. Lower Providence

Pseudo-Plutarch, Apuleius, and the source known to Nemesius all assign the secondary Providence to the "young gods" mentioned by Plato in *Timaeus* 42D-E. Here Plato says that the Demiurge, in order to preserve himself guiltless from any of the evil that might be done by the souls that had been formed, delivered over to the "young gods" (*neois theois*) the task of shaping the mortal bodies, completing the formation of the human soul and governing (*diakubernan*) the mortal creature in the best possible fashion. This commissioning is reiterated later on in *Timaeus* 69C, where the Demiurge is said to be responsible for the framing of divine things, but gives to his sons the responsibility for the construction of mortal things. And then in 69Dff we are given a description of the execution of this commission, in the creation of the mortal soul and body.

These sections of the *Timaeus* have evidently left their stamp also on the *Apocryph*, even though it may not be clear whether this influence has resulted from a direct reading of the *Timaeus* or from some more indirect channel. I have suggested elsewhere that one trace of this influence of the *Timaeus* can be seen in the way in which *Apocryph* develops the picture of the to and fro movement of Sophia.<sup>16</sup> The passage is a commentary on the Greek term *epipheresthai*, "rush over," used of the Spirit in LXX Gen. 1:2. This term in Gen. 1:2 seems to be used by *Apocryph* to mark Sophia's first experience of motion. The agitated movement of Sophia is a sign of intense grief, and we are probably to see in Sophia's behavior a paradigm for the experience of passions on the part of the human soul here below. Precisely in a passage in the *Timaeus* that is touching on the levels of transition from the realm of transcendence to the realm of matter, Plato has the Demiurge lecturing to the not-yet-descended souls about the passions that they will experience when they are implanted in mortal bodies that are characterized by "to and fro movement" (*Timaeus* 42A). It is just after this lecture that we read of the commissioning I mentioned above, of the construction and governance of the mortal realm by the young gods (42D-E), and the subsequent narrative of the execution of this demand is full of remarks about erratic motion, disturbance and shaking which the soul experiences in the mortal bodies that are created (42E-44B).

The commentary in *ApocryJn* on Sophia's restless motion (II 13, 13-26 par) falls between the account of the begetting of the cosmic archons and their commissioning for the governance of the heavens (II 10, 1-12, 33 par) and the account of their fashioning of the human soul and body (II 15, 1-19, 1 par). There is significant confusion among our manuscripts of *ApocryJn* regarding the names, features, and individual roles of the archons. I will summarize those elements most pertinent to the topic at hand:

The first archon in *ApocryJn*, Ialdabaoth, the grotesque theriomorphic offspring of Sophia, produces a squadron of archontic henchmen. In both recensions the myth includes the listing of two such groups of archons, first a group of twelve and later in the story a group of seven. The fundamental astrological idea seems clear enough: the group of twelve correspond to the zodiacal signs and the group of seven to the seven planets.<sup>17</sup> After the production of the twelve, Ialdabaoth placed seven kings over the heavens and five over the abyss. However, there is some confusion here since the list of seven archons which occurs later in the myth is not made up simply of seven names from the first list of twelve, though there is some overlap. After the initial listing of the group of twelve, we hear nothing further of most of the names in the list, or indeed of the notion itself of a group of twelve.

Our primary interest here is the group of seven archons, for it is with these the *ApocryJn* associates a lower Providence, and it is these seven whose role seems to be partially derived from that of the "young gods" in the *Timaeus*.<sup>18</sup> The first listing of these seven includes not only a list of their names but also of their theriomorphic features. This list is as follows in *BG*, *CG* III, and *CG* II (*CG* IV is very fragmentary at this point):

*BG* 41, 16 - 42, 9*CG* III 17, 20 - 18, 7*CG* II 11, 26-35

Iaoth	lion-faced	Aoth	lion-faced	Athoth	sheep-faced
Eloaios	ass-faced	Eloaios	ass-faced	Eloaios	ass-faced
Astaphaios	hyena-faced	Astaphaios	hyena-faced	Astaphaios	[hyena]-faced
Iao	snake-faced,	Iazo	serpent-faced,	Iao	[serpent]-faced,
	with seven heads		lion-faced		having seven heads
Adonaios	serpent-faced	Adonaios	serpent-faced	Sabaoth	serpent-faced
Adoni	ape-faced	Adonin	ape-faced	Adonin	ape-faced
Sabbataios	face of fire	Sabbadaios	face of fire	Sabbade	face of fire

Ialdabaoth then gives seven powers to these seven authorities (the text of *CG* III is missing; what remains of *CG* IV agrees with *CG* II):

*BG* 43, 10 - 44, 4*CG* II 12, 16-25

Iaoth	Providence ( <i>pronoia</i> )	Athoth	Goodness
Eloaios	Divinity	Eloaios	Providence
Astaphaios	Goodness	Astaphaios	Divinity
Iao	Fire ( <i>koh</i> )	Iao	Lordship
Sabaoth	Kingship	Sanbaoth	Kingship
Ad[onai]	Insight	Adoncin	Jealousy ( <i>koh</i> )
Sabbataios	Wisdom ( <i>sophia</i> )	Sabbatcon	Understanding

As one can see, one of the differences between the two versions is the placement of Providence. Its position in the first place in the *BG* version agrees, as we shall see, with its first-place position in a similar list in *OrigWorld*, and seems to give to this lower Providence a kind of priority in the cosmic realm that mirrors the position of Barbelo/Providence in the aeonic realm.

The situation is complicated to a certain extent by our next encounter with these powers in the myth, which occurs at the creation of the psychic Adam. The words of Gen. 1:26, "Let us make man, etc.," are interpreted in *ApocryJn* as a resolve of the archons to create a being in imitation of the image of the Perfect Human, and each of the powers of the archons supplies a different type of psychic substance in the fabrication of the psychic Adam:

*BG* 49, 11 - 50, 4*CG* II 15, 14-23

Divinity	bone-soul	Goodness	bone-soul
Goodness	sinew-soul	Providence	sinew-soul
Fire	flesh-soul	Divinity	flesh-soul
Providence	marrow-soul, and the whole foundation of the body	Lordship	marrow-soul
Kingship	blood-soul	Kingship	blood-soul
Insight	skin soul	Jealousy	skin-soul
Wisdom	hair ( <i>foe</i> )-soul	Understanding	eyelid ( <i>fouhe</i> )-soul

It can be seen that the longer recension (*CG* II and *CG* IV) has retained the same order of the seven powers as in the preceding list, with Providence in second place. On the other hand, the order of the powers here in the shorter recension differs from that recension's earlier list (*BG* 43, 10-44, 4), with Providence now in fourth place.

In spite of the fact that Providence seems at first glance to have been "demoted" in *BG*'s second list, this may not have been the actual intention. In the first place, one notices that in connection with Providence this text mentions not only Providence's contribution of

"marrow-soul," but also adds, "and the whole foundation of the body."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, van den Broeck has pointed out that if we shift Providence/marrow-soul to first place in *BG*'s list then we have an order of the psychic bodily components which corresponds very closely in both content and sequence to the list of bodily components in *Timaeus* 73B-76E: marrow, bones, sinews, flesh, skin, hair and nails, a sequence which is "a logical one, running from the inmost part of man to his outmost."<sup>20</sup> Van den Broeck argues that *BG*'s attribution of the "whole foundation of the body" to the same power which supplies the marrow is also an echo of the *Timaeus*, since *Timaeus* 73D says that the whole body is fashioned around the marrow.<sup>21</sup> Admittedly, we are left without a solid explanation for the shift of Providence/marrow-soul to fourth place, unless perhaps being the middle member in the list of seven is supposed to suit the marrow's position as the core or foundation of the (psychic) body.<sup>22</sup>

I suspect that the more prominent role played by Providence in the lists in *BG* is more original than the consistently second-place position in the two lists in the longer recension. The consistency in *CG* II is, in fact, rather mechanical and superficial. In spite of what at first appears to be greater inconsistency in *BG* in these lists, there is in a sense a greater logic in their arrangement. In any case, in both recensions we have a set of planetary archons whose nature and function seem in part to have been inspired by the picture of the "young gods" of the *Timaeus* and whose faculties or powers include a Providence lower than Barbelo/Providence.

### c. Fate

Pseudo-Plutarch identifies still a third level of providential guidance, carried out by *daimones* "stationed around the earth as guardians and overseers of human affairs" (*De fato* 573A). The relationship of the three Providences to Fate is explained as follows: Primary Providence begets Fate and therefore somehow includes Fate, Secondary Providence is begotten together with (*suggennētheisa*) Fate and therefore is included together with (*sumperilambanetai*) Fate (in Primary Providence), and Tertiary Providence is begotten later than (*hysteron*) Fate and therefore is contained within Fate in the same way that free will and chance are contained within it (574B). Nemesis also

mentions a Tertiary Providence (*tritē pronoia*). In almost verbatim agreement with Pseudo-Plutarch, Nemesis's source assigns this Tertiary Providence to "certain *daimones* stationed around the earth as guardians of human affairs" (*De nat. hom.* p. 346 Matthaei). But Nemesis does not explain how his Platonic source related Fate to the three different Providences.

Now in fact, it is only Pseudo-Plutarch and Nemesis's source which speak explicitly of a "Tertiary Providence." Apuleius, who had mentioned a Primary and a Secondary Providence, never actually refers to a "Tertiary Providence." But after talking about the gods of the Secondary Providence he does refer to the daemons who are the gods' ministers:

And (Plato says that) the Primary Providence (*prima providentia*) belongs to the highest and most eminent of all the gods, who not only has organized the celestial gods whom he has distributed through all parts of the cosmos for guardianship and splendor, but has also created for the duration of time those beings that are mortal by nature who are superior in wisdom to the other terrestrial animals. And when he had established laws, he gave to the other gods the responsibility for disposition and oversight of the subsequent affairs which would have to be attended to daily.

Consequently, the gods exercise so diligently the Secondary Providence (*secunda providentia*) which they have received that  $\Pi$  things, even the things visible to mortals in the heavens, maintain immutably the state ordained for them by the Father.

(Plato) considers the daemons, whom we can call *genii* and *lares*, to be ministers of the gods and guardians of humans, and interpreters for humans should the latter wish anything from the gods (*De Plat.* 1.12).

Apuleius then adds that in Plato's view not all things are in the power of Fate, but that a portion belongs to free will (*in nobis*) and a significant portion to chance. But unlike Pseudo-Plutarch, Apuleius does not spell out the relationship between Fate and the different levels of Providence.

In *Apocryphus*, also, we have no mention of a Tertiary Providence assigned to daemons. However, we do find what could be a level of daemonic activity that is subordinate to the level of the planetary archons and their Providence. And there is a certain similarity with the scheme in Pseudo-Plutarch, in that this level of daemonic activity in *Apocryphus* is contained within Fate. The critical passage is found in two rather different versions in the two recensions:

## BG 72, 2-12:

(The first archon) took counsel with his powers.

They begot Fate,

and with measure and times and seasons they bound the gods of the heavens, the angels, the daemons, and humans

so that they might all be in (Fate's) bond,

since it is lord over everyone — a wicked and perverse thought!

In both recensions, the measures initiated by the chief archon in this passage are in response to his realization that the power of thought possessed by the perfect race of humans is superior to his own, and the begetting of Fate is an attempt to imprison this thought.

The inclusion of the "gods" or "gods of the heavens" in the list of those bound is somewhat puzzling. Is this a reference to the planetary archons?<sup>23</sup> If so, then Secondary Providence would seem now to be contained within Fate, in spite of the fact that the begetting of Fate by the planetary archons might have led us to expect archontic Providence to be transcendent to Fate.

The one text in our group of Platonic sources which discusses the

## CG II 28, 11-32:

(The first archon) took counsel with his authorities, who are his powers, and together they committed adultery with Sophia.

There was begotten by them disgraceful Fate, which is the last of the variegated bonds, and exists in a variety of forms, since they are different from one another. Fate is harder and stronger than that with which (or "she with whom")

are mixed

the gods, the angels, the daemons, and all the generations until today. For from that Fate appeared every sin and injustice and blasphemy and the bonds of forgetfulness and ignorance and every burdensome command and burdensome sins and great fear. And in this way the whole creation was blinded, so that they might not know the God who is above all of them. And their sins were hidden because of the bond of forgetfulness. For they were bound with measures and times and seasons, since (Fate) is lord over everything.

relation of Fate to the multiple levels of Providence, viz., Pseudo-Plutarch, seems to subordinate to Fate all but the highest level of Providence. However, there is a certain ambiguity in the case of the Secondary Providence that is comparable to the ambiguity in *ApocryIn* on the relation of archontic Providence to Fate. On the one hand, Pseudo-Plutarch says that while Fate conforms to Providence, Providence does not conform to Fate, yet the author immediately cautions that this statement is being made only about the Primary Providence (573B). After such a caution, we might be prepared to hear that both the Secondary and Tertiary Providences *do* conform to Fate. Instead, the author tries to argue for a kind of sibling relationship between Secondary Providence and Fate: they are "begotten together" (573B). Apparently, this idea is prompted by the scene in *Timaeus* 41E-42E, where the Demiurge creates the souls, places them in astral positions, and then lectures them about the laws of Fate which will govern their future as they descend into mortal bodies; but then the actual administration of this somatic existence is given over, as I have already discussed, to the "young gods." Pseudo-Plutarch evidently finds in this passage evidence that Fate and the administrative responsibility of the young gods (=Secondary Providence) come into being at the same time, the young gods somehow administering the laws of Fate without themselves being encompassed by Fate (*De fato* 573 D-F). Dillon suggests that the language about Secondary Providence being "begotten together with" Fate is "more or less meaningless," and that essentially "this secondary Providence would seem to be identical with Fate."<sup>24</sup> Pseudo-Plutarch himself at one point raises the question of whether it would not be more correct to say that Secondary Providence is "included in" rather than "exists with" Fate (574C-D), and the passage may indicate the author's awareness of controversy on this issue in his day,<sup>25</sup> and a sensitivity to a certain amount of ambiguity in his own analysis.

## On the Origin of the World

The similarity between doctrines of multiple Providences such as in Pseudo-Plutarch, Apuleius, etc., and the teaching about Providence in *OrigWorld* was already noted in 1980 by Pheme Perkins.<sup>26</sup> However, she had not yet noticed that the picture of Providence in *ApocryIn* might be just as relevant. In my view, *ApocryIn* in fact presents a doctrine of multiple Providences that is even more similar to that in the Platonic sources than is the doctrine in *OrigWorld*. This and other differences

between our analyses lead me to conclusions which differ from those of Perkins.

#### a. Higher Providence

In only one passage does *OrigWorld* mention what could be a universal Providence. It is not called the Providence of the First God, however, nor the Thought of the Father, but rather the "Providence of Pistis":

Now it was in accordance with the Providence of Pistis that all this took place, so that the human being might appear before his image and might condemn them through their molded body (113, 5-9).

That which is being referred to here as having occurred in accordance with the Providence of Pistis is the plan of the archons to create an earthly human. Pistis, or Pistis Sophia,<sup>27</sup> is a figure whose precise rank in the transcendent realm in *OrigWorld* is not clear. Unlike the *ApocryIn*, *OrigWorld* presents very little description of the realm above the archontic cosmos. It may be that *OrigWorld* presupposes some account of the emanation of aeonic beings who fill out the transcendent realm, but if so it condenses the account to a mere allusion: "Now when the nature of the Immortals had come to perfection out of the Infinite, then an image flowed out of Pistis, called Sophia" (98, 11-14). Is Pistis in this gnostic tractate one of the higher entities among the "Immortals," or is she, like the Sophia of *ApocryIn*, the lowest?

In spite of our lack of certainty on this question, it may be proper to speak of the Providence of Pistis in this text as a higher Providence. However, the fundamental justification for this inference is not so much something positive which is said about the Providence of Pistis in this one passage as it is the language that the text uses in several other places to refer to a lower Providence, one that belongs to the realm of the archons.

#### b. Lower Providence

The first such mention of a lower Providence is in connection with the listing of the names of the planetary archons. We are first of all told that the chief archon, Ialdabaoth, created three androgynous offspring for himself through the reification of his enunciated boasts:

Iao, Eloia, and Astaphaios (101, 9-23). But then, somewhat confusingly for the reader, the text immediately begins to speak of a group of seven androgynous archons, each having both a male name and a female name (101, 24-102, 1):

Male Names:	Female Names:
(Ialdabaoth) <sup>28</sup>	Providence ( <i>pronoia</i> ) Sambathas
Iao	Lordship
Sabaoth	Divinity
Adonaïos	Kingship
Eloaios	Jealousy
Oraios	Wealth
Asaphaios	Wisdom

That there is some relationship between this list and the lists in the *ApocryIn* tradition is apparent, although this list in *OrigWorld* presents us with still a third version that cannot really be said to clear away much of the confusion among the versions in the *ApocryIn* texts. However, at least one agreement stands out between *OrigWorld* and the short recension of *ApocryIn*: the first-place position given in the list to Providence (cf. BG 43, 10-44, 4).

In fact, the archontic Providence receives even more attention in *OrigWorld* than in the short recension of *ApocryIn*. Not only is Providence found at the head of the list of the seven planetary powers, but she is singled out as a mythological personality to play a more visible role in the narrative. While in the *ApocryIn* the higher Providence was more developed as a character in the myth than the lower Providence, in *OrigWorld* the situation is reversed.

For instance, the second mention of the archontic Providence in *OrigWorld* occurs when the Immortal Human from the transcendent realm makes an appearance in the world below as a beautiful light (108, 1-9). No one was able to see this luminous Human except the *archigenetôr*, Ialdabaoth, and "the Providence with him" (108, 11f). This Providence was attracted to the luminous Human, but because she was "in the darkness" the Human despised her and she was unable to cleave to him (108, 15-17). Unable to cease her love, "she poured out her light upon the earth" (108, 19). What follows is a midrashic word-play on the Hebrew terms *adam*, *adamah* ("earth"), *dam* ("blood"), and the Greek terms *adamas* ("adamant") and *adamantine*: from that day, the luminous Human was called "Light-Human, which means 'luminous blood-person,' and the earth spread over Holy Adamas, which

means "holy, adamantine earth" (108, 19-25). The description of Providence in this passage as being "in the darkness" underscores the fact that she is a *lower* Providence, and a little later in the narrative she is actually referred to as "the Providence which is below": After remaining on the earth for two days, the luminous Adam "left the Providence which is below (*tpronoia etmpsa mpitn*) in heaven and ascended to his light" (111, 31-33).

The light/blood poured out by lower Providence in her love for the luminous Adam also produced androgynous Eros, having a male aspect, "Himeros, which is fire from the light,"<sup>29</sup> and a female aspect, "blood-soul, which is from the essence of Providence" (109, 1-6). The archontic Providence is thus involved in the creative process, but not as contributor to the psychic Adam of "marrow-soul and the whole foundation of the body," as was the case in the *BG* version of *Apocryph.*<sup>30</sup> Instead, here she contributes the female blood-psyche to Eros. What is apparently intended by the myth in this section is that the guidance or management of the creative process by this lower Providence comes first of all in the form of the introduction of desire. As a result of this desire, a certain providential ordering of life in the cosmic realm is effected, but the author paints a rather gloomy portrait of this order: after commenting that the intercourse of Eros caused the sprouting of the first sensual pleasure on the earth, the author adds: "the woman followed the earth, and marriage followed the woman, and reproduction followed marriage, and dissolution followed reproduction" (109, 22-25).

The archontic Providence is also mentioned in a rather negative light in connection with the birth of material children from Eve. When the seven archons and their angels mate with the material Eve and beget Abel and "the rest of the sons," we are informed that this all took place according to the Providence of the Archigenetör, so that Eve "might beget within herself every mixed seed, which is joined to the Fate of the cosmos and Fate's configurations (*schemata*) and justice" (117, 20-24).

And finally, the apocalyptic predictions in the closing sections of *OrigWorld* include the announcement of the condemnation and future destruction of the planetary archons:

When all the perfect ones appeared in the vessels fashioned by the archons, and when they disclosed the Truth which has nothing like it, then they put to shame every wisdom of the gods, and their Fate was found to be condemnab[e], and their power was extinguished, their lordship was destroyed, their Providence became [ . . . ]. (125, 23-32).

Although there is a lacuna in the text which makes the precise wording of the statement about Providence uncertain, we can be sure from the context that some unfavorable outcome for this archontic Providence was mentioned. It has been suggested by PHEME PERKINS that this last-quoted passage is referring to still a third Providence, one which corresponds to the lowest Providence in Pseudo-Plutarch's *De fato*.<sup>31</sup> But I see no reason to conclude that the Providence in this passage is any other than the archontic Providence which I have been discussing. Admittedly, there is a sense in which one might want to speak of this archontic Providence in 125, 23-32 as now *confined* to a lower level than had been the case in the earlier passages, since in the meantime the seven archons with whom this Providence is associated have been cast out of their heavens down to the earth (121, 27-35; 123, 4-15).

### c. Fate

Fate is mentioned several times in the tractate, and in order to ascertain the relationship between Providence and Fate in this text it will be useful to begin with one of the two passages which I just mentioned, where we hear of the casting down of the archons to the earth:

For when the seven archons were cast down from their heavens to the earth, they created for themselves angels — that is, many demons — who would serve them. These taught men many errors and magic and charms and idolatry and shedding of blood and altars and temples and sacrifices and libations to all the demons of the earth, who have as their fellow-worker Fate, who came into being in accordance with the harmony (*symphōnia*) between the gods of injustice and justice (123, 4-15).

The coming into being of Fate that is mentioned here evidently refers to a much earlier moment in the narrative, at which time Sabaoth, one of the sons of Ialdabaoth, had revolted from his father and had been translated out of the darkness to a higher realm, where he received his own assembly of angels and powers, etc. (103, 32-106, 11).<sup>32</sup> The realm of Sabaoth was given the designation "justice" and that of Ialdabaoth "injustice." (106, 11-18). Presumably, Fate in this text consists of the effects which result from the interaction (*symphōnia*) of the powers in these two realms. Such a conclusion would seem to be confirmed by the fact that after listing the various unpleasant powers in the realm of Ialdabaoth (Death, Jealousy, Wrath, Weeping, etc.) and various pleasant

powers in the realm of Sabaoth (Life, Blessed, Joy, Peace, etc.), the author says that "you will discover their effects (*apotelesmata*) and their activities in the configurations (*schēmata*) of the Fate of the heaven which is beneath the Twelve" (107, 14-17).

In reading these passages which refer to Fate, as well as the passage in 117, 20-24 that I mentioned earlier, where in accordance with Ialdabaoth's Providence, Eve begot mixed seed enmeshed within Fate's configurations, we might be tempted to see the archontic Providence as itself prior to or outside of Fate. However, that this is not the author's intention is indicated by still one further passage, in 121, 13-16, where we are told that when the archons became jealous of Adam's superior understanding, they wanted to shorten the life expectancy for human beings. However, the archons were unable to do this, "because of Fate, which was established from the beginning." Therefore, even though the appearance of archontic Providence occurs before the mention of Fate in the mythic narrative, this secondary Providence seems inseparably entwined with Fate, subject at least in some sense to Fate's law, and finally condemned together with Fate (125, 23-32).

### Conclusions

As I mentioned earlier, I have arrived at certain conclusions on this material which differ from those reached by PHEME PERKINS, the only other scholar, so far as I know, who has commented on the similarity between the multiple Providence doctrines in Apuleius et al. and doctrines of Providence in gnostic texts.<sup>33</sup> She has argued that *OrigWorld* manifests a threefold division of Providence: the Primary Providence, belonging to Pistis; the Secondary Providence, associated with Ialdabaoth; and still a third Providence, which she believes to be referred to in 125, 27-32.<sup>34</sup> She argues that the limited attestation of the three-fold Providence doctrine allows some fairly specific conclusions about the author of *OrigWorld*: Apuleius was evidently studying in Athens about 150 C.E.,<sup>35</sup> and his teachers during this time may have included students of Plutarch (Taurus, and possibly Plutarch's nephew Sextus).<sup>36</sup> "Like *Orig. World*, Apuleius presents the doctrine of three levels of providence, *Timaeus* exegesis, Isis mythology and, in novelistic form, an Eros story . . ."<sup>37</sup> Given the fact that Plutarch mentions a cosmological understanding of Eros that seems to link the activity of Eros to Providence,<sup>38</sup> and given Plutarch's well-known cosmological interpretation of Isis, Perkins concludes, "Since all Apuleius's known teachers were followers of Plutarch, we may even

suggest that the cosmological allegorization of Isis and Hesios (Eros) myths had probably carried on into the discussions of this circle in Athens."<sup>39</sup> And since *OrigWorld* contains the doctrine of higher and lower Providences, cosmological speculation about Providence as the source of Eros, and possibly the influence of Isis mythology,

We thus conclude that the peculiarities of the cosmological interpretation in *OrigWorld* reflect the teaching of this particular group at Athens around A.D. 150. We may reasonably assume that our author studied philosophy at Athens at that time. In the treatise before us, he has applied the teaching of that school to the exposition of Gnostic cosmological traditions such as we find in *Hyp. Arch.* and *Ap. John* and the Sethian-Ophites.<sup>40</sup>

As I have argued, I find evidence for only two Providences in *OrigWorld*, not three. Now it would be tempting to argue that my analysis, if correct, in fact only strengthens the case being made by Perkins, since in one respect it brings *OrigWorld* even closer to Apuleius's actual language. For Apuleius also never explicitly mentions three Providences, but only two (see below). Nevertheless, I question whether even then the sum of the evidence justifies the conclusion that "we may reasonably assume" that the author of *OrigWorld* studied philosophy in Athens about 150 C.E. And I am made all the more skeptical about so specific a provenance because of the presence of a doctrine of higher and lower Providences in *ApocryIn*.

Perkins regards the doctrine of multiple Providences in *OrigWorld* as a decisive fingerprint of the teaching of the Athenian school of the mid-second century C.E., and she is thinking of this teaching as having been woven into the exposition of gnostic cosmological traditions such as those in *ApocryIn*. But such a reconstruction is no longer satisfying once it is recognized that *ApocryIn* itself contains a doctrine of higher and lower Providences that is at least as similar to Apuleius's account as is that in *OrigWorld*.

The gnostic evidence may well invite certain revisions in the history of this chapter in Platonism. The speculation in these gnostic texts about higher and lower Providences and Fate ought not to be fitted by force too quickly into previously constructed arrangements of the surviving fragments of similar Platonic speculations. For example, the fact that Apuleius never really speaks of three Providences, but only two, has occasionally been registered, in routine fashion. Yet it has been regarded by interpreters as insignificant, since it has been assumed that Apuleius is of course *thinking* of three Providences, even though he does not mention the last one. The temptation to assume this is



powerful, so long as one is looking only at Apuleius, Pseudo-Plutarch, and Nemesis. (Calcidius may be left aside for the moment, since his similarity with the others does not really include references to a second or third Providence.)

However, the evidence of the gnostic texts for distinction between only two Providences may now provide reason for more hesitation in assuming that Apuleius really is thinking of three *providentiae*. It may be that the longer list of sources now at our disposal which speculate about multiple Providences favors a more complex reconstruction, in which we allow for the possibility that early versions of speculation about multiple Providences may have involved only a twofold distinction between the Providence of the First God and the Providence of the "young gods" of the *Timaeus*. How early, after all, is our evidence for talk of three Providences? Of the three sources Apuleius, Pseudo-Plutarch, and Nemesis, the only one which we can date with confidence in the second century C.E. is Apuleius. Nemesis writes more than two centuries later, and we do not have a certain date for Pseudo-Plutarch. Only these latter two sources actually speak of three Providences. If, as Gercke argued,<sup>41</sup> Pseudo-Plutarch and Nemesis are independent of one another, then it is probable that they are dependent on a common source or tradition. Gercke thought that Albinus and Apuleius also knew this source, and that the date for the source must therefore be pushed back into the second century.<sup>42</sup> But, as I have mentioned, that Albinus knew this source has recently been questioned by some scholars,<sup>43</sup> and therefore it is only Apuleius, *De Plat.* 1.12, which remains as the supposed evidence that all three Providences known to Pseudo-Plutarch and Nemesis were already being talked about in the second century. To be sure, Apuleius certainly does know a doctrine similar to that in Pseudo-Plutarch and Nemesis, but perhaps the reason that Apuleius does not go ahead and speak of a "Tertiary Providence" exercised by the daemons is that he had never thought of putting it that way. Perhaps he would not even have thought of *providentia* as a particularly appropriate designation for the role of the daemons.

At the same time, our understanding of these gnostic texts and the significance of their references to Providences and Fate is enhanced. Once we have dutifully registered important differences that do separate such gnostic texts from an Apuleius or a Pseudo-Plutarch, such as the fundamentally less sympathetic gnostic evaluation of the lower Providence and its god,<sup>44</sup> there still remains an impressive amount in common to be appreciated. In this regard, not the least important point to raise involves the implications for the positions of these Platonic and gnostic writers on the question of free will. Platonists in antiquity,

including Apuleius and Pseudo-Plutarch, are famous for arguing theories of Fate which leave ample room for free choice. Perhaps the most traditional form which this took was the argument that Fate is a law defining the inevitable consequences that will result from a given choice, rather than being a law which makes all one's choices inevitable.<sup>45</sup> Gnostics, on the other hand, tend to be labeled "determinists." To be sure, what is usually intended by this label is not that gnostics believed everything to be determined by Fate. Rather, what is normally meant is that salvation is inevitable for some and destruction inevitable for others, due to their possession of different "natures" (pneumatic, psychic, hylic, etc.), and therefore the pattern of choices in an individual's life is determined in advance by the individual's "nature."<sup>46</sup>

Now in the debate between Platonists and Stoics, for example, the Platonists' insistence on the distinction between Fate and a Providence quite outside Fate's control tended to go hand in hand with the assertion of the reality of free choice and human responsibility. It would be fascinating if a text such as *Apocryphal John*, so much like Apuleius or Pseudo-Plutarch in its scheme of higher and lower Providences and Fate, were nevertheless poles apart from them on the issue of human responsibility. It would be fascinating, but in my view there is no evidence of such a contrast between them on this point. There is not space here to defend this assertion completely.<sup>47</sup> I would simply point out that the important section in *Apocryphal John* which discusses the variety in human responses to revelation and degrees of success in achieving spiritual strength and salvation (II 25, 16-27, 31 par) is shot through with implications of conditionality.<sup>48</sup> I see nothing in the text which suggests an interest in denying the possibility of human choice. The text certainly does not make such an argument in theoretical terms. Many modern (and probably some ancient) readers have thought that there is in such a text an implicit, mythological denial of free will. Such has been inferred from the myths of pre-existent races — the "immovable race" mentioned in *Apocryphal John*, for example. But an ancient gnostic may not have seen the rigid determinism in such mythology that he/she is so often assumed to have seen.<sup>49</sup> When a text such as *Apocryphal John* holds out the assurance to readers of a benevolent Providence higher than Fate's chains, are we really justified in concluding that this higher Providence is, after all, only a more divine form of Fate?

## NOTES

1. Alfred Gercke, "Eine platonische Quelle des Neuplatonismus," *Rheinisches Museum N.F.* 41 (1886): 285.
2. In his commentary on the *Timaeus*, chapters 142-190; see *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus, Plato Latinus* 4, ed. J.H. Waszink (London and Leiden: Warburg Institute and Brill, 1962); J. den Boeft, *Calcidius on Fate: His Doctrine and Sources, Philosophia Antiqua* 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1970). Calcidius does not actually speak of three Providences, but only one; but Calcidius's doctrine of Fate and Fate's position in a hierarchical system of divine hypostases is very closely related to Pseudo-Plutarch's doctrine of Fate and Fate's relation to a hierarchy of three Providences.
3. *Nemesius, De natura hominis* 44; *Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis graece et latine*, ed. Christian Friedrich Matthaei (1802; reprint: Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), pp. 344-346; *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Emesa*, Library of Christian Classics 4, ed. William Telfer (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), pp. 432-435.
4. Gercke (above, n. 1), p. 279.
5. E.g., Willy Theiler, "Tacitus und die antike Schicksalslehre," in *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühl zum 60. Geburtstag* (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1946), p. 71; *Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 7, ed. and trans. Phillip H. de Lacy and Benedict Einarson (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 304; J.H. Waszink, *Studien zum Timaeuskommentar des Calcidius*, vol. 1, *Philosophia Antiqua* 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1964), p. 22, n. 2; den Boeft (above, n. 2), p. 129.
6. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 298, 320; R.W. Sharples, "Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato*: Some Parallels," *Classical Quarterly* 28 (1978): 243ff.
7. Dillon (above, n. 6), p. 320.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 325.
10. For the short recension: the second tractate in the Berlin gnostic codex (=BG), *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*, ed. Walter C. Till, second edition by Hans-Martin Schenke, TU 60, 2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1972); and the first tractate in Codex III of the Nag Hammadi Library (=CG III). For the long recension: the first tractate in Codex II from Nag Hammadi (=CG II) and the first tractate in Codex IV (=CG IV). For the three Nag Hammadi texts of *Apocryphon*, there is the edition by Martin Krause and Pahor Labib, *Die drei Versionen des Apocryphon des Johannes im koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo* (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1962). Except where differences among the versions need to be noted, I will for convenience usually cite *Apocryphon* according to the CG II version, of which the English reader has a handy translation by Frederik Wisse in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row; Leiden: Brill, 1977), pp. 98-116.
11. See *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus Codex II von Nag Hammadi im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo*, ed. Alexander Böhlig and Pahor Labib, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin Institut für Orientalforschung 58 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962). The Coptic scribe did not number the pages of Codex II. The edition by Böhlig and Labib numbers the pages with the plate numbers from the older facsimile edition by Pahor Labib, *Coptic Gnostic Papyri in the Coptic Museum at Old Cairo*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Government Press, 1956). I use here the pagination of *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, published under the auspices of the Department of Antiquities of the Arab Republic of Egypt, in conjunction with UNESCO, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), the same system followed in the English translation by Hans-Gebhard Bethge and Orval S. Wintermute, in Robinson (above, n. 10), pp. 161-179. A fragment of a second copy of *OrigWorld* is found among what remains of Codex XIII from Nag Hammadi, but it is too limited to be of help for the questions addressed here.
12. Cf. R.E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1937), p. 100.
13. Calcidius, *In Tim.* 176.
14. *Nemesius, De natura hominis* 44.
15. Cf. Michael A. Williams, *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity*, Nag Hammadi Studies 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), chapter IV.
16. Ibid., pp. 114ff.
17. Cf. A.J. Welburn, "The Identity of the Archons in the Apocryphon Johannis," *Vigiliae Christianae* 32 (1978): 241-54.
18. I take for granted, but do not discuss here, the importance of further traditions, such as Jewish midrashic traditions on the creation narratives.
19. However, CG III may not be in agreement with BG on this. The few fragments of words which remain for this passage in CG III 22, 18-23, 6 at least do not seem to allow the restoration of the lacunae so as to match neatly the wording in BG. But the text of CG III is so fragmentary at this point that we cannot determine with any certainty the degree of difference from BG.
20. R. van den Broeck, "The Creation of Adam's Psychic Body in the Apocryphon of John," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, EPRO 91, ed. R. van den Broeck and M.J. Vermaseren (Leiden: Brill, 1981), p. 46. Plato first mentions sinews and flesh, in that order (*Tim.* 74B), although admittedly he then proceeds to discuss first the composition of the flesh, and then that of the sinews.
21. Van den Broeck (above, n. 20), p. 47, who understands the phrase "and (=mn) the whole foundation of the body" epexegetically: "the fourth is Providence, a marrow-soul, that is, the whole foundation of the body." (Actually, van den Broeck for some reason erroneously speaks of the epexegetical sense of the Coptic copula *awo* here, when the Coptic term in

- the text is actually *mn* — for which, of course, the exegetical sense can still be argued.)
22. It is true that the second listing is introduced with the statement: "and the powers began *from below*" (BG 49, 9f), while the first listing is introduced as a list which begins "*from above*" (BG 43, 11). But, as one can see, the order in the second list is not simply a reversal of the order in the first; only Providence's position has changed.
  23. Ialdabaoth, for example, refers to himself as "god" in *ApocryIn* II 13, 8f par.
  24. Dillon (above, n. 6), p. 324.
  25. R.W. Sharples, "Nemesius of Emesa and Some Theories of Divine Providence," *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983): 142: "The relation between secondary providence and fate seems already to have been a topic of controversy among the original proponents of the three-providence theory" (and here Sharples cites Pseudo-Plutarch, *De fato* 574C-D as evidence).
  26. Pheme Perkins, "On the Origin of the World (CG II,5): A Gnostic Physics," *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980): 36-46.
  27. On the problem of the interchangeability of these terms in this tractate, cf. Francis T. Fallon, *The Enthronement of Sabaoth: Jewish Elements in Gnostic Creation Myths*, Nag Hammadi Studies 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), p. 17.
  28. Ialdabaoth is not actually mentioned at this point in the text: "Seven appeared in androgynous form in Chaos. They have their masculine name and their feminine name. The feminine name is Providence Sambathas, which is the Hebdomad. But his (n.b.!) son, called 'Iao': his feminine name is 'Lordship'; Sabaoth: his feminine name is 'Divinity,'" etc. But that Ialdabaoth and Providence are supposed to be paired is indicated by the context and by the wording in 108, 10-12 and 117, 19ff (see the discussion of these below).
  29. The Coptic text has *himirenis*; see Böhlig-Labib (above, n. 11), p. 62; Perkins (above, n. 26), p. 39; J. Mansfeld, "Hesiod and Parmenides in Nag Hammadi," *Vigiliae Christianae* 35 (1981): 174-182.
  30. However, van den Broeck (above, n. 20), pp. 47ff., has pointed out that later on in *OrigWorld*, in the passage which describes how the fashioned form (*plasma*) of the material Adam came into being with each part of the body corresponding to one of the seven archons, it is said that "their great one (=Ialdabaoth) created the brain (*egkephalon*) and the marrow" (114, 33-35). Since *OrigWorld* identifies Providence as the female consort of Ialdabaoth, then this passage is indirectly parallel to the association of Providence with "marrow" which we saw in the BG version of *ApocryIn*. Moreover, in its mention of "the brain and the marrow" as contributed by the leader of the list of archons, *OrigWorld* is reminiscent of Plato's description of the brain as a special portion of marrow fashioned at the beginning of the creation of the human body (*Tim.* 73D).
  31. Perkins (above, n. 26), pp. 41-43.
  32. See Fallon (above, n. 27).

33. In the discussion following the 1984 presentation of this paper, I was delighted to learn from Prof. Michel Tardieu that he also had addressed the relation between *ApocryIn*'s theory of providences and Platonic theories of multiple providences, in his (at that time, just published) commentary on the Berlin Codex (*Écries Gnostiques: Codex de Berlin, Sources Gnostiques et Manichéennes 1* [Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1984], pp. 19, 258, 292ff). Unfortunately, it has not been possible to incorporate a treatment of Tardieu's study in this paper. I will only point out that a significant respect in which our conclusions differ is that he argues that *ApocryIn* does in fact speak of three providences, the third being an implicit interiorization of transcendent Providence in the form of the intelligence given to the seed of Seth (pp. 292, 319, 329-331).
34. Perkins (above, n. 26), pp. 42ff.
35. Dillon (above, n. 6), pp. 306ff.
36. Ibid.
37. Perkins (above, n. 26), p. 44.
38. Plutarch, *De fac.* 926E.-927A; cf. Mansfeld (above, n. 29), pp. 175, 180ff.
39. Perkins (above, n. 26), p. 44.
40. Ibid., pp. 44ff.
41. Gercke (above, n. 1), p. 278.
42. Ibid., p. 279.
43. See above, n. 6.
44. Here I would also tend to disagree with Perkins (above, n. 27), pp. 41ff, who speaks of the lower Providence in *OrigWorld* as "beneficent."
45. See Dillon (above, n. 6), pp. 295-98, 322ff.
46. E.g., Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, *Sather Classical Lectures* 48 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 150-157.
47. Cf. Williams (above, n. 15), chapter VII.
48. The "worth.ness" of the most perfect type of soul is linked to "endurance" (*hypomenein*) in the "contest" (II 26, 3-7 par); the positive influence of the spirit of Life and the negative influence of the evil spirit are admittedly factors from outside which either help or hinder the soul's liberation from forgetfulness and acquisition of gnosis (II 26, 15-27, 10 par), and yet it is clearly assumed that persons can have received the gnosis and then "fall away," and for this they will be held responsible and punished (II 27, 21-30).
49. Cf. Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. R. McL. Wilson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 117: "Gnosis is not a 'theology of salvation by nature,' as the heresiologists caricature it; it is rather thoroughly conscious of the provisional situation of the redeemed up to the realisation of redemption after death. Otherwise the extant literature which relates to existential and ethical behavior is inexplicable."

# NEOPLATONISM AND JEWISH THOUGHT

*edited by*

Lenn E. Goodman

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R. Baine Harris, General Editor

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJS	Association for Jewish Studies
B.	Babylonian Talmud ( <i>Bavli</i> )
DK	H. Diels and W. Kranz, <i>Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> (Berlin, 1934-54)
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
IJMES	International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JHP	Journal of the History of Philosophy
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JTS	Jewish Theological Seminary of America
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LXX	The Septuagint
M	Mishnah
PAAJR	Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research
REI	Revue des Études Islamiques
REJ	Revue des Études Juives
SUNY	State University of New York
SVF	H. von Arnim, <i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> (Leipzig, 1903-24)
Y.	Jerusalem Talmud ( <i>Yerushalmi</i> )

## PREFACE

R. Baine Harris

Religion can never be completely free from philosophy. Although it might be possible to construct a philosophy that would be free from any religious meanings, philosophical concepts and opinions are essential elements in religion; and they are found in all religions.

Philosophy is a fundamental human activity—even more fundamental than religion. It is an effort to inquire into the origin and nature of everything we encounter, an inquiry that no individual capable of reflection can avoid, but one that can be responded to in a number of ways, some of which are religious.

Philosophy in its early stages is an intellectual analysis of everything we can know or think about in some way. It may or may not move on to a rational synthesizing of our knowing experiences, and to an intellectual commitment to some logical way of systematizing them. Religion, in contrast, is always a statement of belief about the nature of whatever the believer believes to be ultimately real and of ultimate importance. Religion usually involves some form of personal commitment either to an identifiable being or to some teaching about the ultimate nature of reality—a commitment which cannot occur without making some philosophical assumptions. It is a response that is affected to some extent by the nature of the original philosophical inquiry.

Religions usually begin with the vision of a founder around which, as time goes on, are constructed additional teachings and

interpretations by its various proponents. The original vision soon becomes encased in a superstructure of organized doctrines, as interpreters attempt to explain and even expand the significance and larger meaning of the views of the founder. Although the original visions of the founders of religions are often emotionally intense and profound in their insight into human nature and human behavior, they are not always philosophically profound. A notable exception is the vision of the Buddha. This is not to say, however, that these visions are philosophically uncommitted, for they are given and developed in languages which are themselves historical, and as such, are dependent upon some concepts of reality that are the products of someone's philosophical reflection.

Even though the original vision may not be clear in its ontology, consistent in its logic, or rich in its epistemological options, the basic components used by the founder and the concepts used by those who interpret the vision are themselves products of history, and, as a consequence, are philosophically laden. However timeless and universal the original vision of the founder of a religion may be, it is a product of the philosophical outlook of its age. This is why religions are always in need of new interpreters to update the vision, translate it into terms and concepts that are meaningful in the new age, and at the same time revive the ancient meanings of the religion in some way that is amenable to some contemporary philosophical outlook. These two objectives are not always compatible. One of the dynamic tensions that seems to run throughout the history of most of the world's great religions is whether the main focus of the religion is to be upon the simple interpretation of the vision of the founder or upon the more elaborate and sophisticated philosophical ramifications of it that have evolved over the years.

Religions are much more complex than they appear to be. Not only is there a philosophical factor involved in their internal growth and development, but their interpreters must also make intellectual adjustments in their theology along the way as they encounter certain well-developed and established philosophies of challengingly similar or rival content. One instance of such an encounter is the main theme of this book, most of the essays of which chronicle the historical encounter from the First through the 17th centuries of an old established religion, which we now call Judaism, with a very sophisticated and Romanized form of late Platonic thought which

grew to become what we now call Neoplatonism. Serious Jewish thinkers had to deal with Neoplatonism, both because they were wise enough to see that no religious thinkers can afford to ignore any well-ordered philosophy contemporary to them and because they saw in the speculations of certain Neoplatonic philosophers epistemological and metaphysical notions that were quite compatible with their own historical and traditional attempts to characterize the nature of God and his relation to nature and man.

It was of no great importance to them that Roman Neoplatonism, in addition to being a philosophy, was also a way of life, and even practiced as a religion by a few elitist philosophers. They had no need of it as a philosophy of life or as a form of religious commitment, since they already had quite satisfactory forms of both in Judaism. They were interested in it mainly for its utility in developing a religious epistemology and metaphysics, a main concern of the many Jews, Christians and Muslims down through the centuries and even in the present time who have been seriously interested in Neoplatonic thought.

Not all Jewish thinkers were enthusiastic supporters of Neoplatonism. Some strongly opposed it in favor of some other philosophical approach; and the larger history of Judaism in the Late Hellenistic, Roman, and Medieval Periods must include those who reacted to Neoplatonism as well as those who advocated it. But it would not be an exaggeration to say that Neoplatonism was the philosophy that was most influential upon the formation of Jewish thought during these periods. It played a significant role, if not the dominant role, in the whole development of modern Jewish thought.

The essays in this volume should be of interest to modern Jewish intellectuals who wish to have a deeper understanding of the actual historical philosophical elements in their own religious tradition. But they also have an importance much broader than Jewish cultural self-definition. This is because they generally deal with those larger intellectual issues that are involved whenever the thinkers and scholars of a religious tradition attempt to become philosophical about their religion, namely, when they attempt to translate sacred meanings into metaphysical meanings with the aid of a critical epistemology.

These larger intellectual issues, such as the definition of the divine, man, and nature, their proper relations, the meanings of time,



history, and worship, are remarkably similar in the great religions, although their metaphysical formulations may differ radically. The essays in this volume show how major Jewish thinkers dealt with some of these issues. But the intellectual issues are universal and reflect concerns held in common with many religious traditions, and especially with Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, all of which in the course of time have had their own scholars who have considered some of the same issues, and in some instances provided responses similar to those provided by the Jewish philosophers.

These essays should be of special interest to modern Christian and Muslim scholars. The monotheistic faiths are still struggling today with the same basic problem dealt within most of them, namely, that of making monotheism metaphysically meaningful. They should be of interest to anyone who does not think that monotheism can be completely divorced from philosophy and wishes to establish some connection between the God of Abraham and the God of the philosophers.

Although the idea for a conference on "Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought" was my own, its development and execution into reality was the work of one man, Professor Lenn E. Goodman, of the Philosophy Department of the University of Hawaii. He not only organized the conference, but also secured the funding for its support and edited the papers contained in this work, spending hundreds, if not thousands of hours of his time on the project. His devotion and scholarly professionalism have been an inspiration to me during these past five years. I can only say of him what Leigh Hunt says of Abou Ben Adhem, "May his tribe increase!"

My deep thanks are extended to President Albert J. Simone of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, the host institution, for his strong support of the project. Appreciation is also expressed to the sponsors of the conference, namely, the Department of Philosophy, the Department of Religion, the Department of European Languages and Literatures, the College of Continuing Education and Community Service, Temple Emanu-El and the Hawaii Council of Churches. To the Matchette Foundation, the University of Hawaii Foundation, the Hawaii Committee for the Humanities, the Office of the University of Hawaii Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and the American friends of the Hebrew University my deep appreciation is also given for their financial contributions, without which the conference would

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August, 1990

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION : **Thematizing a Tradition**

One benefit of studying texts from another age is the access they afford us to alternative problematics and thus to crosschecks of our own speculations and assumptions. In the great tradition of philosophy that extends from Philo, the intellectual godfather of Neoplatonism, to Spinoza, who restructured the by then classic Neoplatonic mode of thought, it was not the existence of God or even the reality of minds or universals that principally exercised philosophic minds. Rather the great issues were those of relating the ineffable indefiniteness of the One with the finite and intelligible specificity of the many, the absoluteness of divine power and perfection with the seemingly arbitrary particularities of practical experience and choice. Minds and universals were not problems but parts of the solution of this single problem that loomed so much larger than any difficulty the bare fact of consciousness or notion of intelligibility might sometimes seem to pose: the problem we can identify under the shorthand title of the many and the One. If that name scarcely seems for us to designate a problem at all, it is only because we may not have assigned quite the role and function to the One and quite the rigorously construed alienness to the many that the schemes of philosophy ancestral to our own traditionally assigned.

The philosophic method founded by Plato and forged into a system by its synthesis with the thought of Aristotle provided philosophers in antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages not only with an explanation of the possibility of knowledge but also with an exposition of the content of that knowledge. It was clear why and

how God was real, if reality and value were coextensive, so that the highest value was the highest reality. It was clear as well how God could be known, if what was most real was also most beautiful and most intelligible in itself, and if the knowledge of all specificities came through the knowledge of the absolute truth Itself, the Source of all that is real, constant, or intelligible among changing things. It was clear how living beings are animated and how consciousness is possible, if reality and thought are gifts from the highest reality and pure thought is pure actuality. For it was clear that the loss of form and rationality betokens as well loss of reality. When amorphousness and indefiniteness are complete only the utter limit of non-being remains.

What was not clear and not agreed among Neoplatonists was why and how the One, or God, the Unconditioned, would compromise Its absoluteness. The problem was not how being was possible, for it was clear that being was actual. Nor was the problem how the Absolute was possible. For the Absolute was necessary in and of Itself. Rather the problem was how the Unconditioned could give rise to the conditioned. The problem of creation, the problem of evil, the problem of revelation, the problem of specifying the doable good in relation to the demands of absolute Perfection, were all conceived as special cases of the general problem of relating the finite to the Infinite, the many to the One.

In the Middle Ages varieties of Neoplatonic Aristotelianism afforded the overarching philosophic framework for most thoughtful Muslims, Jews and Christians who believed that they required a philosophic framework at all, and for many who believed that they did not. The cliché is that it was an age of faith. If this means that communities of faith defined the alignments of society, the cliché is probably true. But it is certainly false if it is taken to mean that philosophers in the Middle Ages were more dogmatic or less critical than philosophers of other epochs. And it is certainly false if it is taken to mean that the philosophers of Neoplatonic-Aristotelian persuasion took refuge in fideism from the problems of critical thinking. Such a description is a romantic projection, seeking comfort and escape in an illusory, idealized past from intellectual difficulties that were just as alive then as they are today, only confronted with different tools and perhaps tackled from a different end or aspect, as climbers might concentrate now on one face, now

on another, of the same peak or summit. When Philo made philosophy the handmaiden of theology, what was important was not merely that he gave philosophy a seemingly subordinate role, serving theology, but that it was philosophy he gave that role. When Origen reasoned that God's perfection requires that in the end even Satan will be reconciled and brought back to union with God, he found the proof-texts in Christian scripture, but they were used to bear out what reason had demonstrated must be so.

When Augustine molded Christian faith out of Platonic *pistis*, Ciceronian *fides*, and Stoic assent or appropriation, and spoke of faith seeking understanding, he made faith the means but understanding the end. Likewise when Saadia set forth his beliefs and convictions in treatise form, he qualified their description in the title of his book with the designation 'Critically selected' and organized the book around the arguments that vindicated each of his theses *vis-à-vis* its alternatives. When al-Ghazālī appraised the character that had made him a thinker, he mentioned an innate curiosity and an inability to accept dogmas on blind faith; he said that if critics expected him to refute a position he had not first assayed for its merits, they were expecting the wrong task from the wrong person; and he sustained all his criticisms of the established traditions in philosophy with detailed philosophic argumentation, rejecting only those theses that could not withstand such scrutiny. Maimonides too held that if scripture clashed with reason, scripture could and must be allegorized, adjusting our reading of its meaning to preserve its truth. And Thomas, in his mighty *Summas*, always states objections first, in the manner of the Arabic *kalām*, and follows his thesis with its Euclidean proof and then the answers to the objections. Sacred and authoritative texts are quoted only to establish the authenticity as Christian, traditional doctrine of the theses sustained by argument. The same is true with the proof-texts used by the Muslim and Jewish philosophers. All see a congruence and complementarity of reason and revelation, where tradition supplies the bond uniting the two—reconciling insight with insight by way of dialectic and so making possible the coherence of a community that endures from moment to moment and from epoch to epoch.

Modern historians of ideas who write of medieval philosophy as though it were a battleground between reason and revelation are projecting their own unease about the sacred and the secular, the

ancient and the modern, left and right, red and black, fathers and sons, onto domain where such a conflict does not enter the terms of reference. Scholars play this game of old and new, reason and faith, only by refusing to allow the philosophic texts to speak for themselves and define their own concerns. For the primary food for any philosophy is the corpus of texts bearing the critical thinking of past generations; and the primary test of the scholarship that profits from those texts is its willingness to allow them to thematize themselves. Only the scholarship that is willing in this way to listen to the great thinkers is qualified to judge their critical achievement, and only through such judgment can our own thought become critical and in some measure transcend the boundaries of its generation.

Ennui is the great enemy of scholarship, and it takes many guises—not only literal boredom with the musty tomes, but fear of readers' boredom and a resultant desire to make old texts palatable or relevant by reducing them to pawns or players in some contemporary contest or struggle. Such reductionism is both self-aggravating and self-defeating. It buries the insights of past thinkers beneath concealing projections and muffles the voices of their advocates, stifling the freshness they might bring us from another age and thus perpetuating ennui by confronting a vision as yet unfocused with an apparent wall of opacity and the temptation merely to silver that wall, on the cynical assumption that scholarship must always be about ourselves. Intellectuals who believe that the texts they study will tell them nothing that does not resolve to partisan advocacy of contemplation or praxis, autonomy or heteronomy, individual or society, universality or particularity, or any other preconceived polarity, are not prepared to glean more from the texts they con than what they have already brought with them—least of all are they prepared to profit from the discovery of alternative problematics.

One who supposes that medieval thought revolves around ■ conflict between reason and revelation operates as though reason and revelation were products rather than processes, and as though it were already known, before scholarship or philosophy, or the dialectic between them, has begun its work, what will be the outcome and content of each. But if there is any truth in saying that the Middle Ages were an age of faith, that truth lies in the fact that the great issues of the day, for so many, could be summed up in the question: What ought to be the content of faith?

The present volume brings together the papers presented at the International Conference on Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought held in Honolulu November 30-December 3, 1987. If there is merit in these papers it arises in each author's probing of a particular text or body of texts for its Neoplatonic themes and their intellectual relevance, allowing the texts to speak for themselves. The striking finding, if we may use a somewhat scientific-sounding word, is that independent scholars, writing independently about figures who worked in different periods and languages, albeit in a common religious confession and philosophic construction, alighted repeatedly on the issue of mediation, the central Neoplatonic concern with the means by which the Absolute can be related to the here and now. This became the unifying theme of the conference and of this volume, linking the diverse approaches adopted by the thinkers studied and the diverse methods of the scholars, theologians and philosophers who took part, as a spontaneous but recurrent focus. Arranged in ■ rough chronological sequence, the papers afford a striking historical sampler of the ideas, achievements, difficulties and philosophic struggles of a group of men who worked not quite at one another's sides, nor wholly in isolation, to form a tradition of intellectual exploration that grew out of the philosophic work of antiquity and late antiquity. Readily bridging the gap that separates pagans from monotheists and rival confessions and sects from one another, this tradition, sustained by common theological values and philosophical concerns, continued for centuries to aid thinkers in confronting problems in a wide variety of contexts, fostering a common conceptual vocabulary and indeed a common philosophical aesthetic for mystics, rationalists, and empiricists, Jews, Christians, and Muslims—a philosophic source whose vitality is not yet exhausted.

David Winston, a specialist in the thought of Philo of Alexandria, the great Hellenistic Jewish thinker of the first century B.C., opens the volume with reflections on the very Maimonidean, Rabbinic, and indeed universal problem of naming or describing God. He shows how Philo availed himself of Stoic strategies to prevent the idea of divine transcendence, say, of the passions, from strangling discourse about the divine altogether, discovering and exploiting affective terms that do not imply passivity, and so licensing and rendering coherent with the Biblical idea of divine transcendence the

seemingly incompatible usage that conceives of God in terms of compassion, joy or will. The idea of divine joy becomes an important theme for mystics, including philosophic mystics; the idea of divine will becomes the common focus of all monotheistic thinkers in the Middle Ages in responding to the Neoplatonic theme of emanation.

John Dillon addresses the *Fons Vitae*, or *Fountain of Life* of Solomon Ibn Gabirol, a remarkable work of almost pure Neoplatonic metaphysics, which, as Dillon, Mathis and McGinn show, is rooted in the late ancient theories of Greek Neoplatonism and spreads its influence far beyond its own time and place to become a point of departure and dialectical response to Christian continuators of the philosophic tradition of natural theology. It is commonly said that the chaste dialogue of the *Fons Vitae*, which survives in full only in a Latin translation of the Arabic original, is devoid of Biblical allusions or other distinctive marks of its Jewish origin—so that the schoolmen who used it could not tell if the author was Muslim or Jewish. Indeed, it was not until Rabbi Salomon Munk of Paris in 1845 discovered quotations from the work in a text by Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera that scholars knew that Ibn Gabirol, the well-known Hebrew poet of sacred and secular themes, was identical with the “Avicbrol” of the *Fons Vitae*. But in fact, the work bears in its title an allusion to the beautiful lines from the Psalms: “For with Thee is the Fountain of Life; by Thy light do we see light.” It was this poetic equation of life with light, the principle of being with that of understanding, that convinced many Jewish neoplatonists of the underlying harmony between Biblical and Neoplatonic theism: At bottom the Torah and the philosophers were saying the same thing in different ways—thus the insights of either tradition could shed light on the problems of the other.

Newcomers who came to Plato’s Academy to hear his famous Lecture on the Good were shocked to find that instead of a discussion of the good life, Plato was exploring the most basic problem of arithmetic, the relation between the numbers one and two. But for Plato this issue had become the final undissolved residue of philosophy. If it could be explained how the pure simplicity of the One, or the Good, gave rise to that first otherness of “the Indefinite Dyad,” of “the great and the small,” then the emergence of the cosmos, of matter from idea or spirit, of time from the eternal, of

change from changelessness, and of specificity from pure generality, would seem easy. The key to Plato’s problem, Ibn Gabirol thought, lay in the recognition that thought has an objective, thus objectifying aspect to it: Thought itself is like matter, a principle of differentiation or otherness and thus the first precipitate of emanation—the first matter.

Dillon shows how Ibn Gabirol drew his striking idea of a material nature in the spiritual realm of the divine from a well developed Neoplatonic tradition of thinking about “intelligible matter,” applying that idea, as earlier Platonists had done, to preserve divine transcendence—mediating but not compromising the absoluteness of God’s oneness and perfection. He shows how Ibn Gabirol responds, much in the manner of Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, and Iamblichus (fourth century), to difficulties about the notion of intelligible matter, drawing upon our familiarity with the anatomy of thought to assign to intelligible matter the hybrid character it will need if it is to function successfully as the vehicle of the mind’s access to the divine world and of God’s access to nature.

Carl Mathis pursues the parallel between Ibn Gabirol and Iamblichus, exposing more fully the motive of preserving the absolute transcendence of the One while conceptually allowing the traffic between God and nature, without which the most transcendent God becomes a metaphysical irrelevancy. In Iamblichus, as in Ibn Gabirol, Mathis finds a “doubling” of the One, which allows God both to remain in “unspeakable splendor” and to “unfold Himself” into principles that give rise to nature and diversity as we know it. Here Ibn Gabirol is seen continuing work on the problem that was racking Plato’s mind in the years before his death in much the way that Einstein, in his last years, was seeking a unified field theory. The same motives and values and often the same strategies are at work later in the Kabbalistic thinkers, as we see in the papers of Novak, Katz, Idel and Popkin—the need to preserve divine transcendence, yet to allow access of God to the world and of the human mind and heart to God.

Bernard McGinn takes us to an endgame of Ibn Gabirol’s gambit in philosophy, showing how problems in the idea of intelligible matter—for example, about the unity of the human person—made that idea less helpful than Ibn Gabirol had hoped, even for thinkers who took his approach far more seriously than did the

mainstream Jewish philosophical tradition. At the same time, he takes us deeper into the architecture of Ibn Gabirol's intellectual universe (to borrow A. H. Armstrong's phrase), revealing the central role of divine will (*Voluntas*), a theme preserved in all the later Jewish philosophers and in the Kabbalists. Indeed the centrality of Will becomes a hallmark of Jewish Neoplatonism, in a way curtailing or redefining the commitment to Neoplatonic thinking. God's will becomes ■ Neoplatonic hypostasis or is identified with the Ineffable highest Unity that Neoplatonism taught Jewish thinkers how to conceptualize without reduction, and so, in their own distinctive ways, to address without compunction (despite its utter transcendence) and even (in the case of some Kabbalists) to engage with in the expectation of a response.

It is Will for Ibn Gabirol that brings matter and form together and so makes creation possible. Creation is thus in some way a free act of God. It is not a mere timeless flowing forth of necessity, a freezing of the event within the eternity of God, as though nature somehow remained embedded within God and never actually acquired its own reality. This idea, the reality of creation—symbolized by the thesis that nature had an origin and epitomized in the affirmation of divine volition, God's freedom to act or not to act, according to his grace and pleasure—becomes the great theme of medieval Jewish philosophy and the great thesis to be defended. Human freedom, the contingency and openness of the future, are just two of the corollaries of this response to what was seen as the constraining necessitarianism of the intellectualist, determinist reading of Neoplatonic emanation theory. It is here that Arthur Hyman's paper introduces the challenge that scriptural monotheists consistently threw down at the feet of the more strictly intellectualist and deterministic exponents of emanation: How can what is one and simple (as the Neoplatonic God is supposed to be, if God is to be absolute, indestructible, necessarily existent, unique and unrivaled) give rise to anything but what is one and simple? That is, even assuming the success of some Neoplatonic strategy of mediating the gap between the One and its product, through a series of Neoplatonic-Aristotelian disembodied intellects, how can any outcome emerge but a series of such presumably "simple" beings—not a world of multiplicity and change, but simply an indeterminately long sequence of undifferentiated and therefore undifferentiable theoretical beings. The answer, as Ibn Gabirol

clearly anticipated and as Jewish philosophers of many backgrounds and persuasions were to underscore, with aid from Muslim predecessors who had raised the same question, was that only divine will could make a difference where none was given at the outset.

Hyman shows how the tension between divine simplicity and the world's multiplicity and complexity was addressed by Plotinus, Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, Isaac Israeli, Ibn Gabirol, Ibn Daud, Maimonides, Averroes, Ibn Falaquera, Narboni, and Albalag. He follows the principle that the simple can give rise only to the simple from its origins in Neoplatonic philosophy to its use in the critique of that philosophy by al-Ghazālī and Maimonides and its eventual refinement, qualification or abandonment by Jewish Averroists, under pressure from adversaries who sought to restructure emanationism in a more voluntaristic, less mechanical direction.

Alfred Ivry questions the success of Maimonides in fusing emanationism with the idea of creation, insightfully glossing Maimonides' emphatic strictures against polytheism as veiled attacks on the Neoplatonic-Aristotelian scheme of celestial intelligences associated with the spheres and mediating God's governance over the sublunary world. Maimonides saw the ultimately pagan roots of this scheme, Ivry argues, but rather than reject a solution to the problem of the many and the One that was at its root "inimical to monotheism," he sought to tame it by emphasizing the createdness of the intelligences. In inveighing against an Aristotelian view that seemed to make God "*primus inter pares*," first among His peers, "Maimonides is protesting against a world view in which God plays essentially a mechanistic role." Critically exploring the somewhat neglected Neoplatonic side of Maimonidean thought and its backgrounds in the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, Ivry finds that the Avicennan philosophy had failed to resolve its problem of the many and the One: "Perhaps Maimonides realized this and therefore drew back from utilizing the distinction between essence and existence more than he did." But Maimonides' ambivalence between commitment to Neoplatonic solutions and sensitivity to Neoplatonic deficiencies remains unresolved, in Ivry's view, a source of continuing difficulties in his philosophy, which are concealed by his reticence.

My own paper takes a more favorable view of the success of Maimonides' neoplatonizing project, although within the framework

of the assumption that no work of philosophy, as a human enterprise, can achieve perfect coherence and resolve all tensions. The paper focuses on Maimonides' bold effort to interpret the Biblical imagery of angels as divine messengers, with the help of Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophy, in a manner that will preserve both the naturalism of the sciences (and his own art of medicine) and the Biblical axiom that God is the ultimate author of all events. Here again we see our theme of the mediation between God's absoluteness and the conditional realm of the ephemeral and empirical. Maimonides sharply attacks "those men who purport to be the Sages of Israel" for superstitiously believing that God sends an angel, a being one-third the size of the physical world, to form the foetus in the womb, and failing to understand what Rabbinic usage about angels plainly indicates: that angels are natural forms and forces imparted by God through the Active Intellect—that this is "the real meaning of greatness and power" in God's act. Maimonides glosses the midrashic equation of angels with the third part of the world as proposing a tripartite ontology in which Platonic forms, classically conceived as thoughts of the supernal intelligences, play a critical mediating role. After laying out the anatomy of this scheme, my essay seeks a philosophical significance for it in an era after the Ptolemaic spheres have fallen.

Menachem Kellner explores the idea that faith can be a virtue and shows that this virtue is not to be understood in strictly intellectualist terms. The problematic of his paper is expressive of the longstanding Maimonidean/Ghazalian protest against the intellectualism of that strand of Neoplatonic-Aristotelian philosophy that was taken up and pushed to deterministic extremes by Jewish and Muslim philosophers of Averroistic inclination. David Burrell, in a different way, takes up the same theme. A theologian whose background is informed by Avicennan and Ghazalian studies as well as the Thomistic tradition, he brings a Whiteheadian and perhaps also Bergsonian slant to his inquiry when he asks why Maimonides did not more fully pursue the idea that God's knowledge is practical rather than strictly cognitive. He asks further whether theologians today should not follow up on this approach, which Thomas, for one seemed to regard as promising in terms of preserving both divine and human freedom.

Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, like Ivry, stresses the tensions between Neoplatonic and Aristotelian elements in Maimonides' philosophy. Such an exercise always runs the risk of submerging the synthetic achievements of a philosopher who sought to reconcile what others might conceive as incompatible ideas. But the feminist slant of Dobbs-Weinstein's writing vividly highlights an ancient Neoplatonic difficulty which Maimonides himself pinioned as the Achilles heel of Neoplatonism: its desire to treat matter both as the explanation of all evil and as a mere "receptacle" or condition of otherness, with no positive being or character of its own. In Maimonides' exegeses, matter is personified both as the married harlot of the Book of Proverbs, always changing forms, never content with just the form it has; and as the good woman (the so-called Woman of Valor, in the familiar mistranslation) of the same book. Maimonides seeks to reconcile these two images by arguing that matter itself is neutral and that whether it becomes good or evil depends on what is done with it. It is not evil in itself; yet, as a condition of otherness and privation, it is the basis of evil. But Dobbs-Weinstein discovers unresolved tensions within Maimonides' accounts of matter as created and physical or as metaphysical and notional; and she finds similar problems in his accounts of evil, which sometimes seek to relativize, sometimes to objectify it. Maimonides, she argues, "deliberately declines to give matter an essential role in human perfection." Dobbs-Weinstein finds a resolution of such tensions in the philosophic synthesis of Aquinas, which "succeeds in dissociating matter from evil and overcomes the tension between sub- and supralunar existence."

Whether it is true that Maimonides' sometimes magisterial dicta and sometimes Puckish silences about matter and evil conceal unease and bad faith or a profound insight into the strengths and weaknesses of Neoplatonism will continue to be debated well beyond the confines of this volume, but Dobbs-Weinstein's engaging paper, as the very least of its merits, may attract some students of Maimonidean and post-Maimonidean philosophy away from endless and usually ill-conceived debates over the preferability of the intellectual or the practical life and encourage them to address the question whether Neoplatonic or Aristotelian approaches, or some hybrid or synthesis of the two, can aid us in addressing the question of our embodiment

and the ambiguities of our status as creatures who live, as Dobbs-Weinstein puts it, in both realms, the intellectual and the physical.

David Bleich's paper is a Talmudic *shi'ur* and in some measure a *jeu d'esprit*, arising from the endeavor to explain the efforts of such medieval rabbis as Me'iri to disallow the claim that Christians were idolators. Cutting away from socio-economic explanations, Bleich sifts the record of Christian dogmatics for evidence of early Christian heretics whose doctrines of the Trinity may have provided a theological basis for Me'iri's ruling. The focus of his study, which follows in the traces of Harry Wolfson's survey of the teachings of the Church Fathers, call to mind one of the central findings of Wolfson's work in the history of ideas: that while Jews and Muslims may reject trinitarianism, its central metaphysical ideas are not exclusively of Christian interest but arise precisely from the Platonic problematic of the One and the many and were pioneered by Philo before the founding of Christianity, and thoroughly explored by the Muslim theologians of the *kalām* in dialogues and debates that laid the basis of the philosophic claim for the radical simplicity of the divine nature and thus for the central themes of medieval natural theology in Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, Maimonides, Thomas, and other Western thinkers down to and including the argumentation of Spinoza.

With Seymour Feldman's paper we turn to Gersonides and the juxtaposition of his views about epistemology with the corresponding arguments and theses in Plotinus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Themistius. Gersonides' reliance on an external and hypostatic Active Intellect, Feldman argues, jeopardizes empiricism, carrying rationalism to the point of regarding all knowledge as essentially inspired. If sensory data are needed at all on such a scheme, he argues, it will only be as cues, Platonic "reminders," not of what we know eternally, but of what our limited, material intellect is given to know by the Active Intellect. Like Dobbs-Weinstein, Feldman finds a fuller resolution to the difficulties he raises in the philosophy of Thomas, where the Active Intellect is dethroned from its hypostatic state and restored to an immanent position as an aspect of the human mind. Averroes pioneered this more naturalistic approach, shying away from a hypostatic formgiver, in reaction to what he came to see as the excesses of Avicennan Neoplatonism. But Gersonides did not

follow Ibn Rushd here, evidently less convinced of the adequacy of a reductionistic account of the informing of the human mind and the natural world at large.

Jewish mysticism does not abandon the positions and problematics of Jewish philosophy in general or of Neoplatonism in particular. Rather, it is attracted to the Neoplatonic device of dispatching hypostatic beings to mediate between divine infinity and the compromised world of the here below. The inspiration may be gnostic at times, as Kabbalists view the world with deepening anguish, but the element of hope is never wholly beneath the surface, and the most demonically infested Kabbalistic visions are still animated by the ancient Biblical conviction that this world can be redeemed by human action in concert with the purposes of God. Mythic masks may obscure the features of the Kabbalistic surrogates for argument, but all of the most sophisticated cosmographers of the Kabbalah remember the philosophic problems which the figures they evoke are meant to resolve; and, as the papers of Dethier, Idel, and Popkin reveal, founding figures of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment like Leone Ebreo (Isaac ben Judah Abarbanel, 1437-1508) and Spinoza reclaim what is distinctively philosophical from the creative achievements of the Kabbalah.

Steven Katz, paralleling Winston's paper on Philo, shows how the apophatic or negative theology of pure transcendence was not allowed, in the name of consistency, to exclude all characterizations of the divine. Rather, from Philo to Isaac Israeli, Ibn Gabirol, Bahir, Cordovero, Luria, Azriel of Gerona, Moses de Leon (the author of the *Zohar*) strategies of mediation and qualification were devised both to allow characterization of the divine by man and to ensure that access to creation was not denied to its creator, ruler and judge. Moshe Idel and David Novak develop these themes in detail.

Idel shows how Kabbalistic thinkers took up the idea of God's inner knowledge of the forms of all things and made this the basis of the scheme by which the *Sefirot*, dynamic Kabbalistic hypostases, mediate between God and creation. He also examines the Kabbalists' reliance on other mediating entities and images, surveying the contributions of Ya'akov ben Sheshet, Isaac the Blind, Menahem Recanati, Shem Tov ben Shem Tov, Azriel of Gerona, Nahmanides, Isaac Abravanel, Alemanno, Luzzato, Cordovero, Herrera and others



in their responses to the philosophic tradition and its problems.

Novak complements this exposition with a detailed anatomy and dynamic of one of the most original conceptions of the Kabbalah, the idea of *zimzum*, divine self-contraction, as a means of reconciling emanation with the Biblical ideas of divine creation and human freedom. As he shows, *zimzum* was intended to make clear not only how God allows room for creation and affords freedom and existence to lesser beings, but also how the revelation of the Torah and the delegation of its interpretation and elaboration to human minds and hands is a mark of divine favor, withdrawing somewhat from the creaturely realm to afford authenticity to creation in its own right. As Novak writes, "For Kabbalists there is no real difference between creation and revelation. Creation is itself an act of revelation." And the impact of this equation is twofold. Not only was the world an epiphany, as it had always been for serious theists of all persuasions, but the Torah, as the articulate expression of God's will, became our means of participating in the life of God and helping to bring about the cosmic reconciliation which was the great theme of the Kabbalistic version of Neoplatonic eschatology.

Hubert Dethier closely follows the Italian text of the Renaissance Jewish Neoplatonist Leone Ebreo to show how Leone took up Kabbalistic ideas to develop what would become one basis for Spinoza's idea of the intellectual love of God. God imparts His own perfection to creation, and "human sin may adversely affect God himself. . . . It is love that imparts the unity at each level and thus explains the existence and active functioning of each thing in the universe and each level of the celestial hierarchy. . . . Although God is perfectly one and simple, a mysterious multiplication occurs within Him [a theme we have seen in Iamblichus, Ibn Gabirol and the Kabbalah]: Just as Eve is said to have sprung from the body of Adam, the original active entity, God's beauty or simply essence, produces a feminine entity. . . . Beyond his original, intrinsic love, God also loves extrinsically. For, in loving himself, God also desires to reproduce his beauty. . . . The divine Intellect contemplates itself as well as God, and from this contemplation a female entity is produced. . . . From their mutual love emerges all generation."

Richard Popkin completes the arc from Philo to Spinoza by showing why the first readers of Spinoza saw him as a crypto-Kabbalist. Popkin uncovers the sources of the Kabbalistic ideas that

formed a vital part of Spinoza's thinking, despite his rejection of the cosmographical and exegetical excesses of the millenarian Kabbalah of his day. Herrera in particular, in the metaphysical portions of his *Puerta del Cielo*, provides the unifying structure that Spinoza would call to his aid in responding to the dualism of Descartes. And the early responses to Spinoza by such figures as Moses Germanus rightly noted the connection. When the French Huguenot Jacques Basnage ascribed Spinoza's monism to a commitment on his part to the "Kabbalistic" principle *ex nihilo nihil fit*, he was not speaking nonsense, but was rightly perceiving, if rather crudely stating, the Neoplatonic basis of Spinoza's treatment of matter and thought as attributes of God. If the world was not to be sundered by the Cartesian epistemological turn, into corporeal substance and spiritual or intellectual substance, with no possible connection between them, either in the case of human perception and voluntary movement or in the case of divine creation and governance—or love—then matter (even Cartesian matter, as it now was, no longer the intellectual stuff of Ibn Gabirol or the curious "otherness" of Ibn Sīnā and Maimonides) would have to be given back somehow to God, no longer alienated from Him. If nothing comes from nothing, then the materiality in nature cannot "come from" what in itself contains no materiality: Matter must be one manifestation or "attribute" of God (using Maimonides' interpretation of the word 'attribute' as an aspect under which we apprehend divinity). If God is everywhere, then God is in matter too; if the highest monotheism, as al-Ghazālī put it, sees God in everything, then matter is not exempt; and if dualism is untenable and renders matter inaccessible to God or the mind, then the idea of emanation must be revised to reveal not ■ penetration of alien matter by the pure light of form—the female by the male—but a coordinate authenticity of extension and idea, as each other's representations, conjoint manifestations of the infinite essence of the Divine.

In the final conference paper, Robert McLaren surveys Neoplatonism as a whole and Jewish Neoplatonism in particular with ■ view to discerning the psychodynamical needs and theological conundrums which the recurrent Neoplatonic epochs in Western philosophy may address. His appraisal does not (in the manner of Freud's classic dismissal of the religious quest) simply dismiss Neoplatonism, or the religious impulses it expresses, as a delusion,

on the ground that it answers questions of the heart; but equally it does not seek in the manner of pop theology to validate Neoplatonism on those same grounds, as if the service of the needs of the heart were sufficient vindication of an idea's veracity. For if our age can learn anything from the thinkers of the past it is that religion in general and religious philosophy in particular are not elevated by being treated as a consumer commodity. To a wiser sensibility like that of Bahyā ibn Paquda, the service of the heart means not service *to* but service *by* the heart.

McLaren seeks sympathetically to explicate, in psychodynamic terms, the same crosspressures that the classic thinkers studied in this volume sought to reconcile philosophically. One is reminded of Maimonides' comment, echoing Saadia as he so often does, that the Ash'arites and occasionalists of the *kalām* are not to be scorned but respected for their endeavors to struggle with great issues, and for the honesty, clarity and consistency of their respect for the values we still find enshrined within their philosophies, even where those philosophies do not succeed in making all coherent but leave the threads and crossthreads imperfectly disentangled.

Expositors, here in this volume and in the past, have sought to tease out some of those threads, sometimes to weave them into a more durable fabric, sometimes simply to show them to be hopelessly snarled or at risk of unraveling completely if handled any further. The names of the great thinkers whose work informs the matter of this volume are thus themselves intertwined in the notes and bibliography with the names of scholars of their work whose thoughts were never far from the minds of our symposiasts and whose writings underlie much of what is written here: Alexander Altmann, M.-M. Anawati, A. H. Armstrong, W. Bacher, Abdur-Rahman Badawi, Zvi Baneth, Clemens Baeumker, Maurice Bouyges, Émile Brehier, Fernand Brunner, Hermann Cohen, Israel Efros, J. N. Findlay, Louis Gardet, Étienne Gilson, Louis Ginzburg, A.-M. Goichon, Julius Guttmann, P. Henry, A. J. Heschel, George Hourani, Isaac Husik, Louis Jacobs, J. Kafah, David Kaufman, S. Landauer, R. J. McCarthy, Ibrahim Madkour, Muhsin Mahdi, Henry Malter, Philip Merlan, P. Moraux, Salomon Munk, David Neumark, Joseph Owens, Shlomo Pines, Fazlur Rahman, Franz Rosenthal, W. D. Ross, Cecil Roth, Joseph Sarachek, Shmuel Sambursky, Solomon Schechter, Gershom Scholem, Steven Schwarzschild, H. Schwyzer, Leo Strauss,

Samuel Stern, Leo Sweeney, Georges Vajda, Simon Van Den Bergh, Richard Walzer, Zwi Werblowski, John Wippel, Stephen Wise, Harry Wolfson, A. S. Yahudah, and a handful of others. Their influence is pronounced, not only here, but in the writings of many of our colleagues cited frequently in these pages: Edward Booth, Pierre Cachia, Vincent Cantarino, Herbert Davidson, Majid Fakhry, Stephen Gersh, Dimitri Gutas, David Hartman, Raphi Jospe, Barry Kogan, Joel Kraemer, Michael Marmura, Dominic O'Meara, Eric Ormsby, Ian Netton, F. E. Peters, Shalom Rosenberg, Everett Rowson, Tamar Rudavsky, Norbert Samuelson, Jacques Schlanger, Kenneth Seeskin, Yirmiyahu Yovel, and others recurrently cited in the notes to our papers.

Philosophy, like Penelope's web, is torn down in the night but rewoven every morning, not out of mere doggedness or temporizing, but in a continual effort to capture adequately and in the perfect balance of its natural colors a single subtle but elusive pattern that will be emblematic of all reality. In the course of our studies of that weaving and unweaving, we may catch traces of the design that animates the ancient craft, and may seek to describe it to one another, or perhaps ourselves to take our places in the weaver's chair and touch our fingers to the clews.

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Our conference was the Seventh Congress of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies. R. Baine Harris, the president of that society, deserves special acknowledgment for his many years of service to Neoplatonic studies and for first suggesting the conference whose deliberations are represented here. He had long felt the need for a conference exploring the achievements of Jewish Neoplatonism, the responses of Jewish thinkers to Neoplatonic philosophy, and the impact of that philosophy on Jewish thought. He invited me to organize such a meeting; and, finding a warm response from prospective scholarly participants, academic sponsors, and funding agencies, I was glad to do so. The conference was sponsored by the University of Hawaii Department of Philosophy, which has a history of commitment to comparative philosophic studies that goes back over fifty years. Our meeting was aided with generous grants and in

kind support from the University of Hawaii, the Matchette Foundation, the Hawaii Committee for the Humanities, a state-based program of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Friends of the Hebrew University, the Jewish Federation of Hawaii, Temple Emanu-El of Honolulu, and the Hawaii Council of Churches.

Special thanks are due to F. Glen Avantaggio for giving freely of his time to prepare the index of this volume, to John Casey for his graphic design work and photography at the conference, and to Guy Axtell, Ray Steiner and their fellow members of the Philosophy Students' Association at the University of Hawaii for driving the conference vans and facilitating the meeting in many other ways. Ours was the first Jewish studies conference to be held in Hawaii and the first conference to bring together the unique constellation of scholars represented in this book, many of whom had never met before. In addition to its formal academic proceedings, which are represented here, the conference also involved an ecumenical scholar-in-residence weekend, a public lecture series, a University of Hawaii mini-course for the academic and lay community on Neoplatonism and the Kabbalah, and publication of an adult education Interpretive Guide for the benefit of the host community. The scholars and I join in thanking the sponsoring bodies and the communities locally, nationally, and internationally, from whom they draw their support, for the opportunity they gave us to work together and the occasion for which we produced the body of work represented in this volume.

We met in true conference style, seated like the members of an orchestra, with our music before us, at the concentric tables of the Asia Room in the East West Center on the University of Hawaii campus. The papers as presented here cannot reproduce the full liveliness of the exchanges that took place, although most of them profited from those exchanges, often in ways now imperceptible. The twinkling eye of Bernie McGinn, the jovial laughter of Menachem Kellner, the hearty earnestness of David Novak, and Dick Popkin's delightfully low-key narrative style as he reported the forgotten or hitherto unknown comings and goings of Renaissance and Enlightenment figures—the general tone of anticipation and delight as each of us warmed to his topic and sparked off one another's observations, cannot be recorded here. But it was when the players took up their instruments in earnest that the real event began—the

light, airy allegro of David Winston, introducing Philo's theme in the flutes and piccolos, against a background of Greek woodwinds, followed by the extended andante passages of Ibn Gabirol in the cellos of Dillon, Mathis, and McGinn; the stately adagio of Maimonides in the strings, offset by reedy counterpoints of Islamic rhythms and Thomistic counterstatements in the basses, and by Ivry's and Dobbs-Weinstein's querulous oboe and clarinet solos; the intricately patterned Kabbalistic largo, and the brilliant scherzo and finale in which the new themes of Leone and Spinoza are heard in counterpoint with the now familiar material of the earlier presentations, and the whole brought together, rousing, pleasingly but quizzically in McLaren's brassy and tympanic coda. Some of this effect is recorded here. The significance of none of the materials touched on is exhausted, but if this volume leads some of its readers to delve further into the texts themselves and the intellectual questions they subtend, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

Lenn E. Goodman  
Honolulu

## Philo's Conception of the Divine Nature

David Winston

### The Divine Transcendence

Philo's doctrine of the transcendent character of God undoubtedly derives from the Middle Platonic and Neopythagorean traditions that had postulated a supranoeitic First Principle above a pair of opposites, the Monad, representing Form, and the Dyad, representing Matter. Philo seems to be referring to such predecessors when he writes: "Others maintain that the Unoriginate resembles nothing among created things, but so completely transcends them, that even the swiftest understanding falls far short of apprehending Him and acknowledges its failure."<sup>1</sup> As is often the case with Philo, we have here an example of the convergence of his Jewish inheritance with his Greek philosophical antecedents. The prophetic teaching of the incomparability and unnameability of God reinforced Philo's philosophical convictions and led him to espouse an emphatic doctrine of extreme divine transcendence. It was his philosophical commitment, however, that (pace Wolfson) was clearly the decisive element in his sharp distinction between God's essence and his existence, and his insistence on man's absolute inability to know the former. For such metaphysical categories were completely alien to the Biblical and Rabbinic traditions.<sup>2</sup>

Philo states repeatedly that God is absolutely *apoiios*, qualityless (LA 3.36, 51, 3.206; *Deus* 55-56; *Cher.* 67). Drummond and Wolfson have shown that this means that God is without accidental

quality, but also implies that in God there is no distinction of genus and species. God is *to genikotaton*, the most generic (*Gig.* 52). And, since He belongs to no class, we do not know what He is.<sup>3</sup> All God's predicates are, strictly speaking, properties (*idiotetes*). They are derivative of His essence but, unlike definitions, do not indicate that essence itself and, unlike qualities, are not shared with others. Further, since the essence of God is one and single, whatever belongs to it as a property must be one and single. Thus Philo reduces all divine properties to a single one, that of acting (*Cher.* 77).<sup>4</sup>

In Philo's hierarchy the essence of God, although utterly concealed in its primary being, is nevertheless made manifest on two secondary levels: the intelligible universe of the Logos, which is God's image (*Som.* 1.239; *Conf.* 147-48), and the sensible universe, which in turn is an image of that Logos (*Op.* 25). Although the essence of God in itself remains forever undisclosed, its effects, images or shadows (or, to use a Plotinian term not employed by Philo, traces: *Enneads* VI 7.17) can be perceived. Philo attempts to delineate the dynamics of the Logos' activity by defining and describing its two constitutive polar principles: Goodness or the Creative Power (*poietike dynamis*) and Sovereignty (*exousia*), the Ruling Power (*basilike dynamis*) (*Cher.* 27-28; *Sac.* 59; *Her.* 166; *Abr.* 124-25; *QE* 2.68; *Fug.* 95). It is not difficult to recognize in these two powers the *apeiron* and *peras*, the Unlimited and Limit, of Plato's *Philebus* (23C-31A).<sup>5</sup> These reappear in Plotinus' two moments in the emergence of Nous. Undefined or unlimited Intelligible Matter proceeds from the One and then turns back to its source for definition (II 4.5.5; V 4.2; VI 7.17; cf. Proclus *Elements of Theology*, Props. 89-92, 159). The various positive properties attributed to God by Philo are all subsumed under one or the other of these two polar forces, and are therefore all expressions of the Logos, manifesting God as thinking/acting (*Prov.* 1.7; *Sac.* 65; *Mos.* 1.283).

At the summit the powers of the Logos are grasped as constituting an indivisible unity. But at lower levels there are those who know the Logos only as the Creative Power, and those beneath them who know it as the Ruling Power (*Fug.* 94 ff.; *Abr.* 124-25). Lower still are those who are sunk in the mire of sensible being and

unable to perceive the intelligible realities steadily (*Gig.* 20). At each lower level of knowledge the image of God's essence grows more dimmed or veiled.

Since God's essence in itself is beyond human experience or cognition, even beyond mystic vision, the only attributes applicable to Him in His supreme concealment are those of the *via negativa* (e.g., *agenetos*, *adekastos*, *akataleptos*, *akatonomastos*, *aoratos*, *aperigraphos*, *arrhetos*, *asygkritos*) (*Mut.* 7-15), or of the *via eminentiae*.<sup>6</sup> Although Philo sometimes speaks of God as a Monad and as good, blessed, or benevolent (*LA* 2.2; *Deus* 26; *Cher.* 86; *Det.* 146; *Abr.* 203; *Mut.* 129), he also emphasizes that God is actually "better than the Good, more beautiful than the Beautiful, more blessed than Blessedness, more happy than Happiness itself, and anything there may be more perfect than the aforementioned."<sup>7</sup> He says that God is "more venerable than the Monad, and purer than the Unit" (*Praem.* 40; *Cont.* 2), and that He alone has veritable being,<sup>8</sup> truly acts, is the true Peace or Repose, and is free and joyful.<sup>9</sup> God's superiority to such attributes undoubtedly signifies for Philo that they are applied to Him only equivocally.

### Scriptural Anthropomorphism

While sternly opposed to all anthropomorphic and anthropopathic descriptions of the Deity,<sup>10</sup> Philo is sensitive to the human weaknesses that induce them:

Since we are for the most part mortal, we are incapable of conceiving anything independently of ourselves and have not the strength to sidestep our defects. We crawl into our mortal shell like snails and like hedgehogs curl up in a ball, entertaining ideas about the blessed and the imperishable identical to those about ourselves. In words we shun indeed the extreme notion that the Godhead is of human form. But in fact we commit ourselves to the impiety that he possesses human passions. So in addition to hands and feet, entrances and exits, we invent for him enmities, aversions, estrangements, anger, parts and passions unfitting the Primal Cause.<sup>11</sup>

The anthropomorphic language used in Scripture is for the admonition of the masses, who could not otherwise be brought to their senses:

For among the laws which consist of commands and prohibitions, laws, that is, in the strict sense of the word, two ultimate summary statements are set forth concerning the First Cause, one that 'God is not like a man' (Numbers 23:19), the other that he is as a man. But although the former is guaranteed by absolutely secure criteria of truth, the latter is introduced for the instruction of the many. Wherefore it is also said of him, 'like a man he shall discipline his son' (Deuteronomy 8:5). Thus it is for education and admonition,<sup>12</sup> not because God's nature is such, that this is said of him. . . . The companions of soul, in contrast to the lovers of body, do not compare the existent to any form of created things. They have excluded him from every quality. For one of the things that pertains to his blessedness and supreme felicity is that his existence is apprehended as simple, without any other distinguishing characteristic. So they have allowed a representation of him only in respect of existence, not endowing him with any form. . . . Those, on the other hand, who are of a dull and obtuse nature, who have been ill-served in their early training, incapable as they are of keen vision, need overseeing physicians to devise the proper treatment for their condition: Ill-bred and foolish slaves too are profited by a master who frightens them. In dread of his threats and menaces, they cannot help but fearfully accept reproof.<sup>13</sup> Let all such learn the lies that will benefit them, if they are unable to become wise through truth. The most esteemed physicians do not dare tell the truth to those dangerously ill in body, since they know that they will become disheartened as a result and their sickness will not be cured, whereas with the consolation of the opposite approach they will bear their condition more lightly and their illness will abate.<sup>14</sup>

#### God's *Apatheia*/*Eupatheia*

The absolute rationality of God entails for Philo His insusceptibility to *pathos*, an irrational impulse of any kind (*Deus* 52; *Abr.* 202). The Stoics had similarly insisted that the wise man must be wholly *apathe*s, clearly implying that he thus assimilates himself

to God, who is perfect rationality. "The wise man's soul ought to be such as would be proper for a god," writes Seneca (*Ep.* 92.4). "Just as it is the nature of our bodies to stand erect and look upward to the sky, so the soul, which may reach out as far as it will, was framed by nature to this end, that it should desire equality with the gods" (*ibid.* 30). Epictetus declares more boldly: "Let one of you show me the soul of a man who wishes to be of one mind with God . . . to be free from anger, envy and jealousy—but why use circumlocutions?—a man who has set his heart upon changing from a man into a god, and although he is in this paltry body of death, does none the less have his purpose set upon fellowship with Zeus" (2.19.26-27; 2.14.11-13). The Old Stoa preferred to speak of the wise man's "living in complete agreement with Nature" (*SVF* 2.127; 3.12, 16) rather than of *homoiosis to theo* like the Platonists (*Theaetetus* 176B). But the Middle and Late Stoa made Plato's formula their own.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, in reinterpreting popular myth, the Stoics were constrained to criticize both anthropomorphic and anthropopathic descriptions of the divine:

The perversion has been a fruitful source of false beliefs, crazy errors and superstitions hardly above the level of old wives' tales. We know what the gods look like and how old they are, their dress and their equipment, and also their genealogies, marriages and relationships—and all about them is distorted into the likeness of human frailty. They are actually represented as liable to passions and emotions—we hear of their being in love, sorrowful, angry. According to the myths, they even engage in wars and battles.<sup>16</sup>

As an exegete of Scripture, Philo faced a similar problem. We have seen the pains he took to neutralize Biblical verses that appeared to contradict his philosophical convictions about the divine nature. His efforts were considerably facilitated by the Stoic doctrine of *eupatheiai*, good or rational emotions. This aspect of Stoic theory will help us to understand Philo's readiness to ascribe certain emotions to God.

According to Stoic theory, *hormai* or impulses of various kinds are generated in the *hegemonikon* or commanding faculty of an individual as ■ result of the stimulus of various *phantasiai* or impressions conducted to it from the excited sense organs by way of

tensile motion.<sup>17</sup> If the *hegemonikon* is in a healthy state, a condition of right reason, the impulses released through its acts of assent will be rational or wholesome *eupatheiai* and express correct judgments (*SVF* 3.169-77). But if it is diseased or irrational, the impulses released will be excessive and will constitute *pathe*, erroneous judgments.<sup>18</sup> The sage's perfect *hegemonikon* spontaneously makes correct judgments, wholly eliminating the *pathe* and generating only *eupatheiai*, purely rational impulses.<sup>19</sup>

The three canonical *eupatheiai* are *boulesis* (willing), *eulabeia* (watchfulness or caution), and *chara* (joy),<sup>20</sup> and it is clear that Philo was in no way embarrassed to apply at least two of these to God. He frequently employs the verb *boulomai* and the noun *boulema* of God,<sup>21</sup> and if the reports of Diogenes Laertius and Plutarch are accurate, it would appear that the Old Stoa spoke of "the will (*boulesis*) of him who orders the universe."<sup>22</sup> Similarly Philo had no difficulty in describing God not only as beneficent but also as benevolent and kind (*Op.* 81; *Mut.* 129; *Abr.* 137). He was aided by the fact that benevolence (*eunoia*) was classified by the Stoics as a variety of *boulesis*. Antipater of Tarsus characterizes God as beneficent (*eupoietikon*), not benevolent, towards men.<sup>23</sup> But Seneca adds that the gods are "ever gentle and kindly (*placidi ac propitii*), and bear with the errors of our feeble spirits."<sup>24</sup> *Chara* too was accounted a *eupatheia* by the Stoics. So it comes as no surprise that this attribute also was ascribed by Philo to the daemons or disembodied rational souls (which he also called 'angels'), to the world, which he describes as "a rational and virtuous living being, philosophical by nature,"<sup>25</sup> and to God himself. He notes with evident approval:

It is said that even the Father and Creator of the universe continually rejoices in his life and plays and is joyful, finding pleasure in play which is in keeping with the divine and in joyfulness. And he has no need of anything, nor does he lack anything, but with joy he delights in himself and in his powers and in the worlds made by him. . . . Rightly, therefore, and properly does the wise man, believing his end to consist in likeness to God, strive so far as possible, to unite the created with the uncreated and the mortal with the immortal, and not to be deficient or wanting in gladness and joyfulness in his likeness. For this reason he plays this game of unchangeable and constant virtue

with Rebeccab, whose name is to be interpreted in the Greek language as 'Constancy' (*QG* 4.188, tr. Marcus).

The wise man's *chara*, however, is not the equal of God's. The limited capacity of finite creatures denies us the unbroken continuity that marks the divine archetype of our happiness. In *Abr.* 201-07 Philo expands on this theme:

The intended victim is called in Chaldean Isaac, but when translated into Greek, Laughter. But laughter here is not taken as the laughter which arises in the body when we are engaged in play, but the rational emotion of the understanding, joy. Thus the wise man is said dutifully to sacrifice to God, showing through a symbol that rejoicing is most appropriate to God alone. For mankind is troubled and very fearful of evils either present or expected. . . . But the nature of God is without distress or fear and free from all passion, and alone partakes of perfect happiness and bliss. To the temper of mind that has made this true acknowledgment, God, in his goodness and benevolence, having driven away envy from his presence, returns the gift according to the measure of the recipient's capacity. And, in effect, he delivers the following oracle: The full gamut of joy and the act of rejoicing I know well are the possession of none but me alone, the Father of All. Yet, although in possession of this good, I do not begrudge its use by those who are worthy. . . . Let no one assume, however, that joy descends from heaven to earth undiluted and free from admixture of distress. It is rather a mixture of bliss and suffering, although the better component is predominant. . . . This was the reason, it seems to me, that Sarah, who is named after virtue, first laughs and then denies her laughter in response to the questioner. She feared lest she usurp the joy that belongs to no created being but to God alone. Holy Writ therefore encourages her and says: 'Have no care; you did indeed laugh and you have a share in joy.' For the Father did not permit the human race to be borne amid griefs and pains and irremediable burdens, but mixed with them something of the better nature and judged it right that the soul should at times enjoy calm and fair weather. As for the soul of the wise, he willed that it should pass the greater part of its life in the joy and cheer of the spectacles offered by the universe.<sup>26</sup>

Although here Philo attributes perfect joy to God alone, in *QG* 4.188 he allows the angels, the stars, and the universe as a whole, a

portion of eternal joy unmixed with sorrow. Most likely, when he attributes perfect joy to God alone, he intends only to restrict that attribute to the heaven at large, and sees earth as the abode of mixed realities. It is not clear, however, how the Philonic attribution of joy to God is related to the Stoic position. For the earliest explicit testimony for the Stoic assignment of *chara* to God is found in Seneca. "The effect of wisdom," he writes, "is a joy unbroken and continuous. The mind of the wise man is like the firmament beyond the moon. Eternal calm pervades that region. . . . The joy which attends the gods and those who imitate the gods, is not broken off, nor does it cease."<sup>27</sup>

To understand Seneca's assertion, we must recall an early controversy between Cleanthes and Chrysippus. Cleanthes argued that since virtue can never be lost and the good man is always exercising his mind, the wise man's virtue is exercised continually. He enjoys an unbroken state of *chara*. Chrysippus believed that virtue can be lost through drunkenness, 'melancholy,' heavy drowsiness, lethargy, and drugs. So he would deny an uninterrupted *chara*.<sup>28</sup> In line with Chrysippus' position, Diogenes Laertius writes (7.98) that *chara*, like walking exercise, is not a permanent good; the wise man does not enjoy it continuously.<sup>29</sup> But Seneca, like Cleanthes, must have believed that once a man becomes wise, he has achieved a state of uninterrupted virtue, so that the rational elation of *chara* attendant on the exercise of virtue (D.L. 7.94) continues at least to his death. God, whose rationality is unchanging,<sup>30</sup> must forever be in a state of *chara*, his *pneuma* characterized by the perfect *tonos* (*eutonia*, SVF 3.47) that the wise man's psyche attains or expands into only on his conversion to the life of virtue. It is not inconceivable, therefore, although there is no explicit evidence for it, that the early Stoa too held that the perfect rationality of God is continuously accompanied by joy. While agreeing with Seneca that God enjoys continuous *chara*, Philo diverges from him and appears to approximate the position of Chrysippus in denying a like condition to the wise man.<sup>31</sup>

There are some further hints in the surviving texts that the attribution of joy to God was already a characteristic of Middle Stoic teaching, and possibly of early Stoic doctrine as well. Cicero's Stoic spokesman Balbus asserts that "the nature of the world has all the

movements of volition, impulses and desires which the Greeks call *hormai*, and exhibits the actions in agreement with these in the way that we ourselves do who are moved by emotions and sensations" (ND 2.58, tr. Long). "As body-soul compounds," writes Long, "we humans are microcosmic beings, and attributes that we possess in virtue of having rational souls are features of the world."<sup>32</sup> A similar ascription of impulses to God is found in Epictetus, who speaks of our observing the impulses of God and his governance (4.1.100; cf. 4.1.89), and boldly declares: "I shall attach myself to God as a servant and follower, my impulse is one with His (*synormo*), my desire one with His (*synoregomai*), my will is one with His will (*synthelo*)."<sup>33</sup>

The third *eupatheia*, *eulabeia* is never ascribed by Philo to God directly. But there may have been no theoretical difficulty in his doing so. *Eulabeia* is the rational avoidance of evil (Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.15; Plutarch, *Stoic. Repug.* 1037F; cf. Philo *Det.* 45; *Som.* 2.82), and it could be said that the Divine Logos is continuously characterized by such ■ spontaneous avoidance. Indeed, the Stoics come close to saying as much when they state that the deity is a living being "admitting nothing evil into him" (*kakou pantos anepidekton*).<sup>34</sup> For Philo, God's *eulabeia* could readily be subsumed under the *basilike dynamis*, his power of delimitation which rejects and punishes evil.<sup>35</sup>

For Philo, *chara* is the best of the *eupatheiai* (*Mut.* 1.131; *Cong.* 36; *Praem.* 31), and it is quite possible that, like the early Stoics, he would have shrunk from ascribing either *boulesis* or *eulabeia* explicitly to God, since, strictly speaking, the Deity could not be characterized by want of any kind. *Chara*, as an *epigennema* (D.L. 7.94; cf. Aristotle *EN* X 1174b32; Philo *LA* 3.86), was exceptional in that it involved no imputation of want to its subject and was therefore designated by Philo as the best of the *eupatheiai*. On the other hand, Philo's use of terms like *boulema* and *boulomai* in relation to God can readily be seen as a concession to ordinary linguistic usage (cf. Cicero, *De officiis* 2.35). But since *chara* in relation to God does not involve an *eparsis*, it should not strictly be called a *eupatheia* at all. The term accurately describes a psychic state only in man. In enjoying *chara* God may be said to be characterized by a state which in man is designated as a *eupatheia*, that is, the *eupatheia* of *chara*



is assigned to God only equivocally. If the above interpretation is correct, we should conclude that Philo ascribes to God neither *pathe* (with the possible exception of *eleos*) nor *eupatheiai*, but only a perfect *eudaimonia*, his objective state,<sup>36</sup> and a subjective *chara*, which in view of the fact that in God it involves no change whatever, is strictly not accounted a *eupatheia*.

Turning from the *eupatheiai* to the *pathe* proper, we find Philo in complete accord with the Stoics in rejecting anger (*thymos*) as a feeling inapplicable to God (cf. Pseudo-Aristeas 254). He is quite willing to stand Scripture on its head to avert such an attribution. After indicating that the description of God as wrathful was necessary for the duller folk who need to be schooled by fear,<sup>37</sup> he offers a forced interpretation of the troublesome verse in Genesis 6:7: "I was wroth in that I made them." Philo suggests that perhaps the intent of the verse is to indicate that the wicked are so through God's wrath, i.e., through the wrath that comes from God; and the righteous by his grace, since the next words are "but Noah found grace with Him" (Gen. 6:8). He squeezes out of the fact that the word-order is "I was wroth in that I made them," rather than the reverse, "because I made them, I was wroth," the notion that these words are only a figure to convey the meaning that it was through wrath that God made or caused their blameworthy actions. Scripture's meaning, then, is that those human actions which result from any of the four primary passions or their derivatives are blameworthy, whereas those which are the product of right reason are worthy of praise.<sup>38</sup>

Having rendered innocuous a troublesome verse, Philo finds in the statement that Noah found grace with God, an allusion to God's saving mercy (*soterion eleon*). Were God's judgment not tempered by mercy, we should find, he says, that the human race could not endure, since sin is unavoidable:

For if God should will to judge the race of mortals without mercy (*eleon*), His sentence would be one of condemnation, since there is no man who self-sustained has run the course of life from birth to death without stumbling. . . . So then, that the race may subsist, though many of those which go to form it are swallowed up by the deep, He tempers His judgment with the mercy which He shows in doing kindness even to the unworthy. And not only does this mercy follow

His judgment (*ou monon dikasas eleei*) but it also precedes it (*kai eleesas dikazei*) (*Deus* 74-76).

In ascribing pity (*eleos*) to God,<sup>39</sup> Philo decisively parts company with the Stoics, who had classified pity as a species of *lype* or distress, one of the four primary passions (*SVF* 1.213; 3.394, 413-134, 416; cf. Seneca *Clem.* 2.4 ff). He might have avoided the overt break without yielding too much on the issue of God's mercy had he simply substituted the terms *philanthropia* and *epieikeia* for *eleos*.<sup>40</sup> Thus Seneca sharply distinguishes *miser cordia*, or pity, (a form of *ae gritudo* or distress) from *clementia*, or mercy.<sup>41</sup> He recommends the latter as the action of "an unruffled mind and a countenance under control" (*Clem.* 2.6.2-3). The Old Stoa had made no such distinction. Their doctrine was that the wise "are not pitiful and make no allowance for anyone; they never relax the penalties fixed by the laws, since indulgence and pity (*eleos*) and even 'equity' (*epieikeia*, a sense of fair play going beyond the rigid line of the law) are marks of ■ weak mind, which affects kindness in place of chastising."<sup>42</sup> But the Middle Stoa may have modified the Old Stoic view of *epieikeia* in the direction of Seneca's theory.<sup>43</sup> We have evidence that the Stoics were attacked for their severity in rejecting pity as a vice. They may have been compelled to emend their unpopular position. Cicero clearly reflects one line of defense:

It is urged too that it is useful to feel rivalry, to feel envy, to feel pity. Why pity rather than give assistance if one can; or are we unable to be open-handed without pity? We are able. For we ought not to share distresses ourselves for the sake of others, but we ought to relieve others of their distress if we can. (*Tusc.* 4.56)<sup>44</sup>

In elaborating his doctrine of *clementia* Seneca too refers to the sharp critique leveled against the old Stoic view:

I am aware that among the ill-informed the Stoic school is unpopular on the ground that it is excessively harsh and not at all likely to give good counsel to princes and kings; the criticism is made that it does not permit a wise man to be pitiful, does not permit him to pardon. (*Clem.* 2.5.2)

In the light of the later Stoic doctrine of *clementia*, it may be asked why Philo did not restrict himself to the Middle Stoic *philanthropia/epieikeia* formula in his description of God's mercy. Had Greek possessed a word precisely equivalent to *clementia*,<sup>45</sup> Philo might well have been happy to adopt it as a substitute for *eleos*. But in the absence of such a convenience, he undoubtedly felt constrained by the stress laid upon God's attribute of mercy in his native tradition.<sup>46</sup> It seemed incumbent to ascribe *eleos* not only to the wise man (*Sac.* 1.5221; cf. *Ios.* 82; *Spec.* 2.115, 138; *Virt.* 144), but also to God.<sup>47</sup> There is an occasional slip in Seneca,<sup>48</sup> but Philo's frequent indulgence in the ascription of pity to God and on occasion even anger (*Som.* 2.179; *Op.* 156), which he had labored so mightily to remove from him in *Deus* 70-73, is considerably more jarring. We may conclude that it was the frequent application of *eleos* to God in the Septuagint, Philo's canonical text, that made it so difficult for him to avoid the philosophically problematic attribution.<sup>49</sup> Yet in ascribing *eleos* to God, he undoubtedly had in mind a rational form of the emotion, like Seneca's *clementia*.

The Old Academy and the Middle Platonists generally adopted the Peripatetic ideal of *metriopatheia*, measured or moderate emotions, in lieu of the more rigorous Stoic goal of *apatheia/eupatheia*, freedom from emotions, at least of the 'negative' sort.<sup>50</sup> But Philo apparently was sufficiently attracted by the Stoic model to adopt it in preference to the Platonic mean—in spite of the difficulties and modifications this choice entailed.<sup>51</sup> The ideal of *eupatheia* so intrigued him that, not only did he ascribe it to the wise man but, in a way, to God himself—although the Stoics may have anticipated him in this. Philo's rare references to divine anger may be regarded as occasional slips. The major deviation from Stoic theory in his description of God is his insistence on attributing *eleos* to the Deity. In doing so he was clearly acting under the influence of Jewish teaching.

## Notes

1. *Som.* 1.184, tr. Colson. Cf. *Anon. Comm. Parm.* 4.22-26 (see n. 8 below); 2.10-14; 9.7: the *Chaldean Oracles* would not even designate God as 'one'; *Corp. Hermet.* 4.9; 11.5. Philo cites Philolaus (DK 44 B. 20), "Himself like unto Himself, different from all others" (*Op.*

100). For Eudorus' supranoeitic 'One,' see Simplicius *In Phys.*, 181.17 ff. Diels. See John Whittaker, *Studies in Platonism and Patristic Thought*, essays IX, XI. The claim that Speusippus' 'One' was *hyperousion* was made by Philip Merlan, Walter Burkert, H. J. Krämer, Eduard Zeller, Louis Robin, H. J. Armstrong and H. R. Schwyzer, but has been denied by Leonardo Tarán, *Speusippus of Athens* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 338-39. See the detailed discussion by John Dillon, "The Transcendence of God in Philo: Some Possible Sources," *Colloquy 16 of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies*, ed., Wilhelm Wuellner (Berkeley, 1975), and the extensive treatment by A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris: Gabalda, 1954) 4: *Le Dieu Inconnu et la Gnose*; Philip Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism*, 97, 105; H. J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1967), 207-18, 351-58; H. Happ, *Hyle* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), 208-41.

2. See H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, 2.94-101.
3. Although Philo generally affirms that God is *asomatos* and *apoios*, at *LA* 3.206 he asserts that we cannot even make negative statements of God. Heinemann thinks that he is here echoing the Skeptics, but he may be reflecting a Middle Platonic formulation seen later in Albinus: *Epit.* 10.4 Louis: *oute poion oute apoion*, i.e., beyond such categories altogether. Cf. Proclus *In Parm.* 7.67-76; *Platonic Theology* 2.109.
4. See James Drummond, *Philo Judaeus* (London, 1888; repr. Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1969) 2.17-34; Wolfson, *Philo* 2.94-164.
5. Cf. *Philebus* 27BC: "The first then I call the Unlimited, the second the Limit, and the third the being that has come to be a mixture of these two." A similar triadic configuration reappears in the Zohar. The *sefirot* of Wisdom and Intelligence represent the Logos, while those of Love and Stern Judgment are its dynamic polar principles, the Unlimited and Limit. The two in this case are balanced and anchored in the *sefirah* of Compassion.
6. Wolfson rightly pointed out that "though Philo used many negative descriptions of God, he does not say outright that, as a result of the unknowability and ineffability of God, He is to be described by negations. Nor does he apply the principle of negation as an interpretation of those predicates in Scripture that are couched in positive form." *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, 1.117. Philo did not need to do so, since in his view these predicates indicate only God's properties and not his absolute essence. Philo also seems to hint in *Deus* 55-56 at another way of speaking of God: the analytical process of *kat'aphairesin*, depriving the object of knowledge of any sensible attribute; cf. Albinus, *Epit.* 10.5, Louis:

- "We shall achieve the first idea of God by making successive abstractions, just as we get the conception of a point by abstraction from what is sensible, removing first the idea of surface, then that of line, till finally we have a point," tr. Chadwick in *Origen Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1965), 429, n. 4. See Whittaker, *Studies*, IX; S. R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 221.
7. *Legat.* 5. At *Spec.* 2.53, Philo writes that God "is filled with perfect forms of good, or rather, if the real truth be told, Himself the good." Cf. J. R. Harris, *Fragments of Philo Judaeus* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1886), 24: *mallon de makariotetos autes hyperano*. Although Philo sometimes speaks of the Ever-living God, and of the Father and Creator who continually rejoices in his life (*QG* 4.188), at *Fug.* 198 he says, "God is something more than Life, an ever-flowing spring of living."
  8. At *Det.* 160 Philo says: "Things posterior to God (*met' auton*) have no real being, but are believed to exist in imagination only." We find precisely the same notion later in the anonymous commentator (Porphyry?) of Plato's *Parmenides*, fr. 2 (fol. 4, ll. 19-28): "For it is not He who is non-existent and incomprehensible for those wishing to know Him, but it is we and all existing things who are nothing in relation to Him. And this is the reason it has been impossible to know Him, because all other things are nothing in relationship to Him, whereas acts of knowing perceive the similar through the similar. It is therefore we who are the nothing in relationship to all things that are posterior to Him (*ta met' auton*)." See Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968) 1.119; 2.76.
  9. *Det.* 160; *Cher.* 77-78; *Post.* 27-28; *Som.* 2.253; *Cher.* 86; *Abr.* 201-07; *Spec.* 2.54-55; *QG* 4.188.
  10. Cf. the Stoic opposition to anthropomorphism, *SVF* 2.1076 (=Philodemus, *De Pietate* 11); Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2.45; Diogenes Laertius 7.147.
  11. *Sac.* 95; cf. *QG* 1.42: "God gives the impression of walking without actually walking, indeed without moving at all."
  12. Philo understands the LXX *paideuo* (where it is used in the "vulgar" sense of "to discipline," translating Hebrew *yasser*) in the classical sense of "educate."
  13. Cf. Seneca, *NQ* 2.42.3: "Being very wise [the ancients] decided that fear was necessary for coercing the minds of the ignorant. . . . It was useful, in times of such insolent crime, that there exist something against which no one might consider himself powerful enough. And so to terrify men who find nothing attractive in good behavior unless

- it is backed up by fear, they placed an avenger overhead, and an armed avenger at that." Cf. also *Ep.* 47.18-19; and Critias, *Trag. Graec. Frag.* 43F 19.16 ff.
14. *Deus* 53-55, 63-65; cf. *Som.* 1.237; *QG* 2.54. For the physician analogy, cf. *Cher.* 15; Plato, *Republic* 389B; *SVF* 3.554-55; 2.132. See F. Wehrli, "Der Arztvergleich bei Platon," *Museum Helveticum* 8 (1951): 177-84.
  15. See Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 2.37-39, 153; *Tusc.* 4.57; Musonius, fr. 17; Epict. 2.14.11; Seneca, *De Ira* 2.16; *Prov.* 5.4; Marcus Aurelius 10.8. See also H. Merki, *Homoiosis Theo* (Freiburg: Paulus Verlag, 1952), 8-17; A. C. van Geytenbeek, *Musonius Rufus and Greek Diatribe* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1962), 22-24.
  16. Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 2.70; cf. Seneca, *Hippolytus* 195; Plutarch, *Amat.* 757C; Pericles 39; *SVF* 3. Diogenes of Babylon 33; Diogenes Laertius 7.147. See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1073a, 11; Epicurus *K.D.* 1; Cicero, *De Officiis*, 3.102: "It is the universally accepted view of all philosophers that God is never angry, never hurtful." See Max Pohlenz, *Vom Zorne Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1909), 1-9.
  17. For tensile motion, see A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1987) 1.288. Impressions in mature human beings are envisaged to have a propositional content; we assent to them by assenting to their corresponding *lekta* or propositions. "Rationality presumes that the mind's stock of conceptions is immediately activated when a sense-impression is received, with the result that the impression presents its object in a conceptualized form." See Long and Sedley 1.240.
  18. Zeno held that a temporal sequence was involved, in which first a judgment is made by the *hegemonikon*, and then rationality or irrationality leads to a *eupatheia* or a *pathos*. For Chrysippus, however, the emotional effects are constitutive to the judgment itself, and there is no such thing as a purely emotionless act of thought. See J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 22-36.
  19. See F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), 59-68; Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action* (Oxford: at the University Press, 1985), chs. 3-5; Long and Sedley, 1.410-23; Pohlenz, 1.151-58; Ernst Holler, *Seneca und die Seelenteilungslehre und Affektpsychologie der Mittelstoa* (Diss., Munich; Kallmünz: Lassleben, 1934); David Winston, "Philo's Ethical Theory," in Wolfgang Haase, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, Principat* 2.21.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 400-05; N. P. White,

- "Two notes on Stoic Terminology," *American Journal of Philology* 99 (1978), 115-19.
20. Diogenes Laertius 7.116: The Stoics "say that there are three good feelings: joy, watchfulness, wishing. Joy, they say, is the opposite of pleasure, consisting in well-reasoned swelling [elation] (*eulogon eparsin*); and watchfulness is the opposite of fear, consisting in well-reasoned shrinking (*eulogon ekklinin*). For the wise man will not be afraid at all, but he will be watchful. They say that 'wishing' is the opposite of appetite, consisting in well-reasoned stretching [desire] (*eulogon orexin*). Just as certain passions fall under the primary ones, so too with the primary good feelings. Under wishing: kindness (*eunoian*), generosity (*eumeneian*), warmth (*aspasmon*), affection (*agapesin*). Under watchfulness: respect (*aido*), cleanliness (*hagneian*). Under joy: delight (*terpsin*), sociability (*euphrosynen*), cheerfulness (*euthymian*)," tr., Long. Cf. SVF 3.432-42.
  21. *Op.* 16, 44, 77; *LA* 1.35; *Deus* 75; *Post.* 73; *Her.* 272; *Abr.* 204; *Mos.* 1.287, etc.
  22. D. L. 7.88; Plutarch *Comm. Not.* 1076E. Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 29E, 30A, 41B5, cited by Philo *Aet.* 13. Cf. Epictetus 1.17.14; 2.17.23; 3.5.9; 4.7.20; 4.1.99; *Encheiridion* 26; Seneca *NQ* 3.15.3; 7.27.6; *Ep.* 66.39; 76.15-16; Aetius, *Plac.* 1.6.1: God is a *pneuma noeron* . . . *metaballon de eis ho bouletai*, Diels, *Dox. Graec.*, 292. Note that for the Stoics (certainly at least for the Middle and Late Stoa) God is not an impersonal force, but "a living being, rational, perfect or intelligent in happiness, admitting nothing evil into him, taking providential care of the world, although he is not of human shape," D. L. 7.147; cf. Epictetus 3.13.7; Seneca *Ep.* 92.27. See A.-J. Voelke, *L'Idée de Volonté dans le Stoicisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973), 105-12; Plutarch *Stoic. Repug.* 1051F.
  23. The first of Plato's canons of theology (*typoi peri theologias*) is that God is good, and the good is beneficent (*Republic* II 379AC). According to Musonius Rufus 17, Lutz, God is *euergetikos* and *philanthropos*. Cf. Plutarch *Stoic. Repug.* 1051E, where it is said that Chrysippus bases his attack against Epicurus upon our conceptions of the gods as beneficent and humane (*euergetikous kai philanthropous*).
  24. *De Ira* 7.31.4; cf. 2.27.1. There seems to be no evidence prior to Seneca that the Stoics attributed benevolence to God.
  25. See Plato, *Timaeus* 30B; Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2.36.
  26. Cf. *Spec.* 2.54-55; *Cher.* 85-86. For the contrast between God's perfect *chara* and the imperfect form enjoyed by man, cf. Hippodamas, ap. Stob. 4.39.26, cited by E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light* (New

- Haven, 1935; repr. Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1969), 141, n. 106; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* X 1178b25: "The gods enjoy a life blessed in its entirety; men enjoy it to the extent that they attain something resembling the divine activity"; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 102.27.
27. *Ep.* 59.16, 18; cf. 50.8; *Vita Beata* 44; *Const.* 9.3. And cf. Epictetus 3.5.16: "Always to wear the same expression on one's face, whether one is coming out or going in"; 1.26.31: "That is why Socrates always wore the same expression on his face"; Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.31; Seneca, *De Ira* 2.7.1. With Philo *Der.* 137, cf. Seneca *Ep.* 23.2-3. See Adolf Bonhöffer, *Epictet und die Stoa* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Fromann Verlag, 1890), 297-98. But Plato denied that the gods feel either joy or its opposite (*Philebus* 33B; *Ep.* 3.315C; but cf. *Timaeus* 37C).
  28. D.L. 7.127-28, where only drunkenness and melancholy are mentioned—but Simplicius, *In Cat.*, 401, 35, 402, 25 ff., Kalbfleisch (SVF 33.238), naming no particular Stoic teacher, adds the other conditions. All these states, as Rist (*Stoic Philosophy*, 16-17) has pointed out, were regarded by the ancients as physical disorders. The wise man's actions under their influence might well be irrational. Epictetus refers to some of these states but seems to leave the issue open, suggesting only that one who could overcome such states could indeed be regarded as an invincible athlete (1.18.23; 2.17.33).
  29. According to a report in Stobaeus 2.68.24 (SVF 3.103), not only is joy not necessarily continuous, but neither does every wise man enjoy it. It is difficult, however, to make sense of this report.
  30. Cf. Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII 1154b 25; *Metaphysics* VII 1072b 16. For Aristotle's notion that pleasure is an *epigenennema*, see *EN* 1174b 32.
  31. At *Praem.* 35, however, Philo assigns to Isaac, the sage who has gained virtue through Nature, a life that has no share in anxiety or depression, and is free from distress and fear (*alypon te kai aphobon*): "The hardships and squalor of life never touch him even in his dreams, because every spot in his soul is already tenanted by joy."
  32. See Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers* 1.319.
  33. Epictetus, 4.7.20. Epictetus also refers to God's perception (*aisthanetai*) of the motions of human souls, inasmuch as they are portions of his own being (1.14.6,9). In the same vein, Marcus Aurelius declares that all things happen neutrally "by some primal impulse of Providence (*horme tini archaia pronoias*), in accordance with which She was impelled by some primeval impulse to this making of an ordered universe, when She had conceived certain principles for all that was to be" (9.1.4; cf. 9.28; 10.21). See also Albinus, *Did.* ch. 25: The souls of the gods contain a part called

- hormetikon corresponding to the human *thymoeides*. Cf. John Dillon, "Metriopatheia and Apatheia: Some Reflections on a Controversy in Later Greek Ethics," in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, ed. J. P. Anton and A. Preus (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983) 2.508-17.
34. D.L. 7.147. In *Op.* 73, Philo similarly asserts that the stars, which he believes are thoroughly rational, are insusceptible of any evil (*pantos anepidektos kakou*). Cf. D. Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology*, 33.
  35. Cf. Dillon, in David Winston and John Dillon, *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), 225.
  36. See Sandbach, *The Stoics*, 40-41. God's essence as it is in itself is, of course, beyond blessedness and happiness. *QG* 2.54; *Legat.* 4-6; cf. n. 7.
  37. *Deus* 51-68. Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.71: "After this because Celsus failed to understand them, he ridicules passages in the Bible which speak of God as though He were subject to human passions, in which angry utterances are spoken against the impious and threats against people who have sinned. I reply that, just as when we are talking with little children we do not aim to speak in the finest language possible to us, but say what is appropriate to the weakness of those whom we are addressing, and, further, do what seems to us to be of advantage for the conversion and correction of the children as such, so also the Logos of God seems to have arranged the scriptures, using the method of address which fitted the ability and benefit of the hearers . . ."; 72: "When we speak of God's wrath, we do not hold that it is an emotional reaction on His part, but something which He uses in order to correct by stern methods those who have committed many terrible sins," tr. Chadwick.
  38. *Deus* 70-73. For similar deductions from word-order, see *LA* 2.78; *Mig.* 140; *Conf.* 103. Cf. the rather more straightforward exegesis of *QG* 1.95, where the possibilities of juggling the *hoti* clause have not yet occurred to Philo.
  39. Cf. *Sac.* 42: "for on God's mercy (*eleo*), as a sure anchor, all things rest"; *Her.* 112; *Fug.* 95; *Mut.* 133; *Som.* 1.93, 112, 147, 2.149; *Ios.* 255; *Mos.* 1.86; *Spec.* 1.308; 4.180; *Praem.* 39, 117; *Legat.* 367.
  40. Compare *Mos.* 1.198, where Philo begins the sentence with a reference to God's *epieikeia* and *philanthropia*, but ends by applying to Him the verb *eleeo*: "God moved partly by the clemency and benevolence to man which belongs to His nature (*dia ten symphyton epieikeian kai philanthropian*), partly too by His wish to honor the ruler whom He had appointed . . . took pity on them (*eleesas*) and healed their sufferings." Cf. also *Praem.* 166, where Philo refers to "God's

- clemency and kindness (*epieikeia kai chrestoteti*); *Spec.* 2.110; *Praem.* 166. Both Cleanthes and Chrysippus called the gods *philanthropoi* (*SVF* 2.1115). Cf. Plato *Laws* 713D (*ho theos philanthropos on*); Wisdom of Solomon 12:18: "But while disposing of might, you judge in fairness (*en epieikeia*)."
41. "Clementia," says Seneca, "means restraining the mind from vengeance when it has the power to take it, or the leniency of a superior towards an inferior in fixing punishment" *Clem.* 2.3.1. For *misericordia*, cf. Cicero *Tusc.* 3.20-21. The nearest Greek equivalents to the Roman concept of *clementia* in its various aspects are *philanthropia*, *epieikeia* and *praotes*. See F. Weidauer, *Der Prinzipat in Seneca's Schrift de Clementia* (Diss., Marburg, 1950), 106-09; M. T. Griffin, *Seneca, A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford: at the University Press, 1976), 149.
  42. D.L. 7.123. Cf. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 14.41, quoting Chrysippus: Justice "has the title of virgin as a symbol of her purity and an indication that she has never given way to evil-doers, that she has never yielded to words of blandishment (*tous epieikeis logous*, words involving indulgence), to prayers and entreaties, to flattery, nor to anything of that kind"; and cf. Plutarch, *Cato Minor* 4.1.
  43. See M. Fuhrmann, "Die Alleinherrschaft und das Problem der Gerechtigkeit," *Gymnasium* 70 (1963): 514, n. 34; Griffin, *Seneca*, 166. Cf. Cicero *De Officiis*, 1.88; 2.18. "If Knoellinger's reconstruction of Cicero's treatise *De Virtutibus* from a fifteenth-century French work could be accepted with confidence," writes Griffin, "it would provide evidence that before Seneca, the Stoics, whose doctrines clearly infuse the material, had accepted *clementia* as a virtue distinguished from *misericordia*, and had admitted it into the administration of justice with the definition: *iustitia humane et liberaliter exercitata* (Fr. 8)," *Seneca*, 167. See W. S. Watt, Review of the 1949 Teubner edition of Cicero's *De Virtutibus* by W. Ax, *Journal of Roman Studies* 41 (1951): 200.
  44. Cf. Seneca *Clem.* 2.6.2; *Tranq.* 468D; W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscript. Graec.* (Leipzig, 3rd ed., 1915-24), 814.21: *ou di' eleon hymas, alla di' eumeneian euergeto* (Nero's proclamation to the Greeks). Spinoza, in condemning pity as a passion, similarly insists that he is "speaking expressly of a man who lives under the guidance of reason. For he who is moved neither by reason nor pity to help others is rightly called inhuman, for he seems to be dissimilar to man" *Ethics* IV, Prop. 50. Cf. Philo *Virt.* 144; *Ios.* 82. Hasidic teaching was similar—that one should help one's fellow not out of pity but out of love. "Thus it is told of one zaddik that when a poor person had excited his pity, he

- provided first for all his pressing needs, but then, when he looked inward and perceived that the wound of pity was healed, he plunged with great, restful and devoted love into the life and needs of the other, took hold of them as if they were his own life and needs and began in reality to help." See M. Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 120-21. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide I* 54, 126 (tr., Pines): "Sometimes, with regard to some people, he should be merciful and gracious, not out of mere compassion and pity, but in accordance with what is fitting." See Herbert Davidson, "The Middle Way in Maimonidean Ethics," *PAAJR* 54 (1987): 31-72. Nietzsche similarly wrote: "Ich will sie das lehren, was jetzt so wenige verstehen und jene Prediger des Mitleidens am wenigsten: —die Mitfreude"—"I wish to teach you, what so few now understand, and the preachers of pity least of all, namely to share in joy," *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 44.338, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973) 5.2, 248. See Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 4th ed., 1974), 364-71.
45. For a full discussion of Seneca's doctrine of *clementia*, see Griffin, *Seneca*, 129-71; and J. Rist, "The Stoic Concept of Detachment," in *The Stoics*, 259-72.
46. See Exodus 33:19; 34:36; Numbers 14:18; Psalms 145:19; Ben Sira 6:11; 2:7-11; 18:5-14; Tob. 11:14; Pseudo-Aristeas 192, 208; Wisdom of Solomon 11:23; 15:11. Philo's acute awareness of the centrality and ubiquity of the quality of mercy in Jewish tradition is clearly evident in *Spec.* 4.72: "And this [not to show pity to the poor man in giving judgment] comes from one who has filled practically his whole legislation with injunctions to show pity and benevolence (*eleon kai philanthropian*)." Cf. *Virt.* 141: "After this let those clever libellers continue, if they can, to accuse the nation of misanthropy and charge the laws with enjoining unsociable and unfriendly practices, when these laws so clearly extend their compassion to flocks and herds, and our people through the instructions of the law learn from their earliest years to correct any wilfulness of souls to gentle behavior"; 144: "and since milk is so abundant, the person who boils the flesh of lambs or kids or any other young animal in their mother's milk, shows himself cruelly brutal in character and gelded of compassion, that most vital of emotions and most nearly akin to the rational soul," tr. Colson.
47. Philo's philosophical position emerges momentarily in *Spec.* 1.116, where it is said that the High Priest will put himself above pity (*kreittou oiktou*) and continue free from distress, since his nature must approximate to the Divine.

48. *Vita Beata* 24.1; *Ben.* 6.29.1; cf. Marcus Aurelius, 2.13. See also Bonhöffer, *Epictet und die Stoa*, 305-06.
49. In the LXX *eleos* is normally used for *hesed* and less frequently (six times) for *rahamim*; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964) 2.479.
50. See Cicero, *Acad. Pr.* 2.131; Plutarch *Virt. Mor.* 443C, 444B, 451C; Albinus *Did.* 30.5-6 Louis; Gellius *NA* 1.26.11; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 1.19b; 27.116b. Apuleius seems to be the only exponent of Middle Platonism who openly adopted *apatheia* instead of *metriopatheia*. See Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 99-106.
51. We find, for example, that Philo ascribes *metameleia* and *eleos*, two subspecies of *lype*, to the wise man (*Fug.* 157; *Sac.* 121), as also *epithymia* in the form of its subspecies *orge* and *misos* (though the latter are limited to *orge dikaia* (*Fug.* 90; *Som.* 1.91; 2.7; *Mos.* 1.302; *Spec.* 4.14; cf. Aristotle *EN* 1125b, 31-35) and *misoponeria* (*Mos.* 2.9, 53; *Decal.* 177; *Spec.* 1.55; 4.170; cf. Ps-Aristotle *Virt. et Vü.* 1250b, 23-24; Plutarch *Stoic. Repug.* 1046C). As for *misoponeria*, he even ascribes it to God at *Her.* 163, where he says that God hates and abominates injustice. When Seneca wishes to speak of a proper form of anger, he uses the terms *vis* and *impetus* (*De Ira* 2.17.2; 1.9.1). See Holler, *Seneca*, 29, n. 84. Moreover, at *Abr.* 257, we are told that at the death of Sarah, Abraham chose not *apatheia*, but *metriopatheia*, moderating his grief instead of extirpating it. Strictly, by Stoic theory, Philo should have described Abraham's grief and tears, since Abraham was a sage, as a sort of "sting and slight convulsions of the soul (*morsus et contractiunculae quaedam animi*)" Cicero *Tusc.* 3.82, as he does, for example, in *QG* 4.73, Greek frag., Marcus, 2.220, where we are told that Abraham experienced not a *pathos* but only a *propatheia* (cf. Aristotle *De Motu Anim.* 703b 5-20; *De Anima* III 99). The term *propatheia* is elsewhere found only in Origen on Psalms 4:5 and 38:4 (*Patrologia Graeca* 12.560 and 689) and on Matthew 26:37 (*G. Chr. Schr.* 11.206k1) and Hieronymus *Ep.* 79.9, 22.506. It appears to have its origin in the medical literature (Plutarch, *Sanit. Praec.* 127D-129A). See Pohlenz, *Die Stoa* 2.154. Although the Stoics did not consider *degmos* (biting, sting) to be a *pathos*, neither did they consider it a *eupatheia*, but placed it rather in the category of an automatic bodily reaction such as pallor, shuddering, or contraction of the brow; Epictetus, fr. 9 (180); Seneca *De Ira* 2.2.3; *Ad Polyb.* 17.2; *Ep.* 57.3; 71.299; 99.15. The Stoics were frequently attacked on this account for fudging and resorting to linguistic quibbles in order to escape from reality (Plutarch *Virt. Mor.* 449A). But Philo classified *degmos* as a

*eupatheia* (QG 2.57). He was either following some minor Stoic sensitized by the criticism, or he simply did this on his own: He could therefore describe Abraham's grief as *eupatheia*, but the technicalities of such an explanation may have deterred him. He preferred to use the Peripatetic ideal instead. See Plutarch *Ad Apoll.* 102D; Cicero *Tusc.* 3.12; cf. Plato *Republic* 603E; D.L. 10.119; Plutarch *Non Posse Suav.* 1101A. Seneca himself, who generally follows a strict Stoic line in this matter, does on occasion yield to the Peripatetic *metriopatheia*: "For Nature requires from us some sorrow, while more than this is the result of vanity. But never will I demand of you that you should not grieve (*maereas*) at all. I well know that some men are to be found whose wisdom is harsh rather than brave, who deny that the wise man will ever grieve (*doliturum*). But these, it seems to me, can never have fallen upon this sort of misfortune. If they had, Fortune would have knocked their proud philosophy out of them. . . . Reason has accomplished enough if only she removes from grief (*ex dolore*) whatever is excessive and superfluous; it is not for anyone to hope or to desire that she should suffer us to feel no sorrow at all. Rather let her maintain a mean which will copy neither indifference nor madness, and will keep us in the state that is the mark of an affectionate, and not an abandoned, mind. Let your tears flow, but let them also cease, let deepest sighs be drawn from your breast, but let them also find an end," *Ad Polyb.* 18.5.6, tr. Basore; cf. *Ad Helv.* 16.1; *Ad Marc.* 7.1. In *NQ* 2.59.3, Seneca says that we can be unconquered but not unshaken, "and yet the hope occasionally arises that we can also be unshaken (*inconcussos*)." See Eduard Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen* (repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1963) 2.1.1047, n. 7.

## Solomon Ibn Gabirol's Doctrine of Intelligible Matter

John M. Dillon

### I

The concept of matter has a long and fascinating history in Greek philosophy,<sup>1</sup> but only one aspect of that history is of relevance to my theme. That theme is the search for sources of the striking dominant motif in the eleventh-century philosopher Solomon Ibn Gabirol's *Fons Vitae*: the remarkable theory of the primacy among created things of Universal Matter and Universal Form.<sup>2</sup>

The term 'matter' (*hyle*), of course, we owe to Aristotle, but the concept is found in Plato, under the name of the 'receptacle' (*hypodochē*) of the *Timaeus*. Aristotle himself does not hesitate to refer to this as 'matter' (*Physics* IV 2, 209b 33 ff.). Many scholars today feel that Aristotle was quite mistaken in this identification. Harold Cherniss is particularly clear about this,<sup>3</sup> especially since Aristotle further identifies the Receptacle of the *Timaeus*, as a material principle, with the Indefinite Dyad, or 'the great and small' of Plato's unwritten philosophy (*Physics* 187a 16-20; 192a 11-14).

Clearly Aristotle and Plato need not mean the same thing by matter. But, although I accept the possibility that Aristotle's reading of Plato here is profoundly polemical, I find it inconceivable that he would misinterpret Plato as radically as Cherniss would claim. But whether or not Aristotle is misinterpreting Plato, he has put his finger

on an important aspect of the Platonist concept of matter, an aspect which comes into prominence especially in the Neopythagorean tradition stemming from Plato's successors Speusippus and Xenocrates, and which is crucial for the Neoplatonists<sup>4</sup>, and ultimately for Ibn Gabirol, namely the doctrine that a 'material' principle operates at the highest as well as the lowest level of the universe, as the immediate correlate of the unitary first principle as well as the ultimate substratum of the system of Forms in the physical realm.

What we need to clarify for ourselves at the outset, since this will in turn make sense of the various equivalences that we will see being drawn, is what role this entity 'matter' is intended to play in Neoplatonic ontology. As we can see from the later chapters (6-16) of Plotinus' tractate On the Two Kinds of Matter (*Enneads* II 4), later Platonism accepted Aristotle's analysis of matter in the material world as the substratum that necessarily underlies opposite qualities and survives their change. Primary matter is that which underlies all sets of opposites, or all form. What later Platonists were prepared to do (against Aristotle's objections) was to place in this role of substratum that entity inherited from Pythagoreanism, the Indefinite Dyad.<sup>5</sup> These later Platonists may have been encouraged to this view by a tendentious interpretation of an interesting usage of Aristotle's. In four passages of the *Metaphysics* (Z 10, 1036a 9-12; Z 11, 1037a 4-5; H 6, 1045a 33-37, and I 8, 1058a 23-24), he talks of *hylé noété*, 'intelligible matter.' What Aristotle seems to intend by this expression, as becomes clearest from the third and fourth passages, is the part of a definition which sets a particular species in a wider genus, e.g., 'plane figure' in the sentence, 'a circle is a plane figure.' This is certainly not what Plotinus, for one, wants to mean by 'intelligible matter,' but the idea that there is a common substratum to particular Forms is one that I think a Platonist could pick up and run with.<sup>6</sup>

Nor should a third source of stimulation be overlooked, that of Speusippus—insofar as he can be distinguished from the Neopythagorean tradition he did so much to inaugurate. Speusippus does seem to me to contribute to the concept, worked with later by Moderatus of Gades, that the same entity manifests itself on successive levels of reality.<sup>7</sup> For Speusippus, Multiplicity (*plethos*) already appears at the level of the One "as a completely fluid and

pliable matter." It continues to manifest itself at each successive level of reality: arithmetical, geometrical, psychical, physical—until it appears as matter proper.

## II

What we find, then, in the doctrine of Plotinus is the concept of a 'material' element present from the outset in the intelligible world. I want now to look more closely at the arguments Plotinus employs in *Enneads* II 4.2-5 to establish the necessity of such a material element in the realm of forms. These arguments prove to bear an interesting resemblance to those used by Ibn Gabirol. Plotinus begins in chapter 2 by presenting objections to the existence of intelligible matter:<sup>8</sup>

1. If something such as matter must be undefined and shapeless, and there is nothing indefinite (*aoristos*) or shapeless among the beings There, which are the best, there would not be matter There.
2. If every intelligible being is simple (*haploun*), there would be no need of matter, so that the composite being (*syntheton*) might come of it and from something else.
3. There is need of matter for beings that come into existence and are made into one thing after another—this was what led people to conceive the matter of sense-objects—but not for beings that do not come into existence.
4. Where did matter come from, and whence did it take its being? If it came to be, it was by some agency; but if it was eternal, there would be several principles, and there would be an element of chance in the activity of the primary beings.<sup>9</sup>
5. If form comes to matter, the composite being will be a body, and so there will be body There also.

This is a pretty comprehensive schedule of objections, originating from the argumentation of both Peripatetics and earlier Platonists. As we shall see, Ibn Gabirol reproduces them and deals with them in much the same terms as does Plotinus.

In chapters 3-5, Plotinus responds. First, he points out, not everything indefinite and shapeless is to be despised. If it is prepared to submit to ordering by form, as Soul,<sup>10</sup> for instance, is prepared



to submit to ordering by Intellect and logos (3.1-6), it is a positive entity. Secondly, it is not true that every intelligible being is simple, although compositeness in the intelligible realm is of a different sort than that of bodies. *Logoi* are composite and through their compositeness make composite the natural objects which they bring to actuality (3.6-9). More to the point, surely, although Plotinus does not say it here, is that forms themselves are composite, in the sense expounded e.g. in the later tractate VI 7 (especially chapters 10-15), that each of them in a way contains all the others. This is not a point made by Ibn Gabirol, so we need not dwell on it.

Plotinus' reply to the third argument is simply to point out that just because the intelligible realm is comprised of eternal objects, and so has no coming to be and passing away into and out of an underlying matter, that does not mean that there is no role for matter there. It means only that "in the intelligible world matter is all things at once; so it has nothing to change into, for it has all things already. Therefore, matter is certainly not ever shapeless. There, for even matter here is not, but each of these matters has shape in a different way" (3.13-17). This argument does not, of course, prove that intelligible matter exists. But it does counter the opposing argument that it need not exist because it is only required as a substratum for changing qualities.

The fourth question, about the origin of this matter, Plotinus postpones to chapter 5; but we may deal with it now. He postpones it because it needs some leading up to, as it involves the obscure question of the derivation of Intellect from the One. Matter, as we learn in chapter 5, is the basis of primal Otherness and Motion, two of the five 'categories' of the noetic world, which come forth from the One to form Intellect: "The Motion and Otherness which came from the first are undefined (*aoriston*) and need the First to define them; and they are defined when they turn to it" (5.32-4). Matter is here identified with the initial, undefined stage of the (timeless) production of Intellect, and its connection with the Indefinite Dyad is made unusually clear. But this is only one aspect of Matter in the noetic realm, and not even the main one. Ibn Gabirol refers to it only incidentally in the *Fons Vitae*, since he is not primarily concerned there with the derivation of all things from God,<sup>11</sup> but rather with the structure of intelligible reality.

When Plotinus turns to counter the final objection, that the introduction of Matter into the noetic world seems to involve the introduction of body into that world, he deals with it, in chapter 4, not directly, but rather by describing the necessary role Matter does play:

If, then, Forms are many, there must be something in them common to them all; and also something individual, by which one differs from another. Now this something individual, this separating difference, is the shape (*morphe*) that belongs to each. But if there is shape, there is that which is shaped, of which the difference is predicated. Therefore, there is matter, which receives the shape and is the substrate (*hypokeimenon*) in every case.

Further, if there is an intelligible world (*kosmos noetos*)<sup>12</sup> There, and this world is an imitation of that, and this is composite, then there must be matter There too. Or else how can you call it a 'world' except with regard to its form? And how can you have form without something on which the form is imposed? (4.2-11)

For Ibn Gabirol these last two arguments are the most important, as we shall see: first, that the multiplicity of the forms necessitates a common substrate, and second, that, since this world is an image of the intelligible, and this one is a composite of form and matter, then so must that be. There is nothing in the sensible realm that is not already present in the intelligible.

The mid-portion of Plotinus' treatise (chapters 6-12) is devoted to an analysis of the concept of matter in the physical realm, based largely on Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, and so is not relevant to our present purpose. But in the last part of the treatise (chapters 13-16), in analyzing what Matter in general is not (Quality, Unlimitedness, Otherness), Plotinus says a number of pertinent things. In chapter 15 he is inquiring as to the possible relationship of Matter to 'the unlimited' (*to apeiron*) and 'the indefinite' (*to aoriston*) and once again makes clear the essential identity between Matter at the intelligible level and the concept of the Indefinite Dyad and the Unlimited of the *Philebus*, as a substratum for the multiplicity of forms and also as a reason for generation in general. The forms as a whole, says Plotinus (15.3 ff.), constitute Limit (*peras*). Matter, which they set in order, is *to apeiron*. He goes on (15.18 ff.) to refer to Matter's relation to the One:

For in the intelligible world, too, Matter is the Unlimited, and it would be produced from the unlimitedness (*apeiria*) or the potency or the everlastingness of the One; not that unlimitedness is in the One, but the One produces it.

This linkage with the pair of *peras* and *apeiron* seems to me important. Plotinus never hypostatizes these entities; but his successors do, from Iamblichus on, and it seems possible to me, as I shall explain, that something of Proclus' treatment of *peras* and *apeiron* filtered down, through the Arabic tradition, to Ibn Gabirol.

I turn now to Ibn Gabirol's chief arguments for the existence of intelligible matter, and will then discuss the troublesome question of sources and possible lines of influence.

### III

The main purpose of the *Fons Vitae*, as is generally agreed,<sup>13</sup> is to investigate the nature of reality, and specifically to prove that the universe at all levels, intelligible as well as physical, is made up of Matter and Form. God Himself, Ibn Gabirol declares at the outset (*Fons Vitae* I 5), is unknowable in His essence, and known only through His works. It is the totality of these works that Ibn Gabirol will confine himself to examining. For our purposes here, it is Book IV of the work that is of primary importance. It follows a long discussion, comprising Book III, intended to prove the existence of intelligible substances, as a necessary middle term between the First Principle and bodily substance. Ibn Gabirol then turns to the proof that intelligible substances, like bodily ones, are necessarily composed of form and matter. This leads us back to what was said in Book II about bodily substance. In chapters 1 to 3 of that book, Ibn Gabirol asserted that, even as body is 'matter' for the forms it contains—the shapes, colors and other accidental qualities present in it—so there is a non-sensible substance which serves as 'matter' for corporeal nature, and for which corporeal nature is 'form.'<sup>14</sup> In chapters 6-8, we are told that the universal matter which acts as substratum for sensible entities is the substance which acts as substratum for the nine categories (i.e., the Aristotelian categories other than Substance itself), and they constitute its form. This substance is the limit which

separates the sensible from the intelligible, and it is here that we must begin the study of intelligible reality. In fact, because the lower derives from the higher and is its image, one attains knowledge of the higher by studying the lower. Therefore, one can compare the substance of the categories with the absolutely universal primal matter.

The terms 'matter' and 'substance' in fact designate the same entity, we are told in chapter 11. This entity is to be viewed as matter when it is imagined as not yet having received the form proper to it, and as substance when it is seen as being already informed. In fact, of course, matter is never found without form, or form without matter, either in this realm or among the intelligibles.

In Book IV, then, we turn to the consideration of matter and form in simple (intelligible) substances. Ibn Gabirol begins by reasserting that these intelligible substances, like composite (physical) substances, are composed of matter and form. In support of this thesis he produces two of the arguments of Plotinus. First, as he already urged in Book II, If the lower emanates from the higher, all that is in the lower must be in the higher (IV 1, 211, 13-14). When the pupil asks for evidence (*signum*) of this, Ibn Gabirol answers:

The proof of this is that spiritual substances are common in matter but diverse in form, that is, since their effects are diverse, there can be no doubt that their forms are diverse, and it is not possible that the matters of these substances be diverse, because they are all simple and spiritual, and diversity derives only from form, and simple matter does not have form in itself (212, 2-9).

This is Plotinus' fifth and central argument for the existence of intelligible matter, as set out in *Enneads* II 4.4. There must be a common substratum to account for the unity of the intelligible realm, where the individual forms provide the diversity.<sup>15</sup>

Ibn Gabirol's second argument corresponds exactly to that presented by Plotinus at the beginning of *Enneads* II 4.4: If simple substances were solely matter, there would be no basis for their difference from each other; but if they were composed of form alone, they would lack any substratum (IV 1, 212, 18 - 213, 13). This argument provokes the Pupil to ask how spiritual substance can be composite while being also spiritual (IV 2, 213, 21-22), an objection,

as we recall, also raised in *Enneads* II 4.2. But Ibn Gabirol's solution is rather different from what we find there. He points out that there are various levels of spiritual substance. This at least is a sign of complexity. The distinctions among the levels of soul, for example, and those between soul and intellect, show that these substances possess a diversity of forms. Yet it remains to be explained how there can be a diversity of levels of form, if one wishes to maintain, as Ibn Gabirol does, the basic unity of form:

What you must imagine about spiritual forms is this, that they are all one form, and that there is no diversity among them of themselves, because they are purely spiritual, and diversity is not a property of theirs except on account of the matter which supports them. The more it is near to perfection, the more subtle it will be, and the form which is supported by it will be at the extreme of simplicity and spirituality, and vice versa. Take as a comparison the light of this sun of ours: Its light in itself is one, and if it comes up against subtle and clear air, it will penetrate it and will appear in a different guise to what it will appear in air that is thick and not clear. The same must be said of form.

So the root of diversity is put back onto matter! Form is just the agency provoking this diversity. Evidently in Ibn Gabirol's mind differing degrees of 'opacity' do not conflict with the underlying formlessness of matter.

With all its problems, Ibn Gabirol's account of the different degrees of being in the universe does not correspond to anything in Plotinus. It is curiously reminiscent, however, of the theory of the manifestation of matter at different levels of reality, which appears in chapter 4 of Iamblichus' *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* (attributable almost certainly, I feel, to Speusippus<sup>16</sup>).

But the answer Ibn Gabirol offers here deals only with the diversity among the levels of spiritual substance. Under further prodding from his pupil, Ibn Gabirol goes on to claim that there is complexity *within* a given spiritual substance, namely, the soul (IV 3, 216, 12 ff.). His argument is that the soul, although an immaterial entity, has capacities for changing its nature for better or for worse, and that from its own resources. This argument is reminiscent of Plotinus' second, about the complexity of *logoi*, although not

identical with it. The *logoi*, like the soul, contain the possibility of many different manifestations.

#### IV

On the whole, our comparison of Ibn Gabirol with Plotinus supports a conclusion one would be forced to reach on other grounds as well: that while there are interesting parallels, there is no evidence of a direct connection between the two thinkers. What we seem to have, rather, is two incisive and highly original minds working within the same tradition and reaching similar conclusions about the structure of the universe. This, I think, is a more interesting result than any proof of direct dependence. Mere dependence would diminish the stature of Ibn Gabirol as a creative thinker; but it would also pose a serious problem in the history of the transmission of texts. For so far as we know there was no Arabic translation of the first three *Enneads* of Plotinus, although the last three were extensively drawn upon for the *Theology of Aristotle*, the *Letter on Divine Science*, and the *Sentences of the Greek Sage*, all texts which seem to have been available to Ibn Gabirol.

But if Ibn Gabirol did not derive his doctrine of intelligible matter directly from Plotinus, what plausible sources or backgrounds to his reasoning present themselves? His was certainly not an obvious doctrine for a thinker of his era to propound, even if it was authentically rooted in the Neoplatonist tradition. Yet there certainly were allied doctrines available from the accessible materials of the Greek tradition that could stimulate a creative thinker to develop such a theory.

As a preliminary to asking what these may have been, let us briefly set Ibn Gabirol's doctrine of intelligible matter in context conceptually. The *Fons Vitae* posits a completely unitary and ineffable First Principle, knowable only by his activities and products. The first of these is his Will, of which we hear much in Books I and V. The Will may be compared to the Stoic (and Philonic) Logos, in that it permeates and informs the universe. But it is even more closely analogous to the Will of the Father in the Chaldaean Oracles,<sup>17</sup> a source not available as such in Arabic, but which

influenced many documents that were. This hypostatic Will, issuing forth from the One, strikes upon a primal Otherness and Indefiniteness, which is matter. Matter, declares Ibn Gabirol (*FV* V 32), must be conceived to be in a sort of movement consequent on its desire for the One—specifically, for being informed by the One. The response to this movement is the emanation of God's will, which imposes itself on matter as form. Thus form is really only an actualization of will in matter.

All this activity, of course, is differentiable only through analysis. It is not a temporal sequence. In fact, as Ibn Gabirol assures us (e.g. *IV* 4, 219, 3), there was never a time, not the twinkling of an eye, when form was not united to matter. But for the sake of theory we are driven to postulate a succession of stages, beginning (a) with matter somehow present "in the knowledge of the Eternal One" (*V* 10, 274, 20-22), in a state of potential being, but then (b) having a shadowy existence outside the First Principle, moving in anticipation of receiving form from God's will, and finally (c) united to form to constitute substance.

Ibn Gabirol is wrestling here with mysteries like those that surround the emergence of Intellect from the One in the philosophy of Plotinus. He cannot be expected to come away with any more satisfactory conclusions than Plotinus does. Nous for Plotinus emerges as a formless entity, rather like matter, "before" it becomes Intellect by reflecting back on the One (e.g., *Enneads* V 1.6, V 6.5, VI 7.16-17). Indeed, the initial, processive aspect of Nous is that same intelligible matter that Plotinus is discussing in *Enneads* II 4.5.

But if we are concerned with sources rather than mere conceptual analogies, we must look beyond Plotinus. I have suggested that Ibn Gabirol seems to be drawing on some form of the later Neoplatonic doctrine, attested in Iamblichus,<sup>18</sup> of a pair of principles following upon the One and structuring the universe, Limit and Unlimitedness, a scheme developed by the later Neoplatonists out of what Plato says in the *Philebus* (17C ff.). There is still a problem, of course, as to how Ibn Gabirol might have become acquainted with this doctrine. But there are a number of reasonable hypotheses.<sup>19</sup>

First of all, we may note the doctrine of "Empedocles" as reported in the *Book of Five Substances*, a text probably available to Ibn Gabirol,<sup>20</sup> and described also in Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-Milal*

*wa'l-Nihāl* (II 2, ch. 1).<sup>21</sup> Empedocles is reported by Shahrastānī to have held that:

Prime matter is simple, as is the essence of intellect, which is other than it, but not of an absolute simplicity. That is to say, it is not absolutely one, like the essence of the First Cause; for there is no effect which is not composite, whether it be of intelligible or sensible composition. Matter, in its essence, is composed of Love and Strife, and from these two principles are produced both simple, spiritual substances and composite, corporeal substances, in such a way that Love and Strife constitute two attributes or indeed two forms for substance, two principles for the totality of existent things.

The doctrine of "Empedocles" set out here certainly does not quite square with that professed by Ibn Gabirol. In particular, it makes matter a composite of Love and Strife, rather than one of the two elements making up all substance. But such a report as this could have given a creative mind like Ibn Gabirol's some inspiration and impetus towards his own doctrine. Love and Strife, after all, can be seen as simply poetic representations of the more properly philosophical pair Limit and Unlimitedness, which in turn can be assimilated to the more Aristotelian pair of form and matter.

The *Book of Five Substances* again presents some interesting "Empedoclean" doctrines.<sup>22</sup> The Creator creates, first, matter, in which are found in embryo all the forms of the universe. After creating matter, he creates intellect, and extends over it life, through the intermediacy of matter. Intellect, then, since it draws its life from matter, turns its attention towards the forms in matter, and draws from them the beauty of form which is in it. It then comes to possess intelligible forms, which, by combining with matter, produce soul. Here we have all the constituents of Ibn Gabirol's universe, although arranged slightly differently. Once again, however, one can see how such speculations could lead him to his own solutions.

The most striking analogy to Ibn Gabirol's doctrine of matter and form, however, and indeed its probable immediate source, is the doctrine of Isaac Israeli,<sup>23</sup> who was active in Egypt in the first half of the tenth century, and who is in turn indebted for his doctrine of matter and form to a source whom Stern calls 'Ibn Hasday's Neoplatonist,' since his doctrine is to be found in a philosophical

excursus in chapters 32-35 of the twelfth-century writer Ibn Hasday's *The Prince and the Ascetic*.<sup>24</sup> The most tellingly pertinent passage occurs in Israeli's *Book of Substances*,<sup>25</sup> of which only fragments survive. In Frg. 4 he embarks on a proof that "the first of created things are two simple substances, out of which is established the nature of the intellect." He proves this by an 'ascent' from the lowest form of soul (vegetative), through animal and rational soul, to intellect, which he declares to be "most particularly affected by the action, without mediation, of the power and the will." It is composed of matter and form.

Israeli dwells on the comparison of the intellect to light and to levels of light corresponding to levels of being (cf. Ibn Gabirol's distinctive response to the student at *FV* IV 2, quoted above):

Regarding the quality of the emanation of the light from the power and the will, we have already made clear that its beginning is different from its end, and the middle from both extremes, and this for the following reason: When its beginning emanated from the power and the will, it met no shade or darkness to make it dim or coarse, while its end met various imperfections and obscurities which made it dim and coarse; the middle partook of both extremes.

The reason for the variations is the varied receptivity of matter.

It is fairly clear, then, I think, that we can trace the chain of influence back to Israeli, and beyond him to the source of Ibn Hasday (which is also the source of the longer version of the *Theology of Aristotle*). But when one tries to reach back beyond these probable proximate sources the problems become greater. What Greek Neoplatonic sources may lie behind the pseudo-Empedoclean doctrine is not easy to unravel. Certainly for Proclus, Empedocles' Love and Strife are cosmic forces analogous to Limit and Unlimitedness. At *In Tim.* II 18, 6 ff., for example, he links 'Empedoclean Strife' with Otherness and Unlimitedness as belonging to the realm of Becoming, but producing along with Love a synthesis or bond (*desmos*) whose product is the physical world. Later, at II 69, 23 ff., Love is presented as the mode of being proper to the intelligible world, while Strife is proper to the physical world, although, in truth, they must both operate at both levels.<sup>26</sup> But Proclus' commentaries do not seem to have been available in Arabic, so other intermediaries remain

to be sought. All I can do here is attest to the naturalization of Empedocles within the tradition of Neoplatonism and leave further investigation to others.

I can make one further contribution, however, to a field of inquiry in which no doubt there is much still to be discovered. The Arabic *Liber de Causis*, as we know, is a compilation from Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. Yet it happens that the doctrine of intelligible matter does not figure in the propositions from the *Elements* which are included in the Arabic work, although a number of other doctrines do that are relevant to Ibn Gabirol's system, such as the Procline doctrine of receptivity, for example.<sup>27</sup> But in 1973 the German Arabist Gerhart Endress published for the first time the text of twenty propositions from the *Elements*,<sup>28</sup> one of which is Proposition 72, which lays down the principle that everything which serves as a substratum (*hypokeimenon*) to something else proceeds from more complete and more universal causes (sc. than that which informs it). This yields the corollary that "matter, taking its origin from the One, is itself devoid of form. For matter, which is the substratum of all things, proceeded from the cause of all things." The same, Proclus adds, is the case with body in relation to soul.

Proclus' Proposition 72 is transmitted in the Arabic in a rather truncated form—yet with some material added. The whole passage is highly relevant to Ibn Gabirol's doctrine of matter, and I present it here in full:

Every substratum which has the capacity to underlie a great number of things proceeds from a more universal and perfect cause. Every cause which is a cause of more things is more universal, stronger and nearer to the ultimate Cause than a cause which causes less and less important things. If this is as we have set out, and if the first substratum can underlie all things, and the first agent can effect all things, then the first agent must actualize and produce the first substratum, namely matter, which embraces all things. It is clearly proved, then, that the first substratum, that is, matter, underlies all things and that it is an intelligible substratum, even as the first agent actualizes it, because it is the agent of all things.

Here we have matter presented as an intelligible entity deriving from the First Principle, and, with form,<sup>29</sup> bringing all substance into

being. This is Ibn Gabirol's doctrine in a nutshell. The passage would certainly have provided food for thought for Ibn Gabirol, if he had this text available to him. Unfortunately, we can demonstrate no such thing. But we see here that there were more Neoplatonic texts available in Arabic than we used to think, and there may well be more still to be discovered.

## V

As I said at the outset, the concept of matter in Platonism is a complex one, based on Plato's Receptacle in the *Timaeus*, but affected by Aristotle's doctrine of matter and form, the Pythagorean pair of One and Indefinite Dyad (appearing also in the Limit and Unlimitedness of the *Philebus*), and even the Stoic *ousia*, 'essence' or substance, construed as matter, the passive element in the universe. Ibn Gabirol, in eleventh-century Saragossa, is the heir to all this complexity, and out of it he weaves a theory worthy of his great intellectual ancestry as a Platonist.

What I think we find in examining Ibn Gabirol's philosophy in general and in his doctrine of intelligible matter in particular, is a thinker steeped in the Neoplatonic tradition relayed to him by a variety of Arabic sources, but also possessed of an incisive and logical mind, capable of working out solutions of his own that are harmonious with the themes of the tradition as it reached him. The method of work, indeed, is very much like that of Plotinus himself. The role Ibn Gabirol gives to matter in his universe and the arguments with which he supports his theory bear a notable resemblance to those of Plotinus; and the development of the nuances of the theory in a distinctive way follows the tenor of the Plotinian tradition as it unfolded. But there is no need, I think, to postulate a direct dependence on Plotinus, or to seek an immediate source to be copied by Ibn Gabirol, rather than to provide a hint or stimulus to his own problem solving. Better to see here a case of great minds thinking alike.

## Notes

1. See Clemens Baeumker, *Das Problem der Materie in der griechischen Philosophie* (Münster, 1890)—the same who produced the only text of the *Fons Vitae*; see also Heinz Happ, *Hyle: Studien zum aristotelischen Materie-Begriff* (Berlin, 1971).
2. Ibn Gabirol was born of Jewish parents in Malaga around 1021/2 and was educated in Saragossa, where he spent most of his life. He died in Valencia about 1058, still only in his late thirties. There is little or no external mark of a distinctively Jewish origin in his main philosophic work, *The Fountain of Life*, composed originally in Arabic, but now available only in a Latin translation. But he is also well known for his poetry, both religious and personal, which is composed in Hebrew and clearly Jewish in inspiration. Indeed, for a long time the author of the *Fons Vitae* was not identified with the poet, as Bernard McGinn's paper details. Ibn Gabirol's poetry reveals a lively and headstrong character, frequently at odds with his contemporaries, including even his patron, the Jewish statesman, Samuel ha-Nagid, vizier of the King of Granada.
3. *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1944), 83-96.
4. Plotinus, in chapter 11 of his tractate On the Two Kinds of Matter (II 4 [12] 11.33-35) accepts the validity of this equating of matter with the 'great-and-small,' and puts it to work in his own theory. We shall have more to say about this presently.
5. As we can see from Porphyry's references to him in his treatise On Matter (quoted, in turn, by Simplicius, *In Phys.* 230, 34 ff. Diels), the Neopythagorean Moderatus of Gades envisaged a role for matter at all levels of the universe: Physical matter was simply a reflection of what he terms 'quantity' (*posotes*) at the noetic level, this 'quantity' being the indefinite substratum left if one mentally 'withdraws' the One from the process of production of forms or logoi. Moderatus' theory must have had a considerable influence on Plotinus, although Plotinus does not approve of *posotes* being given the role of intelligible matter; see *Enneads* II 4.9.
6. See Happ, 639-49. For Aristotle, of course, the only incorporeal beings are pure forms, not composites of form and matter; see *Metaphysics* XII 6, esp. 1071b 20: *eti toinun tautas dei tas ousias aneu hules*.
7. That is, if we accept Philip Merlan's identification of chapter 4 of Iamblichus' *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* as essentially Speusippian, as I argue we should, in "Speusippus in Iamblichus," *Phronesis* 29 (1984): 325-32.

8. Tr. after A. H. Armstrong. See the useful discussions in Thomas Szlezk, *Platon und Aristoteles in der Nuslehre Plotins* (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1979), 72-79, and J. M. Rist, "The Indefinite Dyad and Intelligible Matter in Plotinus," *Classical Quarterly* 12 (1962): 99-107.
9. I.e., there would be an unexplained factor in the coming together of the two first principles; or, perhaps, matter itself would introduce an element of chance into the process.
10. This suggestion that Soul is in a way 'matter' for Intellect is interestingly reflected in a suggestion of the Pupil at *Fons Vitae* IV 1, 212, 9-10: "What will you reply if I say that the substance of Soul is matter, and the substance of Intellect is form?"
11. The notion of matter as 'otherness' does seem to come up at IV 6, 222, 24-28, where Ibn Gabirol argues, as a further proof that intelligible substance is composed of matter and form, "the creator of all must be one, and what is created must be different (*diversum*) from him. Hence if what was created had been matter alone or form alone it would have been assimilated to the One, and there would be no mediating element (*medium*) between the two of them, (as there is) because there are two after the One." Here, matter seems really to provide the necessary element of 'otherness.' Also, Ibn Gabirol has a theory of the motion of matter, as a consequence of its desire to receive form (V 32). See further below, p. 51. And for the issue of the *medium*, Bernard McGinn's discussion in the present volume.
12. In the sense of an ordered whole.
13. I am chiefly indebted in this part of the paper to Jacques Schlanger, *La Philosophie de Salomon Ibn Gabirol*. I have also consulted Jakob Guttman, *Die Philosophie des Salomon Ibn Gabirol* (Göttingen, 1889), and D. Kaufmann, *Studien über Salomon Ibn Gabirol* (Budapest, 1899).
14. This notion that a higher principle may serve as 'matter' for a lower one is taken further in IV 8 (229, 22-24): "So on this account we must conclude that what is more corporeal is form for the more simple (substance), until our analysis attains absolutely simple matter." The doctrine that reality becomes increasingly complex as one descends the scale of being would be accepted by Plotinus, e.g. II 9.6.28 ff., VI 7.8.17 ff.: *to gar plethos en elleipsei* (l. 22), and is formalized by Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, Props. 61-62.
15. This, incidentally, creates a difficulty for Ibn Gabirol's postulation of universal form as a single entity, which he gets around (as Plotinus does) by taking Intellect to be the universal form that holds together all the particular ones: IV 12, 238, 16-22.
16. Cf. n. 7 above.

17. E.g., Fr. 37, 1-3, *Des Places*: *Nous patros erroizêse noêsas akmadi boule/pammorphous ideas, peges de mias apo pasai/exethoron. patrothen gar een boule te telos te*. Here the basic entity is the Intellect of the Father, but it issues as an act of will (*boule*). Its 'leaping forth' generates the Ideas. The surviving fragments of the Oracles do not bring this Intellect or Will into direct contact with matter. But matter, as we gather from Fr. 34, also springs forth from the Father, as it does for Ibn Gabirol (V 10).
18. Ap. Damascius, *De Primis Principiis*, ch. 51, I 103, 6 ff. Ruelle. See my discussion in *Iamblichus Chalcidensis Fragmenta* . . . (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 31-33.
19. The possibilities are set out usefully by Schlanger in ch. 4 of his monograph, 52-109.
20. Shem Tob ibn Falaquera, in the introduction to his collection of extracts in Hebrew of the *Fons Vitae*, tells us that in this work one finds opinions very close to those of Ibn Gabirol; see Schlanger, 88.
21. Schlanger, 76-79. For "Empedocles" as an authority in Arabic philosophy, see S. M. Stern, in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. "Anbaduklis," I 483-84.
22. D. Kaufmann published the surviving fragments in "Pseudo-Empedokles als Quelle Salomon Ibn Gabirol," in his *Studien über Salomon ibn Gabirol* (Budapest, 1899; repr. London, 1972). See 19, para. 8.
23. I am indebted here to A. Altmann and S. M. Stern's excellent *Isaac Israeli*.
24. See also S. M. Stern, "Ibn Hasdāy's Neoplatonist."
25. The work is in the *kalām* form of problems and solutions, the format adopted by Ibn Gabirol.
26. Cf. also *In Parmenidem*, 723, 22 ff., Cousin, where the same contrast is made.
27. *Liber de Causis*, para. 23 = *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 142. Ibn Gabirol could certainly have derived his conception of the varying degrees of 'opacity' of matter from this source.
28. *Proclus Arabus: zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in arabischer Übersetzung*, (Beirut: Steiner, 1973). The full collection of 20 is found only in one manuscript, but a number of other mss. contain some of them.
29. The Arabic author avoids mention of form here, talking rather of *al-fā'il*, 'the creator' or 'agent,' thus confusing form with the first principle, but both elements are inevitably involved and need to be distinguished.

## Parallel Structures in the Metaphysics of Iamblichus and Ibn Gabirol<sup>\*</sup>

C. K. Mathis II

This communication has a purpose both novel and modest. Its novelty resides in its being the first suggestion that striking parallels exist between the metaphysical system of Iamblichus (d. ca. 320) and that of Solomon Ibn Gabirol (died ca. 1058). With the exception of one casual remark by Fernand Brunner, I have found no previous mention of a parallel between these two thinkers.<sup>1</sup> The aim here is solely to advance the claim that such parallels exist. No attempt is made to show a line of filiation. Neither is the claim advanced that the systems of these thinkers are identical, even though the structural parallels, at the hypomnetic levels, are exact. Divergences surely exist—historical, cultural and linguistic—that are palpable and that could not be ignored in a full treatment. I do not hold that by adducing these parallels the many problems we all have with the text and thought of Ibn Gabirol disappear—problems, to take but one key example, such as those regarding his concept of matter.

The terminology of our two thinkers differs not merely because the one man wrote in Greek and the other in Arabic. Iamblichus was

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\* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Conference at Villanova University in October, 1987, where I benefitted from the comments of Kevin Corrigan and Father Leo Sweeney. Special thanks for the patient editing of Lenn Goodman.



doing philosophy in the context of ■ pagan culture, beleaguered but still vital. Ibn Gabirol wrote in the context of an ancient, monotheistic faith, enveloped in the culture of another monotheism, then in the full bloom of its spiritual outburst and imperial strength. But both thinkers were Neoplatonists, committed to a philosophy that would be responsive to its cultural and historical context but retain its inner coherency and integrity. As a standard of the challenge for such a philosophy, I refer you to Father Leo Sweeney's succinct and useful three-point test for determining the Neoplatonic status of a thinker.<sup>2</sup>

Iamblichus and Ibn Gabirol share a common perspective, nuanced by the differences of time and place. Both seek solutions to a perennial problem for that perspective, and their meditations intend a commonly experienced reality. Their symbolic structures show remarkable parallels. Both authors posit a quiescent first principle followed by an active second principle, which engenders a third pair productive of ■ hypostasis that is noetic.

The argument of this paper unfolds through three moments. First, I shall identify the Neoplatonic spiritual aporetic that animates the efforts of both Iamblichus and Ibn Gabirol. Second, I will display the principal known features of the Iamblichean system—as far as it can be reconstructed. And finally, I will offer the texts from Ibn Gabirol that demonstrate the parallels.

## I

Damascius, with unaccustomed succinctness, states the problem: *oti zeteitai pos aph' henos ta polla proelthen*: "The question is how plurality has proceeded from unity."<sup>3</sup> Neoplatonists characteristically approach the Divine through a monistic symbolism. The One escapes every attribute, is above all other realities, and is the source of all that has real existence. The noetic and psychic realms are real, and the somatic realm, which participates in these principles, also has a kind of reality. But each thing below the hypernoetic realm has its reality only because of the One that is in it. Here is the root of the problem. The One in Plotinus does too much—covers too much symbolic ground. Somehow it is simplicity or unity, needing nothing. But at the same time it is the cause of the unity-in-

multiplicity that is Nous. Some later Neoplatonists were less sure that the reality they experienced could be symbolized adequately in this manner. They clearly were unhappy about the proximity of the ultimate simplicity of the One to the busy-ness of producing the many.

If Plotinus' conception of the nature of the One was fraught with problems for his successors over the tension between the unity and the fecundity of the One, the situation did but mimic that of the earlier followers of Plato.<sup>4</sup> Passages in the *Republic*, *Cratylus*, the *Seventh Letter* (whether by Plato or a colleague), and, of particular interest for us, the *Philebus*, leave the nature, status and function of the Good in considerable ambiguity. Speusippus surely opts for ■ dualistic solution. His two principles are above being and non-being and are productive through their interaction.<sup>5</sup> It is not until the first century B.C. that a clearly monistic approach to the problem is articulated. Eudorus of Alexandria posits the One as a supreme principle, below which he discerns a pair called the monad and the dyad, which represent form and matter respectively.<sup>6</sup> Others with ■ similar view abound, such as Pseudo-Archytas and Brotinus. Pseudo-Archytas developed a metaphysics embracing three principles: matter, form and God. Very suggestively of Ibn Gabirol, he says (in John Dillon's translation), "It is not possible for matter to partake of form of its own volition, nor for form to come together with matter, but it is necessary for there to be some other cause which will move the substance of things toward form."<sup>7</sup> This scheme is particularly interesting because Archytas is emphatic that his first principle is hypernoetic. He is seconded in this, according to a passage in Syrianus, by Philolaus, Archænetus and Brotinus.<sup>8</sup>

In his studies of Neopythagorean influences on the Platonic tradition and on the idea of self-generation, John Whittaker tells us that for Philo, "An act of generation is incompatible with the immobility and impassability ascribed to the Supreme Deity."<sup>9</sup> Philo says twice in his writings that the Supreme God is neither generated nor a cause of generation. How then does the world originate? One answer was to make the second principle (variously conceived by different thinkers) a "self-generating" principle that creates itself out of the quiescent first principle. One finds this solution adapted in various ways in the *De Mundo*, Numenius, the *Codex Brucianus*, the *Peratae*, and the *Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>10</sup>

## II

The reputation of Iamblichus as a philosopher has been rising in the past two decades. In the 1970s B. D. Larsen<sup>11</sup> and John Dillon<sup>12</sup> became the prime exponents of this rise in stature. The studies by John Finemore<sup>13</sup> and especially by Gregory Shaw<sup>14</sup> in the 1980s, have greatly advanced the process of rehabilitation. The system of Iamblichus' First Principles can be reconstructed from two main sources. John Dillon accomplished the task with reports from Damascius in his *De Primis Principiis*. Damascius tells us, in chapter 43, that Iamblichus posits two first principles in his commentary on the *Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>15</sup> The first of these Iamblichus calls the *pantelos arrheton*, the Utterly Ineffable. The second, we learn from chapter 50, is *ho haplos hen* or the Simple One. Between this second principle and *to hen on*, the One-Existent (simultaneously the last moment of the realm of the One and the first moment of the noetic realm) is a dyad. From chapter 51 we learn that this dyad is composed of principles that Damascius says may be called the Limit and the Unlimited or the One and the Many.

Iamblichus uses the Pythagorean terminology of Peras/Apeiron, where Ibn Gabirol uses the "Aristotelian" language of form and matter. But both Damascius, reporting the views of Iamblichus, and Proclus, developing them, repeatedly make it clear that the names of this dyad are conveniences.<sup>16</sup> They can be called Limit and Unlimited, One and Many, or Orphically "Aether" and "Chaos." Syrianus calls them Monad and Dyad.<sup>17</sup> But Proclus identifies them with Form and Matter.<sup>18</sup> Jean Trouillard has written convincingly about Proclus' hylomorphism, showing that he equates form and matter with the Iamblichean *peras* and *apeiron*.<sup>19</sup> Iamblichus himself, in a report by Simplicius, seems, in a commentary on a passage of the *Philebus*, to relate form and matter to *peras* and *apeiron*, calling them auxiliaries (*sunaitia*) to the Cause (*Aition*).<sup>20</sup>

The passage that helps us reconstruct Iamblichus' system is *De Mysteriis* VIII 2-3, which expresses the same system in religious rather than philosophical terms. Here we learn that prior to what is regarded as the first God and King (*to haplos hen*) is a God who is immovable and "abiding in the solitude of His own unity." This ineffable is (somehow) the paradigm of the second principle, and is

like a *Fons Vitae*—"for He is . . . the fountain of all things, and the root of the first intelligible forms."<sup>21</sup> Iamblichus splits or, to express it better, doubles the One.

About *to haplos hen* we learn that He is the father of Himself, Self-begotten, the Father alone, and the truly good, also that he is a God sufficient to Himself and (significantly) that He unfolds Himself into light. He is the God of Gods. Simplicius, in his commentary on Epictetus' *Enchiridion*, says that it is this God of Gods who creates everything.<sup>22</sup> We learn in *De Mysteriis* that he is a monad from the One, and that he is prior to essence and is its Principle. Finally we learn that from this God of Gods are derived two things: entity and essence. That these may perhaps be equated with *peras* and *apeiron* is adumbrated in the next chapter (chapter 3). There we are told, "Everywhere an indefinite nature is under the dominion of a certain definite measure and under the supreme uniform cause of all things."<sup>23</sup> Damascius tells us that the production of plurality out of unity is via the intermediate stage of duality, that is, *peras* and *apeiron*, and that "only a symbolic value can be attached to the distinction between the two principles."<sup>24</sup>

The relation of the creative simple one to the dyad and of both of these to *to hen on* for Iamblichus is admirably summarized by Dillon: "On this scheme the *to hen on* or *aei on* at the summit of the noetic realm, will be the *mikton* (mixture) resulting from the concerted action of these two principles (the dyad), the *second one* serving as the mixing agent, while the *first one* sits in unspeakable splendor above all this."<sup>25</sup> This terminology of the *second one* as mixing agent, of the dyad as the ingredients, and the head of the noetic realm as the mixture (all drawn from the *Philebus*) will be most significant when we turn to the *Fons Vitae*. Gregory Shaw explains the importance of the dyadic principles for Iamblichus most effectively as "transforming the conflict of good and evil into the generative principles of the cosmos, expressed as *peras/apeiron*, the first derivations of the One and the Good." In this sense, "every expression within the Whole contains the Whole in a different manner and measure of the *peras/apeiron* formula."<sup>26</sup>

Iamblichus' doubling of the One seems to be a response to the intense experience of the (to repeat Dillon's words) "unspeakable splendor," the superabundance itself, of this Fountain of Life and

every other good. Iamblichus will not profane the Source by making Him even the first moment in the process of reality. This is why *ho haplos hen* "unfolds Himself" into light to be the creative God of Gods. I take the second principle to be the initial and hence pure overflow of the superabundant Ineffable from whom the process of reality proceeds. Doubling the One expresses the Divine in both of the experienced relations as *aition* and as *telos*. The symbolism addresses what Eric Voegelin calls the problem of the Beginning and its Beyond.<sup>27</sup>

### III

Ibn Gabirol's system of first principles leaves everyone who studies the *Fons Vitae* with more questions than answers. There are three major factors (and many minor ones) in this situation. Most obviously there is the problem that we lack the original text. Apart from a few fragments, the Arabic original is lost. The Hebrew epitome that survives from the pen of Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera is in a different shape than the dialogue form of the Latin text.<sup>28</sup>

A second problem is the nature and number of Ibn Gabirol's works. The pronounced differences in the style and content of his various works makes it hard to relate ideas from one work to another. His poetry runs from the profoundly religious (and explicitly Jewish) in theme through the affecting artistry of the panegyric to the equally profoundly sensual, erotic poetry, both heterosexual and homosexual in focus. His work on psychology, *On The Improvement of Moral Qualities*, deals principally with the animal soul. It does allude to and quote scripture but shuns reference to the Rabbinic traditions of interpretation.<sup>29</sup> And the *Fons Vitae* itself makes no direct mention of any identifiable source or authority. The only name briefly mentioned is that of Plato. The question of lost works by Ibn Gabirol has been disposed of by Heinrich Simon, who effectively reduces these tomes to the ghostly status they deserve. The Witch of Endor was more successful in conjuration than the proponents of these ectoplasmic pages.<sup>30</sup>

The third problem, that of sources, has involved the greatest spilling of ink. Various possibilities have been proposed, singly and

in combination. Doubtless many, if not most, of the major candidates could have served as ingredients in the mixture that coalesces as the teaching of the *Fons Vitae*. The principal candidates put forward include Isaac Israeli, Pseudo-Empedocles, *The Theology of Aristotle* (long version), "Ibn Hasday's Neoplatonist," and even Eriugena. The problem seems to stand where it did more than twenty-five years ago when Alexander Altmann surveyed the question of will in Ibn Gabirol.<sup>31</sup>

Recent scholarship shows that the philosophy of Iamblichus and Damascius (who is the main source for our knowledge of Iamblichus' system and an adherent of it) *may* have survived in the Islamic world in forms other than merely doxographic. Harry Wolfson showed that Ibn Hazm (994-1046) probably had knowledge of Damascius' idea of the senses of the souls of the spheres.<sup>32</sup> Everett Rowson shows a definite influence on al-Āmirī in the tenth century from the *Phaedo* commentaries of Olympiodorus and Damascius.<sup>33</sup> J. C. Bürgel has shown the same influence in a Persian version of the *Phaedo*.<sup>34</sup> And Michel Tardieu has recently made a strong case that Damascius and the seven philosophers exiled by Justinian returned from their sojourn in Persia in 532, not to Athens or Alexandria but to Harran, in what is now eastern Turkey. He believes that these seven (strongly influenced by Iamblichus) contributed the Hellenic component of the mysterious culture of the so-called Sabians of Harran.<sup>35</sup> At this point these facts are but faint clues (or will-o-the-wisps) that someone trained in Arabic studies can better pursue.

The principal elements of Ibn Gabirol's system include God, the *Primum Esse* (also called *Deus Excelsis et Sanctus*, *Essentia Prima et Sancta*, and *Factor Primus Excelsis et Sanctus*).<sup>36</sup> Below Him is *Voluntas*, followed by *Prima Forma*, and *Prima Materia*, and lastly *Intellectus*. For brevity's sake I will refer to these as God, Will, Form, Matter and Intellect. The system clearly parallels that of Iamblichus—but is this parallelism structural or decorative? The first principles of Iamblichus have definite functions to serve. Do the principles of the *Fons Vitae* serve the same functions? Let us reverse Ibn Gabirol's order and travel down from the top to find our parallels.

We must remember that for Iamblichus, Proclus and Damascius, Form and Matter are among the names always applicable to the dyad.

Medieval Christian thinkers understood the terminology of the Latin translation of Ibn Gabirol's work in the context of their study of Aristotle; they justified or damned "Avicebrol" by showing him to be a successful or unsuccessful student of the Philosopher. But like John Goheen, Vincent Cantarino and Joseph Blau, I find no direct importance in the use of Aristotelian terminology in the translation. General similarities of terminology, in any case, cannot be considered determinative of the meaning of concepts. One could, for instance, adduce the commonplace statement of Iamblichus' so-called "Law of Mean Terms" at *Fons Vitae* I 7 and V 15 to prove Ibn Gabirol an Iamblichean. The terminology of the work is indeed of Aristotelian coinage; but the meaning and function of the principles these terms name is consistently in the mode of later Neoplatonism, itself thoroughly impregnated by the Aristotelian concepts and terms.<sup>37</sup> We can be much more concrete and specific however.

At the summit of Ibn Gabirol's system stands God. *Deus*, however, is not the most common term here for the highest reality. Like the *Pantelos Arrheton* of Iamblichus this highest principle is little described and given no action to perform. At V 39 a distinction (albeit partial and ambiguous) is made between God and Will. The radical immobility of God (cf. *De Mysteriis*, VIII 2) is emphasized by the fact that even his hypostatic Will is immobile, and it "pervades all without change and prompts all without temporality."<sup>38</sup> That God is indeed the *Fons Vitae* (like the ineffable font of everything at *De Mysteriis*, VIII 2) is seen in the passages such as this (V 19): "The Supreme and Holy God contains Will, and whatever Matter and Form is in it, uniquely and incomparably." God in Himself remains strictly unknowable; and Will is scarcely to be known: "To ascend to the primary essence on high is impossible; and the ascent to that which follows it (Will) is exceedingly difficult" (V 35).

Ibn Gabirol tells us that Will can be considered from two standpoints: in itself or as creator. In itself it is inactive, and its function need not be considered. Considered as the ultimate cause, the "active unity," Will is intermediary between the simplicity of God and the duplicity of the dyad, and it is creative. Other texts, such as V 43, affirm this intermediary status of Will. In some passages (such as IV 19) Will is spoken of as engendering only Form. But a number of texts derive both Form and Matter from Will. At II 13 it

is baldly stated that, "Will is the creator of Form and Matter, and moves them" (and see IV 19).

The unescapable tension in Neoplatonic ontologies between acceptance of God as ineffable mystery and experience of Him as Creator or Father of Being has survived many attempted dissolutions. The Neoplatonists used various symbolizations as we have seen, often positing a dyad after a monad. Iamblichus, Damascius and Ibn Gabirol seem almost alone in attempting to resolve the tension with a symbolism that doubles the One Itself (or, if you judge that effort erroneous, of splitting the One). But in the work of Marius Victorinus we find a Christian Neoplatonic solution with at least some parallels. In his work against the Arians Victorinus distinguishes the Father and the Son with language not uncongenial to that of Iamblichus and Ibn Gabirol. The Father for Victorinus is pre-intelligence and pre-existence, "dwelling within itself, alone in the alone."<sup>39</sup> The Son, Victorinus describes as leaping forth and as the power through which act is actuated.<sup>40</sup> Here in a Christian idiom is the common aporetic context that exercises our two Neoplatonists and moves them toward their commonly structured symbolisms.

In the Islamic philosophical milieu within which Gabirol wrote, spiritual thinkers labored with no less concern to protect the ineffability of the ultimate reality from compromise with multiplicity and change. In the century prior to Ibn Gabirol, the Ismā'īlī Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī argued that the ineffable God has the attribute of power but not of force.<sup>41</sup> God is a *source* of power, but not, *sensu strictu*, the Creative Force that makes things be. Al-Sijistānī could hardly adopt the symbolism of two Gods; but he accomplishes the Neoplatonists' intention by having his second hypostasis, Intellect, provide the attributes of God's creative command and goodness—the only things knowable about God. Al-Sijistānī's God is not a Cause, nor even (as in the *Theology of Aristotle*) a Cause of Causes. So Al-Sijistānī does distinguish between God as ineffable and God as Creator. Attributes can be applied to God only as the Creator, not to the ineffable highest reality. This is not unlike Will in Ibn Gabirol—indistinguishable from God except when looked upon as Creator.

In Ibn Gabirol the same protection is extended in the relation of God to Will and of Will to Form and Matter. In Falaquera, where the word is Unity, we read that Will is superior to Form and Matter,

"because the unity of Form and Matter only exists by reason of the imposition of unity in them. And since between one and two there exists no intermediary, you must realize from this that there is no intermediary between unity and Form and Matter."<sup>42</sup> Furthermore this creation by imposition of unity is a process of emanation—Ibn Gabirol uses the Plotinian metaphor of the flow of water from its source. The flow is uninterrupted but the source is without loss or change.<sup>43</sup> Ibn Gabirol even suggests that the emanative flow from Will must be *through* the dyad (V 41). The dyad thus performs an auxiliary function that parallels the Iamblichean function of Limit and Unlimited as *synaitia*. In one passage (V 19) Ibn Gabirol graphically likens Will to the writer, Form to the act of writing, and Matter to the parchment or wax tablet, an Islamic topos that serves his purpose well.

A variety of texts describe the relation of Will to Form and Matter, and these in turn to Intellect. The relation parallels that of the One to the dyad and the noetic One-Being as cause, auxiliaries and mixture in Iamblichus (V 7; cf. IV 14; V 2, 8, 9, 10, 21, 31, 38). To take but one of the ten texts I find that cover this point, consider this exchange between the Pupil and the Master:

P: What idea is understood regarding matter and form when they are joined?

M: It is intellect, constituted of matter and form.

P: By what means do we know that intellect is constituted from these?

M: When you realize that intellect gathers together all form, then you will know that its form is universal matter. (V 7)

Form for Ibn Gabirol is the active partner of the dyad. We saw earlier, at V 19, that Form is directly identified with the Will in its aspect of unity and power. Ibn Gabirol explicitly attributes to Form the power of imposing itself on Matter. We read that Form as a secondary unity is capable of multiplicity and division: "The cause here, however, is that this same unity envelops Matter and is alienated from the source of unity" (IV 19). Repeatedly Ibn Gabirol returns to this sharing and limiting function of Primary Form on Primary Matter with the metaphor of sunlight penetrating the air (IV 14).

Matter as the substance out of which Intellect is engendered by the limiting power of Form is *Materia Intelligibilis*. The texts indicating this are listed in Clemens Baeumker's edition of the *Fons Vitae* in the *Index Rerum* (p. 485). Matter's passive reception of Form was of great interest to John Goheen in his book on Aquinas' *De Ente et Essentia*. In a discussion of the difficulty many have had from the time of Aquinas (and even Ibn Daud) with the conflicting statements that Matter exists prior to union with Form and that it exists only in its union with Form, Goheen points out that Matter is described by Ibn Gabirol as *occulta*, whereas Form is *manifesta*: Form perfects Matter, the Platonic "receptacle."<sup>44</sup> Matter's receptivity is not seen by Ibn Gabirol as sterile but as the fullness of potentiality from which all things arise. In fact, Ibn Gabirol calls the independent existence of Matter "potential existence," contrasted with the concrete existence of Form—another indication that the usage here (e.g. IV 14) is Neoplatonic. Syrianus, developing the *peras/apairon* concept of Iamblichus, analogously speaks of the *apairon* (as an aspect of the dyad) as *apairodynamos*, which Ann Shephard renders "infinite in power," but which John Rist, perhaps more faithfully for our purposes, understands as "of unlimited potentiality."<sup>45</sup>

There are a number of texts of particular interest that deal with the relation of Form and Matter. Both are eternal: "Matter never existed apart from Form for an instant as noncreated and not having existence" (V 42). The same passage and two others affirm that Form may be seen as the unity and Matter as the infinity of God.<sup>46</sup> The parallel here with the Iamblichean system is apparent. Proclus, building on Iamblichus, tells us in his *Elements of Theology* (Props. 87-92) about *autoperas* and *he autoapairia*. E. R. Dodds explains that Limit itself is the expression of the unity of the One (like Will in Ibn Gabirol) while the Unlimited Itself is the expression of the One's infinity (correlate to Ibn Gabirol's God).<sup>47</sup> For Ibn Gabirol the entities interact (V 23) yet remain separate (V 2). Evidently, we are expected by Ibn Gabirol to understand Form and Matter as distinguishable, but not exactly discrete, entities. And we have already seen that Damascius, following Iamblichus, finds the distinction between the two elements of the Dyad only symbolic. Thus both Iamblichus and Ibn Gabirol want the components of their

dyads to be a two-ness that proceeds from the One-ness of the Cause and to be the fecund mixture out of which all plurality (beginning with the unified plurality of Nous) flows. Theon of Smyrna succinctly expressed the same insight centuries earlier when he said, "The first increase, the first change from unity, is made by the doubling of unity which becomes Two, in which are seen matter and all that is perceptible, the generation of motion, multiplication and addition, composition and the relationship of one thing to another."<sup>48</sup>

Alexander Altmann held fast to the thesis stated in the translation and study of Israeli's work that he co-authored with S. M. Stern that Israeli distinguishes between two forms of causality within the various hypostases.<sup>49</sup> He contends that for Israeli Form and Matter are produced by a creative act, while the spiritual realities below Intellect flow from it by a necessary emanative process. Altmann acknowledges that this distinction is not present in Ibn Gabirol's system. I am unconvinced by his arguments for seeing this distinction in Israeli's work. It seems to me that the same problem, of accounting for Unity's production of plurality, is receiving in Israeli essentially the type of solution sought by Iamblichus and Ibn Gabirol. Form and Matter for Israeli are hypernoetic principles and therefore hyperousian also. They are a power of duality; they oscillate and interpenetrate and so produce Intellect as a unified plurality like a Plotinian One/many—a mixture from which the lower levels, if it is permissible to speak thus, bubble up into being.<sup>50</sup>

Ibn Gabirol says of Form and Matter, "Each of them differs from the other in itself. And I do not mean here a difference of convenience, but I mean a difference of opposition and of true contrariety." Iamblichus in a fragment (Frg. 7) preserved in Proclus' commentary on the *Timaeus*, similarly describes the opposition within composite things as ranging even up to the level of the dyad. Here again Iamblichus and Ibn Gabirol seem both to be concerned to protect their highest principles from effortful activity by allowing the effortless flow of essence to descend in an overflow to successively lower fonts from the Fountain of Life Himself. Ibn Gabirol is emphatic (V 21) about the interaction of Matter and Form: "Primary transcendent Form must absolutely operate in everything; but the evidence of this operation differs according to the distance from the source." He describes Form and Matter as the ingredients, whose

amalgamation produces the mixture that is the first Intellect: "Out of the amalgamation of Matter and Form another substance or nature comes into being compounded from them, which was not previously in either of them as itself . . . but of their blending and combining ■ concept arises which was not previously in either of them alone" (V 9; cf. V 8). Ibn Gabirol also treats Form and Matter as the One and the Many; a name for the dyad which we saw from Damascius and Proclus as an alternative to the language of *peras* and *apeiron*. In a key passage (IV 12) too long to be quoted here, but of particular interest, Ibn Gabirol names the Form of the dyad "the One" and its matter as "the Two" (IV 12). This is reminiscent of Syrianus, who in his commentary on the *Metaphysics* calls Limit the monad and Unlimited the dyad.

The hypostatic of Intellect in the *Fons Vitae* parallels the Iamblichean *to hen on*. We have seen that Intellect for Ibn Gabirol (e.g. V 7) is the product of the mixing of Form and Matter. Goheen's analysis shows the "universal intelligence," as the first emanation from God by the union of Universal Form with Universal Matter. Of this intellect, Goheen observes, "it is correct to speak of it as the World Intelligence, moreover, because within it are contained the form of all things. It knows all. Not only are all forms conceived in this intelligence, but they are conceived 'non-loco' and 'non-tempore' in their positive fullness."<sup>51</sup> Thus, Ibn Gabirol's *Intellectus*, like Iamblichus' *to hen on*, is engendered in the very interaction of the dyad, contains all of the forms, and is the existence in which the lower compounds, both spiritual and corporeal, participate.

The texts adduced here do not exhaust the parallels, but I trust they suffice to authenticate the central contention of this paper: The Neoplatonists Iamblichus and Ibn Gabirol, living seven centuries apart and in quite different cultural milieus, developed strikingly parallel answers to a common problem. Both sought to understand how the ineffable highest reality could be what they conceived Him as being—perfect, yet productive; abiding in the aloneness of His unity, yet the *Fons Vitae*. They differ in an immense number of details, yet their answers are structurally identical because they intend an identical reality. Thus, they proffer us equivalent symbols.

## Notes

1. *De Jamblique a Proclus*, 31-32. But see now John Dillon's paper in this volume.
2. Leo Sweeney, "Are Plotinus and Albertus Magnus Neoplatonists?" In Lloyd Gerson, ed., *Graceful Reason, Studies in Honor of Joseph Owens* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1983).
3. Damascius, *Lectures on The Philebus*, L. G. Westerink, ed., (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1959), 47.
4. What follows is indebted to R. T. Wallis, "The Importance of not Knowing," in A. H. Armstrong, ed., *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*, 464-77.
5. Philip Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism*, 115-16.
6. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 126. See also Theon of Smyrna, *Mathematics Useful For Understanding Plato*, tr. after J. Dupuis by R. and D. Lawlor (San Diego: Wizard's Bookshelf, 1979), 13.
7. *The Middle Platonists*, 3.
8. For the Syrianus and parallel (and likely affiliated) developments in Philo and Plutarch, see Dillon's *Middle Platonists* and David Winston's *Logos and Mystical Theology In Philo of Alexandria*.
9. *Studies In Platonism and Patristic Thought*, 180.
10. Whittaker, 182-83.
11. *Jamblique De Chalcis: Exegete et Philosophe* (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1972).
12. In his edition of *Iamblichi Chalcidensis, In Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).
13. *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985).
14. See his 1987 dissertation at U.C. Santa Barbara, *Theurgy, the Language of the Embodied Soul*; also "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," *Traditio* 41 (1985); and his paper at the American Academy of Religion Conference, Anaheim, 1985, "Philosophus Hieraticus."
15. Dillon, *Fragmenta*, 29. Dillon's reconstruction is given strong support by Iamblichean fragments recovered from two works of Psellus by Dominic O'Meara in his *Pythagoras Revived, Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1989), 81-85, 226-27.
16. Damascius, 47; Proclus, *Commentaries on the Timaeus of Plato*, I, tr., Thomas Taylor (London, 1820), 140-44.
17. *The Middle Platonists*, 32.
18. Proclus, *On the Timaeus*, 221; cf. Proclus *On The Platonic Theology*, Book 3, 169; and *Ten Doubts Concerning Providence and a Solution of those Doubts and on the Subsistence of Evil*, tr. Thomas Taylor (Chicago, 1980), 129.
19. *Le Un et L'Âme selon Proclus* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1972), 69-89.
20. Simplicius, *In Categorias*, ed. C. K. Kalbfleisch (Berlin: C.A.G. 8, 1907), 327.
21. Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, tr., Alexander Wilder (London: Chthonios, 1989), 301.
22. See Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 306.
23. Translated by Gregory Shaw, in *Philosophus Hieraticus*, Quotation 1b.
24. Dillon, *Fragmenta*, 46, 48.
25. *Fragmenta*, 32.
26. Shaw, "Theurgy," 28, 21.
27. See Eric Voegelin, "Equivalences of Experiences and Symbolization," in *Eternità e Storia* (Florence, 1970), 10-11.
28. Collette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 69.
29. See Ibn Gabirol, *The Improvement of the Moral Qualities*, tr., Wise.
30. H. Simon, "Lost Treatises of Ibn Gabirol?" *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Studies on Cultures of the Western Mediterranean* (Algiers, 1978), 264-68.
31. See his "Problems of Research in Jewish Neoplatonism," *Tarbiz* (1961); but now see John Dillon's careful paper in this collection for suggestive possibilities.
32. *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, 1.45.
33. *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate: al-Âmiri's K. al-Amad 'alâ 'l-abad*.
34. J. C. Bürgel, "A New Arabic Quotation from Plato's *Phaedo* and its Relation to a Persian Version of the *Phaedo*," *Actas do IV Congresso de Estudios Arabis e Islamicos, Lisbon, 1968* (Lisbon, 1971).
35. Michel Tardieu, "Sabiens Coraniques et 'Sabiens' de Harran," *Journal Asiatique* (1986).
36. Vincent Cantarino, "Ibn Gabirol's Metaphysics of Light," *Studia Islamica* 26 (1967): 56, n. 1.
37. See John Goheen, *The Problem of Matter and Form in the De Ente et Essentia of Thomas Aquinas*, esp. 17-19; Joseph Blau, "On the Supposedly Aristotelian Character of Ibn Gabirol's *Keter Malkhut*," in *Salo Baron Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1974) esp. 1.224-25.

38. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are of Ibn Gabirol, *The Fountain of Life*, tr., Alfred G. Jacob (Philadelphia, 1954), with my corrections of terminological awkwardnesses.
39. Marius Victorinus, *Theological Treatises on the Trinity*, tr., Mary T. Clark (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1981), 172. Lenn Goodman has pointed out to me the echoes here of Plotinus and the *Psalms*, such as 27:10 and 113:5.
40. *Theological Treatises*, 175.
41. Paul Walker, "An Ismaili Answer to the Problem of Worshipping the Unknowable Neoplatonic God," *American Journal of Islamic Studies* 2 (1979): 15-16.
42. II 13; cf. V 31. Iamblichus uses the same kind of analogy in his *Theology of Arithmetic*, tr., Robin Waterfield (Grand Rapids: Phanes, 1988), 36, 38, 40 = Falco's edition 2, 4, 5, 7.
43. V 31. Clearly, the aim of Ibn Gabirol here parallels that of Iamblichus, to exclude from the highest reality any need or effort to act or be anything other than the superabundant source of reality and life that He is.
44. Goheen, 17-19, esp. n. 39.
45. A. Sheppard, "Monad and Dyad as Cosmic Principles in Syrianus," in H. J. Blumenthal and A. C. Lloyd, eds., *Soul and the Structure of Being in Late Neoplatonism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1982), 3; Rist's comments, op. cit., 15.
46. See IV 10, IV 11. A perception that seems not unlike Syrianus calling the Unlimited, *apeirodynamos*.
47. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, 247-48. Cf. Iamblichus ap. Simplicius on the *Categories* 135.10 ff.
48. Theon of Smyrna, 66.
49. A. Altmann, "Creation And Emanation In Isaac Israeli: A Reappraisal."
50. My metaphor is drawn from Damascius, *Dubitationes et Solutiones*, ed. C. E. Rolle (Paris, 1889) 1.195.7-8; where he says that the life (*zoe*) of each essence is its boiling (*zeon*).
51. Goheen, 32; cf. 28-30.

## Ibn Gabirol: The Sage Among the Schoolmen

To the memory of Alexander Altmann (1906-1987),  
superb scholar and inspiring teacher

Bernard McGinn

Philosophy was the first form of ecumenism in Western history. Communities that for centuries had nothing good to say about each other from the religious point of view, and that easily found excuses for persecution when the possession of power allowed them to put their prejudices into practice, still found it important to study the philosophical writings of their religious opponents, and, even when disagreeing, to treat them with a grudging respect. This paper investigates one historical example of the interaction between philosophers and philosophical theologians of different faiths.

From the time of Philo the ancient tradition of Greek philosophy has played a significant role in the intellectual exposition of monotheistic faith in the West, first in Judaism, later in Christianity, and eventually also in Islam. Although no one has ever been defined as a Jew or Christian or Muslim simply because of adherence to some particular philosophical understanding of what the community's beliefs entail, Jewish, Christian and Muslim thinkers have often felt constrained to provide philosophical explanations and defenses of their creeds both to coreligionists and to adversaries. What were these defenses intended to do? How do they relate to the classical



philosophical tradition which Jews, Christians and Muslims used in the exposition of their beliefs? What do they tell us about the relations among religions in pre-modern Europe? A consideration of Solomon Ibn Gabirol provides an interesting test case.

Ibn Gabirol, like all medieval philosophers, received the classical philosophical tradition via an ecumenical route. The early Muslim philosophers obtained much of their knowledge of Greek thought through translations made by Syrian Christians. Medieval Jewish philosophers in turn absorbed this complex and developing tradition through the writings of the Muslim *falāsifa*. And beginning in the early twelfth century the philosophically undernourished West went on a veritable translation binge to sate its speculative hunger. The appetite for new learning and insight was as often satisfied from Jewish and Arabic sources as from Greek texts.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of Ibn Gabirol's own works, especially his central philosophical text, the *Mekor Hayyim*, is illustrative of the ecumenical nature of medieval philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Originally written in Arabic, it was translated in Latin as the work of "Avicebron" or "Avengebrol" under the title *Liber Fontis Vitae*, probably in the second half of the twelfth century by Dominicus Gundissalinus and Johannes Hispanus.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Gabirol's philosophical economy called for no mention of the Hebrew Scriptures or other overt indications of the philosopher's Jewish sources, so his many Christian readers thought that Avicebron was either a Muslim philosopher or a Christian Arab. The partial Hebrew translation of the work by Shem Tob ibn Falaquera in the thirteenth century seems not to have been widely read, although it would be incorrect to say that Ibn Gabirol's metaphysical thought was without influence in the history of Jewish philosophy and mysticism. It was not until 1845, when Solomon Munk correctly identified Avicebron as identical with the well-known Hebrew poet Ibn Gabirol, that this major philosophical mind began to receive his due.

My intention is to examine Ibn Gabirol's Neoplatonism and its reception by the Christian Schoolmen. These remarks must be partial ones. While Ibn Gabirol is traditionally said to be the greatest of the Jewish Neoplatonists,<sup>4</sup> his investigators frequently note that his thought is complex and perhaps not always fully coherent. Some aspects of his influence on medieval Scholasticism have been studied, but we have no complete treatment. Avicebron is mentioned by many of the Schoolmen, but his work appears to have been closely

studied by few. It may be an ecumenical anomaly, or a deeper truth worth pondering in our age of frantic search for easy agreement, that those Christian *magistri* who took Ibn Gabirol most seriously and pondered his arguments most closely were usually not his friends but his critics.

## I. The Character of Ibn Gabirol's Neoplatonism.

One difficulty in commenting on Ibn Gabirol's Neoplatonism is that the *Fons Vitae* does not give us a full account of his system. Early in this austere philosophical dialogue, the Master tells the Disciple, "There are three parts of science as a whole: the science of matter and form, the science of the Will, and the science of the First Essence."<sup>5</sup> The five treatises or books of the *Fons Vitae* deal in detail only with the first part of science, although there is some discussion of the *Essentia Prima* or *Factor Primus*,<sup>6</sup> and even more of the *Voluntas*.<sup>7</sup> At least some of the obscurities and seeming contradictions in Ibn Gabirol's thought must be laid to the fact that we do not have a full exposition of all three parts.

But why should philosophy have three parts at all? Obviously, because the nature of reality is threefold. When we ask why reality is threefold, we immediately confront one of the central laws that governs Gabirol's system and that shows how deeply rooted he is in Neoplatonism. In response to the Disciple's question, "What is the reason why only these three things exist?" the Master says, "... for every created thing there must be a cause and something intermediate between them. The cause is the First Essence, the created thing is matter and form, what mediates between them is the Will."<sup>8</sup> In a famous passage in the *Timaeus* (31C) Plato had insisted on the necessity for such a third thing, or medium: "But two things alone cannot be satisfactorily united without a third; for there must be some bond between them drawing them together. And of all bonds the best is that which makes itself and the terms it connects a unity in the fullest sense."<sup>9</sup>

Rooted in the Platonic conception of the essential duality of the spiritual and material realms, the law of mediation (as I shall call it) was one of the central philosophical principles in the history of Platonism. More implied than explicitly invoked in the thought of

Plotinus, it was richly developed in the Iamblichan-Proclean tradition of Neoplatonism.<sup>10</sup> The proliferation of horizontal and vertical triadic structures in Proclean metaphysics cannot be understood apart from this fundamental dynamic principle. Proclus's *Elements of Theology* clearly articulates the metaphysical need for such a principle: "For that which has its existence embraced by time is in all respects temporal, since *a fortiori* it has a temporal activity; and the fully temporal is altogether unlike the fully eternal; but all procession is through terms (Prop. 29): therefore there exists an intermediate principle."<sup>11</sup>

The law of mediation operates on all levels of Ibn Gabirol's universe. Every mode of being is fundamentally mediational. Ibn Gabirol describes the levels of reality in a bewildering, but coherent, variety of ways throughout the *Fons Vitae*. The basic threefold structure is expanded from several perspectives as the philosopher proceeds with his analysis of created reality. In the second treatise he speaks of nine levels of subsistence by which the "*forma loci*" descends from the superior to the inferior levels:

First is the subsistence of all things in the Creator's knowledge; second, the subsistence of universal form in universal matter; third, the subsistence of simple forms in each other; fourth, the subsistence of the accidents of simple substances in simple substances; fifth, the subsistence of quantity in substance; sixth, the subsistence of surfaces, lines and points; seventh, the subsistence of colors and figures in surfaces; eighth, the subsistence of parts of bodies in other parts; and ninth, the subsistence of some bodies in others.<sup>12</sup>

Other passages analyze seven kinds of simple substances.<sup>13</sup> Still others set out the parallels between spiritual and corporeal substances.<sup>14</sup> Both fourfold and threefold divisions of matter are studied.<sup>15</sup> The divisions of form are even more complex.

The different types of form are helpful in providing a simplified, but I hope generally accurate, picture of the levels of reality in Ibn Gabirol's universe. In good Neoplatonic fashion, Ibn Gabirol always insisted "*omne esse rei ex forma est*," that is, the being of something (that by means of which we can conceptualize its existence) comes from its form.<sup>16</sup> So an analysis of the kinds of form can provide a conceptual map of reality. There are three general types of form: the

form of things which is found in the *essentia voluntatis* (which is form only in an equivocal sense); the form joined to matter in act (that is, the form of the *intelligentia universalis*), and the form joined to matter in potency. All "other forms are contained under the universal form,"<sup>17</sup> that is, the form joined to matter in act. They descend according to the following levels:<sup>18</sup> Directly under the *forma intelligentiae*, the universal form containing all others, is the *forma animae*, Ibn Gabirol's equivalent to the Plotinian World Soul. This is frequently spoken of as a single unified principle,<sup>19</sup> but because it precontains on a higher level all the lower operations of soul, it is also discussed in terms of the tripartition of soul into its vegetative, animal and rational functions.<sup>20</sup> The lowest of the simple substances, that is, those that consist of a combination of higher form and matter, is the *forma naturae*, or *forma mundi*.<sup>21</sup> On the level of corporeal substances, that is, those beings made up of combinations of lower matter and the *forma quantitatis*, the root of all corporeality, we have parallel levels which Ibn Gabirol describes in different ways at different times. From the formal perspective we can say that the lower level consists of the *forma substantiae*, the *forma corporis* and the *forma figurae et coloris*,<sup>22</sup> while from the perspective of existing substances, the corporeal world contains heavenly bodies, human beings, animals, plants and elements.

Our interest is not so much in the exact portrayal of all these levels as in the dynamic laws of the system that generates them. The most prominent of these is our principle of mediation. According to this law, not only is *voluntas* ■ necessary medium between God and the created world, as we have seen, but form itself also serves as a medium between *voluntas* and *materia*.<sup>23</sup> In arguing for the necessity of a *substantia media* between God and bodies in the third treatise, Ibn Gabirol's dependence on the principle of mediation becomes almost tiresome. His famous fifty-six proofs for the existence of simple substances ring the changes on the theme of mediation in order to protect God's transcendence above material reality. "If there were no medium between the essence of the First Maker and the substance which sustains the predicates, the essence of the First Maker would be joined to that substance."<sup>24</sup> Thus, for Ibn Gabirol as for Avicenna, the transcendence of God excludes His creating lower substances directly.<sup>25</sup> A subsequent passage applies

the principle to all the levels of substance found in the corporeal world.<sup>26</sup>

But what mediates between universal matter and universal form themselves, we might ask? Is this an exception to the principle of mediation? The answer appears to be yes and no, perhaps because of the mingling of Aristotelian elements into Ibn Gabirol's Neoplatonic metaphysics.<sup>27</sup> Universal matter and form are not opposites or extremes in the way that God and the world or spiritual and corporeal reality are in Neoplatonic metaphysics. Rather, they appear to be correlatives. The Jewish sage always insists that matter and form are essentially coordinate and cannot exist apart from each other.<sup>28</sup> Yet they do need the action of *Voluntas* to bring them together—"form receives from the Will the power of holding on to matter."<sup>29</sup> Thus in a sense Will may be said to be their medium.

Taken by itself, the principle of mediation might suggest static levels of reality insulated from each other. But this, of course, is just the opposite of what Neoplatonic systems intend, as can be seen especially when the principle of mediation works together with a second principle of Neoplatonic metaphysics, which we can call the principle of coinherence. Plotinus put it succinctly in *Enneads* V 5.9: "Everything which is brought into being by something else is either in that which made it or in another thing, if there is something after what made it; for in that it is brought into being by something else and needed something else for its coming into being, it needs something else at every point. . . . But the Principle [i.e., the One], since it has nothing before it, has not anything else to be in; but since it has nothing else to be in, and the other things are in those which come before them, it encompasses all the other things. But in encompassing them it is not dispersed into them and it possesses them without being possessed."<sup>30</sup> Briefly put, all things are in their superiors by way of what we might call "precontainment," while the omnipresent Highest Principle is both in and not in all the lower things, possessing, but not possessed.

Middle Platonists, such as the second-century Numenius of Apamea, in speaking of the intelligible substances, used the formula "all in all, but in each according to its nature."<sup>31</sup> In the development of Neoplatonism this principle was expanded eventually beyond the intelligible realm to suggest how the whole of reality is bound together by a dynamic coinherence.<sup>32</sup> Not all Neoplatonists

understood this mutual involvement of "all in all according to what is proper to each" in the same way. But there is a community of thought behind the various expositions of the principle. Ibn Gabirol's version of the principle of coinherence is crucial to the understanding his philosophy. It underlies one of the longer and more vexed parts of the *Fons Vitae*.

Shortly after exasperating his readers with fifty-six proofs of the necessity of a *substantia media* between God and bodies, Ibn Gabirol tries them still further with no less than sixty-three proofs that corporeal substances come from and depend upon spiritual ones.<sup>33</sup> This plethora of proofs rests on the underlying principle of coinherence. The central theme is perhaps best expressed in Proof 45: "Therefore, inferior forms must exist so that they may all be present in the superior forms, grade by grade up to the universal form, in which all forms are gathered. But there the forms are not in a place, here they are. There they are united in the union of spiritual substance; here they are scattered in the dispersal of corporeal substance."<sup>34</sup>

The dynamism that the Neoplatonic principle of coinherence introduces into Ibn Gabirol's thought is evident throughout the *Fons Vitae*. The Jewish sage is especially interested in what we might call the "precontainment" aspect of coinherence, that is, the way in which all lower levels of reality are contained in, or find their true "place" in the level of reality immediately above them. He summarizes as follows: ". . . form contains matter, just as Intelligence contains soul and soul contains body. Will contains form, just as each one of these contains the other; and God, holy and exalted, contains Will and whatever exists in Will of matter and form, although in an incomparable manner."<sup>35</sup>

The principle of coinherence means not only that the forms imitate the *Factor Primus* in diffusing themselves and their powers insofar as they are able,<sup>36</sup> but also that everything in the lower forms must be precontained in the higher,<sup>37</sup> so that lower forms exemplify higher ones.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, a primary mode of philosophical argumentation is from the lower to the higher.<sup>39</sup> As in all Neoplatonic systems, however, the dialectic is not fully reversible. In Ibn Gabirol's words, "It follows that whatever exists in lower substances also exists in higher ones, but not that whatever exists in higher ones exists in lower. For example, growth and

generation exist in the animal soul, but sensation and motion are not present in the vegetative soul; and sensation and movement are in the rational soul, but rationality and knowledge are not present in the animal soul."<sup>40</sup>

The coinherence principle helps us to understand the view of causality found in the writings of the Jewish philosopher. We must note at the outset the critical distinction Ibn Gabirol makes between God's mode of causing, *creatio ex nihilo*, and all other causation. "*Creatio est acquisitio essendi*," and it belongs to God alone to give being.<sup>41</sup> To be sure, creation can be described in the language of emanation as the "coming forth (*exitus*) of form from the First Source, that is, the Will, and its infusion (*influxio*) on matter,"<sup>42</sup> and there are passages that draw out the analogies between the divine causality of creation and causality here below. But an essential difference always remains. All lower causation is the *impressio* or *influxio* in matter of what is found or located in the essence of the higher substance; God alone creates matter and form, that is, makes something that is other than his essence. "If the simple substance were to imprint what is not in its essence, its action would not be an impression, and it would be a creator from nothing. But there is no creator from nothing other than the First Maker, holy and exalted."<sup>43</sup> We might say that God alone can give what he does not have, namely, created being.

What is the nature of the *impressio* and *influxio* that is the essence of causality here below? Fundamentally, it is the active diffusion of all the forms present in the *Intelligentia* or *Intellectus*, the first created reality composed of universal matter and universal form. Since all lower levels of both simple and corporeal substances are specifications of universal matter by more particular forms that are precontained in *Intelligentia*, their realizations are exemplifications of the principle of coinherence, that is, they can be impressed upon or flow into matter because they pre-exist in a higher essence that has the power to impart them.

The notion of the *vis* or *virtus agendi* is central here. "It is necessary that what is acted upon by the First Maker without a medium receive the power of acting (*virtus agendi*). And what receives the power of acting is an agent."<sup>44</sup> A later passage explains this in more detail: "This is still clearer proof that a form proceeds

from the First Maker and is submissive to Him in that it is compelled in its nature to give itself and to confer its form when it finds matter to receive it. And because it was the first thing made and the first activity, it was necessary that this thing and activity should penetrate through everything until it could no longer be received."<sup>45</sup> What flows forth by way of generation from this highest substance and from all subsequent substances in their proper ranks is not their essence itself, but their power (*vis*) of formation. That is why the essences of the higher substances, and *a fortiori* the *Prima Essentia*, are never diminished by their causal action.<sup>46</sup> Light is Ibn Gabirol's constant metaphor when speaking of causality as *fluxus*. Just as light remains essentially within the sun, but radiates out through the air and becomes visible when it encounters a body, so too the *Intelligentia* sends forth the rays that are the simple substances into apt matter, spiritual or corporeal.<sup>47</sup>

If the twin principles of mediation and coinherence place Ibn Gabirol firmly in the Neoplatonic tradition, certain aspects of his teaching on creation demonstrate the distinctive and, it may be suggested, Jewish character of his Neoplatonism. Recent studies have emphasized the shifts Neoplatonic themes underwent as the philosophy was being accepted as a "co-determinant" along with Church teaching in the systematic and speculative exposition of Christian belief.<sup>48</sup> Just as Thomas Aquinas' use of Aristotelian philosophy as a tool for the systematic exposition of *sacra doctrina* led to profound inner transformations of Aristotelianism, so too Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Boethius, and a host of successors transformed Neoplatonism in the service of Christian theology. The textual record is sparser in Jewish Neoplatonism, but the case of Ibn Gabirol shows that a parallel process was under way in Judaism.<sup>49</sup> Two central topics in Ibn Gabirol's thought reveal this transformative process at work: Ibn Gabirol's discussion of the relation of unity to duality and his treatment of the Divine Will.

In Plotinus and in earlier Neoplatonism in general the One, which is beyond being, produces a second, Being or Nous, which is a transcendental unity in multiplicity, a "one-many." Insofar as Nous turns towards and contemplates the One, it is united with it; but Nous is unable fully to capture the simplicity of the One. The most it can achieve is to "think" the super-intellectual One as a single and simultaneous multiplicity of forms (see *Enneads* V 3.0-11; VI 7.15).

Through this activity Nous becomes the productive source of all the lower, differentiated stages of reality. "But this one thing is two things: Intellect and Being and thinking and thought—Intellect as thinking and Being as thought. For there could not be thinking without otherness and also sameness."<sup>50</sup> The axiom that what is produced by the Absolute One must itself be one, although in some derived and less perfect way, is characteristic of Neoplatonism. In the words of Alexander Altmann, "In all Neoplatonic systems the principle prevails that from the One only one substance can proceed."<sup>51</sup> In its Avicennan form, in which it was used to derive the origin of differentness and multiplicity in the universe from the First Intelligence and not from God, it had a crucial role in the history of medieval thought in Islam, Judaism and Christianity.<sup>52</sup>

Ibn Gabirol's stance toward this fundamental principle reveals much about his thought. Ermenegildo Bertola's claim that he "substantially accepted" it<sup>53</sup> is misleading in view of the highly qualified way in which this basic law of Neoplatonism appears in the *Fons Vitae*. Pressing the distinction between the transcendent Creator God and His creation, Ibn Gabirol insists that the Absolute One can produce only *what* is two. The principle is briefly announced in IV 6: "The Creator of all things ought to be one only, and the created should be different from him. Hence, if the created were only matter or only form, it would be assimilated to him and there would not be a medium between them, for two is after one."<sup>54</sup> This general thesis is followed by a careful argument showing that all creation cannot be resolved into one root, or into more than two, but must be traced back to the duality of matter and form, so that "everything that exists from the beginning first point of the ultimate highest down to extreme lowest point is also composed of matter and form."<sup>55</sup> Critics of Ibn Gabirol like Albert the Great were to seize on this denial of what they considered a universally accepted philosophical principle as evidence of the problems of his thought, as we shall see.

It might be thought that Ibn Gabirol's Divine Will functions like the "one-many" of the Plotinian Nous, but the differences are more evident than the similarities. In addressing the underlying problem of the origin of multiplicity from unity, the *Voluntas* is both creative (the *Factor Primus* precisely as Creator) and ultimate unity (*prima unitas*). It is the origin of subsequent multiplicity insofar as it is simply one, not insofar as it is a one that is potentially many, like

Plotinus' Nous and Avicenna's First Intelligence. It is true that Ibn Gabirol accepts a modified version of the traditional axiom of the one giving rise only to one in the passages where he speaks about the relation of the *prima unitas*, or *unitas agens* (i.e., the Will) to the *unitas creata*, or *unitas patiens*, i.e., the First Intellect composed of universal form and universal matter.<sup>56</sup> But, unlike Avicenna's First Intelligence, this entity is actually and not merely potentially two, a metaphysical composition of form and matter.

Ibn Gabirol's insistence on the necessary duality of creation appears to spring, at least in part, from a fundamentally Jewish concern with protecting divine transcendence. The same fundamental value grounded his most famous philosophical doctrine, universal hylomorphism, that is, the ascription of matter and form to all created reality. The beginning of creation for the Jewish sage is precisely the commencement of the union of matter and form.<sup>57</sup> An analysis of Ibn Gabirol's understanding of the roles of universal matter and universal form in the constitution of created being will help explain why.<sup>58</sup>

Aristotle had understood matter as what is needed to explain physical change in a universe that is eternally given. For Ibn Gabirol, who, like all monotheistic Neoplatonists, was fundamentally interested in why there was a universe at all, matter is much more. More than the root of the possibility of physical change, matter is the root of all possibility. Whatever might not have been must be material.<sup>59</sup> This can be seen in a text from the same *resolutio* argument cited above: If there were one root to creation, "it would be necessary that the one root be either only matter or only form. If it were only matter, it would not be possible for forms to come to be through it, and if forms were not, beings would not have *esse*. And if it were only form, it would not have *existere per se*, nor likewise would it be possible that various kinds of matter could come to be through it."<sup>60</sup>

Ibn Gabirol discusses the properties of universal matter and universal form early in the *Fons Vitae*. Universal matter is described as what is *per se existens*, of one essence, sustaining diversity, and giving essence and name to all things. Universal form subsists in another (i.e., in universal matter), perfects the essence of that in which it is, and gives it *esse*.<sup>61</sup> In order to understand these

properties we need to grasp Ibn Gabirol's rather unusual use of such terms as *esse*, *essentia*, *existentia*, and the like, and here we can be helped by his discussion of key philosophical terms in *Fons Vitae* V 7-8.<sup>62</sup> Although his use of these metaphysical terms may not always be consistent, many apparent problems are resolved when we recognize that Ibn Gabirol's basic philosophical vocabulary is essentially relational. Because created reality is always a composition, we need to analyze how each term expresses composition in order to grasp its meaning.

While it may be puzzling initially to hear that matter is *per se existens*, a subsequent passage explains that this does not mean that matter can ever exist by itself, but rather that it is the principle of reality which receives, or "sustains," form. In other words it is that without which form could never have a more than ideal reality.<sup>63</sup> This is why matter for Ibn Gabirol is the source of substantiality and why he claims that the same reality is called matter in reference to form and substance insofar as it stands on its own.<sup>64</sup> The term *essentia* signifies the formality under which we understand things, and it seems to be used in two perhaps equivocal ways by Ibn Gabirol. First, generally, as the *essentia materiae*, that by which anything can be said to be a substance; and second, more properly, as the equivalent of form, namely, that by which *something* is what it is—"forma constituit essentiam eius in quo est."<sup>65</sup> *Esse* is the most relational of all the terms. Since creation is the "*acquisitio essendi*," *esse* in the true sense is what eventuates when matter and form come together through God's action, the "*existentia formae in materia*."<sup>66</sup> Matter conceived in itself possesses only *esse in potentia*, that is, the power to sustain form; form possesses *esse in actu*, and this is why Ibn Gabirol can make use of the traditional Neoplatonic formula "*omne esse ex forma est*." But without matter's sustaining power, form would only serve to demarcate an unsubstantial ideal or mental reality.<sup>67</sup> The sage summarizes the respective roles of universal form and universal matter thus: "It is necessary that this be the form which gives every form *esse* and *quod est* (*essentia*), just as matter is that which gives all substantiality."<sup>68</sup>

Two important implications of universal hylomorphism need to be mentioned before we pass on to the other innovative aspect of Ibn Gabirol's Jewish Neoplatonism, his view of the Divine Will. The

first is the well-known issue of the plurality of forms; the second, the related question of primacy between matter and form. Ibn Gabirol has been controversial both among the Schoolmen and among modern scholars for his doctrine of the plurality of forms in each existing subject. From the viewpoint of his Neoplatonic metaphysics, this teaching is no more than a necessary implication of ■ coinherent universe composed of matter and form on every level. All existing substances from the First Intellect down to the lowest bodies are not only based upon the fundamental combination of universal matter and universal form, but also composed of the kinds of matter and form appropriate to their substantial level in the spiritual or corporeal realms.<sup>69</sup> Other Neoplatonists share this perspective, although they spell it out in different ways.

More revealing of the uniqueness of Ibn Gabirol's thought is his conception of the priority of matter to form. It is no secret that in Aristotle's world form is king. In Ibn Gabirol's world we might say that matter is king, but it is a constitutional monarch. Because it is matter that provides substantiality to all created things, Ibn Gabirol can describe *materia prima*, rather than being as the *genus generalissimum*.<sup>70</sup> Viewing created reality from the perspective of substantiality leads the Jewish philosopher to passages in which the traditional Great Chain of Being comes to sound more like a Great Chain of Matter. A good example is in *Fons Vitae* V 29, where we read: "Understand that matter has as it were two extremes, the one ascending to the limit of creation, namely, the beginning of the uniting of form and matter, the other descending to the goal of rest."<sup>71</sup> Yet, from another perspective, that of the modalities by which we come to understand what God has established in the realm of substance, forms still possess an intellectual if not a real priority.<sup>72</sup>

The final area I wish to examine is that of the Divine Will. In Plato's intellectualist metaphysics the Forms or Ideas are outside the maker of the universe, the Demiurge (*Timaeus* 28a, 29a). The multiplicity and "extradeical" position of the Ideas created difficulties for later Platonists, since the transcendental source must be ■ unity. The solution was the creation of an intradeical interpretation of the Ideas: The Ideas form a unity in the mind of God. Philo is our earliest witness to the intradeical view, but it seems to go back well before him.<sup>73</sup> Plotinus identified the Nous with the world of Ideas

in *Enneads* V 9.9 and elsewhere; his view may be called intradeical insofar as the Nous is a god. But the multiplicity implied in thinking and thought exclude Nous from the highest divine realm, that of the One. For Christian Neoplatonists, especially St. Augustine, the Ideas form a unity in the Divine Mind, understood as the coeternal Logos, the second Person of the Trinity.<sup>74</sup> Speculation on the status and role of the Divine Ideas was one of the central themes in medieval Christian thought.

From this perspective, the restricted role of the Ideas in Ibn Gabirol's thought, at least as it comes down to us, is initially surprising. True, he insists that "form *per se* existed in the knowledge of God (*scientia dei*), exalted and great,"<sup>75</sup> and even that the first subsistence is that of all things in the Creator's knowledge;<sup>76</sup> but speculation on what the nature of the "*scientia factoris primi*" might be and what role the Ideas play in it is noticeably lacking.<sup>77</sup> Its place is taken by Ibn Gabirol's teaching on the Divine Will.<sup>78</sup>

We have already seen *Voluntas* as the necessary medium between God and creation; we must now investigate how it relates to God, the *Essentia Prima*, as well as to matter and form.<sup>79</sup> Ibn Gabirol describes *Voluntas* from two perspectives: first, as not acting, in which case it is infinite and identical with the Divine Essence; and second, as actually producing universal form and matter,<sup>80</sup> in which case it is finite and thus less than God. Given Ibn Gabirol's insistence, like that in Maimonides after him, that the First Essence is absolutely unknowable, positive predicates such as willing cannot be really ascribed to the divine as it is in itself. The role that Ibn Gabirol assigns to the divine "hypostasis" of *Voluntas* attempts to qualify this fundamental apophaticism yet remain faithful to the traditional Jewish understanding of the centrality of the divine command in cosmology and ethics.<sup>81</sup>

*Voluntas* is both united to and separated from the absolute *unitas* of the First Essence.<sup>82</sup> "When you remove action from the Will it is the same as the Essence; when it is taken with action, it will be different from the Essence," as we read towards the end of the fifth treatise.<sup>83</sup> The *Voluntas*, as God's transcendent *virtus* or *vis agendi*, is described as the "*virtus unitatis*,"<sup>84</sup> or "the power of God the Holy penetrating all things, existing in all things, acting in all things

outside of time."<sup>85</sup> However, the Divine Will acts in different things in different ways, as we shall see.

When we look at the relation between the Will and the world it creates, we see a pattern both like and unlike Neoplatonic Christian views of the Logos as Creator. Ibn Gabirol's *Voluntas* is creative, but with two important differences from the Logos. The first and essential difference is that for the Jewish sage the dual creation is rooted, at least according to many texts, in different aspects of the divine being. "Concerning matter the same can be said as for form, namely that matter is created by the Essence, and form is from the property of the Essence, that is, from Wisdom or Unity (i.e., the Will), although the Essence is not made proper by some property extrinsic to it."<sup>86</sup> This is one of the most ambiguous areas in Ibn Gabirol's thought, especially because other texts link both form and matter to the Divine Will, as when the reader is encouraged to attain the knowledge of ". . . how there is a subsistence of all forms in universal matter and how there is a subsistence of universal matter and universal form with everything it contains in the Will of the First Maker, holy and exalted."<sup>87</sup> Ibn Gabirol seems to want to have his cake and eat it too. Rooting matter and form in two aspects of God explains their essential difference, but it also highlights the unresolved problems in Ibn Gabirol's thought about the relation of the Divine Essence and the Divine Will. Locating the source of both matter and form in the Divine Will may provide a clearer solution, but creates difficulties for those texts that either point to a dual origin or insist that form too, and not just matter, is found in the *scientia dei excelsi et magni*, that is, in the Divine Essence.<sup>88</sup> This nest of problems is certainly among the most difficult facing interpreters of the philosopher's thought.

A second difference concerns the kinds of causality ascribed to the Divine Will. *Voluntas* is described as the *verbum agens* of the entire creative process.<sup>89</sup> This might seem to bring *Voluntas* close to Christian understandings of the creative Logos or *Verbum*, but a closer perusal of the mode of activity of Ibn Gabirol's Divine Will shows some important differences. Not only is the Christian Logos coessential with the Father in every way, but He also acts directly and immediately on all levels of created reality. Ibn Gabirol's Divine Will works on the different levels of creation in diverse ways—as

*verbum* in spiritual substances, and as *motus* in corporeal ones.<sup>90</sup> In describing how the forms of all things exist in the Divine Will, however, Ibn Gabirol is closer to some of the patterns found in Christian discussions of the pre-existence of all things in the Logos. The forms of all things can be said to exist in the essence of the Will because they are caused by it, not because they have some intrinsic relation to it (the traditional Latin *via causalitatis*).<sup>91</sup> Some passages also seem close to Logos speculation on the *via eminentiae* in claiming that all the forms exist in the Will in a more perfect, more ordered and full way.<sup>92</sup>

In the brief treatise on the Will that closes the *Fons Vitae*, Ibn Gabirol identifies the *Voluntas* with the scriptural "*sapientia essentiae primae*" (see Proverbs 8),<sup>93</sup> hinting at the religious roots of his transformation of Neoplatonism. From this perspective, Ibn Gabirol's complex and elusive teaching on the Divine Will can take its rightful place alongside other attempts in Jewish religious philosophy to emphasize a voluntaristic approach to the doctrine of God that remains fully respectful of the divine mystery.<sup>94</sup> At this supreme point of philosophical speculation we are left with several puzzling problems, not only about the relation of the two aspects of the *Voluntas*, but also about the relation of the *scientia dei* in which all things in some way pre-exist and the active *sapientia dei* by which the world is created. One passage seems to treat them as equivalent,<sup>95</sup> but we are given no indication of how this is the case and no description of how the Ideas themselves might function as primordial causes (one of the key themes in Christian Logos speculation). This is not to try to judge Ibn Gabirol by a Christian yardstick; it is merely meant to emphasize how different the sage's brand of Jewish "voluntaristic" Neoplatonism is from the Logos speculations of his Neoplatonic Christian predecessors, contemporaries and successors.

## II. Some Scholastic Reactions to Solomon Ibn Gabirol.

The *Fons Vitae* was widely read by the Latin Schoolmen. It was influential, within important limits, and vigorously debated. The full history of Ibn Gabirol's influence on the Masters of the Schools

has yet to be written, although there are some useful studies.<sup>96</sup> It will not be possible here to do more than sketch a broad picture, illustrated by a few details, as a way of highlighting the real achievements, as well as the significant limitations, of medieval philosophical ecumenism.

Ibn Gabirol's powerful but in some ways idiosyncratic system became available to Latin Christian authors at a propitious moment. The late twelfth century was a period that would be difficult to describe as other than eclectic, as long as we are prepared to admit that "eclecticism," understood as creative openness to new ideas and systems without undue concern for ultimate systematic coherence, can have positive values. Ibn Gabirol's special form of Neoplatonism contained elements compatible with important themes in Augustine and Boethius, two of the major Christian Neoplatonic authorities. It also complemented the forms of twelfth-century Platonism connected with what has been called the "School of Chartres." These complementarities and the nonsectarian religious tone of the *Fons Vitae* assured it a role in the thought of High Scholasticism.

The work was translated when Latin Christian philosophy and theology were just beginning to sense the possibility of separate but intertwined academic existences. This element of timing may help explain the power of its early influence. It appeared on the scene when distinctions between philosophical and theological positions were still fluid and when Augustine was still the master of truth in both realms. At the end of the twelfth century, whatever served to complement and explain what was thought of as Augustine's philosophy was welcomed and promptly put to use.

Dominicus Gundissalinus, the Spanish archdeacon who translated the *Fons Vitae*, was also responsible for mixing Ibn Gabirol's views into the philosophical stew of the time. The Spaniard was the most "Gabirolean" of all Latin thinkers, but his eclectic thought uses much from Augustine, Boethius and Avicenna too, and at times advances contradictory positions in different works. Gundissalinus's small treatise *De unitate et uno* is an odd mixture of Boethius, Augustine and Ibn Gabirol. Since it circulated under the name of Boethius, it gave a Boethian cachet to such Gabirolean doctrines as universal hylomorphism<sup>97</sup> and the existence of both a "*prima et vera unitas*" (i.e., God) and an "*unitas creata . . . omnino diversa . . . et quasi*



*opposita*." It gave an aura of acceptability and familiarity to an understanding of creation that is clearly under the impress of the Jewish philosopher's fundamental principle that only what is dual can come from the One.<sup>98</sup> In another treatise, the *De processione mundi*, Gundissalinus explicitly advances that principle, paraphrasing a passage from the *Fons Vitae*: "Everything created must be different from the Creator. Since the Creator is truly one, unity ought not belong to creatures. . . . Since the Creator is truly one, the creature which comes after him must be two."<sup>99</sup> The overall metaphysical picture in these two treatises, the discussion of the nature and kinds of matter and form, and the insistence on the plurality of forms, are clear marks of the influence of the Jewish philosopher.<sup>100</sup>

On the plurality of forms, however, Gundissalinus stands at the head of two opposing traditions. Universal plurality of forms throughout the created universe implies substantial plurality in the human person, especially the plurality of the three Aristotelian souls—vegetative, animal and rational. Ibn Gabirol held this view and Gundissalinus echoes it. Avicenna, however, while admitting that a form of corporeity (*forma corporeitatis*) combines with other forms in constituting bodies, insisted that there is only one soul in each living being. The Spanish archdeacon translated Avicenna's psychology (the famous *Liber sextus naturalium*), and adhered to this position in his own *De anima*.<sup>101</sup>

Much has been written about the twin issues with which the history of Ibn Gabirol's influence on the Schoolmen of the thirteenth century has often been linked—universal hylomorphism, the teaching that all creation is composed of matter and form,<sup>102</sup> and the separate but related issue of the plurality of forms, that is, whether in one and the same individual there are many substantial forms or only one.<sup>103</sup> It was possible to affirm one of these two theses and not the other. William of Auvergne (ca. 1180-1249), who praised Ibn Gabirol as "*unus omnium philosophantium nobilissimus*,"<sup>104</sup> held to the plurality of forms but denied the existence of spiritual matter. Later, Bonaventure accepted universal hylomorphism (although he never cites Ibn Gabirol) but denied plurality of forms.<sup>105</sup>

The existence of intellectual or "spiritual matter" (*materia spiritalis*) had enjoyed a long history among pagan Neoplatonists.<sup>106</sup> More important for thirteenth-century Christian

thinkers, it also found a clear foundation in Augustine in texts both authentic and pseudonymous, and in the writings of many Augustinian theologians of the twelfth century.<sup>107</sup> The exact extent of Ibn Gabirol's influence in spreading this view is not easy to determine and has been evaluated differently by various investigators. He is not mentioned explicitly as often as one might expect. But the fact that he developed the arguments for this position in far greater detail and with more rigor than any of the other sources known to the Christian *magistri* indicates that, despite sparse citation, he was of considerable importance in furthering this view and the related position of the plurality of forms. Maurice de Wulf, criticizing Étienne Gilson's description of the reigning philosophical complex of the early thirteenth century as an "augustinisme avicennisant," suggested that we might as legitimately speak of an "augustinisme avicebrolisant."<sup>108</sup> Such awkward, hybrid terms do not really give a very satisfactory picture of a complex situation. We can agree with the recent evaluation of James Weisheipl that "Avicenna rather than Augustine is the source of what appeared to the vast majority of thirteenth-century theologians as the traditional and sound doctrine."<sup>109</sup> But we should remember that it was the compatibility of these doctrines to passages found in Augustine's writings and to themes in the history of Augustinianism that made them so widely acceptable.

What was at issue was the best way to protect divine transcendence. As William de la Mare, one of Thomas Aquinas' opponents on this issue, later put it: "If an angel does not have matter it is altogether immutable and hence God."<sup>110</sup> William, like Ibn Gabirol, identified matter with contingency, composition and the possibility of change. So he and his predecessors, both Dominicans and Franciscans, were convinced that some form of matter must characterize all created being.

Up to the third decade of the thirteenth century, most Scholastics, following the lead of Gilbert of Poitiers and Peter Lombard, had denied that spiritual substances, such as angels, were composed of matter and form, basing their composition on some other ground, such as the Boethian distinction between the *id quod est* and the *id quo est*. Around 1230, however, we find Roland of Cremona, the first Dominican Master at Paris, affirming that the angels are composed of form and spiritual matter, ■ position also put

forth by Alexander of Hales, the first Franciscan Master, around the same time. During the next decade opposition to this view is also found, both among secular masters, such as William of Auvergne and Philip the Chancellor, and Mendicants, such as the Franciscan John of La Rochelle and the Dominicans Hugh of St. Cher and later Albert the Great. While support of universal hylomorphism was to become a hallmark of Franciscan attacks on Thomas Aquinas, the early picture is more complex than a simple split between Dominicans and Franciscans.

The question of plurality versus unity of substantial form shows a similar confused development. The judgment of the best modern scholarship, such as that of D. A. Callus and Fernand van Steenberghen, has continued to emphasize the importance of Ibn Gabirol in furthering the doctrine of plurality.<sup>111</sup> When the issue surfaced in the first decade of the thirteenth century among figures like Alfred of Shareshal and John Blund it was unity that held the field. This view continued to find strong support among the Dominicans in the line that stretches from Roland of Cremona, through Albert, to Thomas Aquinas. But in the middle decades of the century some theologians began to shift to plurality. The real debate, however, was only to erupt in the wake of Aquinas' support of the unity of substantial form in his attack on Ibn Gabirol in the *De substantiis separatis* and throughout his writings.

The two Schoolmen who have the most to say about "Avicebron," Albert the Great and his pupil Thomas Aquinas, disagreed strongly with him on these and other issues. Thomas' critique has been treated by a number of scholars.<sup>112</sup> Albert's reaction is not as well known but is particularly revealing,<sup>113</sup> because he disagreed with the Jewish philosopher not just on universal hylomorphism and plurality of forms, but on even more fundamental metaphysical principles. The roots of Albert's critique are most evident in his *De causis et processu universitatis*, a paraphrase, commentary and expansion on the *Liber de causis* that he wrote between 1267 and 1271. Book I devotes three full chapters and other comments to the Jewish philosopher.

Albert clearly had read the *Fons Vitae* carefully, and his condescending remarks about it as the product of "some undergraduate" (*quidem sophistarum*) are in conflict with the

attention he gives it. The Dominican recognized the importance of the principle of mediation in Ibn Gabirol's thought, especially with regard to the role of the *Voluntas* in the creation of the *binarium famosissimum*, the primal duality of universal matter and form.<sup>114</sup> He resolutely opposed this principle, at least with regard to divine activity. Analyzing the notion of an infinite First Principle, he affirms: "A thing said to be infinite in this way is absolutely perfect and has no need of a medium,"<sup>115</sup> a position in accord with the revised Neoplatonic metaphysics he developed out of Pseudo-Dionysius and the *Liber de causis*.<sup>116</sup> The "doctor universalis" also disagrees with what we have called the principle of coinherence, at least insofar as he sees it positing an essential "flow" (*fluxus*) of the First Principle into all things by way of penetration. In this critique Albert can be accused of misreading Ibn Gabirol's intention from the perspective of his own Dionysian Neoplatonism based upon the universal diffusion of the Highest Good.<sup>117</sup>

Even more interesting are the Dominican's reactions to Ibn Gabirol's distinctive insistence that only two can come from what is one and that the Will mediates between God and creation. Citing Aristotle, al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes, he most strenuously objects (*fortissime objicitur*) to Ibn Gabirol and defends the axiom "Only what is one can come from the Simple One."<sup>118</sup> The contrary is a position that "Avicebron" alone among the philosophers has upheld.<sup>119</sup> Much of the Dominican's argument against the Jewish philosopher, both here and elsewhere in his vast *corpus*, is devoted to a detailed refutation of the most problematic philosophical corollary of created duality, the doctrine of universal hylomorphism.<sup>120</sup>

Ibn Gabirol's emphasis on the divine *Voluntas creatrix* had been much valued both by Gundissalinus and by William of Auvergne, two of his most fervent Christian admirers, perhaps because they saw this doctrine as an answer to the necessitarianism of the Arabic philosophers.<sup>121</sup> But Albert the Great will have none of it. He mounts his attack on Ibn Gabirol's voluntaristic Neoplatonism in the name of traditional Christian Logos speculation centered on the intradeical interpretation of the Ideas.

Albert begins by noting how Ibn Gabirol's description of the derivation of the universe is basically Platonic, with the exception of

his stress on the Divine Will.<sup>122</sup> The importance he accords to this deviation is shown by his two lengthy attacks on the error of having Will rather than Intellect as the medium between God and creation—if a medium is really needed!<sup>123</sup> In chapter 6 of the first treatise he offers five related reasons why “the First acts through itself and its essence without anything that determines it to act.”<sup>124</sup> In the fourth chapter of the third treatise he gives a detailed refutation based upon the Aristotelian principle that the will is always specified to action by the intellect. His arguments on the relation of intellect and will are scarcely as detailed and profound as those of Thomas. But they are central to his disagreement with the Jewish philosopher. Neither Albert nor Thomas, however, was able to prevent the priority of the Divine Will from winning the day among many Scholastics in the century to come.

Albert the Great attacked the metaphysical roots of Ibn Gabirol's Neoplatonism more directly and effectively than any other Scholastic author. His student, Thomas Aquinas, also disagreed with the Jewish sage; but an investigation of just how Thomas took issue with Ibn Gabirol lies beyond the scope of this paper. In reading the Angelic Doctor's detailed critiques of Ibn Gabirol's universal hylomorphism and plurality of forms, it is difficult not to say that he won out in the technical argument.<sup>125</sup> But this does not negate the value of Ibn Gabirol's thought, nor does it preclude the possibility of a “revised” Neoplatonic response to at least some of Thomas's objections.<sup>126</sup>

Many historians of thought have commented on the relations between Maimonides and Aquinas. Thomas had read the *Guide* with care. He cites Rabbi Moses often and with respect, even when he disagrees with him. Fewer scholars have studied the fascinating relations between Maimonides and Meister Eckhart, a student of both Albert and Aquinas. It would probably be too much to call Eckhart a Latin Maimonidean, since he is so much his own man in many ways. But Eckhart uses Maimonides extensively throughout his Latin works and never expresses disagreement with him.<sup>127</sup> His habit of quoting or paraphrasing large chunks of Maimonides led to one of the curious paradoxes of ecumenical thought in the Middle Ages. The twenty-third of the propositions for which Eckhart was condemned in the papal bull of 1329 actually comes from the *Guide* I 51; so Maimonides has the unique distinction of being the only Jewish thinker condemned as “suspect of (Christian) heresy.”

Solomon ibn Gabirol offers us another case of a philosophical encounter in the era of High Scholasticism, one perhaps more indicative of the limits of ecumenism in the Middle Ages. In the case of Maimonides, his closest student, Meister Eckhart, was also his sincerest admirer. Ibn Gabirol had many Christian admirers, and his thought was of real influence in developing two of the themes that came to characterize the Augustinian reaction to Thomism in the latter part of the century. But it appears that Ibn Gabirol's closest students were his most strenuous opponents, Albert the Great and his pupil, the greater Thomas. Perhaps this can serve to remind us that true ecumenical discussion in our own age must be as honest about differences as it is hopeful for discovering shared truths.

# Notes

1. On the role of Arabic translations in medieval scholastic philosophy, see John F. Wippel, “Latin Translation Literature from Arabic,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) 14.254-56. For the translations into Arabic, see L. E. Goodman, “The Greek Impact on Arabic Literature,” *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, 1.460-82.
2. The two most recent monographs on Ibn Gabirol are those of Ermenegildo Bertola, *Salomon Ibn Gabirol (Avicbron): Vita, Opere e Pensiero* (Padua: Cedam, 1953); and Jacques Schlanger, *La philosophie de Salomon Ibn Gabirol: Étude d'un Neoplatonisme*.
3. See M.-T. d'Alverny, “Dominic Gundisalvi,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 4.966-67.
4. A. Altmann and S. M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, xiii.
5. All citations will be from the edition of Clemens Bacumker, by book and chapter with page and line number where necessary. For this passage, I 7, 9, 24-26: *Partes scientiae omnis tres sunt, scilicet scientia de materia et forma, et scientia de voluntate, et scientia de essentia prima*. Cf. V 36, 322-23.
6. Significant passages on the *Essentia Prima* are scattered through the work; see especially the discussions of the differences between the *Factor Primus* and his creation in III 2-5, 75-88; and III 6-8, 90-95. For the various names of the *Factor Primus*, see Bertola, 83.
7. Major texts discussing the *Voluntas* are found in II 13, 46-47; III 15-16, 111-13; III 57, 205-06; IV 19-20, 252-56; V 17, 288-89; V 31, 314; and especially V 36-39, 323-36. For a fuller list, see Bertola, 95.

- In V 4, 330, 10-12, Ibn Gabirol mentions having written a book treating "de scientia voluntatis." This has not survived.
8. I 7, 10, 1-4: D. *Quid causae est quod in esse non sunt nisi haec tria? M. Causa in hoc haec est, quod omni creato opus est causa et aliquo medio inter se. causa autem est essentia prima, creatum autem materia et forma, medium autem eorum est voluntas.*
  9. Tr., F. M. Cornford in *Plato's Cosmology* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1957), 44.
  10. See R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 130-32. Wallis calls it the "Law of Mean Terms."
  11. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed., Dodds, 95, Prop. 106. Cf. Props. 28, 29, 132, 148, etc.
  12. II 14, 48, 11-24.
  13. III 27, 143-44; cf. III 47-48, 184-88; and IV 17, 250.
  14. E.g., III 56, 203-04; and IV 4, 217.
  15. For a fourfold division of matter parallel to four divisions of form, see I 17, 21; and II 2, 26-27; for a threefold division, see IV 8, 229. Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 76, lays out a fivefold general division.
  16. E.g., III 39, 168, 24; IV 5, 221, 11-12; and V 8, 271, 8. Cf. Boethius's equivalent formula "omne namque esse ex forma est" in *De Trinitate* 2, in *The Theological Tractates* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, LCL, 1952), 8.
  17. IV 20, 255-56.
  18. See especially V 20, 295; III 27, 143-44; and V 34, 319-20.
  19. E.g., II 24, 70; III 15, 111; III 23, 132-33; III 26, 142; III 51, 194; III 57, 207.
  20. E.g., III 47-48, 184-86; III 54, 199; IV 17, 250.
  21. On the *forma naturae*, see III 27, 143-44; IV 13, 239; V 20, 295. On the *forma mundi* and its relation to *materia vel hyle*, see II 9-14, 40-49.
  22. See V 20, 295; and IV 17, 217. On the proportionality between the realms of simple and corporeal substances, see II 8, 38-39.
  23. V 39, 328.
  24. See III 9, 97, 2-5: *Si inter essentiam factoris primi et substantiam quae sustinet praedicamenta non esset medium, essentia primi factoris esset iuncta substantiae quae sustinet praedicamenta.* The fifty-six proofs are found in III 2-10, 75-102.
  25. The Disciple had already asked why there might not be only God the creator and lower substance in II 12, 44. The Master's response was to tell him to wait for the fifty-six proofs.
  26. III 51, 194. See also II 1, 24; III 1, 73-74; IV 8, 229; V 15, 284-85.

27. T. M. Rudavsky, "Conflicting Motifs in Ibn Gabirol's Discussion of Matter and Evil," esp. 57-58, has argued that there is a fundamental imbalance between the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic elements in Ibn Gabirol, but she may overemphasize the distinctively Aristotelian elements.
28. See IV 5, 221; IV 10, 234; V 31-34, 315-20.
29. V 39, 327, 24: *forma suscepit a voluntate virtutem qua retinet materiam.* Cf. III 16, 113, 19-20.
30. Tr., Armstrong, 5.181-83.
31. Numenius, *Fragments*, ed. E. des Places (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973), 90, Fr. 41.
32. E.g., *Enneads* IV 4.2, 9.5, V 8.4, VI 5.7; *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 103; Dodds, n. 254.
33. III 17-24, 114-38.
34. III 23, 133, 17-23: *ergo formae inferiores debent esse ut omnes sint in formis superioribus, gradu post gradum, donec perveniatur ad formam universalem in qua est collectio omnium formarum; excepto hoc quod illae formae sunt in non-loco, istae vero in loco, illae sunt unitae unitione substantiae spiritualis, et istae sunt dispersae dispersione substantiae corporalis.*
35. V 19, 293, 6-11: *... quod forma continet materiam, sicut intelligentia continet animam, et anima continet corpus; et voluntas continet formam, sicut unaquaeque harum continet aliam; et deus excelsus et sanctus continet voluntatem et quicquid materiae et formae est in ea sine comparatione et exemplo.*
36. III 13, 107, 10-20.
37. IV 1, 211, 13-14.
38. This is one of Ibn Gabirol's most frequently invoked principles, e.g., II 7, 37; II 24, 70; IV 16, 247; V 17, 289-90.
39. E.g., II 24, 70; III 50, 191-93; III 56, 203.
40. III 49, 188, 25 - 189, 3: *Sequitur hoc quod quicquid est in substantiis inferioribus, est et in superioribus; sed non quicquid est in superioribus, est et in inferioribus, sicut vegetatio et generatio sunt in anima animali, sed sensus et motus non sunt in vegetabili, et sicut sensus et motus sunt in anima rationali, sed rationalitas et cognitio non sunt in anima animali.*
41. V 42, 334, 7.
42. V 41, 33, 17-21: *Dico ergo quod creatio rerum a creatore alto et magno, quae est exitus formae ab origine prima, id est voluntate, et influxio eius super materiam, est sicut exitus quae emanantis a sua origine et eius effluxio quae sequitur alia post aliam . . .*

43. III 25, 139, 22-25: *Si substantia simplex imprimeret quod non est in sua essentia, non posset eius actio esse impressio; et esset creatrix ex nihilo. sed creator ex nihilo non est nisi factor primus altus et sanctus.* See also II 9, 40, 21-22: *Omnis auctor, excepto primo auctore, in suo opere indiget subiecto quod sit susceptibile suae actionis.* Similarly, II 3, 79, 18-20; IV 13, 240, 16-23. On the basis of such passages, one can well take issue with Julius Guttmann's claim that "... in Gabirol's system even the divine activity is subordinated to the general categories of action," *Philosophies of Judaism*, 114. Bertola, 83-85, has stressed Ibn Gabirol's creationism.
44. III 4, 82, 23-25: *Necessarium est ut patiens a primo factore sine medio sit recipiens virtutem agendi. et quod est recipiens virtutem agendi, agens est.*
45. III 14, 108, 23 - 109, 3: *et hoc est evidentius signum quod forma processit a factore primo et est obtemperans illi, eo quod compellitur in natura sua ad dandam se et ad conferendum formam suam, cum invenerit materiam receptibilem sui. Et etiam, quia erat factura prima, et actio similiter, fuit necesse ut haec factura et haec actio esset penetrans per omne usque ad defectum receptibilis sui.*
46. See the important passage in III 52-55, 195-202; cf. IV 17, 249-50; V 15-16, 285-87; V 18, 290.
47. For the light metaphor, see, e.g., III 16, 112-13; III 25, 141; III 35, 160-61; III 45, 181; III 52, 195-96; III 54, 200; IV 14, 241, and 244-45. In a striking metaphor Ibn Gabirol compares the existence of corporeal substances within the ambience of spiritual substances to the flight of a bird in the air—V 30, 311, 13-15. Vincent Cantarino, "Ibn Gabirol's Metaphysic of Light," argues for a much larger role for *Lichtmetaphysik* than I believe the text allows.
48. See, e.g., Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); Bernard McGinn, "Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity," in Dominic O'Meara, ed., *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, 128-39.
49. Cf. Isaac Israeli and the texts and discussions in Altmann and Stern.
50. *Enneads* V 1.4, after Armstrong, 5.25; cf. VI 2.21.
51. Alexander Altmann, "Creation and Emanation in Isaac Israeli: A Reappraisal," 20. On the history of this axiom, see the paper by Arthur Hyman in this volume.
52. Avicenna, *Metaphysics* 9.4 in *Opera Philosophica* (Venice, 1508; repr. Louvain, 1961), ff. 104v-105r. See the responses by Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Ia, 47, 1; and Meister Eckhart, *Comm. in Gen.* n. 10, and *Comm. in Sap.* n. 36. For Averroes's rejection of the principle

- in his later writings, see Barry Kogan, "Averroes and the Theory of Emanation."
53. Bertola, 100.
54. IV 6, 222, 25-28: *... quia creator omnium debet esse unus tantum, et creatum debet esse diversum ab eo. unde si creatum esset materia tantum aut forma tantum, assimilaretur uni, et non esset medium inter illa, quia duo sunt post unum.*
55. IV 6, 224, 15 - 226, 7. The passage cited is found on 226, 5-7: *constat per hoc quod totum quod est ab initio extremi superioris usque ad extremum infimum est etiam compositum ex materia et forma.* For other texts on this central theme, see I 6, 9, 12-14; V 12, 279, 3-19; V 25, 304, 10-15; and V 42, 333, 3-17. On Ibn Gabirol's view of unity, see A. J. Heschel, "Der Begriff der Einheit in der Philosophie Gabirols," *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 82 (1938), 89-111.
56. E.g., II 20, 61-62; IV 14, 240; and IV 19, 252.
57. See V 30, 311, 19.
58. These issues have been much discussed in the literature. See Bertola, 106-22; Schlanger, 216-72; and Fernand Brunner, "La doctrine de la matière chez Avicbron," *Revue de théologie* 6 (1956): 261-79.
59. See Brunner, 268.
60. IV 6, 224, 20-25: *Et etiam necesse est ut ipsa una radix aut esset materia tantum, aut forma tantum. si esset materia tantum, non esset possibile ut formae fierent per eam; et si formae non fierent, non haberent esse. si autem fuerit forma tantum, non posset existere per se; similiter nec esset possibile ut materiae fierent per eam.*
61. On matter, see I 10, 13, 14 - 14, 5; on form, I 13, 16, 9-19.
62. V 7-8, 269-77.
63. V 25, 304, 12-13: *existens autem per se sit sustinens, non existens per se sustentatum.*
64. V 7, 269, 17-21.
65. IV 11, 235, 23-24; cf. 236, 22-23; V 9, 272, 26 - 273, 3.
66. V 10, 274, 19.
67. On *esse in potentia (esse materiale)* and *esse in actu seu effectum (esse formale)*, see V 8-11, 271-77; and I 3, 16, 21-24.
68. V 16, 286, 15-17: *oportet ut haec forma sit quae dedit omni formae esse et quod est, sicut materia est quae dedit omnem substantialitatem.*
69. On the plurality of forms, see I 11, 14; II 2, 26-27; III 46, 181-82; IV 3, 215-16; V 20, 295; V 34, 320.
70. V 8, 270, 4-5.

71. V 29, 310, 14-17: *Intellige materiam quasi habeat duo extrema, unum ascendens ad terminum creationis, scilicet principium unitōnis materiae et formae, aliud descendens ad finem quietis.*
72. Cf. II 20, 61; V 23, 300; V 42, 335; etc.; Brunner, 272-79.
73. E.g., *De opificio mundi* 20. See H. A. Wolfson, "Extradicel and Intradicel Interpretations of Platonic Ideas," in *Religious Philosophy: A Group of Essays*, 27-68.
74. Augustine's classic treatment is in *De diversis quaestionibus* q. 46.
75. V 27, 306, 7-8: *M. Forma erat in scientia dei excelsi et magni per se.* Matter also pre-exists in the *scientia dei*, cf. V 10, 274, 20-22.
76. II 14, 48, 13-14: *primus eorum est subsistentia omnium rerum in scientia creatoris.* Cf. III 57, 207-08; and V 30, 312-13.
77. On *scientia dei* in Ibn Gabirol, see Schlanger, 275-77. For the sparse references, see the "Index rerum" in Baemker, 513.
78. On the Divine Will in Ibn Gabirol, see Bertola, 94-105; Schlanger, 277-84; cf. Guttman, 114-17.
79. In V 40, 329, 9-10 we read *perfectio sapientiae est scientia de voluntate.* This, of course, is because there can be no *sapientia* concerning the *essentia prima*. On the two modes of knowing the Divine Will, see V 43, 388, 10-15.
80. On the dependence of matter and form on the Will, see II 13, 46-47; IV 20, 254-56; V 28, 308; V 31, 314.
81. *Voluntas* is more than an attribute or quality of God, as Schlanger notes, 277.
82. See V 40, 329, 27 - 330, 1.
83. V 37, 325, 23-24: *... quia voluntas, remota actione ab ea, ipsa et essentia sunt unum, et considerata cum actione, erit alia ab essentia.* See especially III 57, 205, 23 - 206, 5; IV 19, 252, 18 - 253, 18.
84. V 37, 315, 16.
85. III 15, 111, 25-26: *... virtus dei sancti penetrans omnia, existens in omnibus, agens in omnibus sine tempore.* Cf. V 38, 326, 3-19; V 39, 327, 14-17; 328, 11-17.
86. V 42, 333, 3-5: *De materia hoc idem dicitur de forma, scilicet quod materia est creata ab essentia, et forma est a proprietate essentiae, id est sapientia et unitate, etsi essentia non sit propria ab ea extrinseca.* Also in V 42, see 334, 4-5; and 334, 24 - 335, 11. In IV 19, 252, 21 - 253, 3, form alone flows from the Will.
87. III 32, 153, 5-9: *et inde eriges te ad sciendum quomodo est subsistentia omnium formarum in materia universalis, et, quo modo est subsistentia materiae universalis et formae universalis cum omni quod continetur in voluntate factoris primi sancti et excelsi.* Cf. V 38, 326, 4-5, where Will makes and joins both matter and form. On these two

- diverse formulations, see Bertola, 97-98; Schlanger, 282-83; and Sirat, 76.
88. E.g., V 27, 306, 7-9.
89. E.g., V 36, 322, 22 - 323, 20.
90. V 36-37, 323-25. Important in this regard are the two metaphors that Ibn Gabirol uses to illustrate the relation of *voluntas* to *materia* and *forma*: the image of matter receiving form from Will as a mirror receives an image from the onlooker (e.g., V 41, 331, 1-3), and matter as the seat of the One (*cathedra unius*) in which Will as the giver of form sits and rests (V 42, 335, 22-24).
91. IV 20, 256, 11-16.
92. V 17, 289, 13-24: *et secundum hoc oportet ut formae sint in voluntate prima perfectius, quoad esse potest, et ordinatissime et plene.* Cf. V 20, 308. For more on the relations of *voluntas*, *materia* and *forma*, see V 38, 326-27.
93. V 42, 333, 1: *sapientia essentiae primae.* Cf. V 41, 331, 10-11.
94. In this connection, see the remarks of Alexander Altmann on the role of power and will in Isaac Israeli's understanding of creation: "Creation and Emanation in Isaac Israeli: A Reappraisal," 25-26. Note also Maimonides' well-known interpretation of God's speaking as God's willing in *Guide* I 65.
95. V 10, 274, 19 - 25: *similiter etiam materia non est privata absolute, quia habet esse in se in potentia, scilicet illud quod habebat esse in scientia aeterni, excelsi et magni, non composita cum forma.* D. *Declara mihi hunc intellectum amplius, scilicet esse materiae sine forma in sapientia creatoris excelsi et magni.*
96. The most useful works are Michael Wittmann, *Die Stellung des hl. Thomas von Aquin zu Avencebrol (Ibn Gebirol) (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters 3.3.* Münster: Aschendorff, 1900); Jacob Guttman, *Die Scholastik des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts in ihren Beziehungen zum Judentum und zur jüdischen Literatur* (Breslau: Marcus, 1902); Fernand Brunner, *Platonisme et Aristotelisme. La critique d'Ibn Gabirol par saint Thomas d'Aquin*; and most recently James A. Weisheipl, "Albertus Magnus and Universal Hylomorphism: Avicenna," *Albert the Great Commemorative Essays*, ed., Francis J. Kovach and Robert W. Shahan (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 239-60.
97. Paul Correns, *Die dem Boethius fälschlich zugeschriebene Abhandlung des Dominicus Gundisalvi De Unitate (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters 1.1.* Münster: Aschendorff, 1891), 3, II. 10-12, etc.
98. Correns, 5, II. 15-21.

99. See the edition in Menendez Pelayo, *Historia de los Heterodoxos Espanoles* (Madrid, 1880), 1. 698: *Omne creatum a creante debet esse diversum. Cum igitur creator vere unus sit, profecto creaturis non debuit esse unitas; . . . cum igitur creator vere sit unus, profecto creatura que post ipsum est debet esse duo.* Cf. *Fons Vitae* IV 6, 222, 24-28.
100. E.g., *De unitate*, ed. Correns, 8, II. 1-10.
101. On this issue, see Daniel A. Callus, "The Origins of the Problem of the Unity of Form," *The Dignity of Science: Studies in the Philosophy of Science presented to William Kane, O.P.*, ed. James A. Weisheipl (Washington: The Thomist Press, 1961), 126-32. See Avicenna's *Psychology* (*Najat* II vi), tr., Rahman, 64-68.
102. The issue was most often posed in relation to spiritual substances, especially the angels. See Erich Keineidam, *Das Problem der hylomorphen Zusammenhang der geistigen Substanzen im 13. Jahrhundert behandelt bis Thomas von Aquin* (Breslau: Universität, 1930); D. O. Lottin, "Le composition hylémorphique des substances. Les débuts de la controverse," *Revue néoscholastique de Philosophie* 34 (1932): 21-41; and Paul Bissels, "Die sachliche Begründung und philosophiegeschichtliche Stellung der Lehre von der materia spiritualis in der Scholastik," *Franziskanische Studien* 38 (1956): 241-95.
103. Besides the article of Callus mentioned above, see Gabriel Théry, "L'Augustinisme médiéval et le problème de l'unité de la forme substantielle," *Acta Hebdomadae Augustiniana-Thomisticae* (Turin-Rome, 1931), 140-200; D. O. Lottin, "La pluralité des formes substantielles avant saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue néoscholastique de philosophie* 34 (1932): 449-67; Roberto Zavalloni, "La métaphysique du composé humain dans la pensée scolastique préthomiste," *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 48 (1950): 5-36; and especially his *Richard de Mediavilla et la controverse sur la pluralité des formes. Textes inédits et étude critique* (Louvain: Institut supérieur de Philosophie, 1951).
104. William of Auvergne, *De Trinitate*, ed., Bruno Switalski (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1976), chap. 12, 77-78.
105. See John Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure's Philosophy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973), 219-319, and 845.
106. The term "materia spiritualis," while rare in the *Fons Vitae*, is found in III 24, 135, 22. See the paper by John Dillon in this volume for the background.

107. The primary texts in Augustine affirming spiritual matter are to be found in Book 7 of the *De genesi ad litteram*, e.g., 7.5.7, 7.6.9, 7.17.39, 7.19.25. Frequently cited also was the pseudo-Augustinian *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae* (see *Patrologia Latina* 35, cc. 2149-2200), a seventh-century Irish text. Among the twelfth-century theologians supporting this view were Honorius Augustodunensis and Hugh of St. Victor. See Bissels, 238-52.
108. Étienne Gilson first advanced the term in two important articles: "Pourquoi saint Thomas a critiqué saint Augustin," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 1 (1926): 5-126; and "Les sources gréco-arabes de l'augustinisme avicennisant," *Archives . . .* 4 (1930): 5-107. Maurice De Wulf responded in *Revue néoscholastique de philosophie* 33 (1931): 1-39; see 32-33 for "augustinisme avicebrolisant."
109. Weisheipl, 241. Compare Weisheipl's five characteristics of thirteenth-century Augustinianism (voluntarism, universal hylomorphism, plurality of substantial forms, Avicennan interpretation of divine illumination, and identity of the soul with its powers, 242-43) with the seven themes identified by De Wulf in his 1931 article (17-18): plurality of substantial forms, universal hylomorphism, theory of *rationes seminales*, identification of perfection of corporeity with light, plurality of forms used to defend the substantial independence of soul from body, identity of soul with its powers, and necessity for creation of world in time.
110. See P. Glorieux, *Les premiers polémiques thomistes. I. Le correctorium corruptorii Quare* (Paris: Le Saulchoir, 1927), 50.
111. See Callus, 133-36, 146; and F. van Steenberghe, *La philosophie au XIIIe siècle* (Louvain-Paris: Beatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1966), 491-92, responding to R. Zavalloni's attempts to minimize Ibn Gabirol's role here.
112. Besides the studies of Wittmann and Brunner mentioned in note 96, see John Goheen, *The Problem of Matter and Form in the "De Ente et Essentia" of Thomas Aquinas*.
113. See Jacob Guttman, *Die Scholastik . . .*, 60-85; and J. A. Weisheipl. The extent of Albert's Neoplatonism has been evaluated in different ways by recent studies. Leo Sweeney, S.J., in his article "Are Plotinus and Albertus Magnus Neoplatonists?" in *Graceful Reason: Essays in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy Presented to Joseph Owens, CSSR*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1983), 177-202, shows important differences between Plotinus and Albert, but in adopting too rigid a view of Neoplatonism does not resolve the question of whether Albert can be judged a Neoplatonist.

- on broader grounds. Edward Booth in *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1983), ch. 5, demonstrates the great weight that Proclean and Dionysian Neoplatonism had in Albert's metaphysics.
114. See *Liber de causis et processu universitatis*, Liber I, tr. 1, cap. 5, in *Beati Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, ed. Auguste Borgnet (Paris: Vives, 1891), 10. 371a.
  115. *Liber de causis*, Liber I, tr. 3, cap. 4: *Taliter autem vocatum infinitum, perfectissimum est, et nullo indiget medio* (Borgnet, 10. 406b); cf. tr. 1, cap. 6, on God's direct action on all things (373b).
  116. See Booth, 180-85, 195, and 202-04.
  117. *Liber de causis*, Lib. I, tr. 4, ch. 3 (Borgnet, 414a-15b). Albert's position centers on his claim: *Per hoc enim quod dicamus primum principium penetrare per omnia propter sui simplicitatem, non determinatur ratio qua ostenditur qualiter bonitas fluens ab ipso efficitur in alio*.
  118. Liber I, tr. 1, cap. 6, 372b.
  119. Liber I, tr. 4, cap. 8, 428a. Yet in his response to authorities defending the origin of matter and form from the First Principle Philip the Chancellor had included a text he claimed to find in the Pseudo-Dionysius: *Item. Post monadem sequitur dyas, secundum Dyonisium. Ergo cum prima substantia non sit angelus, sub dyade cadit. Set prima duas est materie et forme. Ergo habet materiam et formam*. See D. O. Lottin, "La composition hylémorphique des substances spirituelles," 27.
  120. The major arguments in the *Liber de causis* are advanced in Liber I, tr. 1, cap. 6, 372a-74a; but cf. tr. 4, cap. 8, 430b. For other passages, see *In II Sent.*, d. IA, art. 4 (ed. Borgnet, 27. 14b); and *Metaphysica* XI, tr. 2, caps. 8 and 16.
  121. See Weisheipl, 244.
  122. *Liber de causis*, Liber I, tr. 1, cap. 5, 371b.
  123. Liber I, tr. 1, cap. 6, 372b-73a, giving five reasons; and tr. 3, cap. 4, 405b-407a, with four reasons. Cf. *Summa theologiae* II, tr. 1, q. 4, m. 1, art. 2, p. 2 (ed. Borgnet, 18. 37).
  124. 372b: *de ratione enim primi est per se et per essentiam determinet ipsum ad actionem . . .*
  125. Aquinas's major attacks on universal hylomorphism can be found in *In II Sent.* d. 3, q. 1, a. 1; *De ente et essentia* 5; *De substantiis separatis* 5-8; *De spiritualibus creaturis* a. 3; *Summa theologiae* Ia, q. 50, a. 2, ad 2, and q. 66, a. 2; and *Summa Contra Gentiles* II, 50. The issue of plurality of forms is treated in *In II Sent.* d. 12, q. 1, a. 4; *De sub. sep.* 6; *De spir. creat.* a. 1, and a. 3; *Quodlibet* XI, q. 5, a. 5; *STh*

- Ia, q. 66, a. 2; *De anima* q. 6; *In II de Anima*, lect. 1; and *In I de generatione et corruptione*, lect. 10.8.
126. See Brunner, *Platonisme et Aristotelisme*, for an attempt at to look at Ibn Gabirol with "une autre objectivité."
  127. For the relation between Eckhart and Maimonides, see *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed., Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 15-30.



## From What is One and Simple only What is One and Simple Can Come to Be'

Arthur Hyman

In an article entitled "Maimonides on Causality"<sup>1</sup> I undertook to show, in part, that Maimonides uses the theory of emanation to explain how incorporeal intelligences can causally affect other incorporeal intelligences and bodies as well, but rejects emanation as a cosmogonic theory. One of his major arguments against the emanationists, who hold that the world proceeds from God by necessity, is that they accept the principle that "from what is one and simple only what is one and simple can come to be,"<sup>2</sup> yet at the same time hold that a world of multiplicity necessarily emanates from a principle that is one and simple in all respects.

Maimonides attributes the emanationism he criticizes to Aristotle and his followers; but, more accurately, it is a theory proposed by al-Fārābī and Avicenna.<sup>3</sup> According to the Farabian version, from God, the First, who is one and simple, there necessarily emanates an incorporeal intelligence which is also one and simple. This Intelligence thinks itself, but also its cause. As a result of thinking

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its cause there emanates from it a second intelligence, while as a result of thinking itself there emanates from it the first celestial sphere. This dyadic emanative process continues until it comes to an end with the Agent Intellect and the sublunar world.<sup>4</sup>

The Avicennian version is somewhat more complex, since it rests on Avicenna's schematism of necessary and possible existence. From God, who is one and simple, there necessarily emanates a first incorporeal intelligence which is also one and simple. But while God is necessary through Himself, the emanated intelligence is possible through itself, necessary through its cause. Reflecting upon God, its cause, the first intelligence emanates a second intelligence; reflecting upon itself as necessary, it brings forth the soul of the first celestial sphere; and, reflecting upon itself as possible, it produces the body of the first celestial sphere. This now triadic process continues until, once again, it comes to an end with the Agent Intellect and the sublunar world.<sup>5</sup>

It will be helpful to examine the texts in which Maimonides discusses our principle and presents his critique:

A proposition universally agreed upon, accepted by Aristotle and by all those who have philosophized, reads as follows: It is impossible that anything but a single simple thing (*al-shay al-basit, ha-davar ha-pashut*) should proceed from a simple thing. If the thing is composite, there may proceed from it several things according to the number of simple things of which the compound is composed.<sup>6</sup>

Having provided some illustration for the latter point, he concludes:

In accordance with this proposition, Aristotle [sc. al-Fārābī and Avicenna] says that what first proceeded from God was constituted by a single simple intellect only.

Maimonides' critique is lengthy, but two objections indicate its direction and are crucial to our investigation:

[1] With regard to Aristotle's statement that the first intellect is the cause of the second, the second of the third and so on—even if there were thousands of degrees, the last intellect would indubitably still be simple. How then can composition [that is, multiplicity] have come to exist, the composition existing—as Aristotle believes—in beings in

virtue of necessity? . . . [2] But even if we grant him his guess and conjecture, how can the intellects be a cause of the procession of the spheres from them?

Who are the philosophers that accept the principle "from what is one and simple only what is one and simple can come to be" yet hold that it can form the basis of a valid cosmogonic theory, and who are their opponents? What are the models and arguments of each group? What is the history of this issue within medieval Jewish philosophy? Some of these questions have been discussed by Herbert Davidson and Barry Kogan, and I acknowledge my indebtedness to their studies.<sup>7</sup>

## I

Our problem had its origin in Plotinus. Dissatisfied with a cosmogony that explains the origin of the world on the analogy of the production of an artifact by a craftsman,<sup>8</sup> Plotinus formulated the theory of emanation: The world proceeds from an ultimate principle, the One or the Good, like streams of water from a spring or like sunlight from the sun, like heat from fire, like cold from snow, or like perfume from something scented.<sup>9</sup> The One is absolutely transcendent and beyond the capacities of the human mind.<sup>10</sup> This thought is expressed in a passage from Plato's *Republic* (509B, 8-10) which reads, "the Good is not being (*ousia*), but is beyond it in dignity and surpassing power," which Plotinus often echoes.<sup>11</sup> The One is unconditioned and unlimited. Itself uncaused, it is the cause of things. The categories of space and time do not apply to it. It is not form nor definable. It is not subject to motion or contingency, and it is ineffable. "We must be forgiven for the terms we use," writes Plotinus in a characteristic passage, "if in speaking about Him in order to explain what we mean, we have to use language which we, in strict accuracy, do not admit to be applicable. As if (*hoyon*) must be understood with every term."<sup>12</sup> Above all, the One is simple in all respects, admitting of no multiplicity.

The world, however, is manifold, and Plotinus must explain how multiplicity can proceed from something absolutely one.<sup>13</sup> Even before this he must ask how anything at all can come to be from a

principle that is self-sufficient, without needs or desires. Invoking what has been called "the Principle of Plenitude" and what might be called "the dynamism of existence," Plotinus holds that whatever is perfect produces something other than itself.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the One produces Intelligence (*nous*) as a hypostasis. Like the One, Intelligence is one, yet at the same time it also contains multiplicity:

Intellect is all things together and also not together, because each is a special power. But the whole Intellect encompasses them as a genus does a species and a whole its parts. The powers of seeds give a likeness of what we are talking about: for all the parts are undistinguished in the whole, and their rational forming principles (*logoi*) are as in a central point. (*Enneads* V 9.6; cf. V 4.2.)

Turning to the question that concerns us most directly here, Plotinus asks "how from the One, if it is such as we say it is, anything else, whether a multiplicity or a dyad or a number, comes into existence . . ." (*Enneads* V 1.6). He answers that what is produced must be inferior to its source and this inferiority is manifest in multiplicity. But why does Intelligence proceed from the One? Plotinus answers that the First Intelligence is an image of the One (*Enneads* V 1.7). To be sure the One does not think in the conventional fashion, but in its self-quest it has vision, and this vision is imitated by *Nous*.<sup>15</sup> As intelligence, *Nous* requires intellectual objects. As objects of thought, these are many, as belonging to the First Intelligence they are one:

Intellect is not simple but many; it manifests a composition, of course an intelligible one, and already sees many things. It is certainly also itself an intelligible [it is an object of thought], but it thinks as well [it is an intellect]: so it is already two. (*Enneads* V 4.2; cf. III 8.9)

So the emanative process is the cause of multiplicity. Like its source, the First Intelligence is one; but, having emanated and being intellect, it differs from its source in that it contains multiplicity within itself. This thesis became the mainstay of those who held that necessary emanation is compatible with the principle that "from what is one and simple only what is one and simple can come to be."

The Plotinian theory found a subsequent expression in Proclus'

*Elements of Theology*. While Plotinus' *Enneads* are rather associative, Proclus presents his views in geometric fashion, in propositions and proofs. Like Plotinus, he holds that the world proceeds from the One or Good and that the One is absolutely transcendent. The question of how multiplicity can come from what is absolutely one engages his attention at the very beginning of the *Elements*. Starting with the observation that the world is a multiplicity, Proclus begins with the propositions that "every manifold in some way participates in unity" (Prop. 1) and that "all that participates in unity is both one and not-one" (Prop. 2). With characteristic dialectical subtlety he argues: Since the manifold proceeds from the One it must somehow manifest the principle from which it comes, that is, it must be one; but since it is also derived from the One it *participates* in the One, that is, it is also not-one, that is, multiple. Proclus compares the One and what emanates from it to a root and its branches (Prop. 11; cf. *Enneads* II 8.3). As with Plotinus, "the dynamism of existence" is the cause of emanation (Props. 7 and 25). But Proclus differs from Plotinus in that he interposes henads or gods between the One and the First Intelligence (Props. 113-65, esp. 115).<sup>16</sup>

Like Plotinus, Proclus uses thought as a model to show how *Nous* can be both one and many: In every cognitive act, he argues, there is a knower that is one and objects of knowledge that are many. But since the First Intelligence is its own object of cognition, it is both one and many: "Every intelligence has intuitive knowledge of itself; but the First Intelligence knows itself only, and the intelligence and its object are here numerically one" (Prop. 167).

Neoplatonic theories came to the Islamic and Jewish worlds through Arabic translations of excerpts from Neoplatonic works. Among the key collections: *The Greek Sage*, *The Letter Concerning the Divine Science*, and, most important, the *Theology of Aristotle* (which circulated in two recensions) and *Concerning the Pure Good*, known in its Latin version as *Liber de Causis*. The *Theology* was a paraphrase of books 4, 5 and 6 of Plotinus' *Enneads*. The *Book of the Pure Good* comprised excerpts from Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.<sup>17</sup> Neoplatonism found a further line of development in the *Epistles of the Sincere Brethren*<sup>18</sup> and in the Neoplatonizing Aristotelianism of al-Fārābī and Avicenna.

The self-conscious human intellect is at the root of Avicenna's metaphysical and cosmogonic speculations (*al-Shifā*, *De Anima*, I 1).<sup>19</sup> This intellect has an immediate intuition of being and a concomitant intuition of the distinctions between essence and existence, and necessary and possible existence. That which is necessary through itself is its own cause, that which is possible through itself requires a cause in order to exist. From a world of possible existences Avicenna argues to the existence of a being necessary through itself and one and simple. This being is God (*al-Shifā*, *Metaphysics*, I 6 and 7).<sup>20</sup>

To explain how the world came to be—in Scriptural language, how it was created—and how a world of multiplicity can derive from a being that is one and simple, Avicenna turns to the Neoplatonic theory of emanation, interpreted in accordance with his own metaphysical scheme. As in the Greek Neoplatonists, God, the One, is absolutely transcendent, and the world emanates from Him by necessity. Reflecting upon Himself with a reflection wholly different from human thought, ruled by His own goodness, God emanates a first substance which is one. This substance cannot be composed of matter and form. It must therefore be an intelligence. Reflecting upon itself, this First Intelligence produces multiplicity. As we have already seen, reflecting upon its necessary cause, the First Intelligence emanates the intellect of the second celestial sphere, reflecting upon itself as necessary it produces the soul of the first celestial sphere, and reflecting upon itself as possible it brings forth the body of the first celestial sphere. It is here that Avicenna combines the notions of necessary and possible existence with the theory of emanation to explain how a world of multiplicity can come to be from a being totally one.<sup>21</sup>

The Avicennian (and Farabian) emanationist scheme found its critic in al-Ghazālī. In his *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*)<sup>22</sup> he offers one general and five specific arguments against it.<sup>23</sup> The burden of his proofs is to insist that the principle "from what is one and simple only what is one and simple can come to be" must be construed strictly. It follows that the Avicennian scheme cannot explain the origin of multiplicity. Of al-Ghazālī's

arguments against necessary emanation, let us consider the two that are reflected in the Maimonidean critique.

According to the view of the Philosophers, the first argument goes, multiplicity can come to be in one of four ways: (1) through a difference in acting powers—a man, for example, commits one kind of act through the power of passion and another through the power of anger; (2) through a difference in the matters on which an agent acts—the sun whitens a garment, blackens the face of a man, melts certain substances and hardens others; (3) through a difference in instruments—the same carpenter performs different acts with a saw, an ax and an awl; or (4) through mediation (*tawassuʿ*), that is, by the interposition of an intermediary between agent and object. The first alternative is inapplicable to God, since His unity precludes a differentiation of powers within Him. The second and third are impossible, since they place matters or instruments on a par with God. This leaves mediation. But even this is impossible. For if the philosophers are correct in holding that "from something one and simple only something one and simple can come to be" it would follow that the world consists of unitary beings, not of anything composite. But this conflicts with the philosophers' thesis that within the world bodies are composed of form and matter, men and even celestial beings of soul and body (*Tahāfut*, Bouyges, 110; cf. Van Den Bergh, 104).

Another of al-Ghazālī's arguments important for the Maimonidean critique is that an act of thinking cannot produce a material substance. Let us perform a thought experiment. Assume that there exists a certain man who knows himself and his Creator. If a material substance can follow from an act of thought, it would be possible that in thinking of himself as possible this man could bring forth a celestial sphere, another intelligence, and a soul. But who would subscribe to such a conclusion? (*Tahāfut*, Bouyges, 129-30; cf. Van Den Bergh, 150). These and other arguments bring al-Ghazālī to the conclusion that only a volitional being can be a cause of multiplicity—a point on which Maimonides seems to agree, at least in part. With these backgrounds in mind, let us now consider the influence on medieval Jewish philosophy of our principle and its critique.

## II

Neoplatonism had at least a threefold history within medieval Jewish philosophy. Some writers, like Isaac Israeli and Solomon ibn Gabirol, developed their philosophy along more or less strict Neoplatonic lines. Others, like Abraham ibn Daud, accepted the Neoplatonic Aristotelianism of al-Fārābī and Avicenna. And still others—Maimonides belongs here—followed al-Ghazālī in his critique. Many Jewish philosophers were troubled by the necessitarian aspects of Neoplatonism. To remove this difficulty some introduced the divine will within the emanationist scheme, although it is not always clear how a given philosopher understood this will. Other Jewish philosophers relied on the so-called Pseudo-Empedoclean writings and a work by an unknown author, whom Alexander Altmann and Samuel Stern called "Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist."<sup>24</sup> These works interposed universal matter, or universal form and universal matter, between God and Intellect.

Isaac Israeli (d. 955) was the first medieval Jewish Neoplatonist. His views, scattered throughout his writings, are not always clear. Altmann and Stern published some new texts and translated and systematized his writings,<sup>25</sup> showing that he was primarily influenced by al-Kindī and Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist.<sup>26</sup> Committed to the Scriptural account of creation, Israeli describes God<sup>27</sup> as the "Creator" (*al-bāri'*) and argues for creation out of nothing. In characteristic Neoplatonic fashion, Israeli holds that God is transcendent, not comprehensible by the human mind. Yet, as Altmann pointed out, negative theology seems to be absent from Israeli's account. Acting without needs or desires, God, through his goodness and love, created the world. In a departure from the Neoplatonic scheme and apparently to counter its necessitarian aspect, Israeli ascribes the creation of the world, at least its first stage, to the "power and the will" of God (*Book of Substances* IV 5r, 86). Affirming creation out of nothing, Israeli ascribes the creation of universal matter and form (wisdom) and of the Intellect to the "power and will" (*qudra* and *'irāda*) of God. For Israeli, unlike Ibn Gabirol later on, power and will are attributes of God, not separate hypostases. But the world subsequent to the First Intellect proceeds from it not by free creation but by necessary emanation.

Clearly Israeli tries to strike a balance between volitional

creation and necessary emanation. Under the influence of Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist and the Pseudo-Empedoclean writings, he modifies the Plotinian and Proclean schemes.<sup>28</sup> Intellect is no longer the first hypostasis proceeding from God; universal matter and form emanate first. Alluding to the problem of many out of one, Israeli describes universal, or first matter as "the first substance which subsists in itself and is the substratum of diversity" (*Mantua Text* 1, 119). Such matter is "the universal substance which is one in number, exists by itself and is the substratum of diversity absolutely" (*Book of Substances* IV 5v, 86). Diversity is provided by universal form, which Israeli identifies with perfect wisdom, the pure radiance and clear splendor (*Mantua Text* 1, 119) or "the light created by the power of God without mediator" (*Book of Definitions* 2, 25-26). In some passages it appears that universal matter and form are constitutive principles of Intellect as first hypostasis; but on balance Israeli seems to hold that they precede Intellect in the cosmogonic scheme.

In maintaining that universal matter and form are the first emanated hypostases, Israeli and others like him provide an alternative model for the emanation of multiplicity from what is one and simple. The new model is based on a reworking of Aristotle's conception of substance. According to Aristotle, primary substances in the sublunar world are one and individual and are composed of form and matter. Form makes a substance what it is, while matter serves as substratum of the form and principle of individuation. Israeli and his sources reverse this scheme. It is now the matter that gives a thing its determinate nature, while form is incidental to matter and serves as the principle of diversification: The bronze statue is bronze that happens to be a statue not a statue that happens to be bronze. With universal matter and form present as first hypostases, created by God's free act, Israeli seems to feel that there need be no difficulty in accounting for the origin of diversity.

There is no conclusive evidence that Solomon ibn Gabirol (d. 1058), the Avicbron of the Latins, knew the writings of Israeli, but it is clear that he was heir to the same Neoplatonic tradition upon which Israeli relied. Ibn Gabirol presented his ideas not only in his famous philosophic work, *Fons Vitae*, but also in a religious poem, *The Kingly Crown*.<sup>29</sup> There are differences between the two works, but their cosmogonic scheme is essentially the same. Ibn Gabirol

affirms the transcendence of God; but, unlike Israeli, he holds that God is known through negation, as is clear from a number of stanzas dealing with God's attributes in the *Kingly Crown*. Thus:

Thou art One and in the mystery of Thy Oneness the wise of heart are astonished, for they know not what it is.

Thou art One and Thy Oneness neither diminishes nor increases, neither lacks nor exceeds.

Thou art One, but not as the One that is counted or owned, for number and change cannot reach Thee, nor attribute nor form . . . (p. 28)

Ibn Gabirol differs again from Israeli in that he posits a first hypostasis (perhaps two) between God—called in *Fons Vitae*, *essentia prima*—and universal matter and universal form. He variously calls this hypostasis "Wisdom" (*sapientia*) or "Logos" (*verbum*) or "Will" (*voluntas*). In the *Kingly Crown*, "wisdom" (*hokhmah*) and "will" (*hefez*) are distinct, successive hypostatic emanations:

Thou art Wise, and wisdom, the source of life, flows from Thee (*mimekha noba'at*), and every man is too brutish to know Thy wisdom.

Thou art Wise, prior to all pre-existence, and wisdom was with Thee as a nurseling.

Thou are Wise, and from Thy wisdom Thou didst send forth (*'ozalta*) a predestined will (*hefez mezuman*) and made it as an artisan and craftsman to draw the stream of being from the void [nothing]. (32-33)

In the religious poem at least, Ibn Gabirol appears to maintain voluntary creation out of nothing. But the relation between "Logos," "Wisdom" and "Will" is less clear in *Fons Vitae*. In most passages Ibn Gabirol places "Will" between the First Essence and universal matter and form. For example, when the student inquires concerning the objects of knowledge, the master informs him that they are: (1) matter and form, (2) Will, and (3) the First Being (I 7). Similarly, toward the end of the Fifth Treatise, Ibn Gabirol speaks largely about will (V 36-40; cf. I 2). But there are other passages where he identifies "will" with "acting logos" (*verbum agens*) or "wisdom."

Thus, speaking once again of the three kinds of knowledge, he now describes the second as "knowledge of the acting logos, that is, will" (V 36). In another passage he speaks of "will, that is, wisdom" (V 42). So it is not too clear how Ibn Gabirol conceives of creation in *Fons Vitae*. He speaks of creation by will in several places (e.g., V 36-40), suggesting that creation took place through a volitional act. Yet he also uses models for creation like the flowing forth of water from a fountain, the reflection of light in a mirror, and the issuance of human speech (V 41, 43), suggesting that creation should be understood as necessary emanation. Whatever the solution, it is clear for our purposes, that Ibn Gabirol posits "will" (and/or "wisdom") and universal matter and universal form as intermediaries between God ("the First Essence") and Intellect in order to explain how multiplicity can come to be from a unitary being.<sup>30</sup>

Abraham Ibn Daud (d. ca. 1180), generally considered the first Jewish Aristotelian, brings the Avicennian solution into Jewish philosophic thought, devoting to it a chapter of his *The Exalted Faith*.<sup>31</sup> Ibn Daud maintains that God is absolutely one and identifies Him with Avicenna's necessarily existent. He holds that divine attributes must be understood in terms of negations. Invoking the schematism we have already met in al-Ghazālī's critique of Avicenna, Ibn Daud considers the four ways in which multiplicity might come to be from a unity and concludes that the world's multiplicity must arise through mediation. Following the approach developed by Avicenna, Ibn Daud reasons that Intellect, called "angel" in the Torah, proceeds from God "without an intermediary" (*beli 'emza'i*) (152, 9-11). Like its source, this universal Intellect is one, but "its oneness is not like the oneness of the First" (152b, 12). The First is necessarily existent through Himself, but Intellect is only possibly existent through itself (152b, 12-153a, 2). Possible through itself, necessary through another, Intellect is composed of something *like* matter and form. Its possible existence is *like* matter, its necessary existence from another is *like* form (153a, 2-5). But although he holds that Intellect is composed of something *like* matter and form, Ibn Daud distances himself from Ibn Gabirol. He does not interpose universal matter and universal form between God and Intellect or hold that even incorporeal beings are composed of matter and form. Probably influenced by the Aristotelian teaching that

incorporeal intelligences cannot be composed of matter and form, he writes:

Ibn Gabirol, in the fifth treatise of his book, tried to establish the existence of hyle [matter] and form [in the incorporeal intelligences]. He did not explain that [what] they have is something like hyle and something like form. Rather, he ordained that they have matter and form, and when he tried to establish this, he could not. (153a, 6-9)

Ibn Daud continues in the Avicennian mode by holding that from the First Intellect there emanates another, as well as the body and soul of the first celestial sphere, and so forth until the procession ends with the Agent Intellect and the sublunar world.

This brings us back to Maimonides. His critique is clearly indebted to al-Ghazālī's *Incoherence of the Philosophers*.<sup>32</sup> He adopts al-Ghazālī's argument that even if it is admitted that other substances emanate from God, it follows that these substances are simple, so that, at best, the universe is an aggregate of simple substances. Similarly, Maimonides' argument that a material substance cannot result from intellectual reflection is the fifth of al-Ghazālī's more specific arguments.<sup>33</sup>

If necessary emanation cannot explain how a world of multiplicity can come to be from a being absolutely one and simple, is there a theory that can provide an adequate account? Agreeing in part with al-Ghazālī, Maimonides turns to volitional causality for a solution. He writes: "Every agent, acting in virtue of purpose and will and not in virtue of its nature, accomplishes many different acts" (*Guide* II 22, 317). But Maimonides does not have in mind a divine will like the human will. In his discussion of divine attributes he rules out the view that will in God is a disposition.<sup>34</sup> To hold that God created the world through his volition solved the problem that those who believed in necessary emanation were unable to solve. But it must be added that Maimonides also differed from al-Ghazālī. For al-Ghazālī denied the principle of necessary causality altogether, admitting divine volition as the only cause, while Maimonides followed the Aristotelian tradition in holding that necessary causes are operative in the sublunar world.<sup>35</sup>

### III

One more opinion concerning our problem must engage our attention, that of Averroes (d. 1198), Maimonides' Muslim contemporary. As Davidson<sup>36</sup> and Kogan<sup>37</sup> have shown, Averroes, in his *Epitome of the Metaphysics*, accepted a modified version of the emanationism of al-Fārābī and Avicenna, but—possibly as the result of having read al-Ghazālī's *Incoherence*—revised his opinion in the annotations to the *Epitome*, and in the *Middle and Long Commentaries on the Metaphysics*. He now abandoned the theory of emanation; and instead of distinguishing between God and the mover of the outermost celestial sphere, he now identifies the two.

Through the Hebrew translations of his works,<sup>38</sup> Averroes' opinions became widely known in Jewish philosophic circles. In fact, next to Maimonides himself, he became the most important philosophic authority during the post-Maimonidean period. In the discussion of our problem his critique of al-Fārābī and Avicenna as well as his own views play an important role. Whatever other Averroean sources may be at work, it is clear that the Third Discussion of the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* was central. Here only a sampling from three of the major participants in the discussion can be presented.

Shem Tov ben Joseph ibn Falaquera (d. 1295) addresses the issue in his *Moreh ha-Moreh*<sup>39</sup> (completed in 1280), and his account is taken over verbatim by Joseph ibn Kaspi (d. 1340) in his *Amudei Kesef*.<sup>40</sup> Both works are commentaries on the *Guide*; and the occasion for the discussion is *Guide* II 22, the chapter we have already highlighted. Ibn Falaquera investigates the origin of our problem, what he takes to be a Farabian-Avicennian misunderstanding, and the correct solution proposed by Averroes. Citing Porphyry,<sup>41</sup> Ibn Falaquera traces the origin of our problem to the philosophers of Greece. Having observed that whatever comes to be requires a cause and that whatever is moved requires a mover, they came to the conclusion that there must exist a unitary being that is the ultimate cause of all that comes to be and the ultimate mover of everything moved. But having agreed on the principle, they disagreed concerning its interpretation. Aristotle and his follower Averroes understood it correctly; Porphyry, al-Fārābī and Avicenna

understood it incorrectly. Invoking the authority of Averroes, Ibn Falaquera explains that the error of al-Fārābī and Avicenna arose because the two attempted to accommodate the opinion of the philosophers to that of the masses. Holding that the philosophic view that the world is eternal and that the mover of the outermost sphere is the First Principle is incompatible with the belief that the world was created by God, al-Fārābī and Avicenna tried to effect a compromise by differentiating between God and the mover of the outermost sphere. Having made this distinction, they explained creation by holding that the world came to be from God by means of emanation. But with the acceptance of this theory, the Ghazalian critique applies: how can multiplicity come to be from what is absolutely one and simple? Moreover, the Farabian-Avicennian account deprives God of one of His noblest attributes, as the cause of motion.

In identifying God with the mover of the outermost celestial sphere, Averroes provides the correct account. The theory of emanation is now no longer needed. By the Averroean account the world is eternal and self-contained and "creation," correctly understood, becomes an account of how God, the mover of the outermost sphere, is the ultimate cause of the changes and motions within the world. Averroes and his Jewish followers do not seem to be troubled by these conclusions since, as they see it, they contain the true, that is, philosophic interpretation of the Scriptural motif of creation. The Averroean scheme provides the correct solution:<sup>42</sup> The world consists of incorporeal intelligences that are one and simple and of bodies composed of matter and form. The incorporeal intelligences "ascend to" (*ya'alu el*), i.e., are causally dependent on the unitary intellect that moves the outermost sphere; bodies within the world "ascend to" the composite celestial body. Thus, from what is one and simple only what is one and simple comes to be; what is composite comes only from what is composite.

Isaac Albalag (late thirteenth century) translated al-Ghazālī's *Opinions (Intentions) of the Philosophers* from Arabic into Hebrew and added critical notes entitled, rather tellingly, *Correction of the Opinions* (1292) to his translation.<sup>43</sup> Albalag contends that al-Ghazālī intended to present the opinions of the philosophers (sc. Avicenna) in order to refute them afterwards, but in the end accepted them (5:5-9; 21). Albalag's discussion of the origin of our problem

is more extensive than Ibn Falaquera's and contains views not found in the *Moreh ha-Moreh*: Ignorant of the methods of demonstration and employing dialectical arguments, ancient thinkers held that the world is governed by two principles, good and evil. They reasoned that good and evil are opposites and cannot come from the same principle. Subsequently, however, philosophers began to realize that everything, including good and evil, is derived from a unitary principle, that is, from God. Having acknowledged that the world depends on an ultimate being that is one, and recognizing that the world is multiple, Aristotle and the Sages of Israel alike<sup>44</sup> agreed that from something one and simple a world of multiplicity comes to be (59:24-60:3; 204).

The notion that "from what is one and simple only what is one and simple can come to be" was introduced by some unnamed ancient "philosophizers" through an error of logic. Noting that a unitary effect can come only from a unitary cause, these "philosophizers" erroneously thought that this proposition is convertible: that what is multiple cannot come from what is one and simple. It was this error that presented them with their problem (60:3-10; 205). For a solution they turned to the theory of emanation. The "philosophizers" did not distinguish between an agent that acts through its essence and an agent that acts through an attribute added to its essence. An agent of the latter kind can produce only one effect: heat as an attribute added to the essence of fire can only produce heat. But an agent of the former kind—an intellect for example—can produce many effects (55:17-21; 198).

Albalag mentions in passing that al-Ghazālī raised many questions concerning our principle in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (Albalag calls it *Shibush ha-Pilosophim*), but his arguments differ from those of al-Ghazālī mentioned earlier in this paper.<sup>45</sup> Albalag finds contradictions in al-Ghazālī's views as presented in the *Opinions of the Philosophers*. Al-Ghazālī accepts the principle that "from what is one and simple only what is one and simple can come to be," yet holds that multiplicity can come to be from something one and simple. For example, God knows the species of existing things in unitary fashion, yet from this divine knowledge the multiplicity of species existing in the world comes to be. Again, the proponents of the principle deny that multiplicity can come from God, yet admit that a multiplicity of forms can come to



be from the Agent Intellect or Giver of Forms—which, however different from God, is still a unitary intellect. Even if it is admitted that from the forms residing in the Agent Intellect there proceed the embodied forms existing in the sublunar world, it can still be asked how from a single form in the Agent Intellect there proceeds the multiplicity of forms of individual substances belonging to a given species (55:2-16; 197-198).

Albalag, like Averroes, identifies God the Creator with the mover of the outermost celestial sphere (29:9-10; 132 and 61:17-19; 30) and interprets creation as an eternal act. Creation without beginning or end, he argues, is superior to creation that has a beginning in time, and for this reason should be ascribed to God. To create, in its most proper sense, he argues, means to bring something from potentiality to actuality—and potentiality requires an underlying matter. Since matter exists only in the sublunar world, God can be said to be the Creator only insofar as He is the ultimate cause of the changes that take place within that world (62:10-18).

While Ibn Falaquera still tries to find some interpretation of our principle, Albalag rejects it altogether. So he has only to show how a unitary principle can be the cause of multiplicity. This he does in several ways, all based on the supposition that the world is eternal. Since all the corporeal effects (motions) within the world are dependent on the motion of the outermost sphere, one such argument goes, and God is the cause of the motion of that sphere, God can be said to be the cause of the many motions within the world (29:9-12; 132). According to another argument, the essences of the incorporeal intelligences consist of what each intelligence knows of God. As the unitary object of the thoughts of these intelligences, God is their cause (63:7-16; 99). According to still another argument, God, as the form of the world, may be compared to the form that makes a man what he is. Just as each of the limbs and organs of man has its own structure and motion, yet each is dependent on the human form, so each of the celestial spheres has its own structure and motion, yet all are dependent on God, the form of the world (96:14-97:9; 95-96). From these and similar arguments it follows that God is the first efficient, formal and final cause of the world (92:8-11; 102).

Of the three post-Maimonideans, or post-Averroean, considered in this paper, Moses of Narbonne, known as Narboni (d. 1362), most closely follows Averroes in discussing our problem. Most of what

he has to say in his Commentary on *Guide* II 22 consists of quotations from, paraphrases of, or elaborations on the Third Discussion in the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*.<sup>46</sup> He tells his reader: "And I saw fit to collect in this place whatever words of Averroes in the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* are appropriate, and I shall expand the explanation" (34b, 36-37).

Narboni's account of the origin of our problem is, with one addition<sup>47</sup> and some deletions,<sup>48</sup> an almost literal translation of a passage in Averroes' *Incoherence of the Incoherence*: Ancient Greek thinkers at first supposed that there are two ultimate principles, those of good and evil, but through dialectical arguments they came to realize that there must be one ultimate principle, since all things tend toward an end, the order existing in the world. This order is like that which an army receives by having a single leader or like that which a state receives by having a single ruler (34b, 37-51).<sup>49</sup> Having accepted that there is one ultimate principle and holding additionally that from something one and simple only something one and simple can come to be, the ancient philosophers wondered how this unitary principle can be the cause of multiplicity. The question was answered in three ways: Anaxagoras held that multiplicity comes to be through matter; some unnamed philosophers believed that it comes to be through instruments; and Plato affirmed that it comes to be through intermediaries. While among these opinions that of Plato is the most adequate, it still cannot explain how from an incorporeal intelligence matter can come to be (34b, 51-35a, 6).<sup>50</sup>

The difficulty arose, continues Narboni, because the ancient philosophers and their Muslim followers, al-Fārābī and Avicenna, believed that God, the First Agent, acts like a simple, unitary agent in the perceptible world. To be sure, a simple agent in the perceptible world can only have one effect, but the First Agent can have many effects. One who distinguishes correctly between the perceptible, material world and the intelligible, immaterial world will understand that bodies composed of matter and form "ascend to" (*ya'alu el*), that is, are causally dependent on the (composite) celestial body,<sup>51</sup> while the incorporeal intelligences "ascend to" the unitary First Principle which is their formal, final and efficient cause (35a, 6-11).<sup>52</sup>

Narboni is primarily concerned with explaining how multiplicity can come to be from a unitary principle, but he takes account of the

rival opinions by showing that the principle "from what is one and simple only what is one and simple can come to be" correctly understood is valid and that matter, instruments and intermediaries all have some role in the origin of multiplicity. To explain how multiplicity can arise from a unitary principle he turns to an Averroean argument. There exist in the world composite substances such as those composed of matter and form or of the four elements, whose existence comes to be through the conjunction of their component parts. The bestower of conjunction is, therefore, also the bestower of existence. But since everything conjoined is conjoined only through ■ unity within it and this unity is ultimately dependent on a unitary First Principle, it follows that this principle is the cause of both unity and multiplicity. It is the cause of unity insofar as the unities existing in the world are dependent on it, and it is the cause of multiplicity insofar as these unities receive it in accordance with the diversity of their component parts (35a, 30-40).<sup>53</sup>

Refining this analysis and, once again, using an Averroean source, Narboni undertakes to show how the various multiplicities in the world come to be with the aid of intermediaries, matter and instruments.<sup>54</sup> Each incorporeal intelligence is a unitary substance, but each, in accordance with its rank, has a different understanding of the First Principle. This difference accounts for their multiplicity. The differences among the celestial spheres result from their having different causes. Each sphere has its own mover (efficient cause), its own form, its own matter and, through its acts in the world, its own purpose. Here the reliance is on instrumentalities. Cautiously Narboni adds that if the celestial body possesses matter, it is a matter of a special kind,<sup>55</sup> and that the philosophers did not believe that the celestial bodies existed for the sake of their effects in the sublunar world.<sup>56</sup> Turning to the sublunar world, Narboni, still following Averroes, finds that the differences among the four elements depend on the differences in their matter and on their closeness to or remoteness from the celestial bodies, their movers.<sup>57</sup> Generation and corruption, of course, depend on the motion of the sun along the ecliptic. When the sun approaches the sublunar world it causes generation; when it recedes it causes corruption.<sup>58</sup>

Summarizing how multiplicity comes to be in the sublunar world and attempting to do justice to the alternative accounts, Narboni states that differences in that world arise from four causes: difference of

agents, difference of matter, difference of instruments, and difference of intermediaries. These intermediaries (the heavenly bodies) transmit the acts of the First Agent without its direct interference. Apparently somewhat hard pressed to find room for instruments in this scheme, Narboni states that intermediaries are similar to instruments. To illustrate how differences can arise through differences in the recipients and how some differentiated things can be the cause of others, Narboni invokes the example of color. Color in the air differs from color in the eye, and again from color in the common sense, in the imagination, and finally in the memory (35b, 2-17).<sup>59</sup>

#### Notes

1. In S. Pines and Y. Yovel, eds., *Maimonides and Philosophy*, 157-72. See also, A. Hyman, "Maimonides on Creation and Emanation," in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. J. F. Wippel (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 59-61.
2. The principle is found in two versions: (1) "from what is one only what is one can come to be," and (2) "from what is simple only what is simple can come to be." Except for direct quotations, I have combined the two versions in this paper.
3. Maimonides' account and critique applies to both philosophers, but there is evidence that it is primarily directed against Avicenna: (1) while he rejects Avicenna's account of emanationism as a cosmogonic theory, he accepts his cosmology in preference to that of al-Fārābī (*Guide* II 4); (2) he accepts the Avicennian distinction between necessary and possible existence (*Guide* II, Introduction, Props. 19 and 20; II 1); (3) the Ghazalian critique of necessary emanation, to which Maimonides is indebted, aims primarily at the Avicennian version; (4) Shem Tob writes in his commentary on *Guide* II 22: "... and the Master thought that concerning these matters the opinion of Avicenna is that of Aristotle"; *Guide* (Warsaw, 1872; repr. Jerusalem, 1959-1960) 2.49r.
4. *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, II 3, 100-05, 362-67; *Al-Fārābī's The Political Regime (Al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya)* ed., F. M. Najjar (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1964), 52 l. 5 - 55 l. 5. The German tr. in *Die Staatsleitung von Alfarabi*, eds., F. Dieterici and F. Brönnle (Leiden: Brill, 1904), 28-32, is based on an inferior text. See also A.-R. Badawi, *Histoire de la philosophie en Islam* (Paris: Vrin, 1972) 2.538-45; Herbert Davidson, "Alfarabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect

- in the *Cuzari* and Hallevi's Theory of Causality," *Revue des Études Juives* 131 (1972): 354-57; "Averroes on the Active Intellect as a Cause of Existence," 195; *Proofs for Eternity*, 206-07; T. A. Druart, "Alfarabi and Emanationism," in J. F. Wippel, ed., *Studies in Medieval Philosophy* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 23-43; M. Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 136-38. The account given here is from *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*. But in a more refined analysis in the same work (III 7) he holds that each celestial sphere has its own form, variously described as intellect or soul, which is distinct from the incorporeal intelligence governing the sphere (120-25, 376-77). But this does not change the dyadic character of the scheme. According to al-Fārābī's cosmology, God is followed by ten incorporeal intelligences, governing, in descending order, the spheres of the diurnal motion (the all-encompassing sphere), the fixed stars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon; the tenth, the Agent Intellect, governs the sublunar world.
5. See S. M. Afnan, *Avicenna: His Life and Works* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958), 132-35; Badawi, *Histoire* 2.648-56; Fakhry, 172-77; A.-M. Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sīnā*, 201-59; B. S. Kogan, "Averroes and the Theory of Emanation," 384-87; *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation*, 248-49; S. H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, rev. ed. (Boulder: Shambhala, 1978), 197-214. Avicenna's order of the celestial spheres is the same as al-Fārābī's, except that he places Venus and Mercury above the Sun. For the controversy over the two planets' positions, see Maimonides, *Guide* II 9.
  6. *Guide* II 22, 317. The following versions of the *Guide* were used: Arabic: ed. I. Joel (Jerusalem, 1930-31); Hebrew tr., Samuel Ibn Tibbon, ed., Y. Even Shemu'el (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1981-82). Page references here are to the Pines translation.
  7. See notes 4 and 5 above.
  8. See A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, 239-41; D. J. O'Meara, *Structure hiérarchique dans la pensée de Plotin*, 68-69, 71-73, 78-79; R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 63.
  9. *Enneads* III 8.10; V 1.6; cf. V 4.1. For the Greek, *Plotini Opera*, eds., P. Henry and H. R. Schwyzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964-82), 3 vols. Unless otherwise noted, the translations cited here are Armstrong's. See also his *Cambridge History*, 236-49; E. Bréhier, *Philosophy of Plotinus*, 47-52; J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, 66-83.

10. Rist 25-26.
11. See Bréhier, 134-35. The allusions to this phrase have two versions: (1) "the One is beyond being," and (2) "the One is beyond Intellect." See "Index Fontium," *Plotini Opera* 3.357.
12. *Enneads* VI 8.13; Armstrong, *Plotinus*, 56.
13. See Armstrong, *Cambridge History* 241-43; Bréhier, 136-41; Wallis, 57.
14. *Enneads* V 4.1-2; V 1.6; V 2.1; cf. III 8.10, 5.394, n. 1; see O'Meara, 42-44; Rist, 66-71; Wallis, 61-66. Wallis mentions Lovejoy's "Principle of Plenitude" on 64-65.
15. The text is problematic; see Armstrong on *Enneads* V 1.7, 5.34, n. 1.
16. See *Elements*, 257-60 (Dodds' commentary); Wallis, 147-53. In one passage Proclus writes: "the One is prior to Intelligence." Prop. 20. But this passage occurs before the section in which he discusses the henads.
17. See, A.-R. Badawi, *La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe* (Paris: Vrin, 1968), 46-73; Fakhry 32-44; J. Kraemer, "Neoplatonism," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 12.958-62; F. E. Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 56-57, 72-74. An English translation of the Arabic excerpts of the *Enneads* appears in Henry and Schwyzer, 2; comparative tables of the Greek and Arabic are found at 2.489-501.
18. See, I. R. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), 32-36; Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *The Case of the Animals vs. Man before the King of the Jinn*, tr., Goodman, 57-58, 71, 110-12, 137-38, 171-75.
19. Arabic: *Avicenna's De Anima*, ed. F. Rahman (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 16; Arabic and French: *Psychologie d'Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne) d'après son oeuvre Aṣ-Ṣīfā*, ed and tr. Ján Bakoš (Prague: Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 1956), 12-13. See also, *al-Shifā'*, *De Anima* V 7; Rahman, 225; Bakoš, 181. S. M. Afnan, 150-52; Goichon, 13-15.
20. Ed., G. C. Anawati, et al. (Cairo, 1960); tr., Avicenne, *La Métaphysique du Shifā'*, (Paris: Vrin, 1978-85). For the essence-existence distinction, Afnan, 115-21; Goichon, 130-48; P. Morewedge, "Philosophical Analysis and Ibn Sīnā's 'Essence-Existence' Distinction," *JAOS* 92 (1972): 425-35; F. Rahman, "Essence and Existence in Avicenna," *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 4 (London: Warburg Institute, 1958): 1-16, "Essence and Existence in Ibn Sīnā: The Myth and the Reality." For necessity and possibility, Afnan, 121-26; Fakhry, 142-56; Goichon, 151-80; G. Hourani, "Ibn Sīnā on Necessary and Possible Existence"; G. Smith, "Avicenna and the

- Possibles," *New Scholasticism* 17 (1943): 340-57.
21. *Shifā'*, *Metaphysics*, IX 4, especially, Arabic: 405, l. 9 - 407, l. 8; French: 2.140-42.
  22. Arabic: Algazel, *Tahāfot al-Falāsifat*, ed., M. Bouyges (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1927); English: largely in *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, tr., Van Den Bergh.
  23. Bouyges, 110-30; cf. Van Den Bergh, 104-50. See Davidson, *Proofs*, 206-09; Kogan, "Averroes and the Theory of Emanation," 392-93 and n. 3; Goodman, "Did al-Ghazālī Deny Causality," *Studia Islamica* 47 (1978): 83-120.
  24. See Stern's "Ibn Hasdāy's Neoplatonist: A Neoplatonic Treatise and its Influence on Isaac Israeli and the Longer Version of the Theology of Aristotle."
  25. A. Altmann and S. M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli*; page references below are to their translation.
  26. *Israeli*, xi-xiv.
  27. *Israeli*, 151-58.
  28. *Israeli*, 159-64.
  29. For the *Fons Vitae*, Latin: ed. C. Baeumker; Modern Hebrew translation from the Latin: J. Blaustein (Tel Aviv: Maḥbarot le-Sifrut, 1950). For the poem, *Keter Malkhut*, ed., I. A. Zeidman (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1950); *The Kingly Crown*, tr., Bernard Lewis (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1961); page references below are to the Lewis translation.
  30. For a different reading of Ibn Gabirol's idea of Will, see J. Schlanger, *La Philosophie de Salomon ibn Gabirol*, 277-98.
  31. Ibn Daud, *Ha-Emunah ha-ramah (The Exalted Faith)* II 4.3, Samuelson keyed to the pagination of the manuscript, as cited here; see also Samuelson's summary, 169-72.
  32. See L. E. Goodman, "Three Meanings of the Idea of Creation."
  33. A simplified version of the argument appears in Saadiah's *Emunot ve-De'ot*, I 3; ed., S. Landauer (Leiden, 1880), 46, ll. 8-12; ed. with modern Hebrew tr., J. Kafih (Jerusalem: Sura, 1969/70), 49; medieval Hebrew tr., Judah ibn Tibbon (Josefow, 1888; repr., Jerusalem: Maqor, 1962), 31b; tr., A. Altmann, in *Three Jewish Philosophers* (New York: Athenaeum, 1969), 67. The argument also appears in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* IV 25, eds., D. H. Baneth and H. Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977), 183-84; Hebrew: ed. A. Zifroni (Tel Aviv: Maḥbarot le-Sifrut, 1960), 267-68; tr., H. Hirschfeld (New York: Schocken, 1964), 238-39.
  34. See *Guide*, I 56, 131; II 18, 300-01.

35. See *Guide*, II 22, 319-20. For this paragraph, see Hyman, "Maimonides on Creation," 54-59.
36. Davidson, "Averroes on the Active Intellect," 192-201.
37. Kogan, "Averroes on the Theory of Emanation," 384-404; *Averroes on the Metaphysics of Causation*, 248-255.
38. See H. A. Wolfson, "Plan for the Publication of a *Corpus Commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem*," *Speculum* 38 (1963): 88-104; repr. in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, 1.430-54.
39. Ed. M. L. Bisliches (Pressburg, 1837; reprinted in *Sheloshah Qadmonei Mefarshei ha-Moreh* Jerusalem, 1961). This edition as well as those of Ibn Kaspi's 'Amudei Kesef and Narboni's Commentary on Maimonides' *Guide*, which appear in the same volume, are unsatisfactory and must be supplemented by manuscript materials.
40. Ed. S. Werbluner (Frankfurt a. M., 1848). On 'Amudei Kesef in Kaspi's literary work, see B. Mesch, *Studies in Joseph Ibn Kaspi* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 52, n. 75. For another instance of Kaspi's indebtedness to Ibn Falaquera, see Mesch, 98, n. 99.
41. See *Moreh ha-Moreh*, 104-06. Ibn Falaquera's "quotation" from Porphyry is rather strange. It is probably based on Averroes' observation that Porphyry, who was not a very proficient philosopher, accepted the view that multiplicity came to be through intermediates. See *Incoherence of the Incoherence* III, Bouyges, 259-60; Van Den Bergh, 1.154 and 2.100 (note on 154.6). It seems likely that Ibn Falaquera used Averroes' comment to find an "ancestor" for the Farabian-Avicennian error. Cf. Badawi, *Histoire* 2.814. How the late Medieval Jewish philosophers used their sources deserves further study. For a good example, see, A. J. Ivry, "Moses of Narbonne's 'Treatise on the Perfection of the Soul': A Methodological and Conceptual Analysis," *JQR*, N.S. 57 (1965-66): 271-79.
42. This argument consists of a literal translation of a small section of *Incoherence of the Incoherence* III, Bouyges, 175-76; Van Den Bergh, 105-06.
43. See, M. Steinschneider, *Die Hebräischen Übersetzungen* (Berlin, 1893; Graz: Akademische Druck-und Verlagsanstalt, 1956), 299-306. Albalag did not complete the translation; it was finished by Isaac ibn Pollegar. *Sefer Tiqqun ha-De'ot*, ed. G. Vajda (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1973). A French translation of most of the work appears in G. Vajda, *Isaac Albalag: Averroïste juif, traducteur et annotateur d'al-Ghazālī* (Paris: Vrin, 1960). Of the numbers cited parenthetically here, those before the semicolon refer to Vajda's edition; those after, to his translation.

44. Throughout his work, Albalag strives to show that the Averroean opinions he accepts are in harmony with Scripture and the sayings of the rabbinic Sages.
45. Albalag mentions the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (96:7-8; 95) but never refers explicitly to Averroes' *Incoherence of the Incoherence*. He mentions only in passing that Averroes answered al-Ghazālī's attack on the Philosophers (5:9-10; 21). But Vajda in his *Isaac Albalag*, 34, mentions the influence of Averroes' *Incoherence of the Incoherence* on Albalag and cites examples in a number of notes.
46. Ed. J. Goldenthal (Wien, 1832). Corrections and additions to this edition are found in *Hehaluṣ* 11 (1880): 76-91, esp. 84. References in parentheses are to the Goldenthal edition. I also used the following manuscripts: Paris 698, ff 49a-51a; see, M. Beit-Arié and C. Sirat, *Manuscripts médiévaux en caractères hébraïques* (Jerusalem-Paris: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1979) 2.43; Paris 696.1, ff. 391-40b; see M. Zotenberg, *Catalogues des manuscrits hébreux et samaritains de la Bibliothèque Impériale* (Paris, 1866), 110; Paris 697, ff. 149b-156a; *ibid*.
47. To the Averroean report that early Greek thinkers believed in two ultimate principles, Narboni adds a story concerning the founder of Manicheanism: Mani succeeded in attracting many people to his new religion, including Shapur [I], the king. Shapur invited Mani and important persons in his kingdom to a banquet. The important persons arrived first and the king commanded that they be hanged on trees in the garden of the palace. When Mani arrived, the king took him to the garden and explained that the god of evil had commanded him to do this deed. Telling Mani that the fate of his companions was also appropriate for him, the king commanded that Mani be hanged as well. For Mani in the Islamic literature, see *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987) 9.158-61.
48. There are some deletions of textual passages, but, characteristically, a Koranic verse (21:22) is also omitted. When Narboni's deletions occasion difficulties in understanding his comments, I use the fuller text in the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*.
49. Cf. *Incoherence of the Incoherence* III, Bouyges, 176-77; Van Den Bergh, 106.
50. Bouyges, 177, Van Den Bergh, 106-07. 'Anaxagoras' is the reading in *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*. Narboni has 'Pythagoras.'
51. According to Averroes, the celestial bodies are composed of form and matter, but not as terrestrial bodies are; 'form' and 'matter' are predicated of celestial and terrestrial bodies completely equivocally. See Averroes, *Ma'amar be-'Ezēm ha-Galgal* (*De Substantia Orbis*),

- ed. A. Hyman (Cambridge-Jerusalem: Medieval Academy of America and Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1986) Hebrew: 13-14, 25, 27, 41-42, 50-51; English: 28-35, 39-43, 41 n. 6, 74-75, 82, 89-90, 110-11, 120).
52. Cf. *Incoherence of the Incoherence* III, Bouyges, 175-76; Van Den Bergh, 105-06.
53. Cf. Bouyges, 180-81; Van Den Bergh, 108.
54. Averroes is rather loose in applying this threefold distinction to the origins of various kinds of multiplicities. Narboni here has the reading 'matter'; Averroes, 'dispositions.'
55. On the matter of celestial bodies, see *Incoherence of the Incoherence* 2.94, on 142.8.
56. See Van Den Bergh 2.100, on 155.2.
57. See Van Den Bergh, 2.100, on 155.3.
58. See Van Den Bergh, 2.100, on 155.4. For a more extensive discussion of the influence of the twofold motion of the sun, see *Incoherence of the Incoherence* III, Bouyges, 188-89; Van Den Bergh, 113. The discussion has its origin in Aristotle's *On Generation and Corruption* II 10, 336a 23-336b 24. Averroes mentions this work; Narboni does not.
59. Cf. *Incoherence of the Incoherence* III Bouyges, 260-62; Van Den Bergh 154-55.

## Maimonides and Neoplatonism: Challenge and Response

Alfred L. Ivry

The challenge of Neoplatonism is one that Maimonides tried to reject and could not. He could, however, pretend that he ignored the challenge, and he did. So successful has he been in this respect that few readers of the *Guide* over the centuries have been alert to the amplitude of the Neoplatonic dimensions of the work. That which it shares of this heritage with other medieval works, particularly its use of emanation and its concept of the One, is seen as part and parcel of the medieval Aristotelianism which incorporated such doctrines into its basic structures. It has not been recognized by and large that Maimonides' Neoplatonism could be a serious departure from Aristotelian doctrine, adduced only because that doctrine proved inadequate for him.

Maimonides tried to reject Neoplatonism because he found that it too was inadequate. He did not prove it inadequate, since he did not confront it openly, or philosophically, but his bias was towards Aristotle, and had been since his youth, as attested by his *Treatise on Logic*.<sup>1</sup> His letter to the Hebrew translator of the *Guide*, Samuel ibn Tibbon, recommending various authors, confirms this attachment and shows that Maimonides was disdainful of Neoplatonic authors.<sup>2</sup> Since the letter is silent about key works of Neoplatonic literature available and presumably known to Maimonides, the evidence from that source for Maimonides' involvement with Neoplatonic literature

is inconclusive. More telling is the *Guide* itself, which shows its author adopting Neoplatonic ideas and perspectives repeatedly, although without arguing for them. In reconstructing Maimonides' argument, its Neoplatonic basis emerges clearly, and we can see why he was attracted to this philosophy, and why he could not bring himself to admit his dependence on it.

Maimonides had to be familiar with Neoplatonic teachings, since they were fairly ubiquitous in the intellectual circles of Islamic culture with which he was intimate. Particularly in twelfth-century Fatimid and immediate post-Fatimid Egypt, Shi'i theology, with its Neoplatonic leanings and borrowings, could not have escaped Maimonides' attention. He would have read or have heard of the teachings of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. circa 971), Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. circa 1021), and their disciples. We know that he met 'Abd al-Latīf b. Yūsuf al-Baghdādī, whose *Metaphysics* quotes and paraphrases part of the Theology of Aristotle. That treasure-house of Plotinian doctrine had circulated in the Islamic and Jewish world since the time of al-Kindī, the first philosopher of the Arabs. It was in fact part of the *Enneads* corpus. The tenth-century Ikhwān al-Safā' had made use of its teachings in their encyclopedia, the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā'*, a paraphrase of which, *al-Risāla al-Jāmi'a*, also circulated widely.<sup>3</sup>

Neoplatonic views thus surfaced in various guises in Islamic culture well before Maimonides' time and had become well known. In the writings of al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and even Averroes we see the inroads made by these teachings into supposedly Aristotelian territory. Maimonides' writing, in this area as in others, mirrors to a large degree that of his Muslim predecessors among the *falāsifa*. More than they, however, he seems to be struggling with this hybrid legacy.

The areas of Neoplatonic influence in the *Guide* are numerous, beginning with Maimonides' view of God as the One above all predication, of whom certain predicates are somehow still appropriate, particularly goodness, wisdom and will. Maimonides' God is the First Cause, who in knowing Himself knows the world and is responsible for the emanation of that world, or at least its ideal, intelligible aspect. God has no direct relation to matter, which is foreign to His nature, so He relates to the world through its universal

forms, and does not relate directly to individuals as such. Providence, accordingly, is expressed in general and not particular ways. God is not responsible for the evil in the universe, which stems from the recalcitrance of matter and man's will. Both of these, matter and will, are loci of freedom. God's freedom, however, is inextricably bound up with the necessity of His being. It is to this God, finally, that we and all created being turn and return, our greatest felicity being knowledge of the divine and conjunction with it.<sup>4</sup>

Most of these ideas in the *Guide* are presented in disguised form, for they are hardly traditional and we can see that Maimonides struggled with them. The God revealed here is at least not apparently the God of revelation, and Maimonides is determined to maintain the validity of revelation as well as to keep faith with Aristotle. Aristotle's philosophy for Maimonides is the model of science and reasoned explanation, the ideal conjoining of logic and nature. He deviates from it only when compelled to do so. It is his declared admiration for the Stagirite which probably has blinded readers of the *Guide* to the extent of his actual deviations from his model. Most Maimonides scholars take his attachment to Aristotle as a given, and interpret the Master, ha-Rav, without serious concern for the Neoplatonic themes in his thought. They do so at peril to their interpretations.

The experience of Leo Strauss is instructive in this regard. His actual view of Maimonides' secret teachings is itself a pretty well-kept secret, as readers of his various studies of Maimonides' work can testify. His well-known, yet enigmatic introduction to Shlomo Pines' translation of the *Guide*, titled "How to Begin to Study *The Guide of the Perplexed*,"<sup>5</sup> has particularly puzzled, if not infuriated, scholars, to say nothing of the effect it must have on lay readers. This is not the place to undertake a full-scale analysis of that work, and I will restrict my remarks to the theme at hand. But Strauss' attitude toward Neoplatonism is critical, I believe, in his final assessment of Maimonides' beliefs. Strauss generally avoided discussing Neoplatonism in his writings on Maimonides and mentions it rather late in this introduction. He rightly views the initial theme of the *Guide* to be God's incorporeality, a notion critical in the fight against idolatry.<sup>6</sup> Idolatry is, of course, the *bête noire* of the Torah, and indeed of the Bible as a whole. Taken literally, idolatry entails

corporeality, since an idol is a physical *eikon*, or likeness, of a god. Incorporeality thus removes the basis of idol worship.

Idolatry in Judaism, however, came to have a broader meaning, tantamount ultimately to denial of the law and synonymous with paganism, what Maimonides called Sabianism.<sup>7</sup> Polytheism is at the heart of Sabianism, and much of the *Guide* is devoted to the overthrow of this last vestige of pagan thought. In Maimonides' time, with the non-Jewish world of his cognizance divided between Islam and Christianity, one may well wonder which pagans Maimonides was attacking. Who were the real Sabians? For the historic Sabians were an obscure, essentially defunct polytheistic sect. The answer would seem to be that the "Sabians" Maimonides had in mind were Aristotle and his ilk, Maimonides' closest allies philosophically. Dwelling on the beliefs and rituals of the ostensibly historic Sabians may have served Maimonides' purposes in terms of justifying the establishment of the Mosaic law,<sup>8</sup> but it also distracts the reader from identifying Aristotle as Maimonides' main opponent and thus deters the reader from adopting a negative attitude to philosophy.

It is particularly Aristotle's belief in the existence of many unmoved movers,<sup>9</sup> known in the medieval tradition as the intelligences of the spheres, which struck Maimonides as inimical to monotheism. Not that Maimonides himself rejected the cosmological scheme whereby each sphere was informed by an intelligence of its own; but for him these intelligences and the heavenly bodies which are their physical counterparts are under God's ordinance, part of His created world, whereas for Aristotle the heavens in their entirety, intelligences and bodies alike, are co-eternal with God and in fact divine.<sup>10</sup> Aristotle's *Nous* is *primus inter pares*. The intelligences are incorporeal eternal beings, minor deities, it is true, yet gods nonetheless.

In inveighing against such a notion, Maimonides is protesting against a world view in which God plays essentially a mechanistic role, as the first mover, and in which the world runs itself, the heavens control themselves. Such a world holds no place for a personal God; it is a world governed by the strict dictates of logic; a naturalistic and scientific world in the most irreligious sense of the terms, at least when looked at from the traditional sort of viewpoint that Strauss believes Maimonides really holds.

Strauss notes that the argument against such a position cannot be based on the notion of divine incorporeality, since the intelligences of the spheres are themselves incorporeal. For Maimonides—though not, strictly speaking, for Aristotle—it is the argument for the unity of God, coupled with an argument for incorporeality, which ensures the validity of the monotheistic idea.<sup>11</sup> The main argument for divine unity, however, is taken from Aristotle, a premise of that argument being an eternal world which includes the eternal intelligences of the spheres.<sup>12</sup> Maimonides is thus left with the position, according to Strauss, in which he has to assert the creation of the world from nothing as the free act of the one God, in order to deny the existence of other eternal, hence divine, beings of any sort. But this assertion, in contrast to the belief in God's unity and incorporeality, is undemonstrable, and Maimonides knows it. It lacks, presumably, any scientific or natural premise of its own, and is based purely on a notion of logical possibility from which no necessary conclusions follow.<sup>13</sup>

The struggle against idolatry, which is the struggle against the Aristotelian naturalistic world view, is helped only partially by the arguments Maimonides adduces for the notion of divine incorporeality. For here, Maimonides is in danger of overkill, constructing through the *via negativa* an image of the one God which is practically devoid of any meaning, and certainly of any personal relationship to creation. Actually, Maimonides has two images of the divine incorporeal unity, and he alternates between them. The more problematic image, religiously, is the more Aristotelian, and it is that which identifies God as self-thinking intellect.<sup>14</sup> Intellect, as Strauss points out,<sup>15</sup> is the only term predicated of God which is not used equivocally, so that however little we may grasp of a being that is totally self-contained, we can yet comprehend it *qua* intellect and understand Maimonides' intention in identifying the notion of divine knowledge with the notion of life.<sup>16</sup>

We may understand Maimonides here, but we can barely believe that he is actually advancing such a radically deistic view in the name of Judaism. God as intellect is pure intelligence, without will or power. The existence, unity and incorporeality of God are established, but at great expense to the tradition. So it is not surprising to find Maimonides criticizing this view, which he himself supposedly endorsed. The critique is multi-faceted and need not



detain us here.<sup>17</sup> Its thrust is to weaken if not destroy confidence in the Aristotelian and post-Aristotelian worldview, on which the identification of God as intellect is based. But the alternative to the logically flawed eternal world of Aristotle, sincerely offered according to Strauss and Maimonides' apparent teaching, a world created from nothing, lacks a scientifically, philosophically grounded conception of God.

Strauss is not deterred from this conclusion. Indeed he sees it as intrinsic to Maimonides' essentially anti-philosophical Jewishness. The unknown God of creation is not only one, existent and knowing, He also has will and power, however unaccountable to human reasoning. This assertion ties in neatly for Strauss with Maimonides' doctrine of attributes: While it is grossly inappropriate to predicate attributes of God in corporeal terms, and logically inappropriate in incorporeal terms, the negative moral of divine unity for Strauss is God's absolute uniqueness, a uniqueness which somehow tolerates its own set of unique attributes. As Strauss says, without demurrer, "The meaning of the doctrine of attributes is that God is the absolute perfect being, the complete and perfectly self-sufficient good, the being of absolute beauty or nobility. . . . (S)ince we understand by God the absolutely perfect being, we mean the goodness of His creation or governance when we say that He is the 'cause' of something."<sup>18</sup> These attributes, Strauss emphasizes, are neither anthropomorphic nor discrete, but simply indicate divine perfection, a perfection which is an "unfathomable abyss."<sup>19</sup> Although unfathomable, this concept of God is considered by Strauss as an "appropriate expression of the Biblical principle" of the "hidden God who created the world out of nothing . . . in absolute freedom, and whose essence is therefore indicated by 'Will' rather than by 'Wisdom.'"<sup>20</sup>

Intellect and Will, then, emerge as emblems of the two images of God which Maimonides considers, the one supported by a scientific world view, however vulnerable; the other, carried aloft on the thin shoulders of a purely theoretical logic. Neither image is demonstrably true, it is realized, nor, presumably, is the combined image any the more demonstrable. In any event, Strauss feels that Maimonides' last word is not always the identity of intellect, or wisdom, and will in the divine being.<sup>21</sup> So, for Strauss, Maimonides never chooses rationally between the competing world views, but

remains skeptical of ever attaining such knowledge. Strauss' own last word is one of perplexity, or rather perplexities, Maimonides' perplexities.<sup>22</sup> These perplexities are liberating, as Strauss sees it, and—although Strauss doesn't say so explicitly—they qualify Maimonides after all for the true philosopher's mantle, the skeptic's cloak.

However liberating Maimonides' perplexities may be, Strauss does not allow him the one model which could have resolved the impasse between intellect and will, eternity and creation, and governance and providence: the Neoplatonic model that challenged Maimonides. Strauss' avoidance of that challenge contributes largely to his image of Maimonides as a rational skeptic, or an agnostic believer. True, Strauss does not completely overlook Neoplatonism. When he finally gets to it, after describing the entailments of both models of the divine unity, he says that the "true state of things is somewhat obscured" by Neoplatonic teaching, which Maimonides' doctrine of attributes "restates."<sup>23</sup> For Strauss, however, Maimonides' use of Neoplatonic doctrine is unique here, although he fails to explain further. Evidently, Strauss considers this element in Maimonides' thought minor, restricting it to the doctrine of attributes, where it lacks the power to compete with the hidden God of revelation. Neoplatonism, then, does not seem to Strauss to be ■ weltanschauung that Maimonides seriously considered. But in underestimating it, Strauss may have fallen victim to the very literalism against which he campaigned.

The late and lamented Alexander Altmann may be the scholar who has most recently attested to a strong Aristotelian reading of the *Guide*, pronounced after a thorough and profoundly informed examination of the text.<sup>24</sup> Altmann, whose studies on Isaac Israeli and Jewish mysticism alerted him to the presence of Neoplatonism in medieval Jewish thought, did not find this presence predominant in Maimonides' philosophy. This reading is consistent with Altmann's earlier approach to Maimonides, and must be taken seriously. Nevertheless, I respectfully differ with his approach.

It is particularly Altmann's view of essence and existence in Maimonides' thought that I wish to consider. In an article published in 1953, which he saw fit to reprint in 1969,<sup>25</sup> Altmann refers to Maimonides' well-known definition of existence in *Guide* I 57, which he renders in English as "an accident ('*arad*') affecting (lit. happening

to) that which exists (*mawjūd*), and therefore something (*ma'nā*) superadded to the essence (*māhiya*) of that which exists." Existence of this sort is restricted to caused beings, in contrast to the necessary, inherent existence characteristic of uncaused being, of which God is the unique example. Altmann observes that Maimonides' statement "reflects" Avicenna's theory concerning essence and existence, as has long been known, and that his medieval commentators took sides in interpreting Maimonides' remarks from an Avicennian or Averroean viewpoint, positing or denying the independent being of essences as "possible existents." Altmann questions whether Maimonides so understood Avicenna, whether in fact Avicenna should be so understood.

Altmann is influenced in his reading of Avicenna by the interpretation of the late Fazlur Rahman.<sup>26</sup> Both see their men as holding Aristotelian views of the subject, however un-Aristotelian the locutions may seem at first. The priority of actual to potential states of being, the view of potentiality as dependent upon prior actuality, where actuality is determined by the fact of existence, governs their understanding of Avicenna's treatment of necessary and possible existence. Altmann has no hesitancy in saying that Maimonides "stands solidly on Aristotelian ground" in his view of essence.<sup>27</sup> It is the form of an individual, definitive of it, and as such descriptive of the species to which the individual belongs. This account of essence in terms of species elevates it to the realm of universals, a realm which Maimonides, according to Altmann, considers logical, or conceptual, only. Quoting *Guide* III 18, Altmann tells us that for Maimonides, "it is an established fact that species have no existence outside our minds, and that species and other universals are concepts appertaining to the intellect, while everything that exists outside our minds is an individual or an aggregate of individuals." The constancy of forms, however, i.e., of essential forms or of the species, poses a problem for this interpretation of universal being; and, as Altmann says, "Maimonides does not further analyze the peculiar mode of being that attaches to essence or form as something existing only in concrete individuals and yet transcending them." Altmann, however, is sure that for Maimonides there is no mean between existence and non-existence.<sup>28</sup> This nominalist or conceptualist position is urged against the attempts of *Kalām* authors to find some middle ontological ground for divine attributes, neither real nor not-

real. For Altmann, Maimonides is set against such attempts, on logical and scientific grounds, grounds which locate essences as true existents only in individual substances.

In clarifying the Aristotelian teaching of the relationship between essence and substance, in which the "primary substance," the concrete individual, is seen as inferior in being to the "secondary substance," its essence, Altmann appears to modify his stance. He acknowledges that, while essence "exists only in concrete things and never by itself, it has nevertheless being and unity in a higher degree than the concrete thing."<sup>29</sup> Altmann does not state immediately where this being comes from; the essence, like its existence, is seen to "happen," to come into being as the form of a particular matter, as the result of ■ causal process. It is, of course, the emanative process which for Maimonides would be the cause of the instantiation of a universal form.<sup>30</sup>

Yet Altmann does not go into this subject here, preferring to discuss the nature of existence as a function of God's Will, while relating essence to the divine Wisdom. Both are united in God's unique being;<sup>31</sup> but for us, Altmann argues, Wisdom stands for "essence which represents the realm of nature in the timelessness and constancy of being."<sup>32</sup> The temporal "happening" of essence is thus discrete from its timeless being, a state which Altmann identifies both with God's own Wisdom and with the realm of nature. This joint identification would place the essences of all things, their universal natures, into the Godhead in some form or other, with tremendous implications for Maimonides' teachings of the complete simplicity of the One. And this identification indicates as well the real nature of universals, subsisting timelessly within God. Altmann does not pursue the implications of his remarks directly, but at the end of the article makes the point that it is "remarkable that Maimonides refrained from using Aristotle's concept of the analogy of being (as al-Fārābī and Averroes did) but insisted on the homonymous nature of the term." Altmann says the reason for this is to be found in Maimonides' Neoplatonic orientation, "which he shared with Avicenna."<sup>33</sup>

Altmann invokes Neoplatonic doctrine, then, to account for the uniqueness of God's being in Maimonides' scheme, which reduced the "different shades of being . . . to one single level compared with the totally other Being of God." Neoplatonism here becomes a kind

of functional synonym for a radical dichotomy between God and the world—a treatment which ignores the bridge which it offers between the two. Not only does emanationism provide such a bridge, but so too does the distinction between essence and existence, when that distinction is not forced into an Aristotelian mold. The little that Altmann explores of the entailments of this distinction is sufficient to draw attention to the problematic nature of essences for Maimonides. And a fresh look at Avicenna's understanding of possible existents—-independent of Rahman's influential interpretation—suggests that possible existents are real, subsisting in a state of being prior to their actualization as "existent" beings. This, despite Avicenna's—and Maimonides'—ostensible claims to the contrary. The texts permit such a view, and the logic of possible existents *vis-à-vis* the Necessary Existent requires it. It is demanded, moreover, by the entire issue of God's relation to the world, conceived by both men in a way that preserves both necessity and freedom, for God and the world. Let us, then, explore Avicenna's famous doctrine in Avicenna's own terms, for only a complete understanding of the philosophical legacy that Maimonides inherited will permit us to understand his thought fully.

Avicenna followed al-Fārābī in distinguishing between God as the *wājib al-wujūd*, the "Necessary Existent" (literally, "Necessary of Existence"), and all the remaining substances of the world, each called *mumkin al-wujūd*, a "possible existent" (literally, "possible of existence").<sup>34</sup> Avicenna used this distinction primarily in his proof for the existence of God,<sup>35</sup> conceived as a unique being of utter simplicity. In contrast to all other beings, the essence of the Necessary Existent is simply its existence. It has no other nature. There are no other factors besides existence involved in the composition of the Necessary Existent, indeed it has no composition, no differentiating aspects which would require causal explanation. The Necessary Existent has no causes, it rather is the cause of all other existents. These others—all other existents in the world—are thus caused in a way the Necessary Existent is not: in regard to their existence. Their existence is not intrinsically part of their essence. Rather, it is conceived as extrinsic to their essence. The being of these other existents is composite, comprising an essence and a state of existence which is joined to the essence by an external cause. The actual joining of these two components renders these existents, which

are possible existents in themselves, into necessary existents; the necessity, however, is extrinsic. Thus the existence of a possible existence, once it is brought into actual existence, is ■ necessary fact.<sup>36</sup>

Avicenna's argument for the existence of God affirms the contingency of all other beings in the world. But their contingency is theoretical only, evidently, since the extrinsically necessary existence which beings enjoy once realized renders them *de facto* necessary beings. Avicenna in a way had his cake and ate it, in claiming that possible existents are both possible *per se*, *bi-dhātihī*, and necessary *per aliud*, *bi-ghayrihī*. The world is seen as originally, continually and ultimately dependent on God, although it also functions in a necessary, continuous and predictable way.

We would seem, with this argument, to be back on the firm Aristotelian ground of a necessary universe, after having flirted with other conceptual schemes. Yet there are elements of this conception which are decidedly non-Aristotelian. This becomes evident when we closely examine Avicenna's formulation of the notion of the Necessary Existent. As we have said, this being is uniquely simple. Its entire being is its existence. In contrast, possible existents have an essence which is other than their existence. These essences are foreign to the nature of the Necessary Existent, by definition. They are the essences of particular objects, different from one another, each essence having a distinct identity of its own, classifiable within the divisions of being, a separate part of all that is. Yet the Necessary Existent can give these essences only what it has to give, which is what it is, existence pure and simple. It cannot give them their essences in any more defined or particularized a manner. For the Necessary Existent has no particular essence to give. As pure existence, the essence of the Necessary Existent is no doubt considered by Avicenna, and by Maimonides, to be the quintessential essence of all existents, its being comprising the essential element in all beings. Yet the dichotomy of necessary and possible existents which Avicenna has emphasized compels recognition of the "presence" or reality of essences independent of the existence and thus of the kind of being bestowed on them by the Necessary Existent. This being may be called existential being. It is critical for the existence of all beings but does not comprise the totality, or essential nature, of their being.

This raises the problem of determining the origin of the essences which in themselves are only possible existents. If these essences do not come from the Necessary Existent, where do they come from? Could they be independent entities with a reality of their own prior to being rendered necessary by God? This is a tempting suggestion, though it must be admitted that Avicenna nowhere entertains this possibility specifically. That is, he does not posit a primordial stage of "subsistence" for these essences "before" their being brought into "existence" by the Necessary Existent. He says that "quiddity before existence has no existence,"<sup>37</sup> by which he would appear to be intent on sticking to one world, the world of our experience, in which all possible existents are also necessary *de facto*. In this reading possible existents do not have a past history before they "enter into existence."

But the assertion that "quiddity before existence has no existence," may be no more than a tautology concerning existence as normally construed, repeating the distinction to which attention has been drawn between quiddity, or essence, and existence. Of course quiddities do not exist before they exist. Yet this does not preclude the possibility that quiddities may have some kind of subsistence, or reality, apart from their actual "existence," and beyond the mere potential which Aristotle allows. If possible existents cannot receive anything from God but actual existence, their essential natures remain unaccounted for. They cannot come from nothing on their own, haphazardly, and the Necessary Existent cannot create them in their particular natures. Rather, on this reading, the possible existents would be real in their own way, independently of the Necessary Existent, although dependent existentially upon it.

If this reading reflects Avicenna's true sentiments, it must be acknowledged, as admitted above, that he does not help the reader to realize it. Avicenna never speaks of a time in which the possible existents did not exist, or of a stage within God or within some universal hypostasis from which they "entered into existence."<sup>38</sup> The totality of their being includes their existence, which is bound up with the existence of their cause, the Necessary Existent, and always has been. Here we must remember that Avicenna, like al-Fārābī, believed in an eternal universe, with certain substances—the heavenly bodies and their formal and efficient principles, their intellects and souls—eternal in themselves.<sup>39</sup> He offers no endorsement in his presentation of metaphysics of a Platonic kind of creation. So

Avicenna must regard these eternal substances as *prima facie* refutations of the notion that an essence can have an identity other than the one it has, as known to us in its existential dimension.

Even the sublunar world, which is not fixed in unchanging eternal structures, is locked into an eternal pattern of beings classified as species and genera. For Avicenna, as for Aristotle, universals are substances of a secondary sort, not existing independently of their individual members.<sup>40</sup> Yet these individual members are just that, particular expressions of a specific class. For Avicenna, this class, representing the essence of its potentially existent members, the possible existents in themselves, should have an ontological dimension. If so, though, Avicenna does not speak of it. Externally at least, he considers secondary substances separately from possible existents, and draws no inferences to the former from the putative nature of the latter.

Thus Avicenna would have us view the relation of potential and actual existence in an Aristotelian perspective. While any particular here may or may not be actualized, and thus qualifies as a possible existent in the literal sense of the term, such a potential existent does not have an independent existence as potential. It is tied to and caused by the prior actual existence of another member of its species, the existence of which was in turn assured by the prior actual existence of yet another member of the species. The sublunar world of generation and corruption thus has no more room for truly independent or anomalous possible existents than does the supralunar world of eternal beings. The contingency of beings on earth is a theoretical construct, as is the contingency of celestial substances, their being never existing other than as necessary, because of the eternal influence of the Necessary Existent upon them.

Avicenna has in this manner created a parallel structure, in the dichotomy of possible and necessary existents, to that of Aristotle's distinction between potential and actual substances. Yet our argument suggests that Avicenna should be prepared to posit (tacitly if not openly) the essentially independent nature of the beings of this world. Of course all beings owe their existence ultimately to God, the Necessary Existent, but this ultimate source of actual existence is just that, and the complex world of individual substances is foreign, in its very composition and multiplicity, to God's essence. Avicenna's Necessary Existent, like Aristotle's thought-thinking-itself,

does not create this world in its entirety, does not in fact create it in any sense but one, although that is indispensable to the world's existence.

Avicenna's God like Aristotle's, then, is in the embarrassing position—for Avicenna—of not being the Creator of the universe in the fullest sense of the term. Since Avicenna defended an eternal universe this was to be expected. But the conceptualization of the Deity as the sole Necessary Existent and the *per se* contingent nature of all other beings tends to obscure this fact. Then too, as the Necessary Existent, Avicenna's God goes out to the world more directly than does Aristotle's Deity, an intelligence that actualizes and moves the world without ceasing to contemplate itself. But, for all its more active involvement in the world, Avicenna's God can in this construal no more know the world as it is than can Aristotle's deity, a situation which Avicenna would have found unbearable, presumably. For all their contingency, then, the possible existents constitute a real threat to divine omnipotence and omniscience; not in the *per se* contingency of their existence, but in the very nature of their being. There would indeed seem to be substances with which Avicenna's Necessary Existent interacts, beings which for want of a better term are called essences, and which appear in existence as the celestial substances and terrestrial species we know. The Necessary Existent "creates" them all, but only in one sense, by granting them existence. Their essential nature is their own.

If the forms of the world are an independent given for Avicenna, so too is its matter.<sup>41</sup> Matter is linked, of course, to that multiplicity which is foreign to the divine. The Necessary Existent, being simple in the extreme, has no shred of multiplicity, and hence no material dimension. It thus has no matter to give to the world. The matter of the world is its own reality, alien to God. As the Necessary Existent cannot give the world its forms, so the one immaterial God cannot endow the universe with its matter. In fact, God's relation to matter is even more remote than His relation to forms, since the existence bestowed upon a possible existent is bestowed directly only on its form. For the possible existent in itself is only form, or essence. It is true that the instantiation as actual existents of nearly all forms in this world (to exclude the intelligences of the spheres) entails the realization of their form in a material substratum. But this realization is part of the internal—dare we say autonomous—mechanics of the

relation between matter and form. Presumably God does not deal directly with matter. It is too alien. God's role is to actualize the existence of possibly existent essences, without coming into direct contact with matter itself. The gift of existence is given directly to form, which is the principle of actuality in any event; and it is this actualized form which brings matter around, as it were, shapes it up and presents it as an existing being.

The distance between God and matter is expressed more explicitly by Avicenna when he comes to explain the emanation of the universe.<sup>42</sup> According to this well-known view of Avicenna's, the first being to issue from the One is the intelligence of the outermost sphere, that sphere which encompasses the entire world and defines its outermost limits. The definition of these limits, in a sense their creation, is the direct work not of God but of the first intelligence. Utilizing his distinction between possible and necessary existents, Avicenna says that this first intelligence generates the outermost sphere, which is the first body of the world, by thinking itself as itself, i.e., as a possible existent. Matter is thus introduced into the world as a function of its contingent nature; matter is, as it were, the embodiment of contingency.

God in this scheme is not directly responsible for the creation of matter, any more than He is for the ever-increasing multiplicity of beings. From God there eternally emanates only the one intelligent or formal principle, a single being which is presumed not to challenge the integrity of divine unity.<sup>43</sup> Multiplicity, like corporeality, is thought to enter the world through the activities of the first intelligence. Thus God can be held responsible for the totality of being only as its indirect cause, through the emanation of this first intelligence, and through the consequences of its activity.

The scheme which Ibn Sīnā elaborates ensures that God keeps far from matter, even while it affirms His role as the guarantor of the existence of all being. In the eternal rhythm of the emanative process, the intelligence of each sphere engenders the body of that sphere, as with the first, by regarding itself as a possible existent. By contrast, the intelligence of each sphere engenders the soul of that sphere and the intelligence of the subsequent sphere by reflecting, respectively, on the necessary aspect of its existence and on the intelligence from which it was itself engendered. Now necessary existence and intelligence are not dissociated from God. Thus the

souls and intelligences in the heavens and their analogous formal appearances on earth are linked more directly to God than is the body of the world, its matter. Yet even they are not directly related to Him, since each intelligence and soul receives its nature from the preceding intelligence, not from God directly.

Looked at from another perspective the intelligences and souls of the spheres may be said to bear the imprint of God's presence. They are the result of the intelligence's apprehension of itself as a necessary existent, and this is the kind of existence which derives essentially from the Necessary Existent. The actual existence of heavenly souls and intelligences, as necessary existents, is thus testimony to God's direct presence in the world. That is, as we have learned already, God is present in the world directly through the actualization of its forms, both celestial and sublunar. As these forms are all related to matter, and in the sublunar sphere especially do not function apart from matter, God's presence, as the source of life, permeates matter too. Yet it permeates matter through the form with which that matter is associated, and does not relate to matter as such at all.

Matter, then, is like the possible existents in being separate from God's presence and knowledge. But in actual existence, matter is controlled by the forms with which it is always associated, and so brought within the divine purview. Separate or independent matter is itself another theoretical construct only. But we should not slight the significance of these constructs. For, however theoretical they may be, they are real ontologically in Avicenna's scheme, and serve a crucial purpose. Possible existents, as their name indicates, are not necessary in themselves. Matter, as the locus of potentiality, is indeterminate. Particularly sublunar matter, as the principle of motion and change, has to maintain its freedom from any necessary identification with one particular form. Yet matter and the possible existents represent respectively the indeterminate and non-necessary aspects of this world, that realm which God and man attempt to dominate, with mixed results.

The indeterminate, "free" status of matter, then, is not a positive value in Avicenna's scheme, and it is not surprising that the evil in the world is linked by him directly to matter:<sup>44</sup> Unlicensed, uncontrolled, unmodified (by form), matter is seen as a cause of evil in the world. Yet beyond this, the very presence of matter, as the

symbol of potentiality and change, is antagonistic to all that God represents. That matter should yet be part of the emanative process which originates in God is accordingly a paradox, unless again we see the real origination of this process to be the work of the first intelligence.

The emanative scheme developed by Avicenna allows God to relate to the world in one way and keeps Him apart from it in another. He relates essentially to the forms of the world, not to their material counterparts, and even to the forms He is the giver of existence rather than the "donor of the forms" themselves. This may ensure God's unity and uniqueness, but it does not bring Him close to the world in the sense of being conscious of the particular natures of those beings for whose existence He is responsible. On this analysis God's knowledge of the world is very circumscribed. Indeed He knows no more of it than does Aristotle's First Mover. Such a conclusion is repugnant to Avicenna, and it would be ironic to have him adopt a Neoplatonic emanationist scheme in order to wind up with no closer relationship of God to the world than is found in Aristotle's metaphysics. So it is not surprising to find Avicenna often speaking of God's detailed knowledge of all the world's particulars, an expression as much of His omnipotence and providence as it is of His omniscience. Close analysis of these remarks, however, confirms the suspicion that such assertions of Avicenna's must be qualified, that God knows the particulars of this world in a universal way, even as He knows the many as one. Ultimately, one is forced back to the conclusion that God, for Avicenna, knows the world in knowing Himself, and that His self-knowledge is somehow transformed through emanation into the discrete entities which form this world.

The theories we have explored do not succeed in explaining this process, although they were clearly intended to relate God to the world more directly than Aristotle did. No more than Plotinus is Ibn Sīnā successful in bridging the gap from the One to the many, and like Plotinus, Ibn Sīnā too covers the inadequacies of his explanation with dogmatic statements which do rhetorically what logical argument cannot. Perhaps Maimonides realized this, and therefore drew back from utilizing the distinction between essence and existence more than he did. It was part of a heritage toward which he was profoundly ambivalent. His minimization of Avicenna's contribution

to philosophy, in his letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon, may be taken as a negative judgment on Avicenna's Neoplatonic leanings. Compared to Avicenna, Maimonides makes little attempt to argue for the Neoplatonic doctrines he does hold. Yet he may well hold such views, despite his disinclination towards them, on the strength of the sort of arguments presented by Avicenna.

Maimonides' reticence in these matters has encouraged our predecessors to underestimate his full involvement with Neoplatonic doctrine and to minimize this dimension of his thought unduly. Alexander Altmann and Leo Strauss read Maimonides differently from one another, but on this point they seem to be in agreement, both relegating Neoplatonism to that supposed dimension of Maimonides' speculations in which faith in an unknown God and in His mysterious Will has replaced knowledge. The scientific and logical structure of Neoplatonic thought is thereby ignored. Perhaps Maimonides shared this attitude, and it prevented him from developing fully the ideas he borrowed from Neoplatonic sources. Yet the abundance of such ideas in the *Guide* shows that Maimonides did not dismiss this approach as cavalierly as some scholars have thought. It may be that Maimonides answered the challenge of Neoplatonism with a response that still awaits a response.

### Notes

1. Ed. and tr., Israel Efros (New York, 1938); and his "Maimonides' Arabic Treatise on Logic," *PAAJR* 34 (1966): 155-60, Hebrew text, 9-42.
2. See A. Marx, ed., "Texts by and about Maimonides," *JQR*, N.S. 25 (1934-35): 374-81; (Uncritical) English translation by L. Stitskin, *Letters of Maimonides* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1977), 130-36. Cf. my appraisal in "Islamic and Greek Influences on Maimonides' Philosophy," in Pines and Yovel, *Maimonides and Philosophy*, 147 f.
3. For further details, see Ivry, 144-46.
4. See Ivry, "Providence, Divine Omniscience and Possibility: The Case of Maimonides," in T. Rudavsky, ed., *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy*, 143-59, repr. in *Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed., J. A. Buijs (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 175-91; "Maimonides on Creation," in *Creation and the End of Days: Judaism and Scientific*

- Cosmology*, Proceedings of the 1984 Meeting of the Academy of Jewish Philosophy, ed., D. Novak and N. Samuelson (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986), 185-214; "Neoplatonic Currents in Maimonides' Thought," in *Studies in Maimonides' Thought and Environment*, ed., J. Kraemer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 149-74.
5. xv-lvi.
  6. Strauss, xx f.
  7. See *Guide* III 29, p. 514 in the Pines translation, which will be used below.
  8. Cf. Pines' "Translator's Introduction: The Philosophic Sources of *The Guide of the Perplexed*," cxxiii f.
  9. Cf. *Metaphysics* XII 8 1074a 14.
  10. See *Guide* I 72, 184 ff. and II 4-6.
  11. See Strauss, xxii f.
  12. *Guide* II 1, 245 f.
  13. *Guide* II 17, 298; II 19, 303; cf. my "Maimonides on Possibility," in J. Reinharz et al., eds., *Mystics, Philosophers and Politicians* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1982), 67-84.
  14. *Guide* I 68.
  15. Strauss, l.
  16. *Guide* I 53, 122.
  17. See, e.g., *Guide* I 54, II 18, 19.
  18. Strauss, xlviii f., and *Guide* I 35, 46, 53, 58, 59, 60 end; II 22.
  19. Strauss, xlix.
  20. Loc. cit.; cf. *Guide* III 13.
  21. Strauss, liii.
  22. Strauss, lvi.
  23. Strauss, l.
  24. See "Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics," in his *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung*, 60-129.
  25. See "Essence and Existence in Maimonides," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 35 (1953): 294-315; repr. in his *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, 108-27. References below are to the latter edition.
  26. Altmann, 109, n. 5. Cf. Rahman's "Essence and Existence in Avicenna," in *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, ed., R. Hunt et al., IV (London, 1958), 1-16; and "Essence and Existence in Ibn Sina: The Myth and the Reality."
  27. Altmann, 109.
  28. Cf. *Guide* I 51, 114. Maimonides actually puts the point as a question, which Altmann takes, apparently, as a rhetorical or stylistic device.

29. Altmann, 114.
30. See *Guide* I 58, 136; II 12, 279.
31. See *Guide* I 69, III 13.
32. Altmann, 117.
33. Altmann, 127.
34. Among the many studies, cf. still A.-M. Goichon, *La Distinction de l'Essence et de l'Existence d'après Ibn Sīnā*, 136-48; G. Verbeke, "Introduction Doctrinale" in S. Van Riet, ed., *Avicenna Latinus: Liber de Philosophia Prima sive Scientia Divina* I-IV (Louvain: Peeters, 1977), 42\*-80\*. George Hourani collected and translated the key passages in his "Ibn Sīnā on Necessary and Possible Existence."
35. See, e.g., 'Uyūn al-Masā'il, *Al-Najāt* and *Al-Shifā'* in Hourani, 76, 81 and 83.
36. See the *Najāt* section in Hourani, 79.
37. As translated by Hourani, 78, from *Al-Risāla al-'Arshiyya* (Hyderabad, 1935), 4.
38. Ibn Sina's use of *dakhala fī* to describe the relation of possible existence to actual existence is misleading, and it would be better (*pace* Hourani, 85, n. 11) to translate it as "include in."
39. See, for example, I. Madkour et al., eds., *Al-Shifā', Ilāhiyyāt* (Cairo: Organisme Générale des Imprimeries Gouvernementales, 1960), 373 f.
40. See M. Marmura, "Avicenna's Chapter on Universals in the Isagoge of his *Shifā'*," *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*, A. Welch, P. Cachia, eds., (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979), 34-56, esp. 35.
41. See Avicenna's discussion of matter in the *Shifā'*, 175 ff.; and Goichon, 378-405.
42. See *Shifā'*, 402-09.
43. See Arthur Hyman's paper and others in this volume for the ramifications of this assumption.
44. In this Avicenna follows a distinctly Plotinian theme; see *Enneads*, I 8.3; J. Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil"; A. Ivry, "Destiny Revisited: Avicenna's Concept of Determinism," in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani*, ed., M. Marmura (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), 164.

## Maimonidean Naturalism

L. E. Goodman

A telling criticism against the mechanistic tradition in science is made by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in his celebrated cosmological meditation, *The Phenomenon of Man*.<sup>1</sup> Natural scientists have concerned themselves largely, perhaps exclusively, with just one of the two basic forms of energy of which we are aware, the outwardly directed or "tangential" energy by which bodies affect one another. The inwardly focused or "radial" energies by which things are drawn, in seeming defiance of the second law of thermodynamics, towards ever higher levels of complexity and integration, have been neglected or ignored. All energy, Teilhard remarks, almost incidentally, must be assumed to be psychic in nature. But the radial sort, as the foundation of heightened complexity, is the prototype of consciousness.

Teilhard's two sorts of energy, radial and tangential, sustain a curious complementarity—mutually dependent, yet not reducible to each other's terms—as though locked in a sort of whirling dance, like twin rotating stars whose identity and distinctness are defined, for the moment, by one another's presence. Teilhard's terminology, in the nature of the case, is somewhat solecistic, and his thesis itself is rather opaque—perhaps, as he suggests, because science does not give us (as experience clearly does) a means of encountering consciousness. We cannot render subjectivity an object like other objects without eliminating all that makes it subjective. Still less



does science hand us those inner dimensions of existence in inarticulate beings which are the prototypes—in medieval terms the “matter”—of consciousness. Yet, despite its inherent difficulty, Teilhard’s point needs perennially to be made, lest the drive toward completeness in our physical models of nature be mistaken to imply the comprehensiveness of mechanistic models, and a dimension be overlooked that runs through nature as pervasively as the “tangential energy” normally studied by the natural sciences. Without this “other energy,” no finite thing would exist. For none would have a determinate form.

Our penchant for seeking to objectify the unobjectifiable as energy runs back at least as far as the Stoic notions of *tonos* and *pneuma*.<sup>2</sup> But we probably should drop that sort of naming, at least in its most familiar applications, where it encourages more confusions than it forestalls. Teilhard uses the term energy in a somewhat more generic, more Aristotelian sense than does our physical science. If we trace the concept back as far as the philosophy of Maimonides we find still functioning there the differentiated Aristotelian concepts of force or power (*dynamis*, *quwwa*) and task, act, work or function (*ergon*, *fi’l*), laid out in a Neoplatonic scheme as one variety of cause and effect. Plotinus saw that a power is no mere passive receptivity.<sup>3</sup> He was building on the pervasively teleological conception of causality pioneered by Aristotle, for whom *energeia* refers to that actuality which is both the goal of activity and the source of the powers that make action possible (*Metaphysics* VIII 8, 1049b 5, 1050a 9; 9, 1051a 4-5). Maimonides finds in Neoplatonism a means of fleshing out Aristotle’s sketchy account and resolving some of its ambivalences between transcendent and immanent causation. In the Torah he finds warrant for regarding the Neoplatonic view as congruent with the Biblical one and hints that enable him to correct the Neoplatonic view when it seems in jeopardy of falling short of its proponents’ objectives.

Maimonides, like Teilhard, is persuaded by the weaknesses of mechanism and dualism to treat all forms of energy spiritually.<sup>4</sup> He takes to task the Neoplatonic Aristotelians for failing adequately to exploit the opening given them by the role of matter in their metaphysics for addressing the central problems of theology—finitude, privation, providence (its possibility and limitation)<sup>5</sup>—problems which Maimonides grouped together under the paradigmatic

rubric of theophany, the Rabbinic issue of the chariot, manifestation of the Infinite in finite terms. By neglecting to apply the fundamental discovery of their own philosophy, that all actuality is form or spirit (and that prime matter, accordingly, is the mere principle of otherness), the Neoplatonic philosophers had made matter a realm apart and generated within their own system a dualism which made problematic (and needlessly so by their own premises) not only the relations of governance between mind and body, God and creation—but even the act of creation itself.<sup>6</sup>

Modern philosophers sometimes think of some form of Cartesian dualism as the ancestral or “background position” in philosophy. Even Plato, despite his equation of being with the Forms and his loyalty to the Parmenidean conception of the ultimate reality, is often assimilated casually to some form of dualism. And Aristotle too is treated as a dualist, despite his retention of the Platonic formula identifying *ousia* with forms—now brought down to earth.<sup>7</sup> So the problem of the ghost in the machine (and the related but larger problem of the larger but related Ghost beyond the natural machine) are made to appear much more pervasive (and medieval philosophers much more naive) than need be. The Neoplatonic synthesis is regularly overlooked. Yet its diverse monotheistic recensions for centuries afforded an integrated view of nature by locating the Platonic Forms as thoughts of an Aristotelian divine intelligence (thus obviating the Peripatetic worry about freestanding Forms<sup>8</sup>) and made those forms the mediating principles between the pure and absolute perfection of God and the partial and relative perfections found in material things. Neoplatonic forms remain principles of intelligibility, as in Plato, but are also principles of activity (energy), respecting the Aristotelian demand that explanatory principles exercise a causal role.<sup>9</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to explore the Maimonidean version of this classic way of integrating the cosmos within itself and with God.<sup>10</sup> Our aim, however, is not to uncover historic curiosities but to discover modes of thinking that might help us with some of our own persistent philosophic difficulties. Our task in that sense is one of critical appropriation. Curiously, but not surprisingly, we find Maimonides himself engaged in a similar task. For he couches his emanative naturalism in terms of a critical appropriation of the Biblical and Rabbinic idea of angels.<sup>11</sup>

### 1. Angels as Forms and Forces

Maimonides discriminates two kinds of angels: permanent and transitory. He warrants the distinction by the Rabbinic expedient of discovering an aporia in the dicta of the Sages. For traditionally angels are thought to be immortal (*hayyim ve-kayyamim*), but the Midrash relates, "Each day the Holy One blessed be He creates a band of angels, who sing their song before Him and go their way" (Genesis Rabbah LXXVIII; cf. *Hagigah* 14a). How is this dictum to be squared with the idea of immortal angels? "The answer would be that some are enduring and some transitory. And that is what is in fact the case. For particular forces come to be and perish continually, but the kinds of forces endure without disruption."<sup>12</sup> Maimonides' means of integrating the temporal with the eternal is appropriately Platonic. His suggestion that angels are forces and kinds of forces is borne out by another Rabbinic dictum: "No angel performs two missions, and no single mission is performed by two angels." This, he urges, lifting the passage from the midrashic idiom in which it is embedded, is an explicit avowal that angels are forces—as will be transparent to the wise, since they know that "every force has its own specific action (*fi'l*), and does not have two."<sup>13</sup> The *types* of forces, which are enduring by Maimonides' account, correspond to the angels construed as immortal beings. In Aristotelian parlance they are the disembodied intellects. Their message (for they remain intermediaries, as the Hebrew *mal'akh* implies) is the content of their thought; for they are thinking beings. Imparted one to the next and ultimately to the world, this thought is the objective, active, organizational form and force within things.<sup>14</sup> In us the corresponding form becomes the subjective answering rationality by which we apprehend the essences of things and thereby understand them.

God does not act upon the world directly but via natural forces. Paradigmatically, He burns things by means of flame. Thus, "God spoke to the fish and it vomited out Jonah," means that God imparted the volition to the fish, not that He made the fish a prophet!<sup>15</sup> The ignorant do not understand that God's real majesty and might are manifested not in supernatural displays but in "bringing to be powers that act invisibly within a thing."<sup>16</sup> God is not "in" the created objects but acts through their instrumentality, as their Creator.<sup>17</sup>

Arguing from a famous midrash designed to promote consultation, a gloss on the use of the plural in Genesis 1:26 ("Let us make man in our own image"), Maimonides elucidates his equation of enduring angels with the Platonic forms. As the Sages gloss the passage: "The Holy One blessed be He, as it were, does nothing without consulting His supernal retinue." Maimonides marvels that the very word *consulting* was used as well by Plato for the Creator's resort to the eternal forms of things.<sup>18</sup> These forms are the celestial intellects themselves, the heavenly host; for forms do not exist alone.<sup>19</sup> The thoughts in the minds of the hypostatic intellects are identical with those intellects; for, as Aristotle made clear, the thought, the thinker, and the act of thinking are one and the same.<sup>20</sup> God's determination to "consult" the universal forms is the basis of creation, since these forms are the patterns of all things. And the world is created by God's thinking the forms that the supernal intellects contain. For the correspondence between God's thoughts and reality is not reflective like ours, but projective, inventive, productive, by way of emanation. Yet the intellects themselves are created as specifications of God's Perfection and Intention.<sup>21</sup> The disembodied intellects and souls of the spheres are the abiding intermediary hypostases, and the transient forces governing all natural events are the ephemeral causes.

Interpreting Psalm 94:6-9, "Will He who emplaced the ear not hear and He who formed the eye not see," Maimonides argues that the design in nature—manifest in the human frame—bespeaks an intelligence not present in nature itself but capable of governance through the characters it imparts, allowing vision by devising the appropriate character and arrangement in the aqueous and vitreous humors, membranes, nerves and sinews of the eye. One cannot think that such an arrangement of materials, each with a character and placement so ideally suited to its function, came about by chance. But God acts immanently, through the particulars in nature, the aqueous and vitreous humors and the like. One is not to suppose, Maimonides insists, that the "emplanting" of eyes was done *by means of eyes*, as though the argument were that "the Creator of the mouth must eat and the Creator of the lungs must shout." Rather, "the clear sense of the argument is that any maker of any sort of tool could not make it without conceiving the task for which it is to be used. The correct analogy is that a smith could not make a needle in the form

needed for sewing adequately unless he had the concept and understood the nature of sewing."<sup>22</sup> God's wisdom as a subject, unknowable in itself, can be inferred from the objective wisdom manifest in nature. But the linkage of God's wisdom to nature, classically known as governance, or more theologically as providence, is not on all fours with the processes of nature but operates through a higher order conceptualization analogous to that of a designer, who does not use the tools he makes but would not be able to devise them without an implicit understanding of their workings. God conceives the enduring forms of things and instantiates them in particulars. Indeed God knows, creates and governs the particulars and the ephemeral forms which are their energies through the same universal conceptual act.

There is a great difference between a maker's knowledge of what he has made and someone else's knowledge of it. For if the product was made in accordance with the maker's knowledge, the maker simply followed his knowledge in making it as he did. But for anyone else who studies this artifact and comprehends it, the knowledge must follow the product. For example, the craftsman who made this case, with its weights moved by the flow of water to mark the passing hours of day or night, must know and understand the entire course of the water through it and each turning that it takes, every thread that must be pulled and every ball that must drop. But he does not know these movements by studying them now as they take place. Quite the contrary, these movements that now occur come to be only in accordance with his understanding. Not so with one who studies this instrument. For him each new movement he sees gives him new knowledge, and he continues to study and gradually to enhance and augment his knowledge until he has acquired an understanding of the instrument as a whole. If you were to suppose that the movements of this instrument were infinite, then the investigator would never understand it comprehensively, nor would he ever be able to know even one of its movements before it occurred. For whatever he knows is derived from what has occurred.

This is just the situation with existence as a whole *vis-à-vis* our knowledge and God's. Whatever we know we know only through study of what exists. That is why our knowledge does not attach to the future or the infinite. Our sciences grow and vary with the objects from which our knowledge is derived. Not so with Him. His knowledge is not *a posteriori*, so that it should involve multiplicity and

change. Rather things follow His prior knowledge, which determines them to be as they are, whether as disembodied beings, as enduring material particulars, or as changeable beings whose pattern of change is undisrupted and invariant.<sup>23</sup>

Maimonides' emphasis on the specificity of the forms bespeaks his naturalism. The proof-texts he draws from Scripture to corroborate his interpretation of angels as forces or powers are earnest of the comprehensiveness of his project: When God shut the lions' mouths (Daniel 6:23), or made Balaam's ass halt (its speech was a subjective event in the consciousness of the prophet) He acted through an angel—that is, through natural forces in the animal. Strikingly, "even the elements are called angels: 'Who makest the winds His angels, the flaming fire His ministrants' (Psalms 104:4)."<sup>24</sup> When the Rabbis wonder how Judah could visit a prostitute (Genesis 38:15-16) and R. Yohanan reasons that the patriarch intended to pass by but for the intervention of "the angel appointed over lust," Maimonides seizes the usage to clinch his argument that any natural force or type of force can be called an angel—"this is the explicit teaching of all our Books. For you will find no reference to any act of God in them except by way of an angel, which you already know means a messenger. Thus anything appointed to a charge is an angel—even the motions of animals, including those that are inarticulate."<sup>25</sup> Every natural process or event stems from its Neoplatonic first principles via its own proper proximate causes, themselves intellectually disposed.<sup>26</sup>

Maimonides rejects the *kalām* occasionalist doctrine of God's immediate causation of each event on the theological grounds that such causation would render much of God's creation otiose. If our food is not necessary to nourish us or not sufficient in due measure to sustain us, then it was otiose for God to create it.<sup>27</sup> God does not, in fact, proceed directly to His goal (like an imperfect being impatient of perfection) but leads finite beings mediately to theirs. For the correct interpretation of the dictum that God created all things for His glory is that God created each thing for its own sake—to progress towards its goal: in the human case, realization of our inner likeness to God Himself.<sup>28</sup> As babes are fed on milk before achieving solid food, and as the Israelites were led through the wilderness rather than directly to the promised land, and enculturated

through sacrificial worship before they learned to pray, and through prayer before they learned the silent contemplation of God's Perfection, so each thing requires its history. No step can be left out.<sup>29</sup>

Maimonides rejects the Epicurean claim that chance is an active force in nature. Natural events, as Aristotle argued, happen always or for the most part in uniform patterns. Such patterns require causal explanation. The name chance is therefore properly shifted, as it is in Aristotle, from the nonexistent realm of the uncaused to the realm of the unusual or unfamiliar. Chance is not an absence but a superfluity of causes,<sup>30</sup> an intersection of sequences not regularly associated because the causes normally operate independently. But even here there are causes, not only for the individual events but even for their juxtaposition. What we cannot analyze under the formal aspect of nature as an expression of God's wisdom, we refer to chance. But the notion, so applied, is purely subjective, referring—if Biblical parlance be taken seriously—to God's will, which is, in fact, by the arguments of radical monotheism, no different from His wisdom. All causal trains run back to the natural motions engendered by the rotations of the spheres and to the governance of the celestial intelligences, which contemplate God's perfection and manifest that contemplation by projecting the forms of things on nature.<sup>31</sup> All actions pursue the good, as constructed or construed by each being and type of being. Volitional actions are motivated ultimately by the pursuit of perfection, which articulate beings construe under the guise of some subjective good.<sup>32</sup>

The existence and the properties of natural objects are not necessary in absolute terms. For God was under no compulsion to create or to impart the natures we observe. But given that God did choose being over non-being for the world and did specify the characters of things as He did, there is a (relative and internal) necessity in the cosmos.<sup>33</sup> The whole is like a single organism<sup>34</sup> with its own settled order. And that order does not change essentially within itself, but things operate by the essences they are given: elements and their compounds and complexes, monovalently; animate beings, volitionally.<sup>35</sup> What emanates from God are the natural forms, including the souls of all living things (said to be in God's hand), and the rational soul of man—said to be in God's image.

Some of the "angels" that emanate from the divine are

conscious; others are not. Among the former, of course, Maimonides counts the disembodied intelligences and the souls of the spheres, but also the human soul. Even animal souls have some measure of awareness, although not rational thought and choice; for all animals, as in Aristotle, have perception and volition. The forms of inanimate things are not conscious. Their rationality is objective rather than subjective. But the forms in each being are the active, causal factors, existentiating each as an exemplar of its kind and founding the dispositional characteristics by which it expresses its nature.

In keeping with the Rabbinic exegetical practice, Maimonides embeds a small aporia in his own text on emanative naturalism, designed Socratically to prompt an inquiry and an inference: Among the Rabbinic texts he cites to warrant the claim that the principal parts of the cosmos include animate and intelligent beings entrusted, by delegation, with the governance of nature is one that oddly seems to warrant the quite un-Aristotelian and un-Maimonidean claim that the earth is intelligent as well as the spheres. For just as we read that "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalms 19:2), teaching us that "the spheres are living and rational," so at the beginning of *Genesis* we read that "the earth was *tohu* and *bohu*," which the Rabbis (in a gloss that Maimonides approves) interpret to mean "mourning and weeping." The earth bewailed the fact that although the heavens were created with her, they were alive and aware while she was dead.<sup>36</sup> The aporia lies in drawing the claim from the testimony of the earth itself. Comparable personifications only a few lines earlier were taken by Maimonides as proof that Scripture and the Rabbis assumed the heavens to be conscious and alive.

The resolution of the aporia arises from the equivocal status of matter, for earth is the paradigm of physicality. As a principle of otherness, prime matter is ■ mere abstraction, a concomitant, Maimonides argues, of finite being, but not a being itself—still less to be numbered among "the sons of God"—that is, the principles of being.<sup>37</sup> Yet "even the elements are called angels."<sup>38</sup> Matter becomes articulate to the extent that it is governed by form, that is, by the ideas that emanate from the Divine; relative to the heavens the elements are dead.<sup>39</sup> They are the most primitive actual instances of matter and achieve actuality by virtue of the specificity of form with which they are endowed. Elements are said to speak by a license beyond the poetic license of personification—a license which

depends upon the fact that they have been assigned determinate characters and identities, that is, by virtue of the fact that they are not pure prime matter but actual existents.

Maimonides makes some remarkable claims in behalf of the celestial intelligences. Not only are they alive, intelligent, enduring beings, but also (unlike Islamic angels<sup>40</sup>) they outrank humanity in the scale of being—a crucial point in Maimonides' arguments for humility as a human virtue and against the notion that man is the goal and cynosure of creation.<sup>41</sup> Moreover the disembodied intellects exercise a rather paradoxical sort of volition. The spheres and intelligences apprehend their own actions, choose rationally and govern, but not as we choose and govern. For all our choices and decisions address emergent events (*lākin laysa mūthla ikhtiyārīnā wa lā tadbīrīnā, allādhi huwa kulluhu bi-'umūrin mutajaddidin*)—that is, new events about to take place, over which our choices and decisions will exercise a determining impact. The angels, by contrast, are given no arbitrary discretion. Thus the angel says to Lot: "I cannot do anything" (Genesis 19:22), and again (in Exodus 23:21), God's angel exercises no discretion, "for My name is in him." Human beings are allotted choice and may choose wisely or unwisely; but the consciousness of the "angels," on which depend the motions of the heavens and operation of all natural processes—through these motions and through the forms imparted by the Active Intellect—is perfectly informed and chooses always "for the best," in accordance with the dictates of God's wisdom.<sup>42</sup> Their "choices" are not immediate but eternal.

Clearly part of Maimonides' intention in speaking about angels is to demythologize:

If you told one of those men who purport to be the Sages of Israel that the Deity sends an angel that enters the womb of a woman and then forms the foetus, that would impress him and he would accept it as an expression of God's greatness and power and an instance of His wisdom—although still convinced that an angel is a body of flaming fire one-third the size of the entire world—supposing all this perfectly possible for God. But if you told him that God placed a formative power in the semen, by which the limbs and organs are shaped and demarcated, and that this is the angel, or if you told him that the forms of all things are the work of the Active Intellect

and that this is the angel constantly mentioned by the Sages as the magistrate of the world, he would bolt at such a view. For he does not understand the real meaning of greatness and power.<sup>43</sup>

The truth is that "all forces are angels"; and the Rabbis called an angel the third part of the world (Genesis Rabbah X) not to suggest its size, but to show the place of spiritual, intellectual, beings in the cosmic order: Angels, the bodies of the spheres, and the changing bodies of the sublunary world constitute the three types of created being. Only in the poetically charged imagination of the prophet is an angel actually envisioned.<sup>44</sup> Angels are invisible because they are forces or powers, the generative forms that organize and enliven the natural world, differentiating it from mere chaos. They are perceived from their effects, apprehended when we understand the structures of natural things and the characters and causes of natural processes. Yet, if Maimonides' goal is to demythologize, why does he insist that "angels" are conscious, rational, volitional beings? Has he escaped the confines of Midrashic mythology only to ensnare himself in the myths of the Philosophers?

## 2. Two Kinds of Volition

The forms, forces or angels that are permanent, as distinguished from those that are distributed in matter (divided with its divisions and dissolved when their work is finished<sup>45</sup>), are conscious, intelligent, rationally choosing beings. They are delegated the governance of nature in accordance with their (invariant but inexorable) choices. Clearly Maimonides' naturalism is not reductionistic in a physical direction. His retention of the Biblical and Rabbinic language, referring to the powers that govern nature as angels, despite his vehement rejection of the mythic image of an angel, is far more than a mere *façon de parler* or shallow bow in the direction of tradition. We gain an insight into his intentions from his insistence that the articulacy of the angels is not explicit but inner, like the silent consciousness of the meditative man who contemplates the Divine as he lies still upon his bed.<sup>46</sup>

Maimonides' treatment draws on a tradition that goes back to Plato's enunciation of Socrates' disappointment with the philosophy

of Anaxagoras. Anaxagoras had promised to show that the world is governed by intelligence. If so, the young Socrates reasoned, one ought to learn from his book how all things are governed for the best, as intelligence requires: "Somehow it seemed right that mind should be the cause of everything, and I reasoned that if this is so, mind in producing order sets everything in order and arranges each individual thing in the way that is best for it. . . . I thought that by assigning a cause to each phenomenon separately and to the universe as a whole he would make clear what is best for each and what is the universal good." But Nous in Anaxagoras proved a fairly adventitious principle, lacking the power of governance for the good that Socrates expected.<sup>47</sup> Aristotle carries the same criticism further, arguing that the ultimate causal principles responsible for the cosmic order should not operate externally, like a *deus ex machina* in a bad play, but from within, through the inner dynamic of each player's actions.<sup>48</sup>

Both Plato and Aristotle devoted central attention in constructing their philosophies to emending the weaknesses they had found in Anaxagoras. Plato fused reality, causal power, rationality and goodness in his conception of the divine. Aristotle gave special emphasis to the immanence of divine causality by arguing that the being of a thing (the "what-it-is-for-a-thing-to-be") is specific to that thing and amounts to the nature each sort of thing develops and expresses in its actions in the world. All processes are teleological in the sense that they head toward a goal (completion), whether or not that goal is consciously articulated, and regardless of the fact that the endpoint of one natural process may be (must be) the initiation of another.<sup>49</sup> Platonically one can say that essences *specify* the universal idea of the Good. Aristotle renders the same conception dynamic and more pointedly causal by differentiating the material ground, telic goal and mediating formal and active principles that govern the action of all things in nature. For each species the pursuit of pure actuality and emulation of pure perfection are expressed by the interpretation of actuality or perfection in a specific natural mode of action or of life. Things realize themselves through their pursuit of goals. For no atemporal essence is ever wholly present in any particular at a given instant. And no single goal is ever comprehensive of all good.<sup>50</sup> God rules the world as He moves it, through the attraction towards divine perfection expressed in their diverse ways by the very essences which are the presence in each

thing of that measure of pure actuality which properly belongs to each natural kind.

In the perspective of this tradition it becomes quite intelligible how Maimonides can claim that the Aristotelian (by which he means Neoplatonic Aristotelian) affirmation of consciously choosing intellects associated with the spheres is congruent with Biblical and Rabbinic views. To be sure, Aristotle is an eternalist and Maimonides is a creationist. But the means by which Maimonides will account for God's relation to the world—God's governance and even creation of the world—are the same emanationist means as those that the Neoplatonic philosophers had derived from their study of the metaphysics of Aristotle and Plato. Granted the world is distinct from God and the intelligences and forms are not to be deemed divine—still less the forces they induce in natural particulars—nonetheless, these forms and forces and the consciousnesses which represent the highest rung attained among imparted forms are "emissaries" of the divine. Like the breath of life that God breathed into Adam, they do God's will by imparting to things the power of acting for themselves.

In the role assigned to them the incorporeal intellects must be consciously choosing beings. For the specifications they determine are not exhaustive of the logical possibilities for finite being. Similarly, the intellects of the spheres must choose in order to govern—to steer and pilot the great ship entrusted to them.<sup>51</sup> Yet the choices made by the disembodied intelligences follow a consistent pattern. The cosmos will not take an alternative course—not because its motions are automatic but because the guiding intelligences choose always for the best.

This seems a strange admission for Maimonides, since he himself criticizes the Neoplatonic philosophers for purporting to assign to God the determination of the existence and character of all things yet simultaneously denying any real alternatives. The cosmos of the philosophers, as an eternal existent, becomes a necessary existent. Its character too is necessary. All things in nature must be as they are; and if the requirements of the Philosophers are taken strictly, change becomes impossible.<sup>52</sup> It is highly problematic, Maimonides argues, for the Philosophers to assign to God the authorship of the cosmos.<sup>53</sup> Al-Ghazālī argued, in the precedent for Maimonides' criticism, that it is contradictory for the Philosophers to

ascribe the world's constitution to God's free act if the world would have had the same character regardless. What can be meant by God's choice if there were no real alternatives for it to range over?<sup>54</sup>

Now the same criticism might be applied to Maimonides himself. How does it make sense to say that natural events occur by rational choices of the angels (rather than automatically or mechanically) when the "choices" will never eventuate other than as they do and their outcomes are the same that any mechanist would predict as the regular outcomes of physical causes? There are two problems to clear up here, both hinging on the Rambam's curious insistence on applying the language of rational volition to the governance of nature: (a) Why is such governance called volitional at all, when by Maimonides' own standards volition must confront real alternatives? Why does he insist on volition when he is equally insistent in denying arbitrary discretion? Has he somehow abandoned the Aristotelian standards he uses throughout his discussion of human and divine volition: that voluntary choices are those which might eventuate in several different outcomes, whereas events in accordance with nature are distinguished by having only one outcome possible under given conditions?<sup>55</sup> And (b) what function does cosmic volition play in Maimonidean nature when Maimonides is at pains to ensure that the system he describes would generate no event incompatible with natural science? If we can answer this pair of related questions, we come to the heart of Maimonides' naturalism, the distinctive basis of his dissatisfaction with mechanism and automatism.

(a) The theological-cum-modal question rests on a rather superficial confusion and is easily cleared up by logical considerations. God's choice does confront real alternatives: being or not being for the cosmos, this set of natural principles or that. Likewise with human choices. We confront the choices between life and death, the blessing and the curse.<sup>56</sup> The notion of alternative futures (implied in the very logic of the divine commandments and particularly in the ordinances that demand we take precautions against causing injury to others) does not imply the reality of alternative actualities. Only one actuality will ever be real. The other possibilities are virtual. There is no rabies on Oahu, there never has been, and perhaps there never will be. But to grant this is not to deny the possibility of rabies on Oahu and therefore abandon all

precautions against its introduction. An event (*pace* Aristotle) is not to be called impossible merely because it will never occur. Accordingly, an option is not impossible merely because it will not be chosen. *To speak of choosing among alternatives is to acknowledge their possibility within a given framework of assumptions and to abstract from the assumptions that exclude or necessitate one alternative or another.* To speak of God's choosing to create the world or to create the world in ■ certain way is to abstract from the considerations (be they what they may) that actually govern God's choice and to make reference only to a looser framework of assumptions in which that choice is unconstrained. Perhaps God's choice to create the world was directed by His generosity and withholding of creation was excluded by God's grace. But when we speak of choice, we mean to abstract—as much as to say that leaving grace and generosity out of consideration, the world need not have existed.<sup>57</sup> The same analysis applies to any determinations, including human choices. When Maimonides says that human choices deal with emergent events or ephemera he addresses the contingency of outcomes. If Zayd makes a parapet on his roof,<sup>58</sup> he may forestall a particular catastrophe that might otherwise have occurred. If he fails to do so, an event that would otherwise have been impossible might become actual. But Zayd is the sort of being that can fail, through negligence, fatigue, distraction or forgetfulness.

What of the "choices" of the disembodied intelligences? God chooses to create, and were it not for His generosity might have chosen otherwise. Nothing in the nature of finite being determined Him to act, for it did not yet exist. Similarly, God chose the nature of the world. A variety of possible worlds are compatible with the logical requirements of internal coherence.<sup>59</sup> God chose this one, the one that operates by these natural principles. But these principles, according to Maimonides, are not abstract "laws" but determinants, disembodied intelligences, traditionally called angels, prime objects of creation. Their actions are invariant. Their "choices" are not irresolute, and their steadiness is the constancy of nature. The instances they govern are the forces that order and inform matter. They are purely intellectual (thus disembodied, fully actual, causally potent and conscious) forms. These intelligences choose in the same way that they were chosen: by delegating to what lies beneath them

inwardly centered, natural control, for each thing, over its own motions and expressions, in accordance with the natures (rational or non-rational) chosen and imparted by the creative act of God.

The intelligences are said to act volitionally, then, because every natural juncture involves confrontation of alternatives. Things might have been determined so or so—not in the sense that, say, appetitive beings confront pragmatic vicissitudes, flexibly, prepared to alter our choices if our actions produce other than the expected outcomes, but determinatively, creatively, specifying the requirements of universal wisdom, with all but infinitely painstaking detail and care,<sup>60</sup> until all the myriad steps are traversed between the generalized idea of grace and the concrete particularity required for the instantiation of each natural kind and creature. In critically appropriating this idea, we would lay greater stress on the inner, evolutionary workings of natural choice at the junctures of contingency and none at all on the poetically personified hypostases. But the projection and pursuit of a good by each natural being remains as vital a supplement to mechanism as it was when Maimonides signalled the inadequacy of automatism in accounting for emanation, or when Socrates said that if all things are ruled by intelligence they would be directed toward the best. Volition in the “angels,” even when they are construed as forms and forces, performs a specifying function that no mere automatism, whether mechanistic or intellectual, can achieve alone. Choice, specification of what need not have been, ensures that divine creativity and governance are not halted at the level of universals but actually reach the world of nature. For, as Aristotle himself taught, despite the Peripatetic denial of particular providence, nothing exists but particulars. There are no independent universals to be recipients of God’s grace.<sup>61</sup>

(b) What then of the cosmological point? If Maimonidean angels answer faithfully to the requirements of the good, obeying God’s wisdom as each in its specificity perfectly but partially conceives it, faithfully replicating the very cosmos that would be expected on any rational scientific account, why are the angels retained at all? Why the emphasis on their intelligence and volition? Part of the answer has been already given. The rationalistic intellectualism that excludes voluntarism makes both the world and God’s act necessary and eternal. At the same time it cuts off the

world of particulars from the divine, as though universals were debarred somehow from governing their particulars. One more of the dangers of the exclusively intellectualist view, very obvious to us, is that it excludes empiricism—a failing marked both by Maimonides and by al-Ghazālī.<sup>62</sup> For it relegates to randomness what it cannot assimilate to wisdom and rational necessity, rather than leaving room for the kind of *a posteriori* recognition of necessity that discovers wisdom in nature even where we did not anticipate it. Maimonides’ approach allows us to assimilate apparently random events to causal pattern without reducing them to matters of logical inevitability.

As for mechanism, its difficulties seemed obvious to Maimonides: It reduced the causal order to the play of chance. Even today mechanism tends to make necessity and chance indistinguishable. It thus has the effect of leaving nature unintelligible and causal regularities unexplained and inexplicable.<sup>63</sup> Where strict intellectualism carried rationalism too far, making God’s choices themselves phenomena to be explained and treating all events as necessary categorically (as though logic were the sole and sufficient determinant of all natural determinacies), mechanistic materialism plainly did not go far enough. By debarring rational principles it made all natural events a mere series of inexplicable motions. Causes and effects became mere givens; every event, a pure positivity, with no principle of explanation to appeal to for understanding or prediction. We still confront the impact of this irrationalism when the positivistic heirs to the mechanism of Democritus attempt (rather lamely and inconsistently) to explain events in terms of natural laws and then turn the ledger to a bankrupt page when faced with the inquiry or the wonder why events should obey such laws.<sup>64</sup> Part of the strength of Maimonides’ rationalistic naturalism lies in the very fact that its principles are not abstractions but concrete forces, intelligences that issue orders not as mere commands but through the inward natures and characters of things, which are, in fact, selected and designed—chosen—by the rational principles operative in nature.

Being determinative in their actions, the Maimonidean intelligences are not like ordinary mechanical forces. Yet the choice and consciousness assigned to the disembodied intellects are not like ours either. Their consciousness is of their own actions; and the



choices they make, not dealing with contingent eventualities and ephemeral goals and patterns, are (as Socrates might have hoped) always for the best. This does not mean, of course, that the intelligences act as a kind of predestiny, charting the course of each finite being. On the contrary, such anthropomorphising notions of governance over nature treat the conduct of nature as though it were simply another pragmatic decision sequence manhandling contingent ephemera. Whereas in fact divine governance operates through the imparting of natural forms. Even in the human case, God's providence is expressed through the imparting of the human form and specifically, the rational soul or human intelligence.<sup>65</sup> Destiny is always causal, and in the human case it does not arise externally but through our own choices and actions.<sup>66</sup>

Nor are there any Panglossian implications to the Rambam's version of the idea that God governs for the best. For what is chosen by the hypostatic intelligences (from a diversity of alternative virtualities on Maimonides' account, which regards strict Neoplatonic emanation as too automatic to allow real differentiation and emergence of diversity and multiplicity<sup>67</sup>) is the pattern of nature at each step and stage of its elaboration. What God chooses is not the future of each being but the specificities of grace and nature by which each will freely manifest its own character in its milieu. In this specification, the divine wisdom is expressed in much the manner of a creative artist, where the wisdom is not fully articulated until it is instantiated. Thus the emanative generosity of God finds its meaning in the act of creation itself, not in its abstract virtuality. God, we can say, might not have created; but that would have been no act of grace. This fact is symbolized traditionally, both in the Neoplatonists and in the Psalms, by the representation of God's creativity as a fountain of light and life.<sup>68</sup> For light and life are not real until they are imparted; not imparted until they are real.<sup>69</sup> What is entailed in the notion that the intelligences of the spheres rule by conscious choice is that what we apprehend as an objective rationality in the cosmos has its roots in a higher, subjective rationality. It is to this matter that we must now turn—Maimonides' version of the answer to the mystery encapsulated in the famous words of Einstein: "The most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible."

### 3. Inward Rationality and Choice in Nature

The Aristotelian spheres have fallen, and the Neoplatonic intelligences are dispersed. One might almost say that their work is completed. If God is to govern nature, He must do so without hypostases.<sup>70</sup> The age of vice-regents is past. But for that very reason the Aristotelian idea of immanence acquires a new and compelling force—although the Maimonidean value of distinguishing what is immanent from what is transcendent remains, as David Novak's paper makes very clear. But further, the Aristotelian natural forms have proved mutable—as a Plato or a Maimonides might have expected.<sup>71</sup> Indeed they are more mutable than Maimonides suspected. For he confined evolutionary change to the formative age of the cosmos and preserved the settled order of nature as an inner necessity against the supernaturalism of the superstitious. But we know that creation is not over and that natural laws are invariant at a rather higher level of abstraction than classical naturalists suspected. Seeming sports of nature prove to be causally significant in a process that may well be unrepeated; its outcomes, unexampled. The universe itself has a history. New meanings are discovered for the old ideas of Aristotle, Plato and al-Ghazālī, that time and space are relative to the things within them, or to the sensibilities of a percipient.<sup>72</sup> Even the idea of concreteness is profoundly altered with the discovery that matter is not what is ultimately conserved, and again with the recognition that the chemical atom is composed of parts made up in turn of particles whose properties are anything but homogeneous with those of the matter they compose.

If any natural object inherits the explanatory primacy of the Aristotelian spheres, it is the electron, or perhaps the quark. But electrons, like the spheres, no longer orbit. Their paths are not continuous curves—indeed they do not seem to be continuous. We can no longer even say in any very direct way of electrons—or of quarks—as once was proposed of the spheres, that their motions and locations determine events. Yet the curious status of our ultimate particles between matter and energy does somehow echo the character once assigned to the curiously non-material matter that Aristotle relied on as the substance of the spheres. And the ambiguous status of light, as wave or particle, seems to echo the ambiguous status of light in Neoplatonic systems, between matter and the ideal. Yet no

one is likely to pretend that photons are alive. What possible meaning can be found for the Maimonidean scheme of angels as forces in a post-Aristotelian, post-Newtonian, post-Darwinian, even post-Planckian age? The beginnings of an answer are suggested in a passage cited by Averroes from Themistius, a philosopher well respected by Maimonides.<sup>73</sup>

Taking exception to an anti-Platonic argument in Aristotle's metaphysics based on the fact that man begets man—hence, that the human form comes to humans from their progenitors—Themistius argued that if “man is born only from man and horse from horse,” spontaneous generation becomes inexplicable.<sup>74</sup> Now spontaneous generation is no more live an option today than are crystalline spheres. But the logic of spontaneous generation—by which species emerge from what they are not—is far more central to our evolutionary sciences than it was to Themistius, where it represented an odd counterexample to Aristotelian naturalism, based on uncontrolled observation of marginal phenomena like the supposed generation of bees from dead cattle and hornets from dead horses. In an evolutionary context *all* species are taken to emerge from specifically and essentially different precursors, predecessors that lack the “form” of the emergent species. And all life is thought to derive from what was not alive.

Normally, in our science, such emergence is ascribed to the work of minute particles. Mendelian genetics has made good on the proposal of Epicurus that the causal principles behind natural selection lie not where Empedocles sought them, on the level of gross anatomy and function, but on the micro-level, in the germplasm, much cosseted from the environment, and capable, on the model laid out by Jacob and Monod and given biochemical configuration by Watson, Crick, Franklin and others, of organizing all the processes of life. But two assumptions common to most evolutionary schemes (whether their end products are living species or galaxies) call for closer examination in our Maimonidean framework than they usually receive: (a) The explanatory particles, at whatever level analysis ends and synthesis of higher order complexes is begun, move or spin or have a charge to impart, that is, they are still assumed to have distinctive, interactive characters, active dispositional properties, expressive of their natures. (b) In forming complexes or in other interactions, regardless how evanescent, the lower level particles

engender higher order properties. The motion or spin or mass or other properties of “elementary” particles are taken as givens, and the higher order properties are treated as their resultants. To this familiar structure we must add two observations: The givenness of elemental properties is a contingent fact that can be explained only relative to *its* causes. And the emergence of “higher” properties from “lower” is a synthetic or creative act. For it takes the natural given beyond its givenness. The emergence of physical properties from, say electrical configurations or statistical regularities, of chemistry from physics, of biology from chemistry, of thought from life, at each stage generates dispositions and activities that could never be accounted for by the general laws describing the prior stages. Lower order properties in nature describe boundary conditions for the higher but neither predict nor explain them. For they do not even generate the categories necessary to describe them. Arithmetic will never “explain” geometry without the postulation of space, and chemistry will never explain psychology without the mention of thought.<sup>75</sup>

We cannot reduce biology to physics without remainder for the simple reason that what we note in physics abstracts away from all that is distinctive to biology. Physical laws are formulated to cover both living and non-living systems and attain their generality by ignoring the activities specific to living beings, which exploit the properties of matter, not “defying” them but *using* them to attain ends that matter considered *as* matter could never attain. Where science achieves generality by abstracting from the complexity and “thickness” of phenomena, it loses explanatory power over the specificities that are the quick of evolution. What emergence defies is not the general principles of nature but reduction to the terms of such general principles.

Mechanism ascribes the attainment of higher ends to complexity. But that is a clear case of disguising an abstract description of the effect as a reductive explanation of the cause, like saying that intelligence is a matter of problem solving or that opium acts through the *virtus dormitiva*. The explanatory power of reductive analysis rests on abstracting away from the thickness and complexity it seeks to explain, whereas here what we seek to explain is complexity itself, or rather, a certain kind of complexity—not turbulence or chaos, but a certain kind of order. In the emergence of life from non-living matter, higher order, organic ends are projected beyond the simple

and immediate, elemental ends of the given. Matter exhibits such properties as impenetrability and inertia; compounds show acidity and basicity. But out of such properties as these new goals are constituted, by complexes capable not just of pursuing such goals but of projecting (and enlarging) a meaning for them: survival, reproduction, efflorescence, biological evolution.

Theorists of evolution who recognize the emergence of complexity tend to treat the fact not as a phenomenon but as a tautology: Of course the complex emerges from the simple. What else could it emerge from? Emergence represents not a tendency but the statistical exception to the general rule of breakdown. Stability, complexity, and higher order properties are not values pursued but mere names for what successfully persists, the delicate toy that rests glistening atop the slag heap of disordered wastes and failed attempts. Insensibly, iridescently, the claim that emergence is a tautology verges into the charge that emergence is a paradox. The notion of stability or success is bundled into a neutral-seeming package, masking the telic character that was present (and indeed presumed) from the outset, so that survival becomes an instance or at best a special case of inertia. Life and consciousness become fragments of a random walk rather than (as in Plotinus) a grand procession (*prohodos*) or (as in Maimonides) a cosmic panorama—nature passing before Moses in the panoply of its kinds (*Guide* I 38). By this means, emergence is assimilated to the random noise around it and ceases to stand forth as an achievement or a gift. And the value of the initial given, along with the values generated by evolving beings themselves in setting out their ends, is dismissed to grey facticity, the facticity that positivism acknowledges but cannot explain.

Simultaneous with the assimilation of the emergent to its background comes the paradoxical insistence on the ultimacy of disorder. It would take us too far afield to excavate the anthropomorphisms and projections latent in metaphysical applications of the idea of entropy, to urge reinstatement of the Aristotelian and Spinozistic insight that order and disorder, as value concepts, are *in our applications of them* (as Maimonides himself insists for all human applications of value notions—*Guide* I 2) necessarily tinged with subjectivity. We must await another occasion to attempt to re-enliven as a wholesome alternative to all

anthropomorphising views of evolution and devolution the Aristotelian response to Empedocles' first falling foul of love and strife: the recognition that the breakdown of one thing is the build up of another.<sup>76</sup> What is pertinent here is the recognition that there is evolution in nature. To this we may add a recognition of ecological opportunism based very much on reading the Second Law of Thermodynamics in an Aristotelian spirit: Energy is not wasted in the cosmos if waste itself can be a resource—if a world as rich as ours can be sustained by the effluence of a middle class star like the sun.

Spinoza captures the dynamic of the two evolutionary assumptions far more forthrightly than most evolutionary theorists when he generalizes them to being at large. The essence of each thing is its tendency to preserve and promote its own being—not statically but through the expression of its own character and the elaboration of that character towards perfection. Here, despite (or perhaps because of) Spinoza's strictures against teleology of the anthropomorphising and anthropocentric type, we see the basis of a new yet properly Aristotelian teleology, in which all things in pursuing their own goals pursue perfection and by so doing, as Maimonides puts it, express the glory of God—or, as Spinoza puts it, express infinite being, each in its own way (*Ethica* I, def. 6). The means by which they do so, in Maimonidean language, are the essences imparted by God. For Maimonides is emphatic in maintaining that the disembodied intelligences from which forms stem are nothing apart from God, and matter itself is nothing but the condition of otherness by which God gives freedom or existentionation to finite particulars.<sup>77</sup>

In her efforts to rehabilitate Aristotelian teleology,<sup>78</sup> Martha Nussbaum is at pains to exclude as un-Aristotelian three doctrines which she plainly regards as damaging to the credibility of the Aristotelian approach in a modern scientific context: (i) "the idea of a universal teleology of nature"; (ii) the notion of mysterious, "non-empirical" strivings toward the realization of form; and (iii) the inclusion of non-organismic processes in teleology. She also objects to any effort to disengage matter from form or to see form as anything but the arrangement of matter. It is difficult to see in this context what would become of Aristotle's God, the pure Intelligence which is also pure Actuality, or how form is prevented from

becoming always the secondary and passive, dependent variable, rather than the active and actualizing, ontically primary principle that Aristotle's metaphysics wants to make of it and requires it to be. But confining ourselves to the realm of nature and recognizing the indissolubility *here* of form from matter—for surely form cannot actualize when there is nothing in need of actualizing—we must recognize that Maimonides has followed an alternative line of interpretation to Nussbaum's in integrating the Aristotelian concepts of form, matter, telos and efficient cause—an alternative, closer to that of Joseph Owens, but not necessarily erroneous, and not necessarily as incompatible with the findings of our sciences as Nussbaum fears. There are good grounds for including non-organic processes in teleology, especially if we accept, as Nussbaum does, the distinction between objective and subjective ends. The goal of a process need not be conceptualized or envisioned by the actor in the process. Aristotle (like Spinoza) likes to speak in relative terms—of some actors as more articulate than others in reference to their goals. Clearly, in evolutionary terms, no integrated organic systems focused on (and thereby constituting) higher order goals are possible unless they could be built of components whose conatus is toward lesser, simpler, non-conceptualized goals.

The idea that such a conatus is a non-empiric “mysterious striving” towards the actualization of form is quite un-Aristotelian. To be sure, no ontic *élan* or thrust is to be detected by the senses. But Aristotelian induction makes it clear that a *nisus* in each thing towards the expression (and preservation, elaboration) of its character is the common theme in all finite being. There is nothing to save in Aristotelian teleology if we discard the notion of unconscious and inchoate goals. For the very essence of Aristotle's teleology is the distinction between ends, which all processes in nature have, and purposes, which only deliberating beings have. Speaking Spinozistically, we do not depart far from the thought of Aristotle if we say that the conatus of each thing is its essence, and that this is known from experience, although no conatus is a sense datum.

As for a general causal plan or universal teleology, Maimonides concurs with Nussbaum's suspicions, if the phrase “universal teleology of nature” intends the assignment of a single overall anthropomorphic purpose to God, as in the thesis which Maimonides anticipates Spinoza in rejecting: that God made all things for man

and man that he might worship God.<sup>79</sup> Maimonides holds that God made all things in the first instance for their own sakes. Things glorify God in pursuing their own perfection. For in so doing they manifest, each in its own way, one aspect of the perfection of God. But, in this sense, on a meta-level, there is a general teleology of nature for Maimonides. The same is true, of course, for Aristotle. That is why the love and strife schematism of Empedocles must be rejected. It relies on separate principles to explain creation and destruction (order and entropy) instead of recognizing that in a single system of nature only one (but very general) principle is required, since build up and break down (like our oxidation and reduction) are the same process viewed from opposite perspectives. The single necessary principle is that of perfection.<sup>80</sup>

Each being in nature has an end or good of its own. It is for this reason in part that the term ‘good’ is systematically (*pros hen*) ambiguous for Aristotle. But there is no comfort for the relativism of the Sophists here. The recognition that finite beings have partial and partisan perspectives on the good does not entail that all differences in levels of perfection are subjective or that one segment of being is no better than another—the grub or speck of dust on a par with the inspired lawgiver and poet.<sup>81</sup> The notion of a universal good remains applicable by reference to the common orientation of each thing toward perfection—a specification of the pure perfection of God.

Nussbaum argues that Aristotle might have had a notion of a general or cosmic teleology had the concept of an ecosystem been available to him, but she denies that such a concept was accessible to Aristotle. Yet Aristotle has the idea of a single integrated cosmic system; and his distinctive use (against Empedocles) of the Heraclitean notion that “the way up is the way down” perfects that concept and allows for a characteristically Aristotelian ecology: Since the breakdown of one thing is the build up of another, energy in Aristotle's sense is not lost in the cosmos but systematically recycled by the action of the spheres and under the influence of the intelligences—there is no loss of complexity for the cosmos as a whole. It was for this reason in part that Aristotle's successors kept alive the ancient equation of the cosmos with an organism.

We cannot retain Aristotle's confidence in the absolute stability of the cosmic plan. But Maimonides, following the lead of al-

Ghazālī and Philoponus, long ago found excessive the Aristotelian claims for the stability of the cosmos. One of his greatest contributions was to disentangle the Aristotelian idea of the consistency of natural law from the metaphysical notion of an unalterable nature. As for ourselves, we expect neither unlimited cosmic "progress" nor necessarily (as in Philoponus) a universal cosmic endgame, but continued opportunities for evolution, accompanied by continued liabilities to decline—the two being by no means mutually exclusive.

Clearly, for Aristotle, if there were no integration of all causes in a single cosmos there would not be much point in taking Anaxagoras to task for failing adequately to integrate the rationality of *Nous* into the account of nature. Nor would it be clear why Aristotle should place *Nous*, at the helm (but not anthropomorphically) of his cosmic system, or why at the outset of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (I 1) he should assume that means without an ultimate end have no end at all. Maimonides profits from the Neoplatonic recension of Aristotle's metaphysics by discovering in it a subtle account of how the form or essence of each thing can be both its project and its charge from God. It is here that he finds an affinity between the thinking of the Neoplatonic Aristotelians as to forms and ends and the Rabbinic, midrashically enunciated teachings and Biblical vignettes about angels. The astronomy of the scheme, of course, is quite secondary.

Maimonides is rather diffident toward the Aristotelian cosmology. He knows the weaknesses of Ptolemaic astronomy in accounting for the retrograde motion of the planets<sup>82</sup> and is skeptical of claims to knowledge about the celestial beings.<sup>83</sup> He echoes Plato's treatment of cosmology as "a likely story," arguing that the Aristotelian scheme is plausible but by no means established or even verifiable, and he stresses Ptolemy's treatment of astronomical theories as mathematical models designed to account for the observed phenomena, not necessarily to map the cosmos as it actually is.<sup>84</sup> In several passages he disclaims any intention of adding to the store of astronomical theory, and in one he urges that there are already enough books speculating on the correct number of the disembodied intellects.<sup>85</sup>

Yet despite these expressions of restiveness with classical astronomy and despite his explicit efforts to bracket the detailed

claims of classical cosmology, Maimonides argues strenuously for the congruence of Biblical and Rabbinic angelology with Greek cosmology and outspokenly avows as general principles what he presents as its central theme: the existence of non-material intellectual beings superior in nobility to humanity and exercising volition in the governance of the cosmos.<sup>86</sup> I have argued that there is something of value here, to be disentangled from Ptolemaic astronomy, mythic angelology and even Aristotelian cosmology. Maimonides' efforts to articulate the insight he finds in quite non-Aristotelian idioms in Scripture and Midrash aid us in disentangling that insight and stating it in terms that do not sap our present scientific beachhead.

The quintessential spheres, slowed by retrogradation, breached by comets, and shattered by the laws of parallax that sent them careening into one another, were brought to the ground finally by the very demands of elegance that had erected them. It was no longer necessary to appeal to 55 or 47 or even 10 intelligences to account for the observed celestial motions when two impersonal forces—gravity and inertia—would suffice, given the adequacy of Newton's principles to account for Kepler's laws. The facts of relativity and the quantum relationships emerge from ambiguities in the behavior of light and its emanative cousins and cousins german—electromagnetism, gravity, and other sorts of forces that might be resident in a body or even propagated where no body is present to support them. The mechanistic materialism once taken as the message of Newtonian physics has given way (yet not entirely and consistently) to a variety of alternative metaphysical readings. Prominent among them are the Whiteheadian de-emphasis of substance in favor of events, and the phenomenalist metaphysic that sometimes passes as radical empiricism or even bravely manifests its allegiance to the old materialism after which it still hankers, but sometimes openly or tacitly avows one form or another of idealism. For moody or disenchanted phenomenologists can still argue that appearances are nothing without subjects and thus that there are no facts without subjective apprehenders—that the very content of physics requires the positing of human subjects. Such arguments, regardless of where they are assumed to lead—whether to subjectivism, humanism, cultural relativism, mysticism, or some form of Buddhism—have no more in them today than they had before the

advent of quantum physics. That observations are subjective is a tautology and cannot imply the metaphysically freighted denial that the world would not exist without an observer—a claim about the world which we have no evidence to support.

Both Process Philosophy and the many varieties of subjectivism that have claimed paternity in the new physics seem to rest their most convincing claims on the fact that what we study in physics (and thus what we know about nature) are intelligible patterns among things. This is what Heraclitus and Greek speakers after him, from Plato and Aristotle to Philo and beyond, called *logos*. It was not something subjective, at least not a figment of human thought alone. The tendency to read the intelligibility of nature as an artifact of human study is a symptom but not a demonstrated consequence of renaissance and enlightenment humanism. The projective/reflexive structure of such a claim is as indicative of its doubtfulness as is the same structure in any other anthropomorphism. We achieve some hope of overcoming subjectivism in our accounts of science by the same means that we find hope of objectivity in science itself: desisting from seeking in the cosmos (or in science) only images of ourselves. For the same distaste for narcissism that once taught us not to find an image of ourselves in the sky ought now to teach us not to seek that same image deflected to the sciences, but to cross-calibrate those sciences so that they reflect the world at large and not ourselves alone.<sup>87</sup> Accordingly, the intelligence that we detect in nature (and must detect in order to explain) must not be judged *as* intelligence by the extent of its approximation to a human mentality. Rather, we must recognize its wisdom in its own terms and learn what universal or absolute intelligence is from the inductive study of its work, not from the application to it of our own preconceived notions.

The same idea, that we can triangulate from our diverse findings to generate some measure of objectivity in science, is expressed, with a slightly different (but still rather Pythagorean) emphasis when modern theorists say that mathematics is the language of physics. What they mean is that a scientific finding is one that answers to formal values such as comprehensiveness, symmetry, rhythm, harmony, and elegance. The exact character of such values cannot be specified *a priori*, just as there is no formal definition of a melody, a pattern, or a game. But in some measure, in specific

circumstances, the appearance of such values is confirmable *a posteriori*, and the more we know of specific contexts and frameworks of operation, the more reliable we become in applying such notions consistently and communicating with others about where they arise and what forms they might be expected to take.<sup>88</sup>

No one could have predicted *a priori* that there were not four but over a hundred elements. Yet, given close observational experience and controlled experimentation with the patterns of behavior of many elements, it was possible in some measure to predict the character and even existence of others—even to generate the conditions in which new elements would arise. The same fact about the nature of science is expressed in Maimonidean terms by saying that scientists study the rationality embedded in nature; in Aristotelian terms, by saying that the sciences study why things must be as they are; in Platonic terms, by saying that they learn how intelligence governs all things for the best.

Explicitly or implicitly the standpoint remains teleological—explicitly in the medieval and classical formulations; tacitly, often surreptitiously, in our own. Standards of value are still used in framing viable hypotheses and in recognizing their confirming instances—which still answer to the description Aristotle gave: that in studying nature we will discover craftsmanship like that of the most skilled artistry.<sup>89</sup> The objective view clearly is not anthropocentric. But in our haste to avoid describing it as divine (for what is science if not the endeavor to understand the world in some small measure as God does and thereby transcend some of our human limitations) we conceal the character of the standards we apply, positivistically deny them (while still using them), or projectively displace them—as we do when we treat them as subjective—as though the order of the world (which in other contexts we feel free to criticize) could somehow be the work of our own minds.

The idea of forms<sup>90</sup> does not die as readily as that of spheres or sphere souls. For matter without form remains a mere virtuality, and all the principles we appeal to in the description or explanation of natural phenomena—forces, fields, charges, dispositions—remain formal characters in things. Nor does Aristotle's profound conception that the linkage between God and nature must be telic die with the gradual rusting of his all too material mechanism for that linkage, which Maimonides, Averroes, and Aristotle himself were more than

prepared to bracket as a mere model of what must one day prove to be the case, and which Plato included most emphatically in what he called "a likely story." The ideal that beings strive for, the form they grope to realize as their own—conceptualizable as the orienting goal of their conatus—is, in its immediacy, neither hypostatic nor immanent. Rather, like Philo's Logos, it remains, through all changes in its conceptualization, a virtuality projected by each individual being, with a characteristic degree of articulacy, propinquity or remoteness.

The Maimonidean claim that the forces governing nature are not only rational but volitional, conscious and intelligent has some salvage value, then, in suggesting an alternative to the positivism that negates the categories of explanation we employ, and an alternative, for that matter, to the reactive subjectivism that romantically confounds those categories with artifacts of our cultures or figments of our psyches: (a) To invoke the notion of choice, as the Rambam does, is to imply that values are at stake, that the determinations we discover in nature are not made among neutral, equally valuable or valueless alternatives but involve a directionality that the conatus in all beings implicitly recognizes and participates in defining—not by assigning it an arbitrary direction but by specifying, composing, articulating and synthesizing. Something is better than nothing; a world in which evolution occurs is better than one in which no such process is possible—even though not every product of evolution will be concordant with *our* purposes.<sup>91</sup> (b) To invoke the notion of intelligence is to make explicit the claim that a rationality is operative in nature that is answerable to our ideas of wisdom although far transcending them, since we at best anticipate the course of divine artistry and never know it *a priori*.

God governs by delegation in that God leaves all beings to the solution of their own problems, but not without means to address them. Human intelligence is a special case. Here the inner or self-focused energies of a being are brought to a pitch of articulation and integration that allows the conscious and communicable setting forth of values and the assignment of orders of priority among them. The inanimate and inarticulate achieve no such integration. Yet the lower is necessary to the higher, as finite minds cannot act without matter; and, for any action to take place or even the most elemental coordination to persist, some measure of integration is required. It

is anthropomorphic to call integration among the elements purposive. But all beings have goals—create goals, we must say—in the very acts by which each being manifests persistence. The blind gropings necessary to the emergence of conscious purpose from its prototypes are referred to intelligence, by license, in the sense that they project a goal; but in earnest, in the sense that goal-directed and goal-constituting activity presupposes a directionality whose orienting pole is the pure intelligence and pure perfection of the Divine.

To find hallmarks of the intelligence that governs nature in the forms of things (not in the celestial bodies alone of course, but in all parts of the cosmos) is both to make that intelligence knowable and to deny that its apprehension depends on our projection. It is to locate in each thing the groping towards choice made by the conatus which is the being and the value of that thing. If the heavens are not alive, as Maimonides hoped, neither is the earth as dead as he supposed. The universe is rife with living beings and with the possibilities of life, light and consciousness. These come not from our perception but from things. They argue the governance of God with the same silent voice that bespeaks the possibility of science. When beings grope toward the definition of their future and the future of their kind they do not do so because we might say they do or as we might say they should. The values that direct their determinations are their own—most often fully articulated for the first time and thereby made actual in the very act of their selection. To understand the world is to see it not from our own perspective but from that of things themselves—that is, from the perspectives that the grace of God unselfishly, or to use Plato's term, unstintingly, imparts. Even the elements have their silent song to sing.

#### Notes

1. London: Collins, 1959, 62-66.
2. See Shmuel Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1959), 1-48.
3. See *Enneads* V 3.15; cf. III 8.10, 2; V 4.2, 38.
4. See Maimonides, *Guide* II 12; and cf. Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, Goodman, 125-27.
5. *Guide* III 16.

6. See *Guide* III 16; cf. I 17, 28, II 13. Maimonides follows Saadiah's lead in treating theodicy as one of the few legitimate problem areas in theology. He follows Aristotle himself, but more specifically the tradition we know as represented by al-Kindī and al-Āmirī, in assimilating First Philosophy to theology. See Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 238-53; Everett Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate*. Of the two major families of issues addressed in the *Guide to the Perplexed*—the Account of Creation and the Account of the Chariot—Maimonides treats the former as a special case of the latter. The problems of cosmology and cosmogony (philosophical "Physics") are a subset of the problems of theophany, God's manifestation in finite terms (metaphysics or theology). Rival schools of thought—creationism, interventionistic occasionalism, the laissez faire theology of the Epicureans and the eternalistic naturalism of the Aristotelians—accordingly lead to corresponding positions with regard to providence and creation. The idea that the principal problem of metaphysics is the emergence of the many from the one is, of course, neoplatonic, as Arthur Hyman's sketch of its history in this volume shows.
7. See Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978), 315-74.
8. Dillon traces the "intradeical" Forms as far back as the Middle Platonists and ultimately to Plato himself: *The Middle Platonists* 6, 95, 255, 410, with *Timaeus* 35A, *Laws* X. Plotinus fuses Aristotle's Nous with Plato's realm of forms, referring to the now content-filled thought-thinking-itself as Being. The other papers in this volume show the many uses found for the idea of Nous as a "one/many," in Plotinus's terms.
9. *Metaphysics* A 9, 991a 8: "Above all one might discuss the question what on earth the Forms contribute. . . . For they cause neither movement nor any change . . ."
10. Philo, heeding Platonic, Stoic, Rabbinic and Scriptural cues, is an architect of the approach, for his Logos partakes of both objective and subjective rationality and thus mediates between God's absoluteness and the particularity of the world. Like Maimonides, Philo calls the ideas powers, following *Sophist* 247DE; he makes them subordinate to God and active (*energoun*) organizing principles of nature. See *De Mutatione Nominum* 21, 122, *De Specialibus Legibus* I 8, 45-48 and Wolfson, *Philo*, 1.217-18; cf. David Winston, citing *Phaedo* 95E and Diogenes Laertius 7, 147 in *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria*, 19.
11. The identification is not confined to the *Guide to the Perplexed*. See Maimonides *Code*, I, *Hilkhot Yesodei Torah* 2.7, ed. and tr. M. Hyamson (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1974), 36a, where the highest echelon of angels, the scriptural *hayyot*, are called forms (*zurot*).
12. *Guide* II 6, Munk 2.17b, ll. 14-17.
13. *Guide* II 6, Munk 2.17b, ll. 5-6. The usage which refers to emanative energies as forces or powers is preceded in Arabic in al-Fārābī's *Fī 'Aql (De Intellectu et Intellecto)*, ed., M. Bouyges (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1938); tr., A. Hyman, in Arthur Hyman and James Walsh, eds. *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 211-21.
14. *Guide* II 5, citing Psalms 19:2-4.
15. *Guide* II 4, Munk 2.14ab; II 48, citing Jonah 2:2.
16. *Guide* II 6, Munk 2.17b, ll. 1-3; cf. *De Generatione Animalium* II 3, 736b 26-737a 11.
17. Thus 1 Kings 19:11-12: ". . . and the Lord was not in the wind . . . the Lord was not in the earthquake . . . the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire was a still small voice . . ." Maimonides cites the passage in *Guide* II 41 in justifying his account of prophecy, which neither reduces prophetic inspiration to a matter of subjective appearances nor treats it as a matter of divine indwelling but relies upon the (creationist) mediating scheme of (neoplatonic, intellectual/formal) angels between God's Absoluteness and human intelligence.
18. *Guide* II 6, Munk 2.16b-17a. The Rabbinic text Maimonides cites echoes Sanhedrin 38b but the verbatim citation is unknown. The celestial retinue are called God's *ḥamalya* (cf. the Latin *famulus*), servitors or ministrants, not peers. Plato speaks of the demiurge consulting the forms at *Timaeus* 28b-30c. The Platonic overtones of the Rabbinic dictum were of great significance in the Kabbalah, as Moshe Idel's paper in this volume shows.
19. See *Guide* III 18.
20. *De Anima* III 4, 429a 15-16, 430a 3; 5, 430a 17-20; *Guide* I 68, Munk 1.86b; *Code* I, *Hilkhot Yesodei Torah* 2.10.
21. *Guide* I 48. Philo reaches a similar conclusion.
22. *Guide* III 19, Munk 3.40.
23. *Guide* III 16, Munk 3.43b-44a.
24. Cf. Saadiah on Job 28:34-25, in Goodman, tr., *The Book of Theodicy*, 331-33.
25. *Guide* II 6, Munk 2.16-18.
26. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, The Incoherence of the Philosophers, ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut: Catholic Press, 2nd ed., 1962): "Our second point addresses those who grant that these events flow (or



- emanate) from the First Principles of temporal events . . ."
27. *Guide* III 17, II 13; cf. III 31.
  28. *Guide* III 13, I 1; "Eight Chapters" 5, echoing Plato's *Theaetetus* 176.
  29. *Guide* III 32. Cf. Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, tr. Constantine Zurayk (Beirut: American University, 1968), 81-83.
  30. *Guide* II 20, citing *Physics* II 4-5; and *Guide* II 12, 48.
  31. *Guide* II 3, 10, 12. For God's "will" and "wisdom," see my "Matter and Form as Attributes of God in Maimonides' Philosophy," 86-97.
  32. See *Guide* I 2, II 4.
  33. *Guide* II 17; cf. III 15.
  34. *Guide* I 72, II 10.
  35. Maimonides *Code* I, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 5.2, 5.1, 5.4 viii, Hyamson, 86b-87b; cf. my "Determinism and Freedom in Spinoza, Maimonides and Aristotle." For animal vitality see *Guide* I 72, Munk 1.102b l. 17 - 103a l. 1.
  36. *Guide* II 5, Munk 2.15ab. Maimonides emphasizes the inanimateness of the four elements in *Guide* I 72 and argues that if the elements were alive and the forces of nature exercised discretion, confining their actions only to what is necessary, there would be no natural evils.
  37. See *Guide* III 22.
  38. *Guide* II 6, Munk 2.16b l. 10.
  39. *Guide* I 72, Munk 1.100b.
  40. See Qur'an 2:34 and the commentaries; for Shi'ite views, M. J. Kister, "Legends in *tafsir* and *hadith* Literature: the Creation of Adam and Related Stories," in Andrew Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 108-09.
  41. *Guide* II, 11, III 12-14. The spheres, being composed of matter, are "impure" relative to the disembodied intellects; but even the spheres are nobler as bodies than human bodies are: They do not exist for our sake. For the nobility of the spheres and intellects, see Abraham Ibn Daud, *The Exalted Faith*, Samuelson, 120b.
  42. *Guide* II 7, Munk 2.18b. Cf. Saadiah, on Job 1:6, *The Book of Theodicy*, 154-59.
  43. *Guide* II 6, Munk 2.17ab.
  44. *Guide* II 6, Munk 2.18b.
  45. *Guide* II, Introduction, Premises 10-12. Natural forms are "forces in a body," but the substantial forms through which a body exists—soul and mind, for example—are not forces in a body or divided even *per accidens* with its divisions (cf. Aristotle, *De Anima* I 5, 411b 19-27). Maimonides accepts the premises of the Philosophers, except the

- eternity of the world, which he treats as an isolable postulate of their system.
46. See *Guide* II 4, 5, 7, 8, esp. II 5, citing Psalms 19:4, Munk 2.15b.
  47. *Phaedo* 97C-98E. Socrates assumed that in knowing how all things are governed for the best and thus what is best for each, he would know how human beings too should be governed. Cf. Maimonides on Moses' desire to learn God's ways, the laws of nature, so as to know how to govern the people: *Guide* I 54, glossing Exodus 33:13-20 and 34:6-7.
  48. *Metaphysics* I 3, 984a 11-19, 985a 18; cf. *De Anima* I 2, 405a 14-17; *Poetica* 15, 1454b 1.
  49. *Metaphysics* I 4, 985a 5-29.
  50. Cf. al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Mabādī' ārā' ahlu 'l-madīnatu 'l-Fādila* (The Book of the Principles behind the Beliefs of the People of the Outstanding State) III 9, tr. R. Walzer as *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*, 145-49.
  51. *Guide* II 4.
  52. *Guide* II 19.
  53. *Guide* II 19, 21.
  54. *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Discussions 3-4, 10; see my "Al-Ghazālī's Argument from Creation," *IJMES* 2 (1971): 67-85, 168-88; "Did al-Ghazālī Deny Causality?" *Studia Islamica* 47 (1978): 83-120; *RAMBAM*, 175-204.
  55. See *Metaphysics* 1046b, 1048a 8-12, and Maimonides, *Guide* II 19; "Eight Chapters," 8; *Code*, I, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 5.2, with 5.1 and 5.4 viii; see my discussion in "Determinism and Freedom in Spinoza, Maimonides, and Aristotle."
  56. *Guide* III 17.5 and Deuteronomy 11:26.
  57. To affirm an open future, I emphasize, is not to affirm the *actuality* of alternative futures but only the reality of alternative possibilities as possibilities—that is, their virtuality. Using the idea of emergence portended in Bergson's concept of duration or even in Spinoza's dynamic conatus, we can say that even if only one future will be actual, there are many alternative possibilities for it, since its nature does not become determinate until it exists, that is, until its causes make it actual.
  58. Cf. "Eight Chapters," 8, citing Deuteronomy 22:8.
  59. For the Maimonidean background of possible worlds, see my "Maimonides and Leibniz," with Leibniz' reading notes on the Latin *Doctor Perplexorum* (Basel, 1629).

60. I say *all but* infinitely painstaking care. Had infinite care been taken, the task could not have been completed and finite being could not have emerged. Finitude in the sense dealt with in David Novak's paper would have been overwhelmed.
61. *Guide* III 18. Maimonides stresses the Aristotelian origin of conceptualism, since the tradition of Alexander of Aphrodisias made Aristotle the champion of a denial of individual providence below the sphere of the moon. The worry that an Avicennan emanative naturalism excludes providence over individuals is answered by the recognition that providence cannot exclude the minds of human individuals, which are among the products of emanation. See *Guide* III 17. But no particular escapes *general* providence, since all are encompassed under their universals and thus under the universal governance of God's law.
62. See my "Three Meanings of the Idea of Creation."
63. *Guide* II 20.
64. Cf. my discussion of the incoherence of positivism in *Monotheism*, 61-69.
65. *Guide* III 25.
66. See Maimonides, "Eight Chapters," 8.
67. See Arthur Hyman's paper in this volume.
68. See *Guide* II 12, citing Jeremiah 2:13, Psalms 36:10; *Guide* I 68. The ideas of light, life, being and truth, come together in the Psalmist's fused image of a fountain of life which is the source of our enlightenment—the image in which Ibn Gabirol saw the affinity of Biblical poetry to Neoplatonic metaphysics. The elaboration of that intuition is the substance of Ibn Gabirol's metaphysics, as set forth in the papers of Professors Dillon, Mathis and McGinn.
69. Here, as in the analogies of the clock and the needle, Maimonides *did* develop the model of practical reason (cf. *Guide* III 21) as called for in David Burrell's paper, although it was not in the nature of Maimonides' project to make every move as explicit as we might prefer.
70. Cf. *Guide* I 23, 65.
71. For Plato insisted that all temporal things are mutable, and Maimonides urged that one cannot make a metaphysical canon of the observed stability of kinds in nature. See *Guide* II 17, 14; cf. the suggestive gloss of Genesis Rabbah XXI at *Guide* I 49: "Through this dictum they state clearly that the angels [sc. forms] are immaterial and have no fixed bodily form outside the mind." Munk 1.55b ll 2-4. For what is fixed, by Platonic standards must be ideal, and what is sensory, and so imaginable, must be mutable.

72. See Aristotle, *Physics* IV 2; al-Ghazālī, *Ma'ārij al-Quds* 203-04; *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (Incoherence of the Philosophers) Bouyges 2nd ed., 67; *Guide* I 52.
73. See *Guide* I 71, Munk 1.96a.
74. *Themistii in Aristotelis Metaphysicorum librum Lambda paraphrasis*, Medieval Hebrew translation, ed. S. Landauer, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 5.5 (Berlin, 1903): 8, cited in Herbert Davidson, "Averroes on the Active Intellect," 202.
75. See P. S. Schiavella, "Emergent Evolution and Reductionism," *Scientia* 108 (1973): 323-30.
76. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Alpha 4, 985a 24.
77. See *Guide* III 18, 22; cf. I 68, and I 9, with Saadiah, *Book of Beliefs and Convictions*, II 13 ad fin., Kafah, 115; Rosenblatt, 136.
78. See her commentary on Aristotle's *De Motu Animalium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 60, 74, 93-98.
79. *Guide* III 13 with III 25.
80. Thus Maimonides' emphasis on the Aristotelian thesis, still employed by scientists, that the world forms a single system, and his further emphasis on the Saadianic point that the thesis of the world's singularity is vital to the central claim of monotheism. See *Guide* I 72.
81. See *Guide* III 17.
82. For Maimonides' rejection of epicycles and eccentrics see, *Guide* II 24; cf. I 71, Munk 1.96a; cf. F. J. Carmody, "The Planetary Theory of Ibn Rushd," *Osiris* 10 (1952): 556-86; A. I. Sabra, "The Andalusian Revolt against Ptolemaic Astronomy," in E. Mendelsohn, ed., *Transformation and Tradition in the Sciences* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1984), 133-53.
83. *Guide* II 3.
84. *Guide* II 11. Plato's "likely story" account of science is not, of course, a skeptical rejection of the scientific enterprise, but an attempt to explain the nature and limits of what must pass for knowledge within the confines of a temporal, sensory world. See Anne Ashbaugh, *Plato's Theory of Explanation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988). Maimonides too is no radical skeptic. He accepts Saadiah's epistemology, and his most distinctive principle of method is the postulate that the possibility of doubt is *not* sufficient grounds for rejecting a claim.
85. *Guide*, II 2, 11. At II 8 Maimonides cites a passage now lost in Talmud texts, at *Pesahim* 94b, "The sages of the nations prevailed," to show that the Rabbis conceded the authority of secular science in astronomy and other natural sciences.

86. *Guide* I 72, II 4-5. Averroes gives the same diffident approval of cosmic emanation that we find in Maimonides, bracketing such speculations as the work of "recent philosophers such as al-Fārābī," perhaps along with the ideas of Themistius and Plato, yet calling them "the most solid" notions we have to go on in these rather unsolid areas. Madrid Escorial Hebrew manuscript G1-14, fol. 103b, etc. cited in Davidson, "Averroes on the Active Intellect," n. 40. Al-Fārābī himself characteristically brackets metaphysical views which have an impact on cosmology as "beliefs of the people of the excellent state." See *Arā'*, and *Fuṣūl al-Madani*.
87. See my "Ordinary and Extraordinary Language in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy."
88. See my "Why Machines Cannot do Science."
89. See *De Partibus Animalium* I 5, esp. 645a 9.
90. Cf. *De Partibus Animalium* I 1, 640b 30 ff.
91. Here I refer to the profound insight articulated in Cynthia Ozick's story, "The Laughter of Akiva," in its original recension in the *New Yorker* 56 (November 10, 1980, et seq.): 50-60+.

## The Virtue of Faith

Menachem Kellner

It is with apparent reference to the verse describing Abraham, "And he believed in the Lord and it was accounted to him as justice (*zedaqah*)" (Genesis 15:6) that Philo, who may well be considered the "father of Neoplatonism," calls faith a virtue, indeed, the "queen of virtues."<sup>1</sup> In his study of Philo's philosophy, Harry Wolfson explains that by 'faith' Philo means "two things: (1) belief in the unity and providence of God as well as in all the truths revealed directly by God, and (2) trust in God."<sup>2</sup> That faith which Philo held to be a virtue has cognitive (acquiescence to certain propositions) and non-cognitive (trust in God) elements.

This reading of faith as a virtue appears to be new in Philo. Wolfson says, "But in Greek philosophy prior to Philo neither faith in general nor faith in God in particular is spoken of as a virtue on a par with piety, the fear of God, and holiness."<sup>3</sup> This estimation is shared by John Passmore: "The path to perfection, as Philo envisages it, begins with faith, a faith in God comparable to Abraham's. This is a point at which Philo breaks sharply with the Greek tradition. There is nowhere in Greek thought any suggestion that faith is a virtue, let alone that it is 'the queen of virtues,' to quote only one of Philo's ecstatic descriptions of it."<sup>4</sup>

Philo's distinctive outlook finds a surprising echo in the writings of Moses Maimonides. In *The Guide of the Perplexed* (III 53) Maimonides calls faith (*al-imān*) a virtue (*faḍīlah*). In this paper I hope to explain why this is surprising and how an understanding of

the claim that faith is a virtue can help us better to understand the place of ethics in Maimonides' thinking. Maimonides' claim about the virtue of faith comes up in the context of a discussion of three terms, *hesed* (loving-kindness), *mishpat* (judgment), and *zedakah* (righteousness). The last of these is defined as follows:

The word *zedakah* is derived from *zedeq*, which means justice; justice being the granting to everyone who has a right to something, that which he has a right to and giving to every being that which corresponds to its merits. But in the books of the prophets, fulfilling the duties imposed upon you with regard to others is not called *zedakah* in conformity with the first sense. For if you give a hired man his wages or pay a debt, this is not called *zedakah*. On the other hand, the fulfilling of duties with regard to others imposed upon you on account of moral virtue (*faḍilat al-khalq*), such as remedying the injuries of all those who are injured, is called *zedakah*. Therefore it says with reference to the returning of a pledge: And it shall be *zedakah* unto you (Deuteronomy 24:13). For when you walk in the way of the moral virtues, you do justice unto your rational soul (*nafsika al-nāṭiqā*), giving her the due that is her right. And because every moral virtue is called *zedakah*, it says: And he believed in the Lord, and it was accounted to him as *zedakah* (Genesis 15:6). I refer to the virtue of faith. This applies likewise to his dictum, may he be exalted: And it shall be *zedakah* unto us if we take care to observe, and so on (Deuteronomy 6:25).<sup>5</sup>

Maimonides here offers two definitions of justice. The first is giving to each his due; the second definition is Biblical and involves more than giving each his due. It demands acting towards others in keeping with the requirements of the moral virtues.<sup>6</sup> Maimonides uses the example of curing the hurts of those whom one has not injured. He cites as a further example the Biblical obligation not to keep a pledge needed by its owner: "When thou dost lend thy neighbor any manner of loan, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand without, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring forth the pledge without unto thee. And if he be a poor man thou shalt not sleep with his pledge; thou shalt surely restore to him the pledge when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his garment and bless thee; and it shall be *zedakah* unto thee before the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 24:10-13).<sup>7</sup>

Maimonides gives another reason for calling the behavior demanded by moral virtue just: When we act morally we do justice to our rational soul, giving it its due. Maimonides here appeals to the first definition of justice in order to justify his second use of the term. But how does acting morally give our rational soul its due? The answer, I believe, involves Maimonides' claim that rational perfection cannot be attained without first achieving moral perfection.<sup>8</sup>

Maimonides now gives a third reason for calling moral behavior just: the fact that moral virtues are called *zedakah*. As his example he cites the verse, "And he believed in the Lord and it was accounted to him as *zedakah*." Realizing that this citation would not be transparent to his reader, Maimonides explains by saying, "I refer to the virtue of faith." This, then, is the context of Maimonides' claim that faith is a virtue.

The concordance shows that Maimonides did not have any other ready options if he needed a verse connecting a specific virtue with *zedakah*. But his identification of faith as a virtue remains striking. For when he deals with questions of faith or belief it is almost always in what we would tend to call an intellectual as distinguished from a moral context. For example, he says of "belief" that it is not "what is said but rather what is thought when a thing is affirmed to be such as it is thought to be."<sup>9</sup> Maimonides reaffirms the point a bit further along in the same passage: "We cannot believe unless we think, for belief is the affirmation that what is outside the mind is as it is thought to be within the mind."<sup>10</sup> Belief, then, is not a matter of disposition, tendency, or relationship between persons. Rather it is the affirmation that what one represents to oneself does actually correspond to objective reality. Belief must then have specific cognitive content, and this content must be subject to proof or refutation. Put in other words, belief is the affirmation or denial of propositions which, at least in theory, must be such that they can be shown to be true or false.<sup>11</sup>

Maimonides in fact insists that the Torah commands the adoption of certain beliefs: first and foremost the existence of God. But all of the beliefs that Maimonides treats as commandments are matters which in his view are philosophically demonstrable.<sup>12</sup> So even in the area where Maimonides most strikingly affirms an

obligation to believe, we see the concurrent assumption of the intellectual content of belief.

But if belief is a matter of the intellect, how can it also be a matter of moral virtue? Maimonides distinguishes the two realms and relates each to a different part of the soul. He subordinates the moral realm to the intellectual and insists that the sound morality is a prerequisite of intellectual perfection, but that the moral aspect of our personhood is less distinguished than the intellectual. He suggests that the importance of the moral side is primarily instrumental.

Maimonides uses two different Arabic terms, *al-imān* and *al-i'tiqād*, for what we call belief or faith. Avraham Nuriel has argued that Maimonides consistently distinguishes between them, reserving *al-imān* for what we would call "trust" and *al-i'tiqād* for intellectual acquiescence in the truth of a proposition.<sup>13</sup> In contemporary terms, we can say that Maimonides distinguishes between "belief in" and "belief that."<sup>14</sup>

Thus Maimonides' intellectualist definition of 'belief' in the *Guide* is a definition of *i'tiqād*, not of *imān*. In those Arabic texts where Maimonides commands belief, such as the first positive commandment in the *Book of Commandments*, he uses variants of *i'tiqād*, and not of *imān*. In their Hebrew parallels, such as "Laws of the Foundations of the Torah," I 1 in the *Mishneh Torah*, he uses variants of the Hebrew *yedi'ah*, knowledge, and not *emunah*, faith or trust. But when Maimonides calls faith a virtue he uses the term *imān*.<sup>15</sup> The text which prompts this study is a perfect example and is cited as such by Nuriel. That faith which is a moral virtue, then, is trust in God.<sup>16</sup>

Turning now to 'virtue,' we find that Maimonides takes up the issue in the first work he is known to have written, his treatise on logic.<sup>17</sup> He devotes the fourteenth chapter to the classification of the sciences,<sup>18</sup> among other sciences discussing political science, which he treats under four headings. Virtue is addressed under the first of these, self-government:

Man's governance of himself is the science which enables him to develop good qualities and to free himself from bad qualities, if he has already acquired them. Moral qualities are dispositions which gradually become more and more fixed in the soul until they are formed into a habit by which actions are determined. Philosophers

describe moral qualities as either excellent or defective. Praiseworthy moral qualities are called virtues (*ṣaḍā'ih*); blameworthy moral qualities are called vices. Actions resulting from praiseworthy qualities are called good; those resulting from blameworthy qualities are called bad. [Similarly philosophers describe] reasoning (*al-nuṭq*), the act of conceiving ideas, as either excellent or defective. We thus speak of intellectual virtues and vices. The philosophers have many books on the moral virtues.<sup>19</sup>

Maimonides here follows Aristotle's distinction of two kinds of virtues: moral and intellectual. Moral virtues are praiseworthy moral qualities which can be "fixed in the soul," that is, strengthened by exercise. They can become habits which determine our behavior. Trust certainly is more appropriately thought of as finding expression in behavior than is intellectual acquiescence. One cannot truly claim to trust one's spouse, for example, if one acts inconsistently with such trust, say hiring private detectives to catch the spouse in acts of infidelity. But in most cases acquiescing to the truth of a proposition (that the earth revolves around the sun, for example, or that there exists a prime mover) has little immediate impact upon our behavior (and shouldn't if Hume is correct in saying that we cannot derive 'ought' from 'is'). Intellectual virtues relate not to dispositions which determine behavior, but to excellence in reasoning. They reflect either our skills in conceiving ideas or the soundness of the ideas we have conceived.

Maimonides affords more information about his conception of virtue in the second of his "Eight Chapters," where he analyzes the diseases of the soul. The title of the chapter is "On the Disobedience of the Soul's Powers and on Knowledge of the Part in which the Virtues and the Vices are Primarily Found." Once again, Maimonides distinguishes moral from intellectual virtue:

As for the virtues, there are two kinds: moral virtues and rational virtues. Opposed to them are two kinds of vices. The rational virtues are found in the rational part [of the soul]. Among them are: (i) wisdom, which is knowledge of the remote and proximate causes and which comes after knowledge of the existence of the thing whose causes are being investigated; and (ii) intelligence, which includes (a) the theoretical intellect, I mean, the first intelligibles, which we have by nature; (b) the acquired intellect, but this is not the place for that;

and (c) brilliance and excellent comprehension, that is, excellent grasp of a thing quickly, in no time, or in a very short time. The vices of this power are the contrary of these or their opposite. The moral virtues are found only in the appetitive part, and the sentient part is in this case a servant of the appetitive part. The virtues of this part are very numerous: for example, moderation, liberality, justice, gentleness, humility, contentment, courage, and others. The vices of this part consist in being deficient or excessive with regard to these [things].<sup>20</sup>

Here Maimonides does not offer a definition of moral virtue, as he did in the "Treatise on Logic"; rather, he gives examples of the moral virtues, noting first that these virtues are found only in the appetitive part of the soul, which in this case is served by the sentient part. He relies on his discussion "of the soul of man and its powers" in the previous chapter, where we are told that the soul has five powers or functions, called parts for the sake of convenience, or even called different souls, although "the soul of man is a single soul." The five functions are the nutritive, sentient, imaginative, appetitive, and rational.<sup>21</sup> The nutritive part "consists in the power of attracting, retaining, digesting, excreting, growing, procreating its kind, and separating mixtures so that it isolates what should be used for nourishment and what should be excreted." The sentient part consists of the five senses. The imaginative part "is the power that preserves the impression of sensibly perceived objects . . . [and] puts together things it has not perceived at all and which are not possible for it to perceive." The appetitive part is

the power by which a man desires, or is repulsed by, a certain thing. From this power originate such actions as seeking something or fleeing from it, as well as being attracted to something or avoiding it; rage and agreeableness, fear and boldness, cruelty and compassion, love and hatred, and many such disturbances of the soul. This power uses all the organs of the body as instruments: for example, the power of the hand for hitting, the power of the foot for walking, the power of the eye for seeing, and the power of the heart for being bold or fearful. Likewise, the rest of the organs—both internal and external—and their powers are instruments for this appetitive power.

The last part of the soul, the rational, "is the power found in man by which he perceives intelligibles, deliberates, acquires the sciences,

and distinguishes between base and noble actions."

The appetitive part of the soul, then, the locus of our desires and repulsions, is the seat of our moral virtues. One acquires moral virtues, accordingly, by training oneself to be attracted and repelled by the right things. A person who controls his or her appetites and acts in accordance with this self-discipline is said to possess moral virtue. The appetitive part of the soul, it is clear, should be guided by the rational part, since it "distinguishes between base and noble actions."<sup>22</sup>

In a note to their translation, Weiss and Butterworth maintain that "there probably was an additional virtue at this point in the original text, but it cannot be identified with certainty."<sup>23</sup> They do not explicate the basis for this view, but they do note that Ibn Tibbon's translation adds the virtue of *emunah*, faith. But the Arabic editions of Kafah and Wolff and the manuscripts examined by Weiss and Butterworth do not support Ibn Tibbon's reading.<sup>24</sup> Herbert Davidson's important study argues that in the "Eight Chapters" Maimonides makes heavy use of al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl al-Madani* (Aphorisms of the Statesman).<sup>25</sup> Davidson indicates that Maimonides' comments on the moral virtues in the second of the "Eight Chapters" follow section 7 of the Aphorisms.<sup>26</sup> But the passage from al-Fārābī does not list faith among the moral virtues. It reads:

The virtues are of two kinds, ethical and rational. The rational virtues are the virtues of the rational part, such as wisdom, intellect, cleverness, readiness of wit, excellence of understanding. The ethical virtues are the virtues of the appetitive part, such as temperance, bravery, generosity, justice. The vices are similarly divided into two classes.<sup>27</sup>

So al-Fārābī's text settles nothing for us, and Ibn Tibbon's translation remains our only source for including faith in Maimonides' list of virtues in "Eight Chapters" 2, a rather thin reed to support the reading.

What we do learn from the "Eight Chapters" as it stands is that the moral virtues pertain to the appetitive part of the soul and are to be connected with the ethics of the mean, developed both here and in "Laws of Moral Qualities." For the moral vices involve excess or deficiency. So if faith is a moral virtue it should pertain to the

appetitive part of the soul and the vices corresponding to it would be excessive or deficient faith. But what would a religious thinker mean by too much faith? The answer is not hard to provide if we follow Nuriel in defining 'faith' (*al-imān*) as 'trust.' Jewish tradition clearly acknowledges that trust in God may be exaggerated and warns against such exaggeration.<sup>28</sup>

Our discussion here, I think, allows us to correct the widely accepted view of Maimonides as a pure intellectual who ultimately prized nothing in the world of ideas or in the world of religion but intellectual perfection.<sup>29</sup> By emphasizing that there is a kind of belief that does not involve the cognition of the intelligibilia and is, in its own way, desirable we show that the faith of the non-philosopher, so long, of course, as it is not actually based on falsehood, is of moral value. At the same time we find a basis for criticizing the view that the ultimate perfection of the individual who has achieved a maximally perfected intellect is moral behavior.<sup>30</sup> For there is no doubt that Maimonides prizes knowledge of God over simple trust in Him.<sup>31</sup>

#### Notes

1. See Philo, *On Abraham*, 270, *LCL*, 6.133.
2. H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, 2.216-18.
3. Wolfson, 216.
4. John Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man* (London: Duckworth, 1970), 61.
5. I quote here (and below) the translation of Shlomo Pines; here, 631.
6. Maimonides' distinction here is perhaps best summed up in the words of Steven Schwarzschild: "Jewish justice is different from the classic philosophic (Greek-Western) view of this concept. In the latter, justice is generally considered under the headings of 'distributive' and 'retributive.' These are, of course, also comprised in *zedakah*, but while 'distributive' and 'retributive' justice are essentially procedural principles (i.e., how to do things), Jewish justice is essentially substantive (i.e., what human life should be like)," "Justice," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971) 10.476. Schwarzschild continues: "Substantive justice depends on an ultimate (i.e., messianic) value commitment."
7. See Maimonides, *Book of Commandments*, positive commandment 199, negative commandment 139; *Mishneh Torah*, "Laws of Lender and Borrower," III 5.
8. See *Guide I* 34: "For it has been explained, or rather demonstrated, that the moral virtues are a preparation for the rational virtues, it being impossible to achieve true, rational acts—I mean perfect rationality—unless it be by a man thoroughly trained with respect to his morals and endowed with the qualities of tranquillity and quiet. . . . It is accordingly indubitable that preparatory moral training should be carried out before beginning with this science [metaphysics] so that man should be in a state of extreme uprightness and perfection" 76-7. For further details see my *Maimonides on Human Perfection* (Brown Judaic Studies, 1990).
9. *Guide I* 50; here I follow tr. L. E. Goodman in *RAMBAM*, 77; cf. Pines, 111.
10. *Guide I* 50; Goodman, *RAMBAM*, 77-78; cf. Pines, 111.
11. See H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, 2.147 and his "The Aristotelian Predicables and Maimonides' Division of Attributes," *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Religion*, 2.163: "What Maimonides therefore means to say is that belief is that which can be expressed by a logical proposition."
12. See my essay, "Maimonides, Crescas, and Abravanel on Exodus 20:2—A Medieval Jewish Exegetical Debate," *JQR* 69 (1979): 129-57 and my *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 38-49.
13. See Abraham Nuriel, "Musag ha-Emunah ezel ha-Rambam," *Da'at* 2-3 (1978/79): 43-47.
14. See Kenneth Seeskin, "Judaism and the Linguistic Interpretation of Jewish Faith," *Studies in Jewish Philosophy* 3 (1983): 71-81, and my *Dogma*, 1-6.
15. Shalom Rosenberg claims that there are many examples of Maimonides' not distinguishing between *al-imān* and *al-i'tiqād*, but he mentions only one. See his "The Concept of Emunah in Post-Maimonidean Jewish Philosophy," in Isadore Twersky, ed., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, 2.273-307, esp. 275. The present essay shows that in III 53 Maimonides does not use *imān* in the sense of intellectual acquiescence but means trust in God.
16. For the Rabbinic doctrine of faith as trust in God, see C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 334-41.
17. Known as *Millot ha-Higayon* in Hebrew, this text was composed in Arabic and translated three times into Hebrew in the Middle Ages. Those portions of the Arabic text then known and the three Hebrew translations were edited and published with an English translation by Israel Efros as *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic* (New York: American

- Academy for Jewish Research, 1938). The full Arabic text was discovered in Turkey and published there twice in 1960 by Mubahat Turker. Efros then published the complete text (in Hebrew characters) in *PAAJR* 34 (1966): 155-60 (English) and 9-42 (Hebrew). See Lawrence Berman, "Some Remarks on the Arabic Text of Maimonides' 'Treatise on the Art of Logic,'" *JAOS* 88 (1968): 340-42 and Israel Efros, "Maimonides' *Treatise on Logic*: The New Arabic Text and its Light on the Hebrew Versions," *JQR* 53 (1962-3): 269-73.
18. On this chapter see H. A. Wolfson, "The Classification of Sciences in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1925), 263-315, repr. in *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*, 1.493-545; cf. his "Note on Maimonides' Classification of the Sciences," *JQR* 26 (1936): 369-77, repr. in *Studies* 1.551-60; Leo Strauss, "Maimonides' Statement on Political Science," *PAAJR* 22 (1953): 115-30; Lawrence Berman, "A Reexamination of Maimonides' 'Statement on Political Science,'" *JAOS* 89 (1969): 106-11.
  19. I follow Wolfson's translation, 538-39. Cf. Efros, 63-4 of his complete translation; and Ralph Lerner, tr., in M. Mahdi and Lerner, eds., *Medieval Political Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 189-90.
  20. Ed., Rabbi J. Kafah, in *Mishnah 'im Perush Rabbenu Mosheh ben Maimon* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1963); I cite the translation (with some additions in brackets) of Raymond Weiss and Charles Butterworth, *Ethical Writings of Maimonides* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 65.
  21. See H. A. Wolfson, "Maimonides on the Internal Senses," *Studies* 1.344-70, esp. 364-66; Eliezer Schweid, *Iyyunim bi-Shemonah Perakim la-Rambam* (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency, 1969), ch. 2.
  22. The quotations are from Weiss and Butterworth, 61-63.
  23. Page 98, n. 7.
  24. Kafah, 377; M. Wolff, *Musa Maimuni's Acht Capitel* (Leiden: Brill, 1903), 5 (Arabic), 12 (German).
  25. See Herbert Davidson, "Maimonides' Shemonah Perakim and Alfarabi's *Fusul al-Madani*."
  26. Davidson, 38.
  27. *Aphorisms of the Statesman*, Dunlop, 31.
  28. The prevalent Rabbinic view is encapsulated in the maxim, "One is not to rely upon miracles" (Pesahim 64b). See R. J. Zwi Werblowski, "Faith, Hope and Trust: A Study in the Concept of *Bittahon*," *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies London* 1 (1964): 95-139, esp. 109-18, 125; Louis Jacobs, *Faith* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), ch. 10.

- Cf. Sa'adiyah's strictures against excessive reliance upon God in his *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* X 15, Rosenblatt, 395-97.
29. This view can be traced back to Samuel Ibn Tibbon, in his introduction to his Hebrew translation of Maimonides' Commentary on *Avot*. See Aviezer Ravitzky, "Samuel Ibn Tibbon and the Esoteric Character of the *Guide of the Perplexed*," *AJS Review* 6 (1981): 87-123. It is also the interpretation of Shem Tov ibn Falaquera. See Raphael Jospe, "Rejecting Moral Virtue as the Ultimate Human End," in William Brinner and Stephen Ricks, eds., *Studies in Islamic and Jewish Traditions* (Denver: University of Denver, 1986), 185-204. Recent upholders of the view include Isaac Husik, *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 299-300; and Alexander Altmann, "Maimonides' Four Perfections," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 15-24, repr. with additions in his *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*, 65-76.
  30. For this view see H. Cohen, "Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis," in W. Bacher, ed., *Moses ben Maimon* (Leipzig, 1908) 1.63-134; J. Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism*, 200-3; Steven Schwarzschild, "Moral Radicalism and 'Middlingness' in the Ethics of Maimonides," *Studies in Medieval Culture* 11 (1977): 65-94. For a political variant, L. Berman, "Maimonides on Political Leadership," in D. J. Elazar, ed., *Kinship and Consent* (Ramat Gan: Turtledove Publishing, 1981), 113-25 and the studies by Berman cited there. For a halakhic interpretation, I. Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 511; D. Hartman, *Maimonides: Torah and Philosophic Quest* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976), 26.
  31. Just what Maimonides understands by knowledge of God and how such knowledge can inform our practical behavior is the central question of my monograph, *Maimonides on Human Perfection*. The key texts are *Guide* III 27 and III 54. See Shlomo Pines, "The Limitations of Human Knowledge According to Alfarabi, Ibn Bajjah, and Maimonides," in Twersky, ed., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* 82-109; Warren Zev Harvey, "Bein Philosophiah Medinit li-Halakhah bi-Mishnat ha-Rambam," *Iyyun* 29 (1980): 198-212, esp. appendix; A. Altmann, "Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics," in his *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung*, 60-129.



## Why not Pursue the Metaphor of Artisan and View God's Knowledge as Practical?

David B. Burrell, C.S.C.

While this question is put primarily to Moses Maimonides in the light of his praise for the artisan image as a way for us to render what lies quite beyond our comprehension—God's mode of knowing (III 21)—it must also be put to Aquinas, who boldly adopts the image as his master metaphor to render God's knowledge of the universe, yet fails himself to pursue it in any great detail. My focus, however, will be on Maimonides, with some help from his friendly commentator and critic after more than two centuries, Levi ben Gershom (Gersonides). And I shall put the question to his writings in both senses of its rhetorical impact: (1) why might he *not* have pursued the metaphor, what stood in the way? and (2) what might he have gained had he done so?

### I. Maimonides' Model for Knowing

The answer to the first way of formulating our question seems relatively straightforward when we recall the Rambam's identification of the divine image (*zelem*) in us with "intellectual apprehension" (I 1) or the power by which "man distinguishes between the true and the false" (I 2).<sup>1</sup> In commenting on Genesis 3, he not only identifies the image of God with our capacity to possess a science "of

necessary truths," but contrasts this with "the science of apparent truths (morals)" in which "right and wrong are the terms employed . . . : it is the function of the intellect to discriminate between the true and the false" (I 2). We have only to reflect that Aristotle makes his distinction between two "ways of arriving at truth" in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VI 3)—speculative and practical—as a preliminary step towards legitimizing ethical inquiry precisely by warding off objections that it cannot yield the certitude associated with science (i.e., the demonstration of essential properties as flowing necessarily from natures), to remind ourselves once again how beholden Maimonides is to Ibn Sīnā.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, in fact, Maimonides' philosophy rightly belongs with "Islamic philosophy," since his cultural ambience is clearly "Islamicate."<sup>3</sup>

Maimonides argues that "the function of the intellect is to discriminate between the true and the false," not good and evil. Thus, "Adam possessed [understanding] perfectly and completely" but "was not at all able to follow or to understand the principles of apparent truths," until he had transgressed a command "with which he had been charged on the score of his reason." Only then did he obtain a knowledge of apparent truths. Maimonides bases this remarkable statement on the verse "and the eyes of both were opened, and they knew they were naked" (Genesis 3:7). The line is carefully parsed to reveal that Adam "received a new faculty whereby he found things wrong which previously he had not regarded as wrong" (I 2). Maimonides' sharp dichotomy between knowledge and opinion as applied to matters of fact and matters of morals is, of course, quite at variance with Aristotle, who speaks of one intellectual faculty whose distinct functions—knowing (speculative) and doing or making (practical)—are determined by the end in view (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI 2).

So far as I know, Maimonides does not ever identify this "new faculty," although the natural place for him to do so would be in the third part of the *Guide*, where he explains the place of the Torah in the life of men, insisting that "there is a reason for each one of the precepts . . . although there are commandments the reason of which is unknown to us, and in which the ways of God's wisdom are incomprehensible" (III 26). He contends that his belief in the law as manifesting God's wisdom—and not merely God's will—is shared by "the common people as well as the scholars," and he moves only to

block speculation purporting to show the utility of the particular, detailed means of each of the 613 commandments of the law. Clearly, he argues, "the general object of the law is twofold: the well-being of the soul and the well-being of the body" (II 27). Thus the goal of Torah is a practical one, and its function for the people of God would be analogous to one of the roles Aristotle gives to practical reason: to discern right from wrong. So one might naturally have expected the relationship of God to God's people, as displayed in the bestowal of the Torah, to have offered Maimonides a model for the initial gift of existence and all that follows from it in creation. That he does not do so—so far as I know—offers another striking example of how much he was beholden to Ibn Sīnā's single-minded devotion to speculative reason as *the* paradigm for knowing and, correspondingly, for the relation between the universe and its source.<sup>4</sup>

But why then the encomium for "the knowledge which the producer of a thing possesses concerning it"? For such a model is suggested by the Rambam for the kind of knowledge God possesses of creation: "Note this well, for I think that this is an excellent idea, and leads to correct views; no error will be found in it; no dialectical argument; it does not lead to any absurd conclusion, nor to ascribing any defect to God" (III 21). It is difficult to imagine higher praise for a conception whose merits Maimonides has just noted: "our knowledge is acquired and increased in proportion to the things known by us. This is not the case with God. [Like the artisan,] His knowledge of things is not derived from the things themselves . . . on the contrary, the things are in accordance with His eternal knowledge." Yet this point of comparison is the only one to recommend the artisan image. When carefully examined, Maimonides' commendation proves to allow that the artisan image is conducive "to correct views" not in that it affords an adequate model for "this kind of knowledge [which] cannot be comprehended by us," but rather in the negative sense underscored by the modifiers following: that it will not mislead us.

So once again, the Rambam uses his dialectical skills to protect the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from a philosophic reason which can be relentlessly reductive when it tries to make human sense of God's ways. Yet here again I would ask whether the image cannot be pursued in a more fruitful, genuinely *leading* way. Was

Maimonides perhaps forestalled from doing just that simply by his Avicennan intellectualism? For on such an account, the artist's knowing cannot be construed as real knowing; only the emanation of conclusions from premises—in the pattern of demonstrative reason—promises knowledge. If God's knowledge will not conform to the speculative pattern, we must simply acknowledge that "the knowledge attributed to this essence has nothing in common with our knowledge . . . so we have no correct notion of His knowledge" (III 20). We cannot look elsewhere in human knowing for a more acceptable model. For there is nowhere else to look, since the "knowledge of the producer" (III 21) cannot claim to be knowledge at all.

Gersonides located the nerve of the Rambam's thesis of "sheer equivocity" regarding all divine attributes in his inability to reconcile God's knowledge of future contingents—notably free actions—with the free response demanded by the Torah.<sup>5</sup> His own response, equally beholden to Ibn Sīnā, was to limit God's knowing to all that is "ordered and defined" (232), trying to persuade us that there is no more to know. It is to Maimonides' credit that he could not take this tack, which he identified with Aristotle (III 17). But let us explore the ways which could have opened to him had he allowed himself to pursue the image of the artisan.

## 2. The Artisan's Knowledge

I have suggested that the Rambam was unduly influenced by Ibn Sīnā in accepting a deductive paradigm for knowing, Aristotle's pattern for science, which had inspired Ibn Sīnā's cosmological picture: The universe emanates from the One in the way that conclusions in a syllogism follow logically from first principles.<sup>6</sup> Evidence for Maimonides' intellectualism abounds, notably in his treatment of prophecy (II 26) and of providence over individuals (III 17). Yet it would seem that his treatment of the Torah (III 26-50) could have opened the way to making practical knowing more respectable, since observance of the law would account for human wellbeing (III 27). In this respect, at least, the attunement to divine wisdom which aligns individuals with God's providential care could apparently be achieved by observance as well as by the "intellectual mysticism" one associates with Ibn Sīnā.<sup>7</sup> Yet a concluding chapter

of the *Guide* insists that "true worship of God is only possible when correct notions of Him have previously been conceived," since it is "the intellect which emanates from God unto us [that] is the link that joins us to God." The passive construction, to be sure, would allow that these notions could be passed on in various nonconceptual ways: through ritual or ethical practices. Yet it is this principle which encourages him to reassert "that Providence watches over every rational being according to the amount of intellect which that being possesses" (III 51).

There is a clear priority in favor of that "knowledge of God, i.e., true wisdom [which] demonstrates by proof those truths which Scripture teaches by way of tradition." This is "the only perfection which we should seek," since "having acquired this knowledge [we] will then be determined always to seek loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, and thus to imitate the ways of God." So the *Guide* ends where it began, identifying knowing with speculative knowledge, and clearly subordinating the formation of character to that "real wisdom [which] proves the truth of the law" (III 54). Accordingly, the manner in which the Torah shapes human life "to imitate the ways of God" will not emerge as a fruitful model for understanding divine "providence extending over His creatures as manifested in the act of bringing them into being and in their governance as it is" (II 54, Pines). Such understanding will only derive from that knowledge of God which Maimonides called "true wisdom" and which could *prove* the truths of scripture. Yet it was precisely that pattern of demonstrative reason which forced him to conclude that we can have no understanding of God's knowledge—that "only the words are the same" (III 20).

Let us examine the features by which he sets divine knowledge apart, to determine whether a more favorable ranking of practical knowing might have offered greater hope for modelling God's knowledge. The stakes are high since the speculative paradigm to which Maimonides is committed threatens his program with a double inconsistency. Authentic human perfection lies in "the knowledge of God [and] of His Providence" (III 54), yet such knowledge is denied us by his insisting that we cannot know God but only "qualities of actions emanating from Him" (I 60). And since the most perspicuously divine activity we can know would be God's bestowing of the Torah, practical knowing would seem to offer ■ model at the

very point where speculative knowledge must fail. The ways in which God's "knowledge is distinguished from ours according to all the teaching of every revealed religion" are five: (1) it is one yet embraces many objects, (2) it applies to things not yet in existence, (3) it is infinite in comprehension, (4) it remains unchanged although comprehending changing things, (5) "according to the teaching of our Law, God's knowledge of one of two eventualities does not determine it, however certain that knowledge may be concerning the future occurrence of the one eventuality" (III 20).

By Gersonides' reading, it was the last of these which forced Maimonides to an agnostic position regarding all attributions of perfections to divinity. Yet in the chapter we are citing, he focuses on the fact "that God's knowledge is not different from His essence" and concludes that "as we cannot accurately comprehend His essence . . . so we have no correct notion of His knowledge" (III 20). The same applies to God's "management . . . and intention" (or perhaps better: *governance* and *purpose*). Such notions "are not the same when ascribed to us and when ascribed to God." Without recounting in detail Maimonides' arguments on equivocity (I 51-61), it should be clear that this generic observation will not suffice to render the discrepancy between divine and human knowledge so great as to prevent utterly our discoursing about divine knowledge. So Gersonides' reading must be sound. Maimonides must be shying away from comparisons of divine and human knowledge so as to avoid the conundrum of necessitation of contingent events by God's eternal omniscience. Now we ask, how could shifting to a practical paradigm for knowing help to overcome the apparently necessitating consequences of God's knowing "the future occurrence of the one eventuality"?

The main lines of a response are available in Aquinas, and in terms quite consonant with Maimonides' treatment, whose lineaments Aquinas generally followed, however critically.<sup>8</sup> For Aquinas, nothing which has not yet occurred can be an object of knowledge for anyone, including God, for there simply is nothing to know. Not even God can know what is not yet present. At this point Aquinas invokes two devices: one which Maimonides neither invokes nor rejects, eternity; and the other which he praises, the practical knowing of an artisan. These must function together. For the mere mention of eternity, while presuming a speculative model for knowing,

produces a mental cramp, or antinomy, when we try to ascertain how what has not yet occurred might nonetheless be *present* to God "in eternity."<sup>9</sup> But what has not yet taken place can certainly be present in the divine intention.

For God knows what God intends to do, as artisans know what they intend to do—without there being anything to know as the object of speculative knowing. Fourteenth-century Christian thinkers, following after Aquinas, began to fear this strategy, finding it too closely patterned on the pot-potter image, and so threatening to human freedom. Yet Aquinas remains serenely untroubled by any potential conflict with his forthright assertions about human freedom, since he finds no reason to understand freedom on the model of autonomy.<sup>10</sup> For like everything else in the created universe, human actions are dependent upon the Creator, whose proper effect is existence and the activity which follows upon existing.<sup>11</sup> Yet that apparently innocent formulation of the article of faith in God as creator embodies Aquinas' own invocation of the Rambam's insistence that a divine activity is utterly unlike its human counterpart. In this case, it is that "'to be made' or 'to make' are said equivocally in this universal production of things, and in other productions" (*In Phys.* 8.2, [1974]). Yet the fact that the term can be used formally, if not descriptively, rests on his identifying existence (*esse*) as neither ■ feature of things nor ■ substance, but the principle of anything's actually existing. This represents, of course, Aquinas' move beyond Aristotle, for whom *existence* is a concomitant of form, and forms are eternal. For Aquinas, however, God's creative activity has an effect proper to it, and the artisan image offers a model for divine knowing without pretending to tell us how God does it.

Sophisticated Rambam readers will remind us, of course, that Maimonides could not countenance such an analogous use of terms (cf. I 56), but I have argued elsewhere that he should have no substantive difficulties with an understanding of analogous terms which is as "negative" regarding descriptive features as Aquinas' is.<sup>12</sup> More conventional philosophers will profess to find both *analogy* and the *via negativa* incomprehensible, but at some point in our discourse about God incomprehensibility becomes a *desideratum* rather than ■ complaint. Then the question becomes a strategic one: why here, where Aquinas locates it, rather than there where Maimonides did? The answer is equally strategic. Aquinas'

approach would allow us to exploit the expressly Biblical images of the artisan, which the Rambam praised. Moreover, adopting the model of knowing congruent with these images could have given him a way of formulating God's knowledge of what is to come, which would not appear so downright contradictory to our understanding of what it is to know. In fact, one might reconstruct Maimonides as advocating an account of divine knowledge whereby God knows the particulars *through* their ideas, i.e., through His intentions. This would not be incompatible with the proposal of practical reason nor contradictory to our ordinary ideas of knowledge. But developing that would involve integrating the practical model he proposes into his treatment in ways in which he does not actually do. Were he to have done so, the possibility of an analogous rather than an utterly equivocal account could have arisen—and that would certainly have fulfilled the goal of his project better than he was able to do with the paradigms available to him.

Indeed, Menachem Kellner offers us a way of so reading Maimonides,<sup>13</sup> and that is to regard the *Guide* itself as a journey. One may then read the final chapters, with their clear *halakhic* allusions, as the terminus of a gradual transition from Neoplatonic priorities regarding reason to a more distinctively Jewish understanding of *imitatio Dei*: becoming like God by acting as God would have us act. As we can know divine attributes of action, so we have been given to know how God would have us act to become Godlike. The Rambam's insistence even in these final chapters on the priority of reason would then be understood as our need to employ philosophy as a guide in undertaking this journey. We must put speculative reason in its proper place: indispensable, yet finally in the service of right action. That such a reading would be in tension with the opening chapters of the *Guide* itself would only highlight the point and purpose of the journey it outlines for us to take. Needless to say, I find this reflective reading attractive, chiefly because it places particular statements in the context of the whole work, read as the *Guide* it purports to be. My own proposal would then become the task of reading back onto Maimonides' accounts of providence and creation his concluding exaltation of practical reason, and so fleshing out the model he proposes (III 21) but does not actually develop.

## Notes

1. Unless otherwise noted *The Guide for the Perplexed* will be cited from the M. Friedlander tr. (New York: Dover, 1956), primarily because his terminology is more standardly philosophical than Pines'.
2. Maimonides' references to Aristotle (e.g., II 19) are often in fact allusions to Ibn Sīnā.
3. Marshall Hodgson introduces the term in *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) 1.39-45.
4. On Ibn Sīnā and the paradigm of speculative reason, see my *Knowing the Unknowable God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986). The point is even stronger if Warren Zev Harvey's interpretation is correct: "A Third Approach to Maimonides' Cosmogony-Prophetology Puzzle," *Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981): 287-301.
5. Norbert Samuelson, *Gersonides on God's Knowledge* [= *Wars of the Lord* III] (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1977), 204-09.
6. This is how I try to make the emanation scheme plausible in *Knowing* (note 4).
7. The phrase is Louis Gardet's in *La Pensée Religieuse d'Avicenne* (Paris: Vrin, 1956).
8. Cf. my "Aquinas and Maimonides: A Conversation about Proper Speech," *Immanuel* 16 (1983): 70-85; "Maimonides, Aquinas and Gersonides on Providence and Evil," *Religious Studies* 20 (1984): 335-51.
9. See Aquinas, *De Veritate* 2.12, *Summa Theologica* 1.14.13; cf. my "God's Eternity," *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1984).
10. Cf. Joseph Incandela, "Aquinas' Lost Legacy: God's Practical Knowledge and Situated Human Freedom," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1986.
11. Cf. my *Aquinas: God and Action* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979); for an approximation to this by Maimonides, see Lenn E. Goodman, "Determinism and Freedom in Spinoza, Maimonides, and Aristotle," in F. Schoeman, ed., *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions*, esp. 144-48.
12. "Maimonides and Aquinas: A Dialogue about Proper Speech."
13. In his *Maimonides on Human Perfection* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).

## Matter as Creature and Matter as the Source of Evil: Maimonides and Aquinas

Idit Dobbs-Weinstein

Throughout *The Guide of the Perplexed*<sup>1</sup> Maimonides presents two distinct accounts of matter, broadly characterizable as Neoplatonic and Aristotelian.<sup>2</sup> The first account is expressed in poetic language, presenting matter as the source of privation, evil, error, and all moral transgressions. The second is a scientific account, of matter as a principle underlying generation and corruption. Both accounts are based upon acceptance of creation *ex nihilo*, which Maimonides affirms in explicit opposition to Aristotle but finds to be consistent with Neoplatonic cosmology.<sup>3</sup>

The discussions are too prominent and recurrent in the *Guide* to permit us to explain away the conflicting accounts as an attempt at deliberate dissimulation. But the concurrent affirmations of matter as creature and as the source of evil seem to establish a causal relation between God and evil that militates against both the revealed and philosophical conceptions of the Deity. I see a genuine problem here, having concluded that the objections which may arise from an exoteric/esoteric distinction within the *Guide* are either invalid or render the text unintelligible *a priori*.<sup>4</sup>

After a brief outline of the problems inherent in the investigation of matter, I shall examine Maimonides' distinct accounts of matter critically and suggest a tentative resolution to the problem that can accommodate the tension between the two accounts without

dismissing either as untrue or insignificant. Then, addressing the possibility of a harmonious synthesis between the God of revelation, the First Principle of Aristotle, and the One of Plotinus, I shall present Aquinas' account of matter as a successful attempt at such a synthesis.

The problem of a tension between matter and perfection is common to the philosophical and Scriptural traditions. Dante's tragic Aristotelian philosopher, who lives in longing without hope,<sup>5</sup> is no less affected by it than Plato's Er or the descendants of Adam. When prime matter is posited simply as a logical principle and distinguished from privation, the mutability of formed matter reflects merely the nature of all composite existence. As logical principles, form, matter, and privation render sublunar existence intelligible, but no more. To deny or lament these principles would be folly since their intelligibility is consequent upon the assent to necessary truths on which depends all our knowledge of the natural world. But when the very nature of matter is judged to be the cause of privation and evil, a serious and inescapable difficulty arises for any believing philosopher. For even if we exclude the issue of God's responsibility for evil, there remains the problem of attributing a qualification originating in practical reason to an ontological principle that is the proper object of speculative reason.

The least ambiguous doctrine conjoining ontological and ethical principles originates with Plotinus, for whom, as Rist points out, the scale of existence and the scale of value "are different ways of looking at the same metaphysical facts, for metaphysics in the *Enneads* is, strictly speaking, an indivisible synthesis of ontology and ethics."<sup>6</sup> Here, the "impotent potency" of prime matter renders it a real source of evil. By endowing matter with a real, albeit negative, ontological status, rather than merely a logical one, and by rejecting the Aristotelian dichotomy between ontology and ethics,<sup>7</sup> Plotinus, in effect, introduces an independent principle of evil into the realm of existence. Following the Plotinian tradition, and despite his repeated affirmations of the createdness of prime matter, Maimonides often posits matter as the cause of evil undermining the possibility of endowing it with a real positive role in existence.

Maimonides' distinct accounts of matter fall into his preliminary critiques of the *Mutakallimūn* and his exposition of his own doctrine; the former account is based upon Aristotelian principles, whereas the

latter constitutes a critique of Aristotle. In his unsympathetic critique of the *Mutakallimūn*, Maimonides is an Aristotelian philosopher who faults the logic of *kalām*, whereas in his debate with Aristotle, he is a Neoplatonist who repeatedly points out the boundaries of demonstrative reasoning. The same division is visible in Maimonides' investigation of the status of prime matter either as a creature or as a co-eternal ontological principle, and again in his investigation of matter as a logical principle, one of the primary principles underlying natural science.

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The focus of all investigations concerning prime matter is the possibility or impossibility of bringing something into being out of absolute non-being. According to Maimonides, this problem cannot be resolved by means of demonstration, a conclusion already reached by Aristotle.<sup>8</sup> Whereas inferences about necessity, possibility, and impossibility can be made about all things in the realm of generation and corruption, they cannot be extended to the principles rendering generation and corruption possible. The mistake of some philosophers and the *Mutakallimūn* was to infer what is possible about the creation of these ontological principles from the nature of what exists in its formed state. The philosophers inferred necessity and eternity, whereas the *Mutakallimūn* inferred the possibility of creation and, hence, the fact of creation from the state of the existing, formed universe. Maimonides denies the validity of both inferences, arguing that "a being's state of perfection and completion furnishes no indication of the state of that being preceding its perfection."<sup>9</sup> He argues that if one begins with the nature of what is, then Aristotle is correct in claiming that prime matter is subject to neither generation nor corruption. But for Aristotle the non-generated state of prime matter signifies eternity and necessity, whereas for Maimonides it designates the possibility of bringing something into existence out of absolute nonexistence, a possibility preceding generation and corruption and rendering it possible.<sup>10</sup> He further argues that his conclusions concerning inference can be derived from sensible experience inasmuch as even in the realm of generation and corruption the perfected, or actualized, state of a thing does not

furnish the data required for inferring its purely potential state.<sup>11</sup> That is, since the laws comprising the logic of possibility are an abstraction from the repetitive regularity of the order of actual existence of which they are not the cause but rather the effect, they cannot govern the principles which make their derivation possible.<sup>12</sup>

Having cast sufficient doubt on the applicability of rules of logic to the investigation of the origin and status of prime matter, Maimonides can offer a Neoplatonic explanation as an alternative to both the Aristotelian and *Kalām* ones. Here, as in other metaphysical inquiries, he delimits the inquiry by two rules only, namely, that it should violate neither the nature of existing things (the error of the *Mutakallimūn*) nor intellectual judgments about God (the error of the Philosophers).

Maimonides first mentions the creation of prime matter in *Guide* I 28, when he explains the true meaning of Biblical terms referring to divine limbs that appear in the account of the apprehension of Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel. He states,

For what they apprehended was the true reality of prime matter, which derives from Him, may He be exalted, He being the cause of its existence. . . . Accordingly their apprehension had as its object the first matter and the relation of the latter to God, inasmuch as it is the first among the things He <has> created that necessitates generation and corruption; and God is its creator ex nihilo.<sup>13</sup>

Although these statements do not constitute an explanation of prime matter, Maimonides' assumptions are quite clear and can help to elucidate the discussions of prime matter elsewhere in the *Guide*. The theses affirmed here are: (a) prime matter derives from God and from nothing else; and (b) it is the first created thing in the order of generation and corruption. Later statements make clear that prime matter is an essential condition for generation and corruption, and thus for natural possibility and impossibility. Accordingly it is also a condition for our derivation of the logical laws of possibility. Given Maimonides' affirmation of the created nature of prime matter, and given his claim that prime matter is *derived* from God, the nature of the condition obtaining prior to its creation can in no way require or necessitate the ontological actuality of anything other than God.<sup>14</sup> In fact, in my view, Maimonides denies such an actuality on the basis

of an intellectual judgment about God, namely, that the affirmation of the eternal preexistence of anything whatsoever, be it understood as an ontological state, or ■ thing, circumscribes the divine will.<sup>15</sup>

Since Maimonides' formulations about any single topic are inconsistent and have given rise to diametrically opposed interpretations, it does not seem to be possible or productive to base our arguments strictly upon the language used. Rather I shall attempt to set forth an alternative solution to the problem of the status of prime matter which is based upon the hermeneutic principle that unless one is willing to grant that the author—in this case, the *teacher*—not only wished to communicate something true, but also wished that this knowledge be accessible to those who truly desire it, one would neither be able to understand the text nor to withhold judgment about it.

If we grant that Maimonides' affirmations reflect his true position, we have to accept the intelligibility of the following: (a) prime matter derives from God alone; (b) creation is a unique act entirely dissimilar to any natural activity such as making or producing; (c) prime matter is not subject to generation and corruption; and hence, (d) prime matter is primarily a metaphysical and ontological principle and only secondarily a physical and logical one.

In *Guide* II 17, Maimonides repeatedly affirms that prime matter was brought into existence out of nothing in a unique manner. Thus it is entirely dissimilar to any entity in the realm of generation and corruption. Once created and stabilized, it is one of the permanent conditions for composition, potentiality, actuality, in fact for the existence of all composite entities. Like time and motion, prime matter is everlasting. Only divine choice can compass its destruction. Despite his repeated references to it, Maimonides says little else about prime matter, except that "it does not exist devoid of form."<sup>16</sup> No doubt, it is difficult to conceptualize anything that is simultaneously everlasting and nonexistent. But I think that Maimonides is attempting to formulate a distinction between non-being proper and the nonexistence that pertains to any unactualized formed matter in the first instant of its composition. The difference is that in its first instant of existence, formed matter, or natural substance, is in a state of nonexistence which is already determined towards something. Formed matter is a privation of existence with



respect to a specific form and the accidents proper to it; but prime matter is not ■ privation of any specific thing, precisely because it is absolutely undetermined. Privation is with respect to something; prime matter is not. Whereas privation designates the *dynamis* of some form or kind, or the lack of existence of an actuality determined by some actually existing form, no actuality corresponding to prime matter exists. In fact, properly speaking, neither prime matter nor form are existents, but rather each has an essence proper to it which in their conjunction renders existence possible. The difficulty in understanding and speaking of prime matter arises from the impossibility of predicating anything, even 'thingness,' of any unformed 'thing,' since it is not a thing. In the final analysis, apart from the term 'prime matter,' all that can be said about prime matter is by way of negating every predication. In my opinion, it is prime matter to which we could apply Ivry's attempt to explain that state prior to creation to which he refers as a certain ontological condition.

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In the first brief discussion of matter as one of the principles required for generation and corruption in *Guide* I 17, Maimonides presents a strictly Aristotelian account which first outlines three principles, matter, form, and "particularized privation," and then explains that precisely because privation is always conjoined with matter, the latter can receive form. He adds that the difficulties inherent in understanding the distinctions among the principles underlying natural science are the cause for the injunction against nonfigurative speech about the Account of the Beginning. For such univocal discourse is potentially dangerous insofar as it exceeds the apprehension of the multitude. In my opinion, this qualification is significant for understanding Maimonides' dual account of matter, and I shall return to it when I present a tentative resolution to this problem.

Maimonides' Aristotelian discussion of the distinction between matter and privation, the real meaning of privation, and its relation to evil is presented as a critique of the *Kalām* understanding of

privation. According to Maimonides, the *Kalām* account is based upon two major errors: (a) The *Kalām* notion of privation, or non-being, recognizes only absolute non-being; and yet, (b) it treats privation as an existent thing. That is, although the *Mutakallimūn* did not distinguish between absolute and relative privation, although they limited privation to contrariety, and although, as a consequence, they maintained that privation did not require the act of an agent, nevertheless, they understood absolute non-being to correspond to an actual existing state, thus endowing it with an independent ontological status.

All the errors of the *Mutakallimūn* can be reduced to an ignorance of the nature of existence. Having failed to comprehend the distinction between essential and accidental characteristics, they concluded that accidents were in no way dependent upon the act of an agent; and, consequently, they were unable to account for them. Composite existence, on the contrary, requires both essential and accidental features, the former representing the real effects of the act of an agent, whereas the latter are related to that act as accidental effects. Only God, in the unique act of creation, brings something into existence out of *absolute* privation or non-being. All other agents produce a change from relative privations, which are absences of due perfections.

Maimonides' critique brings into sharp focus one of the major difficulties inherent in understanding privation in the Arabic tradition. This difficulty emerges again in the perennial difficulties encountered by scholars attempting to understand Maimonides. Since the Arabic term *al-'adam*, like the English term 'lack,' signifies both privation and non-being, the distinction between these concepts has to be read in terms of the specific context of discussion. For the sake of clarity, the interpreter or translator must supply a predicate signifying absolute or relative absence. Once this specification is supplied, it becomes clear that absolute non-being signifies a state prior to existence, or to the composition of matter and form, whereas relative non-being designates the absence of a specific form in a subsistent being. Nonetheless, it should be noted (a) that the only predication used by Maimonides is 'absolute,' and (b) that it has been argued that Maimonides may be inconsistent in his use of, or failure to use, this predicate.<sup>17</sup> Unlike the *Mutakallimūn*, Maimonides insists that all

evils are relative privations ('adam). The failure to comprehend this proposition (evident in the teachings of the *Mutakallimūn*) occurs only in "one who does not distinguish between privation and habitus and between two contraries or one who does not know the nature of all things."<sup>18</sup> That is, rather than fault the art of *kalām per se*, Maimonides criticizes *Mutakallimūn* ignorant of philosophy.

Since no agent can be said to produce privation, or evil, essentially, it is ludicrous to assume that evil is something existing, let alone that God's unique act brought about the evils evident in the world. Given that God alone produces *only* being, and given that being is good by definition, all His acts produce absolute good. Consequently, all things which are understood as evil in this world, including matter, are essentially good and can be understood as evil only accidentally. In fact, understood in terms of their essence, all things existing in the universe without exception are, exist for, and promote being.

Even the existence of this inferior matter, whose manner of being it is to be a concomitant of privation entailing death and all evils, all this is also *good* in view of the perpetuity of generation and the permanence of being through succession.<sup>19</sup>

Thus the distinction drawn by Maimonides between absolute and relative privation in his refutation of the teachings of the *Mutakallimūn* leads to the conclusion that, properly speaking, nothing is essentially evil, evil being merely a category imposed upon the object by human understanding. And, as Maimonides repeatedly points out throughout the *Guide*, "the Torah speaks in the language of the sons of men," and language is merely conventional, rather than natural.<sup>20</sup>

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Thus far, Maimonides' accounts of matter provide a systematic synthesis of Aristotle and Plotinus. However, as soon as he discusses determinate matter, or matter's role in sublunar existence, he presents matter as the cause of evil. Although he uses Aristotelian physics in the account of matter and privation in Part III and, in fact, quotes

Aristotle's *Physics*, his repeated designation of matter as the source of evil, and the immediate succession of the discussion of generation and corruption by an explanation of evil sets the account far apart from Aristotle. Despite the fact that matter is necessary for substantial existence, it is never presented by Maimonides as an essential principle in the actualization of the human form; that is, man's is not an integrated composition. Rather than present matter as pure potentiality and, hence, as the possibility for human actualization, Maimonides underscores its role in corruption. In all these discussions, with one exception<sup>21</sup>, he presents matter metaphorically as the feminine principle, even as a married harlot, who, never satisfied with her husband, seeks others continuously. "This is the state of matter. For whatever form is found in it, does but prepare it to receive another form."<sup>22</sup> The figurative accounts present form as powerless before the corruptive force of matter. Rather than emphasize the power of form over matter as the governing principle in a composite being, Maimonides presents composition primarily as the subjugation of potential form to matter, to such an extent that not only physical ills, but also all spiritual ills and sins are understood to result from corruptive matter. The language used to describe material existence is poetic rather than scientific and, if we are to avoid psychologizing, must be understood as a pedagogic device intended to bring about immediate assent to the premise which asserts that all corporeal desires are shameful and repulsive by definition.

The differences between Maimonides' neutral accounts of matter as an ontological category only and his loaded use of it as a category to which all evils can be ascribed are pronounced. Where the latter accounts collapse moral and ontological categories into one, the former not only distinguish between them but significantly circumscribe their meanings and applicability, implying that the attribution of evaluative categories to ontological entities is a result of the limitations of human knowledge.

Since evil, according to Maimonides, is a category imposed by man upon things, rather than something real existing in them, the discussion of evil in the *Guide* examines the three classes of things interpreted by man as evil. The two main premises upon which the discussion is based are: (a) Properly speaking, all evils are the result of ignorance, or "privation of knowledge,"<sup>23</sup> and (b) Teleological

accounts that posit a final end of all existing things are erroneous, since a final end, *qua* end, implies privation and hence is meaningful only in the realm of generation and corruption.

The proliferation of the mistaken opinion that more evils exist in the temporal world than good is attributed by Maimonides to ignorance concerning the nature of evil which is exhibited not only by the multitude but also by some men of learning, all of whom follow their imagination rather than reason. This mistake, which violates the intellectual concept of God, implying that He is the cause of evil, results from the absurd assumption that all creation exists for the sake of man. Once the nature of existence is understood, however, and man's very limited portion in it becomes evident, it follows necessarily that all existence is a good consequent upon the divine will, or wisdom. Moreover, argues Maimonides, human existence is a very great good; in fact, it is a divine gift, since of all creatures subject to generation and corruption man alone was given the capacity to perfect himself so that he can overcome the necessary and natural limitations of sublunar existence. Consequently, evil is either a good which in our ignorance (itself an evil) we misconceive, or "we suffer because of evils that we have produced ourselves of our free will; but we attribute them to God, may he be exalted above this."<sup>24</sup>

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Maimonides in my view deliberately declines to give matter an essential role in human perfection, thus drawing a radical dichotomy between the sub- and supralunar realms, and between intellectual perfection and all other human perfections. Rather than establish a closer relation between the two realms, requiring a more direct relation between the act of Being and natural corruption, Maimonides chooses to emphasize the distance between the changeable and the perfect. Since man is the only creature who belongs to both realms by nature, he is also the only creature whose existence and essence are not in natural harmony and cannot be harmonized naturally. Yet Maimonides insists that the created universe is perfect, containing no evil; and, further, that no divine act is vain or superfluous. That any being in the realm of change can achieve perfection is *ipso facto*

evidence of divine munificence. But, as Maimonides points out, the repeated qualification 'good' used in the Torah to describe the various beings created by God is an expression used by man to refer to an object's conformity to its purpose; hence, the term 'good' instructs man that all that exists conforms to the particular purpose intended for it by the divine will, a purpose which, nonetheless, exceeds human apprehension, let alone demonstration. And, as pointed out by Maimonides, the limitations of human reason evident in man's inability to apprehend the distinctions between the primary principles of natural science and exhibited by both the vulgar and men of learning also sets limits to man's understanding of the nature of what exists so that we cannot even infer with certainty all of a natural being's potentialities from actual particulars.<sup>25</sup> Since the true nature of all that exists exceeds human knowledge, it also exceeds univocal discourse and renders necessary poetic accounts of determinate matter. Thus understood, the tension between the two accounts of matter is but a reflection of the tension constitutive of finite existence.

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It is in his teachings about matter in general, and about the material substratum of human existence in particular, that Aquinas' philosophical doctrine differs most clearly from Maimonides'. Whereas Maimonides' metaphysics is, first and foremost, a metaphysics of the act of Being, that of Aquinas is *per prius et posterius* a metaphysics of the Good. For if Maimonides emphasizes the radical difference between corporeal and incorporeal existence, Aquinas underlines the unity of all existing things in virtue of their first and final cause—the Good, irrespective of composition. By focusing upon matter's relation to the Good and by arguing for its essential role in actualization, Aquinas establishes a continuity between sub- and supralunar existence which overcomes the Neoplatonic problematic of the relative independence of evil from the divine order. Indeed, it is significant that one of Aquinas' most integrated discussions of the relation between matter, privation, and evil occurs in a Neoplatonic text, his commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius' *De Divinis Nominibus*.<sup>26</sup> In the longest chapter, the one

on the Good, Aquinas devotes about half of his discussion to dissociating the material principle of existence from evil and to relating it to the Good since it is one of the principles necessary for the perfection of rational souls. In fact, he maintains that to understand the procession of creatures from God, as the Good, we must begin with matter.

Although Aquinas is in general agreement with many principles of Neoplatonic metaphysics, he criticizes the understanding of matter as privation and non-being. Despite the criticism, he also underlines and praises the strength of the Neoplatonic system upon which he constructs his own metaphysics. He argues.

[T]he causality of being does not extend except to beings. Thus, therefore, according to them, the causality of being did not extend to prime matter to which, nevertheless, the causality of the Good extends. The indication of this is that it desires the Good above all. Moreover, it is characteristic of an effect that it be turned towards its cause through desire. Thus therefore, the Good is a more universal and higher cause than being since its causality extends to more things.<sup>27</sup>

Upon reading *De Divinis Nominibus*, Aquinas' approbation of the Neoplatonists<sup>28</sup> becomes clear, since the recognition that the Good is a more universal cause than being makes it possible to encompass within it all the principles of existence. Moreover, as the exemplar and final cause of the universe, the Good is both the end sought by all things and the perfection which can render them similar to itself. Consequently, it is necessary that God be the cause of prime matter since it is "the first subject among the effects" and hence, "should be the effect of the first cause alone, which is the Good, while the causality of secondary causes does not reach as far as this."<sup>29</sup> That is, the entire chain of sublunar secondary causality depends upon prime matter, the principle of its operations, for its actualization. Thus, in contrast to Maimonides for whom the good is not a category of reason, let alone the final cause of all existing things, Aquinas argues not only that the Good is a proper object of the intellect, but also that we can know it as the first and final cause of all existence.

*De Divinis Nominibus* provides the best example of Aquinas' synthesis of Neoplatonic and Aristotelian principles, essential elements of which are brought together to form his own metaphysics.

He rejects the Neoplatonic interpretation of matter as "non-being because joined to privation"<sup>30</sup> in favor of an Aristotelian explanation, distinguishing matter from privation, and posits the latter as joined to matter *per accidens*. He then adds that like all caused things which are turned to their cause through desire, prime matter's desire for the Good as its cause "seems to be nothing other than privation and its ordering to actuality."<sup>31</sup> In Aquinas' unique metaphysics the act of creation must be understood, first and foremost, as the manifestation of the Good since God, as the Good, is inseparable from His act, the effects of which can be nothing other than good. Consequently, not only must prime matter be distinct from privation, but also it must have a positive, or real, function in the order of being, rather than merely a logical one. For if the Good is the primary and more common principle of all creation, and if its extension is greater than that of being, an Aristotelian metaphysics of being cannot account fully for the whole of being.<sup>32</sup>

For Aristotle the desire for the Good *qua* the Good has a very limited function in the universal order. But for the Neoplatonists and for Aquinas the desire for God, primarily as the Good, is the *ratio* of universal order. For Aquinas, this desire is for the unifying principle into which all things return to the extent that they desire Him as an active principle, a conserving one, and an end. Departing from both Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius, Aquinas maintains, as did Maimonides, that, rather than designating non-being, the seeming privation associated with prime matter is its desire for perfect being, or for its own actualization. In addition, Aquinas disengages prime matter from its association with evil on the one hand, and on the other, attributes to it a real function in the order of existence, beyond both the epistemological and the ontological. For Aquinas, prime matter is one of the necessary causes for the actual perfection of all created beings; privation, the cause of its hindrance. Thus the main difference between Maimonides' and Aquinas' accounts of prime matter is not in their conception of prime matter as the substratum of natural existence, but rather in their understandings of (1) the moral categories and their relation to ontological categories and (2) the scope of human knowledge of causality.

Rather than view the indefinite potency which is prime matter as evil, Aquinas presents its role in existence as a manifestation of the Good. Based upon the clear distinction between *non ens* and *non*

*est*, Aquinas argues that the potency manifesting a privation of a particular form (*non est*), which seems to be an evil, is in fact a manifestation of matter's natural inclination, or desire, for the Good. Since the Good is the final cause of all existing things, and since no being can be said to desire nonexistence *per se*, neither can privation be said to be essentially evil, nor can any thing be understood as utterly evil. In fact it is precisely because no being can desire evil that evil neither can be caused nor be the cause of anything *per se* and, hence, rather than subsisting *per se*, it must be caused by the Good *per accidens*. Thus Aquinas argues not only that nothing is essentially evil, but also that what is understood as evil can only be an absence of a good which can be possessed, a goodness which properly belongs to the nature of the thing as the effect of the Good cause.

One of the most striking features of Aquinas' exposition of the *De Divinis nominibus* is his ability to dissociate matter entirely from any evil designation in a commentary on a Neoplatonic text which exhibits all the tensions inherent in the Plotinian understanding of matter. He repeatedly argues that change in the natural universe, the principle of which is matter, in no way may be understood as a defect or an evil. Following Aristotle, he argues that natural corruption is the source of further generation and therefore is required for the perfection of the universe, a perfection which must comprise all grades of existence. Given Aquinas' distinctions between *non ens* and *non est*, and between matter and privation, it would be more accurate to explain his understanding of natural corruption as a decay into particular nonexistence which makes further existence possible, rather than into non-being.

Diversity of effects, the material cause of evil, cannot be attributed necessarily to a natural agent, which does one thing only, but rather, to a rational willing agent. In fact, the distinction between good and evil can be found only in the will, the proper object of which is the Good,

since it is characteristic of that which is contrary to virtue to be evil, and it is not found in any other genus that certain species be distinguished through a difference between good and evil, except in the virtuous and wicked *habitus* of the soul.<sup>33</sup>

If the natural universe is perfect, then evil cannot be attributed to a natural inclination or appetite so long as these conform to the natural order. Consequently, only an intellectual being can choose evil; that is, only an active principle of the natural universe can choose to act contrary to nature. But, when acting in opposition to the natural order, man desires nonexistence *per accidens*, insofar as he acts against the principle of his self-preservation.

By rejecting the Neoplatonic theory of Forms and by replacing it with the Aristotelian doctrine of universals, Aquinas is able to establish an all-inclusive continuity between the sub- and supralunar realms of a kind clearly rejected by Maimonides.<sup>34</sup> While he concurs with Dionysius' (and Maimonides') assertion that evil is found in particular rather than universal nature, Aquinas rejects the premise that universal nature is something separate, arguing that forms exist in matter as principles of action and consequently, have to be understood as "the active force of a first body which is first in a genus of natural causes."<sup>35</sup> Natural universal principles, such as prime matter and form, according to Aquinas, do not have existence *in se*, but only *in alio*; they can be said to exist only as particulars consubstituting in nature. Natural powers, *qua* natural, depend upon the natural order for their actualization, are never independent of it and, hence, cannot act entirely against it. Consequently, evil is a particular act *praeter* rather than *secundum naturam*. Aquinas adds that since Dionysius himself excludes the possibility of positing the body as the cause of the corruption of the soul, the particular act manifest as actual sin makes evident that the evil of the soul originates in free choice, which uses corporeal things. For, if matter, *qua* natural potency, were posited as the cause of the corruption of the soul (form), not only would it follow that it is independent of it in some essential way, but more significantly, the corruption of the human soul would occur necessarily, "for an effect follows upon a posited cause out of necessity unless something should impede it."<sup>36</sup>

In emphasizing the essential relation between natural universal principles and natural particulars, and arguing that forms constitute the active principles in subsistent existents, Aquinas is arguing against the understanding of any particular matter as a hindrance to the perfection of the particular composed of it.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, neither can any instance of natural corruption, such as ill health, be understood as evil, except *per accidens*, nor can it inhibit the true

perfection of any natural being. Moreover, *qua* natural power, matter can only act *secundum naturam* and, hence, it can never be argued that a corrupt matter exists, nor that any matter whatsoever constitutes an obstacle to the perfection of the soul. As Aquinas points out, were it the case that any matter corrupts its form or acts independently of it in any way, the corruption of that form would follow necessarily.

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For Maimonides the act of creation is a communication of actual being only and cannot extend to anything in potency.<sup>38</sup> But for Aquinas, the act of creation is, first and foremost, the active communication of being through its most extensive manifestation—the Good and, hence, can extend to beings still in potency. Since Maimonides denies that a final end can be posited to things and argues that their only purpose is actual existence, the predication ‘good’ can be assigned to things only subsequent to and in proportion with their proper act. Consequently, Maimonides circumvents the problem of natural universals existing only *in alio* by affirming neither agency proper nor goodness or evil in them. Although Aquinas concurs that, properly speaking, the object of the intellect is the universal and, thus, the true and the false, he also argues that good and evil are distinctions pertaining to modes of particular objects; potential existence is a good, whereas evil is a privation of a due perfection which (1) can be known<sup>39</sup> and (2) should and could be possessed. As the unifying principle of all existing things, the Good is their final end; and, thus, it is also their impetus to act, which must extend beyond actual being. Consequently, Aquinas can attribute causal agency and goodness to natural universals as well as to particulars.

Since Aquinas’ metaphysics is, first and foremost, a metaphysics of the Good and is one of act only as a consequence, it succeeds in dissociating matter from evil and overcomes the tension between sub- and supralunar existence. Maimonides minimizes the active role of matter in perfection and denies inherent goodness to all corporeal beings, rendering perfection beyond the reach of most individuals. Aquinas, by contrast, translates the seeming privation inhering in

matter into its desire for the Good, thus providing a consistent account of the relation between particular goods and the final good and rendering perfection ■ universal possibility.

#### Notes

1. All translations will follow Pines.
2. The broad juxtaposition of Neoplatonic and Aristotelian thought in this paper is not meant to suggest that Neoplatonism is free of Aristotelian elements, nor to imply that the two philosophical schools are inherently antagonistic. To facilitate discussion, I present the Neoplatonic doctrine of matter as a unified one, although it presents as many distinct doctrines as there are thinkers who adopt the Plotinian cosmology of emanation or the procession of the many from the One.
3. My argument suggests that whereas creation *ex nihilo* is always inconsistent with an Aristotelian cosmology, it can be consistent with Neoplatonic cosmology. But (1) *ex nihilo* does not preclude *de Deo*, and (2) my claim here is limited to the question of *ex nihilo* and does not encompass the question of time, which will be discussed later.
4. See Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, “Medieval Biblical Commentary and Philosophical Inquiry as Exemplified in the Thought of Moses Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas,” in E. Ormsby, ed., *Moses Maimonides and His Times* (Washington: The Catholic University Press of America, 1987), esp. iv.
5. See *The Divine Comedy*, canto iv, *Inferno*, l. 42, tr., Charles Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).
6. John Rist, “Plotinus on Matter and Evil,” 160.
7. See *Nicomachean Ethics* X 8-9. 1178a8-1181b23, and Ross’ introductory essay in *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).
8. Aristotle, *Topica*, I 1, 104b14-18, tr., H. Tredennick (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, LCL, 1960).
9. *Guide*, II 17, 297-98.
10. *Guide*, II 17, 296-98. For a full discussion of the possibility of creation and the status of prime matter see, Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, “The Concept of Providence in the Thought of Moses Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1987, Chap. 3, esp., 141-77.
11. *Guide*, II 17, 295.

12. See Emil Fackenheim, "The Possibility of the Universe in Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Maimonides," *PAAJR* 16 (1947): 39-70 and the discussion in my dissertation.
13. *Guide*, I 28, 61.
14. In "Berī'at ha-'Olam le-fi ha-Rambam," (forthcoming in a Festschrift honoring S. Pines, Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press), Alfred Ivry suggests that to resolve the logical impossibility of *ex nihilo* we must interpret the expression "absolute privation" to connote a certain ontological actuality which "serves as a passive cause for that which appears subsequently, in all its stages."
15. Rist provides a similar argument for Plotinus' major objection to the Gnostics: "Plotinus on Matter and Evil," 161.
16. *Guide*, II 17, 297.
17. See Ivry *passim*. I do not think that we can evaluate Maimonides' consistency without a thorough semantic study of the texts and manuscript traditions. A comparative study of the terms in the Arabic philosophical tradition is also a desideratum.
18. *Guide*, III 10, 439.
19. *Guide*, III 10, 440.
20. See *Guide*, II 30, 358.
21. *Guide*, III 8, 433. In his gloss on Proverbs 31:10: "A woman of virtue who can find?" Maimonides presents the good woman not only as the most excellent matter but, in fact, as a "divine gift." This type of matter, however, is so exceptional that it is most similar to angelic matter, least similar to the human. I do not think that I overstate the case when I propose that the class of individuals who possess this type of matter may be limited to one, namely, Moses. For an alternative interpretation of the relation between matter as the "married harlot" and as the "woman of virtue," see L. E. Goodman, "Matter and Form as Attributes of God in Maimonides' Philosophy."
22. *Guide*, III 8, 431; cf. I 6, 7, 14.
23. *Guide*, III 11, 440.
24. *Guide*, III 12, 443.
25. Since we cannot infer the final cause(s) or purpose(s) of natural entities, and since we do not know the quiddity of their first cause, our knowledge of them does not constitute "science" in the strict Aristotelian sense.
26. *In librum Beati Dionysii "De Divinis Nominibus" Expositio* (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1950). The translations from the Latin are my own.
27. *De Divinis Nominibus*, 3.1.226.
28. See especially the *proemium* to *De Divinis Nominibus*.
29. *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4.2.296.

30. *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4.2.295.
31. *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4.2.296.
32. It seems clear to me that Aquinas realized that an Aristotelian metaphysics of the act of Being necessarily leads to a denial of sublunar providence.
33. *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4.15.486.
34. Since Maimonides, like Aquinas, rejected the Neoplatonic theory of Forms, he could have established a greater continuity between the two realms had he been willing to include the good among the most universal manifestations of the act of creation (like will and wisdom) even if not the most extensive. But contrast the view of Goodman in "Matter and Form . . ."
35. *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4. 21. 550. Cf. *In I Sententiarum*, d. 8, q. 5, a. 1; *Quaestiones de Anima*, 1, ad 2; J. Owens, "Diversity and Community of Being," *Mediaeval Studies* 22 (1960): 257-302.
36. *De Divinis Nominibus*, 4.21.566.
37. See Owens, "Diversity and Community" and "The Unity in the Thomistic Philosophy of Man," *Mediaeval Studies* 25 (1963): 54-82.
38. Despite the difficulties inherent in the interpretation of Maimonides' statements about prime matter, it should be emphasized that, being subject neither to generation nor to corruption after creation, it must be understood to possess actual being of a unique kind.
39. It is important here that for Aquinas practical reason possesses its own primary principles. See *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, IIae. Q. 90, a. 1 and esp., Q. 94, a. 2, where he argues that the first principles of practical reason are *propositiones per se nota* and that *bonum* is to practical reason what *ens* is to theoretical reason.

## Divine Unity in Maimonides, the Tosafists and Me'iri

J. David Bleich

The writings of medieval Rabbinic authorities reflect two, or possibly three, distinct theological positions with regard to Christianity. These positions are not merely theoretical or attitudinal in nature. Rather, they yield disparate halakhic rulings governing the conduct of Jews with regard to interpersonal relationships between members of the different faith-communities as reflected in many aspects of commercial and social conduct.

An entirely negative theological view of Christianity is expressed by Maimonides (1135-1204) both in his *Commentary on the Mishnah* and in his *Mishneh Torah*. The Mishnah, in the opening statement of Tractate *Avodah Zarah*, prohibits various forms of commercial intercourse with idolaters during the three days preceding their days of religious observance. The concern is that an idolater, pleased by the success of a commercial enterprise, may, in the course of the impending religious celebration, give thanks to his pagan deity for his good fortune. Jews are admonished not to be involved even vicariously in acts of idolatry and may not even indirectly cause an idolatrous act to be performed. The Mishnah (1:3) goes on to enumerate a number of such days of religious observance. Maimonides declares the references to be to days of Christian observance, although the days named are not readily identifiable as known holy days of the early Christian calendar:<sup>1</sup>



These feast-days herein mentioned were well known at that time among the Christians<sup>2</sup> and those who cleave to them. . . . And know that all the various sects of this Christian people who profess the claim of the Messiah, all of them are idolaters . . . and one must conduct oneself with respect to them with regard to all [the laws of] the Torah in the manner in which one conducts oneself vis-à-vis idolaters.

Maimonides proceeds to declare that Sunday is to be regarded as a day on which commercial traffic with "believers in the Messiah" is forbidden. This principle is codified in his *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 9:4:

Edomites are idolaters, and Sunday is their day of religious observance. Therefore, in the Land of Israel, it is forbidden to do business with them on Thursday and Friday of each week. It need not be stated that on Sunday it is forbidden in every locale.<sup>3</sup>

In some censored editions of the *Mishneh Torah* the term "Canaanites" is substituted for "Edomites"; in others the entire section, including the numeral introducing the section, is omitted, so that the published version proceeds from section 3 to section 5, with the total elimination of section 4. Maimonides' position is substantiated by manuscript readings of *Avodah Zarah* 6a and 7b, as cited by Rabbi R. N. Rabbinovicz, *Dikdukkei Sofrim*, X, 15. As will be noted, the texts of *Avodah Zarah* eliminated by the censor pose a formidable problem for those authorities who differ with the Maimonidean categorization of Christianity.

Maimonides reiterates his view in the *Mishneh Torah* in a second context. He rules that it is forbidden to derive any benefit whatever from wine that has been handled by an idolater. But the rule about wine handled by a non-Jew who is not an idolater is somewhat different. Such wine may not be consumed by a Jew but there is no prohibition against deriving other benefits from it, e.g., it may be sold to a non-Jew.<sup>4</sup> In *Hilkhot Ma'akhalot Assurot* 11:7, Maimonides declares that "the Ishmaelites," i.e., Muslims, are non-idolatrous gentiles, but that Christians are idolaters, and hence no benefit may be derived from any wine touched by them. In censored editions of the *Mishneh Torah* the word *nozrim* is deleted and replaced with the phrase 'otan ha-'ovdim 'akum.

A somewhat different view of Christianity is ascribed to the Tosafists (12-13th centuries) in their comments on *Sanhedrin* 63b and *Bekhorot* 2b.<sup>5</sup> A literal reading indicates that they hold that acceptance of a doctrine of *shittuf* (association) is permitted to non-Jews. The doctrine involves a belief in the "Creator of the heavens," but links a belief in the Creator with a belief in some other being or entity. The term *shittuf* is not uncommon in medieval philosophical literature and connotes plurality in the Godhead.<sup>6</sup> The *Tosafot* refer explicitly to the gentiles of their day, and the most obvious example of *shittuf*, clearly the doctrine which the *Tosafot* seek to legitimize for non-Jews, is Trinitarianism.

However, this interpretation of the *Tosafot* is by no means universally accepted. The *Tosafot* state only that one may administer an oath to a Christian even though he swears in the name of the Trinity. This ruling is justified by the *Tosafot* with the declaration that nowhere is there recorded a prohibition against causing gentiles to "associate" or to "incorporate" another deity in an oath invoking the Divine Name. R. Ezekiel Landau<sup>7</sup> understands the *Tosafot* as carefully distinguishing between *shittuf* or Trinitarianism as a professed doctrine and the swearing of an oath in the name of the Trinity. *Noda' bi-Yehudah* declares the former to be idolatry and, as such, forbidden to Jew and gentile alike, since idolatry is forbidden by the Noahic Code. Swearing an oath in the name of a pagan god does not constitute an act of worship or adoration but is forbidden in the commandment "and in His Name shall you swear" (Deuteronomy 10:20). That commandment, however, is addressed only to Jews. Although this reading of the *Tosafot* does not at all strain the plain meaning of the text and is followed by a number of later authorities,<sup>8</sup> it is probably correct to say that the majority of latter-day authorities interpret the *Tosafot* more broadly as declaring that *shittuf* does not constitute idolatry for Noahids.<sup>9</sup>

The conventional analysis of the *Tosafot* must be understood as distinguishing between the denial of polytheism and the upholding of Divine Unity. In proscribing the worship of foreign gods, the Noahic Code binds gentiles to the acceptance of a monotheistic belief. That concept, however, entails only the rejection of *shetei reshuyot*, i.e., a multiplicity of powers each capable of independent action. The full doctrine of Divine Unity requires much more than

abjuration of such a primitive notion. Indeed, Maimonides, in formulating the second of his Thirteen Principles, affirms that God's unity is unique:

1. Mankind, for example, is a single species, a unity composed of all individual men. God, however, is not such a collective unity; He is not to be construed as a genus composed of distinct beings or powers. The unity of God is not the unity of a collectivity.
2. The unity of God is not the unity of an aggregate. God is not a compound. His unity is not the unity of a composite divisible into its component parts.
3. Merely to say that God's unity is not the unity of a compound does not exclude the possibility of a nature analogous to that of even the smallest corporeal substance, which, at least in principle or conceptually, may be further divided or broken down. God's unity, however, is not the unity of magnitude. It cannot admit of any division whatsoever. A "simple substance," not composed of parts, cannot be broken down. Since destruction involves the division of an entity into component parts, it follows that God, who is a perfect unity, is not susceptible to destruction.

For Maimonides, renunciation of polytheism is not a separate principle or doctrine standing alone. It flows rationally and necessarily from the notion of Divine Unity and is part and parcel of a sophisticated conception of the unity unique to God. Since rejection of polytheism and acceptance of Divine Unity are but two sides of the same coin, it follows that Noahids, who are commanded to renounce idolatry, are *ipso facto* commanded to accept the doctrine of Divine Unity.<sup>10</sup>

According to this analysis, the *Tosafot* posit that Noahids are required only to renounce the notion of multiple, independent deities. This is expressed in the statement that contemporary gentiles recognize the "Creator of the heavens," by which the *Tosafot* undoubtedly intend to ascribe to Christians a belief in a single Creator who continues to exercise providence over His creatures. The highly sophisticated belief that the Deity is an absolute unity is demanded of Jews but is not a requirement placed upon non-Jews. So worship of a triune God by Christians is not tantamount to idolatry or to polytheism, since they do not ascribe independent powers to the members of the Trinity.

Support for a distinction between rejection of polytheism and acceptance of the doctrine of Divine Unity may, almost paradoxically, be found in a source that formulates this distinction only to reject any difference that might arise therefrom. In describing the obligations of non-Jews, *Hullin* 92a speaks, not simply of the Seven Commandments of the Sons of Noah, but of thirty commandments "accepted" by Noahids:

"And I said to them, if ye think good, give me my hire; and if not, forbear. So they weighed out for my hire thirty pieces of silver" (Zechariah 11:12). Ulla said, "These are the thirty commandments which the Sons of Noah accepted upon themselves, but they observe only three [of them]: (i) they do not draw up a *ketubah* for males; (ii) they do not weigh flesh of the dead in the market; and (iii) they respect the Torah."

Rashi, in his commentary, indicates that the identification of these thirty commandments is unclear.<sup>11</sup> But Samuel ben Hofni (d. 1034), the last Gaon of Sura, does provide a complete enumeration of these commandments and lists belief in the unity of God among them.<sup>12</sup> Although he posits an obligation binding Noahids to accept the doctrine of Divine Unity, Samuel ben Hofni clearly recognizes it as an obligation quite distinct from acceptance of the monotheistic principle which prohibits polytheistic worship. For Samuel ben Hofni the two beliefs are distinct; but, since both are binding upon Noahids, this is a distinction without a difference. Yet once it is accepted, as against the view of Maimonides, that the two are distinct notions and not mutually entailed, it is much less surprising to find that the *Tosafot* recognize acceptance of Divine Unity as a belief incumbent only upon Jews, while for non-Jews renunciation of polytheism is sufficient.

The belief in a single "Creator of the heavens" sharing the divine essence with another being, or with other beings, ascribed by the *Tosafot* to the Christians of the day, is an accurate depiction of a conception of relative unity developed by the Apologists to reconcile Christian belief in a triune God with the inherited Jewish belief in one God. The Apologists accepted the concept of Divine Unity as an expression of the concept of unity of rule, i.e., the

concept of a single absolute ruler of the universe. To them, however, the Deity was not an absolutely simple being but consisted of three beings inseparably united. Thus, for example, Tatian speaks of Christianity as accepting the "rule of one" as opposed to Greek polytheism which acknowledges "the dominion of many,"<sup>13</sup> and Athenagoras describes God, the Logos, and the Holy Spirit as "united in power."<sup>14</sup> This doctrine is also formulated in the writings of Tertullian who declares, "I am sure that monarchy has no other meaning than single individual rule; but, for all that, this monarchy does not, because it is the government of one, preclude him whose government it is, either from having a son . . . or from ministering his own government by whatever agent he will."<sup>15</sup> Tertullian describes the members of the Trinity as "three, however, not in status, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in species; yet of one substance, and of one status and of one power."<sup>16</sup> The terms "monarchy" and "united in power" clearly express the notion of rule.<sup>17</sup> Reflected in each of these citations is a clear renunciation both of a multiplicity of powers and of the notion that Divine Unity demands absolute simplicity. Later Church Fathers formulate the concept of triunity in terms of Aristotelian notions of species, genus and substratum. Statements expressing such concepts do not at all negate the fundamental concept of unity of rule.

A far more positive view of Christianity is expressed by R. Menahem Me'iri (1249-1306). In a number of statements scattered throughout his commentary on the various tractates of the Talmud, Me'iri unequivocally rules that Christians are not idolaters.<sup>18</sup> His most explicit ruling occurs in his commentary on the opening Mishnah of *Avodah Zarah*, where he holds that the restrictions on commercial intercourse with idolaters on their feastsdays are not applicable "in these times." He takes pains to note that the uncensored text of the Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 6a and 7b, refers explicitly to the "Nozri" as an idolater. But Me'iri dismisses that text by declaring that the reference is to an ancient people mentioned in Jeremiah 4:16, whose appellation is derived from the name Nebuchadnezzar. He depicts that people as sun-worshipers who observe the first day of the week as a day of religious devotion because it is regarded as the day of the sun's dominion.

Theologically, Me'iri's most positive statement concerning Christianity is his unequivocal declaration that "they believe in God's existence, His unity and power, although they misconceive some points according to our belief" (*Bet ha-Behirah*, *Gittin* 62a, p. 258). This citation is far more significant for determining Me'iri's theological assessment of Christianity than are his frequent and oft-quoted references to "*umot ha-gedurot be-darkei ha-datot*—nations restrained by the ways of religion."<sup>19</sup> Me'iri's employment of such phraseology is invariably in the context of jurisprudential and interpersonal matters. Hence his comments might well be understood as reflecting the thesis that halakhic distinctions between Jews and gentiles regarding such matters are predicated upon the principle that the advantages enjoyed by Jews, e.g., restoration of lost property, depend on reciprocal respect for property rights and the welfare of others. Hence Jews owe such obligations only to fellow Jews who reciprocate in kind, but not to gentiles "not restrained by the ways of religion," who feel no legal or moral obligation to comport themselves in a similar manner. On such an analysis, Me'iri might well be understood as asserting that law-abiding and benevolent adherents of religions which make similar demands of their devotees are entitled to the same benefits, privileges and protection as Jews. But from such a position nothing can be deduced as to the status of the theological beliefs of the members of such religions. Such a distinction is bolstered by Me'iri's ruling that, unlike a heretic, an apostate Jew is to be accorded the rights and privileges of members of his adopted faith in all matters pertaining to jurisprudence.<sup>20</sup>

Jacob Katz' analysis of Me'iri's stance toward Christianity is flawed by insensitivity to the role of the distinction between positive juridical/moral institutions and valid theological doctrines. Katz characterizes Me'iri's theological comments on Christianity as something that "Ha-Me'iri sometimes adds to the characteristics of the contemporary nations."<sup>21</sup> But Me'iri's references to Christian beliefs are neither an afterthought nor mere theological gilding of the lily of morality. They are formulated in those contexts precisely in which the halakhic issues hinge upon belief and are omitted in discussions of halakhic issues predicated upon juridical and moral institutions and comportment. Thus there is no support for Katz' conclusion that "Ha-Me'iri's positive evaluation of Christianity stems

in the main from his esteem for the maintenance of legal institutions and moral standards of society." Me'iri's evaluation is, of necessity, twofold: moral and theological; but there is no entailment between these two evaluations.

Me'iri's theological assessment of Christianity is unique in Rabbinic literature. Katz' assertion that "independently of him, a similar line of reasoning was followed by certain seventeenth-century scholars, among them Moshe Rikves . . ." <sup>22</sup> is simply erroneous. R. Moshe Rikves in his glosses to the *Shulhan Arukh* bearing the title *Be'er ha-Golah* does indeed posit an obligation to rescue gentiles from danger, and, moreover, to pray for their welfare. <sup>23</sup> And he does express a positive theological attitude toward Christianity, but it is the attitude of the *Tosafot*, not of Me'iri. *Be'er ha-Golah* correctly ascribes to Christians a belief in God as Creator of the universe and author of providence, as evidenced by the phenomena of the Exodus, and adds that "their whole aim and intent is toward the Creator of the heaven and earth, as the codifiers have written." The expression "aim and intent" refers to acts of worship and adoration and is equivalent to the formulation used by the *Tosafot* with regard to Christianity as *shittuf*. The phrase "as the codifiers have written" is clearly a reference to the treatment of the doctrine of *shittuf* advanced by the *Tosafot*, for that is the only positive categorization of Christianity found in the writings of codifiers of Jewish law.

Moreover, it is extremely difficult to determine whether the comments of *Be'er ha-Golah* are to be taken as an expression of normative Halakhah or whether they were penned with an eye to the censor or otherwise intended to dispel anti-Semitic enmity. Phrases such as "the gentiles in whose shadows we live and under whose wings we shelter" and "hence we stand on guard to pray continually for the welfare and success of the kingdom and the ministers" have a ring that is not halakhic, but can be characterized as almost servile in tone. Certainly, the citation of Maimonides' qualification of R. Joshua's dictum (*Sanhedrin* 105a) that the pious of the nations enjoy a portion in the World to Come is imprecise and indeed may have been appended as a means of divulging to the discerning reader that the entire statement is hyperbole. Maimonides maintains that the pious of the nations of the world are entitled to a portion in the

World to Come only if they obey the Noahidic Code because they accept it on the basis of divine revelation. A Christian who believes that the Sinaitic covenant has been abrogated but adheres to the provisions of the Noahidic Code because he accepts them on the basis of natural law, on general humanitarian grounds, or for some other reason, is excluded by Maimonides from the category of the "pious of the nations of the world." If *Be'er ha-Golah* did not accept the limitation Maimonides places upon the concept "the pious of the nations of the world," he might simply have cited the dictum of R. Joshua without reference to Maimonides. So it seems likely that *Be'er ha-Golah's* citation of Maimonides was intended as a clue to the nature of the entire statement.

But Me'iri does not merely distinguish Christianity from polytheism. He makes the far more positive statement that Christians accept Divine Unity. The tenor of his comment about the "misconceptions" of Christianity gives the impression that any doctrinal error on the part of the Christians is not tantamount to a denial of Divine Unity. Nowhere in his categorization of the beliefs of contemporary religions does Me'iri suggest a distinction between idolatry as prohibited to Jews and idolatry as subsumed in the Noahidic Code.

Me'iri's position has long been a source of puzzlement to Rabbinic scholars. Indeed, there is a strong feeling in some Rabbinic circles that these comments are either falsely ascribed to Me'iri or were inserted for fear of the censor. *Hatam Sofer*, citing the comment of Me'iri quoted by *Shitah Mekubetzet*, *Baba Kamma* 113a, declares, "It is a *mizvah* to erase it for it did not emerge from his holy mouth." <sup>24</sup> I am inclined to believe that statements concerning financial and interpersonal relations were introduced into the text with an eye to the censor but that the statements concerning Christian theology constitute Me'iri's considered opinion. My reasons for accepting the censor thesis in part and rejecting it in part are twofold:

Only the hovering presence of the censor can elucidate the remarks of Me'iri in his commentary on *Yevamot* 98a. <sup>25</sup> The Talmudic rule is that no paternal relationship exists among gentiles. The principle regarding paternal relationship is thus analogous to that governing determination of animal species, regarding which "there is no concern whatsoever with the seed of the sire." The practical

halakhic application of this principle is that no levirate obligations are attendant upon converts. Me'iri qualifies the discussion by inserting a statement that this status includes "every idolater who is not within the pale of the religions." The implication is that levirate obligations do devolve upon Christians who convert to Judaism. There can be no question that the qualifying phrase was introduced by Me'iri as a means of obscuring a statement the censor was bound to find offensive. If, as is obvious, this passage was emended for the sake of the censor, there is reason to assume that similar liberties may have been taken with other potentially offensive passages.

Moreover, discrepancies among the manuscripts of *Bet ha-Behirah*, Yoma 84b, discussing rescue of a gentile on *Shabbat*, clearly reflect the handiwork of the censor. The edition published in Jerusalem in 1885 contains the phrase "the idol-worshippers of antiquity . . . since they have no religion and are also unconcerned with the detriment of human society." This phrase is absent in the Parma manuscript which is the basis of the Jerusalem, 1975 edition edited by Joseph ha-Kohen Klein.<sup>26</sup>

However, Me'iri's remarks regarding Christian theology in his commentary on *Avodah Zarah* cannot be understood in the same light: Relaxation of the rule against commercial intercourse with idolaters on their feastdays was not born of a desire to appease the censor. Certainly, a distorted theological perspective was not required to justify suspension of that rule. The *Tosafot* and other early authorities had no difficulty in justifying the departure from previous practices without attempting to flatter the censor. Moreover, Me'iri's elucidation of the term *Nozri*, unless sincerely held, is entirely gratuitous. He could simply have ignored the term in his commentary. To sustain the "censor thesis," it would be necessary to argue that these comments were inserted, not simply as a means of assuring that Me'iri's work would not be suppressed, but were expressly intended to curry favor with Christian authorities for reasons having nothing to do with dissemination of the volumes in which they occur.

Even more baffling is Me'iri's assertion that adherents of the Trinity are believers in the doctrine of Divine Unity. Orthodox Christian views of the Trinity are certainly incompatible with the monotheistic beliefs of Judaism. It appears likely that Me'iri, in formulating his views regarding Christianity, assumed that Christians

professed a view of the Trinity which, although erroneous, did not do violence to the doctrine of Divine Unity. Such views did exist within the Church, particularly during its infancy, only later to be branded as heretical by various Church councils. A number of possible views that are theologically compatible with Me'iri's characterization should be examined:

1. The original Jewish adherents of Christianity conceived of the founder of that nascent faith as a mere human being. This doctrine, known as Ebionism, viewed Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah upon whom rested "the spirit of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2). Somewhat later a form of neo-Ebionism evolved which understood the notion of the incarnation of the Logos in the person of Jesus in much the manner that the Divine Presence may be said to rest upon any righteous and exemplary man. However, in this instance, that phenomenon was posited as an act of grace and the presence of the Logos was attributed to a miraculous event associated with Jesus' birth or baptism.<sup>27</sup>

2. Docetism represented a diametrically opposing view introduced by pagan converts to Christianity. Adherents regarded Jesus as God, who only appeared in human form. This doctrine could certainly have been understood as affirming a perfectly monotheistic notion of God and as explaining all corporeal references found in the Gospels as reports of phenomena which exist only in the mind of man. Thus the second-century figure Simon the Gnostic, displaying a thorough consistency, spoke not only of the merely human appearance of the son but also of the mere appearance of his suffering, stating "thus he was thought to have suffered in Judea, when he had not suffered."<sup>28</sup>

Wolfson notes that a literal reading of the Pentateuch provides a source for belief in the phenomenon of God appearing to man in the form of a human being.<sup>29</sup> Genesis 18:1 records that "the Lord appeared" to Abraham and thereupon informs us that Abraham "lifted up his eyes and, lo, three men stood by him" (Genesis 18:2). Maimonides asserts that the entire incident occurred in a dream.<sup>30</sup> He clearly denies that man can perceive the Deity in a waking state.<sup>31</sup> And the *Midrash ha-Gadol*, commenting on the verse, assumes that such an appearance is possible only in ■ prophetic vision. Nevertheless, a literal reading of the text suggests precisely ■ waking appearance. Such an understanding of the text may be

completely erroneous, but there is no indication even in Maimonides' comments (whose position on this matter is the most extreme in Judaism) that a literal reading of this Biblical narrative would be heresy or a fundamental doctrinal error: Belief in even repeated appearances of the incorporeal God to man in the guise of a corporeal being is no more than the belief that God has repeatedly chosen to generate an optical illusion or mirage. Accordingly, Docetism, if understood as ascribing no substantive reality to the persons of the Trinity, is entirely compatible with a pure monotheistic belief.

Various forms of Ebionism and of Docetism were found among the Gnostics, and a number of forms of neo-Ebionism and neo-Docetism were condemned as heresies by Church councils, including those of Nicaea in 325, Constantinople in 381, Ephesus in 431, and Chalcedon in 451. Condemnation of these doctrines was confirmed by the Council of Constantinople in 556. Thus, any form of Ebionism or Docetism that could conceivably be regarded as monotheistic seems to have disappeared by the middle of the sixth century.

3. The early Christian Apologists made various attempts to present a monotheistic formulation of the notion of the Trinity by describing the members of the Godhead as names, predicates or attributes, rather than discrete entities. Jewish philosophy was later to struggle with the notion of divine attributes precisely because of its belief that multiplicity of attributes, as conventionally understood, is at variance with the doctrine of God as a simple unity. But attributes are ascribed to the Deity by Scripture, and such ascription could well abide explanation. The notion of divine attributes required careful elucidation, a task that commanded the attention of all medieval Jewish philosophers. But what Judaism was to regard as a problem, for some early Christian theologians, became the solution. The "heresies" of Praxeas, Noetus and Sabellius involved a categorization of the distinction among the members of the Trinity as nominal rather than real. If the terms Father, Son and Holy Spirit are regarded as mere names or attributes, devoid of reality, the unity of God is preserved. This view is closely related to Modalism as described by Origen. Modalism regards the Logos as having no reality as a being distinct from God, but as a power of God, a mode of His manifestation to man. This conceptualization of the Trinity

was condemned by Justin Martyr and does not appear to have been accepted by any later source.<sup>32</sup>

4. At roughly the same time, other Christian theologians seeking to reconcile the notion of the Logos as endowed with reality with strict Divine Unity formulated a position known as Creationism. They conceived of the Logos as created by God either *ex essentia Dei* or *ex nihilo*. As a created being, the Logos could not be regarded as a Deity in any real sense. This view proved attractive to some and preferable to Modalism in that it permitted acceptance of the Logos, not simply as a power in God, but as a real being outside of God. According to both Philo and Justin Martyr, the Logos originally existed only as a power in God but became a real being outside of God.<sup>33</sup>

The Apologists maintained that the Logos, in its second stage, was generated by God out of His own essence before the creation of the world.<sup>34</sup> Later, Arius adopted a view similar to that of Philo, asserting that the Logos was created by God "out of things nonexistent."<sup>35</sup> Such a Logos cannot be regarded as God. Naturally, the Arian Logos is intimately associated with Jesus of Nazareth. The role of the Logos in that context is, for Arius, roughly equivalent to that of the divine spirit in Philo's description of prophetic experience. Philo speaks of the mind being evicted and replaced by the divine spirit during prophecy and of the return of the mind at the conclusion of the prophetic experience.<sup>36</sup> The Arian Logos, in effect, performs the same function that Philo ascribes to the divine spirit. According to Arius, however, Jesus had no other rational soul; hence, the Logos became immanent in him in a manner analogous, in Philonic terms, to a person continually endowed with a prophetic state, by virtue of the constant immanence of the divine spirit.<sup>37</sup>

Although Arianism was repeatedly condemned by Church councils during the fourth century and ceased to be a power inside the Roman Empire subsequent to the Council of Constantinople in 381, it remained the faith of the barbarian invaders. Despite the fact that Arianism was suppressed by a series of civil decrees, Roman law was binding upon Romans only; no attempt was made by the Roman emperors to interfere with the beliefs of their Gothic soldiers, who remained "privileged heretics in the midst of the orthodox Empire."

With the Teutonic conquest of the West in the fifth century, Arianism became dominant in Italy and Spain.<sup>38</sup>

5. Although Arianism declined rapidly in the ensuing period, a related theological tenet gained currency towards the end of the eighth century in the form of Adoptionism. The adherents of this idea held the relationship between the Deity and the founder of Christianity to have resulted from God's adoption of a son rather than as flowing from a natural, existential state. Among the Adoptionists, the Cerinthians taught that Jesus became the adopted son of God by virtue of wisdom, virtue and purity; the Basilidians held that Jesus was arbitrarily selected and purified through his baptism to serve as the medium of revelation. The primary focus of the various forms of Adoptionism was insistence upon the humanity of Jesus. Indeed, some historians point to concepts apparently expressed in a letter written in 783 by one of the leaders of this movement, Felix, Bishop of Urgel, to Elipandus, Archbishop of Toledo, as designed to pave the way for a union between Christians and Muslims. The Muslims, of course, would have rejected out of hand any theology in which monotheistic principles were compromised. The doctrines expressed by Felix received wide currency in Spain and France but were repeatedly condemned by Church Councils in the last decades of the ninth century. With the death of Felix in 818 Adoptionism was eclipsed, but similar views are ascribed to Ecumenius in the tenth century and to Euthymius Zigabenus and others in the twelfth. References to, and rejections of, these views appear in the writings of the Schoolmen, including Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, suggesting that the positions continued to enjoy a certain currency, even though they were not widely held. Particularly interesting is the fact that Duns Scotus, although he rejected the theory of adoption, was prepared to allow the use of the term with certain modifications and explanations.

Given the fact that neo-Arianism and various forms of Adoptionism did not become entirely extinct during the medieval period, it is not farfetched to hypothesize that the Christianity about which Me'iri made positive comments was not an orthodox Trinitarianism but ■ Christianity that espoused a theology branded heretical by the Church. Of course, if this is the case, Me'iri must have been misled in assuming that these were the beliefs accepted by the Church as a whole. How this occurred, one can only conjecture.

It may be that he lived in the midst of one of the lingering pockets of neo-Arianism or Adoptionism or had conversations with Christian clerics who, in their desire to influence a prominent Jewish scholar, purposely presented Christian theology in a manner most likely to evoke a sympathetic response. Or perhaps Me'iri's information came from ■ manuscript or manuscripts which, unknown to him, emanated from these "heretical" circles and did not represent mainstream Christian teaching. Since little is known of the circumstances of Me'iri's life and since details of Church history during that period are also obscure, there is little likelihood of finding a "smoking gun" to confirm this thesis.

#### Notes

1. The names seem to be those of celebrations associated with the pagan cults of Roman deities. See *Tiferet Yisra'el*. Moreover, manuscript versions include "Saturnalia" rather than an alternative reading found in the published editions of the Mishnah. Curiously, R. Joseph Kafah incorporates the "Saturnalia" reading in his edition of Maimonides' *Commentary on the Mishnah* (Jerusalem, 1963) without remarking on its incongruity with Maimonides' comments.
2. The Arabic term used in Maimonides' original version is correctly rendered as "*ha-nozrim*" in the Kafih translation of the *Commentary on the Mishnah*. Published versions of the Ibn Tibbon translation, reflecting the handiwork of the censor, render the term "*ha-akum*."
3. This distinction between the Land of Israel and the Diaspora is formulated by the Gemara, *Avodah Zarah* 11b. Rashi, *ad loc.*, explains that in the Diaspora these restrictions are relaxed during the three-day preparatory period (1) because in the Diaspora the burden of desisting from commercial intercourse for an extended period would be onerous, since Jews in the Diaspora are entirely dependent on commercial relations with non-Jews for their livelihoods and (2) because of "fear." *Lehem Mishneh*, *Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 9:1, avers that the distinction is not geographic but socio-economic; hence, in an age when Jews residing in the Land of Israel lack political and economic independence, these restrictions are relaxed in the Land of Israel as well. However, Maimonides' codification does not accommodate such a conclusion. *Lehem Mishneh* asserts that, according to Maimonides, the distinction lies in the fact that gentiles "in the Diaspora are not idolaters and therefore only the feast-day is forbidden." *Lehem Mishneh* presumably means to suggest that non-

Jews in the Diaspora are not staunch in their convictions and observances: lacking the zeal of their counterparts in the Land of Israel, they are unlikely to perform acts of devotion to their deities for beneficences other than those immediately experienced. *Lehem Mishneh*'s distinction undoubtedly relies on the dictum recorded in *Hullin* 13b, "Gentiles in the Diaspora are not idol worshippers; rather they adhere to the practice of their forebears." In context, this statement refers only to diminished dedication and zeal on the part of idolaters in the Diaspora. But *Lehem Mishneh*'s use of this dictum to explain Maimonides' codification is problematic. For, regardless of the nature of idolatrous zeal during the Talmudic period, there is no reason to assume that twelfth-century Palestinian Christians were more zealous than their co-religionists in other countries. Thus, just as the distinction between residents of the Land of Israel and Diaspora is not hard and fast according to Rashi, it should not be absolute according to the thesis advanced by *Lehem Mishneh*.

4. Wine handled by an idolatrous gentile is forbidden lest the idolater had intended to perform an idolatrous libation. All benefit is forbidden from any item used in conjunction with idolatrous worship. The wine of non-idolatrous gentiles is forbidden by virtue of a later Rabbinic decree "*mishum benoteihem*," literally, "because of their daughters": intimacy born of drinking wine with gentiles may lead to intermarriage.
5. Parallel statements also appear in Rosh, *Sanhedrin* 7:3; Rabbenu Yeruham, *Sefer Adam ve-Havvah* 17:5.
6. See David Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre* (Göttingen, 1877), 460, n. 148.
7. *Teshuvot Noda' bi-Yehudah*, *Mahadurah Tinyana*, *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 148.
8. *Sha'ar Efrayim*, no. 24; *Me'il Zedakah*, no. 22; *Teshuvot ve-Shev ha-Kohen*, no. 38; *Teshuvot Hadashot le-Rabbeinu Akiva Eger* (Jerusalem, 5738), 164-66; *Pri Megadim*, *Yoreh De'ah*, *Siftei Da'at* 65:11; *idem*, *Orah Hayyim*, *Eshel Avraham* 156:2; and *Mahazit ha-Shekel*, *Orah Hayyim* 156:2.
9. See Rema, *Orah Hayyim*, 156:1; *Darkei Moshe* 151; *Shakh*, *Yoreh De'ah* 151:1 and 151:7; *Derishah* and *Bah*, *Hoshen Mishpat* 182; *Teshuvot Havot Ya'ir*, nos. 1 and 185; R. Ya'akov Emden, *Mor u-Kezi'ah* 224; *Mishnat Hakhamim*, *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah*; Rabbi Zev Boskowitz, *Seder Mishnah*, *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 1:7 and *Shoshan Edut* (commentary on *Eduyyot*), 188; *Teshuvot ve-Shev ha-Kohen*, no. 38; Rabbi A. Vermeiz, *Me'orei Or* IV 8a, 13a, V, 111b; *Revid ha-Zahav*, *Parshat Yitro*; *Yad Sha'ul*, *Yoreh De'ah* 151;

*Teshuvot Sho'el u-Meshiv*, *Mahadurah Tinyana* I nos. 26, 51; R. Zevi Hirsch Chajes, *Kol Sifrei Maharaz Hayes*, I 489-90; *Ha-Ketav ve-ha-Kabbalah*, Deuteronomy 4:19; and *Pithei Teshuvah*, *Yoreh De'ah* 147:2.

10. Maimonides does refer to polytheism as a belief to be abjured, in the *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* 1.7. That reference is both appropriate and necessary in its context, a succinct specification of the requirements of the commandment, "I am the Lord your God," rather than in a discussion that is primarily philosophical in nature.
11. See, however, sources cited by Maharab Ranshburg, *Hullin* 92a.
12. See Aaron Greenbaum, *The Biblical Commentary of Rav Samuel ben Hofni Gaon* (Jerusalem, 1978), 617.
13. *Oratio ad Graecos*, 14.
14. *Supplicatio pro Christianis*, 24.
15. *Adversus Praxeam*, 3.
16. *Adversus Praxeam*, 2.
17. For unity of rule as a rejection of polytheism, see Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 312-22.
18. See Me'iri, *Bet ha-Behirah*, *Avodah Zarah*, ed., Abraham Schreiber (Jerusalem, 1944) 2a (p. 4), 6b (p. 9), 15b (p. 39), 20a (p. 46), and 22a (p. 53); *Baba Kamma*, ed., Kalman Schlesinger (Jerusalem, 1963) 113a-b (p. 330); *Gittin*, ed., Kalman Schlesinger (Jerusalem, 1964) 62a (p. 258). See also the comments of Me'iri cited by R. Bezalel Ashkenazi, *Shitah Mekubetzet*, *Baba Kamma*, 38a, 113a, and *Asifat Zekenim*.
19. See *Bet ha-Behirah*, *Pesahim*, ed., Joseph ha-Kohen Klein (Jerusalem, 1966) 21b (p. 67); *Ketubot*, ed., Abraham Sofer (Jerusalem, 1947) 15b (pp. 67 f.); *Kiddushin*, ed., Abraham Sofer (Jerusalem, 1963) 17b (p. 108); *Baba Kamma* 113a-b (p. 330); *Baba Mezi'a*, ed., Kalman Schlesinger (Jerusalem, 1963) 59a (p. 219); *Avodah Zarah* 13b (p. 29), 20a (p. 46), 22a (p. 53).
20. See *Bet ha-Behirah*, *Horiyot*, ed., Abraham Schreiber (Jerusalem, 1969), 11a (p. 274) and *Avodah Zarah*, 26b (p. 61).
21. *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (Oxford, 1961), 121.
22. *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, 164.
23. *Be'er ha-Golah*, *Hoshen Mishpat* 425:5.
24. See the responsum of *Hatam Sofer* published in R. Baruch Frankel-Teumim's *Ateret Hakhamim*, no. 14, repr. in *Kovez She'elot u-Teshuvot Hatam Sofer* (Jerusalem, 5733) no. 90. See also R. David Zvi Hillman, "Leshonot ha-Me'iri she-Nikhtevu le-Teshuvot ha-Minim," *Zefunot* 1 (5749): 65-72.



25. Ed. Samuel Dickman (Jerusalem, 1962), 354.
26. See 212, nn. 229, 237
27. See Wolfson, *Church Fathers*, 602-04.
28. Iranaeus, I 23, 3; Hippolytus, VI 9, 6; *Church Fathers*, 591-92.
29. *Church Fathers*, 518.
30. *Guide* II 42; cf. 45.
31. *Guide* II 45.
32. See *Church Fathers*, 580.
33. *Church Fathers*, 192-93 and 582.
34. *Church Fathers*, 292-94.
35. *Church Fathers*, 586.
36. Philo, *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* 53, 265.
37. *Church Fathers*, 593-94.
38. See Henry M. Gwatkin, *The Arian Controversy* (New York, 1891), 165 and his *Studies in Arianism*, 271-72.

## Platonic Themes in Gersonides' Doctrine of the Active Intellect'

Seymour Feldman

### I

The second-century Platonist philosopher Numenius is reported to have said, "What else is Plato but Moses speaking Attic Greek."<sup>1</sup> It would certainly be excessive to say of Gersonides that he is Plotinus writing in medieval Hebrew. Yet in several important respects he and many other medieval philosophers were as much influenced by Plotinus as they were by Aristotle. By virtue of the efforts of many scholars we recognize now that Plotinus' philosophical ideas were available and absorbed throughout the Middle Ages. But in the Middle Ages many of these doctrines were attributed to Aristotle, the Greek philosopher whom the medievals knew best and to whom the title "the Philosopher" was applied, even though this famous name may have been originally applied to Plotinus.<sup>2</sup> To be sure most of the medieval philosophers worked within a broad Aristotelian framework and wrote in a philosophical language that was unmistakably Aristotelian in provenance and meaning. Yet the spirit of Plotinus often hovers over, behind, and

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\* I am thankful for the comments of all the participants in the conference on Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought, and for a suggestion made to me by Zev Warren Harvey of the Hebrew University.

beneath the letter of Aristotle. This is especially true in the theory of mind and intellection.<sup>3</sup>

The late John Randall was fond of describing Aristotle's theory of knowing set forth in *De Anima* III 5, as "a Platonic wild oat coming home to roost."<sup>4</sup> In this obscure but fecund passage Aristotle mysteriously alluded to a philosophical persona that was to play an enormous role in the later philosophical stories about intellection and cosmology. Looking for an active cause of cognition—for, like sensation, cognition involves both active and passive factors—Aristotle fell back upon Plato's myth of a power that "illuminates" the mind and enables it to know. Just as the sun enlightens all physical reality and makes sensation possible, so some supraphysical cause enlightens mental reality and causes knowledge. As Randall suggested, Aristotle does "turn Platonist in the end."<sup>5</sup> *De Anima* III 5, then, ought to be read as a variation on a theme originally stated in Plato's *Republic* VI. Plotinus will incorporate both passages in his own philosophy, and medieval thinkers will read Aristotle through Platonic spectacles, forged by philosophical artisans some of whom were not wholly aware of the sources of their materials.

In *On the Generation of Animals* 736b, 27-29, it might be said again that a Platonic wild oat took root. Here Aristotle discusses when and how the soul emerges in the course of biological development. The question is particularly important for Aristotle in the case of those living things with the highest form of soul, the rational soul, *nous* (*he psyche he noetike*). Aristotle is quite clear here that the purely physical apparatus of the body is not sufficient to account for man's intellectual activities; an external cause must be introduced to explain the presence and operations of the human intellect. This is the "external intellect" (*nous thyrathen*), which acts upon the human body and is divine (*theion*). This external intellect produces that part in man which is immortal, or separable. It is not, I believe, too speculative to suggest that this passage shows the influence of both Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's own *De Anima* III 5. In the hands of the later commentators, most notably Alexander of Aphrodisias, this notion of an external, divine intellectual power, responsible for the rational soul in man, had an enormous influence. Indeed, I would like to suggest that it was this passage in *De*

*generatione animalium* that led Alexander to claim that the active catalyst anonymously referred to by Aristotle in *De anima* III 5 is a *transcendent* divine power, which he now dubbed "the Active Intellect" (*ho nous ho poietikos*).<sup>6</sup> It was this conception of the Active Intellect as a "divine intellect from without," that was to have a powerful impact upon the philosophical tradition of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Maimonides and Gersonides<sup>7</sup>—but again not without Plotinian mediation. For Plotinus too was to insist upon a supernal intellectual force responsible for human cognition and for the natural order. By the time Gersonides made his entry the stage had been well set and several acts of the drama had been played.

In telling this story I shall adopt the favorite genre of medieval philosophical prose: the commentary. But since Gersonides himself was deeply influenced by Averroes, both in form and in content, I shall adapt one of Averroes' more original contributions to this philosophical prose form, the epitome. I shall begin by citing, with only brief comment, some key passages from Plotinus pertinent to the topics of intellection and generation. Then I shall write a Gersonidean epitome of these passages, in which Gersonides' own doctrines will be developed from a Plotinian perspective. My aim is to show both the similarities and the differences between these two thinkers. Like all medieval philosophers, both were the students of an Aristotle who occasionally at least sang a Platonic tune, and of a Plato who sometimes anticipated an Aristotelian aria.

## II

Plato himself suggested the question, 'Where are the Forms?' But he did not give a clear-cut answer.<sup>8</sup> His later followers, now usually called Middle Platonists, claimed that the Forms are in the divine mind, fusing the theories of Plato and Aristotle into one philosophical doctrine: Aristotle's First Intellect, or God, eternally thinking of itself, thinks of the Platonic Forms. This is a common theme in late Hellenistic philosophy and appears explicitly in Philo of Alexandria, whose Logos theory, at least in some of its formulations, is an answer addressed to this central Platonic question.<sup>9</sup>

So is Plotinus' theory of Nous. But unlike Aristotle's First Intellect, or God, and Plato's Form of the Good, Plotinus' Nous is not the ultimate reality. It is the second hypostasis in his ontology, inferior to the One, or the Good, although superior to everything else. Nous eternally *emanates* from the One,<sup>10</sup> a non-temporal production that Plotinus usually describes in metaphors. Plotinus' theory of Nous is rich and complex, since Nous for him is quite active. Two of its functions are paramount: Nous is the primary factor in cognition, and it is a generative cause. Let us begin with cognition.

Following in the footsteps of the Middle Platonists, Plotinus places the ultimate objects of knowledge, Plato's Forms, within Nous. Like Philo, Plotinus calls Nous an "intelligible world" (*kosmos noetos*) in which the objects of knowledge (*ta noeta*) reside.<sup>11</sup> Here Plotinus modifies Plato's idea of the *Timaeus*, where the divine *demiourgos* or craftsman consults the Forms in making the physical world. For Plotinus the Forms are *not* external to but in Nous. The key text is found in the Fifth Ennead, 5, titled: "That the objects of knowledge are not outside of Nous." Consider the following passages:

1. If one grants that the objects of thought are as completely as possible outside Intellect (*ton noun*) . . . then it cannot possess the truth of them . . . but will only get images of them. . . . One must not then look for the intelligibles outside.<sup>12</sup>
2. But if this is so [the *noeta* are not outside], the contemplation (*theorian*) must be the same as the contemplated (*to theoreton*), and the Intellect (*ton noun*) the same as the intelligible (*noeta*). . . . In this way, therefore, Intellect and the intelligible are one. . . . The first Intellect which possesses the real beings (*ta onta*), or rather is the same as the real beings . . . (*Enneads* V 3.5, 22-29)
3. . . . for this Intellect is not potential, nor is it one and its intellection another: for in this way again its substantiality would be potential . . . it is one and the same with its actuality. . . . All together are one: Intellect, intellection and the intelligible. (V 3.5, 40-44)

The first passage argues that the knowables are *essentially inherent* to Nous. I use this phrase to connote the *necessary interiority* of the objects of knowledge in Nous. Thus its knowledge is origina-

whereas our knowledge is acquired. The second passage insists on the *identity* of Nous with its objects. Plotinus reaches this conclusion by applying one of Aristotle's epistemological principles: Where the knower is non-physical, and hence utterly actual, the knower is identical with what it knows.<sup>13</sup> The third passage stresses the absence of potentiality in Nous: It is separable (*choristos*), to use Aristotle's language, and thus completely actual (*on energeia*).<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, this identity of the knower and the known in Nous is *not* absolute. For Plotinus it is a fundamental postulate that all thinking involves some kind of diversity or plurality.<sup>15</sup> Even thought at its most perfect and pristine, as Nous, exhibits some otherness. For there are different Forms: Justice is not identical with Beauty; Equality is not the same as Courage. Accordingly, in Nous the objects of knowledge are diverse. This theme is clearly sounded in the following passages:

4. . . . for [Nous] is not only one but it is one and many (*Enneads* IV 8.3, 10).
5. Let it be granted, then, that Intellect is the real beings, possessing them all not as if [they were in it] as a place, but possessing itself and being one with them. "All things are together there, and none the less they are separate. . . . Intellect is all things together and also not altogether because each is a special power. But the whole Intellect encompasses them as a genus does its species . . ." (V 9.6, 1-4, 8-11)

This otherness, or diversity, in Nous distinguishes it fundamentally from the One, where there is no interior plurality of any kind. Only the One is absolutely simple. Indeed the One is even beyond thought.<sup>16</sup> This essential difference between the One and Nous was to be quite vexing and would have important ramifications in medieval thought. For how can that which is many directly emanate from that which is utterly simple?<sup>17</sup>

In a way Plotinus anticipates this question and answers it. Nous is composite in that it encapsulates many Forms, but it is *one* insofar as it constitutes a unified system of Forms. What it produces, after all, is an intelligible cosmos, that is, as the term *kosmos* connotes, order and system. Here we come to one of our main themes: Plotinus' Nous, despite its irreducible compositeness and plurality, is the ground of order and lawfulness in the physical universe. For in

Nous the diverse genera and species are so ordered and integrated that a complete plan of reality results:

6. And just as in our [physical world] composed of many parts all these parts are linked together . . . so there [in the intelligible world] it is even more proper that all the parts be linked together, each to each other and each to the whole. (VI 7.2, 30-37)

The order and regularity of our world is prefigured, indeed brought about, by the transcendent Nous, where all the Forms which are exemplified corporeally exist in a "separable" mode of reality. Here we have a clear and early statement of an important theme in medieval philosophy: exemplarism.<sup>18</sup>

Nous, then, is an intelligible world containing in unity all the objects of knowledge and paradigms of the natural order. It has a causal role both in human cognition and in the production of nature. In human cognition:

7. [Nous] gives vision to the one who sees . . . (*Enneads* VI 6.18, 25, my tr.)
8. The cognitions of the objects of Nous, which are truly cognitions [are derived] from Nous and *come into* the rational soul . . . (*Enneads* V 9.7, 4-5, my tr.)

These two passages express the causal role of Nous in human cognition, reflecting how Plotinus absorbed Aristotle's Active Intellect into his Nous. The same process of assimilation occurs where Plotinus speaks of Nous as generative.

9. It is not possible then for being to exist if Nous has not generated (*energesantos*). (*Enneads* VI 7.13, 28-29, my tr.)
10. Intellect . . . the true maker and craftsman. Intellect provides [the Soul] with the forming principles. (*Enneads* V 9.3, 27-32)
11. Being a power for generation Nous generates from itself, and its activity is substance. . . . And this very first activity generated reality (*hypostasin*). (VI 7.40, 18-19, my tr.)

The emergence of form in the physical world is an effect of the formal structure present in Nous. Plotinus' Nous has taken over the job, at least in part, of Aristotle's transcendent divine intellect responsible for the generation of terrestrial life, which Alexander had identified with the Active Intellect.<sup>19</sup>

The texts from Plotinus provide us with the background for a favorite medieval theme—the *dator formarum*. The idea is usually attributed to Avicenna, but clearly its provenance is in Plotinus.<sup>20</sup> The cognitive and generative functions that Aristotle had assigned to the Active Intellect are in Plotinus given over to Nous. Like Philo's Logos, Plotinus' Nous is not only the "place of the Forms," the "intelligible world" containing the rational order exemplified in nature, but it is also the efficient cause of cognition and generation in the physical world. Aristotle's criticism that the Forms have no real causal efficacy has been answered, indeed dissipated by Plotinus.<sup>21</sup>

### III

Turning now to Gersonides' epistemology, I preface my exposition with the cautionary remark that like most philosophers in the Arabic and Hebrew medieval orbit, Gersonides did not write on epistemology as such. His epistemological discussions are scattered throughout his writings. Some are found where one might expect to find them, in his super-commentaries on Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Parva Naturalia*. But *The Wars of the Lord* and some of the Biblical commentaries prove even more useful. The commentary on *Song of Songs* is quite important, since Gersonides reads this set of love poems as a philosophical allegory of the Active Intellect and the human intellect.

Gersonides' epistemology begins on an Aristotelian theme: *nihil in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu*. Seemingly rejecting any Platonism in epistemology, Gersonides is committed to the empiricist claim that knowledge begins with sensory data. This theme is sounded throughout his writings.<sup>22</sup> It is a theme found in most medieval thinkers of an Aristotelian bent. But, as Aristotle acknowledged, mere sensation is not sufficient for knowledge; sensation provides us only with *particular* information, and knowledge is, strictly speaking, of *universals*.<sup>23</sup> Another "Platonic wild oat coming home to roost." But Aristotle doesn't say too much on *how* the idiosyncratic material of sensation is transformed into universal truths, just as he doesn't say much about the role of the

Active Intellect in cognition. Later commentators must fill in the gap, and by the thirteenth century a fully developed theory was in fashion: the doctrine of abstraction.<sup>24</sup> In different authors abstraction assumes diverse interpretations, but several common ideas can be isolated. First, there is the initial role of sensation. Second, a return to Platonism insofar as knowledge is claimed to imply the existence of Forms, however they may be interpreted. Third, the Active Intellect is introduced to account for the universalization of the sense data. I want now to spell out Gersonides' version of this general doctrine.

Following Alexander's reading of *De Anima* III 5, Gersonides interprets the human, or material, intellect as initially a mere capacity, or disposition (*hakanah*) for knowledge, not an independent incorporeal substance, as in Themistius and Averroes. Again like Alexander, Gersonides sees the Active Intellect as a transcendent intellectual force that acts upon the material intellect "from without." He rejects "immanentist" interpretations of *De Anima* III 5 like those found in Themistius, Averroes and Aquinas. In this respect he follows the tradition of al-Fārābī, Avicenna and Maimonides.<sup>25</sup> For cognitive material the human intellect relies upon the sensory impact of external physical objects. He calls the inputs "sensory forms" (*zurot muhashot*) and the bodies, "sensory objects" (*muhashim*). The sensory data are images of the sense objects that cause them, so they preserve the very particularity that knowledge must overcome. Thus we have to move to a "higher" stage.

This more advanced stage is dominated by the theme of *dematerialization*. At the level of sense, the cognitive givens literally *affect* the sense organs: The sense organ is physically changed. In modern terms, in seeing an oak tree in the field I receive visual impressions that cause an electro-chemical reaction on the retinas of my eyes, which in turn is transmitted to the brain, where all kinds of bio-physical processes take place *in* the cells and nerves. If the visual impression is too strong, the sensory organ can be harmed. Averroes and Aquinas call sensation a process that involves alteration (*immutatio*), or change, in the organ.<sup>26</sup> For the sense-organ is a material thing and the sense object is a material object. Here Hume's term "impressions" is appropriate, and Gersonides' term '*rishumim*' similarly expresses the idea of a physical impact.<sup>27</sup>

But the data do not remain at the level of sense. They are quickly "elevated" to the level of imaginative forms (*zurot dimyoniyot*), objects of the faculty of imagination, which has the dual role of storing the data (*ha-koah ha-shomer*) and re-producing, or re-presenting, them *ad libitum* (*ha-koah ha-zokher*). This level is more "spiritual" (*ruhaniyyi*), for the material impact of the original sense-datum has disappeared. Stored in the imagination or reproduced, the image no longer affects the imaginative power in such a way that the latter literally "suffers," as in sensation. (The Greek and Latin words *pathema* and *passio* express this idea better than the Hebrew or Arabic *hipa'alut* and *munfa'il*.) On the level of sensation the perceiver suffers; imagination is free of this consequence of our materiality. As Hume was to insist later, ideas are less vivid than impressions. But we have not yet left the world of materiality entirely behind. Imagination is corporeal insofar as it still reproduces the particularity of the material domain. A further spiritualization is needed before we can say that we have attained knowledge proper. Here the Active Intellect must enter the process.

So far Gersonides is following a commonplace medieval account.<sup>28</sup> But his understanding of the Active Intellect makes his version noteworthy. He accepts Alexander's doctrine of the Active Intellect as an external, supernal intellect acting upon the material, or human, intellect, but he develops this familiar theme in a striking Platonic, indeed Plotinian, fashion. In any of the medieval theories, the Active Intellect can act upon our mind and enable us to acquire knowledge because it *has* this knowledge. Like Plotinus' *Nous*, Gersonides' Active Intellect comprises in itself intelligible forms, or patterns. Thus Gersonides frequently calls it "the intelligible order" (*ha-siddur ha-muskal*). Plotinus and Gersonides here reproduce Philo's notion of an *intelligible world* (*ho kosmos noetos*), which serves both as a cosmological blueprint and as a necessary condition of human cognition. The intelligible world can function in this capacity because it exemplifies and contains the rational structure embodied in nature. In the Active Intellect this structure is of course found at a higher level of abstraction and perfection than in particulars. In nature the intelligible order is literally *in* matter, for the material object instantiates the universal law, and thus the intelligible form is embodied (*enulon*) and individualized. In the

Active Intellect these forms exist unencumbered with matter (*a'ula*) in absolute generality. They are perfect in abstraction, unity and harmony. Like the Plotinian Nous, the Gersonidean Active Intellect is a unity and a plurality. It is a system of intelligible forms ordered as a unity. The plan exhibits variety insofar as it is a plan for and of a domain containing many items of diverse natures, yet the plan is itself a *systemic* ordering of the forms of these natures.

Repeatedly Gersonides insists on the contrast between man's knowledge of nature and the knowledge possessed by the Active Intellect. Human knowledge is cumulative and successive, thus subject to quantitative and qualitative imperfection; but the knowledge of the Active Intellect is perfect. Just as Boethius' God knows everything simultaneously and wholly (*simul et tota*),<sup>29</sup> the Active Intellect contains the intelligible order "all at once and entirely."<sup>30</sup> True, the Active Intellect is not an *absolute* unity, since it comprises a system of many and diverse formal structures; yet it is one system. Like Plotinus' Nous, the Active Intellect is a "one-many"<sup>31</sup> by its very nature. The human intellect is, however, many that can become one; but, even when it does, it is never complete.

There is one important difference between Plotinus' Nous and Gersonides' Active Intellect. Nous for Plotinus comprises an absolutely complete plan of all reality. Here Plotinus follows in the footsteps of Plato and Philo. The Active Intellect for Gersonides, however, is only a partial plan. It comprises the intelligible order only of the sublunar world.

It is because the Active Intellect comprises the intelligible order of the terrestrial world that it can help the human intellect acquire knowledge of nature. Just as Nous "lends" its cognitive capital to what is lower on the ontological ladder, so the Active Intellect "endows" the human intellect with information. The word 'information' is telling. For Gersonides the Active Intellect literally imparts intelligible Forms to the human mind. Gersonides uses the terminology of Avicenna, referring to the Active Intellect as the giver of forms (*noten ha-zurot*).<sup>32</sup> Once en-formed, the human intellect is capable of distinguishing the essential from the accidental, the universal from the particular in the sense images it has accumulated. Having acquired these universal concepts, it can formulate universal

propositions true of all members of a species or genus. This is knowledge proper.<sup>33</sup>

Although the general outline of Gersonides' account of abstraction is straightforward, some of the important details are not clearly or consistently delineated. In some texts the "material intellect" of the individual seems to be assigned an active role; in others it is almost entirely passive. Thus in the *Commentary on Song of Songs* and the supercommentary on *Averroes' Epitome of De Anima* Gersonides describes the material intellect as a power or disposition residing in the imagination, or in the imaginative forms themselves, stimulated (*mit'orrer*) to abstract general concepts from these forms by the external action of the Active Intellect.<sup>34</sup> Here the latter functions primarily as a catalytic agent, as appears to have been Aristotle's original intent. Both the Active Intellect and the images provided by sensation are necessary (and together sufficient) to afford us ordinary knowledge—knowledge not communicated through prophecy. On this account, intellection is a capacity, like vision. Just as vision is a disposition of the eyes to receive sensory inputs from external objects, given the medium of light, and to transmit them to a central synthesizing subject, so intellection is the power of the imagination to abstract the general nature embedded in many idiosyncratic images, a power brought into action by the Active Intellect. This dynamic account seems quite close to Aristotle and Alexander.

Yet in other texts, chiefly in *The Wars of the Lord*, a very different account appears. Gersonides still mentions the need for sensory data, but his main concern here is to magnify the role of the Active Intellect, and he does so at the expense of the imagination. It is not just that the latter is not sufficient to generate knowledge; this was a medieval commonplace. Rather, now the Active Intellect as "the giver of forms" has become virtually the *sole agent* in cognition. Gersonides insists that the Active Intellect does *not* directly work upon the imaginative forms; nor do the latter work upon, or move, the material intellect. The role of the imagination is now reduced considerably. The Active Intellect, Gersonides claims, acts *directly* upon the material intellect and renders it capable of apprehending the general concept present *in potentia* in the individual images produced by sensation. Since the Active Intellect possesses

these general concepts *a priori*, it can "endow" the material intellect with them, but it does so successively. So the knowledge of the material intellect is essentially fragmentary. In ordinary human cognition we still need sensation to give us the appropriate data. These data will of necessity be incomplete and acquired accumulatively; this is the human condition.<sup>35</sup> But if the Active Intellect is the "giver of forms" and moves the material intellect to receive the general concept, why do we need the sensory data at all? Since Gersonides stresses the fact that the Active Intellect can give us knowledge, even of ordinary things, without our having the relevant sense data, e.g., in mathematics, his usual empiricist orientation seems here to be abandoned in favor of a Plotinian-Avicennan model of knowledge. Aristotle has given way to Plato. Human cognition is now more a matter of external illumination than of the mind's own abstraction of concepts. It would seem that our knowledge is more a gift than an acquisition achieved by one's own hard work.

A comparison with Aquinas will be useful. He too sees the process of acquiring concepts as one of giving by the Active Intellect and receiving by the "possible intellect." But the Active Intellect for Aquinas is a part or function of the human mind, not a separate, transcendent force that acts upon us "from without." That is the basic difference between Aquinas' account of abstraction and Gersonides'. By internalizing the Active Intellect, Aquinas was, I believe, more successful in making clear what goes on in abstraction. The process becomes no more puzzling than the operation of the heart. Just as one part of the heart pumps the blood coming in from the veins to another part, which pumps the blood into the lungs, so one part of the human mind abstracts the general concept and another part receives and stores it. Aquinas admits that the human intellect is not altogether autonomous and requires the help of some separate, transcendent power, but this is God, not some lesser supernal intellect, as in Gersonides.

Aquinas explicitly rejects the Avicennan theory of the *dator formarum*, which was adopted by Gersonides. His major criticism is virtually the same as the one I just raised against Gersonides' account of abstraction: If the Active Intellect imparts the general concepts to the material intellect, a view that Aquinas characterizes as Platonistic, then there is no need for sense data. What is most curious is that

Gersonides criticizes Avicenna on the same grounds, yet falls to the same charge.<sup>36</sup> I suspect that his desire to permit extra-sensory cognition to enter the domain of knowledge led him to this more Platonic, indeed Plotinian, account. Since the Active Intellect was needed to explain prophecy, it became tempting to hand over to it the responsibility for the whole cognitive process. But it is surely fallacious to argue that since *some* knowledge needs to be given us as a finished product, *all* knowledge is given to us in this way.

In Gersonides' defense it could be argued that sense data would in most cases still be needed as cues for the human apprehension of the intelligible forms. The Active Intellect possesses these forms and does provide them to the human intellect, but we cannot receive them "naked," or neat; the mind needs images to prepare itself to receive the endowment of the Active Intellect. Here both Plato and Aristotle agree. Plato acknowledged the role of sense data as stimuli for the recollection of the Forms; Aristotle insisted upon the need for images in thinking.<sup>37</sup> We all know, sometimes to our chagrin, that it is not easy to think abstractly; we often prefer literally to "fantasize" and reify our concepts. Our inevitable involvement with sense images while we are *in statu isto*, i.e., in our bodies, was a common theme in Latin Scholastic thought. Scotus and Ockham, for example, both distinguished between the cognitive conditions operative in this world and the state when man is no longer attached to sense. In the latter state we shall no longer need sense images to acquire and to retain knowledge. But as long as we are in the former condition, these images are needed for knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps Gersonides shared this opinion, at least in part. It is, he insisted, of the nature of the *material* intellect to need sensory data. The cause of cognition is the Active Intellect, but while we are embodied we need images to "dispose" us to receive the influence of the Active Intellect. In the emphasis he put upon the Active Intellect, Gersonides was close to the Augustinian tradition represented by Bonaventure, Henry of Ghent and Matthew of Aquasparta—all of whom believed that human knowledge *in statu isto* is possible only through supra-natural illumination. And, of course, Plotinus was Augustine's philosophical mentor.<sup>39</sup> Yet Gersonides retained Aristotle's psychology, in which human thought necessarily involves *imaging*. Thus Platonic and Aristotelian elements tug at one another in his epistemology.

If Gersonides' epistemology is somewhat unsatisfactory on this score, his analysis of cognitive statements is much better. Taking the paradigm of an epistemic claim to be an affirmative universal statement of the form 'All S is P,' Gersonides argues that although such statements are true precisely because there is in the Active Intellect a formal structure corresponding to and grounding each statement, the statement is not true of *universalia in rebus*. In this claim echoes of both Plato and Aristotle are made to harmonize. With Aristotle, Gersonides denies that there exist independently existing universals. Yet, each species corresponds to a formal structure or pattern in the Active Intellect. In the Active Intellect the intelligible order exists in its pristine state; in nature it exists embodied in the individuals we encounter in perception. The form is the exemplar or paradigm for the particular. As Plotinus had maintained, the earthly man that talks to us is an embodiment of a supernal exemplar in Nous.<sup>40</sup> But this Platonic Realism is not transferred to the analysis of universal propositions. An affirmative universal judgment is analyzed into a set of particular statements about individuals: The statement 'All dogs are mammals' is true because it applies to each particular dog in our world.

Like his contemporary William of Ockham—who was Gersonides' coresident in Avignon for a few years—Gersonides calls for a "descent to particulars" in the analysis of universal propositions. In this sense, but only in this sense, he too can be called a nominalist. Universal affirmative judgments do *not* denote a universal entity in nature, since in nature there are only individuals. Yet each individual exemplifies a formal pattern in the Active Intellect which constitutes the order of nature. Thus the Gersonidean version of the famous Avicennan formula would be that universals exist *ante rem* insofar as they exist in the Active Intellect; they exist *in rebus* only insofar as each individual in nature instantiates a formal structure found in the Active Intellect; they exist *post rem* insofar as the human intellect can come to know this intelligible order by abstraction.<sup>41</sup> Unlike Ockham Gersonides is still wedded to the Platonic model of knowledge, whereby to know is to apprehend a universal form. True, this form is embedded in concrete individuals, as Ockham would insist; but each individual exemplifies a paradigm in the Active Intellect. Without it the particulars of our sensory experience would be void of intelligibility and order.

## IV

In Book 5 of the *Wars of the Lord* the generative role of the Active Intellect is spelled out in detail. Here our passage from Aristotle's *On Generation of Animals* is especially relevant. Giving a very general interpretation to it, Gersonides claims that *all* living species are guided by the Active Intellect, or "the divine intellect from without," in their cycles of development and growth. The soul of each organism is its form,<sup>42</sup> and the Active Intellect is the form of the terrestrial world, responsible for the presence and development of all form in this world. The cycles of biological development on earth not only mirror the intelligible order in the Active Intellect but are brought about by it. Each embodied form emanates from the formal structure in the Active Intellect, which is the "giver of forms." In Plotinian terms, the formal structure of our sensible world is isomorphic with the intelligible world, which is Nous, the Active Intellect in Gersonides' interpretation.<sup>43</sup>

Gersonides' Plotinian account of generation is consciously contrasted with Averroes' more naturalistic reading of Aristotle's theory of generation. As Herbert Davidson has shown, Averroes' views on this topic shifted from an early Platonistic understanding to a more physicalistic interpretation.<sup>44</sup> This is exactly how Gersonides read Averroes. He too distinguished different views in Averroes but saw him as ultimately advocating a naturalistic account of biological development, except in the case of the human soul.<sup>45</sup> But Gersonides departs from his philosophical teacher. He urges that *On Generation of Animals* be taken literally. All biological development is to be accounted for in terms of some transcendent intellectual force. Gersonides' general counter-argument to Averroes is that a purely naturalistic theory, one that aims to explain life in terms of physical entities and processes alone, cannot account for the hierarchical-telic structure exhibited in nature. All the arguments he marshals against Averroes are based on the same disjunction: Generation is either attributable to chance or to a purposive agent. Since everyone admits that chance cannot be the cause of orderly telic phenomena, we must posit a purposive agent. The question is whether this agent is corporeal and immanent or incorporeal and transcendent. Averroes claims that the agent is of the former type—e.g., the seed in the animal produced by its parents and the heat



coming from heavenly bodies. As Aristotle claimed, a human being is produced by another human being and the sun. Here Averroes uses Galen to interpret Aristotle: in the seed there is a "formative power" (*dynamis diaplaskike*) that is the formative and efficient cause behind the generative process. There is no need to appeal to anything else.<sup>46</sup>

Averroes' account of generation is false, Gersonides argues, because natural generation is not a discontinuous or piecemeal operation. Even today, when teleological biology is certainly not fashionable, we still talk of biological and ecological systems. Averroes' biological perspective, Gersonides claims, is too narrow. He looks at the generation and development of one organism or one species without taking the rest into account. But a more holistic framework is precisely what we need. A certain species of worm, for example, develops within a context defined by the generation of other organisms, birds, plants, *et alia*. Within any subsystem each member is "directed" toward the others. All these microsystems are parts of a comprehensive macrosystem "directed" toward one unified goal: maximum telic perfection. Nature exhibits a definite tier-structure, with the various genera and species ordered hierarchically, such that one level is "the form and perfection of another." The whole system, Gersonides argues, must be directed by an external agent. For if the agent were within the system, it would be part of it and would itself need to be directed, leading to a vicious regress. The whole macrosystem, then, is governed by a transcendent intentional agent that "sees to" the orderly, telic development of terrestrial life. This is the power Aristotle referred to in his *Generation of Animals*; it is the very power described by Themistius, speaking on behalf of Aristotle, that emanates from the heavenly bodies. It is the Active Intellect.<sup>47</sup> Or, in Plotinian language, it is the force emanating from Nous via the Universal Soul that governs the natural order.<sup>48</sup> Gersonides rejects Averroes' naturalistic reading of Aristotle in favor of a literal reading of *On the Generation of Animals* and a Plotinian understanding of the Active Intellect.<sup>49</sup>

Gersonides' defense of a supranaturalistic account of biological development needs to be completed by a more comprehensive discussion of the place of the Active Intellect in this process, relative to the other separate intellects. Gersonides undertakes this task in the

concluding chapters of Book V, Part 3 of *The Wars*. His problem here is essentially twofold: to differentiate the Active Intellect from the separate intelligences other than God, and to differentiate it from God. Plotinus made a sharp distinction between the One and Nous, on the one hand, and Nous and Universal Soul, on the other. In the emanation theory espoused by the Muslim *falāsifa*, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, the Active Intellect is placed at the lowest level of the incorporeal world. It emanates from the ninth intelligence, which is the specific mover of the lunar sphere and is therefore nearest to the terrestrial domain, of whose natural processes it is the proximate supranatural agent. The Active Intellect emanates directly from the intelligence above it, and the latter from the intelligence above it, and so up to the First Intellect, or God, from whom all the intelligences, directly or indirectly, emanate.<sup>50</sup> Gersonides modifies this model in several respects.

Gersonides' Active Intellect emanates from *all* the separate intelligences that are the movers of the celestial spheres. Insofar as a separate intelligence is the mover of a particular sphere it is the cause of the influence of that sphere here on earth; but it is the cause of *this* influence alone. For example, the intellect governing the sun is responsible for the solar influence of light and heat, and that is all. The Active Intellect, however, is the generative cause of the *whole* sublunar domain; as such it must transmit *all* the influences emanating from the whole celestial world. The separate intelligence for each celestial sphere is only a partial emanative force, but the Active Intellect is a universal power for generation on earth, a "synthesis" (*qibbuz*)<sup>51</sup> of all the influences emanating from the movers of the spheres and the spheres themselves. In this "synthesizing" role the Active Intellect is the cause of the order prevailing on earth. For example, if the force emanating from Mars were to reach us unmediated by the Active Intellect, we would constantly be subjected to wars and conflict. Fortunately, the irenic influence from Jupiter is "mixed in," and peace occasionally occurs. The mixing or filtering is the work of the Active Intellect. Like Plotinus' Nous, the Active Intellect exemplifies a general scheme for the domain under its governance and influence. It achieves generality by integrating the particular and sometimes opposing forces emanating from the heavenly domain.

Gersonides mentions that the philosophers, the Torah and the Rabbis agree that the Active Intellect is the lowest (*shafel*) of the separate intellects, because it is attached to the matter of the "lower world," the domain of generation and corruption.<sup>52</sup> But I do not believe that this appeal to authority does justice to the logic of Gersonides' own position. Insofar as the Active Intellect represents a *general* plan for the sublunar world it is superior to the partial representations possessed by the individual separate intellects that move the heavenly spheres. He says that the Active Intellect is in this respect like God, whose intellectual representation of reality is also general. Indeed in the very next paragraph Gersonides quotes a passage in which the Rabbis say of the chief member of the angelic court, the Metatron, "its name is like the name of its Master."<sup>53</sup> The Rabbis, Gersonides assumes, were referring to the Active Intellect. If the Active Intellect is the Metatron, it cannot be the least of the cosmic intellects. Because of the generality of its plan and its generative role, the Active Intellect is like God and bears His name. This Rabbinic hint is supported by Gersonides' interpretation of Proverbs 30:4. There the Biblical author (like Job 28) expresses the difficulty of our understanding the mysteries of nature: "Who has ascended heaven and come down . . . who has gathered up the wind (*ruah*) in the hollow of his hand? Who has established all the extremities of the earth? What is his name or his son's name . . .?" Gersonides identifies the spirit in this passage as the Active Intellect, or the soul that emanates from the spheres. This force is called "son" because it is the effect of another cause, God. Indeed, God created the human species with the aid of the Active Intellect, and it creates individual humans by means of the male and female seeds.<sup>54</sup> It is evident, I think, that the Active Intellect is far more important in its causal efficacy than any or perhaps all of the separate intellects of the spheres. Thus it is duly described in metaphorical terms as "God's son." Here Gersonides approximates Philo's habit of calling the Logos the divine son.<sup>55</sup>

But if the Active Intellect bears the general schema for the sublunar world and is the cosmic power responsible for this domain, how is it different from God, "its master"? For God too represents the whole scheme of nature. In Plotinus the problem of

distinguishing Nous from the One is easier, since Plotinus' One is beyond thought and being. Gersonides' God, however, needs to think and to be; otherwise it cannot be said to act. Accordingly, Gersonides has to find another way to distinguish sharply between the two separate intellects whose representational and causal range is general.

This problem is handled in two steps. First, opposing Averroes, Gersonides denies that God is the mover of a particular sphere, specifically the sphere of the fixed stars. Here again he is closer to Avicenna, who also "detached" God from any particular sphere, and to the Neoplatonic tradition that permeated Avicenna's cosmology.<sup>56</sup> If God were the mover of a particular sphere, His influence would clearly be limited. Second, since the Active Intellect is the force that governs the sublunar sphere, its illumination is restricted to this domain. Even though the influence coming from both God and the Active Intellect is general, the scope of the intelligible order in God is therefore wider than that in the Active Intellect. In God the intelligible order is the plan for the whole universe, celestial and terrestrial.<sup>57</sup>

Gersonides' emanation model, then, like the Plotinian and Avicennan models, is a vertical ontic flowing forth from an ultimate reality to lower levels of existence. Yet his doctrine of the Active Intellect incorporates functions that Plotinus assigned either to Nous or to the Universal Soul. These functions are so important that the Active Intellect is no longer just one among many separate intellects each with a circumscribed role, as it is for Avicenna; instead, it has become a general transmitting agent whose synthesizing capacity is responsible for the order of the sublunar world. For Gersonides the emanative flow begins with a universal agent, God; it then disperses among a plurality of separate intellects, the emanative force of each one of which is restricted to a particular sphere; finally, all these productive powers are integrated by the Active Intellect. The initial unity of the original intelligible order in God is preserved, even though it is particularized as it descends the ontological ladder. It is the Active Intellect that preserves that original unity and order, serving literally for Gersonides as God's chief agent for the sublunar world.

## Notes

1. Quoted in F. E. Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 585.
2. F. E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 10, 15. André Neher holds that the first mention of Plotinus in Hebrew was in Abravanel's *Commentary on Genesis 1:16* (New York: Reprint, 1959) 1.24b; *Jewish Thought and the Scientific Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 221. I am skeptical of this claim.
3. See P. Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness*.
4. J. H. Randall, Jr., *Aristotle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 102.
5. Randall, 99.
6. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentary on De Anima*, ed., I. Bruns, *Supplementum Aristotelicum 2* (Berlin, 1887): 88-89, 112. P. Moraux, *Alexander d'Aphrodise: exégète de la noétique d'Aristote* (Liege, 1942). P. Merlan, *Monopsychism*, section 2.
7. Themistius, an early fourth-century commentator, gave a different interpretation to *De Anima* III 5, holding that the Active Intellect is in one respect *immanent* in the human intellect. Averroes was influenced by this interpretation, as was Aquinas. Themistius, *In libros Aristotelis de anima paraphrasis*, ed., R. Heinze (Berlin, 1899), 99-105; O. Hamelin, *La théorie de l'intellect d'après Aristote et ses commentateurs* (Paris, 1953); S. Feldman, "Gersonides on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Agent Intellect," *AJS Review* 3 (1978): 99-120; A. Ivry, "Averroes on Intellection and Conjunction," *JAOS* 86 (1966): 76-85; Herbert Davidson, "Al-Farabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect," "Averroes on the Material Intellect."
8. *Phaedrus* 247C-E.
9. See H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, ch. 4; J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 155-64.
10. *Enneads* V 6 4, 14-16.
11. *Enneads* III 2.1; IV 8.3, 8; Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* IV-V.
12. *Enneads* V 5.1, 51-56 and V 5.2, 1. I use Armstrong's translation except where noted.
13. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII 7, 1072b 21-23; *De Anima* III 7.
14. *Metaphysics*, loc. cit.; *De Anima* III 5, 430a 18.
15. *Enneads* VI 7 13; VI 9 2.
16. *Enneads* VI 7.41, 35-38.
17. See Maimonides, *Guide* II 22 and Arthur Hyman's paper in this volume.
18. Augustine, *De Gen. ad. lit.* 5, 15, 33; Bonaventure, *Quaestiones disputatae de scientia Christi*, q. 4, in J. Wippel, *Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 314-17.
19. T. Szlezak, *Platon und Aristoteles in des Nuslehre Plotins* (Basel, 1979), 135-43.
20. J. Moreau, *Plotin* (Paris, 1970), 43 ff.; H. Davidson, "Al-Farabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect," 121-23, 159-60; F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*.
21. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I 6, 9. See the English translations of *Plotinus Arabicus* in the Henry and Schwyzer edition of the *Enneads*, 2.67-68, 91, 231, 235, 241, 247, 263, 275, 291, 309, 375, 411, 415.
22. *Commentary on the Megillot, Song of Songs*, 2d, 8a-10a (Riva di Trento, 1560); *The Wars of the Lord*, tr., S. Feldman (Philadelphia: JPS, 1984) I, chs. 6, 9, 10. See the Brandeis dissertation of J. Mashbaum, *Chapters 9-12 of Gersonides Super-commentary on Averroes' Epitome of De Anima: The Internal Senses* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1981).
23. Aristotle *De Anima* II 5, 417b 22-27; *Posterior Analytics*, I 31, II 19.
24. In *Posterior Analytics* II 14 Aristotle appears to allude to the abstraction of universal concepts; Alexander develops the theme further. See Merlan, 42-46.
25. See my "Gersonides on the Possibility of Conjunction," 103; Davidson, "Al-Farabi and Avicenna on the Active Intellect," 109-78; Alexander Altmann, "Maimonides on the Intellect and the Scope of Metaphysics" in *Von der Mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung*, 60-91.
26. Mashbaum, 94-96. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I q. 78, a. 3.
27. *Commentary on Song of Songs*, 8a-10a.
28. F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, chs. 7, 11; Aquinas, q. 85, articles 1 and 2.
29. *The Consolation of Philosophy*, V 6, 10.
30. *Wars* I, ch. 6; V, pt. 3, chs. 5, 13.
31. *Enneads* VI 7.13, 7.17.
32. *Wars*, I, ch. 6, 156.
33. The activity of abstraction, or concept-formation, is *ziyyur*; the activity of judgment, or verification, is *'imut*. See *Wars* I, ch. 4. Mashbaum, 45, 62, 86. C. Touati, *La Pensée Philosophique et Théologique de Gersonide* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1973), 411-31.
34. *Commentary on Song of Songs*, 2d, 9b.
35. *Wars*, I, ch. 6, 150, 161; ch. 10, 204-07. Davidson, "Al-Farabi and Avicenna . . .," 162 ff.

36. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I qq. 79, 84, 85; esp. q. 84 a. 4. *Wars*, I, ch. 6, 148, 161, 207.
37. Plato, *Phaedo*, 73c-d; Aristotle, *De Anima* III 7. Mashbaum, 56.
38. John Duns Scotus, *Oxford Commentary on the Four Books of the Sentences*, Book I, Distinction 3, question 1; in A. Hyman and J. Walsh, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 602. William of Ockham, *Reportatio*, Book II, Question 15; in Hyman and Walsh, 678.
39. Augustine, *On Free Will*, II, chs. 12-17; *Soliloquies* I 6. Bonaventure, *Quaestiones disputatae*, in Wippel, 314-17. Matthew of Aquasparta, *Ten Disputed Questions on Knowledge*, in R. McKeon, *Selections from Medieval Philosophers* (New York, 1930) 2.240-302.
40. *Enneads* VI 7.6 and 8.
41. *Wars*, I, ch. 10; Touati, *La Pensée*, 413-23; Julius Guttmann, "Levi ben Gersons Theorie des Begriffs," *Festschrift zum 75-jährigen Bestehen des Jüdisch-Theologischen Seminars* (Breslau, 1929) 2.131-49; William of Ockham, *Philosophical Writings*, tr., T. Boehner (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1964) II, sections 4-8; IV, section 4.
42. Aristotle, *De Anima* II 1-4.
43. *Wars*, V, pt. 3, chs. 3-4; cf. I, ch. 6. *Enneads* V 8.9, VI 7.7 and 7.12. The Philonic overtones are clear.
44. Davidson, "Averroes on the Active Intellect as a Cause of Existence"; Touati, "Les Problemes de la Generation et le Role de L'intellect Agent chez Averroes," in *Multiple Averroes* (Paris, 1978), 157-64.
45. *Wars*, V, pt. 3, ch. 3.
46. Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, II 10; Galen, *On Natural Faculties* 1, 5-6; *Wars* I, ch. 6, 153, n. 17; V, pt. 3, ch. 3. Davidson, "Averroes on the Active Intellect as a Cause of Existence," 214-22.
47. *Wars* I, ch. 6; V, pt. 3, ch. 3. Themistius, *In Aristoteles Metaphysicorum Librum Lambda Paraphrasis*, ed., S. Landauer (Berlin, 1903), Hebrew 8, Latin 9.
48. *Enneads* VI 7.15, 14-23; VI 9.3, 25-26.
49. In his *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, which Gersonides did not know, Averroes attributes this Platonistic theory to "the philosophers." His attitude toward it here is at least neutral, perhaps even positive; tr., Van Den Bergh, Third Discussion, para. 217-18.
50. Maimonides, *Guide* II 4, 6, 11. Davidson, "Al-Farabi and Avicenna . . .," 135 ff.
51. Instead of following the printed editions, reading 'qibbul,' I have adopted the reading of 'qibbuz,' found in the Vatican, Bodleian and one of the Parisian manuscripts.
52. *Wars*, I, ch. 6; V, pt. 3, chs. 8 and 13.

53. *Wars* V, pt. 3, ch. 13, citing *Sanhedrin* 38b, referring to Exodus 24:1. See also Gersonides' *Commentary on the Torah* (Venice, 1547) 201c.
54. Gersonides, *Commentary on Proverbs*, 30:4; *Commentary on the Torah*, 12d-13a.
55. Philo, *De agricultura*, 12, 51; Wolfson, *Philo*, 1.234, n. 43.
56. *Wars*, V, pt. 3, ch. 11; cf. Davidson, *passim*.
57. *Wars*, V, pt. 3, ch. 12.

## Utterance and Ineffability in Jewish Neoplatonism

Steven T. Katz

### 1. Apophatic Claims and their Problems

Neoplatonism, generally, and Jewish Neoplatonism in particular, presents a familiar yet profound problem. According to its declared premises, verbal descriptions of the ultimate realities are not possible. Language operates upon and within a given categorical structure and is of limited applicability to those realia that lie outside its constructive schema. Philo, the forerunner of Jewish Neoplatonism, tells us that "the companions of the soul, who can converse with intelligible incorporeal natures, do not compare the Existent to any form of created thing, but dissociate Him from every quality." They allow "the conception of existence only, without investing it with any shape."<sup>1</sup> Philo argues that "it is wholly impossible that God according to His essence should be known by any creature."<sup>2</sup> The Divine is "unnameable and ineffable."<sup>3</sup> Whether Philo was the first Platonist to insist upon God's ineffability, and whether or not he did so more for Biblical than Platonic reasons as Wolfson contended,<sup>4</sup> his position becomes a given for the Church Fathers. And the same view had no less powerful an impact on Plotinus and Proclus and their heirs.

Plotinus, in a well known passage (*Enneads* V 5.6) argues: "the One must be without form. But if it is without form, it is not a

substance; for a substance must be some one particular thing, and something, that is, defined and limited; but it is impossible to apprehend the One as a particular thing: for then it would not be the Source but only that particular thing which you said it was. But if all things are in that which is produced by the One, which of the things in it are you going to say the One is? Since it is none of them, it can only be said to be beyond them: but they are beings and Being; it therefore transcends Being. This phrase 'beyond Being' does not mean that it is a particular thing—for it makes no positive statement about it—and it does not say its name, but all that it implies is that it is 'not this.'<sup>5</sup> Plotinus' radical insistence on this point is well known, and through Proclus' systematization the Plotinian position becomes a cardinal doctrine of all later Neoplatonic theory. As Proclus writes in his Commentary on the *Parmenides*: "the most glorious One is neither expressible nor knowable."<sup>6</sup>

By the medieval era the ineffability of the One was taken as an indisputable axiom both by mystics and by Neoplatonic philosophers. Among Jewish Neoplatonists it was a premise of Zoharic and post-Zoharic Kabbalah as well as in the philosophical constructions of such thinkers as Solomon Ibn Gabirol and Bahya Ibn Paquda. Its influence is prominent even among Aristotelians like Maimonides, whose insistence on it overarches everything else he has to say about God and our attempts to comprehend and relate to Him.<sup>7</sup>

Isaac the Blind, the early medieval Kabbalist, refers to the Ultimate as "that which is not conceivable by thinking (*mah she-ain ha-mahshevah moseget*).<sup>8</sup> This, as Gershom Scholem reminds us, "sounds like a paraphrase of the Neoplatonic *akataleptos*,"<sup>8</sup> as does the later Kabbalistic term *yitron*, which appears to be a Hebrew rendering of the Neoplatonic term *hyperousia*, or "superfluity" (or, perhaps better, "beyond being").<sup>9</sup> Later the *Zohar* accepts the same principle, beginning its depiction of the ontological descent of the cosmos by insisting that the *sefirot* irradiate from the One, called the 'Eyn Sof, literally, "the Infinite." There is no comprehension of the 'Eyn Sof *per se*: "For all binding and union and wholeness are secreted in the fastness that cannot be grasped or known . . . the 'Eyn Sof does not abide being known."<sup>10</sup>

Ibn Gabirol had described this clearly: "To know the veritable nature of Substance . . . is impossible . . . because it is above all

things and is infinite."<sup>11</sup> And the twelfth century Jewish Yemeni Neoplatonist Nethanel ben al-Fayyūmī, in his *Bustān al-Uqūl*, declaimed: "nothing is like unto Him; He created all things out of nothing. Unto him we cannot apply definition, attribute, spatiality or quality. He has no throne that would imply place nor footstool that would imply sitting. He cannot be described as rising up or sitting down, as moving or as motionless, as bearing or being born, as having characteristics or as in any way defined. . . . His essence is indescribable and cannot be grasped by means of the attributes."<sup>12</sup>

If we take these claims for apophatic theology seriously, two problems, one philosophical the other theological, arise: Philosophically the issue is how can the "x of x's" retain any meaning given the embargo on content for all predications about the ultimate. Theologically the concern is how can God, conceived so radically apophatically, be the object, or subject, of covenantal relationship, the revealer of Torah and *mizvot*, the Judge or Redeemer of souls, the One to whom one addresses prayers and supplications?

## 2. Responding to the Difficulties of the Apophatic Idea

There are three classical responses to these elemental questions:

i. *The Strict Constructionist.* In response to the demand that divine transcendence be respected we are encouraged to take the utter ineffability of God's true nature in its maximal and literal sense. The "x of x's" then drops out of our vocabulary. Strictly speaking, once we have denied the possibility of linguistic ascription nothing more can or should be said. In some models of theological and philosophical language about ultimates, such as God, Atman, and the like, some system of analogical predication comes into use, allowing or putatively allowing an asymptotic relationship. That is, the operative predicative language continues *ad infinitum* to approach its object but never reaches it. But here, where the Neoplatonic axiom of ineffability is taken in too strong a sense, there is no asymptote. The One cannot be indicated. For, in al-Fayyūmī's phrase, it is beyond "definition and the attributes of spatiality or quality." We are unable to construct any line that will approach the Ultimate, which thus becomes undefinable as an asymptote. It becomes impossible to

say which of all linguistic forms is appropriate to the One, for all language is equally inappropriate. To distinguish some language as "more appropriate" would require standards of judgment and adequacy, criteria of meaning and verification, that have been ruled out by the basic claim.

This may seem no more than what the Neoplatonist wishes to assert. But the curious implication of the position is that it becomes impossible to claim that such predicates as 'good,' 'loving,' 'providential,' 'caring,' 'wise,' 'gracious,' and 'merciful' are more appropriate than 'evil,' 'hateful,' 'uncaring,' 'foolish,' and the like. Metaphysical attributes like unity or coherence similarly cannot be preferred to notions such as multiplicity or randomness.

R. T. Wallis claims that "In contrast to Plato, Plotinus's treatises exhaust the resources of language in endeavoring to attain successively closer approximations to what remains finally inexpressible."<sup>13</sup> But, on the strict interpretation of the ineffability standard, Wallis' description becomes nonsensical. How can Plotinus' language "attain successively closer approximations" to anything, given the collapse of the asymptotic model. And what is true of Plotinus is true of his heirs, insofar as they follow his apophatic lead. Not surprisingly, we observe that, even against their express declamations, Jewish Neoplatonists without exception self-contradictorily use apophatic discourse as well as the language of attributes and essence. They speak of the One in ways that carry content, even if only implicitly and connotatively, by reference to the larger conceptual context that informs everything they say.<sup>14</sup>

ii. *The Logician's Critique.* The second response to the difficulties raised by apophatic claims is to argue that the ineffability thesis is either self-contradictory or meaningless. The thesis holds: 'For any attribute q, x is not q.' But this predicates 'not-q' of x and thus contradicts itself. Here again claims to strict ineffability destroy the contrast between the "sayable" and the "unsayable," rendering both apophatic and cataphatic discourse devoid of content.

Some recent scholars propose to rescue the Neoplatonic schema from inconsistency through recourse to Cantor's,<sup>15</sup> or Kurt Gödel's<sup>16</sup> set-theory. The proposals are ingenious and suggestive. It is argued that we should treat x in the proposition 'For any q, x is not q' as logically similar to Cantor's *Aleph* or Gödel's U, the

universal class that itself is not a member of any class but which contains all sets. This approach opens up new lines for investigation. But I believe that to employ these revolutionary logical insights we will have to forego strict ineffability. For neither Cantor's nor Gödel's axioms will operate if strict apophasis is required.

Still, given the genius of the Neoplatonic tradition, merely to dismiss it out of hand on the logicist ground of self-contradiction is shortsighted and conceptually unsatisfying.

iii. *The Universalist-Comparativist.* In this widely advocated third option the claim is advanced—for example by W. T. Stace, before him by William James, and more recently by Ninian Smart and many others—that ineffability and the experience of transcendence that it mirrors indubitably point to a common experience available to all humanity once we escape the conceptual fetters of language. "In Mystic States," James writes, "we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition hardly altered by differences of clime or creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note, so there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think, and which brings it about that the mystical classics have . . . neither birthday nor native land. Perpetually telling of the unity of man with God, their speech antedates language and they do not grow old."<sup>17</sup>

Walter Stace, writing in a more contemporary idiom, after constructing his typology of mystical states, concludes by affirming that "In [the] general experience of unity which the mystic believes to be in some sense ultimate and basic to the world, we have the very inner essence of all mystical experience."<sup>18</sup> Criticizing R. C. Zaehner, Ninian Smart writes: "Phenomenologically mysticism is everywhere the same."<sup>19</sup> The basis for these claims of comparability, even uniformity, is the contention that, on close inspection, all significant mystical reports reveal a common type marked by a sense of unity that is (a) paradoxical and (b) ineffable.

Still we must ask: Do the elements identified as "common"—ineffability and paradoxicality—allow an inquiry into the suggested identity of mystical experiences or even exploration of their comparability? For the terms 'paradox' and 'ineffable' do not inform

us about the content of any experience or state of affairs. Rather they cloak experience from investigation and hold mysterious whatever ontological commitments or remarkable experiences one has. The terms 'paradox' and 'ineffable' do not provide *data* for comparability but rather eliminate the possibility of the comparisons altogether. Thus, for example, a Neoplatonic description of ecstasy cannot be taken as evidence for a Jamesian or Stacian (or other) phenomenology or typology of mystical experience, when the experience in question is said to be ineffable and paradoxical. It is a *non sequitur* to infer, as James, Huxley, Stace and many others do, that if two mystics claim that their experiences are paradoxical and ineffable, they are describing like experiences.

This criticism leads to a related question: 'What ontological or logical grounds require that there be only one experience that is ineffable or paradoxical?' If mystic experiences are accurately described as paradoxical and ineffable, they are removed from all possibility of definition or description and thus, also, from comparability. No other result can follow. If these terms mean anything, they cancel out all descriptive claims, undermining all attempts at a phenomenological typology of mystical experience.<sup>20</sup> X is canceled out of our language. The frequent comparisons of mystical states break down. Among the rubble one will find Stace's comparison of Neoplatonism and Kabbalah and Emile Brehier's comparison of Plotinus and Advaita,<sup>21</sup> a false parallel widely circulated earlier by Rudolf Otto<sup>22</sup> and D. T. Suzuki, among many others.

Now if this analysis is correct, if the three standard responses to the problems of apophatic claims present insuperable linguistic and cognitive difficulties, how does Neoplatonism operate so successfully? How does it happen that Neoplatonism, despite these primal philosophical conundrums, is one of the seminal, enduring intellectual traditions of Western theological and metaphysical thought? The answer to this important question is to be found in the fact that Neoplatonists, consciously or unconsciously, but universally, recognize the conceptual *cul de sac* that absolute faithfulness to an apophatic hermeneutic entails and use language and thought that contradict their elementary epistemological commitments.

### 3. Affirmation Despite Negation

Philo insists on the utter transcendence of God and the impossibility of speaking of Him. He draws upon Pythagorean ideas of the One as the transcendent Nous, on Platonic doctrines of the One adumbrated in the *Parmenides*, and on the Middle Academy's distinction between *hyparxis* (unqualified being) and *poiotes* (qualified being) to substantiate his claims. Yet in depicting the Absolute and His primordial activity in bringing that which is into being, Philo contradicts his negative theology as often as is necessary to his exegesis. Among the small but telling cluster of attributes that the Philonic Deity ultimately possesses we find:

1. Being *per se* as compared to Being *per accidens*. We might even say "necessary Being," although such a gloss bears Anselmian and Scholastic associations that could confuse the issue. Philo asserts: "God alone has true being" (*Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat*, 44, 160).
2. Being is One. Philo means not only numerically one but simple and unified and, arguably, indivisible.<sup>23</sup>
3. Being is the First Principle (*De Vita Contemplativa* 2; *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum* II 68).
4. Being is immaterial. This becomes a "content" claim, although it originates in apophatic assertions where God is said repeatedly to be beyond space, time and the Aristotelian categories (*Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis* II; *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres*, 187).
5. Being is "unchangeable" (*Legum Allegoria* II 9, 33, 24).<sup>24</sup>
6. Being is *Mind*, absolute or universal Intelligence. The Forms are God's thoughts (*De Opificio Mundi* 17-19); their "place" is the Logos of God (*De Opificio Mundi*, 20; *De Cherubim*, 49).<sup>25</sup>
7. The Forms are the cosmic blueprint. They become actualized through the Divine Will rather than by necessity as emphasized by Plato (with some ambiguity in the *Timaeus*) and Aristotle and then Plotinus and his pagan disciples.
8. God's freedom of action is connected to the deeply held premise that "It is the property (*idion*) of God to act" (*De Cherubim*, 24, 77). Impelled by the Biblical account, Philo insists that: "It is impious and false to conceive of God in a state of complete inactivity. We ought . . . to be astounded at His powers as maker and Father" (*De Opificio Mundi*, 2, 7).<sup>26</sup>



9. Moreover, as "Maker and Father," God acts "benevolently" (*Legum Allegoria*, III, 68) and out of His "goodness" (*Legum Allegoria*, I, 15; *De Abrahamo*, 268).

This much then is clear, the principle of ineffability is certainly elastic. Unless one wishes to crush Philo in a logical vise, it must be taken nonliterally.

Beyond this, the exegesis of Philo's large corpus reveals something still more philosophically fecund. His God, however "ineffable," is rooted conceptually in a matrix that is both Greek and Jewish. Philo is at his most philonic in his valiant struggle to do justice to both traditions and in his effort to show their ultimate harmony and congruence. Thus his "apophatic" readings are highly colored, fundamentally shaped, by the inherited problematics of Middle Platonism as they had developed in the Hellenistic age—in particular by the problems of eidetic causation and participation. Yet, simultaneously, Philo's *Weltanschauung* demands the centrality of the Torah, although, conversely, the sinaitic revelation must conform to the truths discerned by the immortal Plato. Thus there is no disjunction between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Philonic One, to use the Platonic/Plotinian terminology, must be understood as a response to specific ontological problems, Greek and Hebraic. The notions of Being, Will, and Necessity that Philo wrestles with come to him with a history and a rich penumbra of meanings. So it was not "being" or "necessary being" in some neutral sense that Philo predicated of the God of Israel, but "Being" understood in a well-defined, channelized philosophical tradition oriented by distinctive conceptions, say of limit and form. And his rendering of God as a subject is consciously and critically shaped by his effort to adjudicate between the Aristotelian principle of necessity and the Biblical insistence on Divine Freedom.

The Jewish Neoplatonists who came after Philo would continue to struggle with their dual inheritance of necessity and freedom. One sees the contradictions resulting from the attempt in Isaac Israeli's obscure, confused and confusing treatment in *The Book of Elements*.<sup>27</sup> Israeli seeks to reconcile the conceptual obligations imposed by the scriptural claims for God's will with the canonical theory of Neoplatonic emanation by distinguishing between the One's

willed creation of the first two simple substances and the "necessary" emanation of all further things. Whether, as Alexander Altmann proposed, this entailed a dual theory of creation—the first two substances and then emanation for the rest—or, as Harry Wolfson contended, a dual theory of emanation, need not detain us.<sup>28</sup> What is significant for our argument is that the One of Israeli, the first important medieval Jewish Neoplatonist, is the resultant of a historical development that decisively influenced its nuanced formulation, even while Israeli claimed the inability to comprehend this God.

Given the prominence of the issue and Israeli's failure to treat it adequately, it is not surprising that Solomon Ibn Gabirol returns to it in his *Mekor Hayyim* (II 17-20), arguing for an emanationist theory while maintaining the Hebraic volitional imperative by attributing the creation of form to the Divine Will and the creation of matter to God's essence, i.e., necessity. Given Ibn Gabirol's close affinity to the mainstream of pagan Neoplatonism,<sup>29</sup> his positing of a Divine Will is striking.<sup>30</sup> Yet Ibn Gabirol, like the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', the Muslim Sincere Brethren (tenth Century),<sup>31</sup> rejects the Plotinian doctrine of "spontaneous necessity"<sup>32</sup> and the versions of this teaching widely circulated, for example in the *Theology of Aristotle* and its Arabic forms. He opts instead for the reality and repercussive significance of the Divine Will at the origin of the emanative process. Even in the Latin, the *Mekor Hayyim* makes abundantly clear that "The creation of things by the Creator, the going out of the forms from the prime source, is from the will (*voluntate*)."<sup>33</sup> One has only to compare this to Plotinus' treatments of the same stage in the creative process to appreciate its Biblical resonances. Plotinus writes: "There is in everything the act of the essence and the act of going out from the essence: the first act is the thing itself in its realized identity, the second act is an *inevitably* following outgo from the first, an emanation distinct from the thing itself."<sup>34</sup> I am not dissuaded from seeing here a sharp disjunction between Ibn Gabirol and Plotinus, despite Rist's nondeterministic reading, which seems to me anachronistic.<sup>35</sup>

It is illuminating to trace these two 'traditions,' the Philonic and Plotinian, a stage further, among the post *Bahir*-Kabbalists. Those influenced more heavily by the tradition stemming from Plotinus, Proclus, and Pseudo-Dionysius argued not only for the absolute

transcendence and ineffability of the 'Eyn Sof, but also for its impersonality. Others, like Philo before them, were more sensitive to the scriptural imperatives affecting the doctrine of the One. They sought to "personalize" the One, referring to *ha-'Eyn Sof*, the Infinite, rather than just 'Eyn Sof, that which is "Endless" or "Boundless." Both formulations appear in the *Zohar*, but it certainly seems to favor the Philonic view, at least with regard to the question of God's freedom to create. The position was later taken up by Moses Cordovero in his Commentary on the *Zohar* and by Isaac Luria in his remarkable teaching that the first movement of creation was made possible by God's willed self-contraction (*zimzum*).<sup>36</sup> The supernal reality that the *Zohar* calls the *Attika Kadisha* ("the Holy Ancient One") indeed is more than pure negation possessing Will. The exact relation of 'Eyn Sof or *ha-'Eyn Sof* to the *Attika Kadisha* is the subject of widespread debate, but there is no question that the *Tikkunei Zohar* specifically and clearly teaches that the two are identical: "It is called 'Eyn Sof internally and *Keter Elyon* externally."<sup>37</sup> Yet, paradoxically, even as these assertions are being argued over, all the Kabbalists agree that nothing can be known or said about 'Eyn Sof.

Given this philosophical and mystical tradition, we can make two generalizations: (1) 'God,' or the 'One,' or the 'Absolute,' is not only a name, an arbitrary verbal sign, a cipher, but also and necessarily in all meaningful contexts, at least, a "disguised description." The many Philonic excursions on God's names, especially the Tetragrammaton, and the theurgical power of the NAME, of such great importance to Kabbalists, should be reconsidered in light of this recognition. (2) Even the One about whom one can offer only negations, who transcends all predicates, is a definite individual: the 'disguised descriptions' establish a meaning-giving context that shapes the content of their descriptiveness. Thus, for example, in Philo, in the Plotinian tradition,<sup>38</sup> in the Spanish Jewish Neoplatonists, and in the *mekubbalim* (masters of the Kabbalah), there is agreement that the negation of all attributes is *not* an indication of negativity *per se*, of nothingness or meaninglessness. Nor is it an indication that at the center of being there is only randomness and chaos. Rather, in contradistinction to a negative reading of negation, it must be recognized that the One is intrinsically

good, as both Plato (*Republic* VI 509C) and Scripture taught. This Good is *the* creative origin and designing *telos* of all that is. All comes from and returns to the One/Good.

Thus, Isaac Israeli attributes creation-emanation to the One's goodness alone. The identity of the One is informed by the meaning-giving context of a tradition which imputes goodness to the One. The co-incidence of the One with the Good as the Source of creation is a profoundly charged and content-ful *assumption* of classical Western thought. In no way is it an assumption that is necessary *a priori*. Certain Buddhist schools and certain modern scientific accounts attribute no such positive status to the One that they posit as the point of cosmic origination.

Ibn Gabirol expresses this affirmative presumption with paradigmatic clarity in his *Keter Malkhut*. At the end of stanza 3 he proclaims the apophatic dogma:

Thou existeth, and Thy secret is hidden, and who shall attain to it?  
*Atiah nimza', ve-sodkha ne'elam; u-mi-yasigenu.*  
 So deep, so deep, who can discover it?  
*'Amok 'amok, mi yimza'enu?*

Yet in stanza 6, the *Ehad*, the One of stanza 2, is, as the God of Israel must be, the One "Who forbearst long with sinners" (*ta'arikh l'hata'im*) and Whose "mercies are upon all thy creatures, yea upon all of them" (*rahamekha 'al kol beru'ekha, khulam*). The secret and hidden One is not only existent but knowably concerned with human sin, forbearing, ultimately forgiving, and merciful to all. These attributions of grace and mercy are positive construals of the Goodness of the One, despite the obligatory negations entailed by the mature Neoplatonic schema. And this movement from ineffability to positive attribution is no mere poetic image suitable to the *Keter Malkhut* but inapposite in the more rigorous domains of Neoplatonic philosophy. For in the rigorously philosophical *Mekor Hayyim* Ibn Gabirol calls the One *ha-Po'el ha-ri'shon ve-ha-kadosh* ("First Author, sublime and holy").

A third conclusion about the work of most Jewish and other Neoplatonists, inextricably connected with what I shall call the logic of emanation, appears warranted as well. This conclusion follows from the logical, ontological and linguistic implications of the process

of emanation and the relationship of the One to the realities that flow from It and can be summarized as follows: Given the definition of emanation there is a particular and informative reciprocity between the One and the many. For example, Philo can point to the outcome of Divine action, creation, as affording some inferential awareness of Him. Likening the Platonic Forms to Biblical "causes," i.e., to Divine Action, he argues, glossing Moses' prayer in *Exodus*, that "He himself alone is incomprehensible—but He may come to be apprehended and known by the powers that follow and attend Him." Philo immediately adds the qualification: "These make evident not His essence but His existence,"<sup>39</sup> but his remark is especially provocative given the ontological implications of an emanationist metaphysics, i.e., that cause and effect are in some primal and definitive sense the same.

Plotinus tells us, despite all his negations, that the central concept of ontic participation unfolds against the background of the emanationist principle: "The One is all things and no one of them; the source of all things is not all things; and yet it is all things in a transcendental sense, all things, so to speak, having run back to it; or more correctly, not all as yet are within it, they will be."<sup>40</sup> Thus, "The One remains intact . . . since the entities produced in its likeness . . . owe their existence to no other." "Just as there is, primarily or secondarily, some form or idea from the monad in each of the successive numbers—the later still participating though unequally, in the unit—so the series of Beings following upon the first bear, each some form or idea derived from the source."<sup>41</sup> Thus things incorporate, reflect and reveal that from which they derive. Indirectly, then, insofar as we can speak of 'things' we are describing or naming something of the One. Plotinian emanation implicates the One cataphatically as a consequence of its ontological choreography.

Similarly, R. Azriel of Gerona, explaining the emanation of the *Sefirot*, writes:

I have already informed you that 'Eyn Sof is perfect . . . that the agent which is (initially) brought forth from Him must also be perfect. Thus the dynamic of emanation is fittingly the beginning of all creation, for the potency of emanation is the essence of all things.

And extending this exegesis he affirms:

The One is the foundation of the many, and in the many no power is innovated—only in Him . . . although this first is the dynamic order of the other . . . the metaphor for this is the fire, the flame, the sparks . . . they are all of one essence.<sup>42</sup>

The emanation of the *Sefirot* is a process within the Godhead, not a descent into space-time, but R. Azriel's description does lead us to ask what it is that we may potentially come to know, to say, of the 'Eyn Sof. Given that "that potency of emanation is the essence of all things" and that the *Sefirot* (by definition) "are all one essence" with the One ('Eyn Sof) does it not follow that our unquestioned ability to know the *Sefirot* entails that we can in some sense know the 'Eyn Sof? As Gershom Scholem writes, "The hidden God in the aspect of the 'Eyn Sof and the God manifested in the emanation of the 'Eyn Sof are one and the same viewed from two different angles."<sup>43</sup> Analogously, among later Kabbalists, whatever the hermeneutical and metaphysical ambiguities, there emerges a Kabbalistic consensus that the emanative process continues downward and is responsible for the sublunary and material worlds. So these lower realms also participate in and reflect the *Sefirot* from which they emerge. Even if at a remove, they are continuous with the 'Eyn Sof. Even in the '*alma de-peruda*, the world of separation, when things are seen mystically, i.e., properly, "everything is revealed as One."<sup>44</sup> As a consequence, at a far lower level, we can learn about the 'Eyn Sof (through the mediation of the *Sefirot*) by way of the things in our world. By knowing and naming these we know and name the 'Eyn Sof, obliquely but authentically. Moses de Leon, the author of the *Zohar*, notes in his *Sefer Ha-Rimmon*:

Everything is linked with everything else down to the lowest ring of the chain, and the true essence of God is above as well as below, in the heavens and on the earth, and nothing exists outside of him. . . . Meditate on these things and you will understand that God's essence is linked and connected with all worlds, and that all forms of existence are linked and connected with each other, but derived from His existence and essence.<sup>45</sup>

Correspondingly, the inherent dialectic of return to the Source, seeking felicity by reversing the ontic process of differentiation and

procession that is central to both Kabbalah and philosophical Jewish Neoplatonism, is rooted in the metaphysical unity of all things from above to below. The elemental doctrines of *nizozot* (sparks), *bittul ha-yesh* (annihilation), *hithpashtuth* (egression), and *histalkuth* (regression) are all connected with and to be deciphered by reference to the primordial participation of all that is in the 'Eyn Sof through the "mediation" of the *Sefirot*, which are manifestations of the Godhead itself. In this way the theory of regress, the inversion of the metaphysics of emanation, like emanation itself, raises profound ontological, linguistic and logical questions. For it casts new light, perhaps some would say shadows, over the status of the 'Eyn Sof's transcendence of all conceptual and linguistic forms.

The regressive accessibility of the One allows the possibility of *devekut* or union beyond intellection or language, of which the Kabbalists and philosophers speak. The recommendation and the hope which seeks this end are predicated on the assumption that ultimately there is a commonality, a shared ontic nature, that will become apparent and dominant once linguistic and categorical restraints have dropped away in the ascent, or return, of the soul to its source. In the Neoplatonic expression of R. Ezra: "Everything issues from the first cause and everything returns to the first cause"; or, in a more messianic form, in the end we will experience "*hashavat kol ha-devarim le-havvayatam*" ("the restoration of all things to their original being.")<sup>46</sup> Given the possibility of *devekut* and of the return of the *Sefirot* to *Ayin*, can we say that we know nothing and can say nothing of 'Eyn Sof?

Similarly, the doctrine of emanation has profound implications for Jewish and other Neoplatonic moral theories that, like Bahya's and Ibn Zaddik's, and even more like Ibn Gabirol's in his *Tikkun Middot ha-Nefesh* (*Improvement of the Moral Qualities*),<sup>47</sup> presume that the human capacity for ethical perfection resides in our derivation from the One through the creative devolution operative in the universe. Once again, then, more is "sayable" about the essential Goodness of Being than the overt declarations of the Neoplatonists would suggest. Insofar as moral theories implicate and depend upon anthropological conceptions—including the much favored doctrine of the microcosm—for all the qualifications they would introduce at this juncture, the Neoplatonic moralists point to still further venues in

which the 'Eyn Sof/One, incarnate in men, is available to cognitive scrutiny and linguistic description.

Still more generally, the emanationist model presumes a hierarchial descent from the 'Eyn Sof and correspondingly relates "degrees of being" to one's place in the hierarchy: the "higher" and closer to the 'Eyn Sof, the more "spiritual"; the "lower" and further from the 'Eyn Sof, the more "material." This scheme is unescapably conceptual and linguistic. It depends for its cogency upon an order of beings, "beyond which," although somehow related, is the One. The egress of meta-Being/'Eyn-Sof to Being/*Sefirot*, i.e., the emanation of 'Olam ha-*azilut*, down to the emanation of material beings in the 'Olam ha-*'asiyyah*, our terrestrial world, and the regress from 'Olam ha-*'asiyyah* to the Sefirotic realm and then to *Ayin* is a process that is, in a real sense, cataphatic. This is evident, for example, in the first systematic use of the notion of 'Eyn Sof by R. Isaac the Blind. In his teachings on the first *Sefirah*, i.e., his views relating to *mahshavah* (thought) as co-incident with 'Eyn Sof and *mahshavah* as the desired, and potentially available, object of contemplation and relation, the following expressible connection is described: Through *hitbonenut*, mystical contemplation, one proceeds from the isolated things of the 'olam ha-*nifradim* to the *Sefirot*, up to *hokhmah*, and from there to *mahshavah*, which is inseparable from 'Eyn Sof.<sup>48</sup> For all his restraint, that is, R. Isaac is here deconstructing and reconstructing the egress-regress spiral of the *Sefirot*, and their inherent ontic connection with 'Eyn Sof, in a form that is both intelligible and informative. A similar 'truth,' in poetic form, is likewise expressed in the following formulation from the *Keter Malkhut*:

Thou art the God of Gods, and the Lord of Lords,  
Ruler of beings celestial and terrestrial,  
For all creatures are Thy witnesses  
And by the glory of this Thy name, every creature is bound to Thy service  
Thou art God, and all things formed are Thy servants and worshippers  
Yet is not Thy glory diminished by reason of those that worship aught beside Thee,  
For the yearning of them all is to draw nigh Thee . . .

But Thy servants are as those walking clear-eyed in the straight path,  
 Turning neither to the right nor the left  
 Till they come to the court of the King's palace.  
 Thou art God, by Thy Godhead sustaining all that hath been formed,  
 And upholding in Thy unity all creatures.  
 Thou art God, and there is no distinction 'twixt  
 Thy Godhead and Thy Unity, Thy pre-existence and Thy existence,  
 For 'tis all one mystery.  
 And although the name of each be different,  
 "Yet they are all proceeding to one place."<sup>49</sup>

Ibn Gabirol, now through the tropes and magic of poetry, conveys the essential Neoplatonic piety, shared with R. Isaac: God and His creation are one. The *mekubbal* or philosopher may not know how the transcendental ontic interactions occur, but he does seem to know at least that they take place. And in knowing this he knows more of the "x of x's" than would at first seem possible given the systematic negations of Neoplatonic epistemology.

#### 4. Concluding on a Positive, if Paradoxical, Neoplatonic Note

Let me conclude by congratulating the Jewish Neoplatonists of all schools, mystical and philosophical, for their "inconsistency." They intuited, despite the intellectual fashions of their day, that the One of classical pagan Neoplatonism could not be the God of Israel. It might serve as a formal limit to an infinite regress, linguistic and otherwise, but it could not serve the religious and existential requirements of Jews and Judaism. To redeem the negations-of-negations that are Neoplatonism, to instill into these denials the breath of life and meaning, Jewish, Muslim and Christian Neoplatonists, like Plotinus himself in his more intuitive moments, sought, however contradictorily, to recreate the asymptotic approximation that a literal reading of Neoplatonic apophatic theory renders impossible. At the same time, they did learn the epistemic lesson that Neoplatonism teaches, that the God of Israel must always be more than we can say—although this does not require repeating the error of the Neoplatonists in supposing that we can say nothing of the Absolute. In the expressive phrase of the Kotzker Rebbe:

"Pfui, I am not interested in a God that any Tom, Dick or Harry can understand!"

#### Notes

1. Philo, *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*, 11, 55-56.
2. *De Posteritate Caini*, 48, 167.
3. *De Somniis* I 11, 67. See also *De Mutatione Nominum* 2, 11; *Legum Allegoria* III, 206; *De Posteritate Caini* 16; 168.
4. See his *Philo*, 2.110-15.
5. Tr. after Armstrong, with some phraseology of Stephen McKenna (London: Warner, 1917-30) 5 vols.
6. *Plato Latinus* III, *Parmenides usque ad finem primae hypothesis nec non Procli Commentarium in Parmenidem, pars ultima inedita*, eds., R. Klibansky and C. Labowsky (London: Warburg Institute, 1953), 71.
7. *Guide* I 52-53; I 54: "His essence cannot be grasped as it truly is." See A. Nuriel, "The Torah speaketh in the language of the sons of man in the *Guide of the Perplexed*," in Moshe Hallamish and Asa Kasher, eds., *Religion and Language: Philosophical Essays* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1981), 97-103 (in Hebrew); Shlomo Pines, "The Limits of Human Knowledge according to Al-Farabi, Ibn Bajjah and Maimonides," in Twersky, ed., *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, 82-109; and Wolfson's many studies in Twersky, ed., *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion*.
8. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 353, n. 10.
9. G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 89.
10. *Zohar* 3:26b.
11. *Fons Vitae* I 5.
12. Tr., D. Levine as *The Garden of Wisdom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908), 1.
13. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 41.
14. J. N. Findlay is notable among those interested in Neoplatonism and mysticism in recognizing the need for positive attributions to the One. See his *Ascent to the Absolute* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), and "The Logical Peculiarities of Neoplatonism," in R. Baine Harris, ed., *The Structure of Being*, 1-10.
15. See Robert Brumbaugh, *Plato and the One* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); and "Cantor's Sets and Proclus' Wholes," in R. Baine Harris, ed., *The Structure of Being*, 104-13.

16. Carl Kordig criticized and extended Brumbaugh's discussion, using Gödel's notation, in "The Mathematics of Mysticism: Plotinus and Proclus," in R. Baine Harris, ed., *The Structure of Being*, 114-24.
17. *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Mentor, 1958), 321; cf. 292-94.
18. Walter T. Stace, *Mysticism and Language* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 132. See his full discussion in ch. 2, "The Problem of the Universal Core," 41-133.
19. Ninian Smart, "Interpretation and Mystical Experience," *Religious Studies* 1 (1965): 87.
20. Cf. my paper "Language, Epistemology and Mysticism" in Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 54-56.
21. *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 123 ff.
22. *Mysticism East and West* (New York: Macmillan, 1932).
23. The theme is constantly invoked by later Jewish Neoplatonists, cf., for example, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, "The Royal Crown" (*Keter Malkhut*), section 2; and Bahya Ibn Paquda *Hovot ha-Levavot*, Chs. 8 and 9. Augustine, another classical Neoplatonist caught in the same theological tension as Philo, says of God *est per essentiam suam* ("He exists by His own essence"). See his *Comments on Psalms*, 134:4; cf. *City of God*, 8.6, and 12.2.
24. See also *De Cherubim*, 19; and *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin*, I 93.
25. See here Augustine's use of this notion in his *Book of Eighty Three Questions*, q46, 1-2, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 33.29-31.
26. I am indebted here to Wolfson's *Philo* 1.131-35. Philo appears to argue here that God produces the Logos eternally and that His creative activity is continuous and eternal. Yet this continuous creativity is not the result of some blind necessity. See also Winston's paper in this volume.
27. *Sefer ha-yesodot* (*Kitāb al-Ustuqussāt*), tr. in Altmann and Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, 79-105.
28. See Altmann's, "Creation, Emanation and Natural Causality," in Altmann and Stern; Wolfson's reply in "The Meaning of *Ex nihilo* in Isaac Israeli," *JQR* N.S. 50 (1959): 1-12, repr. in Twersky, ed., *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion* 1.222-23; cf. Altmann's "Isaac Israeli's 'Chapter on the Elements' (Ms Mantua)," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 7 (1956): 31-57. In "Creation and Emanation in Isaac Israeli: A Reappraisal," Altmann maintains his position. See also Stern's "Ibn Hasday's Neoplatonist."
29. See the papers of Dillon and Mathis in this volume.

30. Cf. Judah Halevi's critique of the Neoplatonic and Aristotelian position in *Kuzari* II 6.
31. *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1957), 3.38; but cf. the ambiguous analysis in 3.518.
32. I use this locution in light of A. H. Armstrong's reminder that: "Though this production or giving out is necessary in the sense that it cannot be conceived as not happening, or as happening otherwise, it is also entirely spontaneous: there is no room for any binding or constraint, internal or external, in the thought of Plotinus about the One. The One is not bound by necessity; it establishes it. Its production is simply the overflow of its superabundant life, the consequence of its unbounded perfection." *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, 241.
33. *Fons Vitae* V 41, Baeumker, 330 ll. 17-20, cited in Altmann, "Creation and Emanation in Isaac Israeli," 33, n. 25.
34. *Enneads* V 4.2, cited in Altmann, "Creation and Emanation," 24; cf. V 3.12.40; V 1.6; V 3.16.
35. See *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, 27. Rist proposes that VI 8.19 is meant to "deter the reader from supposing there is any necessary production of the hypostases." Even recognizing the nuances introduced by Armstrong, I find Rist's position extreme, not allowing sufficient weight to Plotinus' 'inevitability.'
36. See David Novak's essay in this volume.
37. *Tikkunei Zohar*, end of *Tikkun* 22.
38. See, for example, Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 7.
39. *De Posteritate Caini* 48, 169.
40. *Enneads* V 1, tr. McKenna.
41. *Enneads* V 5.5., tr. McKenna.
42. R. Azriel of Gerona, *Perush 'Eser Sefirot*, "Explanation of the Ten Sefirot," found as a prolegomenon to Meir Ibn Gabbai's *Sefer Derekh Emunah* (Warsaw, 1850), 3-9.
43. *Kabbalah*, 98.
44. *Zohar* I, 241a.
45. Moses de Leon, *Sefer Ha-Rimmon*, cited in Scholem, *Major Trends*, 223; 402, n. 4. The work is now critically edited in Elliot Wolfson's Brandeis dissertation, 1986.
46. R. Isaac, *Perush 'al Sefer Yezirah*, ch. 3 end; cited in Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbala*, 300.
47. Tr. Stephen S. Wise.
48. See Isaac's *Commentary on Sefer Yezirah* in the appendix to Scholem's *Kabbalah ba-Provence* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1963).

49. "Keter Malkhut," tr., Israel Zangwill in *Selected Religious Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society, 1973), Stanza 8, 86-87.

## Self-Contraction of the Godhead in Kabbalistic Theology\*

David Novak

### 1. Kabbalah and Rabbinic Theology

In the mid-sixteenth century, when Kabbalah had already become a staple in Judaism, the leading Jewish legal authority in Egypt, Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra (Radbaz, d. 1573), was asked whether there was any basis in the classical Jewish sources for the relatively new practice of putting on *tefillin* (phylacteries) at home and wearing them into the synagogue, as opposed to the usual practice then of wearing them only in the synagogue itself. He answered as follows:

One of the later sages wrote in the name of Rabbi Simon ben Yohai of blessed memory [traditional author of the *Zohar*] that since one must say when entering the synagogue, "I bow towards Your holy sanctuary in awe of You" (Psalms 5:8), if there are no *tefillin* on his head, where is the reverence? It is as if he were testifying falsely about himself. . . . Anywhere you find that the books of the Kabbalah

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run counter to the ruling of the Talmud (*pesaq ha-gemara*), follow the Talmud and the codes. But anywhere it does not dispute them, as in this case, which is not mentioned either in the Talmud or in the codes, I have seen fit (*'ani ra'iti*) to rely on the words of the Kabbalah.<sup>1</sup>

This responsum epitomizes the deep inroads Kabbalah made into Rabbinic Judaism over the centuries. For Kabbalah presented itself as a deeper manifestation of Rabbinic Judaism, not as an innovation that might challenge it. In the case at hand, *tefillin* were worn, at least by scholars, outside the synagogue, certainly during the early Rabbinic period. The Kabbalistic practice, then, could be seen as a return to purer Rabbinic practice and higher piety. Kabbalah asserted its authority where the Rabbinic sources were silent or ambivalent, and by so doing deeper into common Jewish practice and belief than did the rationalistic theology of the medieval Jewish Neoplatonists and Aristotelians. It rarely presented its problematic in general philosophical terms, and was quite circumspect especially in exposing the influence of Neoplatonism on its development. As a result, for many Jews, Kabbalah was seen as a solely Jewish doctrine, indeed, as Judaism's most profound and original manifestation. In fact, one could argue convincingly that the waning of the hold of Rabbinic Judaism on the allegiance of modern Jews and the waning of the hold of Kabbalah on their imagination were almost simultaneous.

The important Kabbalistic doctrine of *zimzum*, what Gershom Scholem called *Selbstverschränkung Gottes*, "the self-contraction of God,"<sup>2</sup> has significant Rabbinic precedents upon which Kabbalah built. There may also be some affinity with Neoplatonic modes of addressing the problem of the One and the many, but I shall argue that the affinity is real only at one particular point in the development of this doctrine in the theology of Rabbi Isaac Luria (Ari, d. 1572). The main body of the doctrine, held by virtually all Kabbalistic thinkers was at odds with what Plotinus and his followers thought about the relation of the One and the many. This paper cannot cover all the various ways the doctrine of *zimzum* was enunciated in Kabbalistic literature. Rather, I shall try to represent a single synthetic theory of *zimzum*.

Rabbinic theology is much more loosely constructed than Rabbinic law. So here Kabbalah found significant openings for its

own doctrines. The most important issue for Rabbinic theology is God's giving the Torah to the Jewish people and their acceptance of it. And it was about the problem of revelation that the Kabbalists were most persistently concerned. The doctrine of *zimzum* plays a crucial role in the Kabbalistic metaphysics of revelation.

The earliest Rabbinic use of the term *zimzum* seems to be in a midrash about revelation as a relationship that involves active giving and active receiving:

You find that when the Holy-One-blessed-be-He gave the Torah to Israel, had He come to them with His full strength, they would have been unable to endure, as it says in Scripture, "If we continue to hear [the voice of the Lord our God anymore, we shall die]" (Deuteronomy 5:22). So He only came upon them according to their strength, as it says in Scripture, "the voice of the Lord in strength" (Psalms 29:4). It does not say "in His strength" (*be-kokho*), but "in strength" (*ba-koah*): according to the strength of each of them.<sup>3</sup>

In the Torah, Israel's inability to bear the voice of God in its full strength is addressed by the people's proposing Moses as their intermediary and God's acceptance of this compromise (Deuteronomy 5:24-25). But in the midrash, God limits His own power. Where Scripture invokes an intermediary external to God, the midrash perceives God's reflexive Self-confinement. The midrash develops this idea as follows:

When the Holy-One-blessed-be-He said to Moses, "make for Me a sanctuary" (Exodus 25:8), he was amazed and said, "The glory of the Holy-One-blessed-be-He fills the heavenly and earthly realms, yet He says 'make for Me a sanctuary'?!" . . . Said the Holy-One-blessed-be-He, "I do not think as you think . . . but I shall descend and contract (*ve'azamzem*) My presence (*Shekhinat*) within the cubits of the sanctuary."<sup>4</sup>

From this text and others like it, it can be inferred that there are two aspects of the divine life: One relates to what lies beneath it; the other transcends all relations.<sup>5</sup>

According to other midrashim, God's concentration and descent are needed because without His direct involvement the Jewish people



would inevitably misinterpret the Torah.<sup>6</sup> In effect, God has descended to the human level by giving the Torah as a human possession, binding Himself to what is now humanly interpreted and adjudicated law. As one seminal aggadah put it:

Rabbi Eleazar said that ordinarily (*be-noheg she-ba'olam*) a king of flesh and blood makes a decree (*gozer gezerah*), and if he wants to keep it he does; if not, it is kept by others. But with the Holy-One-blessed-be-He it is not so. Rather, He makes a decree and He Himself keeps it first. Thus it is written in Scripture, "Before the aged shall you rise and you shall honor the elderly, and you shall fear the Lord" (Leviticus 19:32). I am the One who first kept the commandment to stand before the aged.<sup>7</sup>

The Palestinian Talmud asks, "What is the basis of this? 'And they shall keep My charge (*mishmarti*); I am the Lord' (Leviticus 22:9), that is, I am He who kept the commandments of the Torah first."<sup>8</sup> This motif runs through Rabbinic literature from the tannaitic period on. A famous tannaitic aggadah expresses the point vividly:

Rabbi Eliezer said to them again, "If the law is according to my view, Heaven will so attest." A heavenly voice (*bat qol*) came forth and declared, "Why do you hold a position against that of Rabbi Eliezer? The law is according to him!" Rabbi Joshua rose to his feet and said, "It is not in heaven!" (Deuteronomy 30:12). . . . Rabbi Jeremiah said that the Torah was given at Mount Sinai already and we do not regard a heavenly voice as authoritative, for You already wrote at Mount Sinai, "Incline after the majority" (Exodus 23:2). It happened that Rabbi Nathan met Elijah. He said to him, "What did the Holy-One-blessed-be-He do at that time?" He said to him that He smiled and remarked, "My children have vanquished Me indeed (*nizhuni*)."<sup>9</sup>

All of this opened up the possibility for the subsequent metaphysical development of the theme of divine dependence on Israel by the Kabbalists.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The Post-Rabbinic Problematic

From these representative texts it is clear that the rabbis regarded the price of active divine involvement in human affairs to be a bifurcation of divinity into a nonrelational priority and a relational posteriority. God, for them, was conceived as both *Deus absconditus* and *Deus revelatus*. God's accessibility is actively and freely initiated by God Himself and freely accepted by Israel. God's absolute oneness and absolute transcendence are thus modified by divine and human freedom. Plotinus addressed the corresponding problem in a radically different way:

So if there is a second after the One it must have come to be without the One moving at all, without any inclination or act of will (*oude boulethentos*) or any sort of activity on its part. How did it come to be, then, and what are we to think of as surrounding the One in its repose (*peri ekeino menon*)? It must be a radiation (*perilampsin*) from it while it remains unchanged, like the bright light of the sun which, so to speak, runs round it, springing from it continually while it remains unchanged. . . . If anything comes into being after it (*met' auto ginetai*), we must think it necessarily (*anankaion*) does so while the One remains continually turned towards itself.<sup>11</sup>

The contrast between these two views of the divine-human relationship can be seen best when the different verbs and prepositions used by the rabbis and Plotinus are contrasted. The rabbis use transitive verbs like "gave" (*natan*) and "came" (*ba*). They use prepositions like "to" and "for" (both expressed by the prefix *le*). The transitive verbs clearly indicate God's relational activity, which entails temporal succession. The prepositions suggest an active and free mutuality between God and His human creatures. Plotinus, on the other hand, denies that such prepositions pertain to the One: "Everything which is moved must have some end to which it moves (*pros ho kineitai*). The One has no such end, so we must not consider that it moves."<sup>12</sup> Here the key prepositions are "after" (*meta*) and "around" (*peri*). Such relations can involve no reciprocity or mutuality. The many *relate* themselves to the One; the One does not relate itself to the many. The many accept their lower ontological status (*meta*) and situate themselves in the orbit (*peri*) of the One, an

orbit compared to the splendor of the sun. The One, however, simply (*ex haplou*) remains (*menon*) as it has always been "because it seeks nothing (*to meden zetein*), has nothing and needs nothing."<sup>13</sup> Because there is no temporal succession, there is no active freedom; the One and the many have always been so related. Their relation could not be otherwise. Verbs suggesting temporality such as *ginetai*, "came to be," and *pepoieken*, "made," are used only metaphorically.

In view of the contrast between Rabbinic theology and Neoplatonic philosophy, one can see why Jewish thinkers of late antiquity and the Middle Ages, who were seriously committed to the cosmological paradigm of their pre-Galilean age, had a vexing problem with the actively relational God of Rabbinic theology and its closely connected theme of the primacy of *praxis* over *theoria*. The paradigm of Aristotle, Ptolemy and Plotinus regarded the heavens to be of superior substance and activity to anything beneath the moon. Circular orbit was deemed superior to locomotion, intransitive action superior to transitive action, *theoria* superior to *praxis*, and metaphysics superior to ethics.<sup>14</sup> To many Plotinus' model of the relationship of the One and the many looked a good deal more attractive than that of the Rabbis. Indeed, Plotinus claimed that his problematic was not born of his own particular vision, but was, as he put it, "the question repeatedly discussed also by the ancient philosophers, how from the One (*pos ex henos*) . . . anything else . . . came into existence (*hypostasias eschen*) . . . which we think it right to refer back to the One."<sup>15</sup>

Although the Kabbalists were immensely successful in concealing whatever philosophical sources they used in the construction of their own theology, it seems that they accepted the general problematic of Neoplatonism concerning the One and the many. But then they reinterpreted Judaism, not according to a Neoplatonic solution of this problem, as did most of the rationalist theologians, but as bearing a superior solution. The Kabbalists attempted this daring project through their development of the closely related doctrines of the divine multiplicity (*sefirot*) and divine self-contraction. The problem remains whether Rabbinic Judaism can bear the stretching of its categories this far. But the influence of Neoplatonism here is much less direct than it is in the openly philosophical approach of many of the rationalist theologians.

Capitulation to philosophy cannot readily be charged against Kabbalah. For the appropriation of Neoplatonic themes is covert, and the philosophic mode of argument and exposition remain external to the Kabbalistic texts. In fact, in the early days of its appearance, Kabbalah was not accused of being too philosophical but of resembling Christian trinitarianism.<sup>16</sup> Yet, unlike rationalistic theology, Kabbalah was adopted by many Rabbinic authorities. So the criticisms were mostly muted even at the beginning and gradually disappeared almost entirely. In the great controversy between the Hasidim and their opponents (*mitnagdim*) in the late eighteenth century, the two leading Rabbinic antagonists, Rabbi Elijah of Vilna and Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, were both Kabbalists.

If the Kabbalists accepted the general problematic of Neoplatonism, they had to deal with the following questions: (1) What is it within the Godhead (*'Elohut*) that makes possible for it an active relationship with finite beings? (2) Does the relational theology of Rabbinic Judaism seem to make God ultimately dependent on His human creatures? The irony is captured in the Talmudic phrase, "the native-born is on earth and the sojourner is in heaven?"<sup>17</sup> In other words, is not the proper hierarchy essentially reversed? (3) How can God be bound by (or even involved with) the commandments revealed to Israel in the Torah when most of them seem to address quite mundane issues? This concern parallels Parmenides' challenge to Plato's theory of Forms: "And are you undecided about certain other things, which you might think rather ridiculous (*geloia dokseien*), such as hair, mud, dirt, or anything else particularly vile and worthless? Would you say that there is an idea (*eidos*) of each of these . . . things . . . or not?"<sup>18</sup> Yet the Torah is concerned with the hair of the Nazirite (Numbers 6:18), the mud of an afflicted house (Leviticus 14:42), and even dirt, as in the ordeal of the Bitter Waters (Numbers 5:17).

### 3. The Foundation in the Zohar

It is often pointed out that the doctrine of *zimzum* as such is not found in the *Zohar*.<sup>19</sup> Yet one can see it as a logical development of the *Zohar's* doctrine of the *Sefirot*, the exfoliation of the Godhead

from solitary infinity ('Eyn Sof) to its ten supernal manifestations. The difference between the realm of the 'Eyn Sof and that of the *Sefirot* is pointedly expressed in this passage from the *Zohar*:

Behold in one word everything is connected, and that mystic word (*ve-raza de-millah*) is I AM ('*ehyeh*, Exodus 3:14). This includes all. When the highways are closed and are not spread out (*ve-la mitparshan*) but are together in one place, He is called I AM. Everything is sealed (*satim*) and not revealed ('*itgalayya*). But after the beginning (*shayruta*), when that river has been impregnated to draw everything forth, then He is called WHAT ('*asher*) I SHALL BE. This means, therefore ('*al ken*), I SHALL BE ('*ehyeh*). I will be prepared for the future (*zamim*) to draw forth and give birth to everything. I AM means, now (*hashia*) I am He who includes everything as an undifferentiated whole (*kellala*) without any parts (*perata*). WHAT I SHALL BE means that the 'mother' will be impregnated and be prepared for the future to bring forth all the particulars and to reveal the exalted Name.<sup>20</sup>

The *Zohar* finds a finitizing element in the word '*asher*'—'what.' This *what* marks the transition from absolute transcendence to transcendent relationality in God. The process of emanation ('*azilut*) is a preparation for the act of creation (*beri'ah*). For it is in creation that the relationality of God will find the objects which it intends and in which it will become immanent.

The distinction between *Deus absconditus* and *Deus revelatus* is especially clear in the following passage from the *Zohar*:

He (*hu*) is concealed and not revealed, for the Torah comes from the upper world (*me'alma 'ila'ah*) and in every place He is the upper world which is not revealed. . . . That is why He is called "He" and not "You" (*hu ve-la 'attah*). . . . Everywhere there are two worlds: that which is revealed and that which is concealed (*ve-da b'itikasya*). And we indeed declare God blessed in these two worlds, as it says in Scripture, "blessed be the Lord God of Israel from world to world" (*me'olam 'ad 'olam*, Psalms 106:48). For the upper world we call "He" and the lower world we call "You."<sup>21</sup>

This passage builds upon a peculiarity of Hebrew, especially the liturgical Hebrew of the rabbis. For a blessing (*berakhah*) begins in

the second person, as a direct address: "blessed are You, Lord" (*barukh 'attah, Ha-Shem*), but concludes in the third person, as an assertion, for example: "who has ('*asher*) given the true Torah to us."<sup>22</sup> On this peculiarity, it seems as though the author of the *Zohar* has built a major theological point: that the human response to God's blessedness intends both divine relationality and divine aseity. For it is clearly in the world of creation alone that God allows Himself to be addressed as "You," that is, He allows human creatures to be related to Him and thus brings Himself into a relationship with them.<sup>23</sup> But human worshippers must always be aware that God is never exhausted by this relationship.<sup>24</sup> Paul Tillich (d. 1965) analyzed the same theological question as it appears in the metaphysical thinking of the West, from which Kabbalah cannot be divorced:

Theological criticism of these attempts is easy if the concepts are taken in their proper sense, for then they make God finite, dependent on a fate or accident which is not himself. . . . But this is not the way in which these concepts should be interpreted. They point symbolically to a quality of divine life which is analogous to what appears as dynamics in the ontological structure. The divine creativity, God's participation in history, his outgoing character, are based on this dynamic element. It includes a "not-yet," which is, however, always balanced by an "already" within the divine life.<sup>25</sup>

Tillich's distinction between the "not-yet" and the "already" in the divine life can be useful, it seems to me, in analyzing the Kabbalistic distinction between God as 'Eyn Sof and God as *Sefirot*.

#### 4. Finitization and Freedom

Some Kabbalists saw a basic opposition between divine effusion (*hitpashtut*) and divine contraction (*zimzum*). But others saw the two as complementary aspects of the divine descent into relationality.<sup>26</sup> For any differentiation entails limitation. Such inner divine preparation for relationship with human creatures is described by the sixteenth-century Safed Kabbalist Rabbi Moses Cordovero:

Through ten utterances, that is, *sefirot*, was the world created. The Holy-One-blessed-be-He caused ten *sefirot* to emanate, and He combined within them the effusion of revelation (*shef'a gilluy*) of His splendor in the most complete unity (*bi-takhlū ha-yihud*) to create the world through them. By means of them [He created] all the worlds and the creatures which are limited and determined (*ba'alei gevul ve-takhlū*). And the ten *Sefirot* of emanation shine and are linked together (*u-mishtalshalot*) . . . for creation, formation (*yezirah*) and making (*'asayah*), through a mighty *zimzum*. For if between the Source-of-emanation-blessed-be-He and the world there were not the order (*sefer*) of the *Sefirot*, it would be impossible for the world, because of its lowliness (*pehituto*) to be led by the 'Eyn Sof.<sup>27</sup>

Here *zimzum* seems to take place not between the *Sefirot* and the 'Eyn Sof, but between the *Sefirot* and creation.<sup>28</sup> The *Sefirot* are not the result of a process of *zimzum* above them. Rather they themselves perform a process of *zimzum* in relation to what is beneath them, namely, the created world. But even here the differentiation and separation are already present in the process of emanation between the 'Eyn Sof and the *Sefirot*. Thus the early sixteenth-century Kabbalist Rabbi Meir ibn Gabbai spoke of the realm of the *Sefirot* as "the power (*ha-koah*) stored and sealed to go forth from potentiality to actuality (*'el ha-po'el*)."<sup>29</sup> If the actuality to be achieved is relationship, then a *zimzum* is present even before creation. For relationship presupposes the limitation of the ego.

In the theology of Rabbi Isaac Luria in sixteenth-century Safed *zimzum* was definitely seen within the Godhead itself. It was not just a condescension required for the process of emanation to lead into finite creation. Rather, it became the very foundation of emanation from the 'Eyn Sof into the ten *Sefirot*. Luria's disciple, Rabbi Hayyim Vital expressed his master's theory as follows:

The essence of this *zimzum* is to reveal the root of judgments, in order to place the attribute of divine judgment (*middat ha-din*) in the worlds. . . . And after this *zimzum*, it seems to me that there remains a vacant place (*meqom he-hallal*), an open and empty space within the light of the 'Eyn Sof itself. It seems to me that this indeed was originally (*kevar*) a place where the emanations, and the created beings, and the beings formed, and the beings made, exist.<sup>30</sup>

The primordial process of finitization was the making of vessels (*kelim*) to hold the diminished light of the emanations. "For in the beginning the light needed to be condensed (*zimzum*) and diminished (*ve-mi'uto*), and by means of this the existence of the vessel would be revealed . . . so that the vessel would be able to subsist and not be destroyed."<sup>31</sup>

For Kabbalists there is no real difference between creation and revelation. Creation is itself an act of revelation. It is not the bringing into existence of something really external to God, but rather God's making room within His own being for a greater diversity. In the theology of Luria and those who followed him, the "vessels" in which God's self-contraction allowed some of His light to be contained are seen primarily as the commandments (*mizvot*) of the Torah. God's ineffable Name is differentiated and finitized in the Torah as divine self-revelation. Thus God's binding Himself to the commandments of the Torah, as it were, does not entail a reduction of God to the control of humans or His confinement within the categories of our world. On the contrary, this binding is now an inner divine act prior to the creation of the world. Our keeping of the commandments with proper intention (*kavvanah*) elevates us as active participants in the inner divine drama. The commandments, despite their mundane phenomenality, are in truth symbols pointing to and participating in a transcendent reality. Here the Kabbalists revived the ancient Rabbinic interest in "the reasons of the commandments" (*ta'amei ha-mizvot*) with a powerful new impetus.<sup>32</sup> By introducing the doctrine of the ten *Sefirot* and the seemingly endless possibilities of relation among them, the Kabbalists multiplied without limit the possibilities for interpreting what the various commandments of the Torah truly intend.

The concern with the inner, spiritual meanings of the commandments is present in Kabbalah from its earliest manifestations. But Luria's theology focused appreciation of the commandments as acts of concentration and spiritual discipline by stressing their cosmic significance on the grandest scale. Rabbi Isaiah Ha-Levi Horowitz, a late sixteenth-century Safed Kabbalist who did much to spread Kabbalistic teachings among a wider mass of Jews, speaks about the significance of the commandments in the same vein:

And the Torah, which is light, subsists through knowledge of the reasons of the commandments and their inner mysteries (*ve-sodeihen*) . . . for the intention of the commandment (*kavvanat ha-mizvah*) is His mysterious Name, may He be exalted. For were it not for this, there would be no connection (*devequt*) of the material aspects of the act to spirituality (*le-ha-ruhaniyut*). . . . And it is evident in the *Zohar* and in the sages of the Truth [that is, Kabbalah] that from the material aspects of the commandment (*me-gashmiyut ha-mizvah*), the Torah and prayer . . . there is no taking hold of (*'ahizah*) and connection to the higher Garden of Eden . . . except through the intentions of the mystic knowledge of His names, may He be exalted.<sup>33</sup>

In the theology of the Hasidic masters, beginning in the eighteenth century, these Kabbalistic doctrines took hold of the imagination and devotion of the largest masses of Jews, those in Eastern Europe. The doctrine that the life of the commandments involves a real participation in the life of God gave an enormous incentive to increased observance and deeper piety. And the doctrine of *zimzum* developed by Luria and his immediate disciples played a key role in this explication of the commandments. We see this in a passage from the writings of one of the most important of the first generation of Hasidic masters in eighteenth-century Poland, the Maggid of Mezeritch:

What it means is that the Holy-One-blessed-be-He contracts Himself and makes Himself manifest (*shoreh*) in this world by means of the Torah and the commandments, which are here in contracted form (*be-zimzum*) and subject to various limiting conditions (*she'urin*). . . . Just as a father who loves his son even though very far from him, concentrates his mind and imagines as though his son's image stood before him, so, as it were (*ki-ve-yakhol*), the Holy-One-blessed-be-He contracts Himself.<sup>34</sup>

By insisting that God, the *'Eyn Sof*, transcends all particularity yet relates Himself to all things through the *Sefirot*, the Kabbalists preserve the Scriptural and Rabbinic theme that all God's acts are freely performed. God's self-contraction to make room for multiplicity is a free act. The relative non-being of *zimzum* is not something eternally existent like Aristotle's relative non-being (*me on*), which is potentiality (*dynamis*) in relation to actual being (*to*

*on*).<sup>35</sup> Both the relative non-being of *zimzum* and the actual being of creatures (*nivra'im*) are the results of God's free will. Vital (presumably following Luria, his teacher) does assert that it was "necessary" (*mukhray*) for God to bring His potential goodness into actuality by creating the world. But he also asserts that this is an act of God's will (*ke-she'alah bi-rezono*). Hence one might say that although God has a compulsion to give forth of His plenitude, it is still His choice *how* and *when* to exercise it. But it must be admitted that Luria and his school, of all the Kabbalists, came closest to the Neoplatonists in their metaphysical qualification of God's freedom.

The Kabbalistic continuation of the classical Jewish doctrine of God's absolute freedom sustains a corresponding doctrine of human freedom of choice. Where Luria saw God as limiting His omnipotence to make *space* for created being, later Kabbalists saw God as limiting His omniscience as well. The eighteenth-century Kabbalist Rabbi Hayyim ibn Attar saw this as a *temporal* limit. For human freedom is the capacity to act into an open future. That future cannot be known in advance, even by God, or it would not be the future—it could not be other than it *already* is known to be. Knowledge follows its object; it does not produce it. Even God can know objects only *after* He has created them. The doctrine of human freedom assumes that God does not create human actions *before* we actually perform them; therefore, even God cannot know them in advance. Present knowledge presupposes an existing object. So the future as such cannot be an object at all. Having no presence/existence (*mezi'ut*, "foundedness") the future *cannot be found*. Thus it is determined by action, not vice-versa.

At this level there seems to be an antinomy between divine omniscience and divine freedom.<sup>36</sup> With their new metaphysical doctrine of *zimzum*, the post-Lurianic Kabbalists had a way out of the apparent antinomy of human freedom versus divine omniscience.<sup>37</sup> It is not that God cannot know the future; rather, God wills not to know the future—so as to allow human freedom, lest the open future collapse into an "eternal now." As Ibn Attar writes:

For I inform you that the Lord is able to cancel (*lishlol*) knowledge that His intellect apprehends, that is, not to know it, when the Lord so wills. Human beings do not have the capacity to do this. . . . Now we can say that at the time of the creation of human beings,

the Lord canceled from His knowledge the [future] sins of man . . . so that the contention of the wicked would have no basis, when they say that God's knowledge necessitates (*makhrahat*) that what it knows will be—Since He already knew that this person would sin as he did, it was necessary (*yithayyev*) that it be so.<sup>38</sup>

Although Ibn Attar uses the term *shellilah* (cancellation) rather than the Lurianic term *zimzum*, *shellilah* is the temporal equivalent of spatial *zimzum*. God limits His power for the sake of creation, especially of human beings, and He limits His knowledge for the sake of human freedom. Divine freedom and human freedom are not just posited, they are correlated in a nexus of complementarity within the Kabbalists' metaphysical articulation and elaboration of Scriptural and Rabbinic themes.

A problem remains in Ibn Attar's formula. Literally, he states that God *had* omniscience and *then* canceled it for the sake of human freedom and responsibility. How does anyone choose to *not-know* what he had previously known? If what is known must be existent, even if the knower chooses to forget the object of knowledge, that object does not cease to exist just because it was forgotten. Even to posit that God's knowledge is *praxis* and not *theoria*, treating it as knowledge *before* the act rather than after it,<sup>39</sup> would not solve Ibn Attar's problem. For such *practical* knowledge can only be that of the actor. For God to have such *practical* knowledge of human acts would require that He, not man, be their author. God's omniscience as theoretical knowledge eliminates the futurity which human freedom presupposes; it makes what must be essentially future past. But God's omniscience as practical knowledge even more directly eliminates human freedom by denying that man is the author of *his own* acts.

I can only suggest the following solution to Ibn Attar's difficulty. One cannot assume that God was omniscient, then created the world, and then chose not to be omniscient about it. But one can say that God chose not to be omniscient *before* He created man in order for man to have the authorship of his own acts and the open future required by freedom and responsibility. In terms of *zimzum*, this would mean that God chose to cancel potential rather than actual knowledge of human action. Power rather than actual deeds is what can be restrained in advance.

### 5. *Zimzum* and Platonic Teleology

I have attempted to show that the Kabbalistic doctrine of *zimzum*, although sharing in the general Neoplatonic problematic of the One and the many, expresses Scriptural and Rabbinic doctrines of divine and human freedom and God's relation to creation. These distinctive Jewish doctrines are at variance with what Plotinus taught. They imply that God's covenantal relationship with His creatures is a good, not a detriment to be overcome or an embarrassment to be explained away. The initial concern is with God's relation to His creatures and, then, correspondingly, with how this relation enables creatures to relate themselves back to God. For Plotinus the ultimate end of this relationship is that it be overcome, that relationality lead to identity, and the many become absorbed into the One. He says:

The One is all things and not a single one of them: it is the principle (*arche*) of all things, not all things, but all things have that other kind of transcendent existence (*ekeinos*); for in a way they do occur in the One (*hoion endrame*); or rather they are not there yet (*oupo estin*), but they will be (*estai*).<sup>40</sup>

For Plotinus, all things do not come from the One in the sense that the One created them. Rather, "a great multiplicity flowed from it as that which is seen to exist in beings, but which we think it right to refer back to the One (*anagein de auto pros ekeino*)."<sup>41</sup> All things are related *to* the One in the sense that they do not truly exist and cannot be understood outside this relation. But the One is not itself related *to* all things in that way at all. It does exist apart from them and in no way requires their existence. The relation is wholly nonreciprocal; there is no genuine interaction between the parties: One side is solely absolute and the other solely contingent. We see much the same in Plato. In the *Timaeus*, the Demiurge creates the cosmos in order to relate unintelligible matter to the intelligible Forms. But the Forms, not the Demiurge, are ultimate reality, and they do not relate themselves actively or reciprocally to anything beneath them.<sup>42</sup> The same can be said of the God of Aristotle, who is not an efficient cause in the Aristotelian scheme.<sup>43</sup>

Some Kabbalists seem to have accepted this Platonic-Aristotelian-Plotinian teleology. They asserted that the purpose of all

human striving is the overcoming of multiplicity and limitation. For Rabbi Hayyim Vital, Luria's chief disciple, the ultimate purpose of all human striving, through the commandments properly intended, is the return of human souls to their pre-*zimzum* union with God.<sup>44</sup> But acceptance of this teleology poses a severe problem for Jewish theologians. For if God created finite multiplicity, why is it His and our goal to overcome it? Did God make a cosmic mistake? Is creation not really good after all, as the Gnostics maintained? Why should God have created it in the first place? Subordinating present relationality to future unification seems to negate the original goodness of God's act of creation and to cancel the worth of created beings.<sup>45</sup> If creation is good, why should it be returned to its source? If creation is to be overcome, why create at all? Why should God have not left everything in its primordial unity? The challenge of Gnosticism is particularly telling for the Neoplatonism of Jews, Christians or Muslims, since their traditional theologies affirm *creatio ex nihilo*. When Kabbalah comes to share the same teleology, which animates so much of medieval theology, more theological problems arise than are solved. It is the demand for a return to pristine unity, I would argue, whether in Kabbalah or in the rationalist theology it attempted to surpass, that must now be set aside or bracketed as a failed experiment.<sup>46</sup> Once this is done, perhaps Kabbalah can be returned to its own true origins as a development of the tradition of Scripture and the rabbis.<sup>47</sup>

### Notes

1. *Responsa Radbaz* (Warsaw, 1882), 4, #1111. Cf. #1151. In #1315 Radbaz calls this the practice of "the sages of Safed," the great center of Kabbalah in his time. I have been unable to find the exact statement in any of the writings ascribed to R. Simon bar Yohai, but the practice seems to be implied in *Zohar*: *Shelah*, 3:175b. See also, R. Moses Isserles, *Darkhei Mosheh* on *Tur*: 'Orah Hayyim, 25, #2, quoting R. Menahem Recanti's *Commentary on the Torah*: *Shelah*, end; R. Abraham Gumbiner, *Magen 'Avraham* on *Shulhan 'Arukh*: 'Orah Hayyim, 25.1, referring to the practice of R. Isaac Luria (Ari). For the Rabbinic practice of scholars wearing *tefillin* all day, see B. Megillah 28a; Maimonides, *Hilkhot Tefillin*, 4.25 and R. Joseph Karo, *Kesef Mishneh* ad loc. The usual reasons given for now wearing

*tefillin* only during weekday morning prayers are as follows: the need for great bodily cleanliness precludes their continual wear by most people (B. Shabbat 49a); *tefillin* were worn by certain charlatans to trick people into believing that they were pious and honest (ibid., Tos., s.v. *k'Elisha*); when wearing *tefillin* one's mind was not to be distracted from their sanctity (R. Nissin Gerondi, *Ran* on *Alfasi*: Shabbat, ch. 4, ed. Vilna, 22b, s.v. *garsinan* and *u-me-d'amar*, quoting B. Sukkah 26ab; *Tur*: 'Orah Hayyim, 37, and R. Joseph Karo, *Bet Yosef* ad loc. Cf. B. Berakhot 30b. Louis Ginzberg in his *Payrushim ve-Hiddushim Bi-Yerushalmi* on Y. Berakhot 2.3/4d (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1941) 1.257-63 suggests very plausibly that the practice ceased to be so public because of Jewish fears of Roman persecution. For later halakhic considerations, see R. Obadiah Yosef, *Yabi'a 'Omer* 1, #36, sec. 15 (Jerusalem: n.p., 1954) 1.127; Jacob Katz, *Halakhah ve-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984).

2. "Schöpfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschränkung Gottes," *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 25 (1956): 90 ff.
3. *Shemot Rabbah* 34.1. See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 6.3, quoting Psalms 29:4 and 19:8; *Pesiqta Rabbati*: Qorbanei Lahmi, ed. Friedmann, 84b.
4. *Shemot Rabbah* 34.1. See *Pesiqta Rabbati*: 'Aharei-Mot, 190a; B. Sanhedrin 7a and Rashi, s.v. "*le-ba-sof*."
5. See my *Halakhah in a Theological Dimension* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), ch. 9.
6. *Pesiqta de-Rab Kahana*: Rosh Hashanah, ed., Mandelbaum, 2.337.
7. *Vayiqra Rabbah* 35.5.
8. Y. Rosh Hashanah 1.3, 57b. See Y. Bikkurim 3.3, 65c; *Pesiqta Rabbati*: Ba-Yom ha-Shemini, 7b; *Tanhumah*: Ki Tissa, printed ed., number 33.
9. B. Baba Mezia 59b. See B. Pesahim 119a ad Psalms 13:1 and Rashbam ad loc.
10. For divine dependence on Israel, see, e.g., B. Berakhot 7a; cf. note of R. Jacob ibn Habib in 'Ayn Ya'akov ad loc. The theme was much developed in Kabbalah, especially in the concept of *zorkhei Gavoha* (divine needs). See, e.g., R. Meir ibn Gabbai, 'Avodat ha-Qodesh (Venice, 1566) 2.2 ff.
11. *Enneads*, V 1.6, Armstrong, 5.30-31.
12. 5.28-29.
13. V 2.1, 5.58-59.
14. See Martin Heidegger, "Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics," tr., W. B. Barton, Jr. and V. Deutsch, in D. F. Krell,

- ed., *Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 265 ff.
15. *Enneads*, V 1.6, 5.28-29.
  16. See *Responsa Ribash* (Constantinople, 1547), number 157; *Zohar*: Bereshit, 1:22b, and I. Tishby, *Mishnat Ha-Zohar* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1961) 2.279-80.
  17. B. Yoma 47a and parallels.
  18. *Parmenides*, 130CD, tr., H. N. Fowler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), 210-11.
  19. See Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 110-11.
  20. *Zohar*: 'Aḥarei-Mot, 3:65ab as emended by Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1957) 1.195. Cf. my *Law and Theology in Judaism* (New York: KTAV, 1974) 1.147-48.
  21. *Zohar*: Vayeze, 1:156b and 158b. See R. Joseph Gikatila, *Sha'arei 'Orah*, sec. 5, ed. Y. Ben-Shlomoh (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1971) 1.189 and sec. 10, 2.115. Cf. M. Berakhot, end.
  22. Cf. the dialectic between prayer as direct petition (*baqashah*) and prayer as less direct praise (*hoda'ah*). See B. Berakhot 31a; B. 'Avodah Zarah 7b-8a; *Zohar*: Vayeze 1:155b (sitrei Torah); Vayishlah 1:169a; Vayehi 1:243b-244a.
  23. See R. Moses di Trani, *Bet 'Elohim* (Venice, 1576), Sha'ar ha-tefillah, ch. 5; he explains that the second person part of the blessing intends God as revealed (*nigleh*) and the third person part intends God as concealed (*nistar*); cf. Sha'ar ha-yesodot, chs. 32-33. See also Nahmanides ad Exodus 15:26; Rabbenu Bahya, *Shulhan shel 'Arba*, sec. 1 in *Kitvei Rabbenu Bahya*, ed. C. B. Chavel (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook, 1970), 467.
  24. The relational aspect of Jewish piety was most profoundly explicated by Martin Buber in *I and Thou*, pt. 3. Cf. Paul Tillich's oblique criticism of the reduction of God to "Thou," *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 62.
  25. *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) 1.246. Tillich was greatly influenced by Schelling. For Schelling's remarkable affinities to Kabbalah, see Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3rd ed., 412, n. 79.
  26. For an emphasis on the opposition, see, e.g., R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liadi, *Tanya* (New York: Kehot, 1967), Sha'ar ha-yihud, ch. 4, 6; R. Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apt, *Torat 'Emet*: Bereshit, quoted in I. Werfel, *Sefer ha-Hasidut* (Tel Aviv: Leinman, 1947) 50a.

27. *Tomer Deborah* (New York: n.p., 1974), intro., 213. See M. Avot 5.1. For early modern discussion of this Jewish doctrine in the light of idealistic philosophy, especially that of Schelling, see R. Nahman Krochmal (d. 1840), *Moreh Nevukhei ha-Zeman*, sec. 17, ed., S. Rawidowicz (London: Ararat, 1961), 306-11.
28. See *Pardes Rimmonim* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1962) 1.2.1; also Y. Ben-Shlomoh, *Torat ha-'Elohit shel Rabbi Mosheh Cordovero* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1965), 98-100.
29. 'Avodat ha-Qodesh 1.1. See, also, R. Abraham ha-Mal'akh, *Hesed l'Abraham*: Terumah, quoted in Werfel 21a.
30. 'Ez Hayyim (Jerusalem: n.p., 1910) 1.11b. See S. A. Horodetzki, *Torat ha-Kabbalah shel 'Ari ve-Rabbi Hayyim Vital* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Hevrah le-Mif'alay ha-Sifrut, 1947), 35 ff.; Adin Steinsaltz, *The Thirteen Petalled Rose*, tr., Y. Hanegbi (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 21-24.
31. 'Ez Hayyim 1.13a.
32. A whole Kabbalistic literature developed on this subject, one of the most popular books in it being R. Menahem Recanti's *Ta'amei ha-Mizvot* (Basel, 1580). An early and seminal version of this new interest is found in Nahmanides (d. 1267), an important precursor of the *Zohar* and subsequent Kabbalah. See, e.g., his comment on Exodus 29:46.
33. *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1963), 2b.
34. *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov* (Satmar: n.p., 1905), 26, 29.
35. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1089a 25.
36. 'Ez Hayyim 1.5a, 11a. See Horowitz, *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit* 14a; Scholem, "Schöpfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschränkung Gottes" 100, 117. For the history of this basic issue in Western philosophy, see A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 48 ff.
37. The tendency to present divine omniscience and human freedom as forming an antinomy is seen as early as M. Avot 3.18 (see Maimonides ad loc.). It was later expressed most explicitly by Maimonides in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*: "Eight Chapters," 8, end, ed., Kafah (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook, 1965) 2.265-66; *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 6.5; *Guide* III 20. Cf. L. E. Goodman, "Determinism and Freedom in Spinoza, Maimonides, Aristotle."
38. 'Or Hayyim ad Gen. 6:5. In medieval Jewish philosophy, *shellilah* has a stronger negative force than Ibn Attar gives it here: It has the force of absolute negation (*ouk on*; see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1089a 15-30). See Maimonides, *Guide* I 58.
39. Cf. David Burrell's paper in this volume.



40. *Enneads* V 2.1, 5.58-59.
41. *Enneads* V 1.6, 5.28-29.
42. See *Timaeus*, 29E ff.; D. Novak, *Suicide and Morality* (New York: Scholars Press, 1975), 33-35.
43. See *Metaphysics* 1072a 25 ff.; W. D. Ross, *Aristotle* (New York: Meridian, 1959), 177 ff. Cf. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, tr., A. Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1944), 350-53.
44. See 'Ez Hayyim 2.66b; also, Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, tr., Werblowsky, 15 ff.
45. In Scriptural-Rabbinic anthropology, the human person is essentially mortal (see 1 Chronicles 29:15), whereas rationalist and Kabbalistic anthropology assign the soul a potentiality for immortality. Death is real and an inherent liability in created goodness (see *Bereshit Rabbah* 9.5 ad Genesis 1:31). Even the Rabbinic doctrine of the resurrection does not imply any human potential for immortality. We do not return to some infinite divine origin. Being embodied, the human person has no such potentiality; see Genesis 3:19. Rather, resurrection manifests God's grace (*Targum Yerushalmi* ad Genesis 30:22; B. Berakhot 34b ad Isaiah 64:3; B. Ta'anit 2ab; B. Sanhedrin 91b ad Deuteronomy 32:39). The life of the world-to-come portends God's power even over death, not man's.
46. For modern Jewish attempts to interpret *zimzum* more psychologically than metaphysically, see Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "The Community," *Tradition* 17 (1978): 15; M. Rotenberg, *Dialogue with Deviance: The Hasidic Ethic and the Theory of Social Contraction* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), esp. 8-16.
47. For a contemporary philosophical argument that divine contraction and divine creativity entail each other, see Robert Neville, *God the Creator* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 83.

## Jewish Kabbalah and Platonism in the Middle Ages and Renaissance

Moshe Idel

### I. Plato in the Kabbalah: An Overview

At the end of the twelfth century Jewish thought underwent several radical changes. The regnant Neoplatonism expressed in the work of such philosophers as Isaac Israeli, Solomon ibn Gabirol, and, in a less explicit manner, Moses and Abraham ibn Ezra and Abraham bar Hiyya, lost its dominance in favor of more Aristotelian ways of thinking like that of Maimonides and Abraham ibn Daud. Later European Jewish philosophy progressed under the aegis of Maimonidean Aristotelianism. But concomitantly with Maimonides' floruit, another speculative trend in Jewish thought began its career as a historical factor, the Provençal Kabbalah. In Provence, the stronghold of this incipient movement, the *Guide of the Perplexed* was translated into Hebrew and began to exercise its impressive influence over Europe. But the nascent Kabbalah was simultaneously emphasizing the Platonic elements in medieval philosophic texts, holding the Maimonidean version of Aristotelianism religiously suspect. The fiery controversy around the Maimonidean writings in Provence and Spain centered on non-philosophical, Halakhic and theological issues.<sup>1</sup> But a need was clearly felt for an alternative to Maimonidean Aristotelianism, and the main, indeed unique,

speculative alternative in the environment of the Maimonidean controversy in Europe was the early Kabbalah, a fountainhead of Neoplatonic concepts, imagery, and mystical cum mythical speculations.<sup>2</sup> The early Kabbalists welcomed ideas explicitly rejected by Maimonides, but even exploited the *Guide* itself to lend credence to a Platonic view actively combatted by Maimonides. R. Ya'akov ben Sheshet, a Catalan Kabbalist, wrote:

God was contemplating the Torah<sup>3</sup> and saw the essences (*havvayot*)<sup>4</sup> in Himself, since the essences were in Wisdom (*Hokhmah*) and discerned that they are prone to reveal themselves. This tradition I heard in the name of R. Isaac son of R. Abraham, of blessed memory.<sup>5</sup> And this was also the opinion of the Rabbi [Moses Maimonides], the author of [*The Book of*] *Knowledge*, who said that He, in knowing Himself, knows all existent creatures.<sup>6</sup> Yet the Rabbi was astonished in Part II, ch. 6 of the *Guide*, at the dictum of our Sages that God does not do anything before He contemplates His retinue (*Pamalia*), and he quoted there the dictum of Plato, that God, blessed be He, does contemplate the intellectual world and causes to emanate therefrom the emanation [which produces] reality.<sup>7</sup>

The Kabbalist here juxtaposes two discussions of Maimonides: in the *Mishneh Torah* the author presents his view, stemming ultimately from Themistius, about God containing the forms of all existents and thus knowing them by way of self-knowledge;<sup>8</sup> discussing a different issue in the *Guide*, Maimonides sharply opposes a simplistic interpretation of the Midrashic dictum that God created the world by contemplating the Torah as the blueprint of reality. To the Kabbalist the two views seem to be equivalent. Thus his surprise at Maimonides' inconsistency in accepting the first while rejecting the second. Since the position of R. Isaac the Blind, cited before Maimonides' views, must be the truth for Ben Sheshet, Maimonides' critique is implicitly rejected, and the Platonic view mentioned in the *Guide* is deemed correct. R. Ezra of Gerona was similarly anxious about "misinterpretation" of Maimonides' Midrashic view.<sup>9</sup> The Ben Sheshet passage, to which we shall return, illustrates the eagerness of the Kabbalists to exploit the hierarchical structure of Neoplatonism in mediating between the divine and the lower realms.

The Aristotelian transcendent theology of Maimonides is unwelcome in view of these motivations.

Concurrently with the rise of the early Kabbalah, Neoplatonic themes were exerting their influence on the mystical movement that developed in Ashkenazi esoteric theology, although penetrating through channels that escape modern scholarship.<sup>10</sup> The geographic areas of the two centers of Jewish learning in which Neoplatonism reverberates are not remote from each other. Perhaps some influences penetrated before the Ashkenazi and Provençal types of Jewish mysticism went their separate ways.<sup>11</sup> But the two movements independently underwent further Neoplatonic influences.

As Maimonidean thinking spread in Spain, fears about its implications fostered a more negative attitude toward Maimonides and his source, Aristotle. From the thirteenth century examples can be collected in which Aristotelian views adopted in the *Guide* were criticized obliquely, attributed only to Aristotle or to Maimonists like Samuel ibn Tibbon.<sup>12</sup> If Epicurus was the *bête noire* of the ancient sages, conservative medieval Jews conceived of Aristotle as the root of theological errors. This image of the Stagirite opened the way for the positive reception of Plato. At the beginning of the fourteenth century we find an adaptation of a legend dealing with the history of Greek medicine,<sup>13</sup> in which the Italian Kabbalist R. Menahem Recanati inserts the name of Aristotle:

There are several testimonies as to persons burned by the "path of the turning sword," and all of them were masters of the ancient philosophy. Most of their sayings were close to those of our sages, of blessed memory. And since then [the burning] they disappeared, and Aristotle came with his wicked disciples, and deviated completely from the way of the Torah, following their own speculations and demonstrations, which the masters of Kabbalah recognized as illusory (*ahizat 'eynayyim*).<sup>14</sup>

The ancient philosophers are anonymous and forgotten; the watershed is Aristotle, who is responsible for the ruin of knowledge.

By the end of the first third of the fifteenth century, Greek philosophy was epitomized among the Kabbalists in a manner highly sympathetic to Plato:

The views of the ancient philosophers like Plato seem to be close to the views of the Torah, but those who came later did not understand his thinking. For they were as insignificant as the heretics of our nation.<sup>15</sup>

Like his fourteenth-century predecessor Menahem Recanati, R. Shem Tov ben Shem Tov, who formulated this admiring view of Plato, was clearly anti-Aristotelian. He relates that he became acquainted with Plato through followers of Aristotle,<sup>16</sup> whose views diverge from Plato's. But Plato's thought was seen as consonant with Jewish piety, not through a profound study of the Platonic corpus (which was unavailable to Jews in the West, as it was to their Christian contemporaries), but precisely because Plato's works (unlike those of Aristotle) were inaccessible and therefore, according to R. Shem Tov, could not possibly have influenced Kabbalistic thought. From an anonymous hand in the generation of the Expulsion from Spain, we read:

those books [the *Sefer Yezirah* and *Sefer Enoch*] in their entirety fell into the hands of the Greeks, who took them from the academy of Solomon in Jerusalem. And the sayings of the early Greeks, up to Plato, were almost religious views, taken from there. In vain did they attribute every science and tradition to their own investigations. In fact they found them written in these books. Then came Aristotle and his companions and they plagiarized them in their flattering language, and all the world followed them.

Aristotle was seen by R. Shem Tov and by the anonymous author just quoted as the source of a pernicious shift in Greek thought: The ancient Greek sages held views close to those of the Torah, and Plato is the paragon of sound theology.

With the coming of the Renaissance and the translation of the bulk of the Platonic and Neoplatonic corpus, Platonic philosophy became a live option for the elite. Christians and Jews alike could now enjoy the writings of the ancient philosopher, who moved to the center of intellectual life in many circles all over Europe. The impact of this Platonic revolution shaped European thought for more than a century, but Jewish intellectuals in close contact with the Florentine thinkers were the chief catalysts. The main body of Jewish thought

underwent only a tangential influence from the luxuriant growth of Neoplatonic literature now available in Latin or Italian. Steeped in the medieval Aristotelianism that was already constitutive to the speculative patrimony of Judaism, most philosophically inclined Jews remained relatively indifferent to the disclosure of the authentic Plato. The Neoplatonic corpus translated by Marsilio Ficino remained untranslated into Hebrew. In a period when Jews were key translators of Aristotelian material into Latin, as with the translations of Eliahu del Medigo, Abraham de Balmes, and Jacob Mantino, the Jewish elite were only rarely interested in the Neoplatonic trend of thought that was expanding its influence among Christian intellectuals.

But at the close of the fifteenth century the pejorative mentions of Platonism common among Jewish Aristotelians gave way to much more positive attitudes. R. Yehudah Messer Leon, a committed Aristotelian, compared Platonism contemptuously to Kabbalah. But his son was interested in Kabbalah and described Plato as the divine master, just as his Christian contemporaries did.<sup>17</sup> The number of printed quotations by Jews from the Latin Platonic corpus in the last quarter of the fifteenth century is minuscule. But there was another type of influence of Ficino's translations: If direct quotations from the Latin are rare, the interest in medieval Jewish and Arabic Neoplatonism was incomparably greater, and was paralleled and supported by heightened interest in the Kabbalah.<sup>18</sup> Derided by the Aristotelian intellectual establishment of the fifteenth century, the Kabbalah gradually became the center of Jewish culture. The same trend is evident in Christian thought in Florence, where the deep interest in Neoplatonism was coupled with the introduction of Kabbalah as an exotic graft onto Christian theology. The Christian interest marks a sharp departure from medieval reticence about pagan philosophy and magic on the one hand and Jewish mysticism on the other.<sup>19</sup> Among Jews the renewed interest in the Neoplatonic legacy is a return to the medieval tradition, at least partially motivated by the Christian rediscovery of Platonic thought.

Why the slight response, then, to the translations of Ficino? Jews active in Florence, close to the circle of Ludovico de Medici, deliberately refrained from immersing themselves in the new world cultivated by their neighbors. Apparently, late fifteenth-century Jews retained a certain medieval selectivity about the sources they would

quote explicitly. They openly cite the Arabic authors, who provide the problematic and background of medieval Jewish philosophy. But they tend not to mention Christian philosophy, even when it influences them. This hypothesis was proposed by Shlomo Pines in discussing the use or abuse of scholastic thought by medieval Jewish thinkers, and mooted again in the case of Leone Ebreo,<sup>20</sup> to whom we shall return. I propose to expand this point to the relationship of Renaissance Jewish thinkers in general to the Platonic, Neoplatonic and Hermetic literatures and the related writings of Pico and Ficino. The material quoted explicitly may be rare, but the impact of the intellectual movement is profound. Rather than focus only on explicit materials, I propose to work inductively to assay the influence of Christian thought on Jews in the first stages of the Renaissance.

Strangely enough, Plato, the philosopher who for some medieval Kabbalists seemed closest to the Jewish religion, became suspect in the eyes of most of the Renaissance Jews who could benefit from study of his works. Evidently he was much more welcome as a legendary representative of lost Greek lore than as a philosopher to be openly cultivated. But an important exception is the famous *Dialoghi d'Amore* of Leone Ebreo, the key exponent of Renaissance Jewish Neoplatonism, whose influence on the Renaissance in general was wide and profound. More than any other Jewish thinker Leone Ebreo profited from Renaissance Christian Neoplatonism.<sup>21</sup> So consideration of his response to Plato may contribute to a more nuanced description of Jewish Renaissance Neoplatonism. Pines emphasizes the medieval Arabic philosophical sources of the theory of love enunciated by Ebreo, and I have suggested another possible Arabic source.<sup>22</sup> I find much less openness to the Christian Neoplatonists than is often supposed, and Arthur Lesley has come to similar conclusions.<sup>23</sup> Ebreo knew Florentine Neoplatonism but did not consider it the apex of philosophy, and, as I shall show elsewhere, he criticized Ficino's handling of some Platonic issues. Following medieval Jewish sources, Ebreo saw Plato as dependent on Mosaic revelation and even as a disciple of the ancient Kabbalists; Aristotle was a disciple of Plato who did not understand clearly all that his mentor had learned from his Jewish masters.<sup>24</sup> The story is reminiscent of Kabbalistic treatments.

With the establishment of Neoplatonism as a major focus of

European thought, from the beginning of the sixteenth century, its influence on the interpretation of Jewish Kabbalah becomes more and more visible. By the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, Neoplatonic speculations dominate the thinking of many Italian and other European Kabbalists, eager to quote substantially from Platonic and Neoplatonic sources, ancient, medieval and contemporary.<sup>25</sup> Let me explore one point of impact of Neoplatonic thought on Kabbalah during the medieval and Renaissance periods.

## II. The *Sefirot* and Hebrew Letters as Neoplatonic Ideas

### A. Neoplatonic Influences in the Early Kabbalah

A key source of Kabbalistic theosophy and cosmology is the short treatise known as the *Sefer Yezirah*. Tantalizing its many commentators for centuries, the work remains an enigma for modern scholarship. At the very beginning of the work Kabbalists found reference to two basic elements necessary to the creation of the world: the ten *Sefirot*, originally ten mythic numbers, and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. According to the medieval Kabbalists, these elements are important not only as instruments of the act of creation, but also, perhaps especially, in constituting the Kabbalistic *Deus revelatus*, God revealed as and through the *pleroma* of the ten *Sefirot*. The mystic numbers preceded creation and were crucial not only to the world's emergence but also to its continued existence. In the early Kabbalah the *Sefirot* and letters were active forces appointed over the universe and susceptible to influence by human activity. The events of their dynamic formed the life of God.<sup>26</sup> The history of Kabbalistic theosophy is to some extent the history of various understandings of the *Sefirot* and the letters. The fortunes of the *Sefirot* are an index of the growth of Neoplatonism in the Kabbalah.<sup>27</sup>

The view of R. Isaac the Blind cited by Ben Sheshet affirms the existence of all essences in the second *Sefirah*, *Hokhmah*, which plays the role of the divine intellect and thus comprises the world of ideas. The same Provençal master is quoted elsewhere by Ben

Sheshet about the nature of the *havvayot*: "The beginning (*hathalar*) of the *havvayot* is one."<sup>28</sup> 'Beginning' here points to the first *Sefirah*, referred to by Ben Sheshet as a subtle and fine *havvayah*. Thus, passage from the first to the second *Sefirah* is passage from unity to multiplicity, although the multiplicity is realized fully as such only in the third *Sefirah*, *Binah*. Ben Sheshet thus places the essences or ideas in a container that is neither wholly "extradeical" nor wholly "intradeical." For the second *Sefirah* is identical with God's thought, yet distinct from the Highest phase of the divine, the 'Eyn Sof or Infinite. According to the Kabbalist, Maimonides is perfectly right to agree that God contemplates all things by an act of Self-knowing. But the "great eagle" was wrong to oppose the recognition of a certain distance between the contemplator and the realm of the ideas.<sup>29</sup>

Ben Sheshet's conception of the second *Sefirah* as the container of the essences is part of a broader Neoplatonic scheme. Explaining the word 'Ayn, nothingness, he writes:

*Alef* points to the Will, which [reaches] the 'Eyn Sof. . . . *Yod* points to *Hokhmah* . . . and the *Nun*, to the emergence of things from *Hokhmah*.<sup>30</sup>

So the divine will is the starting point of emanation, the *alpha* of the whole process of expansion in the divine world; it is identical to the first *Sefirah*. The *Yod*, pointing to *Hokhmah*, symbolizes the intellectual; the third letter refers to the multiplicity that emerges from the essences comprised in the second *Sefirah*. Although the text does not state it explicitly, the numerical value of the Hebrew letters hints at the emergence of multiplicity from unity: *Alef* (one) is unity; *Yod* (ten) is the decad of primary essences in *Hokhmah*, and *Nun* (fifty) stands for the full fledged multiplicity of the third *Sefirah*, *Binah*, traditionally connected to this number in a long series of texts. Ben Sheshet writes:

This is the statement of the philosopher who arranged four [things]: the Intellect, the Will, the spiritual (*ha-nafshi*), and the natural (*ha-tiv'i*). The Will is the divine will; under it is the Intellect, that is, the Active Intellect; under that, the Soul, i.e., the intellectual soul; under it, the natural. We see that *Alef* in our terms (*bi-*

*leshonenu*) corresponds to the divine Will in their terms, and *Yod* in our terms corresponds to the Active Intellect in theirs, etc.<sup>31</sup>

Thus the Kabbalist was aware of a philosophical position paralleling his own and quite like the Plotinian scheme of the Arabic Long Version of the *Theology of Aristotle*, with the divine will placed above *Nous*.<sup>32</sup> The scheme is reinterpreted in Kabbalistic terms, with Will as the first *Sefirah*, Intellect as the second, Soul apparently identified with the third, and Nature consigned to the lower *Sefirot*. This Kabbalist is well aware of the foreign source of the doctrine and acknowledges the difference in terminology but remains convinced that the concepts correspond. A similar view is found in Ben Sheshet's compatriot and contemporary R. Azriel:

The words of the wisdom of the Torah and the words of the aforementioned masters of investigation (*ba'alei ha-meqar*) are as one (*sheneihem ke'ahat*). Their way is one, and there is no difference between them but the terms alone, since the investigators did not know enough to give the proper name to every part.<sup>33</sup>

Only the Kabbalists, R. Azriel urges, who received traditions from the Prophets, know how to designate each entity appropriately. But the philosophers are not to be cast aside—at least not all of them. Aristotle and Plato approximated the wisdom of the Kabbalists.<sup>34</sup> The views quoted in their names are, of course, purely Neoplatonic and have little to do directly with the actual teaching of the two Greek philosophers.<sup>35</sup>

The stance of the two Geronese Kabbalists as to the congruence of Kabbalah and Neoplatonism is not found earlier. But a similar cosmology surfaces in the theosophy of R. Azriel. He too conceptualizes the *Sefirot* in a distinctly Plotinian manner. At the highest level is an Unseen or Invisible world ('*Olam ha-Ne'elam*'), paralleled in Ben Sheshet and elsewhere in Azriel, by the divine Will.<sup>36</sup> Next comes the Intellectual World ('*Olam ha-Muskal*'); then, the sensory ('*Olam ha-Murgash*'), paralleling the world of the Soul in the Plotinian scheme; and finally, the Natural World ('*Olam ha-Mutba'*').<sup>37</sup> In postulating the existence of all the worlds in the divine realm, these Kabbalists seem to intend the idea that all

perfections are contained in the divine and then displayed in the emanative process.

By identifying *Hokhmah* with the Universal or Active Intellect, Ben Sheshet is assuming that all the forms, or ideas, exist there. Yet he rejects the Neo-Aristotelian view of the Active Intellect as given charge over the sublunar world and places it on a higher level, as in the Plotinian cosmology. The second *Sefirah* is identical with the Torah and God's Throne, the essence of which is grasped intellectually.<sup>38</sup> Thus the second *Sefirah* is an intellectual entity, and a conscious one, the object of its thought being the *dimyonot*—visions, images, archetypes, or forms.<sup>39</sup> Here the last may be the best rendering: The divine intellect thinks the forms, much as the human mind does. In a passage reminiscent of Ben Sheshet, R. Azriel, explains:

The 32 wondrous paths of *Hokhmah* are the ten *Sefirot* of *Belimah* and the 22 letters. Each has its own distinctive path, and their beginning is the Will, which precedes everything. Nothing is outside it, and it is the cause of Thought (*Ma'hashavah*). The *Sefirot* and the paths, and all that will be created out of them in the future—everything—is hidden in the *Ma'hashavah* and revealed in its paths: in the paths of Speech (*Dibbur*) and the paths of Deed (*Ma'aseh*). 'He contemplates the Torah' means that He contemplated the *Ma'hashavah*—the paths included in it, and drew each one from the beginning . . . and in the forms (*dimyonei*) of that *Ma'hashavah* the words and deeds were prefigured (*niztayyru*), since the *Ma'hashavah* is the root.<sup>40</sup>

The pre-existence of the roots of speech and deeds in divine thought is compared by R. Azriel with the pre-existence of form and *hyle* in divine thought according to the Neoplatonic sources he quotes. But the philosophers deal only with entities; the Kabbalist is concerned as well with speech and deeds as dynamic processes comprehended in the *Ma'hashavah*. The verb *niztayyru* means both figured and imagined. The same root occurs again, along with the term *dimyon* in relation to deeds, in the work of another Geronese Kabbalist who might have known the work of R. Azriel, R. Moses ben Nahman, the famous Nahmanides:

Whatever occurred to the Fathers is a sign to the sons (Genesis Rabbah 40, 8). When Scripture expatiates on the story of their travels, the digging of wells, and other events, one may think it redundant or otiose, but all is there to teach of the future. For whenever something happens to a prophet or the three Patriarchs, he may understand from it what is predestined for his progeny. Know that every divine decision, wherever it turns from the potentiality of a decree into the actuality of a *dimyon*, will be fulfilled, regardless of the circumstances. . . . Thus God kept [Abraham] in the land [of Israel] and created for them *dimyonot* of whatever He purposed to do to his progeny.<sup>41</sup>

Here the destiny of the Patriarchs is linked to a *dimyon*, just as deeds were connected to a *dimyon* by R. Azriel. The root *z-y-r* is used again in a similar context in Nahmanides:

Scripture here concludes the Book of Genesis, which is the Book of Formation, concerning the creation of the world and all created things, and the events in the lives of the Fathers, which were formative for their progeny—for all their experiences are prefigurations (*ziyyurei devarim*) that hint and presage all that will come to pass in the future.<sup>42</sup>

Here, as in R. Azriel, everything is contained in the Torah, an assumption of which Ben Sheshet was especially fond.<sup>43</sup> Nahmanides does not elaborate on the relation between future events and the creation but leaves obscure just how the acts of the Fathers determine the fate of their progeny. Amos Funkenstein proposes that the Christian term *figura*, indicating the prefiguration of later events by earlier ones, is the basis of Nahmanides' *ziyyur*. He gives 'similitude' as the correct translation of *dimyon*.<sup>44</sup> But since the metaphysical background of Nahmanides' usage is corroborated in the discussions of his compatriots and contemporaries Rabbis Azriel and Ben Sheshet, I think we should understand his terms and views in the light of their discussions. The *Sefirah* of *Hokhmah*, or *Ma'hashavah* in Azriel's text, includes the forms not only of the things to be created but also of all future deeds and words. The specifically Kabbalistic conception of prefiguration would be underlyingly Neoplatonic, although the Neoplatonism is of a distinctive type. It involves not only the classical correspondence of terrestrial objects to ideas, but also the prefiguration of acts and utterances in the divine

intellect. Nahmanides supplies an example from the realm of deeds.

Turning to the realm of speech, we find that Ben Sheshet interpreted the *intellecta* of *Hokhmah* as the roots of the Hebrew letters:

*Hokhmah* emerges from the Nothingness (*me-'Ayn*),<sup>45</sup> and *Binah* from the *Alef*, and the *Alef* points to a subtle entity (*Havvayah daqqah*) out of which the *Hokhmah* comes into existence . . . it is the beginning of all the essences (*havvayot*) . . . the *Yod* points to the *Hokhmah*, which is the Beginning. . . . And out of the *Hokhmah*, the letters were emanated and engraved in the spirit of the *Binah*, and the essence of the letters is that they are the forms of all creatures, and there is no form which has not a likeness in the letters or in the combination of two or three of them or more.<sup>46</sup>

The Plotinian ideas are the essences of all things, existing in an intellectual container, the second *Sefirah* according to the Kabbalists, and are identical with the roots of the Hebrew letters. Moreover, these letters, as forms, have an important Neoplatonic characteristic: Following the view of R. Isaac the Blind, Ben Sheshet indicates that "each letter comprises all the others."<sup>47</sup> This formulation is reminiscent of the Proclean view applied to the Platonic ideas, that "all is in all."<sup>48</sup> The view of the letters as the ideas in *Hokhmah* harmonizes with the view, expressed several times in Ben Sheshet's writings, that identifies the second *Sefirah* with the Torah, which is in turn conceived as containing all the sciences.

R. Ya'akov ben Sheshet and R. Azriel of Gerona do not mention each other, but their work seems to be distinctive in the Geronese Kabbalah—distinct even from the thinking of R. Ezra of Gerona and Nahmanides. The latter were less interested in philosophy in general and in Neoplatonism in particular; they lack the fourfold cosmology and do not mention an affinity between philosophy and Kabbalah. Ben Sheshet need not have innovated these views, but the integration of the scheme may result from his work, perhaps together with that of R. Azriel. The view that *Hokhmah* includes the letters that contain each other can be reconstructed from the writings and fragments of R. Isaac the Blind. So we may assume that the Plotinian view of the second *Sefirah* and of language as a prototype was already present in the Provençal Kabbalah. A similar view is found in a text of R.

Asher ben David, nephew of R. Isaac the Blind: "for the power of one (*Sefirah*) is in the other, since each *middah* is contained in the other."<sup>49</sup> Thus it seems that the principle of Proclus is applied, at the very inception of the Kabbalah, not only to the letters but also to the *Sefirot*.

The affinity between Neoplatonic and Kabbalistic conceptions, then, reaches far beyond the residues of Neoplatonism found in the nascent Kabbalah. For we see it in the adaptation of philosophical terminology in the writings of at least two important Kabbalists. Both R. Azriel and Ben Sheshet were innovative authors who openly exposed Kabbalah, apparently for the first time, to an audience beyond that of immediate disciples.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps they were ready to acknowledge the correspondence between Kabbalistic and Neoplatonic concepts because of their commitment to propagating the Kabbalah. Again, an author who believed that an ancient philosopher acknowledged the same ontological structure as the Kabbalah may have been less inclined to keep to himself the previously esoteric doctrines. What was disclosed would not be wholly novel to his audience.<sup>51</sup> Thus the first author to mention the affinity between the Platonic ideas and the *Sefirot* was R. Yehudah Romano, an Italian thinker well acquainted with scholastic theology and so with the Platonic ideas.<sup>52</sup>

### B. Platonic Ideas and Renaissance Kabbalah

Faced with the more elaborate Platonic views presented in the translations of Ficino and his followers, the Kabbalists' response is less positive than that of R. Ya'akov and R. Azriel at the beginning of the thirteenth century. These compared one view of Plato, as quoted by Maimonides, with a central doctrine of the most important early Kabbalist, in the case of Ben Sheshet, or with the analogous treatments drawn from authentic Neoplatonic texts, in the case of R. Azriel, and they did so without disparagement of Plato. On the contrary, it was Maimonides who was criticized for resisting the Platonizing notion of archetypal essences in divine thought. R. Eliahu del Medigo, a late fifteenth-century Aristotelian who rejected both Platonism and Kabbalah, sees the Platonic background of Kabbalistic thinking as a detriment. His commentary on *De*

*Substantia Orbis* reports on the Kabbalistic doctrine of the *Sefirot* and concludes that, "These opinions were taken from the propositions of the early philosophers, particularly from Plato." On this basis, he questions the orthodoxy of Kabbalah and the legitimacy of its provenance as Jewish lore.<sup>53</sup> A more balanced appraisal is found in Isaac Abravanel:

For of necessity things exist as a figuration<sup>54</sup> in the mind of the agent before they come into being. Indubitably this image is the world of the *Sefirot* mentioned by the Kabbalistic sages of true wisdom, [who said] that the *Sefirot* are the divine figurations with which the world was created. Thus they said that the *Sefirot* are not created but emanated, and that all of them are united together in Him, blessed be His name, for they are the figurations of His loving-kindness and His willing what He created. In truth, Plato set down the doctrine of separate universal forms not as Aristotle understood them.<sup>55</sup>

The affinity between Plato's "separate universal forms" and the *sefirot* is presented without any historical claims. The similarity is simply observed. But Isaac Abravanel believed that Plato studied with Jeremiah in Egypt and received his knowledge from the prophet.<sup>56</sup>

As long as a Kabbalist could present Plato as a more venerable alternative to the pernicious doctrine of Aristotelianism, Plato served as a valuable foil, paralleling and in a way corroborating Kabbalistic themes. But when the Platonic corpus becomes a potential rival to traditional views, Jewish authors begin to stress not Plato's affinity to Kabbalah but his discipleship of a prophet. Rather than allow for two independent sources of knowledge, Mosaic and Greek, they preferred to see the truth and the highest insights as one, stemming ultimately from the Mosaic revelation, accepted by Plato, but distorted by Aristotle. Aristotelianism, in any case, was less influential among Renaissance Jews than among their medieval forebears, and so less threatening. R. Yohanan Alemanno, a companion of Pico della Mirandola, writes:

The ancients believed in the existence of ten spiritual numbers. . . . It seems that Plato thought that there are ten spiritual numbers of which one may speak, although one may not speak of the First Cause,

because of Its great concealment. However, [the numbers] approximate its existence so closely that we may call these effects by a name that cannot be ascribed to the movers of corporeal bodies. Indeed, in the opinion of the Kabbalists, one may say this of the *Sefirot*. . . . This is what Plato wrote in the work *Ha-'Azamim ha-'Elyonim*, as quoted by Zechariah in the book *Imrei Shefer*.<sup>57</sup> From this it follows that in Plato's view the first effects are called *Sefirot* because they may be numbered, unlike the First Cause, and therefore he did not call them movers.<sup>58</sup>

Alemanno here links the terms *Sefirot* and *Misparim*, numbers. Both were considered "separate," i.e., spiritual, beings, so he could assume that their apparent common root was no accident. The passage implies that "Plato" (sc., Proclus, in the *Liber de Causis*, quoted here in an otherwise unknown translation) presented a doctrine of disembodied numbers similar to the Kabbalistic *Sefirot*, and that he held these views independently. But elsewhere Alemanno repeats the view that Plato studied with Jeremiah.<sup>59</sup>

Alemanno is interested in the *Sefirot* mainly for cosmological reasons. In a roundnote of his in the margin of a quotation from the commentary of R. Yehudah Hayyat, a Spanish Kabbalist, on *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, we read:

They said that the *Sefirot* are intermediary between the world of the eternal rest that is *'Eyn Sof*, and the world of motion, that is, the world of the spheres. This is why they are sometimes in a state of rest and sometimes in motion—as is the nature of the intermediary, composed as it is from the extremes.<sup>60</sup>

The Spanish Kabbalist copied by Alemanno held a dynamic view of the *Sefirot*, as linked to human activity and the fulfillment of the commandments. But Alemanno preferred to see the *Sefirot* as intermediary, their motion caused by their ontic status and not influenced by human acts.

In the works of R. Yehiel Nissim of Pisa, whose grandfather was Alemanno's patron, and whose uncle, R. Isaac of Pisa, was Alemanno's student, we find a similar stance, but with a peculiar emphasis:



The upper creatures are a model for the lower. For every lower thing has a superior power, from which it came into existence. This resembles the relationship of the shadow to the object that casts it. . . . Even the ancient philosophers such as Pythagoras and Plato taught and expounded about this. But the matter was not revealed to them clearly; they walked in darkness and attained but did not attain (*noge'a ve'eino noge'a*), since the universals and the forms indicated by Plato only hinted at this. . . . And since they did not receive the truth as it is but groped like the blind in darkness, such were their speculation and their sayings. But we shall hold to the words of our ancient sages, which are true and were received from the prophets, blessed be their memory. And we shall conclude that if this is so, and the lower things need the higher, this being a strict necessity, and the higher beings need the lower, to a limited extent, the entire world proves to be one individual (*ke'ish ehad*), and in this manner each particular thing will be attributed to the ten *Sefirot*, as if you were to say that a particular creature were to be attributed to a certain *Sefirah*.<sup>61</sup>

The nexus between the *Sefirot* and lower beings is seen as similar to that proposed in the Platonic and Neopythagorean theories of ideas and numbers. But the pagan philosophers did not receive the clear truth but a dim glimmering, inferior to the vision of the Jewish sages and prophets. The limited dependence of the upper on the lower is the obvious difference: The *Sefirot* need human acts of worship to function perfectly, a view that is alien to Plato. R. Yehiel ascribes the possibility of influencing the supernal powers to the anthropomorphic structure of the Sefirotic realm. Man reflects this structure in his shape and so can influence it by his deeds. This central claim of the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah is elaborated by the Italian Kabbalist in the discussion that follows the passage just quoted. Elsewhere R. Yehiel soundly portrays the affinity and the distance between the two types of thought:

From the words of Plato it seems that he is close to the view of the Sages, of blessed memory, when he says that the lower and corporal world is in the likeness and image of the upper world. He also said that there are forms in the divine mind called universals (*kelalim*), which resemble the individuals. Still it seems to me that he did not penetrate deeply enough to know truly the profound sense of the Torah and her sages, blessed be their memory, but remained

outside the court: He attained and he did not attain. Thus he and the other ancients could not know the true quintessence of things, although they came close, as it was said in the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*: They are close to the path of truth.<sup>62</sup>

Here too there follows a lengthy discussion on the centrality of man in ensuring the unity of the world. The deepest knowledge is not the awareness of the paradigmatic relations but the grasp of the dynamic influence on the higher world of religious acts fulfilling the *mizvot*. Plato knew the starting point of Kabbalah, the structural parallel of the higher to the lower, but the ultimate significance of the parallelism in practical and religious life escaped him. It is as though the Kabbalist were locating Plato in the cave, as one who had not received the clear revelation of the truth from its source. He is still dependent on the shadows, unlike the Kabbalists, whose knowledge of the truth is complete. Thus the reference to the palace of Maimonides' *Guide* (III 51), indicating that Plato lacks the inmost secrets of theology.

The dynamic interaction characteristic of Jewish theurgical mysticism disappears in another comparison of the Platonic ideas with the *Sefirot*, in R. Abraham Yagel's encyclopedic *Beit Ya'ar ha-Levanon*:

And the power that is in the lower beings is found in the upper worlds in a subtler, more exalted and sublime way. It is found in great purity and clarity in the holy, pure *Sefirot*, which are the truth, the *ideae* for all things.<sup>63</sup>

Yagel does not pursue the historical significance of the relation between the Ideas and the *Sefirot*. But elsewhere he does represent Plato as dependent on the Mosaic tradition. No major difference is mentioned. The Renaissance theory of *prisca theologia* and multiple sources of truth influenced him, and the older notion of a Jewish source for Plato's teachings was still active. R. Joseph del Medigo of Kandia, a younger contemporary of Yagel's, seems to hold this theory of Plato's Jewish instruction. In his *Mazref la-Hokhmah* he contests the view of his ancestor, R. Eliahu del Medigo, who had contemptuously compared Kabbalah with the teachings of the ancient philosophers rejected by the moderns:

My heart does not concur, since the ancient philosophers spoke more truly than Aristotle, who aimed to blame them only to vaunt himself alone. This is obvious to anyone who has read what is written on the philosophy and principles of Democritus, and especially on Plato, the master of Aristotle, whose views are almost those of the Sages of Israel, and who on some issues almost seems to speak from the very mouth of the Kabbalists and in their language, without any blemish on his lips. And why shall we not hold these views, since they are ours, inherited from our ancestors by the Greeks, and down to this day great sages hold the views of Plato and great groups of students follow him, as is well known to anyone who has served the sage of the Academy and entered their studies, which are found in every land.<sup>64</sup>

Del Medigo repeatedly quotes from the whole Neoplatonic corpus as disseminated by the Renaissance translations. He considers the Neoplatonic treatment of the Ideas as fully in accord with the Kabbalistic theory of *Sefirot*, and he calls attention to other congruences between the two systems.

Quite different is the attitude of Simone Luzzato, the Venetian rabbi who wrote at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In his treatise on the Venetian Jews he writes:

The second part [of the Kabbalah] is more speculative and scientific; it deals with the dependence of the physical world on the spiritual world, the supersensory world being the paradigm. They assume all corporeal things are grounded in primary roots and seeds which are like inexhaustible wells from which springs the power of the divine *dynamis* directed toward our material world as if through channels and pipes. This is the function of the ten [*Sefirot*]. . . . These ten *Sefirot* are somewhat similar to the Ideas posited by Plato, but in my opinion the reasons that influenced the theory of the Kabbalists are different from those of Plato.<sup>65</sup>

According to Luzzato, Platonic thought addressed an epistemological problem: how to comprehend the changing world. The ideas afford stability and so ensure the possibility of knowledge. The Kabbalists were seeking to explain the transition from the complete spirituality of God to the corporeality of the world. The *Sefirot*, viewed as "the Ideas of the Kabbalists," are differentiated from one another by their functions and by their spirituality. Luzzato mentions the four worlds

of the Kabbalists, each composed of ten *Sefirot*, which enable a gradual transition to the lower world. This cosmological role, widely assigned to the *Sefirot*, was emphasized by Yagel, who reinterprets the four worlds in Neoplatonic terms.

A contemporary of Luzzato, R. Abraham Cohen Herrera,<sup>66</sup> was deeply immersed in Neoplatonic thought and offered a speculative interpretation of the Lurianic Kabbalah according to Neoplatonic and scholastic principles. He proposes to understand the formative elements of the "*malbush*" or divine garment of the Kabbalah of R. Israel Sarug, by reading its Hebrew letters as pointing to Platonic Ideas. According to his special version of the Sarugian Kabbalah, the garment is not transcendent and does not precede the Primordial Man, *Adam Kadmon*, but is identical with him.<sup>67</sup> The Platonic Ideas refer to the elements that constitute the anthropomorphic archetype of all the worlds. R. Menasseh ben Israel, writing at the same time and also in Amsterdam, regards the Ideas as numbers and letters:

Plato recognized that the world . . . was not produced by chance. . . . It was formed by wise understanding and intelligence. . . . So these plans of the universe, which pre-existed in the divine mind, are termed by him Ideas. . . . Now these ideas or plans . . . are the letters [of the divine language]. This is treated in various ways in the *Sefer Yezirah*. . . . R. Joseph ben Carnebol explaining in his *Sha'arei Zedek* . . . Nahmanides . . . in the *Sefer ha-Bu'ahon*. . . . R. Barachiel in his *Perakim*.<sup>68</sup>

Early Renaissance authors were reticent toward Plato, even when perceiving the affinity between the Kabbalah and the theory of ideas, or they attributed a Jewish teacher to him. But by the last third of the sixteenth century, Plato and his Renaissance followers like Pico, Ficino and Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim became part of the spiritual patrimony of Jewish thinkers who were ready to accept the Platonists' influence even though they recognized its clear independence of Judaism. Perhaps the caution evident in the earlier Kabbalists reflects concerns lest there be a reduction of the Jewish mystical tradition to a mere recapitulation of Platonic views. But the impassivity of the Ideas, even in their Neoplatonic metamorphoses, restrained a more positive reception—even as the Kabbalah matured and continued to integrate Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Neopythagorean

thinking. The earlier Kabbalists were interested in the Platonic ideas at the level of the second *Sefirah* alone. But in the Renaissance the interest was more general, comparing the whole Sefirotic system to the realm of the Ideas. Renaissance Jews confronted an articulate Neoplatonic philosophy that could deeply affect the inner structure of Kabbalistic theosophy, and they absorbed, rejected, or responded critically in a fashion informed by awareness of that fact.

The most extreme expression of anti-Platonic feelings is found in the answer R. Yehudah Arie'el of Modena, that is, Leone Modena, addressed to a Christian correspondent:

E se Philone ha troppo Platonizzato in questa et altra grave materia, per cio non e stato accettato da noi, ne mai sono stati tradotti in hebreo.<sup>69</sup>

One of the fiercest anti-Kabbalists, Modena says that the deep influence of Plato is the reason for the rejection of the theology of Philo by the Jews. His statement sums up the concern of Jewish theologians not to permit too great an influence to Greek philosophy. The same concern may help to explain why Kabbalists like Yagel and Herrera, who did absorb a deep influence from the Greeks, remained outside the mainstream of the Kabbalah. But Modena's anti-Kabbalistic attitude was stronger than his anti-Platonism. For he uses a text of pseudo-Dionysius as a counterforce to the Kabbalistic view of prayer.<sup>70</sup>

### III. Negative Theology and Kabbalah

Medieval Jewish thought produced two major types of negative theology: the philosophical, which has both Neoplatonic and Aristotelian expressions, and the Kabbalistic. The former was formulated in the two classics of medieval Jewish philosophy, the *Fons Vitae* and the *Guide of the Perplexed*. The negative theology of the philosophers was not completely novel but was influenced by Islamic philosophies, which in turn were influenced by Greek Neoplatonic sources. In the Kabbalah, the major realm described in negative terms is the 'Eyn Sof, the source of the ten *Sefirot*. The affinity between the Kabbalistic views of the 'Eyn Sof and the Neoplatonic theology was emphasized by Gershom Scholem, who

understood some of its expressions in purely Neoplatonic terms.<sup>71</sup> He did not accept the view of some earlier scholars that the term 'Eyn Sof originated as a translation from the Greek<sup>72</sup> but envisioned it as a semantic mutation of the adverbial phrase, 'ad 'eyn sof.<sup>73</sup> Yet he still tended to present the concept as basically Neoplatonic in nature, finding nothing antagonistic to philosophical negative theology in the Kabbalistic understanding of the *Deus absconditus*. He saw clashes between the Biblical and Plotinian concepts of God, but was inclined to see them in terms of an opposition between philosophical and Scriptural modes of thought.

I would like to qualify Scholem's diagnosis by emphasizing some of the more positive conceptions of the Kabbalistic Infinite—the anthropomorphical rather than philosophical-theological concepts connected to the 'Eyn Sof. I believe that Neoplatonic negative theology was presented by some Kabbalists as an exoteric theory, while an anthropomorphic theology of the 'Eyn Sof was in their eyes more esoteric and thus closer to the truth.

In one of the texts of R. Azriel of Gerona's *Commentary on Sefer Yezirah* we learn of the possibility of contemplating the 'Eyn Sof:

Here he mentioned that all is from the 'Eyn Sof, and although the entities (*devarim*) have a measure and size, and they are ten, that attribute which they possess is infinite (*Eyn lah sof*). For the natural (*ha-mutbba'*) emerges from the sensory (*murgash*) and the intellectual from the heights of the Hidden (*Rom ha-ne'elam*), and the Hidden is infinite. Thus even the natural and the sensory and the intellectual are infinite, and the attributes (*middot*) were made in such a manner as to allow contemplation through them of the 'Eyn Sof.<sup>74</sup>

R. Azriel is one of the most important exponents of the early Neoplatonizing Kabbalah. But his reliance on the *via negativa* in some writings<sup>75</sup> does not preclude his assigning a material content to the concept of the Infinite. The gist of the above text is that infinitude is conceivable through the *Sefirot*, which actually preserve some of its infiniteness. Later in the same commentary R. Azriel applies the name 'Unique Lord,' *Adon Yahid* to the 'Eyn Sof, a description far removed from purely negative theology,<sup>76</sup> and he refers to the 'Eyn Sof as the *Dynamis* of the *Causa causarum* (*Koah*

'Illat ha-'illot), another positive characterization of the Infinite.<sup>77</sup>

R. Azriel grounds the contemplative process in meditation upon the structure of the human body, which corresponds to the ten *Sefirot*: Contemplation of the revealed and manifest (*ha-galui*) leads to the unseen—"You must contemplate from the manifest to the Hidden."<sup>78</sup> The anthropomorphic starting point leads, strikingly, to the *Sefirot*. Is anthropomorphism relevant there too? The answer is not simple. The *middot*, that is, *Sefirot*, were created to aid the contemplation of the 'Eyn Sof, just as the human body was made to enable us to contemplate the *Sefirot*. R. Azriel's colleague, R. Ezra of Gerona, states that emanation had a beginning, whereas the essences, the *havvayot*, are preexistent.<sup>79</sup> It is not clear whether these primordial essences are arranged in a human form, but the possibility cannot be neglected. A detailed analysis of the texts may clarify the situation. In any case, the influence of the Neoplatonic negative theology is far less important in the early Kabbalah than modern scholarship has supposed. Positive views of the Neoplatonic worlds and the theory of the letters and *Sefirot* as ideas are much more prominent, as we have seen.

Clearly in some late thirteenth-century Kabbalists there is an esoteric theosophy of the 'Eyn Sof, reliant on an anthropomorphic structuring of ten entities that are supernal, static roots of the ten dynamic *Sefirot*, the *Deus revelatus*.<sup>80</sup> The static nature of these roots seems to counter the personalistic tendency of some Zoharic anthropomorphic discussions of the highest level of the divine world. The post-Zoharian Kabbalists sometimes call the static entities *Zahzahot*, *Zihzuhim*, or inner *Sefirot*.<sup>81</sup> Such a theology seems to represent an attempt to maintain the ancient Jewish notion of the *Shi'ur Komah*, the anthropomorphic body of the deity as spoken of in the Heikhalot literature, by projecting it into the deepest divine realm in Kabbalistic theosophy. Here we can hardly speak of a dominant influence of Neoplatonic negative theology. It is hard to say how central the anthropomorphic theosophy may have been, since it was treated as especially esoteric and has only recently been analyzed in scholarly studies. In time we may discover more instances of a "deeper" positive understanding of the 'Eyn Sof, and the relationship of Kabbalistic theosophy to Neoplatonic negative theology may undergo some significant changes.

The anthropomorphic conception of the 'Eyn Sof was surely influential in the *Zohar* and later on, especially in the works of R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, who wrote under the profound influence of this book. He located an anthropomorphic configuration in the bosom of the 'Eyn Sof: ten *Zahzahot* which seem to found, for him or his sources, an esoteric interpretation of the *Shi'ur Komah*.<sup>82</sup> Yet immediately after the appearance of the *Zohar*, another type of Kabbalistic theosophy emerged, which strove to purify the highest realm of the divine from all anthropomorphic attributes. Using the term *Causa causarum*, 'Illat kol ha-'illot in the case of the author of the *Tikkunei Zohar*, or 'Illat ha-'illot alone in the case of R. Menahem Recanati, these Kabbalists employed explicitly negative attributes to reinterpret the theosophy of the *Zohar*.

After the expulsion from Spain, the concept of super-*Sefirot* within the 'Eyn Sof was propagated by the exiles. A clear expression of this view is found in the commentary of R. Yehudah Hayyat on *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*. The latter work, an anonymous classic of the early fourteenth century contains one of the most explicit statements of negative theology in the Kabbalah, arguing that the 'Eyn Sof is not mentioned in the Torah because there is no way even to hint at Him.<sup>83</sup> The commentator, an exponent of classical, post-Zoharic Spanish Kabbalah, uses the term *Zihzuhim* to designate the super-*Sefirot* in the bosom of the 'Eyn Sof.<sup>84</sup> The Italian Kabbalist R. Elhanan Sagi-Nahor echoes this approach.<sup>85</sup> But in time this type of theosophy disappears from the Italian Kabbalah, probably eclipsed by the negative theology accepted by Italian Jews from medieval Neoplatonism and corroborated by the work of Renaissance Christian thinkers influenced by the translations of Marsilio Ficino.

We find an example of the elimination of a reference to the roots of the *Sefirot* in the 'Eyn Sof in Yohanan Alemanno's summary of the stance of R. Yehudah Hayyat:

Hayyat<sup>86</sup>

Although you will find in the *Tikkunei Zohar* in several places that the name *Yud He Vav He*, *Yud Hi Vav Hi* refers to the 'Eyn Sof, it is to be understood as

Alemanno<sup>87</sup>

It is said in the *Zohar*<sup>88</sup> and in the *Sefer ha-Tikkunim* that the name *Yud He* is said of the 'Eyn Sof. But He has no known name because if He had a known name

explained above: these ten letters are the ten *zihuhim* hidden within Him, and they are the ten *Sefirot*, comprised in the name YHVH. But He has no known name. This is hinted at by Elijah, of blessed memory . . . that You have no known name, since you fill all the names, and You are the perfection of all of them, etc. The meaning of this is that if He had a name that can be known He would be limited to that name alone, and it would be impossible to take Him away from it, and He would emanate only to that name.

Here and elsewhere where he might have used Hayyat's view of the supernal *Sefirot*, *zihuhim* as roots of the traditional *Sefirot* in the 'Eyn Sof, Alemanno suppresses the words of his source. Study of the way Alemanno quotes Hayyat's Zoharic sources shows that the exclusion is not accidental. Moreover, the terms Alemanno uses to describe the First Cause or *Causa causarum* are plainly taken over from the *Liber de Causis* in its Hebrew translation.

The theosophy of the *Zahzahot* was likewise rejected by R. Moses Cordovero, who accepted only the view that there are three *Zahzahot* in the 'Eyn Sof, which are not understood anthropomorphically. However, R. Isaac Luria was influenced by the doctrine of the ten supernal *Sefirot*, which in his system became the *Adam Kadmon*, placed above the *Sefirot*.<sup>89</sup> While it was not identical with the 'Eyn Sof, it was called by that name, to point to the exalted status of the figure above all other things.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the negative theology disseminated in Renaissance translations and original writings made a deep impression on many Kabbalists. R. Abraham Yagel,<sup>90</sup> R. Menasseh ben Israel,<sup>91</sup> and R. Joseph del Medigo bear testimony to the depth of penetration of the Neoplatonic negative theology. Although pursuing discussions that began in the medieval Kabbalah and continued in the Renaissance,<sup>92</sup> the seventeenth-

which designates His essence, He would operate only according to that name.

century authors owe much to the Christian and pagan sources, as they openly acknowledge.

The attenuation or even obliteration of that trend of theosophy which attributes anthropomorphic characteristics to the 'Eyn Sof represents a retreat from the dynamic and mythical Kabbalah prevalent in the Spanish tradition and the cultivation of a much more philosophical theosophy consonant with the Christian Neoplatonism of the Renaissance. The shift is paralleled by a new willingness to interpret the *Sefirot* in Platonic terms. After reducing the mythical elements inherent in the dynamism of the *Sefirot*, there was no need to look for static roots beyond or behind them. The *via negativa* preoccupied Jewish authors in the first half of the seventeenth century much more than in previous periods, as is evident from the writings of Herrera, Menasseh ben Israel, and Joseph Shelomo of Kandia. There is evidence that R. Joseph Shelomo devoted a treatise to negative theology, which he planned to print. The printer of his *Novelot Hokhmah*, R. Shemuel ben Yehudah Leib Ashkenazi, noted in publishing the latter work:

The Rabbi the author wrote a treatise to show that there is no name which reflects the essence of the 'Eyn Sof, and I plan to print it, if God so decree.<sup>93</sup>

Unfortunately the plan was not carried out.

It seems that in the whole history of the Kabbalah negative theology never enjoyed the interest among Kabbalists that it had in the period when Renaissance Neoplatonism was already in decline, at the beginning of the seventeenth century. For some Italian Kabbalists, the more mythic the Kabbalah they encountered (as in various versions of Lurianic Kabbalah), the more they inclined to accentuate the mythic elements by imposing a philosophical significance upon the authentic Kabbalah of Safed. It was in Italy, the stronghold of the Neoplatonism of the Renaissance, that the Kabbalah underwent the most powerful impact of negative theology.

But negative theology found its way into Kabbalah from another source as well: Ismā'īlī theology. Following up on the assumption that God is wholly beyond the reach of the human mind, this Islamic sectarian school treated the "first creature" as the being to be addressed in worship. Any attempt to direct one's thought to the

Transcendent was regarded as heresy.<sup>94</sup> God was described as beyond existence and non-existence.<sup>95</sup> By the thirteenth century we find the theory of the "first creature" playing an important role in the religious life of the Kabbalah, alongside the view that God transcends both existence and non-existence.<sup>96</sup> A reverberation of the negative theology implicated with the concept of the "first creature" is heard in the works of a Kabbalist who wrote in Spain before the expulsion and later in Jerusalem, R. Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi. He writes that higher than the ten *Sefirot* there is an entity different from the First Cause, called "the first Simplicity," *Peshitut Rishon*.<sup>97</sup> In other writings he calls it "the first creature" or three lights higher than the *Keter* and lower than the First Cause. These, he says, are beyond the comprehension of anyone. The assumption that anything below the level of the First Cause is incomprehensible seems to reflect the *Ismā'īlī* emphasis upon negative theology. The Kabbalist was apparently acquainted with concepts or fragments of the *Theology of Aristotle*, the medieval abridgement of Plotinus' *Enneads*. For he describes Aristotle, in his "later" period as almost a Kabbalist, who received his doctrine from R. Simeon the Righteous. According to this late Aristotle, the ancient philosophers believed in a deity who coexisted with an eternal world, but he himself, Aristotle the Kabbalist, knew that above that deity was a higher deity who is the source of the lower one.<sup>98</sup> The lower deity, connected to the world through the act of emanation, would be the *Ismā'īlī* "first creature," mediating between the First Cause and the *Sefirah* of *Keter*.

To sum up our findings: In the medieval Kabbalah the influence of the Neoplatonic theory of Ideas is easily traced, and the positive ideas of Neoplatonism recur in Renaissance Kabbalah. But the influence of negative theology is marginal in medieval Kabbalistic texts. It comes to the fore by the end of the fifteenth century and reaches its apogee in the seventeenth. Neoplatonic reinterpretations of the Kabbalah, especially those of the early seventeenth century Kabbalists, mediated its penetration into European culture, through the translations of Knorr von Rosenroth, as Professor Popkin's paper illustrates.

## Notes

1. For the controversy, see Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 39 ff., 147 n. 1; Gershon Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 393-414.
2. See my "Maimonides and the Kabbalah," in I. Twersky, ed., forthcoming.
3. Cf. Genesis Rabbah I 2 and my "The *Sefirot* above the *Sefirot*," *Tarbiz* 51 (1982): 265, n. 131 (Hebrew).
4. For the term, See Scholem, *Origins*, 281; Idel, "Sefirot," 240-49.
5. For this important early master, see Scholem, *Origins*, 248 ff.
6. See *Hilkhot Yesodei Torah* II 10.
7. *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bitahon*, ch. 18, ed., C. B. Chavel, *Küvei ha-Ramban* (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1964) 2.409; cf. Idel, "Sefirot," 265-67; cf. S. O. Heller-Wilensky, "Isaac ibn Latif—Philosopher or Kabbalist?" in A. Altmann, ed., *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 188-89, esp. n. 26.
8. Cf. Shlomo Pines, "Some Distinctive Metaphysical Conceptions in Themistius' Commentary on Book Lambda and their Place in the History of Philosophy," in J. Wiesner, ed., *Aristoteles Werk und Wirkung: Paul Moraux Gewidmet* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987), 177-204, esp. 196-200.
9. Cf. my "Maimonides and Kabbalah."
10. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, 116-17.
11. See my "Sefirot," 243, 280.
12. See Georges Vajda, *Recherches sur la philosophie et la Kabbale dans la pensée juive du moyen âge* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), 33-113.
13. On the origins and evolution of this legend, see my "The Journey to Paradise," *Jerusalem Studies in Folklore* 2 (1982): 7-16 (Hebrew).
14. *Commentary on the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem, 1961 repr.) fol. 15a.
15. R. Shem Tov ben Shem Tov, *Sefer ha-Emunot* (Ferrara, 1556) fol. 27ab.
16. Cf. Meir Benaïahu, "A source of the Spanish Exiles in Portugal and their Exit to Saloniki after the Decree of 1496," *Sefunot* 11 (1971-78): 264 (Hebrew).
17. See Solomon Schechter, "Notes sur David Messer Leon," *REJ* 24 (1892): 122.
18. See my "The Magical and the Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance," in B. D. Cooperman, *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 216-42.

19. See Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 1-116.
20. See Pines' "Medieval Doctrines in Renaissance Garb? Some Jewish and Arabic Sources of Leone Ebreo's Doctrines," in B. Cooperman, 390-91.
21. W. Melczer, "Platonisme et Aristotélisme dans la pensée de Léon L'Hebreu," in *Platon et Aristote à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1976), 293-306.
22. See Pines' "Medieval Doctrines," and my "The Sources of the Circle Images in *Dialoghi d'Amore*," *Iyyun* 28 (1978): 156-66 (Hebrew).
23. See his "The Place of the *Dialoghi d'Amore* in the Contemporaneous Jewish Thought," in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism*, in University of Toronto Italian Studies 1 (1986): 69-86.
24. See my "Kabbalah and Philosophy in R. Isaac and Yehudah Abravanel," in M. Dorman and Z. Levy, eds., *The Philosophy of Leone Ebreo* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuchad, 1985), 79-86 (Hebrew).
25. See my "Magical," 224-29 and "Differing Conceptions of Kabbalah in the Early 17th Century," in I. Twersky and B. Septimus, eds., *Jewish Thought in the 17th Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 138-41, 155-57.
26. See my *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), chs. 8-9; and "Reification of Language in Jewish Mysticism," in S. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
27. Cf. H. A. Wolfson, "Extradeical and Intradeical Interpretations of the Platonic Ideas," in *Religious Philosophy, A Group of Essays*, 27-68; W. Norris Clarke, "The Problem of Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism," in Dominic O'Meara, ed., *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, 109-27.
28. *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bitahon*, 364.
29. I emphasize that the essences in the *Sefirah* of *Hokhmah* are not identical with the *Sefirot* in general, which for most Kabbalists are dynamic entities quite unlike the static Platonic ideas. As paradigms of all creatures, the essences are found only in *Hokhmah*, and the other *Sefirot* behave quite differently from Platonic ideas.
30. *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bitahon*, loc. cit.
31. *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bitahon*, 386. See Scholem, *Origins*, 429, pointing out the affinity of this peculiar view of the Active Intellect to Neoplatonism. The Kabbalistic discussion of the 'Ayn as a symbol of the highest triad is reminiscent, as Professor John Dillon has kindly pointed out to me, of the view attributed by Proclus to Theodotus of Asine. Note the correspondence of the *spiritus asper* and the *Alef*.

- See Proclus, *Commentaire sur le Timée*, tr., A.-J. Festugière (Paris, 1967) 3.318; Asi Farber, "On the Sources of Rabbi Moses de Leon's Early Kabbalistic System," in J. Dan and J. Hacker, eds., *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy, and Ethical Literature, presented to Isaiah Tishby* (Jerusalem, 1986), 96, n. 65 (Hebrew). R. Isaac the Blind, following an even earlier tradition, interpreted *Ehad*, One, similarly as suggesting the *Sefirot*: *Alef*=*Keter*, *Het*=Eight *Sefirot*, and *Dalet*=the last *Sefirah*; see my "The *Sefirot*," 279-80.
32. See S. Pines, "La Longue recension de la théologie d'Aristote dans ses rapports avec la doctrine ismaélienne," *Revue des Études Islamiques* 22 (1954): 7-20.
  33. *The Commentary on the Talmudic Aggadot*, ed. I. Tishby (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1945), 83.
  34. *Commentary*, 820.
  35. See Alexander Altmann, "Isaac Israeli's 'Chapter on the Elements' [MS Mantua]" *JJS* 7 (1956): 31-57.
  36. See Scholem, *Origins*, 418, 436-39. The emergence of the Will as the highest divine manifestation in the works of these two Kabbalists and to a lesser degree in those of R. Asher ben David, the nephew of R. Isaac the Blind, preceded the similar development in the writings of R. Isaac ben Abraham ibn Latif, who seems to have been influenced both by the Neoplatonic sources and by the Ismā'īliyya; see Heller-Wilensky.
  37. See R. Azriel's *Sha'ar ha-Sho'el* in Meir ibn Gabbai's *Derekh Emunah* (Berlin, 1850) fol. 3a. On the early Kabbalistic views of the spiritual worlds, see Scholem's important essay, "The Development of the Doctrine of the Worlds in the Early Kabbalists," *Tarbiz* 2 (1931): 415-42; 3 (1932): 33-66 (Hebrew). The source that influenced R. Azriel's view seems to echo the Neoplatonic terms *cosmos noetos* and *cosmos aisthetos* reflected in Azriel's use of 'Olam. Thus Scholem may overstate the impact of the Gnostic *aion* as the basis of the Kabbalistic *pleroma*; 416-17. He inclined to minimize the influence of Neoplatonic sources on early Kabbalah as to this issue.
  38. See his *Sefer Meshiv Devarim Nekhoḥim*, ed., G. Vajda (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1969), 78, 100-101.
  39. See Israel Ta-Shema, "On the Commentary on the Aramaic Piyyutim from the Mahzor Vitry," *Qiryat Sefer* 57 (1982): 707-08 (Hebrew).
  40. *Commentary*, 82; for the ontic division of *Maḥashavah*, *Dibbur*, and *Ma'aseh*, 110, where also the origins of the *Sefirot* are located in the Divine Will; cf. Scholem, *Origins*, 438-39. At *Commentary* 108 the second *Sefirah* is called the "beginning of Speech."

41. Nahmanides on Genesis 12:6, ed., C. B. Chavel, 1.77; cf. Amos Funkenstein, "Nahmanides' Symbolical Reading of History," in Dan and Talmage, 136-37.
42. *Commentary on Exodus*, ed., Chavel, 179; cf. Funkenstein, 136.
43. See e.g., *Meshiv Devarim Nekhohim*, 78-79.
44. Funkenstein, 137-38.
45. See Job 28:20.
46. *Meshiv Devarim Nekhohim*, 150; cf. my "Reification." *Binah* is conceived by ben Sheshet as the "World of the letters."
47. *Sefer ha-Emunah ve-ha-Bitahon*, 387.
48. *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 176, ed. Dodds, 155.
49. See *Sefer Ha-Yihud*, ed., Hasidah, 18; cf. Scholem, *Origins*, 284.
50. There is even a theory that the writings of ben Sheshet are not full fledged Kabbalistic works and therefore do not disclose esoteric views. See J. Dan, *Jewish Mysticism and Jewish Ethics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 37.
51. Cf. my "Particularism and Universalism in Kabbalah: 1480-1650," forthcoming.
52. See Giuseppe Sermoneta, "Jehuda ben Moshe Daniel Romano, Traducteur de Saint Thomas," in *Hommage à Georges Vajda*, G. Nahon and C. Touati, eds., (Louvain: Peeters, 1980), 246. Romano's remark is brief and apparently not influential; it is not mentioned by later authors.
53. MS Paris BN 968, fol. 41r. For the context, see my "The Magical," 219. For the historical critique of the Kabbalah, cf. Leone Modena, discussed in my "Differing," 155-57.
54. *Ziyyur*. The Geronese Kabbalists addressed the content of the second *Sefirah*, but Abravanel envisions the whole Sefirotic realm as the content of the divine mind.
55. *The Answers of R. Isaac Abravanel to R. Sha'ul ha-Cohen* (Venice, 1574) fol. 12d. On the comparison of the third *Sefirah* to the Platonic deas, see Abravanel's *Mif'alot Elohim* (Lemberg, 1863) fol. 58d. Cf. R. David Messer Leon, who also posits the *Sefirot* as Ideas in the divine mind; see Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, "*Sefirot* as the Essence of God in the Writings of David Messer Leon," *AJS Review* 7-8 (1982-83): 413-25.
56. See my "Kabbalah and Philosophy," 77-79.
57. On this work of Abulafia, his quotation from the *Liber de Causis*, and its reverberations, see my "The Magical," 216-17, 220-23. Neoplatonic influences are more dominant in the theosophico-theurgical Kabbalah than in the ecstatic Kabbalah. But some Neoplatonic motifs came to the fore in the second stage of the

- development of the latter school, in the works of R. Isaac of Acre and the anonymous *Sha'arei Zedek*. They are negligible in the writings of the founder, Abraham Abulafia, where the Aristotelian influence is regnant.
58. *Hesheq Shelomo*, MS Berlin 832, fol. 83ab.
  59. See my "The Study Program of R. Yoḥanan Alemanno," *Tarbiz* 48 (1979): 325, 331-32, and nn. 55-56 (Hebrew).
  60. MS Oxford 2234, fol. 159a.
  61. MS New York, JTS Rabb. 1586, fol. 126b. This text was copied in the various versions of the *Commentary on the Ten Sefirot* written by R. Yehiel Nissim and his circle; see my "The Magical," 227 and n. 233.
  62. *Minḥat Qenaot*, ed., D. Kaufmann (Berlin, 1898), 84, cf. 49, 53. For the *Midrash Ne'elam*, see my "The Journey," 12-13.
  63. MS Oxford 1304, fol. 10b. For the context, see my "The Magical," 224-26. Yagel's formulation is conspicuously influenced by Proclus as represented in the *Liber de Causis*.
  64. Ch. 25. See my "Kabbalah, Platonism, and *Prisca Theologia*: The Case of R. Menasseh ben Israel," J. Kaplan et al., eds. *Menasseh ben Israel and his World* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 86-87.
  65. See François Secret, "Un texte malconnu de Simon Luzzato sur la Kabbale," *REJ* 118 (1959-60): 25.
  66. See the discussion of his role in Professor Popkin's paper in this volume.
  67. See Alexander Altmann, "Lurianic Kabbalah in a Platonic Key: Abraham Cohen Herrera's *Puerta del Cielo*," *HUCA* 53 (1982): 339-40.
  68. *Conciliador*, tr., E. H. Lindo (London, 1842) 1.108-09.
  69. See Cecil Roth, "Leone da Modena and the Christian Hebraists of his Age," *Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams* (New York, 1927), 400. Cf. Henry More's similar stance in differentiating Kabbalah from Neoplatonism; see A. Coudert, "A Cambridge Platonist's Kabbalist Nightmare," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1978). Thanks to Prof. Richard Popkin for this reference.
  70. See my "Differing," 176-78.
  71. See especially his *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974), 88; *Origins*, 441, and the important essay "La Lutte entre le Dieu de Plotin et la Bible dans la Kabbale Ancienne," in *Le Nom de Dieu et les symboles de Dieu dans la mystique juive*, tr. M. Hayoun and G. Vajda (Paris: Le Cerf, 1983), 17-53.
  72. See Christian Ginzburg, *The Kabbalah* (London, 1865), 105.
  73. *Kabbalah*, 88; *Origins*, 265-71, 431-34.



74. *Commentary on Sefer Yezirah*, attributed in print to Nahmanides, in C. B. Chavel, *Kirvei ha-Ramban*, 2.454. The four terms: 'natural,' 'sensory,' 'intellectual,' and 'hidden' recur in other writings of R. Azriel, but not in all of them; see 455. These writings may form a later layer in the literary activity of this Kabbalist, who could have become acquainted with this Neoplatonic sequence after completing his *Commentary on the Talmudic Aggadot* and *Commentary on the Daily Prayers*. Such a development may be related to the affinity of R. Azriel's thought to that of R. Ya'akov ben Sheshet. The issue deserves further study.
75. See his *Sha'ar ha-Sho'el*, fol. 2b.
76. *Commentary on Sefer Yezirah*, 455.
77. *On Sefer Yezirah*, 453.
78. *On Sefer Yezirah*, 453-54.
79. See my "The Sefirot," 241-44.
80. See my "The Image of Man above the Sefirot," *Daat* 4 (1980): 41-55, and "Kabbalistic Material from the School of R. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 2 (1983): 170-93 (Hebrew), esp. 173; and "The Sefirot," passim.
81. See my "The Image," 41-43, 47; "Kabbalistic Material," 171-73, 179-81.
82. See "The Image," 44, 48, 53.
83. See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, 89.
84. *Minhat Yehudah* (Mantua, 1556) fol. 13a, 18a, 44ab, 46a.
85. See Ephraim Gottlieb in J. Hacker, ed., *Studies in Kabbalistic Literature* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1976), 424-25, 463-68, 470 (Hebrew).
86. *Minhat Yehudah*, fol. 44b.
87. MS Paris BN 849, fol. 125ab.
88. This is a mistake; the view presented is found only in the *Tikkunei Zohar*.
89. See "The Image," 48-50.
90. See David Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic and Science in the Cultural Universe of a Jewish Physician* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 147.
91. See Altmann, "Lurianic Kabbalah," 350.
92. The *Liber de Causis* was quoted by Alemanno, Abravanel, and Yagel on negative theology.
93. Basel, 1631, fol. 122b.
94. See Husayn F. al-Hamdani, "A Compendium of Ismā'īlī Esoterics," *Islamic Culture* 11 (1937): 212-13.

95. See Georges Vajda, *Juda ben Nissim ibn Malka, philosophe juif marocain* (Paris, 1954), 65. For the formula, "God is beyond existence and non-existence," see my "Franz Rosenszweig and the Kabbalah," in Paul Mendes-Flohr, ed., *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenszweig* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1988), 244, n. 24.
96. See Sarah Heller-Wilensky, "R. Isaac ibn Latif."
97. See *Masoret ha-Hokhmah*, published by Scholem in *Qiryat Sefer* 2 (1925/6): 129 (Hebrew).
98. *Ma'amar ha-Yihud* MS Jerusalem 8' 154, fol. 146ab; see my "Philosophy and Kabbalah," 80-81.

## Love and Intellect in Leone Ebreo: The Joys and Pains of Human Passion

Reflections on his Critical Panpsychism and  
Theory of "Extraordinary Reason"

Hubert Dethier

Ordinary (practical) reason fluctuates between extremes, its goal being the preservation of life; extraordinary (contemplative) reason disregards the normal conventions of prudence and often leads to alienation and self-sacrifice. Comprising both disinterested love and the desire to "acquire" or "attain" the beloved, its ambivalence is personified in the figure of Sophia, the reluctant mistress of the *Dialogues*. The ordinary reasonableness of the day to day world is challenged here by the radical intransigence of a higher love, which bears with it a higher standard of reason. This philosophically exalted blend of love and desire is the source of Philo's paradoxical desire to both live and die.

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### 1. The Achievement of Leone Ebreo

Leone Ebreo's achievement resides in his effort to present a syncretic philosophy elaborated in all aspects, from metaphysics to ethics, in a truly coherent and systematic manner. Philosophy in his view seeks to give the soul an awareness of its higher destiny, an assurance of its ultimate union with God. This "*pia philosophia*" affirms the identity of rational and religious truth, the harmony of the logical-metaphysical order with the testimony of Revelation. The focus of this paper is Leone Ebreo's encounter with the theories of Avicenna and Averroes on the interactions of human and divine intelligence. For here he recaptured the profound inner sense of Platonic idealism, and, through his rediscovery of Plato and Plotinus, brought to life a pantheistic aspect of the thinking of Averroes, discovering an interdependence of God and man within a higher unity. Of course not just any kind of unification of the cosmos is tantamount to pantheism. It is the particular strategy that Ebreo adopts in behalf of his project of unifying the cosmos that will justify our characterization of his philosophy as pantheistic.

In his introduction to the Italian *editio princeps* of the *Dialoghi*, Carl Gebhardt characterizes the unitive perspective that attracted Leone Ebreo as follows: In itself, the Intellect—potential as well as actual—is of no specific sort, but is identical with the totality of things, which are here potential, there actual. In its actuality, however, the intellect comprises all grades of Being in perfect unity and simplicity.<sup>1</sup> From this Neoplatonic thesis, Leone draws an inference long latent in Averroism and one which has often led to his rejection as a heretic: He identifies the *intelletto attuale* (actual intellect) with the Deity and thus reaches a Pantheism or, more precisely, a Panlogism. For he had already identified the Intellect with the totality of things: "The idea of the world does not really exist in the divine understanding, but is the divine understanding and the divine spirit itself. For the idea of the world is the highest wisdom, through which the world was made. And the divine wisdom is the Word" (III, 121a). Although the Word here still appears to differ somewhat from God, Leone's reading of Logos as Nous urges complete identification of God with His wisdom. Gebhardt cites *Dialoghi*, III, 122b-123a: The first Intellect in Aristotle's sequence

of disembodied Intelligences, is one and the same with the highest God and in no way different, except verbally. The essence of the Divine is nothing other than the highest wisdom and intelligence. As the purest and simplest Unity, God/Intellect produces the universe with all its parts, which are ordered into a whole; and, in producing it, He knows the whole and all its parts, and the parts of its parts in a supremely simple act of knowing. Knowing Himself, as the highest wisdom, on which everything depends as image and likeness, He is, while remaining one in Himself, the knower, the known, the knowing and the wisdom—the one who understands, the act of understanding, and the thing understood. This is the most perfect knowledge of the whole universe and of all created things, far superior, far more perfect and far more definite than knowledge drawn from things. For that knowledge is caused by the things known and so is divided, manifold and imperfect. But this knowledge is the ultimate cause of all things and so is free of the deficiencies of mere effects. The unity and simplicity of the Intellect allows infinite and supremely perfect knowledge of the whole universe.

The pantheism of the Vedanta argues that since God is All and One, what is many must be illusory. The pantheism and near pantheism characteristic of the European Middle Ages evolved, by contrast, from the view that because God alone truly is, all that is must in some sense be God. The ancestry of this view is Platonic or Neoplatonic, relying on the notion of true being. It would be misleading to call Neoplatonism itself pantheistic, although it conceives the material world as an emanation of the Divine. For the fallen and radically imperfect character of this world is always emphasized. Yet the translation of Neoplatonic themes of emanation into Christian terms by John Scotus Eriugena (ca. 810 - ca. 877) led to condemnation of his work as heretical precisely because of its apparent break with monotheism. Eriugena may not seem to be completely pantheistic, in that he does not treat every aspect of nature as being part of the divine in the same way and to the same degree. But by this criterion no thinker could ever be judged a pantheist! In every medieval case after Eriugena, the imputation of pantheism is at best inconclusive. It is only since the sixteenth century that genuine pantheism has become a familiar European phenomenon. Yet we shall argue that Ebreo resorts to a kind of pantheism, that is, the

identification of God and nature, in order to ensure God's access to nature as Knower and as Creator. A prototype of this approach is clearly present in Eriugena.

According to Eriugena, the whole, "natura," consists of four species of being:

what creates and is not created  
 what is created and creates  
 what is created and does not create  
 what is not created and does not create.

The first is God as Creator; the last, God as that to which all created beings return. The second and third comprise the created universe, which is passing from God in His initial form to God in His final form. Eriugena states that each class of beings belongs to a different phase in a historical flow, but he also views this expression as a misleading, if necessary, figure of speech. "Natura" is eternal; the whole process is eternally recurrent; and everything is a theophany, a manifestation of God.

## 2. Resistance to the temptations of pantheism

Suzanne Damians<sup>2</sup> argues that Leone Ebreo resisted the temptation of pantheism inasmuch as he preserved the relative independence of created beings. Thus the work of salvation, which is open to the most intelligent creatures, acquires a sense of personal conquest or achievement, and one can conceive God in more personal terms than in, say, Spinoza. God's love will not be strictly necessary, but will represent "a grace and benevolence more in keeping with the scriptural images of God as father and king." Further, what motivates creatures for Ebreo is final causes, which stimulate their desires and lead them to their ultimate perfection. This view is hardly in keeping with a necessitarian pantheism. Yet there is a pantheistic tendency in Abarbanel which recalls and in some ways exceeds the pantheism of the Stoics! For even Marcus Aurelius, when he addressed the Universe as a deity, did not simply address all that is, but rather the ordering principle (*hegemonikon*) that informs all that is.

The pantheism of the Stoics, like that of Eriugena or Bruno, is founded on the view that the universe must be a single, all-inclusive system, if it is to be intelligible. Thus their pantheism is derived from their ideal of explanation. Leone Ebreo similarly derives his metaphysical unity from purely intellectual premises:

1. Every being, especially every intelligent being, is united and unites itself with the world in such a way that it is in harmony with all other creatures.<sup>3</sup> Thus the world forms a single, harmonious system, reflecting the harmony of the intellectual world.
2. Thus, the perceptible world is emblematic of the intelligible world. This correspondence is fraught with pantheistic significance. Causally, the intelligible world is the unity that underlies the observable unity of nature. But from an experiential point of view the phenomenal unceasingly bears witness to its divine source. Since the phenomenal and the intelligible are counterparts, "Natura" is eternal, the whole process is eternally present, and everything, as in Eriugena, is a theophany.
3. Ebreo moves away from Stoic materialism, for instance when he objects to the notion of harmony as a "matter of dimension" and states that it is "formal grace." But he does not give a purely Platonic account (III 4). Rather he offers an almost Baconian view of the perceptible, remarkably expressed in the language of Platonism: Physical beauty is a mere shadow or image of the intellectual "splendor" of the underlying Forms or Ideas. But such shadows are necessary, since Ideas are first known as images of sensible objects, just as the concept in the mind of an artist is known through the work of art.
4. If Ideas are the original patterns of all created things, do they not, perforce, share the enormous diversity and even, to some extent, the multiplicity of these things? Leone answers this objection by recalling two Plotinian premises:
  - a. an effect is always inferior to its cause, and
  - b. corporeal substance is caused by intellectual matter.

So, Leone returns to the idea of the universe as an organic whole, its many parts unified in a single body. In the mind of the divine artist the multitude and diversity of his creation is "pure unity

and true identity." The unity-in-multiplicity of Ideas is appropriate to their intermediate position between the artist and his work. Reliance on the Plotinian notion of the unity of the Ideas as thoughts of the divine is what makes Ebreo a pantheist. For such a view intentionally blurs the distinction between the One and the many.

For Ebreo's relation to Stoic materialism, Dialogue Two is of great importance. It expands the discussion to cosmological scope by showing that love is a principle that governs the entire created universe: the world below the heavens, the heavens themselves, and the disembodied intellects or angels. In the crucial final section Ebreo shows how love is the force, or principle of interaction and unification connecting these three levels. Such unity or love between higher and lower is imitated in lower beings as well, proving that without love the universe as a whole and all the creatures in it would not exist.

The closing section of Dialogue Two discusses love among the heavenly intelligences. Here Leone addresses what is perhaps the critical problem of his entire system: How does one explain the love of a superior for an inferior? Why would the intelligences care to move the lower spheres; why would a perfect God love a sinful world? Leone explains that a generous love is better than a selfish love. A father loves his son in order to improve him, not for any personal benefit. Moreover, a defect in creation implies a defect in the Creator. The immediate inference would be that God loves and blesses His creation for the sake of His own perfection, which does not contradict His loving it for its own sake. But the further implication is that human sin may adversely affect God himself. Leone frequently returns to the view that God himself depends on man's righteousness, a notion common to many Kabbalistic writers and often based on the saying that the Just Man is the foundation of the universe (Proverbs 10:25).<sup>4</sup> Not wanting to distress religious sensibility by the boldness of this concept, Leone prefers to emphasize the positive side of the argument: that the mutual love between superior and inferior leads to their union, which is "the principal end of the highest Maker and Sovereign God in the production of a world of ordered diversity and unified plurality."

After a brief discussion of the love of the intelligences for God, the author elaborates on his theme of the universe as a single organism:

The entire universe is like an individual or person, and each of these corporeal and spiritual or eternal and corruptible things is a member or part of this great individual, the whole and each of his parts having been produced by God for the common end of the whole, together with an end proper to each of its parts. . . . The end of the whole is the unity and perfection of the entire universe . . . and the end of each of the parts is not only that it be perfect in itself but that it may thereby contribute to the perfection of the whole; and this universal end is the prime intention of the Deity.<sup>5</sup>

The argument, also found in Bernard Silvestris' *De universitate mundi* or *Cosmographia* (circa 1143),<sup>6</sup> seeks in part to legitimize a compromising of the intellect's crucial contemplative activity. For the proper act of the Intellect is to know itself and thus all things within itself, as the divine essence shines within its clear vision like the sun in a mirror. But Intellect must also consent to "move a material heavenly body, an act extrinsic to its own true essence."<sup>7</sup> A corollary for the human case is the recognition that the joys of contemplation may best be enjoyed after death.

It is love that imparts the unity at each level and thus explains the existence and active functioning of each thing in the universe and each level of the celestial hierarchy: Just as God is united with His creation through love, the angels join with the celestial bodies, the world soul with the sphere of generation, and the intellectual soul with the human body. The poles of these syzygies are familiar: upper and lower, spiritual and physical, active and passive, light and darkness—and, especially meaningful in a discourse on love, male and female. We are now prepared for Ebreo's broaching of the Kabbalistic insight that "all creation is female with respect to God the Creator" and for the next Dialogue, which will elaborate on the mystic theme of the cosmic union of God with His creation.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Noesis

Leone maintains that only the intellect in man is eternal and capable of approaching the Divine. He discerns five levels of intellect, each of which reflects the divine beauty according to its own nature or capacity: (1) human intellect *in potentia*, (2) human

intellect *in actu*, (3) human intellect coupling or in "conjunction" (cf. Ibn Bājjah) with pure or angelic intellect, (4) angelic, and (5) divine intelligence. Man's quest is for union with the Active Intellect. The Philosophers regard it as the lowest of the angelic intellects, but true believers identify it with God Himself.<sup>9</sup> The two views are complementary rather than contradictory according to Leone. The first describes the limits of man's natural reason, but the second describes the glory conferred by divine grace, the angelic vision of God.

Great difficulties are involved in the notion of an Active Intellect separated from the minds it actualizes and able to actualize them only through such human faculties as memory, imagination and abstraction. But Leone succeeds in reconciling the transcendence of the Active Intellect with its action upon the individual intellects of angels and men. His detailed commentary on the functioning of "noein" places him among the Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle's *De anima* and with Alexander of Aphrodisias' *On Intellect*.<sup>10</sup> Intellection, in its imperfect, human form, cannot be explained without recourse to that which is absolutely perfect. The transcendent intellect is what the human mind thinks, because that intelligence both thinks and creates the human mind. But even the distinction between the two is misleading. For in the intelligence in the act of thinking, the object of thought and the act itself are one. The words are Aristotle's in the *De Anima* (III 5). But Leone's Neoplatonic idealism carries their implications far beyond what Aristotle envisioned when he enunciated them as a psychological and epistemological insight.

Ebreo cleaves to the Neoplatonic tradition in holding that forms are the determinants of nature and thus that genera are conceptually and ontologically *richer* than species. That his inspiration is from Plato and Plotinus is evident in the role he ascribes to light, both literally and symbolically. For physical light symbolizes the operation of the Active Intellect which makes us understand and allows us to become what we understand. This higher light makes us intelligent beings in the "exercise of our essence." The idea of the good is the sun of the intelligible world. It accounts for the harmonious organization of the universe as the ontological and epistemological principle of the Ideas, ordering all by logic and finality. The highest genera of Being emerge from the Idea of the

One or the Good, whose truth does not require conformity to any other object. For that truth is not *secundum rem*. Rather, as Plotinus would say, "Intellect provides it (the soul) with the forming principles, as in the souls of artists the forming principles for their activities come from their arts."<sup>11</sup> The same Neoplatonic position had been held by Maimonides.<sup>12</sup> As Plotinus himself explains: "Intellect therefore really thinks the real beings, not as if they were somewhere else: for they are neither before it nor after it; but it is like the primary lawgiver, or rather is itself the law of being. So the statements are correct that 'thinking and being are the same thing' and 'knowledge of immaterial things is the same as its object' and 'I searched myself' (as one of the real beings); so also are 'recollections,' for no one of the real beings is outside, or in place, but they remain always in themselves and undergo no alteration or destruction: that is why they are truly real."<sup>13</sup> In the same vein, Leone remarks that in a single act of intellection, if it is sufficiently complete, knowledge of all things can be comprised (*Dialoghi* I 41).

Although God is perfectly one and simple, a mysterious multiplication occurs within Him. Just as Eve is said to have sprung from the body of Adam, the original active entity, God's beauty or simply essence, produces a feminine entity. Thus we can distinguish: (1) God's beloved, beauty or goodness, (2) His wisdom or intellect, the active lover, (3) the love that arises between the two. Since the beloved is always superior, Leone concludes that God the beloved is superior to God as lover, contradicting the Christian view that Father and Son are equal. Yet, since God is pure act, beloved, lover and love are identical in Him—an interesting extension of the traditional Aristotelian notion of the identity of knower, known and knowledge in the act of knowing.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond his original, intrinsic love, God also loves extrinsically. For, in loving himself, God also desires to reproduce his beauty. Thus God has two loves: (1) the first towards himself, (2) the second towards his images or creatures. The crucial role is played here by the divine Intellect, which, in addition to loving God in perfect contemplation, also contains all the Ideas or patterns of creation. The emanative process, as described here differs slightly from Bernard Silvestris' description in *De universitate mundi*. In the *Dialoghi*, the Intellect is female in its love toward God, but active or male in its love towards creatures. The original dialectic of love is repeated on

this lower level: The divine Intellect contemplates itself as well as God, and from this contemplation a female entity is produced, again on the pattern of Eve from Adam. This new female element is chaos or Prime Matter. These two, Intellect and Chaos, are conceived as male and female, Prime Form and Prime Matter, the original parents of creation. From their mutual love emerges all generation.

#### 4. Leone Ebreo and Spinoza

Leone's description of the intellectual love of God and his differentiation of five levels of intellect, each of which reflects the divine beauty according to its own nature or capacity (III, third question) leads us to inquire after connections between Spinoza's conception of intellectual love of God and Leone's related Neoplatonic conception. In both philosophers the link between man and God is intellectual, critically dependent on knowledge. Yet in Leone Ebreo awareness of a lack is central. In Spinoza the intellectual love of God involves a recognition of necessity, not of the order of causes outside us, but of the sequence of causes affecting us. To attain true love, we must know ourselves and the affections of our soul insofar as these follow from the necessity of the eternal essence of God. But in both philosophers attainment of the love of God involves knowing our own essence in God and the essence of all things. It is by knowing the immensity of God that we can love Him, actualizing our essence as a part of the infinite essence of God.

For both philosophers the intellectual love of the soul for God is the very love by which God loves himself. In Spinoza this is because the human soul, insofar as it is the idea of the body under the form of eternity, i.e., insofar as it has knowledge of the second and third kinds, forms a part of the Idea of God. It "understands in God, and does so through the very intelligence of God." It is therefore the very joy of God, apprehending the plenitude of his being in the logical sequence of his infinite modes:

it is apparent that our mind, in so far as it understands, is an eternal mode of thinking, which is determined by another eternal mode of thinking, and this again by another, and so on to infinity: so that

together they all constitute the eternal and infinite intellect of God. (*Ethics* V, Prop. 40)

The joy of the soul taken up in God is a finite mode of the joy of God and is taken up for ever, the part identifying itself with the whole. Thus the famous corollary of Proposition 36 in Part V of the *Ethics*:

Hence it follows that God, in so far as he loves himself, loves men, and consequently that the love of God for men and the mind's intellectual love towards God are one and the same thing.

Here we find under another guise the famous circle of Leone Ebreo: The arc of "reductive" loves, that turn back to God, can exist only by virtue of the original arc of "productive" loves.

For Spinoza, however, the unitive knowledge of the soul yearning towards God is not knowledge of a lack that commands aspiration toward sovereign perfection. Rather our upward reaching only expresses in duration what we are in fact throughout eternity. For we are always in God and through God. Duration for Spinoza is only an appearance. So the intellectual love of God is not a kind of progress but an inner nature constituted for all eternity. It is for us to enter it, or rather find it. But it is a kind of intellectual grace that cannot be withheld.

In both philosophies, there is a way for man to achieve beatitude, and this is above all through the transformation of knowledge. To conceive this achievement as a kind of personal adventure is far more difficult in Spinoza than it is in Leone Ebreo, because Spinoza holds time to be only an appearance; and an individual personality, merely a transitory mode. This contrast may seem a bit unfair to Spinoza, because it presses his monism too hard, ignoring his seriousness about the drama of the moral life and equally ignoring, for example, the opening passage of *De Intellectus Emendatione*. Nevertheless Suzanne Damien argues that in the framework of Spinoza's intellectualism the reactions of a will that would respond to the circumstances of an individual destiny so as to achieve self-mastery, while unceasingly challenged by the solicitations of an animal nature, are hardly conceivable. The source of our salvation in Spinoza is the act of understanding in a certain

way, a task of pure intellection, which detaches us from an inadequate apprehension of the actuality of things and ourselves and brings us at once the experience of eternity:

We conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of divine nature. But the things we conceive in this second way as true or real we conceive under a certain aspect of eternity, and to that extent their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God, as we showed in Prop. 45, Part II.<sup>15</sup>

It is from this that Spinoza goes on to argue: "Insofar as the human mind knows itself and its body under the aspect of eternity, it necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows that it exists in God and is conceived through God" (*Ethics*, V, Prop. 30).

It is only through the realization of our intellectual capacity to see things in God that we experience eternity. So everything seems to happen as though, on the level of the intellection of the second and third kinds, a radical change takes place in man. We suddenly become independent of the sensory. The third kind of knowledge takes over, dependent on the mind as its formal cause insofar as the mind is eternal (*Ethics* V, Prop. 31). The progress of the soul towards beatitude does not find its true cause in the effort itself from which it seems to result or in the desire to attain a greater perfection or power, since in the long run this effort expresses only what we are throughout eternity, in God and through God. It is for this reason that Spinoza can affirm: "Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself; nor do we enjoy it because we restrain our lusts; on the contrary, because we enjoy it, we are able to restrain our lusts."<sup>16</sup> In Spinoza, as Victor Delbos remarks, it is always the knowledge of our rational union with God that is the means of salvation, "and not the pretension of our will to exceed what we are by relying on the transitory modalities of our present life."<sup>17</sup>

It is easier in the perspective of a creationism like Leone's to account for the love that moves us from awareness of our imperfection to the appeal of an ideal that arouses us. Here we dramatically envisage real progress toward beatitude. Yet while progress in time cannot define ultimate felicity, Spinoza does see

temporal duration as a means to the achievement of happiness. It seems he arrives at this possibility in two ways: (1) through the notion of the anteriority of an intelligible nature,<sup>18</sup> (2) through conferring an ontological status upon the tendency (*conatus*) to be and to persist in being, the desire for power which truly manifests itself only in the realization of our intellectual nature, and yet which is the common principle of all life, whether in those who are not wise men or in those who are wise and have found the intellectual way of living in God. The first of the two alternatives privileges the attribute of thought over that of extension; the second discloses the common basis of the affections which are passions and those which are no longer passions but actions, because they are caused in man by the rational sequence of his ideas. It is perhaps not too brash to consider that it was the reading of the *Dialogues of Love* that enabled Spinoza to develop his conception of the dialectic of the salvation of man.

Spinoza is akin to Leone and through him to Neoplatonism in his mistrust of Aristotelian abstraction. The universal idea drawn from experience of the multiplicity of things is not the purest reality. The generic representation of the secant is not the essence of the secant, for this depends on the relation of the secant to the circle. The essence of the tangent is not all the common characteristics of all tangents but the definition of the tangent as limit of the secant. The essence of man is not the general idea drawn from the individuals met in experience; rather it is determined in the relation of the individual mode to God. In Spinoza, as Léon Brunschvig has clearly shown, reality is totality, envisaged not as a whole depending on its parts but as a unity that bears the reason for its existence within itself.<sup>19</sup> This totality is the ultimate source of determination in all that is. As Spinoza makes clear, a being does not exist by virtue of its limit, which is only an extrinsic definition, but through its inner principle, which gives it being and the force to persevere in its being.<sup>20</sup> Thus: "Every idea of every body or individual thing actually existing necessarily involves the eternal and infinite essence of God."<sup>21</sup> Here in Spinoza's distinctive application of Neoplatonism we find a clear parallel with the thought of Ebreo. The point that needs to be emphasized is that it is from the supreme intelligible that the finite modes of infinite substance derive their determination.



### 5. The intellectual love of God in Leone Ebreo

In the Neoplatonic scheme of Leone Ebreo, the One, in its infinite energy, sends forth a radiation that brings forth the second substance, the Intelligence. This in turn brings forth another, lesser being, the Soul. The Soul, unlike the Intellect, is capable of moving towards things other than itself. It too can contemplate itself; and, through the intermediacy of the Intelligence, it can recognize the light of the One. But when it produces a reflection of itself, the outcome is ■ still lower being, an animated body. In producing it, Soul acquires the desire and the power to incline towards it and provide for its sustenance. As a result Soul diverges from Intelligence.

Leone takes up the Neoplatonic formula: 'The soul is formed from the same and the other.' Its movement towards the intelligible is invisible. But its other movement is visible; it is the motive force of the physical. The human soul and the world soul are a mixture of spiritual intelligence and bodily change. Both are needed to animate body (III 179). Its movement, now towards the intelligible essences, now towards corporeal things, reveals the figure of the circle.

Following Plotinus,<sup>22</sup> Leone compares the intellect to the sun and the soul to the moon, the intermediary between the sun and the earth. The celestial comparisons that seem to fascinate him fit the taste of the time. They are found as well in Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola and recur often in the iconography of the Renaissance, in stained-glass windows, painting and sculpture.<sup>23</sup> Leone represents all the movements of the soul in terms of the relations of the moon to the sun and earth. The moon sometimes turns a lit-up face to the sun and darkness to the earth. Its light is borrowed. The soul similarly reflects the clarity of the intellect, and is now full of the light of the intellect, now deprived of it, but most often, a mixture of intellectual radiance and corporeal darkness. We shall not examine in detail Leone's comparison of the phases of the moon to the movements of the soul. But two examples should be given: When the soul is wholly preoccupied with matter and oblivious to contemplation, it is like the full moon, full of light for us earthdwellers, but full of darkness towards heaven. At the eclipse of the moon, the face of the moon, darkened by the interposition of the earth between moon and sun, corresponds to the loss of

consciousness of the soul. This occurs when sensuality places itself between the intellect and our soul. The soul loses all the light it receives from the intellect, not only in its superior part, but also in its inferior, active and corporeal part. It becomes comparable to the soul of wild beasts and brutes (III 194). It is no longer truly human.

Even in a solar eclipse the sun is never deprived of its light, as the moon can be; when the soul receives the light in its intellectual part only, and its lower part is wholly deprived of light, the body loses its being: "This is the happy death caused by the coupling of the soul with the Intellect, which our blessed ancestors Moses and Aaron tasted, as well as those of whom the Holy Scriptures speak saying that they died through the mouth of God by the kiss of God."<sup>24</sup>

Since Soul receives the light of Intellect, it too radiates and produces a reflection inferior to itself, the body it animates. If it inclines too far towards the body, soul can break away from its moorings and lose itself. But if it turns completely inward and towards its principle, it will reject the care of its body and endanger its survival. We find the source of Leone's analogy in Plotinus:

The First, then, should be compared to light, the next (Nous), to the sun, and the third (Psyche), to the celestial body of the moon, which gets its light from the sun. For Soul has intellect as an external addition which colors it when it is intellectual, but Intellect has it in itself as its own, and is not only light but that which is enlightened in its own being; and that which gives it light is nothing else but a simple light giving Intellect the power to be what it is.<sup>25</sup>

Leone has told us that the soul can turn in two different directions. How does it choose which way to turn? Here we confront the question of love. The cause of the changes of the moon lies in the local movement of the moon. But the ground for all the changes of the soul resides in the love inherent in it. Leone discerns a double aspiration of the soul. As an effect of the divine intellect it seeks the Beautiful beyond the sensible, and when it encounters intellectual beauty, it actively desires it: "It falls in love with this sovereign intellectual beauty, its higher source, as an imperfect woman falls in love with the man who makes her perfect." But the soul is also seized "by another love, linking the soul to the corporeal world

beneath it, like the love of the male for the female, seeking to make the corporeal world perfect, by imprinting on it the beauty which it derives from the Intellect by way of the first love."<sup>26</sup> This conception of twofold love echoes Plato's references in the *Symposium* to the heavenly and vulgar Aphrodite. By combining the two aspects of love, Leone seeks to protect what is unique in beauty, which is a reflection of what is above, and what is unique in that other love, which, even when it is led astray into carnal union, still finds a means to attain Form, drawn from above, to imprint it on matter:

just as the soul, made great by the beauty of the intellect, desires to engender it [this beauty] in the corporeal world and either gathers the seed of this same beauty to make it germinate in the body or, like an artisan, gathers specimens of intellectual beauty to sculpt them from life, in bodies.<sup>27</sup>

Since the love of the soul is twofold, it is sometimes more inclined toward intellectual beauty, to the point of leaving the body in "the happy death of coupling." But in other cases the opposite occurs. The soul is more inclined towards the body and loses sight of the higher beauty. Most often, however, reason comes to a compromise with sensuality, inclining perhaps towards the body or perhaps towards the intellect, as in the waxing and waning of the moon. Here one can differentiate the man who is merely chaste from the man who is temperate. Chastity is the lesser virtue. In temperance, the activity of the intellect can be discerned more clearly. Conversely, unchastity is a less serious fault than intemperance. Each soul must use its potentialities to work out what balance it will strike between the intellectual and the sensuous.

In such a scheme, does destiny depend on the external forces that bestow our faculties and sensibilities, or on ourselves? Does Leone leave room for individual freedom? All depends on his conception of God's love for his creatures. This love is not the recognition of a lack. Rather God's immense perfection makes Him love and desire his creatures, allowing them to reach the highest degree of their own perfection, and, once they possess it, to enjoy it eternally (III 215). Divine love is the principle that explains both creation and the sustenance of creation. Without love no father

would beget or provide for the preservation of his offspring. Similarly, no master would tirelessly impart science and wisdom to his pupil, and no friend would act to make another happy.

Man must pass through two stages to gain happiness: (a) the attainment of virtue and the moral life, and (b) the work of the understanding, dianoetic activity, which finds its highest fulfillment in contemplation. The first stage demands an asceticism which Leone depicts as a sequence like the phases of the moon. Only the temperate soul lives well. But virtue cannot be defined through temperance alone. Like Aristotle, Leone characterizes virtue as the exercise of a faculty or disposition appropriate to every situation, and as a means towards achieving the universal goal of felicity.

Every being belongs to a whole, and the perfection of the whole is the highest good (Dialogue Two, 162). But in realizing its proper perfection, every being serves the perfection of the whole:

It follows that the more the whole and the parts are perfect and happy, the more correctly and completely will they follow the duties to which they are subjected by the divine artisan. The ultimate end for all is the unified perfection of the whole universe, designed by the divine architect. So the aim of each part is not only the perfection of that part in itself, but that it thereby directly contribute to the perfection of the whole, which is the universal goal, the prime intent of the Deity. It is for this common goal, rather than solely for its own sake that each part was made, destined and dedicated. . . . So a part failing in such service, in acts pertaining to the perfection of the universe, would be more at fault and would become more unhappy than if it had failed in its own act.<sup>28</sup>

Virtue so understood has two main effects:

1. It contributes to the continued creation of the universe and to the order of the world as a whole:

Since our soul is only spiritual and intellectual, nothing occurring in the corporeal, ephemeral and corruptible state could benefit it more than its own pure intellectual act already does; but it applies to our body only for the love and service of the Sovereign Creator of the world, drawing life and knowledge and the divine light of the higher eternal world towards the inferior corruptible, lest this lower part of

the world be deprived of divine grace and eternal life, and so that this great animal shall have no part which is not alive and intelligent like the whole.<sup>29</sup>

2. Secondly, virtue maintains the existence of love in the world in both senses: both the yearning toward higher perfection and the impetus to give light to the lesser. The soul which is inclined towards the intellect that can perfect it has no less love for the body which it desires to perfect. Twofold virtue in the service of the whole sustains love in the world and thus strengthens the unity of the world:

For the more being there is in the world and the things in it, the more united and joined together are the world and all its members, like the limbs of an individual. Otherwise the disharmony would cause its total perdition. And just as nothing unites the universe with all its various realities, except love, it follows that this love is the cause of the being of the world and all its realities.<sup>30</sup>

Just as the soul must gain the ethical virtues to acquire happiness, it must make itself beautiful by the exercise of its intellectual faculties to open up the dianoetic way. There are two intellectual faculties: *dianoia*, which uses rational discourse to reach clear knowledge of the forms and their interrelations, and intellection:

The first "aspect" of the soul towards the Intellect is intellectual reason, with which it discourses by way of a universal and spiritual knowledge which abstracts the forms and intellectual essences from particular sensory bodies, constantly converting the corporeal world into the intellectual. The second "aspect," which is turned towards the body, is sense perception, particular knowledge of corporeal things.<sup>31</sup>

For each of these two ways of knowing a different form of love is engendered. The love of sensible things alienates the soul, by subjecting it to multiplicity. Only spiritual love leads man to happiness. The universal, spiritual knowledge of *dianoia* is assimilated to the world soul. For "all abstract forms in the unitive order are found spiritually in the world soul of which our rational soul is the image" (III 331). Thus discursive intelligence, using the

knowledge of the forms, attains comprehension of the ideal archetype, upon which the world is founded. As a result, the order of the universe is represented in our souls under the form of the ordered relations of the ideas. The highest degree of such intellection is intuitive intelligence, which is compared to the ineffable vision of the One, itself, the consummation of all rational knowledge.

That the intuition of the forms should be tantamount to the beatific vision is not surprising, for in the Divine Intellect we find the ideal essences of all things in a unique and perfect union:

The pure intellect which shines in us is at the same time the image of the pure divine Intellect, marked by the unity of all the ideas. At the end of all our discursive reasonings, it reveals the ideal essences in a unique and utterly abstract intuitive knowledge, when our well-trained reason so deserves.<sup>32</sup>

Leone adds:

Once we can see with the eyes of the intellect, we can see in one single intuition the sovereign beauty of the first intellect and the divine ideas: and seeing it we are delighted and we love it; and with the eyes of our rational soul, with its ordered discourse, we can see the beauty of the soul of the world and in it the whole system of forms whose beauty delights us again greatly and moves us to love.<sup>33</sup>

Before specifying how Leone envisages this intellectual love, we note his acknowledgement of the inequality of souls in attaining knowledge—a result of the unequal obedience of bodies to souls (III 329). Leone describes in Platonic terms the situation of souls which appear to enjoy corporeal beauties but fail to discern true beauty or formal grace, sensing only physical pleasure or utility. If in the end we find sensual pleasures or utilitarian profits inadequate, we have only the imperfection of our desires to blame. For sensuous pleasures rob us of higher goals that could bring real satisfaction, and sensuous desires disturb our quiet contentment by succumbing to "restless matter, the mother of sensory beauties" (III 332 f.). Leone stigmatizes those who favor lasciviousness, because they fail to find spiritual beauty in corporeal things. Such persons turn the accessory into the essential, prefer shade to light. At the end of the third

dialogue, Sophia is advised by her lover not to take delight, as Narcissus did, in a mere image of beauty, losing sight of the original, and drowning in its reflection. It is in the realization of our intellectual essence that the highest form of love occurs, when rational intuition grasps the essences latent in the divine wisdom.

The love of God for his sovereign wisdom is the primal love that produces the world, holding forth the first beauty, toward which the loving God draws in the first expression of love, through which the world was ordered out of chaos. But this primal love is identical with the love of creatures that leads this world to its final perfection. The perfection or virtue of a glass is that it is made in likeness to the form and design in the mind of the maker. But its final perfection is that it be used for the proper purpose for which it was made. We recognize here an Aristotelian distinction, applied by Leone to the universe at large.<sup>34</sup>

Sophia asks: "What then are the activities that contribute to perfecting the generated universe?" Philo answers that many such acts are found in the universe at diverse levels. The ultimate perfection is the most perfect, and the rest are only means of attaining it. These means are physical actions, but by rising through them to the purest intellectual acts one can discover and communicate to the world what leads to the ultimate perfection for the world. The highest of the intellectual acts is that of understanding, which has as its goal the divine essence and its sovereign wisdom,

For this level includes and comprehends every intellectual matter and every degree of intellection; and this is what can make the potential intellect wholly actual and the other produced intellects actual in the highest degree of their perfection?<sup>35</sup>

The ultimate perfection is achieved by means of three acts: thought, love, and unitive pleasure. Sophia asks Philo if thought uses any act other than understanding once it reaches love and unitive pleasure. Philo answers: "No, love at the intellectual level is in essence no different from thought itself." Love and intellection remain one, and it is only "according to reason" that they are distinct. Unitive pleasure is the highest and most perfect thought, because the more perfect an intellectual act is, the more perfect is the union of the intellect that understands and the matter understood.<sup>36</sup>

The intuitive knowledge of divine wisdom is love. For it is knowledge of the sovereign beautiful and good and this knowledge is as much a prerequisite of love as an outcome of it. Indeed, if it were the kind of knowledge that implies desire, this desire would disappear with the possession of the object and pleasure would not endure! But there is a love beyond desire, which has recognized its object and united with it. To understand this we must refer to an illustration that Leone uses as early as the first Dialogue: He who has no child longs for one; but he who has one does not desire one, but loves and enjoys the offspring he has. Another comparison is used in the third Dialogue:

A certain knowledge precedes the wish for food, but once the food has been enjoyed, the perfect knowledge of nourishment that is unitive, creates a love which is no longer caused by the lack of union, but by a desire to preserve it.

God's paternal love for his creatures, which corresponds to the order of production of the universe, is answered by "the reductive love" of his creatures resulting from the realization of their essence in virtue, the highest phase of which is intellectual virtue. The counterpart of the half-circle of loves from the Perfect to the imperfect is that which runs from the least perfect to the most perfect.<sup>37</sup> Leone's image of the circle from God to the least of creatures and back, by the road of love, to God in his supreme intelligible and intellectual perfection, like Marsilio Ficino's, was doubtless inspired by the Alexandrian mystics and such thinkers as Dionysius the Areopagite. Ficino writes:

If God fills the world with delight and the world is filled with delight by him, there is a certain continual attraction between God and the world which begins in God and passes through the world and finally ends in God, as a circle returns to where it began. So there is one single circle that runs from God to the world and from the world to God and is named in three ways: insofar as it begins in God and has power of attraction: beauty; insofar as it is transferred to the world and fills it with delight: love; insofar as it returns to the Creator and unites his works: delight. . . . And it is necessary that love is good: born from the Good, it will return to the Good.<sup>38</sup>

The circle represents the pattern of outflow and return, dear to all Neoplatonists. Marsilio says:

The Sovereign Creator, God, first created all things, secondly filled them with delight in himself, thirdly gave them perfection. God is therefore beginning, middle and end.

Leone takes over this formula almost completely. In union with the divine principle, we encounter the goal of all love. Indeed, without love and the yearning for sovereign beauty, it would have been impossible for things to emanate and become detached from the Deity. And it is precisely for this reason that love and the desire to return to their divine origin manifest themselves under the form of a desire for and a love of the beautiful which leads them toward their ultimate perfection.

Sophia, in the presence of this great conception, raises three objections:

1. How is it possible for delight to be the goal of intellectual love, since delight is a passion, and the intellect, being separated from the matter, is not susceptible to passions?
2. Can delight be the goal of productive love? Does it not seem impossible to rejoice while approaching the non-beautiful or the less beautiful?
3. Is it not difficult to admit that the love that leads the universe to its perfection is the reductive love of creatures for sovereign beauty, and not the productive love of God for the world He produced?

Leone answers:

1. Intellectual delight is not a passion in the intellect. Thus there can be a delight that is not a passion. It is an intellectual act and nothing else.
2. Delight can be the goal of productive love: God rejoices in His works, as many texts from the Torah confirm. True, neither sadness nor joy are found in God. But the delight here is "the agreeable fitness of the perfection of the effect, and the sadness is privation on the part of the effect."<sup>39</sup> Divine delight consists in the union of the not beautiful or the less beautiful with what makes them beautiful. It is not a union of the sovereign beautiful with the not beautiful or the less beautiful.

3. There is no difficulty in admitting that the love that leads the world and God to their perfection is the "reductive" love rather than "the productive love of God." For there is no beauty or perfection that does not grow when it is communicated; the fruit-bearing tree is always more beautiful than the sterile one.

The universe was produced by God "not just to keep it in its primal state of production but also and more truly to lead it to its ultimate perfection through its happy union with sovereign beauty."<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, there is no doubt that our eyes and visual powers with the desire of perceiving the light lead us to see the light and the body of the sun in which we rejoice. And their knowledge and enjoyment would not exist if our eyes were not at first illuminated by the sun and by the light.<sup>41</sup>

Our intellectual love, which is the highest form of love for the sovereign beauty in the universe and which leads us to unite with it, would never be capable of such a union "if our intellectual faculty were not assisted and illuminated by the sovereign beauty and by the love God has for the universe. It is this love that rouses and revives the love of the universe. It illuminates the intellectual faculty of the human soul to lead it to happiness in union with sovereign beauty."<sup>42</sup> Hence a true reciprocity is established between the "productive" love of God which conditions the order of existence and the "reductive" love which leads the universe and God himself to ultimate perfection. Here Leone Ebreo comes very close to Marsilio Ficino, who writes in the second book of *Letters*: "to be enraptured, you would never have desired it if He had not desired it." God's love for his creatures is the original force and the impetus that sustains each being and imparts the intelligence to understand and to love God.

Victor Delbos observes, "It is possible that Spinoza borrowed from Leone Ebreo and his *Dialogues of Love* his formula on the relation of knowledge and love, at the source of which we find Plato and Neoplatonism; but the formula was widespread in the language of the philosophers."<sup>43</sup> I think that Spinoza must have been struck by the pertinence of Leone's writing concerning the intellectual love of God, the objections of Sophia and the answers the Jewish philosopher gave to them. In the *Short Treatise* he wrote:

As man is in God together with all that is, he cannot have love for anything else, since all that is forms just one single thing, God himself. (chap. 14)

And in the *Ethics*:

God is free from passions, nor is he affected with any emotion of pleasure or pain (V, Prop. 17).

and

He who loves God cannot endeavor to bring it about that God should love him in return (V, Prop. 19).

Yet the difficulties adumbrated in such propositions are not insurmountable. Leone could aid Spinoza by showing that neither in God nor in a man who loves intellectually is love a passion, since it is the act of the intelligence. With this aid Spinoza can conclude the *Ethics* by stating that God does love Himself and man, since there necessarily exists in God an idea of His own essence and of all that necessarily follows from this essence (*Ethics* II, Prop. 3). This idea, constitutive in the infinite intellect, ensures that God knows Himself through an eternal and infinite mode of His thought. As a result, there can be a love of God for Himself. For the infinite perfection in which God conceives Himself goes hand in hand with the idea of Himself as cause of Himself and this perfection. But that formula, of course, answers to the definition of love. Thus: "God loves himself with infinite intellectual love" (*Ethics* V, Prop. 35).

As for God's love of man: every soul is defined as "the idea of a body." But insofar as our soul uses the knowledge of the second and of the third kinds, the soul understands itself as an eternal essence linked to the eternal essence of God, thus a part of the idea of God. Accordingly, one can understand the intellectual love of souls for God as a part of the infinite love of God for Himself (*Ethics* V, Prop. 36 and corollary).

Here once again we find the famous circle of Marsilio Ficino, but made more explicit by Leone Ebreo. It is through the elaboration of God's infinite essence that the soul exists as a finite mode. But it is only insofar as God can unfold Himself through the essence of

the human soul that he loves Himself. As Victor Delbos remarks: "There is truly no love of God for himself except insofar as finite beings, which are part of his Being, love him."<sup>44</sup> It would be right to add: insofar as these finite beings think of themselves *sub specie aeternitatis*, that is, in the light of the dependence of their essence on the essence of God. But in drawing this conclusion Leone lays the emphasis elsewhere. For after it has completed the dianoetic path, our intellection results in the intuition of our intimate union with God. If there is a kind of mysticism in Leone, it in no way represents a state which exceeds reason, unless on account of the joy or infinite delight of one who ultimately knows God.<sup>45</sup>

In Plotinus the ecstatic intelligence that conjoins with the One is a power the mind possesses eternally, although it seldom uses it: "because it is intelligence (*oti esti nous*) it contemplates the first principle, by means of what in it is not intelligence (*tō eautou mē nō*)." The full text is:

Since the substance generated [from the One] is form—one could not say that what is generated from that source is anything else—and not the form of some one thing but of everything, so that no other form is left outside it, the One must be without form. But if it is without form it is not a substance; for a substance must be some one particular thing, something, that is, defined and limited; but it is impossible to apprehend the One as a particular thing: for then it would not be the principle but only that particular thing which you said it was. But, if all things are in that which is generated [from the One], which of the things in it are you going to say that the One is? Since it is none of them, it can only be said to be beyond them. But these things are beings, and being: so it is beyond being. (*Enneads* V 5.6, Armstrong, 173)<sup>46</sup>

In Leone Ebreo we find nothing of this kind<sup>47</sup>—an intelligence that attains what is beyond itself and which contemplates the first principle by means of what in itself is not intelligence as such, does not exist. Still it is this conception which Proclus, in the footsteps of Plotinus, outlines in his *De providentia et fato*.<sup>48</sup> He calls this ecstatic intelligence the apophatic intelligence as opposed to the normal, cataphatic intelligence. It is Leone Ebreo's more rational and pertinent method of approaching ecstatic intelligence that, it seems to

us, renders his intellectualism much more marked than that of his predecessors in antiquity, and brings it nearer to that of a philosopher like Spinoza.<sup>49</sup>

# Notes

1. Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'Amore: hebraeische Gedichte*, tr., Carl Gebhardt (Frankfurt a.M.: Curis Societatis Spinozanae, 1929), 55 ff., citing *Dialoghi*, I, 26a-b. This edition is a revision of Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'amore, poesie hebraiche*, Ristampati con introduzione di Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: C. Winter; Gravenhage: Nijhoff; London: Oxford University Press, 1924). We have also consulted Léon Hébreu, *Dialogues d'amour* (Lyon, 1551; tr. Pontus de Tyard) ed. T. Anthony Perry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974), which is of particular interest for its introduction. The Italian edition of Ebreo's work to which we refer throughout is the Santino Caramella edition of *Dialoghi d'amore* (Bari: Laterza e figli, 1929). Beyond its well known influence on such diverse figures as Montemayor, Giordano Bruno, Cervantes, Spinoza and Schiller, Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'Amore* has enjoyed a relatively recent resurgence of interest, judging from the translations in Spanish, German, English and Hebrew and re-edition in Italian. E. Friedberg-Sceley and J. H. Barnes translated it into English as *The Philosophy of Love* (London, 1937); this was not available to me in Belgium, and the translations here are my own. The classic study was H. Pflaum, *Die Idee der Liebe* (Heidelberg, 1926); cf. now Suzanne Damien, *Amour et Intellect chez Léon l'Hebreu* (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1971) and Alfred Ivry's splendid "Remnants of Jewish Averroism in the Renaissance," in B. Cooperman, ed., *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 243-65. Ivry shows the infusion of Averroian and Averroist thought (distinguishing the thought of Averroes from that of his interpreters) not only in works of admitted and obvious disciples but also in the compositions of their major intellectual adversaries, the Platonists of the period.
2. Suzanne Damien, *Amour et intellect chez Léon l'Hebreu*.
3. *Dialoghi* III 385 f.
4. See Gershom Scholem, *Les origines de la kabbale* (Paris: Payot, 1966), 165. Similarly, according to the ancients (probably the Kabbalists), "le juste rend la splendeur divine parfaite, et elle est par le méchant tachée" (144). The world is perfect, not sinful. From this we might infer that God's love is not diminished by its manifestation

- in the world but preserved, so that the world remains in some sense divine or an expression of the divine.
5. II 162-63: "Tu hai altra volta inteso da me, o Sofia, che tutto l'universo è un individuo, cioè come una persona, e ognuno di questi corporali e spirituali, eterni e corruttibili, è membro e parte di questo grande individuo, essendo tutto e ciascuna de le sue parti prodotta da Dio per uno fine commune nel tutto, insieme con uno fine proprio in ognuna de le parti. Séguita che tanto il tutto e le parti sono perfetti e felici, quanto rettamente e interamente conseguono gli offizi ai quali sono indirizzati dal sommo opifice. Il fine del tutto è l'unita perfezione di tutto l'universo, disegnata dal divino architetto, e il fine di ciascuna delle parti non è solamente la perfezione di quella parte in sé ma che con quella deservia rettamente a la perfezione del tutto, che è il fine universale, primo intento de la divinità." Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* I 72, II 10. Maimonides called the indirect way through which nature attains its goals a "gracious ruse" of God and his wisdom; he may have taken the expression from Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Principle of the All* (extant only in Arabic translation; see A. Badawi, *La Transmission de la philosophie grecque en monde arabe* (Paris: Vrin, 1968); J. M. Rist, "On tracking Alexander of Aphrodisias," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 48 (1966): 82-90; J. van Ess, "Über einige neue Fragmente des Alexander von Aphrodisias . . .," *Der Islam* 42 (1966): 149-54; F. W. Zimmermann and H. V. B. Brown, "Neue arabischen Übersetzungstexte aus dem Bereich der spätantiken Griechischen Philosophie," *Der Islam* 50 (1973): 313-24; P. Thillet, "Un traité inconnu d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise sur la Providence dans une version arabe inédite," *Actes du 1er Congrès international de philosophie médiévale* (Louvain, 1960). The idea is suggestive of Hegel's "cunning of Reason."
  6. Bernard Silvestris, ed., Peter Droncke *Cosmographia* (Leiden: Brill, 1978). See also *The Cosmographia of Bernardus Silvestris*, tr., Winthrop Wetherbee (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973); see also Brian Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Bernard Silvester* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).
  7. II 162: "In questo alto debbe consistere la sua felicità e il suo ultimo fine, non in muover corpo celeste che è cosa materiale e alto estrinseco de la sua vera essenza."
  8. The view that sperm is produced by the entire body is found in the *Zohar*, II 150 b, 82, tr. H. Sperling, M. Simon and P. Leverhoff (London, 1933-34), 5 vols.; *Sepherha Zohar (Le livre de la splendeur) Doctrine ésotérique des Israélites*, tr., Jean de Pauly, ed., Émile

- Lafuma-Giraud (Paris: Leroux, 1906-1911), 6 vols; *Le Zohar*, tr., Charles Mopsik, (Albertville: Verdier, 1981). See also Gershom Scholem, *Les grands courants de la mystique juive* (Paris: Payot, 1960); *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic tradition* (New York: JTS, 1960); *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik* (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1960); Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi (i.e., Warren Kenton), *Adam and the Kabbalistic Tree* (London: Rider, 1974) and François Secret, *Le Zohar chez les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance* (La Haye: Mouton, 1964).
9. See the important passage on Avicenna and Averroes in the *Dialoghi*, ed., Caramella 283-85, corresponding to 231-39 in the Anthony Perry ed. of the French translation of Pontus de Tyard (1551). That the active intellect is the lowest of the angels was maintained in Italy by such Jewish Neo-Aristotelian philosophers as Yehudah Romano (b. 1292). Its identification with God was defended especially by Christians, including Thomas Aquinas. See Joseph B. Sermoneta, *La dottrina dell' intelletto e la "fede filosofica" di Jehudah e Immanuel Romano* (Spoleto: Ateneo, 1965). On intellection in Leone, see Suzanne Damians.
  10. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Fate*, ed. and tr., R. W. Sharples (London: Duckworth, 1983); *Traité du destin*, ed., Pierre Thillet (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1984); Paul Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen, von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias: Die Renaissance des Aristotelismus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973).
  11. *Enneads* V 9.3; Armstrong 5.293.
  12. *Guide* III 2.
  13. *Enneads* V 9.5; Armstrong 5.299. This passage affords an excellent example of Plotinus' practice of collecting texts of varied significance in their original contexts to support his own doctrine: Cf. Parmenides frg. B3, Diels; Aristotle *De anima* III 4, 430a 3-4 and 7, 431a 1-2; Heraclitus frg. B101, Diels; and (for example) Plato, *Phaedo* 72E 5-6.
  14. Alexander Altmann credits this doctrine to the Islamic Aristotelians, and credits Maimonides (*Guide* I 68; *Hilkhot Yesodei-ha-Torah* 2.10) for its currency among Jewish philosophers; see his "Moses Narboni's Epistle on Shi'ur Qoma," *Jewish and Medieval Renaissance Studies* 4, ed., A. Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 265. Cf. Carl Gebhardt, 55 f.: "Mit dieser Lehre von Der Identität Gottes und der Welt als des göttlichen Denkinhalts steht Leone in der Tradition jüdischer Philosophie. Aus des Aristoteles Bestimmung der Gottheit als der noesis noeseos (Metaph. XII, 9) hatten die arabischen Peripatetiker den Satz geformt: Gott ist das Denken, der Denkende und das Gedachte. Ihnen folgend lehrt Abraham ibn Esra im 12.

- Jahrhundert: Er ist allein Verstehender, Verstand und Verstandenes, und im 13. Jahrhundert übernimmt Maimonides die Identitätslehre in de *Yesodè-ha-Torà* un den *More Nebukhim*: Er ist Verstand, Verstehendes und Verstehbares und diese drei sind in Gott nur ein und dasselbe Ding, in dem es keine Vielheit gibt, und er findet die Einheit nicht nur im Schöpfer, sondern in jedem actualisierten Verstand. Auch die Mystiek der Qabbala hat sich die Identitätslehre nicht entgehen lassen; im 16. Jahrhundert ist Mose Corduero ihr Vertreter. Und wie die Mystik des Mittelalters in Meister Eckhart das Auge darin ich Gott sehe, in eines setzt mit dem Auge, darin mich Gott siehet, so kündigt Leone die gleiche Identität: Der Verstehende, das Verstandene und der Verstand sind geschieden, sofern sie potentiell sind, und sind vereinigt, sofern sie aktuell sind (III, 57a). In Gott ist der Erkennende und das Erkannte und die Erkenntnis selbst alles ein und dasselbe." (III, 56a. References to editio Carl Gebhardt: Heidelberg, 1924).
15. *Ethics* V, Prop. 29, scholium, tr., after E. Curley, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 610.
  16. *Ethics* V, Prop. 42; cf. *Short Treatise* II, Ch. 26.
  17. *Le Spinozisme* (Paris: Vrin, 1916), 171. Such a reading might encourage the notion that because Spinoza writes *more geometrico* he must conceive human life as a geometric deduction. But *Short Treatise* II, ch. 26 shows how aware Spinoza was of the human moral drama; and when he says there are no demons but only our own weaknesses, he echoes Heraclitus' *ethos anthropoi daemon*—hardly a cold or overly monistic point.
  18. Of this Victor Delbos asks if it is not the imperfect substitute, but a substitute nonetheless, for the idea of predestination, *Le Spinozisme*, 166 ff.
  19. Léon Brunschvig, *Spinoza et ses contemporains* (Paris: Alcan, 3rd edition, 1923); see also his "Le Platonisme de Spinoza," *Chronicon spinozanum* 3 (1923).
  20. *Ethics* III, Prop. 6, 7; cf. Def. 6; IV, Props. 3, 5.
  21. *Ethics* II, Prop. 45.
  22. "Again, just as in the number two there is a one and another, and it is not possible for this one with another to be the number one, but it is necessary for there to be a one by itself before the one with another; in the same way it is necessary that, when a thing has immanent in it something simple along with something else, the simple thing should be simple in and by itself, having nothing in itself of all that it has in its association with other things. For what could make it something else in something different, if there was not something before it from which this something else comes? For the simple could not derive



- from something else, but that which is many, or two, must itself depend on something else." *Enneads* V 6.4; Armstrong, 5.209.
23. Cf. Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968) and *Le soleil à la Renaissance: Science et mythes* (Bruxelles, Paris: Presses universitaires de Bruxelles/Presses universitaires de France, 1965) the proceedings of a colloquium held in April 1963 which include Francesco Negri Arnoldi, "L'iconographie du soleil dans la Renaissance italienne," 519-38, and Francois Secret, "Le soleil chez les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance," 211-40. See also George Francis Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance before Cellini* (London: British Museum, 1930).
  24. III 19: "E questa è la felice morte che causa la coppulazione de l'anima con l'intelletto, la quale hanno gustata i nostri antichi beati Moisé e Aron, e gli altri de quali parla la sacra Scrittura che morino per bocca de Dio baciando la divinità (come t'ho detto)."
  25. *Enneads* V 6.
  26. III 195: "(l'anima) . . . s'innamora di quella somma bellezza intellettuale sua superiore origine, come s'innamora la femmina imperfetta del maschio suo perficiente, e desidera farsi felice ne la sua perpetuata unione. Con questio si giunta un altro amore gemino de l'anima al mondo corporeo a la inferiore, come del maschio a la femmina, per farlo perfetto imprimendo in lui la bellezza che piglia da l'intelletto mediante il primo amore."
  27. III 195: ". . . come che l'anima, ingravidata de la bellezza de l'intelletto la desidera parturire nel mondo corporeo, o veramente piglia la semenza di essa bellezza per farla germinare nel corpo, ovvero come artifice piglia l'esempli de la bellezza intellettuale per sculpirli al proprio ne'corpi."
  28. II 163: "Séguita che tanto il tutto e le parti sono perfette e felici, quanto rettamente e interamente conseguono gli offizzi ai quali sono indirizzati dal sommo opifice. Il fine del tutto è l'unita perfezione di tutto l'universo, disegnata dal divino architetto, e il fine di ciascuna delle parti non è solamente la perfezione di quella parte in sè, ma che con quella deserva rettamente a la perfezione del tutto, che è il fine universale, primo intento de la divinità. E per questo comun fine, più che per il proprio, ogni parta fu fatta, ordinata e dedicata. Talmente che, mancando parte di tal servitù negli atti pertinenti a la perfezione de l'universo, le sarebbe maggiore difetto e più infelice verrebbe a essere, che se li mancasse il suo proprio atto."
  29. II 164: "Ché l'anime nostre essendo spirituali e intellettive, nissun bene da la società corporea, fragile e corruttibile lor potrebbe occorrere, che non stessero molto meglio col sua atto intellettivo intrinseco e

- puro; ma s'applicano al nostro corpo solamente per amore e servizio del sommo creatore del mundo, traendo la vita e la cognizione intellettuale e la luce divina dal mundo superiore eterno a l'inferiore corruttibile, acciò che questa più bassa parte del mondo non sia anch'ella priva de la grazia divina e vita eternale, e perché questo grande animale non abbia parte alcuna che non sia viva e intelligente come tutto lui."
30. II 165: "Però che tanto il mondo e le sue cose hanno essere, quanto egli è tutto unito e collegato con tutte le sue cose a modo di membra d'uno individuo: altrimenti la divisione sarebbe cagione de la sua totale perdizione; e siccome niuna cosa non fa unire l'universo con tutte le sue diverse cose, se non l'amore, séguita che esso amore è causa de l'essere del mondo e di tutte le sue cose."
  31. III 331: "La prima faccia, verso l'intelletto, è la ragione intellettuale, con la quale discorre con universale e spirituale cognizione, estraendo le forme ed essenzie intellettuali da li particolari e sensibili corpi, convertendo sempre il mondo corporeo ne l'intellettuale; la seconda faccia, che è verso il corpo, è il senso, che è cognizione particolare de le cose particolari corporee, aggiunta e mista la materialità de la cose corporee conosciute."
  32. III 326: "E il puro intelletto che riluce in noi è similmente immagine de l'intelletto puro divino, disegnato de l'unità di tutte le idee, il quale in fine de'nostri discorsi razionali ne mostra l'essenzie ideali in intuitiva unica e astrattissima cognizione, quando il merita nostra bene abituata ragione."
  33. III 326: "Si che noi con gli occhi de l'intelletto possiamo vedere in uno intuito la somma bellezza del primo intelletto e idee divine: vedendola ne diletta, e noi l'amiamo; e con gli occhi de l'anima nostra razionale con ordinato discorso possiamo vedere la bellezza de l'anima del mondo e in lei tutte l'ordinate forme, la quale ancora grandemente ne diletta e move ad amare."
  34. III 372: "Così ne l'universo prodotto il primo fine del produttore e la prima perfezione di quello consiste ne la perfezione de l'opera divina, essendo proprio simulacro de la divina sapienza, ma l'ultimo fine suo e l'ultima perfezione di quello consiste in esercitarsi esso universo ne l'atto e opera per il quale fu prodotto, il quale è fine di esso operato però che l'essere de l'operato è fine de l'operante, e l'opera de l'operante è fine de l'esser suo."
  35. III 373: "Però che in questo (come già altrove t'ho detto) consiste e si comprende ogni cosa intellettuale e ogni grado d'intellezione; e questo è quello che può ridurre l'intelletto possibile secondo tutta la sua essenza in intero atto, e gli altri intelletti prodotti attuali nel sommo

- grado de la sua perfezione."
36. III 374: "Però che quanto più perfetto è l'atto intellettuale, tanto è maggiore e più perfetta l'unione de l'intelletto intendente e de la cosa intelletta."
  37. For a clear analysis of the grand reconciliation of these opposites in cyclical activity and of the final synthetic vision that crowns the *Dialoghi*, see *Dialogues d'amour*, tr., Pontus de Tyard, Perry, Introduction, 22 ff.
  38. Quoted in Festugière, *La philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin et son influence sur la littérature française* (Paris: Vrin, 1947), 34.
  39. III 383: "Ma in effetto nè la tristezza nè la letizia son passione in lui, ma la dilettaione è grata corrispondenza de la perfezione del suo effetto e la tristezza privatione di quella da la parte de l'effetto."
  40. III 384: "Però che non è alcuna perfezione nè bellezza che non cresca quando è comunicata ché l'arbore fruttifero sempre è più bello che l' sterile, e l'acque emananti e correnti fuora sono più degne che le raccolte ■ ritenute in le sue vivagne. Prodotto l'universo, fu prodotto con lui l'amore di Dio a esso, come del padre nel figlio già nato: Il qual non solamente fu per sostentarlo nel primo stato de la sua produzione, ma ancora e più veramente per condurlo ne la sua ultima perfezione con la sua felicitante unione con la divina bellezza."
  41. III 384: "Non è dubio che li nostri occhi e virtù visiva col desiderio di sentire la luce ne conduce a vedere la luce e corpo del sole, nel quale ci dilettiamo: niente di manco, se gli occhi nostri non fussero prima illuminati da esso sole e da la luce, noi non potremmo mai arrivare a vederlo, però che senza il sole impossibile è che il sole si veda, perche col sole il sol si vede."
  42. III 385: "Né l'amor nostro né suo sarieno mai capaci di simile unione, né sufficienti di tanto alto grado di dilettevole perfezione, se non fusse la nostra parte intellettuale auitata e illuminata de la somma bellezza divina e de l'amore che esso ha a l'universo; quale avviva e solleva l'amore de l'universo illuminando la parte sua intellettuale, acciò che l' possa condurre a la felicità unitiva de la sua somma bellezza."
  43. *Le Spinozisme*, 165.
  44. *Le Spinozisme*, 166; cf. Descartes, *Lettre à Chanut* (1er février 1647), *Oeuvres*, ed., Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Le Cerf, 1897-1913) 4.607, or Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, ed., *Correspondance avec Arnaud et Morus* (Paris, 1953); tr. in part by Leonora D. Cohen in *Annals of Science* 1 (1936): 48-61. Henry More, *Enchiridion-Ethicum*, IX 13-18 in *Opera philosophica* (1678), tr., Edward Southwell (New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930); cf. John Hoyle, *The waning of the Renaissance, 1640-1740: Studies in the thought and poetry of*

- Henry More, John Norris and Isaac Watts (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971); *Philosophical poems*, ed., Geoffrey Bullough (Manchester: University Press, 1931); cf. Serge Hutin, *Henry More: essais sur les doctrines théosophiques chez les Platoniciens de Cambridge* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1966).
45. Cf. the idea of rational mysticism in L. E. Goodman, Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, 30-49.
  46. Cf. Plato *Republic* VI 509: "The Sun, I presume you will say, not only furnishes to visibles the power of visibility but it also provides for their generation and growth and nurture though it is not itself generation. . . . In like manner, then, you are to say that the objects of knowledge not only receive from the presence of the good their being known, but their very existence and essence is derived to them from it, though the good itself is not essence but still transcends essence in dignity and surpassing power," tr., Paul Shorey.
  47. As Goodman suggests, it is not impossible that the sense of hunger and lack Leone speaks of corresponds to this, and so to Diotima's genealogy of love in the *Symposium* as an offspring of *poros* and *penia*. But we must remain cautious here. The opening statement of the *Dialoghi* places the entire work under the sign of a Platonic and rationalistic theory of love. Love (like desire) is always based on knowledge. If love is based on knowledge, the latter in turn can only be of what is; the beloved object must have real existence. The proposition that love expresses a relationship between a subject and an object both real and lovable rigorously follows Socrates' own conclusions in the *Symposium* (200c-201b). Socrates' further observation that one can love or desire only what one does not have, however, seems unacceptable or at least requires clarification. The objection is raised by the quick-witted Sophia apparently to divert the ardor of her suitor's bold opening declaration: How can Philo claim to feel both love and desire? Philo counters with the example of a man's affection for his wife, which may be described as both love and desire.
  48. Proklos Diadochos, *Über die Vorsehung, das Schicksal und den freien Willen an Theodoros, den Ingenieur (Mechaniker)*, ed., Theo Borger, tr., Michael Erler (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1980).
  49. Love is seen as following upon knowledge and stimulating it in turn. Love and desire are means of raising us from imperfect knowledge to the perfect union which is their true end. For the reciprocal relation of love and knowledge, see Ivry's essay, cited above, n. 1. Analyzing Ebreo's remark, "As we know His perfection, so we love and enjoy Him in the most perfect union of knowledge possible to us," Ivry

comments: "The phrase 'possible to us' is a conventional qualification expressing the concern to maintain God's transcendence, a belief Ebreo holds in uneasy alliance with the conviction of His immanence. . . . Ebreo goes further towards uniting man directly with God than do most medievals. Once he even identifies God with the Agent Intellect of our World, its formal principle, with which individual intellects may conjoin" (247).

## Spinoza, Neoplatonic Kabbalist?

Richard Popkin

In the first history of the Jews written after Josephus, the French Huguenot Jacques Basnage wrote, "There is among the *Jews* a third Opinion about the Creation, which Spinoza has reduced to a System. In truth that *Jew* had borrow'd the foundation of his Iniquity from the Rabbis of his Nation, who were known to him; rather than the *Chineses*,<sup>1</sup> or the Heathen Philosophers. He has never cited the *Cabalists* as his Vouchers, because that Man was so extreemly jealous of the immortality of his Name, that he designed to pass for an Original, and an Inventor of his Opinions. The *Cabalists*, no less greedy of glory than *Spinosa*, might have claimed a Discovery which belonged to them, and gloried in that which has made *Spinosa* immortal; but his Name was become too odious to enter into a Society of Atheism with him. In short the *Jews* rose up against him."<sup>2</sup>

Basnage went on, "The *Cabalists* for this long time have been as it were allow'd and authorized to throw about their Extravagances, and make themselves to be admired by some Persons who love to run after shadows and trifles, things of nought: But this comes about by their having the Art and Dexterity to veil themselves under a Mystical Language. They produce their Dreams and Visions as Explications of Scripture, and spiritual Conjectures rather than as decisions of Faith. *Spinosa*, on the contrary, has made a System, and has endeavoured to prove it. He has kept very well to part of the obscure and Mystical Language of the *Cabalists*, and therefore those

who confute him are often accused of not understanding him; and his Disciples affirm, that all those who have attacked him, have not thoroughly comprehended his true thoughts."<sup>3</sup> Spinoza, Basnage insisted, was a disciple of the Cabalists, had taken his principles from them, but went further than they did until he undermined the foundations of Judaism.

This strange interpretation of Spinoza is similar to one that appears in another work of the time, *Den Spinozismus im Judenthums, oder, die von dem heutigen Judenthumb und desen Geheimen Kabbala (Spinoza and Judaism, On Present Day Judaism and the Secret Kabbala)*, by Johann Georg Wachter.<sup>4</sup> Considering that Spinoza is usually seen as the most rational and non-mystical of philosophers, and one who treated Kabbalistic readings of Scripture with complete disdain, it does seem, *ab initio* implausible that Spinoza was a secret Kabbalist, who drew his philosophical system from the mystical one of the Kabbalists. In fact, Spinoza said, "I have read and known certain Kabbalistic triflers, whose insanity provokes my unceasing astonishment."<sup>5</sup> What I shall try to do in this paper is to explore why such an interpretation was offered by two serious intellectuals in the generation after Spinoza, and whether there may have been any justice in their reading of Spinoza.

By now we all know that Spinoza developed his views from Cartesianism, rational Jewish medieval thinkers, and from Renaissance Neoplatonists like Leone Hebreo. What is so obvious now that Spinoza has been put in his place by the German idealist historians of philosophy and by scholars of Jewish intellectual history, was not so obvious when Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* was published in 1677. The central work, *The Ethics demonstrated by geometrical method*, gave no clue as to what tradition it came from or how one was supposed to read it.<sup>6</sup> Spinoza had published only two seemingly unrelated works previously, *The Theological-Political Tractatus* and *The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*.<sup>7</sup>

Forty years earlier, when Descartes produced his strikingly novel works, *The Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*, the author was alive and only too willing to explain to anyone interested what was revolutionary and true in his philosophy. So Descartes left us a large legacy of published and epistolary explanations and justifications of his views.<sup>8</sup> Spinoza unfortunately

was dead when the *Ethics* was published. The few letters printed by his disciples provided scant explanation of the majestic work. Spinoza's radical friends, who accepted his attacks on established religion, like St. Evremond, Col. J.-B. Stoupe and Henriquez Morales (Henri Morelli), just indicated that they agreed with him.<sup>9</sup> Others who had discussed and disputed Spinoza's early views, like Henry Oldenburg, the secretary of the Royal Society, gave no guidance about the import of *The Ethics*. Leibniz, who had apparently leaned towards Spinoza's views, shied away from association with them as soon as they were denounced. The early reading was that Spinoza was "the first to reduce atheism to a system"<sup>10</sup> or that as a consistent Cartesian he perforce became an atheist.<sup>11</sup> Clearly he was exotic, perhaps some kind of Oriental philosopher.<sup>12</sup>

Bayle and Spinoza's early biographer, Colerus, had portrayed the heroic Spinoza as a bright Jewish lad who could not abide the rigidity and aridity of the Synagogue school. He got himself expelled, then studied Latin, read Descartes, became a Cartesian, and, as Henry More might have predicted, by being consistent, became an atheist.<sup>13</sup> This picture of Spinoza's development was to become the standard one in the histories of philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

It is, of course, difficult to put oneself back into the intellectual world of the late 1670s and early 1680s, when Spinoza became an important figure. He provided no introductory material, no intellectual biography. He left no disciples who were ready and able to explain it all. The situation would have been analogous to the appearance of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* without Bertrand Russell's preface. (The fact that so many publishers turned down Wittgenstein's masterpiece *before* Russell wrote the preface indicates the problem.) How would Spinoza's contemporaries have known what to make of the strangely presented text or what school of philosophy to put it in? The difficulty in assessing what Spinoza was up to, even when there were living students and contacts of Spinoza to ask for guidance, is attested by Bayle's enormous article on "Spinoza" in the *Historical and Critical Dictionary*.<sup>14</sup> Where would a contemporary look for some explanation? The texts of Basnage and Wachter show that they looked in a work published

the same year, the *Kabbala Denudata*, and accepted the clues offered by a strange figure, Moses Germanus.

The *Kabbala Denudata*, an immense compilation and Latin translation of major Zoharic and Lurianic Kabbalistic texts, with explanations and discussions, was put out by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689), a mystical Christian Kabbalist and follower of Jacob Boehme. He studied the Hebrew language and Jewish texts with rabbis in Amsterdam and obtained from them many manuscripts of works of Isaac Luria and his followers, including many that had not been published in any language. Gershom Scholem mentions one manuscript which is now known only through Knorr von Rosenroth's Latin translation.<sup>15</sup> The manuscripts were published in the *Kabbala Denudata* in two volumes, in 1677 and 1684.<sup>16</sup>

The editing and translating was done by Knorr and some of his friends such as the Cambridge Platonist Henry More; More's student, Lady Anne Conway; her doctor, Francis Mercurius van Helmont; their Rabbinical consultant, Isaac Abendana, then reader in Hebrew at Cambridge; and Moses Germanus. The last was a Catholic student of the Jesuits who became a Pietist associate of the Protestant leader Jacob Spener and then converted to Judaism, becoming rabbi of the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam, and leader of a new Messianic movement after the collapse of the Shabtai Zvi movement in Holland.<sup>17</sup>

The declared purpose of the *Kabbala Denudata* was to make the Kabbalistic texts, especially the newer Lurianic ones, available to Christian Europeans. Learned Christians would then see what wisdom and enlightenment were to be found there. As Henry More had remarked, "there is pretious gold in this Cabbalisticall rubbish."<sup>18</sup> Further, making these texts more widely known would help in the great Millenarian mission of converting the Jews, by making their secret books available, and thus enabling right-minded Christians to show Jews that the inner message of their Kabbalistic books is that of Christianity. Knorr von Rosenroth makes it clear from the beginning to the end of the *Kabbala Denudata* that the work serves as an important part in a program to convert the Jews, as a prelude to the Millennium. Thus the last item in volume 2 is a brief tract by Van Helmont on the *Christian Kabbalah*, spelling out the view that the application of the doctrines of the Hebrew Kabbalists

will help lead to the conversion of the Jews.<sup>19</sup> Knorr von Rosenroth's achievement was used by European Christians for about two centuries. Locke, Newton and Leibniz, among others, all knew it. The German idealists used it, and it was partially translated into English.<sup>20</sup>

Since volume 1 of the *Kabbala Denudata* and Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* appeared in the same year, many prominent intellectuals read both. Although it has not yet been investigated, Knorr von Rosenroth and Spinoza must have had quite a few friends or discussants in common. They both knew Leibniz. Knorr was involved with the Behmists in the Netherlands, a group that included at times Van Helmont, Peter Serrarius, Benjamin Furly, Adam Boreel and other radical Protestants who also knew and associated with Spinoza. Spinoza's publisher also published the works of Jacob Boehme and his disciples. So some of the same people would have read Spinoza, Boehme, and the work of their friend and associate Knorr von Rosenroth.

Even before Moses Germanus pointed it out, some readers must have noticed a striking similarity between Part I of Spinoza's *Ethics* and the first chapters of the Latin abridgement of Abraham Cohen Herrera's *Gate of Heaven*, which appeared as an appendix in volume 1 of the *Kabbala Denudata*. Abraham Cohen Herrera (ca. 1570-1635 or 1639), born Alonso Nunez de Herrera in Florence, was the scion of a prominent New Christian family who lived as Catholics in Florence and Venice, doing international business for the Duke of Tuscany and the Sultan of Morocco. The son apparently mastered the Florentine Neoplatonism of Ficino and Pico and studied the Kabbalah with a disciple of Isaac Luria, Israel Sarug, at Dubrovnik. Herrera became an agent for the Sultan of Morocco, went to Spain on business for him, and was captured by the English in the Earl of Essex's raid on Cadiz in 1595. He languished under house arrest in England for a few years until released as a result of pleas by the Sultan. Some time later, Herrera went to Amsterdam, where he was one of the first members of the Sephardic Jewish community that came together there. He died in Amsterdam in the mid-1630s, when Spinoza was very young.<sup>21</sup> His great work, *Puerta del Cielo*, written in Spanish, was not published in the original, but a Hebrew translation by one of Spinoza's teachers, Isaac Aboab, was published

in 1655, and Knorr von Rosenroth abridged the Hebrew text and translated and published it in Latin in 1677-78.<sup>22</sup>

Herrera set out first to formulate the message of Lurianic Kabbalism in the Neoplatonic idiom. The first several chapters contain no peculiarly Hebrew terms or concepts but lay out the underlying philosophical basis of Lurianic Kabbalism in didactic and demonstrative form. Much of the first part of the text might be interchangeable with portions of Spinoza's first book of the *Ethics*. This is not to say that Spinoza read Herrera. He could have read the Hebrew translation, he could have heard of it in school, he could have learned of it from someone like Knorr von Rosenroth. Or he could have worked out independently a similar Neoplatonic theory of the nature of God and the relation of all kinds of existence to God. It has been suggested by Dunin-Borkowski, a leading Spinoza scholar, that Spinoza did know Herrera's work. Others have questioned this claim.<sup>23</sup> But whether Spinoza knew of Herrera's writings or learned from them, his work was immediately associated with Herrera's ideas. Moses Germanus, Wachter and Basnage all cite similarities.

Gershom Scholem discussed Wachter's interpretation at length in his introductory essay to the German translation of Knorr von Rosenroth's Latin condensation of Herrera's work, and more briefly in his last public lecture at the 1984 Spinoza Symposium at Wolfenbüttel.<sup>24</sup> But Wachter, in fact, mainly dealt with the views of Moses Germanus on Spinoza, on Judaism, on pagan religion, and with the views of Herrera. He said very little about Spinoza, despite his title.<sup>25</sup> Basnage, who is mentioned only in passing by Scholem,<sup>26</sup> has not been examined thoroughly, but his discussion is much more detailed in relating Spinoza's views to those found in the *Kabbala Denudata*.

Basnage devoted thirty pages to Spinoza in the fourth book of his *Histoire des Juifs*, arguing for the true, Kabbalistic origin of Spinozism.<sup>27</sup> Basnage began with Spinoza's view that there is in the universe only a unique substance, God, and that all other beings are only modifications of this. For a substance cannot engender another substance, and nothing can be created out of nothing. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, Basnage said, was a principle borrowed from the Kabbalists.<sup>28</sup> Those who deny it, according to the Kabbalists, we are told, oppose not only reason but the wisdom and power of God.

A reference is given here to Henry More's *Fundamenta Cabbalae*, which appears in volume 2 of the *Kabbala Denudata*.<sup>29</sup> Basnage was well aware that the *ex nihilo nihil fit* doctrine was articulated by the Epicureans, but he claimed it was taken over by others, including the Kabbalists.

Spinoza's principle that there is only one substance, agrees with the teaching of the Kabbalists, except that Spinoza made this substance material, while for the Kabbalists it is spiritual.<sup>30</sup> Basnage contended, however, that both views came down to the same thing—that there is only one substance, and everything is a modification of it. Basnage again cited More as his authority for saying this.<sup>31</sup> The difficulties for Spinozism will be greater than in "la Theologie Cabbalistique," but both systems will have problems explaining how anything other than the one substance exists.<sup>32</sup> Basnage went on to explore the Kabbalistic Neoplatonic emanation theory and Spinoza's notion of modes. After showing how strange and blasphemous Spinoza's theory could become, Basnage restated his thesis that the foundations of Spinozism lie in Kabbalistic theology: All that Spinoza had done was to dress it up in Cartesian terms, leading to his materialistic characterization of the one substance.<sup>33</sup> Basnage preferred the Kabbalistic spiritualistic version, and he tried to show that Spinoza's materialistic formulation ran into all sorts of special problems.<sup>34</sup> But "the great difficulty of Spinoza, and the Cabbalists before him, is that nothing can come from nothing. If that is so, God has produced nothing outside of himself. Then all parts of the universe must necessarily be parts of the One only substance."<sup>35</sup> Basnage insisted that this was implausible. Far more plausible is the belief that God made the material world by His infinite power, even if we do not know how this could be done. The refutation of particulars in Spinoza's theory Basnage left to his friend, Pierre Bayle.<sup>36</sup>

In the next chapter Basnage went on to deal with other Jewish theories of creation.<sup>37</sup> Here he plunged into the Kabbalistic writings in the *Kabbala Denudata*, Luria's work, More's response, and Abraham Cohen Herrera's work.<sup>38</sup> Strikingly, Basnage disavowed the claim of various Christian Kabbalists who found Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, in the Kabbalistic explanation of how the world was generated from God.<sup>39</sup> Exposing the mistake of the Christian Kabbalists, who find what they want in the obscure expressions of the

Jewish exegetes, Basnage said: "Cohen Irara, a Portuguese Cabbalist who wrote at the end of the last century, has shown us how to understand the thought of the Cabbalists."<sup>40</sup> He then outlined Herrera's emanation theory.

Basnage gave no source for his reading of Spinoza as a Kabbalist or for taking Abraham Cohen Herrera's text as the clearest statement of the Kabbalistic emanation theory. He made no mention of Wachter's book. But Basnage read a vast amount of Jewish literature for his *Histoire des Juifs*, mostly in Latin or modern language editions (although he cited some texts in Hebrew). He did not have access to the manuscripts of the Jewish anti-Christian polemics written in Holland until some were sold in the auction of his son-in-law's library in 1715.<sup>41</sup> This would indicate that he did not have deep connections in the Dutch Jewish world. He did not even have access to the sort of Kabbalistic manuscripts that Knorr von Rosenroth edited. But he knew a lot of gossip and rumor about the Jews of his day, some of which looks as if it came from Jewish informants rather than books.<sup>42</sup> He did not name people he might have talked to. He went to Holland himself after Spinoza was dead. He knew of Orobio de Castro; but, unlike Locke or Philip van Limborch, he does not seem to have known him personally.<sup>43</sup>

Johann Georg Wachter, on the other hand, knew at least one Amsterdam rabbi, namely Moses Germanus. He had known him first as Johann Peter Speeth (or Spaeth), a disciple of Jacob Spener, and collaborator of Knorr von Rosenroth in the *Kabbala Denudata*. Speeth went through a series of spiritual gyrations in the 1680s and 1690s, going back to Catholicism, then becoming involved with Quakers, Mennonites and Socinians, studying Hebrew and Kabbalah, and finally in 1697 becoming a Jew in Amsterdam and a rabbi of the Portuguese Synagogue, with the name Moses Germanus. Wachter came to visit him and derived his ideas about Spinozism and Kabbalism through this personal contact and through letters from Moses Germanus.<sup>44</sup>

A, or *the*, central issue in relating Spinoza to the Kabbalah for Wachter was the centrality in Spinoza, Moses Germanus, and Abraham Cohen Herrera of the principle, *ex nihilo nihil fit*—the problem of articulating a satisfactory emanation theory. It seems too great a coincidence that both Basnage and Wachter saw this as a central issue in Spinoza, unless the two had a common source.

Wachter spoke of the issue as to whether Spinozism was a Kabbalist theory or came from Kabbalism as the latest controversy going on in Holland.<sup>45</sup> Like Basnage, he related the thesis of Moses Germanus and of "Judaism" that "dass alles Wesen Gott sey," with the "rabbinical" and Kabbalistic principle, *ex nihilo nihil fit*<sup>46</sup> and contended that these two theses lie at the heart of Spinoza's view. In this form there is a similarity between Spinoza's, Herrera's and Moses Germanus' formulations, especially if one leaves out the dimension Basnage made all-important, the material aspect of Spinoza's God—and if one ignores the differing conceptions of Divine Causality.

I should like to consider three questions about these early readings of Spinoza: (a) could Spinoza have drawn his views from Kabbalistic sources? (b) is the similarity stressed by Basnage, Wachter and Moses Germanus significant? and (c) do the differences between Spinoza's views and those of the Kabbalah make the similarities of little importance?

Given Spinoza's statement in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* that he read and knew "Kabbalistic triflers," "whose insanity provokes my unceasing astonishment," it remains to be asked whether Spinoza adopted any of the Kabbalistic outlook. Wachter and Moses Germanus were struck by Spinoza's remark in one of the last letters to Henry Oldenburg, at the end of 1675, where Spinoza said, "For I hold that God is of all things the cause immanent, as the phrase is, not transient. I say all things are in God and move in God, thus agreeing with Paul, and perhaps with all the ancient philosophers, though the phraseology may be different: I will even venture to affirm that I agree with all the ancient Hebrews, in so far as one may judge from their traditions, though some are in many ways corrupted."<sup>47</sup> Wachter and Moses Germanus took this as a confession by Spinoza to his close friend, Oldenburg, that his views preserved the tradition of the Jewish Kabbalah in a kind of Jewish Neoplatonism.<sup>48</sup>

Spinoza could have learned something about the Kabbalah while a student at the Synagogue. He was a student of Aboab while the latter was translating Herrera's work. He could have read the published Hebrew version. After the excommunication, Spinoza was close to many Christian mystics among the Quakers, Collegiants and Mennonites. People whom Spinoza knew—like Adam Boreel, the

leader of the Collegiants, who took in Spinoza in 1656—knew Van Helmont, the close associate of Knorr von Rosenroth. Van Helmont was *au courant* in Kabbalistic studies, and his work on the Hebrew language was itself a major Kabbalistic work.<sup>49</sup> So Spinoza's known circle of mystical non-denominational Christians overlapped with the Van Helmont-Knorr von Rosenroth one; Spinoza could have known their views, and they his. Knorr von Rosenroth studied Hebrew and Kabbalah with rabbis in Amsterdam for several years. He was there while Spinoza was alive. He was editing the *Kabbala Denudata* by 1670 and published the first volume in the year of Spinoza's death. A manuscript at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel tells of a trip Knorr von Rosenroth took to Amsterdam in the 1660s. He did not name many of the people he saw there, but he met many scientifically inclined intellectuals and religious figures.<sup>50</sup> In the preface to the *Kabbala Denudata*, he states that he got the impressive collection of manuscript material he used from an unnamed rabbi who was then denounced by the Jewish community. All sorts of troubles descended on the rabbi and his family, he reports, for giving him the material, and on Knorr and his family for receiving it and making it available.<sup>51</sup>

Boreel too, who edited the Hebrew text of the *Mishnah* with the aid of rabbis Judah Leon Templo (who lived and ate in Boreel's house), Menasseh ben Israel, and Isaac and Jacob Abendana, complained about how secretive the Jews were about their religious documents.<sup>52</sup> Yet Boreel and Menasseh apparently agreed to take part in a College of Jewish Studies to be established in London to publish the texts of the Jewish mysteries in Hebrew and in translation.<sup>53</sup> The English Deists found it impossible to obtain the Jewish anti-Christian documents by leaders like Ḥaḥam Saul Levi Morteira, Orobio de Castro and others, until they suddenly turned up in the sale of Basnage's son-in-law's library in 1715.<sup>54</sup> Previously the only indication that these works circulated outside the Jewish community is a note by Orobio on one of his manuscripts, saying he did not publish it for fear of causing scandal, but he showed it to the Jesuits in Brussels, who liked it.<sup>55</sup>

Presumably the Jewish community would be even more guarded about Kabbalistic documents by Luria, Hayyim Vital, Israel Sarug and others, many of which were not published in Hebrew until the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. The fact that a renegade

rabbi gave this material to Knorr von Rosenroth is quite interesting. I do not know who the rabbi was—maybe Moshe Idel or Yosef Kaplan can shed light on the question. Perhaps the unknown rabbi was disillusioned by the debacle of the Sabbatian movement, which was so strong in Amsterdam, tossed away his mystical manuscripts, and left for a new life in America.

At any rate, the Kabbalistic material passed into Christian hands in Amsterdam in the 1660s or early 1670s. Knorr von Rosenroth obviously showed it to Van Helmont, and it probably became known amongst the philosemitic mystical Christians like Boreel, Serrarius, Furlly, Dury (who was Oldenburg's father-in-law), and others, many of whom regularly attended Synagogue services and interacted with the Jewish community.<sup>56</sup> Peter Serrarius, Spinoza's patron, was the leader of the Christian followers of Shabtai Zvi and did some Kabbalistic studies with Amsterdam rabbis on the matter.<sup>57</sup> Spinoza could easily have come to know of the materials available to these Christians.

Contrary to the accepted story, Spinoza knew some Jews in the twenty-one years after his excommunication. He knew the son-in-law of Rabbi Benjamin Musafia of Copenhagen, and he was a close friend of the Egyptian Jew Henriquez Morales (Henri Morelli), the physician of the libertine poet Charles St. Evremond.<sup>58</sup> He may have known others, especially if they were not members of the Amsterdam synagogue. From the Jews he knew he may have learned some things about the Jewish intellectual interests of the time. Oldenburg asked him what he knew about the appearance of the King of the Jews (Shabtai Zvi) and what the Jews of Amsterdam thought about this.<sup>59</sup> Regrettably, the answer (if there was one) is missing, but we have Serrarius' answer. And Serrarius was the point of contact between Spinoza in Holland and Oldenburg and Robert Boyle in England, receiving and transmitting their mail. He was clearly involved with the Amsterdam Jewish Sabbatians and sent copies of Shabtai Zvi's letter to the Amsterdam Jews to John Dury in Switzerland. Thus *he* had access to such a document!<sup>60</sup>

Spinoza, then, had Christian and Jewish contacts who could have given him access to the Kabbalistic ideas and materials being studied in the Jewish community. Further exploration of Spinoza's Christian Millenarian contacts and his Jewish ones may reveal more about Spinoza's knowledge of what was going on in the Jewish world, and



about knowledge among Jews of Spinoza's activities. But even what we know now shows us that Spinoza could have used Kabbalistic sources or ideas. The view stated by Basnage is not preposterous; it is even genuinely possible. Spinoza could have been a secret Kabbalist trying to assert his own originality.

Whether or not Spinoza drew from Kabbalistic sources and ideas, is there enough similarity between his views and Kabbalistic ones to be of any importance? Here I think one has to distinguish between the detailed Kabbalistic system, with the *'Eyn Sof*, the Adam Kadmon, and other elements unmentioned by Spinoza, and a metaphysical system such as that presented by Abraham Cohen Herrera as a basis for, or prelude to, Kabbalism. There are some striking similarities between Part I of the *Ethics* and the first five chapters of Herrera's *Porta Coelorum*. A detailed study would, I think, show that Spinoza and Herrera held to similar views about the status and nature of being or substance and its relation to supposedly created objects. They both had, for want of a better term, a Neoplatonic conception of the One, or Substance. Herrera probably came by his views from the Florentine Platonists. Both men had to hold some kind of emanation theory to account for other existences without allowing for independently caused or produced entities. Both have the basic problem of explaining how and why there is something other than just Being as such. If these features are taken as central, then Spinoza and Herrera have similar metaphysical commitments, which can be described as Basnage, Moses Germanus and Wachter did, as exhibiting the consequences, in a Neoplatonic metaphysics, of accepting either Spinoza's theory of causality, or Herrera's theory of necessary existence, or *ex nihilo nihil fit*.<sup>61</sup>

Interesting as this may be for the ontology of Part I of the *Ethics*, it does not come to grips with either Spinoza's theory or Herrera's of what the world is like and how it operates. The Kabbalistic orientation may have helped fix Spinoza's and Herrera's starting place, but it does not reveal where their respective theories led. Given the purposes of the early interpreters, Basnage, Moses Germanus and Wachter, however, the characterization of the initial orientation may have been enough.

If Moses Germanus originated the interpretation of Spinoza as a secret Kabbalist, as Leibniz claims in the *Theodicy*,<sup>62</sup> we have reason to believe, from a letter of Moses Germanus to Van Helmont

in 1696, that Moses was opposing both Spinoza and Kabbalism in order to advance his own idiosyncratic version of Judaism.<sup>63</sup> Having gone through so many religious and theological turnings, from Catholicism to mystical pietistic Protestantism, back to Catholicism, to the radical Protestantism of the Quakers, Mennonites and Socinians, Moses Germanus became a Jew. As he explains, he became convinced that the Jewish people were the suffering servant of *Isaiah 53*, and Van Helmont urged him to convert to Judaism and move to Amsterdam.<sup>64</sup> What appears in his Amsterdam years indicates that he had developed an extremely Jewish version of Christianity and saw the presence of the actual Jewish Messiah as a historical reality of his time. He claimed to oppose Spinoza's ahistorical and irreligious views and the Kabbalah's obfuscations. What the Jewish people really yearned for, he insisted, was the Messianic Redeemer. Jesus, ■ rabbi of Roman times with fine moral teachings, was, like other Jews, hoping for and expecting this Redeemer. Around 200 of the Common Era, he was grossly and deliberately misinterpreted as presenting himself as the redemptive Messiah. A conspiracy of sinister forces established Christianity and maintained it up to the Reformation. Then one could again see the New Testament for what it was, the life of a pious rabbi conjoined with some inspirational literature, and some dastardly addenda that created a pseudo-Messianic movement around Jesus of Nazareth after his death.<sup>65</sup> This Judaizing version of Christianity (later adopted by some German Bible critics) was coupled with a Messianic Judaism centered on the person of Oliger Pauli, a Dane who had a Jewish grandfather. Moses Germanus and Pauli caused a great deal of stir and agitated the rulers of Europe to join them in liberating Palestine, reestablishing the Jewish people there, and rebuilding the Temple.<sup>66</sup>

It appears that Moses Germanus rejected Spinoza's irreligion along with the Christian reading of the Kabbalah, which he had known first hand as a worker with Knorr von Rosenroth on the *Kabbala Denudata*, in order to advocate his own brand of Messianism. His ground for rejecting both would be the same: their common metaphysical assumptions as reflected in their handling of the problem of emanation. Evidently, for him, this single common theme provided sufficient grounds for rejecting the two systems, as well as for linking them, regardless of what other views Spinoza, or Herrera, or other Kabbalists might hold.

Wachter visited Moses Germanus in Amsterdam shortly after he settled there. As a result of conversations and letters he received, Wachter grew deeply disturbed by Moses Germanus's anti-Christianity. He saw Amsterdam Judaism as being in ferment because of Spinozism and because of Moses Germanus' views. Wachter published his exchange with Moses Germanus, in which the latter attacked Christianity as modern paganism.<sup>67</sup> One aspect of Wachter's counterattack was to contend that Moses Germanus' theory was, all protestations notwithstanding, just Spinozism and Kabbalism. Much of the evidence he offered was to show that Moses Germanus and Spinoza held the same views as Herrera, especially regarding Being, *ex nihilo nihil fit*, and emanation.<sup>68</sup> A substantial part of Wachter's response is an analysis of Herrera's text in the *Kabbala Denudata*.<sup>69</sup> Wachter hoped to undermine Judaism, whether in the form it took in Moses Germanus or as represented in Herrera. Part of his tactics was to lump these thinkers together with the notorious heretic Spinoza.

Basnage offers a more interesting interpretation than Moses Germanus' of Spinoza as a Kabbalist, first because he deals more directly with Spinoza, and secondly because Basnage saw that Spinoza's emanation theory was a materialistic rendition of Cartesianism, a modern scientific account of the world. Basnage himself was involved with a kind of Calvinist Cartesianism, and so could see Spinoza in both the Cartesian and Kabbalistic traditions.<sup>70</sup>

Basnage undertook his massive *Histoire des Juifs* from Roman times to the present, not just out of curiosity. He knew that Menasseh ben Israel had planned such a work, a continuation of Josephus, as evidence that Jewish history is Providential History.<sup>71</sup> Basnage was a Millenarian, concerned to show, through Jewish history, that God is active in history, and in His Actions towards the Jews is bringing about the climax of human history, the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, which Basnage foresaw as starting in the early eighteenth century. Jewish history illustrates God's power, God's concern, God's wrath, and God's redemptive action. In studying Jewish history, the true and believing Christian will have his faith reinforced, and the Jew may be enlightened to see that he has to overcome Jewish myopia and recognize the fulfillment of Judaism in Christianity.<sup>72</sup>

Basnage's work is quite tolerant, especially when compared with what German experts on Judaism, like Wagenseil, Spitzel and others, were turning out.<sup>73</sup> Basnage tried to be objective and to get the facts from reliable sources. He studied Jewish texts and apparently collected a lot of oral history from people in the Netherlands. He often defended the Jews from false anti-semitic accusations. And he was unimpressed with the efforts of those who tried to convert the Jews through force or arguments. Force had backfired in Spain and Portugal, creating the Marrano situation; and Jews usually won the arguments.<sup>74</sup> So, Basnage advised letting God do the actual converting.<sup>75</sup> But a learned, well-intentioned Christian could see that what kept intelligent Jews in their blindness was their philosophy—Kabbalism. Basnage had read the *Kabbala Denudata* and other sources and saw the Kabbalah as the central ideology of Judaism. He devoted a large section of his study to the history of the Kabbalah and explanation of its doctrines.<sup>76</sup> For he was convinced that once the Jews saw the faults and flaws of their Kabbalistic theosophy, they would be prepared for conversion.

Bringing Spinoza into the discussion of Kabbalism was a way of indicating what was wrong with Spinoza and of showing that the roots of Spinoza's atheism lie in Kabbalism. If one could show (a) that Spinoza was a Kabbalist in metaphysics, and (b) that he was an atheist, then his Kabbalism would seem to imply his atheism. Revealing Spinoza's hidden sources in the Kabbalah would destroy his claim to originality. At the same time, Spinoza's sacrilegious results would explain why the Kabbalists were not anxious to claim him as their heir.<sup>77</sup>

All this I presume Basnage got first, second, or third hand from Moses Germanus. But Basnage did see and emphasize the critical difference between Spinoza's emanation theory and the Kabbalistic one, that for the Kabbalists all derivative being is spiritual. For Spinoza, Basnage contended, all derivative being is material. "The Kabbalists agree further with Spinoza in recognizing only one unique Substance, but this impious one makes this substance material, in order to make God corporeal and to annihilate the spirituality of this being."<sup>78</sup> Basnage saw Spinoza's materialism as allowing him to take over Cartesian science but leaving a host of problems, such as how to explain mental or spiritual events and how to explain contrary or conflicting modifications of the one substance. Basnage contended

that the only novelty in Spinoza's theory was in his use of the term "modification."<sup>79</sup> But having done this, he argued, Spinoza had left himself open to the problems that fill dozens of pages in Pierre Bayle's rather amazing article on Spinoza. Basnage was a close friend of Bayle's and cited the text in which Bayle tried to make hash out of Spinoza's views by identifying modifications with substance and arguing that for Spinoza "God is hot" and "God is cold" simultaneously.<sup>80</sup> In short, Basnage sought to push Spinoza back to a Jewish Kabbalistic world and to make his theory a mass of contradictions, discrediting both Spinoza and his Kabbalistic roots. Elsewhere Basnage sought to show that Spinoza's Bible criticism and its impious conclusions came from Jewish sources.<sup>81</sup>

To picture Spinoza as a Kabbalist taking over Jewish views then appearing in the *Kabbala Denudata* was natural for Moses Germanus, Wachter and Basnage. In terms of the interest each had in Judaism, such an interpretation was not far-fetched. From their perspective, Spinoza's metaphysics at its core looked the same as Herrera's. It was certainly possible that Spinoza had known of Herrera's views and used them. Anyone who bought the *Kabbala Denudata* and Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma* in 1677 might have thought them related works, at least until reaching the exposition of Spinoza's Cartesianism or discovering the details of real Jewish Kabbalism.

Seeing how Spinoza's contemporaries could read him as a Kabbalist helps us understand, I think, the milieu in which his ideas appeared. He was connected with many mystical non-denominational Christians, followers of the pantheism of Jacob Boehme. He was also involved with freethinkers. But there is little in his correspondence or writings that shows he was involved with Cartesians, that is, living followers of Descartes. He was interpreted by some as a Kabbalist, and his metaphysics may reflect a synthesis of Cartesianism and Kabbalism. Our received view of Spinoza's thought as growing out of the Cartesian ferment has dulled us to the much richer, more exciting intellectual world in which he flourished. If we can see him as some of his contemporaries did, we may discover that in spite of all the difficulties that dogged his intellectual career, and in spite of his ongoing polemical attacks on Judaism and the Jewish community in which he was reared, Spinoza may have still derived a central part of his philosophy from a vital part of his heritage—the Kabbalism then being studied in Holland. Perhaps he

was trying to utilize the Neoplatonized Kabbalism of Herrera as a way of integrating the new science and the rational/spiritual mysticism of his time. If we can suspend disbelief in Spinoza as a Kabbalist, we may find him a much more exciting and excited thinker.

### Notes

1. The possibility that Spinoza drew his philosophical theory from Chinese thought was raised in the article "Spinoza," Rem. B, in Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*.
2. Jacques Basnage, *The History of the Jews from Jesus Christ to the Present Time: Containing their Antiquities, their Religion, their Rites, the Dispersion of the Ten Tribes in the East, and the Persecutions this Nation has suffer'd in the West. Being a Supplement and Continuation of the History of Josephus* (London, 1708) Book IV, ch. vii, 294. The work originally appeared in French in 1707, with the second, greatly enlarged edition in 1716.
3. Loc. cit. Pierre Bayle was among those accused of not understanding Spinoza when he criticized his philosophy. See Remark DD of Bayle's article "Spinoza."
4. Johann Georg Wachter, *Den Spinozismus im Judenthums, oder, die von dem heutigen Judenthumb und dessen Geheimen Kabbala, vergottete Welt, an Mose Germano sonsten Johann Peter Spaeth von Augsburg geburtig befunden under widerleget* (Amsterdam, 1699).
5. Benedictus de Spinoza, *Theological Political Tractatus*, chap IX, ed., R. H. M. Elwes (London, 1883; repr. New York: Dover, 1951), 140.
6. Cf. Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, ch. 1.
7. Yirmiahu Yovel, in "Bible Interpretation as Philosophical Praxis: A Study of Spinoza and Kant," *JHP* 11 (1973): 189 ff., discusses what people might have made out of Spinoza's views if only these two works had survived.
8. We have Descartes' replies to the objections to the *Meditations*, a great deal of correspondence with and about various critics, as well as Descartes' *Conversations with Burman*, where he answered some very direct questions about what he thought he was doing.
9. See Gustave Cohen, "Le séjour de Saint-Evremond en Hollande," *Revue de Littérature comparée* (1925-26); R. Ternois, "Saint-Evremond et Spinoza," *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* 1 (1965): 1-14; K. O. Meinsma, *Spinoza et son cercle* (Paris: Vrin, 1983), ch. xii; and R. H. Popkin, "Serendipity at the Clark: Spinoza

- and the Prince of Condé," *The Clark Newsletter* 10 (1986): 4-7, and "Some Seventeenth Century Interpretations of Spinoza's Ideas," in C. Augustijn et al., *Essays on Church History Presented to Jan van den Berg* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1987), 63-74.
10. Bayle, "Spinoza" at the beginning.
  11. This was Henry More's diagnosis when he heard about Spinoza's views. See More's letter to Robert Boyle, December 4 [1670?], in *The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle* (London, 1772) 6.514.
  12. This was Bayle's view in "Spinoza," Remark B.
  13. See Bayle, "Spinoza" and Jean Colerus, *La Vie de B. de Spinoza* (La Haye, 1706).
  14. See Rems. CC, DD, and EE.
  15. Gershom Scholem, "Knorr von Rosenroth," *Encyclopedia Judaica* 10.1118.
  16. Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, *Kabbala Denudata* (Sulzbach, 1677, 1684).
  17. On the editing of the *Kabbala Denudata*, see Allison Coudert, "A Cambridge Platonist's Kabbalist Nightmare," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1975): esp. 635-39, 645-52. On Moses Germanus, see under Spaeth, Johann Peter (Moses Germanus) in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* 11.483-84, *Encyclopedia Judaica* 15.219-220, and Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Philosemitismus im Barok* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1952), 67-81.
  18. Quoted in Brian P. Copenhaver, "Jewish Theologies of Space in the Scientific Revolution: Henry More, Joseph Raphson, Isaac Newton and their Predecessors," *Annals of Science* 37 (1980): 522-23.
  19. See the preface of vol. 1 by Knorr von Rosenroth, and the appendix to vol. 2, Francis M. Van Helmont, "Adumbratio Kabbalae Christianae, Id est Syncatabasis Hebraizans, sive Brevis Applicatio Doctrinae Hebraeorum Cabbalisticum ad Dogmata non foederis; pro formanda hypothesisi, ad conversionem Judaeorum proficia."
  20. The *Kabbala Denudata* was cited frequently for over a century after its publication. It was partially translated by S. L. MacGregor Mathers, *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (London, 1887). I own a fifth printing from 1938. I have been told that the pages of Newton's copy, given to him by Van Helmont, are uncut.
  21. On Herrera's amazing life, see the introduction by Gershom Scholem to the German edition of his *Pforte des Himmels* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974) and the article on Herrera in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, which differs from Scholem's account in some important regards.

22. The original Spanish text has now been edited for the first time by K. Krabbenhaft: Abraham Cohen Herrera, *Puerta del Cielo* (Fundacion Universitaria Espanola, 1987). This edition has a long introduction giving biographical and bibliographical information. The title page of the Latin abridgement and translation has the subtitle: *In quo Dogmata Cabbalistica de AEn-Soph, Adam Kadmon, Zimzum, Aziluth, Briah, Jezirah, Asiah, Nomine Tetragrammato, Revolutionibus Alphabeticis, Avvir Kadmon. . . Philosophica Platonica conservatur.*
23. Cf. Stanislaus von Dunin-Borkowski, *Der junge De Spinoza* (Münster, 1910), 188-89; Scholem, "Einleitung," 41-46.
24. Gershom Scholem, "Einleitung," 41-46, and "Die Wachtersche Kontroverse über den Spinozismus und ihre Folgen," in K. Grunder and W. Schmidt-Biggemann, *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner religiösen Wirkung, Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung* 12 (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1984): 15-25.
25. Wachter discussed Spinoza only occasionally, as on pp. 5v, 3, 4 and 34, and in the last part of his work.
26. Scholem, "Einleitung," 61; "Wachtersche Kontroverse," 23.
27. Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs* (La Haye, 1716) Livre IV, ch. V, 4.128-158; in the English folio edition of 1708, the chapter on Spinoza is 294-99.
28. Basnage, French ed., 131-32; English ed., 294.
29. French ed., 132 and note; English ed., 294.
30. French ed., 132-35; English ed., 295.
31. French ed., 137-8; English ed., 295.
32. French ed., 136-9; English ed., 295-6.
33. French ed., 140-41; English ed., 297.
34. French ed., 141-2; English ed., 297.
35. French ed., 149-50; English ed., 297.
36. French ed., 156-7; English ed., 298.
37. French ed., Livre IV, ch. viii, "Creation du Monde par voie d'Emanation," 158-84; English ed., 299 ff.
38. French ed, Livre IV, chap. xiii, sec. 3-15.
39. Sec. xv, 174-6.
40. French ed., 175.
41. See R. H. Popkin, "Jacques Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* and the Biblioteca Sarraziana," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 21 (1987): 154-62. See the "Table des Auteurs qu'on a citez dans cet Ouvrages," at the beginning of the *Histoire des Juifs*, xlix-lxxxvi, which contains many Jewish authors.

42. Quite a bit of the material on sixteenth and seventeenth-century developments in Jewish communities does not seem to have come from books—at least no citations are given.
43. Basnage discussed Orobio in his section on seventeenth-century Jews in Holland, Livre IX, ch. xxxvii, sec. 13-16. He learned of Orobio's unpublished anti-Christian writings from the manuscripts sold in the Sarraz auction in 1715.
44. See Wachter, *Den Spinozismus im Judenthums*, "Vorrede," \*5-\*5v.
45. Wachter, \*5: "Wir praesentiren der hier *Geneigter Leser*, die allerneuesten Controversien von Holland."
46. Wachter, \*5v-\*6v.
47. Letter to Oldenburg, Epistola LXXIII.
48. Wachter, 34.
49. Francis Van Helmont's *Kurtzer Entwurff des eigenthielen Natur-Alphabets der Heiligen Sprache* (Sulzbach, 1667). Allison Coudert is preparing an edition of this work.
50. The Herzog August Bibliothek at Wolfenbüttel has a great many of Knorr von Rosenroth's papers including correspondence and materials used in the *Kabbala Denudata*. The account of his trip is MS. Extrav. 253.1.
51. See Knorr von Rosenroth, "Lectori Philebraco Salutem," *Kabbala Denudata*, 1.18-19. The passage is translated in Allison Coudert, "A Cambridge Platonist's Kabbalist Nightmare," 695.
52. John Dury reported that Boreel was having difficulties with the rabbis about the Spanish translation of the *Mishnah* "by reason of the icalousie & envious spirit wch in yt Nation to hinder all strangers from the knowledge of their law and way." Letter of John Dury to Samuel Hartlib, Amsterdam 5/15 July 1661, Hartlib Papers, Sheffield University MS. 4/4/26. On the Jewish-Christian project to edit the *Mishnah*, see R. H. Popkin, "Some Aspects of Jewish-Christian Theological Interchanges in Holland and England, 1640-1700," in J. van den Berg and E. G. E. van der Wall, eds., *Jewish-Christian Relations* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988), 3-32.
53. See R. H. Popkin, "The First College of Jewish Studies," *REJ* 143 (1984): 351-64.
54. See Popkin, "Jacques Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* and the Biblioteca Sarraziana," 156. Anthony Collins complained that Jews "are forbid, under pain of excommunication" to lend these documents to Christians, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, (London 1724), 82n-83n.

55. This note appears on the flyleaf Hs. 48 E 42 of the Ets Haim, Amsterdam collection, presently at the National Library of Israel. The Portuguese text is reproduced in L. Fuks and R. G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaica Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections*, 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1975).
56. See Popkin, "Some Aspects of Jewish-Christian Theological Interchanges."
57. Serrarius described a Kabbalistic discussion with "quelque Juif" in 1664 in a letter to Dury, Zurich Staatsarchiv Ms. E. II. 457d, fol. 421(659). On Serrarius see E. G. E. van der Wall, *De Mystieke Chiliast, Petrus Serrarius (1600-1669) en zijn Wereld*, (Dordrecht: ICG, 1987); and R. H. Popkin, "A Note on Serrarius," in K. O. Meinsma, *Spinoza et son cercle* (Paris, 1983), 277-79, n. 62.
58. Cf. Michael Petry and Guido van Suchtelen, "Spinoza and the Military: A Newly Discovered Document," *Studia Spinoziana* 1 (1985): 361-69; and R. H. Popkin, "Serendipity at the Clark: Spinoza and the Prince of Condé," *The Clark Newsletter* 10 (1986): 4-7.
59. Letter of Oldenburg to Spinoza, London, 8 December, 1665, in Marie Boas Hall and A. Rupert Hall, eds., *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, letter 467 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965) 1.633-37.
60. Serrarius to Oldenburg, 5 July 1667, in Oldenburg Correspondence, letter 652, 2.446-47. Letter 493, 2.48-51, a report from Oldenburg to Robert Boyle about what was happening in Shabtai Zvi's affairs, is probably based on information from Serrarius. Dury's letter to Ulrich, January 25, 1666, Zurich Staatsarchiv MS. E. II. 457e, fol. 747; and van der Wall, *Mystieke Chiliast, Petrus Serrarius*, esp. Hoofdstuck X.
61. Neither Spinoza nor Herrera used the formula *ex nihilo nihil fit*, but it is equivalent to Spinoza's axioms 1, 2, 3 and 7, and to Herrera's, "Quod entia vel omnia sint necessaria, vel omnia contingentia." cap. I.
62. Leibniz was taken in the eighteenth century as the authority on this. He said, in the *Théodicée*, sec. 9, "Un certain Allemand natif de la Suabe, devenu Juif il y a quelques années et dogmatisent sous le nom de Moses Germanus, s'étoit attache au dogmes de Spinoza, a cru que Spinoza renouvelle l'ancienne Cabale des Hebreux; et un savant homme [Wachter] qui a refute ce proselyte Juif, paroît etre de meme sentiment." Leibniz knew both Wachter and Van Helmont personally.
63. See Wachter, end of "Vorrede"; and H. J. Schoeps, *Philosemitismus im Barok*, 67-81.
64. See "Spaeth," *Jewish Encyclopedia* 11.484; and Johann Jacob Schudt, *Judische Merckwürdigkeiten* 1.273, 4.194.

65. "Spaeth," *Encyclopedia Judaica* 15.219-20; Schoeps, 67-80, and Schoeps, *Juden, Christen und Judenchristen* (Bern: Francke, 1965), 83-91.
66. See Schoeps, *Philosemitismus im Barok*, chapters on Pauli and Moses Germanus, 51-81, and articles "Spaeth" and "Pauli, Holger (Oligier)," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 11.483-84 and 9.563.
67. Wachter published Moses Germanus' "Gegensatz der Jüdisch und Heydischen Religion" in German and Latin at the beginning of his book, along with his own answer to it.
68. Wachter, *passim*.
69. Wachter, 81-101. The third part of Wachter's work is directed against Spinoza.
70. On Basnage's career and interests, see Gerald Cerny, *Theology, Politics and Letters at the Crossroads of European Civilization: Jacques Basnage and the Baylean Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987). On Calvinist Cartesianism, see Michael Heyd, *Between Orthodoxy and Enlightenment, Jean-Robert Chouet and the Introduction of Cartesian Science in the Academy of Geneva* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982).
71. Basnage referred to Menasseh's project several times. In his discussion of Menasseh, he gave the intended title as *Historia y Continuacion de Flavio Josepho hasta nuestros Tiempos, Histoire des Juifs*, Livre IX, chap. xxxvi, Tome XV, 1001.
72. Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, Livre I, ch. 11; and Cerny, ch. 5.
73. As Cerny points out, "The Huguenot historian was profoundly repelled by Christian persecution of the Jews," and he admired the Dutch toleration of the Jews; 198-99. He did not support any of the blood libels that appear in the writings of Wagenseil and others.
74. See Cerny, 182-200, for Basnage's objectivity. In the last chapter, Livre IX, chap. xxxix, Basnage evaluated the attempts to convert the Jews.
75. Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, Livre IX, chap. xxxix, 1140: "Dieu seul connoît le tems auquel il rappellera cette Nation elue. Cette Réflexion engage les Chrétiens à prier Dieu pour eux, au lieu d'employer les Moïens violens qui les oppriment, & ne les convertissent pas."
76. The Kabbalah is discussed throughout the work. Livres III and IV offer a very detailed discussion of Kabbalistic doctrines. All sorts of Jewish and Christian sources were used.
77. This seems to be the point of Livre IV, ch. vii, where Spinoza is treated as a secret Kabbalist.

78. Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, Livre IV, ch. vii, sec. 5, 136 in the French edition. The English edition, 295, reads "that Wretch" for "impious one."
79. Basnage, 137-38.
80. Bayle, "Spinoza," Remarks N and DD.
81. Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, Livre V, ch. i, sec. ix. He also includes a biography of Spinoza in the section on Jews in Holland, Livre IX, ch. xxxvii, sec. vii-xii, which is quite critical.

## The Psychodynamics of Neoplatonic Ontology

Robert B. McLaren

It is a commonplace that analytical psychology is concerned with dynamic "integrative principles" that preserve the self intact.<sup>1</sup> These principles include orientation toward need-satisfying goals.<sup>2</sup> Among the followers of Freud it has been a basic tenet that the striving to achieve these goals is psychosexual in nature. Religion, as one integrative strategy, is not less psychosexual than the rest and arises from the effort to identify with a projection of one's earthly father after discovery of his limitations.<sup>3</sup>

It may be argued that the psychodynamic approach is inadequate for, if not irrelevant to, the study of Neoplatonic ontology. Freud addressed himself primarily to the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity, while Neoplatonism proposes not a paternal deity but an Ultimate Reality, *ontos on*, the ineffable One, who transcends being, and is clearly unrelated to anything so crude as a Father-figure-in-the-sky.

Three responses may be proffered before entering on our main line of argument. First, the Freudian interpretation of the father-projection has not met with universal acceptance even among analysts. It is certainly foreign to the religious experience of many who have sought understanding, from the Hebrew prophets to Maimonides, to Maslow and Einstein. Indeed the earliest conception

of YHWH was that of One who is Ultimate Being, yet no mere being: *ehyeh asher ehyeh*—I AM THAT I AM (Exodus 3:14), whose very name was not to be pronounced lest it suggest finitude. Lenn Goodman points out that "Maimonides advised parents from the earliest age (in marked contrast to Plato) to inform their children that God is not ■ person or a thing."<sup>4</sup> Einstein echoed this idea, placing blame for present-day conflicts between science and religion on the concept of a personal God, "which we must have the stature to give up."<sup>5</sup> Yet both Maimonides and Einstein, like others who rejected personifications of the deity, believed YHWH to be personal in essence—approachable and responsive.<sup>6</sup>

Second, the eagerness with which the Neoplatonic concept of the *ontos on* has been embraced by thinkers outside the Neoplatonist tradition, when traditional religious notions have been found wanting, is most appropriate and interesting for psychological study.

Third, while the psychosexual element of religious experience seems (at least on the surface) wholly lacking in Plotinus' discussion of the One, the Neoplatonist trend in later mysticism produced remarkably vivid sexual content, which has not escaped the notice of even those furthest removed from Freudian interpretation. Perle Epstein notes: "A favorite theme for meditation among Spanish Kabbalists is the *Matrone*, or female aspect of God's face. In Kabbalah the very presence of the living God in the world is female. Rabbi Joseph, a thirteenth century mystic, writes in his *Sefer Tashak*: 'She so pervades the lower world that if you search in deed, speech, thought and speculation, you will find *Shekhinah*, for there is not beginning nor end to her. . . . Her hair, like the Father's beard, is black and curly.' The thirteenth century Castilian Kabbalist Rabbi Joseph's erotic motif presents the cosmos in the form of a grand sexual embrace."<sup>7</sup> Alexandre Safran, commenting on the Kabbalah, notes that Israel is herself "female," and that every Israelite shares in a mystical, communal soul which is at one with God.<sup>8</sup>

In a world where betrayed trusts, estrangements, warfare and death have so often overwhelmed persons and whole communities, and the comforts of traditional faiths have seemed illusory, the desperate need for spiritual security has driven many to seek alternatives. The search has sometimes led to a First Hypostasis, an Allsoul or Oversoul, the One, or to a rejection of any "ground of

being" at all. Whether, as R. M. Martin has suggested, the logic of Neoplatonism leads to "a kind of Principle of Pan-psychism" or to sheer atheism,<sup>9</sup> the gauntlet to investigate is down.

# I

A falling away from the faith of the forefathers in times of disaster, when the gods or Providence seem impotent or absent is not new to human history. Thus the taunt of Elijah to the dismayed worshippers of Baal: "Cry aloud, for he is a god; perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened" (1 Kings 16:27). The Hebrew people themselves were often so disheartened by circumstances as to neglect the faith, while indulging themselves (Haggai 1:4-7) or redoubling their efforts to placate the Deity they thought had forsaken them by multiplying their ceremonies—to the neglect of justice and acts of charity, as their prophets charged (Isaiah 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24). Sometimes they squabbled over whose worship was most acceptable to the Lord (Ezra 4:1-3) or abandoned YHWH in favor of other deities: "Whoring after other gods" (Deuteronomy 31:16; Ezekiel 23:30). Indeed many of the nineteen major and minor prophets of Scripture excoriated their fellow Jews for apostasy in terms so blistering as to be exiled or martyred.

After the tragic years of the Temple's destruction, the generation of Babylonian captivity, occupation by the Greeks and brutalization by the Romans, many of the more sophisticated Jewish scholars, particularly in Alexandria, were attracted to the mystical aspects of Platonic and Pythagorean thought. In the region of Jerusalem, Hellenization was extensive. "Palestinian Judaism," Jacob Neusner points out, "and the Pharisaic sect in particular, are to be seen as Jewish modes of a common international cultural style known as Hellenism. Some of the most important terms of Rabbinic Biblical exegesis have been borrowed from the Greek. This is basic; the existence of such borrowing can be explained only by a period of profound Hellenization."<sup>10</sup> It was a characteristically Hellenistic trait to demand precise readings and interpretations of texts (a tendency that persists today among Fundamentalist Christians) and to insist that every word of Scripture be literally applied. Some scholars



argue that it was Jesus' comparative liberalism that sparked the conflict between himself and the Pharisees, rather than opposition to Phariseeism *per se*.<sup>11</sup>

Amid the political, social and cultural decay of the Roman empire, there was a readiness, especially among intellectuals, to accept the exile and seek comfort in Neoplatonism. It replaced the rigors of the old Phariseeism and the pessimism of the Sadducees with mystical elements, theurgics, and a soteriology of ultimate union with the *en kai pan*. Psychologically, the appeal appears to have been to turn away from the "almighty" god who had commanded obedience to a host of laws and regulations, but who failed to defend them as he had promised, and to embrace a concept of a transcendent, holy, yet impersonal, One.<sup>12</sup> It was both intellectually and emotionally satisfying to contemplate the utter transcendence of the One and to ponder how from this apparent non-Being, goodness and perfection may emanate—for goodness and perfection themselves were to be expected only beyond the phenomenal world.<sup>13</sup>

Next to our hunger for spiritual security in ■ providential God, perhaps our most primitive spiritual impulse, a root both of religion and philosophy,<sup>14</sup> has been the human eagerness to identify with an earthly monarch who could embody the Logos, the spirit and wisdom of Deity. Thus Stobaeus wrote: "To look at the king should put one in order like the music of a flute."<sup>15</sup> In Jewish experience kings rarely justified such ■ description. Yet the dream persisted and can be found even in Philo,<sup>16</sup> and in the pagan Neoplatonist Proclus, whose antipathy to Christianity arose at least in part from Christians' refusal to bend the knee to earthly powers. Yet many Jews had had enough of kings and high priests. Those who could embrace the One, in preference to the God of their fathers, could find in Neoplatonism freedom from dependence on impermanent thrones as well as on traditional faiths.

This is not at all to suggest that these Neoplatonists had become impious or had rejected all loyalty to civil society. Indeed their piety was enhanced by the conception that all persons, objects and virtues are emanations from the One, and that in what Plotinus calls *epistrophe* all things yearn to return to the Source. The longing to recover oneness with the One is the highest expression of religious faith. And because Neoplatonists believed all souls are ultimately one, having originated in the One, they could see human society as

comprised of a brotherhood of persons who must share concern for one another's well being.<sup>17</sup> Although "the Soul is evil by being infused with the body,"<sup>18</sup> and all mortals share in the debility of sin,<sup>19</sup> we still have freedom to act, to improve by keeping our eyes on the perfection of the One. This focus on the Ideal, the *Intellectual Principle*, is seen on three orders: the merely material ("those who adopt this as their philosophy are like birds who are so weighted down they cannot fly"); the moderately transcendent; and "the third order—those godlike men who, in their mighty power, in the keenness of their sight, have clear vision of the splendor above and rise to it from among the clouds and fog of earth and hold firmly to the other world."<sup>20</sup>

It was this third quality of life that had such appeal to the religious expatriates of both Judaism and Christianity in the early centuries of the common era. The concept of humanity united with the Ultimate Being through contemplation, provided a philosophical vantage point from which to view the storms of life with a measure of serenity. This certainly played a major role in the production of Boethius' book, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, one of the most popular writings in Western Europe soon after its appearance in 524. His experience affords an apt illustration for psychodynamic study. When still a child he lost his father, whom he worshipped; he was raised by foster parents, received a good education and achieved some social prominence, but was arrested and imprisoned on political grounds. In disgrace and awaiting execution, he reached beyond conventional religion for solace. He described the inspiration for his book: "While I silently pondered, and decided to write down my wretched complaint, there appeared standing above me a woman of majestic countenance whose flashing eyes seemed wise beyond the ordinary wisdom of men." As the scholarly prisoner dried his tear-stained face with her robe, the apparition introduced herself as Lady Philosophy.<sup>21</sup> Her rival, Lady Fortune, is presented as the personification of prosperity and adversity which so easily entraps the earthly-minded. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, such use of female figures as both saviors and seducers (whether Lady Philosophy, the Holy Virgin, or the numerous goddesses that populate mythology), would seem to support the claims about the psychosexual nature of our commitments. Boethius' acceptance of consolation from Lady Philosophy is in terms of turning to the

unknown and unknowable God, who, he hopes can make sense of the pain of life: "O God, whoever you are who joins all things in perfect harmony, look down upon this miserable earth."<sup>22</sup> Boethius' imprisonment and the female visitors become metaphors for every mortal's struggle from bondage to freedom, from sickness to wholeness: "Happy is he who can look into the shining spring of good; happy is he who can break the heavy chains of earth."<sup>23</sup> Unity with that "shining spring of good," is the only goal worthy of striving.

Boethius adds a caveat of special interest for psychodynamic analysis. At the end of Book Three (Poem 12), in words reminiscent of the story of Lot's wife (Genesis 19:26) and of Jesus' warning against those who look back being unfit for the Kingdom (Luke 9:52), Boethius reminds us that when Orpheus sought to rescue Eurydice from hell, he was warned not to look back. His disobedience cost them both their lives, and perhaps their souls. This fable, he writes, "applies to all who seek to raise your minds to sovereign day. For whoever is conquered and turns his eyes to the pit of hell . . . loses all the excellence he has gained."

"Love is a law unto itself," Orpheus insisted, and in failing to repress the pleasure-principle of *libido*, forfeited the goal of the ego, lost the integration of the desires of the id with the demands of the superego, failed, if the symbols be resolved psychodynamically, at the synthesis of happiness with goodness. In terms of Neoplatonism, since "the Good is that on which all else depends, towards which all Existences aspire,"<sup>24</sup> the disobedience of Orpheus made impossible the achievement of that union with the Good which is the path to salvation.<sup>25</sup>

It is probable, as R. Baine Harris reminds us, that no "pure Neoplatonists" can be found after about 500 C.E., "since most of those who might be labeled as Neoplatonists have actually held Neoplatonic views in combination with other commitments."<sup>26</sup> After the collapse of Rome, amid the chaos of competing tribes and kingdoms trying to dominate Europe, popular literature continued using psychosexual metaphors and quasi-Neoplatonic elements of mysticism. Lady Nature appears in Alan of Little's *Complaint of Nature*; the female figure of Reason features in *Roman de la Rose*; the "Holy Grail" theme figures in the growing legend of King Arthur by the seventh century.<sup>27</sup> Dante will introduce both "Lady

Philosophy," and Beatrice; Holy Church and Lady Meed are both seen as feminine figures in *Piers Plowman*, and presiding over the consciousness of Christendom is Mary, "Queen of Heaven," almost the Ultimate Reality as "Mother of God."

Here indeed is grist for the Freudian mill, suggesting that the ontology of the Neoplatonists and of the mystic visionaries they inspired is a creation of the human *libido*. Contemplation of an utterly transcendent One, from which all reality emanates and to the serenity of which we all must return, would be part of what Freud called "the grand illusion." But it is well to remember the caution of one of Freud's colleagues, that "Freud's beliefs concerning religion were his own, and did not necessarily reflect the scientific findings of the process of psychoanalysis which he developed."<sup>28</sup>

Dynamic psychologists who seek the conjunction of the psychosexual with mystical elements will find little to satisfy their expectations when they examine the works of such men as the Muslims al-Kindī (ca. 801 - ca. 867) and al-Fārābī, who was called a second Aristotle (870-950); or the Christian John the Scot, called Eriugena (ca. 810-870); or the Jewish philosopher Solomon ibn Gabirol (ca. 1021-1058). Rather than the playing out of libidinal and counter-libidinal fantasies and symbolisms, a dynamic of a much more profound nature is discovered, where "deep calls unto deep," and the being of each person seeks communion with Ultimate Being.

"If you will imagine the structure of the whole," writes Solomon ibn Gabirol, "that is, the universal body and the spiritual substances that contain it, consider the formation of man and take that as an image. For the body of man corresponds to the universal body, and the spiritual substances that move it correspond to the spiritual substances that move the universal body, and among these spiritual substances the inferior substance obeys the superior and is submissive to it until the motion reaches the substance of the intelligence. You will find that the intelligence orders and dominates these substances, and you will find that all the substances that move the body of man follow the intelligence and obey it while it perceives them and judges them."<sup>29</sup> In this hierarchy of lower levels dominated and judged by the higher, Avicenna makes it clear that in wisdom, the lower will seek communion with the higher: "Know too that this is the path that leads to perfect happiness and allows us to obtain true delight, that is our end."<sup>30</sup>

It is true that a pantheistic variety of Jewish Neoplatonism evolved, and that one aspect of it led to the development of the Kabbalah. The mystical and sensual aspects of the Kabbalah cannot be denied, but the focus is on the spiritual: "Corresponding to every natural, physical function of each human organ is a spiritual function which is governed by the appropriate *Mitzvah*. Even the structure of the human soul is modeled on that of the *Torah*. Therefore the soul and body constitute a unity: Man is a unified being."<sup>31</sup> And "main-line" Judaism did not follow the most extreme doctrines and images of the Kabbalah but remained grounded in the Mosaic tradition. Maimonides recognized certain "drawbacks which the timelessness of emanation and apparent necessity of its flowing forth represented," but nevertheless found emanation "an admirable model for the relation of the divine to the world."<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, "mainline Christendom" was organizing into a vast power-structure, which took into itself many strains of philosophical thought. Neoplatonism, made available through the translation of a number of books by John the Scot, made its impress on numerous scholars, including Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, and Dante. Aquinas' handling of the relation of Being and the Good, and of Being and Truth, profited greatly from the Neoplatonic synthesis.<sup>33</sup>

## II

Modern Neoplatonists can probably be traced to that convulsive era of the Renaissance and Reformation when again many of the faithful found diminished confidence in established dogmas and rituals. The founders of the Florentine Academy (ca. 1462) were people of prominence in the political and religious institutions of their day. But George Gemistus Pletho and Cosimo di' Medici had already come to regard the powers of both State and Church with disdain. Preferring philosophy to theology, they found in Neoplatonism both a haven and a stimulus to creative work. In seventeenth century England the Cambridge Platonists worked to blend the new Anglican Christianity with Neoplatonic ideas. On the Continent, the legacy of Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) and Gerhard Groot (1340-1384) found a ready audience for both mystical contemplation and liberal interpretations of Scripture among the

Humanists.<sup>34</sup> Jacques LeFevre published three volumes in 1514 reflecting his position within Neoplatonism, the full importance of which was made clear in the lives of Giordano Bruno, Leibniz, and the German Idealists.

Bruno (1548-1600) makes a particularly poignant case for study, having been raised the son of an often absent father who was a professional soldier. He dabbled in magic and Greek philosophy and joined the Dominican order at seventeen. Suspected of heresy, he was nevertheless ordained a priest but soon thereafter was on trial and fled to Rome, only to be tried again and excommunicated. Sickened by the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of some 30,000 Protestants, he identified, in sympathy, with the Calvinists, but his unorthodox publications led to his expulsion from Geneva. At Oxford his writings and lectures took on an increasingly Neoplatonic tone: God, as the principle of unity, is known to us in the unfolding patterns of nature. Here Bruno reveals his awareness of Proclus' dictum that emanations from the One are horizontal as well as vertical. It is the evolving patterns which give the appearance of purpose, hence the notion that God is a transcendent personality. Facing death, Bruno wrote, "we may hope that our purposeful natures may be reunited with that eternal aspect of nature we call God, and of which we were originally a part."<sup>35</sup>

Like his quixotic contemporary Cervantes, Bruno was caught in the corridor between the Renaissance and the Age of Reason by Inquisitors who belonged to neither age. Unlike Cervantes, he was executed; and his death, like that of others who had challenged orthodoxy, turned many away from the familiar traditions. One may question whether the numerous failures of Christendom's primary institutions to be "Christian enough" was the major cause of the disenchantment, or whether it was a combination of the corruption of the humane ethic of the Gospels by some of its leaders and the rise of the sciences in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries challenging the credibility of the Biblical cosmology. But it is clear that much of the "back to nature" movement which followed "the Age of Reason" and evoked a reawakened interest in Neoplatonism was the product of an emotional reaction. Lenn Goodman expressed this (though without direct reference to Neoplatonism): "The disappointment professed by fideists and agnostics . . . is expressive of the still undissolved entanglement of their thoughts in the mythic

level of religion. Hume, Bayle, Voltaire, and the numberless flotsam which drifts in the currents set up by the fall of such giants from naive faith, were convinced that the God of true religion is the God of simple faith. Failing to find that God, they believe that they (meaning religion) have failed absolutely. Their pose of melancholy loss is communicated to the Bertrand Russells and Walter Lippmanns of the twentieth century, with some loss of erudition, and stylistic verve but no loss of the essential ingredient, a true Rousseauvian introspective (if not narcissistic) angst." He adds: "These men who weep for the lost God of their childhood seem rather to be mourning childhood, which indeed they will never recapture, rather than God."<sup>36</sup>

### III

From the vantage point of dynamic psychology, these observations are highly suggestive. Certainly the loss of childhood faith, whether in one's earthly parents or in the cosmic projection of them (as Freud suspected), or in the whole matrix of family-community-religious institution-state, has often sent the despairing subject in quest of a believable substitute. But the effort to understand the Ultimately Real is not always the product of emotional distress. It is well to recall the words of Avicbron: "This is wisdom: to know the First Essence." The writer of Proverbs placed such a value on wisdom as to insist: "Wisdom is the principal thing; with all your getting, get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7). If the gaining of wisdom is the major dynamic of one's life, then comprehending the goal of such knowledge, "the First Essence" is not an exercise of neurosis but of mental health.

Historically, Neoplatonism, with its distinctive ontology, has provided an alternative to the religious traditions which seemed no longer viable to their adherents. But this fact cannot be used to infer that Neoplatonism is that and no more. Indeed its concept of the One remains as challenging today as ever, and can be found in the Pragmatic philosophies of Charles Sanders Peirce<sup>37</sup> and William James as well as in the Process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead<sup>38</sup> and the convictions of physicists like Schrödinger<sup>39</sup> and Arthur Holly Compton.<sup>40</sup> It is in Whitehead particularly that we

find a conjunction of ideas between Neoplatonism and dynamic psychology. He subscribes to the emanation concept of the coming-to-being of substances, but notes that "science can find no aim in nature . . . creativity. It finds mere rules of succession" suggesting no external purpose.<sup>41</sup> He notes the *appearance* of purposes but insists these are purblind: "Blind prehensions, physical and mental, are the ultimate building blocks of the universe."<sup>42</sup> This conclusion fully accords with what psychoanalysts have maintained about the *libidinal* urgencies, which Gordon Allport described as "goal seeking,"<sup>43</sup> and Brown discussed as "vectors in the psychobiological field."<sup>44</sup>

It may be questioned whether there is not a non sequitur in the Neoplatonic effort to move from the proposition that the Ultimate One has no personal attributes, to the proposition that the vast array of complex objects of the familiar universe, especially purposing beings who can love and create, have emanated therefrom. Purpose is a higher order, not a lower order of reality than purposelessness, and the capacity to love is almost universally acknowledged to be the "highest" attribute of personality. Whitehead sensed this and departed from the Neoplatonic position in holding that God both transcends and guides His creation. "God is unique in the sense that He provides for the organization and relevance of eternal objects, and 'saves' them by absorbing them into His enduring life."<sup>45</sup> Salvation, then, is not achieved by returning to an impersonal One, relinquishing all that is highest and noblest in personality, but by identifying with that which is still higher.

What is of greatest importance to dynamic psychology is not to test the truth or even the reasonableness of Neoplatonic formulations, but to ask whether they have answered the need of human personalities for some sense of Being in which they can ground their own beings and which cannot be exhausted by the stresses of life. If so, they have served the psycho-integrative purposes which Freudian thought requires of any religious or philosophical system. Erich Fromm said it well: "The problem of religion is not the problem of God, but of men; religious formulations and religious symbols are attempts to give expression to certain kinds of experience. What matters is the nature of these experiences. The symbol system is only the cue from which we can infer the underlying reality."<sup>46</sup>

Persuading the followers that the "underlying reality" is truly present and adequately expressed in such symbol systems as sacred writ, sacraments, or reasoned argument about becoming one with the All is the task of the religion or philosophical system in question. Meanwhile, because we are unavoidably psychosexual creatures for whom even such concepts as love, justice and compassion for the naked and hungry have quite physical implications, Neoplatonism in both its Jewish and Christian forms has more Freudian aspects than is generally admitted. Both are deeply concerned with questions of our destiny, and thus of our becoming.

Wayne Oates listed what he calls "the spiritual goals of man's becoming: meaningfulness, direction, balance, community, maturity in love, and integration."<sup>47</sup> If the Neoplatonic ontology can provide what Whitehead calls "the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within the passing flux of immediate things; that gives meaning to all that passes," it will have proved to be more than a mere substitute for religion. It will qualify for the definition in the oldest sense of the term: *re-ligio*: to bind back (to the Source). Such a vision, as Whitehead reminds us, is "the one element in human experience which persistently shows an upward trend (and) is our one ground for optimism."<sup>48</sup> It has thus also satisfied the interests of dynamic psychology.

### Notes

1. Edoardo Weiss in Franz Alexander, ed., *Dynamic Psychiatry*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 44: "The forces operating within the mind are subjected to what we call 'the integrative principle' which characterizes biological processes. The organism and its structural parts form a coherent unity manifesting the tendency to preserve itself."
2. J. F. Brown, *The Psychodynamics of Abnormal Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1940), 20.
3. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: Liveright, 1928), 76 f.
4. L. E. Goodman, *Monotheism* (Totowa, New Jersey: Allanheld Osmun, 1981), 23.
5. Albert Einstein, *Out of my Later Years* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), 27.

6. God's self-disclosure to Moses is treated at some length in *Guide I* 63; see the discussion in Lenn Goodman's *RAMBAM*, 102-18. Einstein's personalist conviction is quoted in an interview: "I believe in a personal God," in Fredrick Rikter, *Can a Scientist Believe in God?* (Oslo, 1958), quoted by Gustaf Stromberg, *All Church Press*, January 8, 1960, 4.
7. Perle Epstein, *Kabbalah* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 47.
8. Alexandre Safran, *The Kabbalah* (New York: Feldheim, 1975), 20.
9. R. M. Martin, "On Logical Structure and the Platonic Cosmos," in R. Baine Harris, ed., *The Structure of Being*, 23.
10. Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 9-10.
11. The Pharisees were perceived by Jesus as making compliance with Jewish law a stifling affair, while many of them took such liberties with it as to require denunciation. See Matthew 23:13, 13, 23, 24; 24-25; Luke 18:11; Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (New York: Scribners, 1953), 59. It is probable that Jesus considered himself to be in the Pharisaic line. Certainly the Pharisees were highly respected for urging "The service of God calls for the human heart. Love for Him and fellow man must undergird all our actions." Leo Trepp *Judaism, Development and Life* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1966), 20.
12. In the *Fifth Ennead* Plotinus writes of the One as "The First" which is "without form, and, if without Form, then it is not Being."
13. Yet the trans-ontological character of the One is held in balance in the *Sixth Ennead*, where Plotinus insists that the Good can only be found within the realm of Being: "since it is never a Non-Being." Power, *energeia*, is also inherent in the One (VI 8.7), a distinctly ontological concept. *Enneads*, tr., Stephen MacKenna in *Great Books of the Western World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) 17.231, 346.
14. Einstein held that religion, the sciences, philosophy and the arts are all "branches of the same tree." A deep human yearning to make sense of the universe and to discover our place in it gives rise to all of these studies: *Out of My Later Years*, 9.
15. Stobaeus, *Anthologium* IV 265, quoted in Erwin Goodenough, *The Psychology of Religious Experiences* (New York: Basic Books, 1965), 49.
16. *De Specialibus Libris* IV 30, 157; and the discussion in Wolfson, *Philo*, 2.325-37; Erwin Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), 68-71.
17. *Enneads* IV 9.1.

18. *Enneads* I 2.3.
19. *Enneads* I 8.1-5.
20. *Enneads* V 9.1.
21. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, tr., R. Green (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962), 3 f.
22. *Consolation* I, Poem 5.
23. *Consolation* I, Poem 12.
24. *Enneads* I 8.2.
25. In psychodynamic terms "goodness" is generally defined with reference to societal demands rather than cosmic or metaphysical concerns. Yet, see Carl Jung's discussion in *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 112 f. Cf. Paul W. Pruyser, *A Dynamic Psychology of Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 305-17.
26. *The Significance of Neoplatonism* (Norfolk: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), 12.
27. Christopher Hibbert, *The Search for King Arthur* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 15.
28. Louis Thorpe, *The Psychology of Mental Health* (New York: Ronald Press, 1960), 514.
29. *Fons Vitae*, tr., H. E. Wedeck (London: Peter Owen, 1963), 131.
30. *Fons Vitae*, tr. Wedeck, 132.
31. Safran, *The Kabbalah*, 20.
32. Goodman, *RAMBAM*, 346.
33. *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Q. 3, a 2, 4, 7; Q. 12, Q. 54, a. 3.
34. Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (New York: Scribners, 1970), 291.
35. See Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science* (London: Bell, 1962), 57 f., and my treatment of Bruno in *The World of Philosophy* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1983), ch. 3.
36. *Monotheism*, 23.
37. "I recognize three universes; one of these embraces whatever has its being in itself alone. I denominate the objects (of this Being) *Ideas*, or *Possibles*." The second, Peirce found to be objects and facts about them. The third consisted of the co-being of whatever is in its nature *necessitant*, "that is, a law or something expressible in a universal proposition." *Values in a Universe of Chance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), 404.
38. Whitehead, like the Neoplatonists, held that purposes in nature arise from consciousness as a subjective form; *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 470. In *Modes of Thought* (Cambridge: at

- the University Press, 1938) he described "aim" as the essential characteristic of life, a theme familiar both to Neoplatonism and to dynamic psychology.
39. *What Is Life?* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1947). Schrödinger's identification of Atman=Brahman with the *Deus factus sum* of medieval mystics in the epilogue to his tightly structured discourse on purely biological concerns climaxes with his affirmation of the imperishable, indwelling self. Cf. *Enneads* IV 7.
  40. "A Modern Concept of God," in *Man's Destiny in Eternity*, The Garvin Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949), 19 f.
  41. *Modes of Thought*, 211. "Science," he adds, "only deals with *half* the evidence provided by human experience."
  42. *Process and Reality*, 470.
  43. *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* (New York: Holt, 1937), 108, 112-14.
  44. *Psychodynamics of Abnormal Behavior*, 8-21.
  45. *Process and Reality*, 224.
  46. *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 113.
  47. *The Religious Dimensions of Personality* (New York: Association Press, 1957), 249-70.
  48. *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 275.

# **NEOPLATONISM AND NATURE**

**Studies in Plotinus' *Enneads***

**Michael F. Wagner, Editor**

*INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR NEOPLATONIC STUDIES*

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## PREFACE

R. Baine Harris

Those who dismiss Neoplatonism as only a form of religious mysticism are often not aware that Plotinus does have a fairly well defined philosophy of science. It is not a philosophy of science in the modern sense of an explicit treatment of the specific philosophical basis of each natural science and its problems, but he does have a systematic philosophy of nature. If we were to stretch the meaning of the term a bit, he could even be labeled a naturalist. He once said "All things there are here." His philosophy of nature is an effort to look at natural phenomena and imagine what sort of structure must be behind it. As such, it is not derived solely from thinking about our experiences of nature, but is rather a rational proposal of the hypothetical nature of that which is behind what we see in nature. It is a generic philosophy of science that is not limited to the limits of science and thus is not restricted to any particular conception of science or any particular scientific conceptions. Even though it is about the natural universe of science, it is philosophy, not science.

Plotinus was an unqualified monist. He was not really an idealist, at least not in the sense that Hegel and the German and British Post-Hegelian uses the term, even though he does affirm the immateriality of the One, the ultimate source of all nature and being. Only the One, however, is strictly immaterial. Principles of being have a certain materiality. Every living thing is a soul; and souls are mainly principles of material bodies. Nothing in his philosophy precludes an empirical consideration of natural phenomena, even though he cannot be called an empiricist.

The essays in this volume were specially commissioned by the general editor some twelve years ago and this book has been ten years in

the making. Two of the writers, Ronald F. Hathaway and Reiner Schürmann have died in the meantime. All of the writers are recognized scholars of Neoplatonism with other publications in the field.

The purpose of the volume is to show that Plotinus does have a *de facto* philosophy of the nature and role of science embedded in what he has to say about the nature of the natural universe, albeit not a modern one. In contrast to those in the other volumes of this series, these essays were not presented at one of the international conferences of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies. In the main they constitute an analysis of the Plotinian view of the nature of nature, rather than a consideration of the impact that the Neoplatonic conception of nature has had in the development of Western science and philosophy, a project that still very much needs to be done.

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## INTRODUCTION

Michael F. Wagner

The essays in this volume explicate main features of Plotinus' understanding of the natural universe set forth in his collected treatises, the *Enneads*, as they relate to his Neoplatonic approach to understanding existence and reality—as they relate, in other words, to his metaphysics. A recurring theme here pays special attention to features of Plotinus' philosophy of Nature which are also pertinent to the history and philosophy of science. Ronald Hathaway initiates this theme by examining several discussions in the *Enneads* of natural phenomena in terms of two notions commonly associated with natural science: that the material universe is uniform with respect to the results of natural science, whose methodology involves an interplay between observation and theoretic conjecture and innovation.

This latter notion also serves as one way to address whether Plotinus' Neoplatonic approach and metaphysics comports with science as an ongoing activity or discipline; in other words, whether Plotinus' own philosophy of Nature may legitimately be counted among those associated with the emergence and development of natural science. Jonathan Lee parses this variation on the theme in terms of the degree of independence and (or) dependence which Plotinus' Neoplatonism accords natural science *vis-à-vis* metaphysics and he especially examines relationships between certain of Plotinus' metaphysical (or 'dialectical') conceptions and his understanding of physical things and processes.

Inasmuch as a number of those conceptions have a vitalistic dimension and etymology, Anthony Preus next considers features of Plotinus' understanding of the natural universe which pertain specifically to biological science. In so doing, he examines similarities and differences between a properly Plotinian approach to understanding biological phenomena or processes and the Aristotelian approach, and ways in which Plotinian vitalism may be conceptually related to the evolutionary perspective commonly associated with the emergence of biology as a distinct science.

Scientific explanation and natural laws are fundamental topics in the philosophy of science. Natural essence and causality, in turn, are fundamental topics in the historical development of scientific conceptions of explanation and lawfulness. Accordingly, Lloyd Gerson examines Plotinus' (re)conception of the Platonic image-relation between natural existents and their metaphysical causes, or archetypes, especially *vis-a-vis* the notion associated with Aristotelianism known as *essentialism*; and, Sara Rappe considers more thematically various notions of causality in establishing the significance and meaning of Plotinus' related doctrine that the real existence of individual things or processes depends upon the metaphysically singular 'descent' of the natural universe from its archetype.

In the first of his two essays in this volume, Gary Gurtler explicates further key texts in the *Enneads* pertaining to Plotinian archetypal (or, archetypically lawful) causality, especially as it relates to the Platonic conceit that Nature is a moving image of eternity and to the Hellenistic notion of Providence, as this notion was introduced into scientific discourse by Stoic philosophers. The contrast between Plotinus' conception of Providence and the Stoics' is also highlighted by the fact that it was the latter conception which emerged in Early Modern philosopher-scientists' understanding of the natural universe as a deterministic system. Laura Westra thus discusses the place and meaning of freedom in Plotinus' philosophy, including its relation to his conception of Providence, and she also examines its significance for Plotinus' related understanding of human beings as persons and as moral agents.

In addition to notions of causality and lawfulness, the historical development of natural science owes much to at least three other features of classical Greek thought: its application, especially in the Pythagorean and Platonic traditions, of mathematical concepts to Nature; its notion of a minimal set of explanatory or causative principles and the possibility

even of a single first-principle of all reality, including Nature; and its notion(s) of matter, or a material principle. Accordingly, Aphrodite Alexandrakis explores Plotinus' use (and modification) of certain Pythagorean conceptions in his own understanding of the natural universe; Reiner Schurmann explicates the nature and function of Plotinus' first-principle of reality (the One) in what he argues is more properly termed Plotinus' *henology*; and William Carroll examines the main texts in the *Enneads* where Plotinus discusses the notion of matter, its nature and (or) function and whether it is a real principle.

These (and previous) essays attest, moreover, to the subtlety and originality of Plotinus' Neoplatonism and his cognizance of previous philosophers and traditions. In this regard, two additional major features of Plotinus' understanding of Nature are his critique of Aristotelian categorial theory, explicated here by Christos Evangelou; and his adaptation, examined next by Gary Gurtler, of the (Stoic) notion of *sympathy* as his primary conceptual nexus for relating natural phenomena and causal processes to his Neoplatonic understanding of existence and reality. In this volume's final essay, I offer additional historical considerations regarding the relationship between natural science and metaphysics; and I examine the special place in Plotinus' understanding of Nature of dynamic conceptions related to the classical Greek notion of *becoming* as well as Plotinus' special place in the history of responses to Skepticism, a history which also shaped and defined much of the history of scientific thought itself.

Of course, this thematic introduction hardly does justice to the wealth of issues, materials, ideas, and explicative details to be found in the essays comprising this volume.

# **PLOTINUS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF NATURAL SCIENCE**

**Ronald F. Hathaway**

Is there room for natural science in the philosophy of Plotinus? The question has seldom, if ever, been raised.<sup>1</sup> There are two obvious general reasons for this. The first is the inferior role assigned to matter and the sensible realm by Plotinus, with obvious negative implications for any empirical science. The second is the general absence of natural science in those cultures in which Plotinian Platonism flourished. Some would argue that the question of natural science in Plotinus is pointless because Plotinus' metaphysics reduces to a form of mysticism, and mysticism and natural science are incompatible.<sup>2</sup> A view more worthy of our attention could be inferred from Duhem's claim that it is impossible to derive all the elements needed for the construction of a physical theory from a purely metaphysical system.<sup>3</sup> If Duhem's principle is correct, and if Plotinus' philosophy is in fact a purely metaphysical system, then no definite natural science could be derived from it. Duhem's principle can be regarded as a circumspect formulation of an old suspicion that all ancient philosophies are attempts to derive physical theories from metaphysical principles.<sup>4</sup>

This suspicion is not without substance; however, recent work in the philosophy of science compels us to reappraise the basis of the suspicion itself. The search for epistemological and metaphysical foundations of scientific theories is now seen as being so central in the history of philosophy that Frederick Suppe can say that the history of epistemology and metaphysics is the history of the philosophy of science.<sup>5</sup> It is challenging to extend the application of Suppe's opinion from the modern era which he clearly has in mind to the history of ancient philosophy. Recent research in ancient physical theory, on Plato's theory of elements, on Aristotle's embryology and animal kinesiology, and on Stoic physics has uncovered an interplay between ancient physical theory and ancient metaphysics that raises significant issues in the philosophy of science.<sup>6</sup>

Can one make an analogous claim by reconstructing Plotinus' theory of material body and the sensible realm, or does his metaphysics shut out the existence of natural science in any sense intelligible to us? The answer can be found only by a closer examination of Plotinus' physical theories, especially in *Ennead* II, and of Plotinus' occasional thoughts about natural theory as such; to which I shall turn in a moment.

The historical argument according to which Plotinus' metaphysics and the cultures with which it had an apparent affinity caused the stifling or neglect of natural science raises issues well beyond the scope of my present remarks. However, the historical argument raises one issue that is central to my purposes. It is an issue that surfaces when we ask the following counterfactually phrased question: If Plotinian Platonism had dominated modern European culture, would natural science as we know it not have emerged? Or would there have emerged a different natural science based on the organic and dialectical model of Plotinian Platonism? It is conceivable that the cultural substratum and Plotinian Platonism could have taken independent courses of development. Clearly, the issue posed is what we mean by natural science. It is senseless to ask whether natural science is possible in Plotinus' philosophy until we assign definite content, however general, to the notion of natural science as we know it.

# I

It would beg our question from the beginning if we either assigned a content to the notion of natural science that is inadequate or false for modern science, or if we wholly excluded resembling yet different models of science, for instance, models constructed with organic or holistic assumptions. For brevity's sake, I have reduced the notion of natural science as we know it to two broad truisms. The first is that natural science postulates that the material universe is uniform; whatever explains the properties and processes of matter in one part of the universe explains the same properties and processes in every other part of the universe. I will call this *The Galilean Thesis*.<sup>1</sup> The second truism is that natural science is a disciplined empirical inquiry consisting of a body of theoretical conjectures, as distinguished from rational speculations; changes in this body of conjectures are governed by definite practices and rules, in particular by a high level rule that makes all propositions of scientific theory subject to a test in which both observation and theoretical

innovation play their parts.<sup>2</sup> This second truism I call *The Principle of Empirical Scientific Inquiry*.

To take the Galilean Thesis first, does Plotinus believe in the uniformity of matter and in a uniform explanation of material properties and processes? Plotinus accepts the Platonic dualism of sensible and intelligible realms; but this dualism does not answer our question, since it is conceivably compatible with various kinds of physical theory. The question is whether Plotinus is a dualist with regard to the sensible realm alone. I will call monism and dualism relative to the observable realm *physical monism* and *physical dualism* respectively. If Plotinus is a physical dualist, this would count as evidence against his holding the Galilean Thesis.

In some passages, Plotinus accepts a strong differentiation of sublunar and celestial phenomena (II.1.5). In Plotinus' cosmology, the inferior level of soul, the 'generative soul' in matter (II.3.17), does not as firmly hold and control the material constituents of bodies in the near-earth region as it does in the celestial sphere. In the near-earth region, "it is not the individual thing which lasts forever, but the unity of form" (II.1.9, 9-10).<sup>3</sup> Plotinus thinks that the sun and stars existed in the past always and will always exist in the future as individuals (II.1.8) because they are more directly controlled by the superior level of soul, although he is genuinely perplexed about how this can be true. He thinks that the circular motion of the celestial sphere is constructed in imitation of the Intellect (II.2.1)—which implies an even stronger dividing line between motion governed by the superior soul, which receives forms directly from Intellect (II.3.17, 15-17), and motion governed by the inferior soul, whose rational forms (*logoi*) are not the originals (II.3.17, 19). This dualism leads Plotinus to question the relatively uniform distribution of matter in the cosmos. He asks whether fire is the only element in the celestial sphere, and whether it is in flux, like other bodies (II.1.6). At IV.1.6, 57-60, he bluntly claims that "to lift up earth into the celestial sphere is against nature and opposed to her regulations."

A clearer indication of physical dualism is found in Plotinus' theory of light (*phōs*). He interprets Plato's light "other than flame" (*heteron phlogos*: *Timaeus* 58C5-7) as being a body. This light distinguishes the sizes and colors of the stars (II.1.7, 43-46) and composes "the rest of the celestial sphere" (46-47). It is visible in the stars but invisible in the night sky because of its fineness, nonreflective transparency, and distance. From light of this kind there can be no outflow (*aporroē*). It is the purest body in the purest region, and a kind of fire. It is body "joined with soul" (*meta*

*psychēs*), and a body with a higher status than body "alone by itself" (II.1.8, 6–7). This implies a dualism of types of body. Plotinus further distinguishes a second kind of light which "shines from [the first], having the same name, which [second kind] we say is bodiless" (*asōmaton*). Plotinus is evidently referring to radiant light coming from the sun. The first kind of light is a body, partly visible, partly invisible. Radiant light, the second kind, is bodiless and in this regard seems to resemble the intelligible realm (Cf. II.1.8, 27–28). The first kind of light has physical properties such as fineness, transparency, and distance, and by it one can distinguish sizes and colors. The second kind of light, which Plotinus could have detected as the glow surrounding the sun, is only problematically a physical thing at all if it is without body. Stellar fire of this radiant kind differs in some seemingly irreducible way from terrestrial fire. This radical discontinuity within the observable order suggests again that Plotinus is a physical dualist. This implies the denial of the Galilean Thesis.

I turn next to Plotinus' attitude toward physical theory as a form of inquiry governed by a method in which observation plays a role. For Plotinus, the highest form of theoretical inquiry requires us to "cut away everything" (V.3.17)—sensible substances, their properties, and our mental representations of these. But when Plotinus is thinking in this vein, he is not thinking of physical theory. Thinking of the physical universe, he grants that forms are embedded in sensible material bodies. Do our minds gain the kind of access to these forms that enables us to attain theoretical insight? What kind of theoretical enterprise is involved? The road to insight and knowledge is dialectic, which deals with real beings, forms or rational principles (Cf. II.4.16, 2–3), not with sensible things, which are objects of opinion (I.3.4, 9–12). In dialectic, theoretical statements (*theōrēmata*) and the things about which they are true are grasped at the same time (I.3.5, 12–13). Physical theory (*peri physeōs theōria*) is a different part of philosophy. It theorizes "about nature by borrowing help from dialectic, as other crafts make use of arithmetic; but it stands nearer to dialectic [than the other crafts stand to arithmetic]" (I.3.6, 2–5). What Plotinus means by the relation between the crafts and arithmetic is unclear. He might mean that arithmetic is only instrumental in the activities of the other crafts. Or, if we believe Porphyry's accounts of Plotinus as having thorough knowledge of geometry, mechanics, optics, and music (*Vita*, 14), he could mean that other crafts are theoretical skills that are parts of a more general theoretical system within which they draw certain of their 'theorems' from number theory—one possible meaning of *arithmētikē*. A

third interpretation is also possible. If Plotinus knew Eratosthenes' works, or had read other reports of the Academy's work on the Delian Problem, he could be thinking of the way in which crafts like architecture seek help from branches of mathematics in the form of proofs of the possibility of certain physical constructions."

I cannot pause to canvas separately these interpretations. What seems clear is that Plotinus' claim that physical theory is closer to dialectic than other crafts are to arithmetic implies that the former relation cannot be only technical and instrumental, but must involve some more integral and systematic relation, either in the field of inquiry or in methodology. If the affinity between dialectic and physical theory were this close, the test of the truth of physical theories would more likely be truths about forms embedded in matter yet apprehended as intelligible, not observable. Hence it seems doubtful that observation can play any direct role in testing physical theories for Plotinus. This implies the denial of the Principle of Empirical Scientific Inquiry.

Since Plotinus seems to reject both of our truisms about natural science, it seems to follow that natural science as we know it is impossible inside the framework of his philosophy. Until now, I have argued that a *prima facie* case can be made for this conclusion. Unfortunately, this *prima facie* case needs careful qualification, as we shall see. Plotinus remains honestly perplexed about both physical dualism and about the validity of observation as a test of the truth of physical theory.

## II

The passage in which Plotinus distinguishes stellar fire as body joined with soul from body by itself alone (II.1.8, 6–7), which implies radically differing types of body, is misleading. Elsewhere he thinks of soul as extending to the lowest levels of sensible reality (Cf. II.3.18). Strictly speaking, there is no body alone by itself anywhere. The entire observable order has body (II.1.1, 2). Every body has shape or form (II.4.3, 14–16).<sup>1</sup> Form, or the traces of form, are imprinted in generative soul. Since Plotinus argues that there must exist something that underlies the sizes, shapes, and volumes of bodies to explain their intertransformability, viz. matter (II.4.6), the entire observable order for Plotinus is material body. Does Plotinus really reject a uniform explanation of the observable cosmos?

It is useful to consider the details of one of his arguments dealing with physical theory. His line of thought in his treatise 'On the Celestial Sphere' is not a dogmatic monologue, but an inquiry filled with doubts.<sup>11</sup> "We say" that the universe exists eternally, but something more adequate than the will of God is needed to explain this (II.1.1). It is possible that God causes the cosmos to persist not as a particular, but as a form imposed on an endless succession of individuals, like living organisms. Why should terrestrial animals persist in form only while celestial bodies persist as particulars if the cosmos is itself an organic whole? Plotinus, as a matter of honest perplexity, is raising a question about a uniform cosmos. At first (II.1.2), he thinks tentatively: If we accept the opinion (*doxa*) that the celestial sphere and all bodily things in it last forever as particulars (*to tode*) and sublunar things last forever only in form, one then has to show how anything having body can persist forever as a particular, when body is always in flux.<sup>12</sup> Since Plotinus rejects Aristotle's fifth body as a special explanation of the eternity and continuous motion of the celestial sphere, and also rejects the Stoic theory of an immanent eternal fire, this problem is fundamental for him.

He starts his resolution of this problem by assuming with Plato that the cosmos is a "universal living thing" (*to pan zōon*) (II.1.3, 30). In a Platonic cosmobiology this analogy entails that the cosmos, like any organism, has both body and soul. If, then, the celestial sphere is an eternal particular (II.1.2, 19), it is to both soul and body, to soul alone, or to body alone, that it must owe its eternity. But body is not indestructible, so it alone cannot furnish the explanation. Soul alone cannot furnish one either, since Plotinus thinks that the cosmobiological analogy requires an indissoluble connection between cosmic soul and cosmic body; the soul of the cosmos is an inseparable soul. It follows that "the matter and body of the totality" (II.1.3, 1) must contribute in a synergistic way to the eternity of the whole. How can this be explained? Plotinus at first tries a weak compromise by suggesting that body is in flux but not in total flux. He argues by appealing to observation of terrestrial instances: "One must observe" (*horan de dei* II.1.3, 5), he writes, that individual organisms and we too remain the same despite changes of constituents, just like the whole mass of the earth and water (II.1.3, 7–10). Sublunar particulars thus have two kinds of persistent identity: (a) sameness of kind or form, and (b) relative sameness as physical individuals. Plotinus infers from this observational generalization that stellar fire is (perhaps) not in the kind of flux that would undermine the synergism of cosmic body and soul that produces stability. Stellar fire is tractable (*eugrēnos*: II.1.3, 18). But is

stellar fire tractable enough to compose an eternally persistent particular? Let us note here, aside, that Plotinus' appeal to observation seems to commit him to argue from truths about the near-earth sensible region to truths about the celestial sphere. His problem is that the (b) type of persistent identity still falls short of the absolute eternal sameness demanded by partisans of an eternal celestial sphere.

Here Plotinus vacillates. In II.1.4 he contends that because celestial fire is immediately governed by soul, it at least is not in a "boiling state" (*zesis*) (Cf. Aristotle, *Meteorologia* 340b23). He appeals again to a fact of observation: "Even if [the elements of a thing] are continually changing [e.g. wearing out like pieces of wood], the whole remains." It is thus possible that stellar fire boils as a whole mass but remains as a mass or distinct body. Again he refers to soul concessively: "Even if it were possible for all body to perish, nothing would happen to alter soul" (II.1.4, 32–33). Obviously, he is unwilling to concede this much—that the bodily component of the cosmos could entirely perish—since it is a necessary synergistic condition of the identity through time of the cosmos. He thus retreats to a new position: The bodies that compose the cosmos, stellar fire, are "pure and in every way better" (II.1.4, 8), i.e. better than terrestrial bodies. In what sense does Plotinus ascribe higher value to stellar fire? To say that those bodies are better because eternal would reverse the order of explanation. Plotinus' ultimate reason is based on his cosmobiological analogy: In other organisms, "nature selects and places the better things in their most important parts" (II.1.4, 9–10). The celestial sphere is the most important part of the cosmos, the universal living organism; so, Nature has selected and placed stellar light there. Plotinus construes his Platonic analogy in the strongest sense, as entailing an organic internal organization analogous to terrestrial organisms. Again let us note that his argument depends on the observed nature of terrestrial organisms.

His view of the universe as organized and as persisting through time in the same way that organisms persist as individuals allows for a kind of uniformity in nature, namely an organizational uniformity. But, as he notices, it presents an even greater problem. Why does the cosmic organism not ultimately perish, like all other organisms? Plotinus' explanation depends on a double appeal to Plato's authority in the *Timaeus*. The first depends on the mythic aspect of the text, and I will not dwell on it here.<sup>13</sup> The second involves a serious attempt to reinterpret what Timaeus says about stars having been composed "mostly" (*tēn pleistēn*) though not entirely, from fire (cf. II.1.6, 10 with *Timaeus* 40A2–3).<sup>14</sup> Plotinus realizes that Plato seems committed to the view that stars are solids (II.1.6, 6), and

that an element other than fire is probably required to explain this. This implies that Plato is one of those, to whom Plotinus referred earlier, who hold that the body of the celestial sphere is composed of the same elements of which organisms are made (II.1.2, 14–17). If Plato holds a version of this theory of the relatively uniform distribution of physical elements, there would be no need for a special kind of fire, like Plotinus' light. Anticipating his own theory of light, Plotinus appeals weakly to the fact that Plato distinguishes different kinds of a given element, e.g. different kinds of earth (II.1.7, 33–34), and even refers to gold as a kind of water (II.1.6, 51–53).<sup>26</sup> Yet Plotinus knows that Plato does not give stellar fire any *ad hoc* special status. The implied relatively uniform distribution view is troubling to Plotinus. The notion that organisms and stars are composed of the same matter is an anti-Aristotelian uniformity of elements position (and it is incidentally in striking agreement with the modern theory that the material of organisms is the residual product of stellar evolution). This uniformity of elements position troubles Plotinus because even though he rejects the Aristotelian fifth element theory, he continues to think of stellar fire as occupying a privileged place in the cosmos. His position thus looks like an uneasy truce with the Aristotelians, or an attempt to harmonize Plato and Aristotle.

Plotinus' final resolution of his own position is found at II.1.7. The stars are solids, but it is not the element earth that explains their solidity; but it is a quality ('resistance') normally associated with earth. Physical qualities such as resistance, density, hardness, and brightness can be gained or lost or intermixed independently of the elements with which they are normally associated. It is not physical elements but physical qualities that are relatively uniformly distributed through the cosmos. Plotinus refers to this general idea as "the community in the cosmos" (II.1.7, 15). By this he does not mean the Stoic notion of universal *sympathy*, which is explained by an immanent universal fire and entails physical monism. Plotinus' view amounts rather to the independence and associativity of qualities admitted as a universal high-level feature of the cosmos. Therefore, in two ways Plotinus' argument turns on high-level features: the ordering of parts of the cosmos according to the cosmobiological analogy, and a principle of independence and associativity of physical qualities.

This long detour through Plotinus' treatise on the celestial sphere enables us to assess more fully his position relative to the Galilean Thesis. The Galilean Thesis is both a doctrine of the relative uniformity of matter and a doctrine of the strict uniformity of physical explanations. Plotinus rejects a relatively uniform distribution of material elements, but he accepts

a notion of uniform physical explanation. This is what his reference to 'the community' in the cosmos means: The kinds of the element fire are not uniformly distributed—stellar fire does not flow downward (II.1.8) and terrestrial fire is prevented from reaching beyond the near-earth region (II.1.7)—but they both have the quality that makes them solids. The community or association (*koinōnia*) in the cosmos is an association of common qualities. If physical explanations using the same physical qualities are the same kinds of explanations, then Plotinus' notion of the cosmic community of physical qualities entails uniformity of physical explanation. In this respect, he accepts the Galilean Thesis.

Plotinus' notion of explanation in terms of qualities or properties independent of material constituents or physical elements raises serious questions. What is the physics of complex properties compounded of other properties? How can Plotinus appeal to the authority of Plato's *Timaeus* when he avoids the Timaeian theory of physical elements as intertransformable, geometrically defined components of the regular solids, in which the ultimate constituents and properties of fire supply a uniform and interconnected explanation? Plotinus follows his Middle Platonist predecessors in avoiding any detailed investigation of the Timaeian theory.<sup>27</sup>

### III

Turning once again to the Principle of Empirical Scientific Inquiry, can anything be added to our initial judgment of Plotinus' position? I have noted that Plotinus appeals to observation. To these cases one can add other, more telling cases of Plotinus' use of appeals to observation. For instance, in discussing the physical explanation of "complete coalescence" (II.7.1 & 2), his use of Alexander presupposes close attention to the phenomenon of the expansion of wetted papyrus pulp. Plotinus rejects atomism, since he holds that bodies are completely divisible (II.4.7, 20–22). The expansion of wetted pulp is for him a case of complete interpenetration without complete division.<sup>28</sup> His resolution of what he calls "these difficult questions" (II.7.2, 42–43) involves defining the quality of density (*pyknotēs*) as itself made up of other qualities (II.7.2, 35–37). The pulp expands because it is interpenetrable, and its interpenetrability is explained by its relative density. Interpenetration is explained by the mingling of the qualities of the water and the papyrus. The absence of division of the water and pulp by one another is explained by his theory that qualities "can go through bodies without cutting them"



(II.7.2, 28–29) because they are “bodiless” (II.7.2, 29). His notion of bodiless qualities may seem like a metaphysical speculation without any clear justification; yet the purpose of his reasoning is the attempt to make coherent sense out of the observed facts. For Plotinus, *interpenetration* is a theoretical term whose definition rests on an account of the nature of qualities, and his introduction of the theoretical meaning of the term is part of an attempt to determine which descriptions are to count as the facts in need of explanation, as well as part of an attempt to explain the facts. Admittedly, Plotinus does not clearly distinguish this kind of determination of a domain of facts from their explanation.

This intimate pairing of observation and theory may be found in many of Plotinus’ discussions. The soul that regulates the celestial sphere also enters the realm subject to chance (*tychē*: II.3.10). The stars produce nonessential changes in terrestrial things. The higher and lower levels within the sensible realm interact, which suggests that they must share common general descriptions; there is a common repertoire of physical theoretical terms. In general, all sensible matter is formed in some way and is thus a proper object for physical theory (II.4.3, 16–17; II.2.1, 38–39). But does Plotinus imply the general view that physical theories must as such be open to a test of adequacy such that not reason alone but observable facts must be appealed to, even if indirectly?

A prior, more central question is this: Did Plotinus have even the idea of physical theory as only *partially* justified or contestable? In particular, we ought to ask what his attitude was towards the doctrine of physical theories as partially justified or ‘probable’ accounts that is the cornerstone of Plato’s *Timaeus*. Plotinus refers to this doctrine indirectly in the passage already cited (II.1.6) in which he asks whether celestial bodies are made of fire only or of fire and other elements.<sup>24</sup> Contrary to his normal usage, there Plotinus does not cite Plato’s text with “He says,” but with the words: “For *Timaeus*... the stars contain not all fire but mostly fire, since the stars obviously have solidity” (Cf. II.1.6, 2–6, with *Timaeus* 40A2–3). He says that “perhaps” (*isōs*) *Timaeus*’ view is correct, and in any case Plato “agrees” with *Timaeus* in judging that the view in question accords with what is ‘probable’ (*tōi eikoti*). The fact that *Timaeus* and Plato might not agree underscores the plurality of possible positions that are measured against the yardstick of ‘probability.’ Nowhere else does Plotinus treat Plato and *Timaeus* as holding potentially different positions. As if to excuse this distancing of Plato from *Timaeus*, Plotinus adds a twofold justification of Plato’s position:

From our sense perception, by sight and the exchange of contact [with starlight], it appears that they contain all or mostly all fire; but when we consider them rationally, we see that if there is no solid without earth, they must contain earth.<sup>25</sup>

Plato’s position is supported either by sense perception or by reasoning, or by both. What sense perception reveals is unclear: either stars are composed of fire, or they are composed mostly of fire and partly of other elements. Reason argues that since stars are solids, then if there is no solid without elements other than fire, stars must contain elements other than fire.

Since Plotinus’ own theory of stellar composition requires that stars be composed only of a special type of fire and contain no earth, he in effect rejects the argument from reason alone and accepts one of the two alternative testimonies of the senses—but in any case, he rejects Plato’s position. He later explains that stellar fire is a solid in having resistance (*antereisis*) but not hardness (*sklērotēs*: II.1.6, 48–50). For my purposes, two things are worth noting. Plotinus appeals in a roundabout way to observation, not just to reason. Thus, for him the *Timaeus* account is in fact only partially justified, not only because it is a merely ‘probable’ account, but also because it is an account that is contested both by the evidence of perception and by Plotinus’ countertheory. In this passage, Plotinus proves that he is capable of viewing physical theory as a group of competing theories, of which Plato’s theory of stellar composition is only one, and not necessarily the correct one. It should also be added that Plotinus is exceedingly coy about this conflict with Plato. He wishes to appear not to disagree with Plato.

This rare passage placed Plotinus closer to the spirit of Plato’s doctrine of partially justified accounts than all the passages in which Plotinus accepts Plato as an authority without reservation. It leads Plotinus closer to the idea of physical theory as conjecture, and this is a fundamental step towards a grasp of natural science as a disciplined inquiry. Since it is possibly unclear what I mean in ascribing the idea of a physical conjecture to Plato, I will restate Plato’s position and then, in conclusion, I will evaluate Plotinus’ precise attitude. For Plato, physical theory deals with what “comes to be and is perceptible”; since the perceptible is “grasped by opinion together with sense perception” (28B4–C1), the sensible realm is also properly thought of as an object of changeable opinions (*doxaston*). Physical theories therefore are never ‘exact’ accounts, “in every way in agreement with themselves” (29C5–7). Physics is not an exact science like geometry; it is not an entirely consistent body of theory. The best one can

hope to achieve is accounts that are "no less probable than others" (29C5-D1). Since physical theory is a matter of belief (29C4) and opinion, or at best a mixture of probability and necessity of the kind sought for in the Timaeon theory of elements, the most we can hope to achieve is contestable belief.<sup>2</sup> The choice of a theoretical model at the core of the Timaeon theory of elements is explicitly open to contest. "The prize of the contest goes in a friendly way to the one who refutes this, and discovers that it does not hold in this way" (54B1-2). It is arguable that refutability of a physical theory is a kind of falsifiability.<sup>3</sup> Given this doctrine of refutability together with Plato's strong epistemological distinction between belief and knowledge, the Timaeon doctrine can be said to sever physical theory cleanly from dialectic. Physical theory for Plato is thus advanced as a species of conjecture rather than as a body of rational argument or speculation. In Platonic physics, it must be granted that more weight is given to the choice of theoretical models than to empirical confirmation or disconfirmation—for Plato 'the appearances' are treated as what need to be explained, not what tests theory—but it is not this that should be the important issue, but rather Plato's first fledgling conception of a physical conjecture.

Plato's reference to 'probability' in the passage about stellar composition may have loosened Plotinus' commitment to Plato's own authority—a salutary effect—but it did not serve as a springboard for a Plotinian investigation in the philosophy of science, for instance, in the epistemological or metaphysical foundations of natural theory as such. Plotinus' rare appeals to observation and sense perception, when seen in this light, are but vague pointers towards an empirical criterion; they do not even hint at the more important conception of a physical conjecture.<sup>4</sup>

Plotinus' view that physical theory is closer to dialectic than the crafts are to arithmetic implies that physical theory makes use of dialectic in some systematically close way that would leave little room for the idea of a partially justified or contestable theory. Plotinus does not reflect on the structure of physical theory as distinguished from dialectic.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the charge or suspicion that Plotinus is a philosopher who simply derives physical theory from his metaphysical system is not accurate. When compared with the Stoics, Plotinus' metaphysical system does not directly logically entail any consequences in physical theory, although it stands in a constant rapport with it. Plotinus' theories of physical coalescence, of stellar composition and causation, or of the nature of physical qualities are not derived from the metaphysical principles of unity,

intellect, and soul—even though certain references to soul and the 'traces' of its *logoi* are presupposed by them. It is conceivable that the outlines of a Plotinian physics could be put together from Plotinus' accounts of density, interpenetrability, divisibility, transparency, resistance, and other material qualities. This is not to say that it was ever Plotinus' intention to do so.

In conclusion, I have argued that Plotinus' position relative to the Galilean Thesis is ambiguous. The sensible universe is bifurcated into two regions that differ materially because of the overall organization of the biocosm. The two regions share the same physical qualities. Plotinus is not a physical monist like the Stoics. The uniformity of the physical order is not due to an immanent unifying element nor to the relatively uniform distribution of a plurality of elements, but rather to the "community," i.e. the independence, associativity, and relatively uniform distribution of physical qualities. It is in this sense that Plotinus' cosmology rests on an organic and holistic basis. If, then, the Galilean Thesis entails the uniformity of matter, Plotinus' position rejects the Galilean Thesis. On the other hand, if the Galilean Thesis entails only the uniformity of physical explanation, Plotinus' position is at least compatible with the Thesis. As for the second of my truisms about natural science, it is clear that Plotinus has no well formulated idea of physics as an empirical inquiry or even as a body of physical conjectures. On balance, we might be able to speak sensibly of a 'Plotinian physics,' but this physics would lack certain of the key ingredients of physics as we know it.

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## NOTES

1. Cf. B. Marién, *Bibliografia Critica degli Studi Plotiniani* (Bari, 1949), and, thereafter, *L'Année Philologique*. Of interest are Pierre Duhem, *Le Système du Monde: Histoire des Doctrines Cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, I-IV (Paris, 1954-1965) and A. Graeser, *Plotinus and the Stoics: A Preliminary Study*, *Philosophia Antiqua* 22 (Leiden, 1972). Possibly of interest is the unpublished work by M. I. de Santa Cruz de Prunes, *Le problème du monde sensible dans la philosophie de Plotin*, *Annuaire de l'École pratique des Hautes Études* (Paris). It is surprising that Duhem did not directly address the question of a Plotinian cosmology.
2. For a working scientist's expression of this view, Cf. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*, Program 7 (Carl Sagan Productions and KCET, 1979). Kepler, Newton, and Einstein all held a mystical attitude toward the natural order.

3. Pierre Duhem, *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory*, translated by P. Wiener (New York, 1962), 18.
4. Stoic physical theory offers perhaps the best case of something like such a 'derivation'; but Cf. Proclus, *Institutio Physica* ("Treatise on the Elements of Physics"), ed., A. Ritzfeld (Leipzig, 1912) and, on Proclus' model of deductive knowledge, see R. Hathaway, "The Anatomy of a Neoplatonist Metaphysical Proof," *The Structure of Being: A Neoplatonic Approach*, ed. R. Baine Harris (SUNY Press, 1982), 122–136.
5. Frederick Suppe, *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Chicago, 1977), 717.
6. Cf. Gregory Vlastos, *Plato's Universe* (Seattle, 1975); Aristotle, *De motu animalium*, edited and translated by Martha C. Nussbaum (Cambridge, MA.); Robert B. Todd, "Monism and Immanence: The Foundations of Stoic Physics," *The Stoics*, ed. John M. Rist (Berkeley, 1978), 136–160. Of special interest is Montgomery Furth's forthcoming work on the metaphysical foundations of Aristotle's biological theory. See also *Science and Speculation: Studies in Hellenistic Theory and Practice*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Jacques Brunschwig, Myles Burnyeat, and Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge, 1982).
7. At the time that Ficino translated Plotinus into Latin (1485, published 1492; cf. P. Kristeller, *Suppl. Ficinianum*, lxvi), Italian science combined mechanical explanation with teleological, organic, and holistic explanations taken from a variety of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic sources; Italian culture and its physics could have branched in any of a number of directions. Plotinian modes of thinking had been embedded in Christian culture by the anonymous Pseudo-Dionysius. Critical reaction to the 'fraud' implied by Valla's suspicions about the provenance of the Dionysian Corpus (published in 1505 in the *Annotationes* by Erasmus) may be one significant reason for the loss of respectability of Plotinian Platonism among many scientists and intellectuals. Such adventitious events independent of scientific theory often play a role in the choice of models of scientific theories.
8. Because of Galileo's well known role in publicizing the view (not fully extended until Newton). Does the Galilean Thesis still hold for physical science? At the 1982 Cambridge Conference on Particle Physics, a new version of what has come to be called the 'inflationary [cosmological] model' was put forward by Steinhardt and Albrecht (and independently by Linde) which implies that the totality of the observed universe is merely a local universe cut off from very remote 'universes.' Moreover, the Steinhardt-Albrecht-Linde version allows different physical laws as a possibility for these remote universes, and thus implies both real space-time discontinuity and explanatory non-uniformity. However, their version is so conjectural that it would be false to say that physics has adopted anything like it. Most physicists continue to hold something like the Galilean Thesis.

9. Theoretical innovation enters the test of theories as background in determining a given domain of facts. I have merely tried to encapsulate accepted positions here, holding controversy at bay. In particular I omit any reference to the contents of a 'body of conjectures,' especially any reference to claims to knowledge. If Plotinus accepts Plato's cosmological epistemology, natural science would not be a body of claims to knowledge, a position that would challenge contemporary discussion and only raise a multitude of troublesome questions.
10. All citations are to the Henry-Schwyzler edition, *Plotini Opera* (Paris, 1951–1959). All translations are my own, though I have profited by consulting Armstrong's *Plotinus* (Cambridge, MA, 1966–1988.).
11. 'Celestial sphere' seems to me to be less misleading than 'heaven' as a synonym of *ouranos*. That what is meant is neither the ancient sphere of rotation nor the celestial sphere of the modern astronomer will be clear from context.
12. Eratosthenes, *Platonicus*, as cited by Theon of Smyrna, ed. Hiller (Leipzig, 1878), 2. For a discussion, Cf. B. L. Van der Waerden, *Science Awakening*, translated by Arnold Dresden (Oxford, 1961), 150, 160–161.
13. II.4.3 says that all sensible matter has shape, but it is clearly only as body occupying place that matter is shaped. Does Plotinus regard a proposition such as 'All body has shape' as true in virtue of sense experience or as a truth of reason, a 'dialectical' truth? For the role of observation in Plotinus, cf. below in this essay.
14. Against this, W. Theiler, "Plotin zwischen Plato und Stoa," *Les Sources de Plotin* (Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1957), 68: "Plotin auch [hat] nicht Dialoge geschrieben. Fragen wurden gestellt in seiner Vorlesung (Vita 13), aber die Antworten lagen schon fest. Philosophie und Leben waren monologisch geworden." (My italics.) Theiler's general contention that Socratic elenchus is absent from Plotinus' view of Plato is correct, or so I have argued in "The Neoplatonist Interpretation of Plato: Remarks on its Decisive Characteristics," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* VII (1969), 19–26. On the importance of elenchus further, Cf. n27 below.
15. Literally, "in saying (*legontes*) that the cosmos has always existed before... if we refer (*anagoimen*) the explanation to the will of God..." (II.1.1, 1–3). It is grammatically correct to render *legontes* as "when we say," as Armstrong does, but it misses the tentative mood of this opening sentence. Armstrong's comment that the whole purpose of II.1 is "to defend the doctrine... of the incorruptibility of the heavens" exaggerates the dogmatic character of Plotinus' thought in II.1. MacKenna's "We hold that..." is too strong. The persons implicit in *anagoimen* are not necessarily restricted to Plotinus and his followers; note that the view in question is not easy to reconcile with Plato's position (Cf. II.1.2, 8–10, with Republic 530B2–3, but on *Timaus* Cf. VI.7.3). For an instance in which Plotinus is making an apparently dogmatic

- claim, Cf. the *phamen* at II.1.7, 27.
16. II.1.2, 1–6. The stars, sun, and planets are eternal particulars “in the strongest sense” (*epi tou autou kyriōs*). Plotinus’ explanation of just what this means (*hōs to kath’ hekaston kai to hōs autōs*: II.1.2, 5) is obscure. On different kinds of persistent identity in Plotinus, Cf. below in this essay. Stars are not changeless in every way (II.1.8, 27–28).
  17. I borrow this term from Todd, “Monism and Immanence,” 147.
  18. The argument is that celestial things are derived from the Craftsman or Intellect, but terrestrial organisms derive from or are produced by gods produced by the Craftsman; since the celestial gods made by the Craftsman are instrumental in producing terrestrial organisms, they therefore cannot be instrumental in producing themselves.
  19. On this passage, cf. below in this essay.
  20. *Timaeus* 59A8–B4, viz. a dense, uniform, fusible kind of water (*hydōr*). Plato’s use of *hydōr* in this and other passages suggests that he means by it any substance found in liquid form. The example seems irrelevant here, but may be important for Plotinus’ later notion of separable qualities like density (*pyknotēs*).
  21. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London, 1977), 48–49: “I can discern no sign of philosophic questioning behind Albinus’ summary of Platonic physical theory... If the Middle Platonists seem uninterested in questions of what we would term Physics, they are after all only reflecting the remarkably nonscientific bias of the age in which they lived.” Dillon’s comment furnishes a good example of what I referred to above as the historical argument. The bias of the culture and Middle Platonism are mutually affined; they reflect each other. One ought to note that ‘the age’ in question produced such outstanding scientists as Heron, Ptolemy, Theon and Galen, and that familiarity with Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Archimedes and Apollonius should have been taken for granted. Why do we think that people like Albinus reflect a bias, like innocent and passive mirrors, rather than actively choosing to adopt a bias?
  22. If there were complete division, the pulp and the water would completely destroy each other. Every volume of matter is a continuum (Cf. II.7.1, 32).
  23. II.1.6, 8–12. II.1.7, 46–50, implies the denial that there is no solid without earth; it also implies that fire is a solid but is neither three dimensional nor hard. The implicit denial that fire is three dimensional seems to imply the rejection of Plato’s Timaeon polyhedral theory of the elements.
  24. It is probably necessary to note here that the term *eikos* as it is used in these passages in the *Timaeus* (cf. note below re Kepler) has nothing to do with probability in the sense of frequency of occurrence. Burnyeat’s comments about Aristotle’s notion of *eikos* involving a subjective element—viz. what most or some people would grant as being convincing or acceptable—apply, at least in part, to Plato as well. Cf. M. F. Burnyeat, “Carneades was no

- Probabilist,” paper read at the Colloquium on Ancient Scepticism (Princeton University, 1982), 7–10.
25. *Timaeus* 53D5 & 56B4. At 59D1 the search for more adequate physical theories is said to involve a pleasure that imparts a kind of measured quality (*metrion*) to life, a measure characterized both by playfulness and shrewd thinking. Plato is thinking here, possibly, of the contest described at 54B1–2.
  26. It is unclear what Plato’s idea of the adequacy of a theory amounts to. It may involve questions about how well one’s theoretical model captures certain features of its domain of facts, e.g. as the sharp vertices of his tetrahedra capture the ‘cutting’ quality of fire. If the only question for Plato is how ‘admirable’ (*kalon*) one’s model is (54A6), adequacy would depend on standards of elegance or symmetry. I believe that Plato’s yardstick for adequacy involves at least both of these questions. Had he developed his idea of refutability in the *Timaeus*, it would have reflected this complexity.
  27. A better instance of physical conjecture, and perhaps of the influence of the Timaeon doctrine, is found in the works of Kepler. The question about what spurred Kepler to move from the 1596 *Mysterium Cosmographicum*, based on the use of the Timaeon regular polyhedra to determine planetary orbits, to the 1609 *Astronomia Nova*, which adopts the ellipse and revolutionizes astronomy, is normally answered by ascribing to Kepler an obsessive concern with matching Brahe’s data. But this motive, to be credible, must have begun with a willingness to treat authoritative models in physical theory as falsifiable. Kepler’s motives in this respect become fully intelligible if this, the crux of his method, was found in his greatest authority as the Timaeon principle of partially justifiable accounts. Cf. not merely 54B1–2, but the pervasive insertions of it: *Timaeus* 28B4–C1, 29C4–D3, 29D2, 30B7, 48D–E, 53D5, 55D5, 56A1, 56B4, 68B7, 68D2, 72D7–8.
  28. The serious questions here concern the relation between Socratic elenchus and the elenchus mentioned at *Timaeus* 54B1–2, which we might term Timaeon elenchus. The consistency of a set of beliefs (or a single belief) is established by Socratic elenchus; the method is purely rational, but inductive appeals are often an intrinsic part of this (including the method of counterexample). Timaeon elenchus establishes the ‘probability’ or ‘likelihood’ (adequacy?) of a general theory. The different uses of *eikos* in *Timaeus* need a careful examination. F. M. Cornford’s criticisms of A. E. Taylor’s views about this are as exaggerated as Taylor’s own claims. Cf. *Plato’s Cosmology* (New York, 1937), 30–31, with A. E. Taylor, *A Commentary of Plato’s Timaeus* (Oxford, 1928). Cf. Vlastos, 93. Plotinus, of course, is not thematically concerned with either type of elenchus.

# THE PRACTICE OF PLOTINIAN PHYSICS

Jonathan Scott Lee

The casual reader of the *Enneads* cannot help but be struck by a paradox in Plotinus' treatment of the sensible world. On the one hand, he has a great deal to say both about the beauty and the positive moral status of this world (particularly in his replies to the Gnostics in II.9 and III.2 & 3)<sup>1</sup> and about the moral and philosophical danger that attachment to this world poses for the soul (most notably in I.8). On the other hand, Plotinus offers rather little in the way of an account of the nature of the sensible world, and much of what he does provide concerns its metaphysical analysis as an image of the intelligible world of forms (*eidē*); for example, the treatise on the categories of the sensible world (VI.3) must be read in this light. Even in *Enneads* II and III, which Porphyry explicitly describe as concerned with physics and other subjects relating to the physical universe,<sup>2</sup> there are very few passages in which Plotinus explicitly deals with what might be called physical analysis of this universe or in which he offers any sort of detailed description of things or events in the sensible world. That this marks a striking departure from the concerns of Plato, Aristotle, and the early Stoa has often been noted,<sup>3</sup> but the deeper issue of determining the precise status of physics in Plotinus' conception of theoretical inquiry has received rather little attention.<sup>4</sup> The guiding assumption of the commentators seems to have been that the issues of genuine philosophical interest in Plotinus in particular and in Neoplatonism in general are largely metaphysical, ethical, psychological and theological.

In the following pages, my aim is to show that Plotinus does in fact have something of philosophical interest to say about the status of physics and about the actual practice of the physicist; to this end, I am perhaps more interested in raising issues and breaking new ground than I am in resolving the difficulties raised. In section 1, I argue for the legitimacy (on Plotinus' own view) of considering physics as a discipline relatively independent from metaphysics (understood in terms of Platonic dialectic). In sections 2 and 3, I consider Plotinus' actual practice of physics in two

treatises of the second *Ennead* (II.7 and II.1), focusing particular attention on contrasting ways in which he treats the relation between physical investigation and metaphysical analysis. Finally, in section 4, I summarize the tentative results of my inquiry.

## 1. Physics and Dialectic

Plotinus' most explicit statement as to the character of natural philosophy in general is found at the beginning of the last chapter of his short treatise, 'On Dialectic' (I.3), where he briefly describes the relation of dialectic to natural philosophy: "So dialectic is the valuable part [of philosophy]. Philosophy has other parts; it also surveys the nature of the physical world with assistance from dialectic, as the other skills use arithmetic to help them; though natural philosophy stands closer to dialectic in its borrowing..." (I.3.6, 1-5). Rather than clarifying the nature of physics in itself, this statement maps the territory in which some such clarification must be sought: To understand the proper role of physics is to understand its relation to and specific difference from dialectic. Plotinus maintains that physics borrows from dialectic and is assisted by dialectic, but there are a number of ways in which such a relation might be construed. In describing physics' relation to dialectic as like the relation of certain other skills to arithmetic, Plotinus is apparently alluding to Plato's claim at *Republic* 522c1-9 that every sort of skill, understanding, and knowledge presupposes number and calculation. However, this reference back to Plato does little more than complicate the issue for Plotinus, since the *Republic* passage is most naturally taken to mean that all skills use mathematics as some sort of tool, while Plotinus has already denied (at I.3.5, 8-13) that dialectic is to be thought of as a tool (*organon*) for the use of the philosopher.

If dialectic cannot be taken to be a tool for the physicist (in roughly the way Aristotelian logic serves as a tool for the Aristotelian physicist), then it would seem that the relation between the two disciplines must be more intimate; indeed, it would seem that physics must borrow at least some of its content from dialectic, and this may be Plotinus' point when he remarks that physics "stands closer to dialectic in its borrowing" than do the other skills to arithmetic. At a rather schematic level of analysis, there are at least two ways in which it could be argued that Plotinian physics actually borrows all of its content from dialectic. (a) Given Plotinus' commitment to Platonism and to the fundamental Platonic claim that the

intelligible forms are the true causes of the sensible world,' a Plotinian could maintain that the complete account of the sensible world—and thus all of physics—is simply implicit in the results of dialectic. From this perspective, physics would tell us nothing which dialectic (understood in terms of the method of collection and division: see I.3.4 & 5) does not reveal, and reveal in a more systematic (because methodologically rigorous) way. (b) Given Plotinus' routine acceptance of the *Timaeus* and, in particular, its doctrine that the physical universe exists as an animal endowed with soul, a Plotinian could maintain that all of physics—as an account of the nature and action of the world's body—is implicit in the psychology of the world-soul. On such an analysis, to understand the sensible world would be simply to understand the world-soul, and this latter understanding would directly involve in turn the dialectical understanding of the intelligible world, thus collapsing (b) into an elaborated form of (a). On either interpretation, it would seem that physics is reduced to a gratuitous pastime wholly dependent upon dialectic.

Nevertheless, even on interpretations such as (a) and (b) which emphasize the extreme dependence of physics on dialectic, there is room (and even a necessity) for a conception of physics as a discipline at least relatively independent from dialectic. If dialectic is to provide the basis for an explanation of the sensible world in terms of reference to the forms, there is a place for the description of the sensible world in terms other than those of dialectic; that is, physics can be construed as a discipline dedicated to (roughly) the metaphysically neutral description of things and events in the sensible world, such description then providing the data that are to be explained by dialectic. Without some such description, it does not seem that a causal explanation of the sensible world by the forms—such as that required by (a)—would even be possible. To put the same point in another way, without the results of physics, dialectic could not be shown to be the genuine explanation of reality in all its dimensions that Plotinus clearly takes it to be (see I.3.4 & 5, especially I.3.5, 5-13). Precisely similar considerations apply to (b), but here we can perhaps go a bit further and maintain not only that physics can and must exist as a discipline devoted to the metaphysically neutral description of the sensible world but that such a physics can also describe sensible things and processes without explicit reference to the soul or souls that are ultimately causally responsible for such things and processes. Again, such a psychologically neutral description would provide precisely the data which world-soul psychology (taken in conjunction with dialectic) would then explain. That Plotinus is willing to countenance this sort of

psychologically neutral physics is made clear in the final part of the treatise on the genera of being, where he insists that a study of the genera of the things that constitute the sensible world must exclude any direct reference to soul, since "the nature of the soul is in the intelligible" (see VI.3.1, 21–31).<sup>7</sup> Later in the same treatise he argues that sensible substance may be distinguished into two classes of bodies, material (*hylikōtera*) and organic (*organika*) (VI.3.9, 1–18), and that organic motion (*kinēsis empsychōn*) must be distinguished from inorganic motion (*kinēsis apsycheōn*) (I.3.26, 4–5). From this it would seem to follow that both organic and inorganic bodies and motions can be studied without reference to any sort of psychology (either of the world-soul or of any other individual soul), and this would certainly provide at least one kind of domain for physics.

Two rather different conclusions come out of the preceding considerations. First, on general philosophical grounds, it appears that Plotinus must be willing to make room for a conception of physics as a (at least relatively-speaking) metaphysically and psychologically neutral description of the things and processes of the sensible world. Second, on specific textual grounds, it appears that Plotinus does in fact grant legitimacy to a description of things and events in the sensible world conducted in isolation from any sort of psychology (and from now on in this essay, I will take 'physics' in the narrower sense of this sort of extra-psychological inquiry). There is, thus, a reasonably clear domain for physics in Plotinus' conception of intellectual inquiry as a description (lacking ultimate explanatory power) of the sensible world. What remains unclear, however, is the precise character of this sort of physical description; in particular, what still needs to be examined is the extent of the borrowing that physics does from dialectic. In order to come to a better grasp of these issues, we need to go beyond the general arguments advanced thus far and to turn to some specific examples of physical description and analysis in the *Enneads*. As Émile Bréhier has pointed out, the question of Plotinian physics is "not one of a well-defined field of investigation, but of the way in which Plotinus deals with the questions included under this head by Aristotle and the Stoics, such as the questions concerning the nature of bodies, the elements, action and passion, mixture, the celestial movements, time, and the nature of living bodies."<sup>8</sup> While we have now seen that such a field of investigation can be somewhat carefully defined, such a definition remains essentially empty in the absence of some specific examples of the actual practice of Plotinian physics.

## 2. Total Mixture

Perhaps the single most straightforward example in the *Enneads* of Plotinus' actually practicing physics comes in the short treatise, 'On Total Mixture' (II.7), in which he offers a very direct critique of an unambiguously physical doctrine integral to Stoicism. The Stoic doctrine at issue is the claim that two or more material substances or material qualities<sup>9</sup> can so totally interpenetrate one another that "any volume of the mixture, down to the smallest parts, is jointly occupied by all the components in the same proportion, each component preserving its own properties under any circumstances, irrespective of the ratio of its share in the mixture."<sup>10</sup> Such a total mixture (*krasis di' holōn*), if it were possible, would make the totality of things mixed (in Plotinus' words) "a whole of like parts" (II.7.1, 6–8). Now, whether or not total mixture in this sense is possible would seem to be a clear case of a physical issue: that is, a decision about the truth or falsity of the Stoic doctrine will entail the truth or falsity of a variety of particular descriptions of things or processes in the sensible world (descriptions, for example, of alleged cases of total mixture). Thus, Plotinus' treatment of the doctrine should shed some clear light on the procedures of Plotinian physics, particularly since his analysis is heavily indebted to the arguments of both Stoic and Peripatetic predecessors (as has been particularly well shown by Bréhier<sup>11</sup>).

Oddly enough, commentators on Plotinus are rather divided about the actual results of Plotinus' critique. Thus, A. H. Armstrong emphasizes his basic acceptance of the Stoic view,<sup>12</sup> while H. J. Blumenthal claims that II.7 amounts to a refutation "in detail" of the view.<sup>13</sup> As we shall see, both interpretations can in fact be defended—Plotinus does refute the notion that *bodies* can mix totally, while he defends the claim that *qualities* might at least often so mix<sup>14</sup>—but to understand how this can be the case, we need to turn to the actual course of his argument, noting the points at which physics appears to 'borrow' from the results of metaphysics.

After an initial chapter reviewing in fairly elaborate detail a series of Peripatetic arguments against the doctrine of total mixture and a parallel series of Stoic responses to these arguments (for a marvelous analysis of these arguments and their sources, see Bréhier's 'Notice' to II.7), Plotinus turns in chapter 2 to develop his own position on the possibility of mixture (II.7.2, 4–6). He begins with the empirical example of water soaking through a piece of papyrus and asks, "how can we deny that the whole body of the water goes right through the papyrus?" (II.7.2, 8–9), going on to insist that this example seems to dictate the actual occurrence of total

mixture: "For, the whole papyrus is wet and its matter is nowhere destitute of the quality [of wetness]. But if the matter is everywhere accompanied by the quality of wetness, the water is everywhere in the papyrus" (II.7.2, 13–15). However, this apparent vindication of the Stoic doctrine is immediately tempered by a dose of Plotinus' own version of Platonism, when he suggests that "perhaps it is not the water [that is everywhere in the papyrus] but the quality [*poiotēs*] of the water" (II.7.2, 15). The Platonic roots of such a claim are to be found at *Theaetetus* 182a8–b2, where Plato introduces the term 'quality' (*poiotēs*) as denoting sensible qualities such as hot or white (as opposed to hotness or whiteness) and at *Timaeus* 49d3–e7 & 51b4–6, where Plato insists that the elements such as water are "suches" rather than "thises" and, thus, that water is simply a region of the receptacle that has been moistened. What Plotinus is doing at line 15 is to introduce this Platonic analysis of sensible things as qualities into his discussion, thus shifting the focus of the doctrine of total mixture away from Stoic materialism. (For a clear statement of Plotinus' acceptance of this Platonic doctrine, see II.6.1, 44–49, as well as VI.3.8, 9–27, to be discussed below.)

That this is the import of line 15 is made clear in lines 16–20, where Plotinus sketches a materialistic response to the Platonic reduction of sensible things to qualities, a response which hinges on the equation of size, mass, and matter. This response (which itself is anti-Stoic) involves the claim that, because the papyrus is enlarged by the presence of water in it, it has taken on additional mass, which entails that "the matter of the water and the matter of the papyrus must be in two different places" (II.7.2, 19–20) and that this is not an example of total mixture after all. This materialistic view, in attributing mass to matter, is of course far-removed from the Plotinian doctrine of the incorporeality of matter (for which see, in particular, II.5.5, 3–7, 20–24 & 34–36, and III.6.7, particularly in the light of Plotinus' analysis of corporeality in chapter 3 of 'On Total Mixture'), a doctrine which will be affirmed in lines 29–32, but Plotinus chooses here to emphasize that the core of the objection has some merit. In lines 20–26 (which in large part repeats the Peripatetic argument of II.7.1, 38–48), he argues in effect that size is a special sort of quality (and, in VI.3.11–15, 23, he will defend the claim that quantity is a genus of sensible things which is distinct from quality): In the case of qualities other than size (e.g. colors), when two or more qualities are mixed together, each of the qualities loses its purity as the result of its mixture (so that yellow is no longer itself when it is mixed with blue to form green); in contrast, the mixing of one size with another does not result in the

disappearance of size. It is this apparent truth that lies behind the materialist's singling out size as, in effect, constituting the matter of sensible things.

Plotinus does not go beyond this to refute the position of lines 16–20. Instead, he turns to another anti-Stoic, Peripatetic argument (first sketched at II.7.1, 8–15 & 31–32) to the effect that total mixture would require that the bodies which are completely interpenetrated in the mixture be actually divided into an infinite number of parts which is absurd (II.7.2, 26–27). However, Plotinus himself uses precisely the same argument in the very early treatise, 'On the Immortality of the Soul,' in order to show that the soul—because it is present in every part of the body and is, thus, totally mixed with the body—cannot itself be a body but must be incorporeal (IV.7.8, 7–22).<sup>10</sup> In the context of II.7, this earlier argument is implicitly recalled in order to move from the empirical fact that the papyrus is completely soaked with water (understood Platonically as wetness) to the new claim that qualities, such as wetness, can "go through bodies without cutting them" because these qualities are incorporeal (II.7.2, 27–29). In other words, Plotinus uses the empirically confirmed fact of total mixture in the case of the wet papyrus, a fact understood in terms of the Platonic analysis of sensible things as qualities, in order to show that sensible qualities are incorporeal (just as he had used in IV.7 the fact of soul's omnipresence in or total mixture with the body in order to show that the soul is incorporeal). It follows that he is willing to allow the possibility of the total mixture of *qualities*, while he denies the possibility of the total mixture of *bodies*.

The remainder of chapter 2 of II.7 provides a general analysis of the constraints on total mixture. It might seem that, given the incorporeality both of matter and now of sensible qualities, there would be no limits to the possibility of total mixture (II.7.2, 29–32). Nevertheless, Plotinus suggests (and here again it seems that the evidence for his claim is largely empirical, although no examples are cited) that certain qualities at least cannot completely interpenetrate solids (*ta stereā*), because solids "have qualities of such a kind as to prevent their penetration" (II.7.2, 33–34). He elaborates this claim by maintaining that the failure of solids to enter into total mixture may stem either from their being constituted by a large number of qualities—density (*pyknotēs*) being understood as a multiplicity of qualities—or from solids possessing the particular quality of density (II.7.2, 34–38). In either case, it follows that "it is not in so far as they are qualities that they will blend but in so far as they are qualities of a certain kind" (II.7.2, 38–39). The final, very difficult lines of the chapter suggest



that qualities essentially connected with size may not admit of total mixture (thereby picking up the thought of lines 20–26?), but it is not at all clear just how this suggestion may be developed (II.7.2, 39–42).

With the end of chapter 2, the *physics* of II.7 comes to an end. We are now in a position to try to say something about the actual practice of physics that is exemplified in the treatise we have been considering. The first thing to be noted is that Plotinus does in fact offer (at a general level, to be sure) a description of the sensible world when he claims that total mixture is possible in certain situations. The further claim that these situations depend upon the nature of the sensible qualities to be mixed is, again, a claim that ultimately will shape detailed descriptions of the sensible world. To this extent, then, the treatise does conform to the conception of physics as a more-or-less metaphysically neutral description of the sensible world defended in section 1 of this essay. The second thing to be noted is that these general physical propositions descriptive of the physical world are defended by an argument which essentially involves the metaphysical claim that sensible things are to be analyzed as qualities (or sets of qualities). That this claim is simply borrowed from Plato makes it no less a result of dialectic (in the broad sense of dialectic as the discipline that develops the most general accounts of reality: see I.3.4 & 5, especially I.3.4, 1–9), and thus what we have here is a fairly clear case of a physical assertion which ultimately rests on an argument which makes essential use of a metaphysical assertion. This would appear to be a striking example of one way in which physics can ‘borrow’ from dialectic and borrow from dialectic in such a close way that the argument for the physical claim presupposes the truth of certain dialectical results. In this sense dialectic would serve Plotinian physics not as a tool (Cf. I.3.5, 8–13) but as a source of premises essential to the defense of physical claims. Moreover, the relative independence of physics from dialectic would be preserved in the distinction between the propositions of physics (which issue directly in statements descriptive of the sensible world) and the propositions of dialectic (which lead to statements descriptive of the sensible world only in conjunction with other, apparently non-dialectical propositions, such as descriptions of empirical fact).

The dialectical—or metaphysical—step in Plotinus’ analysis of total mixture in chapter 2 of II.7 is elaborated in the brief third chapter of the treatise, which offers by way of an appendix to the argument of chapters 1 and 2 a metaphysical analysis of ‘corporeity’ (*sāmatorēs*). Corporeity is simply “a certain form [*eidōs*] and a certain *logos* which enters matter and makes it body. If, then, this is what body is, that which is composed of all

the qualities with matter, this is what corporeity would be” (II.7.3, 3–5). In other words, the term corporeity denotes the particular group of qualities that makes a body a body, a group which is itself an incorporeal thing (or quality) made up of incorporeal qualities (hence, Plotinus’ insistence that corporeity is a *logos*). Implicit in this analysis of corporeity is Plotinus’ basic metaphysical claim about the things that make up the sensible world, namely that they are nothing more than clusters of qualities in matter (matter understood here as the formless receptacle of the *Timaeus*).<sup>10</sup> The clearest expression of this view comes in the third treatise on the genera of Being (VI.3), where Plotinus writes:

But then sensible substance will be a certain conglomeration [*symphorēsis*] of qualities [*poiotēs*] and matter, and all these qualities compounded together in one matter will be substance, while each taken separately will be either a quality [*poion*] or a quantum or many qualities. (VI.3.8, 19–23)

A few lines later Plotinus describes the “so-called substance” of each sensible thing as a mixture (*migma*) of these qualities (lines 25–27), and—as J. M. Rist has pointed out—this term calls to mind the Stoic notion of total mixture (*krasis*). Rist maintains that Plotinus probably uses ‘mixture’ here “because ‘collection’ might be held to imply that the particulars were in some way physically divisible or reducible to their qualitative parts—which would be absurd.”<sup>11</sup> While this is a reasonable interpretation, what is most striking about this passage in the context of our discussion is that Plotinus uses a notion of mixture both in physical description of the sensible world (where the term used is ‘*krasis*’) and in metaphysical analysis of the substances that make up the sensible world (where the term used is ‘*migma*’).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in both cases the mixture at issue is a mixture of sensible qualities, which qualities are inherently incorporeal. What we see here, then, is that Plotinian physics shares with Plotinian metaphysical analysis of the sensible world a key concept—that of mixture—and it is by no means inconceivable that dialectic has borrowed the concept from Stoic physics. Later in the treatise on the genera of the sensible world, Plotinus again has recourse to the concept of mixture in his discussion of integration and disintegration as species of motion in chapter 25. Here he refers to the coming into being of new unities in the sensible world by means of *synknesis*, *mixis*, and *krasis* at lines 9–12, and later he sketches a rather Anaxagorean analysis of sensible alteration in general in terms of integration and disintegration (understood along the suggested lines of mixture)<sup>13</sup> and illustrates this with the example of the mixing (*mignuein*) of wine and water to produce something different

from either of its constituents (VI.3.25, 24–29). What makes this sort of analysis dialectical (as opposed to physical) would seem to be the level of its generality more than anything else. An account of sensible change in general as a mixing and remixing of sensible qualities is compatible with almost any more particular description of the actual sorts of sensible changes (or quality mixtures) which are found to occur; in contrast, the Plotinian claim that total mixture is possible in the case of certain mixtures of qualities and impossible in the case of other mixtures of qualities (once this claim is made suitably specific, along the lines sketched in II.7.2.29–42) clearly dictates precise features of detailed descriptions of sensible things and processes.

Thus, our discussion of 'On Total Mixture' yields two results of importance to the understanding of Plotinian physics. First, while physics may issue in descriptions of the sensible world which are relatively independent of the ultimate metaphysical explanations of this world, the practice of physics may legitimately borrow premises from dialectic in order to justify or even to derive its descriptions. While Plotinus' practice in II.7 in no way suggests that such borrowing would be a necessary feature of physical argument, the alleged independence of physics from dialectic remains rather unclear. Second, the still puzzling difference between dialectic and physics seems (at least in the case of the contrasting uses of the concept of mixture) to come down ultimately to a difference in the degree of generality or universality of the claims of the respective disciplines, with dialectic offering exceedingly general characterizations of conceptual and ontological relations which find concrete and more specific exemplification in the propositions of physics. This analysis finds some confirmation in the treatise, 'On Dialectic,' where after making the rough distinction between dialectic and physics which we discussed in section 1 of this essay, Plotinus goes on to distinguish dialectic from moral philosophy, as well as to distinguish practical wisdom from the other virtues, primarily in terms of degree of generality, emphasizing for example that practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) is more concerned with the universal than are the other virtues (I.3.6, 5–14). The immediate proximity of this analysis to the distinction between dialectic and physics at least suggests that degree of generality may be relevant to the earlier distinction as well. With these issues in mind, let us turn to another example of Plotinian physics.

### 3. The Composition of the Stars

The treatise, 'On Heaven' (II.1), written apparently in the same period as 'On Total Mixture' (in Porphyry's chronological ordering of Plotinus' treatises), is devoted to a defense of the Platonic doctrine of the incorruptibility of the heavens against the objections of Stoics and Stoicizing Platonists. As Bréhier has shown,<sup>2</sup> the treatise falls into two fairly distinct parts: Chapters 1–5 defend the general position, insisting that the heaven as a whole and all its parts are equally incorruptible, everlasting and immutable, and attempt to show how such a view is compatible both with much of Aristotelian doctrine and with the *Timaeus*, as well as with certain tenets of common sense; chapters 6–8 strengthen this position by developing an interpretation of the *Timaeus* which shows that the heavenly bodies are not made up of any mixture of the terrestrial (or sublunary) elements, but are composed of a pure variety of fire, thus undermining any argument for the corruptibility of the heavens by appeal to the instability of the elements (and also undermining the curious Stoic notion that the heavenly bodies need nourishment). This discussion of the composition of the stars is forced upon Plotinus by his earlier denial of Aristotle's doctrine of the quintessence (II.1.2, 12–16). It is with the second part of the treatise that we shall be concerned here, because it is in chapters 6 and 7 particularly that an unambiguously physical doctrine is defended. The claim that the heavenly bodies are made of a pure variety of fire is surely a clear case of a description of the sensible world, and it is thus a particularly striking feature of Plotinus' argument for this claim that it proceeds in large part by way of textual exegesis, with the *Timaeus* as the text at issue.

Two passages from the *Timaeus* set the argument in motion in chapter 6: At 31b4–8 Plato maintains that the universe must be made up of fire (on the grounds that it is a visible thing, and nothing is visible without fire) and of earth (on the grounds that it is a solid thing, and nothing is solid without earth); at 40a2–3 Plato suggests that the bodies of the gods—i.e. the stars—must be made primarily of fire, given their brilliant sensible appearance (see II.1.6, 2–12). The apparently clear view developed here is, however, complicated by a third passage—*Timaeus* 31b8–32c4—where Plato, arguing that two distinct things can only be unified by a third, claims that air and water provide the necessary intermediates for the proportionate uniting of fire and earth. This would appear to require that the heavenly bodies—like all other bodies in the sensible world—be made of some ratio of all four elements.

Now, while such a view seems to be perfectly consistent with the passages from the *Timaeus* at issue here, Plotinus is uneasy with it, in part for apparently empirical reasons—it certainly appears that water and earth can be mixed together, for example, without the presence of fire or air (II.1.6, 14–17)—and in part because it seems to compromise the very identity of the elements. Indeed, the remaining portion of chapter 6 brings up a series of arguments—arguments of a curiously hybrid character, making conceptual points on the basis of empirical observation—each of which is meant to cast doubt on the (again Anaxagorean) claim that “no element would ever have its own essential nature by itself, but all are mixed and take their names from the dominant element in each” (II.1.6, 22–24).<sup>21</sup> A representative example of these arguments is that concerned with the essential presence of water in earth:

They say that earth cannot have concrete existence without moisture; the moisture of water is earth's adhesive. But even if we grant that this is so, it is absurd to say that each element is a separate something and not give it any concrete existence but only an existence along with the others, without anything being separate. How could there be a nature and substantial reality of earth if there is no particle of earth which is earth unless water is present in it to stick it together? What could the water stick if there was no bulk of earth at all which it could join to another contiguous particle? And if there is any bulk of absolute earth at all, then earth can exist by nature without water; and if it is not so, there will be nothing to be stuck together by the water. (II.1.6, 24–35)

We see Plotinus here moving rapidly from what seems to be a conceptual point about the need for the terms of a relation to have some existence separate from that relation to a series of rather oddly materialistic claims about the need for ‘natures’ and ‘substantial realities’ (the Aristotelian term *to ti ên einai* is used at lines 29–30) to be exemplified in a relatively pure form in the sensible world. Curiously enough, both the conceptual point and these materialistic claims are at odds with Plotinus’ assertions in the treatise ‘Against the Gnostics,’ that the coming-to-be of the sensible world does not proceed one element at a time (beginning with fire, according to certain Gnostics) and that this coming-to-be follows a sort of mathematical blueprint or outline which already contains all the elements in their mutual relations (II.9.12, 12–23 & II.9.17, 4–10). Thus, it comes as no surprise that Plotinus eventually grants the claim that at least many sensible things (those “on earth”) are composed of all the elements (II.1.6, 54–60); indeed, in the treatise on the genera of Being, he even grants the

truth of the *Epinomis* principle of naming by predominance (VI.3.9, 15–18). What he is not willing to grant is that these claims hold true of the celestial bodies, and his apparent argument for this restriction is simply that “to lift up earth into heaven is against nature and opposed to her laws” (II.1.6, 56–57).

In chapter 7, Plotinus’ doubts about the omni-elemental composition of sensible things find a deeper analysis in his reinterpretation of *Timaeus* 31b4–8, where Plato appears to maintain that the stars must be made up of both fire and earth. Here he draws a distinction between the nature or substance of an element and certain qualities that belong to that element, suggesting that it is these latter qualities that may mix together to make sensible things appear to be constituted by all the elements. At lines 10–19 he writes:

Earth is mingled with the upper fire, not in the constitution of the stars but because, since they are both in the universal order, fire gains something from earth as earth does from fire and each element from each of the others; not in the sense that the element which gains something is composed of both, itself and that of which it has a share; but, through the community of the universe, while remaining itself it takes, not the actual other element but something which belongs to it, not air, for instance, but the yielding softness of air, and earth the brightness of fire: the mixture gives all qualities and consequently produces the compound thing, not supplying earth only and the nature of fire but this solidity and density of earth.

Given this distinction, Plotinus seems to believe that he can maintain that the pure fire of the stars need not be mixed with earth itself in order to share in earth’s quality of solidity, and this neatly solves the problem of *Timaeus* 31b4–8. Thus, he concludes (and the rest of the treatise pursues the implications of this conclusion) that the stars are composed of this pure variety of fire, without any admixture of other elements (or even of other species of fire).<sup>22</sup>

I have quoted extensively from Plotinus’ argument in chapter 7 so that the striking language of the passage may be apparent. From the mingling (*memichthai*) of earth and fire Plotinus moves on to the mixture (*mixis*) which bestows all qualities, and the link between these two sorts of mixing appears to be the community (*koinōnia*) of the universe as an ordered system (*kosmos*). The language of Stoicism is pervasive here in the reference to mixture and in the suggestion of the doctrine of cosmic sympathy; at the same time, the language of Plotinus’ analysis of sensible substances as conglomerations or mixtures of sensible qualities is recalled.

Here, however, and in contrast to other discussions, Plotinus suggests that there is a legitimate distinction to be made between sensible elements and their qualities, which in turn suggests that the elements—which surely are examples of sensible substances—cannot simply be groupings of sensible qualities. The attempt to make a sharp distinction between, for example, earth and its solidity threatens the analysis of cases of total mixture in II.7 (where, it will be remembered, Plotinus identifies water with its wetness: see II.7.2, 15). The key to the resolution of this problem would seem to lie in Plotinus' endorsement of the Aristotelian distinction between qualities and essence in his account of the sensible world (VI.3.16, 1–5) and in his tendency to conflate the notion of sensible essence with the notion of the intelligible *logos* which comes to be present in matter (for a striking example of this, see II.6.2, 6–34). This would allow him to maintain that the stars are essentially composed solely of fire—implicitly making reference to the *logos* of fire manifested in the bodies of the stars—while granting that they possess incidentally such earthy qualities as solidity—here referring to the mixture of sensible qualities which is, strictly speaking, the sensible substance. Such an analysis would leave Plotinus denying the Aristotelian identity of substance and essence (at least for sensible things), but this is not at all unreasonable for a serious Platonist who would maintain that the real essences of sensible things are to be found outside the sensible world in the intelligible world of forms.\*

Looking back over the argument of II.1.6 & 7, we can see that Plotinus has once again had recourse to the dialectical analysis of the sensible world in order to establish a proposition descriptive of that world, in this case the proposition that the stars' bodies are composed solely of a pure species of fire and not of a mixture of all the elements. The dialectical results employed here are in fact two: First, he endorses the analysis of sensible substances as mixtures of qualities (which analysis had paved the way for his views on the possibility of total mixture); second, he introduces the distinction between the essence and the (nonessential, incidental) qualities of sensible substances. Both of these points are clearly dialectical in their origins—having to do with those most general characterizations of reality which are the special province of dialectic, as described at I.3.4, 1–9—and in themselves seem compatible with a variety of (physical) descriptions of the sensible world. However, in the course of his exegesis of *Timaeus* 31b4–8, Plotinus manages to use these dialectical results to lend support for a claim about the composition of the stars which clearly is a matter of physical description. It should be noted that chapters 6 and 7 of 'On Heaven' in no way constitute a proof of or

even an argument for Plotinus' physical description; at best, the chapters shows that such a description is both coherent and compatible with Plato's text. This is in clear contrast to Plotinus' procedure in 'On Total Mixture,' where the physical claims about the possibility of total mixture were quite clearly defended by an argument making explicit use of dialectical results. Our study of II.1 also suggests that we were on the right track at the end of section 2 of this essay in suggesting that dialectic is to be distinguished from physics (at least partially) by reference to the greater generality or universality of its claims. Here, we see that dialectic yields the distinction between essence and qualities, while allowing an elaboration of sensible substance in terms of mixtures of qualities, but it is left for physics to offer the highly specific claim that the bodies of the stars are composed of fire alone.

#### 4. Tentative Conclusions

In the preceding pages I have attempted to uncover the nature of Plotinian physics in part by considering the implications of Plotinus' Neoplatonism in general (in section 1) and in larger part by considering two specific cases of his actual practice of developing and defending what are clearly propositions descriptive of the physical world (in sections 2 and 3). Several things have emerged from the discussion. (1) There does seem to be room within Plotinus' conception of philosophy for a (perhaps relatively unimportant) discipline of describing the sensible world, a discipline which would in effect find its ultimate justification in providing the data to be explained metaphysically by appeal to the intelligible world of forms. (2) Plotinus at times develops the claims of such a descriptive physics by appeal to empirical observation: In 'On Total Mixture,' the observation of water soaking through papyrus was suggested by the Stoic doctrine under review in the treatise, but what Plotinus emphasizes is the apparent empirical support for the doctrine. (3) Plotinus at times finds his physical doctrine in the texts of earlier thinkers, most notably in the *Timaeus*, and even when he cannot quite find the doctrine he wants (as in 'On Heaven') he is concerned to show how the doctrine is at least consistent with the claims of Plato. (4) In the arguments in support of his physical claims, Plotinus is willing to countenance the borrowing of indispensable premises from dialectic: In II.7, for example, the defense of the possibility of total mixture is dependent upon the metaphysical analysis of sensible things as collections—in fact, mixtures—of sensible qualities.

Here we find that an empirically plausible view is made compelling by means of metaphysical analysis. (5) Plotinus' attempts to derive physical doctrines from other texts—what might be called *exegetical physics*—at times make use of distinctions or analyses which are properly dialectical in their origins: In II.1 we find that he makes use of both the mixture analysis of sensible substance and the Aristotelian distinction between essence and quality not so as to prove that the stars are composed solely of fire but to show how such a physical claim could be consistent with Plato's text in the *Timaeus*.

Each of these five points helps to clarify Plotinus' remarks in 'On Dialectic' about the relation between dialectic and natural philosophy, and I believe that our discussion at least allows us to rule out one plausible analysis of the practice of Plotinian physics. Bréhier, for one, argues that the method of Plotinus' physics is "always the same," something that we have seen is quite clearly not the case, based on our study of II.7 and II.1. He goes on to explain the character of this method:

It is a method of conversion which consists in excluding from matter and bodies all positive reality that one might be tempted to attribute to them, and in ascribing it to an action from above....[Physical explanation] consists in first stripping matter and then bodies of all positive realities which experience reveals to us as existing in them, inasmuch as, at each level, these realities are traces of the Soul. One will be a good natural philosopher to the extent that one knows how to convert the sensible world into spirit....<sup>7</sup>

While it is clear that Plotinus will insist that appeals to soul and the forms are necessary for the ultimate explanation of things and events in the sensible world, our study of the actual practice of his physics shows that there is a properly physical describing of the sensible world which can proceed without any overt such appeals to soul or the intelligible. Indeed, the metaphysical claims that play such an important role in the treatises we have been considering concern precisely the analysis of sensible substances taken in themselves (and not in their relation to the intelligible). Moreover, it is simply not the case that Plotinus attempts to eliminate empirical observation and its results from his physical descriptions of the sensible world, as Bréhier suggests. He uses dialectic to reinterpret or to reanalyze the results of observation, but he does not substitute metaphysical analysis for empirical description.

Nevertheless, it does appear that Plotinus' willingness to allow physics to borrow from dialectic raises some problems for the interpretation of Plotinian physics that may prove quite difficult to resolve.

In the passage quoted earlier from chapter 7 of 'On Heaven,' we saw that Plotinus maintains that each of the elements possesses the qualities of the other elements, and he attributes this to the community (*koinōnia*) of the universe, which is in turn apparently described as a mixture (*mixis*) (lines 10–19). One plausible interpretation of this admittedly obscure passage would be that the community of the universe is in fact the total mixture of all things in all things; corresponding to the Stoic doctrine of cosmic sympathy that Plotinus attributes to the fact that the universe is a single living organism,<sup>8</sup> this theory of community would provide an analysis of the unity of the world's body in terms of the omnipresence of all sensible things in all sensible things. The principle that 'all things are in all things' has a long history, beginning as early as Anaxagoras<sup>9</sup> and continuing through the later Neoplatonists (where it provides among other things a crucial premise in the analysis of the functioning of magic).<sup>10</sup> What is striking here is that the logic of Plotinus' position in II.1.7 appears to force him into accepting this principle at a very general level as describing the relation of the elements to one another,<sup>11</sup> and there is no clear reason why the principle could not and should not be extended to cover the relation of all sensible substances to one another. However, if the principle is so extended, it appears to run into conflict with Plotinus' treatment of total mixture in II.7. As we saw in section 2, Plotinus argues at some length that total mixture (of which 'all things are in all things' would be the extreme case) is possible in certain mixtures of sensible qualities; however, he also clearly indicates that certain qualities (apparently constituting density) may not allow of such total mixture. The suggested reading of II.1.7 dictates that total mixture must, on the contrary, be characteristic of the entire sensible world, and this is difficult to reconcile with Plotinus' earlier willingness to grant that not all qualities completely intermix.

One way out of this puzzle would be to insist that the principle that 'all things are in all things' commits Plotinus to a general acceptance of total mixture at the level of a dialectical analysis of sensible things but not at the level of physical description. This, of course, would serve to confuse further the still problematic distinction between dialectic and physics, although perhaps the distinction could be salvaged once again by appeal to varying degrees of generality. However, such an analysis would still require the Plotinian physicist to explain how it is that not all sensible qualities appear to mix totally in the sensible world (it being understood that they are all *really* mixed totally, when considered dialectically). Part of the difficulty here is that physics and dialectic seem to be competing with one another in describing the sensible world, the greater generality of

dialectic nevertheless dictating rather specific physical claims; and it is not immediately clear how the Plotinian is to show that sensible qualities can both be and not be mixed totally at the same time.

In the final analysis, the difficulties and obscurities of Plotinian physics may simply be the inevitable consequences of a general philosophical *Weltanschauung* which stresses the comparative unimportance and even moral danger of preoccupation with the sensible world. Indeed, in his dialectical examination of the genera of the sensible world (VI.3), Plotinus often emphasizes the possibility that there are competing views of more-or-less equal plausibility, although he usually does attempt to resolve the lingering uncertainty by arguing for one analysis rather than for another. At the end of the treatise, arguing about the role of stability (*stasis*) as a possible genus of sensible things, Plotinus finally betrays a certain impatience with his discussion: "But about these questions let it be decided in whatever way seems best to each individual" (VI.3.27, 44). If the dialectical analysis of the sensible world's genera is thus relatively unimportant to Plotinus, it would come as no surprise to see him dismiss worries about the proper (physical) description of the sensible world. In his discussion of matter's impassibility in III.6, he in fact comes very close to this, suggesting that the presence of form in matter may be described almost any way one likes—since matter (i.e. Plato's receptacle) is utterly without form—and quoting Democritus' strikingly relativistic saying, "Color by convention and other things by convention,"<sup>1</sup> as illustrative of this point (III.6.12, 19–24). What these passages suggest is that it may be asking too much of Plotinus to expect a firm, clear, and consistent account of the sensible world to be found in the *Enneads*. Nevertheless, I have tried to show that there a number of hints in Plotinus' own analyses of physical issues as to how the project of the physical description of the sensible world might be carried out along Plotinian lines. That there remain unresolved problems in working out the details of the Plotinian conception of physics as a branch of philosophy distinct from dialectic will not, I hope, discourage further examination of these issues.

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#### NOTES

1. All references to Plotinus are to the critical edition of Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzler (Paris and Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1951–1973). All translations from *Enneads* I–III are essentially those of A. H. Armstrong in *Plotinus*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966–1988). All other translations are those of the author.

2. For Porphyry's descriptions of these treatises, see his *Vita Plotini* 24, 37–39, 59–60, & 25, 1–11.
3. For a recent example, see John P. Anton, "Plotinus' Approach to Categorical Theory" in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. R. Baine Harris, (Norfolk, VA: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), 89 & 94–95.
4. The major exception to this is Émile Bréhier, whose explicit treatment of Plotinian physics is discussed below.
5. On this dimension of Plotinus' Neoplatonism, see my "Omnipresence, Participation, and Eidetic Causation in Plotinus" in *The Structure of Being: A Neoplatonic Approach*, ed. R. Baine Harris, (Norfolk, VA: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1982), 90–103.
6. Such a claim may be presupposed by Plotinus himself at VI.3.10, 7–20.
7. On the role of the soul in the structuring and maintenance of the sensible world, see IV.3, 9–16, III.2 & 3 & II.3, 16 & 17, as well as such curious shorter passages as II.2.1, 37–39 & II.1.3, 13–23.
8. Compare Plato's rather different emphasis at *Timaeus* 59c5–d3.
9. Compare Émile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, translated by Joseph Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 171.
10. Bréhier, *Philosophy of Plotinus*, 175.
11. Rist points out that even as early as Zeno the doctrine is held to be true of both substances and qualities; see J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 158.
12. S. Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 13.
13. See his "Notice" to II.7 in Plotin, *Ennéades*, texte établi et traduit par Émile Bréhier (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1924–1938), II:89–90[sic].
14. A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus: An Analytical and Historical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 37. Reprinted, Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1967.
15. H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 3 and 10.
16. Bréhier is clear about this implication of the treatise; see his "Notice" to II.7 and *Philosophy of Plotinus*, 177. This also appears to be Rist's view; see J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 173.
17. Armstrong notes that there thus appears to be some connection between the doctrine of total mixture and Plotinus' doctrine of omnipresence: see *Architecture*, 37. Compare Blumenthal's very different reading of IV.7: see *Plotinus' Psychology*, 10.
18. Plotinus' metaphysical analysis of sensible particulars has been carefully discussed by A. C. Lloyd, "Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic," *Phronesis* I (1955–1956), 158–159; Rist, *Plotinus*, 107–108; and Kevin

- Corrigan, "The Internal Dimensions of the Sensible Object in the Thought of Plotinus and Aristotle," *Dionysius* V (1981), 98–99. All of these stress the essentially Platonic origins of this analysis.
19. Rist, *Plotinus*, 108.
  20. Sambursky points out that *krasis* refers to the mixture of liquids, while *mixis* refers to the mixture of non-liquids in Stoic texts, but I see no reason to think Plotinus' use of 'migma' in VI.3.8 is influenced by this distinction: see Sambursky, *Physics*, 12–13.
  21. The roots of this analysis of sensible change are to be found in Anaxagoras, fragment B 17.
  22. See his "Notice" to II.1, *Ennéades*, II:3–5.
  23. For Anaxagoras' version of this position, see Aristotle, *Physics* 187a23–b7.
  24. Armstrong emphasizes that this view is developed in the pseudo-Platonic *Epinomis* 981c8–982a3: see his translation, II:24, n1. It is worth noting that this view is itself again perfectly compatible with the passages from the *Timaeus* at issue here.
  25. This pure species of fire which "is other than flame and only gently warm" (Cf. *Timaeus* 58c5–7) is nevertheless a body and is not to be confused with incorporeal light: see II.1.7, 25–30.
  26. Aristotle's complex analysis of the relation between substance and essence is the central topic of *Metaphysics* Z, especially chapters 4 & 6.
  27. Bréhier, *Philosophy of Plotinus*, 175 & 178.
  28. On Plotinus' account of cosmic sympathy, see R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), 70–72.
  29. See the passage from the *Physics* (187a23–67) cited above.
  30. On the principle in general, see Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 107 and 123–124, and Dodds' note in Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, revised text with translation by E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 254.
  31. Dodds notes that Proclus accepts the principle at precisely this level in his *Timaeus* commentary, II.26, 23–27, 7: see *Elements*, 254.
  32. See Democritus, fragments H 9 & B 125.

## PLOTINUS AND BIOLOGY

Anthony Preus

A reader might find the subject of this essay somewhat surprising, since Plotinus is not generally credited with having contributed to biology. In fact, Plotinus says very little about what we would call the science of biology. It would have been surprising had he done so, for the earlier Neoplatonists as a group developed a philosophical position which seems in its broad outlines independent of biological investigations. The classic interpretation of Plotinus and his associates would lead us to believe that few philosophies have turned so completely away from empirical studies of nature; Plotinus especially is taken to have pursued the formal, eschewing the multiplicities of the material world. However, in this essay I argue that Plotinus did, after all, make some very important contributions to the development of later biological thought, and in particular to the development of biological concepts which broke away from the dominance of Aristotelianism. The common notion of historians of biology is that Aristotle's philosophy, augmented by the Alexandrians and Galen, reigned supreme throughout antiquity and the middle ages, and continued to dominate Renaissance and early modern biological thought. In this connection, such people as Harvey and Caisalpino come to mind. My objective in this essay is to indicate one way in which that Aristotelian synthesis was seriously modified by a philosophical position which opened the way to a quite different way of understanding the living world.

A survey of the literature on Neoplatonism supports the impression that biological concerns are not easy to tease out of their texts. Many pages have been written about the theory of the soul in Plotinus and others of his school, but until Emilsson published *Plotinus on Sense-Perception* (1988) only a few pages dealt with the physiological consequences of the embodiment of soul, and still today very few pages indeed discuss the non-psychological parts of biological theory in Plotinus.<sup>1</sup> H. J. Blumenthal explains that for Plotinus, all soul is derived from Nous (Intellect), and from the World Soul, and consequently the particulars of embodiment are not so worthy of investigation as the bare

fact of embodiment; the entelechy theory of the soul, so fruitful for Aristotle's biological investigations, is explicitly rejected.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps there exists somewhere an extensive study of Plotinus and biology, but I have found only one short essay and a part of a book chapter explicitly with any early Neoplatonist's approaches to biology as such: The article is Pierre-Maxime Schuhl, 'Plotin et la Biologie' (CNRS, 1971), 110; and it is barely half a page long. Schuhl's summary is suggestive, however; my comments owe much to his. The section in a book is Grigorios Kostaras, *Der Begriff des Lebens bei Plotin* (1969), 27–37. I found Kostaras' book only after I had completed this essay, but was pleased to find that he anticipated several of my interpretations.

There are several reasons for thinking that Plotinus *ought* to have something to say about biology. In the first place, Plotinus, like all Neoplatonists, takes Plato's *Timaeus* almost as a sacred text—and the last forty pages of that dialogue are full of suggestions for directions which could be taken in biological investigation. Those suggestions were not lost on the *middle* Platonists. Secondly, the interests and pursuits of several of the middle Platonists would lead us to expect comments on biology from the Neoplatonists as well. It is well-known that Galen thought of himself as a Platonist, and that he tried to synthesize the *Timaeus* with the Hippocratic medical tradition in the *Doctrines of Plato and Hippocrates* and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> But it is also true that several of the essays in Plutarch's *Moralia* rely upon biological knowledge, and show an interest in the character, if not the structure or physiology, of various species of animals; such essays include 'On the Cleverness of Animals,' 'Beasts are Rational,' 'The Eating of Flesh,' and 'The Causes of Natural Phenomena,' which last also shows some interest in plants, along with much else. Another middle Platonist treatise, the *Epitome of Plato's Doctrines* attributed to Alcinous in the manuscripts and to Albinus by most modern scholars, synthesizes Platonic and Aristotelian attitudes toward biological investigation, finding particularly significant the physiological implications of the embodiment of the soul. Chapters 17–22 explicitly summarize the later pages of the *Timaeus*. Another middle Platonist who interested himself in biomedical matters was Apuleius; probably some degree of interest was rather widespread in that period among those who considered themselves Platonists.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless none of the earlier Neoplatonists (Plotinus, Proclus, Porphyry, Iamblichus) seems to have paid significant attention to the later pages of the *Timaeus*. I have found nothing in Plotinus which refers unambiguously to those pages, and that impression is supported by

Charrie's reading (*op. cit.*) The great commentary by Proclus stops well before the biological material begins, and my survey of the other early Neoplatonists has turned up only vague secondhand echoes of Plato's biomedical interests. Of course *later* Neoplatonists knew the entire *Timaeus* quite well, and some of them were guided in their reading by Galen and other middle Platonists.

P.-M. Schuhl calls attention to several more sophisticated reasons for thinking that Plotinus and the Neoplatonists should be interested in biology. His brief summary claims that no one has studied the specifically biological aspects of the thought of Plotinus, but that several passages of the *Enneads* touch upon biological issues of interest even today. He calls attention to Plotinus' rejection of mechanistic explanations (III.8), although there is much more to be said about that tractate; he notices also some comments in passing (II.4.8 on specific size, IV.4.7 on the continuity of biological movement) which he thinks bring Plotinus close to the biologically motivated thought of Andre Meyer and Henri Bergson; finally, he notes the chapter (IV.9.6) in which Plotinus most clearly tries to explain how *logoi* are present in the seed in sexual generation. The references to Meyer and Bergson might seem hyperbolic, but they are not; Bergson lectured in 1897–1898 on *Enneads* IV, which includes the passage Schuhl compares with Bergson's thought.<sup>5</sup>

### 1. *Enneads* II.4.8.

Looking more closely at the passages cited by Schuhl, we find that one of them states the notoriously Neoplatonistic doctrine of the negativity of matter:

All that ever appears upon matter is brought in by the *eidos* [form]: the *eidos* alone possesses: to it belongs the magnitude and all else that goes with the *logos* or follows upon it. Quantity is given with the *eidos* in all the particular genera—man, bird, and particular kind of bird. The imaging of quantity upon matter by an outside power is not more surprising than the imaging of quality; quality is no doubt a *logos*, but quantity also is, being measure and number.<sup>6</sup>

If explanation is so completely dependent upon form, we may readily suppose that Plotinus does not have available the sorts of explanations of defects, errors and oddities to which Aristotle has recourse; even Plato



appeals to irregularities of matter more readily than can Plotinus. For Aristotle, inadequacies of material entities may be ascribed to the failure of form to master the matter; for Plotinus there is ultimately nothing to be mastered, so must not the inadequacies be ascribed to the form or to the *logos* itself? Probably there is a Plotinian answer, but it must be different from the Aristotelian. Another point worth noticing in this passage is that Plotinus does not distinguish between '*eidos*' and '*genos*' in such a way that we would be tempted to translate those words into the modern concepts of 'species' and 'genus'; in this passage *eidos* and *logos* are adventitious forms, while the word '*genos*' refers indiscriminately to two classificatory levels of animal. This is not actually as much a break with the Aristotelian tradition as one might think, since it is not correct to translate even Aristotle's uses of the words '*eidos*' and '*genos*' as 'species' and 'genus.'

## 2. *Enneads* V.9.6

Plotinus comments several times on how form is present in sexual generation. It seems to me that he was worried about how his general philosophical position could handle the ontological problems involved in sexual generation; at least he suggests ways in which defects and errors may occur, even if he does not answer questions we may have about the ontological status of new members of a species. A positive theory of the transmission of form might be derived from V.9.6, where the containment of powers in seeds (*spermata*) is used as an image to explain how the mind includes the contents of intellection:

The entire mind includes as a genus includes species and a whole includes parts. The powers of seeds provide an image of what I'm saying; for all are undistinguished in the whole, and the *logoi* are as it were in one center; there is one *logos* of the eye, another of the hands, known to be other from the visible thing generated from it. The powers in the seeds are each of them one whole *logos* with the parts wrapped up in it; the bodily has a matter, for example some fluid, but the *eidos* itself is the whole and a *logos*, being the same in *eidos* as the soul in the generator, which is an image (*indalma*) of another better soul. Some call this power in the seeds 'nature,' which was driven thence from those prior to it, as light from fire, and it turns and enforms the matter, not relying on the help of those much—discussed mechanisms (levers), but by imparting the *logoi*. (V.9.6: my translation)

In the context, Plotinus is trying to explain how the mind contains many different sorts of knowledge simultaneously, how the mind can, as Aristotle put it, think all things. The 'seed image' argues that the mind thinks all things in a way analogous to that in which semen contains all the parts of the body which it generates. Bréhier, in his note to this passage, supposes that Plotinus commits himself here to preformationism, the theory that the parts are already present in the semen determinately. It seems to me more likely that Plotinus is aiming at something closer to what we would call an epigenetic position, not so very dissimilar from Aristotle's, since what is present in the seed is not the parts, but the *dynamis* (powers) for bringing the parts into being. Plotinus actually paraphrases some of Aristotle's account of sexual generation—his use of the word '*emperiēchomenon*' ('wrapped up in') echoes Aristotle's use of the word '*emperilambamenon*' at *De Generatione Animalium* II.3, 736b36. Further, Plotinus says explicitly that the *logos* as *dynamis* enforms nothing more than something fluid when it is in the seed, that it is the power to bring about the development of the organ, and not the organ itself. Plotinus, as I understand this passage, accepts the Aristotelian doctrine that there are active powers present in the seed, and calls them *logoi* as does Aristotle himself. But Plotinus cannot have the entire Aristotelian theory of sexual generation, since he does not have the passive powers, the capacities of materials to be acted upon by those active powers or *logoi*.

We may discern some other unAristotelian ideas in the passage. The notion that the generative soul is an image of another better soul would be puzzling from an Aristotelian point of view—plants have only generative soul, yet are perfect of their kind. Certainly mind and entities that have minds are regarded by Aristotle as much as by the Neoplatonist as the 'best' entities that exist, but the structuring of the continuum between the various psychic functions by means of the image-relation (*mimēsis*) would be alien to Aristotle, and not readily explicable in terms of the physiological structure of plants in comparison with animals and human beings.

Another peculiarly Plotinian touch is the suggestion that the nature present in generation is caused to act by something else not present, "as light from fire"—in other words, as an action ('emanation'?) from some higher power. For Aristotle, the nature present in generation is a tool, (*organon*), of the male parent, and even perhaps of the male line going back to some distant progenitor, but the moving cause in generation is not traced to a transcendent origin. To be sure, Aristotle does say in

*Metaphysics* A.5 that the causes of a person are the elements, the father, and "besides these the sun and its oblique course" (1071b15) but that means little more than that the climate, the existence of a biosphere, and perhaps a propitious season of the month or year, are necessary conditions for individual acts of procreation.

Plotinus seems to take a slap at Aristotle's account of sexual generation when he attacks the appeal to mechanisms, since it is at just this point in his argument that Aristotle appeals to the marvelous automatic puppets (*De Generatione Animalium* II.5, 741b8). It is as if Plotinus were saying that his version of the theory of sexual generation is more purely Aristotelian, more purely antireductionist, because it explicitly refuses *any* appeal to mechanical explanation, relying *only* on the image of the propagation of the *logos*. The refusal to accept Aristotle's mechanical analogy is symptomatic of what I take to be the central problem with Plotinus' implicit explanation of sexual generation: For Aristotle, the mechanical image is introduced to show how active and passive powers can work upon each other in series, until a final result is obtained. For Aristotle, the seed has the power of making, and in a way becoming, the source (*archē*) of the body, which in turn makes the rest of the body. The male and female seeds have in them all the parts *as powers*, but not as actualities; Plotinus appears to agree. But Plotinus does not seem willing to distinguish active and passive powers, and thus cannot easily explain why the actual presence of the *logos* does not also mean the actual presence of the part. It is because of this embarrassment, as I would call it, that Bréhier concludes that Plotinus must have meant to assert preformationism in this passage. It makes more sense to put Plotinus in the epigenetic camp; after all, the mind is not simultaneously conscious of all the thoughts of which it can be conscious. Thoughts which are not currently conscious are present in the mind as *logoi*, as *dynamēis* (*passive powers*), according to this passage. A preformationist image of thought would have all thoughts actually present consciously simultaneously—that certainly won't work!

Although we may discern some distinctions between Aristotle's theory of sexual generation and its altered form in Plotinus, ultimately neither version is especially convincing. Neither Aristotle nor Plotinus imagines anything remotely ancestral to our DNA and so on, nor do they observe the patterns of heredity which we associate with Gregor Mendel. Both Aristotle and Plotinus knew that information, *logoi*, has to be transferred from parent to child through the generative materials, but neither had any real notion of how. The theory expressed in this passage

of Plotinus is largely derivative from Aristotle, but it is less successful, vaguer, less argued, less developed.

### 3. *Enneads* III.8

In III.8, Plotinus takes up the theme of sexual generation again, and clarifies the place of generation in his system. In this important tractate Plotinus argues that generation is the actualization of *theoria* (contemplation). He admits the paradoxical look of that notion, since the first word of the tractate is 'playing' (*paizontes*); but he becomes quite serious in his defense of the thesis that all nature both stems from *theoria* and aims in all natural processes toward an actualization of *theoria*. This thesis he believes to be true of the universe as a whole, of humankind including children, of animals, plants, and the changing character of the inanimate world.

The interpretation of *all* natural change as an urge toward *theoria* is, I suppose, a radical interpretation or application of Plato's doctrine of *eros* (love).<sup>7</sup> Plato had suggested the possibility of the general application of the doctrine of *eros*, first in the *Symposium*; one might want to take it as Plato's solution of the problem of explaining goal-directed change. But we may remember that Aristotle, in *Metaphysics* A, charges that Plato *fails* to explain goal-directed change, despite the well-known criticism which Socrates in the *Phaedo* directs at Anaxagoras for the same failure. In the *Timaeus*, the most 'scientific' of the dialogues, Plato uses neither *eros* nor *theoria* in biological explanation. It was left to Plotinus, among others, to make the connection.

Rejecting all mechanistic explanations of life, Plotinus asks rhetorically: "What jostling, what levers could bring about all those colors and forms?" (III.8.2) The reference to jostling (*ἄθισμος*) sounds very like an explicit rejection of Epicurean atomism. As if the rejection of mechanistic explanations were to imply idealism directly, Plotinus immediately claims that nature is an 'unmoved form,' a *logos* which produces another *logos* in animals and plants (III.8.2). Since nature itself is not identical to the *logos* which is in the entity produced, and it is not an action, it must be a *logos* which is simultaneously a *theoria* (III.8.3); this means to me that Plotinus believes that a *logos* which is separable from a particular physical entity, yet identifiable in some sense as the *logos* of that entity, must be 'theoretical' in this special sense. The idea that nature is an unmoved mover in that to which it belongs primarily is

not, of course, an unAristotelian notion, but the separation of the nature from the generated entity *is* unAristotelian, and makes a purely biological analysis impossible. Indeed, it tends toward a personification of nature, and Plotinus succumbs to that temptation with poetic enthusiasm.

Personified nature is represented as telling us that the generated entity is the *theama*—the visually produced presentation—and the *theorema*—the object of contemplation and so on—of nature; that nature is generated by the *theoria* of higher entities, and reflects that activity in natural generation. Plotinus has nature saying (I paraphrase): "As the lines drawn by the geometer are the *theoria* of the geometer, so when I theorize, the limits of body come into being, as if from me" (III.8.4). This literally 'theoretical' understanding of the activity of nature is applied directly to sexual generation at the end of III.8.7:

When an animal generates, the *logoi* within move, and this is an activity of *theoria*, and a labor of giving birth to many forms and many objects of *theoria*, to fill everything with *logoi* and thus always to theorize; for to make something is to make an *eidos*, but this is to fill things with *theoria*.

This is obviously meant to answer the question, why do kinds of animals continue to generate offspring? It might help to compare the answer given by Aristotle, that sexual generation occurs so that each *eidos* may be everlasting in the way open to it; Aristotle does not argue, at least not in *De Generatione Animalium* II.1 where this question is discussed, for a principle of plenitude. He seems to imagine that all the natural kinds which exist today have always existed and always will exist, if only contingently. Plotinus, in contrast, tells us that the *logoi* actualize themselves in the generation of forms, and the actualization of a plenitude of forms is the theoretical activity of nature.

It would be difficult, but not impossible, to develop an Aristotelian theory of the evolution of different kinds of animals. An Aristotelian *genos* is a *lineage*, a hereditary line, and an Aristotelian *eidos* is an appearance as much as anything else; nothing prevents individuals in a *genos* from being different in *eidos* from other individuals of that *genos*, so a failure of the male seed to dominate, or the recalcitrance of the material presented, could well result in an offspring which was not of the same *eidos* as its parents (Cf. *De Generatione Animalium* IV.4, 770b3ff). The most likely case is that the offspring is *defective* in some way, but what if the offspring were in some respect 'better' than its parents? What would Aristotle say then? Certainly *not* that the improvement could be

ascribed to *chance*; that is one consequence of the criticism which he levels (more than once) at Empedocles, for example (Cf. *De Partibus Animalium* I.1, 640a19ff). If there *were* an improvement from parent to offspring, the cause would have to be found in something superior to the parent, implicitly containing the form which appears explicitly in the offspring. Aristotle never suggests that he considers the possibility of such an explanation within a biological realm, to the best of my knowledge, but he does suggest a comparable explanation of the 'evolution' of the *genos* 'tragedy' in the first part of his *Poetics*. There, obviously the higher source of form is human experience, which tragedy partly imitates.

In contrast, it would be a delightful exercise to construct a Plotinian evolutionary theory. Genetic lines could be seen as generating variations in much the same way as a rational being generates hypotheses; stable species might be compared to theories with a high degree of confirmation, the forces which limit the reproduction of some of the variant forms might be compared to the rebuttals and refutations to which hypotheses are subject. If Plotinus had been acquainted with paleontology, how pleased he could have been with *that* spectacle of concrete dialectic!

But Plotinus has a difficult time explaining those productions which seem best understood as failures of generative processes; in III.8.7 his reasoning is brief and unsatisfactory:

Errors occur in things generated and things done when the theorizing gets carried away from the object of theory. The bad workman is the one who makes ugly forms. Lovers see and strive toward the form.

The explanation may be traced to Plato's *Republic* (X, 601c–602a: the maker has only belief about how things should be made; the user knows) and to the charioteer of the *Phaedrus*, led astray by the mistaken theorizing of the ignoble horse (248b: feeding on the food of semblance). The trouble with this sort of explanation of biological 'error' is that it always places the blame on the formal, what Plotinus calls the theoretical, and thus on the active cause, and never on the matter. It would lead to some rather strange explanations of birth defects, as if they were always caused by defective genetic structure, and never by environmental or nutritional defects.

The extension of *theoria* throughout living processes is explained, to some degree, by a distinction made most clearly at III.8.8: all life is

thought (*noēsis*), but there are at least three levels of thought: vegetative thought, sensitive thought, and ultimately psychic thought. Probably we would not be wrong to add 'mineral' thought at one end of the scale, and 'divine' thought at the other. That is a direction of investigation taken up later by several philosophers, notably Leibniz.

A more clearly biological direction is taken at III.8.10, where life is compared first to an inexhaustible spring, from which flows or emanates all things. More to our point, life is then compared to a tree:

The life of a great tree goes out to all parts, yet remains a source (*archē*) and is not dissipated in the whole as it rests in the roots. This source furnishes the whole life to the tree, but it remains itself, the source of the whole, and not many things.

This 'Yggdrasil' (so to speak) is for Plotinus an image of the unity of life, the unity of the soul, the unity of the universe. This tree motif also appears in III.3.7, where (I am paraphrasing now) the source (*archē*) is said to be all in one, immobile as a root; the parts which grow out from it carry an image of the source; the parts closest to the roots contain the others, which going out split ultimately into twigs, leaves, and fruit. Some parts live for a season and die; others persist, generating again new leaves and fruits, and having in them the seeds of the prior parts, as if they wanted to become in their turn small plants. Although each growth seems to come only from the neighboring branch, in fact it comes from the source, which in turn depends upon another source. According to Bréhier, this image had already appeared in Philo of Alexandria's *De Plantatione* #4ff; certainly it expresses a view of life which draws upon biological understanding, and in turn contributes to a biological interpretation of the world. The concept of the universe as one living organism, familiar from the beginning of the *Timaeus* (and Cf. *Ennead* III.2.7), requires an examination of the characteristics of organisms as its basis, and as a part of its heuristic program."

#### 4. Excursus

Nevertheless, Plotinus did not actually *do* any biology, and he took little interest in the biological investigations carried out by his predecessors, even by his Platonistic predecessors. Despite that abstention, his contributions to the history of biological thought are neither negative nor neutral. The philosophy of Plotinus is a most

energetic defense of the thesis that we should investigate form rather than matter, principles of unity rather than principles of disunity; that one should expect to find universal laws of nature, and unified sources of life, rather than special principles, separate causes, accidents, multiplicities.

No one among the immediate followers of Plotinus was prepared to follow this vision as a scientific goal, and probably nothing Plotinus said or did would encourage scientific investigation as a way of life, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that the indirect influence of Plotinus has been one of the many sources of the modern synthetic theory of living nature. We have indicated some of the ways in which his thought leads toward an evolutionary theory, a theory perhaps more like that of Lamarck than that of Darwin, but closer to modern viewpoints than the apparent immutability characteristic of Aristotle's biology. In addition, Plotinus contributed heavily to the sources of the vitalistic theory of life, and vitalism has certainly played a large role in the turn toward biological science, and away from the radical reductionism of modern physics, during the past hundred years or so. Sometimes the role of vitalism has been more dialectical than constitutive, but it continues to be an important theoretical force. Schuhl's reference to Bergson is not amiss, not only in that Bergson read and lectured upon Plotinus, but also because Bergson and others philosophically akin to him have forced twentieth-century biologists to define clearly the ways in which living beings are based upon nonliving structures, and in what ways living beings differ from nonliving systems.

Nothing could contribute more, in the long run, to biological thought than a thoroughgoing love of the natural world, in all its complexities and flourishing variations. I believe that Plotinus laid the groundwork for that love, without doing much about it himself; of his immediate successors, only Porphyry pursues any biological interest so far as I can see, and that seems to be limited to his spirited defense of vegetarianism in the *On Abstinence from Animal Food*.<sup>1</sup> But later Neoplatonists *did* take up the challenge; more about that on another occasion.

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#### NOTES

1. This paper was originally presented at a conference on "Neoplatonism and Islamic Philosophy" sponsored by the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science, and the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy. I thank several of the participants, especially John P. Anton, for their

- helpful comments. Other parts of the same larger study are my "Animal and Human Souls in the Peripatetic School," *Skepsis* 1 (1909), 67-99, and "Biological Theory in Porphyry's *de Abstinencia*," *Ancient Philosophy* III (1983), 149-159.
2. Literature research has included *L'annè philologique* and bibliographies in: A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1967); H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971), referred to as "Blumenthal" below; Emile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, translated by J. Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); J.-M. Charrue, *Plotin Lecteur de Platon* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1978); CNRS (P. Hodot), *Le Neoplatonisme* (Paris: CNRS, 1971); Eyjdfur K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Sense-Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Grigorios Kostaras, Ph., *Der Begriff des Lebens bei Plotin* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1969); John, Rist, *Eros and Psyche* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964); John, Rist, *Plotinus, The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); A. Smith, *Porphyry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974); R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972); T. Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901; reprinted 1928).
  3. Blumenthal, 12 (commenting on *Ennead* IV.17.8@11<sup>5</sup>).
  4. P. DeLacy, "Galen's Platonism," *American Journal of Philology* 93 (1972), 27-39; W. D. Smith, *The Hippocratic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979), 86 ff.
  5. Albinus, *Epitome*, ed. Pierre Louis (Paris: Budè, 1945); John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977), for Apuleius see 315 ff.
  6. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 173-4; I have not seen R. M. Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin* (Paris, 1959), cited in Charrue's bibliography.
  7. 11.4.8. The translation is radically reworked from Stephen MacKenna's translation of the *Enneads*, (London: Faber, 1956, revised edition). Since I find that MacKenna's English does not correspond with my understanding of the Greek text, subsequent translations owe more to the French of Bréhier, *Plotin: Ennéades* (Paris: Belles Lettres Budè, 1960-1963).
  8. See also *De Generatione Animalium* IV.10 and Peck's "Appendix A" in the Loeb edition of *GA*.
  9. See J. M. Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, for an exploration of the development of this theme.

10. It is this aspect of Plotinus' 'biological' comments which most interests G. P. Kostaras, as well it might, since it is fundamental for Plotinus' concept of Life. Kostaras talks of Plotinus describing the "biologischen Bewegung der Seele nach dem Sinnlichen," and in his summary, at the end of his book, notes that for Plotinus, "Das Leben ist ein Baum, ein Organismus, d.h. ein einheitliches Ganzes von angeborenen Kräften, Tendenzen und Spannungen. Dieser Lebensbaum hat die Fähigkeit sich zu entwickeln und zugleich die Möglichkeit sich zu teilen, ohne seine eigene Form zu verlieren und ohne dass seine Einheit zerstückelt wird" (135).
11. See my discussion of this treatise in *Ancient Philosophy* 1983. The research upon which this paper depends has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the SUNY Foundation.

# PLOTINUS AGAINST ARISTOTLE'S ESSENTIALISM

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Aristotle's criticisms of Platonism frequently appear in a simple logical form: if P, then Q. But Q is absurd, therefore P is false. For example, if Forms exist, then the reality (*ousia*) of something will be separate from that thing.<sup>1</sup> But it is absurd that the reality of, say, a man should be separate from the man. Therefore, Forms do not exist. Why exactly is it absurd for the reality to be separate? Aristotle is not very explicit on this point. The central books of the *Metaphysics*, however, make it sufficiently clear that since reality (*ousia*) accounts for the being and unity of a substance, to separate it is to make unaccountable a substance's identity.<sup>2</sup> This claim might be formulated as follows. For any sensible substance S, there must be a true statement of the form 'S is P' where 'is P' indicates some sort of identity with a natural kind P. If the reality of S were separate, then there would be no such true statement. This I take it is just an explication of what it means to claim that a substance is a particular or 'this-such' (*tode ti*). Thus, for Aristotle, if the Form of Man is separate from Socrates, then it is false that Socrates is really, that is, essentially, a man. Perhaps he could turn into a cat. But this is thought to be absurd because Socrates' identity is determined by his being a man.

Some modern defenders of Plato are inclined to respond to Aristotle's attacks by denying that Plato's doctrines entail the absurdities indicated by Aristotle. For example, Harold Cherniss seems to argue that the separation of Forms does not entail that 'the reality of a particular' is thus separated from it. For the Forms are not intended to account for this reality.<sup>3</sup> So presumably, for Cherniss it does not follow that Socrates cannot have an essential identity as a man if the Form of Man is separate from him. Socrates is a man because he participates in the Form of Man. I think that Cherniss in his zeal to show Aristotle's lack of understanding of Plato's position has in fact himself misunderstood Aristotle's point. I take it that the point is that if the Form of Man is separate, then there is no way that the *identity* of Socrates is fixed by that Form. It is, thinks Aristotle, absurd

that the reality of a man should be separate from him because the reality of a man is just his identity. His identity is determined by the essence predicated of him.

In contrast to Cherniss's continual refusal to accept the implications that Aristotle draws from his interpretation of Plato's claims, Plotinus embraces the other extreme. He simply accepts it that if Aristotle says that if Plato says P, then Q follows, then this is indeed so. It is evident, though, that he does not accept Aristotle's interpretations and their implications because he believes that Platonism is absurd. Rather, his approach is to embrace the putative absurdity and to show that in fact it is true largely because the (Aristotelian) alternative is itself absurd. I think that in the above example Plotinus understands Aristotle's point better than Cherniss does. If the Form of Man is separate from Socrates, then the identity of Socrates is not determined by that Form. 'Socrates is a man' is not in any sense an identity statement. Hence, essentialism and the substance metaphysics from which it is inseparable, are false. Plotinus, unlike Cherniss I suspect, thinks that this is what Plato holds and that Plato is right to do so. In the remainder of this paper I will try to show why Plotinus thinks that Aristotle's criticism of Plato turns upon itself and serves to vindicate a rejection of essentialism in the sensible world.

Plotinus' analysis of 'Socrates is a man' is definitely peculiar.

For when I predicate 'man' of Socrates, I mean it not in the sense in which the wood is white, but in the sense that the white thing is white; for in saying that Socrates is a man, I am saying that a particular man is man, predicating man of the man in Socrates; but this is the same as calling Socrates Socrates, and again as predicating 'living being' of this rational living being.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that in this passage Plotinus is interpreting what Aristotle would call the 'said of relation' between secondary and primary substance (*ousia*) and which is expressed grammatically as 'Socrates is a man' in terms of Platonic participation. For Aristotle, 'Socrates is a man' is based on an analysis which yields the priority of the individual over the form along with their real distinction. For Plotinus, 'Socrates is a man' means that Socrates partakes of the Form of Man. But what is Socrates? A man, of course. There does, however, seem to be a good deal of difference between saying that this man partakes of the Form of Man and that Socrates is Socrates, counter to what Plotinus says. For in the former case there is a distinction between the instance of the Form and the Form: in the latter case there is an identity statement. Or perhaps it is not quite so straightforward. It is true that Plotinus wishes to insist on a distinction

between an instance of a Form and the Form itself. But he also must insist on their identity, otherwise instantiation would be entirely opaque.<sup>5</sup> So, the man that Socrates is, is and is not identical with the Form of Man.<sup>6</sup>

I think we can better understand these obscure claims as intended to be directly inferable from a denial of what Aristotle says. Assume that the essence of man is the Form of Man and that this is separate. Nevertheless, Socrates is a man because there is humanity in him just as Helen is beautiful because there is beauty in her and a building is tall because there is tallness in it. Why cannot we say then that if humanity is in Socrates, then the essence of humanity is in Socrates and that therefore Socrates is essentially a man? The simple response to this question is that the essence of humanity is identical with the Form of Man and this is separate. But why we might ask is it not enough that there be humanity in Socrates in order for us to say that the essence of humanity is in him and that he is essentially a man? It is not enough because unless Socrates is identical with that essence, its presence does not make Socrates essentially a man anymore than, say, having the essence of baldness in him makes him essentially bald.

Then why not take the next obvious step and just say that Socrates *is* identical with his essence? From Plotinus' perspective, the answer to this question is that we must refrain from doing so because it is false, and furthermore, Aristotle himself must admit this. In chapter 6 of *Metaphysics Z* Aristotle raises the question of whether each thing and its essence (*to ti ên einai*) are the same or not. Answering this question, says Aristotle, is useful for the investigation of substance because each thing is thought to be nothing else than its own substance, and this substance is said to be to essence.<sup>7</sup> The answer given to the question at the end of the chapter is that "of things which are primary and are stated by themselves [*kath' auta legomenôn*], then, it is clear that each of them and its essence are one and the same."<sup>8</sup> But for us and no doubt for Plotinus the obvious puzzle is just what these things 'which are primary and are stated by themselves' are supposed to be. A passage a bit further on in chapter 11 supplies the answer: "And we have stated that in some cases the essence of a thing and the thing are the same, as in first substances; for example, curvature and its essence are the same, if curvature is a first substance. (By 'first substance' I mean one which is not stated as being in something else in an underlying subject as in matter.) But things which exist as matter, or which include matter, are not the same as their essence; nor are those things which are one by accident, such as Socrates and the musical, since these are the same by accident."<sup>9</sup> It seems plain that 'first substance'

is equivalent to 'things which are primary and are stated by themselves' and equally clear that Aristotle excludes sensible composites from this class. The reason given is that the composite is in an underlying subject, its matter. Thus, in the next book Aristotle says: "For a soul and the essence of a soul are the same, but the essence of a man is not the same as the man, unless also the soul is called 'a man'; accordingly, in some cases a thing and its essence are the same, in others this is not so."<sup>10</sup>

According to Aristotle's own analysis, a sensible substance does not seem to be identical with its essence because that substance includes matter. Therefore, the putative absurdity of separating the essence of humanity from Socrates cannot consist in the non-identity of Socrates and his essence. This much Aristotle admits. How then can Aristotle infer from the Platonic proposition that Socrates is a man because there is humanity in him to the anti-Platonic conclusion that Socrates is essentially a man? For it is evident that this is just the inference that Plotinus refuses to make. The answer is roughly that the sensible composite, Socrates, is qualifiedly identical with his essence according to the order of act and potency. This man and 'what it is to be a man' are thus related.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that Plotinus' reasons for denying this claim are not based on his rejection of the basic distinction between act and potency. Quite the contrary. Plotinus makes abundant and fruitful use of the distinction when addressing numerous metaphysical and epistemological problems. Indeed, despite his rigorous negative theology, he will insist that the source (*archē*) of all, the One, is properly identified as perfect actuality (*energeia*).<sup>11</sup> So it is somewhat puzzling why Plotinus wants to maintain an extreme position that might reasonably be thought to be defeated by employing the distinction between act and potency.

Against Aristotle's assertion that 'man and what it is to be a man are not identical'. Plotinus says 'the Form of Man and man are identical,' holding that the 'what it is to be' of anything is in fact a Platonic Form.<sup>12</sup> Aristotle can say that 'Socrates is a man' is an identitive use of 'is' and not predicative without holding that 'man and what it is to be a man are identical' just because there is a real distinction *within* Socrates between the composite individual and the form of man.

Plotinus sees a contradiction latent in Aristotle's position. On the one hand, Aristotle wants to say that sensible composite is related to essence as act to potency. But Aristotle also want to hold that the sensible composite is *posterior* to the form because it is not perfectly actual.<sup>13</sup>

The crux of the dispute between Plotinus and Aristotle comes down to this. Grant that 'S is P' but that whatever is P's nature is not

unqualifiedly identical with S. It would seem that all anti-nominalists, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, *et al.* must grant this much. Let us grant further that form and actuality are identical.<sup>14</sup> Then, how is S related to that nature of P in terms of priority and posteriority in reality? For Plotinus, the correct answer is unavoidably Platonic. Somewhat less tendentially, the position which at once maintains that act is prior to potency, that form is act, and that the composite is posterior to form, cannot consistently also maintain that the composite is prior to the form which is not identical with it.

An Aristotelian will no doubt want to object that this argument depends on an equivocation. For the sense in which a sensible composite is prior in actuality to essence is different from the sense in which form is prior to sensible composite. The priority of form to sensible composite refers only to the priority of non-sensible form which is substance. A sensible form such as the form of man, which never exists separately, is always posterior in actuality to the composite. Form and essence are identical only in the former case, never in the latter. If the form of man could exist separately, then it would indeed be incoherent to hold that there is one actuality, this man, and another actuality, the separate form.

This objection, however, is circular. It depends on saying that the form of man does not exist separately because it is a sensible form. What is the proof of this? Just that man and 'what it is to be a man' are not identical. And this is so because the reality of man is the man and not 'what it is to be a man'. But this is precisely what Plotinus denies when he asserts that the true man is the Form of Man.<sup>15</sup> Plotinus does not deny that there is a distinction between the sensible form and the Platonic Form. Rather, he holds that the former is posterior to the latter. The instance of the Form is an image of it.<sup>16</sup> Let us consider both claims in turn.

Plotinus wants to hold that if a sensible form is posterior to a Platonic Form, then they cannot be related according to the order of act and potency.

For literary skill [*hō grammatikē*] is not posterior to the particular literary skill but rather it is because literary skill exists that that in you exists; since that in you is particular by being in you, but in itself is the same as the universal. And Socrates did not in his own person give being human to the non-human but humanity gave being human to Socrates: the particular human is so by participation in humanity. Since what could Socrates be except 'a man of a particular kind' and what could the 'of a particular kind' do towards being more of a substance?"



I believe the following argument underlines this passage. The relation between humanity, i.e., the Form of Man, and particular instances of this Form is a one-many relation. So too for the Form of Grammaticality or Literary Skill and its instances. In such a relation, the one is prior to the many, because it is the source (*archē*) of the many. And this priority is not that of potentiality to actuality. This is so because if a subject has a property that *could be* instantiated in another subject, the explanation of this is that they are instances of the same thing. But a potentiality as such does not explain anything because potentialities as such are not actual. No one would, say, accept the potentiality for death as an explanation of death or the potentiality for learning as an explanation for learning. These are at best conditions for their actualization. But the conditions are dependent on actualities. Thus, having the potentiality for death is a condition of an actual body.

To say that a Form is the source (*archē*) of its instances is in part to say that it is the explanation of instantiation or of identity in difference. If more than one thing has the same property, then the explanation of this must at least start with the existence of the property as distinct from the instances. It is of course not to the present point that a nominalist would deny the antecedent of this claim. Aristotle must allow that there is such a datum to be explained, but there is no question of a property serving an explanatory function by being potentially its instances. It is not even coherent to say that the explanation of Socrates possessing an instance of the Form of Man is the (his?) potentiality for being a man.

Recall that the question of the priority and posteriority of man and 'what it is to be a man' is occasioned by Aristotle's own conclusion that only in primary substance are they the same and that sensible substances are not primary. Aristotle thinks that it is absurd that man and 'what it is to be a man' should be the same because then 'what it is to be a man' will be a man. But this only follows if one *assumes* that 'man' must refer primarily to Socrates. Such an assumption is a stellar example of being misled by language. There is no substantial dispute between Aristotle and Plotinus regarding the possibility of designating a sensible particular such that no non-sensible particular can be named univocally with it. Let 'man' stand for 'image of the Form of Man' and 'what it is to be a man' stand for 'Form of Man'. Then Plotinus would agree that it is absurd that 'what it is to be a man' should be a man. The issue is not the irreducibility of instance and universal, but their relative priority. When Plotinus asserts that the true man is the Form of Man it is the issue of relative priority that he is addressing.

The priority of Form to instance is characterized by Plotinus in the much maligned language of imagery. Plotinus' position is that substance is said homonymously (*homonymōs*) of intelligible being and sensible bodies.<sup>14</sup> There are many passages in which Plotinus stresses the homonymy of the sensible world in general.<sup>15</sup> Aristotle clearly distinguishes between a term said homonymously of two things and a term that is relational (*pros hen*).<sup>16</sup> So, it would seem that Plotinus is denying a relational connection between the substance of the Forms and substance when said of sensibles. On the other hand, he also seems to connect them as 'prior' and 'posterior', which is not the way that things merely with a name in common are usually described.<sup>17</sup> This is in fact to be expected where sensibles are images of Forms. As we saw in the passage quoted above, an instance of a Form 'is the same as the universal', though 'posterior' to the Form. For example, a drawing of a house is, as image, posterior to the real house, though its proportions may be the same as those of the house. But its proportions are not equivocally those of the house; they are the same, though posterior. Another example would be a film which is homonymously that which it images, but which also contains synonymous images as well, such as the words spoken by the actors.

In general, synonymous images are univocally named with their models, even though they are posterior. In this matter, Plotinus is actually following Aristotle's principle. For in the *Metaphysics* Aristotle asserts, "of things to which the same predicate belongs [*hyparchei to synōnymon*] in the highest degree is that in virtue of which it belongs also to the others. For example, fire is the hottest of whatever is truly called 'hot', for fire is the cause of hotness in the others."<sup>18</sup> In the *Organon* there is a precise and consistent meaning for synonymy (*synōnymon*): when things have a name in common and also the definition corresponding to the name, they are synonymous.<sup>19</sup> Synonymy implies univocal predication. Thus, fire and water can be said to be hot univocally, even though fire is the cause of hotness in the water and so is prior. I have elsewhere argued for the Platonic nature of such a claim and Aristotle's reasons for ultimately abandoning it.<sup>20</sup> The point here is that a Platonist is committed to such priority and univocity for Forms and instances. The priority follows from the argument discussed above. The univocity follows from the kind of explanatory entity that a Form is. The Form of Humanity explains the identity in difference of many men in the sense that it is just what is identical in all the many.

This point is misunderstood by many, including many modern defenders of Plato, because it is thought that synonymy excludes

homonymy and hence the diminished reality of the sensible world. Thus, a false dichotomy is set up, one which perhaps leads Aristotle to suppose the obvious reasonableness of his own position and the absurdity of the Platonic alternative. If synonymy obtains between Form and instance, then priority of Form to instance is gainsaid. If homonymy obtains, then priority and posteriority can be claimed, but we are saddled with the quaint conceit that the real man is the Form of Man, not Socrates. We have, as Aristotle would put it, just copied the real world onto a notional world and arbitrarily transferred the appellation 'real' to the latter. But Aristotle himself testifies that priority and posteriority can coexist with synonymy, albeit his later conclusion that this is false for 'being'.

In effect, Plotinus wishes to hold that when there is priority and posteriority along with synonymy, as is the case with Forms and their instances, the priority and posteriority is to be analyzed as homonymy in being. The diminished reality of the sensible world, occasioned by the separation of Forms in the first place, is explicated as synonymy in nature and homonymy in being. Thus, there is humanity in Socrates, but this nature or form is present in a mode of being different from its primary mode. For one thing, the Form of Man is eternal, and the humanity in Socrates is temporalized. For another, the Form of Man is thoroughly transparent or intelligible, while the humanity in Socrates is infected with matter.

Perhaps the most illuminating and relevant example of homonymy combined with synonymy in representations is from Aristotle's realist epistemology. According to Aristotle's account, knowledge is the identification of knower with the form of a knowable object. The form in the intellect is synonymous with the form in that which is known, but cognitive being is homonymous with the being of the knowable. The concept of humanity is not a man. That is what homonymy indicates. But the form of humanity in the intellect really is that form. It is not an approximation or arbitrary symbol of it. That is what synonymy indicates. The real and the cognitional are ordered as prior to posterior.

Plotinus' point is that the Form of Man is related to the individual man analogous to the way the individual man is related to the form of man in the intellect. His reasons for holding against Aristotle that the being that is prior to cognitive being is itself posterior to a Form are twofold. The first reason is as we have seen that actual Forms are needed to explain the phenomenon of identity in difference. The second reason is Aristotle's own admission that the sensible composite is not substance in the primary sense. It is quite outside the scope of this paper to argue the case that

Aristotle's account of the relation of the absolutely prior unmoved mover to sensible substance is inadequate. It is appropriate to stress, however, that given Aristotle's hypothesis that being is substance, the posteriority of the sensible substance provides the groundwork for at least the homonymy in Plotinus' analysis.

From Plotinus' perspective, Aristotle has practically conceded the posteriority in being of the sensible composite. Furthermore, in the implication of his argument that primary being is to be identified with separate form, Aristotle has taken the next important step.<sup>2</sup> The last crucial concession that Aristotle refuses to make to the Platonic position is the recognition of the priority of separate form to the form of sensibles analogous to the priority of the form of sensibles to cognitive form. Aristotle seems to believe that the form of sensible composites, unlike the form that is primary being, could not exist separately. There is no reason actually given for this claim in the *Metaphysics* so far as I can tell. Perhaps his reason is that in a sensible composite there is one actuality, the composite itself. The form could not exist separately because for it to do so it would have to have its won actuality. But that would mean that in the sensible composite there are so to speak *two* actualities, that of the form and that of the composite. So, the unity of the sensible composite can only be preserved if the form is not an actuality apart from the composite.

Plotinus would find this line of reasoning unpersuasive for at least two reasons. First, the preservation of the unity of the sensible composite is only a desideratum if one is committed to holding that sensible being is primary being, as Plotinus and presumably Aristotle are not. By contrast, the unity that a dependent being has can be compromised. Second, Aristotle identifies form and actuality. It is unclear why this should be so for the separate form but not for the form of the sensible composite. If it is true for the latter as well, then there is no reason why that form cannot exist separately except that its actuality in the sensible composite would undermine its unity.

What Aristotle finds incomprehensible in the Platonic position and what Plotinus takes pains to defend is the claim that 'what it is to be P' and 'P' are the same. This might be understood to mean that either now there are two men or there are none, because the essence has been separated from what it is the essence of. But once homonymy is combined with synonymy, one is not obliged to say either that the Form of Man is a man or that Socrates is not a man because the essence of man is separate from him. He participates in the essence and so he is a man, but he is not identical with the essence.

Plotinus' alternative to essentialism is to say that the sensible composites is a 'conglomeration' (*symploresis*) of qualities and matter, or bodies.<sup>28</sup> The qualities are just the instances of Forms, or what Aristotle would call sensible forms. Since the only subject in these conglomerations is matter, Aristotle's claim that essence is what a thing is in virtue of itself is rejected.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Socrates is not essentially a man. He is the actual composite of qualities in matter. These qualities in matter, like the visible qualities 'tall' and 'white' are images of Forms. These images bear their names univocally with Forms. But their *logoi* necessarily include matter. Thus the tallness in Socrates is self-identically tallness, like the Form. But the tallness in Socrates is necessarily the particular tallness of a body. So, the composite Socrates, who is just these qualities in matter, is an homonymous image of the Form of Man, 'containing' a synonymous image, namely, an instance of the nature of man.

It might be objected, however, that if qualities A, B, and C together in matter represent the Form of Man, then the essence of man is in the individual man just if the essential qualities are present. For the presence of the essence is just the presence of the representation of the Form. But unless the essence identifies Socrates, then Socrates is not essentially a man any more than he is essentially any other quality that he may have. In one sense, Socrates is indeed identified by all his qualities. Plotinus is not denying this. But the essentialist needs a special identifying sense for the essential qualities. And so long as Socrates is not identified with these, he is no more essentially a man than his body is essentially seated at any one moment or essentially bearded. So, we have to say that Socrates is a man if there is manness in him, but he is not essentially a man.<sup>30</sup>

Should we then allow that Socrates could become, say, a sparrow? One might suppose judging from what Plotinus says about reincarnation that the answer is yes. I think that would be too hasty an answer. For the Socrates now at issue is the sensible composite and it is false that the sensible composite is reincarnated as anything. It is the soul of Socrates that may enter the body of another animal. This suggests that the identity of Socrates is not the identity of a sensible substance (*ousia*) but that of a soul which exists apart from the body. This of course is what Aristotle explicitly denies. The identity of the individual sensible composite, however, severed from essence, is not non-arbitrarily determinable.

The abandonment of Aristotelian sensible substance as determined by essence is complete in Plotinus' embrace of what Aristotle regards as an absurdity: that we make substances out of non-substances.<sup>31</sup> Plotinus here of course means putative sensible substances. They are constructed out of

qualities and matter. This apparently means both that we designate various 'conglomerations' as substance and that the elements of these conglomerations are matter and qualities. This naturally invites the question of whether matter then becomes substance, a result that Aristotle declares is impossible.<sup>32</sup> It does not become so for Plotinus any more than for Aristotle, because matter is not a 'this something'.<sup>33</sup> Its identity is not determined by essence.

Owing to the fact that qualities or instances of Forms are univocally bearers of the Forms' natures, pragmatic categorizations of sensible composites are possible.

But what species of it [sensible substance] should one posit, and how should one divide them? Now the whole must be classed as body, and of bodies some are matterish and some organic; the matterish are fire, earth, water, air; the organic the bodies of plants and animals, which have their differences according to their shapes [*morphas*]. Then one should take the species of earth and of the other elements, and in the case of organic bodies one should divide the plants, and the bodies of animals, according to their shapes; or by the fact that some are on and in the earth, and, element by element [one should class separately] the bodies in each; or [one could class them on the ground that] some are light, some are heavy, and some in between, and that some stand in the middle, some surround them above, and some are in between; and in each of these the bodies are already differentiated by their outlines, so as to be some of them bodies of celestial living beings and other appropriate to the other elements; or one should divide the four according to their species and afterwards proceed in another way to weave them together by blending their differences according to places and shapes and mixtures, classing them as fiery or earthly, called so according to the largest and predominant element [in the mixture].<sup>34</sup>

It is important to grasp what is and what is not being suggested here. Plotinus wants to maintain that, say, the Form of Man is present in the sensible composite that is called 'Socrates'. The Form of Man is eternally self-identical and distinct from the Form of Horse. But since so-called sensible substances are not identical with the natures of Forms, the classifications of these composites must occur through perception.<sup>35</sup> Knowing what the Form of Man is does not provide the criterion for classifying a conglomeration of qualities and matter. We can call one organic composite a man and one a horse owing to their shapes (a quality plus a mass of extended matter), but this does not imply that things with these shapes are essentially human or horse. It is appropriate in this context to recall Plato's argument that Forms are manifested in sensible instances

via material that can also instantiate opposite Forms. Thus in the first book of the *Republic* returning someone's possession can be an instance of justice, but it can also be an instance of injustice. And in the *Symposium*, Beauty can be manifested in a body, but bodily qualities are not essential to the manifestation of Beauty, for Beauty can be manifested in non-bodily souls.

A classification of conglomerates is a classification of homonymous images. Take a drawing of a conical shape. Is it a tepee or an ice-cream cone? The answer is purely contextual or pragmatic because what the drawing is of is not entailed by the shape. The conical shape, however, is or contains a synonymous image of the Form. The classification of homonymous images, like sensible composites, in terms of synonymous images, like the instance of Forms, is interdicted because sensible composites are bodies that contain matter. There is no more of a necessary connection between these two types of images than there is between the proportions of a drawing and the medium in which the drawing is rendered.

The statement 'Socrates is necessarily a man' can be understood in two ways. In one way, Socrates is necessarily a man because 'Socrates' stands for a man, as Plotinus says. So necessarily, this man (the sensible composite) is a man. But this *de dicto* necessity will of course not do as an interpretation of Aristotelian essentialism. In another way, Socrates is not necessarily a man because there is no necessary identity between the subject, matter, and the sensible qualities that together make up the conglomerate. The matter in this composite could have and might yet participate in the Form of something other than Man. Therefore, there is no *de re* necessity in the connection of subject and essence. For Plotinus, the common sense plausibility of Aristotle's position actually trades on the ambiguity of these two types of necessity.

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#### NOTES

1. Cf. *Metaphysics* I.9, 991b1–2.
2. Cf. *Metaphysics* 7.13, 1038b14–15 & 7.17, 1041b7–9.
3. Harold Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* (New York, 1962), 373. Cherniss states: "Now the 'reality of a particular' which is peculiar and cannot be separate is just what the particular is as *this* particular, i.e. The particularity itself. That, however, is not the sense in which the immaterial essence is the 'reality of a particular,' i.e. the cause of the

- particular's being..."
4. VI.3.5, 18–23. Cf. *Metaphysics* 7.17, 1041a17–22, which is perhaps the passage Plotinus has in mind. There Aristotle tries to show that to inquire into why something is itself is to inquire into nothing.
  5. The instrumental causality of Forms, as in Helen is beautiful because of Beauty is only explained by such identity as is the parallel self-identity of Form and instance in 'neither is Tallness short nor is the tallness in us short'. Cf. VI.5.8, 22–6: *ei gar mē en tē hylē estin hoion pyros hē idea...auto dē pyr tē hylē ouk eggenomenon auto morphēn pyros kata pasan tēn pyrōtheisan hylēn parexetai*.
  6. One may perhaps compare Magritte's famous hyper-real painting of a pipe with the legend 'this is not a pipe'. Or we might think of a drawn circle which is and is not a circle. If we think it is wrong to call the drawn circle a circle, is it equally wrong to call it a square?
  7. *Metaphysics* 7.6, 1031a15–18.
  8. *Metaphysics* 7.6, 1032a5–6.
  9. *Metaphysics* 7.11, 1037a33–b7.
  10. *Metaphysics* 8.3, 1043b2–4. Cf. A. Code, "On the Origins of Some Aristotelian Theses About Predication," *How Things Are: Studies in Predication and the History of Philosophy and Science*, ed. J. Bogen and J. E. McGuire (Dordrecht, 1985), 102: "...a particular like Socrates is not, according to the hylomorphic analysis of *Metaphysics* Z, a primary substance, and he is not identical with his essence."
  11. VI.8.20, 9–15. Cf. V.4.2, 35; VI.8.7, 46–48; VI.8.12, 22–23; VI.8.13, 6–8; VI.8.16, 15, 25, 30, 31, 35.
  12. VI.3.4, 17: *to de tou anthrōpou eidos kai ho anthrōpos tauton*. I take it that this is a direct denial of Aristotle's conclusion at *Metaphysics* 8.3, 1043b3: *anthrōpōi de kai anthrōpos ou tauton, ei mē kai hē psychē anthrōpos lechthēsetai*. Note that Plotinus embraces the counterfactual condition. In VI.3.5, 12–14, Plotinus adds: *hōste mē to eidos en tē hylē einai hōs en hypokeimenō mē ton anthrōpon en tē Sōkratēi meros onta Sōkratous*—where the last clause must be intended to distinguish the sensible composite which is Socrates from his form.
  13. *Metaphysics* 7.3, 1029a5–7 & 30–31.
  14. Aristotle, at *Metaphysics* 9.8, 1050b2–4, affirms both the identity of *eidos* and *energeia* and the priority of *energeia* to *dynamis* in *ousia*.
  15. Cf. VI.3.15, 24–38.
  16. V.9.5, 17–19: *to gar en autois eldos epi hylē eidōlon ontos, pan te eidos en allō par' allo eis ekeino erchetai kai estin eikōn ekeinou*.
  17. VI.3.9, 23–30.
  18. VI.3.2, 1–4.
  19. VI.3.1, 21; III.7.11, 27–29. Cf. I.2.2; II.3.18, 17; II.8.5, 6; II.9.8, 19–26; III.2.1, 25; III.2.14, 26; III.6.13; III.8.11, 29; IV.4.36, 7ff; V.3.7, 33; V.3.16, 8ff; V.8.12, 11ff; V.9.13, 10; VI.2.7, 11; VI.2.22, 38; VI.3.1, 20–21; VI.3.8,

- 32; VI.6.15, 4; VI.7.6, 6; VI.7.7, 21; VI.7.12, 2.  
 20. *Metaphysics* 4.2, 1003a33–34 & 7.4, 1030b1.  
 21. VI.1.1, 25–28.  
 22. *Metaphysics* 2.1, 993b23–26.  
 23. Cf. *Categories* 1.1a6, 5.3b7; *Topics* 4.3, 123a28–29; *Topics* 6.10, 148a24–25; *Topics* 7.4, 154a16–18.  
 24. Cf. “Causality, Univocity, and First Philosophy in *Metaphysics* ii,” *Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1991), 331–349.  
 25. For form as *tode ti* see *Metaphysics* 5.7, 1017b24–26; 8.1, 1042a29; 9.7, 1049a35; 12.3, 1070a9–15. For form as *ousia* see 7.7, 1032b1–2; 11.1037a27–30, b3–4; 8.3, 1043b2–4.  
 26. VI.3.8, 20. Cf. VI.3.15, 24–38; II.7.3, 4–5 where *sōma* is defined as ‘qualities with matter’. At VI.3.10, 12–17, we read: *epei gar peri aisthēōs ousias ho logos, ouk atopos an eiē, diaphorais ei lambanoito pais pros tēn aisthēsin. Oude gar on haplōs all’ aisthēon on to holon touto. Epei tēn dokousan hypostasias autēs [sensible ousia] synodon tōn pros aisthēsin ephamen einai kai hēpistis tou einai para tēs aisthēseōs autois.*  
 27. *Metaphysics* 7.4, 1029b13–14.  
 28. Cf. Code, *art.civ.*, 103: “The separability of Forms goes hand in hand with the idea that Forms are participated in *accidentally*. If the Form of Man is separable, then particular men are accidentally, not essentially, men. Aristotle finds this unacceptable.” But once Aristotle concedes that a sensible substance is not unqualifiedly identical with its essence, he no longer has the tools to defend the alternative.  
 29. VI.3.8, 30–31: *kai ou dyscheranteon, ei tēn ousian tēn aisthēōn ex ouk ousiōn poioumen.* Cf. II.6.1, 48–52. Cf. *Physics* 1.6, 189a33: *pōs oun ek mē ousiōn ousia an eiē.* Cf. *Metaphysics* 14.1, 1087a29–b4. The absurdity is said to arise from the fact that substances do not have contraries, but if a substance is in a subject, that out of which it is made, it will have a contrary. Further, if non-substances are prior, what is the subject they are in?  
 30. *Metaphysics* 7.3, 1029a26–27.  
 31. Cf. II.6.2, 14; VI.1.2, 11–12.  
 32. VI.3.9, 2–18. Cf. VI.3.17, 4; VI.3.18, 9–11.  
 33. VI.3.8, 2–3. Cf. VI.3.10, 12–14: *epei gar peri aisthēōs ousias ho logos, ouk atopos an eiē, diaphorais ei lambanoito tais pros tēn aisthēsin.*  
 34. I take it that at VI.3.1, 13–16, when Plotinus proposes to order sensibles in terms of species and genera, he is doing this solely on pragmatic grounds.

## EXPLANATION AND NATURE IN *ENNEADS* VI.7.1–15

Sara L. Rappe

*Ennead* VI.7, ‘How the Multitude of Forms Came into Being and On the Good,’ opens with a criticism of Plato’s account of Demiurgic creation in the *Timaeus*. Under direct fire is language that describes the Craftsman as calculating, planning, or entertaining reasons for his act of production.<sup>1</sup> What is the philosophical context for this exegesis? Our treatise’s structure is guided by a series of six *aporiae*, each concerned with a Platonic text frequently adverted to within the tradition.<sup>2</sup> Yet the same denial of discursive thought to God is found in several other treatises, viz. ‘On Providence,’ ‘On Problems Concerning the Soul,’ and in the *Großschrift*,<sup>3</sup> all of which are non-Platonic contexts.

Because of the very similar language employed in a parallel passage in II.9, ‘Against the Gnostics,’ most scholars agree that our passage alludes to the gnostic interpretation of Plato’s Demiurge as the planning mind (*nous dianoumenos*)<sup>4</sup> and to the Gnostic idea that Thought, unaccountably hypostatized, planned and carried out the work of creation—*albeit* faultily. More recent scholarship views the denial of discursive thought to the Demiurge as an attack upon the Stoic view of deity which identified human reason and divine intelligence, and holds that in this Plotinus was informed by earlier Academic criticisms of such anthropomorphism. Here III.2 is adduced.<sup>5</sup> To be sure, there continued a longstanding debate in the annals of Ancient Greek philosophy over the question as to whether God thinks the way we think, and Aristotle’s negative answer was definitive for the later Platonists.<sup>6</sup> However, in VI.7 itself, within the chapters that immediately follow the criticism of *Timaeus*, Plotinus refers neither to the Gnostics nor to the Stoics, but rather to Aristotelian teleological explanations of the kind adumbrated at *Physics* II, 199b34, and *Partibus animalium* 1641b25, as well as to the Aristotelian account of definition in *Metaphysics* Z.3.

In this paper I want to discuss the doctrine in terms of Plotinus’ own philosophical methodology,<sup>7</sup> since source criticism has yielded such a

plethora of interpretations. Within our treatise, this doctrine is tied to a discussion of the limits of philosophical explanation: Even though we may *describe* it by means of discursive thought, there is no such thing as a unique explanation for the structure of the world. A good statement of this position may be found in V.8, 'On the Intelligible Beauty.' The explanations by which we humans try to account for world, using discursive thought as we must, are always underdetermined by the available evidence:

You can explain the reason why the earth is in the middle and round, but it is not because you can do this that things are so There; they were not planned like this because it was *necessary* for them to be like this, but because all things There are disposed as they are, the things here are well disposed, as if the conclusion was there before the syllogism which showed the cause, and the conclusion did not follow from the premises. (V.8.7: Armstrong translation)

The word that Armstrong translates as 'reason' is *aitia*. In Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* it bears the meaning of 'explanation.' According to Aristotle, "if we come to know the 'reason,' we know both the reason for a given state of affairs and that, on account of the reason, it is not possible for the state of affairs to be otherwise. Such knowledge is said to constitute knowledge in its most proper sense. But things could not be more different with Plotinus. For him, the condition *sine qua non* for knowledge is the unity of the knower and the object of knowledge, a condition which discursive thought of any kind necessarily precludes."

Our blue-prints for the world don't correspond to the architect's, because there simply is no discursive thought in intellect. Plotinus offers this critique in keeping with the caveat that Plato himself issues concerning the limits of philosophical explanation:

One should distinguish between an image and its model in terms of the accounts given of them, since the account must resemble its subject matter. The account which describes something stable and evident to the intellect is itself reliable—insofar as words can be not subject to refutation, one must add this qualification—but the account of that which imitates the latter is analogously [deficient].'

By invoking the Platonic being/becoming dichotomy, Plotinus underscores the radical deficiencies of our cognitive powers when we try to look at phenomena apart from their source in the intelligible. Perhaps

the modern concept of *metaphysical realism* can help us to get a handle on just where the difficulty lies with such explanations:

What makes the metaphysical realist a metaphysical realist is his belief that there is somewhere 'one true theory'. In company with a correspondence theory of truth, this belief in one true theory requires a ready-made world: the world itself has to have a 'built-in' structure since otherwise theories with different structures might correctly 'copy' the world (from different perspectives) and truth would lose its absolute (non-perspectival) character."

If by 'world' we mean, in keeping with the Platonic distinction just cited, the totality of phenomenal appearances as opposed to intelligible objects, then this can hardly be something which comes to us 'ready-made'.<sup>14</sup> Now causal relations are a prime instance of what is meant by a 'ready-made structure'. And Plotinus declines to discuss the structure of nature in terms of standard causal explanations, including teleology, one-directional causal connection, essentialism, and metaphysical dualism, all of which are characterized in various ways by the limitations of discursive thought. When Plotinus refuses to subscribe to such explanations, it is because he denies that discursive thought can ever be absolute.

To put it another way, Plotinus' degrees of reality theory has consequences for the way in which causation is understood within different levels of reality. His understanding of the relationship that exists between effect and cause is expressed differently for the physical order than for the intelligible, and again for the first hypostasis. Rather than either the metaphysical realism defined above or the perspectivism that it seeks to combat, Plotinus' view of causation as it relates to the multiple levels of Being could better be described as non-dualism. He sees all of the multiple states of existence as belonging to an integral but unique principle (the One).

We turn now to the critique of causal explanations offered in treatise VI.7. His arguments seem to cut in two directions. Plotinus corrects Platonic teleology with a healthy dose of what is ostensibly Aristotelian essentialism. But this essentialism is in turn modified beyond anything recognizably Aristotelian when Plotinus insists upon the unity of substance (*ousia*) with the second hypostasis, Intellect (*nous*). Aristotle's theory of explanation according to which 'what a thing is' (*to ti ên einai*) is identical to the reason for its existence (*to dia ti*)<sup>15</sup> shows up in chapter 2 as a corrective to the idea that the teleological disposition of the world is imposed from outside.<sup>16</sup> In fact there really is no teleological disposition

of the universe, since the world is well-disposed simply because it subsists together with its intelligible cause." The identity of substance with its essence means for Plotinus that substances, once we understand them in terms of their essence, are self-explanatory, and do not have any external reasons for their being. At the same time, this Aristotelian account of substance (*ousia*) in terms of essence is stretched beyond its original metaphysical framework, because each of these same substances or forms is the whole of the second hypostasis, Intellect. So we cannot explain the world by appealing to the discrete essences of hylomorphic compounds anymore than we can be appealing to the demiurgic imitation of the Forms. It is not the case that the intelligible is only to be discovered in the sensible particular, or that the sensible particular is the teleological goal of the intelligible. Rather, we must go to the intelligible and see how the particular looks from that point of view.

Plotinus replaces or enhances these causal theories with the concept of *coordinate arising*. This doctrine presents a two-fold analysis of the phenomenal world, both parts of which are intended to break up any belief in an independently real or self-subsistent external world. The first theme is a description of the world as an *interdependent nexus of beings*. Under this description, the familiar Stoic idea of *cosmic harmony*<sup>2</sup> receives a more profound philosophical interpretation as a system of relationships which can be described as mutually reflective points of view. The second theme treats the multiplicity of individuals more on the analogy of thoughts arising in the mind, each expressing the nature of the thinker who has them.

Under the first theme, Plotinus uses the concept of *coordinate origination* in order to analyze individuals. Individuals are interrelated to each other with respect to their mutual subsistence within the world and with respect to the kinds of beings that they are. What it means to be an individual is to be an entity that is entirely relational, or to put it negatively, there is no what-it-is-to-be for an individual,<sup>3</sup> apart from the fact that it is interrelated to all other beings and that it represents this reciprocal origination from a certain point of view. Moreover, it is just this inherently relative nature which effectively blocks any adequate discursive account of the sensible world.

The second part of the analysis views individuation as a function of intellect together with soul, whose discursive thinking results in the differentiated world of discrete essences. Therefore Plotinus does not exactly revert to a Platonic model of formal causation, where the form is considered as an entirely separate entity which somehow causes the

particulars. Rather he reframes the whole image-archetype dynamic and emphasizes the nature of image as a function of the archetype.<sup>4</sup> Thus the separation of cause (form) and effect (particular) is subject to criticism, and the whole of the phenomenal world is examined as a function of the intelligible.<sup>5</sup>

### 1. Theories of Explanation in VI.7.1&2.

The treatise begins with an attempt to understand why the individual has been endowed with the faculties of sensation: "God or a god send souls into genesis, endowed with sense organs." But why was this provision made? Answer: for the sake of preservation, which is to be accomplished by the activities of pursuit and avoidance (of sense objects). Plotinus follows a strictly teleological model of explanation to what he considers an absurd conclusion:

God endowed living beings with sense organs out of foreknowledge, that this would tend toward their bodily preservation. Since perception is a function of the soul and not the body, souls must possess some faculty for sense perception even before entering the world of genesis. Otherwise they would lack psychic faculties which constitute part of the definition of soul. Hence the conclusion must be that souls are endowed with the sense capacities by nature. The purely noetic or intellectual condition of the soul would therefore be unnatural for the soul. So the nature of the soul is to exist in a state wherein the sense faculties may be used, and so it must live in the sense world. The soul is designed by nature, then, to exist in a state of embodiment, multiplicity, and in general evil. But if the same intelligence responsible for the creation of the soul could be responsible for its being endowed with the ability for self-preservation, we would have contradictory purposes in the very creation of the soul: "The exercise of providence would amount to no more than the purpose, that the soul be preserved in evil."

The absurdity involves the fact that the Intellect could propose the sensible as an end for its own action. If Intellect is the starting point of deliberation, surely the conclusion will also be intellectual, not perceptible. Hence if deliberation were the mode of thought applicable to the Intellect, then it would not arrive at the sensible as the outcome of the reasoning process. And yet the sensible exists; its cause can only be the intelligible. So the intelligible brings about the sensible in a way that does not involve the production of something outside of itself. The conclusion is that the

sensible already exists within the intelligible. At this stage of the argument, Plotinus does not yet tell us how the sensible exists within the intelligible. He seems to content to exploit a rhetorical trope suggesting the reversal of inner and outer, and to leave the language of the sensible intact as a kind of metaphorical or extended usage.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, after proscribing teleological views, Plotinus proceeds with his own account of the relation between the intelligible and the sensible. The immediate and glaring difference between the type of banned account and the kind of account found at the end of chapter 1 is the manner of reference to time. In the *Timaeus* narrative, events unfold temporally and causation is a developmental sequence that ends in the individual realization (*hekastēn energeian*) of a form within matter. But this kind of analysis is false because of the view that it adopts. It looks at reality as if it were a succession of temporal segments that somehow have to be linked to each other through the explanations we give. Instead of trying to explain things in this way, we should start with the realization that "no 'later' exists in the Intellect" (VI.7.1.40). So when we try to understand reality we should start with a perspective that sees things as simultaneously present.

Several recent studies have called our attention to the Neoplatonists' interest in theories of causation.<sup>25</sup> Of interest to moderns is the outright denial of horizontal or one-directional causal sequence among sensible particulars, or the denial that bodies are causally efficient.<sup>26</sup> Conversely only incorporeal beings such as form, intellect, and soul are agents. The Neoplatonists regularly accounted for the emergence of substances as well as the processes of the natural world by appealing to the idea of *immanent causation*, the doctrine that effects are contained within their causes. Therefore the sensible particular, inasmuch as it is not incorporeal, cannot be designated or isolated as the cause of a given individual or event. In the following passage, we see the denial of something that could be likened to a modern notion of causal relationships, which are very often thought to be capable of expression by means of counterfactual conditions. If event A precedes another event B, such that B would not have come about without the presence of A, then A is said to be the cause of B. In the following passage it appears that, although this counterfactual condition obtains, nevertheless the two events are said not to be causally linked.

Fire does not arise without a cause—What is its cause? Not friction, as one might assume, since fire already exists in the universe and friction takes place with the bodies undergoing friction [already] containing [fire].<sup>27</sup>

Here event A, the friction, is not the cause of event B, the conflagration. Rather, the cause of the conflagration is just the fact that the element fire exists, and presumably, does so in dependence upon the form. This appears to be a denial of horizontal causation. Yet in other places, Plotinus seems more concerned not to deny horizontal causal sequences but rather to illustrate the difficulties involved in trying to specify just how events are supposed to be related to each other if one is to say that they are causally related.<sup>28</sup> One very basic issue involves the difficulty of picking out just what a cause is, such that it is both necessary and sufficient for the bringing about of a given effect. The problem has to do with being able to distinguish such a unique cause from what might be called the total causal field—in being able to distinguish a background condition from a cause. Hillary Putnam for instance illustrates the problem in this way

Imagine that Venusians land on earth and observe a forest fire. One of them says, 'I know what caused that—the atmosphere of the darned planet is saturated with oxygen'... What is and what is not a 'cause' or 'explanation' depends on background knowledge and our reason for asking the question.<sup>29</sup>

The problem here arises from the ambivalent context in which the explanation is given, but we can generalize from this example. If for any given query we find that a complete answer will have to specify all of the relevant background conditions, then it seems that our answer will be reduced to something that does not look like an explanation for the event at all. Plotinus has this in mind when he asserts that the only real explanation for an event is to say that it belongs to a totality.<sup>30</sup> The theoretical background for this kind of problem is sketched at VI.7.2.35, in what I will refer to as Plotinus' doctrine of simultaneous arising:

In fact just as in our universe which subsists from a multiplicity of elements all things are linked with each other, and the explanation for the individual consists in its being a member of the totality (that is, just as the part in the case of every individual is perceived in terms of its relation to the whole), it is not the case that first one thing arises, and then after that, this, but rather things subsist in relation to each other, both the cause and the effect.<sup>31</sup>

We can break this passage into three supporting theses and a conclusion:

(1) *All things co-originate with one another.* This thesis does not simply mean that each thing co-originate with at least some other thing; it is more



likely to mean that all things co-originate with all other things. This universal reciprocal dependence is suggested by the preposition *syn* as well as the reflexive pronoun. (2) *The reason for the existence of each thing consists in its membership within a totality.* And (3) *In the case of each individual, the part is seen to exist in relation to the whole.* This phrase should not simply be translated as 'the part is related to the whole,' since here *echon* is equivalent to the copula and denotes a state of being. Thus the idea is 'a part is within the category of relation to'—i.e. individuals are not substances, but relative entities that do not exist in themselves. Hence, (4a) (Conclusion) *It is not the case that first one thing comes to be, and next another comes into existence after this* [and dependent upon it?].

The first part of the conclusion seems to sketch and then to deny a theory of causation which could easily be compared to the Humean account of cause as:

An object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it in the imagination, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other."

Obviously things do arise one after the next. What this phrase (4a) in the text must mean then, is that although there may be sequences of events, these sequences are not causal sequences. The next part of the sentence presents an alternative causal theory: (4b) *The cause and the effect come to be simultaneously in relation to each other.* This alternative, non-teleological method of explanation, in which the relationship between cause and effect is one of co-arising, shows up in the subsequent puzzles of VI.7.1–15: In VI.7.1 it appears to be the inspiration behind the constant refrain in which the logic of temporal succession—*tode meta tode*"—is denied. Rather, the sensible arises as an immediate and necessary expression of the intelligible. In chapter 2 this conclusion is generalized as a corollary of the theory of explanation present in lines 32–35, examined above: The cause must include its effects within itself. Chapter 3 applies this theory to an analysis of soul and concludes that soul must arise simultaneously with its sense faculties. Chapters 8 and 9 show that the objects of sense, and so the whole realm of sentient beings must arise simultaneously from the intelligible world. In chapter 10 all sentient beings must arise simultaneously, as must the gross elements together with their inhabitants (chapter 12).

## 2. Simultaneous Arising within the Larger Scope of Plotinus' Metaphysics

In order to assess the significance of this causal theory, we have to ask whether it is an *ad hoc* solution to the problems of interpretation that beset Plotinus in VI.7, or whether it is a consistent statement of his philosophical orientation. I believe that Plotinus included the doctrine of simultaneous arising as a key concept within the larger framework of his metaphysical system, and that he presented this doctrine as such. The most explicit statement concerning its centrality is found in VI.4, to which we now briefly turn.

Plotinus frequently employs an image consisting in the simple model of a center surrounded by one or more concentric circles, with radii projecting from the center to the circumference of these circles. The terminal points of the radii form the circumference of the circles and the lines described by the radii fill up the surface of the circles surrounding the center. The diagram serves to represent the hypostatic view of reality, with the One symbolized by the center, and each of the circles standing respectively for Intellect and Soul

For the sake of clarity, often the argument wishes to lead to a conception of the multiplicity which has come to be, by positing many lines from one center."

Moreover, he uses the diagram in order to illustrate the causal structure of his entire metaphysical system. Briefly the parts of the diagram refer to a transcendent source (the center in isolation), an immanent source (the center to which the radii are connected) which unifies a multiplicity with which it is identical (the circle considered as the terminus points of the radii), and the individuals which arise simultaneously as members of this unified multiplicity (the radii which fill up the surface area of the circle).

This ontological schema," the interrelationship of all three hypostases, demonstrates the interdependence of all of the aspects of reality upon all of the other parts. Each aspect of the diagram is necessary for and implies the existence of all of the other parts. It is this simultaneous co-presence of the three hypostases of being within the real which fully captures Plotinus' vision, in which the hypostases of soul, intellect, and pure unity, are necessary moments within the integral but unique reality.

The introductory line in chapter 5 gives us an important piece of information about the significance of this model. The model is designed to illustrate the Platonic doctrine of exemplarism or the theory of forms. Plotinus is using a geometric schema in order to illustrate the relationship existing between a form and its phenomenal expression. He states explicitly that this model serves as an illustration for the relationship between intelligible and particular in lines 21–23 of this chapter:

The lines provide us, in this instance, with an analogy for those elements through which the intelligible nature, coming into contact with them, appears to be present to a multiplicity, as a multiplicity.<sup>4</sup>

Considering the diagram as a whole, Plotinus tells us to envision the lines, not as distinct rays, but rather as one surface: All the lines entirely fill up the space delimited by the circle. The unified comprehension of these distinct rays illustrates the relationship of phenomenal particulars, whose individuation is the condition of their multiplicity, with the unity of their own order. The lines arise simultaneously and comprise one totality, they cannot really subsist as realities distinct from each other.

But one must bear in mind when one says this that the things which are said to become many are all together at once, just as there in the example of the circle one cannot take the lines as being separated: for it is one surface.<sup>5</sup>

It is because the individual arises as an integral condition of the totality that the order of individuals must be comprehended as a whole: no amount of discursive thought could succeed in tracing the innumerable relationships that the individual has with other things.<sup>6</sup> Thus we are told that individuals are not self-standing, but exist in ontological dependence within a community of finite entities: "All other things [apart from the One] when isolated are not self-subsistent."<sup>7</sup>

Among later Neoplatonists this analysis of the individual, in which paradigmatic causation by one form, *pace* Aristotle, is replaced by the concept of mutual coproduction<sup>8</sup> became standard. A. C. Lloyd<sup>9</sup> quotes Proclus' *Commentary on Parmenides* as an illustration:

If one is to name one cause, then the order of the universe; or if one is to name several, the movement of heavens, particular types of nature, the properties of the seasons, climates, as well as those who superintend all these. (825, 13–17: Lloyd translation)

One way of comprehending the universe is to look at the entire network of individual components at any given time within the course of its development. This community of individuals, each producing an effect as a result of its interaction with others, is just the world of space and time, the place "from whence what is done is already an effect." Plotinus describes this interconnected community of action in III.2.6 as follows:

Everything does not produce an identical effect when it interacts with everything, but it produces a different effect in relation to a different thing.<sup>10</sup>

Here the individual events take their rise in relationship to other things; they have no fixed character in themselves, but are entirely determined as relative entities.

Plotinus elaborates upon the relative character of the individual viewpoint by means of spatial symbolism, in treatise III.2.7, the end of his work 'On Providence,' in an image which encapsulates the entire teaching on this subject. The outer circumference of our circle is shown in this image as the extremities of branches stemming from a trunk, itself a projection of the central root. Here is what Plotinus has to say about the twigs:

The empty spaces between the branches are filled from the [parts] that [stem] from the root which grow in a different manner, from whence the twigs on the branches are affected as well, as though imagining that the experience comes only from the immediate environment [sc. and not ultimately from the root].<sup>11</sup>

The individual viewpoint is shown as relative here in several ways: The twig, as an extremity of a branch connecting it to the root, really is not an individual at all, but belongs to one organism, and has no existence of its own apart from that organism. Secondly, what it experiences as another organism interacting with it or affecting it, is in fact not another organism at all.

### 3. Individuals and Explanation in VI.7

In chapter 3, Plotinus applies his theory of interdependent causation to the analysis of the human form: If we ask, why does man have eyes or eyebrows, the only answer can be in order that all things might come to be

(*hina panta*). Why should this kind of answer constitute any kind of an explanation at all? Taking the example of eyes first, we can see that Aristotle would certainly find this answer unsatisfactory. Since it is a part of human nature to be a sighted being, we have eyes because they are components without which the human form would be incomplete. Aristotle describes this preferred type of explanation as follows:

This is why we should for preference say (a) that man has these parts because this is what it is for a man to be. For without these parts he cannot be. Failing that, the next nearest thing: that is either (a') that it is altogether impossible otherwise, or at any rate (b) that it is good this way."

At this point we can see difficulty emerging in the view which is explored in chapter 2 of VI.7. There, we read that each being has its reason why within itself, and that on a secondary level (in the order of individuals) the form is the cause of each individual's coming to be. Such a concession would seem to be completely in agreement with what Aristotle says here about the preferred form of natural explanation. Yet in this treatise Plotinus asserts that the reason why human beings have eyes is in order that everything may come to be (*dia ti oûn ophthalmoi: hina panta*). Plotinus has not merely substituted the externally imposed teleology of the *Timaeus* which analyzes the constituent parts of the human form as in some sense instrumental to its good, with the Aristotelian teleology of natural kinds in which parts are described as directed toward the functioning of the mature organism. Rather, he seems to be assuming that the world order will tend toward a maximally rich and heterogeneous composition from among its members."

The use of the word *panta* is a bit confusing in our passage. In chapter 2 it refers to the completion of the form as self-explanatory; in chapter 3 it is also used for the complete realization of a given form within matter. Completion in this sense can be applied to an individual that lacks no part contained within the formal definition of its nature. But he also uses the word 'complete' as part of his denial of teleology, as when he says that the "form means possessing everything"—meaning that the intelligible must contain the sensible within itself. In keeping with this latter usage, if the form (e.g.) of human beings is complete then this completion entails the capacity for sensation (line 27). The simultaneous origination of the physical from the intelligible goes against the strict dualism of Platonic two-worlds metaphysics<sup>26</sup> without embracing Aristotelianhylomorphism. It is within this context that Plotinus says:

"These perceptions here are dim intellections, but the intellections there are clear sense-perceptions."<sup>27</sup>

It becomes clear that a specifically Aristotelian doctrine of nature as principle of change is what is rejected by Plotinus.<sup>28</sup> That natural processes are directed toward the realization of form in matter and toward the most complete development of an individual substance is, according to the doctrine of the pre-existence of the sensible within the intelligible, an inadequate explanation of genesis as a whole. The actualization of form in matter cannot be the goal by which we can account for the specific structure of an organism, because form cannot in fact be actualized in matter. When the form comes to be in a material substrate, it exists in an incomplete state. The specific differentia are compensatory accretions due to the inherent deficiency of embodied individuality:

For, as the powers [of the intelligible world] unfold themselves, they constantly leave behind [something of themselves] above. They proceed by losing something and in the various losses each power finds something else to add on as a result of the deficiency of the living being that appeared as a result of the loss."

In fact, Plotinus goes on to suggest in this treatise that not only is the essence/accident distinction invalid, but it is so because the very differentia which are said in Aristotelian parlance to constitute the definition of something, and so to constitute its essence, are in fact inessential, or strictly accidental for that substance. In this section, Plotinus pursues his attack upon essentialism by means of a favorite strategy. He attempts to pry apart the essence/accident distinction by showing that it has no explanatory power, and thus that the individual substance lacks essential properties.

Aristotle seems to have thought that the concept of hypothetical necessity could be applied to the parts of an organism,<sup>29</sup> so that there were "features of a kind that explain other features of that kind without themselves being explained by features of that kind."<sup>30</sup> If we say that it is part of the human essence to be a sighted being, then eyebrows will be necessitated given this essential structure. So in this case we should be able to designate the eyebrows as 'protective' (*phylaktikon*) and so as something which contributes to the end but is in fact not the end. But then the reason for the eyebrows, the form of man, must exist before—although clearly not temporally since Intellect lives an atemporal life—the safeguard, since it determines that there be a safeguard. Plotinus

concludes that the safeguard is not after all contributory to the essence, but is a part of the essence.

One part of an individual cannot explain another part; parts must arise simultaneously. Thus it is extremely difficult to come up with a functional analysis of the parts of an individual in such a way that one could specify which elements function for the sake of others: "One could say that all that belongs to an individual is its reason why."<sup>24</sup> The collapse of the concept of definitional necessity is based upon the rejection of the distinction between the parts of an individual which are components of the essence, and the parts of the individual which are contributory toward the essence.

This is not to say that the Neoplatonists rejected Aristotelian logic as incapable of yielding valid results for the reasoning process. Rather, the results obtained by this process will not yield necessary propositions about the reality which they describe." As Lloyd points out in his well-known article, the Neoplatonists "are, as it were, assuming that all syllogisms are [only] dialectical [not demonstrative]." In V.8.7, 41 we read:

As if the conclusion was there before the syllogism which showed the cause, and the conclusion did not follow from the premises; [the world order] is not the result of following out a train of logical consequences and purposive thought; it is before consequential and discursive thinking.

The doctrine of dependent origination coincides with Plotinus' assessment of the individual not only as lacking an essence, but as a construction of the discursive reasoning process trying to grasp the intelligible object. Plotinus explicitly tells us that individuation is due to the way that the discursive thought encounters the intelligible object:

When the process of rational thinking separates the distinctive individuality in these realities, not taking it away from the intelligible world but rather grasping it and producing something else, it produces the qualitative as a kind of part of substance, grasping what appears on the surface of reality."

This passage tells us that the individual is not something that exists in the intelligible order (*ouk ekei then*), but is the creation of discursive thought when it simply grasps the surface presentation of the reality (*labōn to epipolēs phanen*). The individual viewpoint, while adequate for ordinary discourse, is only the mental reflection of the sensible world, and is not

adequate for the practice of philosophical understanding or training. In fact, the individual is not a real being, but only what Plotinus calls a pseudo-substance, an appearance that lacks any self-subsistence. Thus in terms of discourse, as the subject of statements, the world of individuals is a system of place holders, or representations, which exist and are defined only as predicated by other such place holders, having entirely relative meaning and reference."

#### 4. Intellect and Explanation in VI.7

Plotinus in VI.7.2 describes the physical world as a mutually conditioning and conditioned causal nexus, which contrasts with his understanding of the intelligible world. In the physical domain, cause and caused are simply correlatives, so that any given thing, having an infinite number of relationships with other things, is an entirely relative entity. However, an idea, far from being related to an infinite plurality of individuals, has its cause within itself. It is causally independent, to the extent that Plotinus can say about the intelligibles at VI.7.2, 40 that each "contains the cause within itself" (*anaitiōs tēn aitian echein*).

By itself, this formula 'containing the cause within itself' specifically recalls *Posterior Analytics* b2, 90a15—to which Plotinus alludes at line 13—but also more generally the identity of substance and essence at *Metaphysics* Z.7. Indeed, Plotinus makes this doctrine the starting point of his discussion of the formula at VI.7.2, 17. The discussion begins with the familiar notion of the convergence of formal and final causes: "What each thing is, is the reason why it comes to be" (VI.7.2, 16). But Plotinus does not confine himself to the case of an individual substance and its essential form: Not only is it true that for each substance, the form (*eidos*) is the cause (*aition*); he means that for each form there is a 'reason why' inherent in it:

Not that the form is the reason for the individual's being—although this is certainly true—but rather if you unfold each form back on itself, you will discover its reason why within it."

'Unfolding the form back upon itself' involves referring each form to the second hypostasis as a whole. Since Intellect (*nous*) is all of the things in it, each of the forms contains the cause of existence in itself, and Intellect, consequently, contains the reason why of all of the ideas in it.

Plotinus clearly uses the formula 'having its cause in itself' to suggest not that each of the forms fits into a system of which it is an essential member," but rather that each form is the whole of Intellect due to the unity of knower and known at the level of the second hypostasis. So Plotinus contrasts the relationship of form to Intellect with that of part to whole in order to demonstrate that the structure of intellect is not fully comprehended through the discursive analysis which depends solely on the logic of essences.

At VI.7.9 we can see directly how the unity of subject and object are at the heart of Plotinus' views on the nature of essence and necessity. Chapter 9 takes up the problem of how the *logoi* of irrational animals can be present in the Intellectual cosmos (*kosmos noētos*). Here we have only what Plotinus reveals to be a pseudo-problem, since there can be nothing unintelligent in intellect itself, which is the source of the *logoi* for irrational animals. The unintelligent within intellect turns out to be intelligent, since both the thinker of the irrational form is intellect, and its thought is intellect. The consequence of this unity is not the improbable one that irrational beings are rational within intellect, but that the rational/irrational distinction simply is not applicable at all. Rational thought does not exist in intellect, so how could it belong to any of the beings in intellect? Now if thought could be different from its object, then the object could be thoughtless. But in intellect, the thinker will be the same as the that of which the thinker thinks. But since thought and object are one, thought can only be a thought of that which is itself intelligent.

In the case of the human self, it will turn out that Plotinus' critique of essentialism extends to the Aristotelian identification of substance (*ousia*) with the soul. In fact, the human soul, containing the *logoi* of all sentient beings, is potentially any one of them: "It exchanges [its body] for the body of an animal. Thus it is incredible that the soul could be the definition of the human being." Since every soul contains the ideas of all living beings, it actually is accidental as to which *logos* a particular soul will exhibit as its essential type in an embodied state. Plotinus objects to defining substances by means of differentiae which are only applicable to embodied beings.

Plotinus elsewhere discusses the question of whether we can define the soul *per genus et differentiam*, as living being, where soul belongs to the genus 'living' and is defined by the differentia 'living'.

Is then being one thing, and the rest something else, which contributes to the completion of the substance of the soul, and is there being [as such] and an essential difference makes the soul?"

Lloyd discusses the strategy for Plotinus' criticism of the definition of soul *per genus et differentiam* as living being:

Soul is an *ousia* [substance], but its being is distinct from generic being. It cannot be being plus a differentia added to it from outside this generic being; otherwise it would be an essence or substance in respect of only half of its essence, viz. the generic half of its definition."

The point is that for the Aristotelian definition, we must find a differentia outside of the category of the genus. But in this case the genus is Being, so to find a differentia outside of Being, would, according to Plotinus, necessitate that soul be less than substance in half (the differentia) of its definition. Lloyd gives this example in an attempt to show that the Neoplatonists deny the validity of Aristotelian essentialism by showing that there can be no necessary connection between the two parts of a definition, a problem about which Aristotle himself was certainly exercised. But if there is no necessary connection between the two parts of a definition, it is no longer possible to draw the distinction between accidental and essential.

This argument is an example of an across the board rejection of this kind of definition for any species: Since any species form is a *substance*, to say that the specific differentia falls into a different category, is to say that only one half of its definition is in fact substantial; the differentia would be by definition accidental. Plotinus goes on to tell us that the soul, if it is substance and not accident, must not obtain its differentia from outside of the category of substance (VI.2.5, 26).

To what does the definition of man refer? Not to the embodied individual, since its matter does not enter into the definition, but not to the idea either: The intelligible form is not susceptible say, to being defined as rational as opposed to irrational, since intellect is pre-rational. Intellect is universal; it cannot belong to any individual. But if there is to be any knowledge of the individual then an appeal must be made to its definition, or to that about it which is universal. We have to refer the sensible back to the intelligible, but in the intelligible, each form is Intellect, and Intellect is all forms. Therefore, in order to have knowledge of the individual, we must have knowledge of the intelligible, but to have this knowledge is to understand the unity of Being. We must therefore rethink the nature of the

individual, and see that individuals are not separate substances, but aspects of the one universal being.

### 5. Explanation and Contemplation in VI.7

In order to show the connection between theoretical underpinnings and contemplative praxis, let us briefly glance at the two meditations that follow upon the exploration of teleology and paradigmaticism in chapters VI.7.1–11. One is macrocosmic, the other microcosmic. In the first vision, Plotinus contrasts the universal living being of the *Timaeus*, exemplar of the world of particulars, with this universe ("this all exists in relation to the paradigm of that intelligible world"—VI.7.12, 1):

Since we maintain that this all exists after the pattern (so to call it) of that, *the universal living being must exist there too first, and, if its existence is to be complete, must be all living beings.* And certainly the sky there must be a living being, and so a sky not bare of stars, as we call them here below, and this is what being sky is. But obviously there is earth there also, not barren, but much more full of life, and all animals are in it, all that walk on and belong to the land here below, and obviously, plants rooted in life; and sea is there and all water in abiding flow and life, and all the living beings in water, and the nature of air is part of the universe there, and aerial living things are there just as air itself is...*For as each of the great parts of the universe is there, so is of necessity the nature of the living beings in them.* (Armstrong translation)<sup>4</sup>

This passage reflects the two-fold analysis of individuation, that of reciprocal origination, and that of the direct expression of the intelligible source in the individual. These two aspects of the meditation are explained by the fact that one facet, the interconnection of all beings, is used as a support for the more direct experience of unity which follows. On the one hand, the vision consists in perceiving the relationship between part and whole, as flowing reciprocally between the two terms of the hierarchy; but it ends, on the other hand, in a complete fusion between the sensible and intelligible, as well as a detachment from individuality, an experience of the unification of the phenomenal world in which the distinction between essence and accident, between body and mind, between any individuals, is no longer present.

This meditation is an introduction to the experience of intellect as the unifying ground of all individuated existence. By shifting the focus from a teleological account of discrete essences to a systematic account of individuals as interrelated, Plotinus hopes to effect a change in the kind of analysis we give of individuals. What counts as an adequate understanding of individuals? The physical aspect of living beings, by means of which they express their individuality, must be seen as a unity, objectively, as constituting one world body, and subjectively, as constituting one phenomenal presentation. What happens in the next step of the meditation is that the qualities that are known to comprise, on the Neoplatonist's account, the sum reality of the individual,<sup>5</sup> are no longer capable of doing the work of presenting attributes by which an individual might be discriminated from another individual. Instead, the qualities are apprehended in the most general form as one unified field of sense presentations, and it is the consciousness of the apprehender to which these presentations belong:

They all flow, in a way, from a single spring, not like one particular breath or one warmth, but as if there was one quality which held and kept intact all the qualities in itself, of sweetness along with fragrance, and was at once the quality of wine and the characters of all tastes, the sights of colours and all the awarenesses of touch. (Armstrong translation)<sup>6</sup>

Thus the progress of the passage is from the objective description of the quality, as sweetness or smell, to its fundamental nature as a kind of awareness on the part of the perceiver.

In chapter 15 we have another vision in which Plotinus seems to be describing an experience which he may have had of the unity of intellect:

So that if one were to compare it to a living, variegated sphere, imagining it either as an entity that consisted entirely in aspect, illuminating by means of its living aspects, or as all detached souls running together into identity, one would not be amiss.<sup>7</sup>

Each individual is no more nor less than a point of view, an aspect, an act of vision. Individuals, as part of the objective order, are intrinsically without their own nature. Thus the sphere is described as consisting entirely of aspect, being mere appearance. At the same time, when the knower succeeds in becoming detached from the objective order of reality—from its *procession* (*prosopon*), as it were—then these same

appearances are seen within the context of a unity which is very difficult to define or communicate, without implicitly severing the unity which is the foundation of the vision. Therefore the meditation ends with an exhortation to 'make oneself the vision.' The reversal in cognition occurs together with the reversal in self-identity. This unity is only apprehended when discursive thought, responsible for the whole order of individuation, is set aside.

Plotinus finishes his study of nature in treatise VI.7 by offering a contemplative vision rooted in the theoretical position he has outlined in the preceding first chapters. Does the doctrine of dependent origination express Plotinus' philosophical originality and does it differ in any significant way from the well-developed Stoic conception of world harmony that obviously informs it? The fact that Plotinus so carefully distances his own position from that of the Stoics by denying discursive thought to the Demiurge should at least invite the above questions.

It seems that Poseidonius attributes the intelligibility of the world's structure to the fact that the designing intelligence, God, and human intelligence share the same thought processes, since human souls are *apospasmata* of God.<sup>4</sup> Therefore the Stoics hold that a teleological description of the world is a factual description of a state of affairs that inheres within the cosmic structure. But this very structure, the systemic cohesion of individuals within their order of being, is understood by Plotinus as a reflection of the inherence of our world within its intelligible cause. And this latter, the Intellectual cosmos, is not systematic in the way that the physical cosmos is.

In chapter 13 the 'highest kinds' (*megistē genē*) of Plato's *Sophist* appear as a counterpoint to the Stoicizing conception developed in chapter 12. Here the reader encounters an extremely paradoxical aetiology for the complexity of the intelligible world:

All things are varied to the extent that they are simple, and this means to the extent that they are not composites and are activities."

And again in line 55:

There is nothing in it which is not other, so that in its otherness it may contribute this too."

Plotinus is describing the dynamic life of intellect in which the interplay between subject and object creates a proliferation of points of view, the subject discovering itself in the object and the object being

discovered within the subject. The life of intellect, constantly projecting itself as object of its own realization is actually the very life that comprises the world of sentient beings.

World and soul, knower and known, must arise together. Plotinus finishes his examination of the sensible and the intelligible by showing that they are more like two sides of the same coin than two separate realities. The world of action, that world in which production occurs and things come to be, is implied by the very nature of the intelligible world. In much the same way one could say that when someone acts, there exists a relationship between his/her internal state and his/her action, for the latter reveals that internal state. The act, seen mentally in terms of one's intention, could not be intended without the awareness of the possibility of carrying it out, nor could we speak of an actor, apart from his/her intention."

By analogy to the relationship between thinker and act, we can say that the life of the cosmos expresses the content of Intellect. Plotinus is emphatic in his assertion, however, that the cosmos has come to be, exactly as if its author had flawlessly calculated the optimum conditions for its existence. Nevertheless, this way of viewing the rational order inherent within the universal is purely metaphor. The divine intellect does not purposively determine any of the states of the cosmos. All things are at once implied by, as well as realized in, their conception, but what is intended, we might say, is the very conception itself. Hence the universe arises as a simultaneous expression of Being, and all phenomena are mutually interdependent within their respective orders."

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## NOTES

1. The first lines quote *Timaeus* 45b3, directly alluding to the younger gods' dispatch of the souls into the world of space and time, but the general issue is the language of deliberation that Plato uses in the narrative. Cf. *Timaeus* 30b1, *logisamenos*; 29c1, *pronoian*; 34a9, *logismos*, etc.
2. For general discussions of VI.7. 1-15 in light of Plotinus' philosophical treatment of the idea of *Pronoia*, see Leroux 1990, 31-32; Theiler 1966; Schubert 1968; Hadot 1988, 31-36; Schroeder 1992, 16-20.
3. On the overall structure of VI.7, see Hadot 1987; Hadot 1988.
4. See Harder 3b; Schubert 1968; Leroux 1990; and Wallis 1987.
5. II.9.8, 20. In chapters 5 and 6 Plotinus censures the opponents' falsification of Plato's account of creation: "Often they have soul as the maker instead of the planning mind and they think that this is the maker according to Plato,

- being a long way from knowing who the maker is. And in general they falsify Plato's account of the manner of the making" (II.9.6, 23–26). For a discussion of whose views precisely are being criticized, see Peuch 1960; Roloff 1970, 169–179; and Elsas 1975, in the appendix on Roloff's monograph. II.9 and VI.7 both oppose a literal reading of the *Timaeus* creation account not only because of Gnostic renderings which hypostasize the planning mind, but also because a literal rendering assumes that the world had a beginning in time.
6. The conception of a Demiurge or Creator God who uses the forms as a blueprint for the world is of course central to most Middle Platonic discussions that try to explain how God interacts with the world. See Witt 1930, 199; Dillon 1977, 46–49 & *passim*.
  7. II.9.7
  8. See Wallis 1987, 942–952.
  9. *Metaphysics* A.9 and *De Anima* II. For the Aristotelianized Platonism of the Imperial period, see Blumenthal 1987.
  10. It could be said that Plotinus reversed the terms of the debate and asked whether the human soul could ever think like the Divine mind. For his positive answer to this question in the form of the concept of the undescended soul and its heterodoxy within the Platonist tradition, see Blumenthal 1987.
  11. Throughout the *Enneads* we find the insistence that the world is not an artifact whose genesis is owed to someone's intentions, associated with the 'two acts' theory of causation, wherein every level of reality must of necessity produce an image of itself in the form of a 'lower' existent. However what follows is a methodological interpretation rather than a strictly metaphysical one. For caution against a purely source-critical approach to Plotinus, see Leroux 1990, 23–26.
  12. *Posterior Analytics* I, 71a16: *Epistametha de oiomeih'hekaston haplōs, alla mē ton sophistikon tropon ton kata symbebēkos. hotan tēn aitian oiōmetha ginōskein di' hēn to pragma estin, hoti ekeinou aitia estī, kai mē endechesthai tout' allōs echein.*
  13. See Lloyd 1986; Alfonso 1990.
  14. *Timaeus* 29b3: *hōde oun peri te eikōnos kai peri tou paradeigmatos autēs dioisteon, hās ara tous logous, hōnper eisin exēgēai, toutōn autōn kai syggeneis ontas; tou men oun monimou kai bebaioi kai meta noun kataphanous monimous kai ametaptōous—kath' hoson hoion te kai anelegois prosēkei logois einai kai anikētois, toutou dei mēden elleipein—tous de tou pros ekeino apeikasthentos, ontos de eikōnos eikotas ana logon te ekeinōn ontas.*
  15. Putnam, 211.
  16. Limitations of space prohibit a detailed discussion of this topic, but readers should refer to Wagner 1982 & Lee 1984.
  17. *Physics* 197a32. Cf. *De Generatione Animalium* II, 742b23–36.

18. On Aristotle as a corrector of Platonic notions of teleology, see Balme 1987, 275.
19. Cf. VI.7.3, 9.
20. On Stoic cosmic *harmonia*, see Cicero *De Finibus* III, sections 38 ff; Edelstein-Kidd 1990, fragments 104 and 106. For Plotinus' familiarity with this Stoic tenet, and the probable influence of Poseidonius, see Reinhardt 1924, Graeser 1976, Witt 1930, Theiler 1966.
21. For Platonists of any century, of course, it is simply not true that the individual (the sensible particular, that is) will have an essence at all. As Code (1985) has shown, if *x* is a particular, then there is no *y* such that *y=x* and *y* is essentially predicable of *x*. The sensible cannot have an essence because it simply has no substance, hence it is neither defineable nor knowable. Whereas for Aristotle, although individuals do not have definitions (*Metaphysics* Z.12, 1039a) the essence of the individual is simply the essence of the kind under which it falls.
22. The relationship that Plotinus tends to find most expressive of this kind of causality is the relationship between thinker and thought, or mind and object of consciousness. Since thought and thinker are not two distinct entities, Plotinus treats the individual, not as a separate reality from the intelligible, but rather as an expression of the intelligible. As A. C. Lloyd puts the matter: "In the last analysis, substance and attribute coincide either as substances and their activities or as imperfect projections of such activities" (Lloyd 1990, 91).
23. See Schroeder 1980, 50: "The intelligible world is not merely represented by the things in the world of sense. It is truly present in them." And again on page 52: "In 6.3.15...the entire content of the world of sense is to be conceived as a quality, in the sense that it bears an adjectival relation to the intelligible world..."
24. Thus we find him talking about "the perceptibles that exist there" (VI.7.6, 2); "the eyes they have there" (V.8.4, 26); "*einai tas aisthēseis tautas amydras noēseis, tas de ekei noēseis enargeis aisthēseis*" (VI.7.7, 31: 'Our sensations are dim intellections; intellections are clear sensations').
25. Barnes 1983; Sorabji 1987; Wagner 1982.
26. Barnes 1983, 175, concisely summarizes Proclus' presentation of this view (*Elements of Theology* 80): (1) all bodies are passive; (2) everything incorporeal is active; (3) no body is active; (4) no incorporeal thing is passive. Barnes supplies the conclusion to the argument: Only incorporeal things are active.
27. VI.7.10, 40 (Armstrong's translation modified, reading *echontōn* as a temporal, not causal participle): *ouk ek tou automatou pyr—pothen gar; ou gar paratripsēs, hās an tis oiēkein; ἑδὲ gar ontos en tōi panti pyrōs hē paratripsis echontōn tōi paratribomenōn sōmatōn.*
28. On the difficulties of specifying the nature of causal connection between events, see Davidson 1980.



29. Putnam 1983, 214.
30. Cf. VI.7.2, 35, discussed in the next paragraph.
31. (1) *kai mēn, hōsper en tōide tōi panti ek pollōn synestēkoti syneiretai pros allēla ta panta*, (2) *kai en tōi panta einai esti kai to dioti hekaston*—(3) *hōsper kai eph' hekastou to meros pros to holon echon horatai*—(4a) *ou toutou genomenou, eita toutou meta tode*, (4b) *allu pros allēla homou tēn aitian kai to aitian synistantōn*.
32. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part 3 (as quoted by Mackie 1974, 3).
33. Cf. VI.7.1, 37: *ho logismos touto anti touto*, VI.7.1, 40: *touto, hina mē touto*, VI.7.1, 56: *tode meta tode*.
34. VI.5.5, 1 (Armstrong translation): *kai saphēneias men heneka ho logos pollakis hoion ek kentrou henos pollas grammas poiēsas eis ennoian tou plathous tou genomenou ethelei agein*. See Ferwerda 1965, 30–34.
35. On the concept of a two-tiered unity (transcendent and immanent), see Gurtler 1989 *passim*. Gurtler acknowledges (page 5) that this structure was pointed out by Blumenthal 1971, 55–63.
36. *Hai grammai parechetōsan hēmin chreian en tōi paronti analogoneinai hōn ephaptomenē hēnoaiē physis polla kai pollachē phainetai pareinai*.
37. VI.5.5, 3: *dei de iērountas homou panta ta legomena polla gegonenai legein. Hōs kakei epi tou kyklou ouk ousas grammas aph'ōrismenas esti lambanein. Epipedon gar hen*.
38. Cf. *Enneads* VI.8.14, 26: *kai holōs hē pros allēla pantōn symphōnta allōois aitia*.
39. VI.8.15, 25: *ta men oun alla monoumena ouk estin hautois autarkē einai eis to einai*.
40. Cf. Hadot 1988, 203: "C'est dans leur production par l'Espirit, c'est à dire dans leur coproduction mutuelle (6.7.2.37) qu'elles ont leur pourquoi (6.7.2.26–27)."
41. Lloyd 1990, 163.
42. *Ou gar to auto poiei pan proselthon panti, alla to auto pros allo kai allo pros allo*.
43. *ta de diakena hoion tōn kladōn eplēroumio ek tōn au ek tēs hrizēs kai autōn allon tropōn pephykōtōn, ex hōn kai epasche ta akpa tōn kladōn. hōs ek tou plēsion oiesthai to pathos ienai monon*.
44. *De partibus animalium* I, 640 a33–b4.
45. Aristotle does not defend his assumption of the permanence of the world order by means of such a theory (Cooper 1987, 248). But Poseidonius evidently used the same description of the world order (poikilon zōon) that Plotinus uses in VI.7.12. See Witt 1930 & Gracser 1972. In this treatise, we find the concept of maximal diversity expressed in the word poikilon. This idea is elaborated upon at line 9 in chapter 13 of our treatise: *sōma homoiomeres ti kai apoikilon; alla gar ti to semnon* ("What is there worthy of adoration in a homeomerous body, one that lacks variation?"); and again

- at line 25: *physin ara echei epi pan heterousthai* ("It [the living cosmos] tends toward maximal diversity"). See below, section 4, for the relationship of this idea to the Stoics and for its justification in Plotinus.
46. Once more, limitations of space prohibit extended discussion of this non-dual tendency within Plotinus' metaphysics, but readers should consult Wagner (1982) for a detailed discussion on the relationship between Plotinus' philosophy of perception and his two-worlds metaphysics.
47. VI.7.7, 31: *hōste einai tas alsthēseis tautas amydras noēseis, tas de ekei noēseis enargeis aisthēseis*.
48. Cf. the discussion in chapter 2 on the deficiencies of the sensible human particular as opposed to the form of the human being. Plotinus' point here is the denial of Aristotelian teleology, in which the goal of change is the realization of the form in matter, or the coming-to-be of the hylomorphic compound.
49. VI.7.9, 40–41: *echelittomenai gar hai dynamis kataleipousin aei eis to anō. Proinsi de ti aphienai d' alla allai dia to endecs tou zōōu tou phanentos ek tou elleipontos heteron exereusai prostheina*. It is true that Plotinus accepts an Aristotelian hylomorphic description of sensible particulars in the treatises concerned with matter, II.4 and II.5, in the limited sense that he accepts the necessity of a substrate for the sensible which in itself utterly lacks quality or is essentially a deprivation of form (see *Physics* Ia.192a2). "Matter is an outcast of reality and is separated from the perfection of being. As a result it can never unite with form, for how can the unreal add anything to the real? Plotinus' theory of matter reflects a dualism between matter and form and is alien to Aristotelian hylomorphism" (Hancock 1985, 139). For a more reconciliatory account of hylomorphism in II.4, see Corrigan 1981.
50. For a list of Aristotelian passages which apply a teleological analysis to the parts of an individual organism, see Gotthelf 1987, 190–191.
51. Gotthelf 1987, 189.
52. VI.7.2, 44: *panta hosa echei echois an eipeln dioti hekaston*.
53. A great deal of scholarly work has been devoted over the course of the last decade to the exposition of Plotinus' notorious critique of Aristotle's categories, presented in *Enneads* VI.1–3. To name but a few of the major works appearing recently: Lloyd 1955–1956; Lloyd 1990; Wurm 1973; Strange 1981; Rist 1967, chapter 8; Corrigan 1981, 98–121.
54. *Hotan de chōrisē ho logos to ep' autois idion ouk ekeithen uphēlōn, alla mallon lubōn kai gennēsas allo, egennēse poion hoion meros ousias labōn to epipolēs phanen aut'*.
55. The bundle theory of sensible particulars as encountered in Plotinus has been the subject of thorough discussion in the context of Neoplatonic scholarship. Strange (1981) relates the *migma* ('mixture') conception of sensible substance to the analysis of sensible substance into "nothing more than the conjunction of the sensible differentiae" (196). Strange is careful to distinguish this position from a nominalistic account of definition, in which

there is simply a list of attributes that in fact belong to a given class of objects. However, Plotinus does not lose touch with his Platonist roots, nor with the entailment relations that in fact govern which attributes are realized in a given class of objects. One feature of Strange's account with which I disagree, with all respect to his very carefully documented claims concerning treatises VI.1–3, is his conclusion that the intellect must be "a logical structure which somehow contains and makes possible the relationship between the terms of all necessary propositions" (199). Since Plotinus denies that discursive thought exists in the intelligible world, it cannot be a logical system which corresponds to discursive predicates. Since writing this dissertation, Strange seems to have changed his views (see Strange 1987).

56. See also the discussion of the coincidence of formal and final causes at *Physics* II.7, 198a.
57. *Ouch hoti to eidos hekastō aition tou einai—touto men gar alēthes—all' hoti, ei kai auto to eidos hekaston pros auto aavaptyttas, heurēseis en autōi to dia ti.*
58. This is not to deny that there could be a sense in which the Forms are systematically related. But my point is simply that Plotinus is not concerned to specify what such a system might be, or even that this system exists.
59. VI.7.6, 22: *metabolousēs de thērion sōma thaumazetai de, pōs logos ousa anthrōpou.*
60. VI.2.5, 22: *ar' oun to einai allo de to loipon ho symplēroi tēn tēs psychēs ousian kai to men on diaphora de potē tēn psychēn.*
61. Lloyd 1955–1956.
62. VI.7.12, 1: *epei gar phamen pros hoion paradeigma ekeinou tode to pan einai, dei kakei proteron to pan zōon einai kai, ei panteles to einai autōi, panta einai. Kai ouranon dē ekei zōion einai, kai ouk erēmōn toinun astrōn tōn entautha touto legomenōn ouranon, kai to ouranōi einai touto. Esti d' ekei dēlonoti kai gē ouk erēmōs, alla polu mallon ezōōmena, kai estin en autēi zōia xympanta, hosa peza kai chersaia legetai enauthu, kai phyta dēlonoti en tōi zēn hidrymena. Kai thulussa de estin ekei, kai pan zōon en hroēi kai zōōi menousā, kai ta en hydati zōia panta, aeros te physis tou ekei pantos moira, kai aeria en autōi analogon autōi tōi aeri... hōs gar hekaston tōn megalōn merōn estin, ex anangkēs houtōs echei kai hē tōn zōōn en autois physis.*
63. *Ennead* II.6.3. On the purely qualitative existence of the individual, see the extensive discussion of Wurm 1973.
64. *Esti d' autōn hē hoion hroē ek mias pēgēs, ouch hoion henos timos pneumatos ēi theriotēs mias, alla hoion ei tis ēn poiōtēs mia pasas en autēi echousa kai sōi zousa tas poiōtēas, glykutēas meta euēdias. kai homou oinōdēs poiōtēs kai chylōn hapantōn dýnymeis kai chrōmatōn opseis kai hosa haphai ginōskousin.*

65. *Dio kai eitis auton apeikazei sphairai zōsā poikilā, eite pamprosōpon ti chrēma lampron zōsi prosōpōis eite psychas tas katharas pasus eis to auto synulrumousas phantazoito ouk endeeis.*
66. See Reinhardt 1924, 116–117.
67. VI.7.13, 1: *alla poikila panta hosōi hapla, touto de hosōi mē syntheta kai hosōi energeiai.*
68. *Ouden estin autou, ho ti mē allo, hina allo on kai touto syntelē.*
69. Davidson 1980, 61.
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## PROVIDENCE: THE PLATONIC DEMIURGE AND HELLENISTIC CAUSALITY

Gary M. Gurtler

Plotinus' discussion of providence and theodicy combines elements from diverse parts of the Greek philosophical tradition. The notion of providence, for example, owes much to the Stoic doctrines of sympathy and seminal reasons, while its actual operation relies on Aristotle's notion of causality. It remains true nonetheless that the context for both of these contributions is the teaching of Plato, especially concerning the role of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*. The centrality of Plato in this instance, as in many others, is not without its difficulties. Plato, in his usual deliberate way, describes the relation between the world of Forms and the sensible world, and the consequent perfection of that world of nature, in terms of a myth, with the Demiurge having a key but mysterious role. Plotinus' more systematic approach means that he must give an exegesis of this Platonic myth in such a way that it fits coherently into his own metaphysical structures without at the same time doing violence to the Platonic text. His exegesis is indeed a conscious one, aware of the literal meaning of the text and of the principles he is using to interpret it.

Under and within this Platonic superstructure, moreover, Plotinus inserts the contributions of the Stoics and Aristotle with hardly a nod of recognition. They have been assimilated as contributing detailed analyses of particular facets of a reality that remains thoroughly Platonic in its orientation. From Plotinus' point of view they do not need exegesis, though he will at times indicate how they must be changed to fit a Platonic world. They are rather tools ready at hand for his more crucial task of understanding what is often obscure in the text of Plato.<sup>1</sup>

My emphasis will be on four treatises where Plotinus provides either a discussion of demiurgic activity or a direct exegesis of the text of the *Timaeus*, two relatively early (V.1[10] & III.9[13]) and two from late in the middle period of his writing (V.8[31] & VI.7[38]). As indicated above, two different kinds of problems emerge. One is strictly exegetical: how

to make sense of the vocabulary Plato uses to discuss the activities of the Demiurge. The second includes a systematic component: the nature itself of demiurgic activity in relation to the corresponding natures of Intellect, the Hypostasis Soul and the world soul. By looking at these two areas we can begin to see how Plotinus develops a carefully nuanced doctrine of providence and also a philosophical method for its articulation within the Platonic tradition. The particularly neuralgic character of the doctrine of providence presents us, therefore, with a glance at the way Plotinus actually went about philosophizing, the issues he considers crucial and the meaning of the texts he regards as foundational.

It is in the context of the doctrine of providence that Plotinus adumbrates how it is that the intelligible world serves as the archetype of the sensible and, in paradoxical fashion, how our knowledge of the sensible serves as the basis for our knowledge of the intelligible. In this regard, he shows great subtlety in moving from concepts or analogies that have their original meaning in relation to sensible experience to the nature and functioning of these ideas when transferred to the realm of the intelligible. Providence thus can be understood not only as a cosmic ordering principle or theodicy but as a peculiar version of the argument for the existence of God in terms of design.

## 1. The Demiurge and Its Planning

In the two early treatises (V.1[10] & III.9[13]), Plotinus sets out to qualify the two key areas that will allow for the possibility of providence, the nature of the Demiurge itself and the language describing its planning activity. His procedure is similar in both cases, moving from an univocal to an analogical understanding of the areas involved. The Demiurge, for example, is identified in the strictest sense with the Intellectual Principle itself, but to operate in the generation of the sensible world its activities must be spread out to include the Hypostasis Soul and the world soul.<sup>2</sup> In a similar way, Soul's reasoning or planning [*dianoia* or *logismos*] must be carefully distinguished from the discursive mode of human thought from which it gets its name and with which it is analogous. The two moves delineate the intermediate nature and function of the soul, which serves as the ontological link between the intelligible and sensible worlds and thus as the locus where providence operates in the Plotinian system. In the later treatise considered in this part, V.8[31], Plotinus specifies the planning of

the Demiurge by means of a contrast to human artistry, thus completing the groundwork for the major discussion in VI.7[38].

### 1.1 *The Soul as Demiurge*

The first passages, from the treatise 'On the Three Primary Hypostases' (V.1[10]), are taken from the middle of the treatise, omitting the preliminary and final sections about the ascent of the individual soul, which begins with its initial identification with the world soul. In this middle section, Plotinus shifts the analysis to the radically different point of view of the relation of the hypostasis Soul to Intellect and the One, on the one hand, and to the sensible cosmos, on the other. The shift is subtle and not all commentators recognize it, but two mutually supportive factors provide strong evidence for it.<sup>3</sup> First, Plotinus begins to discuss the emanation of Soul from Intellect and, second, there is an implicit recapitulation of the relation of this Soul, as the Hypostasis and source, to the world soul and individual souls as its participants. Two passages in particular specify characteristics of the Soul that make it different from Intellect and thus crucial in determining its demiurgic role. They occur at the beginning and end of this middle section, at VI.1.3 & 7.

But one must understand that the activity on the level of Intellect does not flow out of it, but [remains in itself while] the external activity comes into existence as something distinct. Since then its existence derives from Intellect soul is intellectual, but its intellect is in reasonings [*logismois*], and its perfection comes from Intellect, like a father who brings to maturity a son whom he begat imperfect in comparison with himself. Soul's establishment in reality, then, comes from Intellect and its reason [*logos*] becomes actual in its seeing of Intellect. (V.1.3, 12-15: adapted from Armstrong translation)

There is a good bit of ambiguity in this passage. The closeness of Soul and Intellect is both affirmed and denied. The Soul is like the Intellect as having the same intellectual nature, like a son to a father, but its intellection is described as reasonings and reason and its sonship is of a peculiar kind not maturing to eventual equality of being. The ambiguity is deliberate, with Plotinus indicating the nature of the Soul as on the border of the intelligible and sensible worlds with its own function as the generative mediator between the two. This function of the soul is clearly demiurgic, preserving the transcendence of the Intelligible world and allowing for the generation of the sensible, while at the same time defining

the nature of soul in terms of its own being and knowing. For our purposes, however, the terms used for the soul's knowing present a further problem.

The soul analyzed here is definitely the Hypostasis Soul, but Plotinus uses the terms *logismos* and *logos* to describe its knowing in contrast to the *nous* (intellect) and *noera* (intellectual activity) that characterize Intellect itself. The meaning of these terms comes directly from the discursive character of human reasoning, but such discursiveness is impossible in the case of the Hypostasis Soul, which is completely within the Intelligible world. On the one hand, Plotinus is attempting to convey the demiurgic function of the Soul as the repository of the rational, creative, formative principles (*logoi*) that operate in the generation of the sensible world. On the other hand, as V.1.7 points out, the proper activity of the soul is nonetheless intellectual, with the inferior activities connoted by *logismos* and *logos* actually belonging to an inferior type of soul.

And the offspring of Intellect is a rational form [*logos*] and an existing being [*hypostasis*], that which reasons [*to dianoonumenon*]; it is this which moves round Intellect and is light and trace of Intellect and dependent on it, united to it on one side and so filled with it and enjoying it and sharing in it and thinking [*nooun*], but, on the other side, in touch with the things which came after it, or rather itself generating those things which must necessarily be worse than soul; about these we must speak later. (V.1.7, 42-48: adapted from Armstrong translation)

The problem thus centers on the application of *logos* and *dianoeisthai* to the soul. *Dianoeisthai* adds a crucial word that also carries the connotations of planning and deliberation, modeled on the discursive character of human making. The caveat to a simple and literal interpretation of either of these terms, with their full discursive character to the fore, is once more pressed home by the divided character of the soul. The Soul is lower as a certain *logos* and hypostasis different from Intellect, one which reasons (*to dianoonumenon*), but is so close to Intellect on its higher side as to be filled with it and think (*nooun*), only on its lower side producing things worse than itself. Since Intellect itself is described in this treatise as a *logos* of the One (V.1.6, 45), it is clear that Plotinus is using this term in a technical sense which indicates ontological subordination rather than discursive thought or reason. In addition, the consistent way Plotinus posits the soul's own true activity as intellective, using *nous* and *nooun*, makes sense only if *logismos* and *dianoeisthai* can also mean something other than discursive thought in these passages. More evidence

is needed, however, to confirm this initial reading and to fill out more completely what Plotinus means by it and how he actually understands the analogy between their use with reference to the human soul and to these higher levels of soul.

The second treatise in this early period, the first note of Various Considerations (III. 9[13].1), provides more abundant material for resolving these issues. First of all, it is a specific exegesis of *Timaeus* 39e7-9, particularly concerned with the relation of the Demiurge to Plotinus' own threefold division of reality into the One, Intellect and Soul. Secondly, although only *dianoeisthai* and *dianoia* are used, the same problem emerges of applying this term in its strict discursive sense to either Intellect or Soul as Demiurge.<sup>4</sup> This treatise thus provides a glimpse at Plotinus' exegetical problem, how to make sense of a Platonic passage that seems, at least linguistically, not to fit his own philosophical position.

'Intellect,' Plato says, 'sees the Ideas contained in the living creature which is.' Then the Demiurge, he says, 'planned [*dienoethe*] that this universe too should have the things, which Intellect sees in the living creature which is.' (III.9.1, 1-3: following Igal III-IV, 265)

Plato himself uses *dianoeisthai*, with Plotinus supplying the Demiurge as its subject. Parallel passages (V.1[10].10; IV.4[28].12; II.9[33].6; V.8[31].6-8; VI.7[38].1) contain the same juxtaposition of demiurgic function and planning, each attempting to unravel the seeming contradictions between the description of this function as planning and the ontological nature of Intellect and Soul, which excludes any kind of movement in Plotinus' theory of intellectual knowledge.

In the present passage, therefore, Plotinus first determines whether or not the living creature and Intellect are in fact the same thing, distinct only in thought, stating that there is nothing to prevent this identification from being Plato's intention (III.9.1, 10-15). Nor do the words of Plato rule out the possibility of two Intellects, one the intelligible object which is at rest and the other the Intellect that sees it (III.9.1, 15-22). This exegesis admits openly that the text of Plato supports a number of interpretations, only one of which corresponds to his own and one of which was current in the generation before him. He argues for his own position, the second hypostasis as Demiurge, but combines it with the thesis of two Intellects, the middle Platonic position which he normally rejects, as Igal notes (III-IV, 266 n9), putting his conclusion in these terms:

This, then, is that which planned [*dianoethen*] to make in this universe the four kinds of living creatures which it sees in the intelligible. (III.9.1, 21-22: Armstrong translation)

This, however, raises an *aporia*, that the planning function of the Demiurge is in fact not appropriate for the Intellect, whether in its middle Platonic formulation or his own, so some other alternative must be sought. In a very revealing way, moreover, Plotinus indicates that the text of Plato is in itself of no help, and that the solution comes from principles supplied by the interpreter. Exegesis cannot force the text to say something that it does not, although a good exegete, using principles consistent with a Platonic system, should be able to give a consistent, if not conclusive, interpretation.

It seems, nevertheless, that Plato is trying obscurely to make the planner [*to dianoooumenon*] something other than those two. But to others it will seem that the three are one, the living creature which exists in itself, the intellect, and the planner [*to dianoooumenon*]. Rather, as in many cases, proceeding from different premises, there are different ways of understanding that there are three. (III.9.1, 23-26: following Igal III-IV, 267: Cf. Armstrong III, 409)

The difficulty concerns the activities ascribed to the Intellect on the basis of the passage in the *Timaeus*. The Intellect would not only plan what is to be made in the physical universe, but actually carry out the making and dividing, which are clearly functions inappropriate for its eternal and undivided nature. Thus Plotinus is forced to conclude that there must be a third, other than Intellect and the living creature, which actually does something closer to planning than Intellect can and, more importantly, is able to do the dividing necessary in the generation of the sensible world.

We have already spoken of two, but who is this third, who itself planned [*dienoethe*] to construct and make and divide into parts the things that Intellect sees lying in the living creature? (III.9.1, 27-29: following Igal III-IV, 267)

The nub of the problem is the dividing that is done. The Demiurge makes the four kinds of living things (III.9.1, 22)—heavenly beings, birds, fish, and land animals—and a parallel division into types of soul—gods and men, animals and plants. In a way this division comes from Intellect, but the dividing must be the work of Soul, and especially the world soul, a

position that becomes a commonplace in the later treatises of the *Enneads*. Thus, as in V.1[10], Soul is identified with the Demiurge that planned:

Because of this Plato says that the division belongs to the third and is in the third, because it planned [*dienoethe*], which—the planning [*dianoia*—is not the work of Intellect, but of Soul, which has a divided activity in a divided nature. (III.9.1, 34-37: adapted from Armstrong translation)

Though it is appropriate that Soul be that which plans, the strict sense of *dianoia* as discursive thought must still be guarded against. This is true for both the hypostasis Soul and the world soul. We might say that Soul has a planning-in-itself that precedes the actual division into bodies, which is accomplished by the world soul.<sup>2</sup> The world soul in its planning also does not deliberate in carrying out the division, a point that will be made abundantly clear in VI.7[38].1. Thus the terms Plotinus uses here in III.9[13] and earlier in V.1[10], *logismos* or *dianoia* and their cognates, cannot have the discursive character in the Hypostasis Soul and the world soul that they do in the human soul. Why then are they used? Plotinus wants to distinguish two aspects of soul's being and knowing, in conformity with his theory of two acts: the full intellectual act by which it is identified with the Intellect and that act by which its own identity as soul is revealed in generating the sensible cosmos. This second act gets its name from what it produces, but must still have a nature more compatible with the Intelligible. Another aspect of Plotinus' method is implicit in this instance, that our terminology for describing reality, whether sensible or intelligible, derives from sensible experience, and will need appropriate redefinition when we begin to apply it to the higher realms of Soul and Intellect. The next treatise, V.8[31], from the middle period, provides a more explicit contrast to clarify the difference between sensible and intelligible and to indicate the kind of corrective needed to make the move from knowledge of the sensible world to an understanding of the higher realms of Soul and Intellect.

## 1.2 Planning in the Demiurge and the Human Artist

In V.8[31], the second installment of the long treatise against the Gnostics, Plotinus discusses the nature of beauty and distinguishes two kinds of making, that of nature and that of art. This provides a context in which the deliberative and discursive character of the human artist can be contrasted with the non-discursive and non-deliberative character of nature

in its generation of the sensible world. Plotinus is able in this way to confirm the interpretation of the earlier passages in V.1[10] and III.9[13].1 as not implying the same kind of discursive character that is always present in their use with human knowing. At the same time he is able to describe more fully how he understands the activity of the Hypostasis Soul and the world soul as actually taking place. This second area opens up an ancillary topic, the element of design in the world and how it is traceable to a transcendent source. In this instance, moreover, the source under consideration is not Plotinus' ultimate principle or God, but an intermediate being a bit further down the ontological ladder. It is thus all the more useful for shedding light on this controverted area, since Plotinus' peculiar vantage point gives him a certain neutrality with regard to issues that emerge later in the debate about the argument from design.

In the case of both art and nature, 'reason' and 'form' (*logos* and *eidos*) are employed to describe the process of making, although they are present differently in the two different makers. *Logos*, as in the early treatises, denotes the active principle behind the making, while *eidos* picks up the content or model according to which the object is being made. Thus far art and nature are quite similar, and the one can shed light on the other. The difference between art and nature concerns, rather, how *logos* and *eidos* are present to or in each of the makers. Plotinus' contrast is between a presence that is internal in the case of nature and external in the case of the human artist.

But certainly nature which produces such beautiful works is far before them in beauty, but we, because we are not accustomed to see any of the things within and do not know them, pursue the external and do not know that it is that within which moves us: as if someone looking at his image and not knowing where it came from should pursue it. (V.8.2, 31-35: Armstrong translation)

Plotinus, taking his cue from Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, enunciates in this passage the clear orientation of human experience toward the external, the sensible world, and the role of beauty in awakening the ascent of the soul toward the internal, the Intelligible world. This has a moral dimension, alluded to in Plotinus' own allusion to the story of Narcissus, where his pursuit of his reflection leads to his self-destruction. In a similar way, the general human determination by the external, sensible world is understood by Plotinus as the circumstance allowing for moral evil and, like Plato, he finds beauty as a first corrective to this moral descent. Implicit as well is the need for an intellectual

corrective, so that nature and art are understood from the point of view of the Intelligible world, reversing this natural orientation outward and the constant misunderstanding of the intelligible in terms either of the sensible or of the discursive character of human thought.

Again here, while Plato's corrective appears as the move from dialectic to myth, Plotinus feels obliged to give a more systematic articulation. He is unusually clear throughout this treatise, for example, in giving the limitations of experience and how they can be corrected, but is equally clear in dealing with the difficulties presented by Plato's often laconic or confusing *modus dicendi*. The following passages indicate some basic principles and areas of Plotinus' program of correction.

But we have not arrived at understanding this, because we consider that the branches of knowledge are made up of theorems and a collection of propositions; but this is not true even of the sciences here below. But if someone wants to dispute about these, let them go for the present; but about the knowledge there—which Plato observed and said 'that which is not a knowledge different from that in which it is,' but how this is so, he left us to investigate and discover, if we claim to be worthy of our title [of Platonists]. (V.8.4, 48-55: Armstrong translation)

For Plotinus, the non-propositional character of authentic knowledge is the key corrective for understanding the nature of knowledge at any level above human knowing, whether nature, Soul or Intellect itself. Thus when reason or planning are used of these higher agencies, they cannot be understood in a discursive sense, but rather as indicating their relative subordination to one another at this higher level. These terms will thus be applied to nature and soul not as claiming that they operate discursively in generating the multiplicity of the sensible world, but to differentiate them from the more unified character of Intellect as abiding more completely in itself. As in earlier works, these differences are articulated in reference to the Platonic Demiurge, whose functions Plotinus must carefully parcel out.

For this reason Plato, wishing to indicate this by reference to something which is clearer relative to ourselves, represents the Craftsman approving his completed work, wishing to show by this how delightful is the beauty of the model, which is the Idea....

Plato deliberately makes it clear that he refers the 'was delighted' to the model by the words which follow: for he says, 'he was delighted, and wanted to make it still more like its model,' showing what the beauty of the model is like by saying that what originates from it is itself, too, beautiful

because it is an image of the intelligible beauty. (V.8.8, 7-11, 15-20: Armstrong translation)

Besides indicating Intellect as the ultimate source of the beauty of the sensible world, Plotinus also makes reference to his method. The sensible world is the beginning of our experience, so our concepts and ideas begin from here as the realm that is clearer to us. That is, we begin with things known through the senses and our knowledge is expressed in propositions, which indicates, in the Greek tradition, the reasoning process of combining and dividing concepts. As we advance in the ascent to the intelligible, we must therefore engage in an ongoing critique of our experience and language so that what seems initially clearer might not interfere with our appreciation of that which is in itself clearer, the intelligible realm as such, and so that our articulation of its nature might qualify the discursive character of our own expression.

At this point, we have reached the end of this preliminary investigation. Passages from three treatises—V.1[10]; III.9[13].1; and V.8[31]—have been used to identify the issues and relevant terms for a discussion of the role of the Demiurge in the generation of the sensible world. The Demiurge itself is identified with Intellect, the Hypostasis Soul and the world soul to accommodate basic principles of Plotinus' ontology. The language applied to the activity of the Demiurge, 'planning' or 'reasoning,' needs to be distinguished in the other direction from its origins as characteristic of human knowing. Finally, the mode of operation of the Demiurge or nature, as it were combining the previous two points, is fundamentally distinct from human making. What is not yet clearly on the table is the relationship of all these points to the problem of providence. The final treatise to be considered, VI.7[38], brings these issues together precisely in terms of a discussion of providence.

## 2. The Nature of Providence

The beginning of the treatise, 'How the Multitude of the Forms Came into Being, and on the Good' (VI.7[38]), presents a tightly woven argument that focuses all the elements scattered in the three earlier treatises on the problem of providence. It begins with a clear statement of the *aporia* to be resolved: the presence of natural evil in the sensible cosmos and the remarkable way sense creatures are adapted to this hostile environment. This is the evidence for providence; but the problem is

showing whether such providence is possible and, if it is, how it works. He begins by making the contrast to human making more precise. The artist must necessarily use a reasoning process that includes foresight. This in a sense is nothing more than the combination of induction and deduction involved in the production of the object. That is, Plotinus recognizes that discursive reasoning tends to work from abstract or mental plans which seek to address the variability that results from combining these plans with an appropriate matter and from the vulnerability of these products to other natural forces, which can be just as hostile to the work of art as they are to the various beings that form part of the world of nature. The Demiurge, on all its levels—Intellect, the Hypostasis Soul or the world soul—differs on both these fronts. It does not need to plan, or form a hypothesis, nor does it need to foresee, or make deductions, since its product is not a combination of plans and matter as separate and discrete elements, precisely because it does not work with an already existing contingent thing or things where alternatives and multiplicities are involved. The sensible world is instead produced as a whole, illustrating Stoic *sympathy*, albeit in a radically modified form, and the demiurgic activity occurs within nature, paralleling Stoic seminal reasons.<sup>6</sup> To establish the Demiurge as an effective agent in the production of the sensible world, however, he relies upon a transformation of the Aristotelian notion of causality, allowing it to operate between levels of reality rather than within the physical world alone. All this, nonetheless, seems to leave little room for a notion of providence as planning and foresight in the generative agent. Plotinus, therefore, must either deny the idea of providence or understand it in some other way.

Finally, this exegesis of the Platonic Demiurge illustrates once more his philosophical method. In part this method implies a hermeneutic for understanding philosophical texts, especially those of Plato. Without the historic or developmental categories of modern exegesis, Plotinus is forced to find ways around the literal meaning of a text that still come from the text itself. We have already seen an example of this in the exegesis of III.9.1, where he delicately balances the literal meaning of the text and the principles he needs to give it a reasonable interpretation in terms of his own system. He uses an analogical sense of language, but is nonetheless cautious in solving his difficulties by this means, even though analogy is a fundamental principle with deep roots both in his ontology and theory of knowledge. Analogy provides one of the major correctives needed in going from familiar discourse about the sensible world to authentic discourse about the intelligible, but it must be supplemented by and



subordinate to a synthetic grasp that begins, as we have seen, from an overall understanding of the Platonic system, moving from there to some problematic area. In addition, there is room within this hermeneutic for the detailed analyses of the Stoic or Aristotelian traditions as ways of filling out the more schematic and sometimes enigmatic approach of Plato.

## 2.1 Providence and Planning

Plotinus begins VI.7[38] with a recognition that sense powers adapt their possessors to the world which they inhabit, which is both other and hostile (VI.7.1, 19-20). The *aporia* to be resolved is whether such adaptation is the result of rational planning (*logismos*), and if it is, of what kind. Providence (*pronoia*) is the indicated mode of such planning and thus the topic of investigation. The difficulty is to determine how providence can operate in the intelligible world and, more specifically, if it does, what is its nature.

This is the providence, that they might be saved being in evil, and this is the plan [*ho logismos*] of God (Cf. *Tm* 34a8) and rational planning [*logismos*] in general. (VI.7.1, 19-21)

The statement of the problem includes as well the major objection to providence or design: the presence and influence of evil. In this context, of course, Plotinus is referring to natural evil, the result of the generation of a level of reality that is divided into parts, with the necessary result that some of those parts will be in conflict with one another. Though providence with regard to ensouled creatures involves their being protected from evil through the use of their senses, the evil itself is a necessary part of the system. Providence is therefore analogous to the rational plan and foresight needed to deal with the contingencies of sensible existence, as in the case of human making. His first argument, however, begins with an attack on this parallel to human making by inquiring into the principles through which providence operates in governing the cosmos.

But what are the principles of these rational plans [*logismoi*]? For indeed, if they are from other plans [*logismoi*], it is necessary to go back in all cases to something or some things before rational planning [*logismou*]. What then are the principles? Either sensation or intellect. But sensation is not yet, therefore intellect. But if the premises are intellect, the conclusion is knowledge; therefore there is nothing about the sensible. Where a principle

is from the intelligible and reaches completion in the intelligible, how is it possible for this same disposition to reach completion in discursive thought [*dianoesis*] about the sensible? (VI.7.1, 21-27)

It is a commonplace among the ancients that reasoning is necessarily a process that uses principles that function as the starting points for the arguments that lead to truth or for the rational plans that lead to the making of an object. Such principles stop the regress of thought because they are eternal, unchanging and outside the system. Plato and Aristotle are both in agreement about this, although they express it in radically different ways. The difference is that Plato associated planning with the Demiurge as some kind of intelligent agent that ontologically precedes the generation of the sensible world, while Aristotle's elimination of the world of forms makes the causes somehow immanent in nature, with the different problem of relating this causality to a first-principle transcending nature. Plotinus is ironically quite content with Aristotle's mode of immanent causation, and exerts far more effort to explain Plato's description of the Demiurge as actually planning, given that such a mode of thinking seems incompatible both with intelligible knowing and with immanent natural causality.

Plotinus uses a complex dialectical argument to examine the relation between intellect and reason, investigating the original problem of the Intellect's provision for the needs of sensible creatures. He begins with an explanation of Plato's affirmation that providence is from rational planning, based on the analogy to human making, where the wise, working with things that already exist in the world of becoming, must plan how they should be arranged and foresee how they will be used.

So providence from reasoning [*logismou*] is neither about a living being nor about this particular universe at all, since there is really no reasoning [*logismos*] there, but reasoning [*logismos*] is affirmed [by Plato] in reference to an indication from the universe in this way, as another wise maker works from reasoning [*logismou*] on things that are later, and foreseeing is also affirmed, because it is in this way that someone wise would pre-know it. (VI.7.1, 28-32)

Two aspects of human making are highlighted in this analogy used to explain the vocabulary Plato ascribes to the Demiurge: the inductive type of reasoning needed to use the material available profitably, and the deductive type needed to predict possible problems with the product and how to correct them. It is an indication, on the one hand, of how well

nature is constructed and adapted to innumerable contingencies and, on the other hand, of how much the analogy limps when one actually looks at the operation of the Demiurge. This second aspect occupies the next major section of the argument.

For among those things that do not come about before reasoning [*pro logismou*], the reasoning faculty [*ho logismos*] is useful for want of a power which is before reasoning [*pro logismou*], and foreseeing [*proorasis*], because the one who foresees does not have the power according to which he does not need foreseeing. Thus foreseeing [*proorasis*] occurs that it might not be *this* but *that*, and, so to speak, is afraid that it not make something of a particular sort. But where it is only this, there is no foresight. Likewise the reasoning faculty [*ho logismos*] makes a *this* before a *that*. But when there is only one alternative, what will it reason [*logizetai*]? (VI.7.1, 33-39)

Foresight and reasoning are shown to derive their function from the need of a creature who works with a material that is already at hand and therefore has to anticipate how the object will interact with other things, also not of one's making, that may well interfere with its purpose. The contrasting situation of the Demiurge is central for Plotinus' understanding of the effortless working of providence in the ordered generation of the sensible world. He proceeds:

How indeed does the alone and one and simple have that which is unfolded, '*this* that it might not be *that*,' and 'for it would be *this*, except it is *that*,' and '*this* appeared plainly useful and salutary having become *that*'? Did it then foresee and did it then pre-plan [*proelogisato*], and in particular—what has been said now from the beginning—did it give the sensations and their faculties through this means, even granting that the giving and its mode are especially hard to understand? (VI.7.1, 39-45)

I have adopted Hadot's reading\* of the second sentence here as a question, which has the advantage of making Plotinus' position consistent and setting up the precise conditions of the *aporia*: that without any kind of planning or foreseeing the Demiurge can still produce providentially. His solution, given in the rest of the chapter, is to show how Intellect can maintain its unity and also become the source of sensible multiplicity. Intellect, as a unified and perfect act, already combines present and future, so that the future is already in it, and everything that will come to be is already always there. When it is unfolded in time, then, it is as if it has been thought out beforehand, but this means only that there is nothing deficient since the act of Intellect is perfect and complete, the internal

cause (*en heauto kai tēn aitian*) of the unfolding (VI. 7.1, 45-57). Thus Plotinus posits preexistence, a preexistence that is perfect and complete and that acts from within, instead of the planning and foreseeing that characterize human making, as the nature and method of providence. With this structural change in understanding the nature of the unity of the cosmos, Plotinus is able to establish Stoic *sympathy* without Stoic materialism. We shall see later how he uses the notion of immanent causality in connection with the Stoic seminal reasons.

An analogy from human activity, moreover, might clarify this model of making from within, and it has the advantage of being used by Plotinus himself, though in a slightly different context, to understand the immateriality and consequent interpenetrability of the Intelligible world. It is the development of a science and its theorems (cf. above, V.8.4). For our purposes, it is perhaps easier to switch the analogy to the origin and development of a language. In any case, it makes no sense to say that a language or science is planned, much less that its development is foreseen. It is, as it were, contained whole and entire in the human capacity for communication. When a particular group begins to speak, this capacity for communication is unfolded as a system of meaning that cannot be radically deficient, otherwise communication could not take place at all, but is always moving unerringly toward further completion, with the rules of development operating unconsciously and immanently within it. This makes sense not only in terms of what Plotinus means by the notion of providence and the workings of the Demiurge, but also in relation to the argument for the existence of God from design. Thus the analogy of God to a clockmaker can be justifiably critiqued, but a more subtle argument about the development of order in the universe along the lines of Plotinus' position is both much more cogent and more than likely the model behind the classical Medieval formulations of the argument. This kind of argument is, moreover, implicit in the above passage, where an indication from this universe is used to understand the nature of the intelligible.\*

This brief section has set out the first part of Plotinus' program, with the silent incorporation of Stoic *sympathy* transformed into Plato's sense of the integral unity of the cosmos and the internal operation of its causality. What is left is Aristotle's analysis of causality and Stoic seminal reasons transformed into the crucial ingredients to explain the relationship between the sensible and intelligible worlds. Plotinus turns first to the Aristotelian position in the next section of the text.

## 2.2 Providence and Causality

In VI.7[38].2, he begins to reflect on the nature of causality as it appears in the sense world, where cause and effect are usually different things, in contrast to the intelligible, where they are always identical. His effort is to show how the substance (*ousia*) and essential nature (*to ti en einai*) of a thing (VI.7.2, 14-15) necessarily include both that it is and the reason why it is, such that the cause of the thing is within it as an integral member of the Intelligible world. This pairing of terms has a reference back to V.8[31], where *eidos* and *logos* are similarly joined, and forward to VI.7.4 & 5, where soul and *logos* will be analyzed in a similar way. The terms are Aristotelian, but Plotinus changes the way they are related. For Aristotle, substance is a *pros hen* equivocal, with *to ti en einai* as one of its meanings. In Plotinus, on the contrary, the two terms are related as co-principles, somewhat like form and matter in Aristotle, with one term expressing the activity of the thing and the other the thing as receiving that activity in a particular way.

Plotinus is moving the terms out of the Aristotelian context of sensible substance to the ontological context of the Intelligible world, where their relationship and function are radically altered. He thereby attempts to describe the dual operation of Intellect in the generation of its own content and ultimately of the sensible world. *Ousia* (substance) and *to ti en einai* (essential nature) thus allude to the two poles of the Intelligible world, being and knowing, both of which must contribute to, and be aspects of, any intelligible being. The relationship between these two aspects of the Intelligible world is something like that of Aristotle's act and potency, but the absence of matter in the Intelligible world changes the nature of the relationship from the horizontal generation of something similar in kind to the vertical generation of something different in substance, as lower and less unified.

This generation also proceeds from the very nature of Intellect as an act, and thus does not involve planning of any sort. Its own content is thus shown not to be planned, but to form an integrally and mutually constitutive unity-in-diversity. Each member of the Intelligible world is generated as an activity, but an activity that resides in some substance, always keeping the essential duality of the Intelligible world. In generating the sensible world, the same dual causality is at work, not making atomistic parts that need to be assembled in some secondary step, but proceeding immanently to create a whole where the parts emerge from

within it and at the same time act as co-agents in constituting its ongoing development.

He singles out one instance, the relation between the intelligible Man and the secondary man of becoming, to illustrate further this different kind of causality. At the beginning of VI. 7.3, he repeats the initial question, specifically asking if deliberation is a factor in the making of the sensible man.

What then prevents deliberating [*probouleusasthai*] about him before hand? Rather, he is according to that intelligible Man, so that neither is it necessary to take away nor to add anything, but [the Demiurge is said] to deliberate and to have reasoned [*to bouleusasthai kai lelogisthai*] by hypothesis: for [Plato] hypothesized for things that become. In this view there is deliberation and reason [*hē bouleusis kai ho logismos*], but by demonstrating an 'eternal becoming,' he denies that the [Demiurge] reasons [*logizetai*]. For it is impossible to reason [*logizesthai*] about the eternal. (VI.7.3, 1-6)

No new point is added to the initial discussion, but the restriction to a particular case clarifies the implications. As a result, Plotinus can argue that Plato does not use 'deliberation' and 'reasoning' in their strict discursive sense, but rather that the providence and rationality apparent from the sensible world show how closely it is an image of the Intelligible. Plato's hypothesis is, therefore, more like a metaphor, which he corrected by positing an eternal becoming. In a sense, qualifying the words of Plato is not merely an exercise in school loyalty, but an indication of the nature of philosophical discourse. Our understanding of the nature of things begins with experience of the sense world, but this implies a necessary critique that understands the sensible world and our way of knowing it as images that point to a reality, the nature of which is gradually articulated precisely as it is distinguished from the sensible. Plotinus thus exploits the ambiguity of the text, on the literal level, to indicate more than just clever exegetical *legerdemain*, since it articulates a critical principle in his own philosophical method, especially prominent throughout this treatise.

In the next chapter, Plotinus spells out how the intelligible Man is present in the man of becoming. He does so by means of an examination of *logos*, which has been linked in all the treatises considered here with the causality or activity of a higher reality on a lower level. This has been in conflict, however, with a sense of *logos* that is associated with human reason or the sensible cosmos alone. We have in the present context, for example, the Stoic notion of seminal reasons, which Hadot oddly takes as the Platonic productive *logos* in contrast to the Aristotelian definitional

logos (*Traite* 38, 217). It is not clear what he means by this Platonic productive logos; Stoic spermatik logoi seem the more obvious reference. It should also be noted that Aristotle's definitional logos is not meant in an exclusive sense, but as one of its technical usages. It remains to be seen, moreover, how Plotinus purports to bring these different meanings of logos, Stoic and Aristotelian, into harmony with one another.

Let us begin with his own sense of logos as an active principle. We have seen in V.1[10] that the Hypostasis Soul looked at as a whole can be described as a logos of Intellect, which emphasizes that it is the act of Intellect expressed in an external and secondary way. In V.8[31], art and nature use a logos as the active principle of their making, with form supplying the content. In the present context, the problem is the relationship between this logos as an active principle and the soul as that which receives it. On the one hand, soul and body form the composite living being; but, on the other hand, Plotinus argues, logos and soul must also be different, forming a type of composite on the level of the intelligible. Soul thus relates to the sensible composite as the logos of Aristotle's definition (VI.7[38].4, 17-28), and to the active logos coming from the intelligible Man itself as the *ousia* defined by this logos as *to ti en einai* cited earlier at VI.7.2, 14-15. Soul, by being what it is, generates something further in the sensible world, and the logos of the intelligible Man, as the active principle united with this soul, continues its active role by giving to the sensible man all the powers it needs to function. Like the power to communicate, this generation by soul and its logos does not need to be planned, because it is either there as a whole or it is not there at all.

He concludes this argument at the beginning of VI.7.5, where he links the intelligible Man and the sensible man by means of the logos that specifies the activities of a specific kind of soul and the composite being it establishes in the sensible world.

It is necessary, therefore, that man is a forming principle [*logos*] other than the soul. What prevents man from being something composite, a soul in such a forming principle [*logos*], where the forming principle [*logos*] is like a type of activity, but an activity that cannot be without that which acts? This is the case for the forming principles [*logoi*] in seeds, for they are neither without souls nor souls simply speaking. These forming principles [*logoi*] that make are likewise not soulless, and it is not at all amazing that these forming principles [*logous*] are such substances. (VI.7.5, 1-8: Armstrong translation)

In terms of previous treatises, soul is the *eidos* or *ousia* of the sensible man, while the logos, as the active principle coming from the intelligible

Man, is the *to ti en einai* that defines exactly what this kind of soul is as a substance or the spermatik logos that directs its unfolding in the sensible world.

At this point, Plotinus' anthropology can be seen in all its complexity.<sup>10</sup> He has the intelligible Man, the identity of logos and soul, which is the generative cause of the sensible man, the image of man made by soul and body (VI.7.5, 14-15). The various meanings of logos now fall into place. Logos as the active principle is used to explain the duality of the intelligible world Plotinus inherits from Plato, but it also incorporates the immanent cause denoted by the Stoics in their spermatik logos. Next the sensible composite of soul and body provides for the definitional logos of Aristotle's categorical theory. It is clear, moreover, that the rational forming principle (logos) is the key relating the intelligible and sensible, operating with the interior causality established earlier. Thus, whether in the case of the sensible universe as a whole or in that of one being within it, the result is the same. As an image of the intelligible it does not need to be made by any kind of planning or foresight, but proceeds as a whole from a whole, though it is unfolded in time.

A final passage continues this reflection on human nature. Plotinus repeats that reasoning as such is not in the Intelligible, but then asks why this faculty is only present in human nature in the sensible world.

For neither is the reasoning faculty [*to logikon*] There: for perhaps the reasoning faculty [*to logikon*] is here, but There that which is before reasoning [*logizesthai*]. Why does this man reason [*logizetai*] here, but no other living thing? Rather, since there is a difference There in thinking [*ou noein*] between Man and other living things, so there is also a difference in reasoning [*to logizesthai*]; for many activities of reason [*dianoias*] are in some way possible also for other living things. (VI.7.9, 9-14)

The major addition of this brief passage is to underline the analogous use of language that is behind Plotinus' whole discussion. 'Reason' is analogous in two different directions. Usually it shows the continuity between reason and intellect, but it can also indicate the continuity of reason in lower forms of knowing and perception.

Plotinus has shown in this section the subtlety of his position. What was implicit in the earlier treatises is faced with considerable frankness. It is interesting that the problem of evil is not the main sticking point in justifying providence; evil rather confirms the presence of providence in the sensible cosmos. The main problem concerns the possibility of providence given the nature of the Intelligible world. Our sense of how

providence works might begin with an anthropomorphic model, but Plotinus is relentless in showing that the reasoning and foreseeing of the human artist are at best ways around the defective character of human knowing and making. The Demiurge, as soul or Intellect, is not handicapped in this way and thus operates without such planning and foreseeing. It acts in a way that is both different and difficult to articulate. As the artist works premeditatively and externally, the Demiurge works without any deliberation at all and internally. When Intellect generates something, it has a dual aspect: It is a substance that has as well its own active principle within it. This establishes a chain of causality that moves from higher to lower levels of reality, reaching finally to the sensible world itself. This chain of causality is similar to Aristotle's, as composed of active and passive elements, but is radically different, as proceeding vertically rather than horizontally.

### 3. Conclusion

The discussion of providence afforded by these four treatises is far from complete. They provide instead an introduction to a topic that occupies Plotinus' attention at different times throughout the whole period of his writing. As a good introduction, they indicate the basic themes and problems that arise in relation to providence but none of them provide an exhaustive treatment of the problem, with objections and counter positions given and discussed. For that one needs to turn to the later treatise on providence, III.2 & 3[47 & 48]. Nonetheless they illustrate in a remarkable way how Plotinus goes about dealing with an issue, collecting his thoughts about one detail or another and building a case that is clearer and stronger as he goes along.

Another advantage of these four treatises is that the problem of providence is discussed in terms of the Platonic Demiurge, which means that Plotinus is forced to reflect a little more fully on the actual mechanism that allows providence to work. The problems he faces in this pursuit occur in multiple areas: the identity of the Demiurge itself, Plato's description of the demiurgic activity in mythical terms that are highly anthropomorphic, the difference between human reasoning and the thought of Intellect, and the difficulty in finding a proper way to articulate the causal activity of the Demiurge, whether as the world soul, the Hypostasis Soul, or Intellect itself. These problems come to focus in two major difficulties: the exact nature and functioning of the Demiurge as

providential and the proper exegesis of the Platonic *Timaeus*. While the description of the Demiurge is of central concern, the exegetical problem, tackled in one treatise after another, reveals some interesting insights into the way Plotinus actually philosophizes. Taking Plato as his model doesn't imply abdicating his own rational powers, nor does it imply an uncritical rejection of other philosophers, like Aristotle and the Stoics. In the texts examined, in fact, one of the main problems is elucidating what Plato means, given his use of myth and consequent lack of rational precision. While Plotinus' interpretation of the Platonic text is not exactly critical according to today's standards, it is not particularly fanciful. He respects the literal meaning of the text and articulates his own principles of interpretation. Where he can, he bases his interpretation on some facet of the text itself; where he cannot, he admits that he is following certain principles to explain what Plato has put incompletely or enigmatically. In the process, he is outlining a theory of analogy that is not without connection to his overall purpose in enunciating the principles of providence, that is, indicating the nature of the sensible as an image of the intelligible.

In summarizing his discussion of providence, however, he shows first that the providential role of the Demiurge must itself be spread out among various levels of his own hierarchy of Being. The role of Soul as an active agent must be distinguished from that of Intellect, to preserve the perfection of the Intellect itself. World soul must in turn be distinguished from the Hypostasis Soul for similar reasons. With the agency thus parceled out, the attention shifts to the process, the planning, reasoning or foreseeing, that is used to introduce providence into the sensible world. The planning and foreseeing of the Demiurge are sharply differentiated from the processes of human thought, which give them their names and to which they are analogous. Plotinus moves in two directions at once, distinguishing the role of the soul from Intellect and then making a similar distinction between soul's activity and human thinking. Thus he applies planning and foreseeing to the activity of the Soul in distinguishing it from Intellect, but provides a critique of this usage to avoid an anthropomorphic understanding of providence. Such a critique is particularly crucial in terms of the natural tendency to understand the intelligible world and its operations in terms of concepts derived from the sensible world and human activities operative within it. Plotinus thus has two tasks, to indicate the foundation of the analogy in the nature of the sensible world and human thinking as images of the intelligible and to distinguish the actual nature and activity of the intelligible from these sensory images and models.

Plotinus provides a dialectical movement of affirmation and negation to accomplish his purpose and to safeguard both the relative validity of sense experience and the possibility of authentic knowledge of the intelligible itself. Finally, he must provide a positive understanding of the relation of the Intelligible and sensible worlds through a causality that can adequately link them. He tacitly admits that Plato's works do not provide such a causal theory. He must therefore borrow from Aristotle, especially his understanding of act and potency, but needs to do a bit of reworking to allow causality to operate between different ontological levels. What results is a very subtle account of providence based squarely on the Platonic position that the sensible cosmos is a beautifully complex image of the Intelligible world.

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## NOTES

1. More information on the Stoic notion of providence and its relation to that of Plotinus can be found elsewhere in this volume in the chapter by Laura Westra, "Freedom and Providence." Her discussion focuses on the impact of providence on human freedom and moral responsibility, both among the Stoics and in Plotinus himself. My discussion emphasizes the Platonic sources for providence especially in earlier treatises and thus is complementary to Westra's discussion of III.2 & 3 [47 & 48]. It also provides support for her contention that Plotinus "should not be resolved into his sources," by showing how those sources fit into a Platonic context. In addition, the inclusion of Aristotle's theory of causality forms part of the general metaphysical aim showing how providence functions within the confines of a Platonic theory of reality. Further analysis of Plotinus' relation to Aristotle in terms of his metaphysical interests can be found in my article, "Plotinus and the Platonic *Parmenides*," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1992), 441-445. Thus, while Westra concentrates more clearly on the anthropological and ethical repercussions of the doctrine of providence in Plotinus' major discussion of the topic, this paper focuses on ontological and noetic issues scattered in several earlier treatises.
2. Armstrong, *Plotinus: Enneads*, Loeb Classical Library: 7 volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966-1988), states that Plotinus always identifies the craftsman with Intellect, and never with Soul (volume 5, 40 n1), but the passages examined here state rather unambiguously that the Demiurge is concerned with the universe more directly than is possible for the Intellect. It is much simpler to follow Igal's thesis, *Plotino: "Enéadas" I-II, III-IV* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1982, 1985), I-II, 73, 79-83, 405 & III-IV, 267-268, that the demiurgic function is analogous, with Intellect the true maker and Demiurge (V.9[49].3, 25-26), the Soul, as receiving the *logoi*

from it, the planning principle, and lastly the world soul making the actual divisions in the sense world (III.9[13].1 and II.3[52].17 & 18). My book, *Plotinus: The Experience of Unity* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988) confirms Igal's thesis by showing how it fits into the major structural paradigm that undergirds both Plotinus' ontology and psychology. Atkinson, *Plotinus: Ennead V, 1, On the Three Principal Hypostases* (Oxford University Press, 1983), 22-23, also admits the different references of the Demiurge in Plotinus' usage.

3. Armstrong, neither in his synopsis nor in the translation, indicates the change from world soul to the Hypostasis Soul. This is not surprising, since his notes on IV.9 do not indicate that Plotinus distinguishes the Hypostasis from the world soul, although his translation is accurate enough to express it (e.g. at IV.9.1, 13). H. J. Blumenthal, "Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul," *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris: Éditions de Centre de la Recherche Scientifique, 1971), 55-63, and Igal III-IV, 545, both maintain that Plotinus does distinguish the Hypostasis from the world soul, but are somewhat hesitant about how early this takes place in Plotinus' writings. In the context of V.1, the unity of chapter 3-7 about the Hypostases and the parallel between chapters 2 and 10 on the relation of the world soul and the individual soul, for both of which the Hypostases are described as external, indicate that the distinction is operative, despite Plotinus' laconic transitions. Atkinson, *Ennead V, 1*, 62 & 89, presents Plotinus' argument as if the same soul is being discussed all the way through, with the resultant complaint of inconsistency.
4. Igal III-IV, 268 n18, makes this question of the meaning of *dianoesthai* and *dianoia* explicit, which Armstrong implicitly supports by translating them as 'plan'. Armstrong's problem, as noted, is the identification of the Demiurge with soul, which he argues Plotinus never does (vol. 5, 40 n1). Igal, both in III-IV, 267 n13, and in I-II, 73, argues that Plotinus posits three Demiurges: Intellect, Hypostasis Soul, and world soul. Igal's position reflects the fact that Plotinus divides the various functions of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* so that each function is matched with an appropriate level of Being, which Armstrong reluctantly admits in his note on the present treatise (volume 3, 410 n1).
5. The same difficulty can be found in terms of time and eternity, where the Soul is described as eternally in the Intellect, and yet as temporal. P. Manchester, "Time and the Soul," *Dionysus* 2 (1978), 128-136, explains this paradox by showing that there is a Time-in-itself in the hypostasis Soul and a successive time in the sensible order. In a similar way, the content of the Hypostasis Soul is both less unified than that of Intellect, since its movement is directed outward, but more unified than its successive unfolding in Nature. Though unified in itself as within the Intelligible world, this focus outward to the division of sensible bodies makes the term 'planning' a more fitting description of its activity.

6. It is worthwhile to compare this internal agency with the comments of Laura Westra about the Stoic background in the second part of her chapter in this volume. She points out the immanent way in which the world soul operates and the impersonal character of the logos which establishes the unity of the natural order. Providence for the Stoics, she observes, has three goals: to structure, to complete, and to beautify the world. These three aspects of providence are part of Plotinus' own program, but they are not so much goals as means to achieving the goal of conforming the sensible world to its intellectual archetype. Westra pushes this a bit further back to the Good or One as the aim of all things. This is indeed true, although the particular interest of my argument is restricted to the relation of providence to the Intelligible and sensible worlds alone.
7. There is some textual difficulty at VI.7.1, 30–32, with Harder deleting *allos sophos* and Theiler deleting *en tois hysteron* (Cf. critical apparatus in H-S<sup>2</sup>). Theiler's deletion has been followed, since it makes no essential difference to the meaning. Harder's deletion, however, is another matter. I take both clauses as referring to human making in contrast to the providence of the world soul or Intellect, and thus "the other wise one" is the human craftsman, who works from a plan and on materials that already exist. This is consistent with Plotinus' usual point of contrasting the discursive nature of human reason and the non-discursive nature of higher souls and, especially, of Intellect (Cf. IV.4.12). The alternative is that the world soul, as the making Demiurge, is contrasted with Intellect. This does not, however, seem to account for all the elements as easily as the human craftsman. 'On Providence I&II' (III 2 & 3[47 & 48]), moreover, provides a confirmation of this reading.

The ordering of the universe, then, corresponds with Intellect in such a way that it exists without rational planning [*logismou*], but exists so that if anyone could plan rationally [*logismō*], as well as possible, he would wonder at it because planning [*logismos*] could not have found out another way to make it; something of this is observed even in individual natures, which come into being continually more conformed to Intellect than they could be by an ordering which depended on rational planning [*logismou*]. (III.2[47].14, 1–6: Armstrong translation)

8. Pierre Hadot, *Traité 38 (VI 7)* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1988), 195–197. While one or another point might be disputed, this translation and commentary is invaluable for understanding this complex treatise. It is particularly helpful in the part immediately after the texts that are of concern here, where he discusses Plotinus' anthropology in a rather full way.
9. The claim that Plotinus has anything like the argument for the existence of God from design is on the face of it quite improbable. The transcendence of the One and its necessary lack of interest in the emanations from it are both

emphatically and consistently maintained throughout the Plotinian corpus. The argument presented here in fact gives indirect confirmation of this central Plotinian thesis. It is thus not in relation to the One that a version of the argument from design can be found, but rather in the role of the Demiurge in generating the sensible cosmos from its intellectual archetype.

This different context gives the argument a character much different from later versions working from Christian presuppositions. Plotinus argues that the sensible cosmos, including the evil that is present within it, must have its immediate origin in the Intelligible world, focusing his attention on the nature and mode of design itself. In agreement with later authors, Plotinus thus sees the issues of providence and theodicy as at the heart of the argument from design, but they operate in a strange sort of way. The agent, here the Platonic Demiurge, must be kept as far as possible from any whiff of pre-planning or deliberation. This is a corollary of his general principle, already mentioned above, that a higher reality is transcendent in such a way as to be uninvolved with what follows from it as well as his specific principle that the mode of knowing in the Intelligible world is non-discursive. This joint metaphysical and epistemological restriction gives his argument a sophistication that is not without relevance for understanding the cogency of such arguments in contemporary debate. Plotinus' scheme makes quite clear why design or order or reason are discernible in the workings of the physical universe, and thus how that design is discoverable by the human mind and expressed in discursive sciences. This in no way means, however, that the agent, whether looked at as Intellect, Soul or world soul, has a similarly discursive plan or model. In other words, Plotinus maintains a clear distinction between the operations of nature and those of human making. Thus design has nothing in common with William Paley's version of the argument in his *Natural Theology*, which makes a jump from inferring a watchmaker upon finding a watch to inferring a divine agent upon finding a stone. Our explanation of the stone can be logical and reasonable, but that does not entail that nature itself has a blueprint that somehow corresponds to our explanation. Plotinus is explicit, moreover, that nature cannot in fact operate in the way a human agent does in making an object. The sensible world, therefore, is ordered and unified not because nature is a conscious cause working with a plan, but because the alternative, as neither ordered nor unified, could not even exist.

The medieval argument from design, as found for example in Aquinas' fifth way, where things that lack knowledge still act for an end, depending on an intelligent being which directs them to their ends, has more in common with Plotinus' argument than Paley's. It is intelligence as such, and not the capacity to form a plan, that directs beings toward their ends, which are seen as part of an ordered and unified whole. The difference in this case is that Plotinus' ordered hierarchy of causes pushes the problem of design away from God as first principle and toward divinities (Intellect and Soul) as

mediating principles. From this point of view, certain issues become clarified in greater detail, as can be seen in V.8[31] and VI.7[38], where the distinction between divine and human production can be seen with a subtlety that Christian theism tends to find superfluous. Plotinus has a middle position between full intelligence, expressed in Intellect and Soul at their highest, and the discursive character of human thought. This middle position allows for a more complex analysis of the actual working out of design, the conclusions of which can be used to supplement the more tersely described operation of design in a system where creation takes the place of generation.

10. Igal, "Aristoteles y la evolución de la antropología de Plotino," *Pensamiento* 35 (1979), 315–346, and "Introducción General" I–II, 52–62, shows how Plotinus combines Aristotle's division of the soul into vegetative, sensitive and rational with Plato's different division into rational, spirited and appetitive parts. H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology* (The Hague: Martinus Hijhoff, 1971), 21–22, 48, 103–104, 135, argues very strongly that Plotinus rejects Plato's tripartition of the soul, only using it in ethical contexts where it seems less in conflict with his general theory of soul. Accounting for evil obviously confronts Plotinus with a different set of problems than the cognitive operations for which he favors Aristotle's faculties. Plotinus must preserve the soul's impassibility while at the same time giving it some role in the explanation of evil. Plato's two lower parts, the appetitive and spirited, provide the context in which evil can take place, but the role of the rational part is also recognized as causative. There is no reason, however, to see this as in conflict with the use of Aristotle's psychological faculties to explain various sensory processes, such as perception and imagination.

## FREEDOM AND PROVIDENCE IN PLOTINUS

Laura S. Westra

I contend that *freedom* represents the central notion in the philosophy of Plotinus. Although there are only four instances of 'free' (or 'freedom') in the *Enneads* as a whole, with the exception of the intensive discussion of the concept in *Enneads* VI.8, if the One is Absolute Freedom and the One represents the culmination of Plotinus' philosophy as well as our highest ideal, my contention is defensible on textual grounds. Yet, although our ascent to the One is through virtue and this assumes at least some possession of freedom, so that we can be viewed as moral agents, a question remains: What is the relationship between the 'self' (or our 'upper soul') and universal laws? If such laws are rational, ordained, eternal, and immutable, what does this imply for individual freedom? Can we maintain the position of staying determinedly aloof, uninvolved and free—as Plotinus counsels—even though we are part of the cosmic organism and thus subject to its laws?

### 1. Introduction to the Problem

*Pronoia*, the Greek term for providence, means 'pre-knowing.' Now, this notion seems to imply a fixed series of circumstances, with the one following upon the other in a relentless sequence, whereas *freedom*, in both its fullest sense (as descending or as originating from the One) and its derived sense (as ascending, as a commitment and an ideal from our standpoint) seems out of place in such a context. As we will see, Plotinus' views on providence are played out against the background of the Stoic conception, for he accepts some of the tenets of the Stoics and rejects others.<sup>1</sup> In the final analysis, the problematic we are dealing with here (i.e. the role, and even the possibility, of freedom in a universe under the rule of providence) will give us an answer to the question whether providence as Plotinus discusses it is—and can be—mainly Stoic.



The notion of Plotinian 'virtue' may be viewed as progressively freeing us from involvement—and even connections—with others as much as possible.<sup>1</sup> There are difficulties in trying to reconcile the way this term is understood in ordinary language with its meaning for Plotinus. In the case of virtue there are three possible senses to deal with: virtue in its religious sense, virtue in its moral but non-religious sense, and moral virtue in its Plotinian sense. Examination reveals that there are serious differences between the third sense and the first two senses, and that these differences are rooted in the central notion in Plotinus' thought, namely, freedom, which has a special meaning for him and plays the central role in his metaphysics. Freedom is a notion that tends to illuminate the more obscure aspects of his thought.

The problem of the conflict between providence and freedom is even more acute because the ordinary-language understanding of the former is exclusively religious. We may speak, for example, of 'providing for someone' or of an event as 'providential,' but the noun does not really lend itself to nonreligious uses. Furthermore, we must remember Rist's warning about "not dissolving Plotinus into his sources."<sup>2</sup> In few contexts is this danger so acute as in the case of providence; in fact, if the role of freedom in his philosophy is not properly understood, the difference between Plotinus and the Stoics when it comes to providence will appear minimal. And this may lead to further misunderstandings. For instance, A. Graeser, after comparing a number of Plotinian texts with texts found in the Stoics, concludes by calling Plotinian free will "a precursor to Kantian good will." Not only does this appear anachronistic, it is a conclusion that totally disregards the meaning of the ascent and the supernoetic nature of its goal for Plotinus.<sup>3</sup> He adds: "Plotinus, to be subjected to this intelligible environment is evidently guarantee of its liberty,"<sup>4</sup> which is hardly the whole story. The 'intelligible environment,' for Plotinus and also in some sense for us, is a given against whose limits and confines our individually-won quest for personal liberty is to be fought out. Moreover, the 'intelligible environment' is not just limit and background but also the embodied reminder of our own intelligible beauty and of our capacity (which, unfortunately, is not guaranteed to succeed) to reach beyond it, to freedom.

Bréhier provides us with another example of what can go wrong when we limit ourselves to Plotinus' sources in trying to understand him. Bréhier suggests: "The name 'One' contains perhaps nothing but the negation of the manifold." He then quotes Dean Inge to the effect that "perhaps Plotinus utilizes the word 'One' only because the Greek had no

symbol for zero."<sup>5</sup> Even a cursory glance at *Enneads* VI.8 and many of the passages examined in this study flatly rules out such an interpretation. Neither sheer Unity (an interpretation apparently based on the Pythagoreans) nor 'zero' can even begin to do justice to the multifaceted Act, Being, Good, and Freedom in the One, especially in His providential role. Therefore neither of these interpretations captures Plotinus' originality.

The problems we face in this essay, then, are twofold. On the one hand, we must guard against reading too much of his background and sources in his notion of 'providence.' To make sure that inherited concepts are kept separate from what is original in Plotinus, I will begin with a brief examination of the Stoics. On the other hand, we must be equally careful not to import later and alien meanings into his conception of providence. To guard against this danger, I will also discuss briefly the difference between the Christian understanding of providence and the view held by Plotinus. In the process I will draw directly on the Gospels rather than taking up the treatment of providence in this or that Christian philosopher or theologian. In relation to both of these problems, the original Plotinian meaning of freedom will suffice to steer us away from misunderstandings. In the former case, we will see that the main difference between the Stoic conception of providence and the Plotinian one hinges on the meaning of freedom. And in the latter instance we will have to rely on 'freedom' as well to keep Plotinus' view of providence separate from the conception to be found in ordinary language.

## 2. The Stoic Background

The background to Plotinus' doctrine is to be found in the Stoics. The main meaning of Providence in the Stoic context is "foreseeing and foreseeing correctly."<sup>6</sup> Plutarch regards Zeus and Providence as two possible separate roles played by the same entity, although this interpretation might not be accurate.<sup>7</sup> Reale instead emphasizes Providence as "a consequence of the affirmation of finality" and as a concept that is largely original with the Stoics, although he notes that "it does not have anything to do with the providence of a personal God."<sup>8</sup> He views Providence as an expression of "universal finality," since every being is part of the logos (reason) and is therefore good in that sense. It is the "immanent artificer, the World Soul," Reale says, citing Cicero.

Reale's claim about the lack of a personal God as a major component of the notion of Providence is the main point to be defended in any effort to show that there is a difference between a religious understanding of Providence and the Plotinian/Stoic counterpart of this notion. Therefore I will cite a few Stoic sources and discuss them. Cicero says the following about Zeno's doctrine: "Such being the nature of the world-mind, it can therefore correctly be designated as practical wisdom, or Providence (for in Greek it is termed *pronoia*), and this Providence is chiefly directed and concentrated upon three objects, namely, to secure for the world first, the structure best fitted for survival, next, absolute completeness, but chiefly consummate beauty and embellishment of every kind."<sup>11</sup> All three 'objects' are creatively intellectual. Providence is planning and organizing the whole, ensuring that the world is fit to survive, complete and beautiful, that is, intellectually organized. In the providential relation, the relata are 'Providence' and 'the world,' and no personalized concern for any individual part of aspect of the world is required. The relation is that of a far-seeing planner to his well-put-together plan. The result is 'good' in the sense of being emotionally charged with goodwill toward any human being or entity.

In another passage Cicero praises God's power and his ability to accomplish anything "without toil," which is unlike the way our mind directs our actions and decisions. He says: "the moulder and manipulator of the universal substance is Divine Providence, whithersoever it moves, is able to perform whatever it will."<sup>12</sup> Reale here draws the obviously correct conclusion I mentioned earlier, namely, that providence is not concerned with individual human beings. But a further point can be made beyond the one Reale mentions: Providence appears to have a will. The passage cited indicates not only the ability to perform any chosen action but also the freedom to do so. In this way Providence manifests freedom in its activity, which is a point not explicitly argued for but well worth keeping in mind when we return to Plotinus.

Finally, Stobaeus discusses 'fate' in Zeno and Antipater. Fate can also be called 'nature' or 'necessity' as well as 'Providence.' Other appropriate terms that could be used are 'truth,' 'cause' and 'logos.'<sup>13</sup> This represents an interesting move away from the dichotomy of Ideas/Demiurge (on the side of reason) and 'necessity' as sheer unformed matter in Plato's *Timaeus*. Reason is no longer just external and in opposition to the matter of the Universe; instead it is an immanent principle of regular, forming and organizing/planning power. Therefore

freedom is necessarily in Providence, as is rationality. This is no longer Plato's doctrine, but it is not quite Plotinus' either, as we shall see.

This is not the place to rehash the abundant literature on the problem of freedom in the Stoics, who wish to retain morality (as based on personal responsibility and thus on free choice) while at the same time upholding Fate (as Necessity? or as Providence?). Rist has analyzed this aporia. Some actions, after all, are in our power: for instance, we affirm our freedom by means of the ultimate choice open to man (i.e. suicide) in certain appropriate circumstances. This position was held by the Stoics, and by Plotinus as well: "Obviously we shall die; that is fate. But there is no necessity (in Chrysippus' sense) for us to die at any time other than the time we choose."<sup>14</sup> This sentence is not obviously true, for one might decide to commit 'therapeutic' suicide tomorrow but be struck down by lightning or robbers today. Nevertheless the sense of being able to choose freely is clearly part of the decision to commit suicide when understood along the lines of the Stoics and Plotinus. Rist says: "Fate for Chrysippus is what will be, not what must be, and that still allows for something to be in our power (*eph' hēmin*)."<sup>15</sup> If this is so, then fate and necessity are not one, nor is Providence interchangeable with these notions. And freedom is Fate's (or Providence's) unlimited power to choose, but then it is drastically altered in its meaning as far as we are concerned. Plotinus' freedom of the self goes beyond "the ability to be a co-worker with fate" and then to go along willingly as the wise man must do (he is the only one who is truly free, in Stoic terms), as opposed to those who are "dragged along behind the cart."<sup>16</sup>

Yet, if Providence, at this point, means no more than that certain law-like regularities obtain (necessarily) through the connections of causes which "make any object *qua* object what it is and not another thing,"<sup>17</sup> then we can at least conclude that Providence is not in conflict with Freedom, for it belongs to a different category of things. Freedom, for humans, is a state acquired through virtue, but is not come by easily. Freedom is not to be understood as a description of a state of affairs which obtains and of the natural laws within whose gambit human beings' quest for well-being and their ascent must take place.

We can therefore see what Reale means when he speaks of Providence and 'finality': It is the goal of the perfect, completed design of the world as it is and as it will be. Individuals indeed participate in this 'Providential order' as fitting parts of it, not as persons with specific interests, needs or concerns aside from those that are appropriate to their role within the totality of the world.

### 3. Plotinus and Providence

What is Providence for Plotinus? As we noted, the Greek expression means 'foreknowledge'; it is a noetic, not an effective, term. It does not seem to have anything to do with 'providing' or 'taking care' of things or people. All that is involved is perceiving beforehand. This much one can pick up from studying the Liddell-Scott Greek lexicon.

Plotinus begins *Enneads* III.2 by rearticulating an often repeated concern: We must not attribute the existence of all that is to chance or accident. Furthermore, Providence should not be confused with our sort of providence—viz. foresight—"which is a calculation before action how something should happen or not happen in the case of things which ought not to be done, or how we may have something or not have it" (III.2.1, 11–14). Thus, in its individual meaning, at least, Plotinus understanding of Providence clearly involves a judgment and an anticipatory calculation about future actions and contingencies. It does not involve others, except perhaps as components of the actions and situations we might deliberate about.

As far as the divine aspect of this notion and its meaning is concerned, it is to be understood as "the foreseeing and calculation of the divine [probably soul: *proosasin tina kai logismon theou*] about how all this might come into existence, and how things might be as good as possible" (III.2.1, 18–19). This does not entail a time when the universe did not exist or a prior deliberation and decision that was followed by a coming to be of all that is. Rather, as we have seen, we are to think in terms of a "spontaneous outflow of creative power," as Armstrong puts it in his note to the translation of this passage. "It is the manifestation of the One's Freedom: It is not so much a direct 'outflow' as an outflow that proceeds through Intellect, who is prior in nature and is the cause of the universe as a kind of archetype and model, the universe being an image of it and existing by means of it (III.2.1, 23–27). 'Each part is not cut off from the whole,'" says Plotinus, echoing Parmenides. "The universe as a whole 'lives and thinks all together as one,' so that even if individual parts are opposite to one another, they still belong together. No single part of the universe 'has become merely other, estranged from the rest' (III.2.1, 33–34).

The manifestation of individual ascending freedom does not require as primary that we consider others specifically and individually, whereas it does need respect and admiration from our Source and what comes from There, that is, the universe as a whole." We can now see that its

counterpart, the manifestation of the freedom of the One (Providence) also entails consideration for the Intellectual unity of the Universe and its appropriateness as a whole.

The freely creating power of the One, "the power to produce something else, without seeking to produce it" (III.2.2, 12–13), brings about the Intellect, which in turn, through Soul, without effort or means, creates the interconnected intelligible beauty which is the universe. Providence thus appears to consist of the freely produced completeness of the whole. By way of example, Plotinus points to the relation between Providence and man: "But the divine exists also as things are; and has come to something other than itself, not to destroy the other but, when a man, for instance, comes to it, it stands over him and sees to it that he is man; that it, that he lives by the law of providence, which means doing everything its law says" (III.2.0, 4–8).

Two points emerge here. The first relates to the lack of planning on the part of the One and to the Intellect's free outflow, to which Plotinus returns in V.8.7, which is entitled 'On Intelligible Beauty.' The intelligible world order is a principle, he says, and "in this sense it is well said that we should not enquire into the reason why of a principle" (V.8.7, 43–46). And since 'principle and goal' together form a whole and are to all intents and purposes one and the same, no imperfection or deficiency can arise within it: It is—as a whole—beautiful. It was not laboriously designed through planning or syllogism, and it was not the result of rational inquiry, that is, using the rationality of Intellect. Clearly, no rational argument or inquiry and debate is possible at the level of the One—only effortless, free production. When intellectual endeavour is possible, as in the second Hypostasis (Intellect), then we still do not have process—nothing prior (deliberation) followed something posterior (the formed world), for the two coexist eternally in the form of Beauty as principle and Beauty as completed, perfected goal.

The second point also hinges on the true meaning of freedom and its import in Plotinus. The question that arose in connection with the Stoic meaning of Providence and Fate was: How could individual freedom and a thoroughly complete world order coexist? The passage cited above can help us understand how Plotinus was able to speak on the one hand of the 'law of providence' and 'doing everything which the law says,' while on the other hand still describing freedom as the highest ideal to which man can aspire. Today most people agree that we are basically free to choose our course of action, even when we take into consideration a number of limiting and qualifying factors; to make this affirmation is not to deny the

interconnected material, psychical and logical laws that govern us. Thus, whereas the existence of a personally determined, 'providing' Providence might be viewed as intruding on our personal freedom, the existence of universal laws and regularities does not. It appears that Plotinus had the latter in mind rather than the former.

Such a harmonization is the "concord" of "intellect and necessity" (*nou kai anankas*: III.2.2, 33–34) to which Plotinus refers. This 'harmony' reconciles destruction with coming into being, parts which are friendly with others that are hostile, and those that are better with those that are worse. Because of this concord, it would be unreasonable to "blame the whole because of the parts, as if one were to take a hair of a whole living being, or a toe and neglect the whole man, a wonderful sight to see" (III.2.3, 14–16).

All things aim toward the Good, but they attain it in varying degrees, in proportion to their own receptive power. This is the point Plotinus makes in *Enneads* II.9. The excellence of the Source does not permit us to criticize that which proceeds from Him. However, we can and must try to understand, for all things do not participate in being and life in equal ways: "One must not demand equal gifts in things which are not equal" (III.2.3, 39). Nor should hostility and destruction surprise us: They are necessary in beings that are not meant to last forever. They have come into being as they are "because they all exist There, in the upper heaven" (III.2.4, 19). On the other hand, human beings act "under their own control," inclining to turn to "what is better" and "what is worse." Thus the necessary law-like design of the whole includes the existence of freely acting beings. It is only when these beings act according to the good that they live in well-being. Justice prevails either here or in future times; yet the prize of well-being lies essentially within our grasp, if we make the effort to be virtuous. Even poverty and sickness do not affect this well-being; moreover, they are "not without usefulness for the coordination and completion of the whole" (III.2.5, 8–9).

And so evil is explained without recourse to religious arguments, but in a way that will eventually be useful to Christians. Even the definition of evil is similar to the one to be found later in Augustine and Aquinas: "In general we must define evil as a falling short of good" (III.2.5, 26). Such a definition should not surprise us, for it is quite consistent with Plotinus' doctrine in general. We know where the true good is to be found. The 'evils' we perceive and have to accept do not affect our true well-being.

Plotinus' argument begins with the admitted prevalence of evils. And not only are evils prevalent, but their distribution appears unjust: bad men are masters of good ones and appear to have more than their fair share of worldly goods. Against this background it appears as though "Providence does not reach as far as the Earth" (III.2.7, 34). But note that Plotinus is not wondering who will provide for the unfortunates of the world; his concern here is rather about the extent of the rational pattern of the universe. We cannot deny that even animals and plants share in it. Do we perhaps need to doubt its power?

Again we might be misled into considering some of these parts (evils) in isolation from the whole, as we are tempted to approve of the good while censuring the bad. It is as though we were to claim that heads are fine while the rest of the human body is not quite right, which would be improper from the standpoint of logic and would also fail to show proper respect for the Source of all creation. Logic will not permit us to demand that one part of the integrated organism be dismissed as unworthy; piety and reverence ought to restrain us in our complaining. The first of these two grounds appears more philosophically sound than the second. In general, even the prevalence of evil and injustice should simply be considered part of the whole. The very fact that we perceive evils as such attests to our lack of preparation (III.2.8, 15–16).

Many evils exist simply because of our choices: "But the wicked rule by the cowardice of the ruled; for this is just, and the opposite is not" (III.2.8, 51–52). Despite the many evils we see around us, therefore, we can conclude that Plotinus' arguments for the existence of Providence are based on three separate kinds of premises: (a) ethical, (b) ontological, and (c) noetic.

The ethical arguments are strictly arguments *quoadrios*. The fact that the One is the Good does not make Providence an extension of goodwill or of love. The objective of Intellect is to create according to rational laws and form, to produce the most beauty possible, and to achieve completeness. This was the position of the Stoics, and we have no reason to suppose that Plotinus differed with them substantially on this point. The ethical explanations connected with evils in this world are also of three kinds. (a) We choose the wrong thing.<sup>21</sup> (b) We are not sufficiently 'trained' or prepared to understand the 'evils' that befall us and others in an accepting and understanding frame of mind.<sup>22</sup> Both of these represent inappropriate attitudes which are neither moral nor good, attitudes which are not conducive to our well-being.

From the noetic or epistemological standpoint (c), we persist in misunderstanding the composition of the universe in all its aspects. We expect it to be all light when what it actually presents us with is an infinite variety of plays of light and shadow (III.2.11, 9–17). Therefore we need the sort of understanding that arises out of a different perspective (d), an understanding that is no longer particularized but global, one that is not centered upon our own problems or those of our friends and kin but rather on the admirably law-like regularities that are entailed by a rational forming of the universe. Finally, we must not demand “unmixed excellence” (e) (III.2.7, 2), but should only expect from the rational forming principle “as much as the mixture can receive” (III.2.7, 6–7).

Finally, the metaphysical-ontological reasons have to do with our understanding of the true nature of man. These considerations might also be subsumed under the heading of ‘epistemological reasons,’ but what is required is not a change in approach but a truer grasp of man’s nature. Thus man’s nature is not all of one piece (f): The “shadow of man” cries and moans for the external difficulties of life he encounters. But only the “seriously good part of man is capable of taking serious doings seriously; the rest of man is a toy” (III.2.15, 51–54). Cilento speaks of these passages as the most tragic ones in the *Enneads* and the most powerful commentaries Plotinus offers on the human condition.” And what are the ‘serious doings’ Plotinus is talking about? It seems clear that only our true well-being needs to be taken seriously: All else is play on a stage and childish games. Even death is simply the removal of the “play-costume in which he was dressed” (III.2.15, 57–58). Furthermore, all opposites are part of “the single rational living being” (g) (III.2.16, 48–49). They are often in conflict, since an absolute homogeneity of parts and actions does not make for a good play or an organism that is rationally put together. Unformed uniformity of matter does not manifest a rational plan, but “since it is a rational pattern it has distinctions in itself, and the extreme distinction is opposition” (III.2.16, 53–54). It is necessary to differentiate all throughout nature, for form and limit are better than their lack.” Difference in the highest degree is opposition and hostility.

This is to be expected in a universe that is far less of a Unity than its original Source and is a well-differentiated multiplicity instead. Had the universe been different, the rational principle might have been blamed for bringing about simply unformed, homogeneous parts, “parts all alike and equal” (III.2.1.2, 5–7).

#### 4. The Role of Freedom in Providence

In the tenth chapter, Plotinus once again takes up the problem of free will in relation to evil. If we have to accept the existence of evil in the world for the reasons cited above, is it the case that “men are unwillingly wicked” (III.2.10, 1–4) and that their wrongdoing is not their responsibility? Is the rational principle to blame instead? This is not the case, he says. Earlier in the treatise he had indicated, furthermore, that it is “neither pious nor reverent” to believe such a thing (III.2.7, 42–43). Human beings are not blameless and are not coerced by inflexibly predetermined principles: “men, too, are principles” (III.2.10, 19). Therefore their actions are their own, and they are responsible for them. Plotinus is rather brief here because ‘On Providence’ is a treatise meant to explain descending—rather than ascending—freedom. The focus of the argument is the necessary coexistence of good and evil in a universe brought about by the rational principle (Intellect)—thus by something that is good by definition.”

How does Plotinus manage to save freedom and moral responsibility while exonerating the rational principle from blame? In his clearest statement on this topic occurring in this chapter, he declares: “But as for the necessity, this does not mean that it comes in from outside but only that it is universally so” (III.2.10, 12–13). Thus it is not that the rational principle has erred; all it has done is to establish universal laws of which the amphibious nature of man is undoubtedly a part, so that man’s capacity to act and to do “noble actions by their own nature” and to be a free and independent principle (III.2.10, 19–21) is simply a manifestation of one of the laws that govern everything.

Even a rational principle is only able to produce such effects as the recipient matter is capable of accomplishing. Just as stones have a fixed nature that permits them to be shaped and formed, to roll whenever pushed, but not to walk or feel, and just as an animal’s nature permits it to move and feel and ‘choose’ according to instinctive desires, but not to philosophize, so too a human being is free to exercise and to enjoy his limited sort of freedom.

This freedom consists in part of a natural inclination to pursue the arduous, demanding task of achieving a much better sort of freedom through ascent.” The same sort of thing could be said of the laws governing the flow of a river: They are meant to keep the flow orderly and thus rational, thereby producing certain effects on its banks and in its bed, and also on the creatures on which it has an impact. It is possible,

however, for the river to react to specific environmental stimuli and overflow, thus producing 'evils' which its natural inclination would not cause, or to dry up because of extreme climatic conditions, which would have equally adverse effects. The laws upon which the operation of the river are based are rational, but the evil possibilities are universal in the sense that under the same circumstances or stimuli, any river would perform in the same manner.

Plotinus insists that it is not right to criticize, for to do so would be to demonstrate the same lack of comprehension that one might exhibit in criticizing a painter for not painting a picture that includes all of the best things he is able to paint and nothing else, or in criticizing someone for not producing a play that portrays static perfection rather than action, movement and a mixture of elements (III.2.11, 13–17). Therefore, although freedom is limited by universal laws, it is still present.

Another question remains to be explored: What about the freedom and rationality of the productive principle? Is it still represented through the multi-colored mosaic it produces? Can he still be understood as 'just'? Justice is manifested in two separate ways. First, one needs to adopt the timeless perspective fitting for an eternal Hypostasis such as Intellect or Soul. For instance, we need not judge the justice or injustice of a man's life simply by considering his present circumstances. Any evil he might suffer is surely either (a) part of his natural makeup, e.g. due to disease or death, or (b) the result of a wrong choice, e.g. not working hard enough to elect good rulers, or (c) retribution for misdeeds in past lives.

Once again the fault or responsibility is strictly ours. To think otherwise is simply to demonstrate a lack of understanding of how Infinite Freedom manifests itself. Our parts are prescribed for us in the universal play it designs, but our ability to carry them through in accordance with our talents—admittedly unequal—is due to ourselves alone (III.2.17, 26–33). If fact, our freedom to excel or to disgrace ourselves is much greater because of the universal magnitude of our 'play,' and also because of the basic differences we start out with (III.2.18, 1–3).

Freedom to express itself belongs to Intellect in much greater measure and, through it, to Soul, although we are liable to misunderstand this point because of our limited abilities. Both, however, are less than absolutely free, for both are 'constrained' by rational principles, unlike the One, who is supranoteic. Yet they enjoy a freedom that is not possible for us as complex human beings under the sway of a multitude of laws. We can indeed attain some measure of freedom through training and hard work,

but only for our very self, our inner core, which is subject only to the laws governing non-material entities.

In chapter 4, the second part of the treatise entitled 'On Providence,' Plotinus returns to the question of man's freedom in order to decide whether he is to blame for wrongdoing or not, even though his main aim in this treatise is to show that Intellect and Soul are to be absolved from all blame. He argues that if man were simple, in the sense of being subject to immutable laws in *all* his aspects, as plants and animals are, he would be no more to blame than they are. But he is to blame because "he is not only what he was made but has another, free principle" (III.2.4, 7), which many men do not elect to use, instead choosing "a number of others, the worse ones" (III.2.4, 15–16).

Therefore man has a different status than those other entities, a status that depends on his kinship with the One and freedom, rather than simply on his reception of the rational principle. In the latter regard he is like all of creation, for all things, in one degree or another, receive the rational principle to the extent that their nature is able to. It is the recognition and choice of rationality on man's part, however, that makes freedom possible.

An interesting question remains to be considered. The One is Freedom in an absolute sense and is under no constraint in relation to His free production. This multifaceted and complex world is what He creates, through Intellect (*nous*) and Soul. Why does He not create everything and everyone good? Plotinus answers: Should we blame the Maker just because plants do not feel, animals do not reason, and human beings are not gods? Just as we can and must accept diversity in the world around us, so we must also accept that people have different capacities to perfect themselves and to act for the good (III.2.3, 8–12). It is not as though the Creator of the world had set out to make all the entities in the world perfectly equal (III.2.3, 19–20). Plotinus does not come right out and say it, but the implication is clear: The universe is diverse and was meant to be such. Why should this be the case? First of all, that there is ranking is simply a fact of life. But the strongest consideration is that while the One is Freedom and Intellect is second (and Soul third), individual souls are followed by individual beings which are "not only souls but diminutions of souls," and thus represent "a kind of fading away as the living things move farther away from their origins" (III.2.3, 25–27).

This is clearly the principle reason for the status of the Universe and its controversial condition. Even the One, through Rational Principle and Intellect, could not deny His own uniqueness and supremacy through His creation. He is and remains the only One to be absolutely free; all else is

increasingly and progressively lower, thus possessing lower and lower levels of freedom. It is only man who has as much as the capacity for freedom through rationality. Thus, what we observe in the universe is unavoidable and rational, given the One's unique position. Any other form of creation would obscure the One's own 'nature' and role.

### 5. The 'Daimon' and Freedom

Plotinus devotes a short treatise to the 'daimon.' Are we to regard the existence of yet another superhuman influence on our lives as a further threat to freedom? Does the existence of daimons endanger our already precarious quest for freedom? On the contrary, Plotinus' *daimonia* help us understand why the upper soul is intrinsically inclined to seek freedom.

Other philosophers before Plotinus had grasped the unique nature of soul. Not just Thales but also Heraclitus had understood its depth: "You could not discover the limits of soul, even if you travelled by every path in order to do so; such is the depth of its meaning."<sup>29</sup> Heraclitus also anticipates the role of the demon: "Soul has its own inner law of growth."<sup>30</sup> Cilento says the following about the soul's destiny and nature: "Of this odyssey of the soul, who is the eternal nomad in the metaphysical realm, Plotinus is the last poet."<sup>31</sup> Why is the soul the 'eternal nomad'? Primarily because it is not totally tied to any predetermined state but is free to choose.

In this brief treatise, then, Plotinus explains why Providence's rational plans, which include the nature of the soul just as it is, do not preclude the possibility of human freedom but—on the contrary—require it. The notion of a daimon is alien to our present world-view, and those for whom this notion has meaning (mainly Christians and other religions) view demons as an evil, undesirable lot. For Plotinus, however, 'daimon' possesses a positive meaning, which emerges clearly from his treatment of the topic.<sup>32</sup>

In the title and body of *Enneads* III.4, Armstrong translates *daimon* as 'our allotted guardian spirit.' Cilento reserves the expression 'spirit' for Intellect, perhaps to distinguish it from the more laborious rationality of logos, or even to emphasize the spiritual component of the intellectual principle. He simply retains 'demone' (Italian for 'demon') for his own translation. Cilento also devotes one of his 'saggi' to the history and meaning of *daimonia*, tracing the notion from Homeric and even pre-Homeric times, beginning with Thales, for whom water and even "all" were "full of demons."<sup>33</sup> I will simply refer the reader to his rich and poetic

presentation of the history of 'demons' in Greece. Cilento maintains that with Plotinus we have arrived at the last stage of Greek demonology.

Plotinus begins his treatise by clearly outlining the difference between: (a) fixed, unmoving being and reality, (b) the coming to be and flux of the "expression of some realities" (III.4.1, 1–2), and (c) the restless position of the soul, poised between the two. Cilento characterizes the soul as "a bridge thrown between *Nous* [Intellect] and the world."<sup>34</sup> This 'bridge' is therefore like neither side. Its main characteristic is its ability to change—first of all from state to state, choosing a life that is mired only in the sensual, or the purely vegetative, or perhaps choosing a higher, intellectual way of life. Furthermore, it also moves from life to life, through a "multitude of gradations, values and changing forms," as Cilento puts it.<sup>35</sup>

After an exposition of Platonic doctrine, Plotinus goes on. It is not the daimon that chooses us; rather, we choose the daimon and thus bear the responsibility of our choice. Again and again, we will turn into the sort of creature we deserve to be because of our behaviour. In chapter 3 Plotinus picks up the thread of his own doctrine. We need to choose the daimon above us so that our efforts in this life will be compensated for by the status we achieve in the next life. Plotinus does not say that a daimon exists as separate hypostasis or entity of any sort; still, his description confers on it a "degree of spiritual life" and makes it the highest 'I' that spurs us on—a mythical reified version of man's perennial striving and restlessness for change.

Cilento says: "The demon, like history, is Freedom."<sup>36</sup> And so when we presume to judge Providence for the effects of the Rational Principle which governs the universe and gives it its laws, we first need to understand the power of freedom within the Principle. It is this freedom that permits us to go beyond the myth of the metals, allowing each one of us to choose the better daimon and higher life. The talents we need in order to reach a progressively higher level of spiritual life are just that—spiritual talents; they are primarily spiritual rather than intellectual, because our ultimate goal is freedom. And freedom, in its highest form, is supranoeitic.

### 6. Christian Providence and Evil

Contemporary philosophy of religion faces many of the same problems that plagued Plotinus, such as the conflict between the goodness

of God (and thus Providence, in its Christian meaning) and the existence of what some people have called 'surplus evils,' that is, certain evils which, according to them, cannot even partly be explained by pointing to human error and sinfulness. Even though some 'non-disciplinary evils' might eventually be understood as fostering other human goods, and perhaps as leading to greater strength and happiness in the human beings affected by them,<sup>2</sup> there remain many that appear far beyond any and all rational explanations.

When confronting the cases in which it does not appear that God cares in a personal way—or any other way—for every sparrow, philosophers are often at a loss. Some try to rethink and rework the concept of God in such a way that He retains a sort of Kantian goodwill while His omnipotence is temporarily or occasionally curtailed.<sup>3</sup> In this study I will not discuss these cases or otherwise attempt to deal with this problem. However, I do wonder whether these arguments do not surrender as much as they gain. Is the 'God' who emerges from such well-meaning conceptual manipulation still the God whom the Christian or an individual belonging to any of the great monotheistic religions would wish to worship?

I also wonder whether Plotinus' concept of Freedom as Absolute, combined with an acceptance of the existence of grades of life and reality, might not say as much in the face of the problem of evil as some of these contemporary thinkers manage to say. Plotinus' position saves more of the Unity and Integrity of his Principle than some Christian thinkers are able to do. (We should not suppose, however, that we was limited by some religious orthodoxy; he was committed only to the inner consistency and coherence of his own metaphysical doctrines and to the necessity of accounting for the existent realities he was acquainted with.)

Is there any sense in which the One or Intellect cares about what happens to us? Rist, addressing the subject of prayer, observes: "The One of Plotinus is transcendent and ultimately remote and unconcerned with transient things."<sup>4</sup> There is nothing in the textual work I have undertaken to suggest any other interpretation. Therefore we should not expect much in the way of concern—or even sympathy—from that Source. On the other hand, some sympathy may be available from other quarters.<sup>5</sup>

It is an important part of the Christian faith to believe that God is a loving Father whose function in regard to man is not limited to His role as Creator. The Christian is told: 'Ask, and ye shall be answered.' Parables attest to the power of prayer and supplication bolstered by faith, which is the prelude for the granting of favours and requests—and perhaps even for miracles that subvert that natural order of laws. Our hope—and sometimes

even our success in being granted what we ask for—is grounded in God's infinite love for us. Belief in these matters is central to being a Christian: faith, hope and charity are Christian virtues *par excellence*. Yet they are not to be found in Plotinus, with the possible exception of 'neoplatonic faith,' as Rist call it.<sup>6</sup>

What could Plotinus possibly mean by 'prayer,' then? What could it mean to pray to a Providence (or a God) who does not love men and cannot ultimately justify their hopes? In chapters 30 through 45 of *Enneads* IV.4, Plotinus distinguishes between two separate meanings of 'prayer.' The first one comes up in connection with his treatment of magic and cults, a domain of activity which he places below the realm of the World Soul. When prayer actually works, he argues, it is not because the gods hear and listen and react; rather, it succeeds because our action mobilizes the 'sympathetic' reaction of various parts of the organism we call the universe. We make these prayers, argues Plotinus, "to the sun and other men to the stars,"<sup>7</sup> and sometimes our wishes (whether good or bad) are granted. But how can a rational entity grant the wishes of an evil man? That this happens should not surprise us, says Plotinus, since both the good man and the evil man can draw water from the river. From this we see that natural bounties are available to all on an indiscriminate basis (IV.4.41, 15–17). Medicine, agriculture, rhetoric, and music all influence things and men to some degree. The first to help "natural things to be in a natural state" (IV.4.31, 17–19), whereas the latter two "influence the soul" and "lead men to better or worse by changing them" (IV.4.31, 21–23). The question is why this should be the case, and the answer we seek ought to be able to explain the effects of prayer and magic. In a lengthy discussion Plotinus considers and rejects various arguments and finally comes to the following conclusion: "This All is a 'single living being which encompasses all the living beings within it'; it has one soul which extends to all its parts, insofar as each individual thing is a part of it..."<sup>8</sup>

The whole universe is 'bound together' as one organism. What is felt by one part is felt by all, just as the pain in one finger is experienced by us as a general feeling (IV.4.32, 21–23). This whole 'organism' exhibits a "harmony of action and experience" (IV.4.33, 2–5). It possesses a great deal, and not just in the way of rational principles, for it also has an "unbounded store of varied powers" (IV.4.36, 1–2). These powers are somehow alerted or awakened by our prayers or magic. Therefore it is not the case that the gods or heavenly bodies are responsible for the effects of our prayers; rather, "the nature of what is done" is responsible (IV.4.38, 5–6). Hence, "magic spells work," according to Plotinus, "by sympathy



and by the fact that there is a natural concord of things that are alike and the opposition of things which are different" (IV.4.40, 1-4).<sup>2</sup>

This sort of prayer or magic is irrational, that is, not subject to rationality or deliberation. It is an 'enchantment' that affects "anything bodily," but "he himself" (i.e. a person's true self) would be unharmed (IV.4.43, 11-12). This enchantment is perhaps on a par with the enticement of the "care of children and concern for marriage" and with other activities such as "political activity and the pursuit of power." All of these are caused primarily by "our passionate spirit," and they "entice man since they give pleasure to their carnal desires" (IV.4.44, 7-12). We have come along way since Plato's *Republic* with its philosopher-king!

All of these lower 'enchantments' are contrasted with contemplation, pure and entirely self-directed, and of such a nature that "it alone remains incapable of enchantment" (IV.4.44, 1-3). It seems as though the good man has no need of this sort of prayer; it may even be the case that resort to it or to other 'magic' is a sure sign that one has not yet become either virtuous or free. The second sort of prayer is instead nothing more than a final 'waiting'; it is something we engage in when we attempt to reach for the One at the end of our journey of ascent: Alone to the Alone. It is not a prayer of request or petition; it is rather a prayer of silence, "...first invoking God himself, not in spoken words, but by stretching ourselves out with our soul into prayer to him..." (V.1.6, 10-12).

Therefore the usual Christian understanding of Providence as the work of a being to whom we can pray in the hope that love will come our way is not to be found in Plotinus, nor is the faith that our prayers will be heard and possibly even answered and that praying is a virtuous enterprise in itself. What he has in mind instead is a free but rational ordering of the universe, a virtuous goal which is conducive to our well-being but does not primarily involve an acquisition of traits or habits: Instead it is to be understood as a new becoming. It is the pursuit of immanent freedom, and it is based on a progressive detachment from everything that is not, or does not foster, the reunion of freedom in ourselves with Freedom itself.

Sympathy exists within various parts of the universe, and it manifests its interconnected wholeness and the powers we can summon from within it—provided we do not expect anything that might run counter to the providential laws that govern and direct us. Any care or concern that we would deem 'natural' is natural for Plotinus as well, but it is therefore to be dismissed, or controlled and—if possible—unlearned. It is a "passionate impulse" belonging to our "play costume," and not to our real self or to our serious work. The latter leads us to the One, but the One is

not a personal God, much less a Loving Agent.<sup>3</sup> It is simply not a nurturing or providing entity. It appears that the only one thing the One provides us with is a respect of a certain sort. He arranges effortlessly for cosmic laws subject to Intellect, but He allows us to retain our freedom, and thus also the kinship to Him that we need in order to ascend.

The term 'respect' is used by Plotinus himself and seems to capture the most that a good man is allowed to feel for his neighbour. For example, he says: "Since you can respect the soul in another, respect yourself" (V.1.2, 51).<sup>4</sup> It is also in the respect for our freedom that we find the main difference between the Stoic meaning of providence (*pronoia*) and the meaning Plotinus assigns it. The latter bases his interpretation of it on the addition to his universe of the One as beyond Intellect and thus beyond the rational principle of providence. Thus the metaphysics of Plotinus adds a new dimension to the universe envisioned by the Stoics, since our ultimate goal, in his view, is to go beyond Intellect, or at least to try to do so. And we should remember that the final step of the ascent is supranoeitic. When we consider the Stoic meaning of providence, then, we can clearly affirm that Plotinus does not hold the same view at all.

When we turn to the problem of the meaning of 'providence' in ordinary language, a meaning with an undeniably Christian flavour, we are equally far from the thought of Plotinus. The main reason for this is the emphasis on God's infinite love, a notion that would be even more anachronistic within the Plotinian context than the human love discussed earlier. Rist, who makes much of certain similarities between human *eros* in Plotinus and the Christian notion of *agape*, points out some differences: "The parable of Jesus, the writings of Paul and John, tell us the nature of *Agape*. *Agape* leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the wilderness to seek the one which is lost (Luke 15:4)."<sup>5</sup> What would Plotinus make of this parable? On the basis of the texts we have examined, we would have to say that his main concern would be for the justice of the case rather than for love shown to the lost individual. He tells us his own parable of the underdog, of those who are weaker, 'unprepared.' It would not be just, he says, for us to step in and save such people; in fact, it would be just if they were to be punished, even if those who triumph are the wicked (III.2.8, 16-26).<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, we must cast aside the limited perspective that would have us view all such cases as injustices (immediate injustices) instead we should take the longer-range view urged upon us by Plotinus: Providence will see to it that justice is served at some time—but not necessarily during our own time, or when we deem it appropriate. We cannot and need not

get involved, since it is our freedom alone that leads to the well-being that is our desired and natural aim.

All involvement with the human needs of others—and even with our own needs—is to be cast aside. As for prayers and other forms of magic, even if they are successful, they simply reaffirm our kinship with the rest of the universe; they do not bring us any closer to our well-being or to the One. It is only progressive freedom, which increases as many of our involvements decrease, that leads us to our goal. This freedom is not really in conflict with the rational laws of providence; it simply helps to clarify its reach and limitations. Perhaps this respectful freedom to choose to be what we can be is the highest sort of providing that man should wish for. In other words, it may be that we should think not in terms of a Christian love for the lowest, for the poorest, for sinners, but in terms of a transcendent 'toughlove' instead, to use a current expression. Such 'love' is all that human beings can expect, according to Plotinus. It may even be enough.

## 7. Conclusion: Freedom and Providence

Although individual human freedom is discussed in the two treatises on providence, the main thrust of the argument is intended to answer the two following questions. (a) How can free creation, which arises from the Good, retain the rationality of the principles according to which it operates when evil exists in the products of its creation? (b) Why is it that no blame for *what is* needs to be ascribed to the One or to other Hypostases? The defense of human freedom is also included, but the purpose of including it is to explain and defend the reach and limitations of rational universal laws and the possible conflict between freedom and necessity.

Another way to approach the problem of how to summarize Plotinus' teaching on providence is to look at it from the standpoint of freedom—in two senses. First let us consider the meaning of Providence against the background of the conflict between freedom and necessity; here the problem is one of global freedom. Against the same background, we could (secondly) raise the question of individual freedom. In both cases, the existence of evil is the catalyst. How can the existence of evil be rendered consistent with the One's creation as both free and good, and thus be uncoerced in respect to the evil that exists?

The first point (the global one) is answered by Plotinus as follows: all things are as good as it is possible for them to be. In other words, the

limits to the goodness of the things in the world do not result from any impotence in the One, who creates everything freely and spontaneously—and not according to any plan. On the contrary, in view of the fact that (1) the One is free, and that Intellectual Principle and the soul are second and third and so on, everything else has to manifest a progressively fading unity, freedom and goodness. The existence of levels and grades emanating from the centre like rays from the sun, each one weaker than the one before as the high power and concentration of light recedes, simply follows from the primacy of the One and is necessitated by His status within the universe. It is not an evil choice, then, that makes Alaska less warm and sunny than the countries through which the Equator passes.

Secondly, there is no conflict between universal necessity and absolute freedom in the One. The conflict that appears to be present is resolved once we realize that the One's free and spontaneous creation in the Good engenders just Intellect, the Intellectual Principle. Therefore the rest of the universe, including Soul and our own souls, is under the sway of rational laws. Freedom is retained through the creative process, for contemplation and freedom are one. Hence the 'self' is always There, maintaining and preserving this higher element even in its fall. After all, the higher element is what inclines the self to reascend to its 'true self' and to its Father and Country once again. Therefore, through freedom the two main difficulties that arise with regard to Providence's universal aspects can be solved.

And what about Providence considered from the individual standpoint? How are souls to be good and bad, and how can men be moral agents (and therefore necessarily free) while they are under the sway of immutable laws? Are we free, or are we coerced by those laws? We have just noted that the self remains akin to the One (Freedom) and longs to reascend. We also saw earlier that the self is a principle, and as such is free. It is clear that the self, since it is immaterial, aloof and free, is under the control of no law, for freedom and the limits of an essence (the rational form) cannot mix. However, the rest of our soul, and the composite that is humanity, are indeed governed by universal fixed laws. This is the reason why our instincts, for example, are no more blameworthy than those of animals. But there is more to us than this aspect, and it is precisely the other aspect, which is akin to the highest (and not just akin to Intellect) that makes our individual action free and thus enables us to retain our moral responsibility. Our responsibility extends even beyond our life. For the rationality of Providence ensures that good is rewarded

and evil is punished—if not in this life, then in the future. The section on the 'daimon' also makes this point forcefully: We must freely choose ■ higher life. Justice prevails throughout the universe, as is reasonable.

And so we see again that when the role and nature of freedom are kept clearly in mind (at least to the extent that such an open-ended notion permits clarity), the apparent contradictions in Plotinus' conception of Providence are resolved. What remains is a coherent and consistent doctrine.

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## NOTES

1. Reprinted with modification, by permission, from: Laura Westra, *Plotinus and Freedom: A Meditation on Enneads 5: 6.8*, Studies in the History of Philosophy series, volume 9 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press ©1990), 147–174.
2. J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 173.
3. This notion raises a problem which has been discussed elsewhere: see Westra, *Plotinus and Freedom*, chapter 6.
4. Rist, *Road to Reality*, 169.
5. Graeser, *Plotinus and the Stoics* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972); see also Graeser, "Plotinus on Man's Free Will," where he writes: "This idea appears to be a striking anticipation of Immanuel Kant..." (124).
6. Graeser, *Plotinus and the Stoics*.
7. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 157 & n6.
8. J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 126.
9. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 163–164.
10. Giovanni Reale, *The Systems of the Hellenistic Age*, translated by J. R. Catan (New York: SUNY Press, 1985), 248–249.
11. Reale, *Hellenistic Age*, 250.
12. Reale, *Hellenistic Age*, 250 (citing Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 2.22.57ff.).
13. Reale, *Hellenistic Age*, 251 (citing Stobaeus, Anth. 1.78.18ff.).
14. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 129.
15. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 122–128; see n1, where he cites Reesor.
16. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 130; see also 127, where he cites Zeno and Chrysippus.
17. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 121.
18. In n1 on pages 44–45 in reference to *Ennead* III.2.1. Armstrong states: "Plotinus frequently attacks the idea that God first planned the universe and then created it, and insists that it is everlasting and not the result of divine deliberation and choice but of spontaneous outflow of creative power without beginning or end." See also V.8.7.
19. Parmenides, "The Way of Truth" (DK 4): "Gaze steadfastly at things which, though far away, are yet present to the mind. For you cannot cut off being from being: it does not scatter into a universe then reunify": P. Wheelwright, *The Presocratics* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1966), 96.
20. See Westra, *Plotinus and Freedom*, chapter 6.
21. *Ennead* III.2.7, 2–21 & III.2.9, 14–17.
22. *Ennead* III.2.8, 14–16 & III.2.15, 36–39.
23. "Il senurmento tragico," in Cilento, *Saggi su Plotino*, 255–259.
24. Rist, *Road to Reality*, 23–24.
25. The question of free will and of human responsibility is the counterpart to the main question that is under consideration, is discussed in Westra, *Plotinus and Freedom*, chapter 6.
26. Outlined in Westra, *Plotinus and Freedom*, chapter 4.
27. DK 45 (Wheelwright, *Presocratics*, 7).
28. DK 115.
29. Cilento, *Saggi*, 35.
30. Regarding the Platonic references in chapter 2 of this treatise, see Armstrong's translation in the Loeb edition, 144–146 nn1–3 & 146 n1.
31. Cilento, *Saggi*, 29–41 (especially page 35, for the history of this notion prior to Plotinus).
32. Cilento, *Saggi*, 35.
33. Cilento, *Saggi*, 35.
34. Cilento, *Saggi*, 37 (also 31).
35. Peter Bertocci, "A Theistic Explanation of Evil," *The Challenge of Religion* (New York: Seabury Press 1982), 334–335.
36. Bertocci, "Theistic Explanation," 336.
37. Rist, *Road to Reality*, 208.
38. Rist, *Road to Reality*, 208.
39. Rist, "Neoplatonic Faith," *Road to Reality*, 231–246.
40. *Enneads* IV.4.30, 4–5. See 225 n3 in Armstrong's translation (Loeb Classical Library edition) for historical details and sources.
41. *Enneads* IV.4.32, 5–8; see also Plato, *Timaeus*.
42. See the discussion of this topic in Rist, "Prayer" *Road to Reality*, 199–212.
43. P. Bertocci, "The Person God Is," *The Challenge of Religion*, 56–57.
44. The expression *agaidai* seems to allow this translation, although the primary meaning of this term is connected with wonder or admiration: *aga* has 'reverence' as one of its possible meanings.
45. "Some interpretations of AGAPE and EROS," *The Philosophy and Theology of Anders Nygren*, ed. Charles W. Kegley (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 160.

46. Plotinus here tells the tale of tough, well-trained boys who are "inferior in soul" to those they beat in a match, and whom they then rob of "their food and their dainty clothes". He asks: "is this anything but a joke?" It is the "good boys" fault that they allowed themselves to become weak and soft, through laziness. It is right not to interfere.

## THE NOTION OF BEAUTY IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSE: PYTHAGOREAN INFLUENCES ON PLOTINUS

Aphrodite Alexandrakis

The aim of this paper is two-fold. First, I will attempt to set forth the aesthetic terms and principles involved in the Pythagorean theory of the construction of the universe. I shall discuss the two central Pythagorean concepts of harmony and symmetry and their relationship to beauty as well as to the Pythagorean mathematical model of the universe. This analysis will establish the importance of harmony and symmetry in the Pythagorean system. Secondly, I shall trace the Pythagorean influence on Plotinus' conception of the cosmos as a harmonious whole and his concern with World Harmony. On the basis of this discussion, I shall argue that the concept of beauty played a fundamental role in both the Pythagorean and the Plotinian models of the structure of the universe.

While it is true that the Pythagoreans did not pursue "aesthetics as an independent science,"<sup>1</sup> their interest in beauty is reflected in their study and analysis of aesthetic elements. The fact that they did not give a name to the study of aesthetic elements—such as harmony, rhythm, and symmetry—does not mean that they did not think of beauty as such. In fact, for the Pythagoreans harmony *is* beauty, and beauty arises from proportion (*symmetria*).<sup>2</sup>

### I

The Pythagorean theory of the universe rests on the basic premise that the world is constructed mathematically. According to Aristotle, the Pythagoreans thought that the principles of mathematics were "the principles of all things."<sup>3</sup> They conceived of the universe as "a musical scale and a number." They arrived at their theory through a recognition

of the numerical properties in all things.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, they observed empirically that the properties and ratios of harmonious musical scales depend upon numbers.<sup>2</sup> The cosmic significance that the Pythagoreans attributed to number arose from their attempt to "discern cosmos within chaos."<sup>3</sup> The term *kosmos* (cosmos) suggests order and the main characteristic of order is measure. Measure leads to balance, which implies proportion (*symmetria*). The concepts of order and proportion are thus deeply aligned with the concept of harmony in the Pythagorean model of the universe.

In the Pythagorean system, the Cosmic structure was conceived as a sphere consisting of a central fire surrounded by Counterearth, Earth, Moon, Sun, the five planets, and "the outer sphere of the universe which carried the fixed stars."<sup>4</sup> According to this Philolaic structure, ten bodies are moving in ten orbits around the central fire.<sup>5</sup> According to Philolaus' fragments—which are the only direct sources of Pythagorean philosophy—Pythagoras conceived of a universal harmony produced by the movements of the planets. In their movements the planets followed a geometric pattern, an astronomical order "conceived both geometrically and musically."<sup>6</sup> This structure is the basis for the doctrine of the *Music of the Spheres* in which, according to Aristotle,

...the movement of the stars produces a harmony, i.e. the sounds they make are concordant..."

And, as Plato says,

...as the eyes are framed for astronomy, so the ears are framed for the movements of harmony."

The Pythagorean belief that "the whole heaven is harmony and number" is expressed by Philolaus:

Since the principles or origins [*archai*], namely, those from which the world order was formed, the limited and unlimited in numbers, as the odd and even, were not similar nor of the same kind, it would have been improbable for them to be set in order, if there had not supervened a fitting together [*harmonia*]. It was necessary that they be fastened together by an *harmonia* such that by it they could be held together in order."

As indicated in the above passage, the term *harmonia* has more than one definition. On the one hand, it means a 'fitting together';<sup>7</sup> on the other

hand, it describes a mathematical relation. For Pythagoras, according to Aristotle, "the attributes of numbers are present in a musical scale and in the heavens and in many other things."<sup>8</sup> In Pythagorean thought the notion that the universe consisted of numbers, and that numbers are tied up with harmony, is the foundation of the harmonic conception of the universe. The Pythagoreans observed a musical harmony in the stars and in their movement. This harmonic conception of the universe was connected to the musical scale which they referred to as an 'harmony.' Philolaus explains the intervals of the musical scale in terms of ratios: 1:2 [the octave]; 3:2 [the fifth]; and 4:3 [the fourth]. This proportional theory was based on the observation of vibrating strings. According to Philolaus, "these ratios are the fundamental principles of cosmic order."<sup>9</sup> Thus, harmony takes on a 'scientific' character. As a result, the Pythagorean cosmology was based on harmonic relationships contained in the Tetractys or the Decad—which represents the totality of mathematical order, for as Aristotle says: "It symbolizes the 'elements of number' which are the elements of all things."<sup>10</sup> The Tetractys has been described as the discovery

of the chief musical intervals, the octave, fourth, and fifth, expressed as the numerical ratios 2:1, 4:3, 3:2, of the fact that the first four integers add up to ten, and that the diagonal of the square is incommensurable with its side."

The Tetractys has been identified by Iamblicus with the cosmic harmony, and was called by Plutarch 'cosmos', 'Heaven' (*ouranos*), and 'All' (*pan*).<sup>11</sup> Thus, harmony brings together and puts in a certain order the 'mixed elements' of the universe. The Pythagorean principles of the limited and the unlimited are "combined by a harmonic process"<sup>12</sup> of a metaphysical nature. The result is an orderly, harmonious universe, founded on a structure of numbers. The Tetractys or Decad, was conceived as divine and perfect—"containing all things in itself"—and it was "the focus of a positively religious veneration."<sup>13</sup>

## II

In addition to the concept of *harmony*, the concept of *symmetry* was of great importance to the Pythagoreans. Symmetry seems to be the result of the order which exists in the Pythagorean cosmos. Plato, whose

Pythagorean influence is apparent, confirms the importance of measure and symmetry in beauty.<sup>22</sup> He says:

...any compound, whatever it be, that does not by some means or other exhibit measure and proportion, is the ruin both of its ingredients and, first and foremost, of itself.<sup>23</sup>

As J. J. Pollit points out, order cannot be conceived without measure—"which involves both definition [marking the boundaries of things] and analysis of the interrelationships of discrete forms."<sup>24</sup> In fact, for Plato, "it is precisely by this effort they make to maintain the due measure that they achieve effectiveness and beauty in all that they produce."<sup>25</sup>

Plato's definition of order (*taxis*) is clearly rooted in the Pythagorean theory. For him, order refers to "how correctly is the object produced"<sup>26</sup> or, in other words, how correctly its parts are arranged.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, he goes even further to suggest that measure and beauty are identical.<sup>28</sup>

### III

In contrast to Plato and the Pythagoreans, Plotinus *rejects* symmetry as a component of beauty.<sup>29</sup> Beauty, for Plotinus, is not found in the symmetrical parts of the object: The One is Beauty (*kallos*), and the One has no parts.<sup>30</sup> Plotinus' One stands for 'zero' (null), or what Scotus Eriugena calls 'Nothing'<sup>31</sup>—that is, the negation of multiplicity in the nature of the One. It is interesting, however, to note that in discussing the One's singular nature, Plotinus refers to the Pythagoreans: "...the Pythagoreans symbolically indicated it to each other by the name of 'Apollo'..."<sup>32</sup> The word 'Apollo' derives from *a-* ['not'] and *pollon* ['of many']. Plotinus' comment indicates his knowledge of and interest in Pythagorean theory.

Plotinus prefers to use the concept of harmony rather than symmetry in his description of the universe. In his view, the universe consists of a rational principle out of which springs "the battle of conflicting elements."<sup>33</sup> He refers to the World Harmony as the result of 'adverse elements'—akin (*syggene*) and opposed (*enandia*). He compares the rational principle of the universe to the plot of a play: There is warfare (*polemos*) and strife (*machē*) in the world, just as there are conflicts in the play whose plot is one. When these conflicts are brought together into one

*harmonia*, then the play is a harmonious whole. In music, as well, melody "results from the conflicting sounds." What Plotinus has in mind here is the Pythagorean combination of higher and lower sounds into an *harmonia*. He discusses how the high and low (*oxy kai vare*) sounds "come together into a unity into the melody itself..." (*syniasin eis en, ondes harmonias logoi...*).<sup>34</sup> The oneness of reason, or of the universe, is the result of the combining of different and opposite elements—such as "white-black, hot-cold, winged-wingless."<sup>35</sup> Like the Pythagoreans, Plotinus extends the notion of *harmonia* to its mystical significance. He refers to the person whose prayers do not reach the heavenly bodies directly but through and because of the presence of an *harmonia* which brings them together.<sup>36</sup> He further compares the World Harmony to the vibration which passes from one lyre to another in so far as *harmonia* exists.

### IV

For the Pythagoreans, harmony is the core of mathematics, music, and their components: symmetry, order, and measure. Consequently, harmony is an aesthetic, scientific, metaphysical, and practical notion.<sup>37</sup> Although there is no use of the term 'beauty' in Pythagoras' theory, it is likely that the Pythagoreans "employed rather the term 'harmony' in place of beauty."<sup>38</sup> Hence, the scientific and religious "character of the Pythagorean movement is reflected in its aesthetics."<sup>39</sup>

Finally, according to Philolaus, it is the presence of *harmonia* which puts in order the causes (*archai*), that is, the principles of the limiting and the unlimited. As a result, harmony, or beauty, takes on a metaphysical aspect which Plato called the 'Idea of Beauty.' The order—the perfect structure and appearance of the planets and the heavenly bodies—results in beauty. Plotinus' notion of harmony, which acts as a 'peace-maker,' a complete serene whole, and a principle of measure, is of Pythagorean origin. He considers *harmonia* from the metaphysical and the aesthetic point of view. It is through *harmonia* that the 'akin' and 'opposing' elements return and unite in order to form the World Harmony. Similarly, the return to the One is the return to humanity's harmonious origin. Both Pythagorean and Plotinian thought are directed towards an ordered rational system: the Tetractys and the One. The Tetractys is a complete, harmonic whole, but it consists of parts. Plotinus' One is a complete, harmonious

whole, without parts. The One is Beauty. The One is the principle of measure itself.<sup>a</sup> The One is Harmony.

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## NOTES

1. W. Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics* I (Paris: Mouton, 1970), 80.
2. H. Diels, *Fragmenta* 40a3 (Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 5, ed., Muller, 425).
3. *Metaphysics* 985b26; 968a1-2; 1080b19; 1090a21-23.
4. *Metaphysics* 1.5, 955b23-35 & 986a1-3.
5. *Metaphysics* 1090a23-24.
6. J. J. Pollitt, *The Ancient View of Greek Art* (Yale University Press, 1974), 16.
7. D. R. Dicks, *Early Greek Astronomy* (Cornell University Press, 1970), 66.
8. Dicks, 68.
9. C. H. Kahn, *Pythagorean Philosophy Before Plato: The Presocratics*, ed. A. P. Mourelatos (Anchor books, 1974), 172.
10. P. Wheelwright, ed., *The Presocratics* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1966), 208.
11. Aristotle, *De Caelo* II.9, 290b12.
12. *Republic* 530b.
13. Quoted in W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, translated by E. L. Minar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), 'Philolaus' b6.
14. G. S. Kirk, *Heraclitus* (Cambridge University Press, 1954), 43-44. The noun appears in Homer in reference to concrete fittings-together.
15. *Metaphysics* 1090a23-24.
16. Kahn, 177.
17. F. M. Cornford, *Mysticism and Science in the Pythagorean Tradition*, ed. Mourelatos, 147.
18. Dicks, 65.
19. Cornford, 147.
20. E. A. Lippman, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece* (Columbia University Press, 1964), 14.
21. A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus* (Cambridge University Press, 1964), 14.
22. In *Philebus* 55e, 64d, and 65d, Plato refers to measure (μέτρον). In the *Politicus* 283d, he refers to measure, and measurement (μετρίτης), as "length and shortness, excess and deficiency in general."
23. *Philebus* 64e.
24. Pollitt, 15.
25. *Politicus* 284b.
26. *Laws* 669b.
27. In *Laws* (669), Plato's requirements for a work of art are: symmetry, order, and harmony (the correct shapes and colors).

28. *Philebus* 64e; *Politicus* 284a-b.
29. For Plotinus' refutation of symmetry, see J. Anton "Plotinus' Refutation of Beauty as Symmetry," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 23 (1964-1965).
30. *Ennead* I.5.6.
31. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 107-108.
32. *Ennead* V.5.6.
33. *Ennead* III.2.16.
34. *Ennead* III.2.16.
35. *Ennead* III.2.16.
36. *Ennead* VI.4.41.
37. The tuning of an instrument.
38. Tatarkiewicz, 80.
39. H. Diels, *Fragmenta* 40A3 (Galen, *de Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 5, ed. Muller, 425).
40. Armstrong, 26.

# THE ONE: SUBSTANCE OR FUNCTION?

Reiner Schürmann

When metaphysicians speak of a supreme being, they call it 'the Good,' 'the Beautiful,' 'Truth,' or 'the One.' Each of these epithets results from a definite human experience, leading to a specific cognitive interest under which that being is considered. It appears as the Good insofar as man's desire for irrevocable possession finds rest in it.<sup>1</sup> It appears as the Beautiful since it orders all things into a cosmos, an order that can be mastered by reason.<sup>2</sup> It is the Truth, for it is known by the mind's return upon itself.<sup>3</sup> Each of these three points of view thus corresponds to a given human interest: appropriation, domination, and reflection. But in virtue of what interest, what intellectual temperament, do metaphysicians call the supreme being 'the One'? I wish to suggest that the *one (to on)*, at least according to a few decisive texts by Plotinus, is not primarily to be understood as a predicate of the supreme being, nor of any being. If *metaphysics* is the doctrine of the nature of things and of their ultimate grounding, then a discourse about the One, *henology*, has overcome metaphysics. If the One is not the supreme noumenon, its 'nature' will have to be discovered in the way it functions among phenomena. It will be 'the First' only as the ordering factor of beings and their constellations. It will not function as ground—neither of things, nor of our knowledge of them.

## 1. Negative Henology versus Negative Theology

The One is not a being, not something. This is clearly implied in the first lines of Plotinus' treatise 'On the One': "It is due to the One that all beings are beings."<sup>4</sup> Why can the One not be called 'something,' a being? "The One is in all respects the First, but mind, as well as the ideas *and being* are not first."<sup>5</sup> The derivative status of *being* is a consequence of its chief quality, intelligibility. All that there is, all that exists, can be understood. But the One is beyond the reach of intellection. Hence it is



not a being. Conversely, *being* is secondary since it is of the same order as mind (*nous*) and the ideas.

Plotinus' denial of knowability and being in the One amounts to turning Plato against himself. With Plato, he holds that *to be* is to be intelligible. But against Plato, he discovers that when we speak of things intelligible we always speak of things manifold, be it only of the duality of knower and known. And what is manifold, what implies otherness, cannot be the First. Mind and Being are derivative because they are intrinsically manifold. This is why, in the Plotinian universe, no being can claim ultimacy. Thus, if it is due to the One that all beings are beings, the One is not itself to be found among them. It is 'non-being.'<sup>6</sup> Here, then, the phrase 'supreme being' would be a contradiction in terms.

It may be all too rash to read the statements quoted, and others like them, as a negative discourse about a divine First—as negative theology. Such is the received opinion about the Neoplatonists: Since the One ranks beyond mind and being, it is 'higher' than these. Its simplicity makes it unknowable to us, but also supreme. The distinction between the One and intelligible Being has led to a few equations for which one would find ample support in the Neoplatonist corpus, both Christian and non-Christian: To be one is to be *inconceivably* actual, spiritual, changeless, powerful, causative, eternal. Thus the One remains something after all. Only, according to what could be called a metaphysics of radical transcendence, it is beyond our reach—being beyond Being, mind beyond mind, cause beyond cause. Despite its apophatism, the discourse of this so-called emanationist metaphysics remains squarely onto-theological, a discourse about being 'as such' which seeks its legitimation in 'a' being that is supreme and divine, although beyond our grasp.

By his distinction between the One and *being*, Plotinus disrupts onto-theology understood in this fashion. He retrieves a characteristic of *being* that has been lost under the predominance of onto-theology since Plato. The English participle 'being', just as the Greek '*on*' (*one*), contains an ambiguity. A participle is that grammatical form which 'participates' in both noun and verb. *On*, or the archaic *eon*, is an essentially equivocal concept. About this equivocality, Heidegger writes: "*On* says 'being' in the sense of *to be* a being; at the same time it names *a being* which is. In the duality of the participial significance of *on* the distinction between 'to be' and 'a being' lies concealed."<sup>7</sup> In Plotinus, it is clear that *on* is a noun. But as such it is precisely derivative. As 'a being' it is not the First. Heidegger thinks that the 'verb' connotation of the participle *on* has been

obscured since Plato by the identification between nominal *on* and the supreme being.

The distinction between One and *being* in Plotinus makes it impossible to reduce the First to nominal being—substance (*ousia*), as he also says.<sup>8</sup> The *on* assuredly is God (*theos*)<sup>9</sup> for him. But Plotinus' onto-theology is his penultimate word, so to speak. It is not his last word. It has to be distinguished from his henology as the second hypostasis, *Noûs* (Intellect, Mind), is from the first hypostasis, *Hen* (the One). Plotinus has seen that any onto-theological discourse about the One necessarily commits the metaphysical fallacy of treating what is First as a being; or what is ultimate, as a substance.

Against the Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics of form, Plotinus holds that it is *not* due to their substantial form that all beings are beings: "It is due to the One that all beings are beings." The metaphysical difference in both Plato and Aristotle between *substance* (whether divine or sensible) and *being* is displaced in Plotinus. He conceives a henological difference between the *One* and *being*. Since the One is non-being—*mē on*—we had better speak of negative henology.<sup>10</sup> It has to be 'negative' since *logos* constitutes the thresholds between the hypostases and is for that very reason subsequent to the One. In negative henology, the ontological difference is between One and *being*, or between *non-being* and *being*.

## 2. Metaphysical and Henological Difference

Negative henology achieves what negative theology can never achieve, namely, an understanding of the difference between *non-being* and *being* as the difference between the verbal and the nominal participle—between 'to be' and 'a being.' The One differs from Mind as a process or an event differs from the noun. Plotinus himself never equates *to hen* with *to einai*. In a later Neoplatonist, however, we read these lines:

The One that is beyond substance (*ousia*) and beyond being (*ontos*) is neither being, nor substance, nor act, but rather it acts and is itself pure acting, so that it is itself 'the to be' (*to einai*), that which is prior to being (*ontos*).

The editor of this striking text first attributed it to Porphyry, and later to the 'Anonymous of Turino.'<sup>11</sup> The One here is not only called 'pure acting' and is thereby desubstantialized, but it is also identified with the verb 'to

be.' Here the ontological difference between the first and the second hypostases is clearly expressed as the difference between 'to be' and 'a being'; between the indeterminate or pure 'is' and the determinate sum of all beings; between the verbal and the nominal participle.

This desubstantialized notion of the One designates no transcendent reality—no thing—and in that sense, nothing. The 'verbal' understanding of the One is also irreducible to the later Scholastic notions of *ipsum esse subsistens* and *actus essendi*. Although these notions rehabilitate the infinitive in the ontological discourse, the verb there serves to express the principle of intelligibility, which is the Neoplatonic *second* hypostasis.

We thus have to distinguish between two versions of the ontological difference. Because of the sweeping influence that Aristotle's *Physics*—"the hidden foundational book of Western philosophy"<sup>20</sup>—has had over the tradition, the terms of the ontological difference have remained confined to problems connected with fabrication. Metaphysicians have not 'forgotten' the ontological difference, but, at least within the Aristotelian tradition, it has remained a physicalist difference. Its discovery was altogether linked to the question of technique: How to produce a universal *being* or form (*eidos*) in individual matter. Thus the terms of the historically predominant concept of difference have been: *ousia* and *on*, *entitas* and *ens*, or, in Heidegger's language, *die Seiendheit* ('beingness') and *das Seiende* ('beings'). This is the *metaphysical* difference. It has imposed itself upon reflection through the observation of physical change. For Plotinus, it constitutes the realm of mind. "The first substance," that is, Mind (*Noûs*), he writes, "has all things and is all things."<sup>21</sup> With the physicalist-metaphysical difference, we are in the realm of onto-theology: the substantiality of things—*ousia*—is treated as an entity, as the hypostatic mind, as a God.

Both Plotinus and Heidegger take a step backwards from this metaphysical difference between substantiality and things to the 'One' or to 'being' understood verbally. What appears with this step can be called the *phenomenological* difference, which is of another kind than the metaphysical difference between a thing and its substantiality. The phenomenological difference secures no transcendent most-real ground; it amounts only to a transcendental condition for the appearance of phenomena. Plotinus' phenomenological difference between the One and substantial *being* shares, as we shall see, the chief feature of Heidegger's phenomenological difference between *to-be* and substantial *being*, namely, the character of event. These separate steps, 1) from *ousia*, or 'beingness,' to *einai*, or 'to be,' and 2) from *on* or *onta* ('beings') to *ousia* ('beingness')

are heterogeneous. Their heterogeneity is completely lost when the One is called *hyper-on*, 'a being beyond being,' as in later Neoplatonists.

One of the most revealing treatments of the relation between the One and *being* is found in Plotinus' commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*. Plotinus there equates each of Plato's hypotheses with one of the three hypostases. The first hypothesis is, 'the One is one.' In Plotinus, it is said to correspond to absolute unity, the primordial One.<sup>22</sup> 'The One is one' amounts to saying that we cannot speak of it because we cannot treat it as an entity. On the other hand, the proposition, 'the One is,' which corresponds to the hypostatic Mind, expresses a unity of many entities.

Whatever has existence and *is*, is by that fact determined numerically...[In the second hypostasis] this multiplicity is seized as a unity; to be utter multiplicity is denied of it, it is unit-multiple. Therefore it ranks below the One, since it possesses multiplicity.<sup>23</sup>

The Mind is the unity of all intelligibles, the first substance, and as such the beingness of all beings. The argument for breaking up the identification between the One and the supreme being rests not on the distinction between the universal and the particular, but on that between unity and multiplicity. *Ousia* or 'beingness' is a derived unity because it comprises multiplicity. Consequently, substantial *being* cannot in any way be predicated of the One.

The full ontological difference, embracing both the metaphysical ground and the phenomenological condition of possibility, thus unites three terms. In Plotinus they are 'beings, substance, One.' In his fourth century disciple, they are 'beings, substance, to-be.' In Heidegger they receive several descriptions: 'beings, beingness, to-be' or 'things present, their presence, presencing' (*das Anwesende, die Anwesenheit, das Anwesen*), or 'things manifest, their manifestness, manifestation' (*das Offenbare, die Offenbarkeit, das Offenbaren*).<sup>24</sup> In each of these descriptions, the third term is a verb: to be, to presence, to manifest.

To point out these parallels concerning the ontological difference in Plotinus and Heidegger is not to claim that the former was a phenomenologist of *being* or that the latter was a negative henologist. Heidegger wanted to convey the impression that he was barely acquainted with the *Enneads*.<sup>25</sup> But his understanding of the ontological difference, uniting three heterogeneous terms, is helpful in showing how negative henology overcomes metaphysics insofar as metaphysics is conceived as the quest for a most-real ground on which knowledge can find certitude—and life, peace. It is the verbal sense of *on* which shows all

substantive notions of the First to be derivative. The verbal participle *on*, Heidegger writes, obviously echoing Plotinus, "indicates what is purely and simply singular, what in its unity is unique and, as unique, is the unifying One before all number."<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The 'One' as Event

The One, both as no-thing (*mē on*) and as the to-be (*to einai*) is best described as event. It repels any notion of substantiality; hence we cannot say that it does something, that it acts. Unifying is not its act in the sense that thinking and speaking are the acts of a human substance or agent. And yet, the One is what unifies each thing as well as each order of things: "Deprived of unity, a thing ceases to be what it is called: no army, unless a unity. A chorus, ■ flock must be one thing. Even house and ship demand unity, one house, one ship; unity gone, neither remains."<sup>3</sup> Unification is not the act of the One, but the One *is* altogether unification; *hen* is *henōsis*.<sup>4</sup> Plotinus never calls the One a hypostasis. The example of the army in movement, borrowed from Aristotle, illustrates his concept of the One as pure function. An *archē*, principle, is nothing in itself, it is mere ordering—"like a rout in battle," Aristotle writes, "stopped by first one man making a stand and then another, until the original formation has been restored."<sup>5</sup> It is through this line of argument that we have to understand the One. Plotinus calls it 'the principle of being' (*archēontos*).<sup>6</sup> As a function, as the differentiating principle among things, "the First is present without any coming and, while it is nowhere, there is nothing where it is not."<sup>7</sup> This is to say, the One is the factor of coordination in all things without which all would disintegrate. It is their pure constellation, uniting bricks into a house, soldiers into an army, cities into an empire. But far from being the epitome of power, as the modality of phenomenal interaction it is most inconspicuous.

Here again, the alliance between metaphysical apophatism and onto-theology obscures the phenomenological discovery contained in negative henology. This discovery can now be stated in a paraphrase of the initial quote from the *Enneads*: It is due to unification—to their entrance into an order of interconnectedness that all beings are beings. In negative theology, on the contrary, we hear that the One is the supreme being, of which we do not know *what* it is, although we know *that* it is. But if the One as *henōsis* is a resurgence of the verb-connotation of the participle, then we can think, although not know, what it is—we can think its nature:

It is the very movement of *nasci*, or *phyein*, of coming-to-presence, in all that there is. It is the *phainesthai*, the appearance as such, in all phenomena. It is their origin in the sense of pure *oriri*, showing-forth. These verbs, *nasci*, *phyein*, *phainesthai*, *oriri*—and although the two Greek ones are not central to the Plotinian terminology—indicate nevertheless how the One is an event. It is the event by which any phenomenon whatsoever enters into a constellation, an economy of presence. These terms also indicate how we have to understand the apophatic negations in Plotinus: the One has no 'form', he says, no 'substance', no 'this' (*tode ti*), and "even this name, the One, contains no more than the negation of plurality." To speak of it, he adds, it might be more appropriate to use "the symbol Apollo," composed of the privative 'a-' and 'pollōn' ('of many'). All these negations are meant to discourage us from conceiving the One as position, as *thesis*.<sup>8</sup> They should also discourage us from conceiving it as simply a more intense mode of *being* than anything we experience phenomenally.

The difficulty in understanding the radically non-metaphysical notion of the One stems primarily from the difficulty of separating it from causal representations. The One assigns all things their locus, their site, in a given economy of presence. It does so, however, not as a demiurge (and even less as a creator), but as a principle, *archē*—this term understood as the mere function by which things present enter into commerce, as the coming about of their mutual rapport. It is true that in Neoplatonism causality is exclusively 'descending.' There is no ascending efficacy of sensible things upon intelligible things. But how can the One be called a cause? "It is cause of the cause" which is the Mind. It gives the second hypostasis (*Noūs*) its orientation so that the Mind's causality is actively unifying. But the One is not active, no more than a geometrical law is active when three lines enter into a certain relation so as to form a triangle. The Mind, the active fullness of reality, is thus immediately unified, but is only mediately unifying. According to received imagery, the One imparts an 'upward' direction to all causes, the *epistrophē* or return. It also imparts to them a 'downward' direction, the *proodos*, or process. It orders substance back to its source and ahead towards appearance. Only as this directionality of substance can the One be called "what is most causative and the true cause."<sup>9</sup>

For this entire set of premises—the One as factor of unification; as denoted by the verb 'being' and not as supreme entity denoted by the noun 'being'; as directionality of phenomena and not as their efficient cause—I find no better term than Heidegger's notion of *Ereignis*, 'event of

appropriation." Again, I am not claiming that it is from Plotinus's *hen* or *henōsis* that Heidegger has worked out this concept, nor am I saying in this context that Plotinus sheds light on the later Heidegger (although that would be a consequence of my claim). Rather, my point is that the later Heidegger is useful for understanding Plotinus. Indeed, one can identify a line of authors whose thinking has remained on the margins of metaphysics precisely because they attempted to retrieve a 'verbal,' non-substantialist, understanding of being. This line would go from Plotinus' 'unification' to Meister Eckhart's 'ground,' to Schelling's 'longing' in all beings to break out of darkness into manifestation, to Heidegger's *Ereignis*.

The 'firstness' of the One remains incomprehensible in terms of efficient, formal, final or material causality." The One can be called the universal 'cause' only insofar as it imposes the directionality of process and return upon all things intelligible and sensible. Since the entire vocabulary of cause is inadequate for an account of the One, negative henology revealed itself to be irreducible to negative theology. Moreover, the difference between the One and *being* is irreducible to the metaphysical difference. The One is the directionality of all things. As such, it is primordial time.

#### 4. Primordial Time

Does the notion of *Ereignis* allow one to raise the question—heretical within the tradition of Neoplatonism—of the temporality of the One? Before seeing how far one can go in temporalizing the One, it may be useful to recall briefly the three decisive moments in the Western philosophies of time. We will then be able to place henology within that framework.

The first of these moments results from the chief experience that strikes the Greek mind in the classical age, namely, the experience of change effected by man. Substantial motion as it occurs in sculpting, building, and so forth, received its theory in Aristotle's *Physics*. Correspondingly, the classical notion of time has to do with movement: "Time is the number of movement according to a before and an after."<sup>28</sup> Without motion no time could be represented. Only through the sequence of individual moments in becoming do we reach concepts such as 'before' and 'after.' Even if the soul experiences such a movement in its own life, this concept of time is worked out from the phenomenal domain of

material transformation. In Heidegger's words, "the Aristotelian interpretation of motion was the most difficult task for thinking in the entire history of Western metaphysics."<sup>29</sup> Since this classical concept of time is derived from physical change, time cannot occur outside the world of sensible substances.

The second moment is one of interiorization. It is most evident in Augustine. To be sure, Augustine knows the concept of time that arises from the observation of change. Following Aristotle, he expresses this as numbering the 'mutations' of forms in matter." But with Augustine the locus of our experience of time shifts from manual production to the life of the mind. The soul itself appears to him as stretched out between past and future: "It seemed to me that time is nothing else than extendedness; but of what sort of thing, I do not know; and it would be surprising if it were not an extendedness of the mind itself." In much the same fashion as Aristotle's physicalist concept of time, this mentalist notion, too, applies only to the earthly world of change. Eternity is entirely beyond time. In eternity there is no alteration. Change is the essence of time," which is therefore not simple: "Time is threefold, namely the present of things past, the present of things present, and the present of things to come."<sup>30</sup>

The third moment in this history of Western thinking about time is Heidegger's discovery of ecstatic temporality. This notion can, in a way, still be viewed as an offspring of the Augustinian *distentio animi*." However, it breaks with that entire tradition in the following ways: The ecstases by which human existence 'steps out of itself' into past, present and future replace the representation of a linear time-flux; the preeminence of the future replaces the traditional primacy of the present; and the three co-originary, 'equiprimordial,' dimensions of time replace the construction of past and future as prolongations of the present. In the metaphysical tradition up to and including Husserl, these elements—the linear sequence of 'now-moments,' the origination of the stream from the *present*, and the genesis of past and future by acts akin to *protention* and *retention*—form a system.

To these historical points of juncture two more must be added, both of which occur in the development of Heidegger's writings. He described the first of these breaks as the transition from time as 'the sense of being' to time as the history of 'the truth of being.'"<sup>31</sup> This break constitutes what he called 'the turning' in his thinking. It results from the discovery that being-in-the-world is not the neutral structure it appears to be in *Being and Time*, but that it has itself a history, which Heidegger calls the 'history of being.' There are the Greek, Roman, Medieval, modern and contemporary

modes of being-in-the-world. Thus ecstatic temporality turns into epochal temporality. The continuity with the existential analytic is nonetheless striking. An epoch, a sudden instauration of a constellation of presencing and absencing, in *alāheia* (truth), unites the three dimensions of time in a *non-linear* upsurge of a phenomenal arrangement that will hold for awhile. Furthermore, since it is the advent of such a new arrangement of things, the epoch is *future-directed*. Lastly, as the phenomenal origin of past, present and future, the epoch unites these dimensions *equiprimordially*. Thus from ecstatic to epochal temporality the basic features in Heidegger's new understanding of time remain preserved, although they become historicized.

The other break is described by Heidegger as the transition from 'the truth of being' to 'the topology of being.'<sup>36</sup> With this last stage in the reflection about time the primordial condition of all previous notions has been reached. Time here is the 'sense' of *being* inasmuch as *being* 'assigns' to all phenomena their site or their place in any given constellation of presencing and absencing. Such assigning must not be misconstrued as referring to any mythical agency. It is nothing but the entrance of beings into an order. This entrance, for which Heidegger also has recourse to such traditional terms as *phyein*, coming-forth, and *phainesthai*, appearing, is what the term *Ereignis* is meant to capture. It may indeed be most suitably translated as 'event of appropriation'; but there is no agent, human or otherwise, who appropriates things, who makes them his own. Nor does the 'proper' (*eigen*) suggest a metaphysic of full presence. Rather it points to the way things belong to one another in any given order, the movement by which they enter into mutual propinquity. Quite as in ecstatic and epochal temporality, it is the *Sinn* as directionality ('sense', not 'meaning') that is at stake here. The directionality of time is, however, no longer understood in relation to either man or history, but merely in relation to presence and absence. It is understood as the emergence from absence into presence.

It should be clear in what way the last phase of Heidegger's thinking remains indebted to the transcendental tradition. Time as 'event' makes possible ecstatic as well as epochal temporality.<sup>37</sup> However, in Heidegger, transcendentalism is divorced from the typically modern preoccupation with subjectivity. The event is primordial time, operative 'always already' in lived time and rendering possible all transmitted concepts of time, be they physicalist or mentalist.

### 5. Time as 'Bad Eternity'

How does Plotinus fit into this history of the concept of time? At first sight his place is obvious. It is indeed from Plotinus (*via* Porphyry) that Augustine learned to understand time in relation to the soul rather than to physical motion. On the soul's *distentio* (extension) into past, present and future, Augustine merely repeats Plotinus. After having rejected all previous definitions of time, particularly the Aristotelian one, Plotinus gives this one as his own:

It is the extendedness (*diastasis*) of life that takes time, and the ceaseless forward movement of life takes ever new time, quite as life past took past time. Would it then not be sound to define time as the life-process of the soul in movement as it passes from one state of life into another?<sup>38</sup>

Plotinus rejects all time concepts derived from spatial representations, that is, time as identified with either a thing moved (Pythagoras), movement (Plato), or some quality of movement (Aristotle). To understand time in terms of itself, he turns inward—a displacement that presages not only Augustine, but Kant as well. Time, then, is the life of the soul. This definition also rejects Plato's theory of time as the product of the demiurge: "It is the soul that made time."<sup>39</sup> As the soul's life, time is 'prior' to the sensible world. Without time there would be no such world. For the classical tradition, on the contrary, there would be no time without the world. The soul, according to Plotinus, temporalizes<sup>40</sup> itself and thus the world. This is a new way of thinking that he states with some apology to his predecessors: "Possibly these [previous] thinkers did not yet theorize in this reversed fashion, and possibly we simply do not understand them."<sup>41</sup> The apparently obvious place of Plotinus in the history of the concept of time is the moment of its interiorization.

But what exactly is his 'reversed fashion' of thinking? Time "is something upon the soul, inherent in it, quite as eternity is to the [intellectual] realm above."<sup>42</sup> His new way of thinking can be stated in the proportionality:

time : soul :: eternity : mind.

It is the relation between time and eternity that separates Plotinus not only from the authors of early Antiquity but also from those in late Antiquity. His new way of thinking consists in understanding time out of eternity. In a strictly parallel way, because the soul can only be known

once the mind is known, he can define time as the life of the soul. This definition is thus not originary. It depends on the more fundamental premise enunciated in the proportionality above. His new way of thinking requires an examination of the *model* of time in the second hypostasis, the Mind. This model is eternity. However, it too is derivative. The new way of thinking, then, cannot stop short of the question, What is the model of eternity, in the One itself? It cannot stop short of the question of primordial time.

The Plotinian 'method' consists in always following a descending *hodos*, or path, of explanation. There can be no action of the sensible upon the intelligible within such an outlook. It is for this general methodological reason that inwardness cannot be Plotinus' last word about time. He does not conceive of time in relation to sense experience at all, be it located in the inner or the outer sense. It is true that his inquiry—as opposed to his explanation—proceeds from the exterior to the interior to the superior, but this itinerary does not properly constitute an ascent. He retains only the heuristic function of *anagogē*, at least as far as the issue of time is concerned.~ Thus he describes how a perceived outward movement of becoming, for instance in animal life, *reveals* the inward movement of psychic life, time; the life of the soul in turn *reveals* the life of the mind, eternity. In this regress of upward discovery it is clear that the One can be neither in time nor in eternity. It is the direct source of eternity and the indirect source of time. In keeping with the understanding, established earlier, of *to hen* as *to einai*—of the One as 'the to be'—the issue of primordial time can now be formulated in another proportionality:

the One : Mind : Soul :: 'to-be' : being : becoming :: X : eternity : time.

How are we to describe this unknown 'X'?

We may learn something about this unknown principle of eternity and time if we look at the way in which eternity mediates between the One and the life of the soul. Every mediating term must participate in the two terms that it connects, otherwise there would be no mediation. More specifically, the mediating hypostasis must have two *logoi*; it must be two-sided, turned both toward the hypostasis from which it proceeds and toward that which proceeds from it. Thus Proclus will later say: From the point of view of the One, the ideas are 'henads,' but from the point of view of the many, they are 'monads.' Furthermore, given the general framework of participation by deficient similitude, the lower degrees of *being*, the images, manifest the higher ones, the models. Plotinus must therefore

distinguish two aspects of eternity as both image of the One and model of time. "*Everlastingness* is the state pertaining to the substrate that stems from it and inheres in it; *eternity*, on the other hand, is the substrate [itself], together with the state which carries it into manifestation." As the image of the One, eternity is a *hypokeimenon* (substrate), even a god. But as the model of time, it is a *katasistasis* (state), of that substrate; it is a world. "Eternity is a god; he manifests himself, shows himself in his essence, namely the to-be without jolt or change, and therefore as also the firmly living."~ If everlastingness is "that state which carries [eternity] into manifestation," then eternity *appears* as everlastingness, as unvarying duration. Christian followers of Plotinus will conclude from this distinction between the essence of eternity and its appearance that everlastingness is only an inadequate analogy of the 'standing now' in which 'all is simultaneous.' In its appearance, eternity both manifests and obscures itself.

Something is lost, then, when we call eternity the model of time. Such an inductive proposition is incommensurate with the second hypostasis because the measure of eternity is the One. The commensurate way of thinking about eternity would have to be deductive. It would be more commensurate with the nature of time to call it the image of eternity. Any phenomenon is correctly understood only when it is placed in the light of the degree above it—which is the reason why there can be no knowledge of the One. Such is Plotinus' reversed way of thinking.~ Due to the merely heuristic function of anagogical reasoning, the treatise on eternity amounts to a negative treatise on the One. "Eternity is around the One."~ The ascending order of discovery—as opposed to the descending order of foundation—is spelled out clearly when Plotinus says:

It is now appropriate to state what *time* really is. To this end we must go back to the state we affirmed of *eternity*; unwavering life, undivided totality, limitless, knowing no divagation, at rest in the *One* and intent upon it."

From time to eternity to the One, what is the primordial condition of all derivative concepts of time that we reach?

## 6. Being as Time~

We saw that each of the traditional metaphysical attributes of the absolute—the Good, the Beautiful, Truth—originates in a specific human

experience. In Plotinus it is a general axiom that we can only philosophize about what we also 'touch,' that is, experience: "What understanding would succeed failing some point of contact? And what contact could there be with the utterly alien?"<sup>20</sup> We are indeed in contact with each of the hypostases: Through the experience of want, we are in contact with that of soul and time;<sup>21</sup> through the experience of intellectual intuition, with that of Mind and eternity;<sup>22</sup> through the experience of "going forth from the self (*ekstasis*), simplifying oneself (*haplōsis*), renouncing (*epidōsis*), reaching towards contact and resting (*stasis*)," with the One and primordial time.

This description of the way we are in touch with the One may sound like moral discourse. There is indeed a Plotinian imperative: *Become restful*. But such an injunction is possible only because we are already in touch with the One ontologically. The One does what man does when he is 'wise,' when he follows his nature and "lets all things be what they are."<sup>23</sup> Unification and simplification in Plotinus thus constitute essential traits both of man and of the One. Likewise, in Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 'releasement,' constitutes the essential trait not only of man when he becomes thoughtful, but more basically of *being* as an event. Even though Heidegger seems to wish to connect his 'letting' with the verb *parechein*, 'to offer, to make possible, to exhibit'<sup>24</sup> rather than with *eain*, this identity of man's way of living and *being's* way of presencing seems to me one indisputably common element between Plotinus and Heidegger. The One is no thing, no hypostasis, but sheer process—*eain*, *einai*, *henōsis*.<sup>25</sup> Likewise Heidegger's 'being' is no-thing,<sup>26</sup> but a process, 'letting-be.'<sup>27</sup> Man's life-process is formally identical with the being-process, be this called 'unification' or 'letting-be.'

Two key terms in Plotinus point to the One as event of appropriation, which is to say, as primordial time. These are *dynamis* and *archē*. The One is "the potential (*dynamis*) towards all things."<sup>28</sup> As such, it lets all things emerge from itself without suffering any diminution. Such letting-appear (a wholly unAristotelian notion of *dynamis*) occurs neither in time nor in eternity; it is the condition of both. At least as far as Heidegger's topological understanding of *Ereignis* is concerned, his reach towards what ultimately conditions all phenomena is not unlike Plotinus' reach. The One as ultimate potential is that event by which phenomena are left to their *topoi*, to the place that is theirs in the universal order of presencing and absencing. As the 'potential towards all things,' it *differs* from all. It is neither one of them nor their sum total. 'Potency' thus must not be misunderstood as the power of a supreme being. It is the condition that

enables all beings to appear; it is appearance as such. This phenomenological difference between appearance and the appearing in Plotinus is particularly evident when he warns us not to conceive of potency as a virtuality for things not yet existent: "It is not possible that anything else come into existence. There is nothing that did not come into existence when the all came about. [The One], however, never was the all."<sup>29</sup> As *dynamis*, the One is the movement by which the all becomes the 'uni-verse,' 'turned towards the One.' It is that sweeping *veriere*, turning, it is directedness as such.

As to *archē*, this term always refers to the One when used without qualification. It is frequently followed by a genitive: The One is "origin of process, origin of life, origin of the mind as well as of all things." As such it is something quite familiar to each of us: "We indicate it by virtue of what in ourselves is like it."<sup>30</sup> What is it in us that is like the *archē*? It is the fact that the body, the soul with its many layers, and the mind are integrated into one human being. It is humanity as a *principle of order* in us, as an ordering, that is like the One. The Greek *archē*, however, implies a motility that neither its Latin equivalents *imperium*, *regimen*, *princeps*, *principium*, *primum*—nor the English 'principle' preserve. In the text quoted earlier from Aristotle, this motility was likened to a battle that is forming. When an army takes flight, the disarray does not stop because one or two soldiers regain courage. But suddenly all may take up their formation. Then the activities of each turn into the action of all. So it is that the One is a forming of order, absolutely. It is nothing but the entrance of many factors into a constellation, nothing but the emergence of such a constellation. If on the contrary *archē* designated some *being* that dominates—although we may not know the nature of its dominion—then the Neoplatonic discourse about the One would indeed amount to negative theology. But the origin as *archē* is nothing other than *archein*, beginning, *oriri*. The subject-matter of negative theology is not divine world-government but something rather more tenuous: the event of arising from absence into presence. This event is impossible to hypostatize or to deify. Nor can it occur either in time or in eternity. It is not possible to construe such an arising as the emptiest genus of all types of unification, sensible and intelligible. It is, rather, the condition (*dynamis*) of these types, their coming-about (*archein*) as such. The One as *archē* is the condition that makes possible all and any forms of time.

It should be clear in what sense this concept of the One as unifying factor in all phenomena, as unification, 'overcomes' metaphysics. To overcome it is not to reject it. Quite the contrary. As we saw, the

metaphysical difference is integrated into henology as the step by which the mind transcends the visible. But the step by which, according to Plotinus, we can also transcend the intelligible is not metaphysical since it leads neither to the nature of substances nor to their ultimate ground. This second step of transcendence amounts to a 'working through' of the hypostatic Mind, a working through of metaphysics. The possibility of going beyond substance arises from the very *dynamis* of the One itself, not from some human faculty. Only when the One is understood as an event can it be claimed that negative henology is an overcoming of metaphysics.

Is it not a very minimalist reading of Plotinus to interpret the One as unification? Is it not utter functionalism to so radically de-substantialize the One that it is best designated by a verb rather than a noun? What, then, are we to make of those best known and most puzzling texts in which Plotinus speaks of an experience that is quite personal and datable? The *Ereignis* in no way refers to some lived experience, some *Erlebniss*. Porphyry, on the other hand, tells us that his master "achieved the supreme goal four times during the period I passed with him, by no mere latent fitness but by the ineffable act."<sup>14</sup> The *Ereignis* is nothing that happens to human beings, rather a *singulare tantum*. How, then, can the One as mere factor of economical ordering inspire lines like these?

Several times it has happened: awakening from the body to return to myself; leaving behind all things and becoming self-centered; beholding a marvelous beauty; then, more than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine; stationing within it by having attained that activity; poised above all other intellectual beings: yet, there comes the moment of descent...."

In light of the imperative mentioned earlier, we can answer: Here Plotinus speaks of those rare moments when it was given to him to 'let' all things be quite as the One lets them all be. His experience would constitute the opposite of the original classical Greek experience as reflected in Aristotle's *Physics*—the experience of making, fabricating, mastering nature. Plotinus stands outside the prevailing tradition in the West because to all forms (including theological) of domination he opposes *henōsis*, the experiential side of which is 'letting-be.' Practical *Gelassenheit* is however only a consequence of the *Gelassenheit* which is primordial time.

In Heidegger the ultimate condition of all forms of time is called, as we saw, the 'event of appropriation.' However, he adds that *being*, understood in this way, is not an unobstructed object for thought. "We

must never forget that expropriation (*Enteignis*) belongs essentially to appropriation (*Ereignis*)."<sup>15</sup> In Plotinian terms: We must never forget that the One as such is ineffable, that there can be no full manifestation of the One. It is part of its essence to hide itself from our thinking. Only as a consequence of this self-revealing, self-concealing nature of the One will any henology have to be essentially negative.

How, then, is the One primordial time? It is as the literally 'dynamic' identity of *being* and nothingness. After having described the transcendental step backwards from epochal temporality to primordial time, Heidegger adds: "The absence of [epochal] destiny from the event of appropriation thus does not mean that it lacks any 'motility'." The event is primordial time as "turning towards us in withdrawal."<sup>16</sup> In a comparable fashion, the One as *to einai*, 'the to-be,' renders itself absent as it renders itself present. While it remains wholly at rest, this interplay of presencing and absencing makes it the condition of all modalities of time.

What cognitive interest is operative when the absolute is called 'the One'? It may well be the attempt to understand *being* as time.

The New School of Social Research

## NOTES

1. Cf. Plato, *The Republic* 358a, 571a, 580b.
2. Cf. Plato, *Philebus* 64e.
3. Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book VII, chapters 10 & 16.
4. Plotinus, *Ennead* VI.9.1, 1.
5. *Ennead* VI.9.2, 30 (emphasis added).
6. *Ennead* VI.9.3, 39.
7. Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt, 1950), 317; translated by D. F. Krell and F. A. Capuzzi, *Early Greek Thinking* (New York, 1975), 32. About the duality contained in the participial form, Cf. M. Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken* (Tübingen, 1954), 133f.; translated by F. D. Wieck and J. G. Gray, *What is Called Thinking?* (New York, 1968), 220f.
8. Substance, *ousia*, is what is most intensely or authentically, *ontōs on*: *Ennead* VI.3.6, 1 & 30.
9. E.g. *Ennead* IV.7.8.(3), 12.
10. I borrow this term from Pierre Aubenque, "Plotin et le dépassement de l'ontologie grecque classique." *Le Néoplatonisme*, Editions du CNRS (Paris, 1971), 102.
11. Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, volume II (Paris, 1968), 104. For the change in attribution, see Pierre Hadot, "L'être et l'étant dans le néoplatonisme," *Etudes néoplatoniciennes* (Neuchâtel, 1973), 30.



12. M. Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt, 1967), 312; translated by T. Sheehan, "On the Being and Conception of *Physis* in Aristotle's *Physics* B, 1," *Man and World* IX (1976), 224. Cf. M. Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen, 1957), 111.
13. *Ennead* I.8.2, 16 & 22.
14. Plato, *Parmenides* 142b.
15. *Ennead* V.1.8, 23–26.
16. *Ennead* VI.6.3, 1–7. For a commentary see Pierre Hadot, "L'Être et l'étant dans le néoplatonisme," 29 & 32f.
17. Cf. *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen, 1969), 32; translated by J. Stambaugh, *On Time and Being* (New York, 1972), 30.
18. In conversation—to disantiate himself, it seemed—he said about Plotinus: "But is that not one of the Neoplatonists?"
19. Heidegger, *Holzwege* 318; Capuzzi, *Early Greek Thinking* 33; translation modified.
20. *Ennead* VI.9.1, 3–9.
21. Cf. *Ennead* VI.1.26, 27.
22. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* II.19, 100a11–13. See the commentary by Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Kleine Schriften*, volume I (Tübingen, 1967), 110.
23. *Ennead* VI.9.9, 1.
24. *Ennead* V.5.8, 23f.
25. *Ennead* V.5.6, 6s. & V.5.6, 26–31.
26. *Ennead* VI.8.18, 37.
27. Concerning the meanings of this word I have nothing to add to Henri Birault's enumeration: "Firstly, *das Ereignis* commonly signifies 'the event' or 'the happening.' Secondly, *das Ereignis* derives from the word *eigen*, which means 'own,' 'proper,' or 'properly.' From this sense stem, for instance, *die Eigenschaft*, 'property' in the sense of 'attribute,' and *das Eigentum*, 'property' in the sense of 'possession,' but also the now quite obsolete philosophical notion *die Eigentlichkeit*, 'authenticity.' Fourthly, *das Ereignis* refers to the old German verb *er-äugen*, which is construed from *das Auge*, 'the eye' or 'the glance'": Heidegger et l'expérience de la pensée' (Paris, 1978), 41.
28. The first three types of causality are frequently ascribed by Plotinus to the One. As to matter, it is said to paradoxically resemble the One: it is formless (*Ennead* I.8.8, 21 and II.5.4, 12), not-being (*Ennead* II.5.4, 11), boundless (*Ennead* I.8.3, 13), and mere potentiality (*Ennead* II.5.5, 5).
29. *Physics* IV.11, 220a24.
30. Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, 353; translated by Sheehan, "On the Being..." 255.
31. "Ipsa mutabilitas...inqua sentiri et dinumerari possunt tempora, quia rerum mutationibus fiunt tempora," *Confessions*, Book XII, chapter 8, 8.
32. Cf. *The City of God* XI, 6, and *On the Trinity* IV.18, 24. Plotinus, in his treatise on time, called eternity *adiastatōs*, non-extended, *Ennead* III.7.3, 15.
33. *Confessions* XI.26, 33 and XI.20, 26.

34. Heidegger cites *Physics* IV.14—"if there were no soul time would be impossible"—and *Confessions* XI.26, 33 as examples of the 'ordinary' time concept. He adds: "The interpretation of Dasein as temporality does not lie outside the horizon of the ordinary concept of time," *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, 1957), 427; translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, *Being and Time* (New York, 1962), 479f.
35. M. Heidegger, *Vier Seminare* (Frankfurt, 1977), 73.
36. Heidegger, *Seminare*, 73.
37. "The event always grants the time-span out of which history takes the while that guarantees an epoch," M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, volume II (Pfullingen, 1961), 490.
38. *Ennead* III.7.11, 42–46. I follow Hans Jonas, "Plotin über Ewigkeit und Zeit," in *Politische Ordnung und menschliche Existenz, Festgabe für Eric Voegelin* (Munich, 1962), 310f., in translating *zoē* as 'life-process' and *bios* as 'state of life.'
39. *Ennead* III.7.13, 47.
40. *Chronour* (*Ennead* III.7.11, 30). According to H. R. Schwyzer, "Plotinos" in *Realencyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* XXI, 1 (525 n14), this verb is probably a neologism forged by Plotinus himself.
41. *Ennead* III.7.13, 13.
42. *Ennead* III.7.11, 64.
43. In the early treatises, however, there are several paraphrases of the ascent according to Plato's *Symposium*, e.g. *Ennead* I.6.7 & 8.
44. *Ennead* III.7.5, 16–22. My reading of the distinction between everlastingness (*aidiotes*), and eternity (*aton*), as the two *logoi* of the mediating hypostasis differs from that of H. Jonas, "Plotin über Ewigkeit und Zeit," 297 n3, who admits of no difference in meaning between these two terms. The two-sidedness of eternity as a middle term, which I am trying to exhibit, provides the architectonic ground for the remark by Werner Beierwaltes—*Plotin: über Ewigkeit und Zeit* (Frankfurt, 1967), 156–158—for whom these terms are names of the same subject-matter, seen from two points of view. The later Latin authors make frequent use of the distinction between everlastingness and eternity, for instance as *sempiternitas mundi* and *aeternitas dei*. As to the substantivized verb *to einai* in this quote, it confirms my earlier distinction between negative henology and negative theology. Plotinus equates "the 'to-be'" with eternity, a god, the firmly living, that is, with the hypostatic mind. The same equation makes him speak of *to d'estin* (III.7.6, 18) and *esti monon* (III.7.3, 34), both of which refer to eternity.
45. "We begin with eternity, since when the stable exemplar is known, its representation in image which time is understood to be will be clearly apprehended. But it is of course true, admitting this relationship of time as image to eternity as the original, that if we chose to begin by identifying time we could thence proceed upwards by recollection (*anamnēsis*) and thus

- become aware of [eternity]" (III.7.1, 21–24). Plotinus does not carry out this inductive, upwards reasoning.
46. *Peri to hen* (III.7.6, 2f.). Eternity is *kentro-eidēs*, it looks to the center of which it is the periphery.
  47. *Ennead* III.7.10, 16–11 & 4.
  48. "Thinking the most difficult thought of philosophy, means thinking being as time," M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, volume I, 28; translated by D. F. Krell, "Nietzsche," *The Will to Power as Art*, volume I (New York, 1979), 20.
  49. *Ennead* III.7.7, 3f.
  50. What is in time 'lacks' (*elleipein*: III.7.4, 15) being, 'attracts' it (*helkon to einai*: III.7.4, 30), it must constantly 'acquire' (*epiktasthai*: III.7.4, 20) being, 'strive' (*ephesei tini ousias*: III.7.4, 31) after it as after what is to come (*ephesis to mellontos*: III.7.4, 34). From phrases like these it appears that "for Plotinus the future is what is properly temporal about time, the mode of its temporalizing," H. Jonas, "Plotin über...", 298. Possessing their end is therefore not the lot of things sensible; the Aristotelian concept of *entelecheia* here does not apply to the sublunary world.
  51. Eternity differs from time because there is no futurity, no not-yet in thinking: the act of *noesis* is identical with its object, the *noeton*. On the other hand, eternity also differs from the One, since noetic identity unites two terms: "The mind is number, but number and the like has its origin in the One. Further, the mind is together what thinks and what is thought, so that it is a duality" (*Ennead* III 8.9, 4f.).
  52. *Ennead* VI.9.11, 23f.
  53. *Eph' heauton eāsai einai*: *Ennead* V.5.12, 49.
  54. Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, 136; translated by J. Barlow and F. M. Comford, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. W. Barrett and H. D. Aikens, volume III (New York, 1962), 265.
  55. It is thus impossible to distinguish between the One and unification as between a substance and its act. H. Jonas seems to intend this impossibility when he writes: "relatedness to the ground is itself the ground" ("Plotin über...", 304).
  56. "What is entirely different from all beings is non-being; this 'nothing,' however, is the essence of being": Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, 101f.
  57. Being is *Anwesen-lassen* (with the emphasis on 'lassen'), 'letting-presence': Heidegger, *Vier Seminare*, 103.
  58. It is Meister Eckhart, mediating between Plotinus and Heidegger on this point, who is most explicit about the process-like identity between the essence of being and that of man; see the term *Ereignis* in the index of my *Meister Eckhart, Mystic and Philosopher* (Bloomington, 1978).
  59. *Ennead* III.8.10, 1. This usage of *dynamis* is irreducible to that of Aristotle. When predicated of the One, Plotinus' concept of potentiality or potency is neither kinetic (potency as "the origin of movement or change": *Metaphysics* IV.12, 1019a15) nor hyletic ("matter is what exists potentially": *Metaphysics*

- VIII.2, 1042b9). I take his usage in this context rather to be an excessive appropriation of Plato's, who writes: "As to potency, I solely consider to what it is related and what it effects." Plotinus' use here is excessive since for Plato there are many *dynamai*, "the strongest being knowledge" (*Republic* V, 477c-d). For Plotinus there can ultimately be only one *dynamis*, the One itself.
60. *Ennead* V.5.12, 48f.
  61. *Ennead* III.8.9, 39f. & 24.
  62. Heidegger says *verwinden*, which is reminiscent of the Freudian *durcharbeiten*—working through suffering or a neurosis. "This *Verwinden* is similar to what happens when, in the human realm, one gets over grief or pain": *Die Technik und die Kehre* (Pfullingen, 1962), 38; translated by W. Lovitt, *The Question Concerning Technology* (New York, 1977), 39.
  63. Porphyry, "Life of Plotinus," in *Plotinus: The Enneads*, 2nd edition, translated by Stephen MacKenna (New York, 1962), 17.
  64. *Ennead* IV.8.1, 1–10.
  65. Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, 46; translated by Stambaugh, *On Time and Being*, 43. Expropriation is related to appropriation as *lāhē* to *alāheia*: Cf. *Zur Sache...*, 44; *Time and Being*, 41.
  66. Heidegger, *Zur Sache...*, 44; *Time and Being*, 41.



enough, Bréhier suggests that matter is independent of the One but at the same time maintains some type of participation in the Good.<sup>4</sup>

Yet some authors believe that matter is independent of the One. Phillippus Pistorius contends that matter is pure negation, that all creativity is an activity of idea upon matter and that matter is eternal. He calls it "the imaginary point where God is not, and where there is, therefore, an absolute lack of reality...absolute evil."<sup>5</sup>

A number of authors are inclined to believe that for Plotinus the production of matter is in some way an activity of the One. E. R. Dodds, for example, strongly asserts that Plotinus will have none of the dualism which results in admitting an independent origin to matter or in making any kind of active source of evil. And, since matter is from the One, "incarnation as such is not necessarily an evil state."<sup>6</sup> Paul Henry contends that Plotinus has made the decisive jump from the One to matter by means of the emanative process.<sup>7</sup> A. H. Armstrong finds a paradoxical situation in Plotinus' account of matter since it is the principle of evil as well as "the last and lowest stage of procession from the Good."<sup>8</sup>

Among those authors who view matter as the endproduct of the emanative process, Dean Inge insists that matter must not be equated with absolute nothingness. He says that it is not "absolutely non-existent," and that below it, "there can be nothing, for the next stage below matter would be absolute non-entity."<sup>9</sup>

Jean Trouillard and Dennis O'Brien are perhaps the best spokesman for the monism of Plotinus. Trouillard says that "Plotinian matter is needed by the Good, and proceeds from it." It is "total indetermination," and still it is "integrated into the total process."<sup>10</sup> O'Brien says that there can be evil only "subsequent to the soul's production of matter."<sup>11</sup>

There remains yet another group of authors. They have no interest in the controversy over the origin of matter, but consider the problem to be meaningless. In general they say that because matter is such a weak and limiting concept this precludes its being an endproduct of the emanative process or an independent reality opposed to that process. John Murray says that matter is "nothing more positive than a determined limit" for the activity of the mind.<sup>12</sup> Joseph Katz calls matter 'complete powerlessness,' which does not exist, and is just "the furthestmost limit of power."<sup>13</sup> Of this latter group of authors, Cletus Carbonara is the most forceful. He maintains that Plotinus rejects dualism, but this rejection does not mean that matter is a part of the monistic overflow. Matter is not an independent reality in the Plotinian universe, not a creation of the One; it is pure negation.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, Plotinian scholars do not agree on the origin and function of matter in the Plotinian universe. In fact, three possible positions have been noted: (i) matter is independent of the One and opposed actively or passively to it; (ii) matter is the end product of the procession from the One; and (iii) the question of the origin of matter is meaningless since matter is nothing at all.

The purpose of this study is to determine which, if any, of these positions best characterizes Plotinus' thought on the origin and role of matter—both corporeal and intelligible. Our method will be one of textual analysis; that is, several key texts, representative of Plotinus' early, middle and late literary periods, will be analyzed.<sup>15</sup>

### 1. Key Text A: *Ennead* II.4<sup>16</sup>

The title of this treatise is given by Porphyry in the *Life* as 'On the Two Kinds of Matter' (*Peri tōn duo hylōn*). It is number twelve in the chronological order and was written at a time when Plotinus did not seem to be particularly interested in the origin of corporeal matter. The treatise is important for our purposes, however, because Plotinus does indicate that intelligible matter is produced by the One.

The treatise begins with an acknowledgment that men generally agree that matter is a certain 'substrate' and 'receptacle' of form. This agreement dissolves, however, when they begin to question concerning the nature of matter and "how it is a receptacle and what of."<sup>17</sup> Chapters 2 through 5 are devoted to an analysis of intelligible matter while the remainder of the treatise is concerned with corporeal matter. It is important that we consider the function and origin of divine intelligible matter because matter Here is in some way an image of the matter There.<sup>18</sup>

Plotinus first presents the argument against there being matter in the intelligible world saying: "If what is of the matter kind must be indeterminate and formless, and there is nothing indeterminate or formless among the beings there, which are the best, there would not be matter there."<sup>19</sup> He counters this argument by pointing out that we must not despise the undefined or the idea of shapelessness since Soul itself is shapeless before being shaped by Intellect and Reason. The matter There is different from the matter Here in that the latter is always receiving different forms while the former always possesses the same form.

In the intelligible world matter is all things at once, so it has nothing to change into, for it has all things already. Accordingly, matter is never without form in the intelligible world since even the matter here is not, but each of them has form in a different way.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, since the ideas are many, each must have something that is properly its own—its form (*morphē*) and that which is common to all, matter (*hylē*). Thus, if there is form in the intelligible world, there must also be matter which underlies and receives the form.<sup>23</sup> In fact, while the intelligible world is certainly indivisible, still it is, in a sense, divisible and matter exists in it. The intelligible world is unity amidst diversity, and the diversity is that of many forms. Take away the diversity of forms and what remains is formless and indeterminate (*amorphon kai aoriston*), viz. intelligible matter.

So, it must be formless before it is varied; for it you take away in your mind its variety and forms and forming principles and thoughts, what is prior to these is formless and undefined and it is none of these things that are on it and in it.<sup>24</sup>

And so that on or in which these intelligible realities have their unity amidst diversity is intelligible matter. Plotinus describes the origin of this matter as follows:

For Otherness There is eternal and produces intelligible matter for this is the principle of matter, this and the primary Movement. For this reason Movement, too, was called Otherness, because Movement and Otherness sprung forth together. The Movement and Otherness which came from the First are undefined, and need the First to define them; they are defined when they turn to It. But before the turning, matter, too, was undefined and the Other and no way good, but unilluminated from the First. For if light comes from the First, then that which receives the light before it receives it has everlastingly no light; but it has light as other than itself, since the light comes to it from another.<sup>25</sup>

Rist explains how this 'otherness' characterizes matter both Here and There. "All beings, that is, everything associated with any kind of matter, possesses 'otherness'; intelligible matter is 'other' than the One, that is than what is 'beyond Being,' matter 'here' is other than Being."<sup>26</sup> And that which is other There is intelligible matter which has its source in the One.

As 2, 4, 5, 30, makes abundantly clear, it is the very characteristic of the first product of the One, namely the substrate of the intelligible world of 'intelligible matter,' to be 'other' than its source.<sup>27</sup>

This 'otherness' of matter does not wish to remain such and continually strives to be filled from the same source that made it 'other.'<sup>28</sup> Now since everything after the One is other than It, all things have some characteristics of matter.<sup>29</sup> They are all produced in an initial overflow as indefinite, and through a conversion to their source they are informed and so complete hypostases.

Chapters 6 through 16 of II.4 are devoted to an analysis of corporeal matter as that which underlies changing beings. Change is not a coming to be from absolute non-being nor is destruction a total perishing into non-being. If this is true then that which changes and perishes must be a composite and as such it must be composed of matter and form. So beings that are destroyed "must be composed of matter and form: form is in relation to their quality and shape, and matter to their substrate, which is indeterminate because it is not form."<sup>30</sup>

Now matter which underlies form is without quality. "We must not attribute to it lightness or heaviness, density or rarity, and indeed not even shape and so not size either."<sup>31</sup> All the qualities that are seen in matter are brought to it by form. "So when the form comes to matter it brings everything with it; the form has everything, the size and all that goes with it and is caused by *logos*."<sup>32</sup> Therefore, since matter is without qualities, it is difficult to speak of it as anything other than a mere potentiality without potency. It is qualityless (*apoiós*) (I.8.10), non-being (*mē on*) (II.5.4 & 5), only a potentiality of being (II.5.5). But even devoid of qualities and other than being, matter still has its own particular characteristic which is simply its being 'other' than others. Rist calls this otherness of matter its nature.

This 'otherness' is its nature (*physis*), a nature which is not essentially quantified but continually admits a flux of changing qualities. Plotinus finds no difficulty in the idea of entities being unqualified (2, 4, 13). If this is so—and nobody disputes the existence and discussability of Quality—then the mere absence of qualities does not rule out the potential 'existence' of matter, or prevent its 'possession' of a nature.<sup>33</sup>

Rist's contention that matter in some sense has a nature appears to be correct. Plotinus himself asserts that just because matter is non-being does not mean that it is not.

Non-being here does not mean complete non-being but only something other than being; not non-being in the same way as the movement and rest which affect being, but like an image of being or something still more non-existent."

Apparently, Plotinus here employs Plato's work in the *Sophist* on negation. Plato had found it necessary to distinguish between the kinds of negation. His conclusion was that 'not being something' is not the same as non-existence." And so when something is said to be non-being, it is not necessarily non-existence but only something other than being. In this way, Plotinus can claim that matter has no being; it is non-being (*mē einai*), and that non-being has some kind of existence that is identical with privation. "Therefore, though it is non-being, it has a certain sort of 'being' in this way and is the same thing as privation."

Now one can not consign matter to the realm of non-being or privation and then forget about it. For although formless and indeterminate, it is the substratum of things.

There is need for some one kind of vessel or place to receive bodies; but place is posterior to matter and bodies, so that bodies would need matter before they need place...it is not an empty name but it is something underlying, even if it is invisible and sizeless."

Matter is analogous to a mirror but does not have the real existence that a mirror does over and above the appearances in it." The images of bodies that enter into it enter as 'falsity into falsity.' Matter is not visible like a mirror and must not be thought of as an object as the mirror is an object. The mirror is an analogy only insofar as it, too, is a 'receptacle' in which images come and go.

Finally, since matter has such a strange type of existence, it can be apprehended only by an equally strange kind of reasoning. Plotinus refers to the 'bastard reasoning' of the *Timaeus* saying that such reasoning does not originate in the mind, but in some illogical way." In order to 'see' matter, one must use "another intellect which is not intellect," an intellect that is devoid of all form and being. Intellect must leave its own light, as it were, and go outside, "to experience something contrary to itself." It must negate itself and become intellectless in order to see matter which exists outside of being."

And so in the twelfth treatise, Plotinus has presented a valuable analysis of the two kinds of matter. Our own analysis of the text has demonstrated that although intelligible matter has its origin in the overflow of the One, no such claim, on the basis of this treatise, can be made for

corporeal matter. The text does indicate, however, that the matter Here is an image of the matter There. It is without quality, a container of bodies, and identical with privation. In its very privation it can be said in some sense 'to be' but as to the source of this 'being' the text is silent.

## 2. Key Text B: *Ennead* III.4.1

This text, number fifteen in Porphyry's list, helps clear up some of the uncertainty concerning the origin of corporeal matter. In II.4 we saw that specific mention was made of the origin of intelligible matter, but no mention was made as to the origin of corporeal matter. Plotinus clears up this deficiency by saying that absolute indetermination (*aoristian pantelē*) is produced by Soul. The text is quoted at length because of its importance.

Some realities [the One and Intellect] remain unmoved when their off-spring come into being, but Soul has already been said to be in motion when it brings forth sense perception, which is a hypostasis, and the power of growth, which also extends to plants. Now Soul has the power of growth when it exists in us, but this power does not dominate because it is only a part of Soul; in plants, however, it dominates because it has, as it were, been isolated. But does this power of growth produce anything? It produces a thing altogether different from itself, for after it there is no more life and what is produced is lifeless. What is it then? Everything which was produced prior to this was produced formless but received form by turning towards its producer and being, as it were, reared to maturity, so here, too, that which is produced is not anymore a form of Soul—for it is without life—but absolute indetermination."

But what is this 'absolute indetermination'? Harder, in commenting on this text, asserts that absolute indetermination is matter." Plotinus himself lends credibility to this interpretation since he refers to matter as indetermination many times." Armstrong in commenting on the meaning of 'others' in II.4.13 adds further clarification.

To say something is 'other' than something else is a way of helping to define it, to show it as a distinctive unity; this remarkable plural is an attempt to exclude all definition, to speak of matter as absolutely indefinite and incoherent with no sort of distinctive unity."

In addition, the very metaphysical structure of bodies requires that matter be indeterminate. This is indicated by several texts but especially by III.4.1 itself.

When it [absolute indetermination] is perfected it becomes a body, receiving a form proper to its potentiality, a receptacle for the principle that produced and nourished it."

Now in another treatise Plotinus speaks of fire, air, water, and earth as the four kinds of bodies." It is the indetermination of matter that is raised to the level of bodies by the introduction of form. Without form coming to matter there would be no bodies. Why?

Because there would not be compounded bodies or even a simple body in reality, without the soul which is in the universe, since it is a rational principle coming into matter which makes a body, and that rational principle does not proceed from any other than Soul."

That which raises matter to the perfection of body is the very principle that produced it. It is first generated by Soul and then becomes the recipient (*hypodochēn*) of its generator. "It is not the body that is the recipient (*hypodochēn*), but the indeterminate matter." Once the power of growth generates and raises it to the level of body other forms can then be superimposed on the matter. For example, a living being is a result of the imposition of the forms of corporeality, element, and life on matter."

Body becomes the meeting place, as it were, between the higher realities and matter here below. "And only this form in bodies is the last trace of that above in the last depth of that below." That which is 'the last depth of that below' is matter.

Now it is necessary that what comes after the First should exist, and as a result that the last should exist, and this is matter, which has nothing at all of the Good."

Plotinus' universe has reached the point of no emanation, no overflow and no Being. Each stage of the emanatory process is characterized by the ability of the less perfect product to turn to its source and be filled, but matter, which is not perfect at all, is unable to turn towards its generator and so remains unformed and in darkness. Previous generations always possessed something of their generator in themselves, even though it may have been 'indetermination without form,' but matter possesses

nothing of the principle of growth which generated it and so is absolute indetermination.

The importance of this text is evident. Matter under the guise of absolute indetermination is explicitly linked with the chain of realities that ultimately has its source in the One.

### 3. Key Text C: *Ennead* III.6.14

The next text for consideration is from treatise number twenty-six, according to Porphyry's list. This treatise, along with the others written during Plotinus' middle literary period, may be more useful for an understanding of the Plotinian doctrine on the origin of matter than the more popular treatises such as I.8 and II.4. This is so because II.4, one of the earlier treatises, is representative of Plotinus' early thinking on matter, and I.8 is representative of his later thought "when his power was already failing." This treatise, then, written when his mental power was "at its height" should present to us, more than any other, his mature thought on the origin of matter. Moreover, if there is any development of his thinking on matter, this treatise should be a keystone in that development, coming between his earlier and later thinking.

The treatise entitled, 'On the Impassibility of Beings Without Body' seeks to demonstrate that both soul and matter are not subject to affections or modifications. With regards to matter Plotinus builds on a discussion just completed in II.5.5.

But if matter really was participant and received being as is commonly thought, what comes to it would be swallowed and sink into it. But, it is apparent that it is not swallowed but matter remains the same and receives nothing, but checks the approach as a repellent base and a receptacle for the things which come to the same point and there mingle: it is like the polished objects which one sets against the sun when he wants to get fire (and he fills some of them with water). Hence, the ray, being hindered by the resistance within, can not pass through but will be concentrated on the outside. So matter becomes in this way the cause of coming into being, and the things that are brought together in it are brought together in this way."

In II.5.5 Plotinus indicates that matter is 'cast out' and 'utterly separated' from all reality. The above citation adds credibility to this independence thesis; in fact, it would seem to suggest that matter is an independent reality which repels and halts the overflow process.

How does matter 'repel' this procession? It repels it "like the polished objects that one sets against the sun." This analogy is reinforced when Plotinus compares matter to a mirror and the beings that are in it to the images in a mirror.

The being which is imagined in it is not 'being' but only a fleeting frivolity; accordingly, the things which seem to come to be in it are frivolities, nothing but phantoms on a phantom, just like something in a mirror which really exists in one place but is reflected in another; the mirror seems to be filled but actually holds nothing while seeming to have all. 'Images of real beings pass into and out of it.' Phantoms into a formless phantom, visible because of its formlessness. They seem to act on it but produce nothing, for they are ghost-like and feeble and have nothing to resist them. They go through it without making ■ cut, as if through water, or as if someone in ■ way projected forms in the void."

This analogy aptly illustrates Plotinus' whole doctrine of matter and of bodies (and so the sensible world). If the images that we see in a mirror were really there, likewise the images present in matter would be there, but, of course, what is reflected in a mirror is not actually there." For a mirror appears to possess everything when actually it possesses nothing at all. Just as a mirror is not affected by the images in it, matter is not affected by the images on it." Moreover, matter is non-being and as such its reflections are non-being. The sensible world is a 'phantom on a phantom.'" Thus both matter and the sensible world have 'the being' of non-being: "The being of these is the being of things that do not exist."

Our text further states that matter is the cause of the generated beings, indicating that in some sense matter 'is' before these other things come to be. This is similar to the account given in III.4.1 where matter is first generated and then raised to the level of body. The coming to be of body is a result of the combination of form and unmodifiable matter. Once again the analogy of the mirror is useful. Just as a mirror must first exist before the images in it can come to be, matter must first exist before the things contained in it can come to be.

Well, then, if matter did not exist, would nothing come into existence? No, just as there would be no image, if a mirror or something of the sort did not exist. For that whose nature is to come into being in something else would not come into being if that something else was not, for that is the nature of an image, to be in another."

Since the sensible world is a 'phantom on a phantom' or an image on an image, matter must first exist before it can come to be. Matter must be before it can unite with form to produce body and so the sensible world.

In this text an interesting development has taken place in Plotinus' thought. Key Text B said that matter was first produced by the power of growth in Soul and it was only then that it was 'informed' by its producer. Through this information of matter by the power of growth in plants, bodies are produced. Our present text is much different in language as well as content. Matter is no longer produced and perfected by form, but is the cause of things as a repellent base. There appears to be no union of matter and form but only reflection. Matter is no longer referred to as being produced but that which halts production. Concerning matter's origin, if it has one, the text is conspicuously silent.

#### 4. Key Text D: *Ennead* V.8.7

In this, the thirty-first treatise according to Porphyry, Plotinus says that the visible universe comes into being as a whole; it is not planned and then made part by part by proceeds without thought or effort from Intellect—even corporeal matter.

Everything Here comes from There, and exists in greater beauty There; for here it is intermingled, but There it is pure. All this universe is occupied by form from beginning to end, matter first of all by the forms of the elements, and then other forms upon these, and then again others; hence, it is difficult to find the matter hidden under so many forms. Since matter too is a sort of ultimate form, this universe is all form, and all things that are in it are form."

In attempting to understand this text, the first half in which Plotinus says that everything is "occupied by forms from beginning to end" is relatively clear since everything that is Here is also There and "Intellect as a whole is all the forms."<sup>30</sup> Even the statement that matter is first of all occupied by the forms of the elements presents no difficulty since it is compatible with the earlier statement that matter is raised to the level of body through its union with form." A difficulty arises, however, when Plotinus calls matter 'a sort of ultimate form.' The Greek simply says *eidōs ti eschaton*, which literally means that "it [matter] is the last [or lowest] form."

This passage is both unique and difficult. Unique in that it is one of the only places in the *Enneads* that Plotinus implies that matter is a form;"

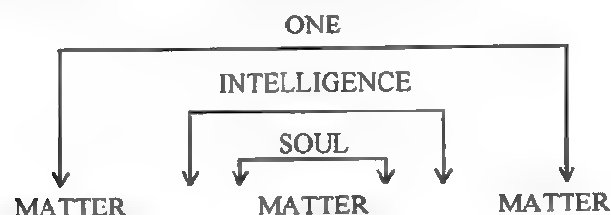


and difficult when we try to reconcile this account of matter with the very strong assertions that matter is formless." At first glance it appears that Plotinus is involved in a contradiction saying that matter is both formless and a form. This difficulty can be clarified, however, by calling to mind Proclus' notion of the extension of power, a notion also operative in Plotinus.

Proclus says in his *Elements of Theology* that a cause is more perfect and powerful than its consequents (Prop. 7), and so it will have a greater number of effects, for greater power produces more effects (Prop. 57).<sup>4</sup> Even those things produced by secondary causes are produced, in a greater measure, by prior and more determinate principles (Prop. 56). Thus the primal cause can be said to operate prior to its consequents, in conjunction with its consequents, and posterior to these same consequents.

From this it is apparent that what Soul causes is also caused by Intelligence, but not all that Intelligence causes is caused by Soul; Intelligence operates prior to Soul; and what Soul bestows on secondary existences Intelligence bestows in a greater measure; and the level where Soul is no longer operative Intelligence irradiates with its own gifts things on which Soul has not bestowed itself—for even the inanimate participates Intelligence, a creative activity of Intelligence, insofar as it participates form.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, the Primal Cause of all, the One, has an extension which is beyond the secondary causative powers of Soul and Intelligence. Likewise, Intelligence has a greater causative power than Soul. This notion of the extension of power can be diagrammed as follows.



In the diagram we see that the One includes in its extension the secondary causes of intelligence and Soul, while Intelligence is inclusive of the causative power of Soul. As a causative power, the One goes beyond the productions of Intelligence and Soul and produces matter.

Thus, for Proclus, the causative power of the One extends to the whole universe. Everything in the universe, including unformed and

chaotic matter derives its reality (or non-being) from the One. The activity of Intelligence does not reach down as far as the One's precisely because it is not the primary principle or causative power. Intelligence does not generate matter. This is not to say, however, that Intelligence in no way effects matter. It shapes it like a potter shapes his clay, but as a potter does not cause clay to be clay, Intelligence does not cause matter to be matter.

Admittedly, there is not a one to one correspondence between Proclus' and Plotinus' respective positions. But through an analysis of Proclus' notion of the extension of power, much light is shed on Plotinus' position in V.8.7. It is our contention, in the remainder of our analysis of this text, that Plotinus includes matter as a 'sort of ultimate form' to demonstrate the scope of Intellect's causative power. He states at the outset of the text that "all that is here below comes from There" but this does not necessarily include matter. The whole universe, "from beginning to end," is occupied by form. Therefore, matter which is the Last<sup>6</sup> must also be occupied by form. It is first occupied "by the forms of the elements, and then other forms upon these, and then again others; hence, it is difficult to find the matter hidden under so many forms." The text concludes by saying that "matter too is a sort of ultimate form." This statement, which appears contradictory at first, now takes on a broader meaning as a result of our analysis of causal extension. Plotinus has said that everything is occupied by form, even matter since it is evident that matter is within the extension of Intellect's power. Since the content of Intellect is all the forms, Plotinus is able to conclude that because matter is affected by the power of the Intellect, it "too is a sort of ultimate form." But the fact that matter is an ultimate form does not necessarily imply a causal connection with Intellect. As we saw in our analysis of Proclus, matter is not dependent on Intelligence for its 'existence.' Rather, Intelligence effects and shapes matter, but it does not cause matter to be. Similarly in V.8.7, Plotinus demonstrates that the power of Intellect extends to matter, but a statement of causal connection is not present. For both Plotinus and Proclus, then, Intellect (Intelligence) shapes matter like a potter shapes his clay, but as the potter does not cause clay to be clay, the Intellect (Intelligence) does not cause matter to be matter. Its contact with form Here is, at best, a pale glimmer of union of matter and form There.

5. Key Text E: *Ennead* III.2.2

This treatise, number forty-seven in Porphyry's list, which Plotinus wrote towards the end of his life, is devoted to the traditional theme of providence. The text explains how belief in the existence and goodness of divine providence can be justified in the face of all the apparent evils in the world. The opponents he has in mind in writing this treatise are the Epicureans, who denied providence; the Peripatetics, who denied that it extended to the world below the moon; and most of all the Gnostics, who propounded the theory that the material world is the work of an evil creator.

The notable characteristic of this treatise is that in it alone Plotinus speaks of a rational forming principle, a *logos*, of the whole universe which appears to be a distinct hypostasis over and above the One, Intellect and Soul. However, Bréhier says, and here we concur with him, that the *logos* of this treatise is not that of a distinct hypostasis but is a way of speaking of the living, forming and directing matter which is derived from the Intellect. It keeps the material universe in the best possible order and brings it into a unity-in-diversity of contrasting and clashing forces which, far inferior to the unity of the intelligible world, is the best possible image of that world here below.<sup>7</sup>

But a unity-amidst-diversity is ■ universe that is not only one: there is a separation in it and therefore conflict. It is not the result of any kind of reasoning but flows necessarily from above.

This universe has come into existence, not as a result of the process of reasoning that it ought to exist but because it was necessary that there should be a second nature; for that true All was not of a kind to be the last of realities. For it was the first and had much power, indeed, all power, and this is the power to produce something else without seeking for it to be produced. For if it had sought, it would not have had it of itself, nor would it have been of its own substance, but it would have been like a craftsman who does not have the ability to produce from himself, but as something acquired, and gets it from learning. So Intellect, by giving something of itself to matter, made all things without itself being moved; this something of itself is the *logos* flowing from Intellect.<sup>8</sup>

This *logos* or rational forming principle, which Intellect gives to matter is not a distinct hypostasis but the presence of Intellect in everything that comes after it.<sup>9</sup> The world of Intellect is the archetype of the material

universe. Everything that is Here is also There, but There everything is alive and united in the rich fullness of eternal life.<sup>10</sup>

Just as the One must produce, the Intellect, the perfect image of the One, must also produce and this production is a movement towards matter.

Just like the One, Intellect produces pouring forth much power. Just as That, which was before it, poured forth its likeness, so what Intellect produces is a likeness of itself. This activity springing from being is Soul, which comes into being while Intellect remains unchanged: for Intellect too comes into being while That while is before It remains unchanged.<sup>11</sup>

Soul is matter in the sense that it is posterior and inferior to the Intellect in which it has its source. This concept of Soul as matter is wholly relational, as Dean Inge aptly demonstrates.

Matter is Matter only in relation to that which is next above it, and which gives it form, and indefinite existence. Thus the same thing may be form (*eidos*) in relation to what is below it. A thing is matter insofar as it is acted upon by a higher principle. It is a purely relative term; every stage in the hierarchy of being, except the highest, is *hylē* (matter), every stage except the lowest is *hylē*. Every *eidos* makes its own *hylē*. But *hylē* is generally the name for the lowest rung in the ladder.<sup>12</sup>

Thus in the hierarchical structure of the Plotinian universe each stage except the First and the Last is both *eidos* (form) and *hylē* (matter). The soul is both matter and form in that it is matter in regards to what comes after it. As form it is the extension of 'the *logos* flowing from Intellect.'

The Soul is, in effect, the *logos* of all things; as the *logos*, it is the last of the intelligible realities or of things included in the intelligible realm, and the first of things included in the sensible universe. It is therefore related to two worlds, happy and brought to life on the one hand; and on the other hand deceived by its resemblance to the First. And it descends here as if under the influence of a magical charm.<sup>13</sup>

Now Soul has two levels: the higher one which acts as a transcendent principle of form, order and intelligent direction; and a lower level, nature, which operates as an immanent principle of life. Nature, as an extension of the higher soul and ultimately Intellect, also produces according to the *logos* in it, but its formation is weak and poor since it is far removed from Intellect.

Intellect gives to the Soul of the All, and Soul (the one which comes next after Intellect) gives from itself to the soul next after it, illuminating it and impressing form on it, and this last soul immediately makes as if under orders. It makes something without hinderance, but in others, the inferior ones, it is impeded. In as much as its power to make is derived, and it is filled with *logoi* which are not the First ones, it will not simple make according to the forms but there would be an offspring of its own, and this is clearly inferior. Its product is a living being, but a very imperfect one, and one which finds its own life hateful since it is the worst of living things, ill conditioned and savage, made of inferior matter, a sort of sediment of the prior realities, bitter and embittering."

John N. Deck explains the relationship of soul, *logoi* and matter:

The soul, containing the *logoi* of all things in the visible universe gives *logoi* to the bodies of the visible universe (ch. IV.3.10.38-42). This giving of *logoi* is the producing of these bodies; that is, a body together with its size and extension, is brought about by a coming of *logoi* upon matter (ch. IV.7.2.22-25). This coming of *logos* is, from different aspects, a coming of unity, of form, of beauty, of life (Cf. I.6.2.13-24; IV.3.10.38-42). The trace of unity is the trace of form and beauty is the trace of intellectual beauty, and so again of the Nous."

This being the case, it is through the *logos* or rational formative principle that the power of the Intellect extends to the ends of the universe. The Soul, with its higher part in the realm of Intellect and its lower part reflecting these true realities on matter, is the vehicle by which the power of Intellect is disseminated. This dissemination of the power of the Intellect continues downward until it reaches the Last, matter, which is 'the lowest rung on the ladder.'

Key Text E has sought to demonstrate that Intellect has given something of itself in order to produce all things. This something of itself is the *logos*. Our analysis has shown that Intellect's 'movement towards matter' begins in its production of Soul. Through Dean Inge's conception of the relatively of matter, we are able to ascertain that all things, except the First and the Last, are both form and matter. We can further conclude that the One, as the First, can be said to be Form in relation to all things and matter to none since It is the First prior to which there is nothing. Likewise, the Last is matter to all things and form to none since it is the Last and there is nothing that comes after it. Concerning the origin of this matter, it appears that Plotinus has avoided the problem. The text says that "Intellect, by giving something of itself to matter, made all things," but we

are left in the dark with regards to the status of this matter before Intellect gave something of itself to it.

#### 6. Key Text F: *Ennead* I.8

The last text is from the eighth tractate of the first treatise, the famous treatise on evil. It is the fifty-first treatise, according to Porphyry, one of the last nine which were "written when his power was already failing." In fact, it was one of the last four treatises in which this waning of power is most evident."

Plotinus begins his study by asking what evil is and what is its nature. By so doing, he seeks to discover its source and whether it exists. But first an epistemological question concerning the nature of how we arrive at knowledge must be answered. Do we come to a knowledge of evil by something already in use? "But there would then be no way to discern by which powers in us we know evil, if knowledge of all is by likeness."<sup>20</sup> Or by knowledge of opposites?

But if opposites are known by the same kind of knowledge and evil is opposite to good, the knowledge of good is also the knowledge of evil, then those who wish to know of evils must have a clear perception of the good, since the better precedes the worse and the better is Form, and the worse is not, but rather privation of Form."

Plotinus chooses the latter approach and begins a discussion of the nature of the Good.

It is that on which everything depends and to which all beings aspire, they have it as their principle and need It: but It is without need, self-sufficient, lacking nothing, the measure and limit of all things, giving from itself Intellect and Being, Soul, Life and intellectual activity. Up to It all things are beautiful. But it is beautiful beyond all beauty and is king of the intelligible realm."

Nowhere in the life of the Good do we find any trace of evil or in the things that are necessarily related to It.

The Intellect is the first act of the Good and the first substance; the Good stays still in Itself, but Intellect moves about It in its activity, as also it lives around It. And Soul dances round Intellect outside, and looks to it, and in contemplating its interior sees God through it. "This is the life of the gods,"

without sorrow and blessed; evil is nowhere here, and if things had stopped here there would not have been any evil, only a first, a second and a third goods."

If we are to discover the nature of evil, we will not find it in the realm of being. But through a knowledge of the nature of the Good we have gained an insight into the nature of evil. The Good is characterized by measure, form and self-sufficiency, that to which all beings aspire. Evil, being opposite the Good, is characterized by its lack of measure and form and is such that no being should aspire to it." It cannot be a part of being since the whole of reality contains some order and measure.

One is able to conceive of evil as a kind of unmeasuredness in relation to measure, and unboundedness in relation to limit, and formlessness in relation to the cause of form, and perpetual neediness in relation to what is self-sufficient; always indeterminate, nowhere stable, completely passive, insatiate, complete poverty; and all this is not accidental to it but the essence of evil itself."

These characteristics deprive evil of any claim to being. It is beyond being not in the sense of the One which is supra-being but as infra-being. The very essence of this non-being is privation. If we say that something is not good because it lacks something, then this is evil accidentally. Evil so conceived is contained accidentally in something else and must itself be something before it can be contained in something else—it must be something else even if we cannot properly call it substance.

For if evil occurs accidentally in something else, it must be itself first, even if it is not a substance. Just as there is the Good Itself and good as an attribute, so there must be evil itself and the evil derived from it which inheres in something else...So, that which underlies figures and forms and shapes and measures and limits, decked out with an adornment which belongs to something else, having no good of its own, only a shadow in comparison to real being, is the substance of evil, if there really can be a substance of evil; this is what our reason discovers to be primal evil, evil itself."

So just as there must be an absolute good that is the source of all that is good, there must be an absolute evil that underlies all that is evil. Evil in a particular soul is the lack of a good (form) that ought to be there. Such a soul cannot be considered as primarily evil since it still shares in the good."

Now the medium which produces this falling short in the soul and is itself the farthest removed from the good is matter." Just as the good must exist, evil must exist and this is matter.

One can grasp the necessity of evil in this way. Since not only the Good exists, there must be the last end to the process of going out past It, or if one prefers to put it like this, descending or going away; and this last, after which nothing else can come into being is evil. Now it is necessary that what comes after the First exists, and therefore that the Last exists; and this is matter, which possesses nothing at all of the Good."

We have now reached a crucial stage in the analysis of this treatise. Does Plotinus mean, in the above citation, that matter is the last thing produced by the emanative process? Or is it the point at which this process is halted and turned back? The First interpretation would hold that matter is ultimately produced by the One, whereas the second would conceive matter as apart from and opposed to the productive power of the One.

At this point we must distinguish between the two matters in regard to this text and the notion of evil in general. In chapter two of this treatise, Plotinus has said that evil is nowhere to be found in the intelligible realm." Now intelligible matter belongs to this realm" and so it cannot be identified with evil. Clearly, the matter with which Plotinus is concerned in this text, and the treatise itself, is corporeal matter. This matter has nothing to call its own and is characterized by its privation. We cannot even call privation a quality of matter but a negation of quality. For Plotinus, such negations of quality are not themselves to be considered a quality. For example, noiselessness is not a quality of sound or anything else; rather, it is the absence of quality. To assert a quality of anything is to speak positively concerning it. Matter is without quality and as such it can be considered to be in a state of potentiality without potency. It is qualityless (*apoiós*)," non-being (*mē on*)," only a potentiality of being."

Yet, to say that matter is non-being is not to say that it does not exist. "Non-being here does not mean absolute non-being but only that which is other than being; not non-being in the same way as movement and rest which affect being, but like an image of being or something still more non-existent." Apparently, Plotinus here makes use of Plato's work in the *Sophist*. Plato had found it necessary to distinguish between the kinds of negation. His conclusion was that 'not being something' is not the same as non-being. Thus when it is said that matter is non-being, this does not mean that it is not, but only that it is other than being. In this way Plotinus

can claim that matter has no being\* and its non-being is identical with privation."

Thus matter is and is not. As there is ■ First, there must be a Last, and this is matter. As the Last, the Plotinian universe has reached the point of no production, no overflow and no Being. Concerning the problem of whether matter is the last stage produced by the overflow process or the extrinsic stone wall which halts this process, two additional texts are available which would appear to support the independence thesis.

The first text is taken from the first of two proofs for the necessity of evil—the second of which is given on the preceding pages.

The All must be composed of contrary principles; it would not exist at all if matter did not exist. 'For the generation of the cosmos was a mixed result of the combination of intellect and necessity.' What comes to it from God is good; the evil comes from the 'ancient nature.'<sup>10</sup>

In this text there is an apparent dualism. On the one hand, everything that comes into the All from God is good. On the other hand, everything that comes into the All from the 'ancient nature' is evil. What are we to understand by this 'ancient nature' (*tēs archaias physeōs*)? Once again we must remember that in this text, as in the previous one, Plotinus' emphasis is on the necessity (*anangkē*) of evil (matter), and not on evil's origin.

Matter must be because the universe is a combination of Intellect and necessity.<sup>11</sup> Apparently the 'ancient nature,' for Plotinus, refers to the unformed matter which is indeterminate and pure potentiality. The sensible universe is, as it were, the point at which matter and Intellect meet. That which is good in this universe is from 'God' (*via* Intellect) and that which is evil is from matter. Thus there are two sources of influence in the sensible universe, and the possibilities of a dualistic interpretation of this text are evident.

A second text which lends support to the dualistic thesis is one which traces the evil in the soul to matter:

This is the fall of the soul, to come in this way to matter and to become weak, because all its powers do not come into action; matter hinders them from coming by occupying the place soul holds which results in a kind of cramped condition, and making evil what it has got hold of by a sort of theft—until soul is able to regain its higher state. Accordingly, matter is the cause of the soul's weakness and vice and is itself evil before soul and is primarily evil. Even if soul had produced matter, being affected in some way, and had

become evil by communication with it, the presence of matter in it would have been the cause of its evil.<sup>12</sup>

Just as there is ■ primal good for the soul there is a primal evil, which, as the texts indicate, is matter. Matter has been called evil, non-being, the ancient nature, and now it is called the primary evil (*prōton kakon*). Nowhere in this treatise has Plotinus indicated that matter has its origin in the Good. In fact, he has consistently placed it opposite the First in the sense of a limit to the power of the One and as the Last. As the primary evil its evil is absolute and as such it has no share in the Good. If it had its origin in the Good through the emanatory process, however remote it is from the Good, this would be sufficient to warrant its having some share in the Good. The closest the text comes to indicating that matter might have its origin in the emanatory process is the statement: "Even if the soul had produced matter..." (*kai gar hei autē hē psychē tēn hylēn egennēse*).<sup>13</sup> But the use of *ei* with the aorist indicative *egennēse* indicates a very remote possibility, if not impossibility, that the soul is the producer of matter.

The result of this treatise is that Plotinus leaves us with a great amount of uncertainty as regards the status of corporeal matter. While it is true that he is not interested, in this treatise, with the problem of the origin of matter *per se*, nevertheless, in talking about the necessity of matter he uses a language full of dualistic implications.

## 7. Summary and Conclusions

Our analysis of several key Plotinian texts has discovered three distinct positions regarding the origin of matter. First, matter is not nothing but its position in the Plotinian universe is an unknown—even to Plotinus himself. Secondly, matter is independent of the One and therefore a principle opposed to It. Thirdly, matter is dependent on the One and as such is the end product of the overflow process. Our conclusion differs from the conclusions of other Plotinian scholars in that our study has shown that Plotinus held all three of these positions at specific times in his philosophical career. This conclusion can be verified by summarizing the key texts:

## II.4[12]

The analysis of this text has shown that intelligible matter has its origin in the One, but no such claim is made for corporeal matter. The text does indicate that the matter Here is an image of the matter There. It is devoid of quality, a container of bodies, identical with privation. In its very privation it can be said to exist but as to the source of this existence the text is silent.

## III.4[15].1

The importance of this text cannot be questioned. Corporeal matter, under the guise of absolute indetermination is explicitly linked to the chain of realities that ultimately have their source in the One.

## III.6[26].14

At this point in Plotinus' philosophical speculations, matter is no longer spoken of in terms of being produced, but it is that which halts all production. Concerning matter's own origin, if it has one, the text is silent.

## V.8[31].7

Plotinus demonstrates that the power of Intellect extends to matter, but a statement of causal connection is not present. Intellect shapes matter like the potter shapes his clay, and as the potter does not cause clay to be clay, the Intellect does not cause matter to be matter.

## III.2[47].2

The One which is the First can be said to be form in relation to all things and matter to none since It is the First prior to which there is nothing. Matter, being the Last, can only be matter to all things and form to none since it is the Last and as such there is nothing that is after it. Concerning the origin of this matter, Plotinus avoided discussing the problem. The text states that "Intellect by giving something of Itself to matter, made all things," but we are left in the dark with regards to the status of matter before Intellect gave something of Itself to it.

## I.8[51]

The result of this treatise is that Plotinus leaves us with a great amount of uncertainty as regards the status of corporeal matter. While it is true that he is not interested, in this treatise, with the problem of the origin of matter *per se*; nevertheless, in talking about the necessity of matter he uses a language full of dualistic implications. There is no indication whatsoever that matter is linked to the higher realities. It is the 'ancient nature' that is the cause of all evil in the world.

That the problem of the origin of matter plagued Plotinus throughout his philosophical career should now be evident. Of the three positions discovered in our analysis of the texts, the one which appears to predominate is the first: matter is not nothing; but Plotinus simply did not know where to place its origin in his philosophical system. This is most evident in his earliest treatises in which many characteristics of matter are discussed. Concerning its origin, the texts are painfully silent. There is a breakthrough, however, in II.4 in which Plotinus inextricably links the origin of intelligible matter to the overflow of the One, but no such claim is made for corporeal matter.

The situation changes with III.4.1 in which Plotinus' monism is most evident. Corporeal matter now has an origin and this origin is 'the power of growth in plants.' Matter is called 'absolute indetermination,' yet it is an indetermination that is tied to the chain of realities flowing from the One. But Plotinus' position of the origin of corporeal matter does not remain stable. After asserting that matter (absolute indetermination) has its source in the higher realities (III.4.1), he once again lapses into his state of uncertainty. Matter is no longer produced but is that which halts all production (III.6.14). This movement away from an emphasis on the origin of matter reaches its peak in I.8 in which Plotinus adopts the third position: matter is independent of the One and the point at which the power of the One is halted.

Plotinus' changing position on the origin of corporeal matter may be diagrammed as follows:

A	B	C	D
II.4[12]	III.4[15].1	III.6[26].14	I.8[51]
		V.8[31].7	
		III.2[47].2	

Tables B and D are indicative of Plotinus' monistic (matter appears to have its origin in the One) and dualistic (matter appears not to have its origin in

the One) positions respectively. Tables A and C are transition periods in Plotinus' philosophical development when he was at a loss as to where to place the origin of matter, if it had one, in his philosophical system. The uncertainty of A culminated in the monism of B while the uncertainty of C culminated in the dualism of D.

The question pursued in this study was whether Plotinus' monism is consistent in accounting for the origin of matter, or whether this monism devolves into a dualism because it makes no provision for this origin. At this point we can say that Plotinus' monism does devolve into a dualism but a dualism of implication rather than intent. At no time does Plotinus say that matter is not a product of the One, but his silence in this regard, especially in the later treatises, deals a deadly blow to his monistic inclinations. The problem of the origin of matter and its position in the universe can be termed the Plotinian albatross—a problem that was with Plotinus throughout his philosophical career and that weighed most heavily upon him in his later years. This is especially true in I.8 in which by the implication of his own language Plotinus appears to embrace a dualism which he heretofore would have avoided.

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#### NOTES

1. Matter is always to be understood as the primary participant. For Plotinus and later for Proclus, this participant is identical with intelligible matter in the trans-sensible world and with corporeal matter in the sensible world.
2. Emile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, translated by J. Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 180.
3. See John M. Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil," *Phronesis* 6 (1961), 154–66.
4. See Emile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 174–181.
5. See Phillippus Villiers Pistorius, *Plotinus and Neoplatonism* (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1952), especially 129–30.
6. E. R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius," *Les Sources de Plotin: Dix éposées et discussion par MM. A. H. Armstrong, P. Vincenzo Cilento, E. R. Dodds, H. Dorrie, P. Hadot, R. Harder, P.-P. Henry, H.-Ch. Peuch, H. R. Schwyzer, W. Theiler* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1960), 21–22.
7. Paul Henry, "Discussion of Dorrie's 'Die Frage nach dem Transzendente im Mittelplatonismus,'" *Les Sources de Plotin*, 236–37.
8. A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), xxiv.
9. W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 2 volumes (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1918), especially 129–144.

10. Jean Trouillard, *La procession Plotinienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 15.
11. Dennis O'Brien, "Plotinus on Evil," *The Downside Review* 87 (1969), 68–110. The quote is from page 102.
12. John Murray, "The Ascent of Plotinus to God," *Gregorianum* 32 (1951), 223–246. The quote is from page 234.
13. Joseph Katz, *Plotinus' Search for the Good: A Study of the Moral Motivation of His Metaphysics* (New York: Kings Crown Press, 1950), 44.
14. Cletus Carbonara, *La Filosofia di Plotino* (Napoli: Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1954).
15. These texts are referred to as 'key texts' because in them Plotinus himself speaks of the origin and role of matter.
16. We shall employ Porphyry's chronological listing of the *Enneads* as presented in his "On the Life of Plotinus," which is contained in Armstrong's *Plotinus* (Volume I). All references to Porphyry's work will be to this edition.
17. The *Enneads* are cited throughout this study as follows. References to the Greek text of *Enneads* I–III are taken from A. H. Armstrong's *Plotinus in the Loeb Classical Library Editions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966–67); to *Enneads* IV–V, from P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer's *Plotini Opera: Minor Edition* (Oxford: University Press, 1977); to *Ennead* VI, from E. Bréhier's *Ennead VI* (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1956). In my translations I am greatly indebted to Armstrong's English and Bréhier's French translations, which accompany the Greek text. I have also consulted Stephen MacKenna's English translation—*Plotinus: The Enneads* (London: Faber and Faber, 1956); the Italian translation of V. Cilento—*Plotini Eneadi* (Bari: Gius, Latera & Figli, 1947 s); and Richard Harder's German translation—*Plotins Schriften* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956).
18. Porphyry, "On the Life of Plotinus," 4, 45.
19. *Ennead* II.4.1, 5–6.
20. *Ennead* II.4.15, 21–23.
21. *Ennead* II.4.2, 2–5.
22. *Ennead* II.4.3, 13–19.
23. *Ennead* II.4.4, 7–8.
24. *Ennead* II.4.4, 18–21.
25. *Ennead* II.4.5, 28–39.
26. Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil," 155–156.
27. John Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 219.
28. See A. H. Armstrong, "Spiritual or Intelligible Matter in Plotinus and St. Augustine," *Augustinus Magister I* (Congrès international augustinien, Paris: 21–24 Sept., 1954) Bréhier, *Enneads* II, 49; Carbonara, *Filosofia Di Plotino* (Napoli: Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1954), 21; Leo Sweeney, S. J.,

- "Infinity in Plotinus," *Gregorianum* 38 (1957), 526.
29. See *Ennead* II.5.3. & V.9.4.
  30. *Ennead* II.4.6, 17–20. This notion of coming to be is characteristic of Aristotle's concept of matter (Cf. *Metaphysics* A.1 & 2, 1069b). The criticism of pre-Socratic views found in chapter 7 is also based on Aristotle (Cf. *Metaphysics* A.7, 988a27ff.; A.2, 1069b20–23).
  31. *Ennead* II.4.8, 9–11.
  32. *Ennead* II.4.8, 23–26.
  33. Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil," 156.
  34. *Ennead* I.8.3, 7–10.
  35. For example, Plato says in 257b: "When we speak of 'that which is not,' it seems that we do not mean something contrary to what exists but only something that is different... So, when it is asserted that ■ negation signifies a contrary, we shall not agree, but admit no more than this—that the prefix 'not' indicates something different from the words that follow, or rather from the things designated by the words pronounced after the negative": translated by F. M. Cornford in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), 1003–1004.
  36. *Ennead* I.8.5, 8ff.
  37. *Ennead* II.4.16, 3–5.
  38. *Ennead* II.4.12, 11–14 & 23–25. On matter as a receptacle see III.6.14, 28–37.
  39. For Plotinus' use of the analogy of the mirror in describing matter see III.6.13, 35–55.
  40. *Ennead* II.4.10, 6–13: "That which wants to be a thought about it [matter] will not be a thought but a kind of thoughtlessness; or rather the mental representation of it will be spurious and not genuine, compounded of an unreal part and with the diverse kind of reasoning. And it was perhaps because he had observed this that Plato said that matter was apprehended by a 'spurious reasoning'." This reference is to the *Timaeus* 52b2.
  41. *Ennead* I.8.9, 15–27.
  42. *Ennead* III.4.1, 1–2. III.9.3, 7–14 also speaks of the Soul's production of the indeterminate.
  43. Richard Harder, *Plotinus Shriften* Ib, 540.
  44. Texts in which matter is identified with indetermination are: II.4.4, 20; II.4.10, 34; I.4.11, 32 & 41; II.4.13, 6. As indefinite, "it is not quality but the substrate and the matter that we are looking for" (II.4.13, 6).
  45. *Ennead* II.4.13, 28–33 (page 140 n1). The text that he is commenting on is as follows: "Other things are not only other but each of them is something as form, but this would appropriately be called nothing but other; or perhaps others, so as not to define it as a unity by the term 'other' but to show its indefiniteness by calling it 'others'."
  46. *Ennead* III.4.1, 14–17.
  47. *Ennead* IV.7.2.

48. *Ennead* IV.7.2, 22–25. II.7.3, 8–14, gives a similar account of the coming to be of bodies.
49. Harder, Ib, 542–543. "Aber nicht der Körper ist sondern das Unbestimmte, die Materie...."
50. One is inclined to say a 'collection' of forms of matter but in VI.3.8, 26, Plotinus uses the word *migma* which means 'mixture.' Commenting on this text, Bréhier says: "But in Plotinus, as there is no such union of matter and forms, forms can be added to one another without the concrete ever becoming one. The sensible substance is, as it is in Locke, 'an aggregate of qualities and of matter'" (*The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 175).
51. *Ennead* III.4.1, 17–18.
52. *Ennead* I.8.7, 21–22.
53. Porphyry, "On the Life of Plotinus," 6, 26–36.
54. Porphyry, "Life," 6, 26–36.
55. *Ennead* III.6.14, 26–37.
56. *Ennead* III.6.7, 22–33. The analogy of matter as a mirror is used again in IV.3.11, 6–14.
57. *Ennead* III.6.13, 49–51.
58. *Ennead* III.6.11, 15–18 & 36–41.
59. *Ennead* III.6.7, 24.
60. *Ennead* III.6.6, 32–33. On the point of the sensible world as non-being, we must be careful not to misinterpret Plotinus. The sensible is beautiful (V.8.8, 7–23), but it is not the intelligible world—the world of true reality. It is an imitation: "Surely, what other fairer image of the intelligible world could there be?" (II.9.4, 22–23) This world is the best possible image of the world There. The plants There are the paradigms of the plants Here (VI.7.11, 6–17).
61. *Ennead* III.6.14, 1–5.
62. *Ennead* V.8.7, 18–29.
63. *Ennead* V.9.8, 4. For other examples of Intellect containing all the forms see VI.7.15; VI.7.22; V.9.6; V.8.3 & 4; VI.7.9; VI.7.12; V.1.4; VI.2.21.
64. *Ennead* III.4.1.
65. He says in I.8.3, 5, that matter is "a sort of form of non-existence...."
66. Examples of the formlessness of matter are: *Ennead* III.6.7, 28–30: "Imitation of real beings pass into and out of it [*Timaeus* 50c4–5]—ghosts into a formless ghost, visible because of its formlessness"; I.3.5, 23–24: "...ugliness is matter not mastered by form..."; II.4.8, 23–25: "So when the forms come to the matter it brings everything with it..."; I.8.8, 19–24: "For matter masters what is imaged in it and corrupts and destroys it by applying its own nature which is contrary to form, not bringing cold to hot but putting its own formlessness to the form of heat and its shapelessness to the shape and its excess and defect to that which is measured, till it has made the form belong to matter and no longer to itself...."



67. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, translated by E. R. Dodds (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1964).
68. Proclus, *Theology*, Prop. 57 (Dodds Translation).
69. *Ennead* I.8.7, 20–22. “Now it is necessary that what comes after the first exists, and therefore that the last exists, and this is matter....”
70. See Bréhier’s “Notice” to his translation of III.2.2. & 3. Also see II.9.1, 31–33, in which Plotinus himself says that λόγος does not constitute a separate hypostasis.
71. *Ennead* III.2.2, 8–17.
72. *Ennead* III.2.2, 18: *to gar aporreon ek nou logos*.
73. See *Ennead* VI.7.9 & VI.7.12.
74. *Ennead* V.2.1, 13–18.
75. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* I, 131. Plotinus himself refers to Soul as matter in II.5.3, 13–14: “...the soul, which is form, can be matter to something else.” This ‘something else’ is Intellect.
76. *Ennead* IV.6.3, 5–10.
77. *Ennead* II.3.17, 15–24. Also see IV.3.10, 38–42 & IV.7.2, 22–25.
78. John N. Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One* (Toronto: University Press, 1967), 60–61.
79. Porphyry, “Life,” 6, 26–36.
80. *Ennead* I.8.1, 7–10.
81. *Ennead* I.8.1, 13–18.
82. *Ennead* I.8.2, 2–10.
83. *Ennead* I.8.2, 21–29. The reference is to *Phaedrus* 248a1.
84. Perhaps a coined word such as ‘despire’ is more appropriate.
85. *Ennead* I.8.3, 12–17.
86. *Ennead* I.8.3, 22–25 & 35–40.
87. *Ennead* I.8.11, 15–20. I.8.12 continues the discussion begun in the previous chapter. “But what is the answer if someone says that the vice and evil in the soul is not absolute privation of good, but only a (particular, limited) privation of good? In this case, if it has some good and is deprived of some, it will be in a mixed state and the evil will not be undiluted, and we have not yet found primary, undiluted evil: and the soul will have good in its very substance, but evil as some kind of accident.”
88. Concerning the notion of matter as the cause of the soul’s failure to achieve its proper goal see: I.6.5; I.8.4 & 5; II.3.12, 9–11.
89. *Ennead* I.8.7, 17–23.
90. *Ennead* I.8.2, 26–28.
91. *Ennead* II.4.5. See Key Text A above.
92. *Ennead* I.8.10, 2.
93. *Ennead* II.5.4, 11–19.
94. *Ennead* II.5.5, 6–8.
95. *Ennead* I.8.3, 7–10.
96. *Ennead* I.8.5, 8–13.

97. *Ennead* II.4.16, 1–10.
98. *Ennead* I.8.7, 3–9. By ‘ancient nature’ Plato meant the underlying matter not yet set in order by some god. The citation is from *Timaeus* 47e5–48a.
99. Plotinus here echoes Plato who says in *Timaeus* 47e5: “For the creation of this world is the combined work of necessity and mind” (B. Jowett translation: *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns,) 1175.
100. *Ennead* I.8.14, 39–54.
101. *Ennead* I.8.14, 52–54. In I.6.5, 45–50, Plotinus says that the soul’s ugliness has come from the addition of alien matter and, if it is to be beautiful again, it must cleanse itself and be as it was before. For the means of purification, see I.8.9, 8–9 & I.9.



In this study my purpose is to attempt a critical analysis of Plotinus' proposed new set of categories for the Sensible world in connection with its Aristotelian background. From this analysis it will become clear why it was that Plotinus found Aristotle's categorial scheme defective and how he thought he could improve upon the Stagirite in this important area of philosophical inquiry. However, before I proceed to deal with the analysis and evaluation of Plotinus' arguments regarding the 'genera' of Becoming and their relationship to the 'genera of Being,' it will be well to draw attention to certain facts which indicate clearly, I think, the importance of the treatise under consideration. Such a clarification is necessary in view of the fact that modern scholars speak of this part of the *Enneads* as, to use Inge's expression, "one of the most obscure and least interesting."<sup>10</sup>

First of all, it is the case that in VI.3 Plotinus is concerned with the Sensible cosmos and its problems theoretically. This interest is rather unusual for the otherworldly philosopher and, therefore, significant. Presumably, Plotinus would not have bothered to write this treatise had he not been convinced that there was much confusion regarding the ontic problem of the 'genera of Being' and its relation to the problem of the categories of Becoming. Second, it is also the case that in VI.3, unlike VI.2, Plotinus challenges Aristotle in the field of his expertise, that is, the realm of the Sensible cosmos. The claim of Plotinus that Aristotle's set of categories, as it stands, is superfluous and cannot adequately account for the phenomena of this world, which it was supposed to explain, is a very serious charge. If Plotinus were right that the categorial scheme of Aristotle needs a drastic (fifty percent) reduction and certain other fundamental changes, which we will discuss in due course, in order to function well within the realm of nature, it would follow that Aristotle did not know what he was doing when he developed his theory of categories in the way he did. It is significant, I think, that subsequent generations of Neoplatonists, beginning with Porphyry, found it difficult to follow Plotinus' anti-Aristotelian tactics in so far as the doctrine of categories was concerned. Fourth, in this light, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that the problematic of Aristotle's categories caused a schism in the Neoplatonic school in Rome in the middle of the Third Century A.D., and that Porphyry, in opposition to Plotinus, emerged as a champion of the movement towards a deeper reconciliation of Platonism and Aristotelianism by accepting and defending Aristotle's doctrine of categories in its entirety."

## I

The third tractate of the sixth *Ennead* opens in the following characteristic way:

We have now explained our conception of Reality (True Being) and considered how far it agrees with the teaching of Plato. We have still to investigate the opposed principle (the principle of Becoming)....

The subject of our discussion is the Sensible realm: Sensible Existence is entirely embraced by what we know as the Universe: our duty, then, would seem to be clear enough—to take this Universe and analyze its nature, classifying its constituent parts and arranging them by species. (VI.3.1, 1–11)

From this passage at least two things are evident: (1) The sharp contrast between the realm of 'True Being' and the realm of mere 'Becoming,' this Universe which Plotinus terms 'the opposed principle' (*heteraphysis*); and (2) the purpose (duty) which Plotinus poses to himself in the present tract is to determine under what genera the constituents of this Universe fall, and whether or not these 'genera' are similar to (or the same as) the genera of the other realm, i.e. the Intelligible cosmos (*kosmos noētos*).

Given, however, that this realm of Becoming is a 'mixture' (*migma*) of Body and Soul, Plotinus alerts us that the investigation should not take into consideration that element of the mixture which is 'alien,' viz. Soul. For, as he explains:

True, it involves the parallel existence of Body and Soul, for the Universe is a living form: essentially however Soul is of the Intellectual and does not enter into the structure of what is called Sensible Being.

Remembering this fact, we must—however great the difficulty—exclude Soul from the present investigation, just as in a census of citizens, taken in the interests of commerce and taxation, we should ignore the alien population. (VI.3.1, 23–28)

As to the question whether the genera posited for the Intelligible sphere will do well also with regard to the Sensible sphere, Plotinus' answer seems to be negative. Inasmuch as the two realms are different, Plotinus thinks that distinct and "new genera must be sought for this Universe" (VI.3.1, 20). The new 'genera,' consequently, can be called so only in an analogous way and homonymously.<sup>11</sup> In no way can they be regarded as 'primary genera.'

Substance (Real Being) requires no more than these five constituents; but when we have to turn to the lower sphere, we find other principles giving rise no longer to Substance (as such) but to quantitative Substance and qualitative: these other principles may be regarded as genera but not primary genera. (VI.2.15, 15–18)

And again:

Our first observations must be directed to what passes in the Sensible realm for Substance. It is, we shall agree, only by analogy that the nature manifested in bodies is designated as Substance, and by no means because such terms as Substance or Being tally with the notion bodies in flux; the proper term would be Becoming. (VI.1.3, 1–4)

Accordingly, ontologically important terms, such as Substance (*ousia*) and Being (*to on*) may be used in reference to the sensible world, but only homonymously, since the so-called 'beings' (*onta*) of this sensible realm are just reflections and images (*eidōla*) of the real Beings of the true and 'Authentic Being.' Thus, the relation between these two realms of existents is analogous to the relation of a living being and its portrait. While 'Up There' everything is both 'simple' and 'substantial,' " 'Down Here' everything is 'composite' and 'shadowy.'" At the end of the second tract (chapter 23) Plotinus used the following characteristic expressions in reference to this sensible realm: *indalma*, *eidōlon*, *eikōn*, *mimēma*, *phantasma*, *graphē*—all of which have the connotation of copy or ectype. Consider, for example, the following:

Up to the production of the image, the Intellectual realm is wholly and exclusively composed of Intellectual Beings: in the same way the Sensible world representing that in so far as it is able to retain the likeness of a living being, is itself a living being: the relation is like that of a portrait or reflection to the original which is regarded as prior to the water or the painting reproducing it. (VI.2.23, 36–40)

Again:

Observe also how in other things Motion or life is clearly separated from Being—a separation impossible, doubtless, in True Being, but possible in its shadow and namesake. In the portrait of a man much is left out, and above all the essential thing, life: the 'Being' of sensible things is just such a shadow of True Being, an abstraction from that Being complete which was life in the Archetype; it is because of this incompleteness that we are able in

the Sensible world to separate Being from life and life from Being. (VI. 2.7, 8–15)

In VI.3.3, Plotinus makes several tentative proposals about the 'genera' or categories of the Sensible realm and finally adopts a fivefold division which includes Sensible Substance or pseudo-substance, as MacKenna renders it" (*ousia legomene* or *aisthēē*), Quantity (*poson*), Quality (*poion*), Motion (*kinēsis*), and Relation (*pros ti*). A simple comparison of this list to that of Aristotle's categories reveals that, at least in name, four of them correspond to the cardinal Aristotelian categories of Substance, Quantity, Quality, and Relation. Plotinus' newly coined category or 'genus' of Motion is called in to substitute for two Aristotelian categories: action (*poiein*) and passion (*paschein*). Whether the Plotinian 'genera' and the Aristotelian categories share in everything else except for their common names will become apparent from the discussion of each of them separately.

The remaining twenty-five chapters of the present tractate are devoted to the discussion of the proposed five 'genera' of the Sensible realm. In accordance with the role which they play in the Plotinian theory, the proportional length devoted to each of these 'genera' is as follows:

- (a) Substance—seven chapters.
- (b) Motion—seven chapters.
- (c) Quantity—five chapters.
- (d) Quality—five chapters.
- (e) Relation—one chapter.

They are considered and discussed in the following order: Substance, Quantity, Quality, Motion, and Relation.

As expected, priority is given to the 'genus' or category of Substance (*ousia*) in respect to both length and order. After Substance comes the Plotinian category of Motion which is new and needs to be well considered and established. With regard to the categories of Quantity and Quality, nothing is unexpected. It is surprising, however, that the discussion of Relation has been compressed into one small chapter, in a way which contrasts sharply with the treatment given to the same category in the first tract. How is this discrepancy to be explained?

Without intending to offer a full explanation of this issue, it may be observed that Relation in a wider sense encompasses the other three Plotinian categories—viz. Quantity, Quality and Motion—as it is clear from the following:

Thus we have five genera, counting the first three entities as one. If the first three are not massed into a unity, the series will be Matter, Form, Composite, Relation, Quantity, Quality, Motion. The last three may, again, be included in Relation, which is capable of bearing this wider extension. (VI.3.3, 17–32)

Therefore, it may be argued that Plotinus found it unnecessary to discuss this category at length, since he had done so with regard to the other three. However that may be, it will be worthwhile to examine very briefly how Plotinus considers each of his categories or 'genera' of the Sensible world. In my discussion I will follow the same order as Plotinus, so I will begin with Substance.

Plotinus opens the discussion on Sensible Substance (*ousia aisthēē*) by raising the question: "What, then, we have to ask, is the constant element in the first three entities? What is it that identifies them with their inherent Substance?" (VI.3.4, 1–2). Seeking for the 'constant element' which will allow the three entities—Matter, Form and Composite—to be regarded as one 'genus,' Plotinus raises the further questions:

But what, we may ask, have Matter and Form in common? In what sense can Matter be conceived as a genus, and what will be its species? What is the differentia of Matter? In which genus, Matter or Form, are we to rank the composite of both? It may be this very composite which constitutes the Substance manifested in bodies, neither of the components by itself answering to the conception of Body: how, then, can we rank them in one and the same genus as the composite? How can the elements of a thing be brought within the same genus as the thing itself? Yet if we begin with bodies, our first-principles will be compounds.

Why not resort to analogy? (VI.3.2, 9–16)

Resort to analogy—which would mean to conceive Matter and Form as analogous to the genera of the 'True Being,' i.e. Substance and Motion respectively—is excluded for reasons given in the rest of chapter two of this tract. Instead, Plotinus goes on to consider five alternative 'constant elements,' some of which resemble Aristotle's 'peculiar character' (*idia*) of Substance, as will be seen presently.

According to the first alternative, the 'constant element' is identified as *hedra* or *hypobathra*—i.e. 'having the capability to serve as base.' This may be true with regard to Matter or with regard to Composite, Plotinus remarks. But apparently it can not apply to Form which, on this ground, would not be allowed to be considered as a Substance. So the first candidate must be rejected.

According to the second alternative, the 'constant element' is identified as "that which is not said of anything else" (VI.3.4, 7–8). This is evidently true in cases of Composite, e.g. Socrates. But what about Form and Matter? Are not they said to be the Form and Matter of something? To meet objections of this sort, Plotinus proceeds to distinguish, correctly I think, between that which is 'said of something else' because it is a part of that something considered as a whole, and that which is 'said of something else,' though they differ from each other. It is to the former where both Matter and Form belong. Whereas attributes, such as white, which are predicated of something distinct from itself, belong to the latter. In this connection, Plotinus states:

We conclude that nothing belonging to something else and predicated of it can be Substance. Substance is that which belongs essentially to itself, or, in so far as it is a part of the differentiated object, serves only to complete the Composite. Each or either part of the Composite belongs to itself, and is only affirmed of the Composite in a special sense: only *qua* part of the whole is it predicated of something else; *qua* individual it is never in its essential nature predicated of an external. (VI.3.4, 20–26)

According to the third alternative the 'constant element' is identified as *hypokeimenon*—i.e. 'having the capacity to be a subject.' Plotinus thinks that this property is common to all three entities—viz. Matter, Form and Composite—but not without some qualifications (*allōs*). For example, Plotinus contends that Matter is said to be *hypokeimenon* to Form in a sense which is not the same as when the Composite is said to be *hypokeimenon* to accidents, activities, consequents etc. (VI.3.4, 34–35).

According to the fourth alternative the 'constant element' is identified as 'not being present in a subject' (*mē ēn hypokeimenō*). Plotinus observes that this characteristic can not be applied to all entities called Substances, unless: "...presence in a subject be stipulated as not including the case of the part present in the whole or of one thing combining with another to form a distinct unity" (VI.3.5, 8–10). Thus, Form will not be present in Matter as 'in a subject,' nor will man be present in Socrates. For, as Plotinus explains, 'Man is part of Socrates' (VI.3.5, 13), not in the sense in which Socrates' hand is part of Socrates, but in the sense that Socrates is composite of Matter and Form."

It may be recalled here that Aristotle did not, in the end, admit this characteristic as the 'peculiar character' of Substance, on the ground that it did not characterize Substance solely.<sup>19</sup> For it is applicable to *differentia* as well. Plotinus seems to reject the view that *differentiae*, like

Substances, are not 'in a subject.' To support this thesis he argues along the following lines:

It may be objected that non-presence in a subject is not peculiar to Substance, inasmuch as the differentia of a substance is no more present in a subject than the substance itself; but this objection results from taking a part of the whole substance, such as 'two-footed' in our example, and asserting that this part is not present in a subject: If we take, not 'two-footed' which is merely an aspect of Substance, but 'two-footedness' by which we signify not Substance but Quality, we shall find that this 'two-footedness' is indeed present in a subject. (VI.2.5, 23-29)

According to the fifth and last alternative, the 'constant element' is identified as 'neither being present in a subject nor being predicated of a subject' (VI.3.5, 14-15). The expression 'neither...nor,' it may be recalled, states the peculiar characteristic of primary substance in the Aristotelian text.<sup>12</sup> As it is stated, however, this formula can apply only to the Composite. In order to make it fit all other entities, which Plotinus calls categories, he had to modify the formula a little by adding 'neither...nor predicated of *another as other*' (VI.3.5, 15). This little modification is very important because it allows Plotinus to draw the fundamental distinction between predicates predicated of a subject from which they differ essentially (e.g. 'a piece of wood is white') and predicates predicated of a subject from which they do not differ essentially (e.g. 'Socrates is a man'). For, according to Plotinus:

When I predicate Man of Socrates, it is as though I affirmed, not that a piece of wood is white, but that whiteness is white; for in asserting that Socrates is a man, I predicate Man (the universal) of a particular man, I affirm Man of the manhood in Socrates; I am really saying only that Socrates is Socrates, or that this particular rational animal is an animal. (VI.2.5, 17-23)

In other words, cases of *essential predication* seem to be reducible to cases of *self-predication*, i.e. tautologies. For example, to predicate 'man' of an individual is the same, according to Plotinus, as to say that 'Socrates is Socrates.' The problem of predication, however, is very complex and cannot be considered here.<sup>13</sup> Suffice it to emphasize here that the formula 'neither...nor...' as modified by Plotinus can encompass both Aristotle's secondary substances and Plato's eternal Forms. Even so, Matter is left outside. Realizing this, Plotinus gives up the effort to find a formula which

will provide the needed 'constant element' and concludes in the following way:

The truth is, however, that the 'Substance' of our enquiry may be apprehended in directly opposite ways: it may be determined by one of the properties we have been discussing, by more than one, by all at once, according as they answer to the notions of Matter, Form and the Couplement (VI.2.5, 35-39)

Although he has said much about this issue, Plotinus is aware that he has not clarified the category of Sensible Substance, nor has he provided a 'definition' of it as yet. Thus, he is ready to attempt another approach in order to discover what is that peculiar characteristic which distinguishes Substance from the other 'genera' of Becoming. Eventually he will find a solution to this problem in what I shall call the doctrine of *double dependence*. I shall explain what this expression is supposed to mean, after I have quoted Plotinus once again on the equivocation of the term 'existence' (*einai*), as applied to different categories of the sensible realm. Plotinus argues:

What, then, is the meaning of 'existence' as applied to fire, earth and the other elements? What is the difference between this existence and existence in the other categories? It is the difference between being simply—that which merely is—and being white. But surely the being qualified by 'white' is the same as that having no qualification? It is not the same: the latter is Being in the primary sense, the former is Being only by participation and in a secondary degree. Whiteness added to Being produces a being white; Being added to whiteness produces a white being: thus, whiteness becomes an accident of Being, and Being an accident of whiteness. (VI.2.6, 8-18)

Also:

The Being of the Sensible resembles the white in not originating in itself. It must therefore be regarded as dependent for its being upon the Authentic Being, as white is dependent upon the Authentic Whiteness, and the Authentic Whiteness dependent for its whiteness upon participation in that Supreme Being whose existence is underived. (VI.2.6, 28-32)

Now it is somewhat easier to explain what distinguishes sensible substance from the other 'genera' of the sensible realm. The distinction is based on the formula of double dependence. For, as it is evident from the two passages quoted above, especially the second one, while the sensible

Substance is dependent upon the 'Authentic Being' for its existence, the sensible white depends upon the 'Authentic Whiteness' which in turn is dependent upon the 'Authentic Being' ultimately. That is to say, in the category of sensible substance we have *simple dependence*, whereas in the other sensible categories or 'genera' the dependence is *double*.<sup>28</sup> It is in this respect that Sensible Substance is differentiated from the other 'genera' of Becoming.

Let us turn our attention now to another point of importance which Plotinus discusses in this connection—viz. the problem of priority between the two constituents of the Composite: Matter and Form. This is not an easy problem to solve because its solution, that is, priority of the one constituent over the other seems to depend on the viewpoint from which one considers the whole matter.

That Matter is not a Primary we have established elsewhere. If it be urged that other things can have no subsistence without being implanted in Matter, we admit the claim for Sensible things. But though Matter be prior to these, it is not thereby precluded from being posterior to many things—posterior, in fact, to all the beings of the Intellectual sphere. Its existence is but a pale reflection, and less complete than that of the things implanted in it....

But once concede that Form is higher in the scale of Being than Matter, and Matter can no longer be regarded as a common ground of both, nor substance as a genus embracing Matter, Form and the Couplement. True, these will have many common properties, to which we have already referred, but their being (or existence) will nonetheless be different. (VI.2.7, 3–16)

Evidently, by 'things implanted in Matter' Plotinus means the Forms which are "higher in the scale of being than Matter," we are told (VI.2.7, 12–13). Now, granted that "when a higher being comes into contact with a lower, the lower, though first in the natural order, is yet posterior in the scale of Reality," (VI.2.7, 16–18) the conclusion seems to follow, as Plotinus puts it:

If Being does not belong in equal degrees to Matter, to Form and to the Couplement, Substance can no longer be common to all three in the sense of being their genus: to their posteriors it will bear a still different relation, serving them as a common base by being bound up with all alike. Substance, thus, resembles life, dim here, clearer there, or portraits of which one is an outline, another more minutely worked. By measuring Being by its dim manifestation and neglecting a fuller revelation elsewhere, we may come to regard this dim existence as a common ground....

We conclude that the term 'Being' must have different connotations as applied to Matter, to Form and to both conjointly, in spite of the single source pouring into the different streams. (VI.2.7, 12–30)

It is clear, therefore, that Plotinus realizes finally that the term 'to be' (*einai, to on*) is a *pollachōs legomenon*, as Aristotle had pointed out; it is a term with 'focal meaning' to use contemporary terminology.<sup>29</sup> Be it as it may, the conclusion reached by Plotinus—viz. that the 'being' does not mean the same thing when applied to Matter, Form, Composite, entities of the Sensible or the Intelligible Realms—led him to declare that:

The division into elements must, in short, be abandoned, especially in regard to Sensible Substance, known necessarily by sense rather than by reason. We must no longer look for help in constituent parts, since such parts will not be substances, or at any rate not sensible substances.

Our plan must be to apprehend what is constant in stone, earth, water and the entities which they compose—the vegetal and animal forms, considered purely as sensibles—and to confine this constant within a single genus. (VI.3.8, 1–6)

Thus, it would seem that we are back again at the point from which we started, viz. the composite entities of the Sensible World. But now the emphasis will be put, not on the constituents, but on the composite things as such (*syntheta*), which are considered as (a) "actually many substances in one" (VI.3.8, 9), though (b) "not everything which composes the amalgam is Substance, but only the amalgam as a whole" (VI.3.8, 29–30). It may be objected here that (a) and (b) as stated above seem to be incompatible with each other. Whereas the first asserts that 'composites' are actually a collection of many substances,<sup>30</sup> the second seems to deny it by considering as Substance only the amalgam 'as a whole.' For Plotinus, the two statements are not necessarily contradictory or incompatible; they are the outcome of two different considerations. For (a) considers 'composites' sensible being—as composed of such elements as fire, earth, air and water, which in themselves are composites of Matter and Form (VI.3.8, 7–12). But (b) considers a 'composite' sensible being as Composite of Matter, Form, Qualities, Activities and all other Accidents (*symbebēkota*) which go with 'composite,' and which separately can not be called Substance in the same sense (VI.3.8, 13–27).

Apart from the above objection, what really bothers Plotinus is that, if (b) is taken literally, it would seem that sensible substances are derived from non-substances, which is somehow disturbing. For how can

Substance come out of something which is not substantial? Such a claim would seem to amount to its being created *ex nihilo*, and this certainly is neither rational nor acceptable to a Platonist, like Plotinus. Much of the confusion, however, may be cleared up if we recall that the discussion here is about Sensible Substance, which is but a mere 'reflection' and 'shadow' of the Authentic Substances of the Intelligible realm. Plotinus explains:

And let no one take exception on the ground that we produce Sensible Substance from non-substances. The whole amalgam itself is not True Substance; it is merely an imitation of that True Substance which has Being apart from its concomitants, these indeed being derived from it as the possessor of True Being. In the lower realm the case is different: the underlying ground is sterile, and from its inability to produce fails to attain to the status of Being; it remains a shadow, and on this shadow is traced a sketch...the world of Appearance. (VI.3.8, 30-37)

That is the way in which Plotinus considers the Sensible World whose 'genera' he tries to determine. This Universe is simply a picture or sketch (*zōgraphia*) drawn on a shadow, that is, the barren Matter (*agonon*). Such a conception is evidently very different than Aristotle's conception of this World. Plotinus thinks that he has said enough about the 'so-called' substance (*legomenē ousia*), or 'pseudo-substance,' as MacKenna renders it. Next he proceeds to examine the kinds (*eidē*) of Sensible Substance, which will provide him with the opportunity to criticize Aristotle's distinction between primary and secondary substances. I shall consider this issue briefly here.

To begin with, Plotinus postulates body (*sōma*) as the highest 'genus' with reference to the Sensible world. Then, by applying the Platonic method of division he is able to obtain a scheme of subordinate species and genera in a way which closely resembles the 'Porphyrian Tree.'<sup>2</sup> This division of sensible substances is given in the following passage:

But what are we to posit as its species? How divide this genus?

The genus as a whole must be identified with body. Bodies may be divided into the characteristically material and the organic: the material bodies comprise fire, earth, water, air; the organic the bodies of plants and animals, these in turn admitting of formal differentiation. (VI.3.9, 3-6)

This is not the only possible division, according to Plotinus. On the contrary, he mentions two more: (a) The division which is based on such qualities as hot, dry, cold, moist; and (b) the division which is based on

forms or shapes (*morphai*). Both (a) and (b) are related to sense-perception. He observes: "Since our discussion is concerned with Sensible Substance, it is not strange that it should turn upon distinctions related to sense-perception: This Substance is not Being pure and simply, but the Sensible Being which we call the Universe" (VI.3.10, 12-15). Once again, Plotinus felt it necessary to stress the differences which separate the two realms, that of Becoming and that of Being.

With regard to the Aristotelian distinction between primary and secondary substances, Plotinus seems to agree that there are not different kinds of Substances, because they do not differ essentially from each other. Yet, he rejects Aristotle's view expressed in the *Categories* according to which the particular (i.e. primary Substance) is prior to the universal (i.e. secondary Substance).<sup>3</sup> Plotinus thinks otherwise on this issue as it is evident from what follows:

We may be told that Man (the universal) is Form alone, Socrates Form in Matter. But on this very ground Socrates will be less fully Man than the universal;...

Besides, the more general is by nature prior; hence, the Form-Idea is prior to the individual: but what is prior by nature is prior unconditionally. How then can the Form take a lower rank? The individual, it is true, is prior in the sense of being more readily accessible to our cognisance; this fact, however, entails no objective difference.

Moreover, such a difference, if established, would be incompatible with a single Reason-Principle of Substance; First and Second Substances could not have the same Principle, nor be brought under a single genus. (VI.3.9, 32-42)

It may be noted here that the distinction between 'prior by nature' (*physei proteron*) and 'prior with regard to us' (*pros hēmas proteron*) is parallel to Porphyry's distinction between 'prior by nature' and 'sensibly prior' (*aisthēsei proteron*).<sup>4</sup> The Plotinian insight here, like the Porphyrian, is that for *x* to be prior to *y* in one sense does not imply necessarily that it will be prior to that in every sense. This formula, indeed, played an important role in Porphyry's efforts to reconcile the Aristotelian doctrine of the concrete individual (*tode ti*) with the Platonic theory of Forms (universals), as well as the Platonic-Aristotelian theories of the Sensible World with the Platonic-Plotinian theories of the Intelligible realm.

In conclusion it can be said that Sensible Substance is accepted by Plotinus as a 'genus' of the sensible world. But no one should be misled



as to the fact that the 'being,' to which this 'genus' refers is only an image of the 'Authentic Being.' Thus, the use of the term 'Substance' (*ousia*) in its double reference covers ■ case of homonymy."

## II

As in the *Categories*, Quantity occupies the second place in Plotinus' list of the 'genera' of the Sensible world. In his discussion of this 'genus,' Plotinus wants to make clear from the very beginning that (a) only quantities related to matter—but not Absolute Quantity—will be considered here, and (b) only number (*arithmos*) and magnitude (*megethos*) are to be regarded as true quantities. He states:

Passing to Quantity and the quantum, we have to consider the view which identifies them with number and magnitude on the ground that everything quantitative is numbered among Sensible things or rated by the extension of its substrate: we are here, of course, discussing not Quantity in isolation, but that which causes a piece of wood to be three yards long and gives the five in 'five horses.' (VI.3.11, 1–5)

Accordingly, three of the seven Aristotelian 'kinds' (*eidē*) of quantities are left out. These quantities are identified as Place or Space (*topos*) and Time (*chronos*)—which Aristotle classified with the continuous quantities—and *logos* (speech, discourse)—which Aristotle considered as discrete quantity. According to Plotinus, these quantities (*posa*) are reducible to the other 'genera' which were mentioned above. Of these the first two can be assigned to Relation, while the third must be referred to Motion. The justification of this reduction is stated by Plotinus in the following way:

Now we have often maintained that number and magnitude are to be regarded as the only true qualities, and that Space and Time have no right to be conceived as quantitative: Time as the measure of Motion should be assigned to Relation, while Space, being that which circumscribes Body, is also a relative and falls under the same category; though continuous, it is, like Motion, not included in Quantity. (VI.3.11, 6–11)

Also:

Syllable and discourse are only indirectly quantities or substrates of Quantity; it is voice that is quantitative: but voice is a kind of Motion; it must accordingly in any case (quantity or no quantity) be referred to Motion, as must activity also. (VI.3.12, 25–28)

In agreement with Aristotle, Plotinus rejects as non-quantities those comparatives which Porphyry, commenting on this category, called 'comparative quantities' (*aorista posa*)—e.g. 'more,' 'less,' 'more beautiful' etc.—on the ground that they belong to relatives. For the same reason 'large' and 'small'—as in the expressions 'a large tree,' 'a small mountain' etc.—are reducible to comparatives, and ultimately to relatives. For Plotinus, as for Aristotle, these expressions are equivalent to 'a tree larger (i.e. taller) than another tree' and 'a mountain smaller than (i.e. not as high as) another mountain' respectively. Apart from that, Plotinus, unlike Aristotle, wants to assert that "it is some kind of Quantity which gives greatness to the great." He queries:

On the other hand, why do we not find in the category of Quantity 'great' and 'small'? It is some kind of Quantity which gives greatness to the great; greatness is not a relative, though greater and smaller are relatives, since these, like doubleness, imply an external correlative. (VI.3.11, 12–14)

Similarly with 'the beautiful' (*to kalon*):

In sum, just as there is a Reason-Principle of Beauty, so there must be a Reason-Principle of greatness, participation in which makes a thing great, as the Principle of beauty makes it beautiful. (VI.3.12, 17–19)"

Considerations such as the above led Plotinus to accept that there is *contrariety* in the category of Quantity—which Aristotle had denied." The possibility of receiving contraries was, for Aristotle, an indication that the 'quantities' involved were in fact not quantities, but relatives. Plotinus takes the opposite view:

...we must allow contrariety to Quantity: whenever we speak of great and small our notions acknowledge this contrariety by evolving opposite images, as also when we refer to many and few; indeed, 'few' and 'many' call for similar treatment to 'small' and 'great.' (VI.3.12, 1–5)"

And again:

To judge from these instances, there is contrariety in Quantity. Place we may neglect as not strictly coming under the category of Quantity; if it were admitted, 'above' could only be a contrary if there were something in the universe which was 'below': as referring to the partial, the terms 'above' and 'below' are used in a purely relative sense, and must go with 'right' and 'left' into the category of Relation. (VI.3.12, 19–25)\*

Finally, Plotinus accepts the Aristotelian distinction between *continuous* and *discrete* quantities and also the basis for this distinction as given by Aristotle:

It has been remarked that the continuous is effectually distinguished from the discrete by their possessing the one a common, the other a separate limit. (VI.3.13, 1–2)

Number, according to Plotinus, belongs to the latter and can be subdivided into odd and even numbers. On the other hand, magnitude belongs to the former and is subdivided into lines, surfaces, and solids. But to speak of division here is rather misleading. This procedure should be called enumeration (*katalithmēsis*) for the reason that the distinction prior/posterior is involved in the different magnitudes, whereas simultaneity characterizes the species of the divided genus. In this connection Plotinus states:

But how are we to differentiate the continuous, comprising as it does line, surface and solid? The line may be rated as of one dimension, the surface as of two dimensions, the solid as of three, if we are only making a calculation and do not suppose that we are dividing the continuous into its species; for it is an invariable rule that numbers, thus grouped as prior and posterior, cannot be brought into a common genus; there is no common basis in first, second and third dimensions. Yet there is a sense in which they would appear to be equal—namely, as pure measures of Quantity: of higher and lower dimensions, they are not however more or less quantitative.

Numbers have similarly a common property in their being numbers all; and the truth may well be, not that One creates two, and two creates three, but that all have a common source. (VI.3.13, 9–20)

Now, if line is a quantity, and if a triangle is the product of three lines, then to the question "Why is not the product of three lines included in Quantity?" Plotinus' answer is that "a triangle consists not merely of three lines but of three lines in a particular disposition, a quadrilateral of four lines in a particular disposition: even the straight line involves disposition

as well as quantity" (VI.3.14, 8–11). He seems to share Aristotle's view that one and the same entity can be classed under two different categories provided that each time it will be considered from a different point of view:

If however by classing the triangle and the rectangle as *qualia* we propose to bring figures under Quality, we are not thereby precluded from assigning the same object to more categories than one: in so far as it is a magnitude—a magnitude of such and such a size—it will belong to Quantity; in so far as it presents a particular shape, to Quality. (VI.3.14, 18–22)

Consequently, it is not absurd that Geometry, which deals with figures—"viz. triangles, quadrilaterals, etc.—"is the study of magnitudes" (VI.3.14, 16). Thus, Plotinus is able to claim that "if we are told that equality and inequality are characteristic of Quantity, that is not to deny that similarity also may be predicated of certain quantities" (VI.3.15, 4–7). This is evidently an allusion to Aristotle's *Categories*, where equality and inequality are presented as the 'peculiar character' of Quantity.<sup>27</sup> This brings the discussion on the 'genus' of Quantity to an end. But there is a last point which needs to be considered before I proceed to examine the next 'genus' of the sensible world.

The point which Plotinus makes at the end of chapter 15 is that, in contrast to Aristotle's strong position that the individual or primary substance signifies a concrete individual, the sensible substance (*legomenē ousia*) is rather a 'qualified something' (*poion ti*). Hence, that which signifies substance and essence (*to ti einai*) is not the individual but the universal as expressed by *logos*. Compared with what Aristotle states about the expression 'this-such' (*tode ti*) in the *Categories*<sup>28</sup> and about the expression 'what something is' (*ti en einai*) in the *Metaphysics*,<sup>29</sup> the following quotation may show that Plotinus confused the two expressions and their different meanings:

We have spoken of Quality as combining with other entities, Matter and Quantity, to form the complete Sensible Substance; this Substance, so called, may be supposed to constitute the manifold world of Sense, which is not so much an essence as a *quale*. Thus, for the essence of fire we must look to the Reason-Principle; what produces the visible aspect is, properly speaking, a *quale*.

Man's essence will lie in his Reason-Principle; that which is perfected in the corporeal nature is a mere image of the Reason-Principle, a *quale* rather than an essence.

Consider: the visible Socrates is a man, yet we give the name of Socrates to that likeness of him in a portrait, which consists of mere colours, mere pigments: similarly, it is a Reason-Principle which constitutes Socrates, but we apply the name Socrates to the Socrates we see: in truth, however, the colours and shapes which make up the visible Socrates are but reproductions of those in the Reason-Principle, while this Reason-Principle itself bears a corresponding relation to the truest Reason-Principle of Man.—But we need not elaborate this point. (VI.3.15, 23–37)

Unfortunately, Plotinus did not think it necessary to elaborate the point which he is making here, though an elaboration would be most welcome. He seems to distinguish between *logos* of man (i.e. definition, or 'Reason-Principle,' as MacKenna renders it) and *logos* of individual man, e.g. Socrates. But it is not clear (a) on what grounds this distinction is based, and (b) what is meant by *logos* in the case of Socrates. If we interpret *logos* in the second case as having the same meaning as in the first case, then it would seem to follow that for Plotinus even individuals are definable, which Aristotle had denied." Such an interpretation may lead to the further hypothesis that Plotinus accepted 'Forms' of individuals, as has been suggested by modern scholars.\* But it is possible that *logos* in the second case (i.e. *logos* of Socrates) does not mean 'definition' as in the first case, but rather description." Thus, while the '*logos* of man' will give the essence (*ti esti*) of man in general, the '*logos* of Socrates' will qualify and specify—more precisely, atomize—the 'individual' (*ti*) by adding a collection of (accidental) properties, so that it will produce a 'qualified something' (*poion ti*). In this light, the meaning of the above quotation will be the following: As the portrait of Socrates stands to the living sensible Socrates, so the *logos* (*hypographē*) of Socrates (the individual man) stands to *logos* (definition) of man (the universal). The implication of this analogy is that the universal is more real than the particular, in spite of all Aristotelian assertion to the contrary.

### III

With regard to Quality, considered as a separate 'genus' of the Sensible world, there are three main issues which Plotinus discusses: (a) Its distinction from the other 'genera,' (b) its different kinds, and (c) its special characteristics—i.e. its *idia*, as Porphyry called them. Of these three issues it is on (a) that Plotinus' views come very close to Aristotle's.

On (b) and (c), their views diverge, as will become clear from the discussion which follows.

It has been repeatedly stated by Plotinus that the sensible substance or 'pseudo-substance' (*legomenē*) is not simple but complex. It is the amalgam, the concrescence or coming together of many entities (*to ek pollōn*: VI.3.15, 26). Its constituents are not only Matter and Form but also Quantity, Quality, and Motion or absence of Motion, according to Plotinus. Quality, taken separately from the amalgam, can be said to signify 'the distinct mark' or 'the type of a thing.' Thus:

When each of the entities bound up with the pseudo-substance is taken apart from the rest, the name of Quality is given to that one among them, by which without pointing to essence or quantity or motion we signify the distinctive mark, the type or aspect of a thing—for example, the beauty or ugliness of a body. This beauty—need we say?—is identical in name only with Intellectual Beauty: it follows that the term 'Quality' as applied to the Sensible and the Intellectual is necessarily equivocal. (VI.3.16, 1–7)

It is important to note here the 'equivocation' of the term 'Quality' as applied to the two realms—the Sensible and the Intelligible—because Plotinus' discussion in the next several pages seems to rest on this homonymy. On this basis he distinguishes the virtues, arts and sciences which are classed with 'Sensible Quality' from those which "necessarily belong to the...Intellectual." He states:

Geometry and arithmetic are, we shall maintain, of a twofold character: in their earthly types they rank with Sensible Quality, but in so far as they are functions of pure Soul, they necessarily belong to that other world in close proximity to the Intellectual. This, too, is in Plato's view the case with music and astronomy.

The arts concerned with material objects and making use of perceptible instruments and sense-perception must be classed with Sensible Quality, even though they are dispositions of the Soul, attendant upon its apostasy.

There is also every reason for consigning to this category the practical virtues whose function is directed to a social end: These do not isolate Soul by inclining it towards the higher; their manifestation makes for beauty in this world, a beauty regarded not as necessary but as desirable. (VI.3.16, 19–31)

The outcome of this procedure would seem to be, as Plotinus realizes, "a distinction between psychic and bodily qualities, the latter belonging specifically to body" (VI.3.17, 1–2). By subdividing the psychic and

bodily qualities, many and different kinds of Quality may be obtained, which are not the same as those presented in the *Categories*." But here a serious question is raised and discussed by Plotinus: How is it possible to divide Quality into different kinds? For such a division, *differentiae* are needed. Where are they to be found? If qualities (*poiotētes*) serve as differentiae of substances (*diaphorai ousias*), then what would serve as differentiae of qualities (*diaphora poiotētos*)? It cannot be qualities, because that "would be no less absurd than setting up substances as differences of substances." The problem is not solved even if we take as basis for the distinctions of different kinds of qualities 'the variety of sense-organs':

Here a difficulty may be raised: we divide the varieties of Substance and their functions and activities, fair or foul or indeed of any kind whatsoever, on the basis of Quality, Quantity rarely, if ever, entering into the differences which produce species; Quantity, again, we divide in accordance with qualities of its own: how then are we to divide Quality itself into species? what differences are we to employ, and from what genus shall we taken them? To take them from Quality itself would be no less absurd than setting up substances as differences of substances.

How, then, are we to distinguish black from white? how differentiate colours in general from tastes and tangible qualities? By the variety of sense-organs? Then there will be no difference in the objects themselves.

But waiving this objection, how deal with qualities perceived by the same sense-organ? (VI.3.17, 3–19)

Eventually Plotinus accepts the view that not all qualities constitute differentiae (VI.3.18, 16–20). He then proceeds to put down as a rule that (a) "Quality is never a differentia of quality, any more than Substance is a differentia of substance, Quantity of quantity" (VI.3.18, 30–33); and (b) "while in general it is necessary to look for differences by which to separate things from each other, to hunt for differences of the differences themselves is both futile and irrational" (VI.3.18, 1–3). The reason why it is futile to seek for 'differences of differences' is not difficult to understand, though not stated by Plotinus. For, it would seem that such an attempt leads to an infinite regress. But it is not clear on what grounds such a procedure can be characterized as irrational. Perhaps the reason for this is to be found in that only essential qualities (*ousiōdeis poiotētes*) can serve as differentiae by means of which definitions are obtained. Now, definitions seem indispensable to discursive reason in performing its function, which is to give explanations supported by arguments. But

sense-perception and intellect, as cognitive faculties, can dispense with definitions and arguments, since they do not aim at explanation, as Plotinus puts it:

Sense-perception and intelligence may be trusted to indicate diversity but not to explain it: explanation is outside the province of sense-perception, whose function is merely to produce a variety of information; while, as for intelligence, it works exclusively with intuitions and never resorts to explanations to justify them; there is in the movements of intelligence a diversity which separates one object from another, making further differentiation unnecessary. (VI.3.18, 7–12)

In connection with the problem of the different kinds of qualities and the basis of their differentiation, it should be noted that Plotinus agrees here with Aristotle in grouping together (though with some qualifications) qualities and *qualia*. The qualifications suggested here by Plotinus are as follows:

With Quality we have undertaken to group the dependent *qualia*, in so far as Quality is bound up with them; we shall not however introduce into this category the qualified objects (*qua* objects), that we may not be dealing with two categories at once; we shall pass over the objects to that which gives them their (specific) name. (VI.3.19, 1–4)

In so far as the 'peculiar characteristics' (*idia*) of quality are concerned, it may be recalled that Aristotle asserted in the *Categories* that qualities admit (a) contraries and (b) a more and a less. Plotinus has some objections with regard to both (a) and (b). First of all he can not accept the Aristotelian view of contrariety as 'the greatest possible difference.' He rejects it by arguing in the following way:

It may be urged that the products of a contrariety exhibit the greatest diversity. But 'the greatest diversity' is clearly meaningless, unless we can point to lower degrees of diversity in the means. Thus, we cannot speak of 'the greatest diversity' in reference to health and disease. This definition of contrariety is therefore inadmissible. (VI.3.20, 20–23)

Secondly, Plotinus accepts the basic Aristotelian distinction between contraries without intermediaries (*amesa*) and contraries with intermediaries (*emmesa*).<sup>20</sup> Thus, health and sickness, for example, belong to the former, while virtue and vice or black and white belong to the latter.

But there is a difference between these last two examples which Plotinus tries to clarify:

We have to ascertain whether there is not to every quality a contrary. In the case of virtue and vice even the mean appears to be contrary to the extremes.

But when we turn to colours, we do not find the intermediates so related. If we regard the intermediates as blendings of the extremes, we must not posit any contrariety other than that between black and white, but must show that all other colours are combinations of these two. Contrariety however demands that there be some one distinct quality in the intermediates, though this quality may be seen to arise from a combination. (VI.3.20, 1-7)

Hence the conclusion seems to follow that:

If these observations be sound, colours which have a common ground will not be contraries. But there will be nothing to prevent, not indeed every colour from being contrary to any other; and similarly with tastes.—This will serve as a statement of the problem. (VI.3.20, 35-38)

As for (b) Plotinus thinks that only *qualia*—objects participating in Quality—admit of degrees, but Quality as such is excluded:

As for Degree (subsisting in Quality), it was given as our opinion that it exists in the objects participating in Quality, though whether it enters into qualities as such—into health and justice—was left open to question. If indeed these qualities possess an extension quite apart from their participants, we must actually ascribe to them degrees: but in truth they belong to a sphere where each entity is the whole and does not admit of degree. (VI.3.20, 39-42)

#### IV

Can Motion be established as a 'genus' of the Sensible world? This question has to be considered first for two reasons: (1) Because Aristotle did not consider Motion as one of his categories; and (2) because Plotinus thinks that the positing of Motion as a new 'genus' is possible. Plotinus' claim depends on three conditions which he specifies as follows:

- (a) "That it cannot rightly be referred to any other genus";
- (b) "That nothing higher than itself can be predicated of it in respect to its essence";

- (c) "That by assuming differences it will produce species" (VI.3.21, 1-5).

With regard to (a) Plotinus argues that Motion (*kinēsis*) cannot be referred to any other of the 'genera' which he has postulated for this world. According to him, Motion is neither Substance, nor quality, nor quantity, nor relation. It is, as Plotinus puts it, *heteron*: other, something else, different. It cannot be Substance because it presupposes Substance. Although attributive, Motion has an independent reality in the same sense in which Quantity and Quality are said to have independent realities. It is this characteristic which distinguishes Motion from Relation. Plotinus explains:

If we are agreed that Quality and Quantity, though attributive, are real entities, and on the basis of this reality distinguishable as Quality and Quantity respectively: then, on the same principle, since Motion, though an attribute, has a reality prior to its attribution, it is incumbent upon us to discover the intrinsic nature of this reality. We must never be content to regard as a relative something which exists prior to its attribution, but only that which is engendered by Relation, and has no existence apart from the relation to which it owes its name. (VI.3.21, 12-17)

Before proceeding to answer the question "What is that entity, called Motion, which, though attributive, has an independent reality, which makes its attribution possible?" Plotinus finds it necessary to make sure that "there is nothing prior to Motion and predicated of it as its genus" (VI.3.21, 21-24). This was condition (h) as stated above. Change (*metabolē*) is the most serious candidate to be considered as 'genus' of Motion. But upon inspection it appears to be a species rather than the 'genus' of Motion, because "change signifies merely the substitution of one thing for another, whereas Motion involves also the removal of a thing from the place to which it belongs, as is shown by locomotion" (VI.3.21, 42-44). It may also be the case that 'change' is but another name for Motion, because if it were another 'genus,' then the genera would have to be not five but six (VI.3.21, 25-26)."

Since change is not the only species of Motion, as Plotinus understands it, he goes on to specify its other species (*eidē*). Among them are to be found not only generation (*genesis*), alteration (*alloiōsis*) and augmentation (*auksē*) (chapter 21) but also actions (*poiēseis*) and passions (*peiseis*) (chapter 28). Accordingly, the condition (c) is satisfied and, therefore, Motion is established as a 'genus' of Becoming. An additional reason that Motion, in Plotinus' view, must be considered as one of the

highest 'genera' is the fact that it can not be defined: "That Motion is a genus we may be all the more confident in virtue of the difficulty—the impossibility even—of confining it within a definition" (VI.3.22, 19–21).

Having established in this way that Motion is a 'genus,' Plotinus felt it necessary to search for the 'constant element' of this 'genus' which appears in all its species. The outcome of this search is stated in the following passage:

In short, the common basis of all Motion is the existence of a progression and an urge from potentiality and the potential to actuality and the actual: everything which has any kind of motion whatsoever derives this motion from a pre-existent potentiality within itself of activity or passivity. (VI.3.22, 47–50)

Accordingly, "the view would not be unreasonable which, taking some Forms to be active, others inactive, regarded Motion as a dynamic Form in opposition to the other Forms which are static, and further as the cause of whatever new Form ensues upon it" (VI.3.22, 12–16)."

In addition to its being a dynamic Form, Plotinus characterizes Motion as (a) "passage from potentiality to its realization" (VI.3.22, 3–4); (b) "being itself perpetual difference" (*aei heterotēs*) (VI.3.22, 43–44); (c) being distinguished from 'moved objects,' since "by walking we do not mean the feet but the activity springing from a potentiality in the feet" (VI.3.23, 4–5), and (d) "being always qualified" and "taking its quality from the moved" (VI.3.23, 31–33). Thus:

Now, when the potentiality of Motion consists in an ability to walk, it may be imagined as thrusting a man forward and causing him to be continually adopting a different position; when it lies in the capacity to heat, it heats; when the potentiality takes hold of Matter and builds up the organism, we have growth; and when another potentiality demolishes the structure, the result is decay, that which has the potentiality of demolition experiencing the decay. Where the birth-giving principle is active, we find birth; where it is impotent and the power to destroy prevails, destruction takes place—not the destruction of what already exists, but that which intervenes upon the road to existence. (VI.3.23, 20–28)

In chapter 24 Plotinus considers the contrary motions with regard to locomotion, such as: ascending and descending, circular and linear. He concludes that "it appears in general that locomotion is a definite unity, taking its differences from externals" (VI.3.24, 14–15). As for integration (*synkrisis*) and disintegration (*diakrisis*), which are considered in the next

chapter (chapter 25), Plotinus thinks that (a) they should not be identified with condensation (*pyknōsis*) and rarefaction (*araiōsis*) because "to suppose that they were would involve the admission of a vacuum" (VI.3.25, 34), and (b) they are in a sense reducible to local motions. For:

If integration implies that one element proceeds towards another, implies in short an approach, and disintegration, on the other hand, a retreat into the background, such motions may be termed local; we have clearly a case of two things moving in the direction of unity, or else making away from each other. (VI.3.25, 5–9)

The last point which Plotinus discusses with regard to Motion is its opposite. Whether this opposite is Stability (*stasis*) or Rest (*ēremia*) is problematic. The distinction between these two notions is subtle and must be carefully considered. Their difference consists in that the former belongs to that which is immovable (*akineton*), while the latter pertains to that which is movable (*kineton*) but for some reason rests or has come to a stop. In this respect, it is understandable that "we should, no doubt, be well advised to assign Stability to the Intellectual, and to look in the lower sphere for Rest alone" (VI.3.27, 3–4). Accordingly, Rest appears to be the negation of Motion in the Sensible realm, though in the Intelligible realm Stability does not negate Motion.

Why, then, did we not in discussing the Intellectual realm assert that Stability was the negation of Motion? Because it is not indeed possible to consider Stability as an annulling of Motion, for when Motion ceases Stability does not exist, but requires for its own existence the simultaneous existence of Motion; and what is of a nature to move is not stationary because the Stability of that realm is motionless, but because Stability has taken hold of it; in so far as it has Motion, it will never cease to move: thus, it is stationary under the influence of Stability, and moves under the influence of Motion. In the lower realm, too, a thing moves in virtue of Motion, but its Rest is caused by a deficiency; it has been deprived of its due motion. (VI.3.27, 27–35)

The implication is that Stability is not to be found in this Sensible world in which everything is either in Motion or at Rest, that is, in slower or relative Motion. In other words, every entity of the Sensible world must be always in Motion in reference to the Absolute Stability of the Intelligible realm. And there is no other frame of reference. Plotinus argues:

Now, if Rest means coming to rest, it must be regarded as a motion which has not yet ceased but still continues; but if we suppose it to be incompatible with Motion, we have first to ask whether there is in the Sensible world anything without motion. (VI.3.24, 11–14)

This then is Plotinus' theory of relative Motion in the Sensible world."

## V

The last and short chapter of the present tractate (chapter 28) is devoted to the fifth 'genus' of Becoming—i.e. Relation (*pros ti*)—which was discussed at length in the first tractate. In passing, Plotinus notes that: (a) "We have already indicated that Activity and Passivity are to be regarded as motions:" and (b) "as for the remaining so-called genera, we have shown that they are reducible to those which we have posited" (VI.3.28, 1–4). Then he states the following with regard to Relation, which he had characterized as 'manifestly an offshoot' (VI.2.16, 1):

With regard to the relative, we have maintained that Relation belongs to one object as compared with another, that the two objects coexist simultaneously, and that Relation is found whenever a substance is in such a condition as to produce it; not that the substance is a relative, except in so far as it constitutes part of a whole—a hand, for example, or head or cause or principle or element. (VI.3.28, 4–8)

Consequently, Plotinus seems to agree with Aristotle in that (1) relations are closely connected with substances; (2) they presuppose a plurality (at least two) of substances which must exist simultaneously; and (3) no substance is a relative. This last point, it may be recalled, was very controversial. It was discussed by Aristotle at length in the *Categories* and was the main reason why he modified the definition of relatives. Unlike Aristotle, Plotinus is prepared to accept that in some cases Substances can be regarded as relatives. These cases are specified as parts, causes, principles and elements. Now, Aristotle might have objected to this, that in all these cases substances are not considered substances. As Porphyry puts it, it is not Socrates *qua* primary Substance, but Socrates *qua* father of his sons, who can be regarded as a relative (efficient cause)."

At the end of his discussion, Plotinus mentions an ancient division of relatives which reads as follows:

We may adopt the ancient division of relatives into creative principles, measures, excesses and deficiencies, and those which in general separate things on the basis of similarities and differences. (VI.3.28, 8–11)

In this light, it is easy to see how the category or 'genus' of Relation was able, in the Plotinian scheme, to absorb all the Aristotelian categories except for Substance." Although this development led Plotinus away from Aristotle's categorial many-fold, it certainly brought him back to the old Platonic dichotomy between Substance and Relation, or Absolute and Relative Being, as is customary to render the Greek expressions *kathauto on* and *en allō on*. Having thus determined the number and nature of the 'genera' of Becoming, Plotinus closes the tripartite treatise 'On the Genera of Being' with the satisfaction that he has provided a set of five categories which is sufficient, he thinks, to account for this Sensible cosmos, the image and reflection of the Intelligible cosmos.

## VI

It was the purpose of this study to examine Plotinus' proposal of a new set of categories or so-called 'genera' of Becoming and its relationship to Aristotle's categories most of which Plotinus found redundant and, therefore, reducible. In view of Plotinus' criticism and rejection of the Aristotelian categorial set as presented in VI 1, it was necessary to emphasize the point that in VI 3 Plotinus was concerned with finding a new set of categories. Since Aristotle's categories in their ontic claims had been found inadequate to account for the Intelligible realm and had been rejected in favor of Plato's 'highest kinds', Plotinus thought it necessary to restrict his investigations to the Sensible realm in order to examine the applicability of the Aristotelian scheme to the sensible cosmos (*kosmos aisthētos*). Because of this restriction, Plotinus also thought that one should not speak of 'genera of Being' but rather of so-called 'genera' or categories of Becoming in view of the all-important Platonic and Neoplatonic ontological distinction between the Sensible cosmos and the Intelligible cosmos. The dangers of homonymy are always present in Plotinus' mind and this explains a great deal of both the terminology he uses and the criticism he advances against his predecessors. As revealed in the preceding discussion and analysis, Plotinus' views can be summarized as follows:

1) Given their ontological inadequacy, the applicability of Aristotle's set of categories must be restricted to the realm of Becoming. But even within this realm, the Aristotelian number of ten categories is too large compared to the five genera which Plotinus found sufficient to account for the realm of Being.

2) Plotinus recommends a drastic reduction of Aristotle's categories which amounts to fifty percent, and justifies it on the grounds that the omitted categories are redundant and reducible, or that they are more specific than general, or that they lack the required unity and simplicity. Thus six Aristotelian categories are absent from the Plotinian set, because they fail to meet these criteria.

3) Even those of Aristotle's categories which can pass the Plotinian tests of generality, unity, simplicity, and irreducibility must be modified before they can be accepted as 'genera' of Becoming in the Plotinian sense of the term. The specific ways of such modifications and Plotinus' arguments to support them we have seen in our discussion above in detail.

4) Of the five categories for the Sensible world to be found in Plotinus' list four correspond, at least in name, to Aristotle's categories of Substance, Quantity, Quality, and Relation. The fifth Plotinian category, Motion, which substitutes for Aristotle's categories of Action and Passion, has certainly a Platonic origin, since it is found also in the list of Plato's 'highest kinds'.

5) In some sense, then, the Plotinian categorial scheme comprises elements borrowed from Plato and Aristotle. It was left to Porphyry to effectively continue and deepen this process of reconciling the two philosophies, so that he can be rightly considered as the originator of an Aristotelian Neoplatonic tradition regarding Aristotle's doctrine of the categories.

6) The important point to keep in mind is that Plotinus remained to the end anti-Aristotelian regarding the doctrine of the categories, in spite of all the borrowings and similarities in terminology. Since he could not accept Aristotle's categories in their ontological claims, and since he had to restrict their application to the realm of Becoming, it was inevitable that the function of Plotinus' new categories would be formalistic and nominalistic, as has been observed."

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# NOTES

1. For a more extensive discussion of the issues addressed in this essay, see my *Aristotle's Categories and Porphyry*, *Philosophia Antiqua* 48 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988).
2. I have discussed this problem in "Plotinus' Anti-Gnostic Polemic," *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, eds. R. Wallis and J. Bregman (Albany: ISNS & SUNY Press, 1992), 111-128.
3. In all probability, Plotinus' Gnostic opponents were Christians. However, for the Neoplatonists of that time, both movements, Gnosticism and Christianity, were considered as barbaric in spirit, that is, non-Hellenic. (See my "Plotinus' Anti-Gnostic Polemic.")
4. The expression used by Plotinus is *kosmos noēas*.
5. The division of the treatise into three parts is probably due to Porphyry's editorial intervention to reach the desired number, 54 (i.e. 6 x 9).
6. Especially, 254a-256e.
7. Enneads VI.2.1, 19-20: MacKenna's translation, which I shall follow throughout unless stated otherwise.
8. In Plotinus' view, the expression 'genera of Being' can be properly used only in reference to *kosmos noēas*. As for the so-called 'genera' of Becoming, they should be termed 'categories' because they lack real generic power and unity. On this point, see VI.1.5, 22-26; VI.1.9, 27-30; and VI.1.10, 40-42.
9. The exception is Motion (*kinēsis*), which is not a category for Aristotle.
10. *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (New York: Longmans, 1948), 194.
11. It has been reported that Porphyry was the author of two commentaries on the *Categories*: see Simplicius, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* VIII, ed. C. Kalbfleisch (Berlin, 1907), 1-2.
12. For Aristotle's conception of homonymy, or rather *homōnymia ontā*, see the opening paragraph of the *Categories*.
13. With regard to simplicity and unity the three *Hypostaseis* are characterized as follows:
  - a. The One as *pantelōs hen* (Absolute Unity) (VI.2.9, 30) and *adiaphoron on* (Undifferentiated Being) (VI.2.9, 9).
  - b. The *Nous* as to *ek pantōn* (Unity in Plurality) (VI.2.19, 9) and *holon hen* (Total Unity) (VI.2.6, 16).
  - c. The Soul as *polla kai hen* (one and many) (VI.2.4, 31-32).
14. That is the reason why they lack the unity which a genus of Being must possess.
15. Plotinus occasionally refers to this entity as *syntheton* or *synamphoteron*—meaning that which is made up of two entities, Matter and Form.
16. That is to say, the Form of a human being.
17. *Categories* 3a21-27.
18. *Categories* 1b3-8.



19. I have dealt with the problem of essential and accidental predication and its role in determining the nature of Aristotle's four predicables in "Aristotle's Theory of Predicables and Porphyry's *Isagoge*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23 (1985), 15–35.
20. This Plotinian doctrine is in sharp contrast to Aristotle's doctrine that *ousia* is not dependent. In *Metaphysics* he states: "Of the other categories none can exist independently but only substance" (1028a35–35). Also *Categories* 2a34–35.
21. E. G. W. Leszl uses the expression 'focality of meaning' in *Logic and Metaphysics in Aristotle* (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1970), 99. Aristotle's expression for this is *pro hen legomenon*.
22. In VI.3.8, 19–20, we are told that the sensible substance is *symphorēsis tis poioteōn kai hylēs* (a concrescence of matter and qualities: translation mine).
23. *Isagoge*, 4 (21–25).
24. *Categories* 2a11–18.
25. Commentary to the *Categories*, 91 (4–27).
26. In this way homonymy, which was used by Aristotle for cases such as a living human being and its portrait, is extended by Plotinus so as to cover the whole Sensible universe.
27. The question of self-predication of the Forms in the *Enneads* has been ably discussed by J. Rist in *Eros and Psyche* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 59–61.
28. *Categories* 5b11 ff: 'a quantity has no contrary.'
29. The same examples of 'few and many' have been used by Aristotle, *Categories* 5b.
30. According to Aristotle, "it is most of all with regard to place that there seems to be contrariety of a quantity" (*Categories* 6a11–12). See also Porphyry's *Commentary*, 107–108.
31. It may be noted here that geometrical figures (*schemata*) were considered as a kind of quality by Aristotle: *Categories* 10a11–15.
32. *Categories* 11a15–19.
33. *Categories* 3b10–23.
34. *Metaphysics* 1029b13, 20, 27; 1031b9; 1032b14; 1035b16.
35. For Aristotle, individuals admit the definition of their species (*Categories* 2a19–34).
36. On this see J. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 86–87.
37. *Hypographe* is used by Porphyry and other commentators to give a description of concepts, like the highest genera, which cannot be defined by genus and differentia.
38. *Categories*, chapter 8.

39. In *Metaphysics* (1061a12) Aristotle identified contrarities with 'the first differences of being' (*protas diaphoras tou ontos*). Also, *Categories* 6a17–18.
40. *Categories* 11b38–12a25.
41. In *Physics* 18b19 and *Metaphysics* 1065b14, Aristotle uses *kinēsis* and *metabole* as synonyms.
42. This remark echoes the *Sophist* 247e, where Plato states: "I am proposing as a mark to distinguish real things that they are nothing but power."
43. *Physics* 201a11: *he tou dynamei ontos entelecheia*.
44. A comparative study of Plotinus' theory of Motion and Einstein's theory of Relativity should be interesting.
45. Porphyry's *Commentary*, 140–141.
46. See, for instance, *Ennead* VI.3.3, 30–32.
47. On this distinction, see J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 8.
48. C. Ruten, *Les catégories du monde sensible dans les 'Enneades' de Plotin* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961), especially 48–56 & 112–115.

# SYMPATHY: STOIC MATERIALISM AND THE PLATONIC SOUL

Gary M. Gurtler

Sympathy holds a unique place in Plotinus' philosophy of nature. It seems, on the one hand, to be simply a characterization of the organic unity of the physical cosmos. From this point of view, sympathy becomes the explanatory key for prayer, magic and divination as diverse ways in which parts of the cosmos influence and interact with one another.<sup>1</sup> But, on the other hand, this organic unity is essential for Plotinus' thematization of sensation and perception. Thus sympathy also has a role in Plotinus' anthropology, playing the objective correlate to the subjective unity of consciousness, signified by the term *synaisthesis* ('consciousness'). Both of these terms derive from Stoic sources and both require appropriate dematerialization to fit the overall Platonic character of his thought, but in each case the appropriate dematerialization is close to being opposite. *Synaisthesis* is almost totally dematerialized and, consequently, its elaborate structure can be applied to any level in the hierarchy of reality, whereas sympathy needs only the bare minimum of dematerialization for its function in the sensible world.<sup>2</sup>

Using these two terms, sympathy (*sympatheia*) and consciousness (*synaisthesis*), moreover, Plotinus is able to construct a comprehensive account of nature and experience. This account is comprehensive in a new and original way. It attempts to combine the work of Plato and Aristotle, where the internal operations of the soul are analyzed, with the Stoic emphasis on the necessary organic unity of the cosmos as the external basis for perceptual awareness of any kind. It, thus, addresses simultaneously the two opposite poles of experience: the unity of the external world and the unity of the internal states of awareness or knowing.

It is part of Plotinus' genius to see these two aspects of experience and, in addition, to construct a theory that will handle both of them adequately.<sup>3</sup> In articulating the unity of a subject's interior cognitive states,

for example, he faces the problem of other minds with a directness that disappeared in much of classical modern thought, only to be labored over anew by contemporary thinkers. It is not enough to unify the experiences of one mind alone, but the unity must include all other minds, without at the same time sacrificing the integrity of individual experience. From the side of the object, there is a similar bifocal character. Thus, it is not enough to posit a multitude of independent external objects that can be sensed and known, but this multiplicity of objects must already form a unity before sensation or knowledge can take place. Mere physical juxtaposition is not sufficient to explain sensation or perception, but only the cosmic unity established through the analysis of sympathy.

The elaboration of sympathy, finally, shows Plotinus' method of philosophizing, borrowing from the major traditions of Greek philosophy, but making the changes and adaptations necessary for the consistency of his own system. In this instance, the Stoic term, *sympathy* fills out the Platonic notion that the universe is a single living organism (*Timaeus* 30d3–31a1). The change is simple but radical: Stoic materialism must be replaced with the immateriality of the Platonic soul. Sympathy, like *synaisthesis*, is thus rooted in the soul, but the difference is that the relevant soul for sympathy is the world soul and not the individual soul at the center of human consciousness. With this accomplished, Plotinus can adapt the Stoic analysis of sympathy to explain the elusive Platonic characterization of the universe as a single living thing.

## 1. Against Materialism

Four treatises in Plotinus' first period (A.D. 253–263), use sympathy in two major contexts: the inadequacy of materialism to explain the sympathy within or between beings and the corresponding reduction of sympathy to the soul. Finally, a unique usage of sympathy is broached in two treatises, I.2[19] and VI.4[22], overlapping the first and second of Plotinus' literary periods and showing a continuity of issues arising in different contexts. The problem giving rise to this usage is the problem of evil, a difficult point in relating a Platonic soul to the material world.

### 1.1 Soul as Principle of Unity

The first series of treatises to be analyzed come from the very first years of Plotinus' writing, A.D. 254–258, with their focus primarily on the relation of soul and body and secondarily on the interrelation of bodies in the cosmos. Thus, the treatise, 'On the Immortality of the Soul' (IV.7[2]), is a scholastic defense of the Platonic doctrine of the soul's nature and immortality, arguing against the materialistic views of the Epicureans and Stoics as well as the non-materialistic, but still objectionable, views of the Pythagoreans (the soul as a harmony) and the Peripatetics (the soul as entelechy). In the subsequent treatise, 'On Destiny' (III.1[3]), Plotinus shifts to a defense of Platonic causation, with the freedom and integrity of the soul opposed to the determinism of the astrologers and their materialistic allies, the Stoics and Epicureans.

The treatise, 'On the Essence of the Soul' (IV.2[4]), returns to the problem of the nature of the soul and its relation to bodies by introducing the scheme of the indivisible and divisible from *Timaeus* 35a1–4. As applied to the dualism of soul and body, this yields a fourfold structure, with its three higher elements presaging the structure of unity that emerges with more and more clarity in later works. The last treatise in this section, 'If All Souls Are One' (IV.9[8]), in fact, summarizes these earlier discussions on the nature of the soul and points forward, as Armstrong (IV, 427) notes, to the richly complex analyses in VI.4 & 5[22 & 23] and IV.3[27].1–8. Igal, for his part, maintains that this treatise presents the first hesitant attempt to distinguish individual souls and the world soul from the Hypostasis Soul as Plotinus gropes for a way to express adequately the unity and individuality of souls (III–IV, 545–548).

In these discussions of soul, Plotinus gradually unfolds the structure and meaning of sympathy. In IV.7[2], the passage containing sympathy argues against the atomism of the Epicureans.

But if someone says that it is not so, but that atoms or things without parts make the soul when they come together by unity and community of feeling [*homopatheia*], he could be refuted by their [mere] juxtaposition, and that not a complete one, since nothing which is one and united with itself in community of feeling [*sympathous*] can come from bodies which are without feeling [*apathon*] and unable to be united, but soul is united with itself in community of feeling [*sympathes*]. But no body or magnitude could be produced from partless constituents. (IV.7.3, 1–6: Armstrong translation)

Plotinus, in his usual fashion, is using the same argument to cover two points: Epicurean atomism and Stoic materialism. With a twinge of irony, he uses Stoic sympathy to indicate the absurdity of the atomists and then the inconsistency of the Stoics themselves, an argument which continues to IV.7.8<sup>2</sup>. The attack on the atomists is more fundamental, since their position renders explanation and experience impossible. These Epicureans may not have been troubled by the lack of explanation, but Plotinus presses home to the actual problem of their position, that the world itself becomes absurd and impossible. Atoms, Plotinus reasons, can only be next to one another. They cannot be formed into unities with some kind of common feeling, since their juxtaposition is never complete and their interaction only mechanical.

His alternative theory derives from Plato's *Timaeus*,<sup>3</sup> with its four elements and Platonic soul. Plotinus adding only the qualification that the soul is sympathetic to itself. This extremely laconic description should not serve to discount its crucial importance in Plotinus' argument, for in establishing the connection between sympathy and the soul, he is moving toward that first level in his structure of unity, a transcendent source in relation to those things which participate in it on a lower and more multiple level. The description of the soul as self-sympathetic also removes at the same stroke Stoic materialism. Sympathy is a function of the immaterial Platonic soul, and it is, consequently, from soul that it derives its power to unify the realm of bodies.

In the present context, however, Plotinus only states his position, with its development in the later treatises to be considered actually showing some evolution in his thought as he struggles to articulate the intricate relation of soul and body. Finally, the alternative explanation of atomism in this passage (IV.7.3, 5–6), that things without parts make the (corporeal) soul when they come together, is dismissed with utmost brevity: No body or magnitude is derived from what is partless. As Bréhier points out, this is the habitual mistake of confusing the mathematical point with the physical atom (IV, 191 n2). Thus atoms are eliminated because they cannot be unified, and partless things because they add up to nothing. Soul, on the other hand, has the power to unify what is lower and more dispersed than itself, with sympathy the description of this unifying power.

When Plotinus turns to the discussion of causation in the treatise, 'On Destiny' (III.1 [3]), he maintains that the Platonic account is more complete than the Aristotelian (III.1.1 & 2) and more cogent than the various forms of determinism, whether Epicurean or specific types of Stoicism (III.1.3–7). The discussion thus hinges on the conflict between the

immateriality of the Platonic soul and various forms of materialism, or, as expressed here, between freedom and determinism. Plotinus begins by accepting the evidence of the astrologers for the causal role of the sphere of the stars and the wandering planets, disagreeing only with their interpretation.

The evidence for this is that by divination from the planets people foretell what is going to happen in the All and about each individual, what sort of fortune and, in particular, what sort of thoughts he is going to have. And they say that one can see that the other animals and plants grow and diminish under the sympathetic influence [*sympatheias*] of the planets, and are affected by them in other ways; and the regions of the earth differ from each other according to their position in relation to the All, and particularly to the sun; and not only do the other animals and plants correspond to the regions but also the forms and sizes and colours, the tempers and desires and ways of life and characters of human beings. (III.1.5, 4–15: Armstrong translation)

The neuralgic point is the attribution to the stars and planets of a direct causal role in human thought and character, undermining the nature of the Platonic soul as an independent substance. This passage thus gives the *aporia* to be resolved in the exposition of his own position in III.1.8–10.

Plotinus' solution is to situate the human soul within the context of the universe as a whole. Thus any limitation on human freedom is due to the interweaving of a multitude of cosmic factors, including the individual's own choices, and not to a denial of freedom as such. From this point of view, the sympathy mentioned in this passage is a positive contribution to his own argument. By rooting sympathy in the soul, Plotinus derails the kind of complete causality operative in the materialistic view of the astrologers, and substitutes a concatenation of causes that is ultimately traceable to soul itself. At the same time, a secondary aspect of sympathy is introduced, the interrelation of the participants within a comprehensive whole.

The last treatise in this initial trilogy, 'On the Essence of the Soul' (IV.2 [4]), is a short addition to IV.7 [2], in which Plotinus establishes a further dichotomy in being and becoming, yielding a fourfold division. Thus, in the realm of being, there is the primary indivisible, the Intellect itself, and the secondary indivisible, the soul; and in the realm of becoming, the secondary divisible, the forms immanent in bodies, and the primary divisible, sensible magnitude and mass.<sup>4</sup> Appropriately, sympathy occurs in the section dealing with the secondary indivisible, the soul.

But again, next to that altogether indivisible nature there is another reality following upon it and deriving from it, having indivisibility from that other nature, which pressing eagerly on in its progress from the one to the other nature, established itself in the middle between the two, the indivisible and primary and the 'divisible which is in the sphere of bodies', which is upon bodies: [it does] not [behave] in the same way in which every colour and quality is the same in many places and many bodily masses, but the quality or colour in one mass is totally separate from that in the other, just as much as one mass is separate from the other; and even if the magnitude is one, yet what is the same in each part has no community [with any other] leading to a common experience [*homopatheian*], because this 'same' is one thing here, another there: for what is the same is an affection [*pathema*], not the same substance. (IV.2.1, 41–53: Armstrong translation)

In the first part of the passage, the soul is established as between that which is indivisible essentially (the Intellect) and that which is divisible in the sphere of bodies (the qualities of bodies). Soul is thus between the primary indivisible and the secondary divisible, and will be characterized by attributes of both.

Unwittingly, Plotinus has stumbled on the structure of unity that will dominate his later discussions, a completely unified source, individually unified beings, and something in between which unifies these individual beings by its closeness to the source. In the present context, however, the groundwork for this structure is still being established. Central to this enterprise is the carefully wrought distinction between qualities and soul as they relate to bodies. Qualities are formally the same wherever they occur, but are numerically distinct and separate as attributes of material bodies. Soul, on the other hand, because it is a substance and not merely an affection of a body, keeps the indivisible nature it shares with the Intellect, and thus is divisible in bodies without loss of its integral unity.

The term in which this dual character of the soul comes to focus is sympathy, which describes the particular kind of unity soul gives to bodies that goes beyond mere physical juxtaposition. The present passage offers, therefore, an important clarification of the discussion in IV.7.3 by its more precise distinction between physical proximity and sympathetic unity. At the same time, it prepares for later discussions by its sharper focus on the relevant issues, the comparison of soul and qualities in relation to body and the very structure implicit in the fourfold division of being.

The next treatise, 'If All Souls Are One' (IV. 9[8]), provides an opposite perspective in Plotinus' treatment of the problem. It is not the relation of souls to bodies, but rather their relation to one another that

becomes problematic. The first passage, therefore, presents an objection to the thesis that all souls are one precisely on the basis of the unity of experience that sympathy implies.

But, before this, we must discuss whether it is correct to say that all the souls are one soul, like the soul of each individual. For it would be absurd if my soul and anyone else's were one soul: for if I perceived anything another would have to perceive it too, and if I was good he would have to be good, and if I desired anything he would have to desire it, and in general we should have to have the same experiences [*homopathein*] as each other and as the All, so that if I had an experience [*pathontos*] the All would share in the perception of it [*synaisihanesthai*]. (IV.9.1, 13–19: Armstrong translation)

Plotinus is caught here in a dialectical examination of the positions outlined in the three previous treatises. In two of them, IV.7[2] and IV.2[4], he has defined sympathy in terms of soul's unification of the body, and in the other, III.1[3], in terms of the relations of separately ensouled bodies in the universe to one another. In reversing his perspective, he introduces the problem of monism, the exact inverse of the atomism criticized so thoroughly earlier.

The *aporia* now becomes not the relation of soul and body nor the problem of freedom and determinism, but a unity that does away with any individuality at all, the unity, in other words, which was instrumental in solving his former difficulties. He begins in IV.9[8].2 by drawing out the implications of his former position for the present situation. In a reversal of the argument in IV.2.1, he now applies to souls the numerical distinction and separation that qualities had in relation to body. One might suspect inconsistency, but Plotinus is a very careful as well as subtle thinker. In the previous context, the contrast was in the relation of soul and qualities to one body, while here it is the relation of many souls to different bodies. Thus many souls, formally the same, are numerically distinct and separate, just like qualities, in relation to the many bodies they unify.

After establishing the individuality of souls in terms of their relation to individual bodies, Plotinus must reassert unity, lest his own position turn out to be as atomistic as the materialists'. He does so by examining the unity of the cosmos as a whole, the place where these individual souls take up their residency.

For we do not say, either, that it is one in such a way as to be altogether without a share in multiplicity—this must be attributed to a higher

nature—but we say that it is one and a multiplicity, and participates in ‘that nature which is divisible in the sphere of bodies’, and also in the ‘indivisible nature’, so that again it is one. But just as in me the experience of a part need not dominate the whole, but what happens to what is more essential has an influence on the part, in the same way the influences which come from the All to the individual are more obvious, and we are often affected [*homophainton*] in the same way as the whole, but it is not clear whether what comes from us contributes anything to the whole. (IV.9.2, 24–33)

Indeed, the argument deriving from facts opposed [to the assumption of complete separation of souls] asserts that we do share each other’s experiences [*sympathein*] when we suffer with others from seeing their pain and feel happy and relaxed [in their company] and are naturally drawn to love them: for without a sharing of experience there could not be love for this reason. And if spells and magical acts in general draw men together and make them share experiences [*sympatheis*] at a distance, this must be altogether due to the one soul. And a word spoken quietly acts on what is far off, and makes something separated by an enormous distance listen; from this one can learn the unity of all because their soul is one. (IV.9.3, 1–9: Armstrong translation)

Again, IV.2[4].2 provides both the principle and illustrations necessary to resolve the present difficulty. The individuality of souls embodied does not imply complete division. Each soul not only unifies a particular body, but they are all related to the cosmos as a whole. The evidence for this is the sympathy operative between the All and its parts, and among the parts themselves. Plotinus admits that this evidence does not in fact explain how all souls are one, and gives a preliminary explanation in IV.9[8].4 & 5, using the analogy of a science and its parts. His full explanation comes in the middle period of his literary output in VI.4 & 5[22 & 23] and IV.3[27].1–8.

### 1.2 *Soul in Sympathy with Body*

The two treatises in this section consider, respectively, the ascent of the soul by means of the virtues (I.2[19]), and its descent made possible by its omnipresence and immateriality (VI.4[22]). They thus deal with the relation of soul to body from different perspectives, moral and ontological. Looked at morally, the soul has the task of fleeing the body and finding its identity in the Intellect, but, looked at ontologically, the very presence of soul to body needs to be explained. Despite this divergence of purpose, there is considerable connection between the two treatises, which is not

surprising given their chronological proximity, separated only by Porphyry’s arrival in Rome and attendance at Plotinus’ lectures.

There is, for example, a distinction which is essential to both of them, the relation of image to archetype. In I.2, this appears as two types of likeness. One requires a reciprocal similarity between the objects that are alike, while the other precludes such reciprocity. The first type applies to the relation among objects from the same source, with the second, the relation of the objects to that source. Such objects are like the source, but the source is not reciprocally related to them nor even less is it like them (I.2.2, 4–10). An ontological distinction of the same sort dominates VI.4 & 5, as Plotinus tries to define the relation between the sensible and intelligible worlds. In VI.4.9, for example, he differentiates between partition and participation where the one and many are related as transcendent whole to its parts. The parts go out from it as powers, capturing the whole but as images on a lower and more multiple level. In the present context, VI.4.3 provides a similarly complex argument to show the independence of the source and the dependency of the parts.

A closer point of contact, however, is precisely in the use of sympathy, a use repeated only once outside these two treatises in II.3[52].13, 42. It seems to reverse the usual structure of sympathy by describing the soul as in sympathy with the body. In I.2[19], moreover, this particular meaning is seen in a wholly negative light.

What then do we mean when we call these other virtues ‘purifications,’ and how are we made really like by being purified? Since the soul is evil when it is thoroughly mixed with the body and shares its experiences [*homopathes*] and has all the same opinions, it will be good and possess virtue when it no longer has the same opinions but acts alone—this is intelligence and wisdom and does not share the body’s experiences [*homopathes*]—this is self-control—and is not afraid of departing from the body—this is courage—and is ruled by reason and intellect, without opposition—and this is justice. (I.2.3, 10–19: Armstrong translation)

The good and evil states of the soul are distinguished precisely in terms of whether or not the soul is in sympathy with the body, with such sympathy defining its evil state. The summary in I.2.6 makes the same point.

So the higher justice in the soul is its activity towards intellect, its self-control is its inward turning to intellect, its courage is its freedom from affections, according to the likeness of that to which it looks which is free from affections by nature: this freedom from affections in the soul comes

from virtue, to prevent its sharing in the affections [*sympathe*] of its inferior companion. (I.2.6, 23–27: Armstrong translation)

To determine Plotinus' meaning in these two passages, it is necessary to keep in mind the moral tenor of the treatise. He is not discussing the ontological value of the sensible world, but the moral attitude of the embodied soul. The soul, moreover, is not seen as the source of sympathy in the sense world, but as itself in sympathy with the body it is unifying. This is diametrically opposed to the soul's ontological function and nature, wherein the soul's substantial nature is precisely what allows it to give the body sympathetic unity. In the present case, the soul seems to be overly sympathetic, taking upon itself the very limitations that its presence in the body was designed to overcome.

The treatise on the omnipresence of the soul (VI.4[22]) returns to the more familiar ground of the soul's ontological role in the making of the cosmos. There are two instances of sympathy, the first of which reverts to Plotinus' standard usage, and consequently adds no more than confirmation of the particular kind of unity the soul imparts through sympathy.<sup>9</sup> The second instance, on the other hand, occurs in the more general context of the relation of the Intelligible world to the sensible. This dense argument seems intended in fact to justify a positive understanding of the soul's sympathy with the body, the controversial usage of the immediately preceding treatise.

(1) Are we to say the [Intelligible Being] is present itself, or, rather, that it exists independently, but powers go from it to all things and in this way it is said to be everywhere? They mean in this view that souls are like rays, so that it is set fast in itself, but they, as sent forth, become one living thing after another.

(2) Rather, on the one hand, the one over these [many], by not preserving the whole nature which is in that intelligible itself, is present here only as the power of that by which it is present; but this is not to say that that intelligible is not completely present, since even then that intelligible is not cut off from its own power, which it gave to the sensible, but rather the recipient [i.e. the sensible] is able to take only so much of all that is present.

(3) On the other hand, where all the powers are present, being itself is clearly present, though still separate. For if it became form of a particular, it would depart from being the whole and from being in itself everywhere, and would even accidentally belong to the other. But since it wishes to belong to nothing which would wish for it, as far as it is able, being draws near, not

becoming [form] of that particular (but that desires it), nor even less belonging to the other.

(4) It is then not surprising that it is in all of them in this way, because it is in no one of them so as to be dependent on them. In conclusion, to speak in this accidental fashion, that the soul is in sympathy with the body, is equally not absurd, if it were to mean that the soul is itself by itself, not becoming dependent on matter or body, but that it illuminates, as it were, the whole body throughout its whole self. (VI.4.3, 1–22)

In (1), the souls are set up as the means by which the intelligible is present in sensible things. The intelligible, however, retains its own independence, putting into ontological form the statement in I.2.2 that the source is not related to its products. In (2), the soul's power is present here in sensible objects precisely as one. This unity, however, is secondary and deficient. It is in the sensible object as spatially and temporally distinct, with only the power from the intelligible, since it cannot preserve the complete reality of the intelligible. Plotinus thus continues the distinction in IV.7.1 and IV.9 establishing the particular kind of unity the soul gives the living thing, analyzing it in terms of that power which comes from soul's relation to the Intellect.

The exact nature of the relation of soul's power to the Intellect is the major project of this treatise. There is brief indication here that the power must capture the intelligible as a whole, otherwise the intelligible would be cut off from its power. This power must, therefore, present the whole intelligible to the sensible object, with the limitation coming from the side of the sensible as recipient. All of the intelligible is present to it, but it can receive only so much. This relation of whole to part in terms of the notion of power receives more complete analysis later in the treatise at VI.4.9, where the power always brings its source as a whole, but on a lower level that is both different from and an image of the source.

In (3), the argument moves from the powers to being which is present along with them. There is thus a contrast between form and being, form becoming accidentally dependent on the particular, but being drawing near while keeping its independence, since it is the particular that desires it. The scheme in IV.2.1 can perhaps clarify Plotinus' point. Being can be identified with the secondary indivisibility of the intelligible (the soul), and form with the secondary divisibility of qualities in bodies. Soul in this scheme is able to maintain its independence and integral unity, while at the same time it is present to the divided particulars of the sense world."

After this, the conclusion (4) is rather straightforward. With these distinctions in mind, it is not at all absurd to speak accidentally of the soul as in sympathy with the body, since negatively it preserves its independence and positively it illuminates the whole body as a totality." It is clear, however, that speaking of the soul in this way is not strictly accurate. The two treatises, I.2 and VI.4, do not, therefore, advance the analysis of the structure of sympathy, but they do give an interesting insight into Plotinus' explanation of evil. It is not a problem of the soul's ontological function in producing and governing the cosmos, but of a moral attitude that reverses its proper relation to the body, becoming sympathetic to it rather than establishing sympathy within it.

## 2. The Universe and Its Parts

By the time we come to 'On the Problems of the Soul' IV.3 & 5[27 & 29], Plotinus has formulated the basic structure and the major issues concerning the operation of sympathy in his system, but has analyzed in depth only a few of them. The structure of unity establishes the soul as the immaterial source for sympathy in the cosmos. Sympathy, in turn, is the foundation for the kinds of mutual influence and interaction that manifest both the unity and diversity possible in the sensible world. The prologue of the treatise, IV.3.1-8, summarizes this material by making explicit the connection between sympathy and the structure of the Soul, the Hypostasis as transcendent source, with the world soul and individual souls as its participants.

This then is how it is with the solution of this problem, and the fact of sympathy [*sympatheias*] does not hinder our arguments: for since all souls derive from the same from which the soul of the Whole derives too, they have a community of feeling [*sympathês*]. (IV.3.8, 1-3: Armstrong translation)

As Plotinus begins this long investigation, applying his ideas to the experience and functions of the soul, he articulates the connection between his ontological analysis of the structure of the soul and the various states of awareness that characterize its operations. Sympathy is seen here in its cosmic dimension, relating individual souls to the world soul in one community of feeling. Two aspects of this community of feeling receive particular attention, the explanation of the awareness possible for the

embodied soul, and the ultimate unity of the universe as a single living being.

### 2.1 Perception: Between Soul and Object

In discussing the relation of soul to body, three factors are involved, the soul's entrance into, presence in, and departure from the body. The first factor, as we have seen, is more strictly concerned with ontological problems, the relation of whole and part, and the omnipresence and immateriality of the soul. The next two factors add problems of a quite different sort that fall under two general headings: powers of awareness, analyzed in terms of memory, imagination and perception, and affections, whether pleasure and pain, the appetites, or anger. Plotinus defines these states from two points of view, the conditions necessary for their functioning, and the need they serve for the embodied soul.

The full range of these faculties and operations is unique to the human soul alone, with plants and animals not having all of them and the stars and planets, as divine beings, not needing any of them. In articulating the reason why the heavenly bodies do not need various perceptive powers, Plotinus begins with the occasional nature of human perception itself as linked to some specific need in the conjoint of soul and body. In the case of the stars, however, this experiential reason is only incidental, since the essential reason revolves around the perfection and unity of life shared by all the heavenly bodies and manifested in the music of the spheres.

If, of course, the heavenly bodies themselves live a blessed life, and contemplate this life besides with their souls, by this direction of their souls towards one object and by the illumination which extends from them to the whole heaven-like strings on a lyre plucked harmoniously [*sympathos*] they sing a song which is naturally in tune—if this is how the whole heaven and its parts move, the heaven itself being self-directed and the different parts having the same direction in different ways (since their positions are different), then our account will be still more correct, since the life of all the heavenly bodies is still more one and uniform. (IV.4.8, 52-61: Armstrong translation)

The image of the strings of a lyre is common in this part of IV.4, capturing a movement that is at the same time a sympathetic interaction of all the parts together as well as the individual action of each by itself. This combination of perfect unity and individual freedom is pervasive, and is the motivating factor in Plotinus' adoption of sympathy in delineating the



Platonic notion of the cosmos as a single living being. As applied to the stars, it illustrates two points. Sympathy expresses the mutual perfection of the stars, allowing them to contemplate Intellect uninterruptedly, and also points to their materiality, allowing them to wield their mighty influence upon the events of earth.

Plotinus turns next from the music of the spheres to the perception of the mundane. At this point, the particular need for perception is not defined, but rather the elements necessary for the perceptual situation, preserving both the essential impassibility of the soul as well as the essentially passive character of perception itself. The solution is the introduction of the sense organ as between the soul and the sensible object and able to be in sympathy with either one.

There cannot, then, be nothing but these two things, the external object and the soul: since then the soul would not be affected; but there must be a third thing which will be affected, and this is that which will receive the form. This must be jointly subject to like affections [*sympathes kai homoiopathes*] and of one matter with the sense-object, and it must be this which is affected and the other principle [the soul] which knows; and its affection must be of such a kind that it retains something of that which produced it, but is not the same as it, but as it is between the producer of the affection and the soul, it must have an affection which lies between the sensible and the intelligible, a proportional mean somehow linking the extremes to each other, with the capacity both of receiving and of transmitting information, suitable to be assimilated to each of the extremes. (IV.4.23, 19–28: Armstrong translation)

The synthetic character of Plotinus' thought can be seen in this passage. Is Aristotle the source of this description of the role of the organ of sense, the mean between object and knower, potentially the one and a potentiality of the other? Or, Plato, with the affections of the body reminding the soul of the forms within it? Or, the Stoics, with the affections coming together in the leading principle and judged as from the external object? One does not have to choose among them, but it is important to recognize that Plotinus is not merely putting things next to one another eclectically; their mixture is complete and completely his own.<sup>17</sup>

Having used the sympathy between the object and the organ in the explanation of perception, Plotinus turns to the more complex issue of the particular kinds of influence of heavenly bodies, illustrated, for example, by petitionary prayer or the effects of magic.

Their knowledge of prayers is the result of a sort of linking and a particular disposition of things fitted into the whole, and the same applies to their accomplishment of what we pray for; and in the arts of the magicians everything is directed to this linking: this means that magic works by powers which follow on sympathetically [*sympathos*]. (IV.4.26, 1–4: Armstrong translation)

The effectiveness of both phenomena depends on the links and sympathy between parts of the universe. Prayer or magic, as a consequence, puts one in tune with the power of the stars as they form different configurations and patterns. It is, therefore, not a result of some kind of perception, but a communication of or participation in the power of beings in the universe, mediated through the cosmos as material but dependent on the nature of soul as spiritual.<sup>18</sup>

A similar argument holds for the earth itself in its providential care for the life it fosters, an essential element of its descent as soul.

For even if the earth's body is difficult to move, it is certainly not immovable. But the earth's perceptions will not be of small things, but of great ones. But why? Because it is necessary, since there is a soul in it, that it should not be unaware of the greatest movements. And there is nothing to prevent the earth having perceptions for this reason, too, that it may make good arrangements for men, as far as the affairs of men concern it—it will make good arrangements by a kind of sympathy [*sympathos*]<sup>19</sup>—and hearing those who pray to it, and answering their prayers, not in the way we do, and being subject to affection by the other senses in relation to itself. (IV.4.26, 8–17: Armstrong translation)

This last passage reiterates two points characteristic of this section. First, there is the necessary link between the presence of soul and awareness, though such awareness need not be at all like the familiar modes of human awareness. Second, and far more important for our purposes, there is the persistent theme of the unity of the cosmos, expressed through Stoic sympathy, but with its source very clearly in Plato's *Timaeus*, to which Plotinus now turns his attention.

## 2.2 Sympathy: in a Single Living Thing

The next series of passages all come from the same section, IV.4[28].30–45, which Igal describes as investigating the nature and scope of the influence of the stars (III–IV, 302). It is closely parallel to the treatise 'On Destiny' (III.1[3]), with the similar problem of freedom and

determinism, but now arising against the background of the related aporia of atomism and monism (Cf. IV.9[8]). His solution involves a thorough analysis of the phrase from the *Timaeus*, that the universe is a single living being (30d3–31a1).

First of all we must posit that this All is a 'single living being which encompasses all the living beings that are within it'; and it has one soul which extends to all its parts, in so far as each individual thing is a part of it... This one universe is all bound together in shared experience [*sympathes*] and is like one living creature, and that which is far is really near, just as, in one of the individual living things, a nail or horn or finger or one of the other limbs which is not contiguous: the intermediate part leaves a gap in the experience and is not affected, but that which is not near is affected... and since it is a living thing and all belongs to a unity nothing is so distant in space that it is not close enough to the nature of the one living thing to share experience [*to sympathein*]. (IV.4.32, 4–7, 13–17, 20–22: Armstrong translation)

As we have seen, Plotinus applied the primary aspect of his structure of unity to sympathy by showing its source in the Hypostasis Soul (IV.3.8), coming finally in this long section to apply its secondary aspect to sympathy as it occurs among participant souls. Sympathy in this secondary sense, therefore, has two foci: the comprehensive unity of the universe as a whole and, within that, the particular sympathy operative between or within its different parts.

The remainder of this section of the treatise explores the interrelation of these two foci, attempting a delicate balance between the demands of unity, which is the base of the whole structure, and the free and spontaneous movements of its parts, which is needed for their individual integrity.

But since the heavenly bodies move according to reason and their relationships within the [universal] living being vary, and then here below these events occur in our own sphere in sympathy with [*sympathon*] those above, it is reasonable to enquire whether we should assert that these earthly occurrences follow on those above by correspondence, or whether the figures have the powers which bring about what is done, and whether it is simply the figures or the figures made by particular heavenly bodies. (IV.4.34, 9–14: Armstrong translation)

Plotinus, as we have seen in III.1 and IV.9, admits the influence of the stars, but wants to determine the exact nature of this influence: Is it merely

correspondence, an external similarity, or is it causal, the figures actually having the power to bring about what happens? Assuming his earlier argument against determinism, he now argues for both aspects, making more explicit the role of the figures. Is the effect produced by a figure acting as a single entity, or as summing up all the causal factors occurring within it?

In opting for the effectiveness of all the causal factors, he undercuts the determinism of the astrologers by an argument already implicit in their own position, and substitutes an explanation linking both action and signification. A preliminary version of this argument was present in III.1[3].8–10, but Plotinus now illustrates it with the rich and varied images of this section, IV.4[28].30–45, mentioning next the image of the dance."

This argument, then, gives powers to the figures and powers to the bodies arranged: since with dancers each hand has a distinct power and so have the other limbs, but the figures also have great power, and then there is a third group of consequentially effective things, the parts of the limbs which are brought into the dance and their constituents, for instance the clenched fingers of the hand and the muscles and veins which are affected along with them [*sympathounta*]. (VI.4.34, 26–33: Armstrong translation)

In the ensemble of the dance, three elements in the configuration can be the focus of attention: the pattern of the whole dance, the movements of each dancer taken alone, and finally the gestures and movements of specific parts of the dancer's body. The dance as such depends on all three, but each element contributes both as part of the general pattern and as spontaneously moving in its own right, according to the particular sympathy operative within it. This is Plotinus' model for the living unity of the universe, a model that is taken from life itself.

The advantage of this model is that it does not reduce our experience to a formal antinomy of freedom and determinism, but substitutes a mixture of different kinds and levels of causes operating within an overall unitary scheme. It thus has, to use a modern analogy, the flexibility of Einsteinian relativity in contrast to Newtonian objectivity, of a multiplicity of possible perspectives instead of just one. In recapitulating these points, it is the sympathetic unity of the cosmos as one living being that is central for this mixture of unity and plurality.

But if we remember that we posited that the universe is a single living thing, and that since it is so it was absolutely necessary for it to have an internal

self-communication of its experiences [*sympathes*]; and if we remember further that the process of its life must be rational and all in tune [*symphonos*] with itself, and that there is nothing casual in its life but a single melody and order [*harmonia kai taxis*], and that the celestial arrangements are rational, and each individual part moves by numbers, as do the dancing parts of the living being, we must admit that both are the activity of the All, the figures in it and the parts of it which are arranged in figures,...and that this is the way the All lives. (IV.4.35, 8–17: Armstrong translation)

Plotinus begins, as he did in the image of the dance, with the universe as a whole, manifesting itself as a single living thing that is sympathetic to itself. Its life is unified, but not with a deterministic rigidity. In tune with itself, life weaves all else into a single harmony and order, whether the focus is on the whole or moves from part to part. Life fosters life, and thus neither the figures nor their parts are ultimate, but both together produce the flourishing state of the cosmos.

The last two passages in this section mention magic and prayer, both of which were also used to illustrate cosmic sympathy in IV.9[8].3 and IV.4[28].26.

But how do magic spells work? By sympathy [*sympatheia*] and by the fact that there is a natural concord [*symphonian*] of things that are alike and opposition of things that are different, and by the rich variety of the many powers which go to make up the life of the one living creature. For many things are drawn and enchanted without anyone else's magical contrivance: and the true magic is the 'Love' and also the 'Strife' in the All. And this is the primary wizard and enchanter, from observing whom men came to use his philtres and spells on each other. (IV.4.40, 1–9: Armstrong translation)

The factors he lists follow the pattern of his description of the dance, the overview in terms of sympathy, and the interplay of specific parts as alike or different. The third point about the rich variety of powers in the cosmos is, as it were, the central point of his whole investigation. He can now rob magic of its magic by making it like any other power operative in the universe that attracts or repels, merely another illustration of Empedocles' reduction of all things to the interplay of love and strife. Petitionary prayer, too, comes under the same spell of universal sympathy.

But the sun, or another heavenly body, does not hear his prayers. And that which he prays for comes about because one part is in sympathetic [*sympathous*] connection with another, just as in one tense string; for if the string is plucked at the lower end, it has a vibration at the upper. But often,

too, when one string is plucked another has a kind of sense of this by its concord [*symphonian*] and the fact that it is tuned by the same scale [*harmonia*]. But if the vibration can even pass from one lyre to another in so far as a sympathy [*to sympathes*] exists, then there is also one single harmony in the All, even if it is composed of opposites; and it is in fact composed of parts which are alike and all akin, even when they are opposites. (IV.4.41, 1–9: Armstrong translation)

The musical image implicit in the previous passage becomes explicit here with the reemergence of the lyre, in fact, a whole series of lyres. This new twist to the image allows Plotinus to use sympathy not only to illustrate the internal unity of the parts of a thing, but also the relation between separate things that are mutually adjusted.

The discussion of sympathy in IV.4[28] provides, therefore, another example of the clarification Plotinus is able to give to one of his major ideas when he deals with it in a focused and systematic way. At no point does he disagree with the earlier series of treatises, but by drawing together the various themes dealt with in piecemeal fashion and for disparate purposes, he shows more clearly the unity and consistency of his thought. Sympathy, thus, clearly manifests the unity and diversity present between the world soul and individual souls as similarly participants in the Hypostasis Soul and similarly related to the physical universe. As such, IV.4 explores in rather thorough fashion the secondary type of unity in his structural scheme. He begins with individuals and their experience, the sympathy within and between each of them, but this sympathy itself must be traced back to the sympathetic unity of the cosmos as a whole. Without cosmic sympathy, these individual parts would fall into atomistic isolation, a point reinforced in IV.5[29], which examines the necessity of sympathy for sensation.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. The Soul's Causality

No new ground is broken in this final section on sympathy, but only a very late confirmation (II.3[52]) of the anomalous use of sympathy found otherwise only in I.2[19] and IV.4[22].3, and a fascinating study of the role of sympathy in sensation (IV.5[29].1–8). In discussing sensation, Plotinus is dealing with two ostensibly parallel cases, the necessity of the organ as the medium between soul and sensible object, developed at IV.4.23–25, and that of the corresponding medium between the organ itself and the sensible object. In both cases the interests of his Platonism determine the solution, demanding the medium in the first case to preserve

the impassibility of the soul, and not demanding it in the second to accentuate the soul's essential role in grounding sensation in the sympathetic unity of the cosmos. The argument is very tightly drawn, showing Plotinus' ability to focus on a specific issue with all the resources of his system, thereby giving a concise critique of competing systems and the rich subtlety of his own.

### 3.1 Perception: Between Organ and Object

The issue was stated with deliberate precision in the previous paragraph, for it is a common interpretation that Plotinus rules out not only the necessity but even the possibility of the medium in the course of his argument. Evidence of this interpretation abounds: Bréhier's 'Notice' (IV, 57), presents the dichotomy that there either is or is not a medium; G. H. Clark, 'Plotinus' Theory of Sensation,' makes him develop a theory that "appears to be a case of transmission without a medium" (363–365). Armstrong (IV, 30) and Igal (III-IV, 305 & 453ff.) also state in their notes on the text that a medium is not necessary.\* Plotinus' actual position, however, is somewhat more nuanced. It is not so much that the medium is not a necessary condition for sensation, but that it, along with the other necessary conditions discussed in IV.4[28].23–25, is not the sufficient condition. The sufficient condition involves both *synaesthesia* (as the internal intention to look) and sympathy (as the external unity of the physical cosmos). Thus the object between functions at a maximum as a hindrance to sensation or at a minimum as somehow manifesting the sympathetic connection between the sense and its object.

Plotinus begins the discussion with explicit reference back to the comments in IV.4.23–25, where the problem of the medium was first raised.

This is why this knowledge comes through bodily organs; for through these, which are in a way naturally united to or continuous with sense-objects, the soul must somehow in some way come to a unity with the sense-objects themselves, and so a sort of common affection [*homopatheias*] with them must arise. (IV.5[59].1, 10–13: Armstrong translation)

Plotinus takes up the question postponed from IV.4.23, 42,<sup>17</sup> but moves outward from the sense organs to the objects with which they are somehow continuous, examining the other side of the organ's mediation. The distance, posited earlier as necessarily between the organ and the object,

becomes here the problem to be examined, especially in the case of sight or hearing. The distance is assumed to be some kind of body, whether air, water or some other transparent material. Air, for example, is between object and organ, and must at least in the literal sense of the Greek be the medium. The problem is whether or not this medium is affected in the act of sensation, the very distinction Witt makes between air as medium and as instrument ('Plotinus and Posidonius,' 205). The nuance might be captured in English by stating that air, while between the eye and the object, does not act as a go-between.

Following from the premise that the air is the medium, Plotinus quite logically distinguishes between two types of bodies, dense or subtle. Dense bodies block sight and are therefore eliminated from consideration. Subtle bodies, as at least not blocking sight, are then examined to determine whether or not they can in fact be an aid to sight. Plotinus addresses this in two questions which dominate the discussion in IV.5[29].1–4. Does this object between have to be affected first in order for the affection to reach the eye? If, on the other hand, the eye is immediately affected by the object, then is the object between affected differently or not at all?

Plotinus immediately relates this second question to the issue of sympathy, giving the general direction of his answer, but certainly not its final form, a fact which interpreters of this passage have invariably overlooked.

But really the discussion seems to be moving in the direction of the sympathies [*sympatheias*] we talk about. But if one thing is naturally disposed to be sympathetically [*sympathos*] affected by another because it has some kind of likeness to it, then the intermediary [*to metaxu*] between them, being unlike, would not be affected, or would not be affected in the same way. If this is so, then that which is naturally disposed to be affected would be so much more if there was nothing in between [*metaxu*] them, even if the intermediary [*to metaxu*] was of such a kind as to be affected also in some way itself. (IV.5.1, 34–40: Armstrong translation)

Plotinus' use of the plural, sympathies, seems hardly accidental, but a way of indicating the varieties of meaning established so clearly in earlier treatises, especially its immediate context in IV.4[28]. Two of these meanings are particularly relevant, the sympathy operative between or within specific parts of the cosmos and the cosmic sympathy which is their foundation.

The immediate concern is this first kind of sympathy, where the sense organ is 'to suffer sympathetically' with the object on the basis of some likeness to it. Plotinus is establishing, first, that sensation is for him to be understood as knowledge of like by like, maintaining at this juncture that the object between is not, in fact, like either of them. Consequently, it would not be affected at all, or at least not in the same way, and even if it is affected in some way, then the sense organ would be even more directly affected by the object if there were no such object in between. In either case, therefore, the object and the organ can be more directly related if there is, or perhaps could be, nothing between them. The premise of the argument remains, however, that there is in fact something between them, air, for example.

The subsequent review of previous theories concerning the relation of the eye to its object is typically brief (IV.5.2, 1–15), but does nonetheless cover the primary issues related to the discussion of each of his two questions. The first two theories, from Platonic sources, focus on the nature of light, which Plotinus will attempt to define in chapters 6 & 7. The first theory, from *Timaeus* 45b4–d3, joins the light coming from the eye with the intermediate light in the air—following Igal (III-IV, 310 & 455) rather than Armstrong (IV, 285). Plotinus is satisfied with Aristotle's objection that the alteration involved in this theory can just as easily take place in the eye alone without the intermediary (*De Anima* 418a29–b2). The other theory posits light as an efflux, needing an intermediary to keep it going in a straight line, which is again unnecessary since light is incorporeal (Cf. IV.5.6, 17–20).

The following pair of positions are both materialistic, but opposite in operation. The Stoics explain sight in terms of a resistance between the eye and the object, thus making it a material passage of the affection from the object to the eye. The Epicureans, on the other hand, positing images passing through a void, only require space to prevent an obstruction and thus would be quite happy with a theory that eliminates any need for an object between. In an exceedingly rare move, Plotinus admits favoring this Epicurean view, as if in some strange way it shares some common ground with his own position in terms of sympathy, which is the last theory in his list.

The next section, IV.5.2, 15–IV.5.4, 49, presents the thesis of sight by sympathy, and immediately puts it to the test by applying his two questions: whether the object between needs to be affected first (IV.5.2, 21–IV.5.3, 15) or the sensible object affects the eye directly with no role for the object between (IV.5.3, 15–IV.5.4, 49).

(1) But all those who say that seeing takes place by sympathy [*sympatheia*] will assert that one would see less well if there was any intermediary [*ti metaxu*], in that it would obstruct and hinder and weaken the sympathy [*sympatheian*]; but it would be more consistent to say that even that which is akin [*to syggenes*] in all circumstances weakens the sympathy, in so far as it is itself affected. Certainly, if a body continuous to the bottom is set alight by the application of fire, all the same the bottom of it will be less affected by the fire applied to it than the part before it. (IV.5.2, 15–22)

(2) But if the parts of one living being are in sympathy [*sympathe*] will they be less affected because there is something between [*metaxu*] them? Yes, perhaps they might be less affected, but the affection would be in the proportion which nature willed, and the intermediary [*to metaxu*] would prevent excess: unless what is conceded amounts to this, that the intermediary [*to metaxu*] is not affected at all. (IV.5.2, 22–26)

(3) But if sympathy [*sympathes*] depends on being one living thing, and we are affected because we are in one and belong to one, how is continuity not needed when there is perception of something far off? The answer is the continuity and the intermediary [*to metaxu*] are there because the living being must be continuous, but the affection is only incidentally of something continuous, or we shall have to say that everything is affected by everything. (IV.5.2, 26–31: Armstrong translation)

There is both a weak and a strong version of the objection that the medium, or object between, needs to be affected first (1). All would admit, he says, that any object between 'obstructs, hinders, and weakens' the sympathy, but he argues that the more logical position holds that even an intermediary that is totally akin to the organ and its object weakens the sympathy, precisely in being affected itself. He illustrates the point with the example of a continuous physical body set afire, and concludes that a material medium necessarily weakens the sympathy between the organ and its object, even though it establishes physical continuity between them. The primary target is, therefore, the Stoic explanation in terms of a materialistic transfer of the affection from the object to the eye.

Plotinus substitutes instead his own psychic explanation of sympathy, describing first an individual living being and then the cosmos itself as a unitary living being. In the case of an individual living thing (2), its parts are indeed affected less, because there are parts between them. This diversity in affection is precisely the work of nature, with the part between preventing that excess that would be destructive of some other part, or where the affection given is such that the part between is completely

unaffected—again following Igal (III–IV, 457). Perhaps an example of the prevention of excess is the use of the hand to shield eye or ear from excessive light or noise, while the unaffected medium might be involved when reading a book or hearing a discourse conveys information but produces no affection in the body.

In turning to the universal living being (3), more importantly, Plotinus begins to define the nature and scope of sympathy, especially its difference from continuity and the object between establishing it. These two factors relate to the physical aspect of the universe, precluding a void and establishing some minimal physical connection between the distant parts of the universe. It is clear from this that his affinity with the Epicureans is merely incidental, with the only similarity a common immaterial operation, which is utter lack in the case of the void but the presence of soul in the case of sympathy. The physical continuity and the medium, furthermore, are incidentally, but necessarily, related to the affections that constitute sensation, which is precisely the affection of an embodied soul. Plotinus will clarify this complex interrelation when he explores in greater detail the relation of this continuity and medium to the sympathetic unity of the universe as a whole (IV.5.3, 15–21).

The conclusion from the argument so far is that the object between is not needed, and thus those who posit such an object for sight must show the need by some other method (IV.5.2, 34–35). He applies the conclusion himself to the two positions, Stoic and Platonic, that seemed to entail the medium in his cursory list at the beginning of the chapter. Stoic resistance, for example, seems to be explained here (IV.5.2, 35–48) in terms of the theory of reciprocal thrusts (*antiperistaseis*) as it applies to different bodies in the universe: bodies falling, fire rising, trees growing upward, and ourselves moving along. In all these instances, air is parted by bodies without being affected by them, with the corollary that air would need to part even less to allow for the passage of the forms which come to sight. In rare agreement with the Epicureans, Plotinus maintains that such forms do not pass through air as if through a stream, and this corroborates his conclusion that there is no need for the air to be affected first (IV.5.2, 49–50).

He next applies this conclusion to the Platonic thesis (IV.5.2, 50–IV.5.3, 15). Does the air between the object and the eye need to be illuminated? If the answer is yes, then seeing would be like being warmed. It would not be a perception of a distant object (Cf. II.8[35] & IV.6[41]), but of the immediately affected air before the eye, just as the body is warmed by the warm air next to it, and not directly by the more distant

fire. That is, sight would take place by contact. But sight, as Aristotle pointed out (*De anima* 419a12–13), cannot take place by contact. Plotinus gives factual evidence to bolster his case: We see distant objects in daylight, but just as clearly we see, in the darkness of night, fires and beacons, and even distant stars. What is essential is that the object be in the line of sight, confirming once again the conclusion that the intermediary does not need to be affected.

This leads directly to the second question: that sight, in fact, takes place without an object between. Igal sees it clearly as a second objection, needing to be discussed and resolved. It thus cannot be, as it stands, the conclusion of the argument. Plotinus is rarely that simple. His position lies somewhere in between the alternatives posed by the two questions, revealed slowly in their dialectical interplay.

But one might pause to consider this further point, whether it is not possible to see in the absence of an intermediary [*to metaxu*], not because there is no intermediary [*meden metaxu*] but because the sympathy [*sympatheia*] of the living being with itself and of its parts with each other, which depends on being one thing, will be done away with. For it looks as if any kind of perception depends on this, that the living being—this All—is in sympathy [*sympathes*] with itself. For if this were not so, how would one thing share in the power of another, and especially in power from a distance? (IV.5.3, 15–21: Armstrong translation)

Oddly enough this passage, far from eliminating the medium, sees it as a necessary manifestation of sympathy. What, however, can be the connection between sympathy and the medium? What can Plotinus mean?

The solution is readily available if the present context is compared to IV.4.23–25 concerning the necessary conditions for sensation. They may all be there, but without the soul's intention to look, there will be no sensation. The present case focuses similarly on the relation between the necessary and sufficient conditions for sight. The necessary conditions are the physical, and therefore minimal, manifestations of sympathy, precisely the continuity and the medium that his previous argument seems to eliminate, in the view of some interpreters. Consequently, he argues that the absence of these necessary conditions is actually the more radical problem of the absence of sympathy as the sufficient condition. Plotinus' logic is crystal clear, making allowances for the inversion caused by focusing on the external conditions for sight rather than its internal conditions within the sensitive being. Without sympathy, there simply cannot be physical continuity or a medium.

The inevitable conclusion is, paradoxically, that the medium is necessary, but not for the reasons its proponents had given. Plotinus' real difficulty is with a solely materialistic transmission of the affection. This is the point of the first section (IV.5.2, 15–IV.5.3, 15), and the second merely reinforces it (IV.5.3, 15–IV.5.4, 49). He begins again with an allusion to Stoic materialism. If the air in between were affected, it would have to be corporeally, the result of some kind of impression. Such an impression could, however, capture only a partial view of the object. He counters with this argument:

But as it is, the whole object is seen, and all those who are in the air see it, from the front and sideways, from far and near, and from the back, as long as their line of sight is not blocked; so that each part of the air contains the whole seen object, the face for instance; but this is not a bodily affection, but is brought about by the higher necessities of the soul belonging to a single living being in sympathy [*sympathous*] with itself. (IV.5.3, 32–38: Armstrong translation)

There is an uncannily modern ring to this passage. It would be right at home in Twentieth Century phenomenology, for the object is seen as an integral whole. In perceiving it, one is aware at the same time that it can be perceived from any perspective. Such an awareness, Plotinus reasons, is not reducible to a bodily affection, but belongs to the soul precisely as self-sympathetic, that is, as itself a living whole.

The remainder of the treatise, IV.5.4–8, contains a mixture of positions—Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic—held together by Plotinus' gradual explication of light in terms of his theory of two acts, in which light becomes structurally identical to soul. He begins with a parallel application of the present discussion about the object directly affecting the eye to the Platonic thesis of the mixture of the eye's own light with the light between it and the object, concluding that this intermediate light is needed for seeing at a distance, but remains itself unaffected (IV.5.4, 1–10). The relation of this intermediate light to air is mentioned, but its treatment is briefly postponed to consider an entirely new alternative, that sight is a movement out of the soul to the object, with the object inert and inactive. It comes in two forms, one which seems traceable to Galen (Igal, III–IV, 461 n23) and the other to the Stoics. Galen's version holds the connecting light to be ensouled as the soul moves through it to the object (IV.5.4, 10–38), whereas the Stoics have a materialistic interpretation, with the soul using the light like a stick to reach the object (IV.5.4, 38–46). The

difficulty is the same for both: Seeing is reduced to a species of touch and the receptivity of sensation becomes inexplicable.

In IV.5.5–7, Plotinus finally considers the role of the intermediate air. In the case of hearing, he quickly establishes the same position as for sight: The intermediate air is affected only incidentally, with the colliding bodies a sufficient explanation for the vibrations of sound (IV.5.5). His argument in the case of light is against the Aristotelian position that light is an actuality of a transparent body (IV.5.6, 1–7), or alternatively is a modification of air (IV.5.6, 34–40). He reasons that light depends for its existence, not on air, but on fiery bodies. It is consequently not a quality of air, but an activity coming from such a body—a form of energy in modern parlance. It is therefore a second act, extrinsic to its source and incorporeal, in the same way that life is an activity of soul (IV.5.6, 7–34). As a secondary act, light never perishes, but color, its presence in the corporeal, can disappear, just as the trace of soul in matter can depart, not indicating that light or life perish, but that it is no longer present since nothing is there to pick up its image (IV.5.7, 1–49).

The parallel of light and life only emphasizes the centrality of the soul in Plotinus' account of sensation, expressing in visible form, as it were, the unity of the sense world as derivative of soul. The final passages using sympathy, in IV.5.8, capture this unity of the cosmos in a vivid image that illustrates the necessity of sympathy for any kind of sensory experience.

But if there was a body outside the heavenly sphere and there was an eye looking from our universe with nothing to obstruct its vision, would it see what would not be sympathetically [*sympathes*] connected with our universe, if as things are sympathetic [*sympathes*] connection is due to the nature of a single living being? Now if sympathetic [*sympathes*] connection is due to the fact that perceiving subjects and perceived objects belong to a single living thing, there would be no perception, unless this outside body was part of our [universal] living being: for if it was, there would perhaps be perceptions of it. (IV.5.8, 1–7: Armstrong translation)

As Igal mentions (III–IV, 471 n50), Plotinus is positing a universe numerically distinct from our own, and as such outside the sympathetic unity requisite for sensation. He then gives it all the qualities and characteristics that would make it perceivable, making it seem absurd to claim that our senses fail to perceive their proper objects when they are present. Determining where the absurdity lies is a problem, moreover, that shows the intimate connection of this section on sight to the argument of

the whole treatise, IV.3–5[27–29], that the soul is the principle of both the unity and plurality of the cosmos.

It is that here, being in one and belonging to one, we act and are affected in this way. We must therefore investigate whether this is the reason why we do so. And if this has already been sufficiently shown, our demonstration is complete; if not, we must demonstrate it by other arguments as well. Now it is clear that a living being is sympathetically [*sympathes*] aware of itself; and if the universe is a living being, this is enough; so that the parts also will be sympathetically aware of each other in that they belong to one living being. But suppose someone were to say that this [sympathy] is because of their likeness? (IV.5.8, 14–19: Armstrong translation)

The absurdity comes, not surprisingly, in the conflict between the twin assumptions of Plotinus' theory of sensation. Sympathy precludes any awareness of that other world, but the principle of knowing like by like demands that we know it. The solution can come only by determining which one is prior, and Plotinus does this by tracing all likeness and kinship to the one soul, the source of all, as demonstrated ontologically in IV.3[27].1–5."

### 3.2 *The Influence of the Stars*

The late treatise, 'On Whether the Stars are Causes' (II.3[52]), presents a final consideration of problems going back to his earliest writings, the treatise 'On Destiny' (III.1[3].5 & 6), and examined at great length during his middle period in IV.4[28].30–45 on the nature and scope of the influence of heavenly bodies. In both of these earlier treatises, sympathy plays a role in Plotinus' explanation of stellar influence, an explanation designed to counteract the determinism of the astrologists by situating the causality of the stars within the context of a wider interweaving of causal factors in the single unity of the universe as a whole. The first occurrence of sympathy in the present treatise, despite its textual dislocation," continues the same line of argumentation, refuting the theories of the astrologers, while admitting their evidence (II.3.2–6).

So, too, in the complete whole [of the universe] there is need of some organ like the gall and of some other directed to producing sweetness; others are the eyes of the universe; all are united in feeling [*sympathe*] by their correspondence. So the universe is one and a single melody. (II.3.12, 29–32: Armstrong translation but reading *analogo* [line 31] after E. Orh.)

Igal mentions that this is very much a capsule summary of the positions spelled out more fully in IV.4.28 & 32 (I-II, 395 n76 & n77), indicating that the general nature of sympathy remains consistent throughout Plotinus' writings.

Its second occurrence in this late treatise, however, is more significant, since it reiterates the usage and problem underlying the discussions in two other treatises, I.2[19].3 & 6 and VI.4[22].3. In only these three treatises does Plotinus speak of the soul's sympathy with the body, and only in I.2 and II.3 is sympathy seen negatively. The present context, in addition, emphasizes the dualism in the whole sensible order, affecting human nature and the entire cosmos, even the heavenly bodies. The soul gives rational order to the universe as a whole, but the parts of the universe share in that rationality by degree, as inanimate instruments or living beings with a variety of levels of contribution, from mere locomotion to rational thought. It is through this diversity of activity that Plotinus seeks to explain the origin and status of evil.

So then living things are all conformed to the complete pattern of the All, both the ones in heaven and the rest which have been made parts in the whole, and no part, even if it is a great one, has power to bring about a complete change in the patterns or the things which happen according to the patterns. It can bring about a non-essential alteration in either direction, for better or worse, but it cannot make anything abandon its own proper nature. It makes a thing worse either by giving it bodily infirmity, or by becoming responsible for an incidental badness in the soul which is in sympathy [*sympatheî*] with it and was given out by it into the lower region, or, when the body is badly put together, it may by means of it hinder the activity of the soul which is directed towards it: as when a lyre is not so tuned that it takes the melody [*harmonias*] accurately so as to make its sounds musical. (II.3.13, 34–47: Armstrong translation)

There are links here with the complex theodicy operative in IV.4.30–45, including the simile of the lyre, but that is only the context for the specific contribution of this passage in determining what Plotinus means by evil, especially moral evil.

To begin with, evil falls into the category of the non-essential change that any part of the universe can introduce, proportionate to its size and relation to soul. Such change can be either for better or worse, with change for the worse receiving more detailed analysis. Two examples of this kind of change concern physical evil, coming from bodily weakness or a situation where the body is described as badly put together, and thus



a block to some activity of the soul. In either case, the problem has a more essential relation to the physical capacities of the composite, and does not affect the integrity of the soul.

The significant alternative is where the body is responsible for some accidental weakness, *phaulotetos*, in the soul, because of the soul's sympathy with it. This confirms the point made in I.2.3 & 6 that it is the soul's over-involvement with the body that brings about an evil that in some sense involves a moral dimension. Plotinus adds that the soul is somehow given over to the lower by the body, with reference perhaps to the theory of reincarnation recounted in Plato's *Republic* X. This specifies the weakness as the soul's sinking lower into the sense world, a position congruent with the analysis of evil in Rist, 'Plotinus and Augustine on Evil' (Atti del Convegno internazionale sul tema: *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*, Roma, 1970; Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1974). There is an ambiguity here that Rist expresses well, that "the weakness of the human soul which is moral evil may at times be both an effect of matter and in some way prior" to matter as its cause (502). We find it here in the direct statement that the body is cause of the weakness of the soul, but that it acts as such a cause because of the soul's sympathy with it. A further ambiguity is introduced by describing this weakness of the soul as accidental, assuming strangely, as Rist also notes, that the soul can be affected somehow by the body. It seems that Plotinus tries to protect the impassivity of the soul by making the evil only accidental, but in so doing makes the soul more directly a cause of the evil. Even at the very end of his life, there is no movement beyond this radical ambiguity in his theory of evil and its relation to the soul.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this analysis of sympathy, Plotinus shows remarkable consistency and ingenuity in the application of the basic structure of unity. The treatises of the first period, in fact, give some indication of the particular problems that served to refine Plotinus' thought to the point where the threefold structure of unity emerged with utmost clarity and could then be utilized in the lengthy treatises of the middle period. The first problem is the Platonic dualism articulated in IV.7[2] and IV.2[4]. In trying to delineate the connection between the sensible and Intelligible worlds, Plotinus proposes a fourfold division that contains the structure of unity implicitly in its three highest factors. In IV.9[8], the structure of unity has

its first hesitant debut in the distinction of the Hypostasis Soul and its participants, world soul and individual souls. This treatise also brings into play the countervailing problem of monism, thus forcing Plotinus to steer the narrow course between atomism and monism.

The results of this tension come to expression in VI.4 & 5[22 & 23], a dense reexamination of the relation of sensible and intelligible in terms of the structure of unity. This is now firmly linked with the Platonic doctrine of participation and Aristotle's theory of act and potency, all transformed by his own keen sense of unity as immateriality. With these ontological distinctions in place, Plotinus can turn to an examination of soul in IV.3-5[27-29], its powers and affections. In terms of the discussion of sympathy, the problem of dualism appears in two forms, the relation of the individual soul to sensible objects through the medium of the senses, and the relation of the sense organs to their proper objects where there is a distance between them.

The first area, the soul in relation to the sense world, takes up the bulk of IV.4[28], with the possible interrelations between the parts of the sense world, whether perception, divination or magic, explainable in terms of the unity of the cosmos as a single living thing, combining Stoic sympathy with Plato's *Timaeus*. This emphasizes the two secondary levels in the structure of unity, that sympathy firmly rooted in the world soul as source and principle of the overall unity present in the physical universe, and of the final type of sympathy in the relation of one part of the universe to another. This last and most difficult aspect of sympathy receives thorough examination in IV.5[29] on the problem of sight. Here Plotinus sees the very material continuity of the universe, which functions under certain conditions as the medium between organ and object, as a manifestation of sympathy itself. Sympathy, as a power of the soul, gives the physical cosmos even that physical unity it is capable of having, showing how completely he has transformed this Stoic term.

One other problem occurs in the course of Plotinus' discussion of sympathy, the moral dimension of human life. It appears in III.1[3] as the problem of freedom and determinism, which Plotinus consistently solves by a careful exposition of the full range of causal factors involved in cosmic events and by a careful distinction of the different phases of the human soul. In I.2[19] and II.3[52], however, he addresses the more difficult issue of moral evil and its relation to the soul. His position is clearly subtle, but not enough to eradicate the ambiguity that moral evil presents to a consistently Platonic psychology. The ambiguity can be seen precisely in his use of the term *sympathy*, which ordinarily denotes the

unifying activity of the soul in relation to the material world, allowing the parts of the world to have their own organic unity and, on that basis, to relate to one another. Sympathy in this respect is a decidedly positive phenomenon, manifesting the goodness and unity at the heart of Plotinian reality.

It is therefore all the more striking that sympathy should have some role in Plotinus' attempts to explain the problem of evil. The soul's sympathy with the body, thus, opens the door to moral evil and the soul's entrapment in the sense world. This usage is not only strange because of its association with evil, but this very association seems based on a reversal in the meaning of the term. In no other context does Plotinus claim that the soul, or any higher reality, is in sympathy with a lower. In fact, it is used precisely of the lower in relation to the higher, allowing it to be more unified and thus more in tune with its source. It must be admitted, however, that there is some basis for this usage in Plotinus' theory. He has defined *sympathy* from the very beginning as based in the soul and as expressing its relation to the material world.

The reversal in direction and the association with evil are, nevertheless, problematic, for they introduce an ambiguity in the soul itself. The dilemma is simple. Plotinus has been at pains, especially in controversy with the Gnostics, to show that the material world is not evil, and has thus tended to describe it as the occasion rather than cause of evil. These passages involving sympathy are fully in that tradition. This has the unwanted effect, however, of making the soul itself the implicit cause of evil, or perhaps, more accurately, some kind of co-cause. The ambiguity produced is both unavoidable, given the restrictions of his system, and subtle, given the extraordinarily delicate distinctions Plotinus is trying to make.

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## NOTES

1. Reprinted with modification, by permission, from: Gary M. Gurtler, S.J., *Plotinus: The Experience of Unity*, Series 5, volume 43 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing © 1988), 91–137.
2. It is therefore not surprising that of its forty-five occurrences, twenty-seven of them can be found in IV 3–5[27–29], the treatise "On the Problems of the Soul," where the relation of soul to cosmos is examined at considerable length, especially in its last section, IV.4.18–IV.8. Graeser—*Plotinus and the Stoics* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 68—emphasizes this connection between sympathy and cosmology in Plotinus.

3. The restriction of sympathy to the physical cosmos is pointed out clearly in my article, "Sympathy in Plotinus," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1984), 395–406, especially in opposition to K. Keilung, *Über die Sympathie bei Plotin* (Dissertation: Jena, 1916), who misconstrues the two aspects of sympathy: the harmony of the physical cosmos and the various types of perception or influence based on it. Keilung seems to take these latter as establishing a connection between the sensible and intelligible worlds, but in fact they only spell out the cosmic relation between the heavens and the earth.
4. In my article, "Sympathy in Plotinus," there is a preliminary attempt to articulate the connection between consciousness and sympathy, especially in terms of reconciling unity and individuality (403–406), but the intricacy of this connection becomes even clearer in terms of the structure of unity discerned in my book, *Plotinus: The Experience of Unity* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988). That structure presents a combination of vertical and horizontal dimensions that explains how sympathy is rooted in the transcendent world soul and how it is manifest on the same horizontal level in different ways, both for nature in general and human experience in particular.
5. Graeser, *Plotinus and the Stoics*, indicates the blending of Stoic and Platonic elements in the Neoplatonic use of sympathy in three areas (69–72): cosmic sympathy and friendship (*Laws* 903b), the providential governance of the universe (*Phaedrus* 246b and *Timaeus* 30–31), and the influence of the heavens on the earth, more eminently Stoic.
6. Graeser, *Plotinus and the Stoics*, supports the idea that Plotinus is attacking the atomists from a Stoic point of view, but denies the possibility that there is also an implicit attack on the Stoics themselves in terms of soul as source of sympathy (77). It should be noted that sympathy is used to translate two Greek words: *sympatheia* and *homopatheia*, both of which have a similar meaning and function.
7. Both Bréhier, *Plotin "Ennéades"* (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1924–1938) IV, 179–188, and Igal, *Plotino: "Enéadas" I–II, III–IV* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1982, 1985) III–IV, 281–283, point out that IV.7 uses the method of the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus* in showing the soul to be a transcendent substance, starting from Plato's ontological dualism. Later, in IV.2, Plotinus recapitulates the argument of this treatise and introduces a new method based on *Timaeus* 35a1–4, yielding a four-fold division: the primary divisible and indivisible, and the secondary divisible and indivisible. In the context of this argument against the Epicureans, however, other aspects of the *Timaeus*—the elements and the demiurge—are more clearly the background. P. Friedländer, *Plato: An Introduction* (Princeton University Press, 1969), 246–260, discusses these aspects of the *Timaeus* in relation to modern atomic physics. His comments concerning the parallels between the two in method and in the structures utilized can serve also as background for what Plotinus is attempting, given that there is a similar divergence in

vocabulary and imagery between Plotinus and modern culture that obscures such parallels at the surface level.

8. Igal (III–IV, 282) mentions three factors that should be kept in mind to understand Plotinus' purpose here: (1) it is a division of the four degrees of Being, thus the One and matter are excluded from consideration; (2) the criterion used in this fourfold scale is the degree of quantitative division; and (3) the formula of *Timaeus* 35a1–4, 'the indivisible and divisible,' is taken as the equivalent of *Parmenides* 155e5, 'one and multiple.'
9. It provides a parallel to the discussion of quality and soul in IV.2[4].1, with certain nuances added. The dependency of the qualities on the bodies is more explicit, with no affection existing by itself nor known except in a body. The soul, on the other hand, is numerically one throughout the body and only appears to be divided because the body itself is made up of parts, to all of which the same soul is present. He writes:

Similarly someone would reasonably inquire in this case, how the soul is given magnitude accidentally. For it is obviously not in the way a quality, like sweetness or color, is distributed through the whole body, that the soul is so distributed. These qualities are affections of bodies, so that the whole passive object has the affection and no affection exists by itself, since it is known only as belonging to a body. It follows necessarily from this that it is of such a size, and the white of one part is not sympathetic [*homopathes*] to the white of another. In the case of whiteness, it is the same in species, the white of one part relative to the white of another, but in the case of soul, it is the same in number, whether it is possessed by the foot or the hand, as perceptions make clear. In general, then, it appears that for qualities the same thing can be divided, but that in the case of the soul the same thing cannot be divided, even though it is said to be divided, since it is everywhere. (VI.4.1, 16–18)

10. The meaning of this passage becomes clear if the barely visible parallel structure is recognized. Thus, if being became a form, it would be the form of a particular, *genomenon toude*, and belong accidentally to the other, *kata symbebekos allou*, but being remains separate and thus is neither: *ou genomenonekeinou* and *oud' au allou*. The translation has been thoroughly revised and corresponds to that in my article, "Plotinus and the Platonic Parmenides," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1992), 441–455.
11. The manuscript tradition is in disagreement whether *symparathēin* (BxUCz) or *sympathein* (w) is present in line 20, but 'keeps pace with' hardly sheds light on this convoluted passage. It either amounts to sympathy or connotes a vague relationship between soul and body that scarcely merits the intricate distinctions Plotinus has been making.

12. The topic of perception, so briefly mentioned in this passage, receives ample investigation in the last part of this treatise on the soul, IV.5[29], to be treated in the next section.
13. J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge, 1967), 199–212, presents a discussion of prayer in Plotinus, tracing out sources in Plato and the Stoics, with a distinction between the vulgar petitions of the many and the silent prayer of the purified soul in its ascent to the One featured in V.1[10].6, V.8[31].9, and III.5[50].6. In these passages prayer is directed to Intellector the One, and not to the world soul or the divine souls of the stars and planets. This section is also significant in E. de Keyser, *La signification de l'art dans les Ennéades de Plotin* (Louvain, 1955) in articulating the difference between religious and secular art—the imitation of transcendent forms and not mere sense objects.
14. E. de Keyser, *La signification de l'art*, points out the shift of this image in Plotinus from the more rigid movement of the classical chorus to the mime of the individual dancer, a change reflecting the art of his own day (23).
15. When writing "Sympathy in Plotinus," I saw more congruity in my own position and that of D. Rodier—"The Problem of Ordered Chaos in Whitehead and Plotinus," *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. R. Baine Harris (Norfolk, VA: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), 301–317—with his distinction between predictive and operative sympathy. Rodier sees divination as a sign of predictive sympathy, indicating only the external relation between parts of the universe as forming one organic whole, while prayer, magic and, in general, perception are based on an operative sympathy localized to specific parts of the universe and internalized in an agent. In describing their common dynamism, however, their congruence is much more thorough, making it very difficult for him to maintain any real difference between them. It is much easier to see them as diverse manifestations of the same cosmic sympathy, with Plotinus' real aim the grounding of the human soul's independence within the concatenation of cosmic causes.
16. Graeser, *Plotinus and the Stoics*, 77—following G. H. Clark, "Plotinus' Theory of Sensation," *Philosophical Review* 51 (1942), 357–382—is even stronger in his denial of a medium between object and organ, since the organ already functions as medium between object and soul. H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), admits in his brief summary of the argument in IV.5 that for some of Plotinus' opponents a medium is necessary (78)—stating only later that the necessity of sympathy for all perception dispenses with a medium (137), with a disparaging remark about R. E. Witt, "Plotinus and Posidonius," *Classical Quarterly* 24 (1930), for suggesting (205) that air is the medium, though not the instrument, of vision. Witt in this instance has hit upon the right solution, but unfortunately his comment was too brief to overcome the tide of opposition.

17. This is discussed in *Plotinus: The Experience of Unity*, Chapter 2, 67–72, and shows the conjunction of the two terms in explaining perception. In IV.4.23, Plotinus argues that the distance between the knower and sensible object and the presence of organs are necessary for sensation to take place. In that context, however, the argument moved internally, from the fact of sensation to the reason why the soul needs such information, either as a necessary consequence of its nature or for the purpose of maintaining its presence in the body (IV.4.24). Neither of these is sufficient for the presence of sensation, and Plotinus moved further back to find its root in the disposition of the soul to look (IV.4.25).
18. Armstrong appends a note to this passage, in which he admits Plotinus' logic in terms of the priority of sympathy as the basis of perception, but notes a logical lapse in another area (IV, 315). He claims that Plotinus' distinction between the Hypostasis Soul and the world soul and individual souls in IV.3[27].1–5 leaves the possibility open that other souls, like the world soul, could produce a distinct universe, still having some sympathetic relation to this one. A more careful examination of IV.3.1–5, as shown in *Plotinus: The Experience of Unity*, indicates, however, that the world soul is not such because it is soul of this world, but rather is world soul because all after the Hypostasis Soul must be united within it (23–30). This consistent structure of unity would not allow for Armstrong's alternative and, conversely, his alternative would have disastrous results, if applied with similarly logical rigor. Thus, could not one also posit additional Hypostases Souls, all equally members of the Intelligible world and equally capable of producing world souls and individual souls? And in a similar way, also in the case of Intellect in relation to the One? The logic of Plotinus' structure seems therefore to be a little more tightly drawn than Armstrong suspects at this point.
19. Thus, 12, 12–32 seems to fit better after 5, 21, with some minor adjustments, as noted by Igal (I–II, 385 & 393: n30, n31, n68, n71).

## **PLOTINUS, NATURE, AND THE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT**

Michael F. Wagner

...Those on whom  
 Delusion cast its gloomy pall of doubt,  
 Upborn now on the wings that genius lends,  
 May penetrate the mansions of the gods  
 And scale the heights of heaven...  
 Admitted to the banquet of the gods,  
 We contemplate the polities of heaven;  
 And spelling out the secrets of the earth,  
 Discern the changeless order of the world  
 And the aeons of its history.<sup>1</sup>

Science has a privileged status in our culture as discernor and arbiter of human knowledge regarding the natural cosmos. In this regard, modern science is the intellectual progeny of ancient philosophers' attempts to discern the elements (*stoicheia*), principles (*archai*), and causes (*aitiai*) of our cosmos. At the same time, however, ancient philosophers were deeply concerned with issues that today are not normally considered pertinent to science—e.g. with the relationship between human history and conduct, on the one hand, and the inexorable order of natural causality and metaphysical Being, on the other. In their struggles to discern order and law amid the evident diversity and complexity of our cosmos, the ancients grappled also with such issues as contrariety among its sensible appearances, apparent irregularities in its celestial movements, incommensurability and the continuum, the nature of movement and change, and its place within metaphysical reality more generally. Perhaps it is a mark of intellectual progress that scientists no longer burden themselves with most such issues. At the same time, however, the foregoing indicates that piecing together the history of scientific thought often requires recognizing scientific outlooks and concerns amid issues,

even worldviews, which might strike contemporary readers as generally nonscientific.

The diverse doctrines, hypotheses, and methods generated by the fertile minds of ancient philosophers constituted a vital step in humanity's quest for scientific understanding. To some among the ancient philosophers themselves, however, this diversity called into serious question whether intellectual progress was being made or could be made at all. Chief among them were the Pyrrhonian Skeptics, whose critiques of so-called dogmatic philosophy were compiled and elaborated by Sextus Empiricus (fl. c. 200 A.D.). Plotinus, who began teaching in Rome approximately forty years after Sextus' standard flourishing date, has been portrayed as a (perhaps unwitting) collaborator with the Pyrrhonian abandonment of the Greek scientific spirit. Leon Robin, for example, casts Plotinus as chief villain in his exposition of the "Decline of Greek Thought", wherein he alleges that in late antiquity "the natural rationality of the old Greek [scientific] spirit yielded more and more to the invasion of Oriental superstitions." Robin's assessment may be more extreme and pejorative in tone than most scholars'; but the overall image of Plotinus' *Enneads* which it conveys is by no means uncommon—even among Plotinus scholars.

In this essay I shall examine features of Plotinus' Neoplatonism which, far from aiding and abetting Pyrrhonism, seek to save Greek rational or scientific philosophy from its Pyrrhonian attackers. Perhaps most important in this regard is Plotinus' insistence that our cosmos is rational and its rationality is universal, pervasive, and irrevocable; that the *natural* cosmos (the order of Becoming investigated by natural science) is one and the same with the *observable* cosmos (the objects of human sense experience); and that the metaphysical principles which underlie our cosmos and are responsible for its rationality are immune to the Pyrrhonian critique, and so provide an epistemically sound foundation for human investigation of our cosmos. I am not interested here in how particular details of Plotinus' conception of our cosmos might have influenced subsequent thinkers so much as in that conception's place within a philosophical framework which makes rational science epistemically possible. I will, of course, consider specific texts from Plotinus' *Enneads* to piece together a textually viable account of his conception of the natural cosmos and the metaphysical grounds for a scientific understanding of it. But first I shall note some pertinent features of Modern scientific thought, focusing specifically on Galileo Galilei's

views on the relationship between science, observation, and metaphysical principles.

### 1. Science, Observation, and Metaphysics

A chief goal of science is to discern the causes of (all) natural processes and things, the principles (or laws) which order and determine them, and the fundamental substances which underlie or comprise them; and it presumes that, in doing so, it is thereby explaining the same processes and objects which we observe daily by means of our senses. Now, Plotinus identifies the *causes* of nature with its governing or ordering *principles*; and he identifies both of these in turn with the metaphysical grounds for nature's existence—i.e. with its *substance*. The first identification yields his doctrine of *vertical causality*, according to which the cause (or sufficient reason) for a given process or existent is not to be found horizontally—on its same level of Being—but in a higher level of Being to which it stands as an image to its archetype, as an expression of law to the law expressed, as an instantiation of principle to the principle it instances, or the like. The second identification yields Plotinus' doctrine of *hypostasis* (or of *the hypostases*), according to which the metaphysical principles and true (vertical) causes of our cosmos are also ontologically the most fundamental (or real) of all existents; indeed, they comprise the existential ground (substance) of all 'lower' existents, including especially our cosmos. Finally, Plotinus maintains that the natural (or natured) cosmos effected, enunciated, (il)luminated, or temporally instanced by the hypostases just *is* the world of Becoming we observe in sense experience.

Galileo, in contrast, favors material atomism's account of our cosmos' existential ground (substance), and he accepts horizontal causality (i.e. real causal relations among substances within the natural cosmos itself). Despite departing from classical Neoplatonism's identification of nature's causes, its determining principles and its existential ground, Galileo nevertheless insists upon the importance of metaphysical understanding to establishing a scientific conception of our cosmos and even to observing scientifically its sensible manifestations or appearances. To this extent, at least, Galileo echoes basic themes Plotinus develops in his *Enneads* where he argues for the natural-*cum*-sensible cosmos' utter (existential) dependency on metaphysical principles of absolute order (unity), intelligibility (or rational order), and life (or temporalized intelligible order).

Galileo's *Dialogue Concerning The Two Chief World Systems* is a testament to the view that scientific theory and scientific observation depend upon metaphysics to legitimate them. Galileo attempts in his *Dialogue*, first, to undermine Aristotelian support for the Ptolemaic cosmological system and, second, to establish the Copernican system's superiority over the Ptolemaic. His efforts in pursuing this end rest upon, at times even explicitly employ, at least three methodological principles:

- (i) Legitimate science presupposes an understanding of principles which metaphysically inform the natural cosmos and govern its movements and processes.
- (ii) These principles are inherently rational, in themselves and as they inform our cosmos or determine its movements and processes.
- (iii) Observation is pertinent to scientific deliberation just insofar as it also presupposes these principles (is itself rational). The rationality of an observation or method of observation is, in particular, a prerequisite for using it to confirm a scientific theory based on observable appearances or phenomena implied (or 'predicted') by it.

The first two of these principles are especially crucial to Galileo's critique of Aristotelianism, which he summarizes by admonishing Aristotle for "trying to accommodate the architecture to the building instead of modeling the building after the precepts of architecture." The 'building' in this case is our cosmos; and Galileo is insisting that a legitimately scientific conception or model of our cosmos must conform to the 'precepts of architecture.' These precepts, Galileo believes, are mathematical (more precisely, geometric); and so they also are absolutely rational and deductive in their relationships and implications. These precepts are *sine qua non* for any adequate scientific theory. Indeed, the methodological principles stated above, and the Neopythagorean character of Galileo's conception of the metaphysical principles or precepts they mention, are never debated in Galileo's *Dialogue*. They are treated as prerequisites for any legitimate scientific deliberation and debate to occur at all; any scientific model or theory which does not conform to them is necessarily mistaken, and so lies beyond the pale of further rational or scientific discussion.

For Plotinus, the principles informing nature's architecture are his hypostases (the One, Intellect, and Soul). Whether this commits Plotinus to a fundamentally different conception of those principles from Galileo's Neopythagorean conception of them lies beyond the scope of this essay.

More importantly, Galileo is especially concerned in his understanding and use of methodological principles (i) and (ii) that science's conception of our cosmos should not be grounded instead on sensory appearances—most especially, not on pre- or unscientific observations of nature. In this regard, Galileo echoes Plotinus' insistence that metaphysical principles—the preconditions or grounds for natural order—cannot be abstracted from sensory appearances. Plotinus cautions that when attempting to grasp the (metaphysical) nature and order of Being itself, we must not allow ourselves to stray back into the sensible cosmos; we must steadfastly attend to the principles which define and govern that (vertical) order itself (VI.5.2, 19–23). In like fashion, Galileo admonishes Aristotle partly for not attending adequately to metaphysics apart from or prior to his scientific speculations, and especially for the resulting subordination of his conception of our cosmos and the principles informing it to terrestrial appearances.

Galileo focuses on two Aristotelian doctrines in demonstrating Aristotle's error:

- (a) The Earth is the center of celestial motion and the physical referent of all terrestrial motion (i.e. earth and water naturally move towards it, and air and fire naturally move away from it).
- (b) All motions of complex bodies (i.e. bodies composed of more than one of the four elements) are complex motions which result from the natural and simple motions of the elements composing them. (E.g. the motion of a body composed partly of air, whose natural motion is away from the Earth, and partly of earth, whose natural motion is towards the Earth, is determined by which of these two opposed elements predominate in the mixture.)

Doctrine (a) illustrates the dependency of Aristotelian principles upon terrestrial observation, which surely does suggest that the Earth is the center of our cosmos and that moving objects incline towards or away from it. Of course, the Copernican system shares the Ptolemaic belief that a physical body is at the center of our cosmos; whereas the geometric principles of nature do not entail that any physical body must occupy the center of the cosmos. Below I shall say a bit about Galileo's rationale for favoring the Copernican system over the Ptolemaic. For now, the point is that whether there is a physical body at the center of our cosmos (and if so, which one) should not be inferred directly from terrestrial appearances

(and likewise for Aristotle's conception of 'natural' motion); but, Galileo intimates, Aristotle did precisely this.

Nevertheless, doctrine (a) *might* be true, since the desideratum to conform cosmology to geometry does not rule it out. The same cannot be said for doctrine (b), however, thus negating any support that the Ptolemaic system may hope to derive from Aristotelian science. Aristotelian mixed motion is straightforwardly irrational, hence scientifically inadmissible, since it implies that real motions of natural bodies may be (indeed, oftentimes are) resultants from simple motions which are opposed to one another—as in the case of a body composed partly of air and partly of earth; and such an implication, Galileo apparently feels, is as irrational as supposing that a square and a circle can be combined into a real shape of some sort. Moreover, the Aristotelian response, which differentiates our cosmos into two parts and argues that its terrestrial (sublunary) part need not conform to the rational rigors of "mathematical demonstration," thereby further compromises reason and the (geometric) principles of 'architecture' for the sake of Aristotle's metaphysically inadequate conception of the 'building.'

Galileo's insistence that legitimate science *presupposes* rational (and geometric) principles which therefore are not directly or commonsensically inferred from terrestrial (sensory) appearances, however, does not entail for him that observation and sensory appearances are utterly irrelevant to science—and nor that scientific theory is irrelevant to what we do or can observe. Galileo (like Aristotle, and also Plotinus) holds that the cosmos modeled and investigated by science is in fact the same cosmos as the one we experience daily through our senses in our terrestrial context. Moreover, Galileo's ultimate aim is not just to undermine Aristotelian support for the Ptolemaic system but to argue for the Copernican system's superiority over the Ptolemaic; and, considered apart from its Aristotelian affiliations, the Ptolemaic system *per se* is as geometric and rational as the Copernican. Some sort of nondeductive principles of rational choice (e.g. elegance or simplicity) might argue in favor of the Copernican; but Galileo does not develop such an approach. He appeals to observation but, as methodological principle (iii) indicates, not observation *simpliciter*. Precisely where and how observation fits into scientific deliberation for Galileo is itself a matter of ongoing debate among Galileo scholars. In rough and general terms, however, it seems that Galileo distinguishes what might be termed *scientific observation* from nonscientific observation; and, though perhaps not dismissing the latter altogether (i.e. he seems interested in 'saving' as much of appearances as

possible), he seems to maintain that the former is at least more germane to scientific deliberation than the latter.

Perhaps the best known observational evidence offered by Galileo to support Copernicus are his observations of Sun Spots through the telescope. Galileo notes how it

...came about that, continuing to make very careful observations for many, many months, and noting with consummate accuracy the various [Sun] spots at different times of the year, we found the results to accord exactly with the [Copernican system's] predictions.<sup>7</sup>

This suggests that observation pertains to scientific deliberation when it confirms a theory's predictions or implications; but prediction and confirmation seem to be only part of the story. Galileo seems, in particular, to be equally concerned with the rationality of a given observation or appearance. Thus, for example, he commends Aristarchus and Copernicus for remaining "confident of that which *reason* told them must be so" in light of *certain* of their observations, despite also recognizing that their conception of our cosmos conflicted with other observations or appearances: Clearly, not all observations or appearances are equally pertinent to scientific deliberation and, e.g. to theory confirmation. Thus, Galileo seems as intent in the above passage on emphasizing the "very careful observations [and]... consummate accuracy" of his work with Sun Spots as he is on noting its conformity with predictions he derived from his Copernican geometrics. Similarly, he also seems convinced that a heliocentric system (whether Copernicus' or Aristarchus') is simply *more rational* than a terracentric system, and so the explanatory light it sheds even on certain *pretelescopic* observations imbues them with a scientific significance which outweighs potentially falsifying or disconfirming observations. Indeed, Galileo goes so far as to suggest that certain recalcitrant appearances of Mars and Venus are not merely (mathematically) imprecise but in fact are *mistaken* (though he does offer some explanation for why they occur).<sup>8</sup> Observation, or at least *scientific* observation, must somehow share in the rational strictures which Galileo demands *a priori* of scientific theory itself. Although he wishes to account for or 'save' as much of appearances as possible, Galileo seems to hold that since the rationally informed cosmos of scientific theory is the same as the cosmos of sensory observation, the latter confirms, manifests, or the like, the former only insofar as it also is informed by those same rational principles.

Ancient science has been faulted for allegedly lacking an experimental method—for not methodically submitting theory to observational confirmation, or for not amending or refining theory in light of methodical observation. I shall not enter into this controversy here. In Plotinus' case, it surely seems that experimentalism is not an **obvious** feature of his *Enneads*—though it also is the case that the *Enneads* have never been thoroughly investigated for this possibility. It suffices for here, however, that Plotinus' insistence that we must not "stray forgetfully back into the sensible realm" when seeking to understand the metaphysical order of his hypostases does not mean (nor entail) that we must (or even can) ignore the sensible cosmos altogether when we do 'descend' from the metaphysical order into the natural order to discern precisely *how* those principles in fact inform or function in our cosmos. Plotinus insists at length that although our cosmos is not itself a hypostasis, it nevertheless is genuinely and utterly an image of that order. Consequently, a Plotinian conception or model of our cosmos which does not conform it to the metaphysical principles of the hypostases must be incorrect, and *everything* in our cosmos—including *what is observable*—must be explicable in terms of those principles (as a descent from them); and Plotinus' own conception of our cosmos and its processes relies very much on sensory appearances or observed phenomena to discern how or in what way(s) our cosmos conforms to that vertical order. In this regard, of course, we have seen Galileo suggesting that certain appearances may simply be, if not mistaken *tout court*, at least scientifically mistaken, as it were. But even this seems an echo of Plotinus' view that although our cosmos is genuinely and utterly an image of the hypostases, some of its appearances or observable aspects may manifest and reveal its order, rationality, and metaphysical aetiology more perspicuously than others (as we shall see later).

This section has identified several thematic aspects of Galileo's conception of science, observation and their (subordinate) relations to metaphysics. One additional aspect not highlighted thus far is Galileo's insistence that the principles of nature's architecture are, in Plotinian terms, omnipresent. Nature's precepts, Galileo insists, do not hold just for its celestial movements nor just for its simplest, most elemental constituents; they hold equally everywhere throughout our cosmos—for so-called sublunary as well as for celestial bodies, for 'complex' as well as for 'simple' (elemental) bodies, and for every movement of every one of these bodies and/or elemental substances. Plotinus' doctrine that the sensible cosmos is genuinely and utterly an image of the hypostases

likewise implies that its order and rationality is ubiquitous and irrevocable—that our cosmos, *in toto* and throughout all of its parts and processes, is an image of the hypostases. To see how this and preceding themes are developed by Plotinus, and especially to see his own conception of nature, I now turn to several key treatises in his *Enneads*.

## 2. Plotinus' Metaphysics of Nature

Of Plotinus' three hypostases (One, Intellect, and Soul), the second of these (Intellect) is initially the most germane to the issues addressed in section I inasmuch as it is the vertical cause in virtue of which our cosmos is informed with rationality or intelligibility. My primary text for elaborating this point will be *Ennead* III.2, the first installment in Plotinus' two-part treatise on Providence. Among other things, Plotinus argues in this (half)treatise that Intellect is archetypally *cosmos*—the metaphysical prototype for what it is to be a cosmos, or for anything else's being truly a cosmos. He also argues that our cosmos truly *is a cosmos*, and it is a cosmos solely because it is an image of Intellect—i.e. because its relationship to its archetype (Intellect) is grounded in the principles of vertical causality. Plotinus' understanding of Intellect (or *Being*) establishes the 'precepts' to which any sensible, material, or otherwise existing object or system of objects must conform if it is to be investigated or explained rationally (i.e. as a cosmos); and he maintains that our cosmos (or *Becoming*) is irrevocably such an object or system of objects.

Plotinus begins *Ennead* III.2 by contrasting two approaches to understanding the cause or source of our cosmos' substance and structure (*ousian kai systasin*). On the one hand, the materialist (e.g. Epicurean) approach simply rejects the supposition that these have a cause, maintaining instead that they are fortuitous matters of chance (III.2.1, 1–2). The Gnostic approach, on the other hand, postulates a process of divine deliberation and foreknowing which precedes and causes the coming to be of our cosmos (III.2.1, 18). Plotinus' own approach will agree with the Gnostics, *pace* the materialists, that our cosmos is caused and that its cause (his Intellect) is metaphysically *prior* to it. However, Plotinus disagrees with the Gnostics' conception of this priority, especially denying that Intellect is a deliberative agent and our cosmos is an outcome of consciously foreknowing deliberations on its part. Rather, Intellect's priority over our cosmos is to be explicated in terms of its eternally, immutably perfect nature, by virtue of which it simply *is* "the true and first



cosmos" or "the archetypal cosmos" and to which our cosmos is metaphysically related as an image that is "forever coming into existence" (*hypostantos aei*) in conformity with it (III.2.1, 26).

Plotinus maintains, it seems, that materialism requires denying the real existence of *metaphysical* causes, and this leaves materialism without sufficient grounds for understanding putatively systemic or rational features of our cosmos, forcing them to view those features as inexplicable—as matters of mere chance. Given Plotinus' later insistence on the ubiquitous rationality of our cosmos *despite* putative appearances (or certain aspects of appearances) to the contrary, he may also be concerned that if such notions as 'system' and 'rational' are not grounded objectively—in an archetypal or *metaphysical* reality—but are abstractions from whatever it is about our cosmos which happens to strike us that way, then we would have no grounds for investigating the rest of our cosmos (or other features of our cosmos) to discern whether, *despite* (perhaps) appearances to the contrary, they might not also *in fact* be systemic or rational in the same way. At the very least, his insistence on the everlasting ('forever') conformity of our cosmos to its archetype indicates a conscious concern that such abstractions would leave us with no grounds for supposing that the way(s) in which our cosmos is (or seems) systemic and rational now (or insofar as we have noticed this) is at all pertinent to its future (or continuing) condition and processes. In short, the materialist may strive to understand our cosmos and its processes systematically, but he will have no grounds (Plotinus believes) for universalizing that understanding—or at least his grounds will be no more objective than dumb luck or chance.

Plotinus says very little about materialism in the remainder of the treatise. His focus, rather, is on the Gnostic approach and its understanding of our cosmos as a deliberated outcome. Plotinus maintains that our cosmos *doubly* is not a deliberative outcome: first, in that Intellect does not (nor need it) deliberate on what a cosmos must be (or must 'be like') and, second, in that our cosmos' relation to Intellect is not like that between an outcome and a prior process of thinking or deliberating towards that outcome. Insofar as our cosmos is an outcome at all, it is an outcome entailed by, or generated and sustained according to, the *metaphysical* principles in virtue of which metaphysical reality itself is *eternally* and *immutably* ordered (and for Plotinus, of course, also *hierarchically* ordered).

Regarding his thesis that Intellect just is archetypally *cosmos* (and so need not deliberate on this), Plotinus explains that it is the archetypal cosmos because it

...does not stand apart from itself and is not weakened by division and is not incomplete even in its parts, since each part is not cut off from the whole; but the whole life of it and the whole intellect lives and thinks (*noousa*) all together in one, and makes the part the whole and all bound in friendship with itself, since one part is not separated from another and has not become merely other, estranged from the rest; and, therefore, one does not wrong another, even if they are opposites. And since it is everywhere one and complete at every point it stays still and knows no alteration; for it does not make as one thing acting upon another."

This last clause ("for it does not make...") alludes to Intellect's eternal *contemplation* as the metaphysical process whose principles generate and sustain eternally Plotinus' vertical order of true causality, and also to Plotinus' difficult doctrine that Intellect is distinct from our cosmos as (one of) its metaphysical cause(s) but it is not thereby substantively *separate* from our cosmos. More important for now, however, are the features of Intellect which Plotinus believes render it the archetypal cosmos. These features are characterized in this passage in both negative and positive terms, as they bear both upon Intellect as a whole and upon its parts and also upon its parts' relations both to Intellect itself and to one another.

In negative terms, (a) Intellect does not stand apart from itself; (b) Intellect is not weakened by division; (c) Intellect is not incomplete nor subject to change in any way; (d) each of its parts is not cut off from the whole, nor separated from any other part; and (e) one part is not merely 'other,' nor 'estranged' from the rest (of the parts), and nor does it wrong any other part (even when they are 'opposites'). Rather, in positive terms, (a\*) the whole Intellect lives, or is wholly alive; (b\*) Intellect and its life thinks "all [of its parts] together in one"; (c\*) it is everywhere one and complete at every point; (d\*) each of its parts is made the whole of Intellect; and (e\*) all of its parts are bound together in friendship with Intellect. Implicit in this litany of Intellect's archetypal features is a presumption that a cosmos is a whole composed of parts; hence, if Intellect is to be the archetypal cosmos, it also must in some sense be (or be capable of being understood as) a whole composed of parts. The foregoing negative and affirmative characterizations indicate the unique, or at least distinctive, nature of Intellect as a whole, of its parts, and of their relationships. They focus especially on the distinctive nature of (i)

Intellect's life, (ii) its composition, and (iii) its *telos*. In so doing, they sound themes found elsewhere in the *Enneads* where Plotinus is not so intent on understanding Intellect in whole/part terms.

Plotinus maintains in the above passage (i) that the nature of its life is such that Intellect is not distinct from itself and nor are its parts separated or cut off from one another nor from it; rather, its life is *self-contained* (it is identical with Intellect's 'self,' or is a feature of Intellect just *qua* Intellect) and it is *interpenetrating* (it equally is a feature of Intellect as a whole and of each and every one of its parts). Hence, Intellect is not weakened in any way by its division (or, Plotinus may intend, Intellect is not weakened by any *real* division within itself); rather, (ii) its mode of division, composition or containment is by *omnipresence* to itself and to all of its parts as it "thinks all together in [any] one," and so is truly *one* or *unitary* in both its life and its composition. (iii) Intellect thus fully and irrevocably (or *immutably*) realizes its *telos*, as both it and every one of its parts are *perfect(ed)* just by virtue of the nature of its life and unity. Hence, Intellect can never be incomplete, and nor can its parts be in any real opposition with one another or with the whole. Howsoever we are to distinguish Intellect's parts (including even any contraries or 'opposites' among its parts), they are bound both to one another and to Intellect itself in perfect accord, conformity, or 'friendship.' Regarding its life, composition and *telos*, then, insofar as Intellect is (understood as) a whole composed of parts, it is so archetypally inasmuch as

- (i) the whole and every one of its parts are productive or causative ('living') by virtue of the very nature of Intellect and in the manner or sense entailed by that nature (viz. by thought or intellection [*noësis*]);
- (ii) each part is the whole and the whole is each (and every) part, and so also each part is every other part and, indeed, is all of the whole's parts; and
- (iii) the whole and all of its parts are eternally and immutably complete or actual, both in themselves and in all of their (internal) relationships to one another and to the whole.

In Plotinus' Neoplatonism, (i) reflects Intellect's status as a (vertically) causative principle; (ii) reflects its status as a (first) declination from Plotinus' absolutely first principle (the One); and (iii) reflects its metaphysical credentials as an hypostasis.

Our own cosmos departs from Intellect on all three scores. However, Plotinus' initial account in III.2 of the features of our cosmos which

preclude its being the archetypal cosmos touch most fully and explicitly on (ii)—its mode of composition. This seems appropriate since it is Intellect's status as a (first-) declination from the One's absolute simplicity which makes it possible to understand it as a whole composed of parts—hence, as a metaphysical archetype of *cosmos*. Accordingly, contrasting our cosmos with Intellect with respect to (ii) should most sharply define its *nonarchetypal* nature, or why it is that our cosmos is not itself a cosmos archetypally. Plotinus claims, regarding our own cosmos, that

...it is many and divided into a multiplicity, and one part stands away from another and is alien to it, and there is not only friendship but also enmity because of the separation, and in their deficiency one part is of necessity at war with another. For the part is not self-sufficient, but in being preserved is at war with the other by which it is preserved."

Significantly, this passage refers to our cosmos as a whole only initially, asserting—in contrast especially to (b)'s assertion that insofar as Intellect is a whole it cannot be "weakened by [a real] division" into its putative parts—that our cosmos (really) *is many* and (really) *is divided into a multiplicity*. The remainder of this passage deals primarily with this real multiplicity of its parts, contrasting them especially with Intellect's parts in terms of the negative characterizations observed in (d) and (e). Unlike Intellect's, our cosmos' parts *are* separated from (they really do 'stand away' from) one another, and they are not merely 'other' (or different) but each *is* estranged from (it is in fact 'alien' to) the other parts; and whereas each of Intellect's parts is complete and perfect (since each is 'made the whole' by Intellect's omnipresent and interpenetrating life), each of our cosmos' parts is by itself deficient (since each is really separated from and alien to the other parts). Finally, this deficiency in our cosmos' parts is characterized also in terms of each not being self-sufficient but dependent upon other parts for its preservation.

Paradoxically, it might seem that Intellect's parts should depend utterly upon one another (since each is irrevocably related internally to every other one), yet in fact each is by itself eternally complete or actual; likewise, it might seem that our cosmos' parts should not depend upon one another at all (since each is really separate from, and so is related only externally to, the rest), yet in fact each is incapable of preserving itself—indeed, each achieves its *telos*, or is preserved at all, only by virtue of other parts. But whereas the seemingly paradoxical condition of Intellect's parts attests to their immutable perfection and to that of their interrelationships, the paradoxical condition of our cosmos' parts attests to

their metaphysical deficiency—to their temporal, interactive, or warlike character. In sharp contrast with Intellect's archetypal nature, we find regarding our own cosmos that

- (i') productivity or causality (metaphysical life) is not attributed to it at all;
- (ii') Plotinus emphasizes the real multiplicity and separateness of its parts, alluding to their relationship to (and so their composition into) a whole only indirectly—by reference to each part's inherent lack of sufficiency or completion; and so
- (iii') regarding their *telos*, our cosmos' parts are said to relate 'of necessity' to one another in such a way that one depends upon another for its preservation, and it does so in a warlike way (presumably, their real separateness makes any relations they might have violent, e.g. so that one part's preservation occurs at another's expense).

As noted, Plotinus' account in III.2 of how our cosmos departs from Intellect's archetypal nature says very little about our cosmos as a whole. He does not contrast our cosmos, for example, with respect to his earlier assertions that [a] Intellect does not stand apart from itself, and [c] Intellect is not incomplete nor subject to change. Moreover, although that account contrasts our cosmos mainly with respect to negative claims made earlier regarding what is *not* the case for Intellect, it does harken back to (e\*) in saying that "there is not *only* friendship..." and in suggesting that, howsoever it is that the parts of our cosmos are in fact related to the whole (or to one another within the whole), this relationship preserves at least some of them at a given time—*albeit* somehow at the expense of other parts. It thus seems to be a positive characteristic of our cosmos that its parts are bound together in some sense, though not in complete friendship with one another. Whether this precludes their being bound together in (complete) friendship with our cosmos as a whole is unclear; but the enmity caveat regarding any friendship among our cosmos' parts does suggest that at least (b\*) and (c\*) would have to be modified if applied to our cosmos—i.e. the parts of our cosmos cannot be all together *at the same time* and, likewise, oneness or completion cannot be realized throughout every point (or part) of our cosmos *at the same time*. That caveat also seems to deny (d\*) of our cosmos altogether; surely no part of our cosmos could be 'made the whole' cosmos if any given part's very preservation is only at the expense of other parts of that whole.

Perhaps more significantly, there is very good reason for Plotinus' saying so little about our cosmos as a whole in his initial account of its nonarchetypal character. Having stated features of Intellect by virtue of which it *is* the archetypal cosmos and features of our cosmos by virtue of which it is *not* archetypal, Plotinus immediately alludes back to an earlier claim that our cosmos is from Intellect (*para nou*) in such a way that Intellect's providence (*prōnoia*) connotes the metaphysical fact that our cosmos conforms with (*kata*) Intellect as an image conforms to its archetypal cause (see III.2.1, 20–22). Plotinus declares that our cosmos is not an outcome or end result of some divine reasoning (*logismoi*); rather, it exists (1) just by virtue of Intellect possessing the power to produce another without having to *try* to produce it (*aneu...zētein*) (III.2.2, 12–13) and, in particular, (2) just by virtue of Intellect "giving something of itself to matter"—viz. a *logos* whose source is Intellect itself, or its nondeliberative power (III.2.2, 16–19). Our cosmos is forever coming into existence *as a cosmos*, Plotinus argues, by virtue of a *logos* which molds, organizes and controls it on behalf of Intellect and which Intellect produces simply because it is in its nature (causative power) to do so. This *logos* continually produces out of the aforementioned multiplicity, diversity and (putative) enmity of our cosmos' parts a harmony and "singular ordering" of its parts into a whole (III.2.2, 30–31). *Only insofar as we view our cosmos from this perspective can we understand it as a whole and appreciate how it is that our cosmos is indeed a cosmos.*

Plotinus does not elaborate at this point on the notion that Intellect gives a *logos* of itself to matter. We shall see later that this *logos* is Nature, and that Intellect's production of it by a giving of itself is to be explicated in terms of eternal contemplation. Instead, Plotinus now emphasizes two important implications of this notion. First, it allows him to maintain that Intellect remains archetypal or pure (so, metaphysically distinct from our cosmos) without suggesting that Intellect produces and governs our cosmos as an outside, deliberative agent might seek to mold and order it—say, as a terrestrial artist might plan and then work purposively to fashion a work of art." Our cosmos may be construed as a "coming together" of Intellect and Necessity, Plotinus indicates, in the sense that through its *logos* Intellect "descends towards irrationality" (*alogian*) while remaining wholly itself and undefiled, and able to govern and control matter or Necessity (III.2.2, 33–37). Second, this eternal (or at least everlasting) mixing of Intellect with Necessity does not denote an actual mixing of opposed metaphysical elements or principles but connotes the metaphysical fact that our cosmos both is *not archetypally* a

cosmos—i.e. it is an image of Intellect as descending *towards* irrationality, matter, or Necessity—and yet it is still truly *a cosmos*.

Plotinus argues regarding our cosmos that although only Intellect's logos (its presence within our cosmos) is strictly speaking an intelligible thing (*noētos*), this does not imply that our cosmos as such is not truly a cosmos—or, that it is *a-cosmos*. The world of Becoming can be construed as a sort of mixture in the sense that metaphysically it lies between inchoate, irrational matter, Necessity, or Non-Being and rationality, law, or Being itself; but in this mixture Intellect's logos (now referred to as a soul) presides utterly—with complete and sole authority—over the very *substance* of our cosmos, so that Intellect itself may be said to direct our cosmos by a “kind of presence” (*parousia*) (see III.2.2, 36–42). Because of this presiding presence of Intellect in the very substance and fabric of our cosmos, moreover, our cosmos is itself an in-its-own-way likeness or manifestation of Intellect's better (i.e. archetypal) nature (III.2.3, 5–6). More precisely, the world of Becoming is not a concatenation of chance concurrences, nor is it really an irrational realm upon which we (or Intellect) have sought arbitrarily to superimpose an order or structure of some sort; rather, our cosmos is in fact

...a whole, all beautiful and self-sufficient and friends with itself and with its parts, both the more important and the lesser, which are all equally well adapted to it.<sup>14</sup>

When considering our cosmos as a whole, from the perspective of its metaphysical aetiology instead of the diversity and separateness of its parts, Plotinus' highly negative characterization of that separateness and the related enmity among its parts gives way to a highly positive statement of its overarching self-sufficiency, its order (beauty), and its *bona fide* friendship with itself and with each and every one of its parts (and *vice versa*).

To this extent at least, our cosmos, like Intellect, does *not* “stand apart from itself” [a]—although Plotinus is yet to indicate whether our cosmos also is ‘alive’ otherwise than just in having Intellect's logos present in it [a\*]; it is complete [c]—although it cannot be “one and complete” at every point (at least not concurrently), except perhaps insofar as Intellect's logos is ubiquitously one and complete in it [c\*]; its parts are *not* “cut off” from our cosmos as a whole [d], even though they are diverse and separate from one another and so cannot each be made the whole—although here, also, Intellect's logos may be an ubiquitous whole to or in each and every

part which it makes and binds together into a whole [d\*]; and, of course, despite its parts being estranged from one another and wronging one another when our cosmos is viewed part-by-part [e], these same parts in fact are utterly in friendship with the cosmos as a whole—and to some degree, or in some sense, with one another within (or from the perspective of) that whole [e\*]. Our cosmos thus contrasts sharply with Intellect in that it is “weakened by division” [b] and in that howsoever Intellect's logos in fact “binds” its parts into a unity and friendship, this cannot be in a “life [which] thinks all together in one” *simpliciter* or archetypally; but on all other points characteristic of Intellect [(a), and (c)–(d)], our cosmos is unlike but also *like* Intellect.

In line with Plotinus' caution regarding the sense in which our cosmos is a mixture of Intellect and Necessity, those features of our cosmos which demonstrate its nonarchetypal nature (e.g. that it truly is many and divided and its parts are, or appear to be, at war with one another) and those features which render it truly a cosmos nevertheless (e.g. its unity and sufficiency, order and friendship, when viewed as a whole) are indeed distinguishable from one another but they do not denote (really) distinct parts or elements which somehow combine to form one cosmos, or which derive somehow from distinct and opposing metaphysical principles.<sup>15</sup> The warfare we observe among our cosmos' parts, for example, is not something distinct from its (and their) friendship; rather, the putative warfare is in fact *a type of* friendship inasmuch as the objects and warlike processes comprising our cosmos are in fact governed and ordered into a single harmonious whole by Intellect's logos—or, inasmuch as this warfare is in fact Intellect's archetypal friendship adapted to or descended towards multiplicity and matter by way of its logos.

To discern the friendship which is in fact present in—which does truly characterize—our cosmos, we need not look at something other than its many, warring parts; rather, we need only to look more discerningly at “the parts in relation to the whole, to see if they are harmonious and in concord with it; and when one considers the whole one must not look at a few little parts” (III.2.3, 11–13). Plotinus believes that when a person does this, moreover, she will recognize that the parts are indeed harmonious and in concord with the whole. When thus viewed in light of its metaphysical aetiology—or the resulting presence (and operation) of Intellect's logos within it—our cosmos

- (i\*) may as such be still metaphysically dead but at least Intellect's life is present within it in the form of Nature (a logos of Intellect); and so,
- (ii\*) though really separate (from one another) and a multiplicity, its parts are in fact friends with our cosmos as a whole—and even with one another, inasmuch as they do compose a single, harmonious whole by virtue of that presence; and
- (iii\*) our cosmos as a whole and all of its parts, though incomplete when compared with the archetypal perfection of Intellect's *telos*, are fully well adapted to one another and do constitute a fully ordered, utterly unified whole or system—*albeit* one which is continuously evolving or moving and is never finished or completed.

Though still not an archetypal cosmos, our cosmos is thus much more like Intellect than Plotinus' initial part-by-part account, summarized earlier in (i')–(iii'), suggested.

We can reach the same result from considering the fact that Plotinus' Intellect also is the archetype of rationality: Our cosmos truly *is* a cosmos by virtue of the archetypal cosmos (Intellect) informing it with its own rationality through the ubiquitous presence of its logos (Nature). Plotinus' negative [(a)–(e)] and positive [(a\*)–(e\*)] characterizations of Intellect's nature suggest, in other words, Plotinus' conception of rationality. They suggest, for example, that in an archetypally rational system the principles defining its nature (its *metaprinciples*, if you will) define the system without remainder (the system as a whole, including all of its parts, is derivable from them), and they thereby also define each and every one of its parts (the principles interpenetrate the system). Moreover, the nature and contents of such a system cannot change (they are immutable); and nothing is missing or lacking from the system which is necessary for its completion, or which would render it more faithful to or fully derived from its principles. Finally, every part of the system is related to every other part; these relationships are also defined or entailed by the system's principles; and they are unalterable (immutable) and such that every part may be derived from every other part as well as from (or within) the whole.

Since Becoming differs from the archetypal cosmos most evidently in the nature of its parts, we should expect it likewise to depart from archetypal rationality particularly with respect to its parts. Although we may be able to discern *a posteriori* that any given part, process or relationship within our cosmos conforms to its systemic principles, for

example, we cannot deduce each and every one of them from the principles by themselves and certainly not from one another; and although the nature or principles of the system (of our cosmos) as a whole cannot change, its contents (parts) and their relationships to one another certainly do change. Likewise, though perhaps nothing is missing from our cosmos as such, its deficiencies relative to some aspects of an archetypally rational system do render it forever incomplete inasmuch as its faithfulness to or conformity with its principles may continually be tested as hitherto unobserved contents and relationships emerge, or inasmuch as our understanding of precisely how its contents conform to its principles admits continually of reformulation or refinement. Indeed, inasmuch as Becoming's systemic principles do not define (or entail *a priori*) the system, or at least not each and every one of its contents, it is not wholly unreasonable to question whether Becoming is in fact a rational system at all—as opposed, say, to a lucky conglomeration of disparate parts; its rationality is not evident, or at least it is not self-evident or immediately evident, to every rational person.

In the final section of this essay, which addresses Plotinus' response to Pyrrhonian Skepticism, we shall see that Plotinus' notion of archetypal rationality suggests that an archetypally rational system would in effect be (perhaps among other things) a system of necessary truth. This suggests, in turn, that the task he sets for natural philosophers (scientists) is to discern how our cosmos as a whole and all of its parts in fact are governed by, are manifestations of, or are explicable in terms of a system of archetypal (necessary) truth. Plotinus' conception of the *metaprinciples* defining Intellect's nature (and so archetypal rationality and truth), moreover, is based on the five most-high types (the *megista genera*) of Plato: Being, Same, Difference, Motion, and Rest. Before discussing those principles, however, and some details of Plotinus' conception of our cosmos as an image of the archetypal cosmos they define, I return to Plotinus' notion that our cosmos is "forever coming into existence" in conformity with Intellect, relying especially on *Ennead* III.8 for further elaboration.

*Ennead* III.8 is first in a four-treatise sequence that continues with *Enneads* V.8 and V.5, and concludes with *Ennead* II.9. The middle two treatises focus on Intellect, the second of these especially emphasizing that Intellect is a true, archetypal unity. For, although Intellect is a descent from the One—its unity falls short of the One's absolute, unqualified unity—it nevertheless is (as seen in *Ennead* III.2) utterly self-contained, self-sufficient, eternally one ("in friendship") with itself and its parts, and

the like. The final treatise in this sequence is a more sustained attack on Gnosticism. Here, however, I am most interested in the two main conclusions Plotinus draws in *Ennead* III.8. One is that the One is the first principle and source of all Being and life (both archetypal and sensible). The other conclusion is that the entire vertical order (down to its lowest levels) is bound together and proceeds by contemplation, where 'proceeds by' does not connote a temporal or deliberative process but denotes a metaphysical ordering explained by the nature of contemplation—an eternally self-focused act which entails, however, a phantasm or image whose substance is defined by the contemplated object. Together these conclusions guarantee in turn that the *metaprinciples* defining Intellect's nature—its archetypal principles of rationality and of *cosmos*—are themselves grounded in the utterly first principle of all reality (the One) while also informing every level of reality which derives in turn from Intellect. Since our cosmos is itself ineluctably an image or (by-)product of this metaphysically causative order, moreover, its rationality—though not archetypal—is irrevocable, ubiquitous and 'forever' nonetheless.

The argument of *Ennead* III.8 begins with Plotinus postulating or "playing with" the paradox (*paradoxon*) that all activities in the natural cosmos—including the natural processes and movements of plants and the Earth, and also the actions of animate and rational beings—are in fact "serious efforts at contemplation" (III.8.1, 14). He does not tell us why this postulate is (or at least appears to be) a paradox. Perhaps he has in mind the Aristotelian view that contemplation is paradigmatically a *nonproductive* activity.<sup>14</sup> Or he may be foreshadowing a crucial point to emerge later—viz. that since (archetypal) contemplation characterizes the activity of Being, his own metaphysics implies that the activity of *Becoming* is in fact an image of (or an effort to act like) *Being*. In any case, Plotinus begins to resolve or explain this seeming paradox by introducing Nature as "a logos which produces another logos, an offspring of itself which gives something to the substrate while itself remaining unmoved" (III.8.2, 28–30). This response to the paradox will justify invoking contemplation as the archetypal act at which even natural processes and actions are efforts because the power to produce another, or to give something to another, while remaining unmoved (or unmoving) is paradigmatically a characteristic of contemplation (III.8.23, 16–17). I shall discuss how such an act could be the archetype of *Becoming* as I proceed; but first I wish to emphasize a refinement introduced here to the notion of Intellect's logos seen in *Ennead* III.2. In particular, Plotinus here asserts a *double* logos: first, a logos which he identifies with Nature itself

and, second, the logos which is finally given to matter—now identified as an *offspring* of Intellect's logos (Nature).

I begin with Plotinus' further claim that this offspring of Nature is the final logos because it is "dead and unable to produce another" logos; it produces *visible form* or shape instead (III.8.2, 30–34). This additional claim seems meant to distinguish, for example, between the process or activity of a tree growing and the visible or sensible form(s) in which this process manifests itself to human sense experience—say, as we observe the tree altering in size as it grows. Strictly speaking, Nature's offspring would be the tree's *growth*—the tree's growth *process* or *activity* as this transpires in the natural world. The observable alterations in the tree's size is the way in which that natural process manifests itself to our sense experience and is an *image* of the tree's growth, just as the process of growth itself is an image, manifestation, or offspring of the logos Nature. In producing its own visible form—i.e. in manifesting itself to our sense experience—Nature's logos (e.g. the tree's growth-process) is dead since (we shall see later) a true or living logos always produces another living or productive logos as its image; but Nature's logos does not do so. It produces visible form, which is not a *logos* (it is not a metaphysical or intelligible phenomenon, as it were) but a *sensory* or experiential phenomenon. By itself, however, this threatens a vicious regress: If every living logos must produce another living logos, whereas Nature produces a dead logos, then Nature would seem to be a dead logos—and so on, for however far up the vertical order Plotinus' notion of *logos* would extend. To avoid this regress, I note (as we shall see later) that when viewed in its descending mode, once the vertical order proceeds below archetypal life, 'alive' and 'dead' are no longer absolute or all-or-nothing characteristics. Rather, as the vertical order descends from (or beyond) *archetypal* life, its life then becomes increasingly weak and diffuse. In these terms, it may be more accurate to say that Nature's life is so weak—is so far removed from archetypal life—that its offspring is more dead than alive, or has become effectively dead instead of alive.

In claiming that Nature's offspring produces its own visible form, moreover, Plotinus is not alluding to any physical processes (e.g. to any purported physical causes of sensory appearances), but to the vertical (metaphysical) causes of sensible *Becoming's* Being—for example, the intelligibility of the observed alterations in a tree's size in fact *being a process of growth*. Plotinus' model for this sort of (vertically) causal account of sensory appearances is the way in which, as he sees it, a geometer has lines comprising visible shapes directly "fall from" her

activity of geometric contemplation—as opposed to her using physical instruments to draw lines, say, in the dirt (III.8.4, 9–11). Plotinus maintains that this is the true (complete, or sufficient) account of the line-image shapes which manifest themselves to the geometer while she is contemplating and, indeed, that all occurrences of visible (or sensible) forms are to be explained similarly—in terms of the vertical causes of their Being, with Nature being the metaphysical agent of the contemplation which produces sensible form when this is *sensed* rather than imagined by some person. Of course, one point of disanalogy between Nature and Plotinus' contemplative geometer is that what immediately 'falls from' Nature's (attempt at) contemplation is not sensible form as such but real activities, natural processes, or 'Becomings'; and it may be that the ways in which these processes in turn manifest themselves to us as sensible form(s) admit of descriptions which—despite the sufficiency of Nature's contemplative agency—refer also to physical processes or causes of our sensations, or sensory experiences, of them. Nonetheless, the key point to Plotinus' analogy remains, that the true cause(s) which (sufficiently) explain sensible form(s) is not another sensible or observable thing (or things) but is that which defines it as the sensible manifestation of some Being (-in-Becoming)—e.g. of tree-growth, or of triangularity.

Plotinus maintains that the sensible lines—the phantasms of lines—imagined or internally sensed by the geometer are direct products of her (attempts at) contemplating Being (say, triangularity). Analogously, the observed alterations in a tree's visible size are in fact *nothing other than* the tree's growth-process, which surely is a direct result of Nature's (attempt at) contemplating, say, the Being of *tree-ness*. Now, it may be that when explaining why or how it is that we do not (externally) sense just the tree's growth-process as such but certain sensible forms (e.g. sequences of shapes and sizes), we postulate that (external) sensation occurs only when Nature produces other processes (e.g. in our sensory organs) alongside or "in sympathy with" the external tree's growth-process. But while this postulate regarding Nature's *modus operandi* might explain why internally sensed phantasms are manifestations of our own (attempted) contemplations whereas externally sensed phantasms are manifestations of another's (viz. Nature's) contemplations, it is not *necessary*—much less sufficient—even for explaining the sensible form itself. As objects of (external) sense, the observed alterations in the tree's size just *are* the tree's growth-process; they are not in fact real objects distinct or apart from that process, and so they do not require any cause(s) other than the (vertical) cause of that process (in the logos Nature) to explain them—even

though, unlike the geometer case, those (externally) sensible forms remain distinguishable from Nature's direct product in Becoming (the growth-process as such).

Plotinus' approach to sensible form is symptomatic of his views on causality generally. While for many philosophers individual observable things are causes *par excellence*, for Plotinus they are metaphysically ineffective or causatively impotent. The real causal order is not horizontal, or determined e.g. by generalization *from* (repeated) concurrences or sequences of sensible objects. The cause of any thing or process is that which governs, orders, or unifies it. For Plotinus this will be that which defines or gives it substance and Being; and this is a metaphysical or vertical matter, not a physical or horizontal one. As seen from *Ennead* III.2, insofar as the diverse things and processes comprising our cosmos are viewed on their own terms—as a mere multiplicity, or a collection of discrete parts or sensible objects—it seems more a place of fragmentation, warfare, even irrationality, than of rational governance, order and unity. In fact, however, our cosmos is *not* really fragmented, irrational, and the like, because the true causes of its rationality, order, and the like—indeed of its parts themselves—are not to be found amid its observable multiplicity but in the intelligible (*nonsensible*) power of Nature, or only insofar as we can refer sensible objects to intelligible principles which inform Nature's power. *All* things and processes in Becoming are in fact offspring (effects) of that power; and, Plotinus contends, this fact becomes increasingly evident when instead of viewing the diverse parts of our cosmos on their own terms, we consider the sensible cosmos as a single whole and strive to discern how within that whole its parts in fact behave in an harmonious and ordered way, or conform to a system of governance enacted by Nature to inform and order that whole.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, we have seen that in *Ennead* III.8 Plotinus postulates an intermediate logos (or logoi) between Nature and sensible things or forms—viz. Becomings themselves. The world of Becoming has two distinguishable (though not distinct, nor separable) aspects or, as it were, sides: processes of or activities in Becoming as such, which are still images of Being (as expressed, say, in "this temporal process *is* one of *tree-growth*"); and their sensible appearances or forms (e.g. the many diverse sizes observed of the tree as it grows), which strictly speaking are no longer images of Being—though, unlike pure matter, they at least are images of images of Being. The fact that strictly speaking Becomings themselves are the (final) images of Being which result from Nature's

attempts to contemplate Being indicates that Being itself, though static in that its substance is eternal and unchanging, is *dynamic* in that processes, activities, or life (in the terrestrial sense) *are* genuinely and (at the level of our cosmos) appropriately manifestations of it. The (meta)principles defining Intellect's nature establish it as concurrently archetypal Motion and archetypal Rest (its substance or reality *is a motion*—*albeit* one that is eternally at rest) and the existence of Becoming is explained by Nature's inability to contemplate Being in its archetypal condition of (eternal) Rest but only in its aspect of Motion, or only as the principle or archetype of motion." Plotinus thus understands Becoming itself as a sort of Being: The Aristotelian conception of horizontal causality as a web of efficient causes actualizing the potentialities of diverse (sensible) substances gives way to a conception of causality even within our cosmos as a (final) effort at contemplation, or as a (lowest) type of vertical causality. Sensible substance no longer need be capable of the metaphysical feat of jumping from potentiality to actuality; rather, Plotinus considers processes or instances of Becoming to be fully actual and real already—*albeit* owing to Nature's capacity for metaphysical contemplation.

More important, Plotinus' reconception of Becoming discerns intelligibility within the sensible cosmos itself. In our tree example, the differing sensible forms observable through time (its visible size at one moment, succeeded by another visibly taller size at a later moment, and so forth) abstract from what in fact is a single, real, *continuous* process—its *tree-growth* (or *-growingness*, if you will). Accordingly, philosophers of nature should not model our cosmos on its diverse sensible forms and whatever patterns or regularities they may discern among them; rather, to understand our cosmos (indeed, also to explain whatever patterns or regularities they do observe among its sensible forms) natural philosophers should focus on its processes, activities, or instances of Becoming as such—as themselves intelligible realities (*albeit* intelligible realities which we may first notice sensorially, or as sensible realities)—and conceive them to be parts of a single, rational system informed throughout and for all time by immutable principles of Being as these manifest themselves under conditions of Becoming (i.e. space and time).

In terms of the Platonic tradition, this allows Plotinus, on the one hand, to accept Plato's formula that Becoming is the 'moving image of eternity' without invoking a metaphysical principle outside the vertical order of his hypostases to account for how an image of eternity could be moving. On the other hand, Nature's inability to preserve (or contemplate) motion in its archetypal condition of eternal rest allows Plotinus to

maintain a trace of Plato's metaphysical dualism. We have seen Plotinus insist in *Ennead* III.8 that, unlike the archetypal cosmos (Intellect), the vertical causality operative in our cosmos is inherently only an *attempt at* contemplation. As a result of Nature's unceasing effort to attain what Intellect has (or is) eternally, its offspring (our cosmos) departs so significantly from what is above (vertically prior to) it that it may be considered a distinct sort of reality altogether—e.g. a world of Becoming instead of a world of Being. Thus Plotinus speaks at times as if there were, on the one hand, a sensible world and, on the other hand, an intelligible world, even though in fact there is just the single vertical order and its various levels of reality—the sensible world being just its lowest level, a final image or manifestation of its substance and its principles.

In *Ennead* III.8 Plotinus expresses this obeisance to Platonic dualism by alleging that when the vertical order reaches our cosmos of Becoming, it finds itself entering the world of *participation in* Being and exiting the world of Being as such (see III.8.5, 12–13). Various scholars have noted, of course, that Plotinus' notion of participation differs markedly from Plato's notion. In terms of our current discussion, the notion seems meant to indicate that the sensible cosmos, in addition to being metaphysically dead (impotent, or not genuinely causative), is also inherently *partial* and *incomplete* as an image of Being. In *Ennead* II.1, for example, Plotinus refers to body as forever hastening and flowing (II.1.1, 8); and in *Ennead* III.7, he says, concerning celestial motion, that

...it, too, hastens towards what is going to be, and does not want to stand still, as it draws being to itself in doing one thing after another and moving in a circle in a sort of aspiration to substance...[so that it continuously] hastens in this way to everlasting existence by means of what is going to be."

In its attempt to mimic the *telos* of the archetypal cosmos, Becoming behaves as if there were "restless energy" present in it forcing it onwards and "pursuing and destroying countless forms" in its pursuit and hastening (see VI.4.27, 23–25). In contrast, Being as such is eternally whole, complete, self-contained, settled, and quiet. It is not the existence of Becoming or motion as such within our cosmos but the never-settled, forever-restless and -aspiring character of that motion which differentiates it from the archetypal cosmos. Indeed, our cosmos *is* a partial image of (a participant in) Being only because, as noted earlier, (archetypal) motion is itself 'part' of Being—*albeit* along with archetypal Rest. Plotinus thus argues in *Ennead* VI.2 that the Platonic genus of Motion is in fact another



name for Being, whose quietude consists in its being eternally at rest in that archetypal motion (VI.2.7, 8 & 15; also see III.7.3).

I shall not analyze in detail Plotinus' argument in *Ennead* VI.2 for his contention that the five Platonic genera—Being, Same, Difference, Motion, and Rest—in fact *all* denote the same metaphysical cause (Intellect), nor precisely how conceptually distinguishing them as *metaprinciples* of Intellect articulates and explains its (causative) nature. For now, the key point is just that (archetypal) Motion *is* a 'part' of Being, and so our cosmos is a *partial* image of Being just by virtue of its motion or Becomingness.\* It also is significant, however, that when Plotinus portrays motion in our cosmos as sharply different from (or only participatory in) Intellect's Motion-in-Rest, he typically alludes to manifestations of Becoming in *sensible form(s)*—e.g. the circularity of celestial movements and, in general, Becoming's seeming pursuit and destruction of countless (sensible) forms. For, classical Platonism's sharp dualism begins to dissolve as soon as we consider motions or processes as such, apart from or *prior* to their manifestation to us as sequences of sensible form. Thus, a growing tree may seem to be "pursuing and destroying countless forms" (observable sizes); yet, even regarding the observable tree, we can intellectually consider "simply the motion" (as Plotinus puts it in *Ennead* VI.1)—e.g. the tree-growth as such—which, far from being pursued and destroyed by the tree, allows us to make sense of its seemingly countless changes of sensible form while itself just *being* (and continuously *remaining*) an image of some motion-in-Being (e.g. an instance, or moving image, of tree-growth). Similarly, for an example given in the *Enneads* themselves, we can consider a person's activity of walking, as we observe it, as a continual changing of place; but we also can consider it as—from its outset and continuously throughout its existence—simply an instance of *walking* (see VI.1.16, 4–17).

Nonetheless, the fact that motion in our cosmos is *not* Intellect's archetypal Motion-in-Rest entails that even when viewed as intelligible and simple (or unifying) processes of Becoming, motion in our cosmos possesses a sort of aspiring and incompleteness which is not found in Intellect's motion even though it derives from it. For, Plotinus tells us, when considered apart from its eternal condition at Rest in archetypal Being, archetypal Motion itself entails repetition or "once again" (*to palin*) and a striving towards difference and succession (VI.1.16, 5–8). Walking, for example, is a matter of moving in a certain way towards some place different from one's current location. Accordingly, even if walking as such is not really a matter of pursuing and destroying the countless

sensible forms in which it manifests itself to our sense experience (e.g. the numerous observable locations or slices of sensible space a person traverses), it nevertheless is a sort of instance of Being which (at the level of Becoming) can exist only so long as its *telos* (the location toward which one is walking) lies outside it. Paradoxically, as soon as an instance of walking-in-Becoming completes itself (attains its *telos*), it no longer *is* an instance of *walking* (see VI.3.23, 11–12).

Another upshot of Plotinus' conception of Becoming seems to be that even when considered intelligibly, as an image (or images) of (part of) Being, motion in our cosmos must be *in*—or perhaps, it must be generative of—*space and time*; and this is so, once again, because of the nature of motion itself when it is not eternally at-Rest in Intellect. Once again, Plotinus does not conceive of Becoming as resulting from Being compromising with another metaphysically real principle that lies outside of or opposes Being. Becoming's source is wholly vertical inasmuch as Being itself "enters" our cosmos through its logos (Nature), and

...shakes, drives, rouses, and thrusts those that partake in it so that they neither rest nor remain in their own identity in order that they may be caught in that restlessness and turbulence that is only an image of Life [or Motion]. (VI.3.23, 1–5)

Of course, Nature could not "shake, drive, rouse, and thrust" the partial images of Being comprising our cosmos in the manner of an Aristotelian efficient cause—by virtue of itself shaking and thrusting about and somehow imparting, or actualizing a potential for, this among natural things. Plotinus has argued in *Ennead* III.8 that Nature's causality is properly understood as contemplation (or, at least, as an attempt at contemplation) because it "produces another while itself remaining unmoved [and unmoving]"—to which Plotinus immediately adds that Nature thereby produces Becoming itself, but in such a way that it *oversees* it (*epistatōn*) and truly remains a logos of Being instead of itself becoming an activity (*praxis*) in Becoming (III.8.3, 4–5). Since Nature causes Becoming without itself being in Becoming, it must, Plotinus maintains, be a type of soul. More precisely, he argues, Nature must be a soul because the 'living' power in virtue of which it produces its offspring is not just one aspect or part of its Being but comprises its entire essence: "For it, producing is what it is, and its productive power is identical with what it is" (III.8.3, 18). Nature cannot be identical with the hypostasis Soul, however, but must be a lower soul since it is itself an offspring of a prior soul (III.8.4, 15). Plotinus' reasons for these points rest, moreover,

on his use of contemplation as the means by which anything real is grounded in, or is metaphysically caused by, the principles defining his vertical order of the hypostases.

The cause of each level of reality after the One coming into existence as an image of a prior or higher level is contemplation, and is explained by the nature of contemplation. In particular, it is explained by the fact that contemplation is inherently productive because it includes the power to produce an image of its object as a by-product, or offspring, of the very act of contemplating that object. Any deficiency in such an image's Being is not to be explained by any principle or cause outside the act of contemplation itself but by a deficiency in the *clarity* and *completeness* of a given contemplative act. Plotinus argues that the 'dead' nature of Nature's offspring, for example, is due to the fact that Nature's contemplation is "somewhat blurred" and "a weak [or blurred] contemplation produces a weak object," i.e. offspring (III.8.4, 28–30). The blurred and weak character of Nature's contemplation also accounts for Becoming's partiality and incompleteness as an image of Being. The hypostasis Soul, in contrast, is "always filled and illuminated by the higher realm" of Intellect itself—by Being in its eternality and entirety (III.8.5, 10–13). Hence, Nature cannot be the hypostasis Soul (nor *vice versa*); it must be a secondary soul, a descent from the hypostasis soul. To be sure, hypostasis Soul's contemplation is also deficient and weak in relation to Intellect's (archetypal) contemplation; but its weakness is *not* a matter of obscurity, partiality, or blurredness. The weakness of its contemplation is seen, rather, in its need to utter and expound its object in order to learn it (III.8.6, 22–24). Unlike Intellect's offspring, Soul's are more than by-products of its contemplative activity. While the nature of contemplative activity always entails the production of offspring, in Soul's case this production also is the necessary means by which it 'learns' the object of its contemplation. This need to learn its object by expounding it in images gives Soul its essence as making-power; but it also is responsible for Soul's offspring having an obscured, blurred or partial contemplation of Being. In other words, the hypostasis Soul does 'learn' its object utterly and with complete clarity—even if not with Intellect's interpenetrating immediacy, or through the self-identification which characterizes Intellect's contemplative activity; but in Soul's 'learning by expounding' lie the seeds of Becoming and of the obscuring or blurring of archetypal Being that leads ultimately to sensible form.

How does weakness of any sort arise in reality's contemplative activity in the first place? Plotinus argues that "what is produced [by

contemplation] must always be of the same kind (*homogenes*) as its producer but weaker through losing integrity (*exitēdon*) as it descends [from the contemplator, or from its act]" (III.8.5, 23–24). Plotinus' insistence that a product of contemplation will be 'of the same kind' as its producer further buttresses his view that a lower level of reality is not the result of a higher reality somehow compromising with an opposing principle or with some real, independent substrate; rather, a lower reality is a lower, deficient manifestation of the level of reality immediately higher than it." This principle, that a lower level must lose something of its producer's integrity also explains why its own contemplative activity must be weaker than its producer's contemplation. This principle applies already to the hypostasis Soul, inasmuch as Soul is itself the by-product of Intellect's contemplation. Just as Nature is a type of soul since it is a by-product of Soul's contemplative activity, so too must the hypostasis Soul in fact be a kind of Intellect, Plotinus argues, but one which has lost some of its integrity in that it inherently "sees another" (III.8.6, 26). This inherent 'seeing' of its object as 'another' (or, Soul's need to expound its object in order to 'learn' it) differentiates Soul from archetypal Intellect, and once again yields the above result that, for Soul, its making is its essence—i.e. defines it as Soul, even though it also is a kind of Intellect.

Plotinus' notion of an image's loss in integrity relative to its metaphysical producer ultimately denotes a loss in *unity*. This becomes evident when he turns next in *Ennead* III.8 to Intellect as now the archetypal contemplator—just as in *Ennead* III.2 it was the archetypal cosmos. In discussing that treatise, recall, I noted that the One could not itself be the archetypal cosmos because 'cosmos' connotes a *system* of some sort, and so a whole composed of parts. A primary feature of Plotinus' description of Intellect in *Ennead* III.2.1, however, was that Intellect's parts are not separated from one another, nor from Intellect as a whole, but are effectively *one* within the unity of Intellect's thought and with Intellect itself. In other Plotinian terms, Intellect is metaphysically but one remove from Absolute Unity because even the fundamental duality in its nature (between its Motion, Activity, or Life, and the object or *telos* of that Motion) does not denote a real distinction in Intellect. Intellect's Motion and its object are not really distinct from one another—nor from Intellect itself, the ground or 'agent' of this Motion—because Intellect's archetypal Motion is archetypal contemplation, and archetypal contemplation is not a motion directed by an agent towards a distinct object; rather, in archetypal contemplation the contemplator, the act of contemplation, and the contemplated object are in fact one and the same."

In *Ennead* III.8, Plotinus expresses this by describing Intellect as nothing but "living contemplation" (*theōria zōsa*) (III.8.8, 11). It is essentially living since it is a (first) descent from Absolute Unity just by virtue of its Motion, along with the implied (at least logical) difference between motion and its object. It also is essentially contemplative since its Motion is eternally at Rest in Intellect and is eternally the Same as Intellect, and as its object. Likewise, Intellect is also primal (archetypal) Life (III.8.8, 18):

If, then, the truest life is life by thought (*noēsei*) and is the same as the truest thought, then the truest thought lives; and contemplation, and the object of contemplation at this level, is living and life, and the two together are one."

Plotinus thus solidifies Intellect's credentials as the archetypal cosmos by identifying it as a first descent from Absolute Unity or, viewed the other way around, by recognizing that the only metaphysical principle which could be higher than Being (Intellect) is the One.

Plotinus argues in *Ennead* III.8 that in contemplating itself, since it is utterly and truly a unity, Intellect could contemplate only Unity itself as the archetype or source of its substance and essence." Accordingly, Intellect is "first in the order of outgoing" (III.8.9, 34) from the primal substance of all reality; but there must therefore exist a yet higher, absolutely first principle which is the source, power, or cause of the outgoing and of Intellect's archetypal Life within that order (III.8.10, 1-4). Since Intellect's own archetype could only be Absolute Unity—or, since the primal substance of all reality and the (absolutely first) cause even of Intellect are one and the same, viz. Absolute Unity—Plotinus concludes *Ennead* III.8 by insisting that any thing *is* or can *be* just insofar as it is in some way *one* (III.8.11, 19-28). Nothing is intelligible, explicable, alive, or at all real except insofar as it is some sort of Unity (or is a descent from Unity); and, insofar as any thing is causative, it must be a cause or source of unification. The ultimate primacy of unity (and unification) to real substance (and causality) is even more fundamental than the five Platonic *metaprinciples* defining Intellect's nature and than the principles of intelligibility, rationality, or *cosmos* immanent in Intellect. Indeed, these subsequent principles and *metaprinciples* depend upon it (Unity) for their own validity or truth, and so it is also *sine qua non* above all the others for any adequate conception of reality—hence, for any adequate conception of our cosmos, or for any scientific explication of our cosmos and its processes. I now turn to final remarks on Plotinus' own conception of our cosmos and, especially, of Nature.

In his *Phaedo*, Plato posits as the "causes of (things in the world of) generation and corruption" what come to be known as his Forms—suggesting that something in the world of Becoming is beautiful, for example, just insofar as it partakes in Absolute Beauty. In *Timaeus*, however, he adds a "receptacle of random powers" to account for the nature or process of Becoming by which things in our cosmos pursue and partake in form." In contrast, Aristotle posits that things *are* by Nature, which he conceives distributively—as that aspect of his primary substances or hylomorphic individuals which is the "source of being moved and of being at rest in that [substance or individual] to which it properly belongs." In *prima facie* contrast both to Plato and to Aristotle, Plotinus posits Absolute Unity as the utterly first principle of all (real) things, and Living Unity or Primal Life (Intellect) as a derivatively-first principle for things which are not utterly *one* but which are *one* nevertheless."

In effect, however, Plotinus incorporates elements both of Plato's and of Aristotle's views in his metaphysic of Nature. Like Plato, Plotinus maintains that the archetypal cause of our cosmos is eternal Being or Form (though as he conceives of this, of course), and that Being as such must be prior to and devoid of all Becoming. Unlike Plato, however, Becomingness is not explained by a receptacle or some similar principle or substrate, but by Being itself descending to the (metaphysical) level of sensible Becoming. Like Aristotle, Plotinus maintains that the proximate cause of motion and its forms in Becoming is Nature, which is both internal to our cosmos and a logos of Being. Nature—which, unlike Aristotle, Plotinus conceives nondistributively, as a *soul*—has this dual-faceted status by virtue of its being *unifying power* (*dynamis*).<sup>24</sup> As seen earlier, it is the proximate cause of Becoming by virtue of the "once again" character implicit in the nature of its causative activity, owing to the "somewhat obscured and partial" character of its (attempt at) contemplation; yet it thereby also effects Becoming's participation in Being by virtue of the unifying effects of this activity, owing to Plotinus' principle that something *is* just insofar as it is *one* (or is *unified*) in some way.

Partaking in Being by virtue of inner, unifying power seems especially characteristic of life, or of living things; and so we might say that Becoming, as effected by Nature and despite its own causatively impotent (or metaphysically dead) status, is a system of life or of living things. Thus, in *Ennead* I.7 Plotinus maintains that all things in our cosmos—including putatively soulless things (*apsycha*)—partake in Unity,

and so also in Being, because Form (or Being) is an image of the Good (i.e. the One) (I.7.2); and in *Ennead* IV.4 he argues that our cosmos is universally alive (or living throughout)—everything within it living according to its own appropriate (sort of) life—so that even things which may not seem to be self-moving or animate must possess their own “hidden life” as the proximate cause of their motion (see IV.4.36). In *Ennead* VI.9.1 Plotinus argues that even *continuous magnitudes*—the movements of celestial or terrestrial bodies through space—are just in virtue of a unity which those magnitudes possess as effects of some soul or power. Earlier, of course, we saw Plotinus distinguishing between the logos Nature itself, Nature’s logoi, and those logoi’s sensible forms. That the various processes and activities in the world of Becoming, when considered by themselves (prior to their sensible forms), are logoi of a single soul (Nature) is ultimately confirmed by the fact that they *all* are explicable as manifestations of one (metaphysical) thing—viz. unifying power. Nevertheless, that something multiple or composite in Becoming may be unified (and so given Being) from within Becoming itself seems most evident in the case of organically alive things; and so Plotinus’ conception of our cosmos relies heavily on notions associated with (organic) life, including when he has in mind such diverse natural processes as a person’s walking, the celestial movements of heavenly bodies, the burning of a fire, the flowing of a river, or the falling of rocks in an avalanche.

This coalescence in Plotinus’ thought of inanimate and animate processes, and their common dependency on Nature’s unifying power, is the main theme of *Ennead* IV.4. In this treatise, Plotinus sometimes refers to Nature as “the soul of the all,” and sometimes as “the giver of order” (*to kosmoun*) or as a “divine craftsman.” The first title is perhaps most apt insofar as it emphasizes that Nature is not an agent which operates from outside our cosmos but is “the life of our cosmos that possesses leadership within itself.” The latter two sorts of descriptions are also helpful, however, since they emphasize that Nature’s unifying power operates not only in things which we would normally consider to be alive or animate but *wherever* discernible order (*taxis*) exists to demonstrate the presence of unity amid what otherwise may seem just a sensible multiplicity—as, for example, the ordered circularity discernible in a celestial body’s continuous change in its observable position. By discernible order, of course, I do not intend order which necessarily someone has discerned or actually observed. Plotinus maintains that our cosmos is *in fact* rational throughout because—despite its diversity, Becomingness, and its countless

multiplicity of sensible forms—every real thing or process within it in fact *is* ordered in some way. Our cosmos as a whole and *everything* within it is effected and ‘crafted’ by the unifying power of Nature: *all* processes in Becoming are vertical effects (manifestations, logoi) of one master (*hēgemonoun*), because Nature is a soul and “a soul is a unity and its artisanship is [always] one” (see IV.4.10, 1–16). Thus, our cosmos is a vertical effect of a living unity and a logos of Living Unity (IV.4.11, 1).<sup>2</sup>

In my examples of Becoming, I have focused thus far on individual motions, activities or processes within our cosmos. *Ennead* IV.4.10 emphasizes the important fact, however, that Nature’s primary function is to be the soul, or unifying power, of our cosmos as a whole. Indeed, Nature’s presence within individual things or processes derives from that primary function, denoting (part of) the means by which it unifies our cosmos as a single whole. In *Ennead* IV.4 Plotinus proffers a variety of conceptions for how Nature promulgates its primary governorship over the entirety of our cosmos. He tells us, for example, that Nature flows into all things, dominating them and conducting them into a single, circumscribed whole (see IV.4.10, 25 & IV.4.11, 1–4); that diversity springs from a logos, and therefore is always guided in its ‘difference’ and sequentiality by a logos (see IV.4.12, 37ff); that our cosmos is a sympathetic whole because of Nature, and it thereby is itself a living unity (see IV.4.32, 14), wherein all things are established as to their physical conditions, positions, and structures as are the parts of a single living thing (see IV.4.33, 26–33); and that because of Nature all things in our cosmos are entwined into a unity (see IV.4.38, 18). Similarly, Plotinus says elsewhere that the divine logos (Nature) composes what is *one* cosmos from the *many* parts as it orders them into a single whole (I.6.2, 19–20); that the soul of our cosmos “runs over its surface” ordering all things (II.9.7, 29); that our cosmos is a weaving together of all things (III.2.15, 2); that it possesses a soul which binds it together and “brings it entirely under the rule of reason” (see IV.3.9, 43ff & IV.3.10, 11ff); and that the author of all (natural) things is a soul which has breathed life into them all—which has shaped and ordered the heavens and still conducts the heavens in their harmonious movements, and which likewise gives to *all* (natural) things law and motion and life (see V.1.2).

Implicit in the foregoing paraphrases are thus two dimensions to Nature’s operation or function. There is Nature’s distributive ubiquity—the immanence or presence of its unifying power within every thing and process in our cosmos. Soul as such is “power streaming into life” (VI.7.31, 3), and Nature is that power as operative in Becoming in

such a way that every individual (real) thing in our cosmos is a living unity. This dimension to Nature's operation is most evident, I have noted, in those sorts of things which we would normally consider to be living or animate. A plant or an animal is doubly a multiplicity: first, in that it is composed of parts and, second, in that it and its parts move through space and change through time. In both respects, however, such an organism is ordered and patterned into a single whole because both its (organic) parts and its (or their) movements and processes spring from a single active unity within the organism—a productive logos, binding power, or soul (see VI.2.5). Indeed, my earlier discussion of *Ennead* III.8 implied that things in our cosmos are (at least when viewed *sub specie naturalis*) in fact nothing but (ordered patterns of) movements, processes, or Becomings. Insofar as a given process (e.g. a tree's growth) does not exhaust the reality of a thing in Becoming (e.g. the tree), we may distinguish the thing itself (the tree) from that process (its growth). In reality, however, it seems that for Plotinus the reality—indeed, the *substance*—of things in Becoming is comprised of, or is exhausted by, patterns or sets of Becomings which manifest Nature's unifying power in a certain rationally discernible way (or, perhaps, as operative at a certain unificative point within our cosmos). Second, there also is Nature's own *primary* unity as essentially the soul or unifying power of our cosmos as a whole. Thus, we saw in *Ennead* III.2 that it is our cosmos in its entirety, not any individual thing(s) or process(es) within it, that is most clearly and fully an image of the archetypal cosmos.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Plotinus argued there that it is only in relation to our cosmos as a whole, or to one another as ordered into a single cosmos, that individual processes and their seeming interactions or interdependencies become rationally explicable and 'friendly.' In this dimension to its operation, Nature is a single, undistributed logos or soul—effecting and governing our cosmos as one entirety, wherein individual things and processes are in fact comparable to the diverse parts, or organs and processes, comprising a single living organism.

These two dimensions to Nature's operation are not opposed to one another. Indeed, I have argued that its concurrent presence in diverse individual things and processes, ordering and unifying (or subordering and subunifying) them, derives from its primary status as *the* one (and only) unifying power present in our cosmos. Just as ordering and thereby unifying various parts and processes of a plant or an animal would contribute to its soul's governance of the plant or the animal as a whole, so too does Nature's (sub)ordering and (sub)unification of individual things and processes in Becoming contribute to its operation as the soul of

our cosmos as a (single) whole. Plotinus brings these two dimensions together in *Enneads* II.2.3 and VI.7.7 by arguing that as Nature "runs through" our cosmos effecting, ordering, and governing it, there occurs an "effective separation of [its] powers" wherein its single unifying power manifests itself in various ways in various parts of the cosmos. Thus its distributive ubiquity is in fact (at least part of) the way in which Nature promulgates its primary, undistributed function of ordering and unifying our cosmos as one, single whole.

Plotinus' explication in *Enneads* II.2.3 and VI.7.7 of Nature's distributive ubiquity (as I have termed it) in terms of an "effective separation of powers" implicit (it seems) in its undistributed or primary unificative power might seem to compromise the latter's primacy. Lest Nature as a single soul become something like Aristotle's form of the outermost sphere or a power located (like, on one reading, Anaximander's Indefinite substance) at the cosmogenic center of our cosmos from whence various powers radiate or separate, it might seem necessary that this "separation of powers" denote a distribution or descent of Nature itself, wherein its purportedly singular power in fact becomes many diverse and discreet (sorts of) powers. Nor would it suffice for preserving Nature's primal unity to characterize this counterfactually—e.g. by arguing that even though its power does distribute itself in a certain way, it could have distributed itself differently (indeed, in any number of possible ways which might be consistent with effecting a cosmos). This would not suffice because Nature is a *reality* or an *actuality* for Plotinus. Indeed, Nature is *more real*, or is *higher* in the order of reality, than the world of Becoming and than the various ways in which its power might manifest or separate its self within various parts of our cosmos. The appropriately Plotinian resolution to this conundrum lies, I think, midway between adopting a merely counterfactual account of the primacy of Nature's primal power of unification and denying that Plotinus' separation-of-powers explication of Nature's ubiquitous (self-)distribution denotes a *real* or *actual* (vertical) process. In particular, Plotinus intends, I think, that Nature itself and its primal power *are* in reality already *ubiquitous*—i.e. are present completely (or nondistributively) at every point or within every part of our cosmos.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, Nature's primal unity and power is surely not *absolutely* or *utterly* primal (since the One alone is). Consequently, my notion of Nature's distributive ubiquity and Plotinus' explication of this as a separation of powers denote the fact that at each point or within each part of our cosmos Nature (in fact, or in actuality) *utilizes* its primal power, or

manifests a 'part' of its primal self, in the manner most appropriate to or effective in that part of our cosmos.

The importance of this way of conceiving Nature is perhaps most evident when we recognize that in addition to unifying various parts of our cosmos individually or distributively and to unifying our cosmos as a whole, Plotinus intends Nature also to unify or order observable interactions between or among diverse parts of our cosmos. Indeed, we saw in *Ennead* III.2 that our cosmos' rationality, beauty, or friendship is most evident when we recognize the harmony and rationality which in fact obtains among seemingly warring parts of it. Whether in the case of a fire consuming wood, a lion attacking an antelope, or boulders bouncing off one another during their head-long descent down a mountain—each and every putative interaction among things within our cosmos is in fact a rationally orchestrated, lawfully ordered manifestation of Nature's unifying power. (I'm ignoring, of course, the issue of free will in human behavior.) To suppose that real conflict or warfare exists in such cases would be at least as absurd as supposing that my body is at war with food as it consumes it for nourishment, or that my hands are in conflict with one another when I bring them together in a clapping motion and they bounce off one another after impact. For, while 'consumes' and 'bounces off' may still suggest conflict in some sense, what these terms in fact denote in these examples are lawful sequences of observable events or complex processes of (sensible) Becoming which transpire in a quietly ordered fashion as themselves in reality just parts of the rationally orchestrated cosmic drama being effected in its entirety by Nature. Our cosmos, and the things and processes which comprise it, as further testimony to its nonarchetypal nature, are constrained by principles of contrariety—for example, such that two bodies cannot occupy the same place at the same time, or that the same organic material cannot be both part of an antelope and also part of a lion at the same time. But these principles do not denote any real warfare or actual contraries among various parts of our cosmos. What was once part of an antelope now *becomes* part of a lion, for instance; and this is itself simply a natural process—or, a manifestation of Nature's unifying power as *fully* present throughout our cosmos, including wherever a seeming interaction might occur.

A final point of emphasis regarding Plotinus' conception of Nature: Although Plotinus maintains that Nature is a soul and that souls differ from (sensible) bodies in not possessing size, mass, quantity or position, he does not conceive of Nature and the world of Becoming as two separate substances. Instead, we have seen that as the vertical order descends from

the One and Intellect towards Becoming, each lower level of reality is the same *in substance* as its immediately prior level but weaker or less unified in that substance. The world of Becoming, in particular, just *is* Nature manifesting itself first in Becoming as such and then to our sense experience—therein 'acquiring' size, mass, place, etc. Of course, it then is our cosmos and is no longer Nature as such, inasmuch as 'Nature' denotes the unifying power which is metaphysically prior to and causative of our cosmos. Nevertheless, Nature does not become a separate substance from our cosmos but is "present within it" as that living unity or productive power which in fact is manifesting *itself* at the level of Becoming and sensible form(s). All reality and substance in fact is a descent or outflow from the One, and Nature is prior to our cosmos in the order of that descent or in its reality as a manifestation of that one primal substance; but, for this very reason, it thereby is not itself a (metaphysically primal) substance which somehow constitutes a separate substance from another putative (metaphysically primal) substance which somehow constitutes our cosmos.

This last point is pertinent especially to seeing Plotinus' Neoplatonism and its conception of Nature as a response to Pyrrhonism—my final topic in this essay.

### 3. Plotinus, Pyrrhonism, and 'Scientific Spirit'

Far from supporting the notion that Plotinus' preoccupation with metaphysics implies a disinterest in this-world, or a rejection of its rationality or of the legitimacy and value of scientific investigation of it, the textual discussions in section 2 of this essay have demonstrated a concerted effort in the *Enneads* with saving our cosmos from the irrationality of matter and from intellectually unwarranted conceptions of it. I have, of course, dealt with a very small and select body of texts from Plotinus' *Enneads* and have barely scratched the surface even of those texts. Nevertheless, we have seen a Plotinus who is hardly willing to abandon our cosmos to Gnostic deprecation or to Pyrrhonian indifference. Plotinus' ascent to Intellect in *Ennead* III.2 and to Intellect and the One in *Ennead* III.8, for example, are clearly meant to establish Becoming's pedigree as a *bona fide* image of Being that is all-beautiful, harmonious, etc. Together with *Ennead* IV.4 and other texts I have mentioned, moreover, that ascent also prepares the ground for science itself, among other things, by identifying unifying power as the essence of Nature, by

conceiving of Becoming itself as an intelligible and rational object for human investigation, and by suggesting as guiding concepts for discerning and studying Nature's lawful effects in Becoming such notions as order, harmony, pattern, and the like.

That Plotinus' rational beatification of our cosmos is a response to Gnosticism is, of course, explicit in the *Enneads* themselves. That it also responds to Pyrrhonism is not explicit. Indeed, Plotinus never mentions Pyrrhonism by name, much less individual Pyrrhonists, in the *Enneads*. I shall rely upon Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* to sketch the main elements of Pyrrhonism's challenge to "Greek rationality" before articulating how Plotinus' Neoplatonism responds to that challenge.

Ancient Skepticism took two principal forms: Academic Skepticism, and Pyrrhonian Skepticism. The former tradition—as enunciated by Cicero, for example—argues that the true natures of things are obscured and hidden from us by sensory appearances and that, as a result, a wise person ought never to assent to anything as *true* but instead should accept and act upon what *seems-true* just in (or from) appearances themselves (what they also term the "probable" or "truth-like"). In this way, Academics hoped to maintain that the goal of the wise person is still truth, or the true natures of things; but this goal is unattainable by any human being. Only truth's likenesses (i.e. appearances) are within our reach; and so, we must be content with the "probability" which lies within our reach, even while striving for our real *telos*—truth itself. Pyrrhonism is a more radical Skepticism whose goal is *quietude*—an utter surcease of the desire to attain truth. A Pyrrhonist will not assent to, nor even just "accept," any theory about the true natures of things whereas an Academic, though he would never "assent to" (commit himself to the truth of) any such theory, may accept a theory if it seems-true at the time or resonates with the probability of sensory appearances."

Both Academics and Pyrrhonists thus live by appearances alone, but they do so for different reasons and in different ways. An Academic lives by appearances because they are truth-likenesses or seemings-of-truth, and he tries to discern in them reason to accept provisionally various of the ideas, beliefs and theories he encounters while vigorously pursuing the forever-elusive truth which lies just beyond his reach—on the other side of appearances. A Pyrrhonist, in contrast, lives by appearances, not because they are (allegedly) truth-likenesses, nor because he believes instead that they themselves must somehow be the truth. He lives by appearances, rather, simply because they are all that lie within our grasp; he has no use for the philosophers' notion of 'truth' at all, and so

disregards it altogether. In Sextus' terms, it is simply the case that appearances are the only things that are "evident" to us. Whether they also are all there is to reality, and so are themselves the truth about it, or whether they are images or likenesses of further reality (and ones which may or may not perspicuously manifest it to us), is of no concern to the Pyrrhonist. Rather, the Pyrrhonist intends to live a solely practical life, thinking and acting in terms of appearances alone and not utilizing or appealing to them in any way whatsoever to speculative ends—unlike the Academic.<sup>4</sup> Sextus' writings, for example, while they do articulate the Pyrrhonian viewpoint, seem more fundamentally meant to lead Pyrrhonists away from pursuing philosophy's traditional end (truth) and towards quietude and perhaps also to serve as a prophylactic for any Pyrrhonist who backslides into searching for truth.

Sextus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, like all of his writings, is long and complex. I shall focus on two of its main features: Its analysis of what Sextus terms *Dogmatic* philosophy, and its attempt (which accounts for its length and complexity) to lead Pyrrhonists towards quietude by establishing an "equipoise" among all Dogmatic beliefs and arguments. For, only after speculation has thusly annihilated or at least paralyzed itself can the Pyrrhonist be free to live his practical life amid the "evident" appearances of sense.

As Sextus sees it, *all* philosophy, not just Pyrrhonism, is *in fact* a search for quietude (*ataraxia*). More precisely, philosophy arises from a recognition of some apparent puzzle or anomaly (*anōmalias*) that disturbs (or disquiets) us, and its goal is to restore quietude by resolving the anomaly." Traditional philosophy, however, has sought to restore quietude by distinguishing between truth and falsehood and supposing that the way to resolve apparent anomalies is to find the truth, and so has come to suppose even that truth is itself the *telos* of philosophy. But an apparent anomaly *is* anomalous in appearances, and so traditional philosophy is forced to suppose that the truth is not to be found in appearances themselves.<sup>5</sup> It thus is forced to go outside appearances—and so, Sextus maintains, outside what is "evident to us"—and to postulate *nonevident* things (*adēla*) which philosophers express in propositions or conceive in thoughts that Sextus terms *intelligibles* (*noēta* or *nooumena*), and which contrast with appearances (*phainomena*). Sextus calls these traditional philosophers *Dogmatists*, and he defines *Dogmatism* as "assenting to a non-evident proposition" or as "assenting to certain of the non-evident things sought by science."<sup>6</sup> As Sextus defines the term, *Dogmatism* does not mean, say, close-mindedness or assenting to something without

argument or reasons. On Sextus' definition, even Academic Skeptics, who insist upon continually examining and reexamining the available evidence and its "probability," are Dogmatists insofar as they search for nonevident things or choose (provisionally) to accept nonevident propositions. Any philosopher who pursues quietude by seeking truth in nonevident propositions or things is a Dogmatist; and, Sextus believes, anyone who seeks the truth *must* do so in nonevident propositions since, as noted, appearances *are* anomalous and so cannot themselves be truth.

Central to Sextus' understanding of Dogmatism is his notion of nonevident propositions, or of propositions which postulate nonevident things. To get some idea of what Sextus has in mind by 'nonevident things,' it is interesting to note that the philosophical tradition least discussed by him is Platonism. Sextus' paradigm of Dogmatic philosophy seems, instead, to be materialism—especially Atomism and Stoicism, and also Aristotelianism. Thus, Sextus offers as prime examples of Dogmatism Anaxagoras' attempt to resolve the anomaly that snow seems to be a form of water which, however, seems unique among forms of water in that it appears to be white by positing "Snow is frozen water; water is black; therefore, snow is black";<sup>1</sup> and Democritus' attempt to resolve the anomaly that honey tastes sweet to some people and bitter to others by postulating that in reality honey is neither sweet nor bitter but instead is composed of (tasteless) atoms and void.<sup>2</sup> In both of these examples, the Dogmatic move is to postulate a real or true material world which underlies appearances and resolves apparent anomalies just by itself not being anomalous. Thus, in Anaxagoras' material hypokeimenon snow shares with all other forms of water that it is really black—it only appears to be white; and in Democritus' material hypokeimenon all things are really tasteless—they only appear to be sweet, bitter, or whatever. Sextus' arguments in his *Outlines* range over all areas of Dogmatic philosophy, not just natural science; and they attack a wide range of Dogmatic philosophers, not just Atomists and Pluralists. Throughout his arguments, however, *material hypokeimena* remain his paradigms of nonevident things; by nonevident propositions or thoughts ('intelligibles') Sextus consistently has in mind propositions or thoughts whose objects lie outside the propositions or thoughts themselves and which—like Anaxagoras' black snow and Democritus' atoms—exist beyond appearances as such. This understanding of intelligibles is also the basis for Sextus' method of equipose.

The bulk of Sextus' *Outlines* is occupied with his strategy of leading Pyrrhonists to quietude by establishing an equipose (*isostheneias*) among

all Dogmatic intelligibles, thereby annihilating or at least paralyzing speculation's desire to reach the truth.<sup>3</sup> Establishing this equipose will not resolve the apparent anomalies which give rise to speculation, of course; but, strictly speaking, Dogmatic philosophy does not resolve them either. The apparent anomalies remain anomalies in appearances for the Dogmatist who 'resolves' them by seeking refuge from them in his nonanomalous (by postulation) realm of nonevident hypokeimena. The Pyrrhonist differs from the Dogmatist on this score, however, precisely because he recognizes that the Dogmatist's 'resolution' of the anomalies of appearances is bogus—that it does not really resolve them at all. More precisely, Sextus' equipose method demonstrates the bogus character of the Dogmatist's response to the riddles of appearances by showing that Dogmatism cannot lead to quietude. His method does this by showing that every Dogmatic intelligible has Dogmatic competitors which contradict it, and that any argument a Dogmatist might give for assenting to his intelligible has competitors which argue against that intelligible and in favor of opposing intelligibles.

The basis for Sextus' method is the fact, as he sees it, that the conflicting intelligibles of the Dogmatists are by themselves all of equal worth since they all are equally nonevident propositions, or thoughts about nonevident things.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, it is incumbent upon the Dogmatist to base his intelligibles upon arguments which seek to prove them and to disprove his competitors' intelligibles. The Dogmatist, Sextus argues, cannot apprehend the objects postulated in his intelligibles just by the act of conception itself (*to noein*); he must implicitly add to the act of conceiving an intelligible an assumption of the existence (*tên hyparchin*) of its postulated object(s).<sup>5</sup> For, as noted earlier, the objects postulated in intelligibles are external to the intelligibles themselves; and thought "does not make contact with external objects and receive presentations by means of itself but by means of the senses, and the senses do not apprehend the external real objects [postulated in intelligibles] but only, if at all, their own affections [*i.e.* appearances]."<sup>6</sup> Since the Dogmatist's postulated objects are not "evident" within the act of conceiving intelligibles itself (nor in sensory appearances), their assumed existence must be made to rest upon arguments which would justify his assenting to them. But the arguments mobilized by Dogmatists in attempting to prove their intelligibles (and to disprove their competitors') can all be shown in turn to be by themselves of equal worth in their logic (validity) and in their relevance (or lack thereof) to appearances (what is "evident"), and so they also stand in need of their own proof—and so on, and so on, *ad infinitum*.<sup>7</sup>



Not only can traditional philosophy never lead us to the truth (or, at least, never to recognition of the truth), and so return us to a condition of quietude; it cannot even demonstrate that one intelligible is stronger than another. All of the Dogmatist intelligibles are equally provable, and equally refutable.

The Pyrrhonian attack on the Greek scientific spirit has speculative quietude or scientific indifference as its goal, and its focus is the Dogmatic character (the Pyrrhonists believe) of all traditional Greek philosophy. In light of this, it is crucial to recognize that, although Plotinus' Neoplatonism seeks to resolve the apparent puzzles and anomalies of sensible Becoming by finding reality or truth, it is *not a form of Dogmatism*. For one thing, Plotinus' philosophy denies the presumption that apparent anomalies in fact *are* anomalies in appearances, and so also the Dogmatist's approach to 'resolving' them by postulating a realm of hypokeimena beyond all appearances wherein lies the truth. In thus rejecting the Dogmatic program of finding truth in such hypokeimena, moreover, Plotinus also rejects the nonevident intelligibles of the Dogmatists. Truth is to be found in, or by means of, intelligibles for Plotinus; but the so-called 'intelligibles' of the Dogmatists are not genuine intelligibles to begin with.

Plotinus maintains, we have seen, that our cosmos as a whole and every part of it is ordered and unified by Nature, and our cosmos is not separate in substance from Nature but it and its parts are in fact manifestations of Nature itself. The world of Becoming is, as a result, thoroughly rational; and this is in fact the very same world as that which appears to us in sense experience, or which we also discern in sensible form(s). Plotinus' Nature, in other words, is not a hypokeimenon, or 'underlie,' for appearances at all.<sup>6</sup> Sensible form (or appearances) is just a final manifestation of the one real substance which extends or proceeds from the One all the way to the level of sense experience. To be sure, the consequent rationality of sensible Becoming is not always *self-evident* in the "evident" world of sensory appearances. At times, it may become evident only after much careful study and scientific investigation informed by an understanding of how the principles of rationality or *cosmos* operate and manifest themselves to us, ultimately in sensible form(s). Apparent anomalies are thus not really anomalies in appearances, but are appearances whose (nonanomalous) rationality might not be readily discernible insofar as it is not self-evident in appearances. But to say that the sensible cosmos' thorough rationality is not self-evident is not to say that it must therefore be *nonevident*, or that it therefore can be a feature only of a realm of hypokeimena which lies outside all appearances.

Recalling the anomalies of snow's whiteness and of honey's taste, for example, the Plotinian idea would seem to be that these are not to be 'resolved' by postulating an underlying matter in which snow is not white and honey is not really sweet nor bitter; instead, they are genuinely to be resolved by understanding the various ways in which Nature appropriately and rationally manifests itself, or operates, in the diverse parts and amid the complex circumstances or conditions found in our cosmos. For example, whiteness is the appropriate visible form for water to take under certain conditions, and sweetness (or bitterness) is the appropriate flavor for honey in certain circumstances (which include conditions in the person tasting it). As St. Augustine tells the Academic Skeptic in his *Contra Academicos*, regarding whether we can apprehend "evident truth" in appearances: "Perhaps it cannot be apprehended by you or other fools, but why can it not be apprehended by a wise person?" (Book III, 21). The context of Augustine's remark is somewhat different from our present discussion; but its upshot is the same: That appearances in the world of sensible Becoming appear anomalous or irrational to someone who does not understand how Nature operates within it (or manifests itself by means of it) does not mean that they really are anomalous, or that they would be so even for one who does understand this.<sup>7</sup>

An important element in Plotinus' metaphysical system which I have ignored almost completely in this essay is his theory of the intelligibles (or Forms). I shall not attempt to detail that theory here either;<sup>8</sup> I only will indicate in programmatic terms how Plotinus does conceive of intelligibles as postulates of Intellectual activity, yet of a sort which sharply contrasts with how Sextus and his Dogmatists conceive them. Recall that for Sextus and his Dogmatists, intelligibles are propositions or thoughts which postulate hypokeimena—i.e. objects that exist apart from their Intellectual conception (as well as beyond all sensory appearances)—and so they are nonevident and require a separate assumption, and so also proof, of their existence before we can assent to them. For Plotinus, in contrast, the objects of genuinely Intellectual acts or conceptions are far from nonevident. In fact, they are archetypically *self-evident*.<sup>9</sup> A genuine Intellectual object (or intelligible) exists solely by virtue of (and so "within") its Intellectual conception; it is an object of Intellectual *contemplation* wherein the contemplative act and its object are one. Since genuine Intellectual activity, in other words, is contemplation and since the contemplative object is already present within the activity of contemplation itself, there is no other outside or external object whose existence is merely a postulate of Intellect. Knowing *external* objects, or

knowing objects externally, is the goal (and need) of sense experience, not Intellection. Consequently, genuinely Intellectual conceptions must always be true and can never be false. Likewise, such notions as deliberation, plausible belief, assent, persuasion, hesitation, doubt, possible error, and the like, are simply out of place when discussing Intellect and its activity or mode of conceiving intelligibles.<sup>8</sup> And so once again, no separate justification or proof is needed to establish the existence of the objects of genuine Intellectual activity; any putative object whose existence is not self-evident in its very conception (and so also true by its very conception) simply is *not* an object of genuinely Intellectual activity—and this is especially the case with material hypokeimena.

I realize that the foregoing gives an idea of what Plotinus' intelligibles *are not* more than of what they *are*. Nevertheless, it does indicate further how Plotinus' Neoplatonism is a non-Dogmatic response to Pyrrhonism. In doing so, however, it focuses on Plotinus' hypostasis Intellect as the archetype, source or metaphysical agent of all Intellectual activity. How does this relate to the conceptions or thoughts of individual philosophers (or scientists)—the living targets of Sextus' attacks? It would, of course, be appropriate here to discuss Plotinus' views regarding our souls' relationship with Intellect—regarding the intellects-in-us and their relationship to archetypal Intellect. Roughly, since Intellect eternally "fills and illumines" Soul (see III.8.5, 10), and since our souls (as well as Nature) are offspring of Soul, insofar as we engage in genuinely Intellectual activities our conceptions will be one and the same with Intellect's and with those that inform Nature's operations.<sup>9</sup> Once again, however, this only points towards the outlines of the theory, and it also raises the further question of how we are to *recognize* when we are engaging in genuine Intellectual activities. Inasmuch as Plotinus' main concern is to distance his own intelligibles from those characterized by Sextus, however, I can only presume that he intends genuine Intellection "in us" to share the same features as those noted earlier regarding archetypal intellection—e.g. that since the objects of genuine Intellectual activity must already be present within the activity itself, their conception must be self-evident, and so they *must* be true and *cannot* be erroneous or false.

In closing, this section has contrasted Plotinus' intelligibles with those postulated by Sextus and his Dogmatists: First, they are not hypokeimena which underlie appearances and which are tailored to provide a refuge in our cosmos from the anomalies of appearances.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Plotinus rejects the presumption that appearances really *are* anomalous, or irrational; he

conceives sensible Becoming to be in fact a final manifestation of intelligibility or rationality itself. Second, in their pure form at least—that is, as objects of genuine Intellectual activity or as prior to the objects of sense experience which manifest them—Plotinus' intelligibles are self-evident and so, it would seem, are true *necessarily*. No Pyrrhonian equipoise of competing (genuine) intelligibles is possible: During genuine Intellectual activity only *one* set of intelligibles is even *possible* (viz. those which are true *necessarily*; and so whose denial or 'opposing conception' must be *false necessarily*). Insofar as a conception (or its object) is merely possible, postulated, or putatively factual (contingent), it cannot be a genuinely Intellectual activity nor an intelligible.

I still have not articulated fully or precisely the nature and character of the items comprising the (one, self-evident, necessarily true) set of intelligibles which Plotinus believes is conceived by genuine Intellectual activity (i.e. archetypal contemplation, and its images in the soul of the cosmos and in human souls); nor have I discussed Plotinus' grounds for adopting the Platonic *megista genera* as *metaprinciples* defining Intellect's nature, its consequent contents (the intelligibles, or Forms), and any vertical effects (logoi and images) of it. Moreover, as I alluded when discussing archetypal rationality and our cosmos in section 2, the foregoing leaves the Plotinian natural philosopher (scientist) the formidable task of discerning precisely *how* each and every appearance, sensible form, or sense-observable Becoming (including seeming-anomalies) in fact *is* explicable as an instance of those intelligibles. My concern in this section, however, has been with Plotinus' historical context and, in particular, with Skepticism in its classical form(s). In that regard, moreover, Plotinus is clearly no friend of Pyrrhonism, even unwittingly. Plotinus' well-known insistence that *true quietude* can be found only in Intellect (and the One) can now be seen as—far from an abandonment of rationality and its (scientific) applications in understanding our cosmos—potentially a profound source of renewal for the so-called scientific spirit of the Ancient Greeks as they sought to understand the phenomena and puzzles of our cosmos.

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#### NOTES

1. From Edmund Halley's ode to Isaac Newton (translated by Leon J. Richardson) in *Sir Isaac Newton's Mathematical Principles*, translated by Andrew Motte and revised by Florian Cajori (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934, 1962).

2. Leon Robin, *Greek Thought and the Origins of the Scientific Spirit* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1928, 1967), 361.
3. Galileo Galilei, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, translated by Stillman Drake (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 16.
4. For an elaboration of pertinent aspects of Plotinus' philosophy, see my "Realism and the Foundations of Science in Plotinus," *Ancient Philosophy* 5 (1985), 269–292.
5. Galileo, 15 & 412.
6. Galileo, 14.
7. Galileo, 335. Alexandre Koyré argues that the Platonic (or Neopythagorean) approach adopted by Galileo severs scientific theory from the observable cosmos and, as a result, rests upon a "basic contradiction: it requires a total conversion, a radical substitution, of a mathematical, Platonic world for the world of empirical reality...while at the same time it renders this total substitution impossible, since instead of explaining empirical reality it does away with it, because instead of saving the phenomena it creates, between empirical and ideal realities, a fatal chasm of unexplained facts": *Galileo Studies*, translated by John Mepham (Atlantic Heights, NJ: Humanities Press, 1978), 155. In contrast, see William A. Wallace, "Galileo and Reasoning *Ex Suppositione*," *Prelude to Galileo*, ed., W. A. Wallace (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1981), 129–159. As Ernst Cassirer also sees it, Galileo represents the last stage of development in the Renaissance conception of the relationship between mathematics and empirical reality, concerning the beginnings of which Cassirer remarks that "So long as definite criteria of experience were not created through the medium of mathematics and through the other new intellectual means furnished by it, the empiricism of the Renaissance lacked objective standards of value and any principle of selection among the teeming phenomena"; but, after a transitional stage whereon Koyré's assessment might be *apropos*, in Galileo "the empirical is no longer to be resolved in the ideal, therewith stripped of its specific character. On the contrary, the ideal can only be genuinely fulfilled in the empirical, where it is tested and justified"—*The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, translated by Mario Domandi (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 151 & 172.
8. Galileo, 335.
9. Galileo, 336.
10. A. H. Armstrong translation (Loeb Classical Library): *Ennead* III.2.1, 28–37.
11. Armstrong translation: *Ennead* III.2.2, 2–8.
12. Dominic O'Meara maintains that Plotinus rejects Plato's notion of a (or the) divine, cosmic craftsman (or *demiurge*) because (1) "the world must derive from one ultimate source"; (2) "soul, and only soul, is the proximate cause of the world"; and (3) "[h]e accepts the Aristotelian claim that natural

processes are far superior to human craft" in that (3a) "nature does not need to calculate and deliberate; it does not toil over its work" and (3b) it "does not work on matter, as it were, 'with its hands' or with instruments...[but it] produces without moving"—Plotinus: *An Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 70–76. These points are important, and accurate. However, they do not entail a wholesale rejection of Plato's notion. Plato himself surely recognized that this conceit is but an image, even a metaphor, for his *divine, metaphysical demiurge*; and O'Meara is correct to point out various respects in which Plotinus' use of that conceit must denote a reality, or feature of reality, which differs from its human model even more so than Plato's does. As we shall see below, however, Plotinus *does use* the notion in his own discussions of our cosmos' archetype and vertical cause(s)—and so he hardly could be *rejecting* it—since it *does* convey quite well certain features of our cosmos' metaphysical aetiology and archetype. Perhaps among other things, it conveys the intelligence inherent in that vertical order; its unfailing reliability, if you will; and the fact that it yields a product which is not some amorphous, unintelligible mess of matter but which is shaped, ordered, (well-)formed, and the like. For, central to Plato's classic notion of a craftsman or artisan is that she possesses *art*—i.e. a set of (intelligible, cognitively discernible) *principles* and *standards*—and she is eminently accomplished at crafting products which conform to those principles and standards. At least in *these* regards, Plotinus *does not* consider craft-activity inferior to natural activity but a feature of it—or, perhaps, a *precondition* for it (see section 1 of this essay).

13. Armstrong translation: *Ennead* III.2.3, 7–9.
14. Thus, in *Ennead* I.8.4, Plotinus also argues that "bodies" may be said to "partake in matter" insofar as they are considered to be deprived of life, to destroy one another because of their (purportedly) disorderly motions, and to hinder Soul's operation and so to evade substance (*ousian*) as they continually flow or move. But insofar as we thus conceive of bodies as partaking in matter, we are not thereby attributing to them a (material) *substance* of their own; rather, we are conceiving of them as *evading* or *departing from* substance. Thus, in *Ennead* II.4.12 & 14, Plotinus argues further that matter, considered absolutely or by itself, *seems* to be a hypokeimenon—a substrate for sensible qualities. So considered, however, matter does not even possess size, nor even corporeality (*sōmatotēs*). Instead, its distinctive nature (*idiotēs*) is purely *relational* and is not really "absolute" at all; it becomes purely "other than"—a privation or taking away of qualifications and delimitations from reality. In short, something is *material* just insofar as it departs from, or is deprived of, substance or Being.
15. See, for example, *De Anima* III.7, 431a15 & 431b3.

16. In *Ennead* II.3.13, Plotinus explicitly interrelates the degree to which something is lifeless (or dead) and the degree to which it is impotent and passive.
17. Indeed, Plotinus argues in *Ennead* II.9.16 that the first step in our ascent toward recognizing the real substance and causes of our cosmos lies in recognizing order and proportion within it.
18. Thus, in *Ennead* I.4.3, 34–41, Plotinus distinguishes *levels* or *grades* of life (rather than distinct sorts of life), where the True, Real or perfect life is that of the intelligible world and where the various sorts of life we commonly distinguish in our cosmos are in fact various incomplete grades or traces of that archetypal Life.
19. Armstrong translation: *Ennead* III.7.4, 29–33.
20. Dominic O'Meara argues that Plotinus' solution to the Platonic problem of the "relation between intelligible and sensible reality" revolves around effecting a "reversal" in the way in which we conceive that relation. Whereas Plato (at least until his *Parmenides*) conceived the relation from the perspective of (sensible) particulars—as one wherein, in his most common vocabulary for this, particulars participate in intelligibles (Beings, or Forms)—Plotinus conceives the relation from the perspective of intelligibles, i.e. as one wherein intelligible reality is present in sensible reality (or particulars) and, more precisely, as one whereby sensible reality has intelligible reality present in it by virtue of its being *causally dependent* upon that higher reality. It seems, then, that on this approach Plotinus is seen to resolve the Platonic problem (1) by considering the Platonic expression for the problematic relation—'x participates in F'—to be reducible to (or, perhaps, to be replaced by) the metaphysically more perspicuous expression 'x is causally dependent (vertically) upon F'—perhaps by way of first reducing it to, or replacing it with, 'F is present in x'; and then (2) by explicating 'x is causally dependent upon F' in context with explicating the procession (or "derivation," O'Meara acutely prefers) of all reality from the One, down to its limit (sensible matter)—see *Plotinus: An Introduction...*, 22–27. This approach is ingenious, fruitful and, I think, right-headed. At the same time, however, there is something to be said for Plotinus' continued use of the Platonic participation-relation to connote features of the relationship which are not connoted (at least not evidently, or explicitly) by the presence-, or the causal dependency-, relation. Most especially, a key feature of Plotinus' understanding of Platonic participation that there is a sense in which Becoming possesses (manifests, exhibits, or is metaphysically related to) part of Being, and so may be perspicuously said to *participate* in Being. In the opening section of his *Parmenides*, of course, Plato worries about the fact that (in Greek) 'participates in' suggests or connotes 'has a part of', and so also that Being must somehow be comprised of 'parts' which are distributed or apportioned among sensible things—as a (physical) sail may be viewed as comprised of spatially extended parts (contiguous portions of

sail-cloth) which may be distributed over various objects were it draped over them. Plotinus, of course, would reject *this* depiction of Being as much as Plato did. But although Being does not come in parts which are distributed among sensible things as surface-portions of sail-cloth might cover various objects (i.e. one part uniquely covering, relating to, or exclusively possessed by each object), it is nevertheless true of *all sensible things* that each and every one of them possesses a *part of Being's nature*—most especially, we have just seen, that part of its nature (and so of its contents, the Forms) defined by Motion (and *sans* its—and their—Rest). Thus, 'x participates in F' means, or at least entails, 'x is F-in-Becoming' or 'x is F's Motion [*sans* its Rest]'. To be sure, this does not invalidate the approach I abstracted above from O'Meara's discussion. For one thing, Becoming participates in Being in this way (or sense) only *because* Soul seeks to 'learn' Being by expounding it, and so by means of (*dia*) a logos whose sequential (or sequencing) activity necessarily expounds it *sans* its Rest. For another, the possibility of two numerically distinct (sensible) particulars participating in the same intelligible—i.e. how it could be the case that x is F-in-Becoming and y is F-in-Becoming, where x is not (identical with) y—can, likewise, be explained in Plotinian terms only by understanding the natures and operations of the items comprising his metaphysical system of vertical causes (or derivations from the One towards sensible matter). The point, however, is that—as I argued previously regarding Plotinus' use of Plato's *демиург* notion—his use of the Platonic 'participation' vocabulary should not be reduced, replaced, or dismissed too quickly; it expresses, or at least entails, important features of Becoming's relation to (archetypal) Being which are not obviously, or at least explicitly, conveyed by O'Meara's other expressions for that relation—even if those features' explanation(s) require other, metaphysically more perspicuous terms.

21. Similarly, Plotinus argues in *Ennead* I.8.6 that the Good (i.e. the One) just is substance (*ousia*) or the archetype of substance, and that the contrary to universal substance (as all "flows from" the One) is not another *type* of substance but *nonsubstance*. Thus, Plotinus indicates in *Ennead* II.9.3, 10–13, that secondary (incomplete) life exists just so long as primal Life exists, since secondary things always exist just from the higher things themselves; and in *Ennead* III.3.7, he uses the image of things in our cosmos existing by "flowering from" their principles (*archai*).
22. Accordingly, Plotinus maintains that Intellect is defined by its own intellectual activity (*νοῦσις*), so that the "two" are in reality truly one (VI.7.41, 18–21).
23. Armstrong translation: *Ennead* III.8.8, 27–29.
24. See, for example, III.8.8, 31; III.8.9, 1–7; and VI.7.15 & 16.
25. See *Phaedo* 96–101, and *Timaeus* 49–53.
26. *Physics* II.1, 192b.

27. See, for example, IV.2.2; V.3.15, 13–15; V.3.17; V.6.3; VI.2.5; VI.7.17; and VI.9.1 & 2.
28. More generally, Plotinus argues that Soul is responsible for all order inasmuch as it is a power second in the order of real activity only to Intellect (IV.4.16, 18–20); for, Soul is that which took power into life from that higher life (i.e. Intellect's) which streamed into it (VI.7.31, 1–4).
29. Indeed, Plotinus argues, what Soul most essentially gives to our cosmos through its logos (Nature) is one, single life (see, e.g. IV.4.32 & VI.5.12).
30. Similarly, in *Ennead* II.1.3, 1–4, Plotinus argues that our cosmos shares in immortality (archetypal self-preservation) by virtue of the fact that, although it is always flowing, it flows only within itself and never “out of” or “away from” itself.
31. Although Soul does not itself possess size or mass, Plotinus argues, it must nevertheless be *present* wherever there is any size or mass (see IV.2.1, 70, & VI.5.9). Moreover, wherever Soul is present, it is *fully* present (or is present in its entirety or full self-identity). In this regard—and contrary to what some recent commentators on Plotinus suggest—Plotinus *contrasts* Soul's ubiquity with sweetness, whiteness, and the like in *Ennead* VI.4.1, rather than comparing it with them.
32. See Cicero's *Prior Academics*, especially chapters xxxi–xxxiii, xxxix, and xlviii.
33. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (Loeb Classical Library edition), I.vii, lix, and lxi.
34. Sextus, *Outlines* I.xi.
35. Sextus, *Outlines* I.vi & I.xii, 29.
36. In *Outlines* I.xxix, Sextus attempts to diffuse possible objections to his acceptance of apparent anomalies as really anomalies in appearances by claiming that this is not a *dogma* but simply a *fact* (*pragma*) that everyone recognizes. Of course, by saying it is not a dogma, Sextus means that the Pyrrhonist restricts his belief in the reality of the anomaly to appearances and does not commit himself on whether any underlying causes or material substrates of the anomalous appearances are also anomalous (see *Outlines* I.xiv, 94). It is important to keep in mind the nature of Dogmatism as understood by Sextus whenever discussing his own Pyrrhonian concepts and claims, lest one be led into seeing inconsistencies in Sextus' philosophy that do not exist. Thus, David Sedley, for example, argues that it “is clear from Sextus' usage that *epoche* for the Pyrrhonist is no longer suspension of assent, since despite his ‘*epoche* about all things’ he does assent to appearances, over which he has no control”: “The Motivation of Greek Skepticism,” *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed., Myles Burnyeat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 9–29; 19.
37. Sextus, *Outlines* I.vii, 14 & I.viii.
38. Sextus, *Outlines* I.xii, 33.

39. Sextus, *Outlines* I.xxx. Sextus' understanding of the “nonevident things of Dogmatism” is further emphasized in *Outlines* I.xxxii, where he argues that the principal difference between Pyrrhonism's non-Dogmatic reliance on appearances and Protagoras' philosophy that humans are the measures of all things is that Protagoras dogmatically held that the explanations (logoi) of appearances still *subsist in matter* (*hypokeisthai en tō hylē*). (Hence, again, we must avoid the sort of common interpretative mistake mentioned above in n36.)
40. Sextus, *Outlines* I.iv, I.ix, and I.xix, 190.
41. See Sextus, *Outlines* II.i, 7–9.
42. Sextus, *Outlines* II.i, 4 & 9.
43. Sextus, *Outlines* II.vii, 72 (R. G. Bury translation: Loeb Classical Library).
44. See Sextus, *Outlines* I.xiv, 115–117 & 122; I.xv, 172–177; and II.v, 34–41.
45. Indeed, Plotinus does not posit a real hypokeimenon to the sensible cosmos at all. Observable ‘material’ bodies may be *provisionally* conceived as mixtures of soul and matter; ‘matter’ does not denote a real substrate for Plotinus, however, but the darkening of Soul's illumination as it descends (see I.8.14).
46. Plotinus likewise argues in *Ennead* I.4.8, 10—when discussing pleasure and pain—that things do not look (or appear) in the same way to a good (or wise) person as they do to others.
47. For example, I have emphasized Plotinus' doctrine that the object of Intellect's activity is in fact just Intellect itself since in its archetypal activity (contemplation) Intellect “turns towards” the One as its archetypal source. How, then, can Plotinus also conceive Intellect's activity to have a number of objects—intelligibles, Beings, or Forms? In *Ennead* VI.2.19 & 20, Plotinus addresses this question by distinguishing two phases of Intellect. In its first phase, Intellect's Being or substance is conceived to be prior to all Forms or shares of Intellect (*pro pantōn hōs eidōn kai merōn*). In its second phase, Intellect is conceived to be the supplier and leader (*chorēgos*) of these items. Forms are “shares” of Intellect because, like Intellect, each contains the cause of its reality within itself (VI.7.2, 26); indeed, they may be conceived as just various Intellectual powers, or powers of Intellect (VI.2.21, 7; V.9.6). Elsewhere, Plotinus depicts Intellect's second phase as a matter of it “overflowing” with Forms—shares or powers of itself—or “unrolling” itself, because of the superabundant power of its Life (III.8.8, 34–38 & VI.2.21, 58). This second phase provides a foundation in Being for the variety and order of Soul's operation as it manifests itself—through its offspring—in the world of Becoming.
48. Thus Plotinus, like the Pyrrhonist, does not “assent” to nonevident things. Unlike the Pyrrhonist, however, Plotinus maintains that both speculative and practical wisdom (*sophia kai phronēsis*) consist in contemplating what lies within Intellect—its archetypal unity and overflowing power (I.2.6, 13). For,

even when judging appearances or sensory impressions, our reason—which formulates every judgment—contemplates Forms, since reasoning is essentially an Intellectual activity (see I.1.9, 19–22). Indeed, even *praxis* is in fact an “attempt at contemplation,” we have seen in *Ennead* III.8.

49. See, for example, I.4.9, 28–30; III.5.7, 50–54; III.7.4, 1–13; IV.3.18; V.1.4; V.3.1, 5 & 6; and V.5.1 & 2.
50. Thus, Plotinus insists that sciences are *logoi* of Intellect present in our souls, by virtue of Intellect itself—the cause of all science—being present in the soul (VI.9.5, 10–13). For, all rationality—whether scientific or just “common judgment” on appearances—comes from Intellect (see III.6.2, 32); and this is so, not just for thought (*to noein*) “simply and absolutely considered,” but for individual persons (see II.5.7, 50–54). How this conception of all “true thoughts” leads Plotinus to the self-transcendence of intellectually active souls and their resulting union with archetypal Intellect as the true agent of their intellections is articulated, for example, in *Ennead* IV.4.2. As for Nature, Plotinus argues that the diversity and order manifest in its product (our cosmos) is explained by the fact that Nature—itsself a *logos* of Soul—contains within its unifying, productive power a model or pattern (*paradeigma*) constituted from *logoi* of Being, to which Nature is subservient in its operations (IV.4.12). The basis for Plotinus’ notion that a *logos* of Soul (e.g. Nature) will contain its own set of Being’s *logoi* is the two phases of Intellect noted earlier. Plotinus postulates that Intellect in its unfolded phase *is* the Form (*eidos*) of Soul, while in its primal phase Intellect *gives* Form to Soul by giving it *logoi* of itself (V.9.3, 31–39). In these terms, then, the hypostasis Soul just is the outflow from Intellect, and this outflow itself contains a complete set of *logoi* or shares (Forms) of Being—hence, so too do any images of Soul (e.g. Nature), which ‘learn’ them through their own intellectual acts. Finally, in our cosmos, Form (*eidos*) denotes that which composes and “brings bodies to unity” (see I.6.2)—or what completes them by giving them an identity and actuality (see VI.7.3). Hence, what in Soul are intellectual acts (*noēmata*)—Forms as *logoi* of Being—“in matter” are additional *logoi*—viz. of Nature’s unifying power as subservient to the pattern of Form(s) from Intellect (see II.3.17 & VI.5.8).
51. I have argued in this essay that the bottom of Plotinus’ vertical order contains natural processes, activities or Becomings manifesting themselves to sense experience in various sensible forms. However, when viewed as composing a horizontal order in abstraction from their vertical aetiology, we commonly conceive these processes to coalesce around “centers of passivity and sources of production” within our cosmos (VI.3.4, 36); and we conceive these centers in turn to be nothing but individuals or “thises” which are not “predicable of any other” but instead are themselves the proper subjects for all the predicates we apply to the sensible cosmos (thus, see VI.3.5). We commonly designate these “thises” or proper subjects by proper names (e.g. ‘Socrates’) or, insofar as we do consider them as images of Being (or partakers in Form),

by sortal terms (e.g. ‘human’). As a result, we also can denote the Forms which “illuminate matter” through Nature with sortal names—for example, conceiving one of them to be the Form of Humanity (*anthrōpou eidos*) (VI.3.10, 18). But our common notions of proper subjects do not in reality designate independent or “underlying thises” (*hypokeimena*); and nor do these sortal discriminations really denote separate Beings, independent essences, or the like. Instead, the former are abstractions from observably close-ordered or tightly-unified processes or segments of Becoming as effected by Nature; and the latter reflect systematic or structural relations among objects and images of intellectual activity entailed by the metaprinciples defining Intellect’s nature—i.e. Being, Same, Difference, Motion and Rest (see, for example, IV.3.5; IV.4.12; VI.6.5; and VI.7.9).

# NEOPLATONISM AND INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Paulos Mar Gregorios, editor

*INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR NEOPLATONIC STUDIES*

Volume 9 in *Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern*  
R. Baine Harris, General Editor

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## Preface

R. Baine Harris

Most Western scholars are not aware of the complexity, richness, and antiquity of Indian Philosophy. It is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, continuous philosophical traditions in history, antedating the speculations of the early Greeks, Egyptians, and Babylonians in its origin, and covers most of the whole spectrum of possibilities for philosophical speculation. Most of it is related to Hinduism in some way, but there are also significant Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, and atheistic philosophers within it. Some Western Scholars have some knowledge of the six major philosophical systems that allow a wide variety of philosophical interpretations of Hinduism, but are not aware of the various schools of thought within them or the wide variety of non-Hindu Indian philosophers.

Most philosophers, including most Indian philosophers, seem to be content to work mainly within their own given inherited philosophical traditions, with only minor concern for comparative philosophy. Due to recent advances in rapid transportation and communication East and West are now meeting and entwining their own economic and even political destinies with each other in ways not imagined a hundred years ago. However, this has not occurred in philosophy and religion. Eastern thought still remains eastern and Western thought still remains western and the "twain" have not really met. Most people, including philosophers, still remain suspicious of foreign philosophies and religions and are quite content to remain with their own traditional ways of thinking. Only a very few philosophers in the West and in the East have been concerned to make serious studies of the philosophical thinking of other major cultures.

In light of these facts, the meeting of a few American, British, Canadian, and Japanese philosophers with a group of eminent Indian philosophers in a conference held in New Delhi during the last few days of 1992 and the first few days of 1993 is of some significance. It was not

only a genuine exercise in comparative philosophy for the participants, it was also a small step forward in aiding East and West to meet philosophically. Although I had a role to play in the organizing of this conference, I was not able to be one of the participants, since I was busy having a heart attack at the time, a rite of passage that seems to come to all the men in my family when they reach a certain age. The conference was ably conducted by Paulos Mar Gregorios, who was then the Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Northern India and the President of the Indian Section of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies and a past president of the Indian Philosophical Congress and the World Council of Churches. He was assisted by Professor John Mayer of Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, and Professor Christos Evangelou of Towson University. Numerous Indian organizations provided various forms of support, financial and otherwise and Dr. Gregorios mentions them in his introductory essay to this volume. Dr. Gregorios was able to complete most of the editing of this volume just a few weeks before his death, and I spoke with him by telephone about it less than a week before his death. Both the conference and the book are the product of his efforts and this book is now offered to the public in his memory.

The theme of the conference was "Neoplatonism and Indian Philosophy." Its stated aim was to note elements in certain Indian philosophies that appear to be very similar to Neoplatonism. Another concern was the controversy among Neoplatonic scholars about the influence of Indian philosophy on Plotinus, a topic on which Dr. Gregorios himself had some firm opinions, as he mentions in his own extensive introductory essay, and one also quite ably dealt with in some of the other papers. I have often wondered if philosophical notions must have one historical source from which they are historically transmitted or may occur in various places at various times as the result of a certain way of logicizing. Regardless of which is cause and which is effect, elements of Plotinus' monism are found in parallel ways of thinking of Indian writers throughout India's long history, and it is important to note these similarities.

All of the participants who have communicated with me concerning the conference have been commendatory of the way Dr. Gregorios and his associates conducted the conference, some even saying

it was the finest conference they have ever attended. All agree that another similar conference should be held either in India or in some other country within the next few years. I do hope that some younger minds will come forth with the knowledge, energy, and enthusiasm to carry on this cause now that Dr. Gregorios for sure, and I, for the most part, are out of the picture.

July 21, 1998  
R. Baine Harris  
Norfolk, Virginia  
Old Dominion University

## A Word of Thanks

Paulos Mar Gregorios  
Editor

We owe a word of thanks to many. We can acknowledge here only a few of those who have made this volume possible. First to the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies and its indefatigable Executive Director, Professor R. Baine Harris of Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. He initiated the preparatory work for the Second International Seminar on Neoplatonism and Indian Thought, held at Teen Murti Bhavan (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library), New Delhi, from December 29, 1992 to January 3, 1993. He also did all the international work of organizing the Seminar, though he was prevented from personally attending due to ill health. Without his untiring effort, the Seminar would not have taken place.<sup>1</sup>

Equally important for the New Delhi Seminar was the support of the Indian Council for Philosophical Research, New Delhi. They gave us a substantial grant covering more than half of the organizers' cost of the Seminar and co-sponsored it. We wish to express our special gratitude to Professor R. Balasubramaniam, the Chairman and Professor Bhuvan Chandel, the Member-Secretary, who gave us all possible support and encouragement. Professor Balasubramaniam chaired the Valedictory session and gave us a scholarly presidential address. We are especially indebted to Dr. Ranjan Ghosh, the Director of ICPR, who personally and with great skill and dedication, handled the major part of the organisational work. To him and to the students from Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University who helped him in the organisational work we owe a deep debt of gratitude.

Three other organisations bore the rest of the cost, and we are grateful to them: the Sarva Dharma Nilaya, New Delhi; the All India Association for Christian Higher Education; and the Manavata Mancir, Hoshiarpur (Dr. I. C. Sharma). We are grateful also to the other co-sponsoring bodies, namely the Indian Philosophical Congress, the International Society for Indian Philosophy, the Akhil Bharatiya Darshan Parishad, the Jamia Millia Hamdard, the Nehru Memorial Museum and

Library, and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. Sri Ravindra Kumar, himself a consummate scholar, helped us most generously with the free use of the Seminar Room and other facilities at Teen Murti Bhavan.

I want to express my special thanks to Professor John R. A. Mayer of Brock University, who co-chaired the Seminar with me, and to Professor Christos Evangelou of Towson University, Towson, Maryland, Acting General Secretary of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies.

Special thanks are due to several Indian philosophers who gave valuable addresses, the texts of which are not available, for various reasons, for inclusion in this volume. I want to mention especially Professor K. Satchidanada Murty's memorable keynote address on the One, Professor Richard Sorabji's stimulating lecture on, "Porphyry and Iamblichus on Animals", and Dr. Girija Vyas' (at that time Minister of State for Information in the Government of India) opening remarks as National Organising Chairman about the wide variety of Indian thought. Several of the papers read during the Seminar could also not be included in this volume.

Some of the papers have been edited; the Editor asks pardon for any slips in editing. Most of the papers are left as presented, with some subsequent changes made by the authors. The Editor believes that this volume, with all its imperfections, constitutes a major contribution to the comparative study of Indian thought and Neoplatonism. The papers in this volume suggest both that the matter is important enough for further research, and also that there is need to reexamine the questions we ask and the presuppositions with which we approach the topic. We also saw, during the Seminar, how Westerners, non-westerners, and Indians can sharpen their own conceptualisations by such inter-cultural dialogue.

Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios  
Editor  
New Delhi  
February, 1994

## Endnote

1. The First International Conference on Neoplatonism and Indian Thought was held at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada in October 1976. The papers from this first conference are in R. Baine Harris, editor, *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*, ISNS, Norfolk, Virginia, and SUNY Press, Albany, 1982.

**Does Geography Condition Philosophy?**  
**On Going Beyond the**  
**Occidental-Oriental Distinction**  
**An Introduction to the Second International Seminar**  
**on Neoplatonism and Indian Thought**

**Paulos Mar Gregorios**

The question has been raised time and again, and supposedly discussed threadbare, as to whether there are any demonstrable oriental influences in the thought of Plotinus. As I suggested at the beginning of the New Delhi Seminar in my brief remarks from the Chair, is it not time that we had a good look at the question itself? What are the assumptions that lie behind the question as it is formulated?

Let us begin by asking ourselves what we actually mean by the term "oriental". To what geographical region does it apply? Would it apply, for example, to the ancient Roman Province or *διοίκησις* of Oriens? If it does then the whole of the West Asian region of the Roman Empire would be meant, (the Diocesan (*Διοίκησις*) or Diocese means a group of Roman provinces under a Prefect or Viceroy) with the capital at Antioch-on-the-Orontes. In such a case the word *Oriental* would not include India in the scope of its meaning. But we know that even in Roman usage, the word meant everything East of the Bosphorus, or sometimes everything outside of Europe. "Oriental" is a very European word. We do well to be careful in the use of this word, particularly in view of the cultural connotations it carries. Sometimes it is parallel to calling the Germanic people "barbarians". It is basically the same spirit, of which we have examples in this volume, by which some Indian scholars sometimes dismiss western thought too lightly, without any major effort to understand it.

Most people, when they reflect on regional philosophies, think primarily of three groups: Western (mainly Euro-American, Classical, Medieval, and Modern Critical) philosophies; South Asian (including Ancient Pre-Vedic, Hindu, Jain and Buddhist) philosophies; and Far Eastern, (Taoist, Confucianist and Chinese Buddhist) philosophies. Certainly there were other philosophies not included in that threefold grouping. Even if there were not, the term "Oriental" would have to include the two latter groups, i.e., everything that is not Occidental philosophy would be *Oriental*!

To deny any oriental influence whatsoever in Plotinus is to deny even the influence of Egypt, where Plotinus was presumably born (in Lycopolis, either the one on the Nile Delta, or in the city of that name in Upper Egypt). He was brought up there as a child and he lived there for a good number of years of his adult life; Egypt certainly cannot legitimately be considered part of the Occident. I think we have to be just as circumspect in our denials as in our affirmations, as philosophers worth our salt. Let us then be done with loose statements in this matter, and state categorically: *There is no historical or philosophical ground whatsoever for the affirmation that the thought of Plotinus is totally free from all Oriental influence.*

I presume that the blurb on the Second Edition of *Plotinus* (7 volumes) translated by Professor A. H. Armstrong in the *Loeb Classical Library*<sup>1</sup> is not the work of Professor Armstrong himself. In any case someone who has more authority than the present writer should advise the Harvard University Press that it will be in the interests of scholarly accuracy to delete from the front and back flap of all seven volumes of future editions or reprints the unnecessary and incorrect statement: "There is no real trace of Oriental influence on his thought".

Let us proceed further to see what we can legitimately say in this matter. In order to do so, we will be on surer ground if we abandon the term *Oriental* altogether, for it was used by the Westerners (Europeans) to denote whatever lay east of their continent; its meaning was vague and imprecise; since Europeans had practically no west before the 15th century, it meant, for many Europeans, just what was not part of their world. It was what was east from the European perspective; the word *oriental* also came to have, perhaps only since the colonial period, a pejorative connotation: for many Europeans, what was not European was somehow inferior.

Besides, even today, both Egypt and Syria are still included by many in the Middle East and would therefore have to be regarded as part of the region denoted by the word *Oriental*. It would be much too laborious and from the start unfruitful to try to disprove all Syrian (e.g. Nemesius) and Egyptian (Ammonius Saccas, Alexandrian culture), and Jewish (Philo) influence on Plotinus. In so far as Plotinus was born and brought up in Egypt, he has to be regarded as an Oriental if that term is to be used at all. Talking about oriental influence on Plotinus is therefore, strictly speaking, nonsense.

So what we want to talk about is the influence of specifically Indian thought on Plotinus, not any so-called oriental influence on him.

Now, Indian thought is a fairly wide ocean, as anyone with even a cursory knowledge of India's vast and deep philosophical heritage should

know. Summaries of Indian philosophical thought have been attempted by many competent and not so competent scholars, both Indian and foreign. Even the best among them admittedly do not do equal justice to the Carvaka, Jaina and multi-schooled Buddhist as well as several Tantric schools of Indian philosophical experience, practice and reflection. In view of this formidably wide scope of Indian thought, it would not be very precise to speak of the influence of 'Indian Thought' in general on Plotinus. If someone has a positive affirmation to make about such influence, that affirmation would gain in clarity and refutability or critical examinability, if a particular aspect of Indian thought could be specified as having influenced Plotinus.

Perhaps we should consider the appropriateness of attaching any geographical labels at all to various schools of global philosophy. Every school we know is indebted to some school outside of its geographical region, either by way of ideas and categories adapted, or in terms of a polemic that generates new ideas.

If philosophy is some form of universal truth why should geography condition it? We have all to learn to shed some of our geographical and racial parochialisms in this regard. In our time we are called upon to regard all regional philosophies as the common heritage of all humanity, and to develop the notion of a global Common Human Tradition, which encompasses all the major trends in the heritage of humanity. All of us are called upon to focus on our common human identity, and our common global heritage, and to seek new human global philosophical perspectives duly enriched by as many regional philosophies as we can access.

Now we have to ask a third question as to what precisely we mean by 'influence'. If for example, the present writer, who is an Indian by birth but trained in the West, has read two books on Chinese philosophy, would he be regarded as having been influenced by Chinese thought? If again as a student at Oxford, he participated in an intensive three-month seminar on "The Tacit Dimension of Knowing" led by the Hungarian émigré, Professor Michael Polanyi, should he be regarded as influenced by Hungarian thought? Influence is rather too vague a concept to define or measure precisely.

I presume that no one disputes the fact attested by Porphyry that Plotinus was profoundly influenced by the teachings of Ammonius Saccas, whose lectures he attended for eleven long years, after having sampled and rejected those teachers in Alexandria who were recommended to him as the best in that city. Plotinus himself may have regarded Plato and Socrates as his basic saints or gurus and guides. Porphyry tells us that the only feasts Plotinus observed were the traditional feasts of Plato and

Socrates. But Ammonius was his living mentor, his preferred teacher. To affirm one is not to deny the other. If one has to speak about 'influence', we are fully justified, by the available evidence, in stating that Ammonius exerted a strong influence on Plotinus. One may even say that the influence of Ammonius was a decisive factor in Plotinus' reinterpretation of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics.

I know that the question, "Who was Ammonius Saccas?" will probably elicit a yawn from some of you. That is also a question that has been discussed "threadbare". Even at the risk of a few yawns and frowns, let us see where we stand at the end of the threadbare discussion.

It has been suggested by one imaginative speculator that the name Ammonius Saccas is a latinisation or hellenisation of the Sanskrit 'Muni Sakya' or *Sakyamuni*, which is a well known form of appellation for the Lord Buddha. If that were only demonstrable, we could have regarded Ammonius, whatever his nationality, as a Buddhist monk, who took on for himself one of the many names by which the Master was called. This was actually put forward by no less a scholar than Cardinal Daniélou, in his lectures on 'The Fourth Century' at the Sorbonne fifty years ago. Unfortunately it is probably only about as true as the other proposal that Pythagoras, or in Greek *Πυθαγόρας*, was a Buddhist monk and that his Greek name was simply a Buddhist monastic name he chose for himself, meaning Putha (original Pali or Prakrit which was then Sanskritized as *Buddha*) of the marketplace, taking *agoras* as genitive of Greek *ἀγορὴ* (=market). Let us leave aside these entertaining speculations, and get back to the question, "who was this Ammonius Saccas?" What in his teaching, according to Porphyry, made Plotinus say, "this is what I was looking for!" (τοῦτον ἐζήτηον).

I am unable to answer either of these questions. What can be said has been said by H. R. Schwyzer and E. R. Dodds and other careful scholars.<sup>2</sup> Ammonius lived ca 175-243 A D, while Plotinus lived 204/5-270, both for substantial periods in Alexandria. Ammonius was thus thirty years senior to Plotinus, who began his study of philosophy in Alexandria in 232, when he was twenty-seven.

According to Longinus, cited by Porphyry, Ammonius was the greatest linguistic and literary scholar (*φιλολογώτατος*) of his time, and no one had come anywhere near him in learning. Longinus himself, according to Porphyry "the most discerning critic of our time" (*κριτικώτατος*) was a fellow student with Plotinus of Ammonius, and calls Ammonius both *Platonikos* (*Πλατωνικός*) and *Peripatetikos* (*Περικηνητικός*).<sup>3</sup> But Ammonius wrote nothing, and told his disciples not to put in writing anything he said.

For eleven years Plotinus studied with Ammonius. We still need a proper exegesis of that key sentence of Porphyry's:

Καὶ ἀπ' ἐκείνης τῆς ἡμέρας συνεχῶς τῷ Ἀμμωνίῳ παραμένοντα τοσαύτην ἔξιν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ κτήσασθαι, ὥς καὶ τῆς παρὰ τοῖς Πέρσαις ἐπιτηδευομένης, πείραν λαβεῖν σπουδᾶς καὶ τῆς παρ' Ἰνδοῖς κατορθουμένης.

"And from that day continually staying with Ammonius, (Plotinus) acquired such a mastery of philosophy, that he became eager to gain knowledge of the teaching prevailing among the Persians, as also among the Indians."

Now, putting all that together this is what I get. Ammonius was both a great scholar and a great philosopher, well versed in Plato and Aristotle, as well as in the whole Greek tradition. Plotinus thought so highly of his teaching, in comparison with that of others available in Alexandria at that time, that he not only said the very first day: "This is what I was looking for", but also continued with Ammonius for eleven long years. If any single living teacher influenced Plotinus more than others, it was Ammonius. Ammonius, being an all round scholar, initiated Plotinus into the niceties and nuances of the teachings of Parmenides, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, so that the latter achieved a good grasp of philosophy in general.

So far I hope everyone agrees. Whether Ammonius was also well versed in Persian and Indian thought Porphyry does not clearly say. What he does say is that the mastery of philosophy which Ammonius imparted to Plotinus was such that it kindled in the latter a great zeal to get better acquainted with Persian and Indian thought. That zeal impelled the nearly forty year old Plotinus to join Gordian's military expedition to Persia, not because he was interested in Romans conquering Persia or India, but because his teacher had told him that he must find out more about Persian and Indian thought. Obviously Gordian's expedition was a failure, and Plotinus had to flee for his life and came and settled down in Rome.

Shall we then say that, after that initial failure, Plotinus gave up every effort to know something about Persian and Indian thought? There certainly were, already by the first century, Brahmins and Buddhists in Alexandria. Did he ever try to contact them? Was literature from India and Persia available in the Alexandrian *Museion*? By the time we come to the third century, Buddhists have established themselves in Alexandria, with a *Vihara* or place of teaching of their own. Do you have reason to think that Plotinus gave up the effort to know something of Persian and Indian

thought after the Gordian expedition failed? Or did he continue to pursue that interest in Rome, where all roads met, including the ones from Alexandria, Persia and India? I leave these questions with you, and do not want to draw any specific conclusions at this point, except to point out that:

1. Ammonius Saccas taught philosophy in such a way to his student Plotinus that the latter felt it necessary to go and acquire some competence in Persian and Indian thought;
2. If the above is true, then Ammonius Saacas had some knowledge of Persian and Indian philosophy, which he most likely imparted to Plotinus as his student.

Let us now raise a fourth point. When Armstrong, or anyone else for that matter, says for example that "There is no trace of Oriental influence on his (i.e., Plotinus') thought" his/her argument must be that, if all elements in the *Enneads* can be explained as originating within the Hellenistic tradition, then there is no need to hypothesize "Oriental influence". But are such scholars, including Armstrong, assuming that the Hellenistic tradition itself is uncontaminated by anything coming from East of the Bosphorus? A cursory examination would reveal that the Hellenic culture and religion were 'Oriental', in the sense of just as much Asian-African as European, through and through.

### Hellenistic Religion

By Hellenism is meant that form of Greek culture which was shaped in and spread from the Eastern Mediterranean from the time of Alexander (the first Western empire-builder ca 330 BCE) for about four centuries. When the Romans took over the Empire in the first century BCE, Hellenism went into a down-swing, till it was resurrected and reinstated as Byzantine culture in the middle of the fifth century. When Plotinus lived and wrote, Hellenism was expressed mostly in the many attempts to revive, reintegrate and revise the ancient Greek religion and thought of Parmenides and Heraclitus, Pythagoras and the other Pre-Socratics, as well as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and others.

Soon after Alexander, Alexandria, the Capital of Egypt, in Africa replaced Athens of Europe as the cultural capital of Hellenism. In that process Alexandrian Hellenism had absorbed many Asian-African (Syrian, Babylonian and Egyptian as well as others) elements; it thus became more cosmopolitan in its outlook and could no longer be regarded as strictly European.

Neither was Alexandrian Hellenism a secular philosophy. It was fully a religious system in which many philosophies flourished side by side. When Ptolemy I founded the city of Alexandria, its core was the *Μουσείον*, a community of learned and gifted men, headed by a Priest of the Muses. The community had its own ceremonies and rituals, and offering of sacrifices. The theurgical tradition soon became part of Hellenic culture and philosophy.

Hellenism was thus not just rational philosophy. Fundamental to it was the religious perspective, integral to all genuine philosophical reflection leading to experiential knowledge of Transcendent Reality. Plotinus was no exception. This religious perspective in Classical as well as in Hellenistic Greek culture expressed itself in three major areas, which one can discern in Socrates and Plato as well as in the Neoplatonist school as a whole:

1. the cult of the gods and daimons in temples and shrines dedicated to them;
2. the Gnostic and Mystery religions with their special revelations, initiatory rites and secret doctrines, and
3. the widespread magico-religious, or Tantric practices of invoking and propitiating the daemons or the Spirits to perform special tasks.

The main enemies of the three religious aspects of Hellenism were the Jews and the Christians whose influence was growing and threatening the very existence of Hellenistic religion and culture.

The point often overlooked is that all the three religious elements of Hellenism had a heavy 'oriental' aspect to them. The Hellenistic culture developed by borrowing liberally from Egypt, Syria, Persia and India, but not apparently much from China. It was always a two-way process. As Greek ideas and culture spread Eastward, the rich culture of the East supplied so much of new insights, so many new ways of doing things, to the Greeks. One can only illustrate here.

Where did Alexander of Macedonia learn empire building in the first place? The Greeks had no such concepts. The Persian wars not only opened up a new world of experience and possibility to the Greeks; it stimulated their resistance to political and cultural domination by foreigners who did not speak their language or behave as was thought proper in their culture. Scholars have been slow in recognizing the



enormous role played by the Persian invasions in stimulating Greek culture to great heights of glory and creativity in art, music, literature, poetry, philosophy, politics, rhetoric, historiography, mathematics, geometry and astronomy in the period immediately following the Persian Wars. I have no reason to think otherwise than that post-Enlightenment European scholars generally exhibit a great unwillingness to acknowledge Europe's debts to Asia. They forget what is acknowledged by learned Greeks, that the Greek civilisation owes much to Babylon, Syria and Egypt.

It was the same pattern in India in the wake of the Macedonian's rape of the Indus valley. The Greeks learned much from the Indians, mainly in philosophy and metaphysics, Indians began to be influenced more by Greek art, sculpture and drama than by Greek philosophy as such, which the Indian philosophers acquired some knowledge of, but found little reason to admire profoundly.

Early Greek religion had sages and seers, but no organized hierarchical structure. It had its oracles and soothsayers, but nothing like the Prophet or the Messiah as in the semitic religions. Hellenism developed various rituals and sacrifices; Neoplatonism developed its own theurgy, but most Neoplatonists simply went along with one or other of prevailing cults: the Eleusinian mysteries, the Dionysian Cult, and the more rational Orphic Cult. Plotinus, probably supported the Orphic cult.

Plotinus was a vegetarian. Vegetarianism was part of the Orphic tradition. He went into a seance in the Iseum or Temple of Isis, and a god appeared to him and held converse with him. Unlike us Moderns, Plotinus shared the belief of his fellow Hellenists in the existence of a world of gods.

The points to be emphasized here are two:

1. Insofar as Plotinus is a Hellenist, he is under heavy Oriental influence. This applies to his teacher Ammonius Saccas also. This is particularly evident in Numenius the Neo-Pythagorean of Apamea (2nd century), with whom Plotinus shared many ideas. It is even more evident in the thought and practice of Plotinus' successors in the Neoplatonic tradition.

2. The attempt to make Plotinus totally independent of Oriental influences seems more of an Occidental prejudice than a scholarly proposition based on the evidence. The West cannot lay any such monopoly claims to Plotinus. He belongs to the heritage of the whole of humanity, and he is rejected mainly by dualist Christians

and by devotees of the European Enlightenment's persistent superstition, the exclusive reliance on Critical Philosophy. Plotinus never belonged to the isolated Occident which in fact never existed. European culture developed historically by heavy borrowing from Babylon, India, Syria and Egypt, perhaps also from Iran and Palestine, and Plotinus drank deeply from that composite, creative, cosmopolitan culture of the Mediterranean, which today belongs to the world's common heritage.

It is in this context that many of the participants felt that it was a waste of time to discuss the question about "Oriental" influence on Plotinus. We found it much more useful to examine the affinities and differences between mainstream Indian thought and Plotinus.

### I. Plotinus and Indian Thought - Some Primary Divergences and Affinities

1. The Soul: We became aware that the primary area in which to explore the question of Affinity/Divergence between the Plotinian category structure and that of Indian thought in general was the conceptualisation of the *ψυχή* or the Soul rather than that of the *One* which after all is strictly nonconceptualisable in both traditions.

The Plotinian Soul (*ψυχή*) is basically Aristotelian-Platonist, and does not easily fit into the categories in which Indian thought conceived the parallel expression *jivatma*. The First *Ennead*, in Porphyry's arrangement, begins with a discussion of the Soul. It is basically *Form* or *εἶδος*. It gives form to body but does not receive anything from the body. It is a simple, non composite substance, as is also the *jivatma* in India. Soul and soulness do not exist independently. To be Soul is to exhibit soulness. *Τὸ ψυχή* is identical with *τὸ ψυχή εἶναι*. The soul cannot thus be described in terms of its composite qualities, since it is simple. The 'procession' or coming forth or origin of the *ψυχή* is from the *One*, through the *Noûs*, born into the world of multiplicity, located in the universe generated by the *World-soul*. This *World-soul* or *Soul of All* is also generated by the *Nous*, as is the human soul, but the latter is not derived from the *World-soul*. It must make the return journey, the *ἐπιστροφή*, back to the *Noûs* and through the *nous* to the *One* (*τὸ εἶν*). Professor Mukhopadhyaya argues here that the Samkhya doctrine of the coming forth of multiplicity from the non-conscious *Pradhana*, and of consciousness or *Purusa* from the *One* is a process of Emanation. This can be debated. Nothing like this procession-recession of everything from the *One* and back to the *One*, is conceived in the Indian tradition as far as I

know. Pralaya-Vilaya or expansion-contraction, yes, but not exactly proodos-epitrophe, or emanation-return or procession-recession.

The soul of Plotinus is *sui generis*. It is both indivisible and divisible, or *μεριστός ἀμέριστος*, unlike anything else. Indian thought offers no explicit parallel to this conception of the soul or *Jivatma* being *sui generis* or divisible-indivisible; perhaps some aspects of Samkhya imply it.

Nor would it be easy to find something like the Soul as one of the Three Principles of Plotinus in the Indian Tradition. For the Indian tradition the *Jivatma* cannot be a distinct hypostasis at all. For Plotinus, it is just three, no less, no more: the *One*, the *νοῦς* and the *ψυχή*. In *Ennead* II:9 *Against The Gnostics*, Plotinus attacks the Gnostic multiplicity of principles, and insists that the principles have to be three, no more no less. One does not find such a three-fold or quasi-trinitarian Principle *One*, *νοῦς* and *ψυχή* in the Indian tradition; of course there are many three-in-ones in the Indian tradition, but not anything like One-Intellect-Soul.

There are, however, affinities between the Plotinian *ψυχή* and the Indian concept of the *jivatma*. The *ψυχή* does not suffer; pathē or suffering belongs strictly to the body. Here Plotinus is more Aristotelian than Platonist, yet somewhat original. He makes the distinction between the higher and lower souls. But how can he make that kind of distinction within the *ψυχή* which is simple? In order to make the distinction, Plotinus conceives, to this end, a new entity called "the living being" or τὸ ζῶον. It is this entity that is composite, constituted of soul and body. The first *Ennead* is about this composite entity, the living being, rather than about the soul as such.

When we come to the later Neoplatonists, we see a slightly more complex pattern of this soul descended into the world of matter, which is no longer the simple *ψυχή*, but a composite entity of which the *ψυχή* is one part. The soul as it descends from the hypercosmic realm acquires its own vehicle, the *ὄχημα*. According to Iamblichus, the *ὄχημα* is created by the δαίμονες. But the *ὄχημα* is not the physical body; it has a divine origin; it is not something to be cast away. In fact, in Iamblichus at least, the *ὄχημα* is indestructible and therefore eternal.

This certainly is not the place for an extended discussion of the concept of *ὄχημα*; but we note that what theurgy does in Iamblichus is to purify the *ὄχημα* of the soul, permitting its union with a particular god allocated to it. Then the light of the god shines upon the soul in its *ὄχημα* and begins the process of the soul's elevation to the gods. "ὄχημα" has a parallel in the Indian concept of *sukshma sarira* or ethereal body. In both cultures 'out of body travel' occurs through the *ὄχημα* or *sukshmasarira*. This non-material body is the vehicle of the soul also for experience in the

material world. A comparative study of *ὄχημα* and *sukshmasarira* is likely to show great affinities as well as some differences.

But Plotinus' discussion of the soul in *Ennead* IV: 2 (Armstrong's IV: 1) is one of the most sophisticated such discussions in literature. The Soul is not a body, not a harmony of non-corporeal natures, not an *entelechy* as Aristotle thought it to be; it belongs definitely to the intelligible world, which in the Platonic tradition, is the home of abiding Reality; it shares in the Divine (τῆς νοητῆς φύσεως, καὶ τῆς Θεῆος Μοίρας, Armstrong IV:1:5-6). There is no attempt to say that the *ψυχή* is identical with the *One* as in the Indian tradition. Plotinus divides Reality into two classes: one group, the sensible world, is composed of the *αἰσθητὰ μεριστὰ καὶ σκεδαστὰ*, or the sensibles, the divisibles, and the perishables. The soul does not belong to this class. But neither does it belong to the other class the *οὐδαμῇ μερισμὸν δεχομένη, ὁμοιῆς τε καὶ ἀμεριστῶς*, or in no way divisible even conceptually, partless and unpartible, unextended (*ἀδιάστατος*), without spatial location in anything else. The Soul is not in that class either.

The Plotinian Soul does not belong to the class of sensibles, or to the class of purely intelligibles, but belongs to a third class of its own the divisible-indivisible-at-once nature, (ἡ δὲ ὁμοῦ μεριστὴ τε καὶ ἀμέριστος φύσις, ἣν δὲ ψυχὴν εἶναι φασίεν). This is of course an aspect of the Platonic tradition, where according to *Timaeus* 35 A1-14, the Artificer of the Universe "mixed a third form from both, from the indivisible which is always in the same state, and that which becomes divisible in the sphere of bodies". The Plotinian soul is an intermediary, a frontier being, between the intelligible world and the sensible world. Here of course Plotinus is not speaking of the individual human soul as such, but about the single unique entity called the Soul, in which the All-Soul and the Human Soul participate. A parallel conception to this cannot easily be located anywhere in the Indian tradition, as far as I know.

The body, whether it be the human body or other bodies in the Universe, come into being just as the Soul, so to speak, goes out of itself to take or form a body, according to Plotinus. Without the All-Soul, the Universe as such has no existence. Existence is what the Soul gives to the body.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, Plotinus' conception of the soul is partly original, but its roots are strictly in the Platonic tradition, and it seems to have no parallel in Indian thought.

## II. General Discussion

In the course of the discussion in the seminar, some other interesting points came up. Here we can only pick up a few highlights of what was indeed a very rich discussion.

1. From the beginning of our discussion it became obvious that it was difficult to define the scope and limits of what is called Indian thought. We have to include Vedic, pre-Vedic, and Avedic thought, the thought of Brahmanas and Sramanas, the Jain tradition which claims to be both avedic and pre-Vedic, the Buddhist tradition which is certainly Avedic, the great Bhakti tradition in its many different forms, Islamic, Sufi and Sikh thought, recent western liberal and western Marxist thought, as well as Christian and Zoroastrian thought, all of which flourished on Indian soil and have not only made rich contributions to Indian culture and thought, but also form an integral part of every Indian's heritage. We are certainly unable to do justice to the vast ocean of Indian thought as it has developed through millennia. When we try to compare Plotinus or other Neoplatonists with Indian thought, it would therefore be wiser to indicate the particular school of Indian thought one has in mind, rather than Indian thought in general.

2. The question came up also about Neoplatonism being both religion and philosophy. In fact classical thought in India as well as in the Mediterranean region, made no distinction between religion and philosophy. Nor did it make religion a compartment of life, as the civilisation of the European Enlightenment often does. In fact the Critical Philosophy of the European Enlightenment writes off any philosophy with the taint of religion as not philosophy at all, since it is dependent on revelation and not exclusively on human reason. For us Easterners, and I think, for many thinking people elsewhere, this appears to be a persistent and pernicious Western prejudice or superstition, without either scientific or philosophical basis.

We must therefore boldly reject this superstition and take into account the whole religious-philosophical matrix of the Eastern Mediterranean (north, east and south, but not west, of the sea), when examining the thought of Plotinus and later Neoplatonists. The thought-world of Parmenides and Heraclitus, of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, of the Skeptics and

the Stoics, the Epicureans and to a certain extent the Cynics, was always religious and philosophical at the same time. So was that of Plotinus; any non-religious interpretation of Plotinus would be off the mark.

3. The Asian-African (not to use the expression Oriental) thought-world of Alexandria in the third century was one which had fully assimilated the Greek tradition, but was in the process of reformulating it in many different schools, e.g. in Christian (Clement and Origen), Gnostic (the Nag Hammadi documents), neo-Pythagorean (the Therapeutes), Middle Platonist-Aristotelian (Ammonius Saccas, Numenius), and Stoic-materialist frameworks and categories. Plotinus was not only aware of these schools, but often wrote to question and correct some of the views expressed in these schools. But none of the thinkers of this age made the distinction that some moderns make between Oriental and Occidental. Neither was any of the schools exclusively Oriental or Occidental. The same applies to Plotinus. Plotinus heavily influenced many later systems of perceiving reality, especially Jewish, Muslim and Christian medieval and post-medieval philosophy. All these three traditions are Asian or "Oriental" in origin.

4. Plotinus specially targeted three contending forces in Alexandria and the Roman Empire: Stoic Materialism, Gnostic speculation, and Christian soteriology. There was already much tension in the culture among three approaches to salvation: Theoria, *θεωρία* and *τα μυστήρια*. Plotinus definitely emphasized *θεωρία* or a vision attained by training the mind. *θεωρία* on the other hand emphasized acts of worshipping God or a god, rather than mental-intellectual contemplation, through which *καθάρσις* (spiritual purification), *ἐλάμψις* (inner illumination) and *ἐνωσις* (becoming one with the Divine) were to be achieved. Many who could not scale the ascents of mental discipline, preferred this way of *θεωρία* in later as well as even in classical Neoplatonist practice. (Iamblichus, Proclus, and so on.)

Plotinus did not wholly approve the growing practice of theurgy in his tradition. For a true Neoplatonist to practice theurgy is similar to a pure Advaita Vedantin practising a Bhakti cult in India. It is often done, but is very difficult to justify philosophically. As far as the neoplatonist use of theurgy is concerned, Plotinus seems to be an exception in the Neoplatonic

tradition as a whole, which was heavily theurgic through and through. Plotinus emphasized *θεωρία* or mental contemplation, while the Alexandrian tradition as a whole tended to put more faith in *θεουργία* and *τοῖς μυστήριας*; even the Gnostics, who seemed to put more emphasis on ■ secret *γνώσις* and thus to be more intellectually oriented, practised some form of theurgy or ritual.

5. It is specifically in relation to *θεουργία* that there seems to be a major gap between Plotinus and his successors, most of whom were Asians who put more emphasis on acts of worship than on mental or intellectual exercises. Both Porphyry and Iamblichus made *θεουργία* central. Plotinus probably practiced some form of *θεουργία* but refused to give it central emphasis, looking upon *θεουργία* with a measure of disdain, as good only for the mentally incompetent.

Professor Berchman's paper on "Rationality and Ritual in Iamblichus and Proclus", along with his bibliography, is very significant in this connection. Ritual has its own rationality, different from scientific rationality. Theurgy establishes contact with reality at a level different from that of scientific rationality, effects a different entry into the intelligible world and achieves communion with the divine; this is more obvious in his successors than in Plotinus himself.

6. Since Professor Berchman could not attend the seminar, his paper was not discussed in detail. But when we speak of affinities between Neoplatonism and Indian thought, this aspect of Theurgy and its relation to the Tantric and the Vedic-Sacrificial or Purvamimamsa traditions in India should not be overlooked. What the west pejoratively calls 'magic', as Professor Berchman clearly shows, is a highly rational way of operating upon reality. In India both the Tantric tradition and the Purvamimamsa tradition are basically theurgic in nature. This means that in looking for affinities between Neoplatonism and Indian Thought, Theurgy-Tantrism should receive ■ fuller treatment than it hitherto has. While it may have been true that at one time western scholarship was rather allergic to any notion of Theurgia (e.g. E. R. Dodds, 1947 and H. Lewy, 1946) things seem to be changing.<sup>6</sup> More recently Professor H. J. Blumenthal of Liverpool has made a significant philological contribution to the discussion in his "From

KU-RU-SO-WO-KO to *Theourgos*: Word to Ritual", in: the Liverpool Classical Monthly.<sup>7</sup>

7. We sought to compare Plotinus' One (*τὸ ἓν*) with the Indian concept of *skamaditiam*. In both traditions, the limits of the conceptual are recognized. The conceptual cannot by any means lead us to the *One* of Plotinus, or to the *ekam* of the Hindus. In this most Indian traditions would agree with Plotinus that the conceptual cannot attain to the Transcendent Divine, and that the *One* has to be known in a way other than the conceptual. In Sankara Vedanta, we call it *paravidya* or the knowledge that transcends. Modern critical philosophy has no such category, and this seems to be its basic weakness.

8. Both traditions recognize the key epistemological role of self-purification in attaining to the knowledge of the Divine. While the Plotinian tradition refers to this need of *κάθαρσις*, the Indian tradition goes to great lengths in working out and prescribing the physical and mental exercises which make one capable of receiving the grace of divine illumination and unity. Not only in the Yoga System of Patanjali, but also in the Bhagavadgita, these systems of *nidhidhyasa* are described at length. It would be a useful study to compare the purificatory disciplines in various Indian schools with the Greek disciplines of self-purification. We can also ask the question whether the European Enlightenment tradition of Critical Rationality also has its own *nidhidhyasa* or *κάθαρσις*, in terms of training the mind for critical rational thinking.

9. It was suggested that the comparative roles of *ἔργος* and *bhakti* in the ascent of the soul to the divine would be worth careful study. Equally important would be a comparative study of the role of worship, or Indian *aradhana* and Greek *θεουργία* (related to the concepts of *εὐσέβεια* and *εὐσεβής*) in self-purification. Indian Tantrism also bears striking resemblances to Neoplatonic *θεουργία*. These need careful further study.

10. Both traditions acknowledge that the *One* is beyond all predicates. If the *Good* (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*), the *True* (*τὸ ἀληθινόν*) and the *beautiful* (*τὸ καλόν*) are not predicates of the *One*, what are they? According to Plotinus, the *Good* is only another name for the *One*, but in no way a predicate.<sup>8</sup> If *Brahman* is *Sat-chid-*

*ananda*, how are *sad, chiul* and *ananda* or *Truth, Consciousness* and *Bliss* related to the predicateless and partless Brahman? The Indian answer would be the same as the Plotinian, namely that these are not predicates, but merely different conceptual formulations of the same reality.

11. We came to the conclusion that there were substantial divergences between the Indian tradition and the Neoplatonic tradition in the question of what constitutes True or Transcendental knowledge. In India *paravidya* or Transcendental knowledge demands overcoming the distinction among knower, known and knowledge, or *jñata, jñeya*, and *jñana*. In the western tradition however the distinction between subject and object seems to be regarded as essential for all knowledge. Is this true? What then would be the western understanding of the logic of the infinite wherein all distinctions ought to vanish and all things ought to merge into each other as a single entity?

12. Our discussion on the relation between the *One* and the *νοῦς-ψυχή* needs to be pursued further. The notion of Emanation, if taken literally, would locate the *One* in time and space, which would make it finite. Emanation (*πρόοδος*) can at best be taken only metaphorically, to denote the relation between the *One* and the *νοῦς-ψυχή*. Obviously the *One* is not located in one point in space. It is both infinite, omnipresent and invisible. Would the procession or *πρόοδος* of the *κόσμος νοητός* or the *νοῦς* be comparable to the Indian *Samkhya* concept of the *vyakta* or manifest universe as coming forth from the unmanifest (*avyakta*)? Neither the concept of *πρόοδος* nor that of *ἐπιστροφή* or return, seem compatible with the Indian tradition as a whole. In the *Samkhya*, the relation between the manifest and the Unmanifest is not spelt out so clearly. What is recognized in both traditions is that the Manifest world of our daily experience has come forth from an Unmanifest Reality, upon which it is contingent. But the Plotinian concept of emanation finds no precise parallel in Indian thought. In Plotinus himself the concept of emanation is not philosophically clear, for emanation is undoubtedly a spatial concept, which cannot be applied to the *One* who transcends space. The analogies which Plotinus gives, like a light-source emanating light or a fragrant substance emanating fragrance, imply a source in space from which the emanation spreads around to the contiguous space. In the case of the *One*, the source is not in

space; the concept of emanation does not help the understanding in relation to the *One* and the *Muny*.

13. We had an extended discussion on the relation of any proposition to truth. Certainly propositions are not the only form in which human beings linguistically express themselves. There is always literature and poetry, and many other ways of talking. We agreed that propositions do not grasp the truth fully; this is so in Plotinus and in Indian thought. We saw how language can be used metaphorically as well as poetically, to supplement and clarify propositional expressions of truth. But do metaphors and poetry get anywhere closer to reality than propositions? Perhaps metaphors and propositions have their significance in their power to evoke inner experience in a way propositions seldom can. The perception of ultimate reality however always eludes the linguistic medium in every form. This applies also to concepts like emanation, when used as a description of the relation between the three principles of *One, νοῦς* and *ψυχή*. Emanation is a metaphor; it can illuminate us only analogically or metaphorically, not propositionally.

14. Finally, both in Neoplatonism and in Indian thought, the metaphysics is not functionally as important as the praxis of a discipline or *nidhidhyasa* which leads to enlightenment. The metaphysics both prepares for and conditions the experience; metaphysics arises out of experience as an attempt to conceptualise it. We thought it would be healthy to keep this in mind in all serious philosophical discussion. Critical philosophy's major weakness is thus overemphasis on the conceptual and the propositional, and the under-emphasis on discipline or *katharsis*.

We concluded that the only option open to us was to begin planning for another Seminar or conference, in India, with wider participation, on The Neoplatonist and Indian Traditions (not just thought, but including praxis or spiritual disciplines, particularly the Yogic and Tantric traditions) in the near future, with special reference to *Theourgia* and Tantrism. Perhaps we should use one of the Himalayan Ashrams as the venue, and also practice some of these disciplines during the Seminar.

## Endnotes

1. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1989, front and back flaps.
2. See E R Dodds, *Numenius and Ammonius*, Entretiens Hardt V, See also Schweitzer, *Plotinus* Intro cols 477-81.
3. Armstrong, *Plotinus*. Vol. I. pp Greek text, 56, 58, Eng. 57, 59.
4. Armstrong, vol. I, Gk p. 8 Eng p.9
5. Armstrong, *Plotinus*. IV: 3:9
6. e.g. see R T Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, passim, esp pp 120-123, 153-157.
7. *Liverpool Classical Monthly*, 1993, pp. 75 ff.
8. See *Enneads* II:ix:1 in "Against the Gnostics"

Plato, Neoplatonism and Their  
Parallel Indian Ideas

D. P. Chattopadhyaya

Fashions and faith change. Languages and ways of doing philosophy are not constant either. But certain fundamental questions of life appear, disappear and reappear in different forms. If one can raise one's vision above the prevailing currents of Analytic Philosophy, Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of Language, or at least if one can see through the issues dealt with in these contemporary areas of philosophy, one can realize the importance of the largely neglected fundamental questions, tackled by great thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Aquinas and St. Anselm.

How are Essences and Instances related? How is the relation between Good and Evil to be understood? How does One become Many? How are Being and Becoming, Time and Eternity related to each other? It is interesting to recall that none of these questions is peculiar to one particular culture, form of life or system of philosophy. Their trans-cultural or pervasive presence is itself an intriguing philosophical question. How do you account for the fact that in India, Europe and elsewhere, old, new and renewable answers have been and still are being raised in the course of tackling these questions?

What is there in Essence which makes its self-instantiation possible? Is it intensive or extensive or both? Briefly speaking, the Platonist finds an aptitude for, or propensity to, instantiation in the eternal *Ideas*. Sometimes this attitude has been described as an excess of fulfillment or, metaphorically speaking, Divine Envy. All ideas are systematically subordinate to Goodness and Intelligibility. Unity or oneness of Good finds itself as a system of all unities through an eternal Demiurgic vision which articulates itself in all knowing instantial minds. God as Good realizes and reviews Itself in and through all things and beings. Plato sees all Ideas as patterns of Numbers and these patterns are

endlessly and hierarchically replicated in all existent patterns, empirical as well as transcendental.

It will not be out of place here to recall that the Unity of Brahman, referred to in the Vedas, expresses itself as *Ria* and *Satya* in the patterned or law-governed multiplicity of the world. This expression is due to the *Ananda-Sakti* or Brahman itself. And this vedic view has a distinct Platonic ring to it. The relation between the One and the Many conceived in the original Samkhya, attributed to Kapila (not Isvarakrsna's *Sankhyakarika*), and the Vedantic theories developed later on are also insightful exercises purporting to explain the relation between the two spheres of reality and often in terms of a mystic theory of Numbers associated with Pythagoreanism.

Aristotle, Plato's disciple and a dissident Platonist, third-century Neoplatonist Plotinus and his fifth-century successor Proclus developed, in the main, Platonism faithfully, and at places interpreted it critically and creatively in such a manner that the influence of Platonism, thanks to their hermeneutic reconstruction, found its way into Jewish, Christian and Islamic theology and philosophy. The ideas of St. Augustine and Aquinas were largely Platonic, though the latter claimed Aristotle as his chief mentor. The Renaissance Platonism of the Florentine Academy, the Platonism of Seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists, the dualism of Descartes, the Transcendentalism of Kant, and the Dialectical Idealism of Hegel are all different variations on Platonic themes, written and unwritten.

If the European history of philosophical and religious ideas is thus rooted in the Platonic tradition, those who are fairly familiar with the philosophies and religions of India can see that basic European ideas, orthodox as well as heterodox, are seminally found in the Vedas, Upavedas and the Vedangas. These generalizations are not intended in any way to ignore the significant differences between various trends of thought and forms of religion.

Every culture, like every personality, has in it differing, at times even opposite, traits. The complexity of a system of thought, particularly of interactive sub-cultures within it, with the simultaneous presence of distinct types of theories and practices within the same country and in the same age do not negate their underlying affinity or family resemblance. Different ways of thinking and forms of feeling are mutually supportive and influential, positively or negatively. For example, though Jainism and

Buddhism are opposed to the authority of the Vedas in very many ways, the insightful scholars of Indian philosophies and religions have not failed to detect their interconnections. Even Indian Islamic culture which is regarded by some as alien in character, has absorbed much of, and contributed creatively to, what we call the composite culture of India.

## II

From general truths of Platonism let me now try to indicate briefly some of its specifics. Both in the tradition of Platonism and that of India, veritable knowledge, as distinguished from unreliable opinion, is said to be due to discernible subsumption of peculiar instances under a truly universal content. In both traditions Intuitive Reason or *nous* is given more cognitive importance than sense-perception as a source of knowledge or validating criterion.

Aristotle, never completely reconciled to the Platonic theory of the relation between the intelligible and the sensible has expressed his questionings and difficulties in his *Metaphysics*. Related to these difficulties is the Aristotelian account of a substantial notion of matter and ■ quasi-materialistic conception of mind. It seems that Aristotle could not accept Plato's conception of space and the related conceptions of individuation and instantiation. It is in terms of his view of teleology, not by a Demiurgic vision, that Aristotle offers a theory of upgraded individuality of being, which, being downgraded universality, is related to the materiality of matter and to the immaterial Goodness of Prime Idea or Highest Form.

Plotinus, together with some Neoplatonists like Eudorus, Plutarch and Numenius, tried to reconcile the positive elements of the teachings of Plato and Aristotle. Their central thesis rests on three principles of Being:

1. Super-essential, Super-intelligible One or Good;
2. the Timeless Archetypal Mind or Intellect; and
3. the World-Soul, working as ■ mediatory principle between the ideas and unifying them as perfect patterns and the changeable world of instances or particulars.

Knowledge of the particulars demands of the knowing subjects that these objects have to be viewed under their appropriate patterns or

forms. Mind or Nous is said by Plotinus to be a unity of all things together, and yet not altogether, since each has a separate potency of its own. This proposition echoes the spirit of Plato's *Theaetetus* and that of Aristotle's *De Anima*. The World-Soul, informed by the Supreme One, informs everything in space. And this descent of One in Many is claimed to be *logically necessary*. How? Whatever is perceived as actual is stated to be due to its *possibility* and the *possibility* itself is grounded on some *necessity*. Equally important is the Neoplatonic theory of *logical interpenetration*. Everything is simultaneously something primarily and everything else subsidiarily. The elements of this theory of enormous consequence are culled from *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*. The same theory is found in the Upanishadic Principle that every Self is present in every other self; every other self is present in this self; and all selves are identical or One at bottom.

Another variation of this thesis is to be found in the intramonadicity, intermodicity and the monadic unity, *monadus monadum*, of Leibniz. The movements between One and the Many may be viewed in two related ways:

1. vertical ascent-descent, and
2. horizontal expansion and contraction.

Sometimes this truth is metaphorically expressed in terms of mutual mirrorism and according to the laws of continuity and symmetry.

That the insights of Neoplatonism are not exclusive to the non-religious philosophical is evident in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The God of all these major religions is recognized as infinitely Perfect or Good, lifted above the world of instances, and the latter depending absolutely on God. Such a notion of God is to be understood in terms of *Being* not *having*, of the essential God and Goodness of this instantial world. The transformation of the tribal Jehovah into the Jewish God is illustrative of the above Platonic principle. The transformation of the tribal deities into One Circle of Kaba Masjid of Mecca may also be viewed in a similar way. God is taken as the most generic of *Being* which shapes the world through the Divine Word or Logos.

The Vedic parallel to this Principle is that Ultimate Reality is the Master Sound (*Nadabrahma*) which individuates itself not only in all distinct audibles but also in all distinct sensibilia. The best available systematization of this view is found in the *Sphotavada* of Bhatṛhari and

in the *Sabdadvaitavada* of Mandana Misra. Of course the pre-systematic elements of this view are available in many places of the Vedic literature and grammar. Perhaps it is needless to add here that when I speak of doctrinal parallelism between Neoplatonism on the one hand and Indian thought on the other, the same must not be understood literally but only conceptually. At the same time I must add that these and numerous other parallelisms are not merely doctrinal but also argumental in many cases, at least in their intention.

### III

Platonic influence on Christianity is clear from Christian philosophers like Clement, Origen, Gregory and Augustine who flourished in the Third and Fourth centuries. They formulate, understandably in different ways, the already referred to three First Principles of Being as the Trinitarian Unity of Goodness as God, Logos and Matter in its two forms, degenerate and regenerate, descent of God in Matter and ascent of Matter towards God.

Even more strongly Platonism is defended by Denis or Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite in the fifth-century. He speaks of Transcendent Primal Unity as beyond the realm of Being and Knowledge and as having nothing to do with Truth, Unity, Godhead, Sonship or Fatherhood. Yet curiously enough, this Transcendent Unity is nameable in very many ways as Good, Beautiful, Luminous, Adorable, etc. The nameability of the Primal Unity is to be understood only in relation to its perception by human beings. In the context of Unity-cum-Humanity one can even speak of mutually contradictory names of the Divine such as "Infinitely Great" and also "Infinitely Small".

In the Upanishads of India one comes across parallel conceptions. Philosophers speak of contradictory aspects of the Supreme Reality. It is said to be nameable and yet also nameless, sensible and yet beyond the reach of all senses, greater than the greatest and, also, smaller than the smallest, static and dynamic at the same time, proximate and distant simultaneously, and *vak* (speech) and yet beyond the ken of speech. The seemingly incompatible names and designations of God or Supreme Reality are indicative of its plenitude of Being which makes it unavailable in its fullness under any category, name or speech.

The fullness of the glory or the perfection of God makes it



difficult for us to think that it does *not* exist within the sweep of space, time and causality and in the mosaic of the ephemeral world. Anselm's ontological proof of God's existence, though well-intended, is ill-formulated in the sense that it takes existence in the instantial sense. It is this weakness of his formulation which has been fully exploited by the pro-empiricist Kant when he tries to refute Anselm's argument by pointing out the important distinction between the *idea* of existence and *existence* as such. It is easy to criticize Anselm because of his pro-Platonic dualistic background. But can Kant himself be fully absolved of this charge? What sustains his proclaimed affinity, not full-blooded unity, between the causal Nature on the one hand, and the transcendental Good and Beauty on the other? What is this *telos* which is credited with the capacity to embrace both the empirical and the transcendental?

It is with relative ease that we can criticize Anselm and Kant for their account of the relation between the World of Ideas and the World of Instances of those very ideas and their experiences in us. But called upon to explain this relation to our scientific as well as spiritual satisfaction, we encounter profound difficulties. If perfect God or Supreme Reality is thought to be incapable of self-instantiation, one can think of another superior God or superior Reality to whom or to which this absent ability could be attributed. But this attribution is itself hypothetical. Because we can never be cognitively sure whether this attributed ability or capacity is in the Highest Reality itself or it is due to will or thought, or both, of human beings themselves. Secondly, if God is thought to be incapable of self-instantiation in the realm of existence or experience, the ontological necessity of postulating another God lands us in the logical fallacy of infinite regress.

The logical or critical scrutiny to which the human thought process is subjected is itself a human conceptual contrivance and, what is even more disturbing, the particular logic used is not unique. Unless the human logic of noncontradiction is accepted as the unique articulation of the Logos itself, the logic of grasping Highest Reality and that of grasping the anaemic ontology of the "shadowy" empirical world cannot be claimed to be one and the same. About the unitarian logic itself grave doubts have been expressed by ancient mystic thinkers like Pythagoras, Plato, all the way down to Sri Aurobindo of our own time. Sri Aurobindo is never tired of reminding us that the logic of the Finite is magic in the Infinite. Interestingly enough, neither the so-called mystic nor the so-called

rigorous analytic philosophers can totally dispense with some form of logic, whether, two-valued, three-valued or many-valued.

Both Aquinas and much later Leibniz went deeply into the questions raised above. Unlike Anselm, Aquinas does not take his cues from the Aristotelean argument for the Unmoved Mover to prove the existence of God. Without being vulnerable to the logical fallacy of infinite regress in the quest of God (higher than whom there is no other God) as Supreme Reality, Aquinas maintains that God is essentially *simple* through and through. This simplicity is nothing but the complete identity of God's existence with His essence. God knows no difference native to its own nature, distinction between *what* is what it is, and *that* it is. Aquinas's account of the empirical world is offered in terms of *participation*. Finite and created objects are what they are by virtue of their participation in God's Nature. God's own Nature is *essential*, i.e., has nothing in it requiring it to be instantiated in the world of objects. The world of objects, unlike God's essential Nature, is said to be *accidental*. Yet the realm of Essence and that of Accidents are united and remain so for ever because of God's Goodness bringing about this coincidence between the said two realms, two from the human perspective, but one and the same from the Divine perspective. Strictly speaking, the human perspective, marked by experiential or instantial plurality, is not different from, or external to, God's simple nature.

#### IV

This line of argument leads one to the view that the Natural World studied in the empirical and experimental sciences has a unity of its own. Natural kinds are not only mutually harmonious but also reciprocally supportive. Bacon takes enormous pains to show that the laws of Nature are there *in* Nature to be discovered by the knowing mind. The reason why our minds are capable of inductive learning and leaping is that there is an orderliness, partly visible and partly invisible, pervading the whole Nature. The reason why laws of Nature form a unity of their own is due to the fact that nature itself is unitarian in its structure. But this structure cannot be easily discovered by the human mind because of its uncritical subjection to some idols or idle dogmas. By contrast, the Divine mind is free from all blemishes or imperfections and informs the whole of Nature.

Critical of the Aristotelian syllogistic, Bacon defends empirical and experimental induction as the *Organon* to be used for delving into the depths of Natural truths. Instances of Natural laws have to be viewed in their mutual relation and not in isolation. Certainly Bacon was not a Platonist in the received sense of the term but his insistence that the existence of orderliness in Nature is to be discovered by inductive exploration and expansion bears the unmistakable stamp of Platonism.

In Leibniz, another scientific philosopher, the influence of Platonism, mediated by Scholasticism, is clear and distinct. In this theory of harmony, simplicity and universality of knowledge, one can easily discern Platonic concerns. First, he tries to resolve by definition every complex term into simple or indefinable terms. Such indefinable terms are represented by mathematical symbols or logical constants. Secondly, he takes pains to show that the distinction between necessary propositions and contingent propositions, truths of reason and truths of fact, is due to the limitations under which human knowledge works, and that from God's point of view this distinction is not there. The Unity of Divine vision comprehends all kinds of truths, scientific, jurisprudential and even theological in a deductive form and which is claimed to be expressible in a universal language, *universal mathesis*. Thirdly, the ideal of harmony is not epistemological in its origin and character. It is monadological or ontological with its moral and theological implications. He speaks not only of the possible union of all Christian *princes* in a future ideal political order, but also of all *beings*, animate and inanimate, as warranted by the Law of Sufficient Reason. Leibniz's theory of "the best of all possible worlds" is developed under the aspect of God's goodness and all-knowing capacity. Even the evil that we come across in our life is said to be compossible with the Leibnizian view of the best of all possible worlds. God is not forced (none to force him from within or without) to create the best or the unique world, but only the best *possible* one, otherwise God's omnipotence and free choice are compromised by implication.

Unlike Newton, Leibniz maintains that space and time are relative, not absolute, and God's *sensorium*, forms of sense-perception of all things in their succession and coexistence. This idea of externality of things to space and time, is borrowed, on his own admission, from the Schoolmen influenced by Plato. Of the phenomenality of space and time he is persuaded. The shadowy or obscure character of inanimate or

material things is due to their situatedness within the framework of space and time. His formulation of the relation between the phenomenal world and its transcendental creator is sure to remind one of the Platonic cave and the distorted shadows cast on its walls by external light. It appears that Leibniz did not succeed in satisfactorily clarifying the relation between the subjective and phenomenal forms of space and time. How the subjective forms of space and time and the things in the objective space and time are related and how both stand related under the aspect of Divinity are some of the questions which have been left unexplored by Leibniz.

It fell to Kant, deeply influenced by Newton, to explain the unity of phenomena available in sensibility through its *subjective* forms of space and time and their affiliation to the Supreme Synthetic and Transcendental Principle of Apperceptive Unity. Kant's subjectivist view of space and time is largely due to Leibniz. Also the unity of *sensibilia* in space and time is rooted in our Transcendental Self and as mediated by two other levels of Unity, of Imagination and of Understanding. Without the transcendental rootedness of the Unity of all sensible objects, the inter-subjective and cognitive shareability of the law-governed world of science remains inexplicable. In brief, the Unity of whatever object in space and time, in existence and succession, could not be known alike and by all the knowing beings without postulating the Apperceptive and Synthetic Unity of the Transcendental Self, ■ functional presence of God in humankind.

Kant's own interpretation of Plato's Idea makes it clear that he, like Plato, concedes the necessity of recognizing a Supreme Transcendental Principle of Unity for both cognitive and ethical purposes. Also for comprehension of change or flux both Plato and Kant maintain that the transcendental approach is absolutely called for. Without ■ transcendental principle like "I" or "I think" what is meant by such expressions as "I imagine" and "I understand" remain unintelligible. Thus Kant, echoing Platonism, has tried to reconcile the unity of the empirical and the transcendental, the scientific and the metaphysical.

## V

In this concluding section I will briefly refer to two Indian types of thought which may appear Platonic or Kantian in their aim and character but were developed independently in India. But, as we know, the

fundamental questions of philosophy and their attempted answers in different times and places, are bound to exhibit a striking similarity.

Both in Vedanta and Samkhya, freedom from error and knowledge as freedom are commended as the supreme *purusartha* or end of life. Pain and suffering associated with the principles of materiality of different ascending grades, *bhutadi*, are obstructive of knowledge and freedom unless they are sublated by appropriate spiritual exercises and the resulting identification with Brahman (in Vedanta) and the reflective discernment (in Samkhya). Reflection itself is a freeing process, both conatively and cognitively, and recognizes the dualism between subject and object. But the being of the object is what it is only in reference to the subject. This reference is expressive of an unconscious teleology in Samkhya. The subject or self as body has its two aspects, material and mental. The mental body in its subtle form may survive the dissolution of the material body. Both aspects of the body are informed of an unconscious teleology through *bhava*. The subjective function of referring to what is *bhogyā* (the objective) expresses its teleological rootedness.

The teleological character of *buddhi* (intellect), an evolute of *Prakṛti*, itself is evident in its twin manifestations, causal and non-causal. The world of experience in its relation to the perceiving body is the content of thought. The world as *bhogyā* (enjoyable or sufferable) is the projection of the feeling body, projection due to unmanifest *guṇas*. *Buddhi* is causal as manifestation of *Prakṛti* and non-causal in relation to its content. Emerging out of causal nature, *mahat* or *buddhi*, according to Samkhya, can assume the dignity of its non-causal or free-creative projection of the world as its content. Interestingly enough, as the confluence of the causal and the non-causal aspects of Nature, our body proves to be a sort of *tertium quid* between the lower nature (*apara prakṛti*) and the upper Nature (*para Prakṛti*). The causal body unfolds itself, projects itself and creates what is *bhogyā*, the ground of pain and joy.

The actions (*karma*) which project their effects in *bhogyā* or experienced (Nature) are manifest in real time. But the reals or evolutes of Nature are nodal in character and therefore in a way distinct from one another. Yet our intellect or *mahat* comprehends them as continuity, projective or constructive continuity. This capability of *buddhi* to see unity in the nodally discontinuous reals, i.e. distinct evolutes, shows its relatively free creative character. That subjection to spatiality and

temporality does not, rather cannot, take away the continuity of the twenty-five reals or principles (*pancavimsati tattvas*) is further indicative of the self-leaving capacity of *buddhi* from the phenomenal manifestations or sense-capacities and action capacities of the empirical world.

Of this disengagemental capacity of our *prapanca*, or world-projecting *buddhi* from its own bases, somatic sensibility, active and imaginative, has been elaborately argued by Kant in a related context. Like Kant, Samkhya draws a significant distinction between *I*, on the one hand, and *me* and *my* on the other. The body *qua* body has no cognitive capacity of its own. It is only ■ the body of the self, as embodied self, which can be credited with the capacities of knowing, enjoying, or suffering, that cognition is possible.

Again, like the Kantian dualism, Samkhya, especially pre-*Kārika* Samkhya, dualism of *Purusa-Prakṛti* lends itself to a pro-monistic, non-mechanical or, positively speaking, proteleological interpretation, not to a forced interpretation. For not only *Purusa* is consciousness but *mahat* also is often conceived in terms of intensity, not extensity, relatively free creativity and implicit teleology. The difference between *Purusa* and *Mulaprakṛti*, especially the number-based symmetry and orderliness of its evolutes, is not essential. On the contrary, they are affine, or have mutual affinity. That explains, at least partly, why *Yoga* could bring or review them together under God. The *Yoga* interpretation of Samkhya, as I see it, is not forced. It is like Hegel's reformulation of Kant's in the light of the *Third Critique*.

Of the modern philosophers who have shown commendable originality in interpreting Indian philosophical and religious thought two, i.e., Sri Aurobindo (1871-1950) and K. C. Bhattacharya (1875-1949), deserve special mention. Sri Aurobindo in his integral monism, *Purnadvaitavada*, has assimilated in a critico-creative manner the basic insights of Vedanta and Samkhya. He takes his cue from the Gita and from *Svetasvatara Upanisad*.<sup>2</sup> The ultimate Reality is there in beings indivisible and as if divided. *Purusa* and *Prakṛti* are both to be taken as eternal without beginning. But Sri Aurobindo recalls the Upanisadic truths that one must know *Maya* as *Prakṛti* and the Master of *Maya* as the Lord of All beings, both indivisible and divided. The Lord of Beings is said to be conscious in all conscious beings. But, at the same time, he is also consciousness in all inconscient things. The One...is master and in control of the many that are passive in the hands of Force-Nature (*Prakṛti*). He is

the Timeless and Time; He is Space and all that is in space; He is Causality and the cause and the effect; He is the thinker and the thought.' It is in this way that *Purnadvaitavada* tries to capture the basic insights of Samkhya in pro-Vedantic idioms. Sri Aurobindo opposes the dichotomous Samkhya construal of Purusa and *Prakrti*. I, as *purusa*, am in communion with all other Purusas under the aspect of Divinity. Nature and Self are nothing but the two aspects of the same Absolute. They form a Unity, a dim analogy of which is to be found in the embodied self. The Self in us, embedded in the symmetry of Nature, not only witnesses all that happens in and around us and all that is experienced and performed by us. In principle it is also reflectively capable of grasping that which makes this unitary consciousness possible and all other lesser unities, mental and somatic.

K. C. Bhattacharya is also not inclined to accept the Samkhya concept of *Purusa* as exclusive of *Prakrti*. He makes use of the universality aspects of Purusa when the egoity (*asmita*) lapses. At a higher stage of development the distinguishability of *purusa-samanya* lapses and thus freedom or *mukti* is realized. But, Samkhya maintains, of this *mukti* the individual as individual is not conscious. Vedanta rejects this conception of unconscious individual *mukti*. *Mukti* is associated with deindividualised consciousness. Samkhya points out that deindividualised consciousness can be attained with the lapse of *buddhi*. At this stage any talk of individual consciousness and its *mukti* makes no sense. This position appears to be very close to the Vedantic one. Both Samkhya and Vedanta thus indicate how both the illusoriness and the reality of the objective world, *Prakrti*, and its phenomena, can be accounted for. Also along the same lines is explained the possibility of disengagement of the world-bound *buddhi* and the resulting attainment of liberation.

To modern scientific ears many of the Indian ideas just mentioned may sound metaphysical and speculative in the bad sense. But some scientifically minded philosophers like B. N. Seal<sup>4</sup> and some philosophically minded scientists like P. C. Roy<sup>5</sup> and K. R. Chakravorty<sup>6</sup> have persuasively argued that these seemingly metaphysical ideas are firmly rooted in the scientific findings of earlier ages and that they are, to a certain extent, consistent with the conclusions of contemporary sciences. For lack of time I do not propose to go into these interesting details right now. But interested scholars will be well advised to look into the metaphysical ideas of the past and compare them with modern scientific

theories. This will help us understand both philosophy and science in their proper perspective and, what is more, would enable us to realize how true knowledge is basically relevant to the good life, individual, social and even universal.

## Endnotes

1. *Bhagavadgita* XIII:17 and 20
2. *Svetasvatara* IV:10
3. *The Life Divine*, Book One, Pt. I. Ch. 21
4. *The Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1895
5. *History of Chemistry in Ancient and Medieval India*, Indian Chemical Society, Calcutta, see also his earlier work, *History of Hindu Chemistry*, Calcutta, 19056.
6. *Science Based on Symmetry*, Firma KLM, Calcutta, 1977.

The Omnipresence of Being,  
The Intellect-Intelligible Identity and the  
Undescending Part of the Soul  
An Essay on the Dispute about  
Indian Influences on Plotinus

Atsushi Sumi

The majority of leading Plotinus scholars of the twentieth century maintain that Plotinus' thought can sufficiently be characterized as an authentic unfolding of Greek philosophy, especially of Platonism. A nearly well-known exception among them is Émile Bréhier who puts forward the view that Plotinus might have been influenced by Indian thought.<sup>1</sup> Although Bréhier is not the first proponent of the possibility of Indian influences on Plotinus,<sup>2</sup> his view is very often referred to by those who attempt to undermine this possibility.

Let us review Bréhier's argument briefly.<sup>3</sup> Plotinus' notion of Intellect is ambivalent. On the one hand, Intellect is an articulated system of definite notions, which insures the possibility of having a knowledge of the world and the knowability of reality through reason. On the other hand, it is the universal being in which every distinction between subject and object comes to a complete end. This second feature, "the identity of the self with universal being," is unprecedented in Greek philosophy and must derive from elsewhere. Bréhier is thus led to look for the source of Plotinus' doctrine in the religious speculation of India, especially in Upanishads. Strictly speaking, this claim is not a thesis. Bréhier himself regards it as a hypothesis.<sup>4</sup>

One point must be noted. Bréhier quotes several passages from *Ennead* VI 4-5 for the second feature of Plotinus' conception of Intellect. He then holds that these treatises "can easily be read without any reference to Greek philosophy."<sup>5</sup> This observation compels him to say that "the question concerning the origin of these ideas then requires consideration."<sup>6</sup>

Bréhier's hypothesis was not received with favor by Plotinus scholars of this century and several negative responses to it followed. But here arises a question. Can we estimate that his position was totally undermined? Needless to say, his hypothesis cannot be sufficiently refuted by a mere claim that Plotinus' philosophy must be viewed as an authentic unfolding of Greek thought. Only a few critics directly attacked

Bréhier's argument. For instance, Jonathan Scott Lee, in his paper published in 1982, tries to undermine Bréhier's observation that the treatises VI 4-5 can be easily read without any reference to Greek philosophy.<sup>7</sup> In these treatises, according to Lee, Plotinus thematically deals with two problems, the problem raised in *Parm.* 130c4-131c11, concerning a thing's participation in the Form and the problem concerning the causal theory of Forms. Lee thus concludes that the philosophical import of VI 4-5 can only be determined in the context of the metaphysical tradition of Platonism. His attempt can be seen as a methodologically appropriate objection to Bréhier since he directly attacks the vein of Bréhier's argument.

In this paper, I try to make an objection to Bréhier's argument in a way which can be methodologically appropriate. First, the key passages which are referred to in his argument, VI 5,1,25-26, VI 5,12,16-23 and VI 5,7,1-8<sup>8</sup> and the passage quite relevant to the identity of the self with universal being, VI 4,14,16-23, are carefully analyzed. Through the text analysis, the doctrines which support Plotinus' conception of the self as a universal being are identified; they are the doctrines of the intellect-intelligible identity and of the undescending part of the soul. After that, it is clarified that Plotinus, in these doctrines, tackles the problems which are vital to the fundamental theses in Plato's theory of Forms and yet are not fully worked out in his dialogues. In summary, I would like to undermine Bréhier's view by showing that the texts highlighted in his argument must be interpreted in the context of the Platonic metaphysical tradition. Moreover, my discussion will seriously challenge Bréhier's observation of some ambivalence in Plotinus' doctrine of the Intellect, which serves as the starting point of his argument. In addition, I shall also examine whether or not Lee's objection to Bréhier is completely convincing.

I would like to touch briefly upon the scope of my argument. It is not the possibility of Indian influences on Plotinus but Bréhier's argument for that possibility that I examine in this paper. H. F. Müller, in his article published in 1914, is concerned to show the Hellenic authenticity of Plotinus without refuting the suggestion that Plotinus was influenced by Indian thought.<sup>9</sup> Wolters assesses that Müller's arguments do not count against Bréhier's hypothesis, since he does not deal with the possibility of specifically Indian influences on Plotinus.<sup>10</sup> Indeed I also do not deal with that possibility in this paper. From this, however, it does not follow that my argument does not count against Bréhier's hypothesis; for I refute his argument for the hypothesis. Nevertheless the refutation of Bréhier's hypothesis, even if it is successful, does not necessarily eliminate the general possibility of Indian influences on Plotinus.

## 1. The Omnipresence of Being

It would be unmistakable to say that the great treatise, which originally consisted of two *Ennead* treatises VI 4 and 5, thematically deals with the omnipresence of immaterial being. In VI 4,14,16-16,47, however, Plotinus slightly deviates from the main theme to the distinction between our higher and lower selves and the explanation of the descent and liberation of the soul in terms of that distinction.<sup>11</sup> After this digression, he proclaims the return to the original discussion about the omnipresence of being in 16,47-48.

Thus, in the beginning of VI 5,1 Plotinus resumes his discussion about the omnipresence of the intelligible being by appealing to the general consent of all men that the god within us is one and the same (1,1-8). This one god is the firmest principle of all that is desired by all things (1,8-14). Insofar as that which is one is led to what is really one by its desire for the good or for itself, and belonging to itself and being itself are the good to its nature, the good exists as being proper to that which is one (1,14-21). Hence the good is being and in being so that it is for each individual in himself (1,21-25). Here the passage, to which Bréhier refers, follows:

We have not, then ( $\alpha\pi\alpha$ ), departed from being, but are in it, nor has it departed from us: so ( $\alpha\pi\alpha$ ) all beings are one (1,25-26, tr. A. H. Armstrong, adapted by A. Sumi).

Bréhier takes this passage with 7,4-8 and regards them as Plotinus' expression of an immediate intuition or experience of the unity of being.<sup>12</sup>

Bréhier's reference to the above passage is inappropriate, because it cannot be a textual warrant for the identity of ourselves with the universal being or the intelligible whole. In VI 5,7,4-8, on the one hand, Plotinus focuses on the true self that goes back to real being (7,1), the Form of Man (6,11-12) or pure souls and intellect united with the whole of real being (VI 4,14,19-20). On the other hand, the omission of the subject of  $\alpha\pi\epsilon\sigma\tau\eta\mu\epsilon\nu$  and  $\epsilon\sigma\tau\eta\mu\epsilon\nu$  in VI 5,1,25 would suggest that Plotinus here does not deal with our higher self: the hidden  $\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  in the present text picks up  $\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  in 1,3 and is simply editorial. In the present passage, therefore, he neither establishes the identity of ourselves with the noetic world nor describes an experience of that identity.<sup>13</sup>

In the context of the passage above, Plotinus thematically considers the omnipresence of the intelligible whole. The basic features of his doctrine of the omnipresence of being are definitely Platonic. First

of all, it is necessary to understand what Plotinus means exactly by the omnipresence of being. In VI 4,2,1-6 he first distinguishes the true All or the intelligible world and its imitation or the sensible world and then ascribes the latter's being situated in the former to the causal dependence of the latter on the former. We are elsewhere told that the problem concerning the omnipresence of one and the same being is tantamount to the problem of how each of many sensible things is not without share in the same being (7,1-3). The omnipresence of being thus primarily represents the causal relation between the intelligible and the sensible worlds. This causal relation is described in two sorts of terminology, participation and paradeigmatism. In the first place, the sensible world is said to participate in the intelligible world (2,18; 8,10-11; 13,5-6).<sup>14</sup> In the second place, the causal relation must properly be compared to the relation between the original and its image as it occurs in pools or mirrors (9,37-10,17). Moreover, Plotinus holds that the causal relation must not compromise the immutability of the intelligible being. The real being is not affected by the participation of material things in it (8,10-12).<sup>15</sup> Also in the beginning of his discussion about the omnipresence of being, Plotinus distinguishes being from becoming, and stresses the unchangeability of being (VI 5,2,12-16; 3,1ff.).

Plotinus' stance in dealing with the omnipresence of being, as shown above, unmistakably conforms to the essential features of Plato's metaphysics. Needless to say, the distinction between constant being and incessant becoming forms the fundamental scheme of Plato's metaphysics in the middle and late periods of his writing.<sup>16</sup> The unchangeability of being or the Form, distinguished from the process of becoming, is hence maintained consistently through the middle and late periods.<sup>17</sup> It must be considered the basic thesis in the theory of Forms,<sup>18</sup> because the denial of the existence of the immutable Forms, according to Plato, results in the destruction of the possibility, not only of philosophy, but of all discourse.<sup>19</sup> Mainly in the middle dialogues, the causal role of the Form is often described as a thing's participation in the Form. For the causal role of the Form and its immutability to be consistent, Plato defines the minimum requirement for the way of participation: "all other beautiful things partake of (μετέχοντα) that Beauty in such a way that, while other things become and perish, that Beauty neither increases nor decreases in the least, nor is acted upon at all (μηδὲ πάσχειν μηδὲν)" (*Symp.* 211b2-5).<sup>20</sup> In his discussion about the omnipresence of being, Plotinus faithfully abides by this requirement; the causal relation between the intelligibles and the sensibles must not infringe on the immutability or impassibility of the intelligible beings.

Lee maintains that Plotinus' elucidation of the omnipresence of the intelligible being can serve as a solution to the problem, raised in *Parm.* 130e4-131c11, concerning the notion of participation and thereby that the philosophical import of VI 4-5 can only be determined in the context of the Greek metaphysical tradition.<sup>21</sup> We may survey his discussion briefly. In the *Parmenides*, the problem concerning the notion of participation takes the form of a dilemma: either the Form as a whole is in each of many sensible particulars that partake of it, in which case the Form will be separate from itself (131a4-b2), or only a part of the Form is in each of the sensible particulars, in which case the Form will be divisible (131c5-11). The metaphor of the day proposed by Socrates (131b3-6), though not pursued in the *Parmenides*, suggests a way in which the dilemma can be avoided. In the first place, Socrates' suggestion opens up the possibility of an escape from the dilemma, involving the acceptance of the first horn of the dilemma together with a denial of the Form's being separate from itself. In the second place, the metaphor of the day challenges the propriety of a conception of the relation between the Form and sensible particulars as an ordinary relation between a whole and its parts and provides a means by which the Form-sensible relation can be appropriately conceived. In the spirit of Socrates' metaphor, Plotinus replies to the problem in the *Parmenides* by accepting the first horn of the dilemma with the refusal of its consequence that the Form will be separate from itself. Plotinus' discussion slightly diverges from the interlocution in the *Parmenides* since the former concerns the relation between the intelligible world as a whole and the sensible world, and the latter the relation between the individual Forms and sensible particulars. But Lee regards this difference as merely one of emphasis. Plotinus' responses to the problem in the *Parmenides* are found in VI 4,8,2-45, VI 4,13,6-26 and VI 5,3,1-21. Lee focuses on the third passage as the key text. In VI 5,3,1-21, Plotinus gives a detailed account of the nature of the intelligible world. The Form's divisibility entailed in the second horn of the dilemma is inconsistent with the essential character of the intelligible being. The intelligible world must in its nature remain an integral whole and thereby participation requires the existence of the same thing everywhere, that is, the omnipresence of being. The problem in the *Parmenides* thus stems from Parmenides' failure to understand the nature of being. Lee, however, wonders how VI 5,3 serves as an argued response to the problem concerning participation and simply points out that in that passage Plotinus is acting on "the principle that the best defense is attack."

Lee's argument is not cogent enough on several points. It is difficult to think that Plotinus' doctrine of the omnipresence of being

serves as a solution to the problem concerning participation in the *Parmenides*.

In the first place, Lee is not aware that the first horn of the dilemma is not valid for Plato's own theory of Forms and therefore that the metaphor of the day does not hint at any real possibility of avoiding the dilemma. Parmenides' objection in the first horn of the dilemma violates Plato's own formula of a thing's participation in the Form. In *Parm.* 130b2-4 Parmenides asks:

Have you yourself drawn this distinction you speak of and separated apart on the one side forms themselves and on the other the things that share in (*μετέχοντα*) them? Do you believe that there is such a thing as likeness itself (*ὁμότης*) apart from likeness that we possess (*ἔχομεν*)...? (tr. F. M. Cornford).

To this question Socrates replies affirmatively (b6). In the above passage, participation (*μετέχειν*) is applied to the relation between the Form and the sensible particular, while possession (*ἔχειν*) is applied to the relation between the particular thing and the immanent character.<sup>22</sup> Once it is seen that εἶναι ἐν (131a8) is a cognate of ἔχειν in Plato's theory of Forms,<sup>23</sup> it turns out that Parmenides' objection in the first horn of the dilemma misinterprets participation in terms of εἶναι ἐν εἶναι ἐντι.<sup>24</sup> This misinterpretation causes the confusion between the separate Form and its immanent character.<sup>25</sup> This confusion further entails the Form's being separate from itself, insofar as it has been established in 130b4 that the Form itself is separate from its immanent character.<sup>26</sup> The consequence of the first horn of the dilemma, that the Form is separate from itself, precisely means that the Form loses its own ontological status as an immutable Form when it is inadvertently and confusedly identified with its immanent character. This entailed identification finally subjects the constant Form to becoming and perishing and so infringes upon the minimum requirement for the way of participation, as stated in *Symp.* 211b2-5, that the sensible particulars participate in the Form while it remains totally unchangeable. As several scholars point out, the first horn of the dilemma rests on the confusion of two idioms, *μετέχειν* and *εἶναι ἐν* or the misconstruction of participation as being-in.<sup>27</sup> Insofar as the first horn is itself invalid for Plato's own theory of Forms, neither Socrates in the dialogue nor Plotinus must be forced to accept it. Thus seen, the metaphor of the day does not suggest any possibility of avoiding the dilemma. Also in the metaphor, what is worse, each of the Forms is said to be in all the sensible particulars (*ἕκαστον τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν πᾶσιν. εἴη*, 131b5-6). The metaphor is not free from the confusion and

misconstruction in the first horn of the dilemma, so that it cannot be a step in the right direction towards the avoidance of the dilemma.<sup>28</sup>

In the second place, Lee confuses omnipresence and immanence. According to him, Plotinus accepts the first horn of the dilemma that the Form as a whole is in each of the sensible particulars that partake of it, with the denial of the consequence that the Form will be separate from itself.<sup>29</sup> Attempting to establish that participation requires the omnipresence of being as an integral whole, Lee refers to VI 5,3,10: "(the real being) is in many things (*ἐν πολλοῖς*) at once, existing at the same time as one whole with itself."<sup>30</sup> From these points, he seems to take omnipresence as almost synonymous with immanence. But Plotinus himself does not say that the intelligible being is in many sensible things. Let us glance at VI 5,3,7-15, where he develops the immutability of the intelligible being:

But if real being is going to be in a state of freedom from affection, it will not be in something else (*οὐκ ἐν ἄλλῳ*). If, therefore, without departing from itself or being divided into parts or itself undergoing any change, it is in many things at once, existing at the same time as one whole with itself, then, being the same everywhere, it will have an existence in many things: but (*δέ*) this is being on its own and, again, not being on its own. It remains, then (*τοίνυν*), to say that it is itself in nothing (*ἐν οὐδενί*), but the other things participate in it, all those which are able to be present to it and insofar as they are able to be present to it. (tr. A. H. Armstrong, adapted by A. Sumi).

Nowhere in the above passage does Plotinus say that real being is in sensible objects. Rather, he holds that real being, in order to be always itself and not to stand apart from itself (lines 3-4), is in nothing.<sup>31</sup> The immanence of the intelligible being in sensible objects is definitely denied. This denial would clearly indicate that Plotinus does not accept the first horn of the dilemma in the *Parmenides*, where the Form as a whole is said to be in each of many sensible particulars that partake of it. Insofar as he does not accept the first horn, VI 5,3 cannot be considered a chapter dealing with his endeavor to escape from the dilemma. Lee appears to overlook the forces of *δέ* in line 12 and *τοίνυν* in line 13. Moreover, the omnipresence of real being is not established in the above passage. Lee observes that there, Plotinus replies to Parmenides' objection in *Parm.* 131a4-b2 by showing that the integral omnipresence of being is a logical consequence of the nature of being.<sup>32</sup> This observation rests on Lee's confusion between omnipresence and



immanence and his unawareness of the fact that Plotinus in the above passage rejects the immanence of real being in sensible things.<sup>31</sup>

In the third place, Lee does not succeed in explaining how Plotinus' elucidation of the intelligible world as a whole in VI 5,3,1-8 is relevant to the problem in the *Parmenides*. On the one hand, Plotinus' discussion in VI 4-5 concerns the relation between the intelligible world as a whole and the sensible world. On the other hand, Plato's discussion in the *Parmenides* concerns the relation between the individual Form and sensible particulars. Lee is aware of this difference.<sup>34</sup> He regards this difference as "merely one of emphasis" and explains the reason as follows: "the characterization of the participation relation with respect to one *eidos* ought to be applicable to that relation with respect to all *eide* (i.e., to the intelligible world as a whole)."<sup>35</sup>

It is indeed true that the characterization of the participation relation with respect to one Form is applicable to that relation with respect to any other individual Forms. But this fact does not necessarily insure that the characterization of the participation relation with respect to one Form is applicable to that relation with respect to the intelligible world as a whole.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Lee points out that Plotinus' claim of the indivisibility of true being in VI 5,3,1-8 dismisses the second horn of the dilemma, in which a thing participates in a part of the Form.<sup>37</sup> He then summarizes Plotinus' claim: "Hence, participation cannot be explained in terms of the apportionment of parts of the intelligible world to sensible particulars."<sup>38</sup> It is indeed correct to say that the Plotinian intelligible world must not be divided and apportioned to sensible particulars. But we cannot apply the same rule to the indivisibility of the single Form and the intelligible world as a complex whole.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless Lee appears to rest on the assumption that the indivisibility of the intelligible world as a whole is applicable to the problem concerning the indivisibility of the single Form.

Finally, Lee does not succeed in explaining how a clarification of the nature of the intelligible being can be an appropriate response to the problem concerning participation. As already noted, the crux of the problem is how it is possible to conceive the way of the thing's participation in the Form, the way which does not infringe upon the fundamental thesis in the theory of Forms, namely the Forms' immutability. Hence, the reply to the problem by arguing from the nature of real being commits a *petitio principii*. Lee's unawareness of this fact stems from his unawareness that participation is illegitimately interpreted in terms of being-in in the first horn of the dilemma. The problem in the *Parmenides* cannot be sufficiently solved by the acceptance of either horn of the dilemma.<sup>40</sup>

In conclusion, VI 5,1,25-26, to which Bréhier refers, cannot be a textual warrant for Plotinus' expression of an immediate intuition of the unity of being or his identification of the self with the intelligible whole. The passage lies in the context dealing with the omnipresence of real being. Lee tries to reconstruct Plotinus' possible response to the problem concerning participation in the *Parmenides* from his account of the nature of the intelligible being, from which the omnipresence of that being results. But this attempt is not successful. Nevertheless, the omnipresence of true being for Plotinus primarily means the causal dependence of the sensible world upon the intelligible, which forms the basic scheme of Plato's metaphysics. Furthermore, Plotinus defends the fundamental thesis in Plato's theory of Forms, namely the Forms' immutability, by making the notion of omnipresence distinct from immanence.

## II. The Identity of Self with the Intelligible Whole

As already mentioned, Bréhier's hypothesis of Indian influence on Plotinus is based on his observation that the view of the identity of the self with universal being is unprecedented in Greek philosophy. Let us see another passage to which Bréhier refers in developing this observation:

Now it is because you approached the All and did not remain in a part of it, and you did not even say of yourself "I am just so much," but by rejecting the "so much" you have become all yet even before this you were all; but because something else came to you after the "all" you became less by the addition: for the addition did not come from being you will add nothing to that but from non-being (VI 5,12,15-23, tr. A. H. Armstrong).

In this passage, Plotinus explicitly speaks of the identity of the self with the intelligible world. But his explanation is purely descriptive. The reason seems to be that the above passage lies in the context dealing with "a bit of encouragement (*τινὸν καὶ παραμυθίων*)" (11,5) for the solution to the problem of how the unspaced can stretch over all the body.<sup>41</sup> The identity of the self with the intelligible world seems to be based on the doctrines of the substantial identity of Intellect and intelligible objects and of the undescending part of the soul. The notion of the self as the intelligible world is satisfactorily established insofar as the self is identified either with Intellect, which comprises the totality of the intelligible objects in itself, or with the undescending part of the soul

which is very intimate to such an all-inclusive Intellect. In the subsequent discussion, I shall clarify that these doctrines are both motivated by the problems left unsolved in Plato's philosophy.<sup>42</sup>

#### A. The Identity of Intellect and the Intelligible Objects

In the third passage to which Bréhier refers, Plotinus explicates the identity of ourselves with universal being in terms of "true knowledge":

For we and what is ours go back to real being and we ascend to that real being and to the first which comes from it, and we think (*νοοῦμεν*) those beings; we do not have images or imprints of them. But if we do not, we are those beings. If then we have a part in true knowledge (*ἀληθινῆς ἐπιστήμης*), we are those; we do not apprehend them as distinct within ourselves, but we are within them. For, since the others, and not only ourselves, are those, we are all those. So then, being together with all things, we are those: so then, we are all and one (VI 5,7,1-8, tr. A. H. Armstrong, adapted by A. Sumi).

As Armstrong notes, this passage is the clearest explanation of Plotinus' statement that we are each of us the intelligible universe, as stated in III 4,3,22 and IV 7,10,34-36.<sup>43</sup> Plotinus here does not seem to distinguish fully the intelligible being and the pure soul which always remains in the noetic world (*ἐκεῖνο καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἀπ' ἐκείνου*), (line 2). Hence it is adumbrated that *νοεῖν* (line 3) is applicable to the undescending part of the soul. This point is fully considered in the next section.

In the above passage, "true knowledge," through which we are intelligible beings, means intellection, directed to those beings, which is free from images or imprints of them (line 3). According to Plotinus, an intuitive and immediate knowledge of intelligible beings is insured only by the substantial unity of Intellect and its objects. In fact, "true knowledge" elsewhere signifies the intellect-intelligible identity. In attempting to avoid the tendency to interpret the intellect-intelligible identity in terms of the Middle-Platonic view that the Forms are hypostatized by divine intellection,<sup>44</sup> Plotinus writes as follows:

But if someone were to say that "in immaterial things knowledge and the thing are the same," one must understand what is said in the sense that it (means)...that the thing itself when it is without matter is object of intellection and intellection, ...intellection in the sense that the thing

itself, being in the intelligible, is nothing else but intellect and knowledge. For the knowledge is not directed to itself, but the thing there makes the knowledge, which does not stay like the knowledge of a thing in matter, to be different: this is true knowledge (*ἀληθινὴν ἐπιστήμην*): this is not an image of the thing but the thing itself (VI 6,6,19-30, tr. A. H. Armstrong, adapted by A. Sumi).

"True knowledge" represents the unity of Intellect and the intelligible objects. Also in the above passage, "true knowledge" is said to involve no image of the knowable thing. Two passages above cited show that the identity of the self with the intelligible world is based on the substantial unity of Intellect and intelligible objects.

What is the motive for Plotinus' doctrine of the intellect-intelligible identity? What problem does he work out with this doctrine?

In V 5,1, Plotinus devotes the entire chapter to the defense of the intellect-intelligible identity.<sup>45</sup> His argument is a negative one against the claim that the intelligible objects lie outside Intellect.<sup>46</sup> According to Plotinus, the greatest absurdity of this claim is that it inescapably causes Intellect to contemplate images of its objects, but neither the objects themselves nor the truth of them, and thereby to be deceived (lines 50-61). For Intellect's infallibility to be sufficiently defended, therefore, the objects must be placed within Intellect.<sup>47</sup>

"True knowledge," which is said to be free from images of its objects in VI 5,7,1-8, is thus embodied by the intellect-intelligible identity which does not involve any image of object, making Intellect capable of attaining always the truth of its objects.

As several critics remark, the intellect-intelligible identity concerns the exigencies of intellectual knowledge compared with the character of sense knowledge and both the possibility and modality of self-knowledge.<sup>48</sup> But the motive for the conception of the intellect-intelligible unity would not be exhausted by the exigencies that have occurred in Plotinus' own system of philosophy. In concluding his argument in V 5,1, he explicitly mentions the definite position that must be defended by the intellect-intelligible unity:

But, since one must bring in knowledge and truth and watchfully preserve real beings (*τὰ ὄντα*) and the knowledge of what each thing is (*γινώσκειν οὐδ' τί ἐκαστὸν ἐστίν*) but not the knowledge of what it is like (*ποῖόν τι ἐκαστον*), since (if we only had that) we should have an image and a trace of real beings, and not possess and live with and be fused with real beings themselves (V 5,2,4-8, tr. A. H. Armstrong, adapted by A. Sumi).

Plotinus here employs Plato's distinction between τὸ ὄν or τὸ τί and τὸ ποῖόν τι (*Epist.* VII 342e7-343a1). This distinction is made among five kinds in such a way that the former corresponds to the Form itself as ὁ δὲ γινώσκων τε καὶ ἀληθῶς ἐστὶν ὄν (342b1) and the latter to a name, a definition, an image and a knowledge of that Form. "To preserve real beings and the knowledge of what each thing is" thus means to defend the existence and the complete intelligibility of the Forms. Notice that the incorrigibility of Intellect is inseparable from the complete intelligibility of the Forms. In Plato, as already seen, the denial of the existence of the immutable Forms results in the destruction of the possibility, not only of philosophy, but of all discourse (*Parm.* 135b5-c2), so that the immutability of the Forms must be regarded as the fundamental thesis in his theory of Forms. The possibility of philosophy and other significant discourse, however, cannot be safeguarded solely by the positing of immutable Forms. Plato himself seems to have been aware of this point:

The result is that the hearer is perplexed and inclined either to question the Forms' existence, or to contend that, even if they do exist, they must certainly be unknowable (ἄγνοστα) by our human nature (*Parm.* 135a3-5, tr. F. M. Cornford, adapted by A. Sumi).

Even if the existence of the immutable Forms is admitted, the denial of their knowability will destroy the possibility of philosophy and other discourse. Hence, the existence of the invariable Forms is the fundamental thesis and their intelligibility the second-fundamental thesis in the theory of Forms. In fact, "the friends of Forms" in the *Sophist* maintain both theses (246b7-8, 248a11-12). But Plato nowhere gives a definite account of how intellect, human or divine, is related to the Forms in the occurrence of intellection. Those philosophers who wish to defend the fundamental position of the theory of Forms cannot avoid drawing a clear picture of the intellect-intelligible relation that not only coheres with the Forms' immutability but insures their complete intelligibility.<sup>49</sup> Hence Plotinus seems to say that we need to maintain the intellect-intelligible unity to preserve not only real beings themselves, but the knowledge of what each of those real beings is.

In summary, Plotinus' notion of the self as the intelligible whole is supported by his doctrine of the intellect-intelligible identity. This doctrine is motivated by his attempt to solve the problem of what relation between Intellect and the Forms coheres with the Forms' constancy and

insures their complete knowability. This is the central problem, in Plato's theory of Forms, which has not been fully worked out by Plato himself.<sup>50</sup>

The starting point of Bréhier's argument for Indian influence on Plotinus is his observation of some ambivalence in Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect; on the one hand Intellect is an articulated system of definite notions which can be grasped through reason, on the other hand the subject is indiscriminately identified with all objects on the level of Intellect. But rather, our discussion indicates that Plotinus' doctrine is totally free from such ambivalence, because the knowability of real beings must be based on nothing other than the identity of the noetic subject and the intelligible objects. Therefore it turns out that Bréhier's argument starts from his misunderstanding of the basic features of Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect.

### B. The Undescending Part of the Soul and Intellection

As already seen, in VI 5,7,1-8 the systematic connection between the undescending part of the soul, referred to as "the first which comes from real being," and the identity of the self with the intelligible whole is not fully explained, but simply hinted at. How is the undescending part of the soul related to this identity? The following passage, which Bréhier does not adduce, clearly shows the bearing of the conception of the self as the noetic world upon the undescending part of the soul:

But we who are we? Are we that real being or that which draws near and comes to be in time? No, even before this becoming to arise we were there, men who were different, and some of us even gods, pure souls (ψυχὰι καθαφαί) and intellect united with the whole of real being; we were parts of the intelligible, not marked off or cut off but belonging to the whole; and we are not cut off even now. But now another man, wishing to exist, approached that man (VI 4,14,16-23, tr. A. H. Armstrong, adapted by A. Sumi).

Here, as does in VI 5,12,16-23, Plotinus speaks of the addition of lower self to a higher one. In the above passage, "the first which comes from real being" (VI 5,7,2) is specialized as "pure souls." From the sentence οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ νῦν ἀποτεμνόμεθα in lines 21-22, "pure souls" are identified as the highest part of the soul that does not leave the intelligible world,<sup>51</sup> the part which belongs also to individual souls.<sup>52</sup> While the undescending part of the soul is discussed by many scholars, it is sufficient for the present inquiry to point out that the cognitive activity of this part is non-discursive intellection.<sup>53</sup> In the undescending soul,

there are genuine kinds of knowledge ( $\alpha\lambda\lambda\theta\nu\omega\varsigma \epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\mu\alpha\iota$ ) that are each and all of the intelligible objects and have intellection within themselves (V 9,7,4-8). The undescending part of the soul is very akin to Intellect in its nature and activity.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, taking VI 4,14,16-23 together with VI 5,7,1-8, we can conclude that the identity of the self with the intelligible world is based also on the nature of the undescending part of the soul which exercises intellection and always attains "true knowledge" identical with the intelligible objects.

What bearing does the undescending soul have upon Plato's philosophy? As Blumenthal points out, the undescending soul gives an account of how men can know the Forms.<sup>55</sup> As mentioned repeatedly, the complete intelligibility of the Forms is the second-fundamental thesis in Plato's theory of Forms; the Forms must be knowable precisely "by our human nature" (*Parm.* 135a5). Intellection is one of  $\pi\alpha\theta\eta\mu\alpha\tau\alpha \epsilon\nu \tau\eta \psi\upsilon\chi\eta$   $\gamma\iota\gamma\nu\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha$  (*Rep.* 511d7-8). Again, "the friends of Forms" claim that we have cognitive intercourse with the Forms "by means of the soul through reflection ( $\delta\iota\alpha \lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\upsilon \delta\epsilon \psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ )" (*Soph.* 248a11). Although Plato does not say that the rational part of the soul always remains in the realm of the Forms, the Plotinian undescending soul does not seem to be alien to Plato's philosophy. Plato suggests the possibility of the soul in her purity to be in perpetual contact with real being ( $\delta\epsilon\iota \mu\epsilon\tau' \epsilon\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu\omicron\nu \tau\epsilon \gamma\iota\gamma\nu\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ , *Phd.* 79d3).<sup>56</sup> In sum, Plotinus' theory of the undescending part of the soul certainly concerns the knowability of the Forms, the second-fundamental thesis in Plato's theory of Forms.

Lee attacks Bréhier also with regard to the weight of Plotinus' treatment of the universal soul in the treatises VI 4-5.<sup>57</sup> Lee points out a misdirection of emphasis in Bréhier's view of the main task of VI 4-5; Bréhier regards it as the elucidation of Plotinus' doctrine concerning "the relations of the individual soul to the universal Soul."<sup>58</sup> Lee notices that the doctrine of the universal soul he calls it the doctrine of monopsychism plays an especially significant role in VI 4,14-15. But he estimates that the doctrine comes up in Plotinus' analysis of eidetic causation and supposes, by referring to VI 5,9,1-13, that the doctrine is devoted to the explanation of the intersubjective accessibility of the sensible world. Lee's view, however, is not tenable. In the first place, he overlooks the context of VI 4,14. As the query in VI 4,14,16-17 indicates, the previously considered passage, VI 4,14,16-23, primarily concerns the inquiry into the true self of the human person, but does not come up in the elucidation of eidetic causation.<sup>59</sup> Again, the final sentence of the treatise (16,48) marks the divergence of Plotinus' preceding discussion from the main theme of the treatise, namely the omnipresence of real being which denotes the causal dependence of the

sensible world upon the intelligible. In the second place, it is apparently difficult to read the intersubjective accessibility of the sensible world into VI 5,9,1-13. This passage simply deals with the unity of the productive cause of the sensible realm. In light of the force of  $\tau\omicron\iota\nu\nu$  in line 13, the sentence  $\kappa\alpha\iota \pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\alpha\iota \alpha\iota \psi\upsilon\chi\alpha\iota \tau\omicron\iota\nu\nu \mu\iota\alpha$  (lines 12-13) merely points to the unity of life on which the sensible world depends (lines 10-12) and thereby does not imply such a unity of souls that insures the intersubjective accessibility of the sensible world. In addition, Plotinus' account of the true self of the human person in VI 4,14,16-23 is not strictly monopsychic; the undescending soul is mentioned in plural ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\alpha\iota \kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\alpha\iota$ , line 19). Lee points out Bréhier's failure to place the problem of monopsychism within the scope of the problem of eidetic causation and participation. As shown above, however, his argument against Bréhier is not convincing enough.

### III. Conclusion

We have critically examined Bréhier's argument for his hypothesis of Indian influence on Plotinus through the careful analysis of Plotinus' texts referred to in his argument. It has been pointed out that Plotinus' conception of the self as the intelligible whole, which Bréhier attempted to explain in terms of Indian influence on him, is supported by the doctrines that are definitely motivated by the problems concerning the basic theses in Plato's theory of Forms. We now conclude our inquiry by saying as follows.

In the first place, the passage VI 5,1,25-26, referred to by Bréhier, does not deal with the identity of the self with the intelligible world. The passage is in the section where Plotinus thematically considers the omnipresence of true being. Although Lee, arguing against Bréhier, emphasizes the Hellenic purity of Plotinus by claiming that the omnipresence of real being suggests Plotinus' response to the problem concerning participation in Plato's *Parmenides*, his attempt is not fully successful. Nevertheless the omnipresence of true being denotes the causal dependence of the sensible world upon the intelligible, which delineates the basic scheme of Plato's metaphysics. Insofar as this causal relation presupposes the separateness of the intelligible beings from the realm of becoming, which confirms the constancy of the intelligible Forms, the omnipresence of real being is inseparably linked with the fundamental thesis in Plato's theory of Forms, the immutability of the Forms.

In the second place, the identity of the self with the intelligible universe is supported by the doctrine of the intellect-intelligible identity.

The doctrine represents Plotinus' reply to the problem raised and yet unsolved in Plato's philosophy, that is, what relation between Intellect and the Forms can insure the latter's complete intelligibility. This problem precisely concerns the second fundamental thesis in Plato's theory of Forms, the complete knowability of the Forms.

Finally, the identity of the self with the intelligible cosmos is also supported by the doctrine of the undescending part of the soul which is very intimate to Intellect. The doctrine provides an explanation of how men can know the Forms and thereby safeguards the second-fundamental thesis in Plato's theory of Forms, the Forms' knowability to us.

Although our argument results in the disclosure of Plotinus' serious endeavor to defend the basic theses of Plato's theory of Forms, this result does not count against the general possibility of Indian influences on Plotinus. Wolters rightly remarks:

There is overwhelming evidence that Plotinus lived and moved in the horizon of the Greek philosophical tradition, but there is no evidence that he was a prisoner of it.<sup>50</sup>

The complete intelligibility of being, which Plotinus' doctrine of the intellect-intelligible identity puts forward, urges us to understand thoroughly the complete fact of our world by abandoning dogmatic attitude towards foreign traditions of culture and religion and then continuing untiringly our intellectual and ethical inquiry in the universal horizon. If Plotinus were to be confined in the self-closed world of Greek philosophy, the vital force of his philosophy would remain dormant. One of the remarkable features of Plotinus' philosophy as the basis of a viable *Weltanschauung* seems to me to reside in its potential openness to various cultural and religious traditions.

## Endnotes

1. É. Bréhier. *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, translated by J. Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp.106-131.
2. The possibility of Indian influences on Plotinus was entertained by several scholars of the nineteenth century. See A. M. Wolters, "A Survey of Modern Scholarly Opinion on Plotinus and Indian Thought," in *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*, ed. R. B. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp.294-295.
3. For a rough sketch of Bréhier's argument, I refer to Wolters' summary of his view. See A. M. Wolters, *op.cit.*, p.298.
4. É. Bréhier. *Op.cit.*, p.118.
5. É. Bréhier. *Op.cit.*, p.111.
6. *Ibid.*
7. J. S. Lee. "Omnipresence, Participation, and Eidetic Causation in Plotinus," in *The Structure of Being: A Neoplatonic Approach*, ed. R. B. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp.90-103.
8. These passages are cited in É. Bréhier, *op.cit.*, p.110.
9. H. F. Müller. "Plotinische Studien II: Orientalisches bei Plotinos?" *Hermes* 49 (1914):70-89.
10. A. M. Wolters. *Op.cit.*, p.298.
11. Plotinus' argument in VI 4,14,16-16,47 does not totally diverge from the central problem of the treatise. As seen in 14,1-2, the omnipresence of the indivisible life naturally raises the problem of the particularization of the soul and the difference in the soul's disposition.
12. É. Bréhier. *Op.cit.*, p.110. Bales finds Plotinus' denial of the meontological character of the One in 1,21-26. See E. F. Bales, "Plotinus' Theory of the One," in *The Structure of Being: A Neoplatonic Approach*, ed. R. B. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp.43-44. This interpretation is evidently untenable, because τὸ ὑπερθεῖν (line 20) indicated by αὐτό (line 21) does not mean the transcendent Good.
13. Bréhier observes that we are dealing with an experience, but not a rational explanation, in the present passage. Is this observation accurate? The repeated occurrence of ἄρα in 1,25-26 would rather adumbrate that a rational argument is developed in 1,24-26. The argument in 1,24-26 is elaborated on as follows:
  - (a) The good is being and in being (1,24).
  - (b) Belonging-to-itself and being-itself are the good to the nature of one being (1,18-19).
  - (c) Then the good is for each individual in himself (1,24-25) (by (a) and (b)).
  - (d) Therefore (ἄρα) we have not departed from being, but are in it, nor

has it departed from us (1,25-26) (by (a) and (c)).

(c) (b) means being-one (1,20).

(f) Therefore (ἀρα) all beings in ourselves are one (1,26) (by (c), (d) and (e)).

The above explanation shows that the passage under discussion just concerns the rational argument for the unity of being.

The objection may be made that the occurrence of ἐντῷ in 1,24 implies that "we," the subject of ἀπέστημεν and ἐσμέν is our higher self, that is, either pure soul or intellect. But this objection is not convincing enough. As already pointed out, the subject of two verbs is omitted. It would be reasonable to think that our higher self enters the scene with τὸ ἡμέτερον καὶ ἡμεῖς in 7,1.

14. See also VI 5,3,14. As we shall see, this use of terminology lacks rigidity in terms of the original use of the idiom in Plato.

15. With Henry-Schwyzler, Harder, Cilento and Armstrong, Gollwitzer's emendation πάσχοντος is read for the MSS παντός in 3,11. The emendation is justified by the force of γὰρ in 8,12.

16. *Rep.* 525b5-5, c4-6, 525c6-7, 534a2-3; *Soph.* 248b6-c2; *Tim.* 27d5-28a4, 29c3. See also *Phd.* 79c2-d7, 80b1-5; *Symp.* 211a1. With several critics, we take "the friends of Forms" of the *Sophist* as representing Plato's own theory in the middle period. See F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1935; reprint ed., Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), pp.243-244; W. D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951; reprint ed., Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), p.107; P. Seligman, *Being and Non-Being: An Introduction to Plato's Sophist* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p.34; R. S. Bluck, *Plato's Sophist*, ed. G. C. Neal (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), p.94. For the list of various views and their proponents, see W. D. Ross, *op.cit.*, pp.105-106; G. Martin, *Platons Ideenlehre* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1973), p.153. For more detailed discussion for identifying "the friends of Forms," see my dissertation "The One's Knowledge in Plotinus" (Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1993), pp.23-29.

17. The immutability of the Forms is emphatically asserted by "the friends of Forms" in the *Sophist* (248a12). This section is regarded as the reminiscence of *Phd.* 79d5 and 80b2-3. See F. M. Cornford, *op.cit.*, p.244, note 1; H. -E. Pester, *Platons Beweise Usia* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1971), p.42. The Forms' immutability has never been abandoned up to the *Seventh Letter* (342c2-4).

18. A systematized theory of Forms is nowhere found in Plato's dialogues. By "the theory of Forms" we temporarily mean a form of insight based on the single hypothesis positing constant Forms. The fundamental hypothesis is that "there is a beautiful alone by itself (τι καλὸν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ) and a good, and a great, and so with the rest of them" (*Phd.* 100b5-7). As ἐκεῖνα τὰ πολυθρόνητα in b4-5 refers back to the Forms mentioned in the recollection argument and the

kinship argument, the locution τι καλὸν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ quite certainly implies the unchangeability of that hypothetical entity. Hence the immutability of the Forms constitutes the fundamental hypothesis, rather than a thesis, of Plato's theory of Forms.

19. *Parm.* 135b5-c2. Cornford observes that Parmenides here accepts "the fundamental thesis of Plato's theory" (*Plato and Parmenides* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937], p.100).

20. For the impassibility of the Forms, see also *Epist.* VII 342c3. Apelt correctly associates *Symp.* 211b4-5 with the refusal, by "the friends of Forms" in *Soph.* 248d10-e1, to consider intellectual knowledge in terms of acting and being acted upon. See *Platonis Sophista recensuit Prolegomenis et Commentariis instruxit O. Apelt* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1897; reprint ed., New York: Garland, 1979), pp.151-152.

21. The following sketch of Lee's argument is based on his "Omnipresence, Participation, and Eidetic Causation in Plotinus," in R. B. Harris, *The Structure of Being: A Neoplatonic Approach*, pp.90-95.

22. In the hypothesis argument of the *Phaedo*, a perfect consistency is seen in the usage of these two idioms. See N. Fujisawa, "Ἐχειν, Μετέχειν, and Idioms of 'Paradeigmatism' in Plato's Theory of Forms," *Phronesis* 19 (1974):45. Also in *Parm.* 130e5-6, participation is understood as applying to the thing-Form relation. Some may observe that Plato inadvertently applies ἔχειν to the thing-Form relation in 130d9. But this observation is not accurate because 130d8-9 ὁ νοῦς ἐλέγχον ἐῖδὲς ἔχειν simply refers to 130d4 εἶδος...τι αὐτῶν οἰσθῆναι εἶναι.

23. For the cognate idioms of ἔχειν, see N. Fujisawa, *op.cit.*: 40; W. D. Ross, *op.cit.*, p.228. See also Aristotle, *Met.* 1023a23-25.

24. εἶναι ἐν, 131a8, b1-2; εἶναι ἐπὶ, 131b9, c3.

25. Supposing that in the present passage Parmenides takes the locution accompanied with εἶναι ἐν and εἶναι ἐπὶ in the most materialistic sense, Allen points out his confusion between a physical relation and a metaphysical relation. (*Plato's Parmenides* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983], p.120). For the physical sense of εἶναι ἐν, see G. Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*," in *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*, ed. R. E. Allen (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p.256, note 1. But what Allen means by the "metaphysical relation" is not fully clear. If the metaphysical relation in question implies a transcendence, it will be totally absurd to express the metaphysical relation by εἶναι ἐν since this idiom properly implies an immanence (see W. D. Ross, *op.cit.*, p.228; N. Fujisawa, *op.cit.*: 40). The confusion between the physical relation and the metaphysical relation is only discernible as the confusion between ἔχειν or εἶναι ἐν and μετέχειν. Several critics are inclined to treat μετέχειν and its cognates as describing the Form's immanence. See W. D. Ross, *op.cit.*, pp.228-230; P. Natorp, *Platons Ideenlehre*:

*Eine Einführung in den Idealismus* (Leipzig: Dürr, 1903; reprint ed., Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1961), pp.88, 155, 409. But, since these idioms express the relation between the sensible particular and the separate Form, we may regard them as implying the Form's transcendence. See N. Fujisawa, *op.cit.*: 40.

26. We should note that χωρίς occurs five times in 130b-d, but does not always concern the separateness between the Form and the thing partaking of it. Whereas χωρίς in 130b2, b3, c1 and d1 concerns the separateness between the Form and the thing, χωρίς in 130b4 alone concerns the separateness between the Form and its immanent character.

For the rejection of the immanence of the Forms, see *Symp.* 211a8-b1 and *Tim.* 52a3. See also R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedo*, translated with an Introduction and Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), pp.143-144.

27. N. Fujisawa, *Op.cit.*: 34; H. Teloh, *The Development of Plato's Metaphysics* (University Park, London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981), p.155; *idem*, "Parmenides and Plato's *Parmenides* 131a-132c," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 14 (1976):128. See also F. M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*, pp.86-87.

28. For an attempt to show that the metaphor of the day cannot save Plato's theory of participation in the middle period, see S. Panagiotou, "The Day and Sail Analogies in Plato's *Parmenides*", *Phoenix* 41 (1987):10-24.

29. J. S. Lee, *Op.cit.*, p.92.

30. J. S. Lee, *Op.cit.*, p.94.

31. See also VI 4,2,2-3.

32. J. S. Lee, *Op.cit.*, p.94.

33. As already mentioned, the omnipresence of real being for Plotinus primarily denotes the causal dependence of the sensible world upon the intelligible. In this causal relation, that which comes after the true All is in the really existent All (VI 4,2,3-4). Again, we are told that the visible universe is, in a way, based on and resting on true All (2,10). Plotinus' position is precisely that the sensible world is in the intelligible rather than that the intelligible world is in the sensible. But VI 4,3,17-19 appears to run counter this. The passage reads:

"There is nothing, therefore, surprising in the true All's being in all things (ἐν πᾶσιν εἶναι) in this way, because it is in none of them (ἐν οὐδενί ἔσθαι) in such a way as to belong to them" (tr. A. H. Armstrong, adapted by A. Sumi).

Plotinus here does not say that the intelligible world is literally immanent in the sensibles. As οὕτως in line 18 indicates, he explains a way in which the intelligible world is present to the sensible in the preceding passage. But the text in lines 15-16 is corrupt, so that we cannot accurately know his explanation. Nevertheless it is evident that the true All is not possessed by any sensible (οὐ γινόμενον ἐκείνου, line 16). As already seen, ἔχειν is a cognate of εἶναι ἐν in

Plato. But since Plotinus rejects the possession of the true All by the sensible object, the locution ἐν πᾶσιν εἶναι in line 18 must be distinct from such locutions like ἐν πολλοῖς οὖσιν ἐνέσται in *Par.*, 131b1-2 and ἐν πᾶσιν εἶη in 135-6. We must not be misled by this locution. Plotinus explicitly states in line 12 that the true All itself is present to the sensible, being all the same separate. Therefore the above cited passage does not establish the immanence of the intelligible world in the sensible.

Lee's confusion between omnipresence and immanence is not without cause. In the metaphor of the day itself, omnipresence and immanence are not fully distinct from each other:

"[The Form would not be separate from itself] if it were like one and the same day, which is everywhere (πολλαχού) at the same time and nevertheless is not separate from itself. Suppose each Form is also in all things (ἐν πᾶσιν εἶη) at the same time as one and the same in this way (οὕτω)" (*Parm.* 131b3-6, tr. F. M. Cornford, adapted by A. Sumi).

In the metaphor of the day, omnipresence is not fully distinct from immanence. Lee might possibly be misguided by this ambiguity. Hence we can conclude that Plotinus in VI 4-5 does not faithfully follow the spirit of the metaphor of the day, but makes omnipresence distinct from immanence.

34. J. S. Lee, *Op.cit.*, p.92.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Lee refers to VI 5,3,13-14, where the things are said to participate in real being as a whole (τὰ δ' ἅλλα ἐκείνου μεταλαμβάνειν), in his reconstruction of Plotinus' response to the problem in the *Parmenides* (*op.cit.*, p.94). If the characterization of the participation relation with respect to one Form is precisely applicable to that relation with respect to the intelligible world as a whole, the things which participate in real being ought to have an immanent character of the intelligible world as a whole. But this is obviously unreasonable. Hence the use of μεταλαμβάνειν in VI 5,3,14 must be clearly distinguished from the normal use of the participation idioms in the passages where Plato deals with the Forms. Moreover, the principle of the causal theory of Forms, τὸ καλὸν τὰ καλὰ καλὰ (*Phd.* 100e2-3), on which the participation relation with respect to one Form is based, is not applicable to that relation with respect to the intelligible world as a whole.

37. J. S. Lee, *Op.cit.*, p.93.

38. *Ibid.*

39. The indivisibility of the intelligible world must be distinguished from that of the individual Form, because the former means that the intelligible world consists of many Forms and yet is indivisible (II 4,4,14-15).

40. For another attempt to reconstruct Plotinus' reply to the *Parmenides* problem concerning participation, see J. Fielder, "Plotinus' Reply to the Arguments of *Parmenides* 130a-131d," *Apeiron* 12 (1978):1-5. As does Lee, Fielder holds that

the clarification of the nature of immaterial entity leads to the solution to the problem. I do not maintain that no solution to the problem is suggested in VI 4-5. My own position is that Plotinus' possible response can be reconstructed from VI 5,8. I will leave the full explanation of my reconstruction and the examination of Fielder's view for another occasion.

41. In VI 7,40,2-5, παραμυθία, coupled with πειθώ, is contrasted with logical necessity (ἀνάγκη).

42. Bréhier takes VI 5,12,16-23 as an expression of the disappearance of an individual consciousness (*op.cit.*, p.110). Bussanich contrasts the present passage, V 8,7,32-35 and V 3,4,9-13 with III 8,11,32-38 and maintains the disappearance of human individuality and individual consciousness on the intelligible level (*The One and Its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus*, A Commentary on Selected Texts [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988], pp.128-129). For the opposing view, see M. Atkinson, *Plotinus: Ennead V.1, A Commentary with Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.104-105; G. M. Gurtler, *Plotinus: The Experience of Unity* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), pp.63-64. But Arnou tries to reconcile the present passage with VI 4,14,17ff., where Plotinus says that we exist as particulars in the noetic world (*Le Désir de Dieu dans la Philosophie de Plotin*, 2nd ed., [Rome: Presse de l'Université Grégorienne, 1967], pp.204-208). See also H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), pp.123-125. In this essay, I do not go into the problem concerning our status in the intelligible world, which is linked with the grand problem of whether or not Plotinus believes in Ideas of individuals.

According to Lee, in VI 5,12,19-22 Plotinus claims that the soul, which was identical with the intelligible world, becomes more of a non-entity through the addition of the self to the objects of her contemplation (*op.cit.*, p.99). I cannot see how such an interpretation is possible. The addition of "something else" (line 20) is said to be from non-being (line 22), namely sensible matter. The passage in question does not warrant the negativity of self-consciousness.

43. *Plotinus*. Text with an English Translation by A. H. Armstrong, 7 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966-88; London: William Heinemann, 1966-88), 6:340-341, note 1.

44. For a detailed discussion about Plotinus' attempt to draw the line between his own doctrine of the intellect-intelligible identity and the Middle-Platonic conception of the Form as God's νόμα, see A. Sumi, *op.cit.*, pp.124-126.

45. For the full analysis of Plotinus' argument in V 5,1, see A. Sumi, *op.cit.*, pp.103-107.

46. See M. R. Alfino, "Plotinus and the Possibility of Non-Propositional Thought," *Ancient Philosophy* 8 (1983):278.

47. This argument is prefigured in III 9,1,6-9 and reappears in V 3,5,21-26.

48. See J. Pepin, "Éléments pour une Histoire de la Relation entre l'Intelligence et l'Intelligible chez Platon et dans le Néoplatonisme," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 146 (1956):48-49; J. Bussanich, *op.cit.*, pp.91-92.

49. See A. H. Armstrong, "The Background of the Doctrine 'That the Intelligibles are not outside the Intellect,'" in *Les Sources de Plotin* (Geneva, Vancœuvres: Fondation Hardt, 1957), p.401:

"Plotinus in formulating his doctrine that the Intelligibles are in Intellect seems to me to be concerned with a question of a different sort 'What is the *relationship* of eternal intuitive thought to its object (or objects) and how is that object to be conceived?'" (Italics mine).

I do not go into details about how the intellect-intelligible unity coheres with the Forms' immutability here. For my discussion about this problem, see A. Sumi, *op.cit.*, pp.113-118, 127-128.

50. Needless to say, Plotinus' doctrine of the intellect-intelligible unity historically goes back to Aristotle's doctrine of divine Intellect. Aristotle's psychological formula of the identity of mind in activity with the object of thought, which is applied to his analysis of the internal structure of divine intellection in *Met.* 1072b14-28, has philosophical merits of insuring the infallibility of divine intellect and safeguarding its immutability. Exploiting these merits fully, Plotinus tackles the problems which remained unsolved in Plato. For the connection of Plotinus' doctrine with Aristotle, see A. Sumi, *op.cit.*, pp.73-74, 78-80.

We may briefly touch upon the philological source of Plotinus' expression ἀληθινὴ ἐπιστήμη. This expression seems to go back to the *Phaedrus* myth, which, according to his own exegesis, implicitly suggests the intellect-intelligible unity. He writes:

"... but about the knowledge there which Plato observed and said 'that which is not a knowledge different from that in which it is (οὐδ' ἥτις ἐστὶν ἄλλην ἐν ἄλλῳ),' but how is so, he left us to investigate and discover" (V 8,4,52-54, tr. A. H. Armstrong).

It is evident that οὐδ' ἥτις ἐστὶν ἄλλην ἐν ἄλλῳ is a paraphrase of ἐπιστήμην..οὐδ' ἥ ἐστὶν καὶ ἑτέρα ἐν ἑτέρῳ οὕσα ὧν ἡμεῖς νῦν ὄντων καλούμεν (*Phdr.* 247d7-e1). Notice that ἑτέρα ἐν ἑτέρῳ (d7-e1) explains ἡ γένεσις πρόσθεσιν (d7) and is contrasted with ἐν τῷ ὃ ἐστὶν ὄν (e1-2) which characterises Knowledge itself or τὸ τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἐπιστήμης γένος (c8). (Hackforth's translation of d7-e1 "knowledge that...varies with the various objects" overlooks the first ἐν in e1). Whereas there is some confrontation and heterogeneity between sense knowledge and becoming, Knowledge itself is totally harmonious with real being. In the *Phaedrus* myth, the expression τὴν ἐν τῷ ὃ ἐστὶν ὄν ὄντως ἐπιστήμην indicates at most the homogeneity and concord between Knowledge itself and real being, but not the presence of the Forms in Knowledge; for true Knowledge is simply about (περί) real being. Plotinus



further reads the unity of Knowledge or Wisdom and real being (V 8,4,47-48: 5,15-16) into the phrase οὐδ' ..έτέρα ἐν έτέρῳ. In 4,3-4, moreover, he contrasts ἐπιστήμην, οὐχ ἢ γένεσις πρόσθεσιν with ὁρῶσι τὰ πάντα...οἷς οὐσία, καὶ ἑαυτοὺς ἐν ἄλλοις. Here he takes οὐδ' ..έτέρα ἐν έτέρῳ or οὐδ' ..ἄλλην ἐν ἄλλῳ as suggesting ἑαυτοὺς ἐν ἄλλοις.

As III 9,1,14-15 insinuates, Plotinus believes that the doctrine of the intellect-intelligible unity is entertained by Plato himself. For more detailed discussion about the *locus classicus* in Plato's dialogues for Plotinus' doctrine, see A. Sumi, "Plotinus on *Phaedrus* 247D7-E1: The Platonic *Locus Classicus* of the Identity of Intellect with the Intelligible Objects," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1997): 404-420.

51. For the undescending part of the soul, see II 9,2,4-5; III 8,5,10-11; IV 8,3,1ff.; V 1,10,21-24. In V 3,9, "the most divine part of the soul" (line 1) is called "pure" (lines 18-19).

52. See IV 8,8,2-3; 8,16-18.

53. See IV 8,3,6; 8,15; V 3,9,28-29. See also IV 3,30,11-12. For intellection as the proper activity of soul, see G. M. Gurtler, *op.cit.*, pp.195-196. On the other hand, the undescending part of the soul is called τὸ λογιστικόν in III 8,5,10 and διάνοια is attributed to "the pure part of the soul" in V 3,3,11-12 (see also V 1,7,42-43 τὸ διανοούμενον). Hence Atkinson is inclined to think of the undescending soul as, in some way, a part of διάνοια (*op.cit.*, pp.61-64). Here we do not go into detail about the status of the undescending soul.

The rational soul is sometimes called "ourselves." In V 3,3,35-36, λογίζεσθαι and διάνοια are attributed to "ourselves." In I 1,7,21-22, the true man is identified with the rational soul (τῇ λογικῇ ψυχῇ). Here διάνοια, δόξα and νόησις are ascribed together to the rational soul or ourselves (lines 14-17). For the kinship between V 3,3 and I 1,7, see G. M. Gurtler, *op.cit.*, p.233.

Rist points out the difficulty in Plato's tripartite division of the soul; though the infallible νόησις and the fallible διάνοια must be clearly distinguished, they are together attributed to τὸ λογιστικόν, the highest part of the soul ("Integration and the Undescended Soul in Plotinus," *American Journal of Philology* 88 (1967): 413-414). He explains how the Plotinian undescending soul is related to the Platonic λογιστικόν as follows:

"If there were a tripartite division of the soul in Plotinus, therefore, with τὸ λογιστικόν at the top, it would be below the level of the upper soul which is eternally in contact with νοῦς in contemplation" (*op.cit.*:416).

This view is not accurate. First, the Plotinian undescending soul is endowed with the intellective function of the Platonic λογιστικόν. Second, Rist's observation of the Plotinian λογιστικόν is not fully accurate. In light of V 3,3,23ff., he regards the middle part of the soul in II 9,2,5-6 as τὸ λογιστικόν whose proper activity is διάνοια (*op.cit.*: 416). But τὸ λογιστικόν in V 3,3 is also

denominated "the pure part of the soul" (lines 11-12). Rist does not consider the fact that Plotinus sometimes calls the undescending soul τὸ λογιστικόν. Although it is true, as Rist points out, that the Platonic tripartition of the soul does not fit well with Plotinus' psychology, we should not overlook the noetic feature that the Plotinian undescending soul has inherited from the highest element of the Platonic soul.

54. This point entails the difficulty in demarcating the undescending soul from Intellect. See H. J. Blumenthal, "Nous and Soul in Plotinus: Some Problems of Demarcation," in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1974), pp.203-219.

55. H. J. Blumenthal, "Soul, World-Soul, and Individual Soul in Plotinus," in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1971), p.62, note 1.

56. In the recollection argument, Plato characterizes the Forms as "what was formerly ours" (*Phd.* 76e1-2), implying that they were known by us before our birth. From this characterization, however, we cannot conclude that the soul's prenatal knowledge of the Forms attains her identity with them, because the characterization seems to be simply contrasted with the soul's loss of her prenatal knowledge in the present life.

57. The following sketch of Lee's view is based on J. S. Lee, *op.cit.*, pp.102-103.

58. E. Bréhier. *Op.cit.*, p.117.

59. By "eidetic causation" Lee means "a theory of the way in which the *eide* that make up the intelligible world of Being are the causes of sensible particulars" (*op.cit.*, p.96). He explains the intermittent character of eidetic causation in terms of the discursive nature of the soul's contemplative activity (*op.cit.*, pp.95-101). Although the intermittent character of eidetic causation, as Lee points out (*op.cit.*, p.101), is mentioned in VI 4-5, it would be impossible to explain it by the cognitive activity of the undescending soul, which is characterized as primarily non-discursive in VI 4-5.

60. A. M. Wolters. *Op.cit.*, p.305.

**The Oriental Influences Upon Plotinus' Thought:  
An Assessment of the Controversy Between  
Bréhier and Rist on  
the Soul's Relation to the One**

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The question of whether or not the thought of Plotinus owes any debt to what might be called the Oriental (or perhaps more precisely, Indian) intellectual tradition has been widely and fervently debated for many decades. Although it is possible, and indeed perhaps even likely, that no conclusive resolution to this controversy will ever be reached, at least in the absence of some dramatically new body of evidence—namely, the discovery of the Neoplatonic equivalent of the Dead Sea scrolls—it would nevertheless be worthwhile to revisit briefly the various arguments, pro and con, which have been put forth in order to determine their individual and collective merits.

Accordingly, in this paper I propose to do three things. I shall, first, briefly review the essential literature of this subject. Second, I shall summarize the argument between Emile Bréhier and John Rist over whether or not Plotinus was influenced by Indian thought. Finally, I shall offer my own assessment of the merits of the Bréhier-Rist argument in particular, and of the issue of Plotinus' "Orientalism" in general.

The general question before us would seem to be this: Are the apparent similarities between elements in Plotinus' thought and in various Oriental views, notably Indian thought, just that, mere *per accidens* similarities, or are they evidence of a stronger sort of relationship, namely, as Albert Wolters has articulated in his very illuminating article on this topic, "an 'influence', 'source', or 'determinative factor' on Plotinus"?<sup>1</sup>

That there appear to be points of similarity is largely not disputed, although A. H. Armstrong in his now venerable article ("Plotinus and India") denies that there is any sort of convincing *evidence* of Indian influences on Plotinus.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, John Rist, in his own way, disputes Bréhier's thesis.<sup>3</sup> Still others, like Willy Theiler, Philip Merlan, Cornelia De Vogel, and H. J. Kramer, belong, in one way or another, to the "anti-

Bréhier" ranks.<sup>4</sup> The question, of course, is what ought to be made of this phenomenon of similarity and what sort of importance to assign to it.

How might we classify the various perspectives on this issue? Perhaps in the following twofold way. Some might be counted as supporters of the milder position: what might be termed the "mere *per accidens* similarity" thesis. Others might be listed as supporters of the stronger position: the "direct causal influence" thesis. For our purposes, it might be convenient to appoint Rist as the representative of the former thesis, and Bréhier of the latter.

Let us now look more carefully at the positions of Bréhier and Rist. For Bréhier, there are good reasons to believe that Plotinus was influenced in a direct and causal way by Indian thought. In chapter seven of his very informative book, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, his primary argument revolves around what he takes to be the double aspects of Plotinus' understanding of *Nous*. There, Bréhier notes. . .

that on the one hand, Intelligence is an articulated system of definite notions. On the other hand, it is the universal being in whose bosom every difference is absorbed, in which every distinction between subject and object comes to a complete end. In the first respect, it expresses the rationalist thesis that it is possible to have a knowledge of the world and that reality can be grasped through reason. In the second respect, it involves the mystical ideal of the complete unification of beings in the Godhead, with the feeling of intuitive evidence which accompanies it.<sup>5</sup>

Although Bréhier admits that the former view is the result of Plotinus' exegesis of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, he argues that the latter cannot be so explained.

Furthermore, and more to the heart of the matter, the chief Plotinian problem, according to Bréhier, has to do with. . .

the relation of the particular being, of whose existence we are conscious, to the universal being. How did the conscious self, with its characteristics, its union with a fixed body, its faculties of memory and reasoning, emerge from the universal being and form itself in a distinct center? What is the relation of individual souls to the universal Soul? In general, how is the universal being present in its entirety in all things without ceasing meanwhile to be universal?<sup>6</sup>

For Bréhier, the soul's union with the One is ultimately not something to be explained in rational terms, but rather something to be experienced in a mystical way.

Later in the same chapter, he argues that. . .

the common and rather monotonous theme of all the Upanishads is that of a knowledge which assures the one possessing it peace and unflinching happiness. This knowledge is the consciousness of the identity of the self with the universal being.<sup>7</sup>

And in order to emphasize this point further, he notes that. . .

the philosophy of the Upanishads, in fact, does not go beyond the self. This is its characteristic trait. But it holds as certain that this self is without limits and that it is all things. It utilizes two fundamental concepts—that of Brahman, the universal being, the unfathomable principle of all forms of reality, and that of Atman, which is the principle in so far as it exists in the human soul, the pure self, independent of all particular functions of the soul, for example, as the nutritive or cognitive. The main thesis is that Brahman is identical with Atman, that is to say, . . . the force which creates and preserves the world is identical with what we discover in ourselves as our true self when we disregard all the activities related to definite objects.<sup>8</sup>

Bréhier claims to have found in the doctrine of the Upanishads the very same question that concerns Plotinus. . .

it consists in inquiring in what sense the self, in concentrating upon itself, finds within itself the very principle of the universe.<sup>9</sup>

Accordingly, this mystical element in his thought is to be explicated in extra-Hellenic terms. Thus, Bréhier argues. . .

we find at the very center of Plotinus' thought a foreign element which defies classification. The theory of Intelligence as universal being derives neither from Greek rationalism nor from the piety diffused throughout the religious circles of his day.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to this sort of internal evidence, Bréhier addresses various essentially historical facts to make his point, which, however, I

shall not treat explicitly here. Suffice it to say that, for a variety of doctrinal and historical reasons, Bréhier concludes that...

one must seek the source of the philosophy of Plotinus beyond the Orient close to Greece [whose cults maintained a variety of convictions and practices abhorrent to Plotinus, among them the idea of a mediator or savior destined to bring man into relation with God, ritual prayer, thanksgiving, and outpouring of religious feeling], in the religious speculations of India, which by the time of Plotinus had been founded for centuries on the Upanishads and had retained their vitality.<sup>11</sup>

To summarize, what relates Plotinus to Indian thought is...

his decided preference for contemplation, from which he derives the only true reality, his scorn for the practical moral life, and finally, the egoistic and universal character of the spiritual life as he conceived it. Indeed, in its highest stage, the spiritual life consists in the relationship in which the soul is 'alone' with the universal principle.<sup>12</sup>

Now, what of Rist's objections to this thesis? Rist's fundamental argument relies on R. C. Zaehner's four-fold division of mysticism - pantheistic or natural, ascetic, monistic, and theistic.<sup>13</sup> But, even though Zaehner himself did not locate Plotinus within his scheme, Rist argues confidently that the mysticism of Plotinus is of the *theistic* sort, "where the isolated soul attains to union and is 'oned' with a transcendent God, though *a fortiori* it is not itself identical with that God."<sup>14</sup> For him, accordingly, the mysticism of Plotinus is not monistic, "where the individual soul is declared to be completely identical with the power behind the universe - Atman is Brahman, as the Indian monists would put it,"<sup>15</sup> whereas, according to Rist and his unnamed "experts," the mysticism of the Upanishads is fundamentally monistic. Rist notes that...

it is precisely this monistic strand that Bréhier tries to find in the *Enneads*. There then in simple terms lies the difference between the two systems. And if the doctrines are unlike, derivation or significant influence can be forgotten.<sup>16</sup>

The crux of Rist's argument here seems to be that the human soul, since it consists of higher and lower parts, does not completely lose itself in its union with the One. Accordingly, he writes as follows:

When therefore the higher soul is enjoying the vision of the One, its lower counterparts do not strictly speaking cease to exist, but become irrelevant to the concentrated personality. Not that the union with the One is a 'self-conscious' union, for self-consciousness as normally understood only blunts the activities with which it is concerned, and in the mystical union the self is transcended or rather 'filled with God.'<sup>17</sup>

The soul, then, since it has a natural kinship with the Primal Reality can and does return to its source and becomes "united" with it. According to Rist...

such a return, as Plotinus tells us again and again, is a rest after our labours and a perfect stillness. But this rest is not a rest in nothingness, nor a blankness like dreamless sleep. True it is attained by a kind of 'confusion and annihilation' of *Nous*, but it cannot be attained without *Nous*, and should be viewed as the fulfillment rather than the negation of the level of existence. It is not blankness, but rapture, delight and perfect happiness. It is not nothingness... but everything, in the sense that the One is everything. He who understands the One understands the soul when it is 'oned'.<sup>18</sup>

At this juncture, how might one approach the evaluation of the controversy between Bréhier and Rist on the issue of the soul's relation to the One and, ultimately, on the question of the Oriental influences upon Plotinus' philosophy? Let me begin by reviewing what I take to be the first principles of Plotinus' philosophy. My struggles with the *Enneads* over the years have left me with the following three convictions. The first of these is fundamental to all Plotinian thought, namely, that to be real is to be one. As Leo Sweeney has noted...

Any item is real because of its unity and a fall into multiplicity is likewise a fall into unreality. So true is this that the more unified something is, the more real it is, with the result that what is totally simple is also the Primal Reality - namely, The One, the absolutely first and highest hypostasis.<sup>19</sup>

The second of these essential principles is as follows:

Whatever is one is good, since that which is one is not only real, but also is perfect and powerful.

This second principle inserts a dynamic aspect into Plotinus' universe, since it is bound up with the position that whatever is genuinely real must by that very fact cause subsequent realities, which turn back to their source because of dependency upon it and desire for it. This principle, then, issues into Plotinus' doctrines of procession and reversion (*prohodos* and *epistrophē*).<sup>20</sup>

The One-Good, then, has a dual status. It is both the source of all subsequent realities (by causing them through its overflow) and the object of their desire and love (by being that upon which they depend for their ultimate perfection and fulfillment).

Finally, because whatever is one is also good—"good to others by producing them automatically and necessarily, good for others as the object of their seeking,"<sup>21</sup> it follows that the third essential principle is that "whatever is prior is of greater reality than that which is subsequent."<sup>22</sup> In other words, "the relationship of prior/subsequent is simultaneously a relationship of higher/lower in actual values."<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the third principle illuminates the essential nature of the relationship between the One and its overflow. Generally speaking, what is prior is of greater worth, importance, and reality than what is posterior. All levels of reality below the One, then, are thereby less real than the One, precisely because they are less unified than the Primal Reality. As such, these lower levels of reality are *logoi* of the One: they are the One, but as found on a lower, less unified level.

Now, armed with these three Plotinian principles, I wish to argue that Plotinus' account of the final stage of the soul's ascent to and unification with the One may be seen as the conclusion of a long and careful deductive argument whose major premise is that first principle mentioned earlier—to be real is to be one. The existential status of both the human soul's ascent to the One and its actual union with the Primal Reality is, to be sure, a mystical one. For surely at that supreme level of achievement, the soul's relation to the One involves no duality of whatever sort and is no longer rational in nature, but rather is supra-rational, and, hence, mystical (or to paraphrase Zaehner, monastically mystical). Accordingly, on this point I find Bréhier's position more appealing than Rist's. As attractive and forcefully articulated as the latter's arguments are, they force us to abandon, or at least weaken, what is central to Plotinus' thought—his consistent monism. And this I cannot bring myself to do.

What is most interesting about this area of his thought however, is that he is thoroughly Greek in his approach to philosophical problems. Namely, he is eminently rational. Yet he is led by the relentless application of his logic to eventually draw conclusions that themselves defy complete penetration by human reason, because ultimately they are in their content supra-rational, or, in other words, mystical.

It appears to me that at various junctures of his speculation he notices that the power of human thought, or human rationality itself, if you will, is inadequate to the ultimate task before it, namely, the understanding in a discursive way and the eventual articulation in human language of the individual human soul's relationship to the Primal Reality. He comes closer than other Greek thinkers have in explicating the nature of this union, however inadequate even his articulation may be. In the final analysis, then, it is Plotinus' essentially monistic viewpoint, coupled with the virtual ruthlessness of his logic, that leads him to draw conclusions that seem to defy rational penetration and thus appear to be mystical in nature, but which nevertheless are the necessary implications of his line of reasoning, whose starting point is the trio of fundamental principles enumerated earlier. Among these conclusions, I believe, is the view that the human soul does indeed lose its identity in its ultimate unification with the One.

Now, what has all of this to do with the question of Plotinus' Orientalism? Although several studies have already considered this issue in a most admirable fashion, among them the studies of Staal, Schlette, and, more recently, Tripathi and Wolters being worthy of special mention,<sup>24</sup> let me conclude this presentation with a few remarks of my own on this matter.

First, although it is entirely possible that the thought of Plotinus on the question of the soul's relation to God, and perhaps on other issues as well, was influenced in some direct and causal way by the Orient, I cannot, on the basis of my analysis, go beyond the available evidence, which is essentially oblique and circumstantial. Hence, I believe Bréhier goes too far in asserting that Plotinus indeed was indebted to Indian sources. In other words, I am uncomfortable with anything more than a "*per accidens*" explanation of the apparent similarities. Certainly, there seems to be little if any justification for the stronger "direct causal influence" thesis.

Second, there would not seem to be much, if any, merit to the adoption of a fundamentally agnostic stance on this question as long as new, relevant, and conclusive evidence is not brought to light. Frankly, I do not look upon such an eventuality with any great degree of optimism. That is why I am led to the following conclusion. It would not be inappropriate, I think, to seek a kind of middle ground on this issue, midway between what perhaps may be termed the two extreme positions of Bréhier and Rist. Such an intermediary stance would affirm the following three points:

1. There seems to be a striking affinity between relevant elements in Indian thought and in Plotinus, particularly in the description of the soul's striving toward union with God and of the nature of that union. One need only compare the description of the human soul's ultimate and complete union with the One found in the *Enneads* with the identification of Atman with Brahman found in Indian thought.
2. There is no need, however, from an exegetical point of view, to argue for the necessity of Oriental influences upon Plotinus. Why? Because he arrives at his conclusions by means of the consistent application of his logic to his three principal insights, particularly, the first—to be real is to be one. There is an internal consistency within his position such that all of his conclusions flow naturally from those fundamental insights.

3. It is possible that the affinities between Plotinus and the Orient constitute evidence of the existence of something which currently does not enjoy much popularity, but which nevertheless may be of value for our present purpose, namely, the concept of a perennial philosophy, defined here as a philosophy which is both permanent and significant, precisely because its features transcend historical and cultural changes.

In the final analysis, this last point may constitute the most satisfactory answer to the problem at hand. It is not so much a question of chronology or causal influence, I believe, but a matter of concomitant or parallel insights, independently reached. There is too little evidence to suggest anything more than this. And, as Wallis has argued . . .

the tendency of the mystical experience to express itself in similar ways at all times and in all civilizations must also be taken into account.<sup>20</sup>

In this way, perhaps one can say that there is a measure of Orientalism in Plotinus and not at the same time impugn his philosophical originality, intellectual gifts, or Greek heritage.

I favor this "perennial philosophy" thesis, then, primarily because it offers the possibility of a profoundly constructive solution to the problem of adjudicating cross-cultural influences, whether philosophical or otherwise. This thesis represents a positive approach to the solution to the problem and is not fraught with the divisive and counter-productive elements of the alternatives. It affirms, I believe, what we all suspect, or at least hope, is the case, namely, that human experience is fundamentally universal. Perhaps, then, what I have been discussing is but one instance of the affirmation, in both Eastern and Western voices, of the common elements of human experience. Perhaps, for our purposes, it might be possible to speak of Plotinian Hinduism, or of Hindu Neoplatonism. In this way, the thought of Plotinus might function as one of the intellectual bridges across that great chasm that has divided East and West for so long.

## Endnotes

1. Albert M. Wolters, "A Survey of Modern Scholarly Opinion on Plotinus and Indian Thought," in *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*, ed. by R. Baine Harris, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), p. 294. Hereafter, Wolters, *Survey*.
2. A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus and India," *The Classical Quarterly* XXX (1936), 22-28. Hereafter, Armstrong, "India."
3. John Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), pp. 213-230. Hereafter, Rist, *Road to Reality*.
4. Willy Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus*, (Berlin, 1940); Philip Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague, 1953); Cornelia de Vogel, "On the Neoplatonic Character of Platonism and the Platonic Character of Neoplatonism," *Mind* (1953), 43-64; H. J. Kramer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik*, (Amsterdam, 1964).
5. Emile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, transl. by Joseph Thomas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 106. Hereafter, Bréhier, *Plotinus*.
6. *Ibid.* p. 109.
7. *Ibid.* p. 123.
8. *Ibid.* p. 125.
9. *Ibid.* p. 125.
10. *Ibid.* p. 116.
11. *Ibid.* p. 117.
12. *Ibid.* pp. 132-33.
13. R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane*, (Oxford, 1957).
14. Rist, *Road to Reality*, p. 214.
15. *Ibid.* p. 214.
16. *Ibid.* p. 229.
17. *Ibid.* p. 230.
18. *Ibid.* p. 230.
19. Leo Sweeney, S. J., "Basic Principles in Plotinus' Philosophy," *Gregorianum* (1961), p. 511.
20. *Ibid.* p. 511.
21. *Ibid.* p. 512.
22. *Ibid.* p. 512.
23. *Ibid.* p. 512.
24. J. F. Staal, "The Problem of Indian Influence on Neoplatonism," in *Advaita and Neoplatonism. A Critical Study in Comparative Philosophy* (Madras, 1961); H. R. Schlette, "Indisches bei Plotin," in *Apgrie und Glaube* (Munich, 1970), pp. 125-51; C.L. Tripathi, "The Influence of Indian Philosophy on Neoplatonism," pp. 273-292 and Albert M. Wolters, "A Survey of Modern Scholarly Opinion on

Plotinus and Indian Thought," in *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*, ed. by R. Baine Harris, State University of New York Press, 1982).

25. R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1972), p. 15.

## Plotinus and Interior Space

Frederic M. Schroeder

A.H. Armstrong entitled his pioneering book *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus*.<sup>1</sup> This title has entered and informed the language of Plotinian scholarship.<sup>2</sup> It is the purpose of the present paper to explore an aspect of "intelligible architecture" which, I would suggest, has been largely neglected. The architectural metaphor suggests a verticality, hierarchy, and externality that Plotinus counterbalances with another architecture, that of interior space.

H. P. L'Orange, in his *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire*, speaks of the dissolution of the classical building structure in late antiquity with an abandonment of emphasis upon the external appearance of the building. However, he observes,

A positive side of this transformation is a new experience of space, a new feeling for the interior itself, which is an expression of the new spirit of the time. An appreciation of this positive side makes it possible for us to meet with a better understanding the peculiarly abstract as it were, the distant glance which we have continually encountered in Late Antiquity... Architecture becomes introspective. The building structure is reduced to a mere shell surrounding what is encompassed. It becomes no more than the enclosure of space.<sup>3</sup>

and further:

Above all, light is the space-creating element and models in its various intensities the different parts of the interior.<sup>4</sup>

He also remarks:

A completely new aesthetic was developed during the third century: beauty does not reside in the proportions of the body, but in the soul which penetrates and illumines it, that is, in expression (the *Enneads* of Plotinus). Beauty is a function of the inner being (*τὸ ἐνδον εἶδος*).<sup>5</sup>

L'Orange does not remark, however, on the possibility that Plotinus may ground the sculpting of inner space in the architecture of late antiquity.



Let us examine some passages that use interior space in figurative language describing the intelligible world. We may turn now to an example of interior space in Plotinus that illustrates these principles with reference to the soul's vision of the One (6.9 [9].11.17-23):

Like a man who enters into the sanctuary and leaves behind the statues in the outer shrine; these become again the first things he looks at when he comes out of the sanctuary, after his contemplation within and intercourse there, not with a statue or image but with the Divine itself (οὐκ ἄγαλμα οὐδὲ εἰκόνα, ἀλλὰ αὐτό); they are secondary objects of contemplation. But that other, perhaps, was not an object of vision, but another kind of seeing (οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν).<sup>6</sup>

The god in the inmost sanctuary is "not an object of vision" (θέαμα), but "another kind of seeing" (ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν).

Trouillard says of the vision of the One that what is required is, not a different object of regard, but a change in our way of looking:

Il est clair qu'il ne s'agit pas de renoncer à tel ou tel objet, mais à une optique, à un système de valeurs: "changer son regard" (1.6.8.25), "chasser les croyances imposées du dehors" (III.6.5.17) "s'éveiller des représentations absurdes" (III.6.5.24) "non plus une contemplation, mais une autre façon de regarder" (οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν) (VI.9.11.2 2). Et cet abandon n'est possible que sous l'influence d'une illumination antérieure.<sup>7</sup>

Of the passages cited, only one (1.6 [1].8.25-26) offers a linguistic parallel to the crux at 6.9 [9].9.11.22-23 (οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν) in its requirement to "change to another way of seeing" (ὄψιν ἄλλην ἀλλάξασθαι). This phrase, however, clearly refers to a change in *our* way of vision, whereas in 6.9 [9].11.22-23 the One is described as another way of seeing. Trouillard's interpretation requires a metonymous transference of the seeing in question from the One to ourselves. The discipline of strict construction (which I shall argue is the most fruitful approach) demands that we insist that, in some sense, the One is itself "another way of seeing."

Bréhier translates, "un mode de vision tout différent." This translation appears to require, as does Armstrong's (which I use here) and Trouillard's interpretation, that the vision in question be *our* vision, a vision that is transformed. Yet it is the One that is described as (another) way of seeing. However, Bréhier comments, "C'est la vision unitive dont il était question tout à l'heure."<sup>8</sup>

What Bréhier has in mind with this comment may be illustrated by Arnou's interpretation of the phrase as:

Une contemplation où s'est effacé la distinction entre le sujet et l'objet, où il ne faut plus parler de θέαμα, (VI.9.10; VI.9.11), ni de θεωρῆς, (V.8.10).<sup>9</sup>

In the same vein, Rist argues that Plotinus, who really prefers the language of union, employs the language of sight in deference to Plato who uses it of the experience of the ultimate principle in the *Symposium* (Beauty) and in the *Republic* (the Good).<sup>10</sup>

The claim that the phrase "another way of seeing" refers, not to a transformation in *our* way of seeing, but to a suspension of the subject-object distinction in the act of vision, still requires an evasion of the Plotinian ascription of this phrase to the One itself. Plotinus could have said that vision of the One demands such a suspension, but he does not say this. He says rather that the One is "another way of seeing." Implicit in the metonymous interpretations of this phrase that we have examined must be the notion that such a strict construction is to be avoided simply on the grounds that it makes no sense. Plotinian scholars disagree on the question of whether the One has any form of consciousness, even of itself.<sup>11</sup> Such a consciousness, however, would surely never be described by the language of vision which obviously carries the subject-object distinction with it and would thus violate Eleatic principle.

We may now turn to similar language in another passage. Plotinus describes the progress of the human soul from the vision of the Platonic Forms in Intellect to the vision of the One (6.7 [38].35.7-16):

It is as if someone went into a house richly decorated and so beautiful, and within it contemplated each and every one of the decorations and admired them before seeing the master of the house, but when he sees that master with delight, who is not of the nature of the images [in the house], but worthy of genuine contemplation, he dismisses those other things and thereafter looks at him alone, and then, as he looks and does not take his eyes away, by the continuity of his contemplation he no longer sees a sight, but mingles his seeing with what he contemplates, so that what was seen before has now become sight in him, and he forgets all other objects of contemplation (ὥστε ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη τὸ ὁρατὸν πρότερον ὄψιν γεγονέναι, τῶν δ' ἄλλων πάντων ἐπιλάθοιτο θεωμάτων).

Even as the god in 6.9 [9].11.22-23 is described, not as an object of vision, but as another way of seeing (*ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν*), so here it is said that in him (*ἐν αὐτῷ*) [*sc.* the master] that which was an object of vision has become vision (*ὥς*). Again, we might be tempted to a metonymous transference of vision from the object of vision to ourselves, or construe this language in such a way that it would simply explicate the union of vision with its object. However, a strict construction would again demand that we understand the ostensible referent (in this case the master) as indeed in some sense (yet to be defined) as "vision."

To understand the sense in which the One may be "another way of seeing" or "vision," we must digress to the subject of Plotinian optics. Plotinus polemicizes against the view that sense-perception results from the imprinting of a sense-impression upon the soul (4.6 [41].1.14-21):

It is clear presumably in every case that when we have a perception of anything through the sense of sight, we look there where it is and direct our gaze where the visible object is situated in a straight line from us; obviously it is there that the apprehension takes place and the soul looks outwards, since, I think, no impression has been or is being imprinted on it, nor has it yet received a seal-stamp, like the mark of ■ seal-ring on wax.

Plotinus examines the question of why it is that distant objects appear small (2.8 [35].1). When things are far removed from us, we do not see them in their detail. It is by measuring from the several objects in a landscape in relationship to each other that we arrive at the size of the whole (33-36):

What happens to them [*sc.* colours and sizes] becomes clearer in things of many and varied parts, for instance, hills with many houses on them and a quantity of trees and a great many other things, of which each individual one, if it is seen, enables us to measure the whole from the individual parts which we observe.

Plotinus comments further (47-51):

And things far off appear near because the real extent of the distance appears in its true extent, from the same causes; but the sight cannot go through the far part of the distance and see its forms as they really are, and so it is not able to say how great in magnitude it really is.

The art historian André Grabar argues that the optical theory set forth in these passages grounds the aesthetics of space in late antique and early medieval plastic art. There the perspective or angle of vision belongs, not to the spectator of the work of art, but to the central figure. Thus the perspective may be inverted, so that everything is seen from the point of view of the central figure. Also, the other objects radiate from the central figure to the same effect. The result is that the spectator enters into the perspective of the central figure. Thus the apprehension has its locus, not in the percipient (the spectator), but in the perceived (the central figure in the work of art) and the whole is measured from the central figure.<sup>12</sup> One could surely say that the central figure is, in this sense, "another way of looking," or "vision."

Art historians distinguish two theories of perspective, the *perspectiva naturalis*, or natural perspective, and the *perspectiva artificialis*, or artificial perspective. The artificial perspective is the perspective familiar to us from the painters of the Renaissance, such as Raphael (we may think of his *School of Athens*). In this perspective, the eye is regarded as immobile and the scene is static. Everything is measured from the angle of vision of the ideal spectator. Space is organized with respect to this orientation (it is in Panofsky's terms a *Systemordnung*).<sup>13</sup> In the natural perspective, which belongs to classical art, the ray from the object is projected on the internal surface of the extremity of a visual sphere, the retina. Our field of vision is spherical and the image we have of an object is projected onto a concave surface. Only the ray which is rigorously perpendicular to the retina will suffer no deformation (vertically, horizontally, and longitudinally), but the others will in proportion as they are removed from that central ray. The size of objects is given, not by their distance from the eye, but by the measure of the angle of vision. The evaluation of the size of an object is expressed in degrees of angles or arcs and not in simple sizes.<sup>14</sup> The size of the object varies, not with distance, but with the angle of vision.<sup>15</sup>

In the artificial perspective, the artist imposes a geometrical order proper to plane surfaces upon empty space. In the natural perspective, the space is not empty, but is a function of the things seen. Their inclusion is additive, rather than belonging to a systematic organization of empty space. In Panofsky's language, this is not a *Systemordnung*, but an *Aggregtraum*.<sup>16</sup>

The artificial perspective would more readily direct our attention to the central figure than would the aggregate inclusion of objects about a central figure as in the natural perspective. In the former the systematic organization of space is designed precisely for that indicative purpose.

Plotinus argues against the theory that the relative size of perceived objects is governed by our angle of vision, preferring the theory that we have examined above.<sup>17</sup> It is clear that his perspective inclines toward the natural, rather than toward the artificial perspective. We should for this reason expect that it views a scene in terms of additive inclusion, rather than of systematic organization of space. Of course, such a scene may also be controlled by a central figure (around which, of course, the scene is organized according to its perspective, rather than the perspective of the ideal spectator).<sup>18</sup>

Plotinus presents a phenomenology of illumination. We see all things by means of light. Light, so long as it is merely an instrument of vision, is among the intentional objects of consciousness. It is "seen together with" with them (*συνωρόμενον*). Yet it may also become the theme and focal object of consciousness, so that all is seen as light or a function of light. Plotinus develops this investigation of light in describing how Intellect experiences the dawning vision of the One. Yet it is applicable to all illumination, including the manifestation of light in the sensible world.<sup>19</sup> Notice that this transformation of our vision requires no conversion in the sense of turning away from one thing and looking at another as in the illuminationist passage concerning the Sun and Cave in Plato's *Republic*.<sup>20</sup> The light and the illumined objects are beheld conspectively.

Let us now return to the passage describing the experience of the great man and his splendid house.<sup>21</sup> We need not think that the separation between our admiration of the appointments of the house and our vision of the great man is merely temporal, so that now we see the objects of the house, and then the great man. Certainly we do not need to turn around in order to see the great man. The interior of the house and its appointments may be seen conspectively even as the light is experienced conspectively with the objects that it illumines. It is rather that the great man is the central object that provides the angle of vision from which we may measure and evaluate the other objects in the scene. In a sense, the great man is the light by which they are illumined. It is his taste and his mind that is reflected in the interior space. As we come to this realization, the great man is thematized as the focal object of consciousness.

An optical theory that grounds an aesthetic belonging properly to painting on plane surfaces (or relief sculpture) is adapted to architectural uses. In the interior of the great house, of course, the mobility of our vision is more actual than is the fictive illusion of that mobility in the painting. Indeed the great man is, not merely an object of vision, but vision (*ὄψις*), as he informs and interprets the entire scene.<sup>22</sup> Again, the

natural perspective lends itself more to the kind of gradual and dawning apprehension of the primary figure than would the artificial perspective that so abruptly guides the eye to the central point.

Although in the previous passage there is no mention of illumination, Plotinian illuminationist theory is helpful toward its interpretation. The point about the central object of the piece being a source of illumination to other objects becomes explicit in the following passage in which the soul's vision of the One as light is described (5.3 [49].17.30-37):

We must think that he is present when, like another god whom someone called to his house, he comes and brings light to us: for if he had not come, he would not have brought the light. So the unenlightened soul does not have him as god; but when it is enlightened it has what it sought, and this is its true end, to touch that light and see by itself, not by another light, but by the light which is also its means of seeing. It must see that light by which it is enlightened: for we do not see the sun by another light than his own.

Above we examined the passage concerning the man who enters the sanctuary and leaves behind the statues in the outer shrine to see, not a statue, but the god himself within who is not an object of vision, but another way of looking.<sup>23</sup> In that passage, unlike the passage about the great man in his house,<sup>24</sup> the vision of the first things seen and the primary figure is not conspective, but successive. Yet we may still say that the perspective with which the statues outside the sanctuary is seen upon the departure from it belongs to the primary figure in that the contemplative sees the other statues now, not from his own, but from its perspective. Both passages treat of interiors, but in the first, the progress into inwardness involves a spatial progress within not demanded by the second.

As I suggested above, the real tendency of the figurative use of interior space in Plotinus is to qualify the spatial metaphor of conversion, of turning as from one thing as to another thing. It is not simply the substitution of one spatial metaphor (inwardness and depth) for another (verticality and ascent).

Plotinus asks how we may see the ultimate Beauty of Plato's *Symposium* (1.6 [1].8.1-5):

But how shall we find the way? What method can we devise? How can one see the "inconceivable beauty" which stays within in the holy sanctuary (*οὐκ ἔνδον ἐν ἁγίοις ἱεροῖς μένον*) and does not come out

where the profane may see it? Let him who can, follow and come within, and leave outside the sight of his eyes and not turn back to the bodily splendours which he saw before.

The passage concludes (lines 21-27):

Our country from which we came is there, our Father is there. How shall we travel to it, where is our way of escape? We cannot get there on foot; for our feet only carry us everywhere in this world, from one country to another. You must not get ready a carriage, either, or a boat. Let all these things go, and do not look. Shut your eyes, and change to another way of seeing (ὄψιν ἄλλην ἀλλάξασθαι), which everyone has but few use.

Notice here again the "other way of seeing" which is common to such descriptions.

The only appropriate conversion (ἐπιστροφή) is that of the aspatial, atemporal, and non-dualistic turning of the One toward itself (5.1 [10].6.12-19):

The contemplator, then, since God exists by himself as if inside the temple, abiding quiet beyond all things (μένοντος ἡσυχου ἐπέκεινα πάντων), must contemplate what correspond to the images already standing outside the temple, or rather that one image which appeared first; and this is the way in which it appeared: everything which is moved must have some end to which it moves. The One has no such end, so we must not consider that it moves. If anything comes into being after it, we must think that it necessarily does so while the One remains continually turned toward itself (ἐπιστραφέντος αἰεὶ ἐκείνου πρὸς αὐτόν).<sup>25</sup>

The words "beyond all things" (ἐπέκεινα πάντων) here recall the Platonic description of the Good as "beyond essence" (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας) in the *Republic* 509b9. In light of the topography of the Sun and the Cave, we may wish to see in Plato a transcendence appropriate to a vertical structure of intelligible architecture. Here, the One or the Good is beyond by being within.

Notice here the language of "abiding in silence" (ἡσυχου μένοντος).<sup>26</sup> The verb "abide" (μένειν) is used in other contexts of the production of what is below the One in undiminished giving. The source abides in its native and intransitive activity and there proceeds from that activity, with no deliberation or external movement on the part of the

One, a transitive activity, as warmth from a flame or light from a luminous source.<sup>27</sup>

Such effortless production is expressed by the language of abiding (μένειν) and silence (ἡσυχία, σιωπή).<sup>28</sup> I have argued elsewhere that this model of effortless and unmediated production counter-balances that of the Demiurge conceived as an agent external to the pattern and the copy who mediates between them and exercises deliberative thought. The demiurgic model implies a vertical space between the pattern and the copy, a space that must be bridged by demiurgic intervention. The present passage suggests that the silent abiding of the One is located in the context of inwardness. Plotinus also counsels that our manner of returning to the One, our source, is to practise its quietness and abiding.<sup>29</sup>

The Soul's effortless production of the sensible world is described in terms of the relation of an architect to a house he has created, but in such a way that he builds without effort and from within his own spirit (4.3 [27].9.29-44):

There came into being something like a beautiful and richly various house which was not cut off from its builder, but he did not give it a share in himself either; he considered it all, everywhere, worth a care which conduces to its very being and excellence (as far as it can participate in being) but does him no harm in his presiding over it, for he rules it while abiding (μένων) above. It is in this sort of way that it is ensouled; it has a soul which does not belong to it, but is present to it; it is mastered, not the master, possessed, not possessor. The universe lies in soul which bears it up, and nothing is without a share of soul. It is as if a net immersed in the waters was alive, but unable to make its own that in which it is. The sea is already spread out and the net spreads with it, as far as it can; for no one of its parts can be anywhere else than where it lies. And soul's nature is great, just because it has no size, as to contain the whole of body in one and the same grasp; wherever body extends, there soul is.

How is it that the world is in the Soul, or the house, as it were, in the divine architect, rather than *vice versa*? The Greek verb "to be" contains an inherent locative value. This fact is evidenced in the sophistic conundrum that, if place is, it must be in place, and so forth to infinite regress.<sup>30</sup> This locative value is in Homer very often inseparable from the existential value of the verb.<sup>31</sup>

It is doubtless because of the inherent locative value of the verb "to be" that Plato feels constrained to locate the Forms somewhere. In

the *Phaedrus* they are in a "place above the heavens"<sup>32</sup> and in the *Republic* (with greater subtlety) in an "intelligible place."<sup>33</sup>

Aristotle defines place as the inner limit of the containing body.<sup>34</sup> From this definition he draws the important corollary that the universe as a whole is not in place since it has no containing body.<sup>35</sup> In general, the ancients had, not a concept of space as a discontinuous and homogeneous medium to be filled with things, but place as a function of each thing that is.<sup>36</sup>

Aristotle rejects the notion that there can be an actually infinite.<sup>37</sup> Plotinus reasons that that principle that confers limit need not itself be limited. Thus, while Intellect is, in its relation to the One, limited, the One, which confers limit upon it, is unlimited.<sup>38</sup> Thus, although he agrees with Aristotle that the corporeal universe cannot be contained by the inner limit of a further containing body, the Soul, that is (in relation to the corporeal world) unlimited, contains the world in the sense that the unlimited principle that confers limit contains the limited as the greater contains the lesser.<sup>39</sup> Each hypostasis contains its inferior in this manner, as each is unlimited with respect to its inferior and limited with respect to its superior.<sup>40</sup> We may conclude that for Plotinus the spiritual pleroma is the place or container of the corporeal world.

At the moment of the epiphany, the interior that is designed to contain the divine presence is itself embraced by the god. To this inversion of location there corresponds an inversion of perspective. We, the spectators, are located within the angle of vision belonging to the god (even though we cannot be the *intendum* of his consciousness). In "another way of looking," we are introduced to an agreeable awe and sense of our own place in the scheme of things as we discover that the epiphany is not altogether our project (even though it cannot belong to demiurgic deliberation on the part of the god). It is indeed true that the effect of this phrase is to overcome a subject-object distinction. Yet that effect results, not so much from our effort to see, as from the way which the thing seen imposes itself upon our vision. The One retains its sovereignty in our experience of it. While the One may be the Good for us, it is so by being the Good in and of itself.

The imagery of interior space occurs in Plotinus as an illustration of metaphysical and spiritual truths. Thus Plotinus does not show a direct interest in the aesthetics of interior space for its own sake. Indeed it is difficult and typical of this author that one is hard put to test his interest in the sensible world, for everything in it seems but an explication of what is enfolded in the intelligible world. Yet this very fact tells us much about the imagery of interior space. That which constitutes the internal space is intelligible form as its interior and formative principle. The

object of the metaphor is the very principle of architecture and spatial organization. It is not so much that the god appears in space as that, by appearing, he creates place. Indeed he is the place in which the objects that occupy the interior appear in numinous transparency.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940; reprinted Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. A. Charles-Saget, *L'Architecture du divin. Mathématique et philosophie chez Plotin et Proclus* (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1982).

<sup>3</sup> *Art Forms and Civic Life in the Late Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>6</sup> This and other translations of Plotinus are from A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus*, 7 vols. (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Heinemann, 1966-88). The edition of Plotinus consulted is the *editio minor*, P. Henry and H. R. Schwyzler, *Plotini Opera*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964-1982).

<sup>7</sup> J. Trouillard, *La Purification Plotinienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 139.

<sup>8</sup> E. Bréhier, Plotin, *Ennéades VI* (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1963) 187n.1.

<sup>9</sup> R. Arnou, *Le Désir de Dieu dans la Philosophie de Plotin* (Rome: Presses de l'Université Grégorienne, 1967), 237.

<sup>10</sup> J. M. Rist, *The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 197-98. Rist cites 6.9 [9]: ὁψεται, μάλλον δὲ ...συνέσται and 6.9[9].11.6: μὴ ἐσπόμενον, ἀλλ' ἠνωμένον.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. my "Synousia, Synaisthêsis and Synesis: Presence and Dependence in the Plotinian Philosophy of Consciousness," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, 2.36.1, ed. W. Haase, 677-99 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987) 691-92 and my *Form and Transformation. A Study in the Philosophy of Consciousness* (Montreal and Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 110 and n. 81.

<sup>12</sup> A. Grabar, *L'Art de la fin de l'antiquité et du moyen âge* 3 vols., I: 15-29 (Paris: Collège de France, 1968), 17-20; 23; cf. now G. M. Gurtler, "Plotinus and Byzantine Aesthetics," *The Modern Schoolman*, 66 (1988-89), 275-84 at 277-79 and Plotinus 4.5 [29].3.32-38 which offers a better example of the thesis that Grabar wishes to advance than do Grabar's texts.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. E. Panofsky, "Die Perspektive als 'symbolische Form,'" in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1924-1925* (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1927), 258-330; reprinted in *Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft*, ed. H. Oberer and E. Verheyen (Berlin: B. Hessling, 1974), 99-167. The distinction is between *Systemordnung* and *Aggregatraum*, 109; 122-123.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the lucid account of the two versions of perspective in L. Brion-Gierry, "L'espace et les perspectives," *Annales d'Esthétique. The Hellenic Society for Aesthetics. Athens* 13-14 (1974-1975) 18-44 at p. 27; for the account of the curvilinear character of natural perspective, cf. Panofsky, 101-108.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Panofsky, 104-108.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. note 13 above. Indian art favours the natural perspective, cf. Brion - Gierry, 22-23. Dr. Basu, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at our 1992-1993 conference on Neoplatonism and Indian Thought, assures me that the natural perspective in Indian art is, as in Plotinus, metaphysically grounded.

<sup>17</sup> 2.8 [35].1.

<sup>18</sup> Gian Paolo Lomazzo, in Chapter XXVI, "Del modo di conoscere e costituire le proporzioni secondo la bellezza," of his treatise *Idea del Tempio della Pittura in Scritti sulle Arti* ed. R. P. Ciardi, vol. I (Florence: Marchi and Bertolli, 1973), 311, following Ficino's account of beauty in his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, argues that order does not consist in quantity, but in the relation of the parts or members of the composition to each other. Measure is not itself a part or member of the composition, but resides in all the parts or members. Measure is not material, because measure is the limit of quantity and consists in lines and points that have no depth and thus cannot be corporeal. Thus Lomazzo offers a Renaissance and Neoplatonic argument for natural, and against artificial, perspective. I thank Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios for this reference.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. 5.5 [32].7 and my *Form and Transformation*, 47-54; for συναρπήμενον see 5.5 [32].7.5-6.

<sup>20</sup> 515c7-8; d3-4; 518c4-d1.

<sup>21</sup> 6.7 [38].35.7-16.

<sup>22</sup> The Greek word for "master" that describes the lord of the house in question is δεσπότης (6.7 [38].35.10). This word would translate the Latin *princeps* or *dominus*, cf. H. J. Mason, *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974), 34 (for the Greek); 195 (for the Latin). Thus the term could certainly describe the Roman emperor. Perhaps Plotinus has in mind the emperor Gallienus with whom Porphyry says that Plotinus had a close relationship in *Vita Plotini* 12. I thank my colleague A. J. Marshall for the reference to Mason.

<sup>23</sup> 6.9 [9].11.17-23.

<sup>24</sup> 6.7 [38].35.7-16.

<sup>25</sup> I have here slightly altered the Armstrong translation.

<sup>26</sup> We may compare the beauty "which stays (μένον) within the holy sanctuary" in 1.6 [1].8.2 cited above.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. 4.5 [29].7.33-49; 5.4 [7].2.22-37; 6.4 [22].9-10 and my *Form and Transformation*, 24-32.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. 1.7 [54].1.13-19; 3.2 [47].2.10-16; 3.8 [30].4.5-10; 6.9 [9].9.18-19; and my *Form and Transformation*, 43-44.

<sup>29</sup> 5.5 [32].8.1-16 and my *Form and Transformation*, 45-46.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Gorgias DK B53, vol.1,230.26 (=Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* VII.70); cf. also Zeno, DK A 24, vol.1,253 esp. Aristotle, *Physics* 1.209a23.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Homer *Iliad* 6.152; 11.722-23; *Odyssey* 19.172; on the locative and existential values of the Greek verb "to be," cf. C. H. Kahn, "The Greek Verb 'To be' and the Concept of Being," *Foundations of Language* 2 (1966) 245-65.

<sup>32</sup> 247c3; cf. 247a8-b1.

<sup>33</sup> 508c1; 517b5.

<sup>34</sup> *Physics* 4.212a6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 212b8-10.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Panofsky, 110-111.

<sup>37</sup> *Physics* 4.208a5-23.

<sup>38</sup> 5.5 [32].6.1-7.

<sup>39</sup> 5.4 [22].2.

<sup>40</sup> 5.5 [32].9; the One acts as a limit to Intellect (6.7 [38].17.14-16); Intellect to Soul (3.9 [13].5; 5.1 [10].7.36-42); and Soul to the sensible world (5.5 [23].11.11-14). For a fuller discussion of this subject, see my *The Doctrine of Presence in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Diss. University of Toronto 1969 [microfilm]), 100-109 (Summary: *Dissertation Abstracts* 32 (1971) 491A). We should now accept that the One is infinite, not by extrinsic, but by intrinsic denomination, cf. my *Form and Transformation* 63 and n. 65 and H. Blumenthal, "Plotinus in the Light of Twenty Years' Scholarship, 1951-1971," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, 2.36.1, edited by W. Haase, 528-70 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 551. I would like to thank the Advisory Research Committee of Queen's University for their support of my participation in the conference that gave rise to this volume.

## Unity and Multiplicity: Reflections on Emanationism as a Philosophical Theme in the Context of Neoplatonism

P. K. Mukhopadhyaya

### I

I wish to discuss here the theme of Emanation in the context of Neoplatonism and Indian Philosophy. I argue that Emanationism can be conceived as (and it was perhaps so conceived originally) a powerful alternative to what is called "creationism", an alternative which has within its scope both empirical selves or *jīvas* and the created inanimate world; but as the doctrine has been developed, discussed and criticized many other considerations have been allowed to become mixed with it. Perhaps this is as it should be; nothing wrong or unusual. But for proper appreciation of the theme and also to avoid unmerited criticism or undeserving praise we should be very clear as to which tenets of the Neoplatonist philosophy of Emanationism are logically related and which are logically independent.

The problem is less acute when we consider the two Indian schools of philosophy, which advocate two versions of *Saṅkhyavāda* or Emanationism-II. Within none of these schools there is much internal difference. But interschool difference is quite clear even though one version of *Saṅkhyavāda* is advocated by both the schools. On the other hand considered as a single school internally distinguished into four sub-schools, Neoplatonism or Emanationism-I exhibits major internal differences in respect of the conception of emanation and other matters of philosophy and religion. But the four forms of Emanationism-I are not so clearly distinguished as the two versions of Emanationism-II.

My choice of this theme for discussion here is not without reason. In the first place I think that it is neither impossible nor so unnatural to view the theme of Emanation as essentially the philosophical theme of the One and the Many. When so viewed one can find in this theme a counter-

example to some familiar misconceptions (to which I refer below) about ancient philosophy in general and classical Indian philosophy in particular. My second reason is that an Indian philosopher is in a better position than scholars belonging to many other cultures to appreciate and respond to the Neoplatonist doctrine of emanation. For Emanationism-I as well as Emanationism-II emerged in non-Christian pagan culture. Even if we ignore the attitude of indifference or opposition to Christianity of many Neoplatonist emanationists yet so far as Emanationism distinguishes itself from Creationism it is anti-Christian in spirit. Perhaps this partly explains how a scholar who is otherwise universally known for his objective and unbiased approach misunderstood the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation in the following passage, if of course it is, as I think it is, an actual case of misunderstanding:

"... they (the Neoplatonists) failed to see the unsatisfactory character of their attempt to steer a middle way between a true creation and monism, and that their theory of "emanation", given their denial of creation out of nothing on the one hand and their denial of the self-dirruption of God on the other hand, could possess no intelligible significance, but remained a mere metaphor. It was left for Christian philosophy to assert the true solution of *creatio ex nihilo, sui et subiecti*."

Emanation is a topic around which there is a prospect of meaningful dialogue taking off among scholars of different cultures. Such a dialogue in the context of varying cultures can enrich the concerned doctrines through exchange of insights and arguments. Standard expositions and criticisms of the different versions of emanationism are rigorously analytical and the respective philosophies to which these versions belong are highly developed. Even if elements of metaphor or mysticism mark the theory of emanationism in some or all the schools of Neoplatonism, it does not follow that the theory admits no rigorous rational formulation.

One of the misconceptions to which I referred above may not always be publicly proclaimed, or even explicitly or consciously affirmed, in so many words, but it seems present behind the back of the mind of many. Philosophy had no distinctive subject matter before the birth of modern European science. In the Middle Ages of Europe, either there was no philosophy or the philosophy that was there did not have any distinctive matter. This is thought to be true as much about India as about the

medieval West. Any attempt to say that there was philosophy is considered to be a sure case of equivocation with the word "philosophy". Any substantive subject which received serious attention of thinkers in those ages would immediately be set aside as religious at bottom. This betrays a firm conviction that so called philosophy in the Middle Ages had no distinctive subject matter; it was religion or theology.

A very wide spread view about Indian philosophy in general is that it is a thing of the past. The Modern scientific revolution did not take place in India or in any Asian country. Whatever may be the reason for that, Indian philosophy could not, according to this view, have or have had, then or now, the proper subject matter of philosophy as has developed in modern times; it remained confined to its medieval setting. Any philosophy that may develop in modern India must be therefore on themes taken over from the Modern scientific West. Many scholars in modern India think that what goes in the name of philosophy in modern India is not strictly speaking Indian, and the type of literature of medieval India, now-a-days referred to as philosophy, is not really that if we keep to the more or less precise and technical sense the term philosophy has in the land of its origin.

Philosophy, according to some, is nothing if it is not epistemology or analysis themes and subjects forced on us by developing science. If one tries to argue that even in ancient times very great importance was given to analytical rigor and precision of expression, one is likely to be told that that was all scholasticism—an attitude wherein this emphasis on method ensues mostly in the absence of substance or failure to tackle substantive issues. It is a type of scholarship which evaded completely any commitment to real life and its concerns; it is full of artificialities. In the absence of a serious and sincere effort at analysis informed by the new discoveries of science and necessitated by the impact of such discoveries on the developing conception of science, all we have in the middle ages, according to these, is idle logic-chopping. If one tries to argue on the other hand that there had been much discussion on such substantive and serious problems as unity, universals etc. more often than not one will be told to probe deeper and discover for oneself that both the nature of the problem and the motivation behind taking it up for discussion were religious.

The problem of Emanation as discussed in Neoplatonism and its near analogue *Satkāryavāda* in India was not necessarily regarded as a strictly religious theme. It had been originally and prominently discussed



by non-Christian pagan scholars. But just as in India many non-theist philosophers contributed to this problem so also among the Neoplatonists some at least could clearly keep their discussion of the problem free from whatever religious commitment they had. The idea of emanation in which we are particularly interested here has a history much older than Christianity. The idea was brought to Christianity from Neoplatonism and the Neoplatonists are mostly not only not Christian; but some of them were fighting against Christianity.

In India though the history of the analogous doctrine, Emanationism-II, a term we shall use here to refer to the theories of *Satkāryavāda*, cannot be claimed to be older than the *Vaidika* culture; yet the *Vaidika* culture cannot be equated with Hinduism in the popular, narrow and Indologist/Orientalist sense of a mere form of religion. Thus both Emanationism-I and analogue-emanationism or Emanationism-II as we shall call it here, are in a sense neutral to either paganism or to any form of religion. But Neoplatonism of the West on the one hand and the *Sāmkhya* and *Advaita Vedānta* systems of thought, which advocate the two familiar and major forms of emanationism in India on the other, have certain similarities. Soteriological concern, emphasis on spiritualism, asceticism and to some extent an attitude of other-worldliness are quite visible in both.

One word about the terminology adopted here may be in point before we proceed any further. In most of the standard expositions of *Sāmkhya* thought in English the expositors use the expressions evolution and evolutionism where I have been and will be using the words emanation and emanationism. Emanationism is a process which according to the Neoplatonists provides a better description of the way the multiplicity or the many came to be there from the first single principle or the "first cause". The term used for the analogous process by the *Sāmkhya* *Satkāryavādins* is *parināma*. And the process of *parināma* agrees with the process of emanation in some of those essential features in which emanation is commonly contrasted with evolution. Evolutionism advocates a certain actual and temporal process of change and transformation which is, at the same time, a process of development and progress in some specifiable sense of the term.

But in the first place it is at least doubtful if the advocates of emanationism or of *parināma* doctrine believe their process to be temporal or developmental. It may also be noted that there is another process, let us

say, of reverse transformation which many of the emanationists and *parināmavādins* admit. Whether a belief in it is strictly consistent with the philosophy of emanationism as distinct from evolutionism is a different issue. But the doctrine of evolution does not normally permit a process of reverse evolution.

These and some other similar considerations suggest strongly that evolution and evolutionism may not be the most suitable expressions for the exposition of *Sāmkhya* thought. This explains our preference for coining a new expression Emanationism-II to refer to the Indian version of emanationism. In spite of its difference from the emanationism-I of the Neoplatonists, the *Sāmkhya* doctrine of *satkārya* and *parināma* are closer to emanationism than to evolutionism.

## II

The striking similarities between Emanationism-I and Emanationism-II will be apparent to the reader if he cares to look into any standard account of these doctrines. It would be helpful if I could present here, side by side, some of the comparable theses of these doctrines. I may attempt that at the end of the paper if space permits.

What I want to do at this stage is develop some basic themes of the philosophy of Emanationism and make specific reference to the views of both Emanationists-I and Emanationists-II as and when necessary. To begin with there are two questions which may naturally be expected to be raised. The first is, "How could such a philosophy of Emanationism ever suggest itself to the thinkers of any particular culture or at any particular period in history?" It may be thought that it is not a proper question to ask a philosopher of Emanationism; neither is a philosopher particularly obliged to answer such questions. It is a question for the historians and historians of philosophy. Without disputing that this may be generally true, the reason why I ask this question will become clear soon. The second question is why in the theory of Emanationism the One or the first principle, cause, or hypostasis, starts emanating at all? Why must the One start multiplying itself?

In the system of Plotinus, from the One comes by way of emanation the *nous*, which is variously rendered as Intelligence, Spirit, Mind and so on. From Intelligence emanates *Psyche* or Soul. These are

said to correspond to the three realms of the ideas, the mathematical and the sensibles which, according to Aristotle, Plato admitted.

In one of the two schools of Emanationism-II, viz., the *Sāṃkhya* school, the first cause or principle is called both *Pradhāna* and *Prakṛti*. The etymology of these two words tells us clearly that it is the source of everything other than itself and that it is the First and hence it comes from nothing else. So both the One of Emanationism-I and the *Prakṛti* of Emanationism-II are eternal and uncaused. From *Prakṛti* emanates all the rest. The total number of items which emanate from *prakṛti* at least from the point of view of the general *Sāṃkhya* philosophical account is twenty three. These are *Mahat* (1), *Ahaṃkāra* (1), *Indriyās* (5+5+1), *Tanmātrās* (5) plus *Mahābhūtas* (5).

According to the highly general picture of the *Sāṃkhya* school of Indian philosophy and Emanationism-II, the world consists thus of twenty four items. These fall into two groups. In the first group there is only one item, *Pradhāna*, from which everything else emanates but which itself does not emanate at all. In the second group belong twenty three items which emanate from the First cause; yet there are only some five stages in the entire course of the 'process' of emanation from the first to the last item. This may suggest that in the account of the *Sāṃkhya* emanationists both vertical and horizontal emanations were admitted from the beginning. In some schools of Neoplatonism the need was felt to add a horizontal emanation to the original and generally accepted vertical emanation.

Though this parallelism is there, it seems that there are some differences of detail. What corresponds in *Sāṃkhya* philosophy to the horizontal emanation of the Athenian school of Neoplatonism or in the system of Proclus is better described as simultaneous emanation or concurrent emanation.

The answer to the question why Emanation begins at all depends on the very nature of that process. One characteristic answer to that question, which states: "... nor is any justification of why the One had to become multiple, necessary", bears reference to and is based on, the generally accepted view that Emanation is an involuntary, unconscious and natural process. It seems the implication is that no further explanation is available; things are the way they are, and that is the end of the story.

Let us reformulate the question: What in the nature of the One makes it thus overflow? Or perhaps, What is it in the nature of the One or

of *Prakṛti*, in virtue of which entities can emanate from it or out of it? What causes the first ever cause to be activated at all?

Emanation is an explanation of, or accounting for, the fact that the First Principle yields the universe. But it does not really tell us why. In Neoplatonism the One is ambiguously described as utterly undetermined, so much so that nothing whatever can be said about it. We cannot even predicate Being to the One. It is ineffable. The One is absolutely undifferentiated, and all multiplicity falls outside of it. In this sense it is simple.

If these are indeed the characteristics of the One, how can it overflow at all? We will return to this question after we hear what the Emanationists have to say in answer to the second question. Then we shall consider the *Sāṃkhya* Emanationist-II answer to the same questions.

Certainly neither Emanationism nor the doctrine of the One arose in a vacuum. There was a historical discussion and development that led to these answers. Plotinus certainly knew the Stoic emphasis on unity and the Epicurean emphasis on plurality. He knew the Pre-socratic and Neo-Pythagorean teachings on these issues. The problem of the One and the Many dominates the entire gamut of Greek philosophy. Emanationism as one possible way of reconciling the One and the Many is certainly better than Creationism, in any case.

The Neoplatonist would find the excessive transcendentalism of the Christian doctrine of Creationism its most objectionable feature. The *Sāṃkhya* or Emanationist-II objection is somewhat different. They probably never knew of the Christian doctrine of Creation. In the *Vaidika* or *Vedic* tradition, creationism is seldom advocated. The principal objection to all *Arambhavāda*, the Indian equivalent of Creationism, is its doctrine of causality. *Parināmavāda* conceives the One as transforming itself into the Many which is not what Creationism holds. The *Satkāryavāda* of *Sāṃkhya* Emanationism-II insists on the whole that the effect is somehow already in the cause. This should be acceptable to Neoplatonism as well. All schools of Neoplatonism seek to steer a middle course between absolute transcendence and total immanence in the relation between the One and the Many.

There are a number of other parallel points between the Emanationism of *Sāṃkhya* and that of most Neoplatonist schools. They both agree that the Many has to come from the One. The One must, however, yield the many without suffering any loss, remaining

undiminished. They also agree that the notion of causation or emanation must remain an involuntary process, not needing any particular form of willing or action at any given time, either at the beginning, or at any subsequent stage of the process, on the part of the One.

Let us now come back to our second question: "What in the nature of the One makes it emanate into the Many?". The *Sāmkhya* Emanationism-II answer to that question seems more clear and straightforward. If the process by which the Many comes forth from the One is to be understood in a way that is not totally mystical, there is no alternative to avoid admitting that there is some first principle which transforms itself into the Many.

*Sāmkhya* holds that non-conscious material entities alone can undergo transformation. Conversely, if an entity is not subject to change in principle, it cannot be material. Thus it is in the very nature of material entities to undergo change and transformation, though matter itself, when regarded as pure matter as such, would be simple and therefore unchanging. This is corroborated by our daily experience. A physical entity, be it mountain or mustard seed, a living organism like the human body or some inorganic substance, undergoes slow or fast, perceptible or imperceptible change. This is not so with Consciousness. Mental states do change in us; that means only that one mental state is replaced by another. But no given conscious state changes or transforms itself into another.

So if the One is to change itself in order to become the Many, then the One would have to be regarded as material or non-conscious. The *Sāmkhya* philosophers say not only that the process of Emanation-II is non-conscious, but also that the emanating principle, the *Pradhāna*, is itself non-conscious. They go on to say that the reason why consciousness cannot change is that it is essentially simple, indivisible and without parts. On the other hand, material entities are not simple, they are complex and therefore essentially subject to change.

The logical consequence of all this is that the *Sāmkhya* One or *Pradhāna* must always be in a state of transformation. The process of emanation must have neither beginning nor end. That process will be as eternal as the *Pradhāna*. *Sāmkhya* accepts this logical consequence.

Does the acceptance of this consequence cause anomalies and inconsistencies in the *Sāmkhya* system? Here is the point at which *Sāmkhya* Emanationism-II and Neoplatonist Emanationism-I disagree with each other. Perhaps it is a point for dialogue between the two cultures

and their differing conceptions of Emanation. Such a dialogue may turn out to be of mutual benefit.

A related question is: If both the Primordial Stuff and the Principle of Emanation are thus non-conscious, and nothing more is needed to account for the multiplicity, why bring in the Conscious Principle at all? If the argument so far is correct, then the First Principle cannot be Consciousness, for Consciousness cannot transform itself, and multiplicity cannot be derived from it.

No conscious principle is necessary to activate the Unconscious First Cause to yield the things in the world of multiplicity. Why do *Sāmkhya* Emanationists as well as Neoplatonist Emanationists insist that the principle of emanation should be non-conscious? One argument discussed already is that if it is not in the very nature of the primordial stuff to emanate, then the existence of this world would be a matter of mere 'accident'. On the other hand, if the very nature of the *Pradhāna* or the One is to transform, then Emanationism-II is simply another name for this natural process of the One or *Pradhāna* transforming itself continuously, uninterruptedly and without interference from or intervention by an Other.

This elimination of consciousness, or any conscious principle, does not arise from any prior commitment or from any reductionist zeal. It is simply that there is no need for introducing consciousness as an explanatory principle for the multiplicity that exists. This is an important point to note. Emanationism-II is neither materialistic nor spiritualistic. And for that reason there may be place in it for consciousness.

As a matter of fact, both Emanationism-I and Emanationism-II do admit consciousness. One reason given by Emanationism-II is that the world of ordinary experience does contain both material things and consciousness. This fact has to be recognized and accepted. It is not possible for Consciousness to emanate or arise at a later stage from the *Pradhāna*. For unlike Evolution, the principle of Emanation is that it cannot give rise to anything that is not already there in the One or the First Cause. Otherwise the One would not be full; it would be less than the multiplicity. Both schools of Emanationism admit that the One is, and must remain, full and undiminished.

The *Sāmkhya* philosophers find here an argument to abandon Monism. They argue that, there must exist, side by side with the one eternal, material and transforming principle the First Cause or

*Pradhāna* another Principle of Consciousness. This principle they call *Purusa*. This must also be eternal; for it cannot come from *Pradhāna*, and there is no other source from which anything can come.

Consciousness is what it is by nature; its nature, however, is the opposite of *Pradhāna*. Because it is nonmaterial, its nature is not to change. Therefore it is outside the process of emanation, which is after all a process of change and transformation. The *Pradhāna* and the *Purusa* are distinct realities; neither of them originates in or emanates from the other. Neither needs, or is dependent on, the other. Thus in *Sāmkhya* there are two irreducible and eternal principles. One of them, the *Pradhāna*, is eternal, but changing or emanating, non-conscious. The other, *Purusa*, is also eternal, but conscious, non-emanating, unchanging, and the very Principle of Consciousness.

Why then should such a principle be introduced at all? The *Sāmkhya* answer is that there is no other way to account for the experienced fact of consciousness and mental states. Without that principle we could not even account for the existence of the *Jīva* or the experiencing soul; they are not only there as given, they are the very ones who raise and discuss these philosophical questions. If these empirical selves were just material, we could have accounted for them as arising from the *Pradhāna*, which is capable of giving birth to everything that is material. The *jīvas* are embodied souls, whose bodies alone could be accounted for as arising from the *Pradhāna*. But they are consciousness as well.

But even *Purusa* cannot, it may be said, explain the existence of the experiencing self. For the *Purusa* cannot cause anything. So *Sāmkhya* Emanationism-II posits yet another principle: that of the Witness. *Purusa* is above all the witnessing principle; it is this witness which enables us to posit the One or the Many which emanate from It. For all that emanates from the *Pradhāna* is material and unconscious. Further, *Purusa* has the capacity of being reflected in suitable matter, like, for example, the sun being reflected in water or in a mirror. In this case the reflecting medium for the *Purusa* is the very first item or hypostasis that emanates from the *Pradhāna*: the *Ahaṁkāra* or ego-consciousness, which is generically different from consciousness as such which knows no desire, change or transformation. The ego is thus not strictly speaking consciousness, but only a mirror for the true consciousness of the *purusa* who remains non-composite, therefore unchanging, inactive.

## Being and Knowing in Plotinus

Lloyd P. Gerson

The *fons et origo* of the ancient Greek philosophical association of being and knowing is a fragment of Parmenides' poem preserved for us by Clement of Alexandria and Plotinus:

...τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἔστιν τε καὶ εἶναι.<sup>1</sup>

The interpretation of this fragment is of course exceedingly contentious.<sup>2</sup> If, as seems reasonable, we must seek to be guided in our interpretation of it by an attempt to locate its context in Parmenides' poem, then the best guess is that it is a continuation of fragment 2 whose last line is relatively unproblematic in meaning and can be translated "For you could not know that which is not (τὸ μὴ ὂν) (because that is not possible) nor could you express it." Then, fragment 3 would naturally be translated, "... because the same thing is there for thinking and for being," which would be an explanation of why it is not possible to know that which is not. We cannot know that which is not because we cannot think about it. No reason is given for *this* claim. Perhaps the reason underlying the interpretation expressed in the translation is that thinking is a relation between a thinker and (a) being and without one term of the relation, the relation itself cannot exist. But this certainly cannot have been Parmenides' reason, for in his account of being there can be nothing outside of being that stand in relation to it. This fact raises the serious question whether any authentically Parmenidean reason could be given for a claim interpreted to indicate a separation of thinking and being. And if there is no such reason, then fragment 3, even as a continuation of fragment 2, should perhaps not be such that it makes a claim that is insupportable on Parmenidean principles.

Outside the Eleatic school, Plato was the first philosopher to grasp the importance of the arguments of father Parmenides. He was evidently impressed both with Parmenides' account of being in general and also with the implication of that account for thinking. He seems to reject that account taken in the strongest sense in the first hypothesis of the second part of the *Parmenides*. Or a radically monistic interpretation of being, being cannot be known or thought about at all (142a). The rejection of radical monism is confirmed in the *Sophist* (244b-245e). For my purposes,

however, I propose to emphasize the positive lessons Plato learned from Parmenides rather than what he rejected. These lessons are incorporated into the middle and later dialogues with considerable subtlety.

The principal lessons are three: First, Eleatic monism can be shown to be false when one realizes that τὸ ὄν is complex. That is, whatever exists is really distinct from the existence it has.<sup>3</sup> This realization has two consequences: we can now legitimately talk about that which exists imperfectly, namely, the world of γένεσις, and we have to distinguish an ἀρχή of οὐσία from complex οὐσία itself, for if οὐσία is complex it cannot be the self-explaining source of being for everything else. Complexity presupposes simplicity, hence the ἀρχή of all must be beyond οὐσία, as Plato tells us in the *Republic* (509b6-10).

The second lesson regards the relation of being thus conceived to knowing. The ἀρχή of οὐσία is also the ἀρχή of knowability (τὸ γινώσκεσθαι) for that which is knowable, namely, οὐσία itself or the Forms.<sup>4</sup> Why should this be so? Why should the knowable as such require an ἀρχή that is "beyond οὐσία," as Plato says? Is it not enough that there be an ἀρχή of οὐσία and οὐσία itself be the ἀρχή of knowability? One might have supposed that the principle of knowability is finite structure or order or arrangement of parts and that is precisely what οὐσία represents. I would suggest, however, that just because to be knowable is to be complex in this way, the knowable requires a simple ἀρχή beyond it.

Consider a simple example illustrating this point. If a triangle is a three-sided plane figure, then knowing triangularity is a case of knowing that  $A = B + C$ .  $A = B + C$ , or more generally,  $A = D$ , is a representation or, in Platonic language, an image of perfect identity, that is,  $A = A$ . An image is relationally dependent upon its model. And this is what the ἀρχή of knowability is, the Form of the Good. Aristotle, and the entire Platonic tradition had no difficulty in surmising that Plato meant to identify the Good with the One. In this, Plato will have transformed what for Parmenides is the name of being into the ἀρχή of being.

The third lesson takes us back to the fragment of Parmenides' poem with which I began this paper and to Plato's interpretation of it. For Plato, a reasoned empirical judgment of the form "x is f" depends upon knowing what "f" is. I take it that this is the central point of Socratic questioning in the early dialogues. Knowing what "f" is or just knowing "f" is the paradigm of cognition. If the object of knowing is a finite structure or οὐσία, then there are two general alternatives for describing the state of mind of the knower. Either the mind is in a state representative of that structure or it is characterized by that structure itself, that is it is identified with it. It is clear enough that if these alternatives are mutually exclusive, then the first alternative cannot describe knowing for Plato. For

if the representation of the finite structure is other than it, as for example, in a symbolic representation, then knowing would not occur unless one already knew the object of the symbolic representation. Either the knower symbolically represents what he already knows, or all he knows is that the object of knowledge is symbolically represented by someone in some way. But then what is known is not that which is for Plato what is truly knowable. If, then, representation is excluded as the mode of knowing, which is intrinsically a plausible hypothesis for any pre-Lockean philosopher, then knowing is something like an identification of the knower with the structure known.

Plato does not of course give us an account of knowing that consciously contradicts representationalism. What he does do in a number of places is stress that a knower must be the same sort of thing as that which is known. In the so called affinity argument of the *Phaedo* (79a6-7), for instance, knowledge depends upon the soul being akin to that which is known. In the *Sophist* (248b6-9a2) τὸ παντελὸς ὄν is said to include νοῦς and hence soul and life.<sup>5</sup> That is, νοῦς possesses the same character as that which is really real. If at the time of writing either of these works Plato supposed that knowing could be representational, then these claims would be unnecessary. For if all that is wanted is a representation of a finite structure, then anything in the sensible world will do as a medium of representation. A body can represent beauty, say, or words or images can represent a truth. The reason why the soul must be made of the same sort of stuff as that which is known is that knowing a truth is not representing it. As Plato puts it in the *Philebus* (65d2-3), "νοῦς is either the same thing as truth or the most like it and the truest thing there is."<sup>6</sup>

If Plato means to make knowing οὐσία something that only that which has true being can do because knowing is some sort of identification of knower and known, then a Platonic interpretation of Parmenides' fragment suggests the translation: "thinking and being are the same thing."<sup>7</sup> This certainly has the virtue of being a literal translation of the Greek. Unfortunately, even if literalism were our only option, which it of course is not, I doubt that the interpretation suggested by this translation accurately represents Parmenides' thought. I also doubt that Plato thought it did. For the qualified identity of thinking and being, which the Platonic tradition infers to be Plato's doctrine on the basis of the dialogues, is inconsistent with monism. I do think, though, that Plato believed that Parmenides "made better," as in the dialogues *Parmenides* and *Sophist*, was in possession of a valuable insight. That insight is that the highest form of cognition, namely, knowing, is a state or activity that is properly also called the highest form of being. This is a much stronger claim than saying that "only that which is really real can know that which is really

real" or something similar. It is a claim that was to resonate down through the history of Greek philosophy.

Viewed from the Eleatic perspective, it is indeed strange that Aristotle should endorse the identification of being and knowing. That he does so on the basis of explicitly anti-Platonic principles indicates the strength of the claim. The manner in which he approaches their identification is instructive. For in the Book Lambda of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle identifies "the best *οὐσία*" with the highest form of cognition, *νόησις*, via *ἐνέργεια* (cf. 7.1072b3; 9.1074b20; 9.1074b34). The unmoved mover, putatively being in the primary sense, is identical with a pure activity which is nothing but *νόησις*. But because thinking by the best is always of the best, the unmoved mover is thinking of itself (1074b33-4). Thus, primary being is identified with self-reflexive thinking.

According to this claim, and Aristotle's doctrine of *πρὸς ἑν* equivocally, *οὐσία* in everything besides the unmoved mover is derived from it. But if to be in the primary sense is to think self-reflexively, then must not everything that has derived being also have derived self-reflexive thinking? It would seem so. One must not suppose that this conclusion can be avoided by saying that thinking is a property of primary being and so that what is derived to everything else is being but not the property of thinking. For if thinking were a property of primary being, then primary being would be in potency to its thinking. But it is the principal burden of the ninth chapter of the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics* to expunge every vestige of potency from being. That is why the unmoved mover cannot even be said to be a *νοῦς* as opposed to being *νόησις*, for if it were, it would be in potency to its thinking.

Nor of course can the conclusion be avoided by saying that thinking is just what perfect *ἐνέργεια* is, and so since nothing but the unmoved mover is perfect *ἐνέργεια*, nothing else can think! It is true that human thinking is imperfect, but it is also true that an animate nonsensate substance like a tree possesses *ἐνέργεια* imperfectly.

I do not think that Aristotle's position is hopeless, even on his own expressed principles. For he could interpret thinking in such a way that what the unmoved mover is said to do paradigmatically, even trees could be said to do derivatively. In other words, thinking is just an unimaginable *ἐνέργεια* in its perfect manifestation, as it is unimaginable in substances inferior to us. Of course, Aristotle represents the thinking of the unmoved mover as pleasurable and as the sort of activity in which we can share sporadically (7.1072b14-18). But these claims seem to be an extra-metaphysical excrescence on the main line of the argument. I mean that Aristotle need not have identified the unmoved mover with a thinker whose activity we can sporadically share in.

In support of this proposed refinement of Aristotle's position, the perfect self-reflexivity of the unmoved mover's thinking might seem to be that which ordinary thinking only approaches asymptotically. For there is no intentionality in it. There is no complexity in it sufficient to differentiate a thinker and an object of thought. Nevertheless, as Plotinus will argue, the conclusion that we should draw from this is not that perfect thinking is perfect *ἐνέργεια* but that since perfect thinking is essentially intentional, the unmoved mover, if it is a *νοῦς* or even it is just *νόησις* cannot be perfect *ἐνέργεια*.

Apart from the travails of the unmoved mover, Aristotle in *De Anima* explicitly endorses the anti-representationalism implicit in Plato's account of knowledge of Forms: "For in the case of objects without matter, that which thinks and that which is being thought are the same"<sup>8</sup> As it stands, this claim is ambiguous. It can either be interpreted to reject intentionality, as in the case of the unmoved mover, or to affirm it. In the former case, our thinking would be perfectly self-reflexive. But there is no reason for Aristotle to say this, and much evidence to indicate that he believed otherwise. In the *Metaphysics* (12.9.1074b34-5) he tells us that all forms of cognition are intentional, that is, "of something else" (*ἑτέρου*) and only incidentally of themselves. If this is so, how are that which thinks and the object of thought the same?

Perhaps the argument is as follows. If thinking is identification with an intentional object, then in thinking about one's thinking about that intentional object, the thinker has himself indirectly as an object of thought. This might mean that he comes to know that he is a thinker, the sort of thing that can identify with an intentional object.<sup>9</sup> It is reasonable enough that in thinking, the thinker should come to recognize that it is capable of doing just the sort of thing it is doing. But it is difficult to see how this interpretation explains the identity of the thinker with an intentional object other than it. It would seem that if one thinks of oneself indirectly in thinking of the intentional object, then one is precisely not identical with that direct intentional object.

Evidently, Aristotle's solution to this problem is to apply his account of perception to thought and to say that the intentional object and the thinking of it are one in *ἐνέργεια* but differ in essence.<sup>10</sup> This is a special case of the more general principle that in efficient causality the *ἐνέργεια* of the agent and the patient are one but not in essence.<sup>11</sup> Thus, for example, an act of teaching and an act of learning are the same *ἐνέργεια*, but the formula of each is different. Aristotle is apparently led by this analysis to infer that that which is one in *ἐνέργεια* but two in formula is an imperfect version of that which is both one in *ἐνέργεια* and one in formula, namely, the thinking that is the unmoved mover and

putative primary being. But if it turns out that that thinking is essentially intentional, then primary ἐνέπρετα cannot be thinking. And if explaining the relation between thinking and being means explaining it in its most perfect form, then we do not as yet have a proper account of being and thinking. One could say, for example, that thinking is intentional, but that this tells us nothing about the nature of being.

I turn now to Plotinus whose critical appreciation of Aristotle is practically unmatched in the history of philosophy. In his account of νοῦς and οὐσία, Plotinus aims to build a defense of Plato with Aristotelian material. He concurs with Aristotle in rejecting a representational theory of knowledge. He has Epicurus particularly in mind, but the gist of his argument is a general *reductio ad absurdum* of all versions of representationalism. If the intentional object of νόησις is other than the Forms themselves, then νοῦς will have to be able to compare the representation of the Forms in order to know that they are accurate. If it can compare them, it does not need the representation in the first place. If it cannot, then eternal truth is not guaranteed. For the eternal judgments in νοῦς will be judgments whose contents are other than eternal being.<sup>12</sup> Plotinus is here arguing for the claim that truth is not something possessed, where possession is understood as a representational state. So long as truth is agreed to be being in relation to intellect, the only alternative to representationalism of any sort is identity.<sup>13</sup>

Plotinus' claim that eternal truth implies an eternal νοῦς actually has enormous anti-Aristotelian implications. First, it implies that the primary ἀρχή of all is not a knower, for that ἀρχή in its perfect simplicity cannot possess the complexity that knowing requires. Second, as we shall see, the identification of νοῦς with οὐσία is refined in the light of the limitless existence of the One. Third, representationalism is resurrected in order to account for modes of cognition inferior to that of eternal νοῦς. Even the highest form of cognition in an incarnate νοῦς is only an image of the cognitive life of its discarnate paradigm. These anti-Aristotelian implications need to be stressed for it is sometimes supposed even by those sympathetic to Plotinus that his metaphysics is but an embellishment or continuation of its Aristotelian antecedent.

In the remainder of this paper I should like to focus on the second point, Plotinus' reconstruction of the account of being in the light of the account of eternal truth and its subordination to the first principle of all, the One.

Eternal truth is supposed to entail the existence of eternal νοῦς. The entailment is supposed to hold because eternal truth is complex, whereas the One is simple, and the complexity of cannot be grounded in a mere multitude of unconnected beings or Forms. Even eternal existential

truths express a connection among Forms. Thus, eternal truth is being for an intellect. But this is construed, on Aristotelian grounds, as the being of an intellect. To have νοῦς "looking in at Forms from the outside" would be to concede that νοῦς is irrelevant to the existence of eternal truth. It is not enough, though, to "internalize" the Forms in νοῦς. Plotinus cannot allow that knowing is different parts of a complex whole related to each other.<sup>14</sup> For what would be in the knowing part would be different from what the other part is. Thus, the requirement that eternal νοῦς exist in order to ground truth leads to the requirement of a particular conception of thinking or knowing. According to this, self-knowing is knowing in the proper sense. But this self-knowing is somewhat more problematic than it is in Aristotle's paradigm case, for intentional complexity is not removed from it.

How is this self-knowing then to be understood as knowing Forms? It is to be understood as the claim that there is no conceptual distinction between knowing and knowing that one is knowing.<sup>15</sup> Thus, sKp and sKsKp are mutually implicative, where "s" is νοῦς or a νοῦς, "K" is the activity of knowing (νοεῖν), and "p" is not a proposition but οὐσία or the complex whole containing all the Forms. One difficulty here would seem to be that if in sKp "p" is not to be construed as a proposition, in sKsKp "sKp" must be so construed. That this is not so follows from the fact that if "sKp" is different in content from "p", then self-knowing is regressive rather than reflexive as it must be if knowing (Forms) is self-knowing. For if sKp entails sKsKp but "p" is an intentional object different from sKp, then knowing "p" is different from knowing sKp, and the identity of subject and object of knowing would involve a vicious expansion of the object of knowing.

Many philosophers from widely different backgrounds believe that sKp and sKsKp are mutually implicative. Many fewer interpret this implication as a characterization of self-evidence such that for s, sKsKp is sufficient evidence for p. Thus, knowing would entail certainty or infallibility. Knowing requires sufficient evidence. The only sufficient evidence for "p" that "s" could adduce without initiating an endless regress would be the claim that sKsKp. "s" knows "p" if and only if "p" is self-evident to s. Plotinus is among the philosophers who believe that knowing thus implies certainty.<sup>16</sup> But few philosophers accept the further implication that the self-reflexivity of self-evidence is only possible if intellect is an immaterial entity.<sup>17</sup> For Plotinus, we might say that since νοῦς is immaterial, it naturally follows that knowing is essentially self-knowing. For knowing implies certainly and certainly can only obtain when there is self-reflexivity. More precisely, there is certainty about what is known non-inferentially only when there is self-reflexivity.

It would seem that owing to the condition that knowing is not representational, but an identification of knower and known, knowing cannot be essentially inferential. For inference requires a representational element of a logical connective and a judgment that A is so because of B. So, if the intellect is immaterial and if knowing in the primary sense is non-representational and non-inferential and certain, these conditions are accurately albeit elliptically contained in the claim that knowing is self-knowing. I think it is important to mention here in passing a point that we shall return to later. Plotinus' characterization of νοῦς does not depend on an appeal to our own experience, for we are not aware of the ἐνέργεια of separate νοῦς, neither our own nor that of the demiurge. He is not arguing that, say, infallible judgments about our own sense-experience indicate the immateriality of νοῦς or self-reflexivity as its essential property. For sense-experience is not an activity of νοῦς. And yet all forms of cognition inferior to that of νοῦς are potentially illuminated by their paradigm.<sup>18</sup>

From the identity of νοῦς and Forms and the mutual implication of σκῆψις and σκῆψις, Plotinus draws a conclusion that is unfortunately easy to misunderstand. He says that Forms themselves possess life.<sup>19</sup> This has been taken to mean that each Form, for example, the Form of Beauty, is itself a νοῦς. So Armstrong translates Plotinus' words καὶ ὅλος μὲν ὁ νοῦς τὰ πάντα εἶδη, ἕκαστον δὲ εἶδος νοῦς ἕκαστος, "And Intellect as a whole is all the Forms, and each individual Form is an individual Intellect."<sup>20</sup> This translation is inaccurate. The last clause is better rendered "and each form is each νοῦς." This text thus rendered only affirms the cognitive identity of each νοῦς with all Forms. It does not obliterate the distinction between νοῦς and Forms or that between the activity of thinking and its intentional objects. The supposed interpretation of the above text is not supported by the identity of νοῦς, νόησις, and τὸ νοητόν.<sup>21</sup> For as Plotinus says elsewhere, it is false to say that Forms are νοήσεις, if this is taken to mean that Forms are not prior to thinking of them or to mean that the Form is just the thinking.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, we only need to take Plotinus as affirming Aristotle's point that νοῦς is intelligible in the sense that it is identical with intelligible cognitively, from which it follows that what is intelligible, i.e., each Form, is identical with every νοῦς.<sup>23</sup>

The identity of νοῦς with its objects requires the complexity of intentionality. Therefore, νοῦς and οὐσία are subordinated to the ἀρχή of all, which is what Plato explicitly holds in the *Republic* and Aristotle explicitly denies. Therefore, strictly speaking, we should not say that νοῦς is identical with being but that it is identical with what οὐσία actually stands for, namely, essence. The cognitive identity of νοῦς with οὐσία is not the paradigm of being, but the paradigm of complex unity, which everything else "below" νοῦς partakes of insofar as it is one and has an

essence. The ἐνέργεια of νοῦς, which is self-reflexive identification with its intentional objects is indeed the paradigm for all cognition. But we are not thereby forced to say that a molecule of water is thinking because it instantiates a Form. For the molecule partakes of νοῦς only insofar as it partakes of its eternal intentional objects. Since thinking is essentially intentional or bipolar, it need not be otherwise. Something does not have to be cognitive in some obscure way in order to be an image of a Form, even though all Forms are eternally identical with a mind.

When in V. 1.8 Plotinus quotes Fragment 3 of Parmenides and endorses what he takes to be Plato's interpretation of it, he says that Parmenides erred in believing that being is one, whereas in fact it is many. As the subsequent reference to Plato's dialogue *Parmenides* shows, Plotinus is not making the point that a plurality of things exists. Rather, he means that finite being or οὐσία is complex. This does not gainsay the unqualified unity of the paradigm of being, the One.

The identity of νοῦς and οὐσία also does not obliterate the logical priority of being to knowing.<sup>24</sup> Neither νοῦς nor the One produce οὐσία if its production is taken to imply logically the possibility that it should not be produced. The eternal dependence of οὐσία on the One and its eternal identity with νοῦς precludes mind-dependent idealism where this is contrasted with realism.<sup>25</sup>

Aristotle's hypothesis in the *Metaphysics* that being is οὐσία is disconfirmed when he identifies οὐσία with the ἐνέργεια of νοῦς (7.1072b26-7). For the ἐνέργεια of νοῦς cannot be perfect ἐνέργεια. It cannot be so because it is essentially intentional and therefore complex. A complex ἐνέργεια cannot be what being is itself because that which is complex has as its own ἀρχή that which is simple. If being were itself complex, consider what we would say about the simples of which it is composed. This last point is an authentic Eleatic insight that Plotinus rescues from the wreckage of extreme monism.

Once being is understood not to be οὐσία, the connection between οὐσία and νοῦς can be reconstructed. The identity of νοῦς and οὐσία need not be taken to imply that to be is to be a thought or a thinker. In this regard, Plotinian epistemological realism is what Aristotelian epistemological realism should have been. If we ask the Aristotelian question "what is being?" the Plotinian answer is being = ἐνέργεια instead of being = οὐσία.<sup>26</sup> Nothing in Plotinus more dramatically shows how he uses Aristotle to rehabilitate Plato than this answer, for the concept of ἐνέργεια does not even appear in Plato.

Once this move is made, an independent line of investigation is opened regarding the question of the eternal identity of νοῦς and οὐσία. There is no longer a need to posit an eternal νοῦς to account for eternal



motion. The Plotinian approach is rather to argue that eternal truth exists, but that it could not exist without eternal  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . Those who agree that eternal truth exists, but deny that an eternal  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  exists which is cognitively identical with Forms must say either that eternal truth can exist without such identification or that these truths are in fact identical with the One, which is beyond  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ .

Plotinus' response to both possibilities amount to the same thing. Since the One is the cause of the being of everything, it follows that the One is virtually all things, that is, it has the power to cause all things to be, including Forms.<sup>27</sup> But it does not follow from this that the One is *eminently* all things, that is, among other things, the perfect instance of eternal truths. Plotinus cannot say this because that would compromise the simplicity of the One.

Let us recognize that Plotinus does actually say that the One has all Forms in it "indistinctly" ( $\mu\eta\ \delta\iota\alpha\kappa\epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha$ ).<sup>28</sup> In fact, the reason given for the One's having the ability to give existence to everything is just that it has everything in it "beforehand." But this claim must be balanced by another sort, according to which "there is no necessity for something to have what it gives" and "the Form is in that which is shaped ( $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ), but the shaper was shapeless."<sup>29</sup> If the indistinctness of the Forms in the One were intended to represent a state prior to a temporal creation, then Plotinus would I think have to say that the One is *eminently* as well as *virtually* all the Forms, in which case his position would not be substantially different from that of, say, Aquinas. But since  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is eternally caused to be by the One, its having the Forms "indistinctly" should not be understood in this way.<sup>30</sup> Rather, as Plotinus tells us, to say that the One is none of the Forms means that they are "later ( $\u03c5\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha$ )" than it, but to say that the One is all of them means that they "come from it ( $\epsilon\chi\ \alpha\u03c5\tau\omicron\upsilon$ )."<sup>31</sup> The Forms are later in the sense that they are an effect of which the One is the cause, though *what* they are is uncaused.<sup>32</sup> The phrase "come from it" is difficult, but it cannot indicate a process of emptying where the result is that something is *outside* the One, for there is no such thing. I would suggest that the phrase "come from it" indicates the result of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ 's contemplation of the One under the aspect of the Good. That is, when  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  achieves the Good it does so by contemplating all the Forms.<sup>33</sup> So the indistinct existence of Forms in the One does not indicate another mode of being for Forms, much less a superior mode of being.<sup>34</sup> It indicates that the eternal achievement of goodness for  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  requires that it go beyond itself to the Good itself, but that this amounts to identification with all the Forms in contemplating.<sup>35</sup>

Another reason why the One cannot be *eminently* all the Forms is that a paradigm is really related to its images. As Plato tells us in the *Parmenides* (132d), we can consider a Form and its image "insofar as they

are like" and this surely indicates a real relation. But Plotinus says that the One is related to nothing. Hence, it cannot be a paradigm, which it must be if it is *eminently* all Forms.

The only way that the One can be *virtually* all the Forms but not *eminently* all the Forms as well is by positing eternal  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . For it is  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ 's relation to the One under its aspect of the Good that is the instrument of the creation of eternal truth.<sup>36</sup> Why should it not have been the case that the diffusion of the infinite goodness of the One results in eternal Forms but not eternal  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ? Why is it necessary, as Plotinus puts it, that  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is generated from the One?<sup>37</sup>

This is an unusually difficult question to answer. It is not satisfactorily answered by saying, as Plotinus does, that  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is "closest" to the One, so that when the One produces it produces  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . "Closest" here means that the complexity of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is least removed from the simplicity of the One. That is,  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is closest to being one that a complex thing can be. Thus,  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is called  $\epsilon\nu\ \pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$ .<sup>38</sup> But I think there is a hint here of a more profound answer.

Consider the putative eternal truths "three is odd" or "fire is hot." The Platonist must explain these truths as grounded in Forms. But how are, say, the Forms of three and odd related eternally? The history of Platonic answers to this question is part of the history of the doctrine that Forms are ideas in the divine mind. Plotinus is too good of a philosopher to be satisfied with the typical naive interpretation of this claim. He sees that Forms must be distinct yet somehow identified.<sup>39</sup> Distinctness and identification are not here contradictory. The identification of Forms is a cognitive activity, as is the "separating" of them. In fact, Plotinus distinguishes two kinds of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ,  $\delta\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\iota\zeta\omicron\nu\ \nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  and  $\delta\ \alpha\mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , engaged in such activity.<sup>40</sup> The judgment made by dividing  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  that "three is odd" involves concepts and is in time. It is a representation of what "undivided  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ " does. "Three is odd" could not be an eternal truth unless there existed an eternal mind making the identification.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps I can make this clearer in the following way. Eternal truths for Plotinus are of the form  $A = B$ , not of the form  $A = A$ . This is sometimes obscured by uncritical characterizations of the  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$  of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  as non-propositional. The formula  $A = B$  cannot stand for anything real, if by "real" we mean extra-mental or non-cognitive. For the real world tells us, as Bishop Butler said, that "a thing is what it is and not another thing." One who identifies eternal truth with a simple  $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta$  is content with this. Plotinus is not because he does not. Complex eternal truth could only be *for* a mind that is making the identification of A and B eternally. Add to this claim the Aristotelian claim that mind is cognitively identical with what it knows and we arrive at the Plotinian conclusion:  $\mu\iota\omicron$

μὲν οὖν φύσις τό τε ὄν ὅ τε νοῦς.<sup>47</sup> Without νοῦς there could be Forms, but there could be no truth.

## Endnotes

1. This is usually given as fragment 3, indicating a continuation of line 8 of fragment 2. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* U.440.12 and Plotinus, *Enneads* V.1.8.17, 1.4.10.6, and IR.8.8.8 preserve the fragment but do not suggest its relative location in the rest of the poem.
2. For discussion of the problems and possibilities see L. Taran, *Parmenides* (Princeton University Press: 1965), 41-44; D. Gallop, *Parmenides of Elea* (University of Toronto Press: 1984), 8.
3. Cf. *Sophist* 245d4-6: ὥστε οὐτε οὐσίαν οὐτε γένεσιν ὥς οὖσαν δεῖ προσαιγορεῦειν [τὸ ἐν ἡ] τὸ ὅλον ἐν τοῖς οὖσι μὴ τιθέντα. The wholeness referred to here is the complexity of that which is, whether it be οὐσία or γένεσις. The second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* makes the same point at 142b6-8: ἄρα οἷόν τε αὐτὸ εἶναι μὲν, οὐσίας δὲ μὴ μετέχειν, —Οὐχ οἷον τε.—Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἡ οὐσία τοῦ ἐνὸς εἴη ἂν οὐ ταύτων οὖσα τῇ ἐνὶ οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐκείνη ἦν ἐκείνου οὐσία. The words οὐ ταύτων referring to "one" and οὐσία indicate the real distinction.
4. It is evident from 510a9 that τοῖς γνωσκομένοις of 509b6 refers at least to that which is νοητόν (cf. 509d4), which I take it is primarily the Forms.
5. *Republic* 510b is also relevant in its insistence that the mode of cognition that is the highest part of the divided line must proceed "without images."
6. There is another somewhat more indirect piece of evidence for this interpretation from the *Timaeus*. At 30d1-2 the demiurge is said to make the world according to the "noblest among the things which are intelligible" and at 37a1-2 the demiurge itself is said to be "the best of the eternal intelligible." The clear implication is that there is some sort of identity between demiurge and Forms.
7. It is clear from the passage in which Plotinus cites the fragment (V.1.8.15-17) that he interprets Parmenides in this way and that he believed Plato held the same view, that is, he believed that Plato interpreted Parmenides thus and that Plato thought that the claim thus interpreted is true.
8. *De Anima* 3.4.430a3-4. Cf. 7.431b17.
9. So R.D. Hicks, *Aristotle's De Anima* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 485, and 429b9 where Aristotle says that only when an intellect becomes an intelligible object is it capable of thinking itself.
10. Cf. *De Anima* 2.2.425b26-7: ἡ δὲ τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ ἐνέργεια καὶ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἡ αὐτὴ μὲν ἐστὶ καὶ μία, τὸ δ' εἶναι οὐ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀνταῖς. By contrast, Plotinus, V.1.8.8, will say that thinking and object of thought are one ἐν οὐσίᾳ.
11. *Physics* 3.3.202a20.
12. Cf. V.5.1.19-21. In this passage, Plotinus uses the Epicurean term τύποι for the putative impressions or representations in νοῦς. I take it the argument is

generalizable whatever the exact of the representations, so long as they are distinct from Forms. At line 55 he uses the more general term εἶδωλα.

13. Cf. III.5.7.50-3; III.9.1.6-10; V.3.5.21-9; 13,12-14; V.4.2.44-6; V.5.1.19-23; V.9.5.7-8; VI.6.7.8-10; VI.7.41.12-13. At V.5.2.8 Plotinus characterizes the identification as a kind of "fusing" (συγκροθέντως) with Forms. This indicates well the real identity of that which is nevertheless distinct.

14. Cf. V.3.5.17-23; V.5.1. Cf. J. Pepin, "Elements pour une histoire de la relation entre l'intelligence et l'intelligible chez Plato et dans le neoplatonisme," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 53 (1956): 54-5 and R.T. Wallis, "Scepticism and Neoplatonism," in W. Haase and H. Temporini (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt Teil 11: Bd. 36.2* New York: Walter De Gruyter (1987): 922-5 on the skeptical background of this argument Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians* 1.310-312, states the dilemma faced by those who hold that cognition is an identification: "For if the mind apprehends itself, either it as a whole will apprehend itself, or it will do so not as a whole but employing for the purpose a part of itself. Now it will not be able as a whole to apprehend itself. For if as a whole it apprehends itself, it will be as a whole apprehension and apprehending, and, the apprehending object will no longer be anything; but it is a thing most irrational that the apprehending subject should exist while the object of the apprehension does not exist. Nor, in fact, can the mind employ for this purpose a part of itself. For how does the part itself apprehend itself? If as a whole, the object sought will be nothing; while if with a part, how will that part in turn discern itself?"

15. This is most clear at II.9.1.36-9; 46-54. Cf. V.3.1.15-28. The passage at II.9.1.53-4 ends: τίς χωρὰ τῇ ἐπειροῖα τῇ χωρίζουσι τὸ νοεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ νοεῖν ὅτι νοεῖ; this would seem to indicate an absence even of conceptual distinctness between knowing something and knowing that one is knowing something. But if this is so, then the only way we can preserve distinct knowers is to say that "p" as known by "s" has some different quality from the way "p" is known by "r". Thus, "s" knows "p" in a unique manner or from a unique perspective. This fact does not, however, entail an obliteration of the distinction between subject and object. If it did, there would be no reason for denying Aristotle's claim that νοῦς is unqualifiedly actual. Cf. J. Hintikka, *Knowledge and Belief* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1962), 103-25, for a useful survey of various versions of the claim that knowing "p" and knowing one knows "p" are mutually implicative.

16. V.5.1.1-2: Τὸν νοῦν, τὸν ἀληθῆ νοῦν καὶ ὄντως, ἀπ' ἃν τις φαίη ψεύσεσθαι ποτε καὶ μὴ τὰ ὄντα δοξάσειν, cf. VI.2.8.2-5 where the infallibility of νοῦς is explained by saying that the being of the object of thinking is just its being thought. With this passage should be read V.6.6.24-7 where Plotinus distinguishes "man" and "thought of man," "horse" and "thought of horse," etc. We can reconcile these two passages if we say that "man" and "thought of man" are

distinct according to a real minor distinction in the latter passage, though in substance they are identical. Cf. Pepin (1956:49-50).

17. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, prop. 15 in (Dodds, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), states this with utmost clarity. Since a material entity has parts outside of parts, there could never be literal self-reflexivity (πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρέφειν) in it. Cf. the commentary of Dodds (202-3) on this passage with references.

18. V.3.4.1-4 seems to contradict this when it says that we are in accord with νοῦς in two ways: "either by having something like its writing written in us like laws, or by being as if filled with it and able to see it and be aware of it as present." The "laws" are evidently concepts. I think that the second way we are in accord with it need only mean that we are aware that νοῦς exists and is active, without our actually engaging in that activity. For how could we engage in that activity while in time and without being aware of all the Forms at once? There is no conceptual space in Plotinus' system for incomplete identification with οὐσία.

19. For Plotinus the most important association of life with Forms is of course to be found in Plato's *Sophist* 248e. Cf. IV.7.9.24; V.4.2.43; V.5.1.33ff; V.9.8.1-8; VI.2.20. Cf. Hadot (1960:108-9). That each Form is an intellect means that the world of Forms is in fact also a community of distinct intellects. Cf. IV.3.5.6-8: ἐπεὶ κακεῖ οἱ νόες οὐκ ἀπολούνται, ὅτι μὴ σωματικῶς μεμερισμένοι, εἰς ἓν ἀλλὰ μένει ἑκάστος ἐν ἑτερότητι ἔχον τὸ αὐτὸ ὃ ἐστὶν εἶναι. W. Himmerich, *Eudamonia, Die Lehre des Plotin von der Selbstverwirklichung des Menschen* (Würzburg, K. Triltsche, 1959), 50 cites III.2.16.17-20 where Plotinus says that πᾶσα δὲ ζωὴ ἐνέργεια. In connection with this statement Himmerich argues, Plotinus employs Aristotle's principle that actuality precedes potency to conclude that primary life has primary ἐνέργεια. This is not strictly true because the One is primary ἐνέργεια. Cf. VI.8.20.9-16. Also, III-8-8.8; V.1.8.17; V.3.5.26; V.6.6.21; V.9.5.29; VI.6.2.9; VI.7.40.15 on the identification of thinking and object thought. As H.R. Schwyzer, *Plotinos in Pauly-Wissowa RE-Sonderausgabe* (Munich: 1978), 553-4, points out, Plato nowhere implicitly identifies νοῦς and οὐσία but this is a natural inference from *Republic* 507b, 509b, and 509b.

20. V.9.8.3-4. Ciletti's translation is not so misleading, "E, precisamente, nel suo complesso lo Spirito è il complesso delle forme; ma la forma nella sua singolarità è lo Spirito preso come singolo." Similarly, but more literally Bréhier, "L'intelligence complète est faite de toutes les idées, et chacune des idées, c'est chacune des intelligence" and Harder-Theiler, "Und zwar ist der Geist als Gesamtheit alle Ideen, die einzelne Idee aber ist der Geist als einzelnes . . ."

21. V.3.5.44-5.

22. V.9.7.14-17: ὁθεν καὶ τὸ λέγειν νοήσεις τὰ εἶδη, εἰ οὕτω λέγεται ὡς, ἐπειδὴ ἐνόησε τότε ἐγένετο ἢ ἐπὶ τότε, οὐκ ὁρθῶς καὶ οὕτως γὰρ τῆς νοήσεως πρότερον δεῖ τὸ νοούμενον εἶναι. D. Roloff, *Plotin Die Grosschrift* III.8-v.8-v.5-II.9 (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1970), 18 commenting on III.8, where Plotinus

explains how thinking and being are identical and νοῦς is true life, says: "Der Geist ist als Subject zugleich das intentionale Object, wie dieses umgekehrt zugleich Object denkende-Subject ist." Cf. 51. Against this view, I hold that the Forms are intentional objects of νοῦς and that self-reflexivity means the subject thinking the subject thinking the intentional object, thereby maintaining the distinction between subject and intentional object. For at VI.2.8.4-5 Plotinus says ὁ δ' ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος, εἰ νοήσεται, τοῦτ' ἔστιν αὐτοῖς τὸ εἶναι.

23. Cf. *De Anima* 3.4.430a1-2. G. Huber, *Das Sein und das Absolute. Studien zur Geschichte der ontologischen Problematik in der spätantiken Philosophie* (Basel: Verlag für Recht und Gesellschaft argues that in the "Spiritualisierung des Eidos" Plotinus develops an idea beyond anything explicit in Plato or Aristotle. I think this is true only in that Plato is not explicit on the cognitive identity of νοῦς and Forms and for Aristotle, cognitive identity of νοῦς and its objects is not identity with Plato's Forms.

24. Cf. VI.5.6.5-10, 31-3; οὐ γάρ, ὅτι ἐνόησε τί ποτ' ἔστι δικαιοσύνη, δικαιοσύνη ἐγένετο, οὐδ' ὅτι ἐνόησε τι ποτ' ἔστι κίνησις, κίνησις ὑπέστη (8-10). Cf. also V.9.7.11-12; VI.2.8.14-16; VI.2.19.18-21; VI.7.8.4-8. Plotinus is probably making use of *Parmenides* 13 2b7-10 where it is argued that τὸ νοούμενον is prior (logically, though the text is not explicit) to a νόημα of it. Cf. VI.7.40.6: νόησις πᾶσα ἐκ τινὸς ἐστὶ καὶ τινός. V.4.2.6-7: ὁρίστος μὲν αὐτῇ [νόησις] ὥσπερ ὅψις, ὁρίζομένη δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ. In V.2.1.12-3 the logical priority of τὸ ὄν to the "gaze" [ὄρα] upon the One is clear. It is tempting to gloss τὸ ὄν with τοῦ νοητοῦ above. The explicit identification of the objects of νοῦς with Forms is made at V.9.8.1-4. Cf. I.6.9.41-2; VI.7.15.9-13. H. Oosthout, *Modes, of Knowledge and the Transcendental. An Introduction to Plotinus' Ennead 5.3 [491]* (Amsterdam, B. R. Grüner, 1991), 68, puzzlingly, argues against the logical priority of being to knowing, even though earlier (64) he asserts it.

25. This is most clearly brought out at VI.7.8.3-8: But supposing [νοῦς] discovered the thought of horse in order that a horse (or some other animal) might come into being here below? Yet how would it be possible for him when he wanted to make a horse to think a horse? For it is already clear that the thought of horse existed if he wanted to make a horse; so that it is not possible for him to think it in order to make it, but the horse which did not come into being must exist before that which was to be afterwards.

26. VI.8.20.9-15. Cf. V.4.2.35; VI.8.7.46-8; VI.8.12.22-3; VI.8.13.6-8; VI.8.16.15, 25, 30, 31, 35 and Krämer (1966: 12-13).

27. On the One as δύναντος of all things cf. V.3.15.33. Also, III.8.10.1; V.1.7.9-10; V.3.16.2; V.4.1.24-5, 36; V.4.2.38; V.5.12.38-9; VI.7.32.31; VI.7.40.13-14; VI.8.9.45; VI.9.5.36-7.

28. V.3.15.31. Cf. V.2.1.1; V.4.2.16; VI.7.32.14; VI.8.21.24-5.

29. VI.7.17.3-4, 17-18.

30. G. Leroux, *Plotin. Traité sur la liberté et la volonté de l'Un* [Ennéade VI,8 (39)] (Paris: J. Vrin, 1990), 96, 108, seems to unpack the metaphorical representations of the One in terms of eminence, a position that is in conflict with his basic thesis that the simplicity of the One entails its impersonal nature.

31. VI.7.32.13-14. Cf. V.5.12.41.

32. Cf. VI.7.2.40-3: εἰ οὖν μὴ ἔχει (the Forms) αἰτία τοῦ εἶναι, αὐτοάρκη δὲ ἐστὶ καὶ μεμονωμένα αἰτίας ἐστὶν, εἴη ὅν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἔχοντα σὺν αὐτοῖς τὴν αἰτίαν. Also, VI.7.17.6-9; VI.7.40.21-4. Cf. C. Rutten, "La doctrine des deux actes dans la philosophie de Plotin," *Revue Philosophique* 146 (1956): 104-5 and J. Bussanich, *The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 163-5.

33. V.6.5.8-9: καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι νοεῖν, κίνησις πρὸς ἀγαθὸν ἐφ' ἑαυτὸν ἐκείνου. Cf. VI.7.15.11, 16. At V.4.2.4, 12, 13 Plotinus seems to hold that the One is intelligible [νοητόν]. On my interpretation, the One is called νοητόν here because the good is achieved by νοῦς by contemplating, that is, having an intelligible object. At 3.8.9.10-11 Plotinus denies that the One is intelligible. The assertion and denial that the One is νοητόν are parallel to the statements that the One does and does not contain all the Forms and should be interpreted accordingly. I believe this interpretation helps explain why in the notorious text at V.1.7.54 Plotinus should not be taken to be saying that the One looks at itself by turning back upon itself and in this way produces νοῦς. The generation of νοῦς in this passage refers to the achievement of νοῦς in identifying itself with what the One virtually is, all Forms. So G.J.R. O'Daly, *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1973), 71-2. On this difficult passage cf. J. Igal, "La Genesis de la Inteligencia en un pasaje de las de Plotino (V.1.7.4-35)," *Emerita* 39 (1971), M. Atkinson, *Ennead V 1: On the Three Principal Hypostases. A Commentary with Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1983), 156-60, and J. Bussanich, op. cit., 37-43. Should V. 1.6.17-18 be read differently? Cf. A.C. Lloyd, "Plotinus on the Genesis of Thought and Existence," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 5 (1987): 159-60.

34. If this were not so, then a real relation between the One and νοῦς would be erected. It is pertinent to recall *Parmenides* 132de where Parmenides derives a regress from Socrates' argument that Forms are παραδείγματα wherein their instances are images or ὁμοιώματα of these. Parmenides' argument is that we can consider model and copy καθ' ὅσον the one is like the other. This presumes a real relation is possible. T. Szlezák, *Platon und Aristoteles in der Nuslehre Plotins* (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1979), 164 n. 539 is too quick to dismiss the containment of Forms in the One as inconsistent with Plotinus' general doctrines. Cf. V. 1.7.10-13: ὃν οὖν ἐστὶ [the One] δύναντος, ταῦτα ἀπὸ τῆς δυνάμεως οἷον σχιζομένη ἢ νόησις καθοπῆ ἢ οὐκ ἂν νοῦς. Ἐπεὶ καὶ παρ' αὐτοῦ ἔχει ἡδὲ οἷον συνείσθησιν τῆς δυνάμεως, ὅτι δύνανται οὐσίαν and the analysis of this passage by Igal, op. cit., 142ff. As Igal argues, the subject of δύνανται is νοῦς. So Lloyd, op. cit., 161. Since νοῦς is eternally contemplating Forms, the sense in which the One has all

Forms indistinctly in it ought to mean that goodness for νοῦς is just contemplating Forms and that the One is the cause of the existence of this ἐνέργεια.

35. If I understand Lloyd, op. cit, 175-6, rightly, my interpretation is consonant with his own. Lloyd thinks that it is the One as object of thought which acts on νοῦς and produces οὐσία, whereas I have said that it is the One as object of desire. Perhaps draw amount to the same thing if the desire of νοῦς is just βούλησις, an intellectual desire.

36. On the generation of νοῦς and Forms from the One cf. V.2.1.7-11. Also, III.8.9.29-32; V.1.5.18-19; V.1.7.5-35; V.3.10.40-4; V.3.11.4-12; V.4.2.4-7; V.5.5.15; VI.7-17.14-16, 21; VI.7.35.19-23. All of these passages analyze the generation of νοῦς into a twofold process or presume such an analysis. The point of this logical analysis which is couched in temporal terms only for heuristic purposes, is to indicate both the priority of being and desire to knowing and the essential complexity of the ἐνέργεια of cognition. V.9.8.9-22 makes abundantly clear that the derivation of νοῦς is logical.

37. V.4.2.3.

38. Cf. IV.8.3.10; V.1.8.26; V.3.15.11, 22; VI.2.2.2; VI.2.10.11; VI.2.15.14; VI.2.21.7; 46-7; VI.2.22.10; VI.5.6.1-2; VI.6.8.22; VI.6.13.52-3; VI.7.8.17-8; VI.7.14.11-12; VI.7.39.11-14. There are some very weak arguments for the existence of νοῦς offered at V.9.4.

39. At VI.9.5.16-20 Plotinus says of νοῦς that it is a πᾶθος ἀδιάκριτον καὶ αὐτοδιακεκρωμένον and just as in ἐπιστήμησις πάντων ἐν ἀμεινῇ ὄντων ὁμοῦ ἐστὶν ἕκαστον χωρὶς αἰνῶν. The divisions and separateness of the parts of νοῦς cannot be the same as what is divided in discursive judgment. I think that what it does mean is that νοῦς is virtually divisible in discursive judgments. Cf. VI.4.2.22-3 (with lines 47-9) where Plotinus says that that which participates in true being ὅλην ὄν ἐντυγχάνει τῷ ὄντι. A.C. Lloyd, "Non-Propositional Thought in Plotinus," *Phronesis* 31 (1986): 362, replying to R. Sorabji, "Myths About Non-Propositional Thought," in M. Schofield and M. Nussbaum (eds.), *Language and Logos Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy* (1982) and *Time, Creation & the Continuum* (Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 1983), 152-6, states the position I am defending with admirable lucidity and precision: "The *totum simul* which is associated with pure intellect neither is nor is known by a collection of propositions, but is what occupies the place of the genus of being. For that can be grasped as a merely undifferentiated whole, while in fact it contains a multiplicity of parts. It is the former aspect, Being as an intentional or phenomenological object, which is the content of the thinking qua thinking and whose non-complexity prevents it from being propositional." Cf. J.M. Rist, "Back to the Mysticism of Plotinus: Some More Specifics," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27 (1989): 190-7 and M.R. Alfino, "Plotinus on the Possibility of Non-Propositional Thought," *Ancient Philosophy* 8 (1988): 273-6 also replying to Sorabji.

40. V.9.8.23.

41. V.5.1.42-4: εἰ δ' ἀπλᾶ φέουσι, δίκαιον χωρὶς καὶ καλόν, πρῶτον μὲν οὐχ ἐν τι οὐδ' ἐν ἐνὶ τῷ νοητῶν ἔσται, ἀλλὰ διεσπασμένον ἕκαστον.

42. V.9.8.18.

## Platonism in Late Classical Antiquity and Some Indian Parallels

Henry J. Blumenthal

The Platonism of late antiquity is, of course, what we now call Neoplatonism. That term is a modern one.<sup>1</sup> All the philosophers whose work comes under this heading thought of themselves simply as Platonists, and the doctrine they were expounding as the Platonic philosophy. For Plotinus, the man normally thought of as the founder of this type of philosophy, all that he might have to say had been said before though it might not have been set out explicitly, and could be found in the text of Plato (cf. V 1.8.10-14). For Proclus in the 5th century, after two hundred years of this kind of thinking, the same view of what he was doing still stood, as it did for Simplicius and Damascius into the 6th. Thus Proclus, in the preface to his *Platonic Theology*, could write of his whole enterprise, and that of his Neoplatonic predecessors, as the understanding and exposition of the truths in Plato.<sup>2</sup>

Given our modern views of Plato and Aristotle, as philosophers whose views developed and whose answers to questions were not always the same, it is important to realize that their ancient interpreters looked at them as creators of fixed systems: though they might recognize that they did not always say the same things about the same questions, they saw such apparent inconsistencies as problems about the relation of disparate statements to an assumed single doctrine rather than about how different doctrines might relate to each other.

Before going on I should perhaps offer three explanations and an apology. The apology is simple: it is to those who know a great deal about Neoplatonism, to whom some of what I shall say is basic common knowledge. The explanations are three.

First, that I am taking late classical antiquity to start in the 3rd century C.E., following an old Cambridge custom of taking ancient Greek philosophy to have ended in the year 180. The second is to say what I am going to do here. It relates to the first. When this view of the limits of classical antiquity still held, the study of Neoplatonism was regarded as rather disreputable, in the English-speaking world at least,

and the few apparent exceptions tend to prove the rule. Thus E. R. Dodds' edition of Proclus *Elements*, still one of the great achievements of Neoplatonic scholarship, and the first modern commentary on a Neoplatonic work, was seen not so much as evidence that there was here a rich field for new scholarly endeavour as an indication of that scholar's eccentricity. The common attitude found its expression in the preface to the first volume of W.K.C. Guthrie's *History of Greek Philosophy*, where he relegated Neoplatonism to the realms of the unphilosophical and the un-Greek: "with Plotinus and his followers, as well as with their Christian contemporaries, there does seem to enter a new religious spirit which is not fundamentally Greek...": that was in 1962.<sup>3</sup> "What I want to do is to look at some of the characteristics of Neoplatonism, and to see how the picture of this philosophy, or rather group of philosophies, has changed during the last three decades. I think most would now agree it is basically Greek."<sup>4</sup> As to the importance of the religious and soteriological elements in it, which for many of its adherents was rather small in any case, that is arguable, and its significance depends on the extent to which one regards other forms of ancient philosophy as enquiries into how one should live the best life. What is important is that most of the Neoplatonic writings we have are clearly philosophical rather than religious or otherwise concerned with the supernatural. I shall therefore take it for granted that we are talking about philosophy, and not any of the other things with which Neoplatonism has sometimes, not always wrongly, been associated. We might note, however, that the combination of philosophical and other concerns, which is more marked in Neoplatonism than in earlier Greek philosophy, is also to be found in some Indian systems.

The third explanation concerns the possible Indian parallels in my title. I have already indicated that I regard Neoplatonism as a purely Greek phenomenon. Though some ideas in it may resemble some Indian philosophical ideas, and those that come under the heading of Advaita in particular, there is no evidence that there was any influence in either direction. What is more interesting, and potentially enlightening, is to consider what parallels there may be between the various kinds of Neoplatonism and the systems of Indian thought which might have something in common with it. At this stage I should make it clear that I have no expertise in Indian philosophy, and in that respect I have come here in the hope of learning from those who do. I should, however, like to observe that almost all the discussion that there has been has centred

on Plotinus, and that it would be interesting to see whether the differences between his philosophy and that of later Neoplatonists might also be found in those Indian thinkers who have ideas in common with, but not ancestral to or drawn from, later Greek Neoplatonism. A look at the index of *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought* shows over five times as many references to Plotinus as to Porphyry or Proclus, the latter being almost entirely confined to two contributions.<sup>5</sup> Iamblichus, Damascius and the Aristotelian commentators are conspicuous only by their almost complete absence. The commentators are represented only by a single appearance of Simplicius, and that not in his own right but as a source for Proclus. I would also observe that a lot of the comparisons that have been made between Plotinus and Indian philosophy have taken as their basis Advaita-Vedanta as expounded by Sankara who was born about five centuries after Plotinus' death, a chronological fact that is rarely mentioned. It should be, because it, of course, rules out any possibility of influence on Plotinus: as far as I know there is no evidence of influence in the other direction either. In fact this insouciance is characteristic of much work that has been done in the whole area: I hardly need to spell out its implications. Perhaps our work here can improve this unsatisfactory situation.

Let us now return to the new version of Platonism, as it is to be seen in the thought of Plotinus. Of course some of the ingredients of that thought were developed in the interval between him and Plato, but it is to Plotinus that we owe the reworking of these and other ingredients into an original and philosophically coherent whole.

Since we are looking at the development of the picture of Neoplatonism as well as the characteristics of its thought, it is interesting to note that the concept of Plotinus has changed more than once. At one time he was thought of primarily as a mystic, and it was somehow supposed that his experience coloured, not to say, vitiated his philosophy. He then came to be seen as a serious philosopher, inferior in antiquity only to Plato and Aristotle, but unlike them, a philosopher with a system rather than the instigator of a series of enquiries many of which led to no clear solution. Now he is starting to look more like his predecessors, a thinker who was often unable to make up his mind on the right answer to some of the questions which he considered over and over again.

The other striking feature of Plotinus' thought, which is by no means peculiar to him, is that much of it is devoted to a quest for

solutions to matters that were problematic in Plato. His successors and I hasten to add that I am using the word primarily in a chronological sense were concerned in their turn not only with these matters but with some loose ends in the new version of Plato that Plotinus had produced. For these reasons I think it may be worth spending some time on Plotinus himself.

Let us begin by looking at some of the rather obvious problems in Plato. The most important in its consequences was the nature and status of the Good (ἐνέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας...ὑπερέχοντος) on the other side of being ... and lying above or beyond it (*Republic* 509B). Most English-speaking students of ancient philosophy would have little trouble with this, and interpret it as meaning that the Good was the Form on the far side of the constituents of the world of Ideas, and so furthest from us, but still a Form. Some in other places would take it to mean that it was beyond the other Forms and so not a form at all.<sup>6</sup> Plotinus and his successors had no doubt that the later interpretation was a correct one and so turned the Form of the Good into something that was not a Form at all, but an entity, or rather a non-entity, that transcended all the other Forms and was the source of their existence: the second part of this proposition does, of course, have clear support in the *Republic*, most obviously in 509B itself, just before the controversial words. The Good beyond Being was also identified with the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, for it was assumed by all Neoplatonists that dialogue contained positive teaching rather than logical exercises or any of the other subjects with which it has at various times been supposed to deal. So clear was this to the Neoplatonists that they eventually came to classify this dialogue, along with the *Timaeus*, as one of the two containing the highest metaphysical truths. It was not, however, a wholly new idea that the *Parmenides* could be interpreted along such lines: attempts to extract positive teaching from the earlier hypotheses had been made in the period before Plotinus, notably by the Neopythagorean Moderatus. But now this approach became standard: the points for discussion were the number of hypotheses that could be interpreted in this way, and what the significance of each, particularly those from the fourth onwards, might be: on the first three there was for a time general agreement that they represented the three primary divisions of the Neoplatonic intelligible world, the One, (οὐς), Intellect, and (ψυχή), Soul.

As for the One, it is strictly indescribable, and its nature can only be indicated by negating descriptions which apply to Intellect, the sphere of Being in Plato's sense, populated therefore by Forms. Some of the indications of its nature which Plotinus used are taken straight from the *Parmenides*: so, for example, when Plotinus says in various places that the one has no name, and is the object of neither reason, knowledge, sense-perception or opinion, his words echo *Parmenides* 142A: it has no name, no reason, no knowledge, no sense-perception, no opinion the Greek words are the same (cf. e.g. VI 7.41.37f.).

By such and similar means Plotinus was able to offer what he regarded as a satisfactory answer to the request made on several occasions in the *Republic* that Socrates should provide a description of the Good, a request with which he notoriously never complies. Modern readers might well ask what the hypotheses of the *Parmenides* have to do with the *Republic*, and answer "nothing", but that would not have impressed Plotinus, knowing as he did that Plato had a systematic world picture to which different dialogues all contributed in their different ways. To say that one was simply unrelated to another because it was dealing with a different subject was unacceptable at this time, though as we shall see it was later to become a principle of interpretation that each dialogue had its own specific purpose. Even then it should not be incompatible with others. All this was greatly helped by the tendency which ran right through Neoplatonism to follow the letter of Plato and Aristotle while making no serious attempt to be guided by the philosophical context of a given text.

A further striking difference between Platonic and Neoplatonic Platonism is the absence of the political, and so of many of the ethical elements, a difference which once caused Plotinus to be labelled a Plato reduced by half.<sup>7</sup> Political structures were of no interest to most of the Platonists who lived under the Roman Empire, or the earlier centuries of its Byzantine continuation. Themistius, who was a prominent member of the Byzantine governing aristocracy, and was one of the few thinkers to stand apart from Neoplatonism, is for that very reason no real exception.

So far we have been talking about the treatment of problems in Plato and we shall, of course, need to say much more about that. But before we continue we must bring in another ingredient in the compound that constitutes Neoplatonism, namely Aristotle. Its importance was already noted by Porphyry who, in a well known remark in the *Life of Plotinus* (14.4-5) wrote that there are unnoticed Stoic and Peripatetic



doctrines present in his works. He goes on to say that the *Metaphysics* are there in condensed form (*Ibid.* 5-7). The Aristotelian views with which we are particularly concerned just now are those about the nature of the unmoved mover, and the soul and its operations, for these are an essential part of the organization of the Neoplatonists' intelligible world.

The self-thinking supreme principle of Aristotle's world from the *Metaphysics*, and the notion that the thinking mind is identical with its objects from the *De anima*, with some refinements made by Alexander, formed the basis of the structure of Plotinus' second hypostasis, or level of being, Intellect. This they did by providing a means by which the components of that structure, namely the individual intellects which were also Platonic Forms, related to each other and formed "parts" of a self-thinking whole.

We can now go back to Plato, to recall some further problems which he left unclear or unsolved. In assessing their relevance we must bear in mind that a Platonic problem was as good a starting point for a Neoplatonic doctrine as was a firm statement of Plato's views. So too was a Platonic answer to a question put for the sake of argument or exploration like those in the second half of the *Parmenides*. And in the case of Intellect Plotinus' intellect all three types of Platonic texts contribute.

To start with the Platonic problem, or rather problems. First, there is the well-known passage in the *Sophist* where Plato is discussing the content of the sphere of being in the fullest sense, (τὸ παντελὲς ὄν) (248E-249A). That should contain (κίνησις, ζώή, ψυχή) and (φρόνησις:) motion, life, soul and intellect, and yet the Forms which must be a part of that sphere. I shall assume that Plato had not abandoned the view that they must be permanent and unchanging. Because of the scope that this passage gave for the introduction of life and thought into the intelligible world, it was to be a favorite text of Plotinus and his successors. Further problems offering scope for interesting if Platonically improbable solutions were available in the first part of the *Parmenides*. The difficulties raised there by Plato himself were serious enough to have led to the rethinking if not to the abandonment of the theory of Ideas. But for Plotinus they offered material for his own philosophy.

We may begin with Plato's first problem, the extent of the world of Forms. Socrates in the *Parmenides* is unwilling to accept the existence of Forms of things which are trivial or undignified; mud dirt or hair are the examples given though *Parmenides* tells him he will learn to accept

them when he becomes more of a philosopher. Whether Plato did or did not accept these particular substances as suitable for Forms, there are other doubts about what had Ideal archetypes. Most Platonists accepted Xenocrates' limitation to things that exist in nature (fr.30H). Plotinus simply said that everything that exists here in the physical world exists in the Intelligible too, though in a superior mode, and derives its existence from it: (ἐκεῖθεν ἦν σύμμιαντα ταῦτα καὶ καλλιόνως ἐκεῖ) (V 8.7.17). The word (καλλιόνως) simply avoids any problems that might be caused by having undignified and worthless objects prefigured in the intelligible world.

Only in one early treatise, which may contain some other ideas that Plotinus dropped later, or even put up only for discussion, and in a rather disjointed chapter of it at that, are various trivial and offensive things excluded. This is the only place where mud and dirt are mentioned, with the suggestion that things of that kind are imperfections, and so not to be sought in Intellect, but rather to belong to Soul and to arise from its inability to produce anything better from matter (V 9.14.7-17) admittedly a paradox in terms of Plotinus' account of the world. Elsewhere one can find warrant for the inclusion of earth and earthy things, and so of mud (cf. VI 7.11).

Whatever they might be like in this world, the inferior things are present in the higher world in a form appropriate to it. Whether or not each individual object or person was also represented there, is a different matter, but I should say it was one of those questions on which Plotinus never finally made up his mind. In any case the apparently simple answer that whatever is here must be there too is not simply a move to avoid facing a Platonic problem. It is a necessary part of a fully monistic system in which everything derives from the One and nothing has an independent existence like the receptacle in Plato's *Timaeus*: one might describe it as non-dualism. When Intellect emerges from the one the kind of Being that is the result of its procession is Form, and not just the form of something, but of everything, with nothing excluded (V 5.6.1-4).

The next problem raised in the *Parmenides* is participation, but before looking at that it may be helpful to explain why a world whose constituents are Forms is described as Intellect, a description which is unremarkable in a Neoplatonic context, but would clearly have puzzled a classical Platonist. In terms of Platonic loose ends we may begin yet again with a *Parmenides* problem, namely the one about the difficulties

in thinking of the Forms as thoughts (*νοήματα*) which would be located in souls. It is presented as a possible solution to previous difficulties, but naturally turned down because it would deny to the Forms the self-subsistent status which was essential to them. But if a Form is a *νόημα*, it cannot be a thought of nothing, so goes the argument, and if it is to be a thought of something, it must be a thought of something that is: it would then be a thought of the one single Idea discernible in its several objects, and that would be the Form. Since for Plato thoughts and their objects are not identical, the original thought could not be a Form after all. A further objection is that if particulars participate in Forms in the way participation is envisaged by Socrates, a reference to *Phaedo*-type participation then they too would be thoughts. If they did not there would be thoughts that do not think (*νοήματα ἀνόητα*). That, Socrates is made to say, would make no sense, and so the proposal is abandoned (132B-C).

If we now return to Plotinus, we find that not only the proposal itself, but some of the consequences which Plato regarded as unacceptable, are taken on board as appropriate to Forms as he conceived them. It is here that the Aristotelian input is most marked. The extent to which the *Parmenides* problem influenced Plotinus appears most clearly in the Treatise "That the intelligibles are not outside the Intellect, and on the Good" (V 5) which discusses both the nature of the contents of Intellect and their internal relationships. Whether or not the intelligibles were contained in Intellect, or were outside, had been a matter of controversy, and both positive and negative answers seem to have been given as interpretations of Plato: we have Porphyry's account of how he was converted to Plotinus' view by a fellow student, Amelius (Life 18.10-22). We are not now dealing simply with the Middle Platonist notion that the Ideas were the thoughts of God, *inter alia* because for Plotinus Intellect was not the supreme principle.<sup>8</sup>

The starting points for this discussion are usually taken as the Demiurge's model in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle's self-thinking Intellect. While the latter is, as we have already indicated, important both here and elsewhere, the section of the *Parmenides* we have just considered has clearly been one of Plotinus' points of departure. That emerges at the very start of the treatise, where Plotinus asks whether Intellect could think things which do not exist and whether it could be not-intelligizing, an expression which recalls the thought which do not think in *Parmenides* 321C. Plotinus takes the answer to both questions to be

negative and says that therefore Intellect must know itself (V 5.1.3-6). It cognizes intelligibles, which must be like itself because if they were not it would be impossible to do so: to cognize what is other and external is characteristic of sense-perception rather than intellection. The kinds of beings that are to be found at this level must be intelligible (*νοητά*) else they could not be parts of Intellect (*Νοῦς*) if they are not intelligible and without life, how can they be beings, asks Plotinus (*Ibid.* 37). In a later chapter Plotinus spells out that intelligence and being are the same: so we have one kind of thing, nature, all being, and truth (V 6.3.1f.). In an earlier treatise he had already argued that intellect and being entailed each other: if there is being, then there is intellect: if intellect, then being (V 6.6.21). Forms are identified with Intellect in other places, most notably in the long discussion of the contents of Intellect in the treatise on "How the multitude of Forms came into being, and the Good" (VI 7, cf. esp. ch. 2 *passim*).

Thus for Plotinus Ideas are indeed thoughts, and since all Ideas are both thought and objects of thought all are *νοήματα*, and none of them (*ἀνόητα*). In other words Plotinus has accepted an identification which was unacceptable in the *Parmenides* and turned it into a description of essential features of his second hypostasis. In all the places we have just referred to the identity of the contents of Intellect both with the whole and with each other rests on the Aristotelian identity of thought and thinker, as set out in the (*De anima*). It is this which makes sense of the notion that any part of Being, as soon as it is conceived as an object of thought, becomes itself an intellect. One could discuss at some length whether Being or Intellect is prior: the short answer would be that it depends on the context, but the question is only a real one if one considers the procession of the hypostases quasi-chronologically otherwise it does not matter. That intellect, as a whole, is based on the self-thinking (*νοῦς*) of *Metaphysics Lambda*, should by now be clear enough. It differs in two ways: in not being the supreme principle, and in having acquired some content for its thinking.

Participation problems raised in the *Parmenides* are also soluble if one operates with Plotinus' suppositions. Two difficulties about participation are raised. The first is that if each particular participates in the whole of a Form, then that Form will be split up: none of the attempted explanations is accepted. Alternatively, each particular might be thought of as participating in part of a Form rather than the whole of it. In that case paradoxical consequences appear to result: a small

particular, for example, would be in possession of a part of smallness smaller than the Idea of smallness itself. Part of Plato's trouble was that he was still inclined to think of immaterial entities as though they had material attributes. Plotinus, who no longer did, was able to think of immaterial entities being omnipresent in the material world. The treatise, split by Porphyry into VI 4 and 5, which he wrote to explore the implications of such omnipresence is now known by a title which may well be taken from the problems, of this part of the *Parmenides*. Admittedly the title is Porphyry's, though Porphyry's claim that the titles of his edition were those by which the treatises were generally known does not exclude that it was originally Plotinus' own. The title is *περὶ τοῦ τό ὄν ἐν καὶ ταῦτόν ὄν ἅμα πανταχοῦ εἶναι ὅλον*, on Being being one and the same at the same time everywhere. The sentence in which Plato expresses the difficulty he sees in participation in whole Forms runs: *ἔν ἅρα ὄν καὶ ταῦτόν ἐν πολλοῖς καὶ χωρὶς οὖσιν ὅλον ἅμα ἐνέσται*, so Being is one and is at the same time present in many things which are separate (131B): the resemblance is too close to be entirely coincidental. The complete and simultaneous presence of the intelligible applies not only to the contents of Being in the strictest sense, namely the collection of individual beings which constitutes the second hypostasis, but also the larger collection of the same entities existing in a more diffuse form in the third. In fact in this treatise Plotinus is not particularly concerned with differences between these two hypostases, but more interested in the nature of the intelligible as a whole, and as opposed to the sensible. A tendency to blur the distinction between these two hypostases was to be one of the loose ends in Plotinus that was picked up by later Neoplatonists. What is of interest in our present context is that the presence of beings (*ὄντα*) in a more diffuse form in Soul makes it easier to think of them as omnipresent at the even further diffused level of existence which is the physical world. When a Form is in the individuals it somehow becomes multiple, like the impressions made by a single seal. It might also be regarded as analogous to the presence of a single soul in each part of its body as opposed to a quality like white which is divisible (cf. VI 5.6.1-15).

Strictly speaking Plotinus would say that the body, or whatever, was in its soul: here he follows the lead of the *Timaeus* (34B and 36D) where the world is said to be in its soul, an idea which Plotinus developed into the general principle that a lower kind of being is always in a higher one rather than vice-versa. While closer examination might

reveal difficulties in the notion that any one particular is in the Form that makes it what it is, it does make it possible for Plotinus to escape from the problems presented by the splitting of Forms in the *Parmenides*.<sup>7</sup> A further section of the *Timaeus* was also helpful here, namely the well-known passage on the ingredients of soul at 35A. The correct interpretation of this passage is, of course, unclear, but what Plotinus found in it included a distinction between what is divisible only in so far as it is distributed around bodies, which is soul, and what is actually divided in bodies, that is sensible qualities. This interpretation of *Timaeus* 35A is applied to omnipresence as a whole at IV 2.2.39-42, though there it is clearly at the level of souls. It does, however, help to show how Plotinus sees the presence of the intelligible in the sensible world.

In any case the ability to explain how an intelligible entity can be present as a whole in more than one place means that the arguably unreal difficulty about pieces of Forms being better representations of some things than the Forms themselves disappears. Let us return for a moment to VI 4-5, where chapter 8 of VI 5 provides some further comment on the whole or part problem. The Idea, writes Plotinus, gives none of itself to matter because it cannot be broken up. Being itself one it has the capacity to inform what is not one with its own unity, and to be present with all of itself in such a way as to inform each individual part of anything with the whole of itself (cf. VI 5.8.35-39). In any case, as he had argued earlier in the treatise, an entity which is immaterial must be exempt from all the *pathe*, affections, of the body of which the most important is divisibility: what has no magnitude cannot be divided (VI 4.8.15-22). A further argument depends on the nonspatial nature of the intelligible: what is not in space cannot be divided if division means, as it does, that one part of a thing is in one place and another in another (*Ibid.* 33-36).

At this point one might ask how a Form can be present as a whole everywhere without replicating itself, and giving rise to one of the variants of the "third man" problem, the alleged need for an extra Form to account for the relation between the original Form and its descendants. Plotinus' answer would be in terms of the way in which lower entities could partake in, or receive higher ones. The participating one participates to the extent that it can, and takes on as much of that in which it participates as it is able, although the whole is present (VI 4.3.10-11). As much as, is not it should hardly need saying a reference

to the size of a piece of Form or soul, but of the extent to which it is available to the participating subject.

So far we have been looking primarily at Plotinus' responses to some of the problems raised in the first part of the *Parmenides*, and these are the most interesting in so far as they show how what had been problems were either explained away or even adopted as positive contributions to parts of Plotinus' own philosophy. But before we go on we should look again at the way in which material from the hypotheses was used to delineate the features of the several hypostases. We have already seen how this worked in the case of the negations used to speak about the ineffable One. In the same way the second hypothesis will give Plotinus some of the distinctive characteristics of Intellect, and its appendix, sometimes taken as the third, of Soul. Soul, however, relates to the dialogue much less clearly than Intellect and the one.

The unity of Soul is such that diversity will appear in it, while that of Intellect is greater, to the extent of the unity there predominating over the diversity and multiplicity of the individual intellects or Forms which are to be found there. Plotinus most often distinguishes Intellect as *εἷς καὶ πολλοί*, one and many (both masculine), from Soul which is (*πολλὰ καὶ μία*), many (neuter) and one (feminine), but at V. 1. 8.23-27 he refers to the Platonic *Parmenides* distinguishing the first one, which is more properly one, the second which he calls *ἐν πολλὰ*, one many, and the third which is *ἐν καὶ πολλὰ*, one and many (neuter in both cases). The *Parmenides* says of the one that is that it is *ἐν πολλὰ* one many, at 144E, in the second hypothesis, while at 155E the "third" talks of a one that is and is many, *ἐν καὶ πολλὰ*. The rest and movement in Intellect, perhaps primarily drawn from the *Sophist*, may also be found in the second hypothesis: this one must be in motion and at rest (145E).

Plotinus did not, of course, write commentaries as such, but an extended discussion of how his intelligible hierarchy related to various texts from Heraclitus to Plato, many of them perversely interpreted, may be found in the treatise "On the three primary hypostases", V. 1. That he did not write commentaries was no bar to his works being treated as commentary by his successors, who expressed themselves in that medium more and more as time went on. Not only were they convinced that they were merely expounding the philosophy of Plato: while doing so they were often explaining and, where necessary, reconciling with Plato's doctrines the writings of the Platonist philosopher Aristotle.

It is time to move on from Plotinus to the rest of the story: I have spent so long on Plotinus because he produced outlines and guidelines for later Greek philosophy. That is by no means to say that he was followed in every detail. Of course he was not: guidelines were sometimes abandoned, and outlines obscured. The first point to stress again, one well-enough known to those who occupy themselves with the thought of later antiquity, is that the new Platonism was not an undifferentiated mass. It is not so long since that was how it was regarded, and even a pioneering historian like E. Vacherot, who was well enough aware of some of the differences, could lump all the Neoplatonists together under the heading of *Ecole d'Alexandrie*,<sup>10</sup> though, to be fair, he did make some attempt to sort them into less comprehensive categories, as did E. Zeller, in different versions of his *Geschichte der Philosophie der Griechen*, influenced perhaps by Hegelian preconceptions rather than the facts of philosophical history.<sup>11</sup>

Even among those not unfamiliar with the field there was a tendency to think of two kinds of Neoplatonism, a Plotinian-Porphyrrian variety and a late and nasty kind beginning with Iamblichus and losing itself in the highly complex structures of Damascius. A further, but as it now turns out, partly misguided attempt to sort later Neoplatonists into groups defined by their approach to philosophical problems as well as the geographical locations in which they studied and taught was made by Karl Praechter in a well-known article published in 1910, entitled 'Richtungen und Schuler im Neuplatonismus'.<sup>12</sup> Among others Praechter distinguished a more scholarly from a speculative strain of Neoplatonism, and associated the former with Alexandria, the latter with Athens. The thinkers who most clearly represented these tendencies were Proclus and Damascius at Athens, and the Aristotelian commentators at Alexandria. The first was responsible for an ever increasing complexity and multiplication of entities as well as, one might add, an interest in dubiously philosophical matters, the second for a more sober approach which restrained these inclinations. This picture was generally accepted, even after H. D. Saffrey, in an article published in 1954, had demonstrated the extent of the connections between the two centres: not only was there considerable movement between them by persons who studied at one and subsequently taught at the other: there were even family connections between them.<sup>13</sup> One obvious problem for anyone working within this theoretical framework is as Praechter realized what to do about Simplicius, superficially an Alexandrian by virtue of his

output, but an Athenian by location and association. Praechter himself, in an article on Simplicius written nearly twenty years later, in Pauly-Wissowa's classical encyclopedia, sought to distinguish an Alexandrian strain manifested in Simplicius' commentary on Epictetus' *Encheiridion* from an Athenian one in the other works. This is a matter to which we must return: let us now go back to the beginning of post-Plotinian Neoplatonism.

The old view of its development, and this includes Praechter's, saw Porphyry not only as the editor of Plotinus' works, but as a faithful disciple of his master, following him rather closely but admitting, or allowing greater scope to, tendencies which Plotinus had avoided, like the major excursion into allegorical interpretation in the exposition of the Odyssean Cave of the Nymphs in the work of that name.

More recent work on Porphyry has seen him prepared to depart from Plotinus in a reorganization of the intelligible world which led to the reduction of Plotinus' three hypostases to two, by treating Soul and Intellect as one: even the One and Intellect were not, on this view, as clearly distinguished as they needed to be if they were to be kept clearly apart, as they are not in the Turin fragment of a *Parmenides* commentary attributed to him by Professor P. Hadot.<sup>14</sup> This so-called telescoping of the hypostases, expounded by Professor A. C. Lloyd in the *Cambridge History of later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*,<sup>15</sup> was widely accepted, but has been questioned in some subsequent work, which would see Porphyry preserving the Plotinian structure. Another area where Porphyry did move on from Plotinus was in the explanation of the body-soul relation: this was one of the Platonic loose ends which Plotinus had difficulty in tying up, for reasons which are perhaps too obvious to state, namely the difficulty of establishing a satisfactory relation between the incorporeal and the material, an old problem which merely became less obtrusive in Neoplatonism because of its monism. Porphyry's solution was produced by the use of his doctrine of *ἀσύγχωρος ἔνωσις*, unconfused unification of things that were in fact uncombinable.

That was a doctrine that did not find favour with later Neoplatonists, who preferred the more Platonic notion of some sort of juxtaposition, obscured by some of them by the interposition of extra levels of soul, of which the last was almost an Aristotelian entelechy.<sup>16</sup> They did, however, adopt and sometimes extend a doctrine that was first taken seriously by Porphyry, that between soul and body there was a

quasi-material vehicle made of some sort of *πνεῦμα*. What is interesting from the point of view of the development of Neoplatonism is that both these questions, the body-soul relationship and the distinction, or lack of it, between the hypostases Intellect and Soul, were ones on which the answers given by Plotinus were either unclear or conspicuously inadequate—adequate of course to late Platonists, not to us, who would generally find their solutions even worse. They were therefore questions which presented a challenge to later Neoplatonists in just the same way as problems in Plato had presented a challenge to Plotinus himself.

In two ways Porphyry may be seen as departing from Plotinus, if not necessarily from the Platonic tradition, in directions where later Neoplatonists were to follow. One was in the adoption of Aristotle's categories into the Platonist system. Plotinus himself had rejected them as inappropriate. The other, not unconnected, was the practice of writing commentaries on Aristotle, two of them in addition to the Introduction on the *Categories* itself. In his treatment of Aristotle he also seems to have moved further in the direction of later Neoplatonism, by taking the line that Aristotle and Plato were really expounding the same philosophy in different words: the lost commentary, or part commentary, on *Metaphysics* A would have made it easier to assess both the scope and the practical effects of that hypothesis.

Before continuing it might be useful to say some more about why the relation between Intellect and Soul in Plotinus may be called a "loose-end". The answer is that though Plotinus insisted that there were three hypostases, neither more nor fewer, his treatments of the second and third vary according to context in such a way that one may be equipped with the attributes of the other.<sup>17</sup> Thus when Plotinus is concerned with the structure of his world, they are kept clearly apart. On the other hand, where he is trying to show how all things are present in the Intellect, he will put into it the dynamic aspects of the intelligible which more properly belong in Soul. Conversely, when he is dealing with the transcendence of Soul above the material world he will emphasize the static elements of intelligible being which more properly belong to Intellect. Lest this seem merely careless or irresponsible, we should note that it arises in part from the difficulty of distinguishing different kinds of immaterial existence, a difficulty which sometimes led Plotinus to say that they differed by otherness alone. Such untidiness was not acceptable to later Neoplatonists, who felt no inhibitions about

multiplying the number of immaterial entities, and levels of immaterial existence, which they admitted to their philosophy.

The most important steps in this direction were taken by Iamblichus. Here again our picture of the development of Neoplatonism has changed. Partly because of the accidents of survival, the credit or discredit for these changes once tended to be attributed to Proclus. Iamblichus, whose strictly philosophical work was represented by fragments in Stobaeus and the reports of his successors while productions like the *De mysteriis* and works on Pythagoras survived, was held responsible for the corruption of Neoplatonism by superstition and occultism. During the last twenty years there has been a process of rehabilitation<sup>18</sup> in my view it has gone a little too far and concentration on what we can learn about Iamblichus' interpretation of Plato and Aristotle, and the philosophical views expressed therein, has shown that he was responsible for at least two of the characteristic features of later Neoplatonism, namely the elaboration of the structures of the intelligible world, and the exposition of Neoplatonism in a course where Aristotle was studied as a preliminary to the study of Plato's dialogues, arranged in a fixed curriculum leading to the highest insights of the *Parmenides* and *Timaeus*, with each dialogue being assigned a peculiar purpose, as were some of the works of Aristotle. Just how far all the details were worked out by Iamblichus himself is uncertain, but that he provided the initial framework is clear enough. So is the fact that Proclus, however much he may have esteemed him, did not always agree with Iamblichus. Less clear is the extent of the contributions of Proclus' master Syrianus: these are now receiving more attention and looking correspondingly more important.<sup>19</sup>

Even those who have some expertise in Neoplatonism have all too readily thought of Iamblichus as the immediate precursor of Proclus. In fact Iamblichus may have been a student of Porphyry's at the end of the 3rd century; Proclus was not born till the 5th. What happened between them is by no means clear, and such attempts as have been made to trace the philosophical history for pagans of the intervening period have been hindered by the lack of surviving works and the paucity of other evidence, particularly for the 4th century.

It may in any case be true that not a great deal happened before the study of Platonism was revived at Athens, probably by the Athenian Plutarch the son of Nestorius late in the 4th century or early in the 5th: the case for attributing the revival to him is strong, if not impregnable.<sup>20</sup>

At Alexandria, though there was a continuous tradition of, at least, Platonist mathematics, from which emerged Hypatia at the end of the fourth century with her pupils Synesius and probably Hierocles, most of the interesting developments took place later. Many of those involved, and the case of Hierocles is particularly worth noting, had been students of Plutarch and his Athenian disciples, Syrianus and Proclus, most importantly Ammonius not, of course, the mysterious Ammonius Saccas, whom I have deliberately left out of this account.

Let us return for the moment to the restructured type of intelligible hierarchy associated with Iamblichus and Proclus, but present in one form or another in most of those who came after Plutarch. We have already referred to its greater degree of elaboration. In it souls and intellects were clearly distinguished, and furthermore divided into different kinds of each, in a framework of triadic structures in which entities were grouped by virtue of participation or lack of it: various orders of gods, all of which could be linked to the *Parmenides*,<sup>21</sup> were also worked into this system. The highest member of a vertical triad would be distinguished by being unparticipated: the second by participating in the first and being participated in by the third, the third by being merely a participant. The separation of an unparticipated level meant that the aspect of soul or intellect that was to be found there was separate from what came below, notwithstanding the apparently conflicting principle that higher entities acted at a greater distance than lower ones. Thus everything could be kept in its own place, and the demarcation problems that arose in the case of Plotinus' second and third hypostases no longer applied. At the same time horizontal triads formalized the relation between different aspects of a given level of being, a system already prefigured in the more informal discussions in Plotinus, of Being, Life and Thought in the hypostasis Intellect. Here again Porphyry began the more formal and rigid treatment of questions which had been explored without firm conclusions by Plotinus, and one might see this too as a part of the process of tying up loose ends even if the outcome was a degree of complication that we might think required radical simplification.

That the structures of Proclus were a conscious move towards greater order appears in his comment that Syrianus had cleared up some of the vagueness and confusion of his predecessors: "he set determinate limits to what was undetermined in the speculation of our predecessors, and put the confused state of the various orders into a condition where

they could be distinguished intellectually" (*Platonic Theology*, 1.10-42.4-20S-W). Similar comments may be found elsewhere. That one might accuse Proclus of causing confusion by having too many entities is another matter. In one respect he had fewer than Iamblichus, for Iamblichus took the creation of new entities to the highest level, and invented a one above the one, a lead rejected by Proclus but followed later by Damascius.

Another piece of tidying up that should be mentioned here, though it is well-enough known, is the rejection of Plotinus' view that a part of the individual human soul could remain transcendent, either at the level of Soul or Intellect, another point on which Plotinus may not have come to a final decision. This view, which Plotinus admitted to be unorthodox (cf. IV 8.1.13), allowed each person a permanent place in the intelligible. Apart from the fact that this broke through the boundaries of the Neoplatonic world, it had other consequences which were regarded as unacceptable by Iamblichus, Plutarch, Syrianus, Proclus, and Simplicius: among their complaints were that it entailed permanent intellection on the one hand, and impeccability on the other.<sup>22</sup> For Iamblichus there is just one text that points in the opposite direction, though it may be a mistake by Simplicius.<sup>23</sup> Otherwise there was a wide consensus, which had implications not only for the means by which some Neoplatonists thought one might ascend to the highest levels but also for the interpretation of Aristotle.

The interpretation of Aristotle brings us back to the question of the two schools of Athens and Alexandria: were they the repository of different kinds of Neoplatonism, and if so how did the Alexandrian kind diverge from the sort of philosophy which we have sketched in relation to Proclus?

Until about fifteen years ago it was generally accepted, following Praechter, that the two groups were philosophically different, and that the Alexandrians were distinguished by having a simpler metaphysical system in general, and not believing in a transcendent one in particular. In some cases these characteristics could be attributed to the fact that their works were commentaries, so that they might have been keeping their own views in the background. I think their methods of work are now sufficiently well-known for it to be apparent that that is not likely to be the correct explanation. Here too views have changed, and the picture of an Alexandrian commentator, of whom Simplicius was taken to be a particularly good example, carefully if somewhat verbosely expounding

the text of Aristotle in a basically scholarly way is no longer on display: not long ago many would have thought that a perfectly reasonable assumption, and one equally valid for most of the commentators. Now that it is coming to be recognized as false even by those without a special interest in late Neoplatonism, there is a corresponding realization that the personal philosophies which find expression in the commentaries may differ. We shall look briefly at a few examples of such differences, which must serve to cast doubt on the notion of a specifically Alexandrian line. That there was such a line, to be opposed to an Athenian one, is *prima facie* questionable if one considers the extent of the cross-fertilization between Athens and Alexandria. In any case closer examination of two works which Praechter had put forward as examples of Alexandrian metaphysics, the *Encheiridion* commentary by Simplicius to which we have already referred, and Hierocles' on the Pythagorean *Carmen Aureum*, has shown that they are not. Not only is it true that the more complex metaphysics present elsewhere are not always relevant. The existence of a One can be shown to be either implicit or clearly required in some passages of each. That was demonstrated ten years ago by Mme. I. Hadot,<sup>24</sup> and in itself invalidates an important part of the till then traditional distinction. It does not, I hasten to add, prove that there were no differences between the two centres, or that Athenian metaphysics was not sometimes more elaborate than Alexandrian: this is still an open question.

With these points in mind let us come back to the man who is generally credited with the responsibility for the Aristotle industry at Alexandria, Ammonius. Ammonius had learnt from the Athenians by two routes: his father Hermias had studied with Syrianus, and he himself with Proclus. He was moreover related to them through his father's marriage to Aidesia, a kinswoman of Syrianus. Further connections of this type may be seen in the careers of Hierocles who, as we have already noticed, was taught by Plutarch, and, in the reverse direction, those of Simplicius and Damascius who were taught by Ammonius at Alexandria.

Ammonius presents two problems, firstly why he inaugurated the concentration on Aristotle which was to be continued by his pupils, and secondly how much of the vast bulk of commentary he and they produced between them is attributable to him. Since some of the commentaries were published by Philoponus, purportedly based on Ammonius' lectures but in most cases "with some additions of his own", while only two have come down to us under Ammonius' own name, it is

not easy to disentangle his views: this also applies to the *Metaphysics* commentary of Asclepius, and even to those commentaries of Philoponus which have come down under his own name exclusively.<sup>25</sup> A start on this difficult task has been made, but much remains to be done.<sup>26</sup> It is complicated by the fact that Philoponus will treat Ammonius as a different person from the commentator even in work which is labelled as his. That could, of course, be the fault of the transmission rather than Philoponus, though one wonders if he was not in some cases trying to present a front of Neoplatonic respectability by presenting his own work as that of his master. His disputes with both the dead Proclus and the living Simplicius provide a reason why he might have wished to do so. Though recent work on Philoponus has tended to highlight his individuality, and the influence of Christianity on some of his ideas, it is important to remember that the framework of his thought was a Neoplatonism to most of which both Proclus and Simplicius would have subscribed, even if in his commentaries he did not go as far as Simplicius in seeking to demonstrate the agreement of Plato and Aristotle.

The other question about Ammonius is less complicated, but likewise admits of no clear answer. It had long been believed, since an article by P. Tannery at the end of the last century,<sup>27</sup> that Ammonius and his school devoted themselves to the study of Aristotle as the result of a deal with the ecclesiastical authorities by which they undertook not to teach Plato. The only evidence we have for any sort of deal is a well-known, if not well understood, remark by Damascius that Ammonius "being disgracefully avaricious and always acting with a view to making money, made an agreement with the person in charge of the dominant view", that is Christianity. In so far as it comes in one of the snippets from the *Life of Isidore* in Photius (cod. 242.292),<sup>28</sup> there is no context. In any case the view that it meant no Plato teaching is merely an inference from the amount of work on Aristotle done at Alexandria. We know that Ammonius himself lectured on the *Gorgias* at a date almost certainly later than the supposed deal: the time of that is uncertain, and the one most often used the patriarchate of Athanasius (490-97) depends on a piece of textual juxtaposition which may or may not be correct. The deal might equally well have had something to do with the conditions under which Christian pupils could attend, or be sent to attend, Ammonius' lectures: no attacks on their religion is a possible ingredient. Or even just a special elementary course? Whatever the answer the traditional explanation must be regarded as unproven.<sup>29</sup> There

are, in any case, other possible explanations for the concentration on Aristotle, apart from the obvious one that Ammonius might have been particularly interested in the subject. One is that the Alexandrians felt that there was little to add to the Plato commentaries already available, most notably those of Proclus: that did not, however, deter Damascius at Athens, or Olympiodorus in the next generation at Alexandria.

Since we are concerned with differences between individuals, we should not omit the quarrel between Simplicius and Philoponus, both pupils of Ammonius but violently at odds over the eternity of the world and the related question of the existence of a fifth element, which came to be known by the Latin calque translation 'quintessence'.<sup>30</sup> I do not intend to discuss again the importance or otherwise of Christianity in determining Philoponus' opinions. Suffice it to say that his by now unorthodox view that the world had a beginning in time is a perfectly possible interpretation of the *Timaeus*, and one that can be taken seriously now: another unsolved problem in Plato.

Philoponus' attack on Proclus in the *De Aeternitate Mundi* is part of the same dispute. Since it is securely dateable to 529 it has sometimes been seen as either a precipitating cause of the imperial edict of that year forbidding the teaching of philosophy by pagans, or a protective gesture to defend the Alexandrians against it. In view of that possibility the work has often been connected with the question of Ammonius' deal without good cause.

What about the edict itself? Everybody once knew that it put an end to Greek Philosophy, at least at Athens. That view survived as a historical fact till the late 1960s, when Alan Cameron produced arguments to show not only that pagan Platonism continued afterwards, but that it continued at Athens.<sup>31</sup> This latter part of his thesis is highly questionable, and it is better to admit that we do not know where the philosophers who left Athens shortly after the edict resumed their activities. The latest candidate, much favoured in France since 1984, is the border city of Harrân, but the case rests primarily on the testimony of an otherwise admittedly unreliable Arabic source, al-Mas'ûdî and some rather over-confident inferences from references to calendars in Simplicius.<sup>32</sup>

Alexandria continued to be the home of Aristotelian commentators, some of whom wrote on Plato too, and may even have received some of the Athenians. On this note of uncertainty, we must end the story. I do not, of course, claim to have presented an exciting new



discovery or new light on a specific problem. What I hope I have done is to show in outline what late antique Platonism looks like now, and some of the ways in which its appearance has changed. I think one can assert with some confidence that if anyone tries to do the same thing in ten year's time, the picture will have changed again. That is a measure both of the number of unanswered questions and of the rate at which they are now being approached. Comparisons with Indian thought seem to be in a similar condition.<sup>35</sup>

## Endnotes

1. 'Neoplatonist' and 'Neoplatonic' first appeared in English and French in the 1830s. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* gives 1837 for the first occurrence of 'Neoplatonist' but 1845 for 'Neoplatonism'.
2. Cf. too In *Alc.* 227.18-21, where Proclus writes that we must not attribute certain things to the soul in order that we should be interpreters of Plato and not explain him in accordance with our own views.
3. (Cambridge 1962) 24.
4. This proved not to be the case at the conference itself since most of the Indian participants, as well as the usual minority of 'western' scholars, thought that there were crucial non-Greek elements in the thought or not-thought of Plotinus. But, in the absence of clear textual evidence for more than the occasional possible parallel, let alone demonstrable influence in one direction or the other, I remain unconvinced.
5. R. Baine Harris, ed. *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*. Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern (Albany 1982).
6. One thinks particularly of the work of the so-called Tübingen School, and especially of the writings of H.J. Krämer, cf. e.g. *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik* (Amsterdam 1964) 351-69; *Platone e i fondamenti della Metafisica* (Milan 1982) 184-98.
7. By W. Theiler, 'Plotin zwischen Plato und Stoa' in *Les Sources de Plotin*. Entretiens Hardt sur l'Antiquité Classique 5 (Vandoeuvres-Geneva 1960) 67.
8. On the history of this problem before and in Plotinus cf. A.H. Armstrong, 'The background of the doctrine "That the intelligibles are not outside the Intellect"', in *Les Sources de Plotin* (see n. 7) 391-424.
9. For a discussion of this difficulty as handled in the *Parmenides* cf. F.M. Schroeder, 'The Platonic *Parmenides* and imitation in Plotinus', *Dionysius* 2 (1978) 51-73, esp. 52-54.
10. *Histoire critique de l'école d'Alexandrie* 3 vols. (Paris 1846-1851).
11. Zeller saw Plotinus as the thesis, Iamblichus the antithesis and Proclus as the synthesis. Vacherot's groups were chronological.
12. In *Genethliakon C. Robert* (Berlin 1910).
13. 'Le chrétien Jean Philopon et la survivance de l'école d'Alexandrie au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle', *REG* 67 (1954) 396-410.
14. 'Fragments d'un commentaire de Porphyre sur le Parménide', *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 74 (1961) 410-38.
15. (Cambridge 1967) 287-93.
16. Cf. e.g. Simplic. in *De an.* 90.29-91.4.
17. Cf. A.H. Armstrong, 'Eternity, life and movement in Plotinus' accounts of Nous', in P. Hadot and P.M. Schuhl, edd., *Le Néoplatonisme. Colloques internationaux du CNRS* (Paris 1971) 67-114; H.J. Blumenthal, 'Nous and Soul:

some problems of demarcation' in *Il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in occidente. Accademia nazionale dei Lincei: Problemi attuali di scienza e di cultura* 198 (Rome 1974) 203-219, reprinted in *Soul and Intellect* (see n 33), Study 11.

18. Cf. H.J. Blumenthal and E.G. Clark ed., *The Divine Iamblichus. Philosopher and Man of Gods* (Bristol 1993) introduction and passim.

19. Cf. esp. R. L. Cardullo, 'Siriano nella storiografia filosofica moderna e contemporanea', *Siculorum Gymnasium* 40 (1987) 71-182.

20. Cf. my '529 and its sequel: what happened to the Academy', *Byzantion* 48 (1978) 373-75, reprinted in *Soul and Intellect* (see n 33), Study XVIII.

21. Cf. the introduction to vol.1 of H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink's edition of the *Platonic Theology*, xv ff., especially the tables on xviii f.

22. Cf. e.g. Proclus' *Elements of Theology* 211 and *Timaeus* commentary, III.334.3ff., Simplicius, in *De an.* 6.12ff.

23. In *Cat.* 191.9-10, where Iamblichus is bracketed with Plotinus.

24. In *Le Probleme du Néoplatonisme Alexandrin. Hiéroclès et Simplicius* (Paris 1978).

25. On the attribution and authorship of 'Ammonius' commentaries cf. my 'John Philoponus: Alexandrian Platonist?', *Hermes* 114 (1986) 325-28.

26. Cf. K. Verrycken, 'The metaphysics of Ammonius son of Hermias', in R. Sorabji, ed., *Aristotle Transformed. The ancient commentators and their influence* (London 1990) 199-231 and 'The development of Philoponus' thought and its chronology', *Ibid.* 233-74.

27. 'Sur la période finale de la philosophie grecque', *Revue Philosophique* 42 (1896) 226-87.

28. 352a 11-14=VI 53H.

29. On this matter see further my 'John Philoponus: Alexandrian Platonist?', (see n. 25 above) 321-24.

30. On this see particularly P. Hoffmann, 'Simplicius' Polemics', in R. Sorabji, ed. *Philoponus and the rejection of Aristotelian science* (London 1987) 57-83.

31. Cf. 'The last days of the Academy at Athens', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* n.s.15 (1969) 7-29.

32. Cf. M. Tardieu, 'Sabiens coraniques et "Sābiens" de Harrān', *Journal Asiatique* 274 (1986) 1-44 and 'Les calendriers en usage à Harrān d'après les sources arabes et le commentaire de Simplicius à la Physique d'Aristote' in I. Hadot, ed., *Simplicius. Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa survie* (Berlin/New York 1987) 40-57, where he argues from Simplicius' references (*In Phys.* 874.32ff.) to four different beginnings of the year, that of the Athenians, 'which we use', at the summer equinox, the Asians' at the autumn one, the Romans' the winter and the Arabs' the spring: these were all used at Harrān, therefore Simplicius must be there. Cf. now the judicious remarks of P. Foulkes, 'Where was Simplicius?', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 112 (1992) 143.

33. An earlier version of some parts of this paper was given as a lecture to the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies in London, England. A compressed version was read to the conference. Another article based on the original lecture will appear in my *Soul and Intellect. Studies in Plotinus and later Neoplatonism*. Variorum Collected Studies (Aldershot/Brookfield VT 1993).

## The *Sadhana* of Plotinus and Sri Aurobindo

Arabinda Basu

Plotinus and Sri Aurobindo are both mystics. They are also philosophers, though not quite in the same sense. For Plotinus philosophy is a way of life, what in India is called *sadhana*, a way leading the philosopher to a vision of, and union with, what he calls The One. Sri Aurobindo takes philosophy as what it means in the modern world. It is primarily rational, an attempt to think about the nature of reality whatever that may be knowledge, ethics, religion, beauty, etc.

Some philosophers may, and do, construct a system of ideas about these subjects, others deny the possibility of building such a system. Sri Aurobindo, while regarding philosophy as a useful intellectual construction, considers it to be too much indulging in abstractions and hair-splitting analysis of concepts which for the most part do not have much to do with actualities of either existence or of life. Plotinus was very well acquainted with the doctrines of Greek philosophers and was influenced by many of them. Nevertheless for him philosophy was not mainly *theory*, not even *theoria* but *praxis*. The philosopher led a certain kind of life in preparation for a knowledge of the Reality by direct experience.

Though Sri Aurobindo thinks that philosophy is basically rational, when he speaks of the Upanishads, he regards them as intuitive philosophy. What Plotinus regards as philosophy Sri Aurobindo calls *yoga* and spiritual *sadhana*. But this is mainly a matter of terminology. The difference in the meaning which Plotinus and Sri Aurobindo give to the term 'philosophy' should not cause confusion to an intelligent student of their respective systems. Both of them hold that discursive reasoning cannot give direct knowledge of Reality and that whatever faculty can attain that kind of unitive apprehension has to be developed by a moral and contemplative discipline.

Sri Aurobindo's *yoga* is much more complex than the philosophical practices of Plotinus both in its disciplines and in its aims

and objectives. This is mainly due to the fact that his concept of The Supreme Reality of Sri Aurobindo appears more comprehensive than that of Plotinus. I may mention in passing that Sri Aurobindo had not read the writings of Plotinus; yet there are many points of agreement between their respective systems which in my mind furnish eloquent evidence of the universal character of some mystical experiences.

Several comprehensive studies of Plotinus and Sri Aurobindo have been published by Indian and foreign scholars. I do not propose to follow their footsteps. My purpose is to point out briefly the agreements and differences between the yogas of Plotinus and Sri Aurobindo. However, since I have said that Sri Aurobindo's concept of the Supreme Reality is more comprehensive than that of Plotinus, and that that is the main reason for the greater complexity of his *sadhana*, I should say something, however briefly, about the two doctrines of God.

First, as regards the points of agreement. For both our mystic-philosophers Reality is self-existent, ineffable, self-aware. Plotinus says that *monos*, One, does not know itself though it has what he has termed self intellection which Sri Aurobindo describes as self-awareness, beyond the duality of subject and object. It is both repose and dynamic and unity-in-diversity on a certain level of its whole existence.

Sri Aurobindo makes a distinction between self-awareness and self-knowledge in God. Self-aware is what is known in Vedanta as *cit*, Pure Consciousness in Sri Aurobindo's English rendering, in which there is no manifest self-knowledge of God. But in Sat-Chid-Ananda *cit* is also *Cit-Sakti*, Consciousness-Force. It is by this inherent Consciousness Force that Consciousness becomes Self-Conscious. God is both his own subject and his own object containing both aspects in him and yet transcending them. Similarly, he posits a status of God beyond the One which of course Brahman is, though no name can be given to this aspect of God. The term Parabrahman is used to indicate this status of Sat-Chid-Ananda which is according to Sri Aurobindo the first manifestation of the Supreme Reality to awakened human consciousness. He says that the One and the Many are the last two antinomies through which the spiritualised mind of man looks at the Absolute *Parabrahma*. As the Rigveda X.82.6 has it: In the navel of the Unborn the One was placed and there in that One all the worlds abide: *ajasyu nabhavadyekamarpitam yasmin visvani bhuvanani tasthuh*.

Plotinus places the One beyond being (Being in the interpretation of some writers on Plotinus) which however, he is careful to point out,

does not mean that the One is nonexistent. I understand Plotinus' statement to mean that the status of the One is transcendent of that level in which the Many emerge ideally in the Intelligible World, for he employs the term 'being' in regard to this second hypostasis, the nous. If the term 'being' is specifically applied only to the Intelligible-World, then the One is certainly above being. But if the word is employed to indicate that which is the ultimate Principle depending on nothing for its existence, then it can be certainly used for the Vedantic Sat-Chid-Ananda. Sri Aurobindo applies the term to Sat-Chid-Ananda, Being or Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

Another difference between Plotinus' and Sri Aurobindo's conceptions of God is the following: the former places the Universal principle and therefore the Universe at a level lower than the One, viz. the nous, or Intelligence. For Sri Aurobindo Brahman is Transcendent, Universal and Individual. I have indicated what the Transcendent is in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. It is beyond not only the universe but also beyond its source; it is however also the All, the Universal. The Universe is an equal extension of the Brahman in which there is yet no individual concentration. But Brahman is also the Individual centration of the Universal God.

Sri Aurobindo describes the Individual Self as the Divine as Individual or the Individual Divine. Plotinus does not speak of any individual self which is an aspect of the One. The individual self first emerges in the Intelligible World, is a content of that world and is itself also (an) Intelligence. Plotinus places the World-Soul below Intelligence and the Intelligible World. Sat-Chid-Ananda is the Soul of the world, the Cosmic Consciousness in Sri Aurobindo's system.

Plotinus distinguishes between the higher soul and the lower soul. Sri Aurobindo would agree with this distinction in principle. But the word soul has a different connotation in his philosophy, which I shall explain presently. Let me just mention here that the soul or the psychic being is an evolutionary entity. Though a portion of God in essence, it is in this world as a being which evolves to the human level from subhuman planes and to its spiritual destiny through many births and through several levels of Consciousness.

Consciousness descends to the many levels of its nature in which it becomes progressively less and less manifest till it reaches that of Matter in which Consciousness is present but completely unmanifest. Of course a

yogi with the right kind of development of his psycho-spiritual means of knowledge can see Matter as a concrete and sensibly seizable form of Conscious Energy, of the Force of Consciousness. While Plotinus in metaphysics considers Matter to be pure negation of being and in ethics as the source of evil, to Sri Aurobindo's spiritual vision, Matter is revealed as the physical vesture of God and the earth as the venue of his unveiled manifestation. This difference in the respective points of view of Plotinus and Sri Aurobindo should be kept in mind, especially when the aim of spiritual life according to the two mystic philosophers is considered. I have said above that in Sri Aurobindo's spiritual vision God is both Plenitude and Plentiful. This description implies that God is both Impersonal and Personal. In Plotinus' doctrine the One is Impersonal and hardly evinces any character of being a Person. In my view this affects his *sadhana* and the fruits of his idea of the state of union with Intelligence and the One, as I shall try to show later. But even on the doctrinal plane the two philosophies are very different in an important respect.

According to Plotinus there is no intention in the One to create the universe understanding the phrase "to create" to mean bringing into being something out of nothing but only the "emanating" of what is already contained in the source of emanation. The world is the product of necessary and spontaneous emanation from the Intelligence as are light and heat from the sun. Sri Aurobindo rejects the view that the world is an emanation from God. On the contrary, it is the product of a deliberate choice on his part to manifest himself as the whole furniture of heaven and earth. Plotinus disagreed with this concept for an apparently good reason, namely, that to wish to create or in Sri Aurobindo's terms, to self-manifest, implies a want and therefore an imperfection. This may be, indeed, is true in the case of finite beings.

But the infinite Plenitude and Plentiful wills to manifest himself not because he lacks anything but because he exercises his super-abundant creative energy to make himself known to beings manifested from his own essential being and nature. He does it for the sake of Delight. For there is a Delight of Being which is the very nature of God and also a Delight of Becoming. If there be a joy in Repose, there is also bliss in Love. Sri Aurobindo says that the selfbecoming of Ishvara does not denude him one iota but leaves him as he always was, is and will be, just as Plotinus says that the emanation does not affect the One at all.

Plotinus has given scant attention to social and political issues. True he has said that political virtues must be developed before one can begin the contemplative life. This corresponds generally to the idea of the practice of *dharma*, in this case by people of a certain order of the society in the Indian scheme of life. Sri Aurobindo on the contrary is intensely interested in the future society as is evident from his book *The Human Cycle*. He has also written a book called *The Ideal of Human Unity*. Both these books furnish ample proof that Sri Aurobindo is convinced that God has a purpose to achieve in the world. The spiritual destiny of the individual human being is sketched out in his *The Synthesis of Yoga* which also describes some of the disciplines and practices of his integral yoga. His idea of the plan of the Divine in the collective, i.e. in society and in humanity is expounded in the two works mentioned above.

Though Plotinus quietly and in a most exemplary manner lived a contemplative and active life, he felt that intellectual and artistic works are a distraction. This certainly is true while a seeker is journeying towards the Intelligence and through that luminous realm, to the One. However, all kinds of work can be done from the state of union with God moved by the inspiration of the Master of Works, be it intellectual, artistic, apparently social and political work. I say 'apparently' because to the *karmayogi* in union with the active Divine, the work he does is fulfilling God's command, though it may appear to others as capable of being brought under human category of mundane works.

Devotion also has hardly any place in the scheme of *sadhana* found in the *Enneads*. The yoga of Plotinus resembles very much the *jñānavoga* as practised in India (actually, it is found in non-Indian mystical disciplines also). But there being no concept of God as a Person who has relations with his emanations or with the individual spiritual *jīvas* in Indian terms, any kind of bhakti-yoga cannot be found in Plotinus' *sadhana*. God is both Impersonal and Personal according to Sri Aurobindo. The yoga of abstractive knowledge leads to the Impersonal aspect, to identity with Brahman as in Shankara or a most close union with the One in Plotinus. Bhakti enables the seekers to have close relation with the Personal.

It is not easy to understand how in Plotinus' idea of spiritual life the souls do not have any kind of personal relation with the One, since their existence is not denied, for if it were then souls cannot be said to emanate from the One at all. True, in one sense emanation from the One is

denied. But this means that the lower self is transcended or in Indian terms the separative ego-sense, *ahankāra* is left behind. But in the yoga of bhakti the higher soul, when liberated from its association with the lower soul, finds its true relationship with God. Sri Aurobindo accepts the possibility of identity, unity-in-distinction and distinction-in-unity with Brahman as viable spiritual states. In his own integral yoga all the three experiences are to be attained and harmonized. This can be done not by means recognized in all mystical disciplines but by what Sri Aurobindo, for want of a better term, has called the supermind.

I have said above that Brahman is Pure Consciousness, self-awareness but also self-consciousness, and self-knowing. God's knowledge of himself is the Supermind. Infinite self-awareness must first translate itself into an infinite faculty of knowledge but also the integral knowledge that God has of himself and of the world his self-manifestation, the method and means of the self-manifestation and its goal. For the cosmic manifestation is moving towards a consummation as foreseen and planned by the Divine. But before I say something about God's purpose in the world, I would like to emphasize that the supramental realisation of God is integral in that one who has that realisation knows God directly as Transcendent, Universal, Individual, Static, Dynamic, Impersonal and Personal, Qualityless, and Qualified, Nameless and all Names, Formless and all Forms.

A capital difference between the respective concepts of the ultimate spiritual destiny of man of Plotinus and Sri Aurobindo is that the founder of Neoplatonism has no doctrine of cosmic evolution while one of the most important doctrines of the founder of the Integral Advaita Vedanta is that he is firmly of the view that God has a purpose in the world in a cosmic way. Brahman, as and through the Supermind, his integral Knowledge-Will and the source of the Universe, manifests himself by a process of downward evolution as a hierarchy of principles of consciousness and being till it reaches the state of the Inconsistent Ocean, of the *apraketa salilam* of the *Nasadyasakta*, Rv. X.129.1-5.

That One, *tadekam* progressively descends through the Supermind. Mind, Life, Psyche, into the state of Matter which is formed out of the unconscious Waters over which the spirit of God broods and moves to bring the world into manifestation. The formation of Matter is brought about so as to provide the stable basis for the progressive manifestation, the upward evolution, of the involved Consciousness. This

thrust of Consciousness or rather consciousness involved in the world, whose essence is less manifest on the different levels of its own involution and evolution, manifests Life and Mind in the world.

The appearance of Mind is really the emergence of Man, the progeny of Manu, Mind. Below the level of Mind, evolution is subconscious; in man it has become conscious. He can choose to collaborate in what Sri Aurobindo describes as the Yoga of Nature, the collective yoga. Yoga is a method of quickening evolution. Subconscious evolution is a tardy movement of universal Nature which in man can make a more conscious and deliberate march towards a further evolution of Consciousness of which the mental is one stage. That higher level of consciousness is the Supermind. In this integral Knowledge-Will there is no diminution of being, consciousness and bliss. It is in effect God as both the material and efficient cause of his self-manifestation as the world.

One of the innumerable powers of God is self-limitation. It is by deliberate self-limitation that the Supermind becomes Ignorance, Avidya, mental Maya. The world is in the grip of Ignorance. It is not a principle and power essentially different from Knowledge. It is from the involutionary viewpoint limited Knowledge and from the evolutionary standpoint developing Knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo holds the view that Consciousness involved in Mind is pressing for a more open manifestation of itself. In other words it is evolving towards the Supermind. When that evolution is accomplished, those who will be supramental souls will live for God and from a state of union with him in Knowledge, Will, Peace and Delight. Their life will be a movement from knowledge to more knowledge and not as man's life is now a seeking of Knowledge from within Ignorance.

It is painfully obvious that Mind cannot control the affairs of the world and the many-faceted life of man and mankind. It therefore cannot be its creator and controller. The supermind is the veiled creator and the hidden principle and power of the life in the world. Whatever is involved must evolve. The Supermind concealed in Mind, Life and Matter must also manifest itself here.

The Will of the Supermind which is full of Knowledge of God and the world is the instrument of bringing about a radical transformation of our ignorant nature comprising Mind, Life and Matter. The ultimate aim of the *sadhana* of Sri Aurobindo is the complete transformation of the physical consciousness in the human body. That is to say, the physical

body of the superman will be fully conscious, vibrant and full of divine peace established in its cells in such a way that their decay will be arrested, their disintegration stopped and consequently death will no longer be inevitable. Instead of being the source of embarrassment and shame the physical body too is potentially capable of knowing the Divine and manifest him in it. There is nothing of this idea and ideal in Plotinus. His sadhana culminates in the passing of the alone to the Alone. In the yoga of Sri Aurobindo the seeker has first to get his own liberation from ignorance and achieve union with God in many modes. He is the lone pilgrim. But he says that to seek one's own liberation is the last act of egoism. The integral yogi's ultimate aim is to realize God on all the planes of being and become a channel of the integral supramental Knowledge-Will for the transformation of consciousness inwardly and of the collective being<sup>1</sup> and life outwardly. The Divine is both Solitary and All. The integral yoga aims at realising God as spirit ensouling a glorified physical body and as the collective Soul, directly guiding a spiritual society in all aspects of its life.

To fulfil God in life is man's manhood, says Sri Aurobindo and fulfilling God means fulfilling his purpose which is manifesting himself in all levels of consciousness and being in the universe including the physical. The life of the supramental community will be a life expressing the Divine in its existence, activities and plays of joy.

### Endnotes

1. The phrase collective being occurs in the *Enneads*. But as I understand it means the intelligible world and not a human society in this world, where we live, more and have our being.

## Plotinus' Neoplatonism and the Thought of Sri Aurobindo

John R. A. Mayer

*"To rest in the apparent and to mistake it  
for the real is the one general error,  
root of all others and cause of all our  
stumbling and suffering, to which man is  
exposed by the nature of his mentality."*

(Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, Chapter 5, p. 37,  
Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library,  
Pondicherry, 1971)

The present conference is dedicated to a task in comparative philosophy, namely to compare and contrast two traditions, Neoplatonism and Indian Philosophy. Each of these traditions is rich, with many diverse individual contributors; so that under this heading an almost unlimited amount of scholarship is possible. The present paper represents a reflection about the significance of the fact that there are a variety of philosophies from a variety of traditions which can be explored both for finding similarities and for contrasts which have in common the fact that they can be seen as metaphysical monism. Plotinus' and Sri Aurobindo's thoughts are exemplars, to which references will be made. It is not our purpose herein to present a detailed exposition of the thought of either. Rather, we shall outline our own reflections, which are also informed by phenomenology, post-modernism, and without doubt, by a strong empathy with monism. The significance of the influence of post-modernity on this author is that he recognizes and admits that whatever is meant by the term "truth" may well be beyond coherent rationalization. Therefore the presence of formal inconsistency in the serious articulation of a philosophical position should not be considered an immediate ground for rejection of that claim; rather, it is incumbent on the open listener to attend not merely to the text and its formal characteristics, but when finding an inconsistency, attempt to reflect on the preideational adumbration from which the author writes, and which is addressed by the text, so as to empathize and find meaning in the



expression. Rejection of a position does not signify its falsity; it signifies essentially the failure of the imagination of the rejecter, and the relative lack of success of the communication intended by the speaker. While truth is subjective, and depends on "having the ears to hear", it is not merely private, but is interpersonal, accessible to everyone, provided that the medium of communication succeeds in focusing the attention of the listener-reader to the same "area" from which the speaker-author constructs his address.

Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) was given a deliberately European education. In a convent school by age five, he was sent to England at age seven, where he stayed until 1893, eventually studying at Cambridge. He returned to India when he was 20 years old, and only then began to study his cultural heritage. It is therefore clear that he had direct knowledge of Western Neoplatonism as well as of Indian philosophy. It is, however, certain that the Indian intellectual-spiritual tradition was the more directly influential element in his later thought. Once in Baroda, he began to study Sanskrit seriously, and immersed himself in the texts of the Upanishads, the Gita, and the writings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. At first he was also involved as a very active nationalist in the political movements of his time, eventually even giving up his post as Vice-Principal of Baroda College in order to be more fully able to participate in the political life of India. It was in the first decade of our century that he gradually withdrew from his political activities in order to pursue his spiritual development. He devoted himself exclusively to spiritual exercises and to philosophical writing for the last forty years of his life, from 1910 to 1950.

Both Plotinus and Sri Aurobindo are authors of speculative metaphysics, in the sense that they have developed and presented in a systematic and thoughtful way their view of the nature of reality. Both of these views may be characterized by the label "monism", in that they identify the ultimate as a singular being, the One or Brahman as the case may be. Both recognize that this singular being is dynamic, involved in a process, that Aurobindo calls the Life Divine. This concern with activity, process, change, evolution and becoming is the reason why their thought in particular is worthy of comparison. Plotinus' monism is in contrast with that of both of his great intellectual predecessors, Plato and Parmenides of Elea, in that Plotinus asserts activity and dynamism on the part of the Ultimate, while the two earlier thinkers denied change or process as appropriately characterizing Being or the Forms. Aurobindo's philosophy

also stands in some contrast with the earlier Advaita Vedanta of Shankara, exactly in the sense that for Advaita change or process is an aspect of *maya* or illusion, while for Aurobindo Brahman is both Being and Becoming. "This absolute manifests itself in two terms, Being and Becoming. The Being is the fundamental reality, the Becoming is an effectual reality. It is a dynamic power and result, a creative energy and working out of Being, a constantly persistent yet mutable form, process, outcome of its immutable formless essence." (*Life Divine*, p. 785 f.)

Our aim in this paper is to demonstrate that in spite of the differences in the way of understanding Plotinus' One and Aurobindo's Brahman, namely that the former conception seems less specifically theistic in its language and envisionment than the latter, we claim that the two systems are compatible, and are but different articulations of fundamentally similar experience. Of course, experience is subjective, and we can have no access directly either to the experience of Plotinus or to that of Sri Aurobindo. However, it is our conviction that articulation and reflection, especially about that which is not strictly and narrowly empirical, is based on an apprehension which is direct, not mediated by thoughts or concepts, but which then serves as a stimulus and guide for articulation and intellectualization. Our claim is fundamentally phenomenological. If we but explore how it is that we give utterance to our thoughts and how our thoughts present themselves to us as plausible, coherent, persuasive and functional we discover that there is a preconceptual adumbration, which guides and forms our reflections which eventually gels into speech or script. Not unexpectedly, our speech and thought patterns are the joint product of this pre-conceptual and root experience and our exposure to our culture, our traditions. From the tradition we extract what seems useful for describing the adumbration; and our audience, our listeners understand our speech or script only to the extent that their experience to some extent confirms what they hear. Otherwise the speech heard will seem to be nonsense, or at least, totally implausible and unconvincing. The fact that monistic speculation has happened in many cultures and many societies is evidence that there is some fundamental experience other than the merely empirical informing us of multiplicity, diversity, differences and particularities. There must be a complementary intuition that however convincing and interpersonal the world of multiplicity is, there is something that is not given in the

empirical appearances, but which we can know just the same. Such an intuition is not merely a private whim, but is widely shared, and it is our belief that with the appropriate discipline and attitude, every person can develop to the selfsame intuition. It, like all intuitions, presents itself as important and meaningful; it might not be directly accessible, yet it will influence the way we open ourselves, and in the way we shape our actions and thoughts, including our speech. This transempirical adumbration is what discloses the meaning in the claim that appearance and reality are not synonyms but rather, antonyms. Reality then is not merely appearance, but is accessible through an intuition that the apparent discloses something that is transcendent to it. How we constitute in thought and language this intuition of transcendence is challenging. However, the very origin of the word "transcendence" and its meaning is evidence of the fact of such an intuition. Given it, one's speculative thought especially concerning metaphysics is deeply influenced. It is this intuition which has lead some thinkers, though not our two, to the belief that multiplicity, process and the empirical domain is merely illusion. In the case of our two authors their contention, grounded in the same intuition, is that the natural world and its empirical multiplicity is not exhaustive of reality, and is not separate from it. What I have called "intuition" presents itself as an intellectual disposition. It is a complex of feeling-thought, which when we discover it in ourselves draws us to an empathetic disposition toward speculative monisms. When we attempt to rearticulate the basis of this tendency, our own speaking or writing is guided exactly by that reality which permits even those paradoxical claims which seem on the surface to be logically inconsistent to be asserted on the one hand, and to be understood on the other. That there are such inconsistencies in the various monisms that we encounter is demonstrable. But these inconsistencies ultimately are not barriers to the acceptance and appreciation of the speculative tradition, they serve rather to intimate the limits of rationality and the less than ultimate adequacy of ideation and language for the fullest expression of the experiences which persuade us of their veracity, their vivacity. Thus every speculative monism has to be somewhat less than crystal clear about the relationship between the One and the Many; the bases of the contrasts within the manifold, if there is ultimately only one substance or being or ultimate. Whether we read Plato or Plotinus, Shankara or Aurobindo, we can spot logical problems in the texts if our openness toward them is characterized by a critical skepticism. On the other hand, if we ourselves

turn to that inner mirror from which we are capable of understanding what we hear or read, and which we use to guide the formulations of our own serious speaking, we are in touch with exactly that anamnestic ground-source of our intuitions and knowledge which Plato desired to redirect us to, which, when we listen to the wisdom tradition, turns out to be not merely private and subjective, but universal, even if it is not always easily accessible, and which in Maharishi Mahesh yogi's terminology is called "the source of creative intelligence". That this is not rational knowledge, but that which lends rationality and plausibility to conceptually formulated claims is clear from all accounts. Therefore, let us now turn to how Plotinus reacts speculatively to the adumbration of the nature of reality from which his philosophy finds its formulation.

While for Plotinus the first emanation of the One is *nous*, or mind; the second, *psyche* or soul, and the third, *physis*, or nature, it would be useful for us to stop and reflect on the meaning of these terms rather than merely translate them from the Greek into their conventional English. If mind and soul are the first two "products" or outpourings of the One, is it plausible for us to think of it as other than Spirit, or Consciousness? Clearly Plotinus avoided both of these terms as descriptives of the One, because he wanted to avoid suggesting any positive descriptions, since each of these would ultimately be intelligible as a limitation, and the One is not limited. However, the tendency to think that the ground or source in the Plotinian conceptualization is impersonal would be a mistake. Now it is true that text asserts the One as being beyond all distinctions, including the one of personal and impersonal. Our tendency, therefore, is to think that the answer to the question "Is the One personal?" should be negative. But the answer to the question "Is the One impersonal?" should be exactly the same. Thus if our imagination is limited to thinking either in terms of personal or impersonal, then the negative answer to the question about the personal nature of the One should not draw with itself the implication of the impersonality of the One. The fact that the first two emanations have characteristics that are more to be associated with subjectivity, consciousness or mind suggest that the One is more proximal to Mind than it is to mere objective existence. Thus Plotinus' philosophy is not to be understood as radically differing from that of Aurobindo.

Aurobindo, on the other hand, calls the ultimate Brahman, and sometimes refers to it as "Supermind". This ultimate is characterizable by three diverse human perspectives. The Transcendental, the Universal and the Individual. It should be clear that each of these three characterizations is dependent on the human perspective from which whatever is transcendental is transcendental, and so forth. Aurobindo suggests that human liberation, *moksha*, is the destiny of the Individual, producing the inevitable emergence of a developed society, functioning through the operation of the principle of love, and the purpose of the evolutionary process. From matter to life, to mind, to Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, Overmind and Supermind. All this is understood as a seamless process, the reversal of the original involution of Brahman into unconscious matter. Here Aurobindo's teaching seems to coincide with that of Hegel. Hegel suggests that the dialectical process initiates itself by the Absolute as pure abstract Spirit, othering itself from itself into its opposite, concrete, unconscious matter, and thereafter each of the separated elements strives to unite itself with its opposite. Matter becomes conscious, first in life, then in selfconscious life, while spirit expresses itself into matter as art, culture, civilization. The restoration, or synthesis is an elevated reintegration of that which originally cleft itself from itself into otherness.

In Plotinus also, we have the presentation of the reunion of the original overflow or emanation. While reason and intellect serve to guide the way back as far as *nous*, beyond *nous* to the One reason and intellect no longer suffice, as the satisfactory means for the restoration. Only love is the sufficient means of effecting the full return. This Plotinian description is indeed similar to Aurobindo's claim that surrender is the only means to achieving the higher stages of the evolutionary process. The ordinary mind and ordinary intellect, however useful they may be in some spheres, are not adequate to this task. But the end of evolution is not the elimination or destruction of the lower stages; rather it is the harmonious integration of all into a mutually interpenetrated whole, characterized by Satchitananda. Multiplicity, even though it is a less than complete appropriation of the way reality is, is, however, not unreality, but the very way of the Brahman self-manifesting in all its varieties and richness. Thus motion, change and history are not illusions, they are of the way of the Being of the One, which is in fact dynamic, processual, and in a continuous and emergent partial self-disclosure, whose characteristic feature is intensification; the

emergence of fuller, more complete and more integrated self-disclosure, which transcends but does not deny process. Multiplicity and particularity does not exclude its simultaneous unity and co-participation in the totality and oneness of Brahman.

Parmenides, as is well known, has maintained that motion and change are but illusions. The real is eternal and unchanging. Zeno, an Eleatic Parmenidean, has developed this thought further, demonstrating the rational unintelligibility of motion and change, and using his paradoxical conclusions as evidence and persuasion for the rejection of the apparent as the basis for truth. It was the analogous paradox concerning the reality of identity and an unchanging substance as expressed by Heraclitus in his famous dictum that one can never step into the same river twice, which contributed to Plato's formulation of his own metaphysics, which can be considered as a reflective synthesis of the Parmenidean denial of change and the Heraclitean assertion of the universality of flux. Traditional Platonism though dynamic even within Plato's own corpus of writings, can be characterized as a kind of two storey universe, with the priority being given to the permanent and unchanging, perfect realm of Forms, under the primacy of the Form of the Good, the True and the Beautiful, all aspects of the same single supreme. Time, the moving shadow of eternity, characterizes a lesser domain, the chaotic unformed, which in its striving to emulate the eternal, gives form to matter, which however, forever fails in its attempt to mirror the Forms because of its debilitating limitations as matter. Materiality prevents the temporal realm from being a perfect reflection of the Ideal, thus resulting in the flux of temporality in its ceaseless effort to more adequately mirror the perfect formal original. Thus change, process, characterizes only this lesser domain, which serves as but an imitation, and an unsuccessful one at that, of the higher true being. Knowledge of the Form of the Good is possible in the Platonic envisionment, but the full formulation and articulation of such a knowledge is elusive, even if formulations are inspired by the unformulated and only partially accessible possession of exactly that which stimulates us in the further search and attempt to know and speak it, as well as to act and live in its service. Plato never makes clear how he understands the original nature of the chaotic, the character of unformed matter, and the reason that human souls find themselves embodied and mired in the temporal domain. His hint is that the soul becomes embodied in consequence of some sort of wrongdoing, though this is problematic.

For if the soul is originally a preexistent in the domain of the eternal, then in fact it cannot be active, it cannot be engaged in "doing" of any sort, much less in wrong-doing. If the soul is originally, even prior to physical embodiment somehow different from the Form of the Good, and in being a lesser Form, subservient to it, then these lesser forms are not wholly forms at all, because they are active. Thus Plato's philosophy, though inspired to some extent by a monism, cannot be thought of as consistently monistic. Plotinus, in transforming Platonism into what is now known as Neoplatonism rejects the inertia associated with the Platonic ultimate, and suggests the notion of "emanation" as a basis of the emergence of multiplicity and differentiation. However, this emanation or overflow of the One is balanced by the need and desire to return and reunite with the One that characterizes particular beings, *physis*, *psyche*, and *nous* alike.

However, Plotinus' speculative thought is much more explicitly monistic than Plato's. What interests us here is how it is possible that in spite of the evidence of multiplicity and the apparent manifoldness of the world of conventional experience, both some sages, but even more surprisingly, many ordinary and common folk have a strong inclination to doubt or reject the ultimacy of the apparent manifold, and generate arguments as well as accept claims of the transempirical reality of the singularity of the ultimate, in which we each live move and have our being.

Monistic philosophies have arisen from different cultural and intellectual backgrounds, and it is my belief that these have often developed in relative independence from one another. Also, it is the case that a variety of speculative monisms have not only been formulated by thinkers, but have found sympathetic and admiring followers. How are these facts to be understood? Why is it that the "natural standpoint" from which it is persuasive that there is an "out there" world of many diverse things has been questioned and rejected in favour of philosophies which assert that the apparent multiplicity of the seemingly independent entities is not the final perspective; rather, that the truth of the matter is, that this vast diversity of appearances all belong together, and are aspects of a "One" which is the ground, the source, the ultimate reality; to which all belong, and from which they are never really sufficiently separated to make the "return" a merely temporal future event. In truth the separation and "descent" is coextensive with a transcendent unity, in which the separations are but perspectival differences. Time is the requirement

primarily for the acquisition of the wisdom to realize the truth of the unity of Being. While that wisdom is occluded from the apparently individual consciousness of the not-yet enlightened being who glories in his/her separateness and individuality, such a glorying is but a moment to be overcome in the growing development of the individual who is eventually to see through the vanity of his individuality.

But where do we get such ideas from? And why are they appealing at all? Surely prior to any and every theoretical and articulated monism there must be some personal, existential adumbration of the notion that things are not what they seem, or that there is more to the ultimate nature of things than meets the ordinary consciousness of the ordinary human beings. A sense of the interdependence of all, of the belonging together not only of the many synchronous entities, but the belonging together of all throughout all time, time past and time future is part of a sensibility which may not be equally and universally accessible to all human beings, but which is sufficiently common and regular in a culture-independent manner as to generate the diversities of monistic philosophies such as those of Spinoza, Shankara, Plotinus, and even such early figures in the Western tradition as Thales and Anaximander.

For to understand the famous fragment of Thales that all is made of water, we must not interpret this to be a shallow and naive materialism; rather, it is the sophisticated insight that what we know as water can take on many distinct and diverse forms, be these solid as in ice or frost, liquid, as is the case of the primary sense of "water", (and here we should remind ourselves how different a river is or a lake from that little vesselful which we drink for our sustenance, or that liquid in which we render most of our raw foodstuff edible and digestible), or gaseous, as in steam or cloud or fog or mist. Indeed, if all is made of water, the clear liquid we associate with the term is not distinctively any more "water" than is any and every other thing. This is why Anaximander's renaming of the single ultimate as the "*apeiron*", or boundless, is indeed an intellectual advance in description even if not in the basic insight of the ultimate unity of being. Furthermore, even the modern realistic materialist will admit a universal "substance", namely matter, as the invariant "foundation" of items as diverse as the Rock of Gibraltar, the gentle breezes which melt the winter snows, and the body of a living human being, such as myself, or that voluptuous "Other" for whose smile and gratitude even the labours of Hercules would gladly be undertaken. Thus the so-called "Absolute

Idealism" of a Bradley is not the only kind of intellectual system which has been developed in consequence of the surmise of the illusory character of the sheer multiplicity and apparent independence of what the Taoist has called "The Ten Thousand Things". Indeed the fact that the problem of the One and the Many has been recognized as one of the core issues of philosophical reflection is evidence that there is a lure of the One not only for the mystic or the scholar of Neoplatonism, but even for all who would use language, and name two distinct moments by the same name. It is this insight which inspired the famous Heraclitean dictum "You can never step into the same river twice". Thus the very fact that humans have a proclivity to language, to speaking, to naming, to claim identity with those former moments which we conventionally call "my" childhood, "my" biographical data, is evidence that there is unity in the very heart of multiplicity and diversity. The very notion of difference hinges on non-differentiation. Thus when I claim that this thing differs from that thing, and insist on the truth of that claim, the very claim is made against the horizon of the thingness of both this and that, in other words, that behind their differences there is also a commonality!

Prior to all speculation, prior to all theorizing, there is an irreducible and prearticulate awareness of transcendence, of unity and of the mutual interdependence of the multiplicity of particulars. It is this which grounds the theorizing, the rational articulation, the specification of the doctrines which are the features of a variety of schools of thought. Our task as philosophers is to read carefully, openly and sympathetically those texts of the traditions which seem to address us, and to learn from them, and at the same time to reformulate and integrate them into the very stuff that constitutes our own life, actions and thoughts, and which will nurture the heritage for its evolutionary goals.

## The Theoria of Nature in Plotinus and the Yoga of the Earth Consciousness in Aurobindo

Daniel Kealey

The word "contemplation" usually brings to mind techniques to facilitate the return to Source, God, Brahman, the One, and this association is usually correct. But it can also connote the apparently opposite movement. That is, contemplation is not only the way by which the lower returns to the higher, but the way the higher forms, and interacts with, the lower. It is the added consideration of this second meaning of contemplation that constitutes an integral view of the spiritual life. The integral view is not missing from Plotinus, even though he and his interpreters have emphasized the one-way ascent to the heights. My intention here is to resuscitate this integral reading of Plotinus and, as an aid to my reading, I will invoke the vision of the great philosopher and yogi of Integralism, Sri Aurobindo. I will not be simply comparing these philosophers. Better scholars than I have already done so. Dr. S. K. Maitra has written a very informative comparative essay in his book, *The Meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*, and Professor Pritibhushan Chatterji contributed an illuminating essay on these two luminaries in *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*.

Plotinus inherited Plato's ambivalence about the value, significance, and purpose of material existence, on the one hand expressing the negative regard towards the body as found in the *Phaedo*, and at other times expressing the positive regard towards material existence as the manifestation of the Divine, as found in the *Timaeus*. It is in these positive views (*Ennead* IV. 8, for example) that we find the integral Plotinus. It is my impression that Plotinus had an integral vision, and he did give it some intellectual expression in his system, but that his will did not fully go along with the vision. I would venture to say, furthermore, that this ambivalence which Plotinus inherited, has been inherited by us. This is a problem we all struggle with to one degree or another.

Our will is wounded, or it behaves as if it were. The spiritual traditions of both East and West have, for the past 2500 years at least, fallen prey to the mood of resentment. Resentment, as revealed by Nietzsche and Scheler, is an attitude that rationalizes our unwillingness to accept the highest and noblest vision of the good life available to us. That vision of nonduality discloses the essential divinity of material existence and our mission to manifest this in our lives here. Because of the difficulties and the frustrations we have faced in this mission, we recoil from the task of manifestation and seek instead to fulfill some more manageable agenda. That these "manageable agendas" have tended to be different in East and West should not obscure the fact that they are fundamentally the same reaction of unwillingness to embrace the life of integral nonduality. Whether we are talking about Plotinus's flight of the alone to the Alone, Christian redemption, the dualism of Samkhya-Yoga, the negation of Maya in Advaita Vedanta, or the modern obsession to conquer nature through science and technology, we are talking about the same rejection of the divinity of material existence.

Seen in the context of this pathology of consciousness universal to the human race, the advent of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Nonduality is, at the very least, a hopeful sign of healing. I would even go so far as to suggest that Sri Aurobindo's personal attainments are an attempt on the part of undivided Divine consciousness to introduce a new force of healing into the fractured state of human consciousness. It is in this spirit of healing and integral nonduality, then, that I will turn to find those elements in Plotinus that resonate closely with this vision of wholeness. I will do this by focusing on Plotinus's concept of *theoria*, or contemplation.

Since it is nonduality that we seek, we must find what it is that bridges the fundamental dichotomy of subject and object. In Plotinus it is contemplation which links each level of reality with its corresponding level of consciousness (except in the case of the One which transcends all differentiation). Plotinus not only links the subjective and objective poles of reality in this way but states further that these subjective sides of reality are ontologically prior to their objective manifestations, these latter being likened to poor images of their archetype. Plotinus called the states of consciousness *theoria*, contemplation, and their objective manifestations *theorema*, which can be translated as either work of contemplation, object of contemplation, or result of contemplation. The world as *theorema* is the product of contemplation. But the world stands to

contemplation not only as product, for it too contemplates. To one degree or another all things contemplate and aspire to contemplation. This is the thesis by which Plotinus begins his treatise "On Nature and Contemplation and the One."

Suppose we said, playing at first before we set out to be serious, that all things aspire to contemplation, and direct their gaze to this end not only rational but irrational living things, and the power in plants and the earth which brings them forth and all that attain to it as far as possible for them in their natural state, but different things contemplate and attain their end in different ways, some truly, and some only having an imitation and image of their true end could anyone endure the oddity of this line of thought?<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly, Plotinus proposes this thesis as a play. Play is here proposed to be a more effective means than is seriousness for leading the inquirer into the experience of contemplation, and this probably for at least two reasons: 1) it encourages the use of imagination, and 2) it frees the mind from more or less exclusive concentration on the given conditioned sensuous aspect of objects so that the playful nature, of the world in its wholeness can be fully participated in. In any case, an argument over whether seriousness or playfulness is the best approach to realize the truth should not distract one from the point that "one plays and the other is serious for the sake of contemplation."

This accent on play is also found in Aurobindo's philosophy. This Lila, or Divine Play, is not to be understood as an arbitrary imposition of a wanton God sadistically enjoying the sufferings of creatures made to dance according to His bidding, but is rather the perception of creation as a mutual agreement between the Divine Purusha and all individual Purushas.<sup>2</sup>

If we look at World-Existence...in its relation to the self-delight of eternally existent being, we may regard, describe and realise it as Lila the play, the child's joy, the poet's joy, the actor's joy, the mechanic's joy of the Soul of things eternally young, perpetually inexhaustible, creating and recreating Himself in Himself for the sheer bliss of that self-creation, of that self-representation Himself the play, Himself the player, Himself the playground.<sup>3</sup>

Seeing creation as play automatically shifts the perspective on life away from the serious business of escaping the tragedy of the cosmic fall or mistake to one which sees oneself as a co-creative participant in the Divine Unfoldment.

Actions, writes Plotinus, are a "shadow of contemplation and reasoning" (III.8.4). People engage in action and have their minds distracted by the purely superficial aspects of manifest action because "their souls are weak and they are not able to grasp the vision sufficiently, and therefore are not filled with it, but still longing to see it, they are carried into action, so as to see what they cannot see with their intellect" (III.8.4).

By exhorting us to see action as a shadow or image of contemplation, Plotinus is encouraging us to awaken a symbolic mode of knowing. A symbolic mode of knowing would try to understand actions as images of a higher life concealed in their working as their essence and origin. Of the different forms of symbolic knowledge, Plotinus spoke highly of the power of art to lift the Soul with the wings of beauty. Beauty is the domination of matter by Form, or Form made visible to the sensitive soul. Even the weak soul sunk in the dissipated consciousness of sensual action can be stirred by the power of beauty of bodies, images, music and excellent actions. Beauty is something which the soul becomes aware of even at the first glance and recognizes and speaks of it as if it understood it already (I.6.2). It welcomes beauty and adapts itself to beauty as if it recognized beauty to be of the same nature as itself. Sri Aurobindo views on Beauty are nearly identical:

Beauty is the special Divine manifestation in the physical as Truth is in the mind, Love in the heart, Power in the vital.<sup>4</sup>

The search for beauty is only in its beginning a satisfaction in the beauty of form, the beauty which appeals to the physical senses and the vital impressions, impulsions, desires. It is only in the middle a satisfaction in the beauty of the ideas seized, the emotions aroused, the perception of perfect process and harmonious combination. Behind them the soul beauty in us desires the contact, the revelation, the uplifting Delight of an absolute Beauty in all things which it feels to be present but which, neither the senses and instincts by themselves can give, though they may be its channels for it is suprasensuous nor the reason and intelligence, though they too are a channel for it is suprarational, supra-intellectual but to which through all these veils the soul itself seeks to

arrive. When it can get the touch of this universal absolute Beauty, this soul of Beauty, this sense of its revelation in any slightest or greatest thing, the beauty of a flower, a form, the beauty and power of a character, an action, an event, a human life, an idea, a stroke of the brush or the chisel or a scintillation of the mind, the colors of a sunset or the grandeur of the tempest, it is then that the sense of Beauty in us is really, powerfully, entirely satisfied. It is in truth, seeking, as in religion, for the Divine, the All-Beautiful in man, in nature, in life, in thought, in art; for God is Beauty and Delight hidden in the variation of his masks and forms.<sup>5</sup>

Turning again to Plotinus we find that beauty and soul are related in so far as they are both productions of Form. It is the participation of the things of this world in Form, which have their station in *Nous* (Intellect, sometimes, under influence of the German *Geist*, translated as Spirit), that endow the things with beauty. The more completely a thing participates in Form the more the beauty inherent in Form is manifested in its recipient nature. Conversely, the less a thing is dominated by Form, the more ugly its appearance. In the Platonic tradition Form is reality or Being. Truth, Beauty, and Goodness are the chief characteristics or Forms of Being and, consequently, the more a thing participates in, or partakes of, the experience of Being, the more it will exhibit these characteristics. "Beautifulness is reality" (I.6-6). Both Soul and the things it contemplates as beautiful or ugly have their common origin in the One, the source of Being. Intellect (*Nous*) is the One's first emanation or hypostasis in Being. Plotinus sometimes refers to *Nous* as God, that which is most like the One under the condition of the Many. The one is beyond Being, or beyond God. Hence, the true beauty of the Soul is to be found in its own highest being which is the Intellect; and to the extent that it is perfectly conformed to Intellect, says Plotinus, so is it truly soul. "For this reason it is right to say that the soul's becoming something good and beautiful is its being made like to God, because from Him come beauty and all else which falls to the lot of real beings" (I.6.6).

To posit that manifestations of beauty (the objective) and souls (the subjective) are alike by virtue of a common third element, Form, only gives us a static, logical explanation which is insufficient for portraying the more dynamic aspect of their relationship. In the treatise "On Beauty" Plotinus portrays the dynamic (*dunamis* in Plotinus is the contemplative power of Forms) relation as one of a procession of Beauty from the One

(which is also characterized as the Good) to Intellect, where it is recognizable as Beauty, and which, in turn, gives beauty to soul, the second hypostasis. Everything else below the purely psychic (Soul) dimension is beautiful by the shaping of Soul. In fact, Soul tries to make everything it grasps and masters beautiful (I.6.6). The psychic dimension refers not only to individual human souls but to the World Soul or Cosmic Soul and to pure disembodied (abstract) soulness alike, although the latter is sometimes identified with *Nous* by Plotinus. In any case, beautifulness is soulness, and the beauty of this world is a reflection of Soul or the imprint, of Soul, which by the power of Forms that inhere in it, gathers the dissipated and relatively unformed matter (theoremata deformed by lapse of time) into organized wholes which, relative to their less formed parts, are beautiful. Thus, whether the beautiful thing is a work fashioned by a human soul or a natural beauty fashioned by the World Soul, the beauty is in each case the work of Soul and an image of soulness. When a human soul experiences beauty it is, consciously or unconsciously, actually being stimulated by universal soulness; it is suddenly edified by its own nature which is beautiful. We might ask here, why is it that if Soul is beautiful it needs to be reminded of its inherent beauty by an extraneous sort of beauty?

The chief characteristic that differentiates Soul or Psyche from *Nous* is duration or time. *Nous* is non-durational or eternal (notwithstanding Plotinus' various contrary assertions, which he tries to justify as necessarily paradoxical, the logic of the Divine transcending the logic of science), and as such is omniscient and omnipresent, having all contents of knowledge altogether at once, which constitutes perfect contemplation. Soul, however, is unable to maintain that intellectual quietude necessary to reflect the whole at once, for it has a "restless power" which does not want, or cannot have, the whole to be present to it altogether, but prefers to experience the whole successively in one form after another in an infinite number of different ways. By thus dividing up, measuring the illimitable it loses its integrity and dissipates the unity of the whole into ever weaker extensions and part-formations. Soul thus betimes first itself and then reality; time is the life of the Soul (III.7.11).

The Soul's activity of "betiming" is also a work of art, for the reality which has been worked or betimed is an image of what is before time, the eternal Forms of Intellect. Time for Plotinus, as it was for Plato in the *Timaeus*, is the moving image of eternity. Time is the One

contemplating under the limitations of Soul. Soul's contemplation is temporal. The essential character of the Soul's activity is contemplation of the whole under particular temporalized Forms. However while its essence (in any particular instance) is the whole under a particular temporalized Form, the Soul's contemplation is inherently distracted and cluttered by its own past acts of contemplation.

The cluttered state of mind is a problem for Soul because the intuitions of different times are not completely conformable to each other, each being the contemplation of the whole from a different perspective. An act of contemplation in the present cannot be isolated from past acts of contemplation which help constitute the present one and which thus render it as ambiguous or over-determined. This problem obtains only under the condition of time, because for the Soul which is conformed to Intellect there would be no past acts of contemplation, Intellect being beyond severed time. At the level of Intellect, therefore, the Platonic concept of recollection would not make any sense. On that account Plotinus replaces recollection with direct intuition. Noetic intellection is beyond time, and so memory is not in order there, for all is present. "Intellect, therefore really thinks the real beings, not as if they were somewhere else; for they are neither before it nor after it" (V.9.5). There is no ambiguity in noetic intellection.

The embodied soul, however, must rely on memory in the attempt to compensate for its weakened intuition. Memory is a Soul power (*dynamis*) which weakens in direct proportion to the soul's degree of absorption in the sense level of experience. The soul's power is fully actual in Intellect, but when embodied its actuality loses ground to potentiality, which is a more passive state of being. The more the soul is merely passively perceiving and remembering the superficial appearances of things, the further it strays from seeing things in their real being. Soul only knows things completely and fully in Intellect, which is to say, when it perceives their eternal being as identical with its own being. Such knowing also constitutes the soul's actualization of its power and this, notes Plotinus, confirms Parmenides' alleged statement that "thinking and being are the same thing."

Thus the soul self-limited to perceiving instrumentally through the senses is blind to real beauty, and can see only its faint reflection, matter. In order to perceive real beauty the soul must develop a "passionate love for the invisible" (I.6.4). This passion of love, *eros*, seems to be a



necessary predisposition that renders the soul receptive to the ubiquitous but otherwise hidden splendor. Plotinus adopts Plato's philosophy of eros, with some minor differences. Eros in Platonism is not just a passion of deficiency seeking for satisfaction but is also a logos, which is to say that it is not merely a passive potentiality but is partly an active *dunamis* by virtue of its constitution as an expression of a rational principle; a delegate, as it were, from the Intellect in the world of embodied souls (to adapt a phrase from Aurobindo). Love is not merely a delegate, however, even though it often forgets itself and becomes enamored of superficial beauty. Ultimately it is of the very essence of reality. The Good, for Plotinus, is not only lovable, *erasmion*, but is eros. "He is at once lovable and love and love of himself" (VI.9.15). Hence for the Soul eros is not merely the conveyance towards the Good, upon the attainment of which eros is dropped, but is, the end and perfection which the soul will conform to eternally (VI.7.22).

While Soul is naturally attracted to beauty, it is beauty in conjunction with goodness, which inflames love. Beauty without goodness may either mislead the soul towards, and entrap it in, the non-being of externality (I.6.8; V.5.12), or it may leave the soul cold and unenthusiastic with a mere passionless attraction (VI.7.22). This applies equally to intelligible as to physical beauty. The attraction exercised by the Good is primal and ubiquitously constant (because it has all power), whereas the attraction exercised by beauty is of a derivative power, not as deep and is intermittent and relative. The power of the Good to attract need not be perceived to be effective, and it is always at work, whereas the power of beauty can only be effective when perceived (V.5.1.2). Beauty, then, functions most appropriately when it is a means of experiencing an even deeper level of being, namely, the Good:

Just as with bodies here below our desire is not for the underlying material things but for the beauty imaged upon them. For each is what it is by itself; but it becomes desirable when the Good colors it, giving a kind of grace to them and passionate love to the desirers. Then the soul, receiving into itself an outflow from thence, is moved and dances wildly and is all stung with longing and becomes love and is truly winged (VI.7.22).

True eros is the love of the Good, a love which carries within it its own principle of purification and perfection. It is a logos, and as such is

deeply connected with the reality underlying all things. The more life a beautiful object possesses, the more beautiful it is because life has "soul, and because it has more the form of the Good; and this means that it is somehow colored by the light of the Good, and being so colored wakes and rises up and lifts up that which belongs to it" (VI.7.22).

The beauty of physical objects, then, is a reflection of the beauty of the Forms. But in the Intellectual or Spiritual world of the Forms themselves, Plotinus argues in VI.7.32, beauty is not just one Form as a part amongst others, but must be that which generates Form; and that which generates Form is the principle of Form and as such must be formless. Consequently,

when you cannot grasp the form or shape of what is longed for, it would be most longed for and most lovable, and love for it would be immeasurable. For love is not limited here, because neither is the beloved, but the love of this would be unbounded; so his beauty is of another kind and beauty above beauty. For if it is nothing, what beauty can it be? But if it is lovable, it would be the generator of beauty. Therefore the productive power of all is the flower of beauty, a beauty which makes beauty (VI.7.32).

"How, then, shall we find the way?" asks Plotinus in introducing the method of contemplation. "Let him who can, follow and come within and leave outside the sight of his eyes and not turn back to the bodily splendors which he saw before. When he sees the beauty in bodies he must not run after them; we must know that they are images, traces, shadows, and hurry away to that which they image" (I.6.8). This gives us a brief sketch of Plotinus's practical instructions on the method of contemplation. Already we begin to see his failure to carry through with his vision and a tendency to resort to a one-way ascent by way of the *via negativa*. The essential point, however, is that external looking at beauty must be complemented by internally-directed looking.<sup>6</sup>

This seeing inwardly, the seeing of beauty within one's own soul, is not a mere passive looking, but an active intervention, an education or drawing out of potential beauty, a process Plotinus likens to "working on your statue" till one sees the "divine glory of virtue" shining within oneself. Working on oneself could be understood as developing one's power, or actualizing one's potential. In the matter of the affections this would involve transforming them from their merely passive states (i.e.,

purely reactive to external situations) into active states, of which love is the primary exemplar (III.5.7). An active affection is one which most exhibits the higher Soul qualities, and these qualities are Soul expressions and reflections of the perfect contemplation of *nous*. Affections are more real and active the more they arise from the unitive level of Soul, which is to say, the more they approximate the contemplative power of *nous*.

Plotinus's views on beauty and love illustrate the sort of symbolic knowledge that he is encouraging philosophers to bring into play when, for example, he exhorts one to see physical objects as shadows of a greater reality. Because it involves faculties usually excluded from "serious" knowledge, (i.e., the passions, imagination, moral and aesthetic sensibility), Plotinus's theory of knowledge goes beyond the prevalently cognitive views philosophers tend to have of knowledge. That is so in that he does not ground knowledge in sense perception, as do empiricists, nor in the laws of reason, as do rationalists, but finds the source of knowledge in the transcendent One whose act of knowledge is identical with himself. True knowledge is undifferentiated absolute identity. This super-knowledge, if it can still be called knowledge, is the perfection of knowledge. The nisus of knowledge on all levels of being is towards identity which is complete knowledge. The standard by which the degree of truth of any knowledge is measured is the identity of the knower and the known: knowledge is truer as knower and known become more identical.<sup>7</sup>

The primary model of knowledge so-called, however, is *nous*, because in *nous*, there is plurality and differentiation, conditions usually presupposed for the possibility of knowledge. The differentiation in *nous* is not opposed to unity, but expresses unity in the most perfect degree possible for any multiplicity. The simplest difference that can be generated from the absolute unity of the One is that between contemplation of the contemplator and the contemplated, *theoria* and *theoremata*. In its origin this difference is a mere difference-in-unity, for in *nous* the contemplator or contemplation, "must be the same as the contemplated, and Intellect the same as the intelligible; for, if not the same, there will not be truth; for the one who is trying to possess realities will possess an impression different from the realities, and this is not truth. For truth ought not to be the truth of something else, but to be what it says" (V.3.5).

By identity of *theoria* and *theoremata* Plotinus means not the overpowering of the latter by the former, as in epistemological idealism, but that the *theoremata* contemplated are themselves also *theoriai* or

contemplations of the whole. If *theoremata* do not become identical with *theoriai* then they remain merely objects in another subject and, even if living objects, they would not be self-living. In *nous* all is self-living, for *nous* is the fullest life (III.8.8). Plotinus employs images to depict this highest level of contemplation in order to provide the soul with some contemplative aids, though these images can only give an external representation which must be "dematerialized" to allow the identification of the soul and what it is contemplating to be realized. For example, Plotinus likens *nous* to "something all faces, shining with living faces" (VI.7.15). Each "face" or Form is a particular power, which makes *nous* a multiplicity, yet each is all and in perfect harmony with the whole because identical with it (which makes *nous* also a perfect unity) even while remaining a part. *Nous* is perfect unity-in-diversity. Each maintains the appearance of a part, "but a penetrating look sees the whole in it" (V.8.4). This heaven world of *nous* is not another place, but as the last quote makes clear, this very world of appearances seen with complete penetration. So heaven is this world of men, animals, plants, sea and earth, but now seen in and as *nous*, heavenly.

All things There are transparent and there is nothing dark or opaque, everything is clear, altogether and to its inmost part, to everything, for light is transparent to light. Each There has everything in itself and sees all things in every other, or all are everywhere and each and everyone is all, and the glory is unbounded. The sun There is all the stars, and each star is the sun and all the others. One particular kind of being stands out in each, but in each all are manifest (V.8.3).

Since heaven or *nous* is this world as experienced in perfect contemplation, there is no type of appearance "here", however lowly or loathsome, that cannot be "saved". This is to say, every existent can be experienced as having inherent divine value, but the degree to which the inherent value of things can be known depends on the degree of one's contemplative intuition. To see all things as heavenly, as the living substance of God, is not to collapse the value distinctions of all things into a single value. Distinctions in value remain on the surface of each being, in their appearance, even though in their common depth they are seen in and as oneness. Differences in value are "according to their nearness to the first principles". Hence a god is greater in value than is a man or animal because more totally *nous*. Even an irrational and animate thing is a living

thought in Intellect, and since at a deep level theoremata are identical with theoria, "is a particular kind of *nous*," and as such does not cease to be *nous*, and as *nous* the *nous* of all, although in a particular way.

For it is actually one thing, but has the power to be all: but we apprehend in each what it actually is: and what it actually is, is the last and lowest, so that the last and lowest of this particular *nous* is horse (for example), and being horse is where it stopped in its continual outgoing to a lesser life, but another stops lower down (VI.7.9).

An important consequence of perfect contemplation, where the contemplated is the same as the contemplation or where thought and being are the same, is that whatever is thought "There" necessarily comes into being. Simply by being what it is, contemplation, *nous* produces. *Nous* does not intend or choose to create; yet if the intelligibles subsist, the sensibles will ensue from a necessity inherent in contemplating intelligibles (VI.7.8). Contemplation, *theoria* is at the same time production, *poiesis*. In this respect *nous* imitates the infinite, supremely active *dyonamis* of the One whose formlessness is productive of all Forms and hence of the existence of all things. Plotinus emphasizes that this outflow of Reality from the One is not the work of a Creator, nor a matter of chance, but is rather a spontaneous but perfectly natural expression of the nature of the Origin, and is without temporal beginning or end. As a natural expression of the One the procession of Reality, cannot terminate until everything that could possibly come into existence on all the levels of being has actually done so. Each of these levels, furthermore, must be complete in its turn: *nous* containing the totality of being in a timeless eternity, Psyche or Soul under the conditions of temporal succession, and sensible Nature under the conditions of spatial extension.

*Poiesis*, the productive aspect of contemplation, is in another view *toima* the impulse of self-assertion. The self that is asserting its desire for existence is always a part of its originary context. Plotinus tends to see this toimaic aspect of contemplation as regrettable, but not to the extreme extent of the Gnostics for whom the concept was equivalent to the principle of evil. In any case, he leaves out this "moment" of contemplative production (i.e., the self-assertion) from his model of *poiesis*, according to which the best action is accomplished by the non-action of resting in oneself. "But that true All is blessed in such a way that, in not making, it accomplishes great works and in remaining in itself

makes no small things" (III.2.1). In moral works this principle is followed by and exemplified in the highest type of man who always does the right thing immediately and spontaneously without having to think about it. That is because his soul is intimate or united with *nous*, and in *nous* action and contemplation are identical, and thus in perfect equilibrium.

Sri Aurobindo places much more emphasis on this constructive work of the Way, and we see it in the importance of Karma Yoga in his system where it serves far more than the traditional purpose of mere return, becoming an expression of Divine will and action on earth. The reason why Plotinus emphasizes the "return" moment of contemplation (which is self-negating, the *via negativa*) over the toimaic moment of self-assertion, is that with the descent of soul the former wanes while the latter waxes in strength, and philosophy must endeavor to bring these powers back into balance. Moreover, since the outward movement of self-expression happens more or less spontaneously, the key to right action is the controlling, forming element of contemplative vision, the depth of inwardness determining the rightness of outward action.<sup>8</sup> From an Aurobindonian point of view, however, it is erroneous to think that manifestation will happen automatically, for if the human will is not aligned with Divine purpose, then the creative self-expression of the Divine will be blocked and distorted in those areas where humans are called to be co-creators with God.

As contemplation weakens, the gap between theoria and theorema, contemplation and action, becomes more marked, to the point where contemplation becomes absorbed by outer action, where action, the contemplated, becomes for all practical purposes the only form of contemplation. That is why Plotinus calls action at this level a mere shadow of contemplation. Even though it is a straying from contemplation, however, action never leaves contemplation entirely behind and tries to return to contemplative intimacy by producing works which will be enjoyed by contemplation. Works are performed ostensibly for the preservation and enhancement of self-existence through a process of possession, and possession is a tendency towards identity or union, which is perfect contemplation. Contemplation is the end of action. The more action is attuned to contemplation the less the need of the soul to go out of itself in action (i.e., the greater the quality of action the less the quantity of action<sup>9</sup>) (III.8.5). Contemplation is, both the origin and end of action, for *poiesis* is the application of rational Forms to potential matter, and this is

an activity of contemplation, "for creating is bringing a Form into being, and this is filling all things with contemplation" (III.8.7). Hence, the originaive principle (Form, Logos, contemplation) is for all things the goal, which is to say that the whole life of the universe is philosophy, or, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "All life is yoga."<sup>10</sup>

What I hope has been clearly brought out in this meditation on Plotinus is that the role of the hypostases for the practical life is not merely that of serving as guide posts for the return journey to the Absolute. They also function as indispensable powers to be used by the contemplative actor in his creative involvement with the world. While Plotinus did not develop this aspect of the spiritual life, Sri Aurobindo made it a central feature of his Integral Yoga. It is this emphasis that prompted him to remark that his yoga begins where all the others end.

According to Sri Aurobindo the Integral Yogi does not merely use the involutionary dimensions as stepping stones to the infinite, but brings the insight and puissance (*cit-sakti*) found there by the elevation of his consciousness to bear on manifest nature in order to further the evolutionary progress not only of himself or even humanity, but of all life and even physical nature itself. The involutionary dimensions, populated by gods, constitute part of the mechanism of grace, which plays a necessary part in facilitating spiritual development. The help that the beings of the involutionary planes can render to the evolving earth consciousness is severely limited, however, by the lack of conscious cooperation with them on the part of humanity. This lack of cooperation and the consequent difficulties we have in manifesting the Divine in the material world constitutes a negative feedback loop that reinforces the *resentment* world views of dualism and materialism.

In Conclusion, if Neoplatonism is to be revived as a viable contemporary philosophy, I believe it needs to develop the neglected aspect of that philosophy outlined in this essay, and Sri Aurobindo's Integral philosophy would serve as an indispensable guide in this endeavor."

## Endnotes

1. *Ennead* III.8.1. A. H. Armstrong, translator. (Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1980). Subsequent references to this translation will be placed in parentheses after the citation.
2. *The Life Divine*, Book Two, Part 1, chapter IV. "The Divine and the Undivine" (p.369 of the 1951 New York edition).
3. Centenary Edition, 18:102-3.
4. *Collected Works*, 9:491.
5. *Ibid* 15:135.
6. Cf. Plato's *Symposium* 210.
7. See Joan Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and the One*, (Toronto, 1967) p.29.
8. This contemplative understanding of action is virtually identical to the concept of *niskama karma*, desireless action, of the *Bhagavad Gita*, and *mutatis mutandis*, to the *wu-wei*, non-action, of Taoism.
9. "Yoga is skill in action." (*Bhagavad Gita* II.50)
10. In a note to his translation of *Ennead* III.8.7, Armstrong observes that "by making *theoria* the end of all perception and action Plotinus abolishes, no doubt consciously and deliberately, Aristotle's distinction between *praktike* and *theoretike episteme*, or *dianoia*...and makes the whole life, not only of man but the universe philosophy in Aristotle's sense." "All Life is Yoga" is the epigram to Sri Aurobindo's book, *The Synthesis of Yoga*.
11. Another lacunae in Plotinus that Aurobindo's thought would help to fill is in the area of spiritual sociology and a philosophy of history. These are consequences of Plotinus's concentration on the static, nontemporal (Shiva) aspect of the Divine and his failure to appreciate the dynamic temporal (Shakti) aspect.

## **The Four Dimensional Philosophy of Indian Thought and Plotinus**

**I. C. Sharma**

At the very outset I would like to define Indian thought as that ethico-metaphysical philosophy, which has its roots in the four Vedas, Rig, Sama, Yajur and Adharva Samhitas which express the four-dimensional essence of the experiences of the sages, engaged in the spiritual search of God, Nature and Man. Further, this very thought has its roots in the Brahmana Granthas which are the explanatory and definitional part of the Vedas: in the Aranyakas, the philosophical experiential conclusions, drawn by the forest dweller practitioners of the four-fold knowledge stated above, and in the Mahavakayas (the universal statements), experienced, expressed and stated in the Upanisadic part of the Vedic tradition. Let it be pointed out that the Vedic tradition the Vedic Truth is called Sruti, the revealed Truth. This truth was attained by the practice and experience of the Ultimate Reality, the groundless Ground of everything that exists, lives and has being; it is again four-dimensional. This ancient most ethico-metaphysical philosophy has the following four divisions:

- 1) The Mantras or hymns;
- 2) The Brahmanas or the explanatory notes;
- 3) The Aranyakas or the books written by the forest wellers;
- 4) The Upanisads or the philosophical conclusions.

The Mantras or hymns are the oldest aspect of the Vedic literature and have been classified into the four major collections stated above, (i) Rig (ii) Sama (iii) Yajur and (iv) Adharva Samhitas. These Samhitas cover a very wide field, ranging from the social problems of marriage, love and gambling to metaphysical theories of creation. But most of the hymns are addressed to gods, who on a close examination turn out to be the names of the various entities or powers of one Supreme God. This Supreme Ruler of the universe, again, is not a person but a central Reality, the Master of the creation that resides in the very core of everything that exists. According

to Plotinus as well, gods are the entities arising from light; and light is equivalent to Brahman.

The Brahmanic literature explains the various rituals and analyses, the various terms used in the hymns. But unfortunately, this literature has been neglected, not only by the Western, but by Indian scholars as well. In fact, Brahmanas are a link between the Vedic hymns and the Upanisadic Philosophy. In the absence of a systematic study of the Brahmanas, the apparent conflict between the ritualistic philosophy of the Vedas and the *Atma Vidya* (the science of self) of the Upanisads, which places knowledge above action can never be resolved.

The four dimensional philosophy of the Vedas and Upanisads, though chronologically prior to the four-dimensional mystic philosophy of Plotinus with the three hypostases of the One, the Nous and World Soul plus the concept of Nature or Matter as an emanation from the World Soul, is not only similar to, but almost identical with the latter. Before explaining the mystic experience and its purpose the union of the individual soul with the One the Supreme Being, the Supreme Abode of Man and Nature it seems necessary to allude briefly to the four dimensional basis and background of metaphysics, ethics, psychology, epistemology and sociology of the Vedic and the Upanisadic philosophy.

The four dimensions of the Vedic tradition stated above, point to the identity of the Vedic and the Upanisadic four-dimensionality with that of Plotinus. The Vedas, the Upanisads and the Bhagavadgita, the three foundational philosophical texts comprising the Indian tradition, agree in accepting the following four fold-nature of the Brahman, the Supreme Being as:

- (1) *Avyaya* Brahman (the Eternal Infinite Ground of all), corresponding to Plotinus' One, and even transcending the One;
- (2) *Aksara* Brahman (the Indestructible Cause), corresponding to Plotinus' Nous;
- (3) *Atmakara* Brahman (the Supreme Self), endowed with the potentiality of creation, preservation and destruction, and hence a Creator, not yet differentiated as subject and object, corresponding to the World Soul of Plotinus; and
- (4) *Visvasrit* Brahman (the Cosmic Manifestation), the extended material world of universes, super galaxies, and individualities, as an emanation and irradiation of just one spark of the Supreme Self, corresponding to the ensouled matter or Nature of Plotinus.

A word of caution in this context seems to be necessary to distinguish between the Plotinian Hypostases and the four-dimensional nature of Brahman, even though both Plotinian philosophy and Indian thought are firmly rooted in the mystic experience, the sole purpose of which is the return of the four-dimensional Self of man to the four dimensional Supreme Self the One. The *Avyaya* Brahman is not to be confused even with the One or with Unity, since It is also beyond One. Even Plotinus agrees with this transcendence of the One in his writings. Thus the One of Plotinus can be regarded as closer to the *Avyaya* Brahman, even though it is not wholly identical with it. The *Avyaya* Brahman is also designated as the *Paraipara Brahman* (the Brahman beyond the beyond). *Aksara Brahman* is the Absolute and Indestructible the unmanifested potential Cause. This very *Aksara* manifests or transforms itself as the *Parama Purusa* (the Supreme Self or the Supreme Person).

Let the comparison given above be misunderstood, a clarification seems necessary. The *Atmakara* is wholly identical neither with the World Soul, nor with the *nous* though it is closer to the *nous* than to the World Soul, because it is the emanation from the *Aksara* Brahman, which is both the One and also the *nous*.

It would help to clarify why the entire gamut of Indian Thought (including Jainism, Buddhism and the materialist Carvaka philosophy) has been comprehended in the Upanisadic philosophy, which expounds the Pancakosa Theory of the Self i.e., the Theory of the *Annamaya Kosa* (the bodily Self), the *Pranamaya Kosa* (the biological Self), the *Manomaya Kosa* (the Mental or Psychological Self), the *Viijnanamaya Kosa* (the intellectual or rational Self), and the *Anandamaya Kosa* (the Spiritual or Blissful Self).

The final *Kosa* or Sheath, the highest stage of the individual self, consists of bliss. It is within the intellectual, mental, biological and physical self and is the subtlest of all. It corresponds to the *Praetapati*, the center of centers and the truth of truths. The realization of the spiritual or blissful Self leads to God-realization, having attained which the aspirant rises above all contradictions and antinomies. The two stages of self-realization, *Moksa* or *Jivanmukti* (liberation while living in the body) and *Videha Mukti* (final liberation or release after physical death), have been recognized by all the schools of Indian Philosophy. Thus the Upanisadic

thought is the very rock and foundation of the metaphysical as well as the ethical concepts of all the systems of Indian philosophy.

The Upanisads also regard man as four-dimensional by combining the causal intellectual ego and the spiritual Self as *Atman*. Society as an organic whole is constituted by *Atman* (Soul as the spiritual organ), *Buddhi*, (the administrative organ, the causal intellect), *Manah* (Mind, the skilled labour organ) and *Sarira* (the physical labour organ), retrospectively designated as the four castes, *Brahmanas* (the spiritual class), *Kshatriyas* (the administrative class), *Vaishyas* (the skilled labour class) and *Shudras*, (the labour class), based entirely on their bent of mind and voluntary adoption of a particular occupation.

The Vedic and Upanisadic Brahman are identical because of this four dimensionality viz., (1) The Ground (2) The Cause (3) The Supreme Self and (4) The Cosmic Form, corresponding to the Plotinian One, Nous, the World Soul and ensouled Matter or Nature.

This parallelism holds good as far as the constitution of man is concerned. According to the Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavadgita, Man is microcosmic Brahman, whose four-dimensionality is constituted by the sum of *Atman* (Pure Being), *Buddhi* (the Casual Self), *Manah* (creative psyche the mind), and *Sarira* (the physical body with five sense organs and five organs of action). It is noteworthy that in the Vedic tradition, the gradation from *Avyaya* Brahman (the Pure inexhaustible Ground of everything) to *Visvavrit* (the Cosmic form inclusive of the World Soul and Matter), that is from the One to Nature, in Plotinian language, is from the subtle and most fundamental to less subtle and dependent. The Plotinian concept of matter confirms this very gradation:

"That which is taken to be material, is in reality the Soul. It is an extension of Soul down below the normal level of Soul, or better, it is Soul in its lowest possible level of being. Just as all of the level of Soul is an extension of Mind down below in its normal level, so Mind is the One in an extension down below its normal level, or the One in its lowest possible level. Thus Plotinus' Ultimate is transcendent in its level as the One from all determinate being, but it is immanent in it as *Nous*!"

The Upanisads, as stated above, regard *Atman* (the Self or Purusha) as identical with man as miniature Brahman. The gradation in

the case of Brahman from *Avyaya* to *Visvavrit* is from subtle and most fundamental to less subtle and dependent as already stated. In the case of man, called *Adhyatma*, the gradation is from the most subtle to the most gross. Based on this fourfold cosmic metaphysics and human nature, are the fourfold social, ethical, philosophical and mystical systems in the Vedas, Upanisads and Bhagavadgita. Unlike Plato, the social system in the Vedic tradition is not threefold, but fourfold, because of the spiritual, the intellectual, the mental and the physical aspects. The fourfold values parallel to Platonic virtues are *Artha* (economic value) controlled by temperance; *Kama* (love), depending on courage and temperance; *Dharma* (ethical duty), depending on justice and courage; and *Moksha* (spiritual perfection), depending on wisdom. The Upanisads also state the fourfold nature of knowledge, based on the four levels of *Jagrad* (waking consciousness); *Svapna* (dream consciousness); *Susupti* (deep sleep consciousness or unconsciousness); *Turiya* (supra-consciousness, associated with the spiritual self, the causal self, the mental self and the physical self, respectively). The word *Cit* (consciousness) applies both to waking and dream consciousness and the word *Acit* (unconsciousness) as the ground of *Cit* (consciousness), is not to be understood as devoid of consciousness. *Turiya* is beyond the concept of *Cit* and *Acit*. Incidentally, Plotinus's gradation of the stages from the physical to the level of the One, so far as soul's journey back to the One is concerned, seems to be parallel to this hierarchy.

It seems important to mention that the philosophy of the Bhagavadgita propounds four, not three parts, as it is commonly believed. These four paths or methods or Yogas, of attaining enlightenment are: the *Buddhi* Yoga, corresponding to the spiritual aspect of man (the *Buddhi* here may mean *Nous*, which is closer to the One); *Jnana* Yoga corresponding to the intellectual or rational aspect, *Bhakti* Yoga, corresponding to the mental aspect; and *Karma* Yoga, corresponding to the physical nature of Man. It is pertinent to point out that the first six discourses of the Bhagavadgita are devoted to the *Buddhi* Yoga, the seventh and eighth discourses explicate the *Jnana* Yoga, the ninth to the twelfth discourses explain the *Bhakti* Yoga, and the last six discourses expound the *Karma* Yoga. This four dimensional trend of metaphysics, ethics, sociology, and practical spirituality in Indian Thought is undoubtedly based on the mystic experience of the One Ultimate Reality,

as experiential and is not a figment of imagination. The same explanation applies to the Plotinian metaphysics.

The One propounded by Plotinus as the basics of the Intelligence Nous, the World Soul and of Matter, is not a product of mere imagination, but that experientible indestructibility and everlastingness which pervades every being everywhere. It would be appropriate here to compare the notions of Matter and Brahman in both the Hindu tradition and Neoplatonism. The Isopanishad says "All this living and nonliving (existence) is permeated with Isa (God as Supreme Being), hence the way to the Supreme is to enjoy everything with an attitude of non attachment."<sup>2</sup>

According to Plotinus this everlastingness is present in Matter or Nature as well as in the Soul and Nous. While defining Matter Plotinus says "Matter then, makes the greatest contribution to the formation of bodies...so here in the material world, the many forms must be in something which is One...we can see that this is so because in our present experience things that are mixed together come to identity by having matter, and there is no need for any other medium, because each constituent of the mixture comes bringing its own Matter".<sup>3</sup>

The Bhagavadgita very clearly points out that the One's indestructibility is immanent everywhere: "Know that (Being) to be indestructible in which everything is rooted; no one is capable of annihilating it."<sup>4</sup>

Further, the substrate according to the Bhagavadgita is both potential and actual Being and becoming as coexistent ontologically:

*"Nasato Vidyate Bhavo  
Nabhavo Vidyate Satan  
Ubhycrapi Drishto Anlah  
Tunyo Tatva Darshibhili"*

That is:

Non-being cannot exist;  
Nonexistent cannot be;  
The seers have accepted this...ontology.<sup>5</sup>

Amazingly, Plotinus also arrived at this ontological notion of the substrate. He says: "One speaks of potential and actual existence; and one speaks of actuality in the class of existing things. We must consider

therefore what potential and what actual existence is. Is actuality the same as actual existence, and if anything is actuality, is it also actualy existent? or are the two different and is it not necessary for that which is actually existing to be actuality? Further, it is clear that there is potential existence in the World of Things perceived by the senses, we must not speak of potential existence simply; for it is not possible to exist potentially without being potentially anything...It is better and clearer to use "potential existence" in relation to "actual existence" and "potentiality" in relation to "actuality".<sup>6</sup>

It looks as if Plotinus is providing an intellectual explanation of the intuitively discovered nature of the substrate as both being and becoming or being and existence potentiality and actuality. As a matter of fact, his notion of the substrate was an intuitive discovery rather than an intellectual construct.

This very substrate is the receptacle of all. In the words of Plotinus, "What is called 'matter' is said to be some sort...of 'substrate' and 'receptacle' of forms...As for the question whether intelligible matter is eternal...intelligible realities are originated in so far as they have beginning, but unoriginated because they have not a beginning in time; they always proceed from something else, not as always coming into being like the universe, but always existing, like the universe There."<sup>7</sup>

Thus Plotinus points out that all the individual ties arise from the unmanifested substrate and that this substrate is the matrix of all the experiences of the senses and of the mind. The Bhagavadgita calls this nature the 'lower' nature or *apara prakrti*...So far as the substrate of the individuality is concerned, this nature is called *Avyakta* or unmanifested material ground known as *Pradhan* in Sankhya system and *Avyakta* in the Bhagavadgita: "*Avyaktat vyaktayah sarvah prabhavanti*." That is, all the individualities arise out of the unmanifested substrate.<sup>8</sup>

As lower nature or *apara prakrti*, this substrate has been beautifully expressed in the Bhagavadgita:

*"Bhumiraponalo vayuh kham mano  
Buddhirevaca ahamkara itivam me  
Bhinna prakrurasiadha"*<sup>9</sup>

That is, earth, water, fire, air, space (ether) mind, intelligence and ego are the eight different types of Nature. It is further stated that these are the lower nature which are dependent upon and rooted in One Supreme



Brahman. The point to be noted here is that the immanence of the One Ultimate Being in all the levels of existence from Matter to Nous and vice versa in the case of Plotinian philosophy and from the Avyaya to Vishvasrit and vice versa in the case of Indian Thought, has been propounded solely on the basis of immediate intuitive and mystical experience. This fact must be highlighted in the context of comparative study of Plotinus and Indian Thought especially because Plotinianism is an unique expression of Plotinus' Four-dimensional Philosophy. Any imposition of other influences on Plotinus would be out of place.

It is claimed that Plotinus's teachings were the culmination of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, since Plotinus followed chronologically Plato and his successors. But this culmination was not a mere summary of what the previous writers had stated. It may be granted that Plotinus' ideas derived their inspiration from Plato, whose philosophy he thoroughly studied. The greatness of his teaching, however, does not depend on his study of Plato nor on the observations of contemporary Christian traditions. Plotinus's philosophy was primarily the outcome of his personal inner experience and his spiritual development. His own intuitive experience, his meditation and the glimpses of the divine light, led him to his fundamental convictions, concluding that God is the source of all existence.

Plotinus's cosmology reveals the presence of individual differences and plurality of souls in the spatio-temporal world, emanating from one God, who is Himself infinite and undifferentiated. This One is also the Supreme God, identified with the light above light. Beyond this however, he tried to avoid the use of any positive concept to define God, lest it conceptually limit Him. Human soul individuates from the World Soul, which itself is an emanation from the infinite God. Before being incarnated, the soul was in a state of constant contemplation of the eternal Nous (Mind), and had complete knowledge of the good. Having separated from God and descended into the material world, it is now on its journey back to God and passes through various births in its ascent towards its Supreme Source. In the state of ecstasy, the soul is raised above all limitations and merges with the soul of God. Only thus reunited with its source can the soul retain true knowledge. These ideas cannot be labelled as the mere summary of a theoretical study of Plato or Aristotle on the part of Plotinus. Rather, they are the expression of intuitive inner experiences

arising from the link of the individual consciousness with the cosmic current.

When the intuition is honoured, and when the inner experience corroborates the external observation, the diversity is understood in its right perspective. Differences and duality are not abolished, but an insight into the underlying unity weaves a coherent and consistent pattern into the differences. Truth is then established as an organic whole of various interrelated parts, which are neither mutually exclusive nor absolutely independent. Reality is fundamentally One and essentially eternal.

## Endnotes

1. R. Baine Harris, Ed. *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, Vol. I in *Studies in Neoplatonism—Ancient and Modern*. SUNY Press, Albany, NY., 1976, p.5.
2. Isopanisad hyam 1.
3. Armstrong, ed. *Plotinus* London, 1966 II:4:12.
4. *Gita* 2:17.
5. *Ibid* 2:1.6.
6. *Plotinus* op. cit, vol. II: pp 155-157.
7. *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1 to 5, pp 107-117.
8. *Gita*, 8:18.
9. *Ibid* 7:4.

## Plotinus' Criticism of Materialism

Christos Evangelou

## I

In *Vita Plotini*, Porphyry provides us with valuable information about Plotinus' habits as a teacher and a writer.<sup>1</sup> From Porphyry's sympathetic presentation, Plotinus emerges as an inspired and inspiring teacher who, like Pythagoras, Socrates, Ammonius Sakkas, and other philosophers before him, was reluctant to commit his thoughts to writing.<sup>2</sup> Late in life, he was persuaded by his students to write down and circulate his advanced doctrines among the selective members of a small inner circle.<sup>3</sup> When they do not express his mystical experiences in metaphorical language, Plotinus' writings reflect the conversational style of the school discussions which would review the opinions of various Hellenic philosophers of the past on a given subject, and invariably end up in presenting the Platonic position as understood by Plotinus. Only two of the fifty-four treatises are engaged in polemics, *Enneads* II.9 and VI.1, and in both cases Plotinus assumed the role of the defender of Plato and genuine Platonism of the Old Academy. The former of the polemical treatises attacks the Gnostics for their misunderstanding of Platonic texts, while the latter criticizes both Aristotle and the Stoics for their audacity to propose radically new sets of categories as a substitute for the Platonic "genera of being".<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere I have analyzed the arguments and explained the reasons for which Plotinus found it necessary to criticize the Gnostics and to reject the Aristotelian doctrine of categories.<sup>5</sup> At the present I would like to consider the specific objections which Plotinus raised against what he considered as a Stoic set of categories in *Ennead* VI.1 which has not received much attention compared with his criticism of the Aristotelian set.<sup>6</sup>

These two sets of categories are functionally comparable in that each of them attempts to provide an ontologically adequate account of the sensible world, but they are equally unacceptable to Plotinus who, being convinced of its truth, wanted to revive the ontology of ancient Platonism with its emphasis on immaterial, incorporeal, and intelligible beings. It will become clear from our discussion that the debate had to do less with

logic and more with ontology which at the middle of the third century A.D. was about to take another turn away from the prevailing materialism. The time was ripe for the rebirth of Platonism of the Old Academy and Plotinus was ready to fight all opposition to such a revival. But before we come to consider Plotinus' specific objections to Stoic monistic and materialistic conception of the Cosmos, it would be helpful to place our discussion in its appropriate context.

## II

*Ennead* VI.1.1 opens with a paragraph in which Plotinus looks back at the history of Greek philosophy and sums up the opinions held by various philosophers regarding the number and nature of beings: "Some said there was one being, some a definite number, and some an infinite number; and in each of these groups, some said the one being was one thing and some another, and the same applies to those who said the number of beings was limited and those who said that it was infinite." Plotinus asserts that the relative merits of each of these positions had already been considered by others who rejected, with good reasons, the two extreme views which claimed that being is one or infinite in number. The consensus was that the number of categorically generic beings is limited and definite, but there was disagreement as to their correct number between the most important schools, the Peripatetic, the Stoic, and the Platonic, which had respectively declared for a tenfold, a fourfold, and a fivefold division of reality. Hence the problem. In his effort to solve this ontological problem and to prove that the Platonic division is philosophically sounder than either of the alternative divisions, Plotinus had to display great dialectical dexterity and a pugnacious spirit which are not typical of him.<sup>8</sup>

Plotinus' strategy develops in three phases. In *Ennead* VI.1. he criticizes both the Aristotelian tenfold and the Stoic fourfold divisions of beings or rather sets of categories<sup>9</sup> for many reasons but basically because neither of them seems to pay sufficient attention to the intelligible and immaterial realm which has, for the Platonists, the most important beings; in *Ennead* VI.2 he expounds and defends the Platonic fivefold division of beings as found in the *Sophist* 254c-255d, *to on*, *tauton*, *heteron*, *kinesis*, and *stasis*, because it articulates clearly the ontological relations of the intelligible beings; and in *Ennead* VI.3 he returns to consider the sensible realm of becoming for which he attempts to provide a new set of five

categories which differ from the Aristotelian categories.<sup>10</sup> This fact in conjunction with the fact that only six of the thirty chapters of *Enneads* VI.1 are devoted to criticizing the Stoic division of categories indicates that, for Plotinus, the real threat to the revival of Platonism was not the crude monistic materialism of the decaying Stoa, but the more subtle and sophisticated Peripatetic ontology which gave priority to sensible substances over the pure Platonic Forms.<sup>11</sup>

It is true that such Stoic doctrines as the unity and sympathy of the sensible cosmos, the function of *logos* and of providence in ordering and guiding all nature and the ideal of the wise man who practices *arete* and finds happiness in this life, did influence the thought of Plotinus. Some of these doctrines as well as many Aristotelian doctrines did find their way into the *Enneads* so that Porphyry is justified in stating "His (Plotinus') writings are full of concealed Stoic and Peripatetic doctrines. Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in particular, is concentrated in them."<sup>12</sup> However, since the categorical doctrine is not among those Stoic doctrines which influenced Plotinus' philosophy, it would seem that he had serious ontological objections against it.

## III

According to *Ennead* VI.25, 1-6, the Stoics distinguish four genera or categories of beings which he identifies as follows: substrates, substances or "subjects" (*ὑποκείμενα*) qualia or qualified things (*ποιὰ*); disposed things or "things in a certain state" (*πρὸς ἑχόντα*); and relatively disposed things or "things in a certain state in relation to others" (*πρὸς τι πρὸς ἑχόντα*).<sup>13</sup> Plotinus also claims that these genera are subsumed under a super genus, "the something" (*τὶ*) which is supposed to encompass both the corporeal, existent, and real things of the sensible world, as well as the incorporals; void, time, place, and the famous *λεκτά*.<sup>14</sup> This supposed super genus became the target of his first attack:

For, really, how incomprehensible and irrational this something of theirs is, and how unadapted to bodiless things and bodies. And they have not left any room for differences with which they will be able to differentiate the something. And this something is either existent or non-existent; if then, it is existent, it is one of its species; but if it is non-existent, the existent ■ non-existent. And there are innumerable other objections.

Well, we should leave those for the present and consider the division itself (VI.1-23, 6-12).<sup>15</sup>

In order to appreciate Plotinus' arguments against the stoic division of reality, we must keep in mind the basic tenets of their philosophy of nature.<sup>16</sup> For the Stoics the real world is one, living, finite, and corporeal being located in the infinitely expanded void, "like the seed in the womb."<sup>17</sup> It is permeated by the divine and vital *πνεῦμα* which is also material but active and responsible for the differentiations and qualifications of matter which gives rise to elements, living beings, and rational beings, all sympathetically related as parts of an integrated Cosmos.<sup>18</sup> In other words everything real is either matter or qualified matter, but the qualifications of matter are due to influence of *pneuma* which is to be understood as a material like fire-air.<sup>19</sup>

With this picture of the Stoic conception of the world in mind, it will be easy to understand the reason for which Plotinus concentrates the fire of his criticism on the first two genera: the *ὑποκείμενα* identified with material bodies and ultimately with matter; and the *τιὰ* identified with the qualified material bodies; while he is rather brief in his treatment of the other two categories, "the things in a certain state" and "the relatives". For instance, he is aware that the Stoics try to distinguish between "the certain state", as it applies to matter which produces the qualia, and as it applies to qualia which produces specifically what they call "things in a certain state." But, Plotinus objects, since the qualia themselves are nothing but "matter in a certain state", it would follow that "the things in a certain state" are ultimately related to matter. Besides, even if the positing of the third category is accepted as legitimate, Plotinus finds totally unacceptable its claim to substitute for such diverse Aristotelian categories as quantity, quality, place, time action, passion, position and possession, although in *Ennead* VI.3 he did not admit most of these categories into the fivefold list which he accepted as final.<sup>20</sup> He concludes with a remark about the fourth category:

But as regards the relative, if they did not class it under one genus with the other (things in a certain state) it would take another discussion to enquire if they give any reality to such (relative) states, since they often do not do so. And again it is absurd to put a thing which is subsequent to things already existing into the same genus as the things which were there

before: for one and two must be there first for there to be half and double." (VI.1 30, 24-28)

Plotinus' brief comment on the fourth category of relation and the relative contrasts with its importance for Ancient and Modern Skepticism and the enthusiastic treatment which it has received.<sup>21</sup>

However, about the other two categories especially the first one, Plotinus has something more interesting to say. Utilizing dialectically the Aristotelian distinctions between genera and species, prior and posterior, potentiality and actuality, substance and accidents, and matter and form, Plotinus is able to look critically at the Stoic category of *ὑποκείμενα*.<sup>22</sup> To summarize and paraphrase his argument (VI.1 25-27), it seems to Plotinus that the Stoics are mistaken in giving priority to matter by considering it as a first principle and at the same time as a genus of being to be classified with material bodies to which it gives rise, thus mixing carelessly what, in their account, is prior to that which is posterior. Furthermore, they speak of *hypokeimena* in plural, while the singular would be more appropriate, since their conception of matter is one continuous and indivisible mass.<sup>23</sup> It is also absurd to give priority to matter which is potentiality, instead of giving it to actuality, that is, the forms, the *rationes seminales* or the divine λόγος.

The absurdities seem to multiply for the Stoics who identified matter with body which itself is a composite of matter and some form or other unless. Plotinus remarks, they use the word "body" with a new meaning different from the common one which associates natural bodies with three-dimensionality and resistance.<sup>24</sup> Above all, by giving ontological priority and the place of honor to that which is indefinite, obscure, shapeless, lifeless, and mindless, that is, sheer matter, the Stoics reduce everything else including God to "matter in a certain state."

To Plotinus it does not make sense to hold, as the Stoics do, that substantiality is decreasing as one moves from matter to body, from bodies to living beings, and from living beings to rational beings because it is contrary to intelligible reality and its priority as he understands it. He describes as follows the root of the Stoic absurdities and the gulf which separates theirs and the Plotinian approach to reality and to the really real beings:

The cause of this is that sense-perception became their guide and they trusted it for the placing of principles and the rest. For they considered

that bodies were the real beings, and, since they were afraid of their transformation into each other, they thought that what persisted under them was reality, as if someone thought that place does not perish. Yet place also does persist for them, but they ought not to have considered that what persists in any kind of way was real being, but to see first what characteristics must belong to what is truly real, on the existence of which persistence for ever depends... But the most extraordinary of all is that, though they are assure of the existence of each and every thing by sense-perception, they posit as real being what cannot be apprehended by sense, for they do not rightly attribute resistance to it; resistance is a quality. But if they say they grasp it by intellect, it is an odd sort of intellect which ranks matter before itself and attributes real being to matter but not to itself. So, since their intellect is not real for them, how could it be trustworthy when it speaks about things more authentic than itself and is in no way related to them? (VI-1, 28, 5-26)

Regarding the second category, the qualia or qualified things, Plotinus proceeds in a similar manner. He raises a series of questions about the nature of the qualia and how they differ from the substrates in order to make the point that Stoic materialism has turned the world really upside down. To paraphrase his argument again, it runs as follows: Since the Stoics posit qualia as a second category, it must be different from their first category, the substratum which was shown to be material, passive and composite. Therefore, the second category must be simple, active and incorporeal. But that is not what the Stoics assert, when they talk about *ἐνὸλοι λόγοι* and characterize their second category as qualified matter and qualified substrata. If their *λόγοι* are nothing but "matter in a certain state," this would make the second category indistinguishable from the third. Plotinus' opponents must face the dilemma that either the *λόγοι* are real beings before they unite with matter in order to produce the qualified things, in which case they will have to give up their materialism; or the *λόγοι* are not real, in which case they must abandon their division of the categories because all of them are reducible to "matter in a certain state." But, Plotinus asks poignantly:

Who then, asserts this? Not, presumably, matter. But perhaps matter does assert it: for matter in a certain state is intellect; though the "in a certain state" is a meaningless addition. Matter, then, says this and understands it. And if talked sense, it would be surprising how it thinks and does the works of the soul, when it has neither intellect nor soul...But, as things

are, matter does not speak, but the speaker speaks with a large contribution from matter, to which he entirely belongs; even if he has a bit of soul, he speaks in ignorance of himself and of the power which is able to speak the truth about such things. (VII. 29f 27-36)

The irony with which Plotinus speaks in this passage highlights the gap which separates the philosophy of Platonic idealism which he wanted to revive from the decaying philosophy of stoic materialism.

#### IV

From the above observations and comments it follows that Plotinus did not treat the Stoic set of categories with much care nor did he approach it in the same serious manner as he did the Aristotelian set. The reason for this differential treatment perhaps has to do with two related factors which are: first, his adherence to the ontological interpretation of the categories, as opposed to the logical and the grammatical interpretations which were adopted by other Platonists;<sup>25</sup> and, second, his commitment to revive the philosophy of Plato which, in his interpretation, gave priority to the incorporeal and the intelligible being, while it gave to the sensible and corporeal cosmos a status of dependence. This commitment placed Plotinus in polar opposition to Stoic corporealism and materialism which he considered as unworthy of serious attention by any philosopher with some sense of self respect as an intelligent human being, a being capable of seeing reality as it really is by using not only discursive reason and also intuitive *noûs*.

Accordingly, believing that the Stoics were trying to conceal the sheer materialism of their philosophical system by drawing divisions upon divisions of beings within the same materialistic framework, Plotinus was unprepared to study the Stoic doctrine of the categories in the scholarly and dispassionate manner which his student Porphyry, for example, and Simplicius later, displayed in their numerous commentaries on Aristotle's works. Unlike these commentators, Plotinus shows no interest and makes no effort to understand the Stoic position correctly, let alone sympathetically. For him nothing ontologically sound could come from a philosophy which put the feet in the place of the head, unless and until the system were to be turned around or rather literally up-side down.

Evidently Plotinus was able to do to Stoicism what Marx did to Hegelianism in modern times but in the reverse order. This clearly

indicates that the long battle between materialism and idealism is by no means over. However, the signs of our troubled times seem to favor the revival of the Plotinian version of Platonism whose categories and ontological priorities are destined to remain, as they have always been, opposed to materialism in all its shapes, Stoic or Epicurean, Marxist or Maoist, Ancient or Modern. More than any possible historical connections between the two, what makes Plotinus a permanent ally of the Indian genus is his determined opposition to materialism and his successful effort to revive the Platonism of the Old Academy with its emphasis on things immaterial, such as the Soul, the Intellect, and the one Absolute.

In conclusion, it would seem that Plotinian philosophy and Indian wisdom are destined to work together in assisting the human mind to comprehend the cosmos, to find its appropriate place in it, and to give meaning to its existence by seeing that the true, the good, and the beautiful all stem from the same ineffable Source. By the strength of their common wisdom, tolerance and enlightenment, Plotinian Platonism and Indian Spirituality can help post-modern humanity overcome anxious existentialism, atheistic materialism, and monotheistic fanaticism in any form of intolerant dogmatism.

## Endnotes

1. See *Vita Plotini in Plotinus*, 7 vols., ed. and translated by A. H. Armstrong, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978-1986. Unless stated otherwise all quotations will be from this edition.
2. The art of writing should be considered as distinct from the art of dialectic and the art of speaking. For one can be a great teacher, like Socrates and Ammonius, or a great thinker, like Heraclitus and Heidegger, without being a great stylist. In this sense, Plato was exceptional.
3. Porphyry was the most trusted of his students and accepted the responsibility of ordering and editing the treatises after the teacher's death, which became known as the *Enneads*.
4. In fact, the title of the three related treatises *Ennead* VI. 1, 2 and 3, is "On the Genera of Being."
5. See my *Aristotle's Categories and Porphyry*, Leiden: J. E. Brill, 1988, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1994, especially part Two; and "Plotinus' Anti-Gnostic Polemic and Porphyry's *Against the Christians*" in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, Richard Wallis and Jay Bregman, SUNY Press, 1988.
6. The general perception that the Stoic categories, unlike the Aristotelian categories, played no significant role in the development of Stoic logic might explain the lack of interest. On this see B. Mates, *Stoic Logic* (Berkeley, 1953), p. 18; and I. M. Bochenski, *Ancient Formal Logic* (N. Holland, 1951), p. 87.
7. Although Plotinus does not identify which view was held by whom of the Pre-Socratics, it is not difficult to guess, since he seems to follow the pattern used in the first book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. See also Armstrong's footnote information on this in his *Plotinus*, Vol. 1, p. 12.
8. Other scholars have noticed that this part of the *Enneads* is difficult and taxing reading. E.g. W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (New York, 1923) p. 194. Part of the difficulty relates to the fact that in his criticism of the Stoics and the Peripatetics Plotinus presupposes many commentaries which, although are not extant for us, were available and read in his school as a basis for the discussions to follow, as Porphyry informs us *Vita Plotini* 14.
9. Since he intends to apply the term *genos* to the intelligible realm of being which is more unified than the sensible realm of becoming, Plotinus prefers to refer to the Aristotelian and the Stoic divisions as *kategoriai*. For more on this important distinction I refer to my book, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-99.
10. "The Plotinian Reduction of Aristotle's Categories," in *Ancient Philosophy*, 7 (1988) 146-162.

11. Beginning with Porphyry, Plotinus' followers tried hard to reconcile Platonism and Aristotelianism by rehabilitating the doctrine of categories, as I have shown in my book *Aristotle's Categories and Porphyry*.

12. *Vita Plotini* 14.

13. The same names of the fourfold division is mentioned by Simplicius in *Aristotelis Categoriae commentarium*, ed. C. Kalbfleisch (Berlin, 1907), pp. 66-67. Modern discussions on the subject include: M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa* (Goettingen, 1948-49), vol. 1, pp. 69-70 and vol. 2, pp. 39-42; P. De Lacy, "The Stoic Categories as Methodological Principles," *TAPA*, 76 (1945): 246-263; J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 152-172; S. Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (New York, 1959), pp. 17-20; A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (London, 1974), pp. 160-163; A. Graeser, *Plotinus and the Stoics* (Leiden, 1972), Chapter Four; M. E. Reesor, "The Stoic Categories," *American Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1957): 63-82; and G. Reale, *The Systems of the Hellenistic Age*, tr. J. R. Catan, (New York, 1985) pp. 226-229. For the fragments see H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* (Berlin, 1905).

14. In SVF II, 501; also II, 333, the scholion from an anonymous commentary reads as follows: τρία δὲ τὰ καθολικώτατα ὁμώνυμα. ἐν. ὅν. τί. Κατὰ πάντων γὰρ τῶν ὄντων φέρεται ταῦτα, κατὰ μὲν Ἠλλάων τὸ ἐν, κατὰ Ἀριστοτέλη τὸ ὄν, κατὰ δὲ τοὺς Στωϊκοὺς τὸ τί.

15. It would seem that Plotinus utilizes here Aristotle's argument against those who posit being (τὸ ὄν) as a genus capable of synonymous predication: οὐχ οἷον τε δὲ τῶν ὄντων ἐν εἶναι γένος οὔτε τὸ ἐν οὔτε τὸ ὄν, *Metaphysics* 998b 22, also 1003b 23-24, 1017a 22-27, 1028a 10-b 7.

16. Plotinus' ontological approach to Stoic categories is closer to Sambursky's than to De Lacy's interpretations in the works cited in note No. 13. The former has tried to analyze the Stoic physics and the latter the Stoic ethics in terms of their doctrine of categories with some success.

17. SVF I, 37a, Stobaeus uses this beautiful metaphor to indicate the place of the divine λόγος in matter, but it could be applied to the whole world nested in the infinite abyss of void.

18. For more details on the stoic cosmology, see Sambursky, Long, Pohlenz, and Reale as cited in note No. 13.

19. SVF II, 359; II, 399-401; and II, 449.

20. On this see my "The Plotinian Reduction of Aristotle's Categories," *Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1988) 146-162.

21. E. G. Long, *op. cit.*, p. 163, writes "For this reason the fourth of the Stoic categories has the widest and most interesting implications. Where all things are interdependent, an idea which has today taken on a particular ecological significance, the concept of relationships is a fundamental one." See also Sambursky, *op. cit.*, p. 18-20.

22. It seems to me that Professor Reesor, *op. cit.*, is inordinately critical of Plotinus because of his use of non-Stoic criteria in his criticism of the Stoic doctrine of categories.

23. Ὀγκος is the word used here by Plotinus which gives the impression that, in his mind, the Stoic emphasis on matter and bodies seemed to reduce Platonic ontology to tumorous oncology.

24. Plotinus was perhaps irritated that the old Platonic definition of real being, "that which has the power of acting and being acted upon," *Sophist* 248c, was appropriated by the Stoics and applied to material bodies. On the Stoic conception of body, see also Sambursky, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-44; Long, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-158; and Reale, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-259.

25. I have dealt with this problem in "Alternative Ancient Interpretations of Aristotle's Categories." In *Language and Reality*, ed. K. Boudouris (Athens, 1985), pp. 163-173.

## Plotinus and Vedanta

S. R. Bhatt

Every system of thought is basically a product of the felt needs and aspirations of its age and of the sociocultural milieu. In its rise it may envelop its past and may also gather influences from its surroundings. There is nothing wrong or unnatural about it. It is in this background one should view the striking similarity in fundamental ideas between Plotinus and Vedanta. The doctrinal affinity in respect of the Vedic and the Vedantic 'Tadekam' and the 'One' of Plotinus is remarkable and attracts comparative studies. The half century old controversy as to whether Plotinus was influenced or not by Indian thought and whether Plotinus is himself Vedantic seems not very worthwhile.

In their metaphysical reflections both Plotinus and Vedantic thinkers regard the One negatively as unknown and undefined and positively as unity of Being, Thought and Bliss (*Sat*, *Cit*, and *Ananda*). Both ascribe *freedom* (*svarat*) and *volition* (*Kama*) to the One. Both insist that the One is immanent and transcendent in many.

This reference to doctrinal affinities, however, should not lead one to overlook the fact that the setting and the conceptual framework within which these two philosophies operate are different from each other and therefore any far fetched interpretation has to be avoided in the zeal to point out their similarity.

Plotinus and Vedantic thinkers highlight the need for metaphysics. Every thinking person sooner or later asks himself the questions, "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "How did I get here?" "What is my future?" etc. These questions inevitably give rise to other questions about the nature of existence of both self and the world. Both Plotinus and Vedantic thinkers held the deep conviction that, as Plotinus put it, "We have undoubtedly to believe that the truth has been discovered by some of the ancient and blessed philosophers." But he cautions us by adding that, "It is advisable to see who were those who found it and how we can ourselves reach it." (*Enneads* III.6.1.13-16). In the Nasadiya Sukta of the Rgveda the seer poses a query about the supreme truth as follows: "Who knows it directly?



Who would answer the questions: Out of what sort of cause has it originated? From where did this creation take place? The gods themselves came into this existence after this creation has taken place. Who can therefore say as to wherefrom all this originated? That out of which this origination took place, did it undertake this creation or did it not also not do so? Only its Lord who resides in the Supreme heavens knows that; or maybe He too does not."

But soon the Vedic seer recovers faith in the ultimate existence of one Supreme Being (*Sat*) which is all-pervasive (*Brahman*) and which is the essence of all (*Atman*).

In India, philosophy was always a faith by which people lived. Even when it was a critique of faith and questioned the old faith, it always created and substituted a new faith. Buddhism is an instance of this tendency. Faith alone leads to certainty and experience. Faith anticipates that we will reach the truth embodied and presupposed in the act of faith. This is what the Gita teaches, "The faith of each is in accordance with his nature, O Bharata, man is made of his faith, as a man's faith is, so is he." (XVII 7.3). The Chhandogya Upanishad declares, "When one has faith then one reflects, without faith one does not reflect. One reflects only when one has faith" (CL7.19). Plotinus also holds, "Thus we arrived at a proof. But are we convinced? A proof entails necessity but not conviction. Necessity resides in the intellect and conviction in the soul." (*Enneads* V.3.6.8.10; VI.1.4.32)

Faith, thus, must precede all ultimate knowledge (*paravidya*) which is a spiritual experience. Faith has to guide it, serve it as its criterion. But it is not a blind or irrational faith. It is a faith which is compatible with reason and which is grounded in spiritual experience and which seeks its culmination in that experience. Plotinus writes, "With my reason I find God. After I have found him I have not the same need for my reason as previously. God can be found by means of the laws of logic but these laws cannot analyze him. The power and indispensability of logic are freely granted; but in the case of simplex it is powerless; because its function is to analyze and a simplex is incapable of analysis. After I have reached the simplex by the power of my reason I contemplate that simplex because there is nothing else left for me to do." This is exactly what the Katha Upanishad says, "*Drsyate tvagryaya buddhya suksmaya*" (I.3) or, "*nayamatma pravacanena labhyo na medhaya na bahuna srutena*" (I.2)

There is such a striking similarity as if Plotinus were actually translating the Katha Upanishad.

In the primacy of experience reason, faith and scriptures all become mutually corroborative and supportive. But this experience is not applicable to sense experience which is incurably subjective, finite and ineffective, since it is based on exclusive attention to a few isolated brute facts with a total neglect of multifacetedness and unitive nature of things. *Paravidya* is not accumulation of more information but entering into new dimensions of reality; a unitive or integral experience which transforms the entire being, changes one's whole life and attitude. Professor K. S. Murty refers to it as commotion producing power (*The Indian Spirit*, p-134). Plotinus says that 'true knowledge' is the immediate intuition of the unity of beings. "In participating in true knowledge we are real beings; we are all together real beings and constitute but one being." Thus according to Plotinus the universal being is that in whose bosom every difference is absorbed, in which every distinction between subject and object comes to a complete end. Such an identity of self with universal being is not a rational conclusion reached by the discursive intellect but a special intuition arising from contemplation. It is not knowledge in the usual sense of the term since it is knowledge concerning the very subject of knowledge and the act of knowledge. It is the very presupposition in all knowledge (*Tasya bhasa sarvamidam vibhati*). As the Upanishads say, How can it (discursive intellect) know him through whom it knows everything? How can it know that which knows? You can not see that which sees in seeing, nor learn that which learns in learning, nor understand that which understands in understanding. There is no other outside of it to see, to understand and to know; "whoever does not know it knows it. Unknown by him who knows it is known by him who does not know".

In conclusion, it must be pointed out that this is not a metaphysics which is created in a library or in an armchair; but developed in the laboratory of real life situation with all concreteness. It is not an empty or barren speculation which could be in the west under the onslaught of logical positivism. It is not an abstract intellectual play with isolated and brute facts but an illumination of them in their inter-relatedness and interdependence. It is a way of life based on an integral view of life. It is a theory of action based on practical wisdom acquired through reflection on concrete experience, whether that experience pertains to a battlefield as in

the Gita or to the court of a king as in Brihadaranyakopanishad; or to the hermitage of a seer as in Chhandogya Upanishad or to the laboratory of a practicing scientist as in the Vaisesika thinkers experimenting on matter and motion; or to Caraka experimenting on vegetation. It is a darshana, a Weltanschauung, a way of life wherein one finds unity, peace, perfection and plenitude.

## Plotinus and Sankara Some Significant Affinities and Divergences

G. C. Nayak

Plotinus and Sankara, two thinkers from the ancient past, have in recent times often been dismissed too lightly by modern philosophers.

Neoplatonism has fallen into disrepute even in the West. It has been accused of not being faithful to Plato, of not being philosophy at all, and so on. Vedanta, especially Sankara's Advaita Vedanta, has been charged by some contemporary scholars, of propagating and promoting illusionism and destroying our normal outlook on life as a whole.

Some Western scholars, like P. R. Coleman-Norton for example, dismiss Neoplatonism as poetry rather than rational philosophy. "This is poetry, not philosophy, when rapture is exalted over reason, and in this essential process of Neoplatonism ancient philosophy abdicates".<sup>1</sup>

As for Indian philosophy, a band of self-appointed custodians of philosophy customarily dismiss the whole of Indian philosophy as mere mysticism, poetry, primitive thinking and so on.

It is in this context that we seek to revive the thoughts of these two great ancient thinkers. The question of their very relevance in the present-day world dominated by science and technology has first to be settled. Unless some relevance to current concerns can be established, there is little point in discussing or examining the substance of their thinking.

One must, however, ask the question: What is the ground of the claim of science and technology to pose as the final arbiter of relevance? Why should everything be tested on the anvil of science and technology? Even if we concede some dominant role to science and technology in determining relevance, that role cannot be all pervasive. For example, science and technology cannot dictate to us in such a way that no one is allowed to cherish classical music, or classical art and poetry.

Contemporary relevance or the absence of it cannot be predetermined, before one has some grasp of the content of the thought of these ancient masters. Contemporary relevance, to my mind, cannot be affirmed simply on the grounds, for example, that present day scientific findings are found to be in conformity with the Vedantic Wisdom of the

past. This in itself, even if it were the case, cannot prove anything. Neither Vedanta nor Science, to my mind would gain a sort of invincibility or sacrosanctity simply because they may perhaps seem to corroborate each other in and through some surface resemblance of theirs when differences are lost sight of. Science, after all, is ephemeral, and prone to change. It is, to say the least, falsifiable, in the words of Popper.

There is nothing like final or ultimate knowledge, Wisdom or explanation in science, nor is it a fact that there is a single unitary principle available in science as a key principle for the solutions of all possible problems. The scientist can dream of a time in future where such an explanation can be found, and this is nothing but a fond hope, I should say, on the part of a scientist with an inbuilt inveterate optimism. Hawking, one of the greatest cosmologists of the present day, thus gives us the hope that, "if we do discover a complete theory (of Physics), it should, in time, be understandable in broad principles by everyone, not just a few scientists. Then we shall all, philosophers, scientists and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find an answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason—for then we would truly know the mind of God".<sup>2</sup>

Even this hypothetical situation is controverted by scientists like Davis who think that "rational explanation for the world in the sense of a close and complex system of logical truths is almost certainly impossible. We are barred from ultimate knowledge, from ultimate explanation, by the very rules of reasoning that prompt us to seek such an explanation in the first place".<sup>3</sup> If this is what science is, what corroboration for ultimate principles in metaphysics, whether it is Neoplatonism or Advaita Vedanta, can be expected from the results of scientific pursuits? Perhaps we take to the wrong direction when we turn to science for either corroboration or criticism of a metaphysical theory. Neither Neoplatonism nor Vedanta can take pride simply because it is somewhat in a vague sense corroborated by the direction taken by present-day science. I am therefore, of the opinion that we have to seek criteria for their relevance, if any, elsewhere.

Moreover, there is one peculiarity about philosophy which needs to be noted *vis à vis* science. Scientific techniques, methodologies and findings may get outdated or outmoded, but this does not happen in philosophy, at least not in the way it happens in science. Philosophers and their philosophies, especially those who really count, seem to have a tendency to persist, even if they at times are undermined or shown to be of

greater relevance at a particular time. Both Neoplatonism and Vedanta have persisted in spite of their summary rejection, so to say, at the hands of some self-appointed custodians of philosophy, whether in the West or even in India itself.

As I understand the situation in philosophy, what survives in any philosophy worthy of its name, in spite of attacks from different angles and from various sources, is its adventure, so to say, in the world of thought, the conceptual shock or jerk and the intellectual commotion or upheaval effected by such an adventure. What survives is the novel way of looking at things, a direction given which may not be of any immediate utility but which may simply be the guiding spirit for in-depth researches to be carried on in future.

A pioneer shows the way in an experience hitherto unnoticed, engineers a value-shift that would bring about a fundamental change in our ordinary day-to-day outlook, life and experience; provides an insight or a coordinating thought that incessantly beckons us to take a dive into its immeasurable depth. All these and similar other factors in a genuine philosophical enterprise are those that survive against all odds, and even seem to have a tenacity that lasts for centuries. These factors are either neglected as simply useless or are welcomed as extremely relevant only because it serves a specific need of the time. Philosophy acquires importance, no doubt, in accordance with its contemporary relevance, but what I want to say is that philosophical enterprise can and should be assessed independently and irrespective of their contemporary relevance alone, for their merit is not merely confined to such utility in the contemporary world. The adventure in the domain of thought is in itself laudable, to say the least.

Shall we say that it is the mystical that has survived in both these thoughts, viz. Neoplatonism and Vedanta, and has been a constant source of attraction and enticement for many as much as it has also been a butt of ridicule by the so-called votaries of reason? Well, it may be so. There are elements in both these thoughts which can be construed as mystical from a certain point of view. And that mystical element continues to entice and excite us throughout the centuries.

But it would be wrong to put everything in Vedanta and Neoplatonism in one basket, under one blanket term viz. mystical. It is not exactly the mystical aspect of these great thinkers which I would like to highlight here, although I do not deny that the mystical in itself has its own

attraction. I would here like to draw the attention of all concerned to that aspect of Plotinus' philosophy where he has highlighted the life and conduct of "a Sage, a Master in Dialectic" as Plotinus calls him. "Once a man is Sage," says Plotinus, "the means of happiness, the way to good, are within, for nothing is good that lies outside him. Anything he desires further than this he seeks as a necessity, and not for himself but for a subordinate, for the body bound to him, to which since it has life he must provide the needs of life; not, however, the needs of the Sage himself, but only of his body. He knows himself to stand above all such things, and what he gives to the lower he so gives as to leave his life undiminished."

This is very significant indeed because it draws our attention to a type of life that is not ordinary in any sense. "A thousand mischances and disappointments may befall him and leave him still in the tranquil possession of the Term", says Plotinus. "The Sage", according to him, "sees things very differently from the average man: neither ordinary experience nor pain and sorrows whether touching himself or others, pierce to the inner hold. To allow them any such passage would be a weakness in our soul". It is important to note that, according to Plotinus, "pleasure and health and ease of life will not mean any increase of happiness to him nor will their contraries destroy or lessen it. When in one subject, a positive can add nothing, how can the negative take away?" The Sage is "ever cheerful, in order of his life ever untroubled, his state is fixedly happy and nothing whatever of all that is known as evil can set it awry—given only that he is and remains a Sage." What is noteworthy about him is that he "can never be deprived of his vision of the All-good."

"For man and especially the Sage", says Plotinus, "is not the complement of soul and body: the proof is that man can be disengaged from the body and disdain its nominal goods". The Sage thus "can be fearless through and through. Where there is dread there is not perfect virtue, the man is some sort of a half-thing." Although it is true that the Sage "will give to the body all that he sees to be useful and possible", at the same time it is to be noted that "he himself remains a member of another order." Referring to Plato in this connection, Plotinus points out in unmistakable terms what Plato rightly taught, that he who is to be wise and to possess happiness draws his good from the Supreme, fixing his gaze on that, becoming like to that, living by that".<sup>4</sup> This conception of Plotinus, though not identical with, is somewhat similar to and reminds us of the conception of *Jivanmukti* in Indian thought, especially in the Advaita

Vedanta of Sankara. Let us see at some length what Sankara has to say about *Jivanmukta*, a person who is supposed to be liberated while he is alive, a free man, in the Vedantic framework.

Before going into the details of *Jivanmukti*, however, I would like to say a few words here regarding another common aspect of Plotinus' and Sankara's thought. I do not think we can make much of the apparent resemblance between Plotinus' idea of unity and Sankara's idea of non-duality. In Advaita, non-duality is not the same as unity. Sankara is quite explicit about it. Moreover, the method by which Plotinus arrives at unity as the ultimate principle is not the same as the method adopted by Sankaracarya. I would therefore desist from highlighting these surface similarities between Plotinus and Sankara. But when we come to consider the life and conduct of a Sage, as envisaged by Plotinus, as also the life and conduct of a *Jivanmukta*, I think we are on surer grounds.

Whether one has his eye on unity as Plotinus envisages it or on the realization of the non-duality of one's own self as conceived in Sankara's Vedanta, one notices in both a unique equanimity and tranquility of mind very rarely found in ordinary human beings. Both the Sage and the *Jivanmukta* are happy under all possible circumstances. The above quotations from Plotinus speak for themselves; further Sankara in his *Vivekacudamani* says "*Sthitaprajna yatirayam yah sadanandamasnute*" i.e., he being a man of equanimity is always in a state of happiness.

"*Istanistarthasampraptau samadarasitayaimani, ubhayatra-vikaritvan jivanimuktusya laksanam*" says Sankara; whether something desirable or otherwise comes on his way, the *Jivanmukta* is not affected thereby, because of his equanimity. The difference between the enlightened who is free and the unenlightened who is in bondage is that the former remains undisturbed and patient through his affliction due to *prarabdha*, whereas the latter is impatient and suffers on account of this,<sup>5</sup> Plotinus says, "Adverse fortune does not shake his felicity: The life so founded is stable ever". and yet, as Plotinus has aptly observed, "this does not make the Sage unfriendly and harsh: it is to himself and in his own great concern that he is the Sage; giving freely to his intimates of all he has to give, he will be the best of friends by his very union with the Intellectual Principle". According to Sankara *Jivanmukta* or the enlightened person is both *vimuktasanga* (devoid of attachment) and *Karunyasindhu* (ocean of mercy) or *Sadaparadhyambuddhama* (for ever the boundless ocean of mercy).<sup>6</sup>

It may not be out of place here to point out that Russell's idea of emancipation, though not identical of course, bears a striking resemblance with the above ideals of the life of a Sage or a *Jivanmukta*. It may sound strange that the models of men set before us by a Plotinus or a Sankara should find an echo in the mind of an empiricist of the 20th Century, but one should not forget that Russell was after all a humanist also, a person who was very much concerned with human life and welfare. So when it comes to stipulating what constitutes the ideal life and conduct in human affairs, it is no wonder that a modern thinker's words should bear a striking resemblance to those of a Plotinus or of a Sankara when they refer to the life and conduct of a Sage or a *Jivanmukta*. This only speaks of a largely unfulfilled dream of mankind, or rather a dream that has been fulfilled only occasionally, if at all, in the unusual life and conduct of some extraordinary person.

The relevance of this model lies precisely in that it should serve as ■ beacon light for the entire humankind. "To abandon the struggle for private happiness, to expel all eagerness for (gratifying) temporary desire, not to burn with passion for external things"—this is emancipation or free man's worship as Russell<sup>7</sup> calls it; it is a beacon light, a model set before humans, irrespective of one's caste or creed, of the locality or time to which he may belong. This is true both in the case of the *Jivanmukta* of Sankara and the life of a Sage as Plotinus envisages it.

Whether it is the 'Sage' of Plotinus, the *Jivanmukta* of Sankara or an 'emancipated person' of Russell, these notions could be taken as performing only a regulative function in our discourse. If '*Jivanmukti*', 'emancipation' and 'Sage-hood' are taken as regulative concepts, if this is their logical status, or to use the well known Rylean terminology, their logical geography, then it would be not very reasonable to search for a *Jivanmukta* or a Sage amidst ordinary living human beings. But Sankara does not take '*Jivanmukti*' as a mere regulative concept, for a *Jivanmukta* alone can be the teacher and the guide of the unenlightened in the ocean of samsara, according to him. The Guru or the guide whom the inquirer (*tattvajijnasu*) is supposed to approach is described in *Vivekacudamani* as *akamahatah* (unsmitten by desires), *Brahmavittamah* (a knower of Brahman par excellence), *brahmanyuparata* (one who has withdrawn himself into Brahman), *ahetuka dayasindhu* (a boundless reservoir of mercy that knows no cause), etc.<sup>8</sup>

There exist great and noble souls, says Sankara, calm and magnanimous, who do good to humanity as does the Spring season, (*Santa mahanto nivasanti santo, vasantavaliokahitam carantah*), and who, having themselves crossed this dreadful ocean of birth and death, help others also to cross the same without any private motives whatsoever.<sup>9</sup> In this context, Sankara's words, *vasantavallokahitam carantah* (Doing good to humanity like the Spring) refer to the spontaneous goodness and kindheartedness of the enlightened, while they themselves remain unperturbed amidst pleasure and pain. This means that Sankara did not regard *Jivanmukti* as a mere regulatory concept. And there seems to be no sufficient reason to think that Plotinus regarded the concept of 'Sage' as a mere regulative concept either. I would therefore submit that all these thinkers took the concepts in question as having application in this world of ours; persons, according to them, should be judged in accordance with how near they got to such a perennial model of humanity, which though rare, is by no means non-existent.

## Endnotes

1. *The Encyclopaedia Americana* (International Edition, Americana Corporation, 1980)
2. Stephen Hawking. *A Brief History of Time* (New York, 1989), p.185
3. Paul Davis. *The Mind of God* (Simon & Schuster, 1992)
4. Plotinus. *The Six Enneads*, translated by S. Mackenna and B. S. Page (Encyclopaedia Britannica, London 1952). All quotations from Plotinus cited in this paper are from *ibid*.
5. Cf. Vidyaranya, *Pancadasi*, "Na kleso jnaniro dhairyamudhah klisyatyadhairyatah".
6. Sankaracarya, *Vivekacudamani*, 35 & 486
7. Bertrand Russell. *A Free Man's Worship and other Essays* (Unwin Paperbacks, 1976), p.17.
8. Sankaracarya, *op.cit.*, 33.
9. *Ibid*, 37

## Man's Predicament—The Unique Indian Experience and the Neoplatonic Tradition

Gopal Chandra Khan

Writing on the history of Greek philosophy Edward Zeller acknowledged that of all the people of antiquity, apart from the Greeks, only the Chinese and the Indians were philosophers, though there is no connection between the philosophical systems of the Chinese and the Indians, nor between theirs and that of the Greeks.<sup>1</sup> About Indian Philosophy he comments: "The Indians have indeed produced various philosophical systems, but Indian philosophy never lost contact with religion and never became independent. Its other-worldly character seems strange to our mind."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Greek philosophy, in Zeller's opinion, was built up by the strength of independent human thought, by the *logos*, which claimed to explain reality in a natural way.

Zeller, however, noticed the absence of this original feature of Greek philosophy to a large measure in Hellenistic Jewish philosophy, in Neo-Pythagoreanism, NeoSkepticism and Neoplatonism, all of which were conceived in Alexandria where the Greek and the Oriental world met and mingled. He therefore regarded these as not truly Greek Philosophy. In particular, "neoplatonism with its need of revelation instead of independent investigation carried to its limit the development begun in neo-Pythagoreanism and thus completed the suicide of philosophy."<sup>3</sup> To sum up: Neoplatonism is not wholly Greek and not wholly philosophy; its unphilosophical character is due to the presence of oriental influence in it. It is needless to say that the "Oriental influence" that Zeller here speaks of is the Indian influence, and thus goes history.

In this short space we do not wish to contest Zeller, we only explain one meaning of philosophy that the philosophers of ancient India upheld. This meaning we observe the Neoplatonists also discovered anew or endorsed. This appears strange to Zeller because he shares the original Greek view according to which all philosophy begins in wonder, and

which Plato<sup>4</sup> and Aristotle<sup>5</sup> regarded as reason's divine discontent, prompting human beings to enquire into the secret springs and principles of (the world regarded as) nature and thence acquiring philosophical wisdom. It is certainly true that philosophical wisdom (*sophia*) in the Greek sense included not only a theoretical understanding of the world, but also a certain attitude to life; but philosophical wisdom always influences life. For the Greek it was the pleasure of philosophical wisdom that mattered; it tasted so good that the philosopher was prepared to renounce other mundane pleasures of life for its sake, and it was this intellectual pleasure that sustained philosophical enquiry in the original Greek sense.

Indians of the ancient world with their very long tradition in philosophical quest and enquiry have, however, their own experience from which to speak. They found that philosophic reflection that began in wonder, as soon as it ran its course, seemed to end in despair. Thus, instead of giving rise to intellectual pleasure it created intense intellectual pain; instead of making philosophic living possible it made life unbearable. The world on which the Philosopher naturally lived from the beginning of his life seem to have ultimately receded to an inaccessible distance. Left thus utterly abandoned and disconsolate he developed a deep crisis in his inner existence. He was now in a fundamental predicament; he should either give up philosophy and return to uncritical living or live in an understanding of the emptiness of the world and still live in that world. For the philosopher it was a trying situation demanding a prompt and quick solution.

From all accounts it appears that the Skeptics among the philosophers of ancient Greece also came up against these problems of philosophy. They found a quick solution in executing an *epoche* with regard to all philosophy, which they claimed gave them the peace of *ataraxia*. It is however, difficult to conceive the real import of *epoche* or the meaning of that peace which *epoche* claimed to have produced. In any case, Immanuel Kant thought that Skepticism is a relapse into the uncritical or unphilosophical attitude of mind.

The Indians never advocated skepticism, and neither did the Neoplatonists. Both the Indian Sages and the Neoplatonists wanted to be positive towards philosophy, and proposed identical solutions to the problems confronted in the course of philosophizing. They pointed out that the problems of philosophy never remain mere theoretical difficulties, but

enter into life in such ways as to constitute living experience. Thus in proposing solutions to the problems of philosophy they insisted upon a fundamentally new kind of experience. This new experience will come, they claimed, through a complete transformation of man's inner life.

It may not now be very difficult to see why philosophy was conceived as *mokshasastra*, or a discipline that leads to man's salvation. In India, they called it *paravidya* as distinguished from *aparavidya*. *Aparavidya* is mundane philosophy, or what Hegel regarded as 'thinking study of things'. It might well begin with wonder, but will ultimately end in chaos and confusion, getting life into its fundamental predicament and unresolved crisis.

Where *aparavidya* ends *paravidya* begins, for which crisis rather than wonder is the beginning. Its objective is not to satisfy man's intellectual curiosity but to bring relief to the tormented soul. The philosopher who exercises in *paravidya* is a lonely consciousness braving his way to recapture the world that once deserted him and threatened his existence. He succeeds in so far he truly expands or widens his inner life so that the whole of reality gets merged in it and nothing is left outside as the 'other'. Plotinus, the founder of the Neoplatonic tradition, also explained this possibility of man's inner development. He saw no possible limits to soul's possible expansion, no stopping place to fix its limits, and no demarcation line between itself and the 'All'.<sup>6</sup>

The older Greeks explained that wonder as reason's natural impulse pushes man into philosophy. But they did not further explain the significance of wonder in man's life, or for that matter admit any goal/fulfillment (*telos*) of reason. The Indians, on the other hand, explained man's philosophical enterprise as the soul's tryst with destiny. Man's life on earth is a journey towards truth. It is a painful and difficult journey, but reach the end of the journey he must; salvation through suffering is his destiny. Plotinus characterized it as soul's rough and arduous return journey, homecoming, as ascent to the union with the One, the All.<sup>7</sup>

The Indian experience says that man's life on earth is full of suffering. The opposite of suffering is bliss, but where is bliss in this world! There are only pleasures and pains. According to the natural tendency of the mind, pleasures are sought after and pains are sought to be avoided. But what initially appears to be pleasure ultimately proves to be pain in disguise. Actually, both pleasure and pain are suffering in different

forms. Then, what is the meaning of a suffering life? The Indians explained that suffering is a constant reminder to the sufferer that as yet he lives in unfulfilled purpose. Since the man feels the urge to achieve his goal, but has no clear knowledge of what he is seeking for, he is perpetually in distress. In other words, man's inner greatness as coupled with his basic ignorance is what the Indians called *avidya* (a beginningless cosmic nescience), and what Plotinus regarded as soul's *tolma*—an illegitimate self-assertion and desire of movement for movement's sake, or the movement of passage from one form of living to another.<sup>8</sup> Through constant suffering and constant enterprise he returns to himself, is redeemed, and his ordeal is over. In the beginning of his earthly life a man works with his natural belief that all that he covets is to be found in the world out there. But the world never satisfies him. His desire gets aggravated, and he becomes more and more restless. In this restlessness he sometimes starts reflecting. Through intense reflection he may realize that everything in this world is transitory, and that what he is seeking for is something permanent. This creates frustration, and his faith in the world gets shaken. Thereupon he tries to find a new ground, and until he finds it he suffers a deep crisis in his inner experience. In this his hour of spiritual distress, philosophy as *paravidya* comes forward as guide and brings him permanent relief. It shows the way to man's inner greatness, his divinity, which is beyond any meanness of the world. As long as man lives in ignorance of his basic spiritual identity, and regards the world out there as the only reality, he finds himself identified with his body, a small entity occupying an insignificant corner of the world. But if he ever learns to see his spiritual identity in its proper light, he discovers the divine in him, his true and basic self which is vastly greater than the world and which, instead of being supported by the world really supports the world.

As Plotinus described his ecstatic soul-experience: The soul is not in the body, but the body is in the soul, penetrated and enveloped by it; the soul is not in the world but the world is in the soul, as in his great image floating like a net in the sea.<sup>9</sup> It is a truly great experience which removes every uncertainty from one's life and resolves one's crisis once for all.

Standing on the verge of a century, thinking of welcoming the next, the twenty-first, our mind is none the less filled with gloom. What kind of a world are we living in, and what kind of a culture are we projecting—boxer is a nation's great man, a mass-meeting attended by millions is a triumph, a political theory is a consumer theory, the relation

between nation and nation is merely a trade relation, a presidential election is fought and won with a promise 'I give you my countrymen, more consumer goods', and such further nonsense! What stupid answers we give to the great philosophical question; what is Man?—Man is conceived as a mere creature of flesh and blood, a producer of consumer goods and a consumer.

But what will happen to this endless consumerism? What if no viable alternative source of energy comes up? What if population explosion continues unabated? What if the ozone layer goes on decaying this way? What if the planet becomes uninhabitable? Through all this turmoil, hopefully one question still arises in our mind: Why is man so lacking in himself? Is he born to be ever defeated? Our great ancestors showed us the way. We must be reborn in their philosophies and struggle to bring back the divine in man to the divine in the All. We shall resolve our crisis in the same way as the great Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana, the great Arjuna, the mighty warrior of the Mahabharata, and the great Siddhartha, who later became the Buddha, resolved the crisis of their lives.



## Endnotes

1. Edward Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, tr. L. R. Palmer, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1955, p.2.
2. *Ibid.*, p.2.
3. *Ibid.*, p.291.
4. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155 D
5. Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, I,2,P 982 b.
6. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.5.7.
7. Cf. Plotinus' last words as recorded by his friend and physician Eustochius.
8. Plotinus *Enneads* 5.1.1; 3.7.11.
9. *Ibid.*, 4.3.9; 4.3.20.

Rationality and Ritual  
in Neoplatonism

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## Introduction

It has become the practice in the present day to regard Neoplatonic ritual as a sign of the decline of ancient philosophy into superstition.<sup>1</sup> In one form or another this interpretation has prevailed throughout this century.<sup>2</sup> In these approaches it is assumed that there is little about Neoplatonic ritual that reflects rationality.

Although there is much that can be learned from these studies, it is also the case that no one has paused to examine the adequacy of their particular notion of rationality for the separation and explanation of ritual, philosophy, and science. Very briefly: it is a hypothetical-deductive model of rationality with a notion of correspondence rules. It can be summed up as follows:

According to this account, scientific theories, the foundation and success of modern knowledge, are based on a distinction between theoretical terms ("entities" or "forces") and observational terms ("observed happenings"). Correspondence rules (operational definitions, rules of interpretation) define the theoretical terms, guarantee the cognitive significance of theoretical terms, and specify the procedure for applying the theory to what is observed.<sup>3</sup>

It is on this model of scientific explanation that philosophical and scientific knowledge are marked off from religious thought.<sup>4</sup> Unobservable entities, mystical notions, or metaphysical entities are excluded by this model of rationality. Since they are beyond empirical verification or falsification, religious belief and rituals are judged as nonsense, or unintelligible.

This model has been thoroughly dismantled by contemporary philosophers of science on the basis of its notion of "correspondence rules," which relate invariant observational statements to unobservable entities in theoretical statements.<sup>5</sup> The very validity or coherence of

correspondence rules marked the demise of the nomological-deductive model of science.

This fact is significant for the purposes of this study because it requires us to seriously question traditional approaches to rationality and ritual in Neoplatonism.<sup>6</sup> More significantly, it compels us to find another definition of rationality.<sup>7</sup>

Symbolic and rationalist attempts to define rationality argue that rationality is a means/ends decision-making process.<sup>8</sup> It is instrumental. For a belief or action to be rational all that is required is that there be good reasons, or a requirement of adequate evidential support for them. In short, rationality involves pursuing ends that are coherent, and employing means that are appropriate to those ends.<sup>9</sup>

A person is considered rational when (a) he pursues ends that are mutually coherent, and (b) he employs means that are appropriate to the ends pursued: "the critical appraisal implied by the attribution of rationality is, judged in light of the agent's belief, the action he decided upon constitutes a reasonable or appropriate choice of means for achieving his end."<sup>10</sup>

This means that if we are to choose a rational course of action in pursuit of given ends, we have to take into account all available information concerning such matters as the particular circumstances in which the action is to be taken; the different means by which, in these circumstances, the given ends might be attained; and the effects that may be expected from the use of the different available means in pursuit of ends.<sup>11</sup> Thus, to judge the rationality of a decision, we have to consider what information is available to the decision-maker, what reasons did he have for believing it true, and its suitability, judged by the information, for achieving its specified objective. Rationality can be adequately defined as a means/ends calculation. Rationality is instrumental, and the criteria of rationality are provided by the believer who culls them from his cultural system.

This definition of rationality allows Neoplatonic ritual action and belief into the domain of rationality.<sup>12</sup> It may well be that these ritual beliefs are mistaken, but this does not imply irrationality, or sheer non-rational expressiveness. For within its Neoplatonic cultural context ritual stands as an element within a wider rational system. Its means are appropriate, and its ends are coherent because for later Platonists ritual is among the best ways of accomplishing a series of intended objectives, such as the ascent of the soul and communion with the divine.

It is suggested that much can be drawn from this definition of rationality and approach to ritual for the study of cognition and magic in Neoplatonism. Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus can be used to illustrate the extent to which ritual reflects a kind of rationality, for these Neoplatonists grounded much of their theurgical beliefs and practices on a means/end calculation.<sup>13</sup> What needs to be done is to describe and interpret the data available concerning theurgy. We need to know what these Neoplatonic agents believed about ritual, and why they thought it rationally plausible.

The issue addressed in the following pages is the examination of Neoplatonic views of the relationship between cognition and magic, culled from the writings of Iamblichus and Proclus. To keep this paper within appropriate limits and yet show the range of functions which rationality and ritual display in Neoplatonism, the discussion will concentrate on Neoplatonic views of cognition, their understandings of the means/end relationship between cognition and ritual, and their judgements concerning the rationality of ritual. These are largely based on epistemological and psychological grounds.

## I. Thesis

Plotinus and his heirs stand at an important point in the history of the interpretation of the rationality of ritual. With caution the following can be said of later Platonic views of cognition, the relationship between cognition and ritual, and the rationality of ritual:

A. The starting point for the study of rationality and ritual in early Neoplatonism is epistemology:

- The notion that the mind perceptively imagines being erases a divided line which linked perception with particulars and intellection with universals.
- The notion that a sensible thing instantiates being marks an inversion of an older Platonic paradigm which claims that a sense object imitates being.

B. The reification of perception and imagination forms the basis for the legitimization of magic and theurgy by Neoplatonists:

- This intelligible world is instantiated in sensible objects such as statuary or in sensible things such as temples.
- Through perception one imaginatively gains entrance to the intelligible world, thereby attaining communion with the gods.
- Through perception the soul imaginatively grasps a divine world and gains salvation.
- Ritual and the salvation of the soul are intimately linked to one another. Attainment of the intelligible world and communion with the gods is effected through theurgy.

C. These notions constitute the main source from which a theory of the rationality of ritual are constructed:

- Ritual is efficacious in terms of means because there is adequate epistemological evidence to suggest that theurgy is suitable for achieving its specified objective—entrance into the intelligible world and communion with the gods.
- Ritual is done for certain reasons. It can be explained as a means to an end—the salvation of the soul.
- Ritual can be rationally explained and justified from within a massive network of philosophical postulates. It can be explained holistically as elements within a rational system.

## II. Definition of Topic

What is implied in the simple Greek word *lagon*, hip? Historians of Neoplatonism can be trusted to ask such questions. The occasion is famous, the figure celebrated. Hecate's hip pours forth a divine oracle; Porphyry and later Proclus are suitably present ready to give the correct interpretation:

About the cavity of the right hip is poured forth in abundance the plenteous liquid of the primordially generated soul who entirely ensouls the light, the fire, the ether of the worlds. In Hecate's left hip exists the source of virtue which remains wholly within and does not give away its virginity.<sup>14</sup>

If it is possible to imagine such hips you have entered the world of Neoplatonic philosophy and religion. For by (*lagon*) Porphyry and Proclus mean that Hecate's flanks symbolize cosmic order and virtue. One hip contains the signs (*symbola*) of the natural order and the other is

the source of the sublunary virtues (*aretai*) the goddess dominates. Such hips require a brief summary of their significance.

Hecate clearly possesses hips worthy to be remembered. Yet what makes them so memorable? To appreciate the boldness of this later Platonic proposition we need only to contrast it with the earlier Platonic one.<sup>15</sup> For early Platonists a statue of Hecate visibly imitates transient becoming. For the Platonist *aisthesis* yields an opinionated reflection of the transient, physical arrangement of the sensibles, not a true perception of the ideas or the symbols of the gods. Consequently, her hips aesthetically symbolize particulars—they are mere icons of cosmic order and virtue.<sup>16</sup> For later Platonists a statue of Hecate visibly embodies ideal being. Her hips noetically symbolize universals—the right cosmic order and the left the source of virtue.

The notion that *aisthesis* deals only with particulars, while *noesis* only refers to universals, is called into question by this imaginative, Neoplatonic perception of Hecate's hips. For the Neoplatonist perception (*aisthesis*) provides entrance into an imaginative apparition of the fixed, noetic order of the intelligibles, even of the divine forms themselves. This understanding of the relation between perception and intellection is unknown in the early Academy.

The effects of this Neoplatonic proposition are considerable. If Hecate's hips had captivated Porphyry and Proclus merely in the manner they would have pleased Plato, we would not be reflecting on her statuesque anatomy in the manner of the two Romes, the old one on the Tiber and the new one on the Bosphorus—but in the manner of classical Athens where Plato taught that rationality and ritual were not complementary, but exclusive notions.<sup>17</sup> This position is overturned, beginning with Plotinus.

## I Iamblichus

### A. Aesthetic Pattern

At this point, Porphyry puts his finger on the central difficulty in all attempts to elevate *aisthesis* to the level of *noesis*. Beyond the indirect evidence of sense perception lies the solid evidence of the intellect. Knowledge of the intelligible world and union with the divine depends on intellection of the intelligibles, not perception of the sensible world and apperception of images of intelligible forms and the gods.<sup>18</sup>

Perception depends on the speculative interpretation of the imagination and this evidence has to be recognized for what it is. For Porphyry, like Plotinus, the difficulty with perception is an acute one. Little more can be made of its evidence than that it yields reasonable symbolic forms. Until some solid evidence was found to indicate that perception is intellection, then Platonists could do no more than ask how intelligible forms might appear in nature and so sketch the outlines of possible epiphanies. Thus even at the beginning of the Diocletian era, with the great period of ancient philosophical thought behind them, the men and women of Athens, Alexandria, and Rome knew little more than their predecessors about perception, or the remoter faculty imagination—and that was precious little.

So at the end of the third century, a vision of knowledge remained, fundamentally as Plato envisioned it. However, a way to break through the divided line had been conceived in the new extramissive epistemology. But until some principles were established to control and render nugatory arguments that perception remains opinion, until some reliable modes of inference had been worked out, by which the noetic barrier could be outflanked or overleaped—claims about the truth character of perception were necessarily speculative. For the theoretical possibilities they imagined far outran the facts available to them as evidence.

The flanking of the noetic barrier is evident from a glance at Hecate's thighs. The sheer extent of their symbols and virtues, which before the fourth century Platonists might guess but never prove, are accepted and proven afterwards.

### B. The Descended Soul, the Vehicle of the Soul, and Divine Causality

This raises the question of motivation. Iamblichus' conception of a dynamic order of reality, its perceptive appropriation and manipulation, which played so large a part in later Platonism, was the product of two factors, each of which tended to strengthen the other. One of these was the acceptance of the theory of divine giving as the basis of ontology and epistemology;<sup>19</sup> the other was the adoption of the doctrine of the descent of the soul as the foundation of psychology.<sup>20</sup>

Taking these together, Iamblichus recognized that the state of the soul—her descent from the hypercosmic realm into generation in stages—resulted in subservience to fate.<sup>21</sup> The reversal of this situation of misfortune dominates Iamblichus' thought. This leads the philosopher to include a place for the vehicle of the soul in his explanation of the descent and reascent of the soul.<sup>22</sup>

To briefly describe Iamblichus' view of the soul's vehicle (*ochema*): it was created by the demiurge; it is not merely generated from portions of the bodies of the visible gods; it is not fated to remain in the material realm. For the philosopher, then, the vehicle has a divine origin; it is ethereal; and it is not subject to destruction or dissolution of any kind.<sup>23</sup>

The descent of the soul involves demiurgic sowing; her encosmizing with vehicle into the visible gods:<sup>24</sup>

....the demiurgic sowing of souls will be divided around the divine creations.<sup>25</sup>

This sowing has a major consequence for it makes each soul fall under its own saviour and patron god:

But they (i.e., the souls) made their first descent when they have already been sown around the visible gods in order that they might have the gods as saviours (*soterai*) of their wandering around generation and that they might call upon them as their patrons (*prostasis*).<sup>26</sup>

Each created thing falls into four classes: the heavenly class of gods; the winged class that traverses the air; the class that lives in water; and the terrestrial class.<sup>27</sup>

Mortals are not joined to the gods but require intermediaries.<sup>23</sup> Since the sowing is not merely of human souls their vehicles and their own gods but also angels, daemons, and heroes, human souls can call upon these greater souls to aid them in their reascent.<sup>29</sup> Thus each soul has its own saviour god and patron powers.

Generative sowing involves the descent of the soul and its vehicle into matter.<sup>30</sup> This procession (*proodos*) from the mixing bowl determines each soul's cosmic rank.<sup>31</sup> From the place allotted to the soul in sowing, she makes her descent into generation. Embodied the soul is no longer a rational soul existing apart from its vehicle. She exists together with her vehicle in the sensible realm.<sup>32</sup>

According to Iamblichus each soul can project a *logos* (*logon proholai*)<sup>33</sup> and leads a life in harmony with a god.<sup>34</sup> For example, projecting a solar life means the soul takes on the *logos* of the physician and is connected with Asclepius or takes on the *logos* of the telestic and is associated with Apollo.

There appears to be a necessary law that requires the soul's descent.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, the soul can either assent and descend voluntarily or resist and be compelled to descend.<sup>36</sup>

Those who descend by choice are pure and perfect souls without passions and not deprived of intellect. They descend for the benefit of the sensible world. They remain in contact with the noetic realm and, thus, are purified from all stains and sin.<sup>37</sup> Some souls are so pure that their descent does not involve generation at all. Thus they enter the material realm and are not contaminated by it. These souls serve the lesser ones in the lower realm.

Souls also voluntarily descend to train and correct their characters.<sup>38</sup> These are souls between purity and impurity, impassivity and passivity who are given the opportunity to better themselves and become fully pure.

Those who resist descent and violate divine and cosmic law are souls who must descend for punishment and judgement of sins committed in a previous life.<sup>39</sup> These impure and passionate souls are sent to Hades and rehabilitated. Upon completion of their sentence they can choose their next life.

With these aspects in mind Iamblichus makes the argument that it is theurgy and not contemplation that brings salvation to the soul. He builds his thesis on two foci: that happiness is union with the gods;<sup>40</sup> and that liberation from fate occurs through knowledge of the gods.<sup>41</sup>

Happiness and knowledge together is defined as wisdom (*gnosis*). This wisdom and union (*theia henosis*), the first road to happiness, is caused by theurgy.<sup>42</sup>

Theurgic rites purify the soul, liberate her from fate, and permit union with the gods.<sup>43</sup> Purification involves the cleansing of the vehicle of the soul.<sup>44</sup> Once purified the soul can associate with the gods. They shine (*epilampontai*) their light upon the soul, freeing her from passions and disorderly motion. Once illuminated the soul begins its elevation to the gods.

In ascent the soul is granted gifts which include health of body, virtue of soul, and purity of intellect.<sup>45</sup> The entities that bring about these purifications are the visible gods.<sup>46</sup> These are the soul's leader gods. Thus if the soul is mercurial her purifications are done by Mercury; if helioteic her purifications are undertaken by Apollo. Once reunited with its god, the soul joins its entourage.

With ascent the soul is also liberated from fate.<sup>47</sup> She separates and leaves her irrational part and vehicle behind in the cosmic realm.<sup>48</sup> These elements are the organs for the soul's lower functions. The irrational soul functions as appetite and desire; the vehicle as sense perception and imagination. Useless in the higher realms they could be detrimental to the soul's existence, binding her to fate.

For Iamblichus the irrational soul and vehicle remain in the divine entourage with the rational soul but only the rational soul beholds the forms in the noetic realm. This he pictures in his interpretation of the *Phaedrus*. The charioteer with his head views the forms in the noetic realm and then descends to rejoin his lower self.<sup>49</sup>

The vehicle's fate is to be reunited with the ethereal vehicle of the visible god, the soul's leader-god. Once accomplished the vehicle and irrational soul are purified and liberated from all irrational activity.<sup>50</sup> This permits the rational soul to ascend and unite with the demiurge and, perhaps, the hypercosmic gods, if not the One.<sup>51</sup> This, then, is how Iamblichus conceived of the descent and ascent of the soul. Even here, perhaps, we catch a glimpse of his defense of the faculties of perception (*aisthesis*) and imagination (*phantasia*).

### C. The Aesthetic Imagination and Theurgy

It has been shown that the vehicle controls the functions of sense perception and imagination, the irrational soul functions as appetite and

desire. However, the vehicle which also houses the rational soul can be purified by divine light. In the theurgic act the gods illuminate:

...the ethereal and luminous vehicle that surrounds the soul. From this (i.e., illumination) divine images take hold of the imaginative power (*phantastiken dynamin*) in us, images moved by the will of the gods.<sup>52</sup>

The vehicle of the soul (*ochema*) is illuminated by an evocation of light (*photagogia*). These divine apparitions (*phantasiai*) move the soul's active imagining perception (*hen en hemin phantastike dynamis*). Thus the divine vehicles are made visible through theurgy.<sup>53</sup>

When the vehicle is illuminated images of the god are impressed upon it. Normal sense perception (*aisthesis*), consciousness (*parakolouthesis*), and intuition (*epibole*) cease. In this state the vehicle's theurgic function is to be filled with divine images. Indeed by this means divination occurs.<sup>54</sup> For Iamblichus the imagination (*phantasia*) does not perceive mere material images or sense impressions. It grasps divine images directly. Plotinus' theory of the imagination is reinterpreted in a profound way.<sup>55</sup> For the soul's purification and ascent not only begins but ends in the sensible realm.

For Iamblichus it is theurgy and not contemplation that brings human salvation. Philosophy is secondary to ritual. The human soul cannot save itself but requires the help of the gods. Indeed, throughout the entire cycle of her existence, the human soul is in the hands of the gods. Sent to the earth by the gods, the soul requires their help to reascend. Thus:

...it is not thinking (*ennoia*) that unites theurgists to the gods...what hinders those philosophizing by contemplation (*theoretikos*) from having theurgic union with the gods? But such is not the case. Rather, the efficacy of ineffable acts accomplished divinely (*theoprepos*) beyond all intellection and the power of unspeakable symbols understood only by the gods impart theurgic union.<sup>56</sup>

Thus bit by bit, the derivative nature of perception, ■ principle upon which Platonic epistemology rested for half a millenium, was challenged. Now it would be dismantled. The ineffable character of intellection would be grounded in the intuitive nature of divinely given perception.

This dismantling emerges with Iamblichus:

The apparition of the gods gives us physical health and virtue of the soul, purity of mind, in short, an ascent of our whole inner existence towards its proper beginnings.<sup>57</sup>

The philosopher begins with the assumption that the gods are perceptible. Moreover their apparition brings to the soul a reversal of her situation of misfortune. The whole point of knowledge lay in its therapeutic and salvific content.<sup>58</sup> These two elements dovetail neatly together. Divine giving manifests itself apparatively. Its symbols are physical and psychological well being, intellectual purity, and union (*henosis*) with the gods.<sup>59</sup>

Other notions inherited from science, magic and ritual fit into Iamblichus' picture, like pieces in a jigsaw. Scientists in late antiquity assumed the familiar interaction of the heavens and the earth.<sup>60</sup> This assumption served as the basis for a system of sympathetic and homeopathic correspondances.<sup>61</sup> Each dæmon and god was associated with particular plants, minerals, animals, and parts of the human body.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, Iamblichus concludes, matter is not necessarily evil.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, there is a kind of matter which is pure and divine and does not prevent us from communicating with the gods. It is a kind of receptacle for their manifestations on earth.

The interconnections which Stoic philosophers treated as links in a deterministic network were now transformed into channels for divine power. Every astral deity fills matter with its own power (*dynamis*). They, in turn, interact with higher, intelligible deities, who in turn, have their source in the hierarchy of Ones which are the ground of all reality.<sup>64</sup> Like some great source of invisible energy, the primal One directed its influence from the recesses of the intelligible world to the physical world, along the conducting paths established by these correspondences.

It is a short step from endowing the physical universe with divine power to assuming that sense perception (*aisthesis*) is in harmony with intellection (*noesis*). From the humblest and most imaginative of sense-perceptions at one end, up to the highest and most complex of intellections at the other, there extended a single divine, intelligible power. Therefore, perception like intellection has a truth character.

In this way, pieces from the whole corpus of ancient science and philosophy were brought together and combined to offer evidence of the truth character of perception. For the central question in Platonism stubbornly concerned the relationship between the divine and human minds. Since the world was an organism whose continued existence was

sustained by divine intellection (*noesis*) and will (*boulesis*), it seemed natural to measure the value and authenticity of all human knowledge by tracing it back to its source.

For Iamblichus the sense of sight became a pre-eminent means by which to acquire knowledge and divine union.<sup>65</sup> Every aspect of sensation has its intelligible association. Sensible knowledge, then, is the starting point of a more refined and potent intelligence. It no longer is a mere imaginative reflection of reason.

#### D. Perception and Salvation

The full consequences of this reformulation have not always been appreciated.<sup>66</sup> Certainly the epistemologies of Plato and even Plotinus have been left far behind. But in their place stands a theory of knowledge that fit the reasons, fears, and ambitions of later Roman men and women.

As a rule, active, immaterial properties are associated with material things. Moreover such relationships are knowable, at least initially, through sense perception. If communication is desired with the source of these properties then prayers, formulas, and epitheta bring the supernatural being before the invocator. Moreover language and its symbols (*symbola*) and tokens (*synthemata*) represent the supernatural powers invoked.<sup>67</sup>

Iamblichus, therefore, distinguishes three kinds of ritual prayer: the one that brings together (*synagoga*); the one that ties together (*syndetikon*); and the union (*henosis*).<sup>68</sup> Hieratic utterances function as a path to knowledge. This idea that discourse depends on the capacity for analogy exemplifies the kind of metaphoric theory of language held by the philosopher.

Discourse accommodates purpose. Thus the uttering of the names of the gods, the invocation of ritual prayers and the use of divine symbols make the ascent of the soul possible. For such discourse results in the appearance of a daemon or god which leads, hopefully, to communion if not union with the divine.

This accommodation of language and purpose is a darling of Iamblichus. He found in this analogy the kind of metaphoric thinking knowledge requires in order to achieve the ascent of the soul. What is required are:

...hieratic supplications... (and a) ritual which involves...admirable signs (for) the ineffable expresses itself in unutterable symbols...<sup>69</sup>

These symbols and signs placed in the hollow statues of the gods animate them at the right moment and bring an apparition of the deity before its supplicants.<sup>70</sup> An intangible and incorporeal spirit appears and surrounds, as if in a circle, those present. Initially it is not perceived or registered as it enters. Then it swishes and this noise (*roizos*), the sound of a whistling arrow, is symbolically interpreted as the divine spirit approaching the human soul.<sup>71</sup> This pneumatic noise has its corollary. It is also the sound made by the stars in their celestial revolutions.<sup>72</sup>

Clearly, hieratic discourse represents the supernatural powers to be invoked; the statue establishes a firm and direct link between the god and his followers.<sup>73</sup> These pneumatic statues were channels through which humans could tap divine power thereby achieving salvation. If not that at least through such *paredroi theoi* ancient Mediterranean men and women attained protection of self, house, city, or country.<sup>74</sup> Although the statue of a god is a material object, Iamblichus reminds us, matter (*hyle*) is also offered by the gods for it is congenial (*symphyes*) to them. Pure and divine it is their receptacle for their manifestations on earth.<sup>75</sup>

Thus a new ingredient enters an ancient equation. Divine sympathy pulsating throughout the universe not only manifests itself universally but also particularly in matter. Although Plotinus accepted this notion, in theory, he saw any manipulation (*goetein*) of cosmic sympathy: "the sum of love and hatred in the universe".<sup>76</sup> Moreover such manipulation of natural sympathy diverts the soul from intelligible to sensible activities. Since these are intrinsically deceptive and incapable of elevating the soul to a knowledge of intelligible reality, Plotinus rejects the proposition that manipulation of natural sympathy leads the soul to the divine. Contemplation (*theoria*) is sufficient to free the soul and catapult her to the gods.<sup>77</sup> Porphyry also noted these facts and was wary for they led to the use and abuse of the gods.<sup>78</sup> Iamblichus, however had fewer reservations. Theurgy replaces and supercedes all philosophy and theology.<sup>79</sup>

These objections to magic and theurgy had to do with their theoretical assumptions. Beliefs about the interaction between the intelligible and sensible worlds, sensible and intelligible knowledge, however, were only the starting points. It was the ambition of magic and theurgy that kept them under a cloud. Both were suspect, as being excessively presumptuous. The theurgist was attempting to sense and manipulate what the intellect alone could know. Moreover, the theurgist

aimed at power over the soul and nature of a kind reserved for the intellect and the gods.

Moreover the natural world pictured by Iamblichus, of symbols (*symbola*) and conventions (*synthemata*) which link every physical thing 'here' with intelligible principles 'there', was impossible.<sup>80</sup> Scattered throughout the material universe by the gods they were known to theurgists who used them achieve union with the gods.<sup>81</sup>

Yet, as Plotinus and Porphyry proposed, this axiom could not be easily reconciled with Platonic teachings on knowledge and being. The theurgists of late antiquity were hard pressed to match their sympathetic view of nature and the fallen soul with earlier Platonic formulations.

The compromise eventually achieved by Iamblichus depended on making the doctrine of knowledge a matter for initiation rather than reason. Plato had not really proved that sense-perception could not attain epistemic veracity.<sup>82</sup> Rather he had demonstrated that intellect proved to be a more credible instrument of knowledge.<sup>83</sup> If this were so, reason alone could not establish either. Thus, the veracity of sense-knowledge was not one to be argued out rationally but had to be decided by other means—and these Neoplatonists were fortunate, in having the question settled for them in the Chaldaean Oracles, collections of *logia* in Greek hexameter.<sup>84</sup> Known to the third century Platonists Porphyry and Iamblichus,<sup>85</sup> they became so influential that Proclus saw their source in Plato and Plotinus.<sup>86</sup>

## II Proclus

### A. Aesthetic Pattern

The compromise eventually established by Iamblichus and Proclus was achieved only at a price. Questions about theurgy opened its assumptions to scientific and philosophical discussion. The full consequences of this fact have long been recognized but misunderstood.<sup>87</sup> To characterize Proclus as exhibiting an incurable weakness for the occult and his Platonism as an example of a decline in the Greek rationalist tradition would be to take too one-sided, if not anachronistic view of their thought.<sup>88</sup>

Theurgic Neoplatonism is not so much evidence of a decline into the irrational, the triumph of superstition over reason, reflecting the general malaise of later Roman society,<sup>89</sup> as it was an attempt by some to expand Platonic theory beyond the frontiers of Plotinianism.<sup>90</sup>

It was in Hellenic Neoplatonism that the hold of theurgic tradition on men and women's minds proved most tenacious and long lasting.<sup>91</sup> In their minds supernatural power is inherent in the world of the phenomena that surrounds us. Divine power can be activated and theurgy is the theory and practice of divine activation.<sup>92</sup> Consequently, a vision of reality emerged, fueled by the fall of the soul, her purification, and her ascent that reconciled Platonism and the theurgic mysteries.

Porphyry and Iamblichus had taken crucial steps towards legitimizing theurgic Platonism. In Iamblichus' eyes theurgy was a divine phenomenon to which there was no higher counterpart. Proclus agreed and his works were the first sustained systematic attempt to complete this account of reality. Thus by the early fourth century Platonism had solidified its interaction with theurgy. From the second half of the fourth through the late fifth century philosophical debate had replaced the Plotinian view of reality with a Proclean one that would survive another millenium.

### B. Hieratic Art and Allegorical Physics

Taken separately, few of Proclus' chief steps were entirely new. What distinguished Proclus was the cumulative weight of his whole system. He



drew together into a unified whole theories that had previously developed almost randomly. His strength was that he patiently settled down to work out the actual interrelationship demanded by such metaphysical and theurgical premises. After painstaking research he concluded that theurgy:

...is a power higher than all human wisdom, embracing the blessings of divination, the purifying powers of initiation, and in a word, all the operations of divine possession.<sup>93</sup>

How and why he reached this conclusion must be examined. Both questions involve issues central to aesthetics. They are mediated through Proclus' physics, epistemology, and psychology.

Convinced that the hieratic art leads to the union of the human soul with the One, Proclus understood theurgy as a process of deification which completes, and does not render nugatory, contemplation.<sup>94</sup> Indeed as the crown of contemplation, theurgy is a supremely noetic act, encompassing all the contemplative and active attributes of worship.

The hieratic art is possible to know and to practice because divine power pulsates through the universe and is inherent in the natural phenomena that surrounds humanity. This vision allowed philosophical issues a more significant place in theurgic Platonism than is generally recognized.<sup>95</sup> Proclus attempted to place the practice of theurgy on a theoretical plane by hard-wiring it into the first principles of natural philosophy.

He made the familiar interaction between the noetic and physical worlds the basis for a complete system of correspondences whose interconnections were understood as channels for divine power. Taking over from the ancient Ptolemaic astronomers the theory of the heavens comprised of some sixty concentric translucent spheres, the earth being at the center and the sphere of fixed stars enclosing the whole system, Proclus allegorized this picture to symbolize the degrees of reality and perfection between matter and the ineffable One.

The poetic value of astral religion was reinforced by his Neoplatonic interpretation of Aristotle's 'quintessence'—the imperishable substance of the heavens—exempt from the change and decay afflicting terrestrial things. With Proclus an astronomical nest of crystalline spheres became the accepted symbol for the scale of cosmic perfection. Things on earth were lowest, both in location and worth. The passage upward through the spheres of the moon, sun, successive planets

to the outermost heavens, and then through the crystalline barrier to the hypercosmic gods, represented a soul's journey from corruption to perfection.

The natural world was an organism whose continued existence was sustained by a divine noetic act, thus it seemed essential to describe and measure the channels of divine power by tracing them back to their supreme source. This became the point of a great deal of metaphysical debate which was a stimulus to novel developments in Neoplatonic epistemology, psychology, and physics.

Seen against this background the intellectual preoccupations of Proclus are understandable. Neoplatonic epistemology and psychology were reinterpreted in a similar allegorical way. For his central question concerned the relationship between the divine and human intellects and the union of the human soul with the One.

### C. Perception, Imagination, and Theurgy

Proclus, for example, came to recognize sight as the pre-eminent means by which we acquire knowledge of the supernatural power immanent in the world. He identified light as the spiritual bond linking the human intellect to its divine origin. Consequently he valued sense perception as the mental faculty responsible for receiving, integrating, and interpreting the photogenic images and forms presented to the intellect.

To Psellus we owe a number of valuable notes and comments from Proclus on this branch of aesthetics.<sup>96</sup> He studied the conditions under which invocations (*kléseis*) take place and the locations where they were performed. He noted that before and during rituals the participants avoid any activity which interferes with the arrival of the gods. They also maintain absolute quiet.

Again and again he was drawn to the phenomenon of divine light, its shapes and symbols (*schemata tauta kai theia synthemata*). Some appear to be lifeless objects, others living beings. Some are endowed with reason (*empsycha logika*), are not (*empsycha alogika*). Statues are filled with divine light when inspired by a god or daemon and deliver oracles.

When supernatural beings self-manifest (*autophaneia*) in statuary they appear in shapes and forms perceptible to the senses. Proclus reports that although divine beings are incorporeal:

...bodies were attached for your (sic. gods) sake to the self-revealed manifestations, as you are grafted upon a corporeal nature.<sup>97</sup>

They may appear in symbols (*symbola*) associated with the divine being. For example, Hecate's symbol is the Lynx. She often manifests herself in a top (*sgrophalos*). Clearly, the art object is linked per analogiam to the goddess. Once manifest in her plastic image she has made that journey from her abode at the acme of the celestial sphere to a locus in the terrestrial sphere.

Proclus reports this is represented symbolically. A disc of the moon was located on the statue's back. Proclus tells us this symbol represents the power the goddess wields over the intra-mundane regions. For this heavenly sphere, called nature, is the abode of Hecate. For she is the ruler of the visible world and resides at its acme as the self-manifesting image of nature.

Proclus even clinically examined those who saw such light. They receive the divine spirit and are possessed by it (*katochoi ginontai, theoleptoi kalountai*). The philosopher noted that this experience was always spontaneous (*aristios*) even though with some it was continuous and with others intermittent. Some mediums are unconsciously ecstatic, others are consciously possessed. Spiritual light was thought to confer a special radiance on its possessor, which in turn could be transmitted to others.

This is what Proclus means when he says that there is a contemplative prelude to theurgy. Before one can practice theurgy one must understand its physical environment; its psychological and epistemological contexts. Moreover, these studies were no stumbling block between the Platonist and salvation. Indeed, they were a necessary propaedeutic. Philosophy had much more to do than fetch and carry for the wisdom of the Chaldaean oracles. Theurgy, therefore, was a scientific art based on observation where the theurgist applied sensible knowledge towards a particular goal—the activation of divine power in the universe.

For Proclus theurgy has two foci: it is an activity, an operation, a technique dealing with the gods based on observable principles; it is also the worship of the gods. Consequently, it is a priestly art (*hieratike techne*).<sup>98</sup>

Its purpose is to evoke a god (*theagogia*) by evoking its light (*photagogia*). This evocation of light illuminates the vehicle of the soul (*ochema*). The result is divine apparitions (*phantasiai*) move the soul's

active imagining perception (*hen en hemin phantastike dynamis*) and the shiny vehicles of the gods are seen.<sup>99</sup>

#### D. The Descended Soul, The Vehicle of the Soul, and Divine Causality

To appreciate the weight that theurgy had upon the perceptions and imaginations of later Roman men and women requires us to return to a psychological problematic—the fall of the soul. By Proclus' time the fall of the soul had become accepted as a symbol for the individual's plight.<sup>100</sup> Her reascent, her journey from corruption to perfection was, for Proclus, a matter of aesthetics.

Proclus, like Porphyry and Iamblichus, maintained the theory of the descended soul. The process of descent is familiar. Proclus sees the soul's movement from the hypercosmic realm to generation as occurring in stages. First the soul is above fate and then upon embodiment becomes subservient to it. There are a series of stages between freedom and slavery.<sup>101</sup> There is the first hypostasis, the distribution, the sowing, the assignment of allotments, and then the descent.<sup>102</sup>

The first hypostasis refers to the soul's hypercosmic life when it is separated from the cosmos and her vehicle.<sup>103</sup> The distribution is the allotting of souls under divine circulations, or the hypercosmic gods.<sup>104</sup> The sowing represents the establishment of the soul and her vehicle into the circulation of the soul's cosmic or visible god.<sup>105</sup> This represents her placement in the heavenly lexis from which the soul either rises to the noetic or descends to the sensible realm.<sup>106</sup> Descent entails the soul's placement of the soul into the four different classes of living things: the heavenly, the winged, the watery, and the terrestrial.<sup>107</sup>

The soul's initial genesis, or sowing, represents her descent from the noetic to the physical realm.<sup>108</sup> Allotted to a visible god the soul takes on the characteristics of her patron and chooses a life.<sup>109</sup> This is what Proclus means by *logon probolai*.<sup>110</sup> However, the soul can choose to life this life rightly or wrongly.

Since Proclus understands this sowing to occur under the young gods, it places the soul under the aegis of the earth, the moon, and other organs of time.<sup>111</sup> Consequently, this sowing involves the soul together with its vehicle. Together they are arranged under the circulations of the celestial gods. This effects a two-fold connection between human souls and the gods. The soul's power is encompassed by the soul's god and the

soul's vehicle is filled by the god's vehicle. Thus the human soul and vehicle are filled by the god's personal nature.<sup>112</sup> Divine and human soul and vehicle are conjoined. Next Proclus states that the sowing occurs in each element (*stoicheion*) under the moon. This includes the four regions divided into the four elements. This explains the difference between different human souls. They are coupled to distinct comic deities.<sup>113</sup> Then the souls hear their fated laws.<sup>114</sup>

At this point the human soul is separate from the divine. Nonetheless, the demiurge:

...himself generates the vehicle of the soul and every life in it, to which the young god's weave the mortal form of life.<sup>115</sup>

Thus, the conditions for the possibility of reascent to the noetic exist for the embodied soul and her vehicle. The rational soul and vehicle are immortal and can attain union with their creator. This will be discussed momentarily.

The reasons for the soul's descent again are familiar. For Proclus there is no part of the soul that does not descend. Descent is necessary but the soul may assent and descend or resist and be forced to descend. Assentive souls make a pure descent; dissident souls an impure descent. Pure souls are impassionate, sinless, and benefit the terrestrial realm; impure souls are passionate, sinful, and wreck havoc in the earthly world.<sup>116</sup>

Unlike the impure soul, the pure soul maintains a connection to the noetic realm while embodied. Purified of all stains and sin this soul serve a religious-theurgic purpose. This soul is the one which invokes the gods and makes it possible for purified souls to encounter the holy and begin an ascent through the heavenly spheres to their leader gods and eventually their maker—the hypercosmic demiurge.<sup>117</sup>

For Proclus a strict metaphysical hierarchy exists in which the noetic gods and the good beyond them are accessible to humans only through the intervention of heroes, daemons, and the visible gods.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, from purified human souls to the visible gods and beyond to the hypercosmic deities and the demiurge there is one continuity, one chain of being that links embodied souls with their source.

This means each human soul is allotted a leader god to which it is connected by a series of higher entities—pure souls, heroes, and daemons.<sup>119</sup> The soul's salvation depends on these intermediary entities which can be reached only through theurgy.

From the doctrine of the soul's increasing materiality in descent, the vehicle of the soul (*ochema*) obtains its theurgic function.<sup>120</sup> Once the vehicle of the soul is purified the soul to be able to imagine those symbols and rites presented to her by the gods. This occurs when an individual is initiated into the divine mysteries of theurgy.

Although the immortal vehicle is tied up with the irrational soul it is capable of an existence apart from it.<sup>121</sup> The vehicle's ultimate goal is to be reunited with the ethereal vehicle of the visible god, the soul's leader god. There the vehicle and the irrational soul remain, purified, and perhaps, the rational soul ascends even higher to the noetic realm.

Once initiated and consecrated the vehicle of the soul can be filled with divine images. They prevent any material images or sense-impressions from occurring within the vehicle, thereby blocking out any irrational activities. The rational soul can now operate on the noetic level.

Whenever the partial (i.e., human) soul attaches itself to the whole (i.e., the divine soul), its vehicle also follows the vehicle of the divine soul, and just as the soul imitates the intellection of the divine soul, so also its body imitates the movement of the divine body.<sup>122</sup>

Indeed the vehicle is purified and elevated by the divine light from the soul's leader god. Thus its function is to be illuminated. This occurs through initiation.

### E. Aesthetic Symbols and the Arts

Proclus, therefore, set out three degrees of initiation: initiation (*telete*); consecration (*myesis*); and vision (*epopteia*).<sup>123</sup> Telestic and consecrative initiation constitute the purifying stages for the vehicle.

Marinus reports that Proclus was initiated into the Mysteries of the Great Nestorius by Asclepigeneia, the daughter of the theurgist and thaumaturge Plutarchus, son of Nestorius.<sup>124</sup> Having studied his teacher Syrianus and:

...the many works of Porphyry and Iamblichus and the writings of the Chaldaeans which belong to the same order of ideas and thus, nourished by divine oracles, he rose to the highest level of the... theurgical virtues.<sup>125</sup>

For the philosopher the last initiation, vision, is a liberation of the soul effected by the gods that brings things together. It is to this image we turn. What does this vision (*epopteia*) bring with it? This question brings us back to the symbolics of this essay. We return to the immortal symbol of Hecate's thighs:

About the cavity of the right hip poured forth an abundance of pienteous liquid of the first generated soul, who entirely ensouls the light, the fire, the aether, and the worlds. In Hecate's left hip exists the source of virtue, which remains wholly within and does not give away its virginity.<sup>126</sup>

Since the goddess ensouls the sublunary world her hips symbolize the cosmic orders dominated by her. The right flank represents the potency of this cosmic soul. She is a power who ensouls the totality of the physical cosmos—its elements of light, fire, aether, and worlds. These correlate to *Aion*, the Father begotten light; *Pyr*, the Empyrian realm, *Aether*, the region of the fixed stars, and *Kosmoi*, the zone of the planets and the terrestrial world.

The orifice on Hecate's left hip does not discharge any water for it symbolizes the source of virtue. The goddess is unwilling to imperil its purity by contact with the sublunary world. Accordingly her remains within Hecate and is accessible to those souls capable of rising to the intramundane realm where the goddess resides.

To acquire these powers and the virginal virtue associated with them the soul must approach her left thigh. Although Hecate is unwilling to reveal them on a terrestrial level, she will willingly reveal her charms to those souls who ascend to the aethereal realm. This, however, requires an ascent of the soul to the moon, to Hecate.

For Proclus, art functions as an instrument of the divine intellect. It triggers and actuates the rational soul and her vehicle. Indeed, when Hecate self-manifests in her statue in an apparition perceptible to the imagination human and divine souls and vehicles move in consort together. When the human elements grasp the activity of the divine elements they turn outward to receive the deity and discover their eternal link with the divine. *Aisthesis* is an *antilepsis*, a coming to consciousness of a higher self, and a divine source. For Proclus this is only possible through aesthetics and the symbolics of the hieratic art.

### III Rationality, Ritual, and Culture

#### A. Aesthetic Pattern as Culture Pattern

For ancient Mediterranean men and women the pilgrimage of the soul to intellect and to deity is cast in terms of divine giving.<sup>127</sup> Later Roman men and women treasured the arts and aesthetic perception. The arts transmuted psychological and ontological distance into the deep joy of proximity to self and to the gods. Aesthetics contributed to a network of interpersonal acts that carried the full over-tones of the later Roman cultural traits of love, power, sympathy, patronage and salvation.<sup>128</sup> Perception and the arts functioned as one of the cements of their social world.

#### B. Later Platonic Symbols and Roman Culture

The remains of this aesthetic pattern pullulate through the writings of later Platonism. Its instantiation lay in the *Truimmerfeld* of temple sites and statuary that ring the Mediterranean basin. To the ancient eye these surfaces and solids reveal images of an ideal world of symmetry, harmony, and beauty for an intelligible beauty could be grasped through the narrow apertures of its temples and the formal qualities of its statues. Architecture and statuary present images of ideal being vivified. Masonry and marble symbolize needs satisfied and long distances overcome.

What does an ancient theory formation tell us about an ancient aesthetic pattern? An elusive question to ask, let alone answer. Plotinus has suggested that beauty manifested itself to the Roman in buildings dedicated to the gods; that the beautiful shimmered in the statues formed to their images. Perhaps by localizing intelligible beauty in art these Romans recognized the presence of the divine in the visible, fed on the joys of its proximity, and thereby tempered their fears of distance from self and from their gods.

The human craftsman like the cosmic demurge fashions a world. Artistic creation makes one aware of the attainability in the visible world of an intellectual beauty whose abode is the intelligible world. Distance is overcome, the beautiful is proximate in temple and statue. The visible

fact of the beautiful points to the instantiation of the eternal in the temporal, the formal in the material.

*Hic locus est*—is the refrain that runs through these monuments of a lost age. The intelligible is accessible aesthetically. Through art the lower self communes with the forms, gains union with the higher self, and eventually with the beautiful. For in temples and statuary beauty dwells. Temples are theomorphic sanctuaries; statuary theomorphic beings. Loci for gods and goddesses they become a focus for the image-making faculty of the soul, even perhaps, places where one's daemon appears.

Clearly temples are places where souls meet *daemons* and gods. Porphyry tells how Amelius visited temples at the New Moon and the Feasts of the Gods happily offering sacrifices (*philothutes*).<sup>129</sup> He asked Plotinus to come along. The master answered: "They ought to come to me not I to them". His refusal to accompany Amelius probably means he did not expect to find any of the higher gods waiting for him in their temples, only lower gods or daemons. Thus, he refused to go. This does not mean, however, that Plotinus thought temples devoid of higher beings.

Porphyry reports that Plotinus encountered a god at an *Isis* temple in Rome.<sup>130</sup> The spirit was summoned (*kletheis*) to appear (*eis autophian*). The deity visually appears and the philosopher assesses it through his faculty of sense perception (*aisthesis*). Statues also are vehicles for the manifestation of the image of the form of beauty.<sup>131</sup> Plotinus claims that the perception of the form of beauty instantiated in the statue leads the mind to an understanding of intelligible beauty and, perhaps, to the beautiful (*he kallone*).<sup>132</sup> Since the beautiful is divine, statuary clearly are concrete manifestations (*algamata*) of divine beauty itself.<sup>133</sup>

Thus Plotinus assumes the physical presence of the divine and the beautiful in architecture and statuary. Their beauty and symmetry guarantee the presence of divinity and beauty in their midst. Most significantly, however, he maintains an aesthetic theory that makes their presence in art meaningful. The philosopher was, after all, a mind that grasped these divine and formal images; a soul aware of its undescended self; a figure who knew the intelligible world of the forms; and even succeeded in rising to the highest god four times.<sup>134</sup>

By the fourth century the strictly noetic way of access to the intelligible world, tied to the presence of the ideal world in the act of

intellection, had come to be irreversibly modified in Platonism.<sup>135</sup> Indeed an aesthetic way opened up, legitimized by an axiological shift in the value of perception and imagination, and heralded by the Neoplatonic view of the instantiation of the divine forms in statues and icons, temples and churches.

The great building projects of Constantine and the rededication of temples by Julian reflect this new awareness.<sup>136</sup> A sense of divine grace lies at the root of the building, making, and translation of art objects by the Roman upper class.<sup>137</sup>

As members of an inherited elite Neoplatonists were in a strong position to encourage the translation of the arts, to appropriate and give the stamp of legitimacy to these channels of the holy. For their theories of knowledge, the soul, and reality rendered intelligible the constant presence of the divine in nature and within art.

In the demi-monde of Hellenic Neoplatonism the dark mood cast over the soul due to her fall and separation from the intelligible world was ameliorated aesthetically.<sup>138</sup> For art served as a visible gesture of divine access to the unconscious and descended soul. Aesthetic knowledge and theurgic practice represented a replication of interpersonal relations between humanity and divinity thought lost because of the tragic nature and destiny of the soul.<sup>139</sup>

The ceremony that surrounds the arts in later Platonism, thus, guarantees good happenings in a world cluttered by bad ones. Theurgic rites represent a carefully articulated model of the new aesthetic relationship between humanity and divinity. Art symbolized for the Neoplatonist contact with ancient gods and goddesses, aesthetic knowledge and theurgic action solidarity with their own empire-wide class.

By the fifth century the philosopher and theurgist are indistinguishable.<sup>140</sup> As the knower of divine wisdom and the doer of the hieratic arts, this figure becomes a supernatural extension of divine power (*dynamis*) and love (*eros*) in the universe. Thriving on the tenacious bond of aesthetic friendship (*philia*) their knowledge and activity offered a mantle of divine patronage (*prostataia*) and the possibility of divine salvation (*sotereia*) to all who fell within their orbit. Indeed, the philosophers use and transfer of divine power to their clients rendered accessible the proprietary relationship with the gods thought lost because of the fall of the soul.<sup>141</sup>

### C. The Philosopher as Cultural Symbol

Mortals are not immediately joined to the gods but require greater kinds of intermediaries ranging from the cosmic gods and their angels to heroes and sages. Philostratus, Damascius, Marinus, Eunapius, Sozomen, and Zosimus present the lives of wise men and women who effectively brokered this patron-client relationship.

Asclepiodorus and Heraiscus spent long periods of their lives in temples, Damascius resided in a cave under a temple devoted to Cybele near Hierapolis.<sup>142</sup> Each communed with the gods and goddesses who appeared at such places. Venturing forth they became privileged agents and administrators of divine power, love, patronage, and salvation to a wider Roman world.

Hypatia of Alexandria and Sosipatra of Pergamon were higher souls protected and guided by blessed daemons and heroes.<sup>143</sup> Not only philosophers of high repute—Hypatia was the teacher of Synesius and the author of a famous treatise on numbers and Sosipatra was the instructor of countless students and wrote commentaries on the dialogues of Plato—they were practicing theurgists. Using a statue Hypatia telestically cured a man who fell in love with her while Sosipatra victim of a love-spell cast on her by Philometer had it reversed by Maximus, the pupil of Aedesius and teacher of the Emperor Julian.<sup>144</sup> Other women like Asclepigenia and Anthusa of Cilicia joined men like Plutarch and Hermias to contact, fathom, and translate the divine presence and hallowing in statues to aristocratic clients in city, town, and country throughout the Empire.<sup>145</sup> The inverted magnitudes of temples and statues resided in their souls. Consequently they were able to bring to seance and seminar their condensed solidarity with the divine world.

This map of divine love and power correlates with another symbolized by divine patronage and salvation. Both coalesce around Neoplatonic aesthetic patterns and later Roman cultural patterns. It is easy to be misled by the heritable traits of later Platonic aesthetics and Roman culture.<sup>146</sup>

So often presented as expressions of those who somnambulated in a utopian world many have lost view that this coalescence of aesthetic pattern and culture pattern functioned to enlist and register the participation of listeners (*akroates*) in the manifestation (*autophania*) of the gods in the physical world.<sup>147</sup>

Since matter is not evil it does not prevent communication with the gods. The statue of a god is a material object and matter (*hylē*) is offered (*didomai*) by the gods. Thus, it is congenial (*symphyēs*) to them.<sup>148</sup> Thus to make and consecrate statues to the gods is the aesthetic way of communing with the divine:

Create a statue, purified in the manner I shall teach you. Make the body of mountain rue (*pegannon agrion*)<sup>149</sup> and adorn it with little animals, with domestic lizards, and when you have crushed a mixture of myrrh, gum (*stirax*), and frankincense, blend it with these creatures, go out to the open air under a waxing moon and perform the rite by saying the prayer...<sup>150</sup>

Porphyry says:

You consecrate a statue of Hecate in the following way: Produce a certain kind of fillet; grind lizards together with fragrant essences and burn all that; say a certain prayer in the open air under a waxing moon; do all this to consecrate the statue of Hecate. The she will appear to you in your sleep.<sup>151</sup>

Buildings and statues, herbs and stones, incantations and formulas, gestures and dancing were included in the categories of symbols (*symbola*) and tokens (*synthemata*) that established contact between a human being and a god. Tools like the bull-roarer (*rombos-stromphalos*)<sup>152</sup>. Marinus reports that Proclus used the rhombos wheel to communicate with the gods.<sup>153</sup> Syllabic utterances (*voces mysticae*) were also employed to render the gods visible.<sup>154</sup>

A divine light (*autophia*) often appeared with the manifestation (*autophania*) of the deity. Sometimes the mediator, the philosopher-theurgist, would radiate divine light.<sup>155</sup> While lecturing Proclus would project such light for he communicated with luminous apparitions of Hecate and saw the goddess herself.<sup>156</sup> Not only gods appear; a parousia of nature appears, preceded by a whole choir of daemons, angels, and spirits. They are gracious, kind, and give beneficence to the person who evoked them as well to those whom the theurgist initiates into their mysteries.<sup>157</sup>

Through symbols and tokens the god would recognize the theurgist as a legitimate practitioner, and the theurgist the god as a real god.<sup>158</sup> Scattered throughout the universe through the kindness of the

gods they work without our knowledge<sup>159</sup> but they are known to the higher soul. Known to them they were used to achieve union with the gods.<sup>160</sup> Spoken or unspeakable, concealed within the statues of the gods, they assure the presence and intervention of the gods known only to the *telestai*.<sup>161</sup>

A sacred fire that shines without shape speaks to the theurgist.<sup>162</sup>

For your sake, bodies have been attached to our autophanies (*autoptois*; *phasmasin*).<sup>163</sup>

The theurgist becomes a medium (*docheus*) for the presence of the divine in the world.<sup>164</sup> Eunapius reports that Maximus assembled a large number of friends in the temple of Hecate and burned a grain of incense, reciting to himself the text of a hymn. The goddesses smiled, then laughed, and finally the torches she held burst into flames, into a blaze of light.<sup>165</sup> Wise men and women, therefore, brought a divine presence into the world and the divine power embraced their human community, reintegrating each human soul with her divine source.

Buildings, statues, natural objects, and language became the visible companions that crowded around the men and women of late antiquity. Pullulating with divine expressions of access and friendship they explain the ancient map of relations between deity and humanity in the age of the later Caesars. Neoplatonists were convinced that gods, goddesses, daemons, and angels revealed their natures and names through those special men and women whose primordial sowing linked them eternally with the divine. Aesthetic perception and the arts enabled the imagination to project a structure of a clearly defined reality onto a known social world and to define personal relationships.

#### D. Aesthetic Symbol as Cultural Symbol

Art, in late antiquity therefore, did more than decorate a landscape with imposing temples and sublime statues. It was an expression of piety exquisitely adapted to enable ancient Mediterranean men and women to articulate and render intelligible urgent questions on the nature and destiny of the soul. Art revealed the continuity between the self and the divine, serving to establish a sense of the stability of the identity. It permits the soul to turn her back on the towering disparity between the different orders of the universe and to seek reassurance in the tight web

of her imagination, in the stability of the well-known human relationships of patron and client.

Against this immemorial backdrop, later Romans turned to discover their divine, unconscious selves. Objects of art provided the soul with recognizable forms of divine beings whose self-presentations were rendered aesthetically intelligible through theurgy.

Neoplatonic aesthetics makes clear the metaphysical structure of patronage and the solidarities that bound together the aristocratic classes of the Roman Empire, in these last pagan centuries. Aesthetic theory established the presence of divine love and power in the world, their accessibility, and, therefore, consolidated the Platonic philosopher at the acme of a divinely sanctioned patrocium.

Thus, art, becomes part of a universe increasingly marked by implicit and explicit patronage. The divine has its network; holy men and women tapped into it by building patronage networks of their own. As a result the theurgist was placed at the forefront of later Roman society as the fulcrum of a wide-ranging social patrocium. As patrons divine men and women emerged to resolve the gulf between self and deity through an aesthetic therapy of proximity. The theurgist emerges as the leader of a *patrona communis* who sees the different levels of the self and the manifold levels between the self and god and resolves them. The aesthetic pilgrimage of the soul to intellect and beyond overcomes distance and alienation. Integral to this Odyssey of the soul is the detachment of the arts from a mimetic context and its attachment to a hypostatic context. Through art the divine communes with the human. Moreover it becomes a locus of a network of "interpersonal acts" between gods and humans that carries with it the full overtones of later Platonic epistemological, psychological, and reality theories as well as later Roman understandings of generosity, inter-dependence, and solidarity.

With Plotinus' concession, Platonic aesthetics at last comes to terms with the cultural world of the later Roman Empire. As Plotinus insisted, the absolute certainty characteristic of the intelligible world manifests itself in the sensible world. The world of ideas is self-contained, cogent, and certain. It is accessible because the natural world is deliberately fashioned so that our minds can move freely and confidently within it to capture the divine essence that creates and sustains it.

Everything in the natural world may be in flux, while certainty belongs to the intelligible world. Nonetheless, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus postulate a fixed framework within nature as a necessary mark of its rationality. The arts provide access into a clearly defined structure of reality within which everything and everyone has a lucidly defined relationship.

Earlier Platonic assumptions, that only a fixed order of being could be intelligible, are proved groundless. The divine order is aesthetically intelligible. In Neoplatonic terms, we understand the world not less, but more completely through nature and the arts. We also understand interpersonal relationships in a new way. Later Romans drew intellectual strength from these facts.

For these ancient Mediterranean men and women Hecate beckons:

Bats are now beginning their short strutting flights against the sky. In the east the color is washing out the world, leaving room for the great copper-colored moon which will soon rise over Epirus. It is the magic hour between two unrealized states of being—the day-world expiring in its last hot tones of amber and lemon, and the night-world gathering with its ink-blue shadows and silver moonlight.

'Watch for her,' says the Count, 'behind the mountains there.' The air tastes faintly of damp. 'She will be rising in a few moments.'

'I am thinking,' says Zarian, 'how nothing is ever solved finally. In every age, from every angle, we are facing the same set of natural phenomena, moonlight, death, religion, laughter, fear. We make idolatrous attempts to enclose them in a conceptual frame. And all the time they change under our very noses.'

'To admit that,' says the Count oracularly, 'is to admit happiness—or peace of mind, if you like. Never to imagine that any of these generalizations we make about gods or men is valid, but to cherish them because they carry in them the fallibility of our own minds.'

## Conclusion

Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus: the list would probably have puzzled my grandfather and his generation. It makes sense now; it symbolizes changes in our historical perspective. We can face, more or

less from the same angle, thought communities which seem far apart; and we can find something in common among them through the rationality and the rituals of the social organizations that produced such facts.

For the most part these men did not know one another. No obvious external link connects most of them with each other. Yet all of them gave new meanings to prophecy, divination, and magic in later Platonism, and brought about profound changes in the societies to which they belonged.

We have been led to ask the philosophical and cultural questions that will interpret the teachings of the later Platonists in order to make them more socially perceptible. We have asked what conditioned the appearance of so many kindred understandings of prophecy, knowledge, reality, and the soul within relatively wide chronological limits. We have inquired how indeed were prophecy, divination, and magic interpreted in so many different ways within relatively narrow cultural limits. We have examined why there is a relation between the religious and philosophical ideas of later Platonism and the social messages these thought communities conveyed.

The very nature of the questions that have come to our minds indicates the essence of our new position towards these men and women. Instead of seeing each later Platonist as representatives of specific religions and schools, we now see all of them as participants in a general cultural system. They have explained themselves to us directly by their own words. We have done our part by commenting on their words. Given the necessary knowledge of languages and texts, we may presume that at some future date we shall understand Porphyry and Proclus in the same way as we comprehend Philo and Origen.

Until then firm conclusions about the relation between individual minds and social institutions can be drawn only when all the evidence has been collected and analyzed. Nonetheless, it is possible, even now, to make a few preliminary observations about prophecy, divination, and magic in Later Platonism and their relation to social facts.

A. Later Platonists established a connection between rationality and ritual. This linkage underscores the ontological, epistemological, psychological, ethical, and soteriological significance of occult knowledge and practices.



B. Later Platonists utilize the pneumatic/noetic link between oracular and scientific knowledge to resolve a series of ontological and psychological problematic endemic to their degree of reality metaphysics and the fall of the soul. This is clear from the extensive use later Platonists make of the technical terminology of ontology, epistemology, and psychology. This permits later Platonists to lift ritual out of the *arcana mundi* to which it was consigned.

C. Later Platonic understandings of rationality and ritual suggest a relationship between individual minds and social institutions. This association resolves itself in four main points:

- Later Platonic cognitive processes reflect later ancient social arrangements. This is largely clear in the relationship between later ancient metaphysical theory and later Roman patronage and kinship systems. Knowledge reflects and builds social solidarity.
- The proposition that philosophical facts are social facts suggests that knowledge is essentially social. Key activities of thinking such as the conferring of identity, the positing of similarity relationships, and the classification of divine and natural kinds are shaped by the cultural and institutional contexts in which they occur.
- Later Platonic knowledge processes and practices underpin institutions. Thought communities are social institutions. The fact-generating activity of later Platonism and later ancient cultural complexes get shaped together. To constitute a version of reality is at the same time to constitute a society.
- The thesis that knowledge acquisition and sharing shows how institutions and knowledge get shaped together effectively limits those who are committed to rational choice theory and its assumption that individuals act as autonomous rational calculators. Rational choice theory cannot fully explain the relationships between metaphysical thinking and the social arrangements it reflects. The difficulty lies in rational choice theory's neglect of the prior problem of how knowledge systems come into being.

To view later Platonic rationality and ritual from these perspectives is to connect them with their proper contextual worlds and to explain how ritual was legitimized rationally and socially. If this study has shed light on the relationship between knowledge and society and

stimulates others to investigate these connections further, it will have more than fulfilled its purpose.

## Endnotes

1. Especially, E.R. Dodds, "Theurgy," in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951, pp. 283-311. cf. Pierre Boyance, "Theurgie et telestique neoplatonicienne," *RSR* 47 (1955), pp. 189ff.; Samson Eitrem, "La Theurgie chez Neoplatoniciens et dans les papyrus magiques," *Symbolae Osloenses* 22 (1942), pp. 22f.
2. See, Georg Luck, "Theurgy and Forms of Worship in Neoplatonism," *Religion, Science, and Magic In Concert and in Conflict*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 185-228.
3. Fredrick Suppe, *The Structure of Scientific Theories*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977, p. 17.
4. In this sense the model of rationality used by Dodds is implicitly logical positivist. This model for theoretical explanations is elaborated on and critiqued by Carnap, Hempel, Nagel, and Braithwaite.
5. See, Hans H. Penner, "Rationality and Religion: Problems in the Comparison of Modes of Thought," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LIV 4 (1986), pp. 646-671.
6. Such as those of E.R. Dodds. cf. e.g., *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951, pp. 283-311.
7. On the question of rationality, ritual, and science. cf. Hans H. Penner, "Rationality, Ritual, and Science," *Religion, Science, and Magic In Concert and In Conflict*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 11-24.
8. This definition received its classical sociological analysis in the works of Max Weber. For more recent definitions. cf. Steven Lukes, *Essays in Social Theory*, London: Macmillan, 1977, p. 54; Maurice Godelier, *Rationality and Irrationality in Economics*, New York, NY: New Left Books, 1972, p. 12.
9. *op. cit.*, p. 22.
10. In Carl Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation*, New York, NY: Free Press, 1965, pp. 163-165.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 464.
12. Following, Hans H. Penner, "Rationality, Ritual, and Science," *Religion, Science, and Magic In Concert and In Conflict*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 20-24.
13. This is not to suggest that Plotinus was a practicing magician. cf. Philip Merlan, "Plotinus and Magic," *Isis* 44 (1953), pp. 341ff.; and the response to Merlan's positive thesis. cf. A. Hilary Armstrong, "Was Plotinus a Magician," *Phronesis* I (1955), pp. 73ff. It is to suggest that Plotinus was instrumental in establishing a series of epistemological and psychological formulations that were used by later Platonists to ground ritual upon rational grounds. Plotinus rejects magic, not because he denies the existence of ritual. He abjures magic because it does not fit his own definition of rationality. cf. *Vii. Plot.*, 10ff.

14. Porphyry, *Phil Orac.*, 1.152.7; Proclus, *Remp.*, 2.201.10ff.
15. Cf. *Laws* 10.888e; *Phaedrus*, 249c; *Ep.* 7.341c. Also see *Sym.*, 210c. However this figure is not the craftsman of the plastic arts who is an imitative artist, cf. *Gorg.*, 450c. For Plato on art see, Paul Friedlaender, *Platon I*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1964, pp. 59-84; Whitney J. Oates, *Plato's View of Art*, New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons 1972, pp. 28; 48-62.
16. For Plato the arts are a mere imitation of nature which is but an imitation of being. cf. P. Friedlaender, *Platon I*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1964, pp. 60ff. Plato, consequently, places the imitative artist in class vi of viii classes among knowers of the ideas, cf. *Rep.* 7.522b; and the plastic arts among the lowest of the imitative arts, cf. *Rep.* 3.401ab.
17. For Plato on the mantic arts, see E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951, pp. 207-235.
18. *Enn.*, 2.9.14; 4.4.40-44. On Plotinus and magic (*goeteia*) see, A. Hilary Armstrong, "Was Plotinus a Magician," *Phronesis* I (1955), pp. 73ff.; Philip Merlan, "Plotinus and Magic," *Isis* 44 (1953), pp. 341ff.
19. *De Reg. An.*, II. 7, 11, 2.
20. *De Myst.*, 43.3; 44.14. For this theory in Iamblichus see, A. Smith, *Porphyry's Place in Neoplatonism*, The Hague: Brill, 1974, pp. 100-110.
21. The soul's descent is discussed in *De An.*, 1.377,13-380,29. cf. A.J. Festugiere, *La revelation d'Hermes Trismegiste*, III, Societe l'Edition "Les Belles Lettres," 1953, pp. 69-73; 216-223; James F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985, pp. 59-124. *De An.*, 1.375,5-18; 378,19-379,10; 380,6-29. cf. *In Tim.*, fr. 87. Also see, James F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, pp. 94-114.
22. ap. Proclus, *In Tim.*, 275,26-29.
23. *Ibid.*, 276,5-11.
24. Each position stands in contrast to those of Porphyry, cf. James F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985, pp. 11-27.
25. *De An.*, 1.377.18
26. *Ibid.*, 1.377.19-21. cf. James F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985, p. 63 n. 8.
27. ap. Proclus, *In Tim.*, 3.280,19-21.
28. *Ibid.*, 3.280,22-32.
29. *Ibid.*, 3.107,30-108,1.
30. *In Parm.*, fr. 2.
31. *De An.*, 1.377,16-17.
32. *Ibid.*, 1.377,23-25.
33. *Ibid.*, 1.377, 18-29. This is its cosmic allotment *lexia*.
34. *De Myst.*, 1.8.
35. ap. Proclus, *In Tim.*, 3.279,11-30.

36. *De An.*, 1.378,21-379,6.
37. *Ibid.*, 1.379,7-10.
38. *Ibid.*, 1.379,2; 22-25; 1.380,7-9; In *Phaed.*, fr. 5.
39. *De An.*, 1.380,9-12.
40. *Ibid.*, 1.380,12-14.
41. *De Myst.*, 10.1, 286,3-11.
42. *Ibid.*, 10.5, 290,16-17.
43. *Ibid.*, 10.5, 291,10-12.
44. For the association with Chaldaean thought see, Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, Cairo, Impr. l'Institut Francais d'Archeologie Orientale, 1956, pp. 178-184.
45. *De Myst.*, 3.31.
46. *Ibid.*, 2.6.
47. *De An.*, 1.455,1-4.
48. ap. Proclus, In *Tim.*, 3.266,16.
49. *De An.*, 1.384,26-27; 1.457,13-14.
50. In *Tim.*, fr. 87.
51. ap. Proclus, In *Tim.*, 3.276,19-22.
52. *De Myst.*, 5.20; 5.22; 10.7; In *Phaedonem*, fr. 5.
53. *De Myst.*, 3.14.132,11-17.
54. *Ibid.*, 3.14.
55. *Ibid.*, 3.11; 14.
56. For Iamblichus the imagination perceives divine images directly. For Plotinus the imagination grasps only images of the forms. cf. *Enn.*, 4.8.4,28-31.
57. *De An.*, 2.11.
58. *De Myst.*, 2.6.
59. *Ibid.*, 10.4ff.
60. *Ibid.*, 1.11f; 15; 21; 2.11.
61. On this notion see, Martin P. Nilsson, *Die Geschichte der griechischen Religion* 2, Muenchen: 1969, pp. 14ff.
62. On this theory see, Albert Berthelot C.E. Ruelle, *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*, Paris: Steinheil, 1888; J. R. Harris, *Lexicographical Studies in Ancient Egyptian Minerals*, (Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Institut fuer Orientforschung 54), Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1961; Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Baltimore-London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, pp. 361-366.
63. See, Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, s.v. *fauna, flora et al.*
64. *De Myst.*, 5.23.
65. This association is explained in *Olymp. Met.*, 3.59. cf. M. W. Gundel-II. G. Gundel, *Astrologumena. Die astrologische Literatur in der Antike und ihre Geschichte*, Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1966.; W. Gundel, *Dekane und Dekansternbilder*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969.
66. *De Myst.*, 2.6; 1.11f; 15; 21; 2.11.

67. See, E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951, pp. 287ff.
68. See, F. Dornseif, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, Leipzig: Teubner, 1925; Karl Preisigke, *Namenbuch*, Heidelberg: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1922.
69. *De Myst.*, 5.26.
70. *Ibid.*, 2.6.
71. Cf. E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley: CA, The University of California Press, 1951, p. 292.
72. *De Myst.*, 3.2.
73. *Ibid.*, 3.9. cf. Eduard des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1971, p. 109 n. 2.; 126.
74. These notions are also illustrated in the Greek Magical Papyri. Precise directions are given for making a figure of Helios appear. A formula is uttered which causes the god to enter the statue. He begins to communicate through the icon sending dreams, curing insomnia, and exorcizing evil daemons. cf. *PGM.*, 4.88-93.
75. Sulla carried an image of Apollo with him and Nero one of the Dea Syria, cf. Suetonius, *Vit.*, 30; 56.
76. *De Myst.*, 5.23.
77. *Enn.*, 2.9.3.
78. *Ibid.*, 4.4.44.
79. *De Reg. An.*, fr. 2
80. *De Myst.*, 2.11.
81. For both Plotinus and Porphyry such symbols and tokens link physical things, at best, and not sensibles with intelligibles. cf. *Enn.*, 2.9.3; *De Reg. An.*, J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre*, Ghent: E. van Goethem, 1913, fr. 4.
82. *De Myst.*, 5.23.
83. *Phaedrus*, 249d-250c.
84. *Tim.*, 27d-28e; 29b; 48e.
85. Edited with translation and notes by Eduard des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*, Paris: Edition du Cerf, 1971.
86. By the early fourth century the Oracles were considered authoritative scripture by some Neoplatonists. They are quoted extensively by Porphyry in his *Phil. Orac.*, and *De Reg. An.* cf. Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles*, Cairo: Impr. de l'Institut Francais d'Archeologie Orientale, 1978, pp. 449-456. According to the Suda Porphyry also wrote a commentary on them, cf. J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre*, Ghent: E. van Goethem, 1913, fr. 52\*18; 70\*50. For Iamblichus see, Julian, *Epistula* in Bidez's collection of his works. cf. 1924, p. 19; pp. 73ff.; Eduard des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*, Paris: Edition du Cerf, 1971, p. 44.

87. See, Proclus, *In Tim.*, 2.255.26ff. cf. *Enn.*, 4.9.11. On this interpretation see, Pierre Boyance, "Theurgie et telestique neoplatonicienne," *RSR* 47 (1955), pp. 195ff.
88. See, E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951, pp. 283-311.
89. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
90. See the review of E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951, 327 pages. Peter Brown. cf. *EHR* (1968), pp. 542-558.
91. Cf. Carlos G. Steel, *The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Platonism*, Brussels: Paleis Academien, 1978, pp. 34-56.
92. As noted Proclus went to great lengths to make Plato and Plotinus good theurgists. cf. *In Tim.*, 2.225.26ff.
93. *Theol. Plat.*, 1.26.63.
94. *Ibid.*, 1.26.63. cf. *Iambl. De Myst.*, 10.4ff.
95. On theurgy in Proclus cf. e.g., E. J. Festugiere, *Commentaire sur le Timée*, Paris: Société l'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1958, pp. 17ff.
96. Cf. E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. iff.
97. They are collected by Eduard des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*, Paris: Edition du Cerf, 1971, pp. 219ff.
98. *Remp.*, 2.242.8.
99. *El. Theol.*, xx.
100. See, J. Trouillard, *L'un et l'autre selon Proclus*, Paris: Société l'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1972, pp. 186ff. cf. *Iambl. De Myst.*, 3.14.
101. See, James F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985, pp. 59-123.
102. *In Tim.*, 3.276,5-11.
103. *Ibid.*, 3.263,22-265,12.
104. *Ibid.*, 3.275,26-31.
105. *Ibid.*, 3.276,8-9.
106. *Ibid.*, 3.280,22-32.
107. *Ibid.*, 3.280,22-32.
108. *Ibid.*, 3.107,30-108,1.
109. *Ibid.*, 3.278,31-32.
110. *Ibid.*, 3.279,15.
111. *Ibid.*, 3.279,17-20.
112. *Ibid.*, 3.304,30-305,11.
113. *Ibid.*, 3.305,7-10.
114. *Ibid.*, 3.307,26-308,7.
115. *Ibid.*, 3.266,11-14.
116. *Ibid.*, 3.233,26-28.

117. See, James F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985, pp. 59-124.
118. See, E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. xxff.
119. See, R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, London: Duckworth, 1972, s.v. Proclus.
120. *In Tim.*, 3.280,19-21. Here Proclus refers to such intermediaries as saviours (*soteras*) and patrons (*prostasis*).
121. *El. Theol.*, prop. 209.
122. *In Tim.*, fr. 81.
123. *Ibid.*, 3.276,19-22.
124. *Theol. Plat.*, 4.16.
125. *Vit. Proc.*, 28.
126. *Ibid.*, 26.
127. *Remp.*, 2.201.10.
128. On this concept in later Platonism see, A. Smith, *Porphry's Place in Neoplatonism*, The Hague: Brill, 1974, pp. 100-110.
129. Proclus explains what is at issue in *In Tim.*, 3.280.19-21.
130. *Vit. Plot.*, 10. On this encounter see, A. Hilary Armstrong, "Was Plotinus a Magician," *Phronesis* 1 (1955), pp. 73ff.; Philip Merlan, "Plotinus and Magic," *Isis* 44 (1953), pp. 341ff. Most discussion of this passage focuses on the issue of Plotinus and magic.
131. *Vit. Plot.*, 10.
132. *Enn.*, 5.8.1.
133. *Ibid.*, 1.6.5.
134. *Ibid.*, 1.6.3.
135. *Porph. Vit. Plot.*, 23.
136. See, A. Smith, *Porphry's Place in Neoplatonism*, The Hague: Brill, 1974, pp. 123-141.
137. See, A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 2 Vols. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, 2.1012-1024.
138. See, Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 106-126.
139. The insights of Evans-Pritchard concerning the function of magic apply as well to theurgy. It reverses a situation of misfortune. cf. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 1-55; For the use of this model for late antiquity, cf. Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*. New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1974, pp. 119-146.
140. This seems to be born out in reports from Porphyry about Plotinus, cf. *Vit. Plot.*, 10; and from Eunapius about Sosipatra, cf. *Vit. Soph.*, 466-467. Each had to counter spells cast on them by opponents or lovers. Fallen souls were under the aegis of fate. Only contact with a power higher than fate insured escape from

- daemonic powers, cf. Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*, New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1974, pp. 119-146.
141. Also see, E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951, pp. 283-311.
142. For a more recent study on this phenomenon see, Eugene V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus*, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.
143. Cf. Zosimus, *Epistula*, 5.46.3f.
144. Cf. Sozomen, *Hist.*, 9.8
145. *Ibid.*
146. A portrait of the mood is nicely given by Augustine, cf. *Civ. dei*, 5.23.235.28ff.
147. Cf. e.g., E. R. Dodds, Proclus: *The Elements of Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.
148. *Iambl. De Myst.*, 5.23; cf. Oracles, fr. 101 {des Places}.
149. *Iambl. De Myst.*, 5.23.
150. According to Dioscorides, 3.45-46 this is the herb molly = *ruta halepensis*.
151. *Oracles*, fr. 224. {des Places}
152. *Phil. Orac.*, 7.130ff. {Wolf}.
153. This is the golden ball of Hecate enclosing a sapphire, covered with magical characters, and placed at the end of a strap made of bull hide. See, Psellus, *Oracles*, fr. 206, 170; cf. Theocritus, 2.30.
154. *Vit. Proc.*, 28. They hung from the ceiling of the palatial hall in Babylon. cf. *Phil. Vit. Apoll.*, 1.25.6.
155. Psellus, *Oracles*, 221f. {des Places}.
156. *Oracles*, fr. 147. {des Places}.
157. *Iambl. De Myst.*, 2.4; cf. 1.12; 2.5; 3.6.
158. *Ibid.*, 2.4, 7; Psellus, *Oracles* fr. 88. 175. {des Places}.
159. Psellus, *Oracles*, fr. 149, p. 184. {des Places}.
160. *Iambl. De Myst.*, 5.23; 2.11.
161. *Proc., Elem. Theol.*, 223 {Dodds}.
162. *Ibid.* Also see, *In Tim.*, 1.273d. cf. E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 292 n.34; Pierre Boyance, "Theurgie et telesmique neoplatonicienne," *RSR* 47 (1955), p. 196 n. 2.
163. *Oracles.*, fr. 148, 173 {des Places}.
164. *Ibid.*, fr. 101.; cf. *Iambl. De Myst.*, 5.23.
165. *Psellus*, 1.249 K-D.

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## Preface

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R. Baine Harris

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All of the papers in this volume were presented or prepared for presentation at an international conference on "Neoplatonism and Indian Thought" held at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada in October, 1976. The conference was sponsored jointly by the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies and Brock University, and was largely the product of the efforts of Professor John R. A. Mayer of Brock University, who arranged primary funding through the Canada Council, served as co chairman of the planning committee, and handled all local arrangements. President Alan Earp of Brock University also gave the project his full moral and financial support. Some one hundred scholars, representing eight nations, participated in the sessions and the conference was judged to be a success by its planners, sponsors, and participants. It stimulated interest in the study of Neoplatonism, a major objective of I. S. N. S., and it continued the long-standing involvement in comparative studies of Brock's philosophy department.

The conference itself, being the first ever held in any country on the subject, was a pioneering venture. Relatively

few books and articles comparing the two intellectual traditions have been written. Although a few first rate specialized studies, such as Émile Bréhier's chapter on "L'orientalisme de Plotin" in his *La philosophie de Plotin* (Paris, 1928) and J. F. Staal's *Advaita and Neoplatonism* (Madras, 1961) are available, no major work dealing with the conference theme in a comprehensive way has yet been produced. Faced with the fact of the scarcity of scholars who are experts in both Neoplatonism and Indian thought, the planning committee decided to have a conference that would allow for an interchange of ideas between specialists in Neoplatonism and specialists in Indian thought. The end result was that most of the papers accepted for the conference were written by experts in the one who were willing to explore some aspect of its connection with the other, and mainly by Western philosophers and classicists willing to investigate Indian thought and Indian philosophers and Western Indologists willing to investigate Neoplatonism. Discussions after the papers were exceptionally lively, and most participants agreed that the sessions were a challenging and creative experience.

Two specific objectives were predominant in the minds of the conference planners. The first and primary one was a careful consideration of certain concepts and assertions that appear to be common to both philosophical traditions. Most of the conference papers relate to this objective. The second and lesser one was an investigation of the possible historical influence of Indian sources upon late Greek philosophy, and specifically upon the Alexandrine Platonists. Although it was our intention to consider all aspects of Indian thought, most of the papers refer only to Hinduism. The conference gave only minor consideration to Indian Buddhism and the Islamic Indian tradition and no consideration to numerous lesser Indian traditions.

The papers in this volume are presented for what they are, namely, the papers of a conference designed as a serious, but preliminary investigation of the topic. They do not provide an adequate, balanced, or definitive treatment of the subject, an

achievement that must await considerable further investigation and reflection that hopefully will yet be done in India, Japan, the United States, Canada, and Europe. They vary in their degree of scholarship and level of understanding of the various intellectual traditions, as might be expected. They are, nevertheless, generally quite provocative and informative. They should be particularly useful to those students who have a limited knowledge of either Neoplatonism or the various Indian traditions and who would benefit from a selective reading of essays which present them on various levels of sophistication.

It is the hope of the editor that this volume will succeed in stimulating further interest in the study of the affinities of Neoplatonism and Indian thought and will lead to additional scholarly research on the subject both in the East and in the West.

## Acknowledgements

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The editor wishes to indicate his special appreciation for the various individuals who have assisted in the production of this volume. Dr. Heinz K. Meier, Dean of the School of Arts and Letters, and Dr. Warren Matthews, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy of Old Dominion University have provided both moral and financial support. They were especially helpful in providing funding for the preparation of the manuscripts and camera-ready copy. Gladys Blair, Penny Haws and Sue Massie served as research assistants in editing the original manuscripts, and Joseph Winfield did much of the typesetting. Final editing, production of camera-ready copy, design of the book, and layout are the work of Tom Rich. Professor Woodrow W. Moore, of Old Dominion University's Foreign Language and Literature Department, generously translated Professor Bazan's lengthy article from Spanish into English.

## Introduction

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While the present volume is an edited record of the proceedings of the Second International Congress of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies held at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario in October, 1976, it is also much more than that. The Congress had for its theme *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*, and this for very good reasons.

Firstly, it is the view of the organizers of the meeting that comparative philosophy is a field of study to which far less attention has been devoted than it warrants. Philosophical development can be understood not merely as innovation, the invention of new and heretofore unthought of systems, methods and views, but also as recovery of that wisdom from the past whose significance has become lost, occluded from view, due perhaps largely to the gradual transformation of the meaning of key terms in the language in which it was transmitted.

Secondly, throughout intellectual history there has been an interplay between the unitive vision which has provided a harmonization of contrasts, revealing the disparate and seemingly

disjointed aspects of experience as grounded in a common matrix, and the analytic scrutiny which searches out contrasts, criticizes, defines and dissects. The contemporary world is largely fascinated with this latter act, while the Neoplatonic tradition invites the contemplative development of the former state. It is clear that the Neoplatonist understands his tradition as a healing alternative to the fragmented dualisms, pluralisms, apperceptions of the world as chaos, disorder and randomness. This volume, then, is not merely a scholarly report, although it is that, too, but an occasion to draw attention to an often ignored but important tradition.

To quote Simone Weil:

It seems that Europe requires genuine contacts with the East in order to remain spiritually alive. It is also true that there is something in Europe which opposes the Oriental spirit, something specifically Western, . . . and we are in danger of being devoured by it. . . .

European civilization is a combination of the Oriental spirit with its opposite, and in that combination there needs to be a high proportion of the former. This proportion is today not nearly high enough. We need an injection of the Oriental spirit.<sup>1</sup>

This book, then, also proposes to be ■ partial response to the above call.

Neoplatonists today can be divided into two groups, with a number of individuals who fit both categories. On the one hand we have the scholars of the tradition, people interested in the reconstruction and interpretation of the texts of ancients, such as Plotinus or Proclus, or of more recent Neoplatonic authors. On the other, there are those who recognize the perennial value, and hence modern-day relevance, of a monistic, non-materialistic, mystically inspired, but intelligently developed and cogently presented system of thought. They yearn to express such a worldview engagingly so as to

bring to a world dominated by materialistic, pluralistic, relativistic and nihilistic philosophies the challenge and inspiration of an entirely differently textured approach to the nature and meaning of experience—both mundane and contemplative. Most contemporary thinkers are firmly rooted in their conviction of the ontological and metaphysical primacy of the empirical, sensory and common-sense domain. Life, consciousness, and world-process are understood as composed consequences of insensate ingredients. To this Neoplatonists counterpose the image of a Source, from Whose transcendent integral center all lesser and determinate forms of being emanate. Of course there are individual variations and differences in just how such adumbrations are presented by different individual authors. But it is the concern of the second group to develop interest in this tradition in order to evoke by means of new and felicitous formulations the recovery and re-living of the existential basis of the insights of the ancient sages.

It is salutary to discover that the non-dual tradition has had a flowering not only in the 4th and 5th centuries of Western thought, but has had remarkable expression and influence on the culture and civilization of India. While the probability of occasional cross-fertilization of ideas cannot be ruled out, it is nonetheless safe to say that Eastern and Western scholars, sages and seers developed similar philosophies and claims largely in isolation one from the other. Their frequently identical metaphors and similes, therefore, confirm the parallel character of their traditions.

The general intellectual climate is not sympathetic today to the Neoplatonic tradition. And yet, one can find evidence for the persistency and appeal of the tradition in our own days. Apart from scholars, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood could be named as influential literary masters committed to this heritage, as well as the countless young people, who seek to give content and meaning to their lives by understanding its objective as the reunion of the separated

individual with his original source, by means of devotion, purification and compassion.

Thus, this volume is presented not merely to the world of scholars, but to the serious layman, to whom it can provide in addition to information about the past, glimpses of that future in which educated men and women will consider as their own not only the narrow confines of the mainstream of their immediate culture, however productive, but rather, the breadth of the adventures of the human spirit, throughout history.

The present introduction did not enumerate and comment on the individual contributions of this volume, since that task is ably done by Dr. I. C. Sharma, in the concluding, summarizing essay. For those readers who may wish to have a guide toward a selective reading of this volume, we recommend turning to it first.<sup>2</sup>

*In fine*, the organizers of the Congress, the officers of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, and the contributors to this volume wish to express their gratitude for the support of those agencies and institutions without which neither the Congress nor this volume would have been possible. Notably, the Canada Council, the Universities' Grants Commission of India, Brock University and Old Dominion University should be specified, although many other Universities assisted by enabling their faculty to participate.

#### NOTES

1. Simone Weil, *Selected Essays, 1934-43*, ed. and trans. Richard Rees (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 205.
2. See pp. 323ff.

## Indian Wisdom and Porphyry's Search for a Universal Way

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Porphyry, the disciple of Plotinus to whom we are indebted for the *Enneads*, the record of his master's teaching, flourished towards the end of the third century A.D. It was a time when men were concerned with the notion of 'salvation'<sup>1</sup> and were particularly anxious to discover some 'saviour', some mediator between God and man, who would be the vehicle by which mankind as a whole might be saved. 'Salvation' had, of course, different meanings for different groups, as indeed had 'god' and 'mediator'. Christianity pointed to Christ as *the* Mediator, God become man, *the* way.

Porphyry rejected the claims made on behalf of Christ and so attracted the attention of Saint Augustine, who was born some fifty years after Porphyry's death. Augustine discusses the matter towards the end of the tenth book of his *City of God* and in doing so quotes passages from a work of Porphyry in which he deals with the return of the soul. It is from one of these quotations that I take my text:

When Porphyry says . . . that no single sect had been found that contained a universal way for the libera-

tion of the soul, deriving from some true philosophy, or the *mores* and *disciplina* of the Indi, or the 'ascent' of the Chaldaeans, or any other way, and that this way had not as yet come to his notice through historical knowledge, he without any doubt admits that some such way exists."<sup>2</sup>

Augustine further asserts that Porphyry held firmly that Providence could not fail to provide such a single universal way for the soul's liberation: for Porphyry it was merely a matter of finding and identifying it.

It is clear from the context in Augustine (whose claims to be a Latin-writing Neoplatonist are variously, but must be seriously, considered) that the liberation of the soul that is in question is its liberation from the cycle of existences as understood by Plato and Plotinus. While these, according to Augustine, accepted that a man might be re-born as an animal, Porphyry demurred: he would allow only that a man might be re-born as man.<sup>3</sup> He held also that the soul could escape altogether from the cycle. "God gave the soul to the world so that when it got to know the evils of matter it would run back to the Father and at length not be held by the polluted contagion of such things."<sup>4</sup> Escape for the individual soul, according to Augustine's report of Porphyry's views, became permanent and absolute when it was cleansed of all evils: it would then be established with the Father and would never again suffer the evils of this world.

The problem did not arise with the individual who might follow the way of philosophy. But only a few were capable of this: some universal way by which the souls of the masses might be freed from the cycle must, Porphyry held, be provided by ■ providence which took such tender care of things of so much less importance.

Having dismissed philosophy, including his own Neoplatonism, as a universal way of salvation Porphyry looked for such a way to the "*mores* and *disciplina* of the Indi," the ascent of the Chaldaeans, and other such systems. His *Letter to Anebo*,

an Egyptian priest, a passage from which is quoted earlier in the tenth book of Augustine's *City of God*,<sup>5</sup> is evidence that among such other systems was the Egyptian, and that in it Porphyry was disappointed.

The 'ascent' of the Chaldaeans requires just a little more notice here, if only because so much attention is given by Augustine throughout the *City of God* to Porphyry's ambivalent attitude to the Chaldaean oracles.<sup>6</sup> These oracles, according to Porphyry, claimed that demons could purge and cleanse the spiritual or pneumatic soul—but not the real, the intellectual soul:

You [Porphyry], being a philosopher, we must assume, can see that for you no such rite of cleansing by theurgic art is necessary in the least. Yet for all that you bring in such rites for the benefit of others. . . . you do it by decoying those who are incapable of becoming philosophers into practices that you admit are of no value to you, who are capable of higher things. Evidently you want all who are turned away from the pursuit of philosophic excellence, which is too lofty for all but a few, to seek out theurgists on your recommendation, in order to obtain catharsis at least of their spiritual, though not, to be sure, of their intellectual soul. And since the number of those who have no stomach for philosophy is incomparably the greater, more are forced to resort to your clandestine and illegal teachers than to the Platonic schools.<sup>7</sup>

Porphyry, then, did not find the universal way of salvation in that minor "ascent" of the pneumatic soul only, which was operated by demons in return for sacrifices made to them and which was commended by the Chaldaean oracles.

Augustine further reports that Porphyry held it as certain that only the Principles, the *principia*, that is, in Neoplatonic terms, the Father (the One) and the Father's Nous (Πατρικὸς νοῦς) could cleanse souls so that they could escape rebirth and abide forever with the Father.<sup>8</sup>

One must emphasize that Porphyry's discussion of all mankind's escape from rebirth is put in a context by Augustine which centres on the characteristically Roman pre-occupation with *vita beata*. The first five books of the *City of God* refutes the claim that happiness in *this* life is ensured by the worship of many gods. The next five books, of which the tenth (with which we are most concerned here) is the last, refutes the claim, represented, Augustine says, mainly by Platonists, that *happiness in the life after death* is ensured by the worship of many gods. Escape from the cycle of existences is essential—since, where there is any possibility of a return to body, happiness cannot be complete and eternal. The nerve, therefore, of Porphyry's enquiry, as represented by Augustine, is escape from *palingenesis*.

When Porphyry then, according to Augustine, in looking for a universal way of salvation, turned to the *mores ac disciplina Indorum*, he had abandoned the hope of finding it in any system of true philosophy—with emphasis on philosophy as experienced by himself. He was turning to something that was not *exclusively* philosophical. The "ascent" of the Chaldaeans was the second such system he specified. The first, however, was the *mores ac disciplina Indorum*. According to the context, what Porphyry was looking for when he turned to the *Indi* was a practical system of providing for all mankind a way of escape forever from rebirth. This does not in the least imply either that there was no true philosophy—in Porphyry's terms—in India or that Porphyry was not aware of the position. This is simply the limiting context of the topic. Indeed insofar as Augustine may reflect Porphyry's views on the point, the Indian Gymnosophists were said explicitly to philosophize: *nudi philosophentur, unde gymnosophistae nominantur*.<sup>9</sup>

It takes even less than my limited acquaintance with Indian philosophies and religions to know that the *Indi* have been at all times greatly preoccupied with practical methods of escaping from the cycle of existences. Of the six classical systems of philosophy the Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā at least

are reported to have concerned themselves with salvation of one kind or another. That great Hindu text, the *Bhagavadgītā*, teaches the three paths to salvation. Jainism aims at isolation (*kaivalya*): Buddhism aims at *nirvāṇa* in which all distinctions cease to exist.<sup>10</sup> Indian systems of religion always had a strong element also of ritual purification and emphasized, to a degree not so frequent in the West, a very rigorous asceticism.<sup>11</sup>

The notion of the incarnation of a deity to do a service to mankind is prominent in Indian texts. Thus in one branch of Hinduism Viṣṇu is credited with ten *avatāra*—as fish, tortoise, boar, man-lion, dwarf, Paraśurāma, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, the Buddha and finally (yet to come) Kalkī who will descend on the earth to destroy the wicked and restore purity.<sup>12</sup> And in that development of Buddhism called the Great Vehicle (*Mahāyāna*) the aim of the Buddhist monk is not the old goal of the *arhat*, that is illumination and entering into *nirvāṇa* and being extinguished, but of the *bodhisattva*, that is illumination and the declining, when it is possible, of entering into *nirvāṇa* and rather giving oneself to lead others to *nirvāṇa* by teaching and example.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the idea of two ways to salvation, one conventional and visible, the other higher and absolute, is found among the followers of the Great Vehicle, who associated the absolute way with themselves, and the conventional with the followers of the Little Vehicle (*Hīnayāna*).<sup>14</sup>

I have ventured the preceding remarks solely to indicate that a complex of notions centring on a universal way of salvation is very prominent indeed in inherited systems of Indian philosophy and religion.

But one may ask if Porphyry searching in his day for such notions could have found them readily? This is the relevant question for us who are concerned with the historical confrontation of Indian wisdom and Neoplatonism. On the matter of the mutual influences of India and the Graeco-Roman world one must be on one's guard against great generalizations. As Filiozat remarked: "Entre temps s'était substitué au préjugé de l'Inde institutrice du genre humain, celui



de l'Inde fermée, de l'Inde ayant créé une civilisation en vase clos."<sup>15</sup> It is possible, as we may see from Derrett's thesis that the *Questions of Milinda* were influenced significantly by Western thought,<sup>16</sup> that our generalizations may now be running to a full circle. Here, however, I shall keep as far as possible to facts as hard as I can find them.

It is hardly necessary to dwell on the contacts of Palestine, where Porphyry was born in 232/3 A.D., or Greece, where he studied at Athens under Longinus, or Italy where he was the disciple of Plotinus, with India in the centuries immediately preceding his birth. Few have not heard of the 120 ships that sailed eastward to India every year at the beginning of the Christian era. Trade with the Roman Empire had assumed great importance in the economic life of southern India, as, for example, the excavations at Virapattanam (the Poducé of Ptolemy?) are reported to indicate. But there were many other marts where Graeco-Roman traders operated, as Tamil literature attests for the period 70-140 A.D. *Direct* Graeco-Roman trade is said—perhaps imprudently<sup>17</sup>—to have declined from around 200 A.D., that is shortly before the time of Porphyry's birth. But indirect trade continued through the Arabians and Persians. Porphyry, born in Palestine, is unlikely, therefore, not to have some near contemporary and contemporary knowledge of India and the Indi. Indeed, as we shall presently see, we know that he had.

He also had, of course, access to quite a considerable amount of published material which began to accumulate after the invasion of Alexander and Nearchus's account of India and of his voyage, which took place around 312 B.C. Foremost amongst this was the *Ἰνδικά* of Megasthenes, who was for some time resident at the court of Chandragupta in Patna towards the beginning of the third century B.C. Nearchus and Megasthenes were used very freely indeed in the *Ἰνδικά* of Arrian who died around 175 A.D. and by others. The relatively great size and range of the literature available in the Greek and Latin languages on India and the Indi in Porphyry's day can very conveniently be judged by English

speakers from the series of compilations of relevant texts in translation done by J.W. McCrindle towards the end of the last century.<sup>18</sup> His translations may not always be accurate, and one must in any case check them against the best texts in each case now available—but he deserves mention here as one who did a great service to those who wish to see how the classical world viewed the world of India. Among pre-Porphyrian authors quoted by McCrindle on the Indi and India at some length are the Pseudo-Callisthenes, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Pliny, Dion Chrysostom, Aelian and Clement of Alexandria.

There is much reference in this literature to the *mores ac disciplina* of the Indi. Megasthenes himself made religion and the customs of India major parts of his treatment. Incidentally he was criticized on the ground that his Greek background in philosophy and myth made him an unreliable observer, inventing parallels between two quite different cultures. We should be suitably warned! We, for our part, have to concern ourselves principally with how, historically, the Graeco-Romans saw the Indi, *not* how they *ought* to have seen them.

The Graeco-Roman world in Porphyry's own, third, century is described by Festugière,<sup>19</sup> borrowing the term from Hippolytus, as *καταπλάγεις*, smitten, by what he calls the *mirage oriental*—the idea that the Easterns had better and purer ideas of the deity, communicated to them in more than just rational ways. Taking his cue from Festugière, Filiozat, despite his awareness that Eastern and Western doctrines might develop independently, attempted to show that Hippolytus of Rome (died 235) learned the doctrines of the *Upanisads* through Christian heretics affected by Eastern ideas, and expounded them in his *Philosophoumena*, dated between 222 and 235 A.D.: "ce sont donc les *Upanisad*, les *Upanisad* seules, et spécialement la *Matry-up*, qui sont à la source de l'information d'Hippolyte sur les doctrines brâhmaniques."<sup>20</sup> Hippolytus could not, Filiozat contends, have got his information from such as Megasthenes: "les principales données de son

exposé, les précisions relatives à la nature du Θεός des Brâhmanes, ne se retrouvent pas dans les fragments qui nous sont conservés de Mégasthène."<sup>21</sup> While one might well have reserves on Filiozat's thesis of Christian heretics importing the doctrine of the *Upanisads* to the West, it is probably safe to accept with him that Rome—and *a fortiori* Alexandria<sup>22</sup>—had concrete information on the philosophy of the Brahmins. If the doctrine of the *Upanisads* was available towards the middle of the third century in Rome and Alexandria, then Porphyry can hardly have escaped knowing it.

Here one should at least mention Dihle's interesting thesis<sup>23</sup> that every author likely to have had stylistic ambitions avoided any allusion to contemporary or late Hellenistic India. According to the standards of literary tradition in the time of the Roman Empire, India was to all intents and purposes the country Alexander subjugated and Megasthenes lived in, and nothing else. On the other hand India as represented, for example, in early Christian writings, even in those which have some literary and stylistic pretensions, exactly corresponds to all the information which had been collected by sailors and tradesmen during the first two centuries A.D., information which had been used by the geographers of the same period but neglected by the men of letters. If Dihle's thesis is correct then Porphyry and his contemporaries could have known very much more about India and the Indi than they transmitted to us.

Among the written sources from which Porphyry *did* draw his information on the *mores ac disciplina* precisely was almost certainly Philostratus's work *In Honour of Apollonius of Tyana* which I shall refer to as Philostratus's *Apollonius of Tyana*. The second and third books of this work deal with Apollonius's romanticized visit to India and comprehensive conversations with the sage Iarchas, who claimed to have been King Ganges in a previous existence, at a time when the Ethiopians were still, he said, being an Indian race, living in India. Porphyry at any rate refers to this work in his own *Life of Pythagoras*. This is not surprising since Philostratus's

life overlaps with Porphyry's. Philostratus lived in Tyre (which is either Porphyry's birth-place or near it) from 216 A.D. and subsequently went to Athens around 219 A.D., a city where Porphyry later lived. Indeed the *Apollonius of Tyana* was published in Tyre itself, while Philostratus was living there.

We have regretfully no similar reasons for having an opinion that Porphyry had available to him in any way the *Questions of Milinda*, a Buddhist dialogue composed in Pali sometime after 100 B.C.—but perhaps as late as the second century A.D. *Milinda*, probably the person known to the Greeks as Menander, king of a Greek territory in India around 100 B.C. clearly symbolizes the cultural union of Indians and Greeks. But we do not know if this very important document on the Greek and Indian encounter in wisdom was known or indeed linguistically accessible to Porphyry or his Western contemporaries.<sup>24</sup> We leave it, therefore, out of account here.

We have, however, the testimony of Porphyry's own *de abstinentia* IV.16-18, that he had been briefed, especially on the Brahmins, by one Bardesanes (Bar Daisan), called the Babylonian by Porphyry, who is said to have acquired his information on India from conversing with the members of an embassy from India, possibly one sent to the Emperor Elagabalus who reigned from 218 to 222 A.D. In addition, he lived at Edessa next to the Persian frontier. Here, therefore, is Porphyry himself on the Brahmins and Samanaeans.<sup>25</sup> Although the quotation is rather long it may be excused since it gives in the clearest and firmest manner an idea of the kind of thing Porphyry could associate with the *mores ac disciplina Indorum*:

But since we have already made mention of one of the foreign nations which is known to fame, and righteous and believed to be pious towards the gods, we shall proceed to further particulars regarding them.

For since in India the body politic has many divisions, one of them is the order of the holy

sages, whom the Greeks are wont to call the Gymnosophists, and of whom there are two sects—the Brahmins and the Samanaeans. The Brahmins form the leading sect, and succeed by right of birth to this kind of divine wisdom as to a priesthood. The Samanaeans, on the other hand, are selected, and consist of persons who have conceived a wish to devote themselves to divine wisdom. Their style of life is described as follows by Bardesanes, a Babylonian who lived in the days of our fathers, who met with those Indians who accompanied Dandamis on his embassy to the emperor. For all the Brahmins are of one race, all of them deducing their origin from one (common) father and one (common) mother. The Samanaeans, again, are not of their kindred, but are collected, as we have said, from all classes of the Indians. The Brahmin is not subject to the authority of the king, and pays no tribute with others to the state. Of these philosophers, some live on the mountains, and others on the banks of the river Ganges. The mountain Brahmins subsist on fruits and cow-milk, curdled with herbs, while the dwellers by the Ganges subsist on the fruits which grow in great plenty on the banks of that river, for the soil produces an almost constant succession of fresh fruits—even much wild rice which grows spontaneously, and is used for food when there is a lack of fruit. But to taste anything else, or so much as to touch animal food, is held to be the height of impurity and impiety. They inculcate the duty of worshipping the deity with pious reverence. The whole day and greater part of the night they set apart for hymns and prayers to the gods. Each of them has a hut of his own in which he passes as much time as possible in solitude. For the Brahmins have an aversion to society and much discourse, and when either occurs, they withdraw and observe silence for many days, and they even frequently fast. The Samanaeans, on the other hand, are, as we have observed, collected from the people

at large, and when any one is to be enrolled in their order, he presents himself before the magistrates of the city or of the village to which he happens to belong, and there resigns all his possessions and his other means. The superfluous parts of his person are then shaved off, and he puts on the Samanaean robe and goes away to join the Samanaeans, taking no concern either for his wife or his children, if he has any, and thinks of them no more. The king takes charge of his children and supplies their wants, while his relatives provide for his wife. The life of the Samanaeans is like this. They live outside the city, and spend the whole day in discourse on divine things. Their houses and temples are founded by the king, and in them are stewards who receive a fixed allowance from the king for the support of the inmates of the convents, this consisting of rice, bread, fruits, and pot-herbs. When the convent bell rings, all strangers then in the house withdraw, and the Samanaeans entering offer up prayers. Prayer over, the bell rings a second time, whereupon the servants hand a dish to each (for two never eat out of the same vessel). The dish contains rice, but should one want a variety he is supplied with vegetables, or some kind of fruit. As soon as dinner, which is soon despatched, is over, they go out and go to their usual occupations. They are neither allowed to marry nor to possess property. They and the Brahmins are held in such high honour by the other Indians that even the king himself will visit them to solicit their prayers when the country is in danger or distress, and their counsel in times of emergency.

Both classes take such a view of death that they endure life unwillingly, as being a hard duty exacted by nature, and accelerate the release of their souls from their bodies; and frequently, when their health is good and no evil assails or forces them, they take their leave of life. They let their intention to do so be known to their friends beforehand, but no one

offers to prevent them; on the contrary, all deem them happy, and charge them with messages to their dead relatives, so firm and true is the belief in their own minds, and in the minds of many others, that souls after death have intercourse with each other. When they have heard the commissions entrusted to them, they commit their body to the flames with a view to sever the soul from the body in completest purity, and then they die amid hymns resounding their praises, for their most attached friends dismiss them to death with less reluctance than it gives us to part with our fellow-citizens who set out on a distant journey. They weep, but it is for themselves, because they must continue to live, and those whose death they have witnessed they deem happy in their attainment of immortality. And neither among those Samanaeans nor among the Brahmins whom I have already mentioned, has any sophist come forward, as have so many among the Greeks, to perplex with doubts by asking where would we be if every one should copy their example."<sup>26</sup>

This passage was quoted almost verbatim by Stobaeus, and so must have been considered by him at least to be an obvious passage for selection from Porphyry—and others—on what they had to report on the Theosophists of India. The gist of the passage can be summed up as follows: the term Gymnosophists is applied to both Brahmins and Samanaeans. Both are concerned with divine wisdom; both live a life of righteousness; both are vegetarians; both engage in much prayer; and both aim at happily freeing their souls from their bodies as soon as possible, so that they may enter into an immortality in which they will encounter former friends. The Brahmins, whether those who live in the mountains or on the banks of the Ganges, are called philosophers and regard it as impure and impious even to taste anything other than fruit, cow-milk, rice or herbs or even to touch animal food; they live in silent solitude as far as possible and impose fasting on

themselves if they have observed this less than they consider proper; they spend practically all their time praying to the gods. The Samanaeans, on the other hand, live in community outside a city, abandoning all possessions and care of family; don a special robe and shave off superfluous parts of their persons; eat only rice, bread, fruit or pot-herbs; spend their days in discourse on divine things and have formal prayers.

One can then, I think, say that when Porphyry speaks of looking not to any philosophy taken very strictly but to the *mores ac disciplina Indorum* for a universal way of the soul's deliverance from the cycle of existences, these were at least the kind of *mores* and *disciplina* that he had in mind. Both terms, *mores* and *disciplina*, apply to the regime of righteousness and purification that Porphyry himself describes in relation to the Gymnosophists. But the term *disciplina* can, and almost certainly does here, imply more. Augustine uses the term as meaning 'doctrine'—and, of course, this is a frequent meaning of the term.<sup>27</sup> Indian righteousness and purification were related to philosophical doctrines—the existence of 'gods' (however different the Indians were from Porphyry's 'gods'), the duty of worshipping deity, the immortality of the soul (again however differently that immortality might be understood), and, above all, the possibility of escaping from the cycle of existences.

Here, then, we have evidence of the impact of Indian 'philosophy'—loosely considered and *mores* on an important Neoplatonist. If the range of his knowledge of and interest in Indian wisdom are not altogether distorted by the context from which we have elucidated them—and this is, of course, a possibility—then we are here given firsthand and valuable evidence on the theme of our conference.

Since Augustine in the *City of God* implies that other philosophers, including specifically the 'Indi', hold a number of philosophical doctrines which he outlined as corresponding to those of the Platonists, that is, including Plotinus and Porphyry among others, one is obliged to consider whether Augustine knew of these doctrines as being held by the Indi

from Porphyry or *aliunde*. In either case—since Augustine could claim to be a Neoplatonist too—the matter is of interest to us.

In the eighth book of the *City of God*<sup>28</sup> Augustine refers to the philosophy of all nations and isolated for his attention only those who hold the following doctrines: that there is a God who is the author of created things, the light by which things are known, and the good for which things are done; the principle of existence for us, the truth of doctrine, and the happiness of life. It is easy to see that this is a very Platonic presentation of these doctrines, organized as they are in accordance ultimately with the Platonic classification of Physics, Logic and Ethics. Moreover Augustine elaborates at length details of these three great headings, where, in my view, it would be quite unjustifiable for us here to follow him. But the general doctrine that there was a creator who is the source of illumination for us and also is our final good, even if couched in Platonic terms, is apparently attributed by Augustine to the Indi and we may accept this with some confidence: among those who hold these propositions he lists Platonists and Pythagoreans and "in addition such men of other nations who were regarded as wise men or philosophers and who were persuaded and taught the doctrines mentioned." The other nations then specified are Atlantic Libyans, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Chaldaeans, Scythians, Gauls, Spaniards.

I know of nothing written on Augustine's knowledge of the Indi—but I must give here some idea of how independent of Porphyry he could have been. Of course, he had available to him quite independently much of the information on the Indi that was available to Porphyry and some, undoubtedly, that was not available. It is known, for example, that the accession of Julian the Apostate, a Neoplatonist also, to the imperial throne in 361 A.D., seven years after Augustine was born, was marked with much interest among the Indi. Ammianus Marcellinus tells us that Embassies from all quarters flocked to the Emperor, the Indian nations vying with emulous zeal in

sending their foremost men with presents as far as from the Maldives and Ceylonese. To what extent this stimulated interest in Italy and Africa in India and the Indi we cannot know. But we might mention, however, for example, that curious document *Περὶ τῶν τῆς Ἰνδίας ἑθνῶν καὶ τῶν Βραχμάνων* preserved under the name of Palladius,<sup>29</sup> a Latin translation of which is attributed to Saint Ambrose.<sup>30</sup> Augustine regarded Ambrose as his spiritual father when he lived at Milan, the Emperor's see, for some years from 384. Ambrose, moreover, was at the centre, it is now thought, of a Christian-Neoplatonist circle at Milan which he probably brought to the notice of Augustine. If Ambrose did do such a translation,<sup>31</sup> then it would very likely be an important recent source for Augustine on the *mores* of the Indi and the Brahmins, even if, as might appear, it had little to add that was not already to be read in Porphyry, for example, or Strabo.<sup>32</sup> We have evidence, in any case, that Augustine at least knew of Philostratus's *Apollonius of Tyana*. He cannot but have known something of the sections of Philostratus's work that describe miracles performed by Apollonius, since he received a letter from Marcellinus—the very person to whom the *City of God* is addressed—(*Epistle* cxxxvi) in which is set forth an account of the controversy between Hierocles and Eusebius of Caesarea concerning these very miracles. Moreover in *Epistle* cii.<sup>32</sup> Augustine refers explicitly to Apollonius of Tyana as a *magus* and philosopher and to the wonderful things attributed to him.

It can be seen, therefore, that when Augustine includes the Indi in his list of philosophers who hold that there is a God who is the author of created things, the light by which things are known, and the good for which things are done, he may have, but need not have, depended on Porphyry. Such views are indeed to be found either explicitly or implicitly in the Classical sources available to both Porphyry and Augustine that I have indicated. Megasthenes, for example, is quoted by Strabo as follows:

... yet on many points their [i.e. of the Indi] opinions coincide with those of the Greeks, for like them they say that the world had a beginning, and is liable to destruction, and is in shape spherical, and that the Deity who made it, and who governs it, is diffused through all its parts. They hold that various first principles operate in the universe, and that water was the principle employed in the making of the world. In addition to the four elements there is a fifth agency, from which the heaven and the stars were produced. The earth is placed in the centre of the universe. Concerning generation, and the nature of the soul, and many other subjects, they express views like those maintained by the Greeks. They wrap up their doctrines about immortality and future judgement, and kindred topics, in allegories, after the manner of Plato. Such are his [Megasthenes's] statements regarding the Brahmins.<sup>33</sup>

Megasthenes also reported that among the Brahmins was a sect that held that "God was light, but not such light as we see with the eye, nor such as the sun or fire, but God is with them the Word—by which they mean... the discourse of reason, whereby the hidden mysteries of knowledge are discerned by the wise."<sup>34</sup> And, as Porphyry himself reports in the text from the *de abstinencia* already quoted, the Brahmins spend almost all their working hours worshipping the deity.<sup>35</sup>

Despite these more philosophical beliefs which I have been able only in a general way to describe and only very tentatively to associate from the *City of God* with either Porphyry or Augustine, the latter, always bearing in mind his main thesis, nevertheless includes the Indi among those who, whatever their more worthy beliefs, resorted in fact also to the cult of many gods.

Philostratus's *Apollonius of Tyana* indeed attests clearly that the Indi had a range of minor gods in charge of various

divisions of activity: "there are many gods in the heavens, many in the sea, many more in spring and river floods, and many whose province is earth, and some beneath the earth."<sup>36</sup> These gods delighted in sacrifices and various appellations. Moreover the Indi practised divination: "the devotees of divination became inspired under its influence and contribute to the *salvation of mankind*."<sup>37</sup> Yet the *Apollonius of Tyana*, though it purports to give a comprehensive survey of all Brahmin teaching, public and private,<sup>38</sup> does not tell us of any *universal way* for the delivery of the soul from the cycle of existences. And although Porphyry is said by Augustine to have searched for such a universal way in the *mores ac disciplina Indorum* he did not find it there.

Joseph Bidez and Franz Cumont in their "Préface" to *Les Mages Hellénisés* proclaim that one of the great problems of the history of ancient thought is 'celle des rapports de l'hellénisme et de l'Orient'.<sup>39</sup> The greatness of the problem is ample justification for the holding of a conference such as this. It is also, I hope, some justification for exploring an approach to the problem on a front even as narrow as I have attempted.

I believe that I have sufficiently alerted you to the fact that my primary source, Augustine, is interested in the *City of God* in what Porphyry has to say about the Indi only in relation to whether or not the Indi teach some universal way of delivering mankind from the cycle of existences. He does not, therefore, refer to all of Porphyry's acquaintance with the Indi and their wisdom, or even such of this as was perhaps known to him.

The evidence, however, which I have brought forward suggests, taken by itself, that the Neoplatonist Porphyry, aware as he was of the traditional Greek regard for the wisdom and philosophy of the Indi, was strongly impressed by the organized piety, abstinence, and general ascetic purgation of the Indi, intended to result finally in a total separation of the soul from body of whatever kind. He was curious to discover if they had any practical method of achieving this result for the mass of men. Later authors, Theodoret (died c. 466),

Claudianus Mamertus (died c. 474) and Aeneas of Gaza (died c. 518) report—in all likelihood, however, using the same source as Augustine—the same interest of Porphyry, which, of course, may be an interest peculiar to Porphyry or of a developing or weakening Neoplatonism. It is, nevertheless, one perhaps not unimportant or unrepresentative strand in the evidence that we must use to clarify the great problem to which Bidez-Cumont refer.

## NOTES

1. Cf. Anne-Marie-Esnoul, Colette Caillat, André Bareau, "La formation des religions universelles et les religions de salut en Inde et en Extrême-Orient," in *Histoire des Religions*, Vol. I, dir. H.-Charles Puech (Paris, 1970), pp. 995 ff.
2. C.xxxii.
3. C.xxx.
4. Ibid.
5. C.xi.
6. Cf. J. O'Meara, *Porphyry's Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine* (Paris, 1959).
7. C.xxvii (Loeb translation with a correction).
8. Cc.xxiii, xxviii.
9. *Ciu. Dei*, xiv.17; cf. xv.20.
10. Cf. L. Pareti, *The Ancient World* (London, 1965), pp. 516, 827 ff. "Le bouddhisme primitif apparaît... comme étant essentiellement une doctrine de salut, la 'voie de la délivrance' (*vimuktimārga*) par excellence"—A. Bareau *apud* H.-Charles Puech, *op. cit.*, 1150.
11. "L'idée de pureté et d'impureté va dominer le brahmanisme et conférer un sens particulier aux rites" A.-Marie Esnoul, *ibid.*, 999. "Pour mener à bien ce rude et long combat contre les passions, les vices, et les erreurs, il faut se soumettre à une discipline sévère et constante..."—A. Bareau, *ibid.*, 1156.
12. L. Pareti, *op. cit.*, 828.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 833.
14. *Ibid.*; cf. H.-Charles Puech, *op. cit.*, p. 1038.
15. J. Filliozat, "La doctrine des brâhmanes d'après saint Hippolyte," in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, Vol. cxxx (1945), p. 60.
16. See n. 24.
17. See Franz F. Schwarz, "Neue Perspektiven in den griechisch-indischen Beziehungen," in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* (January-February, 1972), pp. 5-26 and esp. p. 20 f. (with notes). This article takes account not only of the important work of the Russian Nina Pigulewskaja, *Byzanz auf den Wegen nach Indien* (Berlin-Amsterdam, 1969; first published in Moscow-Leningrad, 1951), which gives an account of Western trade with the Orient from the 4th to the 6th centuries, but also refers to a series of valuable articles by Albrecht Dihle written since 1962. Cf. also J. Filliozat, "Les échanges de l'Inde et de l'Empire romain aux premiers siècles de l'ère chrétienne," *Revue Historique*, 201 (1949), pp. 5 ff.; *Les relations extérieures de l'Inde*, (Pondicherry, 1956), and J. Rougé's edition of the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* (Paris: Sources Chrétiennes 124, 1966).
18. (1) *Ancient India* as described by Megasthenes and Arrian; (2) *The Commerce and Navigation of the Erythraean Sea*; (3) *Ancient India* as described by Ktesias the Knidian; (4) *Ancient India* as described by Ptolemy; (5) *The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great*; and (6) *Ancient India* as described in Classical Literature. These volumes were first published in London-Calcutta in the years 1877-1901 and have, since 1971, been reprinted in New Delhi-Amsterdam. The fragments of Megasthenes are to be found in E. A. Schwanbeck, *Megasthenis Indica* (Bonn, 1846), which McCrindle follows (and, for convenience of reference here, I also use). But cf. C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, II.397 ff.
19. A. J. P. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, Vol. I (Paris, 1944), p. 20.
20. "La doctrine des brâhmanes..." in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, Vol. cxxx (1945), pp. 82, 79.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
23. "The Conception of India in Hellenistic and Roman Literature," in *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* (1964), pp. 17-20.
24. See J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Greece and India: the Milindapañha, the Alexander-romance and the Gospels," *Zeitschrift f. Religions Geistesgeschichte*, 19 (1967), pp. 33-64, and "Greece and India again: the Jaimini-Aśvamedha, the Alexander-romance and the Gospels," *ibid.*, 22 (1970), pp. 19-44. Derrett contends that the *Questions of Milinda* reflects neither a Greek nor a Sanskrit 'age', but rather that of the Kushans, and dates therefore from the period 50-200 A.D. Moreover he maintains that the work contains Alexander-romance and Gospel material, thus indicating Indian dependence on the West rather than the opposite. W. W. Tarn, *The*

*Greeks in Bactria and India* (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 432-6, puts forward an hypothetical *Questions of Milinda* written in Greek which reached Alexandria in Egypt by or before 100 B.C. Even if the hypothesis were accepted, we would still have no evidence that Porphyry knew it.

25. Filliozat argues, in "La doctrine des brâhmanes. . .," in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, cxxx (1945), p. 84, that Bar Daisan is speaking not of Brahmins but of Buddhists. A. Dihle appears to agree that Porphyry's *Samanaeans* are Buddhists: art. cit., p. 22. But see Schwarz, art. cit., p. 13 and n. 2.
26. J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India* as described in classical literature, pp. 169 ff., with minor corrections (=Porphyry, *de abst.*, IV.16-18). For Samanaean, see A. Dihle, *ibid.*
27. Cf. *de Trinitate*, xiv.1: "...scientia dici potest. . . . Quamvis et alia notione, in iis, quae pro peccatis suis mala quisque patitur, ut corrigatur, dici solet disciplina."
28. C.ix.
29. Cf. W. Berghoff, *Palladius de gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1967); J. Duncan M. Derrett, "The History of 'Palladius on the Races of India and the Brahmins'," *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 21 (1960), pp. 64-135. Derrett dates the work at 375 A.D. at the latest (78).
30. Cf. Migne, P.L. XVII.1131-1146; C. Müller, *Pseudo-Callisthenes III* (Paris, 1846), 7-16; S. V. Yankowski, *The Brahman Episode: St. Ambrose's Version of the Colloquy between Alexander the Great and the Brahmins of India* (text and English translation) (Ansbach, 1962); A. Wilmart, 'Les textes latines de la lettre de Palladius sur les mœurs des Brahmins,' *Revue Bénédictine* 45 (1933), 29-42.
31. "St. Ambrose could have been the author . . . of the so-called *Vita Dragmanorum*. . . . The objections on the grounds of style . . . may or may not be substantial"—Derrett, *ibid.*, 101; cf. also 100. Wilmart, art. cit., is convinced that the translation found in *Ms. Vat.* 282 is by Ambrose.
32. Cf. J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India* as described in Classical Literature, 64-74 (=Strabo, *Geography*, xv.58-68).
33. J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India*, as described by Megasthenes and Arrian, 101 (=Megasthenes frg. XLI); cf. 103 (=Megasthenes frg. XLII). Cf. Philostratus, *Apollonius of Tyana*, XIX.97; Numenius frg. 9a, p. 130.8, Leemans.
34. *Ibid.*, 120f. (=Megasthenes frg. LIV).
35. 'The Greckaryans and the Brahmaryans had identical ideas about God, creation of the world and soul,'—Ramchandra Jain, *McCrindle's Ancient India*, (New Delhi, 1972), xxiii. The correspondences

between the doctrines of the *Questions of Milinda* and Greek philosophy, including Neoplatonism, are many and impressive but are not relevant to my paper.

36. xxxv.113.
37. xlii.117.
38. l.121.
39. l.ix.



**Plotinus  
and the  
*Upaniṣads***

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The aim of this paper is to present a general comparison of the thought of Plotinus and the *Upaniṣads*. The thinking of Plotinus serves as a rare vehicle which can productively bridge the so-called gap between East and West. Within the language of the western philosophical tradition, Plotinus presents a striking parallel to the form of thinking predominant in India. The basis of this comparative investigation is a remarkably similar four-fold structuring of reality found in Plotinian and Upaniṣadic thought. Our method will be to single out basic elements of Plotinus's thinking which radically distinguish him from the mainstream of the western tradition, and then to analyse, through a point by point comparison, prevalent themes in the *Upaniṣads* which correspond to Plotinus's world-view. And it is hoped that the emergence of such philosophical similarities in a thinker who worked within the Greek tradition, and who felt he was being faithful to that tradition,<sup>1</sup> will prompt the realization that perhaps thought is not entirely bound up within a culture, and that a reconciliation of East and West is not only valuable, but perhaps natural.

The predominant perspective of western thought began with and grew out of Aristotelian philosophy, where the proper object of thought and value is the intellectual apprehension of individual form, through the discovery of universals immanent in individual form.<sup>2</sup> Plotinus, while not denying this perspective, nevertheless claims something further, that the *ultimate* object of thought and value is something which transcends form, both individual and universal, which transcends intellect, and which transcends individual consciousness. With his distinct vision of the One Plotinus undermines a principle that had apparently been fundamental to Greek thought—that the limited and finite is the perfect, while the unlimited and infinite is the imperfect.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, Plotinus claims infinity, unlimitedness and formlessness to be the One's nature, and then calls this the ultimate ground. Plotinus here unveils a new awareness in western thinking, that of a positive infinity, no longer viewing indeterminateness as an imperfection. And because of this absolute transcendence of the One, the most appropriate analysis of the One is a negative analysis.

Generative of all, the Unity is none of all; neither thing nor quality nor intellect nor soul; not in motion, not at rest, not in place, not in time: it is the self-defined, unique in form or, better, formless, existing before Form was, or Movement or Rest, all of which are attachments of Being and make Being the manifold it is. . . . we should put neither a This nor a That to it. [VI.9.3]<sup>4</sup>

The notion of this One as absolute source gives Plotinian thought the following characteristics which distinguish it from tradition. First, since the One is all-pervasive, any differentiation is not strict distinction but must be explained through his emanation-return scheme. The levels of being established by Plato are not separate or distinct. They are emanations of the One, the One-in-dispersion. And in ascendance, the soul

does not contemplate the Ideas, gazing upon them in a subject-object distinction. If the soul is to raise itself to divine intelligibility, it must *become* Nous. Plotinus's hypostases are not therefore objective realms, separate from the soul; they must be seen as levels of spiritual experience.<sup>5</sup> The soul ascends to Nous not by "discovering" it, but by realizing the ground of Nous within itself. Thus firstly it is this mystical affinity and unity of aspects of being that distinguishes Plotinus's thinking.

Secondly, the nature of the One requires that it be beyond even the divine intellect of Nous. The One is an ever-present source infinitely productive of acts of intelligence. However, productive activity is intelligence, Nous, not the One, which is the *source* of this activity. The true vision of the One is not in Nous; this vision is undifferentiated and is therefore no longer intelligence. Rather Nous is oriented toward the One, it is suspended from and turns toward the One. This suspension-from and turning-toward is the first moment of manifestation from the One, resulting in a manifested intelligence, always grounded in the power of the One, with unity as its principle of operation. Plotinus does not exclude intelligence or deny its importance, but the fact that the One is beyond Nous, means that Nous must go beyond itself. Nous is a stage in the realization of that which generates intelligence. Therefore, the One, or the ground of being, transcends being, and thus transcends intellect. This is a crucial departure from the dominant trend in western thought. All intellection is distinction, a subject-object distinction. And for Plotinus the Platonist, this is a *real* distinction, since the objects of thought, ideas, are realities. There can be no distinctions in the One, therefore the One has no intelligible or intellectual characteristics; it is above knowledge; it is a higher reality than thinking and being (III.9.7,9; V.3.11).

Thirdly, with the absolute transcendence of the One, and the soul's power to ascend to union with the One, the soul ultimately relinquishes its individuality (VI.7.35). Here we are in

conflict again with most of western thought, especially Christianity. But for Plotinus, this surrender of individuality is not to be regretted. It is the soul's very nature to transcend itself; it finds its true reality in union with the One, just as *Nous* fulfills its search for unity through its self-transcendence. This union could not take place unless soul, intellect and the One had an ontological affinity, a similitude which allows the union. This secret affinity between the soul and the divinity is the basic premise of any mysticism.<sup>6</sup>

The Plotinian One carries both a mystical and an intellectualistic interpretation.<sup>7</sup> The latter sees the One as the basis of intellect while the former affirms that, since intellect has its source in the One, then intellect is the One from the standpoint of intelligence, and intellect must eventually therefore transcend itself and *become* the One, since reality is a process of emanation and return. Reality could not be a cohesive whole without this circular dynamism.

In sum, it is Plotinus's refusal to give ultimate status to form, individuality and intelligence that radically sets him apart from the Greek tradition in which he operated. For the purpose of transition, let us again locate Plotinus's attitude toward intelligence. There seem to be two aspects of intelligence. First there is the articulated system of definite notions, the intelligible order, the fixed model of the sensible order. This is the Greek and generally the western emphasis. Secondly we find thought directed toward itself, where subject-object distinctions disappear, and where finally intelligence is transcended and the self is merged with the universal principle.<sup>8</sup> This seems foreign to Greek and most of western thought. The first considers rational knowledge of the universe, the second considers a mystical union of beings in the One. The relation of the individual to the universal had always been a Greek problem. But Plotinus moved to show that the universal is present in its entirety in all things without losing its universality. He no longer sought rational knowledge of the universal, but a mystical union where individual consciousness disappears. This is a withdrawal from particular forms,

and all ethical and intellectual aspects of the soul, where the self is lost in contemplation. And it is generally this emphasis on contemplation as the ultimate reality that most conclusively connects Plotinus with the thought of India.

The *Upanisads*<sup>9</sup> are fundamental to the philosophy of India. Each different form of Indian thought has always had to reconcile itself with them. With the coming of the *Upanisads*, Vedic hymns and rites were replaced by a search for the one reality behind all flux. This was also a movement from the "objective" to the "subjective."<sup>10</sup> The key to the One is found within the depths of the human self. The *Upanisads* often criticize ritualistic religion; liberation is an internal, not external experience. The goal of the liberated self is not the bliss of a heaven or rebirth in a better world, but freedom from the objective, *karma*, and union with the Absolute, which is not in any "state." Vedic knowledge is in itself insufficient for liberation. One must have that unexternalized, uncognitive "knowledge" of the Self. Though Vedic knowledge can lead to Self-knowledge, knowing the Self transcends the entire range of human knowledge (cf. the One as the self-transcendence of *Nous*).

The seers of the *Upanisads* asked: what is the one reality multiplicity is reducible to, what is that which persists throughout change? This ultimate reality is called *Brahman*, which comes from the root *bṛh*, to grow, burst forth, and suggests a huddling over, a ceaseless growth<sup>11</sup> very similar to the idea of overflowing power in the Plotinian One. And like Plotinus, for the *Upanisads*, the world emanates from *Brahman* and returns to *Brahman*, while despite this emanation, *Brahman* remains ever-complete and undiminished. In Indian thought creation is not *ex nihilo*; creation is not making but a becoming, the self-projection of the Absolute, which therefore does not really "create" the world but becomes the world.<sup>12</sup> The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* repudiates all the then-held notions of creation, of it being due to time, nature, necessity, chance, elements, Person, or combinations of these, and calls creation simply the nature of the Absolute, tracing the world simply

to the power of Brahman. Creation does not come about for any "reason," therefore one cannot determine creation to be anything other than the self-expression of Brahman. Why does Brahman create, or manifest? Like the Plotinian One, it is the very *nature* of Brahman to manifest. And again echoing Plotinus, if Brahman is to ground the manifest, it must be unmanifest, or without form, so it can *ground* form, and not itself be one of the forms. The *Subāla Upaniṣad* (VII.1) tells us that Brahman is the indwelling spirit, moving through all the functions and facets of reality and thought, yet these facets themselves apprehend it not; Brahman is beyond all thingness. Because of this, the *Upaniṣads* too consider the most appropriate analysis of Brahman to be a negative analysis.

Absolute Being is not an existing quality or object of thought. It transcends all attempts to grasp it, as it is the source of all manifestations. It can only be described negatively, as the formless, nameless, etc. In relation to concrete beings, it is non-being, but in itself it is the fullness of Being. But we must still not ascribe any positive determinations to the unlimited, the undetermined. Brahman is without form and is beyond sight and the world of objectivity (*Śvetāśvatara U.* IV.20). Brahman is the all-pervading God, devoid of qualities (*ibid.*, VI.11). The *Subāla U.* gives a long list of negative descriptions of Brahman (III.1), and also negates even the negative descriptions by saying that Brahman cannot be said to be dual or non-dual, mortal, or immortal, internal or external knowledge, or both, and it partakes of neither knowledge nor non-knowledge (V.15). In the *Maitrī U.* (VI.3) we find that Brahman has two aspects, the formless and the formed. Though Brahman can take form, in the world, the formless is the fundamental reality, the "cause" of the formed effect. And in the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka U.* we hear the statement at IV.5.15 that Brahman is *neti neti*, not this, not that (cf. *Enn.* VI.9.3, cited above).

As in Plotinian thought, this absolute transcendence of Brahman demands that it be beyond intellect. Mind and sense,

which operate through subject-object distinctions, are misleading, are *avidyā* or "ignorance," if blind to the intuitive level of *vidyā* or "wisdom" which characterizes "knowledge" of Brahman. If the Real is seen as an object of knowledge, it cannot be known. True knowledge or *vidyā* is an integral creative activity of spirit knowing nothing external to it. Truth is not an expression or reflection of reality, it is reality itself. Knowledge and being are the same thing, inseparable aspects of the same reality, indistinguishable in a realm admitting of no duality. Duality is an otherness, an estrangement, a fallenness. Intellect moves within this sphere of duality. The intuitive level of *vidyā* stems from a unity. The *Mundaka U.* (I.1.4) distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge, higher and lower, *parā vidyā* and *aparā vidyā*. This distinction seems to correspond to the Plotinian distinction between "knowledge" or vision of unity and knowledge of multiplicity. *Parā vidyā* is a knowledge of imperishable Being; *aparā vidyā* is a knowledge of perishable beings. The latter is not false; one can seek Brahman in a particularized manner, yet if it is sought merely as particular and not grounded in *parā vidyā*, the result is still bondage and ignorance. It seems that *aparā vidyā* culminates in intellect and *parā vidyā* manifests as vision, an experience. Again this corresponds to the difference between Nous and the vision of the One. One can understand the *Vedas* and the teachings on Brahman, but this understanding will always be insufficient without the actual *experience* of one's ground, the vision, the clarity of illumination. One can know God only by becoming godlike, not by thinking about God (thus the importance in Indian religion of yoga, or non-theoretical techniques to further expanded *experience*).

The *Kena U.* states that Brahman is the basis of mind, life, sense and it is not an object subject to these states (I.1-2). Brahman is beyond thought, life, sensation (I.3), therefore the impossibility of communication and description. Brahman is above the known, yet also above the unknown (I.4), meaning we can "know" Brahman, but not through the mind. And then we hear the famous paradox concerning Brahman:

To whomsoever it is not known, to him it is known: to whomsoever it is known, he does not know. It is not understood by those who understand it; it is understood by those who do not understand it. [*Kena U.* II.3]

The Supreme is one essence with two natures, eternal immutability and unceasing change, stillness and motion. All motion moves out of its stillness. Unity and multiplicity are both aspects of one reality. Unity is truth, *vidyā*; multiplicity, its manifestation, is *avidyā*, but is false only when viewed in itself, cut off from its ground. This affirmation of the lower realms is an important, though rarely stressed aspect of absolutist-type philosophies such as the *Upaniṣads* and Plotinus. Unity *upholds* multiplicity, though not vice versa, "the all-pervading air supports the activities of beings" (*Īśa U.* 5).

It moves and It moves not; It is far and It is near:  
It is within all this and It is also outside all this.  
[*Īśa U.* 3]

This is a paradox to express an ineffable reality. Brahman is beyond the categories of thought, hence it is expressed negatively and contradictorily. And yet it is not a void; all things are filled with Brahman, which is the basis of reality and cannot therefore be ascertained in any determinate way. The basis of all things cannot be a thing (cf. *Enn.* III.8.10; VI.9.5) even an immaterial "state." And it is this very transcendence which allows Brahman's immanence, its presence within *all* things.

Brahman's immanence indicates that it is not merely the unmanifest, it is all the world as well. Brahman sustains the cosmos and is the innermost self of each individual. Transcendence and immanent universality are *both* real aspects of one Brahman; in the former Brahman is not dependent on the manifold, in the latter it is the principle of the manifold (cf. the two aspects of the One-Nous relation, i.e., the One in itself, and the One as the source of Nous). What follows is a

notion found often in the *Upaniṣads* concerning levels of being, where the levels are seen as Brahman in relation to the world.

In the *Śvetāśvatara U.* (I.1) we find that Brahman is the cause of all things. But Brahman in its unmanifested nature cannot be viewed as a cause. So Brahman as cause is Brahman as *Īśvara*, or Lord, the principle of creation. Previously we have seen that the absolute source is impersonal Brahman. *Īśvara* is the creator working through the power of *māyā*. Brahman in relation to the world is *Īśvara*; but Brahman's absolute nature transcends *Īśvara*. This corresponds to Plotinus's notion that the One in relation to the universe is Nous, the divine Ideas as source of the universe.

Brahman is *both* personal and impersonal, formed and formless, two aspects of one reality. *Īśvara* is the Absolute from the standpoint of form. When we find in the *Upaniṣads* mention of a creator, or cause, we must be careful to keep in mind the distinction between Brahman and *Īśvara* in order to avoid confusion. The fundamental reality is formless Brahman. Brahman in relation to the world is *Īśvara*.

Besides *Īśvara* we often come across a notion of a World-Soul, sometimes called Brahma or *Hiraṇya-garbha*,<sup>13</sup> which seems to represent the creator-God *at work* in the world. This World-Soul is not sharply distinguished from *Īśvara* in the *Upaniṣads*, as it is intimately grounded in *Īśvara* and Brahman. These three principles, Brahman, *Īśvara*, and *Hiraṇya-garbha* are continually referred to, in various contexts, as the basis of the manifested world. But each is subtly distinct in meaning, and we must therefore rank them. It is hard to find such systematization in the *Upaniṣads*, though there are suggestions in the *Taittirīya U.* and the soon to be considered *Māṇḍūkya U.* Much of the "systematization" of the *Upaniṣads* comes to us through the later commentaries of men like Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. However, we can legitimately structure such principles on the basis of the philosophical assumptions at work in the *Upaniṣads*. Therefore we come across Brahman, the unity of all, and also a World-Soul, which is subject to the changes

of the world and is therefore effect-Brahman as distinct from Īśvara or cause-Brahman. Īśvara is eternally transcendent and is not subject to world changes. The World-Soul arises at the beginning of the world and dissolves at the end.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, as the *Māṇḍūkya U.* tells us (2), Brahman has four quarters; this can be analysed as four levels of being: (1) A transcendence prior to any concrete reality, Absolute Brahman; (2) A causal foundation of all differentiation, Īśvara or cause-Brahman; Īśvara is looked on as *prāñña*, a supreme intelligence which holds all things in an undifferentiated condition, a divine wisdom which sees *all* things as a primordial whole, unlike human reason which sees things in parts and relations; (3) An interior essence of the world, a World-Soul, effect-Brahman, called Brahma or Hiranya-garbha. This World-Soul emanates from Īśvara the creator (*Śvetāśvatara U.* III.4; VI.18; *Muṇḍaka U.* I.1.9); (4) A manifest world of multiplicity, called *virāj*. These are four coexistent sides of one reality. The Absolute is not a sum of these, or an elimination of any. It is an ineffable unity in the midst of which conceptual distinctions are possible, but only to serve *our* understanding. Brahman has strict distinctions only phenomenally.

Now if we look back over these four aspects of reality and compare them with the Plotinian realms: (1) One, the absolute, undifferentiated, formless source; (2) Nous, the divine Ideas, principle of creation; (3) World-Soul, the agent of creation; (4) the sense world—we find a remarkable similarity of structure.

One of the most famous expressions of this four-fold structure of reality comes to us in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. Here the syllable *AUM* is seen as representing Brahman. This *Upaniṣad* views the levels of reality from the standpoint of the stages of consciousness leading to a realization of Brahman, and corresponds to Plotinus viewing a metaphysical structure in terms of spiritual attitudes, the inward ascension of the soul to the One. First we have the letter *A*, signifying the waking state, *viśva*, a cognition of external objects. Next is *U*, the dreaming state, *taijasa*, a cognition of internal objects.

Next is *M*, the dreamless state, *prāñña*, a mass of cognition, neither internal nor external. Finally there is the transcendental state, *turiya*, the silence surrounding the syllable *AUM*, the unity and basis of all, with no cognition whatsoever, pure Being. *Prāñña* is a unity, but thought becomes one, wisdom. *Turiya* is beyond thought, it is the *source* of thought. *Prāñña* is the basis for creation, and hence manifest, though still a unity, the unified seed of creation, having multiplicity latent within it (quite similar to the Plotinian Nous). *Turiya* is the ground of this creative basis. It is the stillness out of which emanates the creative principle. Here we are given a distinction between the Absolute and God, Brahman and Īśvara, the Unmanifest and Manifest. Creation is a secondary phenomenon. The primary phenomenon is the impersonal Absolute, and the spontaneous emanation out of its stillness. The creative principle, though a unity, is still a manifestation of the Absolute. This Absolute, as *turiya*, is characterized as being not internal, not external, not a mass of cognition, not the cognitive, not the non-cognitive, the unseen, ungraspable, unnamable, unthinkable, the non-dual (*Māṇḍūkya U.* 7).

So the levels of being as described in the *Upaniṣads* can be expressed through the following equations:

1. *A* = *viśva* = waking state = external objects = *virāj* = world;
2. *U* = *taijasa* = dream state = internal objects = *Hiranya-garbha* = World-Soul;
3. *M* = *Prāñña* = dreamless state = mass of cognition, wisdom = Īśvara = creator;
4. Silence = *turiya* = transcendental state = source of all = *Brahman* = peace.

And these levels can easily be seen to correspond to Plotinus's stages of reality:

1. Sense world and the individual soul immersed in its externality;
2. World-soul creating the world from within itself;

3. Nous, the creative principle, unity of divine Ideas;
4. One, undifferentiated source of all.

As in Plotinus, the levels of being found in the *Upaniṣads* are not "other" than the Absolute Brahman, but they themselves are not the ultimate reality. To reach the Absolute, one must penetrate to the formless Brahman. This is accomplished by the self journeying within to its innermost depths where it is one with the Absolute. In the *Upaniṣads* there is a kinship between Brahman and that which seeks Brahman, the self of man. This kinship is explained through the notion of *Ātman*, the principle grounding individual consciousness. In the early prose *Upaniṣads*, *Ātman* was the ground of individuality as distinguished from Brahman, the supra-personal ground of the cosmos. Soon this distinction diminished and the two were identified.<sup>15</sup> Brahman is the transcendent other and the spirit residing within man. Brahman is known through *Ātman*. This whole world is Brahman and this self within me is Brahman too (*Chāndogya U.* III.14.1,4). In order to find the divine one must look within the human soul (*Enn.* V.3.9). Brahman and *Ātman* are two aspects of one reality.

The *Upaniṣads* thus teach the intimate unity of the self of man and Brahman. The wise see God abiding in their self (*Śvetāśvatara U.* VI.12). The knower of Brahman becomes merged with Brahman (*ibid.*, I.7). The individual self sees its true reality as the source of all (*Kaivalya U.* 20-23). It is the task of the individual self to become the Universal Self, and this is not attainable through the *Vedas*, intellectual knowledge, discipline or brain power (*Subāla U.* IX.15), but only through a union. Every individual self has the power to break the veil of separateness and achieve unity, become the Absolute Self. Liberation, *mokṣa*, is different than an existence in paradise, *śvarga*, which is still a part of the manifest, still an individual existence in time. Liberation is not a departure to another "world," nor an expectation of a future state, but the experience of the timeless, placeless presence of Brahman, it is this presence.

This union is the transformation of the soul, the absorption in the divine, seeing one's self in all beings and all beings in one's self (*Īśa U.* 6). One who realizes this is released from sorrow, as all sorrow results from duality (*ibid.*, 7). The self loses itself, casting off all name and form it enters into the Unmanifest (*Muṇḍaka U.* III.2.8). Such is a release from the cycle of birth and death, the wheel of time and change, the achieving of the state *kaivalya*, aloneness (*Kaivalya U.* 25). All of this of course corresponds to Plotinus's flight of the alone to the Alone.

In its initial condition, sometimes the soul is depicted as wandering about, thinking itself different from Brahman, looking on multiplicity as its sole reality (*Śvetāśvatara U.* I.6). This is quite similar to Plotinus's image of the soul wandering through the sense world. Union with Brahman cures the soul of this *avidyā*, or individuality seen in itself independent of its ground, and brings about *vidyā*, or awareness of Brahman. This *avidyā-vidyā* scheme is somewhat comparable to the Plotinian fall-return imagery. Sorrow is seen as the helplessness resulting from being lost in the objective world; salvation involves getting beyond object-thinking to the realm of pure Being (*Śvetāśvatara U.* IV.7).

With the ecstasy of divine union, the world is looked upon as a troubled dream, as illusion, *māyā*. The world is a covering of untruth which hides or veils the truth (*Chāndogya U.* VIII.3.1-3). But it is a mistake to assume that an indifference to the world or a world-denial necessarily results from this.<sup>16</sup> Both the Absolute and Personal God are real; manifestation is not denied. One must "negate" the world to reach Brahman but only to return and redeem the world (*Īśa U.* 18). The world is Brahman, not its own reality. The meaning of *māyā* is that the world is not its own meaning. *Avidyā* is ignorance, viewing the world as its own meaning, as ultimate, as not grounded in Brahman. *Māyā* is a cosmic creative principle, but also the possibility of *avidyā*. *Avidyā* is the subjective phenomenon of ignorance arising from the mistaken attribution of ultimate reality to *māyā*, seeing the play as real, as in itself.

Hence the manifestation of primordial Being is simultaneously a concealment of its original nature. This concealment is *avidyā*. Therefore the world is not unreal, it is merely not independent. There is nothing without Brahman; the unreality of the world is the world seen in itself.

On this point, at times Plotinus accounts for the world through a fall of the soul, resulting from a spiritual pride, *tolma*, forsaking unity for particularity. This seems to be a denial of the value of the world. But in other instances Plotinus sees the descent of the soul as a metaphysical necessity, part of the emanation of the One.<sup>17</sup> The world cannot be denied if the One is ever-present and immanent. Perhaps what Plotinus intends here is what is suggested in the *Upaniṣads*. Perhaps an embodied soul is not evil, but a soul *attached* to a body is evil. So perhaps the world is not evil, but attachment to the world is evil. So the descent into the world is good, is a metaphysical necessity; but this descent allows the possibility of becoming attached to the world, concealing the true reality of the divine realm (the nature of the One defines detachment in a sense). It is *this* aspect of the world, this aspect of the descent which must be modified and which must be considered unreal and valueless. Blind absorption in the world, not the world itself, is that which Plotinus seeks to overcome.

In the *Upaniṣads*, overcoming *māyā* means overcoming worldliness, valuing the world in itself. The meaning of *māyā* is not concerned with the existence of the world, but with the *meaning* of the world, not the factuality of the world, but the way we look upon the world.<sup>18</sup> At times the *Upaniṣads* say the world is appearance, and only Brahman is real; sometimes it is said that the world is real, though not independent of Brahman. Either way, the world is not false or evil, it is merely unfundamental, not being its own ground. This point concerning the status of the world is an important one, needed to counter accusations of nihilism and world-denial thrown at both Plotinus and Hinduism.

We have been able to see deep similarities of thought between Plotinus and the *Upaniṣads*. We find the soul initially

trapped in a fallen awareness, attending to multiplicity and change as the only reality. The task of the soul is to purify and deepen its awareness to reveal the absolute, formless source behind these manifestations. And this awareness is not external but internal, found at the depths of the soul. The soul *is* this Absolute at its depths, hence its individuality is transcended, individuality as an ultimate principle is transcended. The world is an emanation (immanence) of a formless ground (transcendence); form is not the ultimate reality, it must ultimately deny itself, transcend itself, and return to its ground. This is the process of reality, that of emanation and return, reflected in the thought of Plotinus and the *Upaniṣads* in a noticeably similar fourfold organization.

In closing, let me very briefly address the question of Indian influence on Plotinus. I must admit to a certain amount of disinterest in the issue of influence or inter-cultural contact in this regard. I have to say that I like the idea of the independent development of Plotinian thought, viewing it as the consequence and fulfillment of certain fundamental tendencies inherent in Greek philosophy.<sup>19</sup> But I see this "independence" as a modified one, closer to the independence of identical twins separated at birth. There may therefore be a common origin, but one which has nothing to do with cultural or historical contact, but which rather has to do with the necessary depths of thought itself, which thinkers of depth will apprehend similarly. I am somewhat suspicious of influence-theories. They can be seen to stem from either of two far from dispassionate intentions: (1) The impulse to preserve the sanctity of western rationalism by determining non-rational elements to be of external origin; (2) More generally, from the standpoint of historical determinism, which disclaims the possibility of spontaneous creation, thereby diluting the essence and effect of genius, and which therefore cannot claim to be sober philosophical analysis but rather the spectacle of lesser minds dragging greater minds down to a more negotiable level, i.e., subject to external influences. Even



though all thought works with an inheritance, genius is characterized by its autonomy, innovativeness and self-radiance. After being exposed to the genius of Plotinus, I find it hard to believe that he would have sought or needed outside help in articulating his vision. Plotinian and Indian parallels should prompt not a search for historical influences, but rather a re-evaluation of the supposed philosophical distance between the East and West.

## NOTES

1. For discussions of the relation between Plotinus and Plato see: E.N. Dodds, "The Parmenides of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One," *Classical Quarterly*, 22 (1928), 129-42; C. De Vogel, "On the Neoplatonic Character of Platonism and the Platonic Character of Neoplatonism," *Mind*, 62 (1953), 43-64; J.N. Findlay, "The Neoplatonism of Plato," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, edited by R. Baine Harris (International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), pp. 23-40.
2. *Categories*, 3b.5.10; *Metaphysics*, VII.17.1041b.5-10.
3. Two exceptions should be noted: the priority given to the *apeiron* by Anaximander, and Plato's provocative description of the Good as "beyond being" (*Republic*, VI.509b).
4. This and all translations are taken from Stephen MacKenna, *The Enneads* (New York: Pantheon, 1969).
5. See Emile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, translated by Joseph Thomas (University of Chicago Press, 1958), Chapter IV.
6. The self-transcendence of the intellect is a common feature of western mysticism. Even the transcendence of individuality is found in Sufism and Christian mystics like Meister Eckhart. Many western philosophers also fit this model. For a discussion of Spinoza in this regard, see my "The Non-rational Dimension in Spinoza's *Ethics*," *Journal of Studies in Mysticism*, Autumn, 1979.
7. See Bréhier, op. cit., Chapter VIII.
8. Ibid.
9. Translations are taken from Radhakrishnan's *The Principle Upanishads* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969).

10. Ibid., p. 49. A better distinction would be that between the external and the internal, since "subjective" suggests individual selfhood, which is not intended.
11. Ibid., p. 52.
12. Ibid., p. 82.
13. Ibid., p. 60ff.
14. Ibid., p. 62.
15. Ibid., p. 77.
16. Ibid., p. 79.
17. The main texts on emanation are: V.1-5; III.2,3,8,10; IV.8,6; VI.8,18. See A.H. Armstrong's discussion in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*.
18. See Radhakrishnan, op. cit., pp. 78-90.
19. For a discussion of the non-rational and the formless in Greek thought, see my *Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence* (University Press of America, 1978), pp. 1-30.

**Proclus  
and the  
*Tejobindu Upaniṣad***

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This paper is an essay in comparative mysticism. The word "mysticism" is being defined, for the purposes of this paper at least, as (1) a philosophical doctrine, namely, that the conscious individual can and should experience a uniting with 'the divine', that is, the Ultimate Reality. Thus mysticism is both a psychology and an ethics, but naturally these in turn presuppose an underlying metaphysics; and this is generally that of absolute, monistic idealism, since if the individual is *consciously* to unite with the One Reality, that Reality itself must be a kind of consciousness. (Other, non-monistic metaphysics, where the object of union is the highest but not sole reality, are also possible though not of concern to us here.)

But mysticism is also (2) a subjective experience for the individual mystic. The mystics of all times and places have spoken of their experiences, though with a great range of difference in the degrees of their introspection, thoroughness of their descriptions, and so on; some have simply alluded, others have been voluble but vague, others have indeed tried to be precise. Now in modern terminology the effort to report on one's own experience in a self-aware and somewhat

philosophical way has been called "phenomenological description," or simply "a phenomenology." (Although sometimes this word is interpreted as if it implied a universal validity, actually, by definition, it can *only* pertain to some individual's subjective experience, though objectively reported.) Therefore, as an individual's subjective experience that is reported to others, mysticism may also be called phenomenology. And this paper will be an essay, not in philosophical doctrine or historical web of mutual influence, but in the comparative phenomenology of mysticism.

For this purpose I have selected two examples, the Neoplatonist Proclus, and the *Tejobindu Upanisad*. The selection of Proclus is no accident since my doctoral thesis (*The Philosophy of Proclus, the Final Phase of Ancient Thought*, New York: Cosmos Greek-American Press, 1949) was a general survey of his whole philosophy; but Proclus is peculiarly apt for this purpose. He stands practically at the end of development within Neoplatonism, which was of course abruptly truncated by the unfortunate intolerance of Christianity, but which might have further advanced into startlingly new directions had it been given the chance. There's no telling what stimulating, even profound ideas would have been provided by a Neoplatonism that had complete freedom to evolve. Proclus, standing just before the truncation of ancient Neoplatonism, offers the clearest example of the novel and suggestive conceptual trends that might have become more fully developed by such a freedom.

To focus on the phenomenology of mystical experience, I will select only those elements in Proclus which seem to bear directly on this theme. They are:

(I) Proclus's intuition (novel for a Neoplatonist) of the *organic* unity of all levels of reality, as expressed through two ontological principles: (A) "All things are in all things, though in a befitting manner," and (B) the interaction between "providential (benevolent) love" and its correlative, "returning (yearning) love"; and,

(II) Proclus's unusually subjective approach to the mystical experience, which I suggest may be called "the integrative immanence of the One Reality."

I. (A) It is well known how, starting with an earlier, simpler cosmology of the World-Soul, World-Mind and the One, Neoplatonism gradually developed further levels of reality, possibly as a reflection of individual mystical experience, but in Proclus more likely as a kind of 'Aristotelian' desire for precision in cosmological relationships. Thus Proclus interpolates "Finiteness" and "Infinity" immediately after the One, together with a whole nearly-infinite series of individual unities or "henads" which mediate between the Absolute Unity and everything else. (Proclus further interpolated other levels of reality, but these lower levels will not concern us here.) Now since every Idea, if not every thing, has its own unity or henad, clearly this highest characteristic of the universe, that is, 'oneness', exists on all lower levels also, although in a manner befitting that level. Conversely, by a unique doctrine, Proclus maintains that the Absolute One, as the sole Cause of the universe with its many mediating henads, in some sense contains all other things within Itself where they *remain*, that is, where they exist logically prior to their "proceeding forth" or emanating. Therefore everything is found within the Highest One Itself, although in a manner befitting Its absolute transcendence. Because this pattern applies to every level of reality, it is clear that "all things are in all things, but in a befitting manner" (*πάντα ἐν πᾶσι, οἰκείως*), that is, the higher are in the lower and the lower are in the higher.

Now since the goal of the mystical experience is to achieve unity with the One, yet each and every thing already *has* some aspect of unity to it—its own henad—Proclus suggests a kind of *aesthetic technique* by which to initiate the mystical experience: concentrate on the unity of some thing or idea, intuitively experience this sense of unity, and then transfer this intuition of oneness to one's own self and *its* relationship with the One Reality. This aesthetic technique is not the same

as the mystical experience itself; but Proclus's mystical consciousness will have been influenced by this prior effort to grasp the sense of unity, partly by means of sensory perception and using so-called material objects, and partly by meditating on sacred names and/or symbols. In fact Proclus speaks highly of "theurgy or theosophy" (respectively, "working with the gods" or 'wisdom about the gods'; but the term "gods" simply refers to the unities or henads themselves, since the One Reality, "the Divinity," produces its mediating henads or "divinities," that is, "gods"). All that the term "theurgy or theosophy" should denote, strictly speaking, is this aesthetic technique of obtaining a feeling of unity from sensory perceptions of material objects or meditation on evocative ideas. Nevertheless, living at the end of an evolution within ancient Neoplatonism, Proclus had been influenced by, e.g., Iamblichus's effort to preserve the values of classical polytheism by incorporating many popular religious customs into Neoplatonic practice, even theory. Thus Proclus additionally alludes, for example, to a ritual of burning figurines made of several substances so that the resulting smoke will "unify what was previously a mixture," an act which of course can be *utilized* by an aspiring mystic but which undoubtedly had prior existence as a popular religious practice! Therefore, whatever the actual content of Proclus's mystical experience as such, it must have been pervaded by the *memory* of having made these aesthetic and religiously theurgic efforts, including (1)(a) visual aesthetic contemplations of objects of nature (cf. the Taoist/Zen spiritually-oriented aesthetics, or Berkeley's statement, "We do at all times perceive manifest tokens of the Divinity—everything we see, hear, feel, or anywise perceive by Sense being a sign or effect of the power of God"); and also (b) what might analogously be called "mantric" meditations on divine names and "mandalic" concentrations on symbols. But further there would have been the memory of (2) religious or ritual acts such as mentioned above; and I suggest (on the basis of Marinus's *Biography of Proclus*, written only a year after Proclus's death), that Proclus's attitude included

*piety* towards ancestors and departed teachers, an intense *loyalty* to the besieged and dying Greek polytheism, and a resultant *nostalgia* for the glories of the philosophic and religious past whose doom could be easily and sadly forecast.

(B) Regarding Proclus's mystical experience itself, we should consider his twofold meaning of the word "love." First, in common with the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition in general, "love" means the yearning, aspiring movement of the inferior consciousness as it 'returns' towards the sources of its being after having emanated from them to begin with. But, as mentioned above, by his unique doctrine of all things 'remaining', that is, pre-existing in their higher causes, not only can Proclus say that the higher causes contain their lower effects, but also that they "know these effects beforehand," that is, they *fore-know* (Gr. *προ-νοεῖν*, Lat. *pro-videre*). And this foreknowledge is also a kind of love; it is indeed the "providential love" (*ἔρως προνοητικός*) by which the higher causes in a sense benevolently fore-know and even *care for* their effects. Here we are only concerned with the highest Reality, the One Itself, and so we can specifically say that the One Reality loves everything else in the universe, which is contained within Itself, by a providential kind of love. And as the knowing consciousness moves upwards by means of the aspiring, returning kind of love, it ever more clearly becomes *aware* of this continually-flowing benevolent, caring love that comes from the Absolute One above. This interaction, even 'reciprocation', of the returning and the providential types of love, therefore, constitutes a very important content of the mystical experience as Proclus might have phenomenologically reported it. (In other Neoplatonists not only would the idea of the One Reality's providential, benevolent *love* be absent, but also the feeling that there is an interaction, even reciprocation between the two kinds of love.) Obviously this is a personalizing of the One Reality which might seem surprising in as abstract a philosopher as Proclus who, in e.g., the *Elements of Theology* and the *Platonic Theology*, always refers to the One Reality as "It" (*τὸ ἓν*). But as remarked above,

Proclus sincerely followed the leadings of Iamblichus and his own teacher Syrianus in making every effort to integrate classical polytheistic piety with the most precise kind of metaphysics. (Thus in his *Chaldean Philosophy* and *Hieratic Art*, he can even use the metaphorical term "Father" of the One.) And so we must assume that if Proclus had phenomenologically reported on his mystical experience, he would have had to acknowledge that a considerable portion of it consisted of a feeling of personal interaction and almost loving reciprocity with a very transcendent entity. (We should be careful, however, not to interpret this in traditional theistic terms. The personal gods of Greek adoration were to be elevated and legitimized by *their* identification with the One Reality; in no way was the One being lowered by *Its* embracing of their anthropomorphic and culturally diverse qualities.)

(II) As mentioned above, the technique by which anything could achieve unity with the One Reality requires the intermediary of its own unity or henad. So of the human consciousness which, in its journey towards the Absolute has been primarily using its own intuitive mind (*νοῦς*), we would expect that its springboard to the One Reality would be the highest unity that this *mind* could conceive. Proclus indeed discusses this possibility. The unity or divine henad of any individual mind he calls the "flower" of that mind, a poetic way of referring to the intuitive feeling of the unity of our highest thinking. But Proclus specifically rejects this idea and substitutes something even more total: the "flower," that is, the unity or henad of our *whole* 'soul' or personality; that is, the unity of our *whole existence*. By this Proclus means all our conscious power, opinion as well as knowledge, daily and mundane experience as well as philosophico-religious awareness. Notice how different this becomes subjectively. In the case of reaching the One through the unity of our intuitive mind alone, there must be a total withdrawal from all sensory distractions, mundane thoughts, etc., and the most intense

concentration upon the unity of our highest ideas as a springboard to the One Goal, a technique that emphasizes *Its* transcendence. But in the case of the "unity of our whole existence," there's very little that we must really withdraw from—perhaps at the most from the minutiae of daily living, but not from our fundamental desires, attitudes, even weaknesses. Here there would be no pinpointing of attention, but rather an immanent, integrative feeling of self-identity which would therefore suggest an immanence of the divine object, at least at the moment of the mystical union. So though the One Reality is, as Proclus says, "Absolutely Transcendent," by approaching It through the "unity of his whole existence" he must have experienced a sense of divine immanence as *all* aspects of his 'soul' or personality were being integrated with this now-very-close universal Reality. Perhaps the expression "integrative immanence of the One" may be helpful in suggesting the phenomenological nuance intended here.

At least two other Proclean terms regarding the mystical experience, "faith" and "madness," should be considered. The first word, "faith" (*πίστις*), is defined as a "kind of pseudo-belief." Like belief, it is not based on firm knowledge or intuitive grasp, but unlike belief, which is on a lower level, faith pertains to the highest knowledge, the awareness of the One Reality which is higher than the intuitive Mind. The word "faith" therefore refers to a technique of feeling unity with the One Reality but, following its specific connotation, by a distinctive means, namely (I suggest) the effort to *yield* oneself, to give oneself up entirely to the awareness of *Its* integrative immanence in the whole personality. So far "faith" is simply a single term for a complex mystical effort. But in line with Proclus's sincere loyalty to the classical religion, it's very possible to regard this word as additionally filled with traditional late-Greek polytheistic nuances. The second word to be considered is "*μανία*," generally translated since Plato as "divine madness." This would seem to connote that enthusiasm, that energy and joy which results from the mystical

union once achieved. But Proclus does not further elaborate about divine madness, an omission which we should regret.

Let me summarize therefore a hypothetical phenomenological report given by Proclus on his mystical experience: "I, Proclus Diadochus (that is, "Successor" in the Golden Chain of the Platonic tradition), having already sought to increase the feeling of unity within myself by contemplating the unities of particular natural objects, names and symbols, and by employing the pious theurgic or theosophic rituals of the religious tradition to which I remain loyal, have now by these means become strengthened in the sense of my own unity. I gather together all my conscious faculties, ideals, desires, in short, all the elements of my soul or personality, into a feeling of total, integrative unity which I know is caused by the One Reality already close to me. Receiving Its overflowing providential and caring love which reciprocates my own aspiring, yearning love for It, I give myself up to Its absolute Oneness by an act of 'faith', as it were, and am rewarded with that inexpressible enthusiasm, energy and joy, that 'divine madness' which has been so long revered by the Golden Chain of Platonic Successors."

My reasons for selecting the *Tejobindu Upaniṣad* are, of course, very different from those in the case of Proclus. Having read nearly all the 108 *Upaniṣads* in one or another modern language, I have found Chapters 2 and 3 of the *Tejobindu* to contain the *uninterruptedly longest litany of first person singular consciousness*. A "litany" (originally a series of supplications) has come to mean any recital of ideas having the repetitive qualities associated with the original litanies. "First person singular consciousness," when put into writing, refers to declarative sentences which start with the words "I am" or which can be easily translated into such sentences. Such litanies of first person singular consciousness are found in the *Chândogya*, *Ātmabodha*, *Maitreyi*, *Mahā*, *Subāla*, *Adhyātma*, and *Mahāvākya Upaniṣads*, and particularly

in the *Brahmavidyā* (verses 81-III); while Chapters 4 and 5 of the *Tejobindu* contain four separate litanies whose content reflects that of Chapters 2 and 3. But these passages are mostly only short paragraphs, while the *Tejobindu* litany of Chapters 2 and 3 runs to over fourteen pages in the English translation (*The Sāmānya Vedānta Upaniṣads*, tr. into Eng. by T.R. Śrinavāsa Ayyangār, on the basis of the commentary by Śrī Upaniṣadbrahmayogin, and ed. by Pandit S. Subrahmanya (Śastri, Madras: Adyar Library, 1941)). And since this passage directly pertains almost exclusively to the mystical union, that is, to the unity of the knowing Self (*Ātman*) with the One Reality (*Brahman*), the *Tejobindu* offers a rich source for a phenomenological report of a certain kind of mystical experience. It is in fact a wonderful monument in the history of absolute subjective idealism!

One difference between Proclus and the *Tejobindu Upaniṣad* is that the former was a highly individualistic person whose life is authenticated down to the smallest details, whereas it is well known that the actual writers of the *Upaniṣads* are anonymous much more often than not. To be sure, Chapters 2 and 3 of the *Tejobindu* begin with the sentence, "Kumāra asked his father . . . and he, the venerable Parameśvara replied. . . ." But this is reported in the third person, so the actual writer would be neither Kumāra nor Parameśvara. Also, "Kumāra" can be a common noun meaning "son" or "prince" in general, as well as being the proper name of at least a half-dozen Vedic figures, while "Parameśvara" can be the common noun "illustrious personage," as well as the proper name of another several people in Vedic literature. ("Parameśvara" could also refer to the "Supreme Lord" but it is very unlikely that the writer of the *Tejobindu* intended a personal God to speak in the first person as if none of this *Upaniṣad*'s great affirmations could be made by any merely human consciousness, which would be totally contrary to the monistic and mystical teaching of the Vedāntists in general and the *Tejobindu* in particular.) Our conclusion is that the

actual writer of the *Tejobindu* is unknown or merely presumed by ascription; we have no biographical data nor firm date. This means that the material for a phenomenological report must be obtained entirely inductively from the text itself.

This text falls into distinguishable sections. The first (all of Chapter 2), though not directly in the first person singular, is a litany of metaphysical affirmations which pertain almost exclusively to subjective experience. The second (most of Chapter 3) is the great "I am" litany which may be considered the heart of the whole. The third is a one-page litany on the falsehood of everything but the knowing consciousness, and the fourth is a more traditional litany on the value of the affirmation "I am *Brahman*." What all these pages have in common is that they are part of a single litany, a constantly repeated affirmation of closely related ideas, and it is almost a certainty, stylistically as well as in content, that this whole uninterrupted litany was the work of one author.

The metaphysical section of Chapter 2 has two subdivisions. In the first, every sentence has the expression "Indivisible One Essence," in the Sanskrit (from the 108 *Upaniṣads*, in Sanskrit (Bombay, 1895)), "akhandāikarasa(m)", that is, *a-khanda-eka-rasa*: not-fragmented/one/inner-sap or essence—we will use the term "Undivided One Essence." In the second subdivision every sentence has the expression "utter consciousness," Sanskrit "cinnātra(m)," that is, *cit-mātra*: thinking-mind/element(al) or nothing-but—we will use the term "Consciousness itself." These two subdivisions are tightly connected by several sentences specifically equating the Undivided One Essence and Consciousness itself as one and the same thing. Indeed there is no conflict here since "Undivided One Essence" is an abstract expression, denoting the One Reality without suggesting its nature, while "Consciousness itself" is the most immediate of all intuitions since we cannot even conceive something which is "not part of our consciousness," except by extrapolating into it our ideas of "dreamless

sleep," etc., ideas however which are known only to our conscious memory! To identify the Undivided One Essence with Consciousness itself is simply to give an intuitively rich predicate to a metaphysically abstract subject. Therefore both subdivisions of Chapter 2 constitute one doctrine, that of absolute idealism, in this case, however, still 'objectively' presented.

We can analyze Chapter 2 by taking all the characteristics applied to the "Undivided One Essence" and/or "Consciousness itself" (in many cases the same characteristics are applied to both), and by arranging them into certain classes of ideas; (please keep in mind that the sequence of these ideas does not reflect the *textual* sequence but rather the *logical* sequence of meanings). First, the Undivided One Essence which is nothing else than Consciousness itself (and which we may find useful to call "the One Undivided Consciousness") is said to include all existence, the whole world near or far, our bodies, indeed Matter itself! Clearly this is absolute idealism (and closely related to the doctrine of Proclus in which Matter is itself only a final emanation from the One Reality). The One Undivided Consciousness includes all actions, all desires (also detachment), all social ideas such as home, friends, wealth, even religious merit and its opposite or sin. All ideas in fact, all knowledge and the objects of knowledge, whether true or false, all meditation, introspection, the very distinction between "you" and "I"—these are nothing but Consciousness itself. The traditional gods and the sacred *Vedas*, the syllable "Om" and the final *Vedānta*, past, present and future, indeed—and here we reach the highest idealistic affirmations—the One Undivided Consciousness includes both what exists and what does not exist; outside of It nothing can be conceived, there is no leaving this Reality. It is that which has no origin, the imperishable, and transcendent; it is *Ātman*, the Self "who Thou art, who I am"; it is *Brahman*. Summarizing: although Chapter 2 is not itself a first person singular statement, it is easily translated into such (as demonstrated

below), though so far metaphysical and best re-stated by the familiar affirmation "I am *Brahman*."

The core of the *Tejobindu* litany is the five and one-half pages (in the English translation) of pure "I am" affirmations. (It is interesting to note how much of the modern "New Thought Movement" such as Unity, Christian Science, Religious Science, etc., makes constant use of first person singular affirmations; it's also noteworthy that Proclus has almost no statements of this type.) Now whereas in the preceding paragraph we started from the most concrete and moved to the most abstract characteristics, in the case of "I am" statements we should use the reverse technique, since the more concrete the qualities assigned to the "I am" the more distinctive and revealing it will be for a phenomenological report. Here therefore is the list of "I am" characteristics in the order of their concreteness: first, "I am *Brahman*" (said no less than eight times); "I am of the form of the transcendent *Brahman*," absolute eternal being, the Undivided One Essence (twice); "I am imperishable and changeless"; "I am Consciousness itself" (very many times), being all wisdom, knowledge, the form of introspection, the absolute *Turiya* consciousness (which is deeper than dreamless sleep) and even beyond the *Turiya*; naturally, "I am *Ātman*" (several times) and the "form of the *Ātman*." (At this point the very frequent expression "form of" (*rupa*) should be analyzed: in an Aristotelian or dualistic doctrine the form of a thing is not identical with that thing itself, but in idealism the 'form' in the sense of essence *is* the thing itself. Probably what is meant here by 'form' therefore is the *appearance* which naturally may be different from the essence. Thus "I am of the form of *Ātman*" would mean "I am not only the One Self, I am also everything that this Self *appears* to be." This could hold for every other instance of the term 'form' occurring above or below.)

The next group of characteristics are put entirely in the negative form (and will be re-echoed in the short section on "falsehoods" discussed below). Thus: "I have no form," no qualities; I transcend all mind or mental faculties such as

speech, sense perception and the objects of that perception; "I am devoid of body," having neither beginning, nor end, old age nor death; I am devoid of all feeling such as passion, anxiety, all desires, including those for wealth, wife and children, and even desires that would result in either bondage or liberation.

Adding a deeper and more emotional content are the "Bliss and Light" affirmations: "I am Bliss" (said many times); "I am the appearance of the Bliss of the *Ātman*, the non-dual Existence, Consciousness and Bliss" (the famous "sat-chit-ananda" triad which is repeated a half-dozen times); "I am the luminosity, the radiance (*Mahas*) of the *Ātman*; I am of the form of Brightness, I alone am of the form of the Sun of Consciousness in the Ethereal Sky of the heart"; "I am ever wakeful and pure; I am pure liberation and salvation" (*Mokṣa*); indeed, "I am absolute Goodness" and—very interestingly showing some similarity with Proclus—"I am absolute Love."

Very different, however, is another class of positive attributes of the "I am" which might puzzle any Neoplatonist, Proclus included; and from this moment an important divergence between Proclus and the *Tejobindu* appears which will become even greater as we proceed. For the *Tejobindu* affirms "I alone appear like everything else"; that is, I am the *appearances* of all things as well as their Reality. Thus: "Nothing, including the earth itself, has been given up by Me," for "whatever is beyond Me is nothing"; "Of my own accord I manifest myself, the *Ātman*"; "I am satisfied by the *Ātman*, I am the form of complete satisfaction"; "I revel in my *Ātman*, I revel in Myself"; "I revel in the delightful kingdom of my own Self; taking my seat on the throne of my Self I shall conceive nothing but my Self"; "I am the essence of exquisite nectar; I am of the form of extreme emotion"; "I have no need for study or reflection, for I am everywhere the enjoyer of pleasure; I am possessed of delights far and near!"

We must assume that the writer of the *Tejobindu* is speaking after many mystical experiences have sunk deeply into his



consciousness. His intuitions are the fruition of these experiences, and the *Tejobindu* here is the phenomenological report of this great subjective-monistic-idealistic experience of his. He is already the Absolute Itself because what we ordinarily call the individual knower has come to feel himself as the One Undivided Consciousness which is all of Reality, and no longer sees any barriers between one thought and the next, including every materialized appearance. The asceticism which is so generally traditional in idealism, and in fact necessary to remove our attention from worldly distractions, has here disappeared into an all-embracing integration, analogous to but rather more total than the integration of personality mentioned by Proclus. Just as it is said that *Brahman* engages in *play* by producing *Mâyā* or "illusion," so here the knowing Self is totally free to enjoy even the worldly "delights far and near" that up to this moment of victory would have been distractions from the goal of concentration (more on this below).

The one page of "falsehoods" that follows the "I am" litany contains thirty-seven sentences declaring different things to be "false," while seven sentences repeat that only *I* am Reality. In line with the previously-mentioned "negative characteristics" all appearances of mind, or whatever has form, in other words whatever is seen, heard, tasted or smelled—all this is declared to be false. All living creatures, all beings, past, present and future, in fact "*everything* is false" compared to the One Reality which alone is true. Very interestingly, an *antinomian* factor is introduced by the specific rejection of many traditional values: teacher and pupil, and "what does not turn from the path of righteousness" are false; "whatever is wholesome" and all scriptures, the whole *Vedas*, etc. are false; indeed "all truth is false." And applying this antinomianism to conventionally 'bad' as well as 'good' things: right and wrong action, good and bad conduct, victory and defeat, desire, enjoyment and satiation—

all these are also false. This antinomian quality in the *Tejobindu* goes much beyond a merely metaphysical kind of rejection of everything except the Self; on the contrary, the writer has specifically chosen traditionally revered values to reject as 'false'. Nor should we shrug off the *Tejobindu*'s language as merely symbolic, for it is affirming that the One Undivided Consciousness which is the maker, manipulator and enjoyer of all Its thoughts, has the specific *right* to deny the claim of any particular thought to Its reverence.

Antinomianism (or the rejection of traditional patterns on the basis of a higher mystical experience) has been a very frequent concomitant of both Eastern and Western mysticism. The fact that it does not seem to appear in Neoplatonism (or in Proclus) may result from the absence in late classical polytheism of any heavy burden of moral prescriptions or proscriptions (as compared, say, to the Old Testament or the Code of Manu). But the *Tejobindu*'s antinomianism is not so much an indication of the burden of Vedic requirements as it is of the thoroughness of the author's mystical experience. What in Proclus is simply alluded to as "divine madness," that enthusiasm, energy and joy which *follows* from the mystical union with the One Reality, here becomes expanded and totally realized. To appreciate this, let me suggest the possibility of Tantrism, that is, the interweaving of mystical experience with sexual experience. I mention Tantrism not because I believe it to be a really important element in the *Tejobindu*'s composition although the combination of the Self reveling in all Its creations plus the specific rejection of any inhibiting proscriptions does constitute a sufficient basis for its existence—but rather because it is the *ultimate touchstone* (considering the traditional attitudes in both East and West towards sexuality) of the seriousness of any mystic's claim to be united with the One Undivided Reality of Consciousness. To make such a claim and then become disturbed by conventional moral proscriptions which are after all nothing but the creations of one's own divine consciousness to begin with, is to reach the pinnacle only to slip back again. The author of

the great *Tejobindu* litany has not slipped back! "I revel in the delightful kingdom of my own Self; I am everywhere the enjoyer of pleasure, I am possessed of delights far and near." And, as if to leave no doubt about it, he adds: "Know that right and wrong action is false, good and bad conduct is of falsehood; know that all scripture is false, all the *Veda* is always false."

Summarizing, I suggest that the writer of Chapters 2 and 3 of the *Tejobindu* would have given a phenomenological report of his mystical experience somewhat as follows: "I am identical to the One Reality, the Undivided Consciousness Itself; therefore I possess all the perfections and qualities that I deem desirable. And since nothing is alien to Me, being part of My One Consciousness, I am the maker, the manipulator, the enjoyer indeed of every thought, of every delight far and near. The phenomenological report of my *mystical* experience therefore is identical to the report of my *total* experience, whatever I choose to make this be, as long as I continue to be aware that I indeed am the sole Reality." This suggested report by the *Tejobindu*'s writer has not included the methods by which his mystical experience had been attained, as in the case of Proclus, because we are not told just which Yogic (etc.) techniques he may have employed. Rather this report centers on the *results* of the mystical experience, the fearless absorption into the all-embracing unity of the knowing Self of every thought and appearance including those that heretofore might have seemed distracting and/or alien to the One. Conversely, Proclus's phenomenological report was more detailed on the steps *leading* to the mystical unity. What Proclus and the *Tejobindu* have in common is their emphasis on the importance of integrating and unifying all one's faculties, though the *Tejobindu* carries this further. Finally, the *Tejobindu* gives a more detailed paean of praise to that enthusiasm, energy and joy that comes from the mystical union which in Proclus is summed up simply by the famous expression "divine madness."

(Almost as an appendix, the *Tejobindu* litany closes with about one and one-half pages on the affirmation (*mantra*) "I am *Brahman*." Certainly this is a 'correct' affirmation, although "I am the Undivided One Essence," "I am Consciousness itself," etc. would be equally correct. And what is claimed to be the results of this constant affirmation, such as ending the false appearance of duality, destroying grief, re-incarnation, even disease, etc., are also correctly deduced from the basic principles of this philosophy. But the level of consciousness here is not as high as before nor an outpouring of the author's own mystical experience.)

This paper has been "an essay in the comparative phenomenology of mysticism," but some readers may object that the emphasis has been on exposition rather than actual comparison. This is as it should be. First, our "phenomenological reports" have been only hypothetical, particularly in the case of Proclus; but even in the case of the *Tejobindu*, which has provided so many directly first-person statements, there is much that might have been said by its author that we do not know. Secondly, enough actual comparison has been given to provide a basis for anyone wishing to do further work in this area. Finally, all those who recognize the One Reality, generally known as "absolute idealists," constitute a kind of world-wide brotherhood whose similarities are much more important than their differences. The *Tejobindu* stands as a wonderful monument in the history of subjective monistic idealism, a minority type within idealism in general; the *Tejobindu* is a victorious, fully accomplished statement. Proclus stands as an interesting example of movement from the strictly objective idealism of earlier Neoplatonism into the sphere of greater subjectivity; he does not, however, offer "a victorious, fully accomplished statement" but rather presents himself to us with an almost self-conscious poignancy, for he was at least partly aware of the impending truncation of the Platonic Succession's Golden Chain. Perhaps some modern student/philosopher could extrapolate from what Proclus has left us to construct a "new Neoplatonism" which would

continue that evolution into greater subjectivity which Proclus had ventured, explored, and to some extent achieved.

*Buddhi in the  
Bhagavadgītā and  
Psyché in Plotinus*

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*Introduction*

The *Bhagavadgītā* is the most important text in the *smṛti* (what is remembered) literature of India, as distinct from the *śruti* (what is heard) literature which is traditionally regarded as ultimately authoritative. The *Bhagavadgītā* has been assigned a date ranging from the fifth century B.C. to the second century B.C. The Indian religious tradition places the *Gītā* at the end of the third age of the present cycle of the universe and the beginning of the fourth, namely the *Kali Yuga* to which we belong.

The *Bhagavadgītā* opens on the battleground of *dharma* (order, law, duty, righteousness) which is concretised at an instance of time at Kurukṣetra. Kṛṣṇa had earlier attempted to reconcile the two feuding families of cousin brothers, namely Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. However, when war appeared inevitable, and both sides wanted his help, he proposed that one side could have all his armies with their weapons, and the

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other could have him without any weapon. The Kaurava chief, Duryodhana, had the first choice. In choosing the armies he showed little discrimination and intelligence, and no understanding of the true nature of Kṛṣṇa. Arjuna rightly calls him *durbuddhi* (one whose *buddhi* is bad; *B.G.* 1.23). The Pāṇdavas were overjoyed to have Kṛṣṇa on their side, for he is no ordinary man; as he declared himself later, he is the Supreme Person who pervades and sustains all the worlds (*B.G.* 15.17-19). For the purpose of the battle, Kṛṣṇa became the charioteer of the greatest Pāṇdava warrior, Arjuna.

Before the actual fighting begins, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to take his chariot into the middle of the two armies so he could survey all the assembled warriors. From there he sees his teachers, brothers, uncles, cousins, sons and other relatives and friends arrayed in battle on both sides, ready to kill and be killed. Seeing his own kith and kin on both sides, parts and parcels of himself, Arjuna is bewildered about right action and he turns to Kṛṣṇa in despair, at the end of his human tether, to seek guidance. Kṛṣṇa's instruction, in response to Arjuna's need, is not only about his particular duty in this particular situation at Kurukṣetra, but about *dharma* in general; hence about the end of *dharma*, namely, *mokṣa*, unconditioned freedom, which is Kṛṣṇa's own mode of being, as well as about the paths by which Arjuna's being may be transformed so that it may draw closer to Kṛṣṇa's. Kṛṣṇa places the specific situation of Arjuna in a larger context, viewing it from above, as it were, suggesting that every situation has cosmological foundations and every act has universal implications. The dialogue between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, constituting the *Bhagavad-gītā*, is as Kṛṣṇa himself says at the end (*B.G.* 18.70), about *dharma*.<sup>1</sup>

A few general remarks about Plotinus and his writing may be useful in showing the possible fruitfulness and the possible limitations of a comparison with the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The *Enneads*, like the *Gītā*, set the being, thought and action of man in the largest cosmological context. The path by which Plotinus always tried to lead his hearers and readers is a path

from ego-centred particularity to the universality, a path which leads on to something very like *mokṣa*, that union with the One or Good which lies beyond the true universe of *Nous*, the highest our thoughts can reach. But the *Enneads* are a body of various treatises written on different occasions, and perhaps for varying purposes, put together somewhat artificially by their editor, and not like the *Gītā*, a sustained exposition of doctrine taking its start from one particular situation which it rises and expands from but never completely leaves behind. Nor did Plotinus ever claim to speak with anything like the authority of Kṛṣṇa. Though a profoundly original and independent thinker, whose thoughts were solidly based on his own experience, he never professed himself to be more than an exegete, trying to bring home to those who would listen to him in his own time, as clearly and forcibly as possible, the meaning of the one true ancient philosophy (that is to say, the one true way of liberation into the divine) which found its best expression in the Dialogues of Plato. And outside the immediate circle of his friends and disciples he did not exercise, and never has exercised, authority in any form of the Western traditions. Very many people down the centuries have read him, and if they read him seriously the results have often been overwhelming and lasting, and his influence has been very great. But in no tradition, either of Christians, Muslims or even later pagan Neoplatonists, has he ever been a teacher of unchallenged authority, whose doctrine must be assumed to be always right. Perhaps his influence on the Western traditions has been so wide because in a way he stands a little apart from them.

There are, therefore, great differences as well as great similarities between the *Enneads* and the *Gītā*. But the differences are not so great as to make a comparison between them unfruitful, as we hope this paper will show. In each we have a body of mature doctrine, based on tradition and living experience, which points by different ways to the same goal. And we should not make it too difficult for ourselves to see this by making much of inappropriate later Western disjunctions,

which would not correspond exactly to any distinction the author of the *Gītā* or Plotinus would be likely to make between 'scripture', or 'revelation', and 'rational metaphysics', or between 'theology', or 'spiritual teaching', and 'philosophy'.

### *Buddhi in the Bhagavadgītā*

The place of *buddhi* in the *Bhagavadgītā* is central. Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to "seek refuge in *buddhi*" (B.G. 2.49). "To them who are constantly integrated worshipping me with love, I give that *buddhi yoga* by which they may draw near to me" (B.G. 10.10). Later in the process of summing up his entire teaching, Kṛṣṇa says again, "Renouncing mentally all actions to me, making me your goal, relying on *buddhi yoga*, become constantly mindful of me. Mindful of me, you will overcome all obstacles by my grace. But if because of self-centeredness you will not listen, you will perish" (B.G. 18.57-58).

What is this *buddhi yoga*, the path of *buddhi*, that leads to Kṛṣṇa? It is both integration of the *buddhi* and integration by the *buddhi*, in a mutually supportive evolution. And furthermore, it is the self-transcendence of *buddhi*.

*Buddhi* derives from the root *budh* meaning "to wake up," in the sense of discerning, becoming awake and realizing. In the *Gītā*, *buddhi* is clearly distinguished from *manas* (mind) which is the faculty of thinking. *Manas* stands in an hierarchical order of subtlety and priority between senses and *buddhi*. It is fickle, unsteady, impetuous, and difficult to control—as difficult as the wind (B.G. 3.42; 6.34). It can, however, be controlled and brought to rest in the self by *buddhi*, by arresting and reversing the usual order, which by itself is quite lawful and follows Kṛṣṇa's lower nature.

Ordinarily, the senses are drawn outward by the sense-objects, and *manas* follows them. Attachment of the senses to the objects of pleasure gives rise to desire, desire to anger, anger to bewilderment which causes the mind to wander. This

lack of steadiness in the mind in turn results in the deterioration of *buddhi*. Once *buddhi* is destroyed, man is lost. In such a man without purpose there is a dispersion of *buddhi* into many branches, for only a resolute *buddhi* is single. (B.G. 2.41, 62, 63).

He who will follow the spiritual path should draw in his senses, as a tortoise draws in its limbs. He should renounce *saṁkalpa* (imagination, inclination), without renouncing which no one can engage in *yoga*. Then he can be free of desires, which have their origin in *saṁkalpa*, and can control the senses with *munus*. *Manas* can, in its turn, be slowly anchored in the self by *buddhi* established in steadfastness. When *buddhi* functions in this right internal order, from above below, it has a quickness which can bring the unsteady mind, driven hither and thither by *rajoguna*, the passion principle in nature, back to stillness in the self. Such a yogi, whose mind is stilled and who is free of blemish, enjoys highest bliss and becomes *brahman*, a part of Kṛṣṇa's higher nature (B.G. 6.2, 24-27).

The initial integration, according to the *Gītā*, consists in the unification of *buddhi*. For this purpose, essentially three renunciations are recommended. First is the renunciation of inaction, for Kṛṣṇa himself, although he needs to do nothing, is constantly engaged in action; if he were to stop working, all the worlds would perish. The second renunciation is that of anxiety about and attachment to the fruits of action. One must do what needs to be done for sustaining the world, understanding the principle of reciprocal maintenance between gods and men, as sacrifice and worship (*yajña*), casting all actions on Kṛṣṇa (B.G. 3.11-12, 19-25).

The third renunciation has already been mentioned, namely the renunciation of *saṁkalpa* which is imagination and desire-will. "The wise men consider it to be renunciation: to give up works dictated by desire" (B.G. 18.2).

Corresponding to these three renunciations, three definitions of *yoga* are given in the *Gītā*, indicating different instructions for and stages of transformation of man. (It

hardly needs mentioning that these stages are in no sense linear or mutually exclusive.) *Yoga* is skill in action, it is equanimity in failure and success, and it is the disconnecting of the connection with *duhkha* (suffering), the connection that is forged by desire and imagination (*B.G.* 2.48, 50; 6.23-24).

Works done according to *yoga*, i.e., in accordance with the above interior renunciations, will gradually lead to a weakening of the sense of egoism and of the craving for acquisition. Along with this, *buddhi*, which was so far dispersed in multiple wishes and projects, now emerges unified and attuned (i.e., in *samādhi*) to the higher self (*ātman*). This integrated *buddhi* is now able to bring about a proper (i.e., according to the right order) and a harmonious functioning of the whole of one's psychosomatic organism, effecting the second integration of the *buddhi yoga*.

*Buddhi* in the *Gītā* is a faculty which needs to be trained, purified and unified, and which in turn can integrate the whole of one's self, body, heart and mind. This faculty alone, which functions rightly only when educated by *yoga*, can have higher knowledge (*jñāna*, as distinct from *vidyā*, which generally means mental knowledge), higher feelings (such as *śraddhā*, faith, and *bhakti*, love-and-dedication) and higher will (as contrasted with desire-will). *Buddhi* is thus the discriminative intellect which perceives correctly and acts accordingly; it is intelligent and sensitive will in harmony with *dharma*.<sup>2</sup>

The really important function of *buddhi* in the *Bhagavad-gītā* is to provide a perceptual link between what is higher and what is lower. It is a crucial agent in the transformation (*bhāvana*) of the being of man. The whole process of development is symbolized by Arjuna, who is once called *kapidhvaja*, one whose banner is a monkey (*B.G.* 1.20). In this first chapter, which is full of names, descriptions, and multiple laws, Arjuna is deeply despondent and assailed by many doubts. He is overcome by pity and self-pity and is paralyzed. He is confused about *dharma*, and refuses to fight. In the last chapter, his confusion is destroyed, his doubts are dispelled and he

has recollected himself. He is now a different person; he sees, understands and acts differently. Realizing his own and Kṛṣṇa's true nature, Arjuna takes refuge in Kṛṣṇa and does his bidding.

Kṛṣṇa declares the five gross elements—corresponding to the five senses in man the microcosmos—as well as mind (*manas*), ego (*ahamkāra*) and *buddhi* to be the eight components of his lower nature. Beyond this is his higher nature, source of life, by which the whole cosmos is supported. A part of his higher nature is *brahman*, which in an individual is called his essential nature or inner being (*svabhāva*). By itself *brahman* is neither being nor not-being; within all beings, yet it is without them; although undivided it appears as divided among beings. This higher nature is more or less equated with *puruṣa* (person), as distinct from *prakṛti* which refers to Kṛṣṇa's lower nature.<sup>3</sup> *Puruṣa* is not bound by the three fundamental qualities (*guṇa*) of *prakṛti*, namely, *sattva* (beingness, affirmation, light), *rajas* (passion, redness) and *tamas* (passivity, resistance, darkness) (*B.G.* 7.4-5; 8.3; 13.12-23).

*Prakṛti* and all its manifestations—such as the gross elements, senses, mind, ego, *buddhi*, thought, desire, hate, pleasure and pain—are together also called *śarīra* (body) as well as *kṣetra* (field). *Kṣetra* is distinguished from *kṣetrājña* (knower of the field). Kṛṣṇa declares himself to be the knower of the field in every field. Then he says that true knowledge consists in knowing both the field and the knower of the field (*B.G.* 13.1-6).

We see that *buddhi* itself, although the highest part of any particular being, belongs to nature. Therefore, it is subject to the three *guṇas* which can, depending on which quality predominates, give it different colourations. The *buddhi* which knows the correct distinction between activity and cessation of activity, between right and wrong, between danger and security, between bondage and freedom is *sāttvic*; the *buddhi* which is unclear about these and understands them incorrectly is *rājasic*; and the *buddhi* which thinks all things in the reversed fashion is *tāmasic* (*B.G.* 18.29-32).

However, although *buddhi* itself is a part of the lower nature, it is only through purified *buddhi* that one can go beyond *prakṛti*. The function of *yoga* is in a way a reversal of the natural emanations of *prakṛti* expressing itself in a hierarchy of material manifestations, which in man range from *buddhi* to the senses, farther and farther away from the primal source. By following the path of *yoga*, the sensual man, at the periphery of the expanding circle of emanation, moves inwards to become a man of *buddhi*. For this purpose Kṛṣṇa advises the use of the chief creative force of *prakṛti* responsible for giving rise to different states of beings, namely *karma* (action, work, deed), rather than renouncing it. By an interiorization of the renunciation of *karma*, in offering the fruits of *karma* to Kṛṣṇa, the generative force of *prakṛti* can be used to move beyond *prakṛti* itself; *mokṣa* can thus be approached through *karma* (B.G. 3.31; 8.3).

From the level of the purified *buddhi*, the movement is in a wholly different dimension. In that state in which the senses are quietened and thought ceases, one can experience the boundless joy of the transcendent realm of *ātman*. This joy cannot be perceived by any of the other senses or by the mind but only by *buddhi*. Having seen and overcome the process of emanation, the *yogi* stands stilled in *brahman*, attaining to the sight of *brahman* in which he can see all beings and all things without attachment. He is now beyond all dualities and without a sense of ego or possession. Now he is not anything or anyone in particular, for his own being (*svabhāva*) is merged with Kṛṣṇa's being (*madbhāva*). Therefore, he is no longer reborn as this or that (B.G. 6.20-25; 14.19-26).

Here Kṛṣṇa feels it necessary to remind Arjuna that *prakṛti* is also a part of Kṛṣṇa and that it operates by his own creative and magical power (*māyā*), although it does not constrain and limit him. Kṛṣṇa urges him to fight, for Arjuna must do his part in the cosmic drama; he must become an instrument for Kṛṣṇa's purposes. Taking his stand in his own *brahman* nature, he should act without attachment, renouncing all

works to Kṛṣṇa, self-recollected, without expectation, without acquisition and without agitation, to bring about order in the world (B.G. 3.25, 30; 11.32-33; 14.12).

It is as if the circle of eternity and the circle of time almost touched each other in *buddhi* but not quite. Well-honed and purified *buddhi* functions as the antenna for receiving messages from the other shore, as a lookout into the non-personal spiritual dimension of *ātman-puruṣa-brahman*, and as the guiding will of the individualized *prakṛti*.

Having led up to *brahman*, the task of *buddhi yoga* is essentially finished. It has made possible *jñāna* of the transcendent realm. It has done so by a creative synthesis and balancing of four distinct, yet interdependent, *yogas*. The path of action or *karma yoga*, the path of love or *bhakti yoga*, the path of meditation or *dhyāna yoga*,<sup>4</sup> and the path of knowledge or *jñāna yoga* constitute the four limbs of the *buddhi yoga* of the *Bhagavadgītā* which integrates them into an organic whole.<sup>5</sup> Each of these *yogas* is taught and emphasised in its place, without losing sight of the others. The unformed Arjuna, like linear thinkers before and after him, is anxious to have Kṛṣṇa tell him one definite and clear path, clear that is to his untrained (*akṛta*) and ordinary mind. Kṛṣṇa, however, is less intent on giving Arjuna a one-dimensional, logical consistency or mental clarity. He plays a veritable symphony of *yogas*, and himself uses wisdom, tact, love and terrifying form to help Arjuna become attuned to a higher wisdom. This higher wisdom is not of his personal intelligence, although it is within him. Nor is this *jñāna* any mere speculative theory. The characteristics of *jñāna* include absence of pride, non-violence, patience, self-control, lack of identification with I, unfailing love-and-dedication to Kṛṣṇa, and constancy in the knowledge of self (B.G. 13.7-11). *Jñāna* is a way of life, it is a *yoga*; one who follows the *yoga* of knowledge lives this way. All other *yogas* complement and aid this one, just as it complements them.

Kṛṣṇa himself is still beyond. For he is the foundation of imperishable *brahman*, of eternal *dharma* and of absolute bliss

(B.G. 14.27). He declares in B.G. 18.54-55: "Having become *brahman*, with tranquil self, a person neither grieves nor longs; regarding all beings alike he attains the highest love-and-dedication (*bhakti*) to me. By love-and-dedication he comes to know me as I really am, how great I am and who I am in truth; then knowing me as I am, he enters me forthwith."

A simile given in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says that the body is a chariot of which *ātman* is the owner; *buddhi* is the charioteer, mind the reins and the senses are the steeds (I.3.3-4). Since the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* is most closely related, of all the *Upaniṣads*, to the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, we may be justified in extending this simile to the situation in the *Gītā*. For Kṛṣṇa to become Arjuna's charioteer at Kurukṣetra is a perfect symbol of Kṛṣṇa having manifested himself in *prakṛti* in order to give Arjuna *buddhi yoga* by which he may come to know himself and Kṛṣṇa as they really are. Then Arjuna can love Kṛṣṇa and act in accordance with his word.

#### *Psyché in Plotinus*

*Psyché* in Plotinus, like *buddhi* in the *Gītā*, has a very long history behind it. But we cannot incorporate a complete history of Greek psychology into this paper, so *psyché* will be described here as we find it in Plotinus, with only brief indications of the most important points of doctrine which he owes to or has in common with his predecessors. Even so, only a sketch of his doctrine can be given here, as it is immensely rich and complex, and his statements about *psyché* contain a good many formal inconsistencies.<sup>6</sup> These inconsistencies are partly due to varieties and incompatibilities in the traditions which he inherited, Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic, already interacting and combining in various ways before his time: and partly, perhaps, to the fact that "he wrote his treatises straight down as if he was copying from a book" and never revised them or looked them over again;<sup>7</sup> and the treatises are not parts of a planned exposition of a system, but occasional works written for wider or narrower groups of

friends and collaborators in his rather informal circle (which was never any kind of officially recognised academic institution). But there may be a much deeper and more important reason. Plotinus wrote out of his own lived experience: and he would always rather get in all the deliveries of that experience than attain formal consistency by selection, omission or distortion of any part of it. Further, he derives from Plato, and perhaps carries further, a certain scepticism about the adequacy of language to express what he finds within: at the higher levels this scepticism about language becomes total: he knows he cannot say what he sees, however hard he tries, though he does his best. And being a philosopher of late antiquity, he feels bound to use the language and concepts of his school tradition, the Platonic, which was complex and at times incoherent, and to avoid novelties of expression as far as possible (though in fact his language is at times highly original).

The first thing to observe about *psyché* in Plotinus is the enormous range of its functions and sphere of activity. This is something which he owes in great part to the tradition which he inherited. To oversimplify crudely, the concept of *psyché* which he inherited results from a combination of the oldest Greek conception of *psyché* known to us, the Homeric, in which it is the breath of life which leaves the body at death as a mindless ghost, and the Pythagorean-Orphic belief that the *psyché* was a spiritual being fallen from a higher sphere into the cycle of birth and death, capable of wisdom and good conduct, or the reverse, and able eventually to return to its original state by the exercise of wisdom and virtue (or the appropriate ritual way of life in the Orphic version). These come together before Plato: and into Plato's thought about *psyché* there enters too, after much development and differentiation, the conception of the earliest Greek philosophers that the stuff which makes itself into the universe is alive with a life analogous in some ways to *psyché* in man, and sometimes with some kind of intelligence. Aristotle's attempts to delimit



*psyché* at the top by marking it off from pure, divine or god-like thought, *nous*, in a way Plato had not done (in Plato *nous* is a function of *psyché*) created further complications for later Platonists, to be considered in due course. So *psyché* in Plotinus is what makes everything live and grow; it is the principle of physical locomotion and the sensations and appetites which prompt and guide it; it is the principle of all emotions; it is that which thinks discursively; and at its highest reach we discover that it is an eternal inhabitant of the world of divine intuitive thought, the *nous* which is the Platonic Forms or Ideas, and shares its activity and life, and its power of self-transcendence and return to its source beyond thought, the One or Good. And because of its range, it has a cosmic dimension. The psychology of Plotinus differs from most modern psychology (except perhaps that of Jung) in not being exclusively concerned with men. It is a geological, botanical, zoological, demonological, astronomical and theological as well as an anthropological psychology. Everything in the universe of the philosophers of late antiquity is living organism. The earth, the heavenly bodies, and the universe as a whole are ensouled organisms. The life of *psyché* is a continuum reaching from living rock to living gods. Man is not, in fact, very important or exalted in rank among beings possessed of *psyché*. He is rather near the lower end of the continuum in his normal empirically observable this-worldly state. He has, of course, all the levels of *psyché* within him and, by reason of the participation of his highest *psyché* in the eternal life of *nous*, he has the eternal intelligible world within him too. "We are each of us an intelligible universe," Plotinus says (III.4[15].3.21-22; cp. V.7[18].1.9-10 and VI.7[38].6.23). All *psychai* are in a sense one, though differentiated (to various degrees at different levels) in their unity, and in the eternal intelligible world in which *psyché* at its highest is a permanent inhabitant, the unity-in-difference is far more intimate, the interpenetration of parts more complete. "Light is transparent to light." "The sun here is all the stars and each star the sun and all the others" (V.8

[31].4.6, 9-10). Our *psyché* has no absolute limits other than those of universal *psyché*, though its lowly state may make it more difficult to overcome its limitations, and it has limitations which the *psyché* of a god, for instance, has not. And the limits of universal *psyché*, horizontal and vertical, are no narrower than the limits of all existence. Further, there is something in us, though it may be better to call it "self" (*autos*) than *psyché* at this level, which can transcend existence and attain union with its unknowable source, the One or Good.<sup>8</sup> (The rather baffling variations and inconsistencies in the statements of Plotinus about the relation of our *psyché* to *nous* will be mentioned later.) By being *psyché* we are inevitably part of this vast continuum which extends from the depths to the heights and spreads out to the limits of possible being: we cannot drop out of our psychic universality, or really lose or get rid of anything in it. Of course most men are unconscious of most of what is within us (or, better, what we are within) most of the time, and none of us is conscious of all of it all the time—the sort of consciousness in which we can objectify ourselves and talk about the psychic level we are on is not very important or desirable to Plotinus: it is an epiphenomenon dependent on the satisfactory functioning of the compound of lower *psyché* and body. But we can choose on what level we will live: we are not confined to the ordinary empirical-human level of being *anthropos*, "man." We can and should aspire to rise above it, and we can, and probably most men do, fall below it, to live on what is really an animal or vegetable level. And if we do, this will have consequences. Plotinus, like all Platonists, believed in reincarnation, and unlike some, thought a human *psyché* could be reincarnated in an animal or vegetable body. So if we live on a vegetable level in a human life, we may find in our next incarnation that we "have taken the trouble to turn ourselves into trees" (LII.4[15].2.23-24). But we can also (though few do) take the much greater trouble necessary to rise to the highest divine level. If we do, our *psyché* will not, as long as we are in an earthly body, stop functioning on all our lower

levels: in fact it seems likely that it will quite spontaneously function better on the levels of discursive thought, and when required participate in virtuous and beneficent action. The material, space-time universe is in the thought of Plotinus everlasting, without beginning or end, and on its own level real, beautiful and valuable, though only a phantasm or reflection of the intelligible world, and with its characteristic dispersion and separation, leading to conflict, which is not found above. But its existence forever is good and necessary, being the last and lowest self-diffusion of the Good, and it depends immediately, both in general and in its particulars, for its existence, formation and ordering, on *psyché*. Plotinus says that our first step in our return to the Good, which is a matter of "waking up" and understanding who we really are, is to understand that we, as *psyché*, make, animate and direct the material world (VI[10].2). *Psyché* of all sorts therefore must always have the capacity to act on all its lower levels, and must so act when the order of the universe requires. Cosmic and divine *psyché* always does so without, in the normal thought of Plotinus, any disturbance of its unbroken intuitive, noetic contemplation, without calculation, planning or willing, by a spontaneous projection of images and activities which is, so to speak, the reflex of its contemplation. And the ideal state of man for Plotinus seems to be one in which his individual *psyché* behaves as like cosmic *psyché* as possible. And he seems to have lived up to his ideal very well, if we are to accept Porphyry's account. Porphyry's biography is a hagiography, with a tendency to idealize the Master, but Porphyry had known him intimately in the last years of his life, and is sober and truthful as hagiographers go, and his account of Plotinus at the relevant points here rings true to many Plotinian scholars.<sup>9</sup> Plotinus went further than some of his Platonist contemporaries and successors in preaching withdrawal from the rather futile political and social life of the time to wealthy Levantines and Roman aristocrats in his circle of friends, sometimes successfully, but never seems to have recommended or practised withdrawal from human company

or the real human duties which it imposed. In a fine phrase of Porphyry's (*Life*, Chapter 8), "he was present at once to himself and others." He never relaxed his unbroken contemplation, but this did not prevent him writing and lecturing continually and being "at the disposal of all who had any sort of acquaintance with him" (*Life*, Chapter 9). He answered Porphyry's interminable questions, sent him away for a holiday when neurotic depression was driving him to suicide, found a valuable necklace which a lady friend had lost, heard the lessons of his numerous wards and looked after the accounts of their estates, and acted as arbitrator in petty legal disputes. (And he may, for all we know, have done more frivolous things, which his solemn biographer would not have recorded as unworthy of a Sage—he may even have played with the children of whom his house was full.) His withdrawal from the world was primarily an inner withdrawal. He lived austere and simply enough, though in a great and well populated house. But he did not live as a solitary ascetic or monk. And this perhaps helps to give a more vivid and concrete idea of how he thought *psyché* should be in the world.

We now have to consider briefly some puzzling features of the various accounts which Plotinus gives of the relationship between *psyché* at its highest and *nous*.<sup>10</sup> There are passages in the *Enneads* where the situation appears quite simple and straightforward. Plotinus has, so to speak, an official doctrine, which he propounds in many places, particularly when he is explaining how many hypostases or levels of reality there are. In this, below the One or Good which transcends thought and being, there is the One-Being, *nous*, which is at once intuitive eternal thought and Platonic Forms or Ideas in the most perfect thinkable unity, and below this again there is *psyché*, whose characteristic activity is discursive thought and whose function in the great self-diffusion of the Good which constitutes the universe is to transmit as much as it can of the rich and varied plenitude of being which *nous* holds in unity in its eternal contemplation to the material, space-time, world

which *psyché* contains and to which it gives such reality as the material world can have. In one important passage (III.7 [45].11) the wilful tendency of a 'part' or 'power' of cosmic *psyché* to discursive reasoning is said to be the origin of time. Individual *psychai* (though not cosmic soul, even in its lowest activities when it functions as "nature" (*physis*) giving form and life to bodies, or divine embodied souls) can, though they need not, when they are embodied be carried away by their involvement in the material and bewitched and entrapped by this world into an egocentric concern with the needs and desires of their lower individual selves and bodies, though their highest part can never fall or be affected by their lower activities. This seems fairly straightforward and consistent. But when we read further in the *Enneads* we discover that the sharp distinction made between the hypostasis *nous* and the hypostasis *psyché* in the official account becomes blurred, and even tends to disappear altogether. There is a long and important work, divided by Porphyry into two treatises, *On the Reason Why Being is Everywhere All Present, One and the Same* (VI.4-5 [22-23]) in which it is not at all clear for a great deal of the time what hypostasis Plotinus is talking about, and it does not seem to matter very much. In his greatest work on *psyché* (again divided by Porphyry), written not long afterwards (IV.3-4 [27-28]) and a number of other places, we discover that cosmic *psyché* and the soul of the embodied gods do not think discursively but noetically or intuitively, just like *nous*. This is often stated in conscious opposition to the fundamentalist Platonist and Judaeo-Christian doctrine of "artisan" creation, which Plotinus consistently disliked, in which God plans or designs the universe and then proceeds to carry out his plan. Further, as we have seen, the individual human *psyché* at its highest is an inhabitant of the world of *nous* and thinks intuitively, not discursively. The position is complicated here by the fact that *nous* in the individual *psyché* is several times referred to, which is distinct from the hypostasis *nous* but functions in harmony with and is illuminated by it; and probably, by the

dependence of the individual human *psyché* on an individual *nous*-form which is a full member of the intelligible world, being a Platonic Idea in *nous*.<sup>11</sup> There are even a couple of passages where *psyché* and its characteristic activity of discursive reason seem in danger of being "squeezed out" altogether and the intelligible and sensible worlds and intuition and sense perception left immediately juxtaposed (V.8 [31].7; VI.7 [38].7.29-31). Plotinus never seems very enthusiastic about discursive reason (*dianoia*) though he admits its necessity and place in the hierarchy of mental activities. Finally, *nous* itself becomes at times curiously "psychic." The distinction between the two hypostases is never simply one between the static and the mobile. The eternal being of *nous* seethes with the intensest and most vivid life and movement (see especially V.8 [31].3-4 and VI.7 [38].1-15). And it is not quite as easy as the "official" scheme and tidy-minded accounts of Plotinus's thought might suggest always to distinguish noetic and psychic activity as "eternal" (in any generally accepted meaning of eternity) and "temporal" respectively.<sup>12</sup> There are times when the Plotinian interpreter feels that Plotinus might have managed better if he had abandoned the distinction between the two hypostases which he derived from the Aristotelianized Platonism of some of his predecessors and returned to something more like the authentic position of Plato, with *nous* as the highest, divine or godlike function of *psyché* (to discuss the reasons why he did not do so would take us too far from our subject here). This tendency of higher *psyché* to fuse with *nous* may mean that we shall have to take both into account in our comparison with *buddhi*.

### Conclusion

Similarity between the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Enneads* is striking as far as the general movement of the self (*autos*) is concerned, from its being centered in the ego, with a disintegrated preoccupation with particular needs and desires of one's lower nature, to being centered in the One or Kṛṣṇa.

However, there are significant differences between them in the demarcation of the various parts of a human being and the emphasis placed on different methods of integration and transformation.

*Psyché* in the *Enneads* ranges over the entire lower nature of Kṛṣṇa and does not correspond exactly to *buddhi* alone which is only a part of *prakṛti*, albeit the highest. In the *Gītā*, discursive thought does not occupy a significant place in the attainment of *jñāna* or true knowledge. *Manas* is considered one of the senses, although it can control other senses when it is functioning properly. The fickleness, unreliability and limitations of *manas* are strongly noted. In the higher, contemplative intelligence of *buddhi*,<sup>13</sup> *manas* ceases its activity and is quietened, so that a vision of the transcendent realm may be possible. On the other hand, discursive reasoning is the characteristic activity of *psyché*. The relationship between *manas* and *buddhi* sometimes looks like that between the "middle" part of the human *psyché*, and the higher part which is eternally in touch with, and an inhabitant of, the world of *nous*. Plotinus does not stress the unreliability of discursive thought as much as the *Gītā* does of *manas*. Nevertheless, Plotinus himself seems to have had much less use for analytical reasoning than might be supposed. Cosmic and divine *psychai* do not think discursively, or deliberate or plan in carrying out their creative and ruling activities. And human *psyché* at its highest can and should think and act like them. Plotinus often seems to be making great efforts (especially in V.8 and early chapters of VI.7) to get his readers to think "noetically," not "dianoetically" or discursively about *nous*. This is possible because our higher *psyché* does not "come down" and can be brought to see *nous* in the proper way "from the inside" and as *nous* itself (VI.7.15, end). There is a striking likeness between the meaning of the root *budh* and Plotinus's repeated exhortations to wake up and realize who we really are and where we belong. This realization of our true nature, which is *jñāna* and *nous* both, is not an outcome

of discursive thought either in the *Bhagavadgītā* or in the *Enneads*.

However, *buddhi*, unlike the higher part of human *psyché*, can be disintegrated, distracted and dispersed. It needs to be purified and trained. The higher *psyché*, on the other hand, does not descend; what we have to do is to become aware of it and let it direct us. (This is not easy!) At this point the *Gītā* is closer to the later pagan Neoplatonists after Iamblichus as well as the main Judaeo-Christian tradition. But higher and middle *psyché* together are like *buddhi* the means of control of what is below them. Besides, higher *psyché*, like *buddhi*, is our "lookout" on the higher world.<sup>14</sup> Roughly speaking we could say that the unintegrated *buddhi* corresponds to the middle *psyché*, which can be attracted upwards or downwards, and the purified and integrated *buddhi* corresponds to the higher *psyché*, attuned to the *nous*.<sup>15</sup>

*Nous* corresponds fairly well to the higher self of man, namely *ātman-puruṣa-brahman*. What is said of the man who has become *brahman* agrees almost exactly with what Plotinus says about the man who has become *nous*. And a man becomes *brahman* or *nous* because he always was so. It is only that now he realizes it; this seeing or realizing is the same as becoming it. Further, *jñāna* is the sort of knowledge *nous* has and we have in it.

The line of demarcation between the hypostases of *psyché* and *nous* is vaguer and more variable in the *Enneads* than that between *buddhi* and *brahman* in the *Gītā*. However, even in the latter, there are considerable variations: *ātman-puruṣa-brahman* is sometimes imperishable, wholly transcendent and unmanifested; sometimes it is perishable and unmanifested; sometimes it appears entangled with *prakṛti*. It is likely, as said both by Plotinus and Kṛṣṇa, that these distinctions in the level of being are too subtle to be grasped without the eye of *nous* or *jñāna*. One can truly see *nous* or *brahman* (which is the object of *jñāna*) only by becoming *nous* or *brahman*.

In addition to *jñāna yoga*, three other types of *yoga*, namely *dhyāna yoga*, *bhakti yoga* and *karma yoga*, constitute the four limbs of the *buddhi yoga* of the *Bhagavadgītā*. We have already said a little about the counterpart of *jñāna yoga* in Plotinus. As far as *dhyāna yoga*, namely the *yoga* of meditation, and the concomitant physical postures are concerned, there are no traces of these in the *Enneads*. Indeed it is difficult to discover them in any pagan Greek philosopher. The later pagan Neoplatonists may have practised something of the sort but the evidence is not at all clear.<sup>16</sup> The *Gītā* is here closer, and the other Indian traditions which have further developed *dhyāna yoga* perhaps closer still, to the monastic and non-monastic Eastern- and Western-Christian traditions of "methods of prayer."

Although Kṛṣṇa is beyond being and non-being, beyond personal or non-personal existence, one of the *yogas* he recommends is *bhakti yoga*, the *yoga* of love and dedication to him. It has often been remarked that a sense of pious devotion to a personal God is missing in Plotinus. This may be true at the level of lower *bhakti* which is little more than conventional piety directed to God. But we wonder if it is true at the level of higher *bhakti*, which is a way, perhaps the way, of coming to know the essence of Kṛṣṇa and uniting with him (*B.G.* 18.54-55). There is the most intense love (*eros*) of the Good, given by the Good, running through the whole *Enneads*. And though the Good is neither personal nor impersonal, the final union is often described in personal terms.<sup>17</sup>

For both the *Gītā* and Plotinus *prakṛti* is good and real, in its own degree. The Platonist will miss in the *Gītā* what is central to all forms of Platonism, the conviction that the lower world is the image of what is beyond. This relation of image to archetype may sometimes mean that the lower world of *prakṛti* is relatively spectral, inauthentic and inferior. But it may also mean that the two worlds are brought very close together, so that the world of *nous* is seen as an inner world

rather than another world, as this world glorified and apprehended *sub specie aeternitatis*. This is very evident in the great descriptions of *nous* in V.8, 3-4 and VI.7, 1-15. These passages seem to be based on direct experience, where dialectic passes beyond itself into vision.

However, both the *Gītā* and Plotinus are basically concerned with what is beyond *prakṛti* and therefore beyond action and becoming. Still, work in *prakṛti* is necessary, and inaction is no way to go beyond action. Action according to one's *dharma*, based on one's own essential nature (*svabhāva*), is certainly more emphasised in the *Gītā*. This, however, may simply be due to the fact that the *Gītā* is intending to deal with a more absolute sort of inaction and withdrawal from the world than any Greek seeker of truth ever practised.

If a person takes Kṛṣṇa's *buddhi yoga* seriously, he must above all attempt to wake up to his own indwelling essential nature, his *svabhāva*, and act out the law of his inner being, his *svadharma*, with a resolute and a quiet mind, without self-pity or self-importance. Arjuna's way was that of a warrior, Plotinus's that of a teacher and a spiritual leader. Each acted out his *svadharma* admirably. The *Gītā* stresses the importance of discovering and living by one's own *dharma* and not someone else's. Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, following their *dharma*, wrote and taught like Plotinus. And other Platonists of late antiquity understood their *svadharma* differently from Plotinus, for example, the nearest equivalent to Arjuna in the history of pagan Platonism, the Emperor Julian.

#### NOTES

1. For the thesis that the root meaning of *dharma*, as the upholding of the orderly relatedness of all that is, as established in the *Rg Veda*s, the most ancient *śruti* text, has a demonstratable continuity in the *Bhagavadgītā*, see P. W. R. Bowlby, "The Lotus and the

Chariot: A Study of the Root Meaning of Dharma in the Indian Religious Tradition" (Ph.D. Thesis, McMaster University, London, Ontario, 1975).

2. In the religious traditions of India, there seems to be a consensus that the root cause of human bondage and suffering is ignorance, and that what is needed is true knowledge; action is not generally stressed as an avenue to freedom. In the Judeo-Christian traditions, on the other hand, the mainstream emphasis is less on knowing reality; truth has been revealed, the challenge for man is whether he can act according to the revelation and gain salvation. The *Gītā* imbues *buddhi* with both discernment and will. Its teaching and setting insist that right knowledge and right action are inseparable.
3. In addition to the ordinary meaning of *puruṣa* as man, there are three distinct kinds of *puruṣa* mentioned in the *Gītā* (15.16-19): the perishable *puruṣa*, the imperishable *puruṣa*, and *puruṣottama*—highest *puruṣa* who is other than these both and is also called *paramātmā*, the supreme self. Kṛṣṇa declares himself to be *puruṣottama* which does not exclude his being the other *puruṣas* as well; they are also his and they are in him, but he is still beyond. Similarly, in addition to *puruṣa*, other labels referring to the constituents of the higher nature of Kṛṣṇa, namely *brahman* and *ātman*, also have further divisions. These, however, need not be distinguished for our purposes here.
4. It is the same word from which Japanese *zen* is derived by a phonetic shift, through the Chinese *tchan*. *Dhyāna yoga* is also sometimes called *rāja yoga* (royal *yoga*), although *rāja yoga* is not any specific kind of *yoga*; it is *yoga per se*.
5. The various Indian schools of religious thought and practise, before, after and contemporaneous with the *Gītā*, seem to have shown a distinct preference for one or the other of these *yogas*. In the process they usually became one-sided and lost the wholeness of spiritual life and the organic balance and tension characteristic of the *Gītā*. Kṛṣṇa himself says that he taught his eternal *yoga*, which is a supreme secret, to Vivasvat, a sun god, who taught it to Manu, the first among humans. Taught from one to another, this *yoga* was known by sage-kings; but with the lapse of time this teaching was lost on earth (*B.G.* 4.1-3). Kṛṣṇa then taught this *yoga* to Arjuna. The merciless time has undoubtedly again done its damage.
6. The best detailed studies of *psyché* in Plotinus at present available are those by H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus's Psychology* (The Hague, 1971), and the two papers, "Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul in Plotinus," in *Le Neoplatonisme* (Paris, 1971), pp. 56-63, and "Nous and Soul in Plotinus: Some Problems of Demarcation," in

*Plotino e il Neoplatonismo* (Rome, 1974), pp. 203-19. The full commentary by R. T. Wallis on the Fourth *Ennead* (which is entirely concerned with *psyché*) will be of the greatest value.

7. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, Ch. 8.
8. On this see G. O'Daly, *Plotinus's Philosophy of the Self* (Shannon, Ireland, 1973).
9. It is perhaps important to remark here that, though Plotinus writes a great deal about the *spoudaios*, the perfectly wise and good man, the Sage or *Mahatma*, in the *Enneads*, there is no evidence in the *Enneads* or Porphyry's biography that he himself claimed to have attained this perfection, any more than any other great Greek philosopher. They all thought of themselves as *philosophoi* rather than *sophoi*. It was their disciples, like Porphyry, who thought of them as Sages.
10. At this point we depend very much on H. J. Blumenthal's second article (see n. 6). See also, for what might be called "*psyché*-like" characteristics of *nous*, A. H. Armstrong, "Eternity, Life and Movement in Plotinus's Accounts of *Nous*," in *Le Neoplatonisme* (see same note), pp. 67-76, which Blumenthal at some points constructively criticizes. Much further work is in progress about the problems raised in this paper.
11. This is a much disputed question. Reasons for the view adopted here (with an account of previous discussions) are included in a lecture, "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus," reprinted in A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), chap. XX.
12. On this see Blumenthal's and A. H. Armstrong's articles cited in n. 10. There are plenty more to come, notably from Dr. Peter Manchester.
13. *Buddhi* is traditionally located in the heart rather than the head. Although this is not specifically mentioned in the *Gītā* with respect to *buddhi*, Kṛṣṇa declares himself to be located in the heart of every being. On the other hand, Platonists were rather peculiar among Greek philosophers in making the brain the organ of intelligence. The traditional seat of all thought for Greeks was in the heart (or earlier the *phrenes*, the diaphragm and the organs above it) and Aristotelians and Stoics maintained this position. Plato had placed intelligence in the head for symbolic reasons in the *Timaeus*, and the nobler passions in the heart, and later Platonists like Plotinus thought that the Master's doctrine had been confirmed by the discovery of the nervous system by Erasistratus and Herophilus in the 3rd century B.C., whose discovery had been restated and made widely known by Galen in the 2nd century A.D. See Plotinus IV.3

- [27].23.9-21, and A. H. Armstrong, ad. loc., in the Loeb *Plotinus*, Vol. IV.
14. Cosmic and divine *psychai* are altogether of the higher world; intuitive, unchanging, infallible and impeccable.
  15. This was the guess made by one of us in a footnote a few years ago. See R. Ravindra, "Self-Surrender: The Core of Spiritual Life," in *Studies in Religion* (Spring, 1974). On *psyché* and self (*autos*) see G. O'Daly, *Plotinus's Philosophy of the Self* (Irish University Press, 1973).
  16. See A. Smith, *Porphyrus's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague, 1974), pp. 97 ff. and 115 ff.
  17. This whole question of love for God, and also God's love for man, in the *Enneads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* is very important. However, we cannot dwell on it here any longer without being sidetracked from the subject of this paper.

## The Plotinian One and the Concept of *Paramapurusa* in the *Bhagavadgītā*

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Plotinus was essentially a mystic philosopher. It is therefore important that his original contribution be kept apart from the external influence on his thought. He no doubt studied Plato and other earlier philosophers, but his reference to them in his work aimed at clarification, elucidation, and confirmation of his own vision and experience. Any examination of his concepts without reference to the mystical experience, which is the core of his philosophy, is a misinterpretation, if not a distortion. Elmer O'Brien, in his work *The Essential Plotinus*, has committed this fallacy in saying that the historical approach is necessary. Even though he agrees that Plotinus never knew the writings of Philo, yet he imagines that the Plotinian One is the expression of Plotinus's own mystical experience arrived at through contemplation or meditation. O'Brien, a typical historian of philosophy, further comments that Plotinus's meditation shows the influence of Plato. Supporting this contention, he cites Porphyry:

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Porphyry again is our informant that it was by meditation and by the method that Plato teaches in the Banquet that Plotinus "lifted himself . . . to the first and all-transcendent divinity." The reference is to the passage wherein Socrates retails the words of Diotima, the wise woman of Mantinea. The method taught there is that of a twofold purgation of the mind, one qualitative, the other, quantitative.<sup>1</sup>

Even if we were to accept that Plotinus borrowed contemplative method from Plato, the experience that he had was that of the Transcendent One and was his own VISION OF THE TRUTH. Moreover, the meaning of contemplation as understood by Plotinus is different from that which is foisted on him by critics like O'Brien.

It seems important to clarify the meaning of contemplation with reference to Plotinian philosophy. Contemplation as meditation in Plotinus, leading to the experience of the One through Intelligence, bears a strong parallel to its meaning and significance in the *Bhagavadgītā*. The thought of the *Bhagavadgītā* is no doubt a philosophical exposition of the mystic experience of *Paramapurusa*—the Supreme Self—the One, which is both immanent and transcendent. This immanence of the Transcendent One has been recognized by Plotinus in the eighth chapter of the third *Ennead*. There he states that even nature contemplates. It should be remembered that the only way of being aware of the One, according to Plotinus, whether on the part of the individual soul or the World Soul or the Intelligence (Nous), is contemplation. The *Bhagavadgītā* consistently advocates contemplation (*Yoga*) as the sole means of attaining the Supreme Self (*Paramapurusa*). The *Gītā* is older chronologically than the *Enneads* and propounds the manifestation of the World Soul, the Individual Souls, and the Nous or the Intelligence which is designated as *Aksara* or the Indestructible *Puruṣa*. Nature, *Prakṛti* in the *Bhagavadgītā*, stands for the material creation as well as the divine Energy which is immanent in nature. The highest forms of natural

manifestations have been mentioned in the *Gītā* as objects worthy of contemplation for spiritual realization. Having attained identification with *Paramapurusa*, Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna:

In my unmanifested form I am irmanent in the entire creation. Everything rests in Me, but I am not in them.<sup>2</sup>

This immanence of the Transcendent One in nature has been described by Plotinus as well:

That [which] is called nature is a soul, the offspring of a superior soul with a stronger life; that it quietly holds contemplation in itself, not directed upwards or even downwards, but at rest in what it is, in its own repose and a kind of self perception, and in this consciousness and self perception it sees that what comes after it, as far as it can, and seeks no longer, but has accomplished a vision of splendour and delight.<sup>3</sup>

Although Plotinus places contemplation before the attainment of mystic experience as an intellectual means to the end of understanding the One, yet in essence and in effect contemplation is the same thing as the *Yoga* of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Later we shall show how the *Buddhi Yoga*, or the *Yoga* of the Intellect, has been regarded as the highest in the *Gītā*. However, it is important to give the meaning of this term in Sanskrit. This word was derived from the root *Yuj*, which means "to unite" or "join." When we unite ourselves with the Source, the Goal, the One, we are said to be in *Yoga* or in contemplation. Thus *Yoga* is the means of the union of the soul with the One as a technique, and it is also the state of that union itself. This union is the main theme of the *Bhagavadgītā*. At the end of every chapter recurs the statement that the *Bhagavadgītā* is a *Yoga Shastra* or the science of *Yoga*.

As a technique *Yoga* is an activity, and, most accurately, it



is the highest activity of the intellect or the *Buddhi*. As a state of mind, *Yoga* is an attainment of the highest mystical experience which a *Yogin* or contemplator can ever achieve. In this state the *Yogi* may be outwardly inactive because he becomes the source of all activity. But it must be remembered that without the highest intellectual activity no *Yoga* is possible. According to the *Bhagavadgītā*, *Yoga* means efficiency in activity (*Yoga Karmasu Kauśalam*). In this sense, the entire creation has been designated as the *Yogamāyā* or the Creative Energy of the *Paramapurusa*. It has also been referred to as the *Līlā* or the play of God. Plotinus as well talks about play in reference to contemplation. In the *Upaniṣads*, which are the warp and woof of the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā*, creation is the play of *Brahman*, the Supreme Being.

The *Vedas*, which include the Brāhmaṇic and the Upaniṣadic literature, propound the fourfold aspects of *Brahman*:

1. *Avyaya Brahman*—Infinite Beyond, Beyond Being, without any qualifications, not even One (because One is a limitation);
2. *Akṣara Brahman*—Indestructible One, the Ultimate Cause, not yet differentiated from Pure Existence;
3. *Ātmakṣara Brahman*—The Cosmic Self with the potentialities of creation, preservation, and destruction, not yet manifested in Cosmic Creation; as such *Brahman* is the Creator in the same sense *Nous* is;
4. *Viśvasṛit Brahman* the Projection of the *Ātmakṣara* into the entire creation of time, space, causality. As such *Brahman* is the Cosmic Form—the World Soul. This fourth is also called *Virāt Puruṣa*.

The first three aspects of *Brahman* are transcendent, but all three combined are immanent in the World Soul and in the Cosmos consisting of material nature and the individuated souls. The entire creation is the play of just one part of the Cosmic Self which should, in fact, be called Acosmic Self. The ground, the cause, and the creator, which as transcendent realities are 'beyond' the cosmos, combined 'partially' in the

manifested World Soul, are 'immanent' in the spatio-temporal world. This is the basic metaphysics of the *Vedas*, which the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* attempts to explain throughout. Before elaborating on the comparative analysis of the concepts of the Plotinian One and the *Paramapurusa*, let us consider the relationship of play with contemplation as Plotinus sees it:

Well, as the discussion has arisen among ourselves, there will be no risk in playing with our ideas. Then are we now contemplating as we play? Yes, we and all who play are doing this, or at any rate this is what they aspire to as they play. And it is likely that, whether a child or a man is playing or being serious, one plays and the other is serious for the sake of contemplation; and every action is a serious effort towards contemplation; compulsory action draws contemplation more towards the outer world, and what we call voluntary action, less, but all the same, voluntary action, too, springs from desire of contemplation. . . . Let us now talk about the earth itself, the trees, and plants in general, and ask what their contemplation is, and how we can relate what the earth makes and produces to its activity of contemplation, and how nature, which people say has no power of forming mental images or reasoning, has contemplation in itself and makes what it makes by contemplation, which it does not have.<sup>4</sup>

This paragraph especially needs the attention of those who consider Plotinian contemplation merely as empirically intellectual and dialectically discursive.

Our study reveals that contemplation, *Yoga*, and mystic experience are to be understood in the same sense. The philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* is the outcome of the mystic experience of the Vedic and Upaniṣadic sages, re-affirmed by the self-realization of the king of the mystics, Yogirāj Śrī

Kṛṣṇa, who declared the *Yoga* of Intelligence to be the integrated *Yoga*.

Since *Yoga* means "union with the One," the entire *Bhagavadgītā* expounds this union in every chapter, each one of which is a *Yoga* of one kind or another. The emphasis of Plotinus on contemplation is parallel to the concept and understanding of the *Paramapurusa* through *Buddhi Yoga* in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

We can throw more light on the comparison by analyzing the nature of God as accepted in the *Gītā*. The analysis presented here, based as it is on Brahmanic literature, is different from sectarian interpretations of the *Gītā*. The sources of this analysis have not yet been published in the English language. All the commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā*, including that of Śaṅkarācārya, brought to the West by scholars like Radhakrishnan, have generally overlooked the fact that the metaphysics of the *Gītā* is the same as that of the *Vedas* so far as the concept of God is concerned. The concept of *Brahman*, with its four aspects as stated above, is basic for understanding the peculiar nature of *Māyā* as Creative Energy and as an emanation from *Paramapurusa*. A lack of understanding of *Māyā*, caused by their not referring to the Vedic literature, has been responsible for the conflicting conclusions arrived at in different sectarian interpretations.

It has already been stated that the nature of the *Brahman* is fourfold. The *Avyaya Brahman*, the Infinite Ground, the nameless, is the highest and is parallel to the One of Plotinus, when he calls it "beyond all names." The *Akṣara* or the Indestructible Absolute may correspond to the good and sometimes to the One of Plotinus. The *Ātmakṣara* corresponds to the Nous and the *Viśvasṛiṭ*, or the Immanent *Brahman*, manifested in the entire spatio-temporal cosmos and yet beyond it, corresponds to the World Soul of Plotinus.

By referring to this fourfold nature of *Brahman* we see that the *Bhagavadgītā* is the science of *Yoga*, as it is stated at the end of every chapter. In the words of Plotinus, we could call

it the science of contemplation on the One. The above interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā* has been given by two great contemporary Orientalists, Śrī Madhusudan Ojha and his pupil, Śrī Motilal Shastri, neither of whom knew the English language. The two works of these great scholars, *Brahman Vijñāna, the Science of Brahman*, by Ojha, and *Gītā Vijñāna Bhāṣya, the Commentary on the Science of the Bhagavadgītā*, by Shastri, are perhaps the two most monumental works ever published in the Hindi language.

According to Motilal Shastri, the *Bhagavadgītā* as *Yogashāstra* is a most valuable dictionary of the *Jñāna* (comprehensive knowledge) and *Vijñāna* (scientific knowledge) of India. It may be called the index of the definitive terms used in the science of the *Vedas* from the point of view of comprehensive and scientific knowledge. (For the sake of accuracy, I use the terms *Jñāna* and *Vijñāna* instead of their English versions.)

These words have been used in the same senses in the *Bhagavadgītā*. The significance of these terms is so great that the seventh chapter of the *Gītā* is entitled "Jñāna Vijñāna Yoga." Similar is the significance of the words *Akṣara Brahman*; the eighth chapter is entitled "Akṣara Brahman Yoga." The concept of *Paramapurusa*, which is closely connected with these two chapters, is explained in the fifteenth chapter, entitled "Puruṣottama Yoga" (*Puruṣottama* is a synonym for *Paramapurusa*). It is therefore important to clarify the terms *Jñāna* and *Vijñāna* in the present context.

In the *Vedas* there are two independent subjects, *Brahman* and *Yajña*. The word *Yajña* has been poorly translated as "sacrifice." Thus, there are two types of definitions of technical terms in the *Vedas*: (1) Definitions which analyze or explain *Brahman* (the One) as a reality; and (2) those which explain *Yajña* (the pluralistic evolution or expansion) as the reality. Unitive *Brahman* comprehensively knowable as One through *Jñāna* has been accepted as the ground and foundation of pluralistic *Yajña* knowable through *Vijñāna*. In the words of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa: "brahma vai sarvasya pratiṣṭha" (*Brahman* is the ground of all existence).<sup>5</sup>

This is in fact what is called the eternal natural divine *Yajña*. According to the *Vedas* this pluralistic, scientifically analyzable, and knowable cosmos has evolved from and is grounded in that *Brahman* which is knowable as One through *Jñāna*.<sup>6</sup> Thus *Jñāna* (the unitive knowledge of the One) and *Vijñāna* (the pluralistic knowledge of the manifold cosmos) are significant because they presume the metaphysics of the fourfold *Brahman*.

Since the seventh chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* is devoted entirely to these two terms, it is evident that the metaphysical and the cosmological assumptions of this work are Vedic. In the seventh chapter of the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

I will explain to you the reality in detail through the methods of unitive knowledge, *Jñāna* and divisive science, *Vijñāna*, having understood which nothing else remains to be known.<sup>7</sup>

It is needless to emphasize the significance of this verse in the face of the facts stated above. Almost all the sectarian and uninformed translations of the *Gītā* have neglected the significance of *Jñā*, which refers to the acceptance of the One, the *Paramapuruṣa*, who as immanent of the World Soul is called *Puruṣa* only, and, as the transcendent indestructible Absolute, is called *Akṣara* as well as Beyond, Beyond One. Similarly, the significance of divisive scientific knowledge of the pluralistic spatio-temporal cosmos has been overlooked. The pluralistic manifold material nature is described in this very chapter and designated *Aparā Prakṛti* or inferior nature. The individual souls are called *Parā Prakṛti* or superior spiritual nature, which is the ground of the weaker or inferior material nature. Plotinus, too, explains matter as privation and as weaker emanation of the One in the same strain.

According to the *Bhagavadgītā*, the immanent World Soul, *Puruṣa*, itself is rooted in *Paramapuruṣa* (Nous according to Plotinus). However, *Paramapuruṣa* as transcendent is beyond Nous as well. The World Soul is the source of individual souls

or of life. In this sense, the One is the beginning as well as the end of all beings. All beings are strung on it as beads are strung on a thread. The sixth and seventh verses of the seventh chapter read:

I am both the origin and dissolution of all the material and spiritual beings. O' Arjuna, there is no being superior to Me; everything is rooted or strung in Me as the pearls are strung on a thread.<sup>8</sup>

In these verses the material nature and the individual souls, as well as the World Soul immanent in the cosmos, are associated with *Paramapuruṣa*, who is the Supreme Self beyond all distinctions, and as such is the One.

The Plotinian notion of the One is a similar "unity in diversity." In the sixth *Ennead* Plotinus says:

As the One does not contain any difference, it is always present and we are present to it, when we no longer contain difference. The One does not aspire to us, to move around us; we aspire to it, to move around it. Actually, we always move around it, but we do not always look... we are always around The One. If we were not, we would dissolve and cease to exist. Yet our gaze does not remain fixed upon The One. When we look at it, we then attain the end of our desires and find rest. Then it is that, all discord passed, we dance an inspired dance around it.

In this dance the soul looks upon the source of life, the source of The Intelligence, the origin of Being, the cause of the Good, the root of The Soul.<sup>9</sup>

The last paragraph here is almost a paraphrase of the fourfold nature between *Brahman* or *Paramapuruṣa*. It points out the relation between the individual souls, including all natural life, (*Viśvaśrit*), the Nous (*Ātmakṣara*) and the One which also is referred to as the Good. It has already been stated that

*Brahman* as ground is the Beyond and *Brahman* as the One Indestructible is the Cause. The One of Plotinus is sometimes the *Brahman* as the ground and sometimes the *Brahman* depending on the context in which he uses the term.

*Brahman* as the ground is indefinable. In the *Upaniṣads* it has been called the transcendent Being which is indescribable, *Anirvacanīya*. The sages have tried to describe it in negative terms, "Neti, Neti"—not this, not that. Plotinus follows the same methods when he says:

The awesome existent above, The One, is not a being for then its unity would repose in another than itself. There is no name that suits it, really. But, since name it we must, it may appropriately be called 'One', on the understanding, however, that it is not a substance that possesses unity only as an attribute. So, the strictly nameless, it is difficult to know. The best approach is through its offspring, Being: we know it brings The Intelligence into existence, that it is the source of all that is best, the self-sufficing and unflagging begetter of every being, to be numbered among none of them since it is their prior.<sup>10</sup>

Plotinus tries to point out that the One, the transcendent in the sense of being prior to the Good, the Intelligence, the Soul, and the material nature, is yet the begetter of its entire offspring. He arrives at this conclusion and understanding through contemplation. The *Bhagavadgītā* aims at the understanding of the same One, the *Paramapurusa*, as One who knows everything, who is the oldest, who is the controller, who is smaller than the smallest, who is the sustainer of everything, who is beyond material conception, who is unthinkable, who is luminous like the sun, who is beyond material nature and is transcendent.<sup>11</sup>

The same transcendent One pervades the universe and is eternal. Clarifying this aspect of the One, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

Remember that Being is eternal and true  
Which pervades everywhere and manifests too:  
No one can ever annihilate  
That Being Immortal Indivisible and Great.<sup>12</sup>

Since man is regarded as miniature *Brahman*, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, like the *Vedas*, accepts that the totality of man is constituted by the body, the mind, the intellect, and the soul, corresponding to the manifested World Soul in the form of the cosmos, the cosmic Self as the potential Creator, the indestructible One as the cause, and the infinite beyond Being, as the ground. Thus the real soul is beyond senses, beyond mind, and beyond intellect. Referring to this definition of soul (which has incidentally been accepted by Plato as well), the *Bhagavadgītā* says:

Senses are of subtle kind,  
Subtler than senses is mind;  
Subtler than mind is intellect great;  
Soul is beyond intellectual state.<sup>13</sup>

The word "God" in the *Bhagavadgītā* is not used in an anthropomorphic sense. It is used in the Vedic and *Upaniṣadic* sense as *Īśa* (Immanent), *Sarvajña* (Omniscient), *Parah Puruṣa* (Beyond Being), etc. The fifteenth chapter, "The Yoga of *Puruṣottama* or *Paramapurusa*," has great significance from this point of view. It points out that all three transcendental aspects of *Brahman*, the Ground, the Cause, and the Creator, are present in the cosmos as material destructible nature called *Kṣara Puruṣa*, the indestructible *Akṣara Puruṣa* in the form of spiritual nature, and *Uttama Puruṣa* in the form of the Ultimate Soul (*Paramātmā*). This has been clarified in the following verses of the fifteenth discourse:

There are two *Puruṣas* in the cosmos, viz: *Kṣara*, the material nature, and *Akṣara*, the spiritual nature; all the material as well as the spiritual beings are contingent so far as their manifestation is concerned.

They are therefore *Kṣara Puruṣa*. The immanent unitive Soul is the indestructible *Aksara Puruṣa*. There is the other Supreme Self, *Uttama Puruṣa* (*Paramapuruṣa*), the Excellent Self, who has been called the Ultimate Soul, who is Infinite and who, having entered the three dimensional cosmos of space, time, and causality, sustains all existence.<sup>14</sup>

This description of the Immanent Ultimate Soul fits quite well with Plotinus's description of the Soul. The Soul as participant unity, *Visva Srit*, the Ultimate Soul within the cosmos, has been construed in the *Bhagavadgītā* as the presence of the One and has been called *Paramapuruṣa* as well as *Paramātmā* (Ultimate Soul). Plotinus points out that the unity of the Soul is derived from another source (the One). In fact, although the expression is different, the truth expressed by Plotinus and by the *Bhagavadgītā* is the same. In the words of Plotinus:

The Soul, while distinct from The One, has greater unity because it has a higher degree of being. It is not The One. It is one, but its unity is contingent. Between The Soul and its unity there is the same difference as between body and body's unity. Looser aggregates, such as a choir, are furthest from unity; the more compact are the nearer; The Soul is nearer still, yet—as all the others—is only a participant in unity.<sup>15</sup>

To sum up, the Plotinian concept of the One and that of the *Paramapuruṣa* are methodologically and metaphysically the same. Many Western thinkers have said that Plotinus's approach is psychological. The truth is that it is contemplative, Yogic, and intellectually mystic. He uses the word "Intelligence" in a sense which is not common. Intelligence, according to both Plotinus and the *Gītā*, is next to the One. In man, it is next to soul. Though the One is beyond Intelligence, yet it is closest to the latter. Both Plotinus and the

*Bhagavadgītā* are metaphysically monistic and methodologically contemplative and ethical. A deeper study of the *Yoga* of the *Bhagavadgītā* shows that the method of *Yoga* which brings union of the soul with the One is not limited to the path of knowledge, the path of selfless action, and the path of love or devotion. There is the fourth and highest path called *Buddhi Yoga*, the path of Intelligence, which in fact is the essence of the philosophy of the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has emphatically stated that the *Buddhi Yoga* is the highest and most efficacious path, because it is all inclusive. It is the sum and substance of the *Bhagavadgītā*, both as a metaphysical exposition and as the science of *Yoga*. The *Buddhi Yoga* is a golden mean between the two extremes of asceticism and unrestrained indulgence in sensuous satisfaction. So is the philosophy of Plotinus.

This comparative study reveals that mystic experience is not antagonistic to practical life. Intelligence being nearest the One, the way to the mystic experience of oneness is via Intellect. Thus contemplation in the *Buddhi Yoga* and in Plotinus justifiably brings about the union of the empirical and the mystical, the psychological and the logical, the metaphysical and the ethical aspects of philosophy.

#### NOTES

1. Elmer O'Brien, *The Essential Plotinus* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Co., 1975), p. 16.
2. *Bhagavadgītā*, from the Sanskrit (Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 1970), IX.4. All translations from the *Gītā* are my own (unpublished).
3. Plotinus, *Enneads* VIII.4, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 371.
4. *Ibid.*, III, VIII.1, pp. 361-2.
5. Motilal Shastri, *Gītā Vijñāna Bhāṣya*, trans. I. C. Sharma (Jaipur: Manava Ashrama, 1955), p. 3.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
7. *Bhagavadgītā* VII.2.

8. Ibid., VII.6-7.
9. O'Brien, *The Essential Plotinus*, p. 84 (*Enneads* VI.9.9.1-3).
10. Ibid., p. 80 (*Enneads* VI.9.5).
11. *Bhagavadgītā* VIII.9.
12. Ibid., II.70.
13. Ibid., VIII.9.
14. Ibid., XV.16-17.
15. O'Brien, *The Essential Plotinus*, p. 74 (*Enneads* VI.9.1).

## Phraseology and Imagery in Plotinus and Indian Thought

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The existence of significant resemblances between Neoplatonism and Indian thought,<sup>1</sup> despite the presence of perhaps equally important divergences between them,<sup>2</sup> can hardly be questioned; it is, indeed, a necessary presupposition of this colloquium. The question that naturally arises is whether we have to do with mere parallels between them, or whether one culture is borrowing from the other, and, if so, which is the borrower. The existence of abundant opportunities for cultural contact between the two civilizations both before and during the Neoplatonic period does not guarantee that borrowing actually took place, since equally impressive parallels can be found in cases where only the most foolhardy scholar would accept the existence of contact; Dr. Joseph Needham, for instance, observes significant resemblances between fifth and fourth century B.C. Greek scientific theories, notably in Aristotle's biology, and almost contemporary Chinese developments.<sup>3</sup> It may be, therefore, that we must rest content with tracing the similarities and differences between the two traditions and leave the question of cultural contacts unresolved.

Moreover, as Dr. Conze observes, after noting the resemblances between Judeo-Greek and Indian ideas on wisdom, to explain these by "borrowing" ignores both the equally important question of the *motive* of the borrower and the fact that the concept of wisdom in both traditions "grew quite naturally out of the preceding tradition, and is in no conflict with any of their basic concepts."<sup>4</sup> Admitting all these cautions, I wish to suggest here a methodology for approaching the question of "influence" and to apply it to one of the parallels which in my view affords the strongest evidence for interaction of ideas, namely Neoplatonic and Indian ideas on divine activity, in particular, the views of Plotinus and those expressed in the Mahāyāna Buddhist work *Uttaratantra* or *Ratnagotravibhāga*.<sup>5</sup>

First of all, in considering possible parallels between two systems of thought, we must examine their nature. We may, first, have to do with parallels of experience, especially, in the case that interests us, of mystical experience. In my paper, presented to the first of these colloquia in 1973, I drew attention to the parallels between the experiences underlying Plotinus's two higher Hypostases and those of Hindu and Buddhist mysticism.<sup>6</sup> The resemblances between the accounts given by the mystics the world over is a commonplace, and while cultural contact may explain some such cases, it is clearly inapplicable to mysticism as a whole. Secondly, there are resemblances of ideas or philosophical theories. These may or may not be concerned with the interpretation of experience; thus in progressing from the "ineffability" of his experience to the construction of a "negative theology" the mystic has already advanced from experience to interpretation, and, to give a more specific case, remarkable parallels exist between Neoplatonic criticisms of the Aristotelian view of Intelligence as the highest hypostasis and the debate between the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra (or Vijñānavāda) schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism over whether the absolute can be described as "thought."<sup>7</sup> Of a more abstract kind are the parallels between the Greek and Indian ideas on reincarnation.

Here we are on more uncertain ground, but must always keep in mind the possibility that we have to deal not with influences, but simply with similar minds viewing the world in similar ways. This is less likely the closer the verbal parallels between the formulation of such theories; in particular, and this brings us to our third class of parallels, significant resemblances between the images used by different authors in illustration of these theories or experiences deserve the closest attention. Even here, whether borrowing is involved is often uncertain, since, whether or not we accept Jung's theory of "archetypes," there is no doubt that certain images tend to occur spontaneously to the human mind. Thus Plato's simile of the sun (*Rep.* VI.507-9) has very definite parallels in Indian religion literature, including the *Uttaratantra*,<sup>8</sup> but there is no doubt that the use of sun and light as symbols of Ultimate Reality and the illumination it affords is a natural one and widespread throughout the world. The same need not, however, apply to all particular applications of the sun simile, and it is from one of these that I propose to start. In line with the methodology proposed above, I shall deal with parallels both of imagery and of conceptual formulation. It is clear from what has already been said that my method involves a large measure of subjectivity. Yet even if I am wrong and we have to do with "parallels" rather than "influences," these are nonetheless of considerable interest. I must finally confess that my knowledge of Indian philosophy is far from complete and my knowledge of Indian languages virtually non-existent, and I hope that others here may be able to supply texts unknown to me to round out my account.

In his famous account of Emanation in *Enn.* V.1.6. Plotinus stresses its spontaneity; the One he declares, produces "without inclination, will or movement," but, while it remains unmoved, a radiation proceeds from it like that of light from the sun.<sup>9</sup> Similarly the modern Hindu sage Ramana Maharshi declares that "not from any desire, resolve or effort on the part of the rising sun, but merely due to the presence of his rays, the lens emits heat, the lotus blossoms, water evaporates

and people attend to their various duties in life. . . . The three-fold activity of creation, preservation and destruction . . . takes place merely due to the unique presence of the supreme Lord. . . . The Lord himself has no resolve; no act or event touches even the fringe of his being. This state of immaculate aloofness can be likened to that of the sun, which is untouched by the activities of life, or to that of the all-pervasive ether, which is not affected by the interaction of the complex qualities of the other four elements."<sup>10</sup> The ether comparison, as we shall see, has an extremely interesting anticipation in the *Bhagavadgītā*,<sup>11</sup> but, for the rest, my knowledge of Hindu philosophy is too scanty for me to know what anticipations of the Maharshi's account of divine activity exist there. Moreover, since the Maharshi had numerous Western disciples, some of whom must have had at least a superficial acquaintance with the *Enneads*, we may wonder whether he could not have derived the idea from them. This need not be so, however, since very precise anticipations thereof exist in Indian thought, namely the Mahāyāna Buddhist conception of the Buddha's activity—the Buddha, at this stage of Buddhist thought, being conceived as a cosmic principle, identical with Ultimate Reality, of which the historical Buddha is a mere appearance. More precisely, he is conceived as having three "bodics," the *Dharmakāya* (identical with Ultimate Reality and sometimes termed the "Cosmical Body"), the *Saṃbhogakāya* (the "Community" or "Bliss Body," the ideal form in which he appears to beings more advanced than ourselves) and the *Nirmāṇakāya* (or "Transformation Body") the phantom body in which he appears on earth. J. Przyluski has noted the obvious resemblance to the Neoplatonists' three Hypostases,<sup>12</sup> but details of the doctrine, especially of the intermediate *Saṃbhogakāya*, are hard to come by, and the sections of the *Uttaratantra* that discuss the *Saṃbhogakāya* show few Neoplatonic affinities.<sup>13</sup> In any case, the parallels with which I shall deal are less controversial.

The account of the Buddha's activity which interests us occupies the fourth chapter of the treatise traditionally entitled *Uttaratantra*, made up of a sequence of verses, ascribed to Maitreyanātha, the founder of the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna, together with a prose commentary ascribed to his disciple Asaṅga. Maitreyanātha's dates, assuming him to be a historical figure (which is not universally granted), are traditionally given as A.D. 270-350 and Asaṅga is said to have flourished around the latter date.<sup>14</sup> Recent research, however, has identified the work with the *Ratnagotravibhāga* of Sarāmāti (or Sthiramāti), a later Yogācarin commentator, who is generally dated between 350 and 450 A.D.<sup>15</sup> Any of these dates, it will be observed, would make the work post-Plotinian in composition and one is therefore tempted to conclude that, if influence is at work, it is of Neoplatonism upon Buddhism rather than the reverse.<sup>16</sup> Uncertainty is, however, added by the fact that the *Uttaratantra* (as we shall call it for convenience's sake) appeals for authority to various *Sūtras*, or discourses ascribed (mythically, it need hardly be said) to the Buddha.<sup>17</sup> The dating of these texts is even more uncertain than that of the Mahāyāna philosophers, and all that can safely be said is that they must have been composed during the early centuries A.D.<sup>18</sup> Hence uncertainty concerning the origin of the ideas in question must persist.

The sun simile is one of the nine used in the chapter in question to illustrate the view that the Buddha's activity takes place "without effort and uninterruptedly."<sup>19</sup> Or, as the Tibetan writer Gampopa (1079-1153) summarises the doctrine in the final chapter of his *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, "when a man becomes a Buddha, habit-making thoughts and forced effort cease for him. Therefore, whatever is, or is thought to be, necessary for sentient beings happens all the time of its own accord."<sup>20</sup> Hence, "without effort or discursiveness the Buddha's voice proclaims the Dharma simply because it is good for those so fortunate as to listen to it."<sup>21</sup> In the *Uttaratantra* (IV.61 ff.) the sun simile appears as follows:



IV.61. Warmed by the sun, at one and the same time,  
The lotus flower expands and the Kumuda folds its  
leaves;

But the sun, it has no searching thought  
About the qualities and the defects  
Of the water-born flowers as they open and fold.  
Similar to that is the saint (in his acts).

62. Free from any searching thought,  
The sun, expanding its light, simultaneously,  
everywhere  
Makes the lotus flower unfold its leaves  
And causes to ripen (other kinds of plants).

63. Similar to that is the sun which is the Buddha  
With its rays—the highest of doctrines.  
Free from a searching thought, they are directed  
Upon the concerts resembling lotus flowers.

64. Arising in the leaves of Enlightenment  
As the Cosmical Body and the visible forms,  
The sun of Omniscience casts the rays  
Of divine wisdom over all living beings.<sup>22</sup>

In another simile (IV.56-57) we read:

IV.56. As Brahmā, without moving from his abode,  
In all the regions of the gods  
Demonstrates his apparition without effort.

57. In a similar way, in all the regions of the world  
The Lord, though motionless in his Cosmical Body,  
Shows himself in apparitional forms,  
Without effort to those who are worthy.<sup>23</sup>

In short:

The Buddha does not search, nor does he reflect  
(about the character of the work to be done). How-  
ever, he does act, and this his activity free from

search and reflection manifests itself miraculously  
and without effort."<sup>24</sup>

The Perfect Supreme Buddha is motionless, he does  
not reflect, nor does he speak, nor search, nor inves-  
tigate. He neither searches, nor investigates (the  
past), nor does he reflect (about the present), nor  
has he any thoughts (and desires regarding the  
future)."<sup>25</sup>

V.3. Who and by what means is to be converted,  
What is to be the aim, and at what place and time,—  
Without having any constructive thought regarding  
all of this,  
The sage always acts completely free from effort.

4. Indeed he does not give himself up to thoughts  
As to what may be the constitution of the convert,  
Which of the many means of conversion is to be used,  
Where and when it is to be accomplished, the place,  
and the time."<sup>26</sup>

Similar ideas are expressed at many places throughout the  
treatise.<sup>27</sup>

We thus find that in the *Uttaratantra* the Buddha (a) abides  
unmoved, like the One in Plotinus's account of Emanation  
(the familiar Neoplatonic principle of "undiminished giv-  
ing"<sup>28</sup>); similarly, the Buddha's Cosmical Body is "not sub-  
jected to augmentation and decrease."<sup>29</sup> (b) Secondly, "the  
Buddha acts uninterruptedly, as long as the world exists" and  
"is characterised as neither becoming originated nor disap-  
pearing (anew). Being thus immutable, he cannot be regarded  
as acting (in the ordinary sense)."<sup>30</sup> Similarly in Neoplatonism  
the divine Hypostases' activity constitutes an eternal process,  
like the outflow of light from the heavenly bodies.<sup>31</sup> It fol-  
lows that the *Timaeus*' account of divine deliberation cannot  
be taken literally, since there was no time at which such  
deliberation could have taken place.<sup>32</sup> Hence, in both systems

divine activity proceeds (c) effortlessly and (d) without discursive thought. As Sallustius summarises this teaching, once again introducing the sun simile: <sup>33</sup>

We must consider that the gods bestow all this attention on the universe without any deliberation or toil: just as bodies with a function do what they do merely by existing, as the sun lights and warms merely by existing, in this way and much more so does the providence of the gods benefit its objects without involving toil for itself. Hence the questions of the Epicureans are answered: their contention is that what is divine neither is itself troubled nor troubles others. <sup>34</sup>

As Sallustius goes on to observe, the doctrine of the effortlessness of divine providence constitutes the Neoplatonic answer to Epicurus's objection<sup>35</sup> that exercising providence would be a burden for the gods. That the Hypostases do not deliberate is equally rooted in earlier theological debates. Jean Pépin has well brought out that it was essential to Aristotle's account of deliberation that such a deliberation constitutes a search for knowledge of which one is initially ignorant,<sup>36</sup> and I myself have shown, briefly in my *Neoplatonism*<sup>37</sup> and at greater length in a paper to appear in *Aufstieg und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt* how the Sceptics had turned this point against popular conceptions of divine wisdom.<sup>38</sup> As Plotinus observes, to regard deliberation as essential to divine wisdom confuses the search for wisdom with its actual possession and ranks God with the apprentice rather than the master of an art. For the process of deliberation ceases with the achievement of wisdom, and beings whose wisdom is eternal have no need to resort to it at all.<sup>39</sup> Finally (e) both the Neoplatonists and the *Uttaratantra* agree that divine activity proceeds uninterruptedly and that the variability of its reception by inferior beings is due to their own weakness, not to any change in the illumination bestowed upon them from above.<sup>40</sup>

Leaving the *Uttaratantra* for a moment, I wish to note another remarkable parallel between Plotinus and Buddhist thought, their views concerning the omniscience of the world-soul in the former case, of the Buddha in the latter. As Conze observes, Buddhist scholasticism, while upholding the Buddha's omniscience, normally refrains from delineating the nature of that omniscience too precisely.<sup>41</sup> He notes, however, that Asaṅga's younger brother Vasubandhu in his *Abhidharmakośa*,<sup>42</sup> a work written before Asaṅga converted him to the Mahāyāna and one which forms the most systematic compendium of the philosophy and psychology of the Sarvastivādin School of Hīnayāna Buddhism, expounds the view that "the Buddha knows the future not by inference, or by various portents or omens which allow fortune-tellers to guess it, but by seeing it before his own eyes."<sup>43</sup> Likewise, Plotinus, in refuting any idea of divine deliberation, declares that the world-soul's knowledge is not like that of diviners, but of the man responsible for an action, who has full control over its outcome and therefore no doubts concerning it. Hence the world-soul knows the future, as it knows the present, in an unchanging vision and thus need not resort to reasoning.<sup>44</sup> We learn elsewhere that this is *a fortiori* true of Nous, where the future is already present; or rather temporal distinctions have no meaning there, but become operative only with the unfoldment of the sensible world.<sup>45</sup> That the idea is of Stoic origin is shown by Cicero's *De Divinatione*,<sup>46</sup> where we read that, since the world unfolds from its causes according to the law of Fate, one who knows all causes thereby knows all effects. Such knowledge however, is possible only to the gods, who, we learn elsewhere in the treatise, know the universe since they are its cause.<sup>47</sup> For man, however, it is possible only to draw partial inferences from partial effects (artificial mantic exemplified by astrology or the inspection of omens) or at best to observe some of the world's causal principles directly when his mind is freed from the body's influence in prophetic ecstasy or sleep (natural mantic). This distinction between two kinds of mantic was to have great influence on

later thought.<sup>48</sup> All that concerns us here, however, is that Plotinus's contrast between divine knowledge and the inferences of human diviners exactly parallels Vasubandhu's, with the exception that the idea of divine causal knowledge is absent from the latter, since the Buddha, unlike the Stoic or Neoplatonic God, is in no sense the world's cause or creator.<sup>49</sup>

We have thus a further remarkable parallel between Neoplatonism and the Buddhist circles within which the Yogācāra arose. We may now examine some further parallels with the *Uttaratantra* itself. It is essential to Neoplatonic emanation, as opposed to Christian creation, that beings "are not thrown into existence by an external creator without any choice on their part. On the contrary, they come forth voluntarily from this source and shape themselves."<sup>50</sup> Hence the later Neoplatonists' description of them as *αὐθυπόστατα*, a concept whose origin has recently been brilliantly illuminated by Professor Whittaker<sup>51</sup> who observes that "the main objective behind the introduction of self-generating secondary principles was . . . that of preserving unimpaired the immobility of the first principle, if the first principle is to remain immobile it cannot generate, and in consequence any secondary principle must proceed from it rather than be generated by it."<sup>52</sup> As Whittaker shows, while the term *αὐθυπόστατος* is not found before Iamblichus, the notion of a self-generating deity was a "theological common-place of the Roman Empire" and synonymous terms are widespread throughout its religious texts. And though such terms are absent from Plotinus, the notion itself is a necessary corollary of his system.<sup>53</sup> Hence the *Uttaratantra*'s use of the term "self-sprung" or equivalent phraseology affords yet another parallel to the Neoplatonic and contemporary Greek systems, the most revealing example being at IV.59 (at the end of the Brahmā simile):

IV.59. As owing to the vows of Brahmā himself,  
This vision is perceived without effort,

so is the apparitional form (of the Buddha),  
which becomes originated by itself.<sup>54</sup>

The other main analogy used by the Neoplatonists to express the emanation concept was that of the Logos, whereby "just as external speech (*logos prophorikos*) constitutes the external expression of internal thought (*logos endiathetos*), so an hypostasis flows forth from its prior and expresses it under conditions of greater multiplicity."<sup>55</sup>

In the *Uttaratantra* (1.143) a similar analogy is used of the relation of the Buddha's teaching to the Dharmakāya: "The cosmical body is to be known in two aspects: It is the Absolute perfectly immaculate and its natural outflow, the word which speaks of the profound (highest truth), And (of the elements of the Empirical World) in their variety."<sup>56</sup>

I pass over other resemblances between the two systems, which seem to me less significant. Thus, the idea that Ultimate Reality transcends conceptual thought is common to mystics the world over.<sup>57</sup> More doubt may be felt over the use, by both Plotinus and the *Uttaratantra* of the simile of cleaning gold or a statue that has fallen into mud,<sup>58</sup> as a symbol of spiritual purification, but on reflection the simile seems one that might occur independently to two minds. I will therefore pass to two final uses of the sunlight analogy, which seem to afford better evidence of contact between the two systems. The first concerns the Neoplatonists' use of light, based on *Parmenides* 131B, as an illustration of how True Being can be simultaneously present in its entirety at every part of the sensible world.<sup>59</sup> Similarly in the *Uttaratantra* we read:

I.83. It is the Cosmical Body, it is the (Buddha)—one  
with the absolute,  
It is the Highest Truth and point of saintliness, and it  
is Nirvana,  
Just as the sun and its rays, so are its properties,  
indivisible,

Therefore, there is no Nirvana apart from Buddhahood. . . .

85. (It is the Cosmical Body, since)  
The properties of the Buddha are indivisible  
(manifesting themselves in all that exists).<sup>60</sup>

And further on:

The Divine Knowledge of all the objects of cognition . . . penetrates into all the objects cognizable in all their forms; it is thus akin to the net of (the sun's) rays which is spread (over everything perceptible) . . . All these properties [viz. Analytic Wisdom, Divine Knowledge and Deliverance from Defilement] constitute the indivisible nature of the absolute, therefore they resemble (the light, the rays and the disc of the sun) in their indivisible character. <sup>61</sup>

Yet both the Neoplatonists and the *Uttaratantra* recognize the limits of the analogy, since the sun is a physical body of limited dimensions occupying a definite place. Hence, Porphyry observes the sun is not present everywhere that its light reaches in the way that the soul, not being circumscribed by spatial dimensions, is simultaneously present at every point in the body.<sup>62</sup> Likewise the *Uttaratantra* remarks that the sun's light cannot penetrate all the different worlds and all regions of the sky in the way that the Buddha's illumination penetrates everywhere and extinguishes all ignorance.<sup>63</sup> Yet more revealing is the work's comparison (IV.77) of the absolute to space:

IV.77. Although it [sc. space] is experienced (as divisible)  
In higher and lower (parts),  
This is not its true nature,  
Which is that of being one whole.  
Similarly, though the Buddha is seen in all his  
different forms,

He is not such as we perceive him  
(Being unique and undifferentiated).<sup>64</sup>

An explanation is necessary at this point of the Sanskrit term *ākāśa*, here rendered "space" and sometimes alternatively translated "ether." Not merely does the term denote "space" in our sense; as Conze remarks: "At the same time, and without any sense of being inconsistent, the Buddhists treat *ākāśa* as something which has ■ material and positive nature, as a finely material, ethereal fluid which is eternal and omnipresent. The ether is itself unsupported by anything . . . but it supports all the other primary elements. First the element of air rests on it, and then again water and earth rest on the air below them. Finally the ancient traditions of India induced the Buddhists to treat this ether as self-illuminating, and to derive the word *ākāśa* from the root *kāś*, "to shine." Āryadeva tells us that the absence of matter is called *ā-kāś-a* because things therein "shine brilliantly," and in this sense Saramati can say that Buddhahood shines brilliantly like the sun or the ether."<sup>65</sup>

This resemblance between *ākāśa*, as so conceived, and Aristotle's fifth element, or light in the Neoplatonic universe, is evident. Conversely we may recall that Proclus, according to Simplicius, identified space with light, partly on the ground of the latter's indivisibility and impassibility.<sup>66</sup> And it is precisely these two qualities that form the basis of the *Uttaratantra*'s comparisons between *ākāśa* and the absolute. The former we have already noted. With regard to the latter we read (I.61-62):

61. The Spiritual Essence is like space,  
Being uncaused and unconditioned.  
It is devoid of the complex (of producing factors)  
And knows no birth, destruction, and (temporary)  
stability.

62. The Spiritual Essence which is pure and radiant  
Is unalterable like space

And cannot be polluted by the occasional stains.  
Of desire and the other (defiling forces)  
Which arise from the wrong conception (of  
existence).<sup>67</sup>

The Neoplatonists similarly use the analogy of the union of light with air to illustrate how the soul's presence in the body involves no substantial intermixture (contrary to Stoic belief) and hence leaves the soul unchanged and unaffected by the passions of the psycho-physical organism.<sup>68</sup> It will be recalled that the passage quoted earlier from Ramana Maharshi used the ether analogy to make a similar point,<sup>69</sup> and here, we observed, there was a precedent in Hindu tradition, namely *Bhagavadgītā* IX.4-9. The relevant verses, in Zaehner's translation, are as follows:

IX.4. By me, unmanifest in form, all this universe was spun: in me subsist all beings, I do not subsist in them. . . .

IX.6. As in [wide] space subsists the mighty wind blowing [at will] ever and everywhere, so do all contingent beings subsist in me. . . .

IX.9. These works (of mine) neither bind-nor-limit me; as one indifferent I sit among these works, detached.

With this we may compare *Enn.* IV.3.22.1-7:

Ἄρ' οὖν οὕτω φατέον, ὅταν ψυχὴ σώματι παρῇ, παρῆναι αὐτὴν ὡς τὸ φῶς πάρεστι τῷ ἀέρι; καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ καὶ τοῦτο παρὸν οὐ πάρεστι καὶ δι' ὅλου παρὸν οὐδενὶ μίγνυται καὶ ἔστηκε μὲν αὐτό, ὃ δὲ παραρρεῖ· καὶ ὅταν ἔξω γένηται τοῦ ἐν ᾧ τὸ φῶς, ἀπῆλθεν οὐδέν ἔχων, ἕως δὲ ἐστὶν ὑπὸ τὸ φῶς, πεφῶτισται, ὥστ' ὀρθῶς ἔχειν καὶ ἐνταῦθα λέγειν, ὡς ὁ ἀῆρ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ, ἥπερ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῷ ἀέρι.

The two passages thus agree on the following points: (a) the union (of soul with body in one case, of God with the world in the other) resembles that of light (or ether) with air in that (b) the air blows through the ether (or flows by—*παρρρεῖ*), while leaving the latter detached or unmixed; hence (c) we should not say that the soul is in body (or God in the world), but the reverse.

In light of such parallels I find the hypothesis of cultural contact hard to resist. The question remains, if this is so, which system is influencing the other. In favour of the priority of the Neoplatonic texts, we may observe (a) that they antedate the datable Mahāyāna philosophers we have mentioned and (b) that, while the Mahāyānists generally state their views dogmatically and appear to regard them simply as following from the nature of the Absolute, Plotinus generally argues his position at length and usually takes as his starting-point the arguments of earlier Greek philosophers.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, we saw that the Buddhists allude to earlier scriptures of uncertain date; hence the fact that I have not found their views argued anywhere in as much detail as those of the Neoplatonists may be due simply to my own ignorance, or to gaps in our current knowledge of the Mahāyāna's development. We may likewise observe that, while the text quoted from the *Bhagavadgītā* is obscure in the extreme, Plotinus's meaning can be grasped without undue difficulty. Yet it would be hard to assign a post-Plotinian date to the *Gītā* as a whole,<sup>71</sup> though the possibility of later interpolations cannot definitely be excluded. In short, the question which tradition is influencing the other must for the moment remain uncertain and the possibility of influences both ways must be borne in mind.<sup>72</sup> I hope, at any rate, that the present paper has provided at least a start towards the investigation of this question and offered some guidance as to how it can most profitably be pursued.

## NOTES

1. The most complete study so far is I. F. Staal's *Advaita and Neoplatonism* (Madras, 1961); cf. especially his survey (pp. 235-49) of earlier scholars' views on possible connections between Plotinus and Indian thought. More recently, cf. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, p. 88, and A. H. Armstrong, *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, p. 201, n. 1.
2. Cf. J. M. Rist, *Plotinus, the Road to Reality*, pp. 228-9, criticizing E. Bréhier's excessive assimilation of Plotinus's thought to Advaita Vedānta.
3. *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. I, pp. 150-7, esp. pp. 150, 155. The whole section (pp. 150-248) forms a most valuable survey of cultural contacts between China and the West.
4. *Buddhism; Its Essence and Development*, p. 143. For further parallels, cf. the same author's *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, pp. 49-50, 170-2, 207-9, and 217-20.
5. E. Obermiller, trans., *Acta Orientalia*, IX (1931), pp. 111-296; cf. below, p. 105.
6. "Nous as Experience," *Neoplatonism, Ancient and Modern*, Vol. I, pp. 121-55.
7. Cf.: Santideva, *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, IX.17 ff., and pp. 113 ff. of Marion L. Matics' introduction to his translation; Gampopa, *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, trans. H. V. Guenther, pp. 209-11; T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, pp. 317 ff. Note especially the charge, which Guenther (op. cit., p. 227, n. 20) regards as unjust, that the Yogācārins identify the absolute with "Thought cognizing itself"; cf. Plotinus's criticism of Aristotle as discussed, e.g., by Armstrong, *Les Sources de Plotin* (Études Hardt V), pp. 409-11.
8. Cf. especially Obermiller (p. 135): "Just as the sun casts its light on all the visible objects, in the same way the path makes clear everything cognizable in all the different aspects."
9. *Enn.*, VI.1.6.22-30: τὸ οὖν γινώμενον ἐκεῖθεν ὡς κινήθεντος φατέον γίνεσθαι. εἰ γὰρ κινήθεντος αὐτοῦ τι γίνετο, τρίτον ἂν ἐκείνου τὸ γινώμενον μετὰ τὴν κίνησιν ἂν γίνετο καὶ οὐ δεύτερον. δεῖ οὖν ἀκινήτου ὄντος, εἴ τι δεύτερον μετ' αὐτῆς, πῶς προσηύδατος οὐδὲ βουληθέντος οὐδὲ ὅλως κινήθεντος ὑποσῆναι αὐτῆς. πῶς οὖν, καὶ τί δεῖ νοῆσαι; περὶ ἐκεῖνο μὲν ὄν, περιλαβὼν ἐξ αὐτοῦ μὲν, ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ μένοντος· ὅσον ἡλίου τὸ περὶ αὐτὸν λαμπρὸν ὥσπερ περιθέον, ἐξ αὐτοῦ αἰεὶ γιννόμενον, μένοντος δέ.
10. A. Osborne, ed., *Collected Works*, p. 46.

11. IX.4-9, on which cf. below, p. 114.
12. "Les Trois Hypostases dans l'Inde et à Alexandrie," *Ann. de Inst. de Philol. Orientale*, IV (1936).
13. Obermiller, pp. 253-4, 263-4. On the obscurity of the Sāmbhogakāya doctrine, cf. Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, p. 72, and *Buddhist Thought in India*, pp. 233-4.
14. Cf., e.g., T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p. 107, n. 6.
15. See Richard A. Gard, *Buddhism (Great Religions of Modern Man)*, p. 22. Cf. also A. K. Chatterji, *The Yogācāra Idealism*, p. 53 and n. 3, for the possibility of the existence of several philosophers of that name.
16. Believers in reincarnation might also note that A.D. 270, the traditional date of Maitreya-nātha's birth, was also that of Plotinus's death!
17. Cf., e.g., Obermiller: p. 113, n. 2; p. 114, n. 11; p. 115, n. 4; p. 128, nn. 1 and 5; p. 153, n. 3; p. 189, n. 2; p. 269, n. 2; p. 280, n. 5; p. 284, n. 2; and p. 285, n. 1.
18. Cf. Conze, *Buddhism; Its Essence and Development*, pp. 29-31, on the uncertainties of Indian chronology; also, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, p. 19, where, in an article originally published in 1960, he declares that "perhaps five percent of the *Mahāyāna Sūtras* have been reliably edited and perhaps two percent intelligibly translated. It is clear that inferences drawn from the scanty material at our disposal must remain extremely dubious." Clearly, even allowing for the progress of research since then, the same general conclusion must hold true.
19. Obermiller, p. 267.
20. H. V. Guenther, trans., p. 271.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 272.
22. Obermiller, p. 281.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 268.
27. Cf., e.g., pp. 150, 153-4, 250-1, 253 and 267-87 passim.
28. For the doctrine, cf. especially Dodds' note on Proclus, *El.*, 26-7.
29. Obermiller, p. 114.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
31. Cf. esp. II.3.18.16-22.
32. III.2.1.16 ff.; VI.7.3.1-6. As I have observed elsewhere (*Neoplatonism*, p. 86), the conclusion of the former chapter (lines 34-45) brings Plotinus very close to the mysticism of the Far East.

33. *De Dis et Mundo*, chap. IX, trans. A. D. Nock.
34. The phrase "merely by existing" (*αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι*) is not Plotinian. The closest Plotinian parallels appear to be: III.2.2.42., III.8.3.22-3, and VI.7.3.9.
35. *K.D.*, I; cf. *Enn.*, IV.4.12.39 ff.
36. *Théologie Cosmique et Théologie Chrétienne*, pp. 502-4.
37. *Neoplatonism*, pp. 26-7.
38. Sextus, *Math.*, IX.167-73; Cicero, *N.D.*, III.38.
39. IV.4.12.1-22; cf. VI.7.1.32-5.
40. For the *Uttaratantra*, cf. Obermiller, p. 276; relevant Neoplatonic texts are listed in Dodds' note on Proclus, *El.*, 140.
41. Cf., e.g., Gampopa, *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, trans. Guenther, pp. 261-2.
42. E. Lamotte, trans., Vol. II, pp. 303-5.
43. *Buddhist Thought in India*, p. 169.
44. IV.12.22-9.
45. VI.7.1.49-58.
46. *De Div.*, I.127-8.
47. *Ibid.*, I.82.
48. Iamblichus, *Myst.*, III.1-3, 26-7 and X.3-4 (cf. *Neoplatonism*, pp. 122-3); Avicenna, *Najat*, pp. 121 ff. and 251-2 (cf. Averroes, *Tahafut-al-Tahafut*, pp. 496-7).
49. Conze, *Buddhism*, p. 143, notes that Wisdom similarly plays a part in the world's creation in the Judeo-Gnostic tradition, but not in that of Buddhism.
50. *Neoplatonism*, p. 65.
51. *Entretiens Hardt*, XXI, pp. 193-230; for earlier discussions, cf. especially Dodds's note on *El. Th.*, 40 and Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, I, pp. 297-330.
52. *Op. cit.*, p. 229; cf. pp. 219-20, where he quotes Syrianus in *Met.*, 187.6 ff.; Iamblichus, *Myst.*, VIII.2; Porphyry, *Hist. Phil.*, fr. 18, in support of this position.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 203. The term *ἀθνηπότατος* is first found at Iamblichus, *ap. Stob.*, II.8.45 (II.174.21 ff.). The closest *explicit* approach to the concept in Plotinus is his account of the self-generation of the supreme deity at VI.8.13.50 ff. (quoted by Whittaker, p. 215).
54. Obermiller, p. 280. Cf. p. 225, V.136.
55. *Neoplatonism*, p. 69. Cf. especially I.2.3.27-30.
56. Obermiller, p. 226.
57. From the *Uttaratantra*, cf., e.g., Obermiller, pp. 112, 132-3.
58. For Plotinus, cf. *Enn.*, I.6.5.42 ff. (cf. *ibid.*, 9.7 ff.), and V.8.3.12 ff. (cf. also Epiphanius 31.20.9); from the *Uttaratantra*, cf. Obermiller, pp. 119-21, 178, 197, and 218-20.

59. Cf. esp. VI.4.7.22 ff.
60. Obermiller, p. 205.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
62. Nemesius, *Nat. Hom.*, 133.6 (discussed by Dörrie, *Porphyrios' Symmiktā Zetemata*, pp. 74-9); cf. Plotinus, *Enn.*, V.3.9.7-20, and VI.4.7.45-8.
63. Obermiller, pp. 276-7.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 284.
65. *Buddhist Thought in India*, pp. 164-5.
66. Simplicius in *Phys.*, 611 ff., discussed by Sambursky, *The Physical World of Late Antiquity*, pp. 8-9. For space's indivisibility, cf. 612.7 ff.; on its impassibility, *ibid.*, 20-1; cf. also 613.15-20. Sambursky (*op. cit.*, p. 9) compares the modern physicists' conception of "ether"; similarly, Conze (*op. cit.*, p. 165, n.) compares the Buddhist conception of space with the Cabbalistically influenced view of Henry Moore; he further notes the influence on Einstein of the Cabbala's ideas on light and space.
67. Obermiller, p. 188; cf. pp. 186-91.
68. Cf. the passage of Nemesius cited above (n. 62); also, *Enn.*, I.1.3.10 ff. and IV.3.22.1-9, discussed below. Dörrie notes (*op. cit.*, p. 75) that the union of light and air had been used by Chrysippus in support of the Stoic view (*SVF* II.473, p. 155, line 38; cf. Alexander, *de Mixt.*, 218.6). The same text (*ibid.*, p. 155, lines 30-2) also uses the analogy of the penetration of iron by fire; it is interesting that this analogy is used by Ruysbroeck to illustrate the soul's union with God (cf. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, pp. 222-3), and by Śaṅkara (*Viveka-Chudāmani*, 530) to illustrate how the union of Buddhi (intellect) with consciousness gives rise to the senses. We thus have (a) one more remarkable parallel between Greek and Indian thought and (b) an example of how both "monistic" and "theistic" mysticism can use the same analogy in support of their respective positions!
69. Cf. above, p. 103 f.
70. Cf. above, p. 108, for the Epicurean and Sceptical influence on Plotinus's view of divine activity; p. 109, for the influence of the Stoic account of divine omniscience; and p. 111, for the influence of *Parmenides*, 131.B.
71. Zaehner's dating of the *Gītā* (introduction, p. 7) between the fifth and second centuries B.C. probably represents the general view.
72. Nemesius, 129.9 (Dörrie, *op. cit.*, p. 54) ascribes the Neoplatonic view of the soul-body union to Plotinus's teacher Ammonius Saccas. While the hypothesis that Ammonius was himself an Indian missionary (Seeberg, *Ztschrif. Kirchengeschichte* 61 (1942), pp.

136-70; E. Benz, *Abb. Mainz* (1951 no. 3), pp. 197 ff.) deserves no credence, the analogy in question might suggest *some* Indian influence on his thought.

## Meditative States in the Abhidharma and in Pseudo-Dionysius

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The thesis of this paper is that some problems in the Buddhist philosophy's Abhidharma tradition can be illuminated, if not solved, by a comparison with the account of meditative states in the Neoplatonic mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius. There are three specific problems which I shall consider in this paper. These are: (1) the reason for the inclusion of the four formless meditative states (*arūpadhyānāni*) in the Abhidharma typology of meditative states; (2) the relation of the formless meditative states to the form meditative states (*rūpadhyānāni*); and (3) the structure of the formless meditative states and their internal relations.

In this paper I shall pursue my thesis as a systematic rather than historical problem. In so doing I shall attempt totally to avoid the vexingly complex and extremely murky question of the existence or extent of contact between the Buddhist schools of India and the Neoplatonic academies of the Roman world. Furthermore, since my concern is systematic rather than historical I shall utilize quite indifferently both ancient and modern expositions of the Abhidharma tradition, requiring only that my authors be attempting to present traditional



Buddhist categories, rather than claiming to reinterpret those categories in contemporary Western terms. For simplicity of exposition I shall be quoting mainly from the Pali Abhidharma literature with only occasional reference to the Sautrāntika formulation of the Abhidharma as it is preserved in the Sanskrit and Tibetan commentarial tradition based on the *Abhidharma kośa* and I shall ignore the Sarvastivada materials preserved in the Chinese Tripitaka. As a further aid to simplicity of exposition I shall only use the *Mystical Theology* as my source for Pseudo-Dionysius's typology of meditative states and I shall not consider how a detailed reading of the entire Dionysian corpus might affect the interpretation of the typology of the *Mystical Theology*. It must be understood that I am not unmindful of the differences between the various Abhidharma traditions nor uninterested in the more general problems of interpreting the *Mystical Theology* in the wider context of Neoplatonism. However, this paper is essentially exploratory. It is only concerned to suggest that certain comparisons might be illuminating. If it does succeed in creating an initial plausibility for the claim that such a comparison of the accounts of meditation in Neoplatonism and in Buddhism could be fruitful, then, perhaps, the more detailed exploration of each tradition required to develop the comparison might seem to someone to be worth the effort.

For the purposes of exposition I shall first discuss the basic categories of the Abhidharma which are necessary to understand its account of the formless meditative states. Then I shall be able to state more specifically the three questions which this account raises. I shall then discuss several traditional interpretations of the typology and show how they fail to answer the questions raised. I shall then discuss two non-traditional modern suggestions for reinterpreting the traditional accounts and show how they do not quite answer the questions I raise. Next, I shall briefly sketch the account of meditation given in the *Mystical Theology*. Finally, I shall suggest a possible comparison between that account and the

formless meditative states and show how such a comparison might illuminate the three questions I raised initially.

### I. Meditative States in the Abhidharma Tradition

According to the Abhidharma tradition of Buddhist philosophy there are only four ultimate entities: *citta* (mind); *cetasika* (mental concomitants); *rūpa* (matter) and *Nirvāna*.<sup>1</sup> Of these four, mind is by far the most important for it is by control of the mind that *Nirvāna* is realized; it is the mind which is the foundation for the mental concomitants (*cetasikas*); and it is mind, not matter, which determines the structure of Buddhist cosmology.

Buddhist cosmology views the world as divided into three realms: (1) the realm of desire (*kāmaloka*); (2) the realm of form (*rūpaloka*); and (3) the formless realm (*arūpaloka*). This three-fold classification is based on the Abhidharma's triple classification of mind into ordinary consciousness and the two forms of meditative consciousness (*jhānas*), i.e., the form meditative state (*rūpajhāna*) and the formless meditative state. Of these three, ordinary consciousness and its field of operation, the desire realm, occupies much of the discussion in the Abhidharma tradition; for the understanding of ordinary consciousness in moral or immoral, resultant or causally neutral states together with the number and strength of the mental concomitants found in each of these states not only is crucial for understanding the phenomena which occur in the initial stages of meditation practice but such an understanding also provides a framework within which the mental events of daily life can be understood and thus regulated. Likewise, the desire realm which is the field in which ordinary consciousness operates with its heavens and hells, its humans, animals, gods, demons and hungry ghosts, is common to iconography and popular story.<sup>2</sup> However, despite their significance, it is not the ordinary states of consciousness but the meditative states which are our concern here. The meditative realms and the meditative states of consciousness are strictly correlated,

for it is by cultivating a given meditative state that awareness of the corresponding meditative realm is obtained.

The first group of meditative states, the form meditative states (*rūpajhānāni*) has a structure which is both logical and easily grasped. The first form meditative state has five factors. These are: (1) *vitakka* [*vitarka*]; (2) *vicāra*; (3) *pīti* [*prīti*]; (4) *sukha*; (5) *ekaggatā* [*ekāgratā*].<sup>3</sup> These five factors may be translated roughly as follows: *vitakka* by "initial application to the object of meditation"; *vicāra* by "sustained application to the object of meditation"; *pīti* by "joy"; *sukha* by "happiness," and *ekaggatā* by "single-pointedness."<sup>4</sup> A more detailed explanation of these terms according to one commentarial tradition is as follows. Here *vitakka* is being used not in its usual literal meaning of "thinking" or "reasoning" but in its special sense as a mental concomitant found in many mental states, whose function is to direct the concomitant states towards the object. ("Ārammaṇaṃ vitakketi sampayutt adhamma abhinero petīti vitakko." "Just as a King's favorite would conduct a villager to the palace, even so *vitakka* directs the mind towards the object.")<sup>5</sup> Like *vitakka*, the second factor, *vicāra*, is not here used in its usual sense, that of investigation. It means instead the sustained application of the mind to the object. "According to the commentary, *vicāra* is that which moves around the object. Examination of the object is its characteristic. *Vitakka* is like the buzzing of a bee towards a flower. *Vicāra* is like its buzzing around it. As *jhāna* factors they are correlates."<sup>6</sup> *Pīti* is the factor whose presence inhibits the arising of *vyāpāda* (ill-will or aversion) in this meditative state; while the presence of *sukha* inhibits the arising of both restlessness (*uddhacca*) and brooding (*kukkucca*). "*Pīti* creates interest in an object, while *sukha* enables one to enjoy the object. Like the sight of an oasis to a weary traveller is *pīti*. Like drinking water and bathing therein is *sukha*."<sup>7</sup> The final factor, single-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) prevents the arising of sensual desires in these meditative states.

All five factors are present in the first or lower of the form meditative states and by progressively eliminating factors the meditator rises to the higher form meditative states. These higher states are usually listed as four.<sup>8</sup> The second state has eliminated the first two factors (initial and sustained application) and is characterized only by joy, happiness and single-pointedness. The third state has eliminated not only initial and sustained application, but also the third factor, i.e., joy, and is characterized only by happiness and single-pointedness. The fourth and highest of the form meditative states eliminates all of the five factors except the last and so is characterized only by equanimity—*upekkha* [*upekṣa*], the neutral state left when joy and happiness are transcended—and single-pointedness.

Essentially, then, the account of the form meditative states is the description of various stages of meditation distinguished by the increasing simplicity of the act of concentration. In contrast to this easily grasped, logical structure the account of the formless meditative states provides no simple reason for their structure. These states are distinguished by the object of the meditative consciousness rather than by the nature of the consciousness involved. Thus the Abhidharma tradition lists as the ascendingly higher formless meditative states: (1) awareness of infinity of space (*ākāśanancāyatana*); (2) awareness of infinity of consciousness (*viññānancāyatana*); (3) awareness of nothingness (*ākincannāyatana*), and, (4) awareness of neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññānasaññāyatana*).

This fourfold classification of the Abhidharma tradition is found even in that strata of the Pāli canon which Western scholarship holds to be the oldest, i.e., the *Nikāyas*. Although in fairness it must be noted that while the form meditative realms are usually explicitly termed *jhānas* (*dhyānas*), the formless realms, although frequently mentioned (and uniformly given in their Abhidharma order) are rarely explicitly termed *jhānas* (*dhyānas*) in the *Nikāyas*. The following description of the four formless meditative states from the *Aṅguttaranikāya* is representative:

And how has a monk won access to the Imperturbable (*anejja*)? Therein a monk, passing utterly beyond all consciousness of objects, by ending the consciousness of reaction, by disregarding consciousness of diversity, thinking, "Infinite is space," attains and abides in the sphere of infinite space. Passing utterly beyond the sphere of infinite space, reading the sphere of infinite consciousness, thinking, "Infinite is consciousness," he abides in the sphere of infinite consciousness. Passing utterly beyond the sphere of infinite consciousness, thinking, "There is nothing at all," he attains and abides in the sphere of nothingness. Passing utterly beyond the sphere of nothingness, he attains and abides in the sphere of neither consciousness nor unconsciousness. Thus has a monk won access to the Imperturbable.<sup>9</sup>

In the *Vibhanga* (one of the seven books comprising the Pāli Abhidharma canon) the formless meditative states are described as follows:

With the complete surmounting of perceptions of matter, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, with non-attention to perceptions of variety, [aware of] "unbounded space," he enters upon and dwells in the [meditation] base consisting of boundless space.

By completely surmounting the [meditation] base consisting of boundless space, [aware of] "unbounded consciousness" he enters upon and dwells in the base consisting of boundless consciousness.

By completely surmounting the [meditation] base consisting of boundless consciousness, [aware that] "There is nothing," he enters upon and dwells in the [meditation] base consisting of nothingness.

By completely surmounting the [meditation] base consisting of nothingness he enters upon and dwells in the base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception.<sup>10</sup>

Given these descriptions of the four formless meditative states, we are now in a position to see the problems raised by their inclusion in the Abhidharma account of the varieties of consciousness. To begin with, the radical difference between their structuring in terms of object and the form meditative states structuring in terms of the factors present in the state gives rise to the questions of why the former are considered separate. This question seems especially acute since the Abhidharma tradition is quite clear that as far as the factors are concerned there is no difference between the fourth form meditative state and the four formless meditative states. This identity of factors leads naturally to the question of what is the precise relation between the formless meditative states and the form meditative states—especially the fourth one of the latter group. Finally, there is the question of what is the relationship which obtains between the four formless meditative states. Even if we grant that they do occur in this order—why do they so occur?

There are several possible ways of answering at least this third question given in the traditional literature. One way that the objects of the four formless meditative states could be related is given in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*:

Of these [four formless states], the first is due to surmounting signs of materiality, the second is due to surmounting space, the third is due to surmounting the consciousness that occurred with that space as its object. So they should be understood as four in number with the surmounting of the object in each case.<sup>11</sup>

In this account it would appear that the reason for the series is that each lower stage provides the basis for the next

higher stage. Thus the elimination of the object which is the focus of the highest form meditative state gives the infinity of space which is the base of the first formless state. The elimination of the space leaving only the consciousness gives the second formless state. The elimination of consciousness gives the third and the elimination of the disappeared consciousness gives the highest formless state. However, a different explanation of the relationship between these states is also found in the traditional literature. Thus, in the ninth chapter of Anuruddhācariya's *Abhidhammatthasangaho* their relationship is described as follows:

Now, to one who practises concentration on space abstracted from any *kasina* excluding the *ākāsa kasina*, thinking, "This is infinite," there arises the first *arūpa jhāna*. To one who practises concentration on that very first *arūpajhāna*, thinking that, "It is infinite," there arises the second *arūpajhāna*. To one who practises concentration on the non-existence of the first *arūpa*-consciousness, thinking, "There is naught whatever," there arises the third *arūpajhāna*. To him who practises concentration on the third *arūpa*-consciousness, thinking, "It is calm, it is sublime," there arises the fourth *arūpa jhāna*.<sup>12</sup>

In this account, both the second and third formless meditative states are based on the first, while the fourth is based on the third. This ordering of the formless meditative states is developed in more detail by Anuruddhācariya's modern sub-commentator, The Venerable Narada Thera, in the following passage:

The Yogi who has developed the *Rūpa Jhānas* and who wishes to develop the *Arūpa Jhānas* now concentrates on the *Patibhāga Nimitta* [conceptualized image]. . . . As he does so, a faint light, like a fire fly, issues from the *Kasina* object. He wills it to expand until it covers the whole space. Now he

sees nothing but this light pervading everywhere. This developed space is not a reality but a mere concept. . . . On this concept he concentrates, thinking, "Infinite is space," until he develops the first *Arūpa Jhāna*—*ākāsānancāyatana*. . . . Again he concentrates on the first *Arūpa Jhāna*—*Viññānancāyatana*. To develop the third *Arūpa Jhāna*—*ākāṇcaññayatana* the Yogi takes for his object the first *Arūpa Jhāna* consciousness and thinks, "Natthi Kiñci," "There is nothing whatever." The fourth *Arūpa Jhāna* consciousness is developed by the taking of the third *Arūpa Jhāna* consciousness as the object. The third *Arūpa Jhāna* is so subtle and refined that one cannot definitely say whether there is a consciousness or not. As he concentrates thus on the third consciousness he develops the fourth *Jhāna*.<sup>13</sup>

Venerable Narada goes on to summarize the differences between the form *dhyānas* and formless *dhyānas* as follows:

The five *Rūpa Jhānas* differ according to the *Jhāna* factors. Those four *Arūpa Jhānas*, on the other hand, differ according to the objects of concentration. The first and third have two concepts (*Paññatī*). They are the concept of the infinity of space and the concept of nothingness. The second and the fourth *Jhāna* consciousness[es] have for their objects the first and the third consciousness[es] respectively.<sup>14</sup>

In sharp contrast with this analysis of the relationships among the four formless meditative states is the Venerable Paravahera Vajirānana's reiteration of Buddhaghosa's scheme:

. . . emerging from the fourth [form] *jhāna*, considering its tranquility as gross, being based on form object, . . . [the meditator] removes it entirely from his mind, thinking the calmness of the formless state is higher.

Recognizing this weakness [viz., the possibility that form perception may supervene], the Jhāyī [meditator] thereafter proceeds to the second stage. The thought arises within him that consciousness which can embrace infinite space, must itself be infinite. This thought brings him to the second stage, that of infinite consciousness. Continued repetition of the thought leads him into the sphere of infinite consciousness, in which he experiences a calm more profound than that of the previous stage.

But this stage of infinite consciousness is overshadowed in its turn by that of infinite space; and again realizing that this is a possible source of weakness, since his mind may revert to the sphere of infinite space, the Jhāyī determines to proceed to the greater calm of the stage of nothingness. He then establishes the thought, "There is nothing," and continues this thought until his mind rests upon nothingness—the annulment of his previous thought concerning the infinity of consciousness. . . .

But there still remains the possibility that the thought of the infinity of consciousness may intrude and the mind may slip back to the sphere of infinite consciousness. The Jhāyī, therefore, realizing that he has not yet reached the highest, proceeds to the fourth and last stage at which he enters the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. This is achieved by the removal of the third stage; and there now remains an inexpressibly subtle trace of perception. . . . since this lingering trace of perception concerning the third stage produces no result, there is said to be no active perception within him. This is the condition known as that of "neither perception nor non-perception."<sup>15</sup>

We may sum up our discussion thus far by saying that not only do the traditional accounts provide no solid reason for

the inclusion of the formless meditative states in the Buddhist meditative scheme but they even disagree radically as to their structure. Since this is the case let us turn to two modern, Western accounts to see whether they provide any illumination.

In his "Buddha on Meditation and States of Consciousness,"<sup>16</sup> Daniel Goleman attempts to develop a "framework of landmarks" for "methodical laboratory tests of meditation and meditative states of consciousness"<sup>17</sup> on the basis of the *Visuddhimagga*. As might be expected his explicit following of Buddhaghosa's *cariya* leads him to hold that "with the formless *jhānas* the complete removal of one state constitutes the next attainment."<sup>18</sup> However, since Goleman prefers to see the formless meditative states as merely a continuation of the form states (a classification not unknown in the Abhidharma tradition), and even goes so far as consistently referring to the four formless states as the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth *jhānas*, he sees the four formless states as merely increasingly subtle states of concentration: "All the formless *jhānas* share the factors of one-pointedness and equanimity, but at each level these factors are progressively refined."<sup>19</sup> This interpretation has the disadvantage of not only merely repeating the traditional reasons for the inclusion of the formless meditative states—they're the same but more subtle—but it totally disregards the discontinuity between the formless and form states which is stressed as much as their similarity in the traditional accounts. Further, Goleman completely avoids our basic question concerning the structuring of the formless meditative states.

In his very suggestive essay, "ΝΟΥΣ as Experience,"<sup>20</sup> Richard T. Wallis directed attention to the possibility of clarifying certain aspects of Plotinus's teaching by directing our attention to parallels in non-Western traditions including the Buddhist tradition. In that essay Wallis not only provides a brilliant justification for the claim that Plotinus's account of the Intelligible World has an experiential base, he also makes a number of suggestions as to detailed parallels between the

Plotinian account and those of other traditions. One of Wallis's suggestions is particularly relevant to our discussion, for although he does not discuss the formless meditative states, he does see a striking similarity between Plotinian Nous and the form meditative states.<sup>21</sup> However, this suggestion would need to be rejected on grounds which Wallis himself notes,<sup>22</sup> namely, that despite its clarity, the form meditative state is characterized by a sensory object, *rūpa*, and this object is further characterized by its discreteness, separateness, from all other objects, which makes the Buddhist forms quite different from the forms of the Plotinian Nous, each of which contains all others. However, let us accept Wallis's basic premise and see whether or not there might not be other parallels between the Neoplatonic and Buddhist accounts of meditative experience which might be illuminating.

## II. Meditative States in Pseudo-Dionysius

Initially, it might seem that the familiar triadic structure of Neoplatonism would frustrate any attempt at a comparison between the four formless *jhānas* and the stages of mystical ascent described by Pseudo-Dionysius, since the structures of the Buddhist meditative states are tetradic and it is a commonplace that all Neoplatonic structures are militantly triadic. This initial impression only would be strengthened by a reading of the introduction to the *Mystical Theology*, for there, in urging the pursuit of mystic contemplation, the author defines such an activity to be leaving "the senses and the activities of the intellect, all things that the senses or the intellect can perceive, all things in this world of nothingness and in that world of being"<sup>23</sup> and straining towards a "union with Him whom neither being nor understanding can contain."<sup>24</sup> Here we quite clearly have three stages of consciousness which correlate with the usual Neoplatonic triad of Soul, Nous and the One; since the realm of sensation and the sensibles are the creations and activities of Soul, that of being and the intellect is clearly the noetic hypostasis, while that which

is beyond sensation and intellection, being neither the nothingness which is a physical object, nor the being which is an intelligible, is the One. This same insistence on the triad of sight, knowledge and vision or the realms of perception, understanding and the "Darkness which is beyond Light," is reiterated at the beginning of the second chapter of the *Mystical Theology*. It likewise is the basis for the division of the three kinds of theologies in chapter one, viz., that which describes "the Transcendent cause of all things by qualities drawn from the lowest order of being"; that which imagines that God is adequately known by human understanding; and the true, negative theology.

Of course not all the analyses of meditative states in the *Mystical Theology* are triadic. The account of Moses' stages of initiation seem to fall most naturally into a five-fold structure of purification, separation, vision, negation, and union—although these could, perhaps without too much difficulty, be reduced to an essentially triadic structure of purification of the senses followed by abstraction from the senses; noesis and abstraction from the noetic realm, a final "passive stillness of all the reasoning powers" followed by an "unfolding in that which is wholly intangible and invisible, a belonging wholly to Him that is beyond all things."<sup>25</sup> In a similar fashion the complicated meditation of chapters four and five in which Dionysius systematically negates all concepts and entities in the scale of reality from those of physical objects and their qualities up to unity, light and truth—this structure, although orderly, is hardly triadic. However, even if it were insisted that the triadic structure is fundamental to the typology of meditation found in the *Mystical Theology*, some correlation might be possible. Thus when we remember that the extreme clarity of the object in the form meditative states—a clarity which has misled many interpreters into considering these states to be "higher states of consciousness"—is but the clarity of seeing a sensory object without any of the distortions introduced by the preconceptions and inattentiveness which characterizes our ordinary consciousness. (In fact the Buddhist

distinction between perceptible objects as viewed by ordinary consciousness and by consciousness in the form-meditative state is very reminiscent of the Platonic distinction between *eikasia* and *aisthesis*.) If this is so, then the state of soul as it directs its attention towards Nous is that of the form meditative realms—characterized by increasing degrees of unity—, while the first formless meditative state—characterized by a disappearance of any object and the infinity of space left behind—is the darkness of Soul. The second formless meditative state, that of infinite consciousness, would correspond to Nous with the realm of nothingness being the darkness of intellect which precedes the final mystic vision.

If this analysis is correct then not only does the parallelism between meditative accounts based on radically different metaphysics suggest that each account might have a common factual basis—a suggestion so brilliantly developed by Wallis—but the structuring of the Neoplatonic account provides an answer to the inclusion of both the form and formless meditative states in the Buddhist scheme as well as suggesting that the account given by Buddhaghosa's *cariya* of the structure of the formless meditative states is preferable.

However, any significant comparison between these different accounts of meditative states can *not* remain on this level of establishing correspondences between numbered subdivisions. Attention must be given rather to the underlying principles. An initial approach to comparison might note that the cultivation of the formless *jhānas* is not distinct from the form *jhānas* in the Buddhist accounts. In fact, conventional treatments of meditation in the Theravada tradition normally follow the *Visuddhimagga* and interpose the cultivation of the *Brahmaviharas* the unlimited, purified emotional states of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity—between the cultivation of the form *jhānas* and the cultivation of the formless *jhānas*. In effect, then, the general structure is that of disciplining the mind to refrain

from wandering among many objects of attention, of purifying the emotions of a mind so restrained, and finally, withdrawing the mind from any sense-contact whatsoever and allowing it to rest in its own pure nature—a process remarkably similar to the usual development in Western mysticism of purgation, illumination, and union. Nevertheless, a basic difference between the meditation techniques of the Abhidharma tradition and those of Neoplatonism would seem to frustrate any attempt at meaningful comparison. This is the fact that the fundamental technique of Neoplatonism is “simplification”—the emptying the mind of all content—a process of detaching consciousness from any object. The basic technique of Buddhist meditation, in the Abhidharma tradition at least, is “restraint”—focusing the mind on a single object. But this contrast in meditative techniques arises only if these techniques are viewed in isolation from the total context of mental discipline. The process of simplification presented in the *Mystical Theology* explicitly presupposes the mental discipline of the *Divine Names* and the general higher degree of control of mind which the analogical arguments of Symbolic Theology require. In the same way the fixing of the mind on the meditation object, which is characteristic of the form meditative states, is in the end supplemented by the series of negations which characterize the formless states. Thus the ultimate significance of presence of the formless states in the Buddhist meditative scheme may well be that it shows that the Buddhist tradition regards the focusing of the mind as, in essence, preparatory to the detaching of the mind from the sensory world. In any event, the exploration of this kind of comparison lies outside the scope of this paper. It is enough if I have rendered plausible the claim that such further exploration might be a not quite fruitless enterprise.

## NOTES

1. "Tattha vuttābhidhammatthā  
Catudhā paramatthato  
Cittam cetasikam rūpam  
Nibbānam iti Sabbathā."  
Anuruddhācariya, *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, ed. Nārada (Colombo, 1968), *cittasangahaviḍhāgo*.
2. Cf. the familiar *Bhavaçakra mandala*.
3. Anuruddhācariya, loc. cit.
4. These are the translations (conventional equivalents, to be sure) used by Venerable Nārada in his translation of the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* (Colombo, 1968).
5. Nārada, op. cit., p. 50.
6. Ibid., p. 51.
7. Ibid., p. 52.
8. Depending on whether the first two factors are considered as being eliminated simultaneously or not.
9. *Anguttara Nikaya* IV.xix.190, trans. F. L. Woodward, *Gradual Sayings*, Vol. II, p. 192.
10. Trans. Nāṇamoli.
11. Op. cit., ix.58 (trans. Nāṇamoli).
12. Nārada, op. cit., p. 393.
13. Ibid., pp. 58-9.
14. Ibid., p. 59.
15. P. Vajiranāna, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice* (Kuala Lumpur, 1975), pp. 336-8.
16. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Vol. I.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Richard T. Wallis, "NOÏΣ as Experience," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. R. Baine Harris (Norfolk, 1976), pp. 121-53.
21. Ibid., p. 138.
22. Ibid., p. 139.
23. *MT.*, Chapter 1.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.

## Matter and Exemplar: Difference-in-Identity in Vijñānabhikṣu and Bonaventure

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The major Indian conception of material causality can be both a reason for confusion and a source of insight. Translators and interpreters of Indian religious thought have identified with some consistency the term *upādāna kāraṇa* as the "material cause," which represents a significant factor in the Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta thought schemes. Indeed, the material cause denotes the substrate out of which a thing is made; however, in these three Indian schools the term "material cause" connotes two important ideas which are lacking in the precisely defined meaning of material causality in European thought traditions. These are, namely, that an effect is simply a transformation of its cause and hence that the material cause is not separate from the efficient cause. These connotations are brought together in the Sāṅkhya-Yoga term *sat-kārya*. Often this term is interpreted as the preexistence of an effect in its cause, which ultimately implies the emanation of everything of experience from prime matter or nature (*prakṛti*).<sup>1</sup> Gerald Larson in a recent article on *sat-kārya* makes the following conclusion:



In conclusion, therefore, the notion of *satkārya*, in my view, has little to do with Aristotelian material cause or the notion that the effect preexists in the cause in this sense. Rather, *satkārya* appears to function as an explanatory principle for maintaining *prakṛti* as a closed, transforming, self-regulating, intelligible (but not intelligent) whole. . . .<sup>2</sup>

For Vedānta theologians the nonseparation of material causality and efficient causality is a characteristic of Brahman. The correlative of *sat-kārya* is *pariṇāma* or transformation. Through its own essential energy Brahman transforms itself into the world of matter and souls. Brahman is both the ultimate substrate and the efficient cause which orders creation. The transformation of cause into effects and the nonseparation of material and efficient causes gave rise to a particular interpretation of the relationship between Brahman and the world known as difference-in-identity (*bhedābheda*). Not all Vedānta thinkers followed such an interpretation. The Śaṅkara school emphasized the ultimate identity (*abheda*) of everything with Brahman, and the Madhva school stressed the absolute difference (*bheda*) between God and creation. The principal text of Vedānta is Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahma Sūtras*, and the difference-in-identity interpretation of it has been noted already as the most accurate.<sup>3</sup>

Not all difference-in-identity Vedāntins agreed on specifics. Bhāskara believed that the transformation of Brahman into the world is due to temporary conditions, Nimbārka posited certain essential yet distinct energies within Brahman as the source of transformation, and Rāmānuja resorted to a doctrine of Brahman being the soul of a body which it causes to expand into the world. In the context of this study there is no finer difference-in-identity thinker to discuss than Vijñānabhikṣu (fl. ca. 1575) for two reasons: (1) in his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* he explained well the Vedānta notion of nonseparation especially as it applies to Brahman being both the material and efficient causes (in fact, he called his

school of Vedānta "Nonseparate Nondualism"); and (2) he is recognized as an apt interpreter and synthesizer of the Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools from which the notion of *sat-kārya* is derived. I am well acquainted with Vijñānabhikṣu's writings since he was the subject of my doctoral dissertation.<sup>4</sup>

It is also my belief that the Indian legacy to religious thought in general is the completeness to which this triple classification of interpretations of the relationship between God and the world unfolded: identity, difference, and difference-in-identity. Within each of these three large metaphysical frameworks or models a variety of theologies resulted from dialogues and debates. The specific contribution of Hinduism, and especially Vedānta, to western thought traditions is the collection of theological and philosophical formulations within the third framework: difference-in-identity.

This triple scheme can be applied elsewhere, and although identity positions are not very numerous in European thought, difference-in-identity interpretations are not uncommon. In my opinion, Bonaventure's theology is a difference-in-identity synthesis, and this is clear when his notion of exemplary causality is examined. The function of Christ as the supreme Exemplar is similar to the function of Brahman as the material cause in Vedānta. Both the formal cause of Bonaventure and the material cause of Vijñānabhikṣu are not separate from the efficient cause. Both theologians ultimately state a doctrine of difference-in-identity between God and creation.

This study, therefore, is first of all an examination and clarification of the highly misleading term "material causality" when applied to a specific category of the Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta schools. Secondly, in this study I will show that what material causality allowed certain Vedānta theologians, especially Vijñānabhikṣu, to assert in regard to God and creation, formal causality permitted Bonaventure to state.

Material causality according to Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta implies that the effects are simply modifications of the material cause. A real cause produces out of itself equally real effects which are in some way identical yet different from it. The notion of the effect being a transformation of a cause (*sat-kārya*) involves the other Sāṅkhya doctrines of matter, the manifest, the unmanifest, the three qualities, and emanation. Nonexistence cannot be produced, and therefore what is real is (1) manifested and evolved, (2) unmanifested yet evolved, or (3) unmanifested and unevolved. Every potentially existing is an actually existing in the material cause.

The classical formulation of the doctrine of transformation of the cause into real effects is in the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* by Īśvārakṛṣṇa which was probably written in the first few centuries of the Christian era.<sup>5</sup> *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* 9 states: "Because nonbeing does not cause, because of the need for a material cause, because it is impossible for all things to come from all things, because a thing can only produce what it can produce, and because of the nature of a cause, the effect exists (*sat-kāryam*)."<sup>6</sup> The ultimate source of all things is matter which is unmanifest in a preemanation state and is fully manifested as the world of experience. Through a series of emanations twenty-three other principles of being emerge.

Matter is one of two first principles, with spirit being the other, but spirit is necessarily conscious, witnessing, and passive. Energy and activity belong solely to matter and its evolutes because of three constituent qualities of matter as stated in *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* 12: "The qualities, whose natures are pleasure, pain, and indifference, serve to manifest, activate, and limit; they successively dominate, support, activate, and interact with one another."<sup>7</sup> All manifest and evolved things are composed of these qualities and result from their interaction. This is the teaching of *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* 15-16: "Because of the transformation of particular things, because of homogeneity, because of the power which emerges, because of the distinction between cause and effect, because of the nonseparation of all things, the unmanifest is the cause, and it

functions by the interaction of the three qualities due to the specific nature of each quality as in the case of water."<sup>8</sup>

From the above references, it should be evident that matter is the material cause and that the qualities are the efficient cause. These qualities are not separate from matter, and so in a sense they are identical with the material cause. Gaspar Koelman made this equation in his book on Yoga:

The true ultimate efficient cause is identical with the substrative cause, since only that out of which a thing is made and in which it is latent can efficiently draw out that effect of which it is pregnant.<sup>9</sup>

Yoga thinkers took over the Sāṅkhya scheme and developed methods for retracing the effects back to matter in order to isolate the pure awareness of spirit from the remaining factors of experience. The greatest expositor of Yoga was Vyāsa, and in his commentary on *Yoga Sūtras* 4.12 he stated something similar:

An efficient cause is capable of making only an actually existing result present, but not of producing something new. The efficient cause, when fully established, gives aid to the ordered manifestation of its object, but it does not cause it to be created anew.<sup>10</sup>

Through the ceaseless activity of the three qualities more and more effects appear out of the material substrate and return to it.

Vijñānabhikṣu did not write a commentary on the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, but he did produce one on the much later *Sāṅkhya Sūtras*, which he called the *Sāṅkhya Pravacana Bhāṣya*, and a summary of Sāṅkhya entitled *Sāṅkhya Sāra*. Furthermore, Bhikṣu amplified Vyāsa's commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras* in his *Yoga Vārtika* and summarized Yoga in his masterpiece the *Yoga Sāra Saṅgraha*. I can continue, therefore, to discuss

the Sāṅkhya-Yoga notion of material causality through Vijnānabhikṣu's own words.

In his commentary on *Sāṅkhya Sūtras* 5.60 Bhikṣu defined the *sat-kārya* theory, much like Vyāsa did, as the making present of something: "If a manifestation is said to be the acquisition of the present state by breaking up the past state, then this is the doctrine of the transformation of a real effect."<sup>11</sup> Past and future states of a cause, manifested in effects, are simply the breaking up and the not-yet-existing respectively of these effects.<sup>12</sup> The implications of this theory for Bhikṣu were significant, namely, the ultimate nondifference of cause and effect and the validity of the world of experience. From the Buddhists and the followers of Śaṅkara's Nondual Vedānta a challenge had been issued to other Vedānta theologians that, because of the ultimate nondifference of all things, this world is illusory. Bhikṣu saw in the same Scriptures and dogmatic statements a teaching of the transformation of real effects:

It is taught in Scripture that prior to production there is no difference between cause and effect. This means that since the effect is real, its production is not unreal. For if the effect is unreal, then the identity of what is real with what is unreal is inconclusive. These Scriptures teach the identity of cause and effects before production: "Truly at that time this world was unmanifested" (*Br.U.* 1.4.7); "In the beginning, my dear, this world was just being" (*Ch.U.* 6.2.1); "Verily, in the beginning this world was just darkness" (*Mait.U.* 5.2); and "In the beginning this world was just water" (*Br.U.* 5.5.1).<sup>13</sup>

For Sāṅkhya, Bhikṣu admitted, the root cause is matter as he stated in reference to *Sāṅkhya Sūtras* 1.67: "In respect to a root, a root is rootless by not having a root; matter, the root material of the twenty-three principles, is without a root."<sup>14</sup> As the root cause, matter is the first cause in which

all effects are immanent: "When the former goes away, the latter cannot survive because an effect is apprehended as immanent in the material cause."<sup>15</sup> The author of the *Sāṅkhya Sūtras* clearly states in aphorism 1.41 that mere antecedence is not a sufficient definition for material causality, and Bhikṣu in his commentary remarks that both the material cause and the efficient cause are antecedent and "that the distinction between the material cause and the efficient cause is accepted by everyone."<sup>16</sup> Later, when commenting on *Sāṅkhya Sūtras* 1.81, he explained this distinction further: "The actions of the efficient cause are not the root cause because what is the material cause does not conform to the substances known as the qualities."<sup>17</sup>

In Sāṅkhya-Yoga, cognition and materiality are not entirely distinct for in the instinctive principle, matter's first evolute, is the capacity for discrimination. To explain the makeup of all instances of materiality, whether cognitive or physical, the three qualities were used. These qualities are the kinds of elements which constitute the things of experience: intelligence, energy, and mass. In physical matter the predominant elements are energy and mass while in cognitive structures the predominant element is intelligence.

Bhikṣu explained intelligence, energy, and mass as causal substances making up matter and as having many manifestations with varying amounts of their "stuff." His argument was that there would not be any similarity or dissimilarity between the things of the world if they were merely effects of the three qualities. Things are in fact alike and different because they are composed of actual amounts of these three substances. What is at the bottom of this interpretation of the three qualities as substances is an attempt to explain psychic energy, physical energy, and the lack of them in all the cognitive and physical manifestations of matter:

The three qualities, formed of the substances of intelligence and the rest, are found here; hence the triad of qualities. Therefore, intelligence and the

other qualities abide in entities, like the instinctive principle, in the form of a cause; the same intelligence and the others abide in matter in the form of the triple quality composite like trees in a forest. This is how we are to understand it.<sup>18</sup>

The three qualities act as causal substances in matter and each of its evolutes in the form of intelligence, energy, and inertia but also act as qualities of matter and its effects as luminosity, motion, and heaviness. The three qualities in causal form, therefore, are the genuine efficient cause as Bhikṣu stated in his *Yoga Vārttika* 4.3: "Since the causal reason for impelling is due generally to just the qualities, matter's independence is established."<sup>19</sup> In the Sāṅkhya vision, no god acts as the first efficient cause. Furthermore, the qualities are not separate from matter but can be distinguished conceptually as the efficient cause apart from the material cause. The material cause, therefore, has its own ordering intelligibility, its own energy to transform itself into things, and its own principle of limitation in the three qualities respectively. Matter, as cause and effect, is in European scholastic terminology both *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*.

Sāṅkhya is an atheistic school in its classical formulation. In Yoga, God is not a creator but a most excellent spirit who is a grace-giving model for aspirants. In the *Yoga Vārttika* 4.3 Bhikṣu stated matter's nonseparation from its effects in a way suitable to Yoga thought:

Hence matter alone, joined with its effects, in respect to transformation is established as the cause and independent. . . . Therefore matter alone is the cause of the world, but time, action, and God are brought forth as energies generating the effects of matter.<sup>20</sup>

One of Vijñānabhikṣu's great achievements was a theological

reconciliation of Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Vedānta. He was certainly not the first Hindu theologian who attempted to reconcile various orthodox schools, but scholars writing on Sāṅkhya and Yoga must take his interpretations of these two schools into account. This is some measure of his success.

Vijñānabhikṣu was primarily a Vedānta theologian, and in his commentary on *Brahma Sūtras* 1.1.2, which runs nearly 40 pages and which I translated in my doctoral dissertation, he stated the Vedānta views on material and efficient causality in respect to Brahman. Bādarāyaṇa's second aphorism of his *Brahma Sūtras* reads with the following additions: "(Brahman is that) from which the origin and so forth (existence, development, maturation, deterioration, and destruction) of this (world proceeds)."<sup>21</sup>

The first major step which Vijñānabhikṣu took in his commentary on the second aphorism was to identify Brahman as the supporting cause (*adhiṣṭhāna kāraṇa*) of the world. Bhikṣu defined a supporting cause as "the one from which the material cause is not separate and by which the latter, being supported, is transformed into the mode of an effect."<sup>22</sup> This is the root cause in his system, and it upholds everything which is derived from the material cause by being the sole witness of matter.

In the primordial, unmanifested state everything exists in Brahman through a union of nonseparation. This kind of nonseparation is a pre-causal condition before cause and effect are distinguished, and hence in this state Brahman is unmodified. The material cause, on the other hand, which has been transformed into an effect of the supporting cause, is a modifiable cause with its three qualities as nonseparate constituents. Matter is also qualified by its evolutes which in a pristine condition are nonseparate too. Already, then, the theologian has distinguished two kinds of nonseparation—between constituents and between cause and effect.

Even though Brahman is pure consciousness, it can also be considered the material cause of the world and identical with the world because both the material cause and the world are

its nonseparate effects; however, the world does not directly emanate from Brahman. Brahman, then, is not the immediate source of imperfection and evil because the things of the world only indirectly emanate from the supporting cause. At the end of his discussion on supporting causality Bhikṣu remarked that he would refute later in his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* the theory of the direct transformation of Brahman. He was well aware that if the things of the world are direct transformations of Brahman, then the problem of evil would be devastating to his theology.

Not only is material causality indistinguishable from Brahman as the supporting cause, but so too is efficient causality. Vijñānabhikṣu considered that he was positing a fourth category with his supporting cause. The other three causes are constituent (*samavāyi*), nonconstituent (*asamavāyi*), and efficient (*nimitta*). As the support of all these, Brahman is nonseparate and hence identical with the efficient cause too. Once the efficient cause is distinguished from Brahman, then that cause is modified by Brahman's essential power as an attribute. Brahman the creator is then the modified Brahman.

These three causes, constituent, nonconstituent, and efficient, are categories belonging not to Sāṅkhya, Yoga, or Vedānta, but to three other schools of thought: Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṃsā. The constituent cause is more properly what is termed "material cause" in European thought for it is the substrate in which a change takes place. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika held a doctrine of *asat-kārya* or that the effect is not a transformation of a cause. The efficient cause is still that by which a change takes place while the nonconstituent cause is an aid to the material cause. For example, yarn is the material cause of cloth, the weaver is the efficient cause, and the texture and color are nonconstituent causes.

Intrinsic difference has a special place in the theology of Vijñānabhikṣu: "The relationship between support and supported existing in the self prior to any attachment of modifiers cannot be postulated without an intrinsic difference."<sup>23</sup> Nonseparation in the individual self is much the same as it is

with Brahman which is the supreme Self. As the supporting cause, Brahman is the substance of the world. First by a separation of its various energies and then by their modification to perform as different causes, Brahman gives rise to the various conscious and unconscious things in the world. Everything remains substantially identical with Brahman.

In his commentary on Bādarāyaṇa's second aphorism, Bhikṣu clearly stated that the principal meaning of the term Brahman "is completely different from matter and spirit."<sup>24</sup> Since Bhikṣu believed that Sāṅkhya's doctrine of the distinction of spirit from matter was the ultimate truth for self-liberation and since he accepted, for the most part, Sāṅkhya metaphysics, the relationship between Brahman and matter and spirit was one way in which he presented his doctrine of Brahman.

Matter and spirit are energies and their causal function is defined through material causality. Matter remains the material cause and root cause of the twenty-three principles because it is the source of the unfolding of the world. Matter is activated through its joining with spirit, and because spirit is the silent witness of these emanations, matter acts for the benefit of spirit's observation. God is the efficient cause of the world through its uniting of matter and spirit: "Now I maintain that the joining of matter and spirit is effected by God. . . ." <sup>25</sup> This is a definite departure from the twenty-five principle system of the *Sāṅkhya Sūtras*, twenty-three evolutes plus matter and spirit, and an opting for a theism with twenty-six principles. Furthermore, the three qualities become secondary or instrumental causes, since Brahman effectively joins matter and spirit and orders creation.

Brahman, therefore, is equated with both material and efficient causality because it supports these two and shares their functions. Vijñānabhikṣu concluded in connection with this: "Brahman is the universal cause through its various attributes because it is endowed with all energies."<sup>26</sup> Hence, it may be assumed that Brahman's main attribute is power, composed of various nonseparate energies, matter and spirit

clearly being two such energies, and that this essential power is manifested as a quality of the modified Brahman, or God, who effects the conjunction of matter and spirit.

This interpretation of Brahman as the supporting cause, and therefore as the efficient and material causes of the world, is not only a statement of the ultimate nonseparation of the material cause from the efficient cause and a reiteration of the Sāṅkhya doctrine of transformation. Essential to Bhikṣu's theology is a difference-in-identity relation between God and the world. Even the Nondualist Śaṅkara, who departed from the difference-in-identity characteristic of Vedānta religious thought, admitted the similarity between Sāṅkhya and Vedānta on the notion of causality: "It (Sāṅkhya) approaches Vedānta since it admits of the cause not being different from the effect."<sup>27</sup> Bhāskara, a difference-in-identity Vedāntin, whose writings represent the first known refutation of Śaṅkara's Nondualism, restated the transformation theory: "An effect is only a state of the cause; both are different and non-different. . . ."<sup>28</sup> All effects are inherent in Brahman which is not only their source (material cause) but their intelligent source (efficient cause). In both Sāṅkhya and Vedānta the efficient cause, being the three qualities in Sāṅkhya and Brahman the creator in Vedānta, is nonseparate from the material cause.

Another difference-in-identity Vedāntin, Rāmānuja, stated it this way:

Brahman is not just the efficient cause, but also only Brahman is the material cause. If Brahman was just the efficient cause of the world, then the whole world would not be known from a knowledge of it. An effect is not a different substance but the cause obtaining another state.<sup>29</sup>

Rāmānuja argued against several other difference-in-identity interpretations, but he did formulate the same kind of position. The entire universe of souls and matter and its evolutes

constitute a body, and Brahman is the soul of this body. From this perspective he has given one of the most concise and marvellous descriptions of transformation:

This is how transformation is explained. The supreme Brahman is concentrated goodness, being wholly adverse to evil, distinguished from all beings other than itself. It is all-knowing, the realizer of all wishes, possessed of all its wishes, unlimited and sovereign bliss. Having for its body the entire universe of all conscious and unconscious things, which subserves its cosmic play, it is the soul of that body. This universe which is its body survives as an extremely subtle unconscious reality, known as heaviness, through the successive regression of matter's evolutes, the elements, the ego, etc. With this body of heaviness, now arrived at an extremely subtle form, such that it cannot be considered as differentiated, then the supreme Brahman attains a condition of oneness. Through the thought "may I become the world body constituted of the unconscious and conscious being, distinguished as before by name and form," it transforms itself into this world body through entering one evolute of matter after another. This is the teaching of transformation in all the Scriptures.<sup>30</sup>

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Bonaventure's (1221-1274) doctrine of exemplarism is constructed on the difference-in-identity model too. Unity and plurality in God is resolved through a coincidence of opposites because God is both pure Being and self-diffusive Good. Through the generation of the Son, who is the supreme Exemplar and the total expression of all that is possible, the unity and plurality of the world is resolved in God too.

These works are the major sources for this discussion of Bonaventure: *Breviloquium*, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, *Commentarius in Primum Librum Sententiarum*, *Itinerarium*

*Mentis in Deum, Opusculum de Reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, and *Questiones Disputatae de Scientia Christi* and *de Mysterio Trinitate*. The suggestion of difference-in-identity, which is made here, has already been proposed by a present-day scholar of Bonaventure.<sup>31</sup>

Using the name in Exodus 3:14, Bonaventure stated that "I am Who am" is the most perfect name for God.<sup>32</sup> Because all things depend on him, God is the ground of everything and therefore is the first principle of being. God is perfect and pure Being which is an indivisible unity, but Bonaventure realized that this concept of unity expands to include the indivision and simplicity of what originates and the completeness and inseparability of what is originated:

For indivision is unity; however, unity exists in the originating and in the originated, in universals and in particulars, in the will and in nature. Unity in the originating is simplicity; in the composite or in the originated it is wholeness or fullness; in universals it is conformity; in particulars it is countlessness; in the will it is unanimity; and in nature it is inseparability.<sup>33</sup>

Already the language of difference-in-identity is recognizable. The relationship between God and the world under the aspect of God as pure Being has been set up. There is originating, universal, and willing being, and there is originated, particular, and ordered or created being. Hence being can exist in two ways: as subsistent, self-modeled, and self-intended or as contingent, modeled after another, and tending towards another. Also God operates in three orders: origination, exemplification, and termination.<sup>34</sup> These three orders correspond to the functions of the Trinity of Persons respectively, and the two aspects of the first principle, as the pure Being and as the Trinity, coincide.

The explanation of the one God and the Trinity by Bonaventure repeats the teaching of *Brahma Sūtras* 1.1.2: Brahman is the origin, preservation, and destruction of the

world. The first principle through the two modes of perfect emanation, which are generation and spiration, unfolds into God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They stand for the efficient, exemplary, and final principles of the world. The divine essence remains the same in the double emanation. It is one, simple, eternal, immutable, yet it includes fecundity, likeness, and inseparability.

A closer examination of the generation of the Son further elucidates the dual aspect of God and his relationship with the manifest world, because for Bonaventure Christ is the metaphysical medium and through him the three orders of being are related: emanation, exemplification, and return.<sup>35</sup> From all eternity the Father begets the Son, who is his likeness and also expresses all that he can do. This total expression of his Being in the image of the Son is called divine art by Bonaventure.<sup>36</sup> Therefore the nature of God is the same, but the mission and manifestation of each Person is different. The Father sends the Son and expresses the totality of creation through him while the Son, being the Exemplar of everything, is the cause of the return of everything to God in the Spirit.

Bonaventure did not use the same language to describe the relationship between God and the world as the Hindu theologians of the Vedānta school. Although God's essence is pure Being and is all-inclusive, God is not the essence of everything; nevertheless, he is the most excellent, universal, and sufficient cause of all essences. God's essence is one, but it is infinite and multiple in its effects.<sup>37</sup> If the difference-in-identity theme is operative in the relationship between God and the world in Bonaventure's theology, then it should be discernible in his doctrine of exemplarism.

In his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, Bonaventure made the formal connection between divine fecundity and the Person of the Father.<sup>38</sup> The Father is primarily fecund, but this fecundity is expressed throughout the Trinity because the three Persons are God who is the pure Being and self-diffusive Good. Therefore, we can distinguish

two fountains of being: the Father who is the source of the Trinitarian processions and the Trinity as a whole which is the source of creation.<sup>39</sup> What Bonaventure has done is to make a real connection between the fullness of the Trinitarian processes of self-expression and return and the fullness of the creation of the world.

In his Trinitarian theology Bonaventure described the generation of the Son as the production of an equal and consubstantial likeness. The generation is a production from the nature of God, and the Son shares the essence of the Father. Also the Son has all the power and potentiality of the Father because the Father not only communicates his likeness to the Son but also expresses all the things which he could make: "For the Father, as it is said, generated one similar to himself, namely the Word, coeternal with himself, and he expressed his own likeness and, consequently, expressed all the things which he could express."<sup>40</sup>

Christ is the eternal art of the Father and is not separate from him. The created effects of God, which constitute the world, are distinguished from one another through their forms, and hence the creative art involves the giving of a form and individual properties to each thing. God necessarily possesses the ideal forms.<sup>41</sup> God, therefore, is both a first cause and an immediate cause of everything. By possessing all the ideal forms, God is the exemplary cause, and this establishes an intimate relation between God and the world. The world is a pattern of the divine art and is most real in its ideal form as the eternal divine ideas.

In discussing the relationship between God and the creature, Bonaventure used these terms: image, trace, likeness, shadow, echo, and representation. For example, he stated that the universe is like a book reflecting and representing the Trinity on three levels: the trace, the image, and the likeness. All creatures are traces while all intellectual creatures are images. Although at times the term "likeness" is used in special reference to the Son, Bonaventure also used it for those who are "God-conformed," these intellectual creatures

who spiritually conform themselves to God. Thus an ascending scale of representation is indicated with the most material creation at the base and the most spiritual at the tip.

In the *Itinerarium* he described traces as material, temporal, and external while images are everlasting, spiritual, and internal.<sup>42</sup> Later in the same book he listed these terms as synonyms for the creatures in the sensible world: shadow, echo, image, vestige, likeness, and representation.<sup>43</sup> All these terms refer to what is produced from the divine art, which is the efficient, exemplary, and final cause.

Bonaventure's language of likeness, shadow, image, etc. should not be confusing to us. When I mentioned earlier that there is an intimate relationship between God and the world due to the whole of creation being totally expressed in the Son who is the locus of the ideal forms or divine ideas, I meant that all of creation is real because it exists in ideal forms. Anything is real because it exists in the divine ideas:

... for the exemplary likeness more perfectly expresses the thing than the caused thing itself expresses itself. On account of this God more perfectly knows things through their likenesses than he would know them through their essences; and angels more perfectly know in the Word than according to their own kind.<sup>44</sup>

These ideal forms are not just universals, but the Son's embrace of the totality of creation in the divine ideas includes individual things in their own peculiarities.<sup>45</sup> Bonaventure could be no clearer when he says that due to the exemplary mode of being things actually are in God: "Likewise it can be said to follow that things are actually in God in the exemplary order and potentially according to the order of creation because they can be produced."<sup>46</sup> In the light of his mystical theology Bonaventure was prompted to say: "I will see myself better in God than in my very self."<sup>47</sup>

Bonaventure employs the language of difference-in-identity in his descriptions of the relationship between God and his



creatures. The divine essence is all-present, surrounding, penetrating. It is the center and the circumference of all things. Being simple it is wholly interior to all things, but being omnipotent it is entirely exterior to them. Furthermore, because God is all-inclusive, he is all-in-all. Although things are many and God is one, there is in his simple unity all power, all exemplification, and all communicability.<sup>48</sup> God, therefore, is a differentiated unity in two senses: (1) a Trinity of Persons; and (2) an Exemplar of the whole of creation both generically and specifically. Bonaventure's doctrine of exemplarism does not, therefore, set up a polarity between God and the world, but it represents an attempt, and a thoroughly Christian one, to define the relationship between God and his creatures in such a way as to encompass the relationships of identity and difference.

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Difference-in-identity systems of thought in India rest upon the notion of the material cause being more than an inactive substrate in which change takes place. Ultimately this meant for Vedānta a borrowing of Sāṅkhya's notion of real transformation. Matter possesses various qualities and is the material cause which is not separate from the efficient cause. In the Vedānta systems which were truly statements of the difference-in-identity between Brahman and the world, matter retained its qualities of intelligence, energy, and inertia; but they no longer were seen to function as the primary efficient cause. That was Brahman in its aspect as the creator. Yet material causality was not separate from efficient causality.

What material causality did for Vedānta theologians like Vijñānabhikṣu, exemplary causality did for Bonaventure. The exemplary cause is not separate from the efficient cause through the Son. Both are rooted in the nonseparation of Persons in the Trinity. Through this Bonaventure was able to state a position which respected both the unity and the difference between God and creation. Creation is not an absolute

separation from God because all things exist really and immanently in the exemplary condition of the Trinitarian processions and in the Son who is the Supreme Exemplar.

#### NOTES

1. Betty Heimann, *Facets of Indian Thought* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 59, writes: "The *causa efficiens*, the agent, and the *causa materialis*, the material cause, are in Indian philosophy not strictly separated from each other. . . . In the standard examples, the threads are shown as the *causa efficiens* of the effect, the cloth. . . . All effects, both subjects and objects, are potentially contained in the great reservoir of primary Matter before, and after, their actual manifestation. *Prakṛti* is their common efficient and material cause."
2. "The Notion of *Satkārya* in Sāṅkhya: Toward a Philosophical Reconstruction," *Philosophy East and West* 25, 1 (January 1975), p. 38.
3. See Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 5 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922-55), Vol. 2, p. 42: "... Bādarāyaṇa's philosophy was some kind of *bhedābheda-vāda* or a theory of transcendence and immanence of God (Brahman)—even in the light of Śaṅkara's own commentary. He believed that the world was the product of a real transformation of Brahman, or rather of His powers and energies (*śakti*)." Also in *ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 105: "The *bhedābheda* interpretation of the *Brahma-sūtras* is in all probability earlier than the monistic interpretation introduced by Śaṅkara." P. M. Modi, *A Critique of the Brahmasūtra* (3.2.11-4), 2 parts (Bhavnagar, India: by the author, 1943-56), 1.xix-xx, made the same point but more cryptically: "The most essential piece of information discovered on this point is that according to the Sūtrakāra the *Upaniṣads* described the personal aspect of Brahman with the attributes of the impersonal and *vice versa* (*Bra. Sū.* III.3.37-42). It is on this fact that the Sūtrakāra bases his doctrine of two aspects of *absolutely equal status* and gives a complete *option of choice* to a *mumukṣu* to select either of the two, the immediate goal being the same."
4. John W. Borelli, Jr., "The Theology of Vijñānabhikṣu: A Translation of His Commentary on *Bṛhma Sūtras* 1.1.2 and an Exposition

- of His Difference-in-Identity Theology" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fordham University, 1976). Translations from Sanskrit and Latin throughout the present study are my own; some of them can be found in my dissertation.
5. See Gerald J. Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of its History and Meaning* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969), p. 157.
  6. "Āśadākaraṇād upādānagrahaṇāt sarvasambhāvābhāvāt saktasya sak-yakaraṇāt kāraṇabhāvaś ca satkāryam."
  7. "Prītyapritivīśādātmakāḥ prakāśapratyutpannānyābhāvāśrayajanānamithunavṛttayaś ca guṇāḥ."
  8. "Bhedānām parimāṇāt samanvayāt śaktiḥ pravṛtteś ca kāraṇakāryavibhāgād avibhāgād vaiśvarūpyasya kāraṇam aśty avyaktam pravartate triguṇataḥ samudayaś ca pariṇāmataḥ salilavat pratipratiguṇāśrayavīśeṣāt."
  9. *Pātāñjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self* (Poona: Papal Athenaem, 1970), p. 74.
  10. "Sataś ca phalasya nimittam vartamānkarāṇe samartham nāpūrvopajanane siddham nimittam naimittikasya viśeṣānugraham kurute nāpūrvamutpādayatīti."
  11. "Abhivaktir yady atigatāvasthātyāgena vartamānāvasthālābha ity ucyate tadā satkāryasiddhāntaḥ."
  12. Bhikṣu's commentary on *Sāṃkhya Sūtras* 1.123: "This then is the difference between the followers of the real transformation of an effect from those who do not accept the transformation of an effect. The followers of the real transformation of an effect explain that the future and the past states of an effect are real since they represent the not-yet-existing and the breaking up, and the manifest state called the present is posited as separate from them as in the case of a pot for there is an experience of all three states with a pot. But the opposite view is taken by the others."
  13. "Utpatteḥ prāg api kāryasya kāraṇābhedaḥ śrīyate; tasmāc ca satkāryasiddhyā nāsadutpāda ity arthaḥ. Kāryasyāsatte hi sadasator abhedānupapattir iti. Utpatteḥ prakāśānām kāraṇābhede ca śrū-tayaḥ: 'tad dhedham tarhy avyākṛtam āśit,' 'sad eva, saumye, 'dam agra āśit,' 'tama evedam agra āśit,' 'āpa evedam agra āsur' ityād-yaḥ." *Sāṃkhya Pravacana Bhāṣya* 1.118.
  14. "Mūle mūlābhāvād amūlam mūlam. Trayo-vimśati-tattvānām mūlam upādānam prādhānam mūlasūnyam."
  15. "... upādānakāraṇānugatatayaiva kāryānubhavaś ity arthaḥ." Ibid., 1.39.
  16. "Upādānanimittayor vihāgaḥ sarvalokasiddha ity arthaḥ."
  17. "... nimittakāraṇasya karmaṇo na mūlakāraṇatvam; guṇānām drav-yopādānatvayogāt."

18. "Trayaḥ sattvādīdravyarūpā guṇā atra saṁtīti triguṇam. Tatra mahadādiṣu kāraṇarūpeṇa sattvādīnām avasthānam, guṇatrayasamūharū-pena tu pradhāne sattvādīnām avasthānam vane vīkṣavad evāvagan-tavyam." *Sāṃkhya Pravacana Bhāṣya* 1.126.
19. "Guṇatvenaiva sāmānyataḥ pravṛttikāraṇatvāt prakṛtisvātantryam siddham."
20. "Ataḥ sahakāryaprayuktā prakṛtir eva pariṇāme kāraṇam svantan-treti siddham... Tathaiva prakṛtir eva jagatkāraṇam, kālakarmesvar-ādayas tu prakṛteḥ kāryajananaśaktyudbodhakāḥ."
21. "Janmādyasya yataḥ."
22. All remaining quotations from Vijñānabhikṣu's writings are from his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* entitled *Vijñānāmṛta Bhāṣya* and specifically from his commentary on 1.1.2 unless otherwise noted. "Tad evādhīṣṭhānakāraṇam yatrāvibhaktam yenoṣṭabdam ca sadupādānakāraṇam kāryākāreṇa pariṇamate."
23. "Na cāyam upādhisambandhāt pūrvam adhiṣṭheyādhiṣṭhatṛbhāvo nirāṁśasya ātmanaḥ svarūpabhedamvinopapadyata iti."
24. "Prakṛtipuruṣādīvyāvṛtta."
25. "Asmābhis tu prakṛtipuruṣasamyogaḥ Īśvareṇa kriyata ity abhyupa-gamyate."
26. "Brahmanas tu sarva-śaktikatvāt tattadupādhibhīḥ sarvakāraṇat-vam."
27. "Sa ca kāryakāraṇānānyatvābhyupagamāt pratyāsanno vedānta-vādasya." Śāṅkara's commentary on *Brahma Sūtras* 1.4.28.
28. "... kāraṇasyāvasthāmātram kāryam vyatiriktavyatiriktam..." Bhāskara's commentary on *Brahma Sūtras* 2.1.14.
29. "Na nimittakāraṇamātram Brahma, upādānakāraṇam ca Brah-maivety artha. Yadi nimittakāraṇam eva jagato Brahma, tadā tad-vijñānāt na samastam jagat vijñātam syāt. Kāraṇam evāvasthāntarā-pannam kāryam, na dravyāntaram iti." Rāmānuja's commentary on *Brahma Sūtras* 1.4.23.
30. "Evam eva pariṇāma upadiśyate. Aśeṣaheyapratyanīkākalyāṇaika-tānam svētarasamastavastuvilakṣanam sarvajñam satyasaṅkalpam avāptasamastakāmam anavadhikātiśayānandam svallopakaraṇabhūta-samastacidacidvastujātaśarīratayaḥ tadātmabhūtam param Brahma. Svaśarīrabhūte prapañce tanmātrāhaṅkāradikāranaparamparayā tam-aśśabdavācyātisūksmācidvastvekaśeṣe sati. Tamaśi ca svaśarīrata-yā'pi prthannirdeśanarhātisūksmadāśāpattyaḥ svasminnekātām āpanne sati, tathā bhūtatamaśśarīram Brahma. Pūrvavadvibhaktānām rūpacid-acinmīśraprapañcaśarīram syāmiti saṅkalpya, apyayakameṇa jagac-charīratayaḥ ātmānam pariṇamayatīti sarveṣv vedānteṣu pariṇāmo-padeśaḥ." Ibid., 1.4.27.

31. Ewert Cousins is the first to interpret Bonaventure specifically through difference-in-identity. See "La 'Coincidentia Oppositorum' dans la Theologie de Bonaventure," *Etudes Franciscaines, Supplement annuel* (1968), pp. 15-31; "The Coincidence of Opposites in the Christology of Saint Bonaventure," *Franciscan Studies* 28 (1968), pp. 27-45; "Mandala Symbolism in the Theology of Bonaventure," *University of Toronto Quarterly* (Spring, 1971), pp. 185-200; and "Bonaventure and Contemporary Thought," *The Cord* 25 (1975), pp. 68-78. The same theme is developed fully in his book *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978). I should also mention that John C. Plott has a recent book, *A Philosophy of Devotion: A Comparative Study of Bhakti and Prapatti in Viṣiṣṭādvaita and St. Bonaventure and Gabriel Marcel* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), in which some comparative work is done between Bonaventure and Vedānta.
32. "... hoc enim est nomen Dei manifestissimum et perfectissimum, quia omnia, quae sunt Dei, comprehenduntur in hoc nomine: 'Ego sum qui sum.'" *Hexaem.*, XI.1 (V.380).
33. "Est enim indivisio unitas; unitas autem est in principiis et principiatis, in universalibus et particularibus, in voluntate et natura. Unitas in principiis est simplicitas; in compositis sive principiatis totalitatis seu plenitudinis; in universalibus conformitatis, in particularibus innumerabilitatis, in voluntate unanimatis, in natura insepabilitatis." *Ibid.*, XI.8 (V.381).
34. "Esse ex se est in ratione originantis; esse secundum se in ratione exemplantis, et esse propter se in ratione finientis vel terminantis; id est in ratione principii, medii et finis seu termini." *Ibid.*, I.12 (V.331).
35. "Hoc est medium metaphysicum reducens, et haec est tota nostra metaphysica: de emanatione, de exemplaritate, de consummatione..." *Ibid.*, I.17 (V.332).
36. "Pater enim ab aeterno genuit Filium similem sibi et dixit se et similitudinem suam similem sibi et cum hoc totum posse suum; dixit quae posset facere, et maxime quae voluit facere, et omnia in eo expressit, scilicet in Filio seu in isto medio tanquam in sua arte." *Ibid.*, I.13 (V.331). Also, see *Red. art.*, 20 (V.324).
37. "... ubi supra arcam sunt Cherubim gloriae obumbrantia propitiatorum, per quae intelligimus duos modos seu gradus contemplandi Dei invisibilia et aeterna, quorum unus versatur circa essentialia Dei, alius vero circa propria personarum." *Itin.*, c. 5, n. 1 (V.308).
38. "... sed quanto aliquid prius, tanta fecundius est et aliorum principium; ergo sicut essentia divina, quia prima, est principium aliarum essentialium, sic persona Patris, cum sit prima, quia a nullo, est

- principium et habet fecunditatem respectu personarum." *I Sent.*, d. 2, a. un., q. 2 (I.53).
39. "Haec autem fontalitas quodam modo origo est alterius fontalitatis. Quia enim Pater producit Filium et per Filium et cum Filio producit Spiritum Sanctum; ideo Deus Pater per Filium cum Spiritu Sancto est principium omnium creatorum; nisi enim eos produceret ab aeterno, non per illos producere posset ex tempore." *M. Trin.*, q. 8, ad 7 (V.115).
40. "Pater enim, ut dictum est, similem sibi genuit, scilicet Verbum sibi coaeternum, et dixit similitudinem suam, et per consequens expressit omnia, quae potuit." *Hexaem.*, I.16 (V.332).
41. "Si enim det huic rei formam, per quam distinguitur ab alia re, vel proprietatem, per quam ab alia distinguitur; necesse est, ut habeat formam idealem, immo formas ideales. Sic enim in plurali vocantur a santis." *Ibid.*, XII.3 (V.385).
42. See *Itin.*, c. 1, n. 2 (V.297).
43. *Ibid.*, c. 2, n. 11 (V.297).
44. "... illa enim similitudo exemplaris perfectius exprimit rem, quam ipsa res causata exprimat se ipsam. Et propter hoc Deus perfectum cognoscit res per similitudines illas, quam cognosceret per suas essentias; et Angeli perfectius cognoscunt in Verbo quam in proprio genere." *Sc. Chr.*, q. 2, ad 9 (V.10).
45. "Nam corporalis est similitudo spiritualis, et compositi est similitudo simplex, etiam in creaturis; ideo non oportet, quod una idea sit altera simplicior vel prior. Similitudo tamen secundum rationem intelligendi habet proprietatem ideati secundum distinctionem..." *I Sent.*, d. 35, a. un., q. 4, con. (I.610).
46. "Similiter ad sequens, dicendum, quod ratione exemplaris res actualiter sunt in Deo; ratione creationis potentialiter, quia possunt produci." *Ibid.*, d. 36, a. un., q. 1, con. (I.621).
47. "Unde melius videbo me in Deo quam in me ipso." *Hexaem.*, XII.9 (V.386).
48. "Quia aeternum et praesentissimum, ideo omnes durationes ambit et intrat, quasi simul existens earum centrum et circumferentia.— Quia simplicissimum et maximum, ideo totum intra omnia et totum extra, ...—Quia vero est summe unum et omnimodum, ideo est omnia in omnibus, quamvis omnia sint multa, et ipsum non sit nisi unum; et hoc, quia per simplicissimam ininitatem, serenissimam veritatem et sincerissimam bonitatem est in eo omnis virtusitas, omnis exemplaritas et omnis communicabilitas..." *Itin.*, c. 5, n. 8 (V.310).

## *Cit and Nous*

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Neoplatonism has more than once been compared with Indian philosophy, and especially with that pluriform variety of Indian thought which is comprised under the designation of Vedānta, or, as I prefer to call it when speaking of the later interpretations of the *Upaniṣads*, of Vedāntism. Historical dependence has been asserted especially in the case of Plotinus. But I wish to state right from the outset that I do not think that such dependence is proven in any way, though I would not deny the possibility that Plotinus may have had a vague and dim knowledge of one or two Vedāntic doctrines, mediated to him through inexact translations or accounts.

Much more important than the fascinating resemblance of the two spirit-oriented philosophies is the fact that in spite of the common primacy of the spiritual, the conceptual formations and structures are so different that the distinctive terms

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of the Indian school of thought are almost normally misunderstood in the West. Let me illustrate this possibility of misunderstanding by what is perhaps the most striking example. There is no doubt that the German Paul Deussen was in his time the deepest specialist of Vedāntism in the West. Now in this scholar's book, *The System of the Vedānta*, published in German in 1883, we read in a footnote (54, on page 95) that in a certain passage of Śaṅkara's *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* there occurs "the monstrosity of an absolute perception," that is, the postulate of "a subject without an object." It seems incredible, but it is simply a fact, first, that precisely this "monstrosity" forms the very center of the system of monistic Vedāntism, of which Deussen undertook to give an account; secondly, that the most specialized specialist misunderstood the most central concept of the subject of his studies. Now it is this very "monstrosity" which I intend to elucidate in the following, in confrontation with Neoplatonism.

As I have already hinted, this confrontation is not meant to detect historical influences. It is simply an attempt to clarify concepts. Such clarification is a necessary prerequisite for a fruitful interpenetration of Indian and Western thinking in metaphysical speculation, nay, it is already a timid beginning of such interpenetration.

The comparison of Vedānta and Vedāntism with Neoplatonism is beset with difficulties. One of these consists in the enormous differences of the conceptual and argumentative stage of development in the two schools. I will try to explain what I mean by this statement. In the *Upaniṣads*, and I am thinking here especially of the later ones—*Kātha*, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Mundaka*, *Maitrī*—and a few late passages in earlier *Upaniṣads*, in these texts we find concepts which notwithstanding their profundity are in a way indistinct, so that they are hard to define. In addition, argumentation is in quite a rudimentary state. On the other hand, later Vedāntism, beginning from the

time of Śaṅkara, i.e., from the 7th century, combines concepts that are clear-cut and definable, though not very differentiated, with a highly developed argumentation. Now in Neoplatonism, especially in Plotinus, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to define with precision the content even of the leading terms,<sup>1</sup> while, on the other hand, conceptual variety and argumentation are full-grown and refined. So we are confronted with an incongruity in either case: whether we compare with Neoplatonism the *Upaniṣads*, i.e., Vedānta in the restricted sense of the word, or Vedāntism, i.e., the philosophy grown on the basis of the *Upaniṣads*.

Realization of the difficulties and incongruities is apt to deter one altogether from undertaking a comparison, and I frankly confess that in the months while thinking of attending the congress of the Society for Neoplatonic Studies, I was often tempted to renounce writing a paper to be read at the congress. At last, I took a somewhat desperate resolution. It had been clear from the time of my invitation that my task could not be to contribute to the knowledge of Neoplatonism, since I am far from being a specialist in this field. I wish to elucidate an *Indian* concept before an audience familiar with Neoplatonism. So I eventually resolved to confine myself, on the Neoplatonic side, to that brief handbook which recommends itself also on account of the prominent role it played for many centuries in the history of European thought. I mean to Proclus's *Stoicheiōstis theologikē*. Starting from, or on the basis of, or against the background of this book, with references also to Plotinus, I will try to explain the difference of those two concepts which may be, and have been, translated by the same Western word, viz., by "spirit," the concepts of Sanskrit *cit* and Greek *noûs*. This will, of course, also necessitate digressions to other related concepts on both sides. In referring to Proclus I gratefully used the admirable edition by E. R. Dodds, with his translation and commentary, without, however, sharing his opinion that such business belongs to the "Wissenschaft des Nichtwissen-swerthen," i.e., to the science of that which is not worth

knowing. For Plotinus I used the excellent edition, with German translation, published by F. Meiner.

In the title of this paper I have quoted an Indian and a Greek term, *cit* and *noûs*. But this was more or less a make-shift. The meanings of the two words are connected by little more than the fact that both are usually translated by one and the same Western word. Still, I would justify the inclusion of the two words in the title. For, first, both the Indian and the Greek words do express something like what we mean when we speak of "Spirit" in philosophy; secondly, I wish to explain, or at least to make a first attempt at explaining, to the student of Neoplatonism, what is meant by *cit*, and to the Indologist, by what means the Neoplatonist in his maturest stage tried to give approximate expression to that reality which the Indian term faces.

We may start from Neoplatonism, but since the meaning of the Indian term differs very much from that of the Greek one, it would be bewildering to start directly from the Greek term. Some metaphysical propositions of Proclus's book seem to provide promising starting points.

I take proposition 15 as such a starting point: "All that is capable of reverting upon itself is incorporeal" (Πάν τὸ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστροφικὸν ἀσώματον ἔστιν). The notion, occurring in this proposition, of reverting upon oneself, was perhaps first conceived by the Stoics<sup>2</sup> and then taken over by the Neoplatonists. Now I could stop short here, remarking curtly that the Advaitic Vedāntist explicitly dismisses the notion of epistemological reflexivity as illogical, and that, therefore, further discussion is pointless because "East is East and West is West and never the twain will meet."

The concept of ἐπιστροφή πρὸς (or: εἰς) ἑαυτόν has survived in Thomism down to our day. Proclus holds that this capability of reversion upon itself is an indication of an entity's being incorporeal, and the same argument recurs in St. Thomas' *Summa contra gentiles*<sup>3</sup> (II.49 Marietti no. 1254). The difference between Thomas and Proclus is that for Proclus there are three incorporeal entities, namely the One, the

Spirit, and the Soul, each subordinated to the preceding (proposition 20), while for Thomas the only incorporeal thing envisaged here is the *intellectus* or, more exactly, the soul of which the *intellectus* is a part.

Let me first explain *why* the idea of epistemological reflexivity is alien to Vedāntic thought (I am not speaking of Indian thought in general). At a very early time, probably in the first half of the last millennium before Christ, at the latest one or two centuries earlier than 500 B.C., one of those thinkers whose speculations were handed down in the *Upaniṣads* conceived a thought that, in my opinion, belongs to the greatest achievements of philosophy, both Eastern and Western. The clearest formulation of this thought is recorded at *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.4.2, but similar statements recur in four passages of the second, third, and fourth books of the same *Upaniṣad* (2.4.14; 3.7.23; 3.8.11; 4.5.15). This formulation reads (with a slight abbreviation): "You cannot see him who sees vision, . . . you cannot know him who knows knowledge" (*na dr̥ṣṭer draṣṭāraṃ paśyeh, . . . na vijñāter vijñātāraṃ vijāniyāḥ*). I think the formulation makes the idea conveyed appear self-evident. That which makes knowledge possible—knowledge of all kinds, sensorial perception as well as mental insight and discursive thinking—the principle which makes this possible cannot naturally be grasped or comprehended by that of which it is the very basis of existence. Whatever names we may give to the principle that makes both mental and sensuous acts or events possible, whether we call it consciousness or spirit or thought or knowledge, it is absurd to assume that this principle should need an act of knowledge in order to attain that state which we call "to be known" or "to be manifest." It is absurd because that which makes a thing possible, or is the basis of it, cannot possibly itself be made possible by the thing which it makes possible. Such an absurdity, however, would happen in epistemological reflexivity.

Nevertheless it is inconceivable that the greatest thinkers of the West should for centuries have acquiesced in a blatant absurdity. I am convinced that the Greeks who coined the

term "reflection upon oneself" actually faced a reality. But they did not view it from the same angle as the Indians did and accordingly expressed it in a linguistic form totally different from the Vedāntist term. What Proclus means by "reflection upon itself" is the self-manifestation, the self-revealing nature of the spiritual, which Proclus designates by the negative term "incorporeal"—a term which is used by the Vedāntists also. In terms of post-Upaniṣadic Vedāntism, Spirit is not in need of a subject-object relationship in order to become manifest.

Precisely for this argument it is helpful for the thinker who intends to investigate the nature of Spirit, to have, as the Indians had from very early times, a reflex awareness of the subject-object relationship as an element of the structure of reality. For the negative proposition, "Spirit can never become an object," provides a vigorous support to the positive statement, "Spirit is self-revealing." The denial of objectivity on the part of spirit naturally involves its proximity to the subject of knowledge. But according to the theory of Advaitic Vedāntism the actual subject of knowledge is not spirit in its purity but spirit somehow intermingled with an objective element. I will revert to this point later.

The self-manifestation of the spirit is expressed by an old term, stemming from mythic thinking and, through a long history, eventually developed into one of the finest intellectual achievements of India. Like "reflection upon oneself" its expression is a metaphor, but, I think, a much more apposite one, namely "self-luminous," in Sanskrit *svayam-jyotis* or *svayam-prakāśa*. "Light," "shining" is a self-explanatory and widely used metaphor to denote all acts and states of consciousness and cognition and perception. "Self-luminosity" implies both the spirit's awareness of itself and its capability of making objects, both material and mental, appear in the range of consciousness. Here we are considering self-luminosity primarily from the ontological point of view (its epistemological relevance, in the Vedāntist context, will be studied later).

Taking up the comparison with Neoplatonism, we find that the light metaphor does not seem to be restricted there to states and events in the domain of consciousness or knowledge. The word *ἐλαμποις*, e.g., has in Proclus's *Stoicheiōsis* always a purely ontological sense. However, there is a philosophical aspect that may be called epistemological ontology. If viewed from this aspect, ■ most surprising similarity between *cit* or *ātman* and *noûs* becomes perceptible. All the characteristics of self-luminosity are ascribed to *noûs* in a treatise of Plotinus (*Enn.* V.3.8.18-42), and besides luminosity "seeing" is also predicated of *noûs*, namely, "seeing," which is also a characteristic of spirit in Vedāntism and of which I will treat later.

We must, however, bear in mind that the comparability of the passage presupposes our detaching it from its context. For the context is purely Neoplatonic: it speaks of the "Intelligible World" and the relationship of Soul to Spirit—two themes entirely foreign to Vedāntic thought. Nevertheless, the similarity is surely significant, and the more so because the contexts in the two cultures are so different.

I will now translate an excerpt from the relevant passage in Plotinus, omitting ideas to which nothing corresponds in Vedāntism.

It is Spirit which sees [*νοῦς δὲ ὁρᾷ*]. . . . He who has received the light of the true things sees, as it were, the visible things in a higher degree. . . . The life and the activity in Spirit are the Primal Light which primarily shines for itself and is brilliancy to itself, illuminating and simultaneously being illuminated, the true spirit-content, cognizing and being cognized, being seen by [or: for] itself and not being in need of anything else for seeing, to itself self-sufficient for seeing—for that which it sees is itself being known also from our side through even that, so that even from our side its knowledge comes to pass through itself. [*Enn.* V.3.8.34-44]<sup>4</sup>

Even here, where the similarity is so impressive, the differences between the Vedāntist and Neoplatonic views must not be overlooked. The light with which Spirit irradiates Soul has a content, which is the "light of the true things," "That which is truly spirit—content" (τὸ ἀληθῶς νοητόν), the Ideal Forms of the Intelligible World. The thought pattern of spiritual reflexivity, too, so foreign to Vedāntism, is not absent from our passage. Moreover, the concept of *life* occurring here does not have any function in the system of later Vedāntism. Nevertheless, the concept of self-revelation or self-luminosity is brought out with clarity and hymnic admiration. Parallels like these should be given due attention in ontologico-metaphysical as well as in epistemologico-metaphysical speculation.

The Neoplatonist's view that the intelligible light of *noûs* has a content, *noûs* containing all Platonic Ideas, makes us understand why in his mind Spirit's reflection upon itself is not an absurdity, for Spirit carries, so to speak, its objects of knowledge within itself. By the same token, the Indian view of the contentless plenitude of Spirit (*cit*, *ātman*) can appear to be an absurdity or a "monstrosity" to the Westerner.

The same context also accounts for the difference of meaning when both systems describe the Absolute or the Intelligible as "simple" (ἀπλοῦς, *Stoich.*, prop. 47; *asamhata*, *passim*). In Neoplatonism this "simplicity" does not preclude spirit from being the sum of all Ideal Forms (ὅλος μὲν ὁ νοῦς τὰ πάντα εἶδη; *Enn.* V.9.8.4; πᾶς νοῦς πλήρωμα ὧν εἶδόν; *Stoicheiōsis*, prop. 177).

The Indian *cit*, on the contrary, entirely un-Greek and un-Western, is simple in the strictest sense of this word; it is spirituality or intelligence abstracted from all contents or associates. Obviously the thinkers were aware that this abstraction, though of enormous philosophical relevance, was unknown in everyday life and even in other systems of philosophy. So they saw the need for a new term. In order to denote what they had discovered, they simply chose the root of a verb which means "to be conscious of," "to think,"

namely, the verbal root *cit* (with or without the addition of an *-i*). The derivation from this root, *citta*, on the other hand, denotes the mind in philosophical and non-philosophical parlance.

In proposition 47 of his *Stoicheiōsis*, Proclus speaks of entities that are "self-constituted" (αὐθυπόστατον). What is "self-constituted," is "simple" and "without parts" (ἀμερές); on the other hand, he states that precisely "all that is capable of reversion upon itself" (πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιτρεπτικόν, prop. 42) is "self-constituted." Now "self-constituted" seems to be exactly the same as what is called in Sanskrit *svatassiddha* (substantive: *svatassiddhi*), i.e., an entity that constitutes itself by itself as existent and manifest, an entity that by itself establishes its existence and manifestation.

If I am right in explaining that the reality intended by the term "reversion upon itself" is the same as what the Indians mean by *svayamprakāśata* or "self-luminosity," then my equation of the Greek concept "self-constituted" with the Indian *svatassiddha* is corroborated, the more so because, first, the two Greek terms are just as closely linked together as the corresponding Indian terms and, secondly, because both the Neoplatonist and the Vedāntist ascribe to the reality in question the further characteristics of being "without temporal origin" (ἀγένετον, Proclus prop. 45), "imperishable" (ἀφθαρτον, prop. 46), "being without parts" (ἀμερές, prop. 47), and "perpetual" (αἰδιον, prop. 48)—corresponding Sanskrit terms, for which a number of synonyms could be substituted, would be *aja*, *akṣaya*, *akhaṇḍa* or *asamhata*, *nitya*. It would be pointless to cite occurrences, because examples abound from the time of the *Upaniṣads*, i.e., a time earlier than 500 B.C., down to the present time, since there are still adherents of Vedāntism.

Let us stop here for a while to survey the results we have so far arrived at in our comparison. We found two points in which the two systems seemed irreconcilable: first, the wider sense of the concept of "simple" in Neoplatonism as compared with Vedāntism. But we will see presently that on this



point the divergent views can be harmonized to some extent if Vedāntist cosmology is taken into consideration. Secondly, we found the concept of *cit*, which at first sight seemed absolutely unique. However, we succeeded in discovering the concept of self-luminosity in Plotinus also, and this is a bridge which makes *cit* accessible, even though Neoplatonism did not undertake the rigid abstraction which severs *cit* from *citta*. On two other points both the Greek and the Indian system seemed to have in view the same reality, though viewing it from very different angles: "reversion upon oneself" corresponds to "self-luminosity"; "incorporeity" stands for "being spiritual." In addition, there were four terms which are simply identical: "devoid of origin," "imperishable," "partless," "perpetual."

I think these agreements suffice to show that what the Neoplatonist aimed at was much the same as the Vedāntist intended to reach: incorporeity as a stage of pure spirit in the case of the Vedāntist; incorporeity as a stage reached through spirit, but since spirit was not understood here with that purity with which the Indians conceived it, it was felt ultimately to transcend Spirit in the direction of the One, which is beyond Spirit (as conceived in Neoplatonism) and beyond Being.

In order to understand both the similarities and the divergencies of the two systems, it may be useful at this point to form a clear idea of the different ways in which they conceived of the sphere of supreme realities. In both systems the supreme reality is described as a triad; but Vedāntism (in that form which we are considering here, which is also called Advaitism or spirit-monism) conceives of the triad as a substantial unity in which each of the three constituents, one of which is *cit* or spirit, is an aspect of the unity and in reality totally identical with it—in fact the Supreme Reality itself, comprising all the three aspects, can sometimes be called "the One" (εκα). Neoplatonism's triad, on the other hand, is subordinate, with *noûs* being subordinate to the One, and Soul to *noûs*.

The Indian triad, however, is similar to one of Proclus's triads (see W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos* (Frankfurt am Main: 1965) p. 93 ff.). Proclus has οὐσία, ζοή, νοῦς (being, life, spirit; cf. Proclus, *Stoich.*, prop. 103); Vedāntism has "being," "spirit," and "bliss" (*sat-cit-ānanda*). In this compound *cit* (spirit) occurs as the second member. In the Greek triad which I just quoted there is not so much subordination as interpenetration. "Every element of this triad is all the three, but the three are in each element as themselves and at the same time after the manner of that in which they inhere" (Beierwaltes, op. cit., p. 95). The One as such is absent in this triad, which in its essence is an explication of the nature of the hypostasis *noûs* (Beierwaltes, op. cit., p. 97), which as such, of course, remains subordinate to the One.

One of the consequences of the subordinative structure of the hypostases in Neoplatonism is the different treatment of the problem of freedom of the Absolute in the Greek system as compared with the Indian. In Vedāntism, freedom is represented as being inseparably linked up with the spiritual nature of the Absolute. The Absolute is shown to be free in two senses: in the sense of being independent of other entities (*svatantra*) and in the sense of not existing for another's sake (*svārtha*). While the notion of independence needs no elaboration in Vedāntism<sup>5</sup> which holds the Universal Spirit to be the Absolute, the concept of *svārtha* is thoroughly discussed (Śaṅkara's *Upadeśasāhasrī*, Gadyaprabandha, Chapter 2). Neoplatonism ascribes freedom in every sense to the One. Plotinus, at the end of a long treatise "On free will and the One's will," states that the One alone is really free (μόνον τοῦτο ἀληθεία ἐλεύθερον, *Enn.* VI.8.21.31). This seems to be consistent with the structure of the Neoplatonic system, which teaches two supreme realities, in succession subordinate to the One, which is *the* Absolute.

Yet, you may pardon me, I find it hard to reconcile with my Christian and Indian way of thinking to conceive of a Supreme that is free without being of the nature of spirit—this *via negationis* could perhaps become meaningful only if

complemented by a *via eminentiae* and by the thought-pattern of the analogy of being. And I find it questionable that there should be a subordinate hypostasis which is spiritual in an absolute sense, i.e., to the extent of being self-effulgent, but which is lacking in absolute freedom. In an earlier study, I tried to show even within the domain of Hindu philosophy that it is an incomplete stage of insight if the inseparability of spirit and freedom has not been perceived.

A feature strikingly common to the Neoplatonic and the Advaitic idea of spirit is that both normally conceive of spirit as universal. This seems to be more or less inevitable, considering the similarity of starting points of the two systems and, especially, the still greater similarity of their respective goals. But I cannot enter here into this phenomenon; it would amount to something like metaphilosophy or theology. The individual existence of spirit is of course also envisaged in both systems. The thought pattern by which Neoplatonism tries to solve the problem of the relationship between the universal and the individual spirit may perhaps, briefly and with some simplification, be described as existence of the higher in the lower, of the universal in the individual. In India, the various schools of Vedāntism have proposed different solutions. The system which I am considering, Advaitic Vedāntism, solves the problem in a way totally different from Neoplatonism.

We have reached here a point where the two systems radically diverge. The relationship between the universal spirit and the individual, the role of spirit in cosmogony or cosmology, and man's road to union with the Absolute: these are problems whose treatment bears only very few similarities in the two systems; nay, the characteristic disparity of the two cultures becomes strikingly manifest here.

I need not enlarge on the relationship between Spirit and Soul, first, because my audience is better informed of this subject than myself and I have no insights to contribute to the knowledge of Neoplatonism; secondly, because there is absolutely no analogy in Vedāntic thought to the relevant

Greek doctrine. Simply in order not to leave the doctrine in question quite unmentioned and to provide a contrast to set off the Indian doctrines which I am going to delineate, I will quote Proclus's brief proposition from the *Stoicheiōsis* (193): "Every soul takes its proximate origin from spirit" (πᾶσα ψυκὴ προεκεῖνος ἀπὸ νοῦ ὑπεστέκεν), and Plotinus's brief remark that soul is the spirit's outgoing activity (ἐνέργεια ἔχ. αὐτοῦ; *Enn.* VI.2.22.26; cf. V.1.2.5, οἷον λόγος ὃ ἐν προφορᾷ). In Vedāntism, there is no differentiation between Spirit and Soul. Both words are indeed used in translations and English-written expositions, with spirit, however, occurring comparatively seldom. But the meaning of the words in such translations of course always depends on the Indian original they stand for. In speaking of Vedāntism, please note, I leave out of account other Indian philosophical systems—"soul" is often used as a translation of Sanskrit *ātman*, but this word is also, and mostly, rendered by "the self." I prefer this translation,<sup>6</sup> first, because it is strictly literal since *ātman* also performs the function of the reflexive pronoun in Sanskrit; secondly, because the word is excellently suited to express the essential in man, that without which man is not man; thirdly, because it is devoid of any preconceived content; fourthly, because in metaphysics the expression "The Supreme Self" easily offers itself as a term to denote the Personal Absolute by analogy.

The self or *ātman* is, as I hinted before, a triune entity, in the monistic system mostly understood to be the Absolute. Its constituents or aspects or characteristics, each of which is the whole, are Existence, Spirit, and Bliss (*sat-cit-ānanda*). I venture to submit that the similarity between this triad and the Christian Trinity on the one hand as well as Proclus's "Being-Life-Spirit" triad on the other hand is no mere chance but is grounded in reality, the more so since this triad of Proclus does not so much imply subordination as interpenetration. The greatest divergence which separates the three triads is, I think, not the fact that they do not totally coincide at the conceptual level but that the idea of three *Persons* with

an identical substance is unknown to the Indian and rejected by the Hellenic philosophers.

The prominent characteristic of the Self is doubtless Spirit. Śaṅkara, the most renowned teacher of the Advaita-Vedāntist school, treats of the Self almost exclusively as Spirit. The actionless activity, or rather the nature, of the Spirit is described by two metaphors: it "sees" and it "shines" or "illuminates" (see Śaṅkara's *Upadeśasāhasrī*, Gadyaprabandha, Chapter 2). What does it illuminate? First of all, it is important to note that, like the sun, it shines even if there is no object to be illuminated (this is what Deussen called a "monstrosity," as I have noted before). Shining and seeing is its nature and not an adventitious event. When there is an object of its illumination, this object is neither the outward world of things nor an "intelligible universe," a *κόσμος νοητός*. Vedāntist psychology, in this point similar to that of the Sāṅkhya system, posits a psychic entity which I prefer to call "Inner Sense" (others call it "Inner Organ"). It consists of subtle, imperceptible matter. Through the mediation of the senses, it receives impressions—in the literal sense of imprints—from what the Neoplatonists call "the Sensible World," *κόσμος αἰσθητός*; besides this Inner Sense is also the agent or subject or substratum of thinking, and in perception as well as in thinking it takes the form of fluctuations or modifications of the subtle matter that makes up its substance.<sup>7</sup>

According to Advaitic Vedāntism, even these processes are raised to the level of consciousness only by the Spirit's "seeing" and "illuminating" them. There is no trace of a borderline, like the one which Neoplatonism draws, between the "sensible" and the "intelligible" world, and the Vedāntist's estimation of the sensible world and of pure thought is almost the reverse of the value-system of all Platonism. Pure thought is always suspect of being mere fancy.

But I said, "almost" the reverse, because Vedāntism, far from being a pedestrian matter-of-fact philosophy, has developed such a pure and sublime concept of Spirit as no other philosophy, be it in India or in the West, has ever succeeded

in discovering. I think it was an enormous achievement to abstract Spirit not only from its contents but also from those elements that seem inseparably linked up with it to form the Ego or the Subject of Knowledge. I may note here in passing that what Platonism intends to express by the conception of the "intelligible world," emerges in Vedāntism also, but at quite a different level. For the time being, I think it in place to try to explain how Advaitic Vedāntism, with its higher evaluation of direct perception (which it shares with all Indian systems of thought), could nevertheless attribute such an elevated rank to Spirit.

The argumentation which establishes this rank presupposes a highly developed awareness of the subject-object relationship. Its starting point is the axiom that the knowledge of a thing is dependent on the object, i.e., on the object being there, not on any activity of the knower. This statement is directed against the view predominant among earlier Vedāntists who sought to attain to union with the Absolute or the Supreme by different kinds of activity, namely by strict morality, asceticism and meditation (which is a mental action). Śaṅkara appreciated all these activities without restraint, but he denied that they could bring about realization of the Absolute. He contended that this goal implied, or consisted in, *knowledge* of the Supreme; knowledge, however, can never be reached by any activity, mental or bodily. The thing sought to be known must become manifest: this is the only practicable method, or rather, there is no method, but knowledge must emerge of itself. Now the Absolute, in this context called Brahman, is certainly not an object like a thing or even an idea or a complex of ideas. Rather, it is the knower's own self.

Here the spirit-monism of the system comes up. A man's self, whose nature is pure spirit, is of course better known to him than any object, though this knowledge has not the form of a subject-object relationship. Consequently the Absolute is in reality that which is best known to everyone, because it is identical with everyone's own self.

But why are people not actually aware of it? Here the illusionism of Advaitic Vedāntism is introduced. If the Brahman is, as the system teaches, identical with each man's self, without man's being conscious of it, this is the effect of Nescience (*avidyā*), the Vedāntist replies.

Nescience or ignorance is a notion that occurs in all systems of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. All these systems intend to show to man the road to everlasting release—release from the body, with a positive content differently conceived of in the several systems, and the road to release consists in, or includes, right knowledge. To some extent, the notion is known to Hellenic philosophy also. Even Plotinus can occasionally mention ignorance (*ἀγνοεῖν, ἀγνοία*; *Enn.* V.1.1) as one (not the only) cause entering this world.<sup>8</sup> Advaitic Vedāntism, however, has, in the course of many centuries, bestowed a tremendous amount of ingenuity on constructing arguments and theories to demonstrate what nescience is.

As regards Vedāntism I do not hesitate to state that in my opinion in all the huge literature on nescience and *māyā* (the Power of Illusion, more or less identical with nescience) I find, if not absolutely nothing, at any rate very little that is of philosophical relevance. I will not expatiate on this subject but mention only so much as seems to be indispensable for explaining the Vedāntist concept of spirit. The doctrine of nescience and *māyā*, as well as the monism of the system, seem to have been the price the Vedāntists had to pay in order to elaborate their doctrine of pure Spirit. I may note in passing that this price need not be paid, and the truth of the Vedāntist concept of Spirit, if differentiated into individual Spirit and Supreme Spirit or God, can very well be upheld if, instead of monism and illusionism, the thought pattern of the analogy of being is made use of. But I cannot enlarge on this theme here. I may only note that this is, of course, another concept of analogy than that which occurs in Proclus and is referred to by Professor Beierwaltes in his book on *Proklos* (pp. 73 ff.). I have now to treat of the doctrine of monism in so far as it is necessary to understand the Vedāntist concept

of spirit, and of the theory of nescience or *māyā* in so far as it is ancillary to that concept.

To begin with monism, it is largely based on tradition though there were very different kinds of monism in the course of time. The system I am treating advocates radical spirit-monism. The only rational proof the great Śaṅkara has given for this theory includes a fallacy. Since in all acts of consciousness, no matter at what time, in what place, and in what person they occur, the quality or *essence* of consciousness is the same, Śaṅkara concludes that all acts of consciousness are also identical in *existence* (see his *Upadeśasāhasrī*, Gadyaprabandha, Chapter 2). By the way, here we see the value of the medieval distinction between “to be (there)” and “to be thus,” or between existence and essence.

As regards nescience or *māyā* (we may skip here the differences established by some thinkers between the two words), it is, according to a later, but very common explanation (so that quotations are unnecessary) an inexplicable entity whose status of being can be described neither as existent nor as non-existent. So far, I am ready to concede a certain philosophical relevance to the doctrine, for, from the metaphysical point of view, it is meaningful to distinguish degrees of reality. But later Vedāntism (Śaṅkara had not yet foreseen all consequences to which the ideas of his system tended) explained the whole world, all matter, manifoldness, time, space and even all psychic events, as products of *māyā*, which was described as their material cause and as being, like their cause, neither existent nor non-existent. *Māyā* has two powers, one veiling and one dispersing. It veils the nature of the Universal Spirit, and it creates the illusion of a manifold world in space and time, material and psychic. This is how Vedāntism tries to solve the problem of individualization: it is simply an effect of *māyā*.

Most remarkable in our context is the fact that even the Supreme God—called *īśvara*, “the Lord”, for India has developed different forms of quasi-monotheism, coexisting at a higher level with the traditional polytheism and in individual

cases ousting it more or less—even the Supreme God is associated with *māyā*: only in combination with this Power of Illusion is God the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the world. I mention this chiefly for one reason. For here we find a striking analogy to the “intelligible world” of Platonic ideas. *Māyā* is also called *Potency* (*śakti*, St. Thomas’s active *potentia*)<sup>9</sup> and this makes creation possible. And, what is most astonishing, before creation all things exist as objects of the Highest God’s contemplation, i.e., his *ideas* (see Śaṅkara, *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1.5). Surely God is by nature Spirit, even in his association with *māyā*, but this association makes an equation with pre-Christian or Christian Neoplatonic ideas impossible or at least requires adjustment. Nevertheless, there is a striking similarity in so far as the Vedāntist teaches that things preexist as God’s ideas.

A similar association with *māyā* (in this context preferably called nescience) occurs in the individual. The most refined product of nescience is the Inner Sense (designated by *buddhi*, *citta*, and other words). Now the close association of Spirit (*cit*) and Inner Sense (*buddhi*) makes up what may be called the Ego (*ahamkar* in Śaṅkara’s terminology) or the Subject of Knowledge. Release presupposes the extremely difficult mental severance of the spirit from its associate, i.e., the very Ego has to be as it were, dissected. Only then, the system teaches, can pure Spirit shine forth.

I must now come to a conclusion. In spite of the enormous disparity of the two cultures we found in the two systems an impressive number of terms that are partly almost literally translatable, partly interpretable as different ways of pointing to the same intended reality. Historical influences from either side are quite improbable.

In two cases we found remarkable doctrines each of which is fully elaborated and cleansed from unnecessary associations in one of the two systems only. The first of these doctrines is the Platonic concept of Idea, which Neoplatonism has incorporated into *noûs*, thus preparing the way for classical Christian cosmology. If theistic metaphysics is to survive, if the

doctrine of God is not to degenerate into an ideology ancillary to anthropology, it is indispensable that we should uphold this heritage of Platonism and Neoplatonism. In monistic Vedāntism, monism, with its corollary, illusionism, made it indeed hard to explain the origin of the perishable world from the Absolute; all the more notable is the fact that even in this system there emerges an adumbration of Platonic Ideas.

As regards the doctrine of Pure Spirit in Vedāntism, it is certainly one of the greatest achievements of philosophy. It is not logically necessary to associate it with monism and illusionism. Śaṅkara himself has shown this, in demonstrating, in a passage of his great commentary on the *Brahādāraṇyako-paṇisad* (4.3.7),<sup>10</sup> how Pure Spirit is the principle of unity that makes not only all mental and sensory acts possible, but whose light binds even vegetative processes, together with the consciousness-events, into the psycho-physical unity that is man. Śaṅkara seems here—whether deliberately or not, we cannot know—to have kept in suspense his monism and illusionism. It is deplorable that this fragment of a great spirit-oriented anthropology was never elaborated. Nevertheless, it could help us, just with its irrefutable concept of pure spirit, to defy that materialism which nowadays has almost everywhere discarded the traditional notion of soul.

In these two, and probably even in more respects, the study of Vedāntism and Neoplatonism, and even more the comparison of the two systems (as well as the comparison of classical Indian with classical Western systems of philosophy) seems to be of great relevance to our time, provided we recognize the value of great tradition in general and metaphysics in particular.

#### NOTES

1. Armstrong, in his book *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 49 f., lists no less than six “aspects” of *noûs*.

2. But cf. also Aristotle, *de Anima*, 430a3.
3. Cf. also *Liber de causis*, prop. 15, with St. Thomas' comm. lect. 15.
4. ὁ δ' ἐκεῖνο τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀληθῶν λαβὼν ὅσον βλέπει μᾶλλον τὰ ὁρατά. . . Ἡ δὲ ἐν τῷ νῷ ζωὴ καὶ ἐνέργεια, τὸ πρῶτον φῶς ἑαυτῷ λάμπων πρῶτως καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸ λαμπηδῶν, λαμπὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ λαμπόμενον, τὸ ἀληθῶς νοητόν, καὶ νοοῦν καὶ νοούμενον, καὶ ἑαυτῷ ὁρῶμενον καὶ οὐ δεόμενον ἄλλου, ἵνα ἴδῃ, αὐτῷ αὐταρκες πρὸς τὸ ἰδεῖν· καὶ γὰρ ὃ ὁρᾷ αὐτό ἐστι· γινωσκόμενον καὶ παρ' ἡμῶν αὐτῷ ἐκείνῳ, ὥς καὶ παρ' ἡμῶν τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτοῦ δι' αὐτοῦ γίνεσθαι. [*Enn.* V.3.8.34-44]
5. Śaṅkara, in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, in most of the occurrences of *svatantra*, denies that anything but Spirit can be independent; a passage where *svatantra* is directly and positively connected with *ātman* (which is spirit), is to be found, e.g., at *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 2.3.36, in the end.
6. The concept of "real self" is not foreign to Neoplatonism; cf. W. Beierwaltes and H. U. V. Balthasar, *Grundfragen der Mystik* (Einsiedeln, 1974), p. 13, n. 2.
7. Here the νοοῦν and the νοούμενον are identical, in spite of Aristotle (*de Anima*, 430a3), though the objects can be material and the Inner Sense in any case consists of (subtle) matter.
8. Proclus teaches that the philosopher's ascent to the One includes cleansing from ignorance; cf. Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, p. 285. What has been constructed in Advaitic Vedāntism is a frightful fortification to defend the central mystery of spirit-monism, namely, the doctrine that the world is an illusion, neither being nor nonbeing. This idea looms up, occasionally and in quite a rudimentary form, in Plotinus also: he can call matter, though in an *optativus potentialis* and in a certain respect only, "nonbeing," μὲ ὄν (*Enn.*, II.5.4.11).
9. *Dynamis* in an active sense occurs in Plotinus, *Enn.*, III.8.10.1.
10. Cf. my paper "A Note on Śaṅkara's Conception of Man," published in *German Scholars on India, Contributions to Indian Studies*, ed. the Cultural Department of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, New Delhi, Vol. I (Varanasi: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1973), pp. 99 ff., and my articles (in German and Italian) mentioned in the footnotes of the above-mentioned paper.

## Matter in Plotinus and Śaṅkara

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In the first two parts of this tripartite essay we shall deal with the notion of matter in the works of Plotinus and Śaṅkara respectively. The third part considers the parallels and analogies which may be established between them.

### I. Plotinus<sup>1</sup>

#### *The Plotinian Notion of Matter*

The notion of matter is considered in *Enneads* II.4.12. It is not surprising that the notion of matter is treated as a singular notion, even though the formal object of investigation is revealed as having two distinct natures. In the beginning of the treatise, as in many other places in the *Enneads*, matter is characterized as "substratum" or "receptacle." Matter in the spiritual and sensible world fulfils the same function, namely

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as the receptacle of forms, thus permitting the generation of beings. In the Platonic tradition, Plotinus maintains that matter must be present both in the realm of spirit and in the sensible world.

Plotinus investigates the question of what is underlying, how does it receive in itself that which is alien to it, as well as the quality of that which it receives both in spiritual and sensible compounds. Thus Plotinus examines two notions of matter—the spiritual (chaps. 3-5, fundamentally) and the sensible (chaps. 6-16).

In the examination of spiritual matter three aspects are raised: first, the possibility of the existence of spiritual matter; second, its definition; and third, its mode of existence. Spiritual matter is 'indefinite' and 'lacks form'. Spiritual beings have a composite character, just as corporeal compounds. The contrast is that spiritual beings are non-spatial and non-temporal as well as unchangeable, while corporeal ones are spatial, temporal and mutable. Thus spiritual matter always possesses and complements the same form, has form eternally, and is eternally defined.<sup>2</sup>

Spiritual beings, or ideas, exist and are multiple. Each one has form which particularizes it, and each has something in common, a substratum. Thus is the diversity and unity of Spirit accounted for. Spirit is one, in the sense of the receptacle, but multiple in the totality of its beings.

What, then, is spiritual matter? It is the capacity of reception of spiritual characteristics. And what is Spirit as form or informer? The determination, the characterizing force. At their confluence the potencies of donation and reception constitute Spirit. The donating potency defines, while the receiver allows itself to be defined: thus the first has the capacity of multiplication, the second permits the act of multiplication. Spirit is a multiple unity. As a pure aspiration to existence, knowledge and beauty it has allowed the birth of beings, real and beautiful.

The tangible universe, plentiful in its concrete multiplicity, is an image of the spiritual universe. Thus distinction and

multiplicity must also be present in the spiritual domain, and so the manner of division must transcend space and time. In the spiritual also there must be as residue the amorphous or undefined upon which distinction is based.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that spiritual matter has the forms eternally and fully does not preclude the spirit from being a compound. Just as sensible bodies always reveal themselves to the intellect as informed, having an informing principle and a matter which is informed, so spiritual being also has a depth (*bathos*), like a darkness, upon which the light from *logos* is projected.<sup>4</sup> It would be wrong to believe in the simplicity of spiritual beings just because in them form and matter are always united, for after all, the same holds true for sensible bodies. In the former the unity may be more perfect since it is eternal it is nonetheless a dual unity.

When spiritual matter is informed, it is a total or true life; when the same occurs with sensible matter, "information" is identical, but the resultant is like an "adorned cadaver," a reflection of spiritual life. Spiritual matter is truly a substance, because in the realm of Spirit, since everything truly exists, everything underlying the spiritual compounds is also illuminated reality.

The origin of spiritual matter can only be examined in light of the awareness of the eternal nature of Spirit. Spiritual matter must be engendered, because it has a principle: the One; but it must also be unengendered because it is beyond time and always exists. Why is the Spiritual realm both dependent and eternal? The fifth chapter provides the most acute answer. The Spirit, in order to exist as Spirit must reveal in itself a presence of a contrast to the limpidity of The One. If the Spirit exists it must proceed from the One but is a composite of form and matter in contrast to the simplicity of the One.

Matter is also related to Otherness. What must have preceded perfect spiritual existence for it to exist as it does? Something other than the One, which while wishing to be other than It, also wishes to be like It. Otherness, then, is

epinoetically movement, having the character of the undefined (seeking determination by the One). In that sense Otherness is the character of spiritual matter. Both Otherness and spiritual matter as such can be thought of (no doubt abstractly) as "evil," since, as undetermined, they have not yet attained their part of the Good.

Matter also has been associated with 'audacity', the centrifugal coexistent with the aspiration for determination. In this way it makes sense to speak of Otherness as the principle which makes the existence of matter possible, giving rise to the composite.

Thus, matter as substratum is not more than undefined and ambivalent aspiration, the other than the Good, which necessarily occurs in beings as defined, shaped and illuminated.<sup>6</sup>

Plotinus has taken the supreme categories of the *Sophist* and paraphrased them, showing the component elements of Spirit, thanks to which the sensible world will account for its image.<sup>7</sup>

We then proceed to the examination of the nature of sensible matter presented as the receptacle or substratum of bodies. In chapters 6 to 15 Plotinus distinguishes his own views from those of others (matter as mass, quality, quantity, mere logical negation, etc.), which, he claims, confuse the true material nature.<sup>8</sup> In the last chapter he examines in detail what sensible matter is, namely that part of otherness which opposes the forming principles, the *logoi*. It has its own reality which is not annihilated by the *logoi* coming upon it, but which permits their actualization, thereby revealing itself with greater clarity as matter—just as a woman makes her femininity more obvious by pregnancy, or earth displaying its fecundity after being seeded.

Accordingly, matter is analysed as "otherness," always in need, properly what is evil, ugly, weak and false.

Plotinus's later views on matter will be further discussed,<sup>9</sup> but these views, completed in 260-261 A.D., constitute the basis of his thought.<sup>10</sup>

Later he ratifies, and occasionally strengthens his analysis.<sup>11</sup>

Matter, clearly, fulfils its fundamental function of component and correlation necessary to the second and third hypostases.

The clearest synthesis of Plotinian thought we have is the "Great Tetralogy" (*Enneads* III.8.30, V.8.31, V.8.32, belligerently ratified in the fourth, II.9.33, the famous "Against Gnostics"). The main aim of the first of these, "Concerning Contemplation," is to show how the third hypostasis is generated. What is of specific relevance here is the description of the ontological condition of the sensible world, and its production. It is the consequence of contemplation by the Spirit resulting in wisdom pervading even the humblest corners of the cosmos.

From *Ennead* III.8.11 we learn (a) that the Spirit is vision, and therefore, a realized potency, and as such, composite; (b) the determinative aspect of the Spirit is a reflection of the One; but, though the One needs nothing the Spirit is in need, because it contains an otherness from the One, making it different;<sup>12</sup> and (c) in spite of the presence of matter in Spirit, and, in a way, because of it, Spirit desires the One and moves toward It. But this desire is adequately fulfilled, leading to the eternal harmony of form and matter in Spirit. In Spirit there is neither change nor search for new forms. It has all of them, and its aspiration is firm and constant for the truly real, and hence also beautiful.

This is explored in *Ennead* V.8 in which beauty is shown to be none other than the perfect adequacy between form and matter. Thus Beauty itself is rooted in Spirit,<sup>13</sup> and therefore one can develop a hierarchy of beauty from artistic or artificial, to sensible or natural, to inner or psychic beauty, finally to Spiritual beauty, or beauty itself.<sup>14</sup>

An analysis of the relationship between spiritual and sensible beauty follows. After the discussion of Spirit as Being and Beauty Plotinus examines Spirit as truth and knowledge. The perfect unity of the knowledge and the known is achieved in Spirit which always possesses it as its own self-contemplative reality. It is this knowledge which defines it. Here again the



familiar motif of the matter and form of Spirit, this time in its gnoseological aspect is described—as what knows and what is known.

After that follow ontological, aesthetic and gnoseological analyses of how the sensible cosmos is related to its Spiritual model, Being, Beauty and Truth. These, then, are shown to depend on what transcends Being (as well as non-being), which makes Spirit possible, and which reigns over Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

In several passages of *Enneads* II.9 Plotinus rejects Gnostic theories of matter.<sup>16</sup> In the Plotinian view sensible matter is not substantial, nor independent, nor responsible for a universe alien to the Spirit. Matter is also presented as the origin of human wickedness, the “other” to being and form. Inasmuch as evil does not occur in the hypostases, it is sensible matter only which is so charged, functioning in the world of change, in an ethical plane, affecting the behaviour of man.<sup>17</sup> The condition of human wickedness is exactly its own constitution, in which the evil inheres in the sensible matter. Hence the call to purification, using the language of “escape from the body.”<sup>18</sup>

It is thus demonstrable that every ascending wish as well as all descending biases have their origin and explanation in matter, which is an aspect of every composition. But as to the origin of matter, a mystery remains: matter is simply a datum drawn from experience, refusing every rational questioning concerning its own provenance.

#### *The Ontological Image and the Theory of Causality According to Plotinus*

In *Enneads* III.6 Plotinus addresses the apathy of matter, revealing his profound comprehension of it. Two ideas stand out, which will facilitate the comparison with Śaṅkara:

(1) Matter as receptacle or substratum, making possible the concept of image; and

(2) The nature of the intimate constitution of the image-participation.

While in this text, because of its relation to the soul, the emphasis is placed on the sensible world, but as that is a copy of the spiritual, what is said of it will apply analogically to the latter.

The material receptacle reflects what is presented to it as does the surface of a mirror. That is, without undergoing any change of its own constitution it generates, or permits the birth of reflection. In this way it is the necessary ingredient of each being. Without matter the One will maintain itself eternally in its silent non-Being; hence even that which is without foundation, the *IT-SELF* by its own ineffable intrinsic potency is reflected, and the reflection, the weakening of the potency is inconceivable without that ground which permits reflection. There are, then, in Plotinus, two clear, antithetical concepts of potency: one out of excess, and the other, out of defect. It is the conjugated unity of both, and the distinction, which allows their being grasped as the conjuncture of three hypostases and of the world. It is the conception of mixed beings which stimulated the precise and daring expressions used by Plotinus in such places as *Enneads* III.6.7.21-43.<sup>19</sup> The metaphysical reality of sensible beings is that they are images, reflections, figures outlined on a medium always firm in its fallacious nature, and which, for that reason, can create the illusion that the reflection is the reflected object. Actually it is but a deceit: the image is not the truth, the truth is the model that is reflected. Therefore, strictly speaking, the sensible being is not authentic reality, but reality is the determining factor of its projection. We may keep on with an identical reasoning, and apply our logical attention no longer to the sensible world, but to the spiritual universe. We shall prove that the latter encounters in itself the same relation of image with respect to the first hypostasis since it deals with the first circumscription, reflection, or

irradiation. From this new perspective, the One, the ultimately unfounded, is beyond the being, the knowledge and the beauty, or if one wishes to say, non-Being, non-Knowledge and non-Beauty, because it is the inexhaustible Principle, the authentic Reality. Thus the Spirit in relation to It, happens to be as unreal—because of its imaginary nature—as the sensible universe is with respect to the *κόσμος νοητικός* (*kosmos noetikos*). This explains how Plotinus, when referring to the last aspect of his concept, could have written such phrases as: “it must be unique,” “it is Alone,” “to become to be Alone,” “The One is all and it is nothing,” etc.<sup>20</sup>

But, out of logical necessity, the receptacle, the weak component of the image, moves towards the ultimate meaning of the compound constitution. The compound is an image; consequently, from its ontological perspective, the compound hurls itself towards the cause of its existence, which is simpler. The ontological image is nothing but the mere undulation on the water surface, the image in the mirror, in water or in the shadow, as the Master himself says. Then, what is the image? Mere reflection. In what consists its entitative actuality? Simply in reflecting something that is assumed stable and original. Consequently, even with greater profundity, the entitative actuality of the image consists in its participating nature in the model; that improper and ephemeral quality that has given it the power to reflect. Then we see that the image as a conjugation of possibilities is properly image and likeness; image, because of what it appears to be, and likeness because of what permits it to have the appearance of the latter, or that being. Image, then, is a luminous reflection, which nostalgically recalls as its resemblance, its original.<sup>21</sup> Who can doubt, then, that “only likeness can know likeness,”<sup>22</sup> that matter does not have to be locally separated from form, and that other assertion—which is a paradox—that Soul never completely sinks in matter?<sup>23</sup>

The Plotinian theory of participation is another described aspect of the ontological theory of the image. And the two conceptions shed light on the other important point of our

writing, its peculiar theory of causality. These together show us the brilliant manner in which Plotinus was capable of solving the old philosophical problem of the coexistence of the One and of the multiple.

The following quotation from Plotinus supports the interpretation of *Enneads* III.6.7 and permits us to understand with greater clarity the structure of the ontological image and the elements it presumes: “The painted portrait is not precisely the production of the reflection and the image, as happens with waters, mirrors and shadows” (*Enneads* VI.4.10.11-13).<sup>24</sup>

Any one of the examples cited is sufficiently illustrative in itself to illuminate the constitution of the image and to reveal also that its relation to the model is something necessary and intrinsic to the nature of the image. But because of a new reflection on the structure of the ontological image, it is possible to discover also that upon this conception rides the Plotinian theory of causality. The model/image duality is the concise synthesis of his deepest comprehension arising from the experience of the mystic, as the more refined way to apprehend reality.<sup>25</sup>

The model, as it can be considered, is the case of a man and his specular image. He engenders or originates the reflection, but in no way is it proper to say that the image in the mirror forms part of the subject. He produces the image and because of him, it has an existence and reality, but he is not reflection; not contained in it. Using other vocabulary, the cause produces the effect. However, the effect, insofar as the cause is a totally different reality, is not in the cause. The cause produces the effect, but in reality the effect does not exist, autonomously; what truly exists is that on which it depends, the cause. What most truly exists is the uncaused Cause. This has been stated by Plotinus on many occasions:

That which is spiritualized (*τὸ νοερόν*) remains in itself and does not have need of anything. . . .  
[*Enneads* V.4[7]2.14-15]

Because being the nature of the One is the generatrix of all things, it is none of these. [*Enneads* VI.9[8] 3.39-40]

The One is not in its products, because it is prior to them. [*Enneads* 5.36-37]

Consequently, what is Cause of all things is nothing from amongst them. [*Enneads* 6.55]

Because the One is none of these things since everything comes from It, because It is not contained in any form; yes, the One is alone. [*Enneads* V.1[10] 7.20-21]

Or, if one wishes, in general:

The One is all and is nothing, for as the Principle of all things, it is not all, but it is because, so to speak, all returns there; better still, they are not, but they shall be. . . . What is engendered [=the Spirit] turns toward IT. . . . And what the Spirit produces is its image . . . the Soul, which engenders an image of itself. . . . [*Enneads* V.2[11] 1 ff.]

In this manner we form a notion of procession as a vital line made up of a discrete projection of points each of which is the image of the preceding, yet different from it. The original, the One, for that reason, is all, and yet none of the rest. These latter, the effects, are thus produced by the cause, but are in contrast with its reality, are relatively unreal. It is this mystical consciousness of the degrees of reality that constitutes the idea of procession from higher to lower planes of being. In the ascent back there is the vital experience of rupture among the diverse levels. Return to the eternally real is not a metaphor. It is to return to the original from the image, to what truly is and never ceases to be. In contrast with the sensible, the One is the No-thingness, the alien whose

stable or ephemeral appearances occur—thanks to matter—in the reflections of Spirit and the world; it is the mystery of the image; the One of essential causality; the One of the participation in the dream of No-thingness that is our lot to live.

## II. Śamkara

### *The Śamkarian Notion of Matter*

We will deal now with the master, Śamkara, the Indian philosopher of the eighth century, who ranks with Rāmānuja as the best qualified interpreter of the Vedānta.<sup>26</sup> He is an exegete of the Vedānta or the *darshana* which places special emphasis on the reflection concerning the ultimate meaning of reality or the Brahman. He is a thinker who, as a philosopher, belongs to the highest order, that of a metaphysician. He renders his doctrine in the form of a commentary on the traditional and sacred texts of Hinduism. Thus, his most outstanding works, and also the most extensive, are the interpretations he has written of ten *Upaniṣads*, the *Commentary to the Bhagavadgītā* and, above all, the *Commentary to* [Bādarāyaṇa's] *Brahma-Sūtra*. He opposed the interpretations of the followers of the Sāṅkhya, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools, and some Buddhist schools, pointing out that the aphorisms of Bādarāyaṇa not only synthesize the Vedānta doctrine, but, at the same time—under the Advaita form of non-duality—constitute the most appropriate manner of conceiving the traditional teaching of the *Vedas*.<sup>27</sup> Śamkara has also written a few minor works, but due to the fact that for the Indian author we lack chronological knowledge as definite as that which corresponds to Plotinus, and owing to the fact that not all the works attributed to him are his writing, we will consider the *Commentary to the Brahma-Sūtra* as the basis of our exposition.<sup>28</sup>

Śamkara does not have the same propensity as Plotinus for analysis and discursive exposition. By this, we do not mean to

say that Śaṅkara is not analytical in his expositions, since he examines numerous topics carefully and justifies them with formidable scriptural erudition. Śaṅkara is more of a commentator on the sacred texts than he is a philosopher lecturing before a class. Śaṅkara and Plotinus have a comparable understanding of reality and a similar speculative capacity. However the impulse of the mystical or ultimate experience exerts a greater influence on the expositions of Śaṅkara. Therefore we observe in Śaṅkara a prevalence of synthesis which proves detrimental to the analysis. Obviously the western interpreter misses in Śaṅkara these analytical developments that could be so useful to him for confirming his exegesis.<sup>29</sup>

What does the Advaita Vedānta (non-dualism) mean to Śaṅkara? It means the interpretation of the Brahman as that which transcends duality and its affirmation as the sole reality that rises unchangeable before all that exists, or is said to exist. Evidently, what has been expressed neither rejects analysis, nor is it proclaimed as a merely dogmatic formula. Quite the contrary, it is the result of a fundamental experience, and therefore, has the capacity of being accounted for.

The final part of a brief text by Śaṅkara, the *Pañcikāraṇam*, provides us with a good synthesis of its general perspective:

Now, A, the state of vigil must turn into U, the state of sleep; U turns into M, the state of deep sleep. Afterwards, M must fuse into OM, and OM into the Self. I am the Ātman, the inner witness, the Absolute, who has the nature of pure conscience. I am neither ignorance nor its effects. I am the only Brahman, eternal, pure, omniscient, eternally free and real. I am absolute happiness the One second to none and the inner Conscience. I am Brahman himself. Remaining in this state of absolute identification is what is called the perfect state of concentration.<sup>30</sup>

Here we find summed up what is provided us in the *Commentary to the Brahma-Sūtra* as to what the Śaṅkarian doctrine is in essence. At the pinnacle of all reality we find the supreme Brahman. This first and only reality is beyond every attribute and qualification; and this is so for the simple fact that it deals with the support of all and is that which nothing supports. It is what is devoid of foundation, and for that reason is the authentic foundation.<sup>31</sup> As one might say technically, it is "satcitānanda," that is to say, pure being, consciousness and happiness.<sup>32</sup> It is the synthesis of the transcendentals to which a corrector epithet is applied to make the unseen one observable, so that, in reality, we are at a point which is truly more than the simultaneous existence of the being of truth and beauty. We are above them.<sup>33</sup> And precisely in this case—the experience of reality—it is the language that betrays it, because the language, although it be in its most exact form—that produced through metaphysical speculation—has as the basis of its expression the enunciated. The latter is necessarily analytical in nature, and is enunciated on the basis of attribution, and all attribution that is assigned to what primarily rejects it is falsehood. False attribution, the *adhyāsa*, is the incorrect application of the attributes (and what greater mistake than applying them to what by essence rejects them!) and is the foundation of every mistake. Be on the alert then, with language, when what we want in reality is to shelter ourselves in Silence!<sup>34</sup> The latter here referred to is the plane of true knowledge, the point of view of *parāmarthika*.<sup>35</sup> The normal man is not at such heights, but rather, he loves, suffers, strives, knows a few things, ignores many other things, etc., and moreover, he firmly believes that all these acts and the objects that originate from them have the most solid reality. In the final analysis—man focuses on his existence not as a silence, but as a language, in the bosom of a multiplicity that subjugates him. For that reason, he adopts error as truth. He contemplates it not from a perspective of true knowledge, but from a *vyavahariki* viewpoint.<sup>36</sup> For

example, man will give full reality to the objects he experiments with and uses. He will take the cosmos as a unity in its true self. He will accept his internal order as another truth, and even with a religious sensibility, he will attribute to it a governor and creator in which he will discover the most sublime attributes. In all these cases, the common man and the believing man will be under the shadow of error and will be taking for reality what is not. Rather, they are merely its shadows, the diversity which the unique and undivided projects as the presence of *nāmarūpa*, names and forms.<sup>37</sup> But how can this be? Why, when the depth of man, when the *Ātman*, free of veils, re-encounters the Brahman, when the realization of the ONE-SELF is fulfilled and the sole truth that explains its fulfillment ("Thou art That"), the pure light shines, yet the subject moves from illusion to illusion?<sup>38</sup> Only the *māyā* is ultimately responsible for this situation. But *māyā* (a word that is repeated so much by Śaṅkara) is an elusive notion, many times thought to have been trapped, but which indeed, still escapes.<sup>39</sup>

There is in fact, a *māyā avyakta*, but also *māyā vyakta*; there is a *māyā* that is *ajñāna*, but also there is another that is the "divine power." There also are the powers assigned to it, the *vikṣepa-śakti* and the *āvṛti-śakti*, and the "mystery of *māyā*." How can one introduce a logical order in such a varied vocabulary?<sup>40</sup>

Let's see. Already in the beginning of the *Commentary to the Brahma-Sūtra*, the Brahman is introduced to us as the Principle, the Something from which the universe proceeds. The Brahman is the omnipotent and omniscient one from which all things come forth, and to which all things return. We find here the affirmation of a subordination between what is divine and what is worldly, as well as the acceptance of a difference and opposition between the Brahman and all the rest.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, two levels are presented to us. (1) The Brahman is the Principle, that is to say, he is as much the efficient cause as he is the material cause of all beings.<sup>42</sup> As a result, the Brahman does not produce the form in the way a

potter does, for he has to make use of a pre-existent material and apply his knowledge to it. Brahman generates spontaneously—just as a spider sends forth its web, just as light sends forth its splendor, just as fire sends forth sparks.<sup>43</sup> In brief, the Brahman radiates to all that is subordinated to him. Transcending Wisdom emits its rays everywhere. (2) The production of the Brahman recognizes two fundamental phases: the unmanifested state (*avyakta*) and the manifested (*vyakta*). The first stage is considered as the stage causing the second one, as its possibility.<sup>44</sup> In turn, the state of manifestation shows two aspects: the internal aspect of ordination and direction (*nāma*) and the external aspect of materialized and ordered realities (*rūpa*).<sup>45</sup>

In order to interpret Śaṅkara's cosmological levels in this manner we must emphasize that the Indian scholar understands the moments of inferior reality as simultaneous planes of ontological subordination, rather than as principles followed by a posterior evolutive development. What is not manifested is the principle of manifestation. As its productive power it repels and attracts, and in the universal dissolution, in the *pralāya*, that relation of inseparable and permanent subordination between the orders is shown.

Something similar occurs in the case of the concrete individual between deep sleep and his different states of oneiric sleep and vigilance. When the subject sleeps deeply, there is a possibility of the other two states. Deep sleep is the origin and source because of its own indifferenciation, not as germinal virtuality.<sup>46</sup>

Everything proceeds from the Brahman. What, then, is the product in respect to the producer? Well, its specification or determination, which manifests it in diverse degrees, although inadequately, at the same time that it manifests, hides it because it reveals it as what it is not. We find in language a correspondence to this same debilitated ontological reality, since judgement, the basis of all discourse, is in essence *adhyast*; it cannot be utilized without employing attribution,

consequently without attributing division to what is undivided.

The product is not reality, it is an illusion. Moreover, we are dealing with a type of illusion that supplants reality. Therefore, it is subordinate to it, but also opposed to it, and the only really metaphysical solution to this opposition shall be its separation, that is to say, seeing things as they really are, as appearances, and thus seeing the true reality hidden in it. We must pass from the product to producer.

There must be something that makes possible the concealment or the specification of the Brahman; undoubtedly, the *upādhi*, that is, the limiting elements.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the *Īśvara*, the *Brahman saguna* or *viśiṣṭā*, that is, the Brahman endowed with attributes or the qualified One, the cause of the universe, is no more than the Brahman with the *upādhi* of the *avyakṛta prakṛti*. The Brahman, limited by the non-manifested matter and the *virāt* or cosmos, is the manifested matter<sup>48</sup> but now with the *upādhi* of the *viakṛta prakṛti*. It happens in these cases just as it does with clay, with gold or with space. The jug made of clay, the adornment of gold, and the space within a pot, are but modifications in appearance of clay, gold or space, by virtue of the *upādhi* or the limiting characteristics of the clay or the adornment or the pot (although clay keeps on being clay, the gold, gold, and the space, space). These adopted shapes are a mere illusion that vanishes in its foundation, which is what permits the jug, the ornament and the pot to exist.<sup>49</sup> Each limited appearance of the Brahman is not the Brahman really. It is, therefore, *māyā*, that is, illusion, mirage. But this means that there must exist that which sustains the *upādhis* and permits the Brahman's limitations, something that must even possess a capacity for deceiving. Yes, that element is likewise *māyā*, but now not in regard to an illusory effect, but in regard to the source of illusion. This radically deceiving aspect is also called ignorance or lack of knowledge: *ajñāna*, *avidyā* or *māyā*.<sup>50</sup> If *māyā* exists as illusion, it is because the *māyā* also exists as a divine potency, and in the last instance, it exists as a possibility of deception. The last form of *māyā*

which is fundamental, has man as caught by the illusion (the mystery of the *māyā*). The illusion should be left to one side so the Brahman can be recovered, but man, if he is immersed in the illusion allows it to collaborate in his development by his not purifying himself from it, though it is not his ultimate source. Man is responsible for himself and his fellow man, and when he operates out of ignorance, he collaborates in affirming his enclosure, and projects his influence on the social cosmos. But he is not the creator of *māyā*. He, because, of his own anthropological structure, is already in the illusion, a product of a *ajñāna* which differs from the personal, which is not individual, but rather universal.<sup>51</sup> And, in fact, it is the ignorance in the cosmological scope that permits the *upādhi* which deceptively encloses the Brahman in *Īśvara*, as the lord of the creation, in *virāt*, as the cosmos created, and in the *jīva*, as the microcosmos that encloses the *ātman*.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore it is the *ajñāna* or the *mūl-avidyā* which, in the causal scope, gives a false image of the Brahman as *Īśvara* or *pradhāna* (the cause of the universe). It is the *ajñāna* that permits the birth of the manifested world of *nāmarūpa*.<sup>53</sup> It is said that the *ajñāna/māyā* non-manifested has a dual capacity: the power of projection, and the power of mental or intellectual confusion. That is to say, it is the *māyā* which permits the Brahman to appear as dispersed, multiplied, and so offers Brahman, under a nature not his own, but as a divided whole, which in reality, is not him. On the other hand, it is also the *ajñāna/māyā* that permits the illusion of the cosmos and the individual beings, but here the projecting and veiling capacity is seen in the extreme, since in the manifestation the multiplicity reaches its highest degree and the mental veiling has the cosmic possibility of engendering a type of illusion that attributes the true reality, not to multiple unity, but to simple and dispersed space-time unities, whose sum constitutes the world.<sup>54</sup>

The *ajñāna*, therefore, belongs to the same nature of the degrees of derivation of the Principle, but it is man, in so much as he is also a derived being, who manages to confuse

the moments of derivation with their source. That is why he overcomes the cosmic *māyā*—from which he is derived as a compound, his own *avidyā* or *tūl-avidyā*, and engenders, without ceasing, a false reflection of reality: the world which manifests its language, full and heavy with false predicates. Naturally, when the illumined subject recognizes his identity with the Brahman, he perceives what the true reality is, he goes from ignorance into knowledge, burns every residue of materiality (ethical, gnoseological, etc.), and from the correct point of view, sees each form and each particularity as an illusion: the rope that appeared to be a serpent shows its reality as a rope.<sup>55</sup> Does this last idea mean that once the mentioned “annihilation in the Brahman” has been brought about, the world disappears, and for that reason, the world is a pure negation? No. The nature of whatever opposes the Brahman—which is unreality with respect to the absolute reality is *anirvacanīya*, that is to say, indescribable, for it is neither real nor unreal. What does this mean? Well, let’s take into account the illustration of mother-of-pearl and silver. When one perceives, due to the scarcity of light, that a piece of mother-of-pearl is a piece of silver, and immediately when the light is increased, one has the assurance that the first was pure illusion, the illusion of the silver disappears and the mother-of-pearl appears as real. The possibility of deception always continues to be real, since it belongs to the same intrinsic constitution of what produces it, and is therefore distinguishable from the Brahman; but at the same time, it is something unreal, since the one who is informed has discovered that its true nature is not what it appears to be, but rather what is hidden behind it, the Brahman.<sup>56</sup> We can consider the concrete form used by Śaṅkara to refer to the degrees of reality and their unequal behavior.

*The World as Image According to Śaṅkara and His Theory of Causality*

According to Śaṅkara, how does one explain the presence of the Brahman in *Īśvara* and the world? Or to put it another

way—how does one explain the relation between *Unity* and multiplicity? By understanding the second as the image of the first, says the teacher, the Brahman is nothing more than a *pratibimba*. The reflection of the Brahman *nirguna*, and the particular entities in the same manner, are reflections of the Brahman. Beings are images like the sun that is reflected on the water, even though there be various ponds and the reflections are multiple, and even though the movement of the water obscures the brightness of the sun’s reflection, the sun is not for that reason more than one, nor does its brilliance lose potency. The weakness and the number of the images have nothing to do with Brahman, rather, the changes have to do with affections that are from the images, not from Brahman. We confirm that it is the *añāna* (matter) which as a reflecting medium permits the transformations, because it is also that which collaborates in the existence of the image.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, the equally numerous recourses to the clay limited by the shape of the pot or bowl, gold and adornment, space and spaces, sea and caves, may be interpreted in identical manner. It will not be a question of understanding the clay, water, etc., like unlimited mass or continent upon which are fictitiously placed worlds which limit them, creating in that manner, an internal division of the whole. These illustrations will be understood as suggesting that forms and distinctions are visible elements related to the most superficial layer of a more profound nature than the manifestation of those changes which remains unchangeable. The case of the waves and the sea is the most graphic and familiar example. In the same way our imagination can operate with the remaining comparisons.

This way of representing the relationship between the One and the multiple, with the necessary collaboration of matter or *añāna/māyā*, and illustrating their mutual behavior through the theory implied in the Śaṅkarian conception of the ontological reflection—does not contradict the idea of causality maintained by Śaṅkara. The Brahman is not only the material

and efficient cause of the extant ones, but is also the "Brahman second to none," seen from the height of realization. That is to say, that from the perspective of the *vidyā*, placed before the cause, the effect disappears. This can be understood from a theory that presupposes inferior realities, such as the reflection of the highest reality, since the reality of the image truly resides in the model.<sup>58</sup> According to what was previously said, it is also valid to maintain that since the effect is a pure reflection and as effect, it is unreality, no matter how it is produced by the cause.

The illustration of the spider producing its web gives us a clarification of the cause/effect relation. In the first place, the fact that the spider extracts the web from its own organism, tells us that the producing nature is at the same time an efficient and material cause since the spider needs neither an exterior matter to construct its web, nor makes it ignorantly, but according to a determined natural plan. But although it is certain the spider is the productive agent of the web, it would be arbitrary to affirm that the web as such, forms part of the spider's essence. No, in the spider resides the faculty to produce the web, but the spider is not the web. In any given moment, the means of producing the web is within the spider, and the web started to exist either formally or inwardly in order to exteriorize afterwards.<sup>59</sup> These moments reveal the three metaphysical states: the Brahman, the unmanifest and manifest. Consequently, the truth of the essence of the productive cause is rooted here. The cause produces because it has the potency or the faculty to produce, not because it has the undeveloped germs which will later become developed. In the cause—if we look at it well—is the possibility of producing all the effects and it is in a similar sense that the effect is in the cause. If the pre-existence of the effect on the cause should mean its mere germinal existence, the Brahman would shelter prefigurations, which is impossible, considering his status of transcendence, and the effect would be in the cause not as something different from it, but as part of it. This

explains that Śaṁkara can talk about the only and true existence of cause, the Brahman which also is the principle of dissolution. This does not mean that the manifest is ultimately reabsorbed into the cause, and therewith nullified. That notion is impossible if the effect is understood as reflection. Wisdom then is simply the recovery of what is reflected under its true face.<sup>60</sup>

### III. Plotinus and Śaṁkara

The order itself in which we have developed this writing permits us to explore analogies existing between the two thinkers we have dealt with.

Both Plotinus and Śaṁkara conceive of the Real as the highest plane of Reality. The One and the Brahman are the revelation of a mystical experience and both exceed, as pure Possibility, every attempt of determination. In fact, the delimiting includes form, and form cannot exist without matter, its necessary correlative. Therefore, form and matter are totally alien to the Principle; it is the Nothingness.

Matter/*ajñāna/māyā* is the other part of the first Principle, but it is not independent from It. Consequently Matter surges from It, as the determining capacity, but without being in It.

Matter is just as much in the spiritual as in the sensible world, as the *ajñāna/māyā* is in the *Īśvara* (what is not manifested) and *nāmarūpa* (what is manifested).

The One/Brahman irradiates through its own perfection the remaining characters of reality. These characters, therefore, are images, which reveal in an imaginary manner the superior immediate reality, according to the level of reflection. In both cases, the matter/*ajñāna/māyā* constitutes the reflecting medium necessary for the image to exist.

An equivalent conception concerning the degrees of being, likewise illustrated by literary images that manifest the same



comprehension of the ontological theory of the image, permits both authors to develop a similar notion of the metaphysical participation, which is based on the recognition of the superessential identity manifested under the form of the image. In like manner, the Greek and the Indian philosophers maintain the same theory of essential causality, in which the productive cause is the true and sole reality, and the effect, an irradiation reclaiming its cause, which differs from the former, in so far as its manifestation and nothing as a reality since its reality consists in the object it reflects.

In spite of similar doctrinal analogies, both thinkers clearly show genuine peculiarities, related to their corresponding traditions of thought, Greek and Hindu. Both Plotinus and Śaṅkara respond with their central intuitions to the problems posed by an environment and a set of themes rooted in said environment. It is due to this that there are differences in the exposition of the theme. At first glance, Plotinus appears to be more analytical and coherent, while Śaṅkara is presented as being more synthetic and dispersed. Both are, without doubt, speculative geniuses of the noblest race, but the religious tradition that motivates the second man is more philosophically appeased in the first.

There is a question that remains. How has it been possible for two metaphysicians geographically and temporally so distant and with such diverse cultural traditions to agree on the essential points of their doctrines? These reasons could be pointed out: (a) in regards to the central and supreme intuition of both thinkers, a mystic nature stands out; (b) in relation to their form of predominant discursive and symbolic exposition and in relation to their mutual logical demands displays their similar psychic-speculative and intellectual temperament; (c) in the posing of the religious problems from a philosophical perspective in which identical themes and assumptions arise, one would be able to add the stimulus that can represent a common civilizing Indo-European background since it gave rise to the two unique philosophical traditions that we know: the Indian and the Greek.

## NOTES

1. What follows is a condensed summary of a more ample exposition, which for reasons of space, have had to be limited. The critical and bibliographical notes have been likewise reduced to the indispensable minimum.
2. Cf. *Enn.* II.4.3.1-16.
3. Cf. *Enn.* II.4.4.
4. Cf. *Enn.* II.4.5.4-8. Here *buthos* is equal to substratum.
5. Cf. *Enn.* II.4.5.1-4.
6. Cf. *Enn.* II.4.5.8 ff., and previously V.4[7].2, VI.9[9].2 and V.1.10.6-7. Can likewise be seen in comparison with our interpretation: R. Aron, *Le désir de Dieu* (Roma, 1967), pp. 70 ff.; J. Trouillard, *La Procession Plotinienne* (Paris, 1955), pp. 14-20; J. M. Rist, "Plotinus on Matter and Evil," *Phron.*, 6 (1961), pp. 155 ff.; J. Igal, "La génesis de la Inteligencia en un pasaje de la *Enéadas* de Plotino," *Emérita*, 39 (1971), pp. 129-157; and in the examination of Ph. Merlan in *From Platonism to Neoplatonism*, pp. 133 ff., which includes the position of Armstrong and other specialists.
7. Cf. *Enn.* V.1[10].4.
8. Cf. *Enn.* II.4.6-15. In support of II.4.11 for the concept of mass, see also III.6[26].16-17, and from II.4.15.13-37: "as the archetype differs from the image," *Enn.* V.8[31].7.23-24.
9. See the second paragraph of the paper. There is also in this treatise a brief examination of the gnoseological status of matter (II.4.10 and 12.26-37), which is consistent with all the Plotinian exposition. As undefined depth, it is the component of all that can be known through the spiritual or sensible intuition. Therefore, it is only apprehensible in the entirety that is experienced and in itself is unrecognizable (unknown). But the experience of the cognitive synthesis allows us to elevate even what the knowledge gives it, or will stop in the synthesis, to describe logically its constitution; this latter will be legitimate, but also problematic. Nevertheless, it will be the capability to be known of the component. Matter is the limitative (restrictive) case as the opposite to the true knowledge. Therefore, the introspective activity of the soul will be equivalent to emptying itself of the positive and residue will be pure possibility of knowing or a "spurious reasoning," as Plato would say.
10. Negative notions: matter is not body (*Enn.* IV.7[2].8.1.12-16, 28 ff.; V.9[5].3.19-20; 4.8-12; 6.15 ff.; V.1[10].2.23 ff.). Positive notions: matter in the spiritual and in the sensible (V.9[5].3.19-20; 14; V.1[10].4.26 ff.; and V.17); multiplicity and composition in the Spirit (V.9[5].7-8; V.4[7].1; VI.9[9].2.3.5; V.1[10].6.28 ff.;

- 7.22; V.2[11].1; V.9[5].3.19-20; and V.4[7].2); form matter inseparability in the spiritual dominion (V.9[5].5; 10.6 ff.); spiritual paradigms and cosmic images (V.9[5].5); substrate and receptacle (V.9[5].5.37; 9.8-10; V.1[10].3.28-31); Otherness (V.9[5].8.28-31; IV.9[8].33 ff.; VI.9[9].6.42; V.1[10].1.4; 6.53); undefined and amorphous (V.9[5].3.19-20, also *in fine*; VI.9[9].7); receives qualities and quantities (V.9[5].10.6 ff.); collaborates in the spiritual or sensible actualization (V.9[5].12); multiplies and divides (IV.9[8].5); its presence makes the One to be desired (VI.9[9].5.9; V.2[11].1); to corroborate what was said, the first hypostasis is simple, one, perfect, etc. (V.9[5].2.26-27; V.4[7].1; VI.9[9].9 ff.; V.1[10].7).
11. Matter in the spiritual and sensible (*Enn.* II.5[25].3.8-13, 31-40; VI.4[22].4.20 ff.); substrate and undefined receptacle, amorphous and indeterminate (II.5[25].4.12; IV.3[27].9-10); pure disposition (II.5[25].4.3-5); the otherness (VI.4[22].11.17; II.5[25].4.6-11; 5 *in initio*; IV.3[27].4.9-12); precarious gnosological condition (II.5[25].5).
  12. Cf. likewise *Enn.* V.5[32].9.
  13. Cf. *Enn.* III.8.11.26-45 and V.8.1 ff. See also V.5[32].12.
  14. Cf. *Enn.* V.8[31].1-3. *Enn.* II.9[33].17 presupposes it.
  15. Synthesis in II.9.6.33-34; cf. V.5.11-13 and the summary in II.9.1.1 and V.5, chapters 6, 7 and 8.
  16. The theme is amply treated in our thesis *Plotinus and the Gnosis*.
  17. Cf. *Enn.* V.1[10].7 *in fine* and II.9.12.
  18. Cf. *Enn.* II.9.17-18. I.8.8 is antignostic. See Irenaeus de Lyon, *Adv. Haer.* I.5.4 (Harvey, I, pp. 48-9).
  19. This is emphasized in Chapter 19 and II.5[25], and 4 *in fine* and 5.
  20. Cf. *Enn.* V.4[7].1; V.1[10].7; VI.9[9]; V.2[11].1; and V.9[5].2 *in fine*.
  21. Cf. *Enn.* III.6.12.
  22. Cf. *Enn.* VI.9[9].4.10.11; II.4[12].10; III.8[30].9; etc.
  23. Cf. *Enn.* VI.5[23].8; IV.7[2].8; IV.8[6].8; V.1[42].10; etc.
  24. Cf. F. García Bazán, "Sobre una aparente contradicción en los textos de Plotino," in *Genethliakon Isidorianum* (Salamanca, 1975), pp. 177-84.
  25. Cf. F. García Bazán, "El lenguaje de la mística," in *Escritos de Filosofía* No. 1 (Buenos Aires, 1978).
  26. Cf. O. Lacombe, *L'Absolu selon le Vedānta* (Paris, 1937).
  27. Cf. *Śaṅkarabhāṣya* I.1.1, I.1.2 and I.1.4.
  28. We use the *Vedānta-Sūtra* with *Commentary* by Śaṅkaracārya, translated into English by G. Thibaut, Sacred Books of the East

- Series, 34-35 (Delhi, 1962) (hereinafter referred to as *SB*). Also very useful is *Śaṅkara, Prolegomenes au Vedānta*, translated from the Sanskrit by L. Renou (Paris, 1951) (hereinafter referred to as Renou).
29. The methodology of R. Otto is different. See his *Mystique d'Orient et Mystique d'Occident* (Paris, 1951). Also, see G. Vallin, *La Perspective Métaphysique* (Paris, 1959).
  30. Cf. P. Martin-Dubost, *Çaṅkara et le Vedānta* (Paris, 1973), p. 135. See also *SB* II.1.9 (I, p. 312) and IV.4.16 (II, pp. 414-15).
  31. Cf. *SB* I.1.4 (I, pp. 22-3, 36-7), and I.4.3 (I, p. 243); S. Mudhavananda, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (Mayavati, 1921), p. 125 (hereinafter referred to as *VCM*); *Commentary on the Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad* I.9 (śloka) (hereinafter referred to as *SB Māṇḍ. Up.*).
  32. Cf. *VCM*, pp. 135, 225, 237-8, and 464-70. See likewise Martin-Dubost, *Çaṅkara et le Vedānta*, pp. 64-5.
  33. Cf. *SB* I.1.3 (I, p. 19). See likewise Renou, p. 16 and notes, I.1.4 (I, p. 25), I.4.15 (I, pp. 266-7), IV.4.4 (II, pp. 407-8), and IV.4.5-6 (II, pp. 408-9); *VCM*, pp. 260-61, 263, 573; *SB Māṇḍ. Up.* I.10 (śloka) and III.36 (śloka). See also P. Deussen, *Das System des Vedānta* (Leipzig, 1906), pp. 139 ff., and S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (London, 1923), II:533-41.
  34. Cf. *SB* I.1.4 (I, p. 33), II.1.28 (I, p. 352), and III.2.18 (II, p. 157); and *SB Māṇḍ. Up.* I.9 (śloka), I.12 (mantra *in initio*), I.29 (śloka), and IV.60, 61, 62 (śloka).
  35. Cf. *SB* I.1.4 (I, p. 28); *SB Māṇḍ. Up.* IV.42 (śloka *in fine*); later *Dṛgdrīyaviveka*, 42 (hereinafter referred to as *DDV*). One may consult P. Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Vedānta and the Vedāntasara* (Calcutta, 1957), p. 22.
  36. Cf. *DDV* 37, 41; Deussen, *Das System*, pp. 292-3.
  37. Cf. *SB* I.4.9 (I, p. 255), II.1.14 (I, p. 328), and IV.3.14 (II, p. 401).
  38. Cf. *SB* I.1.4 (I, pp. 23, 28-30, 34-36, 41 and 43), I.4.6 (I, p. 251), I.4.22 (I, p. 279), IV.1.19 (II, p. 363), IV.2.7 (II, p. 369), and IV.4.1-2 (II, pp. 405-6); *VCM*, p. 124; *SB Māṇḍ. Up.* IV.75-76 (śloka); and Renou, p. 20 and note.
  39. Cf., for example, Otto, *Mystique d'Orient*, pp. 103 ff.
  40. Cf. *VCM*, pp. 65, 108, 110, 120, 123, and 237-8; *SB* II.1.14 (I, p. 329) and II.1.37 (I, p. 326). In identical tradition is *DDV* 13. See Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, II, pp. 573-4.
  41. *SB* I.1.2 (I, p. 15) *et passim*. See also S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1932), I:437-8.
  42. *SB* I.4.1 (I, p. 237), I.4.23 (I, pp. 283-6), I.4.24 (I, p. 286), and II.1.37 (I, p. 361). See Dasgupta, *Indian Philosophy*, p. 438.

43. The production of the Brahman is different from that of the potters and other artisans; cf. *SB* II.1.24 (I, p. 346), II.1.25 (I, p. 348), etc. Remember *Enn.* III.8[30].2 *in initio*, V.8[31].7, etc.
44. Cf. *SB* I.4.1 (I, p. 238), I.4.2 (I, p. 242), I.4.3 (I, p. 243), I.4.9 (I, p. 255), II.1.14 (I, p. 329), IV.3.8-9 (II, pp. 390-91), IV.3.14 (II, pp. 401-2), IV.4.19 (II, p. 417), and IV.4.21-2 (II, pp. 418-19); *SB Mānd. Up.* I.6 (mantra); and, briefly, Martin-Dubost, *Çankara et le Vedānta*, pp. 101-2.
45. *SB* IV.3.10 (II, p. 391).
46. *SB* I.1.9 (I, pp. 59-60), II.1.9 (I, pp. 311-12), II.1.14 (I, pp. 324-5), IV.2.15 (II, p. 376), and IV.3.11 (II, p. 392). *VCM*, pp. 120-21. *SB Mānd. Up.* I.1 (mantra *in fine*), I.5 (mantra), I.18 (śloka), and III.35 (śloka).
47. *SB* I.2.6 (I, p. 113), I.4.10 (I, p. 257), and I.4.22 (I, p. 279).
48. Cf. *SB* I.1.19 (I, p. 74), I.1.24 (I, p. 92), II.2.3 (I, p. 111), I.3.13 (I, pp. 171-4), and II.1.28 (I, p. 352); Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, pp. 572-3.
49. *SB* passim. Cf., briefly, Dasgupta, *Indian Philosophy*, p. 439.
50. *SB* I.4.3 (I, p. 243), I.4.6 (I, p. 251), II.1.14 (I, p. 329), II.1.28 (I, p. 352), II.1.31 (I, p. 355), and IV.3.14 (II, p. 401); *VCM*, pp. 227, 237-8, 243, 514; *SB Mānd. Up.* II.19 (śloka), III.10 (śloka), III.15 (śloka). See Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, pp. 565 ff.
51. *SB* II.1.36 (I, p. 360) and III.2.35 (II, p. 179); *SB Mānd. Up.* I.16 (śloka). Also see Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, pp. 587-90.
52. *SB* II.3.50 (II, p. 68); *VCM*, p. 243; *SB Mānd. Up.* III.6 (śloka *in fine*).
53. *SB* II.1.4 (I, pp. 329-30) and III.2.21 (II, p. 163); *VCM*, pp. 260, 345; *SB Mānd. Up.* I.18 (śloka *in fine*). See Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, pp. 578-87, 590-94.
54. Cf. *VCM*, p. 343 and, later, *DDV* 13, 35. There is more. *Māyā* has three *guṇas*: *rajas*, *taṃas* and *sattva* (*VCM*, p. 110); and as something undifferentiated (*VCM*, p. 108), it is a perfectly balanced state of the *guṇas*. (Therefore, it is said that the *avṛti* "initiates the action of the projecting capacity" (*VCM*, p. 113), and that it is *Kāraṇa-Śarīra* of the *Ātman* (*VCM*, p. 120).) That is to say, the *māyā-avyakta* or *añāna* is the equivalent of the Plotinian spiritual matter. But in Śaṅkara as in Plotinus the dialectical analysis is possible. First the *sattva* has the "divine tendencies and turning away from the unreal" (*VCM*, p. 118), and second, the *rajas* "has *viksepa-śakti* or projecting power" (*VCM*, p. 111), and the *taṃas* has the *avṛti* or veiling power (*VCM*, p. 113), that is to say, the aspiration upward and the *tolma* of Plotinian matter. Moreover, both powers are in *nidrā* (*SB Mānd. Up.* 1.13 (śloka) and, later, *DDV*

- 38). Remember the *babarménos noûs* of Plotinus (*Enn.* III.8[30].8,34). See likewise *SB Mānd. Up.* 1.15, 1.17, and IV.94 (śloka).
55. *SB* I.2.6 (I, p. 113), I.2.20 (I, p. 135), and I.4.6 (I, p. 251). *SB Mānd. Up.* II.16 (śloka), II.28 (śloka), and II.32 (śloka). See Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, pp. 557 ff.
56. *SB* III.2.21 (II, pp. 162-3). *VCM*, p. 569. *SB Mānd. Up.* IV.44 (śloka). See Dasgupta, *Indian Philosophy*, pp. 486-7.
57. *SB* II.1.6 (I, pp. 307-8), II.3.50 (II, pp. 68-9), III.2.18-21 (II, pp. 157-9), III.2.26 (II, p. 173), and III.2.35 (II, p. 179). *SB Mānd. Up.* I.6 (śloka), II.30 (śloka), II.31, and IV.98 (śloka).
58. *SB* II.3.17 (II, p. 32), III.2.41 (II, p. 183), and IV.4.15-16 (II, pp. 414-15). *VCM*, pp. 223, 226, 230. *SB Mānd. Up.* III.18 (śloka), III.23 (śloka), and IV.90 (śloka). Also see Martin-Dubost, *Çankara et le Vedānta*, p. 63.
59. *SB* I.4.27 (I, p. 288) and II.1.24 (I, pp. 346-7).
60. *SB* I.4.14 (I, p. 266), I.4.21 (I, pp. 277-8), I.4.22 (I, p. 280), I.4.28 (I, p. 289), II.1.1 (I, p. 290), II.1.8 (I, p. 309), II.1.9 (I, p. 311), II.1.14 (I, p. 320), II.1.15 (I, p. 331), II.1.16 (I, p. 332), II.1.18 (I, p. 341), II.1.28 (I, p. 353), II.1.30 (I, pp. 354-5), II.1.31 (I, pp. 355-6), and II.4.20 (II, pp. 97-8). Śaṅkara, *Aparokṣānubhūti* 138 (*Select Works*, p. 82). *SB Mānd. Up.* I.13 (śloka), III.27 (śloka), III.48 (śloka), IV.38 (śloka), IV.42 (śloka), IV.52 (śloka), IV.54,55-7, IV.93 and IV.95 (śloka). Furthermore, if the effect does not exist, neither does the *māyā* (*añāna*), which is its possibility. See *SB Mānd. Up.* IV.38 (śloka). One may compare equally the gnoseological status of *māyā* (*VCM*, p. 109) with the mentioned status of matter in Plotinus.

## Śaṅkara and Eriugena on Causality

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Eriugena, in the *Periphyseon*, and Śaṅkara, in his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtra* of Bādarāyana, are occasionally concerned to establish the truth of a proposition of the type:

(1) A is the cause of B.

In the course of defending their causal assertions, both Eriugena and Śaṅkara sometimes raise objections of the type:

(2) A cannot be the cause of B because A has characteristic<sup>1</sup> *x* while B has characteristic *non-x*.

Having raised such an objection to their causal assertions, Eriugena and Śaṅkara sometimes go further and offer as an objection a general assertion about the nature of the causal relation of the type:

(3) If A is the cause of B, then A and B must share certain important characteristics.

In addition to offering the same types of objections to causal assertions, Eriugena and Śaṅkara offer replies to them which are similar and fall into two main categories. Sometimes the objection is tackled directly and a proof that A is the cause of B is given, which either appeals to Scriptural authority or does not. At other times the reply is based upon a causal analogy. The causal relationship of A and B has been called into question because A is *x* but B is not *x*. Thus a causal analogy is presented, i.e., a pair C and D such that C is acknowledged to be the cause of D but C is *y* while D is not *y*.

The following will be a detailed consideration of several instances in which each philosopher is concerned to defend a causal assertion against objections of the types mentioned above.

### Corporeal Effects and Their Causes

#### *Eriugena*

The "fact" that incorporeal causes can have corporeal effects is mentioned twice in Book One of the *Periphyseon* before the possibility of such a causal relation is ever questioned.<sup>2</sup> The question is finally discussed during a consideration of the relation of *ousia* and its natural accidents to bodies and their accidents (PI 163-71; PL 498B-501C). The Teacher tells the Student that *quantu* and *qualia*, the accidents of bodies, are the effects of the incorporeal quality and quantity which subsist in *ousia* as its natural accidents.

The student wishes to know how this is possible, for the causes in this case are incorporeal and invisible, immutable, and intelligible while bodies are visible and corporeal, mutable, and sensible. "How then can quantity and quality produce matter, which is something very different from them?" he asks, and "why is what is understood of the causes not also understood of their effects? . . ." (PI 165; PL 499A).

The Teacher proceeds to demonstrate that incorporeal causes do, in fact, have corporeal effects (PI 165-7; PL 499B-501B). The basic presupposition of this demonstration is that all corporeal things are a combination of form and matter and that there is no third component in addition to these. This is not stated explicitly by Eriugena. The Teacher begins by eliciting the Student's agreement that unformed matter is contemplated by reason rather than sense. The student then agrees that since formless matter is contemplated by reason, it is incorporeal. The Teacher notes that this conclusion is confirmed by authority and cites Augustine, Plato, and the pseudo-Dionysius. Dionysius is quoted as saying that "matter is participation in adornment and form and species, for without these matter is formless and cannot be understood in anything" (PI 169; PL 500D). The Student agrees that "the species and form and adornments themselves, by participation in which that formless or mutability we mentioned is changed into matter" (PI 169; PL 501B) are contemplated by reason alone. Since form too is contemplated by reason rather than sense, it is incorporeal. But this is all that is needed and the demonstration is completed, as "now you see that from incorporeal things, namely mutable formlessness which yet is receptive forms, and form itself, something corporeal, namely matter and body, is created" (PI 171; PL 501B).

As it is evident from the above, Eriugena's concern is to demonstrate that the causes of bodies and their effects do not share the particular characteristics of corporeality, incorporeality, mutability, immutability, simplicity, and composition. He is not concerned to explain here, or elsewhere, why these particular characteristics are not shared, and why those characteristics (if any) which are shared are shared. Such an explanation would require an explicit discussion of the nature of causation *per se*, something which is not found in the *Periphyseon*.

*Śaṅkara*

Śaṅkara is not particularly concerned with the question Eriugena considers rather carefully, "Can incorporeal causes produce corporeal effects?" He does however, give it a passing glance. This occurs in his commentary on *Brahma Sūtra* 1.1.21.<sup>3</sup>

The question at issue here is the exegetical one of whether the "source of all beings" referred to in *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.1.5-6 is the *pradhāna* (a rival philosophical school's version of prime matter), the soul, or *Brahman*.

A *pūrvapakṣin* (hypothetical opponent of Śaṅkara's position) argues that since earth and other non-intelligent things are given as instances of "sources" in *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.1.7, the source of all beings must also be non-intelligent. Śaṅkara's arguments against this position are mainly exegetical, but his last argument replies to the *pūrvapakṣin*'s interpretation of the analogies of the passage. The contention, says Śaṅkara, that since the parallel instances are non-intelligent, the source of all beings, to which they are compared, must also be non-intelligent is baseless since "it is not necessary that two things of which one is compared to the other should be of absolutely the same nature" (*BS* 1.2.21; 1:139). Concluding the discussion, Śaṅkara says that, "The things, moreover, to which the source of all beings is compared, viz. the earth and the like, are material, while nobody would assume the source of all beings to be material" (*BS* 1.2.21; 1:139).

This treatment appears to be the only consideration in Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma Sūtra* of the question, "Can incorporeal causes produce a corporeal effect?" He apparently considered it unworthy of serious attention.

## God and Brahman and Their Effects

*Eriugena-One*

In Chapter Five of Book Three of the *Periphyseon* Student and Teacher discuss at length how all things can be both eternal in God's Wisdom and also made from nothing. At one point they discuss the question whether formless matter is also created from nothing.<sup>4</sup> Certain "secular philosophers" have insisted that it could not be, and have said that formless matter is coeternal with God. They cannot see how that which is formless, variable, subject to accidents, extended in place and time, receptive of different qualities, corruptible, and compound can come into being from that which is the form of all things, invariable, subject to no accidents, not extended in time or space, subject to no quality, incorruptible, and simple.

But, Teacher continues, we must not doubt that "He who made the world from formless matter also made formless matter from absolutely nothing..." (*P2* 144; *PL* 636D). The Teacher then offers support for this doctrine. In the first place this is the teaching of Scripture. Secondly, such objections are incompatible with the conception of an omnipotent creator.<sup>5</sup>

Eriugena devotes little attention to this objection, and his first reply appears to be misdirected. It is doubtful that "secular philosophers" will be particularly impressed with an appeal to Scripture. The second reply is perhaps being offered as an alternative to an appeal to Scripture. The question then becomes, "What is our source of knowledge of God's omnipotence?" If it is Scripture, then this reply would also be misdirected.

In any case, Eriugena seems to feel that this objection is hardly worthy of note, much less two discussions directed at two different audiences. Throughout the *Periphyseon* he presents a mixture of philosophical and scriptural proofs of his doctrines. At no point does he indicate that he is aware

that objections raised by philosophers who do not recognize the authority of Scripture must be handled quite differently from objections raised by those who accept it. As the discussion of Śaṅkara which follows will show, the distinction between philosophy and theology seems to have been made earlier in India than in Europe.

### *Eriugena-Two*

In Book Two of the *Periphyseon* there occurs an extended discussion of the primordial causes—that which is created and creates. At one point the Student asks if the primordial causes understand themselves before they flow into the things of which they are the causes.<sup>6</sup> The Teacher replies by first pointing out that God made the primordial causes in His Wisdom. Since God's Wisdom knows herself and the things that are made in her, the primordial causes are wise and not only know themselves but the things of which they are the principles. The Student then asks, "If the primordial causes have wisdom of themselves because they are created in Wisdom and subsist eternally in that which admits nothing unwise in itself, how is it that from the wise causes many unwise things proceed?" (P2 67; PL 552B). After giving examples of wise effects of the primordial causes as well as effects devoid of wisdom, the Student answers his own question. The rays of the sun are not dark, he observes, but the causes of darkness inhere in them. Thus the causes of unwise things can subsist in the wise primordial causes. Recalling that in an earlier presentation of this example Eriugena had said that the causes of shadow *are* body and light rather than *inhere in* body and light (PI 171; PL 501C) and Eriugena's earlier statement—"I see no reason why whatever proceeds from those things which are in the source should not be traced back to that very source" (PI 165; PL 499A)—it would be reasonable to conclude that the wise primordial causes can have unwise effects.

Now the question might be asked, "What does the fact that the sun's rays are not dark but they are the causes of shadows which are dark have to do with the possibility that wise causes can have unwise effects?" When the Student asks rhetorically, "If the primordial causes are wise, how is it that from these wise causes many unwise things proceed?" he could have had the following in mind:

(4) If A is the cause of B then A and B must share all characteristics.

But this is obviously much too broad. It says, in effect, that cause and effect must be identical. Admittedly, if the Student did have this in mind then the causal relation between the sun's rays and shadows would be a counter-example that would refute the principle.

A more reasonable objection would be something like:

If A is the cause of B, then A and B must share certain important characteristics or types of characteristics.

For example, one might object that if A is the material cause of B then A and B must either both be corporeal or both incorporeal, or if A is the cause of B, B must share A's essential characteristics. Such a more specific objection would mean that the counter-example works only if the relation of wisdom to the primordial causes and light to the rays of the sun are the same. Whatever the type of objection Eriugena had in mind, however, he gives it so little attention he can hardly have taken it seriously. This might suggest that he had in mind the former of the two objections mentioned above.

### *Śaṅkara*

Śaṅkara wishes to prove that Brahman is the material or substantial cause (*upādāna kāraṇa*) of the world in addition to being the operational or efficient cause (*nimitta kāraṇa*) (BS

1.4.23; 1:283-4). Three times in his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtra* he deals with an objection to this doctrine of the following type:

(5) The world is seen to consist of parts, be non-intelligent, and impure but Brahman is known to be without parts, intelligent and pure. But material cause and effect must share these characteristics. Thus Brahman cannot be the material cause of the world.<sup>7</sup>

Śaṅkara's first reply to this type of objection is that we must conclude that Brahman is both the material and operative cause of the world because this is the only assumption that allows us to make sense out of key scriptural passages (BS 1.4.23; 1:284). Passages such as *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.1.3-4 suggest that through the cognition of Brahman everything else becomes known, but this is possible only through the cognition of the material cause. This is because the effect is "non-different" from the material cause while it is not "non-different" from the operative or efficient cause. Thus, knowledge of the operative cause alone cannot result in knowledge of the effect.

Notice that at this point, Śaṅkara's appeal to Scripture does not deal with the *pūrvapakṣin's* contention that the material cause and effect must be "of the same nature" or "alike in kind." This is because he is dealing at this point with an opponent who also accepts the authority of the *Vedas*.<sup>8</sup> Śaṅkara deals with opponents who do not accept the authority of Scripture later.

It should be pointed out that Śaṅkara considers an appeal to Scripture—"proof by demonstration of the connected meaning of all the Vedānta texts"—to be the final justification for any assertion about Brahman. This is made explicit in his commentary on 1.4.27. Here Śaṅkara notes that Brahman is the material cause of the world because it is called the "source" (*yonī*) in the sacred texts, and that the word

"source" is used in ordinary language to denote the material cause. A *pūrvapakṣin* raises the objection that ordinarily the operative and material causes are different. Śaṅkara dismisses the objection, saying that "as the matter in hand is not one which can be known through inferential reasoning, ordinary experience cannot be used to settle it. For the knowledge of that matter we rather depend on Scripture altogether, and hence Scripture only has to be appealed to" (BS 1.4.27; 1:288).

Śaṅkara's second reply to the type of objection characterized above (5) occurs in a section in which he deals with objections to his position founded on "reasoning" alone (BS 2.1.4-6; 1:299-308). After stating the objection, the first thing Śaṅkara does is to reject one possible defence of his view. This is the assertion that Brahman and the world do share the characteristic of intelligence but that the intelligence of the world is not apparent, just as a man's intelligence is unmanifested in certain states such as sleep. He argues that even if such reasoning explained the difference of characteristics between the intelligent Brahman and the non-intelligent world, there are other characteristics not shared as well. More important, neither perception nor inference supply evidence that the entire world is intelligent. Thus such an assertion could be proven only by an appeal to scriptural evidence. But Scripture itself actually teaches that the world is of a nature different from its material cause—non-intelligent.

Having rejected one possible defence of his doctrine, Śaṅkara replies that "Your assertion that this world cannot have originated from Brahman on account of the difference of its character is not founded on an absolutely true tenet" (BS 2.1.6; 1:305). The objection in this case had been that "things of an altogether different character cannot stand to each other in the relation of material cause and effect" (BS 2.1.4; 1:300).

In the first place, notes Śaṅkara, "we see that from man, who is acknowledged to be intelligent, non-intelligent things such as hair and nails originated, and that, on the other hand,



from avowedly non-intelligent matter, such as cow-dung, scorpions and similar animals are produced" (BS 2.1.6; 1:305). Secondly, even if it is agreed that the non-intelligent human body is the real cause of the non-intelligent hair and nails and that the non-intelligent dung is the cause of only the bodies of the scorpions, the causes and their effects in these cases would still have different characteristics. The body of the scorpion would be a kind of non-intelligent matter with the characteristic "capable of serving as the abode of an intelligent principle" while the dung would be a kind of non-intelligent matter with the characteristic "incapable of serving as the abode of an intelligent principle." This would be an obvious difference in characteristics. Also, the differences in characteristics between men's bodies on the one hand and their hair and nails on the other is quite considerable.

Since the question at issue here is whether the intelligent Brahman can be the material cause of a non-intelligent effect, the relevance of the first counter-example to the *pūrvapakṣin*'s objection is obvious. The relevance of the second and third counterexamples, however, is problematic. The differences in characteristics between dung and a scorpion cannot be denied. But they also share other important characteristics—corporeality, for example. Thus Śaṅkara seems to be interpreting the *pūrvapakṣin* as saying that if A is the cause of B, then B must share *all* characteristics of A (4). As was mentioned in connection with Eriugena's dealing with the question "How can wise causes have unwise effects?", such an interpretation of the objection is so broad that it renders it trivially false.

Śaṅkara, however, goes on to consider systematically the notion of difference in characteristics of the cause and effect that the objection hinges on.<sup>10</sup> He notes that a person who insists that Brahman cannot be the material cause of the world because of the "Difference of attributes" must mean either that:

1. The world has none of the characteristics that Brahman has and the cause and effect must share at least one characteristic; or
2. The world lacks some of the characteristics that Brahman has; or
3. The world lacks some specific characteristic of Brahman such as intelligence.

Śaṅkara then discusses these alternatives.<sup>11</sup> In the case of the first, the assertion is false. The world and Brahman do indeed share a characteristic, *sāttā* (existence). According to the second alternative Brahman cannot be the cause of the world because the world does not have all the characteristics Brahman has. But if the effect must have all the characteristics that the cause has, this would "negate" the relation of cause and effect, "for if the two were absolutely identical they could not be distinguished" (BS 2.1.6; 1:306). Finally, in reference to the third alternative, Śaṅkara says that when a person insists that the world cannot be an effect of Brahman because it lacks the characteristic of intelligence, he is arguing as follows:

Whatever is devoid of intelligence cannot be an effect of Brahman.

The world is devoid of intelligence.

Therefore, the world is not an effect of Brahman.

The truth of the minor premise is obvious. Thus the basic problem for an opponent of Śaṅkara is the proof of the major premise. Śaṅkara is convinced that Scripture unequivocally indicates that Brahman is the cause of all effects. Thus scripture cannot be the source of our knowledge of the truth of the major premise. An opponent cannot advance an inductive proof of the major premise because the *only* source of knowledge of Brahman is scripture. Any example which the opponent might advance as evidence of the major premise would be denied to be such by the Vedāntin.

In spite of the fact that Śaṅkara said he would deal in this section with objections to this position based on reasoning alone, he finds himself unable to refute the most sophisticated of them without an appeal to Scriptural authority. Śaṅkara's non-orthodox opponents (those who do not accept the authority of the *Vedas*) are no more likely to be impressed by an appeal to Scripture than the "secular philosophers" Eriugena mentions as objecting to the doctrine that God created formless matter out of nothing.

Śaṅkara's third reply to the type of criticism of his doctrine of Brahman as the material cause of the world outlined above (5) arises during his critique of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of atomism (*BS* 2.2.10-11; 1:376-86). Śaṅkara begins by showing that the Vaiśeṣika system is just as vulnerable to the criticism they make of his system as his own. Thus an essential part of his reply is a summary of the Vaiśeṣika system (*BS* 2.2.11; 1:382-3) the relevant portions of which are:

1. Atoms are spherical and possess color and other characteristics;
2. When two atoms conjoin to produce a binary compound, the characteristics of the atoms produce corresponding characteristics in the binary compound, except that though the atoms are spherical, the binary compound is not, it is 'minute and short';
3. When two binary compounds conjoin to produce a quaternary compound, once again most of the characteristics of the binary compound produce corresponding characteristics in the quaternary compound, except that though the binary compounds are minute and short, the quaternary compounds are 'big and long'.

Of course, given this summary, Śaṅkara's line of argumentation is obvious. He simply points out that the "forms of extension" of the parts do not produce corresponding qualities in the compounds. Thus the intelligent Brahman can be

the cause of the non-intelligent world and the non-acceptance of this possibility would require the abandonment of a fundamental principle of the Vaiśeṣika.

Now, continues Śaṅkara, the Vaiśeṣikas might try to answer the criticism (*BS* 2.2.11; 1:383-5). The forms of extension of the components, they might argue, do not produce corresponding qualities in the compounds because the compounds are "engrossed" by forms of extension contrary to that of the components, and thus the components cannot produce similar characteristics in the compounds. This principle of "engrossment" cannot be similarly invoked by the Vedāntins, the Vaiśeṣikas might further maintain. Non-intelligence, an obvious quality of the world, is not a quality contrary to intelligence but simply the absence of intelligence. Thus the world is not engrossed by some quality contrary to intelligence which keeps the intelligence inherent in the cause from producing intelligence in the effect. Thus, the Vaiśeṣikas would conclude, the two cases of causality being compared are dissimilar in important ways and the intelligence of the cause—Brahman—would be expected to be manifested in the effect—the world.

The question is thus, "How acceptable is 'engrossment by contrary forms' as an explanation for the difference in characteristics between cause and effect?" Not at all, insists Śaṅkara. In a very terse section not notable for its clarity (*BS* 2.2.11; 1:383-5) he rejects this explanation of the fact that certain characteristics of the cause do not produce corresponding characteristics in the effect.

Though the section is quite difficult, the most important thing to note is Śaṅkara's conclusion after rejecting the alternative explanation of why cause and effect do not share certain characteristics. He concludes that the fact that sphericity, for example, is a characteristic which need not be shared by cause and effect can be explained only on the assumption that this is the result of the essential nature of sphericity. But such a contention can certainly be made by Śaṅkara about the intelligence of Brahman. Thus the Vaiśeṣikas must agree

with the Vedāntins that some causes do not produce like effects and thus the intelligent Brahman can produce the non-intelligent world.

Notice that the Vaiśeṣikas are not arguing that the cause and effect do indeed share all characteristics but this fact is not always apparent. They argue instead that the effect shares the characteristics of the cause unless it is "prevented" from doing so. Śaṅkara is forced to reject this type of causal theory because it would require the postulation of something other than Brahman to "prevent" the Brahman's intelligence from being a characteristic of the world. The postulation of something "other" than Brahman would severely compromise Śaṅkara's monism to say the least. Thus Śaṅkara must argue that the non-sharing of characteristics by cause and effect is due to the nature of the cause alone and to no other thing.

#### Concluding Remarks

The thrust of Śaṅkara's replies to the criticisms of his assertion that Brahman is the material cause of the world appears to be towards the principle that cause and effect need share no characteristics. It might be remembered that at one point he replies to the insistence of a *pūrvapakṣin* that cause and effect must share at least some characteristics. He points out that Brahman and the world do indeed share one characteristic—*sāttā* (existence). However, it should be mentioned that elsewhere Śaṅkara apparently argues that real effects can result from unreal causes, as when a man dies after imagining himself to have been bitten by a venomous snake.<sup>12</sup> Then too, such a statement is not consonant with what might be called the standard interpretation of Śaṅkara's system. Brahman is, among other things, *sāt* (being), while the world, in spite of all the talk about Brahman as its material cause, is "mere illusion or *māyā*,"<sup>13</sup> "only an illusory imagination which lasts till the moment when true knowledge is acquired,"<sup>14</sup> etc. The key analogy of the relation of Brahman to

the world is that of the magician to his illusion.<sup>15</sup> An illusion, says Śaṅkara, is neither *sāt*—"since it does not continue to manifest itself in all times, and has its manifestation up to the moment that the right knowledge dawns"<sup>16</sup>—but neither is it *asāt*, for it is not absolutely non-existent in the sense that a hare's horn or the son of a barren woman are non-existent.

If pushed by cogent criticism of key parts of his system, Eriugena would probably have been forced to take refuge in the principle that the cause and effect need to share no characteristics. It has already been pointed out that he tends to "collapse" causality by preferring to view the first term in a causal sequence as the real cause of all subsequent effects. The consequence of such a tendency is exemplified by his many references to God as the cause of all effects. Since nothing which is predicable of God's effects is, properly speaking, predicable of God, we have a most extreme case here of the non-sharing of characteristics by cause and effect.

Many criticisms which Śaṅkara brings forth against his position are based on the expectation that because a cause has a particular characteristic the effect will also have it. His basic job in dealing with such objections is to show, or remind the *pūrvapakṣin* that though the cause has a particular characteristic, the effect need not have it and conversely. Monists like Śaṅkara will have to deal with this basic type of criticism at every turn, but certain problems which even non-monists have would seem to be amenable to an insistence that there is no characteristic which cause and effect must share. The problem of evil and that of the interaction of mind and body are two that come to mind.

Perhaps if this paper does nothing else it points out the correctness of the common characterization of Eriugena as, for example, "a mind of great power, hampered by the limitations of his time and by the poverty of the material at his disposal."<sup>17</sup> Śaṅkara's discussions of the problems dealt with in this paper are obviously the more complete and sophisticated. Śaṅkara's work is obviously the product of a much more sophisticated and pluralistic philosophical environment. We are

reminded that the "dark ages" was not a global phenomenon and that good philosophy was not and still is not limited to Europe.

## NOTES

1. I am using "characteristic" as the genus, of which "essential characteristics" and "accidental characteristics" are the species. For example, Russ Hatton's characteristics would include corporeality, humanity, masculinity, being 5'9" tall, liking beer, having a hang-over today, etc. "Characteristic" is as general a term as I can find which is not also a technical term in scholastic philosophy.
2. Iohannis Scotti Eriugena, *Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae) Liber Primus*, ed. & trans. I. P. Sheldon-Williams, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, VII (Dublin, 1966), p. 121 (*Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 122, 479A, hereinafter referred to as *PL*) and p. 151 (*PL*, 493A). Subsequent references for passages quoted from this work will appear in the text with the abbreviation *P1*.
3. Śaṅkara, *Commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyana*, 2 Parts, trans. George Thibaut (1890, 1895; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1962), Part 1, pp. 135-9. Subsequent references for passages quoted from this work will appear in the text with the abbreviation *BS*. The references will be of the form (*BS* a.b.c; 1:xyz). The first three numbers refer to the traditional division of a commentary on the *Brahma Sūtra* into *Adhyāyas* (Books), *Pādas* (Chapters), and *Sūtras* (the particular sentence of the *Brahma Sūtra* being commented upon). The second number (xyz) gives the page reference to Thibaut's translation, Part One.
4. Johannes Scotus Eriugena, *Periphyseon: On the Division of Nature*, trans. Myra L. Uhlfelder, *The Library of Liberal Arts*, 157 (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), pp. 144-5 (*PL* 636C-637D). Subsequent references for passages quoted from this work will appear in the text with the abbreviation *P*.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 145 (*PL* 637B). "For the omnipotent Founder of the universe, free from all defects and reaching to infinity, was able to create, and actually created, not only what is like Himself but also what is unlike."
6. Iohannis Scotti Eriugena, *Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae) Liber Secundus*, ed. & trans. I. P. Sheldon-Williams, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, VIII (Dublin, 1973), p. 63. Subsequent references for

passages quoted from this work will appear in the text with the abbreviation *P2*.

7. See Śaṅkara, pp. 284 (*BS* 1.4.23), 300-1 (*BS* 2.1.4), and 381 (*BS* 2.2.10).
8. See Śaṅkara, pp. xli (Thibaut's Introduction) and 290 (*BS* 2.1.1).
9. The objection is actually stated and replied to twice. An abbreviated version is first presented (*BS* p. 301, line 34 to p. 302, line 6) and then an expanded version (*BS* p. 302, line 6 to p. 303, line 20). The two versions are essentially the same and are not treated separately in the following.
10. Again the objection is raised and answered twice. The difference between the two presentations is not that of abbreviation and consideration at length, but of a less systematic and a more systematic presentation. Again the two versions are essentially the same and are not treated separately in the following.
11. The following discussion of the "assertions" is based on the following passage:

The first assertion would lead to the negation of the relation of cause and effect in general, which relation is based on the fact of there being in the effect something over and above the cause (for if the two were absolutely identical they could not be distinguished.) The second assertion is open to the charge of running counter to what is well known; for, as we have already remarked, the characteristic quality of existence which belongs to Brahman is found likewise in ether and so on. For the third assertion the requisite proving instances are wanting; for what instances could be brought forward against the upholder of Brahman, in order to prove the general assertion that whatever is devoid of intelligence is seen not to be an effect of Brahman?... [The upholder of Brahman would simply not admit any such instances] because he maintains that this entire complex of things has Brahman for its material cause. [*BS* 2.1.6; 1:306]

The third objection obviously applies to the third alternative (see page 219). But if the objections and alternatives are read carefully the objection to the first alternative just as obviously applies to the second and conversely. Thus they will be treated as such. Radhakrishnan apparently fails to notice this problem. Please see his discussion of Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahma Sūtra* 2.1.6 (*The Brahma Sūtra: The Philosophy of Spiritual Life*, p. 337).

12. Śaṅkara, pp. 324-5 (BS 2.1.14). This passage is problematic. In spite of the fact that at one point Thibaut translates Śaṅkara as saying "as a matter of fact we do see real effects to result from unreal causes," the examples he gives and the subsequent discussion of them do not make it clear whether this is what Śaṅkara meant.
13. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 5 Vols. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1922-55), 1:435.
14. Ibid., p. 440.
15. See, for example, Śaṅkara, pp. 290 (BS 2.1.1), 312 (BS 2.1.9), and 344 (BS 2.1.21).
16. Dasgupta, p. 443.
17. Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, 8 Vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1946-66), 1:130.

## Union with God in Plotinus and Bayazid

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Porphyry tells us that four times in a state of ecstasy Plotinus was made one with God. He is also said to have been ashamed that he had a body.<sup>1</sup> The last words of Plotinus were, "Now I seek to lead back the self within me to the All self."<sup>2</sup>

In a similar way one day a man asked Bayazid, "What is the Throne (*Arsh*)?"

Bayazid answered, "I am."

He further inquired, "What is the Chair (*kursi*)?"

The Shaikh replied, "I am."

He again questioned, "What are the Tablet (*Lauh*) and the Pen (*Qalam*)?"

The Shaikh said, "I am."

He then investigated about Prophets: Abraham, Moses and Muhammad.

The Shaikh responded, "I am all of them." Then the man talked about angels such as Jibrail, Mikail, Israfil and Izrail. Again the Shaikh uttered, "I am all of them."

The man became silent.

Then the Shaikh explained, "Whoever loses himself in Reality (God), with Reality he becomes Real. If he becomes self annihilated, Reality sees Itself and there is no question of Wonder."<sup>3</sup> It is further said that one day the Shaikh was talking about Reality and was sucking the water of his own mouth and was saying, "I am the wine and even the wine drinker and the cupbearer."<sup>4</sup>

The statements of both, Plotinus and Bayazid, clearly indicate that they uphold the doctrine of Union with God.

But the vital problem is, What do we mean by Union with God?

To understand this problem it would be better first to go through the concept of salvation of Plotinus and then the concept of annihilation (*Fana*) of Bayazid. Salvation, Plotinus says, begins with self-purification and the practice of ordinary moral life. The practice of moral life is not only to avoid sin but it is to do good positively. This leads to the freeing of the soul from all bodily desire and worldly goods and to fixing its attention upon the *Noûs*. And this is possible through dialectics, which for Plotinus is a form of philosophical analysis or the discipline of philosophic thought wherein logic is used as a tool for the analysis of reality. Through this analysis the soul progressively sees itself as soul, then as *Noûs* and then, eventually, as an element of the ultimate. Now and now only is soul prepared for the final ecstasy of re-union with the One.<sup>5</sup> It must be clear at this stage that this concept of salvation of Plotinus is based on his ontological and metaphysical presuppositions and it entails the various stages of "epistrophe," i.e., the return of the soul, stage by stage, to that primal One from which it came.

After Plotinus we now come to Bayazid. Union, in the case of Bayazid, is to annihilate oneself in God. Explaining the concept of annihilation (*Fana*) Bayazid says, "When a man annihilates himself according to the command of God and subsists without depending on his self and the creatures (of God) in expansion (*Bast*) of God; then he becomes annihilated (*Fani*) to subsist and subsistent to annihilate, dead to be

alive and alive to be dead and veiled to be revealing and revealing to be veiled."<sup>6</sup>

The Shaikh further says, "When I attained the stage of proximity (*Mugam-i-Qurb*) to God, God asked me to desire. I replied, 'I have no desire. You (God) should demand something from me'. God responded, 'So long as there is the existence of Bayazid (self) even to an atom's weight, this desire is impossible'.<sup>7</sup>

These statements of Bayazid imply that annihilation means complete absorption of one's own self in the personality of God. In other words annihilation is self-surrender to God and self-surrender demands complete obedience to the command of God. Without complete obedience annihilation is not possible. Bayazid used to supplicate, "Oh God, how long there would remain 'I-ness' and 'Thou-ness' between 'I' and 'Thou'. Please take up my 'I-ness' from the midst so that my 'I-ness' may be with you because I am nothing. Oh my Lord! So long as I am with Thee, I am the most superior to all and when I am with myself, I am the most inferior to all."<sup>8</sup>

And God accepted the prayer of the Shaikh. The Shaikh attained the stage of *Fana Fillah* (Annihilation in God). He himself says, "A voice came from me in me that oh Thou I," i.e., "I reached the stage of annihilation in God."<sup>9</sup>

After the due analysis of Union with God in Plotinus and Bayazid we may infer that Union in Plotinus means the return of the soul from stage to stage to the Primal One and in Bayazid it is the annihilation of the "I"- "thou" relation. But the fundamental issue is, Can we say that the Union with God is an identification of the soul with God?

Before answering this question it would be desirable to examine the concept of "ecstasy" in Plotinus and Bayazid because the Union with God is not a philosophical or rational stage for either, Plotinus or Bayazid; on the contrary, it is purely a state of ecstasy wherein the soul comes into direct contact with the One itself.

Ecstasy, Plotinus says, is the consummation of reminiscence. It is to release the soul from everything except God

which transforms it in such a way that it then perceives what was previously hidden from it. This state will not be permanent until our union with God is irrevocable. Here, in earthly life, ecstasy is but a flash. It is a brief respite bestowed by the favour of the Deity.<sup>10</sup>

The actual term used by Bayazid for ecstasy is *Ghalabat* and *Sukr* (Intoxication). These words denote the rapture of love for God. Ecstasy involves the cessation of human attributes, like consciousness, foresight and choice; and the annihilation of a man's self-control in God, so that only those faculties survive in him that do not belong to the human genus. Ecstasy is not acquired but it is purely a divine gift. It is a stage where the attribution of man's act is to God and a man of ecstasy stands through God.<sup>11</sup> It would be better here to present an ecstatic state of Bayazid.

The author of the *Tazkiratul Auliya* narrates that once in seclusion (in the state of ecstasy and intoxication) the Shaikh uttered, "Subhani Ma azama Shani" (Glory be to Me! How great is My Majesty). When the Shaikh came to his consciousness, the disciples of the Shaikh repeated his utterance to him. The Shaikh replied, "God will be your enemy, if you hear such utterance again and do not kill me." The Shaikh gave a knife to each disciple and instructed them, "If you again hear such utterance from me, you should kill me." The Shaikh again uttered the same thing and as the disciples intended to kill the Shaikh, they saw the entire room full of Bayazid. The disciples were hitting with their knives at Bayazid but the knives seemed as if to hit water. After a little while the huge form of Bayazid came to be little and Bayazid appeared as a finch in an arch. The companions told him his previous state. The shaikh replied, "Here is Bayazid that you see and that [form] was not Bayazid."<sup>12</sup>

From this narration it becomes explicit that ecstasy is a state in which the soul is transformed in such a way that his act remains no more his act but becomes the act of God. Further ecstasy is a temporary phase of the soul which is possible in earthly life.

Thus after the due analysis of the concepts of salvation, annihilation, ecstasy and intoxication we may rightly conclude that Union with God in Plotinus and Bayazid is not the identification of soul with God; on the contrary, it is the absorption of soul in God. Porphyry's statement that in a state of ecstasy Plotinus was made one with God means that Plotinus was fully absorbed in God and absorption was such that there did not remain any separation between them. As a drop of water mixes with an ocean, it becomes an ocean; it never means that a drop of water is identical with an ocean. In like manner when a sufi or a mystic in his ecstasy attains the union with God, it never means that he becomes identical with God; it simply means that his own self becomes annihilated and he subsists in God.

The last words of Plotinus, "Now I seek to lead back the self within me to the All self,"<sup>13</sup> also testifies to this contention. Imam Al-Ghazali, while commenting on "identity" says, "These gnostics on their return from their ascent into the heaven of Reality, confess with one voice that they saw naught existence there, save the One Real. . . . They became drunken with a drunkenness wherein the sway of their own intelligence disappeared; so that one exclaimed, 'I am the one "Real" (*Anal Haqq*) and another, 'Glory be to Me: How great is My Majesty'. . . . Then when that drunkenness abated and they came again under the sway of intelligence (*Aql*) which is Allah's balance scale upon earth, they knew that that had not been actual Identity, but only something resembling Identity."<sup>14</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Benjamin A. G. Fuller, *A History of Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New Delhi: Oxford and I. B. H. Publishing Co., 1979), p. 309.
2. George R. S. Mead, ed., *Select Works of Plotinus*, trans. Thomas Taylor (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1929), pp. xix, xx.

3. Tazkiratul Auliya, *Farid al-Din Attar* (Bombay: Fath al-Karim, 1305 A.H.1.), p. 102.
4. Ibid., p. 101.
5. Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.2.2; VI.9.7; VI.9.9-10.
6. Auliya, *Farid al-Din Attar*, p. 107.
7. Ibid., pp. 100-101.
8. Ibid., p. 102.
9. Ibid.
10. Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.2.2; VI.9.7; VI.9.9-10.
11. Ali B. Uthman Al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub*, trans. R. Nicholson (London: Tuzac and Co., 1936), pp. 184-5.
12. Auliya, *Farid al-Din Attar*, pp. 89-90.
13. Mead, *Selected Works of Plotinus*, pp. xix-xx.
14. Imam Al-Ghazali, *Mishkat al-Anwar*, trans. W. H. T. Gairdner (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1924), pp. 19-20.

## Advaita Vedānta and Neoplatonism

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In this paper we are not taking up the historical question regarding the influence of Upaniṣadic thought on Neoplatonism. That is a rather controversial question and probably it can never be settled. Philosophically speaking, it is not a very important question either. What is more important is the question regarding the doctrinal relation between Advaitism and Neoplatonism. The similarities between the two systems have often attracted the attention of scholars. But in philosophy, distinctions are no less important than similarities and so we propose to draw attention to both.

### I

To begin with, we would like to make our position clear about absolutism, because firstly, both Advaitism and Neoplatonism are sometimes regarded as mere monism, and secondly, Neoplatonism is not like other absolutisms found in the West. Mere monism is not absolutism and that for many reasons. Monism can even be materialistic but absolutism is



never so. Monism admits of the reality of the relative but absolutism cannot. So we will try to lay down the necessary features of true absolutism if only to see how far they are found in Neoplatonism and Advaitism in particular and other types of absolutism in general.

Obviously, every absolutism must accept reality as absolute or independent. The absolute must necessarily be infinite and universal or else it will be limited. This characteristic of the absolute rules out every form of dualism though the duality of subject and object or of matter and mind seems to be too difficult to reject. Not only duality, but also the reality of everything relative is denied. This feature does not seem to be there in the absolute of Hegel and Bradley, because we find that in these thinkers what is emphasized is totality and totality itself is taken to be absolute and independent. This totality is no doubt not mere totality but a synthesized and harmonious totality, but nonetheless it is totality; what is rejected is disharmony and contradiction and not the contents of experience or the elements of appearances. But the totality, howsoever harmonious, cannot be regarded as absolute as it is dependent on its parts that are relative. In this way the absolute ceases to be absolute or independent. In other words, there seems to be no real transcendence here. The whole no doubt transcends the parts but that is not the meaning of real transcendence. As we have shown elsewhere<sup>1</sup> real transcendence means independence from appearances or the rejection of the relative as false. If the reality of the relative is accepted in any form, it is bound to affect the absoluteness of the absolute.

But when we say that the absolute must transcend the relative, it may appear as if we were talking of two realms—the absolute and the relative. This is not so. The relatives are not only relative to each other, they are also relative to the absolute in the sense that their reality depends on the reality of the absolute. If the relative were not dependent on the absolute, it could neither conceal the absolute nor would it be necessary to reject it as false. The relative must therefore be shown to be dependent on the absolute. The two are not simultaneously

real; when we know the one as real, the other is not there. The reality of the relative is derived reality and it is not on its own reality that it stands. That is why when the reality of the absolute is discovered, the very legs on which the relative stands are withdrawn. All reality belongs to the absolute and so the relative is shorn of all its claim to reality. The relative is nothing apart from the absolute, it is but a parasite on the reality of the absolute. This means that the absolute is not only transcendent but also immanent. There need not be any opposition between transcendence and immanence, because immanence does not mean that the absolute has really become the relative. What it means is that the absolute appears as relative or is the ground of the appearance of the relative. As absolute it is transcendent and as ground it is immanent. The relative must have the absolute as its ground or else it will become independent and cease to be relative. The absolute of Hegel and Bradley cannot be said to be immanent either, as it is not the ground but the totality of its parts; the immanent must be independent of the parts. The immanent must also be transcendent and vice versa.

Finally, the absolute must not only be at once immanent and transcendent, it must also be somehow knowable. It must be possible for man to have an experiential knowledge of the absolute or else the absolute will remain just an idea or a myth. Here we are facing a serious problem. How can the finite mind of man know the infinite absolute? As knower the mind will be apart from the absolute and if it is not, it cannot know the absolute. In any case the absolute as infinite would not be known and if it were known it would not be all-comprehensive. It appears to be true that the finite human mind cannot grasp the absolute, but this is so only if knowledge is regarded as mental. There can be such a thing as intuitive knowledge or knowledge by being. After all, how do we know our own selves? We are the self and we know it intuitively. The absolute is our very self (*ātmā sarvasya ātmā, ayam ātmā Brahma*) and so there is the possibility of knowing the absolute. The absolute being is non-spatial and non-temporal, its infinity is not the infinity of expanse; it is rather a qualitative infinity (*svarūpatah*).<sup>2</sup> This

knowledge not being admitted, in Hegel and Bradley the absolute cannot be known.

## II

Thus far, we have been dealing with the absolute. Now we will deal with absolutism. As we have said above, it is necessary for absolutism to show the dependence of the relative on the absolute in a manner that the absoluteness of the absolute is not affected in the least. The relative is related to the absolute but the absolute is independent. In other words the relative does not really come out of the absolute; it only appears to be so; that is, the dependence of the relative on the absolute is only epistemic and not ontological. The relative only appears to be there, though really it is not there. This is possible only because of the ignorance of the absolute. If so, it is necessary for every absolutism to have a view of ignorance which makes the appearance of the absolute possible, otherwise the relative will remain an enigma. It is also necessary therefore for every absolutism to accept two levels of knowledge and reality, the empirical and the ultimate (the *vyāvahārika* and the *pāramārthika*). It is obvious that we do not find this distinction in Hegel and Bradley nor do we find a satisfactory view of ignorance.

There is yet another question worth consideration for every absolutism. Is it possible for man, purely on the basis of reason, to assert that there is such a thing as the absolute? Reason at its best may, it seems to us, only speculate about the possibility of the absolute and may accept or reject the possibility. Even if the possibility is accepted, reason cannot positively affirm that the absolute is really there. Even if the possibility is somehow affirmed, is it possible for reason to show the way of knowing the absolute experientially? Certainly not; reason is confined to concepts only. So how are we to be positively sure that the absolute is there, that it can be experienced and that it can be experienced in such and such manner? It is here that we see the

incompetence of unaided reason and the necessity of taking help from scriptures or *śruti*. It is only *śruti* whose message is based on experience that can categorically affirm the absolute and can not only assure us of the possibility of knowing the absolute but can also tell us the way the absolute can be experienced. Our readiness to depend on the scripture or *śruti* is not a mark of dogmatism but a mark of our critical awareness of the limits of reason as also of our earnestness to seek the absolute. An earnest seeker would not make a fuss about the acceptance of *śruti* in the name of the autonomy of philosophy. He has receptivity and humility. Arrogance of the mind and search for the absolute go but ill together.

## III

Let us now turn to Advaitism and Neoplatonism. As every student of the two schools knows, there are striking similarities not only regarding the views of Plotinus and Śaṅkara but also spiritual virtues such as freedom from worldly aspirations and a keen desire to attain the spiritual goal. For Plotinus, as for Śaṅkara, philosophy was a way of life or the light of life rather than mere speculation. Both gave priority to contemplation as against action. In fact we are told that Plotinus used to have ecstasy or *samādhi* as it is called in India. Both believed that spiritual teaching is something secret and sacred and is therefore to be imparted to the chosen few, those who had the necessary cathartic virtues. Both rejected ritualism.

In the same manner there are many points of similarity between the philosophy of Śaṅkara and that of Plotinus. Attention to these similarities has been well drawn by Mead.<sup>3</sup> We may also notice them here. Corresponding to *Brahman*, *Īśvara* and souls of Advaitism we have in Plotinus the conception of the One, the ultimate reality from which proceeds the Nous which in its turn gives rise to World Soul and souls. Like *Brahman*, the One is formless, infinite and universal; it is not only free from external duality but also internal change

(*svagut bheda*); it is not *a* being but the being of beings (*Sat*) and not *a* good but the good (*Anand*). Creation for Plotinus is a kind of radiation or emanation, the essence of which is that it does not affect in the least the source of emanation (*Purnasya Purna Mādaya Purnamevāvaśisyate*). The One alone being real, the world of plurality and change is unreal, matter being a principle of non-being or darkness. Man is essentially one with One (*ayamātmā Brahma*) but until he has realised that unity, he has to go through different births and can be born even as an animal. This unity with the One is of the nature of identity; in other words, man has only to discover his real nature to find that he is the One. This discovery is not merely intellectual, it is a kind of awakening, it is intuitive. Not only moral virtues but also cathartic virtues, especially freedom from desire for enjoyment (*vairāgya*), and the practice of dialectic are necessary for intuitive wisdom or illumination. Nothing remains to be achieved after that (*Āpta Kāma, Akāma*).

#### IV

The philosophy of Plotinus has been characterized in many ways. It is sometimes said to be a blending of Platonism and Aristotelianism.<sup>4</sup> But to us it seems that Neoplatonism is more Platonic than Aristotelian. Plato's distinction between knowledge and opinion; his conception of the Idea of the Good as supreme reality; his use of the simile of the sun as radiating light<sup>5</sup> seem to be dominant in Plotinus and to go against the realism and pluralism of Aristotle. Aristotle's ethical views and his views of dialectic are also different. In the same way, the characterization of Neoplatonism as pantheism or subjective idealism<sup>6</sup> does not seem to be correct. If it is to be called pantheism, it is pantheistic only in the sense in which all absolutism has to be pantheistic, that is, in the sense that reality is the ground of appearance and not in the sense that it has become appearance. We must not ignore the emphasis of Plotinus on negation. As Armstrong puts it, "The essential

feature of this philosophy is the denial of the limitation of the self, of all individual personality."<sup>7</sup> But in no sense is the philosophy of Plotinus to be called subjective idealism as the term is understood in Western thought. It is no doubt idealism in the sense that the supreme reality is spiritual but it is certainly not subjective idealism. The appearance is subjective or false but subjective not in the empirical sense. We stress this point because sometimes Advaitism also is mistakenly called subjective idealism. Even that school of Advaitism (*dr̥ṣṭi śr̥ṣṭi vāda*) according to which the universe is because of our seeing it holds that the ignorance which makes the appearance of the appearance possible is of transcendental nature; it is not subjective in the empirical sense but in the Kantian sense.

#### V

In our view Neoplatonism is better characterized as a kind of absolutism or even Advaitism.<sup>8</sup> Most of the features of absolutism as pointed out above are shared by Neoplatonism. The One is infinite and unchangeable. As transcendent it is beyond thought and speech but as the ground of everything it is also immanent. And though transcendent, it is intuitively knowable as it is one with our real self. The world of plurality and change, though dependent on the One, is false and not real. The whole idea is briefly put in one line by Advaitism, "Brahma satyam Jaganmithyā jiva Brahmaiva nāraḥ" (*Brahman* is real, the world is false, *Brahman* and the self are one and not different). The philosophy of Plotinus, like the philosophy of Śaṅkara, is not mere monism as there is definite denial of change and plurality. It is sometimes said that the world of plurality being an emanation from the One cannot be false and if it is false it cannot be called emanation.<sup>9</sup> There is no doubt that there is some difficulty regarding the idea of emanation, but to us it seems that the very significance of the idea of emanation is two-fold. Firstly, it does not mean any change in the One, and secondly, it does not affect the absoluteness of the

One. If so, the phenomenal world has got to be false. Emanation is neither transformation of the One nor absolute creation but a kind of radiation or overflow which least affects the source. The One only lends reality to or allows itself to be the ground of appearance. This is the freedom of the absolute. Emanation therefore cannot be also understood as emanation in Kashmir Śaivism where *Śiva* and *Śakti* (power to evolve) are one and the world is a real manifestation; but there is no motion in the One of Plotinus.

Although the system of Plotinus comes closest to Advaitism, yet some differences are there. Plotinus no doubt regards the world as appearance and also talks of the fall of man as ignorance of his real self, but he does not elaborate any theory of ignorance or *avidyā* as is done in Advaitism. There seems to be no doubt that Plotinus does not regard ignorance as mere absence of knowledge<sup>10</sup> and takes ignorance to be the source of all evil<sup>11</sup> and matter to be unreal.<sup>12</sup> Ignorance is neither fully positive (*bhāva*) nor utterly negative but apparently positive (*bhāva rūpa*) or different from both. Advaitism makes it clear that ignorance is not positive because it is negated and it is not wholly negative as it gives to appearance; being different from both being and non-being (sky flower) it is really indescribable (*anirvacanīya*) in terms of the real and the unreal. Advaitism further explains that ignorance has two powers—the power of projecting the false (*Vikṣepa*) and the power of concealing (*Āvarana*) the real. As pointed out above, no absolutism can afford to ignore the importance of a theory of ignorance, because without that there can be neither an explanation for appearance nor any logical ground to reject appearance as false. In this regard Neoplatonism falls short of Advaitism.

There is yet another point to be considered. Śaṅkara starts with an analysis of illusion (*adhyāsa*) and on that basis comes to the conclusion that what is sublated (*bādhita*) is false and what is not sublated (*abādhita*) is real. In the rope-snake example the snake is sublated and the rope is not sublated. But in principle, the rope too or all that appears like snake is likely to be sublated. So the question arises: Is the world also sublated

anytime and is there anything which is never sublated? Reason alone can neither assert that the world is sublated nor that there is something which is never sublated. Here *śruti* or scripture comes to our rescue and tells us that *Brahman* or *Ātman* can never be sublated (*Trikālābādhita*) and that the world is sublated when *Brahman* is known. So *śruti* seems to be indispensable. But does Plotinus depend on *śruti*? Apparently he seems to depend only on dialectic which is the process of going up from the sensible world to the One—though the principles of dialectic are given to a receptive man by *Noûs*, yet Plotinus admits that someone is needed to show him the way.<sup>13</sup> We know that Plotinus had a Guru or teacher called Ammonius Saccas and so in the case of Plotinus the Guru takes the place of *śruti* or scripture. The *Upaniṣads* very clearly tell us that he alone knows who has a teacher (*Ācāryavān puruṣo veda*).

So we come to the conclusion that Neoplatonism has to be regarded as an absolutism of the Advaitic type. The two systems share most of the essential features of absolutism, though Advaitism does so more. There seems to be a kind of incompleteness in Neoplatonism. Our comparison does not intend to suggest that Neoplatonism was actually influenced by Upaniṣadic thought, though the possibility is not ruled out as held by some scholars.

#### NOTES

1. R. K. Tripathi, "Transcendence," *Amṛit*, Vol. IV, No. 3 (July, 1971).
2. A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 57.
3. George R. S. Mead, ed., *Select Works of Plotinus*, trans. Thomas Taylor (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1929), Preface. See also *Advaitism and Neo-Platonism* by J. F. Staal (University of Madras, 1961).
4. R. Baine Harris, "A Brief Description of Neoplatonism," *The Significance of Neoplatonism* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1976), p. 3.

5. Plato, *Republic*, 509.
6. A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus and India," *Classical Quarterly* 30 (1936), p. 24.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
8. Staal, *Advaitism and Neo-Platonism*; see n. 80, p. 179. But on p. 203, Staal says that "the Neo-Platonic position is between the monotheistic and Advaitic position but nearer to the latter."
9. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
13. A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus*, p. 128.

## The Concept of Human Estrangement in Plotinism and Śamkara Vedānta

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The unique characteristic of different transcendence theories in philosophy is that they have emerged out of man's basic feeling of being placed in a world whose affairs are unable to contain his aspirations totally. For all purposes this feeling has remained the pivot around which transcendentalists have woven their thoughts. There is something indemonstrable and yet existentially certain about this feeling: it underlies all our preoccupations with objects and situations in the world. The awareness that the everyday world is the world of contingents and finites and represents only the surface of Being might not dawn on everybody with equal intensity. People take time to realise that our life conceals a kind of ontological separation of ourselves from our "roots," that this separation has made us perpetual seekers of quietude and security, that it is behind our most unpredictable moods of restlessness, boredom, dejection, anguish, and insignificance. The main program of transcendence philosophies is to ratiocinate and articulate this separation and sometimes to develop a salvation ethics that is supposed to rise from it. Plotinus's Neoplatonism and Śamkara's Advaita

Vedānta, two of the most comprehensive transcendental philosophies in the world, are aimed at both these ends. Their thrust is to speculate on the condition of the "fallen" man—man estranged from Being, from that hidden oceanic expanse within him that seems to be the *raison d'être* of all his experiences—and show the way for his self-recovery.

The Hellenic tradition, like the Hindu-Buddhist tradition in the ancient Orient, accentuated the ontological as against the empirical in man. It visualised man as an open-ended act yearning to encompass the meaning of all existence. For instance, Heraclitus (500 B.C.) speaks of Logos or the rational principle running through the universe, and about man as a being destined "to understand the intelligence by which all things are steered through all things." Man's spirit, he held, is open toward the Logos. For Parmenides, the junior contemporary of Heraclitus, the ontological ground of everything is Being and it is comprehensible through rational thought. Being, he said, is the One, changeless, undifferentiated, united, and inclusive of all that is. Pure thought points at it. It transcends the world of our sense experiences. To Anaxagoras, who figured *circa* 480 B.C., mind is the motivating force behind the whole world-process and must be referred to as the very device that enables us to construct our world-experience. Anaxagoras condemns the "weakness of the sense-perceptions" which prevent us from reaching the truth.

The principal design of the thinkers of the *Upanisads* (the source books of Indian thought, the oldest of which might have been composed *circa* 1000 B.C.) was to capture the transphenomenal foundation of our being in the world and to map out the entire urge for transcendence we feel while we are still submerged in worldliness. The polarity between the transphenomenal and the phenomenal, the transcendental and the immanent, or the eternal and the temporary, is the central theme of Upanisadic thought. Man's ordinary, empirical life (called *Jiva*) to which the world is real is looked upon by the Upanisadic sages as transitory, laden with ignorance (*avidyā*), illusory, and subject to suffering and evil. Our constant

endeavor is to reach the infinite, the eternal, the qualityless, the timeless. Our thirst is for the beyond, the most comprehensive, the wholesome, and until we are able to touch it our feeling of being estranged from what we ideally are is inevitable.

In Greek philosophy, as in ancient Indian philosophies, theories center around the transcendental-immanent horizons of human consciousness. They embody a certain attitude the attitude of rejecting the empirically given with a view to encompassing the essential or transphenomenal. Actually, if one limits one's interests to the world of objects and stays rigidly adhered to the phenomenal, one is likely to forever overlook the most natural inward-seeing act of one's consciousness. As Heidegger pointedly says, one's attention must slowly move from one's condition in the world to one's specific way of transcending this condition in the realization of Being.<sup>1</sup> The philosophies—empiricism, positivism, etc.—that today embody the assumption that a flight from the phenomenal toward the transphenomenal is arbitrary remain markedly unconcerned about the basic quest of the human self. For the recognition of this quest a reference to that which transcends the given, that is, to that which is incomprehensible through scientific thought and language, must be accepted as legitimate. Transcendentalists everywhere have repudiated the ability of the phenomenal to contain the movement of consciousness toward Being, i.e., toward its own basis.

Plotinus's (205-270 A.D.) conception of the transcendence-immanence nexus human consciousness reflects is highly representative of the Being theories that went before him. The single forceful idea which runs through all his six *Enneads* is that although the transcendental or "divine" realm (the One) is the true home of man, the spatio-temporal and practical world in which man (the All-Soul) lives is not unreal but a necessary completion of the One. The first emanation of the One is Nous. Nous is the eternal creative principle, the Divine Mind, the intellectual universe. It is the total and universal mind-stuff having a potentiality of diversifying itself into

multiple intelligences, which we ourselves are. Man as a sensible and self-conscious being is not cut off from Nous (or, for that matter, from Divinity), but as one possessing and having concern for his body and living amidst material things is lower than his transcendental source.

The One or Divinity is pure spontaneity and includes within its compass of self-expression everything that is or can be. It is manifest in man through his self-experience, i.e., through his experience of inner space into which his whole being runs as it were. Kierkegaard, the modern existentialist, refers to the One as the experience of "passionate inwardness" or "pure subjectivity." In fact the notable feeling we have of being uncompromised with the world or with ourselves speaks of our being away from the One. The One is the ontological self that we really are. There could be no estrangement, no sense of being fallen apart, had we not been born with a self that extends into the region of the absolute, the transphenomenal, the qualityless. The One is there already in us, but we have to realize it in order *to be* it.

The One, according to Plotinus, comprises three hypostases or principles: Itself or the Good, the Nous, and the All-Soul or Soul of the All. Two rather intricately conceived distinctions occur repeatedly in Plotinus's writings: the distinction between the One and the Nous and that between the Nous and the individual souls (the All-Soul). In fact there is no justification for the distinction he so ardently draws between the One and the Nous, for both these notions denote the organic totality of all that is. The One, Plotinus says, is pure will, pure unity, absolute love, and the cause and ground of all being.<sup>2</sup> Being Divinity itself, it is self-directed, self-loving, eternally creating itself, and returning upon itself. It is the Good, "light above light," "the active First Cause," the Absolute, the denial of all limitations, "the Infinite Self," the supreme source of all substances.<sup>3</sup> Plotinus, however, argues that the One does not by itself come within the reach of human knowledge. There is a certain distance between what

the human self is capable of "seeing" through the transcendental act and what it is as it is in the world. The One is not accessible to us directly—it is reached by us through the Nous, which is the transphenomenal essence of our consciousness.

The Nous (also described by Plotinus as the Intellectual Cosmos) is a bridge between man and the One. There is no way for man's ascent to the One except through self-knowledge and self-transformation. Being of the nature of the deepest experience our consciousness is capable of, Nous is the destination of our inward-seeing act.<sup>4</sup> Within our subjectivity we are much more than *what* we figure in the empirical world. As Nous we are the totality of all realizable mental powers. Human souls, Plotinus points out, are an emanation of Nous, which is the genesis of all that is good, beautiful, and intelligent in them.

In many sections of the *Enneads*, as A. H. Armstrong tells us, Plotinus describes the One in terms almost identical with those applied to Nous.<sup>5</sup> Both are characterized, for example, as the ground of all beings, the origin and totality of things, the unpredicable unity. Indeed here and there Plotinus emphasizes the purely noetic aspect of the One and accounts for Nous's being the primal stage in the emergence of the universe from God. In Nous, he remarks, the One finds its complete "radiation." It descends into the organic universal whole through Nous.

In any case, the One of Plotinus is the ultimate divine reality divisible into two—the Universal Mind and that which holds itself beyond it. The latter is of the nature of perfect transcendence, the One itself, or pure spirit hiding the potency of variegated mental and material creations. Generally, Neoplatonists, following the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition, allude to this, "the Highest of the high," as Infinite Dyad.

Plotinus's speculations on the condition of man in the world are not without ambiguity. Although the world and human souls in it are inherent to the Nous, the very world-experience (with its vicissitudes, contradictions, finitude, and

contingency) represents man's estrangement from his ontological home. Plotinus asserts that our being situated in time and space is not without the process of the One. The world has no explanation except in terms of the logic of Divinity's self-manifestation. And yet so long as the human soul dwells in the world it experiences a state of uprootedness. The ontological in man, the divine spirit flowing toward itself *via* him so to say, keeps him summoned perpetually. Nous's elusive call in him lifts him above his worldly engagements. In the face of worldly happenings, therefore, man lives a restless life.

There is a striking similarity between Plotinus's understanding of man's relation to the Nous and Śaṅkara's<sup>6</sup> theory of the bondage of human consciousness. Śaṅkara, like Plotinus, is an explorer of the ontological domain of human existence, and what he produces is an intellectual system as firmly based on the self's experience of transcendence as Plotinus's is.

Śaṅkara's mission was to realise the ultimate meaning of human existence. As an interpreter and reconstructor of the metaphysical thought of the *Upanisads* Śaṅkara was indeed committed to the ethics of salvation (*mokṣa*) which is the very backbone of the Upanisadic compositions. However when we examine the whole structure of his philosophy we see that it hinges on one profound observation, viz., that amidst everything that consciousness knows and does not know, or can know and cannot know, it has the peculiar characteristic of acting as a transphenomenal seer-into-itself. This characteristic which Śaṅkara has described by the word *ātman* (pure consciousness), or more appropriately *sākṣin* (witnessing consciousness), constitutes the principal ontological assumption of his system. Like Plotinus's Nous-All-Soul relation, Śaṅkara's *Brahman-ātman* (Being-self) relation is resolvable into a kind of two-faces-of-the-same-coin theory.

In Śaṅkara Vedānta, as in Plotinism, Being or *Brahman* is defined as the totality of all things, the ultimate basis of all strata of experience, the highest fusion of truth, knowledge, and eternity. There is nothing that does not depend on

*Brahman* or has not come out of it. It is the supreme intellect governing all phenomena. Intelligence, matter, space, time, causality, change, and all those categories through which we discern the reality of the world have their origin in *Brahman*.

The *Upanisads* say that the nature of *Brahman* cannot be exactly defined. They often use negative terms to convey what *Brahman*-experience could possibly amount to. Even contradictory attributes are ascribed to it. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* states that it is like "light and no light, desire and absence of desire, anger and absence of anger, righteousness and absence of righteousness."<sup>7</sup> In the *Kātha Upaniṣad*, it is characterized as "smaller than the small, greater than the great, sitting and yet moving, lying and yet going everywhere."<sup>8</sup> Like the One or Nous in Neoplatonism, *Brahman* is taken both by the *Upanisads* and Śaṅkara as Supreme Spirit or Pure Essence, self-expressing, self-shining, and self-validating.

Śaṅkara's transcendentalism is ostensibly world-rejecting. By positing the Supreme Being (*Brahman*) as the ultimate cause of all existence, a life-force capable of manifesting itself through diverse products, Śaṅkara annuls the very reality of the world. Although everything emanates from *Brahman*, he argues, *Brahman* is not tied to its emanation. Like Plotinus's Divinity it is wholesome and creative because its presence is felt through all creation. Śaṅkara says that the universe has appeared as the effect of something which is absolutely real (*satyam*), eternally conscious (*jñānam*), and infinite (*anantam Brahman*). The universe is a variegated pattern and cannot have originated from a cause which is not absolutely perfect and self-caused. This self-caused cause, viz., *Brahman*, Śaṅkara asserts, expresses itself through an infinite number of things (*nāma-rupa*) all of which are appearances. Thus the universe, compared to the primordial reality of *Brahman*, is an appearance.

What Plotinus states about the One or the absolute is almost an echo of Śaṅkara's understanding of *Brahman*. Plotinus writes:



...in the One itself there is complete identity of knower and known, no distinction existing between being and knowing, contemplation and its object constituting a living thing....

...Being is limitless; in all the overflow from it there is no lessening either in its emanation nor in itself....

Its nature is that nothing can be affirmed of it—not existence, not essence, not life—It transcends all these.<sup>9</sup>

Both Plotinus and Śaṅkara argue that the Real at the heart of the universe is reflected in the depth of the human soul. This depth is denoted by Śaṅkara, following the Upaniṣadic insight, by the word *ātman*. Insofar as their ontological aspect is concerned, there is no distinction between *Brahman* and *ātman* just as there is none between *Nous* and the individual souls. *Ātman* is only an individuation or a kind of reflection of *Brahman* in man. Throughout Indian philosophy the identity between *Brahman* and *ātman* is presumed.

However, although *Brahman* as the Supreme Being and *ātman* as the individual self are not fundamentally distinct from each other, to every individual his own empirical existence is a unique fact. In its essence *ātman* is of the nature of highly intuitive knowledge, pure consciousness, total transcendence, but in its worldly state it finds itself to be a stranger, that is, to have lost its self-identity. *Ātman*'s whole endeavor is to realise its own being which is somehow lost.

According to Śaṅkara, our phenomenal or *vyāvahārika* existence represents our estrangement from our original transcendental or *pāramārthika* state. The standpoint to which we are accustomed in our ordinary life does not originate from our transcendental being but from a misleading and deluding agency, called *avidyā* or ignorance, operating in us. *Avidyā* inauthenticates *Brahman* or *ātman* and reduces it from the transphenomenal to the phenomenal tier. As individuals on

the phenomenal tier, that is, as souls overwhelmed by the affairs of the world or *samsāra*, we live a life of homelessness, dereliction, and ennui.

Actually there is no problem of estrangement unless one is aware that one has fallen out of a reality to which one ought to be harmoniously related. Man would not have been enveloped by loneliness had he been in unison with his inner space. As Heidegger says, all our attitudes toward things in life are colored with a kind of "homesickness."<sup>10</sup> We seem to have run asunder from our native land, the ontological source of our existence, and descended deep into the crevice of temporality. The estranged constantly moves along a passage between a state of forlornness and the imperative I-should-be-my-real-self. The most striking characteristic of our worldly self is that it feels that it lives a fractured existence and that it is in quest of a state of being unlike anything that it can experience on the phenomenal plane.

What is peculiar and undoubtedly paradoxical about human consciousness is that it is phenomenal and transphenomenal at the same time. Plotinus underlines this paradox throughout his reflections on the *Nous-All-Soul* relationship. He does not reject the vividness of the experience we have of living as "bodied" and in a material world, the sense-world is existent, engaging, and inescapable. But compared to the transphenomenal world, that is, the world of the One or *Brahman*, this world is a confinement. In Indian philosophy it is described as bondage; Plotinus suggests that it is like a prison or cave.<sup>11</sup> Man lives in this world like a stranger, an alien. Although we are born in a physical, spatio-temporal universe and are endowed with empirical consciousness, we are not completely bound up to it. It is because man is ontologically higher than what he is "condemned" to be in the world that he feels forlorn.

For Śaṅkara the self or *ātman* is worldly and trans-worldly, *saguna* (having qualities) and *nirguna* (qualityless) at one and the same time.<sup>12</sup> The two antithetical attributes of the human self respond to two distinct points of view. Understood as the

innermost subjectivity perceived from within, the *ātman*-experience constitutes a domain about which it is impossible to make logical statements. The indubitable truth, Śaṅkara says, is that the pure and self-luminous *ātman* is not grasped by our rational thought but by the suprarational insight inherent in us. Our world-consciousness, on the other hand, is the mundane aspect of our existence. In the whole Vedānta tradition, man as a being conscious of the world is described as *jīva*. *Jīva* is thus the condemned form of *ātman*, i.e., *ātman*'s inauthenticity and self-estrangement shows up in *jīva*. Śaṅkara looks upon *jīva* (literally, soul) as pure consciousness under the spell of a kind of self-deception or ignorance (*avidyā*).

Plotinus is not a total world-rejecter, at least not to the extent of dismissing the world impressions we have as unreal. Having mastered the paths trodden by Plato and Aristotle before him, he makes a compromise between two apparently unresolvable positions, viz., "transcendence alone is true" and "the source of all that is essential or formal is to be bound in particulars." For Plotinus human souls are born in the world as "bodied" because of their original proneness to sin, fall, or degradation. The world, however, is not their permanent abode. Plotinus writes:

This is the fall of the soul, this entry into matter; thence its weakness; not all the faculties of its being retain free play, for matter hinders their manifestation; it encroaches upon the soul's territory and, as it were, crushes the soul back and turns to evil what it has stolen until that finds strength to rise again.<sup>13</sup>

There is almost a reverberation of the theory of the Nous-All-Soul hypostases in Śaṅkara's idea of the transcendental-empirical aspects of *ātman*. According to Plotinus, the Nous is not a unidirectional and finished reality but a sort of going-out-of-itself and turning-within-itself act. That is why individual human souls, despite their being concerned about the

world ordinarily, find themselves as acts of will thrusting ahead. By their very ontological make-up they exhibit a thirst for eternity, a longing for Being, an urge for de-estrangement. The nature of human soul, Plotinus explains,

is twofold, being of divine station but skirting the sense-known nature; thus, while it communicates to this realm something of its own store, it absorbs in turn whenever it plunges in an excessive zeal to the very midst of this sphere; though even thus it is always able to recover itself by turning to account the experience of what it has seen and suffered here, learning so the greatness of existence in the Supreme and more clearly discerning the finer things by contrast with their opposites. The experience of evil brings the clearer perception of good.<sup>14</sup>

Thus for Plotinus and Śaṅkara man is born with a call from the Absolute, the Nous, the Divine, or *Brahman*. The ontological in us transmits this call. By functioning in the world man does not really sink into self-oblivion. The quest for the transphenomenal forms the core of his life's activities. Human consciousness is a whole and does not permit of a permanent cleavage within itself. The transcendental and the phenomenal, the *pāramārthika* and the *vyāvahārika*, the *ātman* and the *jīva* are therefore facets or dimensions of the same integral reality, the same human soul.

The progression from the empirical to the transcendental is a process within the realm of one's own consciousness. It is a journey from one's experience of the solidly existent world, i.e., the world of static externals, to the world of one's own "inside." In fact in every state or act of our mind we surpass ourselves as outer-directed beings and "flow" inward toward what can be described as the pre-reflective and pre-conscious expanse. This expanse is not fully verbalizable. Because of its immensely elusive and metalinguistic nature the *Upaniṣads* have used negative epithets to denote it. The Buddhists

equated it with Emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Buddhists very significantly emphasize its holistic, subjective, and existential realization by one in one's own inner space—that is, one intuitively it as “oneness of being and non-being.”<sup>15</sup> Plotinus and Śaṅkara do not overtly stretch their negative characterization of Being to the extent of emptying it out, but still their repeated suggestion that it is unpredicable and unverbalizable takes it close to Buddhists' Nothing. Consciousness' transcendence is ultimately the indication of the invitation Being exercises on it.

There is perhaps no other expression of human reality which is as mysterious as its being in the world and being at the same time a project beyond the world. Man is a self-surpassing movement, a perpetual act of being and non-being, a highly ambiguous oscillation between the phenomenal and the transphenomenal. Nothing posits itself as stable and finished to human consciousness. We “fly” over the realized freedom, beyond the fulfilled state of our being, and beyond all that we are in *this* world. A continuous state of awakening to the primordial foundation of our existence, that is, to our ontological roots as it were, leaves us with a feeling of being self-estranged. The story of man is the story of his endeavor to overcome this feeling.

#### NOTES

1. For Heidegger, man hides the possibility of reaching his ontological basis, viz., Being. See Arne Naess's study of Heidegger in his *Four Modern Philosophers* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968).
2. Grace H. Turnbull, comp., *The Essence of Plotinus*, based on the translation by Stephen Mackenna (New York: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 196-7.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-5. Nous, like pure consciousness or *Brahman* in Indian philosophy, can be said to express itself through our inward-seeing act. See my *Structure of Indian Thought* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1970), pp. 60-61.

5. A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. 2.
6. Śaṅkara (8th century A.D.) is perhaps the most creative thinker of ancient India. He is known for his nondualistic system of Being known as Advaita Vedānta. This system basically adheres to the metaphysical position set in the *Upaniṣads*.
7. S. Radhakrishnan, ed., *The Principal Upaniṣads* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 278.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 617.
9. Turnbull, *The Essence of Plotinus*, pp. 115-16.
10. Karl Rahner, “Introduction au concept de philosophie existentielle chez Heidegger,” in *Recherches de science religieuse* (1940), p. 153.
11. Plotinus's idea that man's being in the world is almost like his being in a cave perhaps has its origin in Plato's famous cave myth. See for a penetrating reflection on this, J. N. Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), pp. 137-59.
12. For this characterization of *Brahman* or *ātman* see *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. xxxiv, *Śaṅkarācārya: Commentary on the Vedānta-sūtras*, trans. George Thibaut (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1962), pp. 243 ff.
13. Turnbull, *The Essence of Plotinus*, p. 58.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
15. A very insightful comparison between Being in Indian philosophy and Emptiness in Buddhism is made by Masao Abe. See his “Non-Being and MU—The Metaphysical Nature of Negativity in the East and the West,” in *Religious Studies*, 11, pp. 181-92.

**Plotinus and  
Śrī Aurobindo:  
A Comparative Study**

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I

Ever since the dim dawn of speculation man has been inquiring into the nature of this universe and his place therein. He has been raising and discussing the questions: How came this universe into existence? Whence are we? Whither are we? Man's curiosity about the *how*, the *whence* and the *whither* gave rise to science and philosophy. In the early stage of human thought science and philosophy were inseparable, but gradually science separated itself from philosophy and kept itself confined to sense-experience. But philosophers, at least many of them, preferred to transcend the empirical world and raised questions about meta-empirical Reality. What is the nature of the Ultimate Reality? Is it one or many? Is it conscious or unconscious? How is the finite world—especially the world of selves—related to the Ultimate Reality? These are some of the perennial problems to the solution of which philosophers of different ages and climes have formulated different theories and world-views. Of course, some have

adopted a negative attitude and have denied the utility and even the validity of metaphysical questions. We are not concerned with them. We are here specially concerned with two great thinkers—Plotinus and Śrī Aurobindo—who, though separated by a gap of sixteen hundred years and long stretches of land, offered some constructive suggestions to the solution of the metaphysical problems of perennial interest. The two thinkers have different philosophical traditions and historical and cultural backgrounds. Plotinus was born in 205 A.D. in Upper Egypt and was probably a “Hellenised Egyptian,” whereas Śrī Aurobindo was born in India in 1872, educated in Britain according to the English pattern of schooling, and later on turned nationalist Indian and drank deeply of Indian lore.

In the present paper we devote ourselves to a comparative study of these two great thinkers.

## II

The philosophy of Plotinus is an integrated one. The entire classical Greek philosophy casts its shadow upon his philosophy. He develops a full-fledged theory of the One in the Platonic tradition. He is also influenced by Aristotle and the Stoics. But he does not simply combine Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics—his writings display the unity of the vision of the entire Greek philosophy. Much in the same way Śrī Aurobindo also formulates an integrated philosophy—a philosophy which effects an integration of the different types of philosophy, Indian and Western, ancient and modern, and yet bears a distinct stamp of originality.

These two master minds are concerned with the nature and character of the Ultimate Reality and of the relation of the world to it. Both of them believe in one Supreme spiritual Reality as the ultimate source of everything. While Plotinus owes his inspiration to Plato, Śrī Aurobindo owes his to the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads* as developed in the Vedānta. Śrī

Aurobindo characterizes the Supreme Reality as *Sat-Cit-Ānanda*, i.e., Existence-cum-Consciousness-cum-Bliss. Plotinus, however, does not describe the One in any such way, but it is implicit in his system that the One is existence-cum-consciousness, for it is the first principle of Being and the ultimate source of Intellect and souls. Plotinus points out that no adequate description of the One is possible, for human language is quite unfit for the task. Following the Upaniṣadic ideal Śrī Aurobindo also holds that the Supreme Reality is also beyond the grasp of human reason. Both Plotinus and Śrī Aurobindo agree that all things move out of the Supreme Reality and all finally move towards it.

## III

Before we take up a detailed comparative study let us have a brief survey of the philosophy of Plotinus.

Plotinus conceives of a Trinity which is constituted by three hypostases, viz., the One, the *Noûs* and the Soul.

The One is the first member of the Trinity. But how to prove it? The proof is provided by two doctrines formulated by Plotinus: (a) the doctrine of emanation, and (b) the doctrine of intuitive experience.

The entire world must have come out of some source. In so far as the world is one system, the source must be the *same*. Hence it may be presumed that the world is an emanation from some one higher principle. Moreover, the One is realized by many seers in their mystical experience. Though this experience is incommunicable, those that have it are convinced of its validity and they welcome others who would follow them. Indeed, the heart has “reason” which the logical intellect knows not of.

The primal One pervades the entire world-system and in this sense it is omnipresent. But the One is also other than everything that we experience in this world. As it is other than everything elsewhere, it is “nowhere,” i.e., not existing

in a particular point of space or in a particular thing. The One is unique and hence it cannot have any parallel or anything similar to it. It is infinite—it is the greatest and the highest, not quantitatively, but qualitatively. It is infinite, not because it cannot be counted or measured, but because it eludes all attempts at comprehension. It is the greatest, not because it has the highest degree of magnitude, but because it has the highest potentiality. It is the highest, not because it has the greatest height, but because we cannot imagine anything higher than this. It is also the highest Good, because it is above all goods. There is no earthly good to which it is subordinate or which it tries to acquire by effort. It does not aspire after anything, but all things aspire after it. Instead of the One becoming good in association with others, those others that participate in it become good. It is free, because nothing can conceal its self-manifestation.

The One produces the *Noûs* (which is rather imperfectly translated as "Mind" or "Intellect"), and the *Noûs* in its turn produces the World-soul or Soul of the Whole. This third principle is directly responsible for the production of all earthly existents. This sort of serial production is to be understood as the preceding member of the series delegating its potentiality to the succeeding member. As Whittaker explains, "As mind looks back to the One, Soul looks back to the Mind and this looking back is identical with the process of generation."<sup>1</sup> It should, however, be borne in mind that this order of first, second and third principles is to be taken neither in the spatial nor in the temporal sense; but their priority and posteriority is to be understood in the logical sense.

But why should the One indulge in Creation at all? Plotinus replies that since the One contains the potency for all, it cannot but manifest itself, for potency without an express manifestation becomes meaningless. If there is sun, there must be light; similarly, if the One is, then the *Noûs* as its manifestation must be. As the sun is to the light, so is the One to the *Noûs*. The One has its eternal "irradiation" in the form of the

*Noûs*.<sup>2</sup> Just as man becomes conscious of himself through self-consciousness, so the One may be said to "see" itself through the light of the *Noûs*.<sup>3</sup> The One is prior to all thought and Being, and so it requires something, viz., *Noûs*, that would manifest it, and through that it becomes conscious. But in itself it is not unconscious or subconscious—rather it goes beyond consciousness. It must however possess potentiality for consciousness which finds expression in *Noûs*. Indeed, the One is inexpressible and it is difficult to characterize it.

The *Noûs* may be described as Supramundane Intelligence. Emanating as it does from the One, it contains the potentiality for all existence. This potentiality indicates that it has the productive capacity by which the essential forms are made manifest in apparent separation from one another and from the One. Thus Plotinus leans towards the Platonic doctrine of appearance and reality. He holds after the manner of Plato that individuals are individuated not simply in terms of space and time, but are individuated as "appearances of Ideas which alone are real." So all individuals pre-exist in the *Noûs*. And this is true not only of man, but of all sub-human and vegetative life.

The third and final member of the Trinity is Soul. It possesses a twofold nature—one upward and the other downward. "It is," as Dean Inge explains, "an energy thrown off by the Spirit. As an image of Spirit, it resembles its principle closely. But while on one side it is closely attached to Spirit, of which it is the effluence, on the other it touches the phenomenal world. Soul is still a part of the Divine world, though the lowest part."<sup>4</sup> In other words, in its transcendent aspect or upward movement it is related to the *Noûs* (Spirit, Mind or Intelligence) and in its downward aspect it functions as a principle of life and growth.<sup>5</sup> The Soul is in fact the so-called "connecting link" between the spiritual world and the phenomenal world—it is the "last logos of the former and the first element of the latter." Because of its connection with the phenomenal world there may be two kinds of

misunderstanding, viz., that it is limited and that it is lost in the world. Plotinus rules out both these objections. He says that the Soul being rooted in Noûs cannot be limited—rather it is capable of unlimited expansion. Again, the Soul is not lost or merged in the world, rather the universe participates in it and is “embraced and moulded” by it. The Soul is the Providence ruling over the world, and hence the material universe becomes a living organic whole. The Soul is not the aggregate of particular souls, rather it is the Soul of the All. It is not just at the summit of the world and it has no fixed position—it is, to quote Inge again, “the wanderer of the metaphysical world.”<sup>6</sup>

The Soul which is the World-Soul or Soul of the All gives rise to individual souls. Plotinus finds it difficult to explain how the World-Soul originates the individual souls; but he would not accept the view that there is *one* Soul, a view which is subscribed to by Heraclitus and the Stoics. The individual souls have their places in this world. An individual soul descends into a body. For Plotinus this descent is a kind of fall and yet is a kind of necessity. It is both voluntary and non-voluntary. The soul suffers from self-isolation and because of this it is imprisoned in a body. This descent does not mean that a soul literally moves down into body. The descent happens when a body shares in the life of a soul. The “sharing in” or participation of the body in the soul becomes an evil, as the universal activity of the soul is thereby hampered or limited. The soul as it descends “leaps out,” so to speak, from the whole to a part and is thus compelled to confine its activity to a part.<sup>7</sup>

The imprisonment of the soul in a body is not permanent. It has the capacity for rising to the One. The return of the soul to the One is obviously not visible, tangible or physical in any sense. The return is psychical. It involves (a) mentally withdrawing oneself from the world and thereby interiorizing oneself, (b) undergoing a rigorous intellectual and moral discipline, and (c) realizing the internal illumination and union with the One. The re-discovery of an individual's true self is

in the first instance a return to Noûs. Then as he feels himself as “perfect in wisdom and goodness,” he feels himself united with the One. The individual then comes to the journey's end. It is extremely difficult to describe this stage of union. But probably Plotinus does not mean that an individual is completely lost and merged in the final stage of union. Armstrong holds that it will be a stage of unity-in-diversity. He comments: “It is true that in the union we rise above Noûs to a state in which there is no longer Seer and Seen, but only unity. But universal Noûs, of which we are then a part, exists continually in that state of union without prejudice to its intuitive thought and unity-in-diversity.”<sup>8</sup>

The ethical duty of an individual is to make an attempt to overcome the limitations arising out of its imprisonment in the body and be united with the One, from which, metaphysically speaking, the world has descended. Thus ethics requires an individual to move in a direction opposite to that in which the world has evolved. As Windelband explains, “Metaphysics and ethics to Plotinus were, then, in inverted parallelism: ethics teaches the way of salvation to be the same series of stages of development toward an end, which is known in metaphysics as the process of origination from a beginning.”<sup>9</sup>

#### IV

Let us now turn to Śrī Aurobindo. Like Plotinus Śrī Aurobindo also is a monist and he also starts from the concept of one Supreme Being. Plotinus seems to lean, at least occasionally, towards rigid monism and reminds one of the Advaita philosophy (which is a purely absolutistic or non-dualistic philosophy), advocated by Śaṅkara and others. Śrī Aurobindo supports a kind of modified monism, which he calls integralism. While Plotinus is content with stating that the One contains the potency for all existence and is inexpressible, Śrī Aurobindo accepts an integral view of Reality and tells us that Reality is neither pure one nor many, but is a unity in

diversity and at once personal and impersonal. To quote him, "The absolute reality of the Absolute must be, not a rigid indeterminable oneness, not an infinity vacant of all that is not a pure existence. . . ." <sup>10</sup> As pointed out at the outset, Śrī Aurobindo characterizes the Supreme Reality as *Sat-Cit-Ānanda*, i.e., Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. It is a triune Being. The triple nature does not again mean the existence of three separate attributes. That which is Existence is Consciousness, and that which is Consciousness is Bliss. The Reality is basically consciousness and it contains within itself Spiritual Energy, which, when manifested, becomes active and dynamic force, i.e., Creative Energy. Hence Śrī Aurobindo prefers to speak of Consciousness-Force in a hyphenated form with reference to the Supreme Reality. This stress on consciousness and dynamic energy seems to be lacking in Plotinus.

Neither Plotinus nor Śrī Aurobindo keeps the Supreme Reality confined to itself. Both of them explain the world as a product of the One Supreme Reality. The key concept with Plotinus is "emanation," while with Śrī Aurobindo it is "evolution." Plotinus thinks that the *Noûs* emanates out of the One and the Soul out of the *Noûs*. But the term "emanation" does not carry with it a sense of activism on the part of the One—it seems to imply that the world-system automatically comes out of the One, its nature being what it is. But here Śrī Aurobindo falls back on the concept of evolution, which is a dynamic concept. He also puts his own interpretation upon it. The supporters of the traditional mechanical theory of evolution hold that matter gives rise to life and life to mind. But they cannot explain how and why matter should lead to life and life to mind. They cannot satisfactorily explain the *nisus* of evolution, feels Śrī Aurobindo. To explain the onward movement of evolution Śrī Aurobindo formulates a somewhat novel concept of *involution*. He tells us that evolution has been possible because there has been a prior involution. *Saccidānanda*, the Supreme Reality, veiled itself voluntarily and came down to a level which is called the level

of matter. Thus what passes for matter is not really dead, inert matter, but supreme consciousness in a *veiled* form. Evolution is therefore not a mere change, a result of chance variations, an operation of matter-particles, but it is guided all through by Consciousness-Force. Consciousness which is veiled in matter struggles for expression. In animal life this consciousness manifests itself in a rudimentary form in instinct which is subconscious or just conscious. Consciousness moves further, though slowly and gradually, through more and more organized forms of life; and it reaches a highly complex form in Man. While the emanation of Plotinus is a three-stage process, the evolution of Śrī Aurobindo's conception is a six-stage process. According to Śrī Aurobindo, the progressive movement of evolution passes through the following stages: (i) matter (*jada*); (ii) life (*prāṇa*); (iii) psyche (*caitanya-puruṣa*); (iv) mind (*manas*); (v) super-mind (*vijñāna* or *Rta-ctr*); and (vi) Existence (*sat*). This evolution takes place because it was preceded by involution. Involution passed through the above stages in the *reverse* order. This means that Supreme Being or Existence first came down to the level of Supermind, then to the level of mind and so on gradually, stopping at the level of matter. Thus what Plotinus calls emanation has some resemblance with Śrī Aurobindo's concept of involution. But emanation is directly involved in creation, while involution is a pre-condition of evolution which is involved in creation.

Both Plotinus and Śrī Aurobindo agree in holding that matter cannot have any separate existence over against the Spiritual Reality, and both are opposed to any gross dualism between Spirit and matter. But their attitude to matter is different. For Plotinus matter is indeterminate and is in its nature ugly and evil. It is at the opposite extreme of things intelligible. Just as light gradually fades away in darkness, so the divine essence gradually degenerates and loses itself at the farthest end into matter. Thus matter is a non-being, a principle of negation. But for Śrī Aurobindo matter is nothing but



Supreme Reality in a completely veiled form and not something in which Reality degenerates and loses itself completely. Indeed, for Śrī Aurobindo matter is concealed consciousness and hence emergence or creation is possible from the side of matter (which, of course, is really spirit). For Śrī Aurobindo, matter, being Supreme Reality in a veiled form, contains all the potentiality for creation, while for Plotinus the potentiality of the One terminates or disappears in matter. Unlike Plotinus, Śrī Aurobindo would not call matter an evil, though of course he characterizes it as a "seat of ignorance" in so far as the light of consciousness remains concealed in it. In short, the attitude of Plotinus to matter is more negative than positive, while that of Śrī Aurobindo is more positive than negative.

Both Plotinus and Śrī Aurobindo look upon the universe as a harmonious whole, as an unbroken series of descending and ascending values and existences. For Plotinus all grades of existence are, says Dean Inge, "integral parts of the eternal systole and diastole in which the life of the universe consists, a life in which there is nothing arbitrary or irregular."<sup>11</sup> And the remark applies equally to Śrī Aurobindo. In fact, in both Plotinus and Śrī Aurobindo the concepts of Descent and Ascent figure prominently.

Though both Plotinus and Śrī Aurobindo speak of descent and ascent, their interpretation varies. With Plotinus the descent starts with emanation from the One; and the One cannot but emanate because of its inherent potency. He does not tell us *why* the One should emanate. But Śrī Aurobindo seems to be more explicit on this point. He holds that the Supreme Reality descends or conceals himself voluntarily in order that there may be ascent, evolution or creation. The two processes of Descent and Ascent, Involution and Evolution, are always going on—they constitute the cycle of cosmic existence and thus they bring to the forefront the problem of the *how* and the *why* of Existence. The Supreme Reality indulges in involution or descent in a sportive spirit (or *līlā*, as it is technically called) for the delight of becoming. Thus with

Śrī Aurobindo descent and ascent are twin processes that go hand in hand and one is a correlate to the other. But in Plotinus, as we have seen, the notion of descent in the sense of voluntary concealment on the part of the One and for the sake of cosmic emergence or creation is lacking. When Plotinus comes to the third member of his Trinity, viz., Soul, he speaks of descent more or less in the sense of fall or degeneration. The Individual Soul falls into a body, and in order to overcome the bad company of the body, the soul should strive to make an ascent. The soul of an individual, even though imprisoned in a body, maintains a separateness from the body, which as material is an "evil." But when Śrī Aurobindo advises spiritual ascent of an individual, he does not advise anyone to leave aside the body. Śrī Aurobindo aims at *total* perfection through total transformation, a divinization of the entire earthly life. Hence he cannot ignore the body which constitutes "the base" of our life on earth. If we can rise to the Spiritual height, the base should also join the heights. Says Śrī Aurobindo, "If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use."<sup>12</sup> The spiritual transformation on which Śrī Aurobindo lays so much emphasis "is *not* a change into something purely subtle and spiritual to which Matter is in its nature repugnant and by which it is felt as an obstacle . . . ; it takes up Matter as a form of the Spirit. . . ."<sup>13</sup> In divine transfiguration the physical body of a man will shine, assures Śrī Aurobindo, in the glories of "a pure and spiritualized physical existence."<sup>14</sup> From this it is evident that Śrī Aurobindo is averse to any total condemnation of earthly life in bodily form. In fact, the *leitmotiv* of Śrī Aurobindo finds expression in the two fundamental questions which he discusses: (a) How can divine life be established on earth?; and (b) How can Spirit be reconciled to Matter? Hence there cannot be any attempt on the part of Śrī Aurobindo to run away from earthly life.

It should also be noted that when Śrī Aurobindo speaks of the ascent of an individual, he also points out that individual evolution is in tune with cosmic evolution. Ascent and Descent constitute the very feature of the cosmos itself. Of Plotinus it has been said that he is "caught between a cosmos-centered and man-centered perspective."<sup>15</sup> But Śrī Aurobindo tries to effect a reconciliation between these two perspectives.

Both Plotinus and Śrī Aurobindo agree that the ascent of an individual to the supreme level is a long and arduous process and that when an individual rises to the spiritual summit he experiences a supra-terrestrial illumination. According to Plotinus, an individual soul first rises to the *Noûs* and therefrom to the level of the One and finally becomes united with the One. At this supreme level an individual has a kind of Vision that baffles all description. Plotinus says, "To see and to have seen that Vision is reason no longer. It is more than reason, before reason, and after reason. . . ."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, according to Śrī Aurobindo, to have supramental transformation an individual has to undergo a psychic and spiritual transformation. He also describes that there are four stages of ascent from the level of human intelligence to that of the Supermind, viz., (i) Higher Mind, (ii) Illumined Mind, (iii) Intuitive Mind, and (iv) Overmind.<sup>17</sup> When an individual reaches the goal of Supermind, his body and mind undergo a radical transformation and he becomes a gnostic being. A gnostic being has a vision of Truth and he develops an integral knowledge which transcends the ordinary level of argumentation or ratiocination. He also transcends all so-called values of our daily life. The whole of the gnostic life is governed by one principle of self-expression of the Spirit, the Will of the Divine Being. This principle leaves enough room for freedom and no rigid standardization is insisted upon. The Gnostic is not thus merged in the Supreme Reality. He experiences an ineffable joy and delight and his mind is always illumined. Śrī

Aurobindo visualizes the emergence of a community of gnostic beings or supermen and with its emergence the Kingdom of Heaven on earth will be established.

Unlike Plotinus, Śrī Aurobindo is not so much interested in the saving of an individual soul as he is in the upliftment of concrete man. For Śrī Aurobindo the emergence of man is not just an event among events—rather it is a central episode of the evolutionary world pregnant with immense significance. Man appears to be an ambiguous phenomenon—he is half-animal and half-god. He has a pre-human past and super-human future. He is in between the forces of Nature and Spirit. But this ambiguity is not, in the words of Śrī Aurobindo, "a thing to be deplored, but rather a privilege and a promise, for it opens out to us an immense vista of self-development and self-exceeding."<sup>18</sup> Man thus occupies a special position of honour in so far as he is destined to a higher life by unfolding the potentiality that lies dormant in him because of the involution of the Supreme Reality. Man is not the last word or the full stop in the evolutionary process. He is limited and yet he aspires to be infinite; he is relative and yet he feels an irresistible urge towards the Supreme. So man should transcend the level of humanity and develop the Superman in him. This is no determinisitic conception of development, for man must make genuine spiritual efforts to unfold his innate potentiality for a divine life. This ideal of supermanhood is to be carefully distinguished from the inflated ego of the physically strong man or the *Übermensch* of Nietzsche's dream. Such a superman is an apotheosis of mere power or physical strength who does not care at all for values and norms. But the Superman of Śrī Aurobindo's vision rises above the level of humanity not by physical power but by spiritual progress. He cares more for inner conquest than for outward show of power. He converts his whole being into "a channel of divine puissance." Needless to say, this conception of the Superman is lacking in Plotinus's conception of the ascent of the soul. Moreover, this conception puts a meaning in evolution by emphasizing the supreme end which is being

progressively realized through it. And this teleological meaning cannot be discovered in Plotinus's theory of emanation.

While formulating the ideal of Supermanhood Śrī Aurobindo tells us that individual effort by itself is not adequate for the development of Supermanhood and so the individual effort is to be combined with Divine Grace. Man can ascend, only if the Divine descends to lift up man. Thus a new meaning is added to the concept of Descent. The meaning is that unless the Divine Being condescends to descend and stretches out His helping hand, an individual man cannot ascend or rise to the supramental level all by himself.<sup>19</sup>

## V

We now come to the end of our brief comparative study. The purpose of this paper is surely not to extol or decry one of the two philosophers (whom we have compared) at the cost of the other. Such a study repays in so far as it shows how the two philosophers differing in their ages and philosophical training offered certain similar solutions when faced with more or less identical problems.

Each of the two thinkers we have studied here is an original thinker in his own right. And each is difficult to interpret. Every interpretation that may be offered is likely to be challenged by a counter-interpretation. But on the whole it seems that the philosophy of Plotinus is more abstract than concrete, while that of Śrī Aurobindo is more concrete than abstract. But they can meet in so far as they both trace the universe to One Reality and neither of them explains away the world of things and beings as an illusion. Moreover, neither of them is a purely abstract thinker, spinning cobwebs of theories; on the other hand, both are practical and intensely eager to offer relief to ailing mankind. Both philosophers feel that the destiny of an individual is not to be confined to the here and now. Both are of the opinion that

an individual should make a genuine effort at spiritual regeneration. Both seem to diagnose that we suffer so much because we have moved far away from our original spiritual home, and that the sooner we return to our spiritual home, the better. The last words said to have been uttered by Plotinus, "Try to bring back the god in you to the divine in the All,"<sup>20</sup> sum up as much the philosophy of Plotinus himself as of Śrī Aurobindo.

Civilization today is passing through a crisis and mankind is overburdened with maladies of existence. We simply develop a feeling of anguish, a kind of nausea, a sense of alienation in this world. We raise the problem of evil and suffering, but cannot throw any light thereon. We have freedom and yet we cannot fruitfully utilize that freedom, because we do not know what our duties are. We do not realize that our primal duty is to awaken the Spirit that lies dormant in us. If we follow the lead of thinkers like Plotinus and Śrī Aurobindo, we shall realize that human existence can never be cut off from its basic spiritual structure. It is time that we realize this, and if we are able to do so, we shall be able to solve the maladies of present-day human existence.

## NOTES

1. Thomas Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), p. 55.
2. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.1.6.
3. Cf. Plato's conception of the Good in *The Republic* (VI.507): "It was the Sun, then, that I meant when I spoke of that offspring which the Good has created in the visible world, to stand there in the same relation to vision and visible things as that which the Good itself bears in the intelligible world to intelligence and to intelligible objects."
4. W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 2 Vols., third ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1948), 1:204.
5. A. H. Armstrong thinks that this downward or lower aspect of Universal Soul is a "fourth distinct hypostasis and has its special

- name, Nature (though Plotinus is reluctant to admit it)." See his *Plotinus* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953), p. 37.
6. Inge, *Philosophy of Plotinus*, 1:203.
  7. Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI.4.16.
  8. Armstrong, *Plotinus*, p. 41.
  9. Wilhelm Windelband, *History of Ancient Philosophy*, trans. Herbert Ernest Cushman (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1899), p. 369.
  10. Śrī Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (New York: Greystone Press, 1949), p. 759.
  11. Inge, *Philosophy of Plotinus*, 1:254.
  12. Śrī Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation on Earth* (Pondicherry: Śrī Aurobindo Ashram, 1952), p. 6.
  13. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
  14. Śrī Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 991.
  15. Joseph Katz, *Plotinus' Search for the Good* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1950), pp. 35-6.
  16. Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI.9.10.
  17. For details see Śrī Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, chapters 25 and 26.
  18. Śrī Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle* (Pondicherry: Śrī Aurobindo Ashram, 1949), p. 315.
  19. Śrī Aurobindo comments in his *Essays on the Gītā*, First Series (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1937), p. 217: "If there were not this rising of man into the Godhead to be *helped* by the descent of God into humanity[,] *Avatarahood* (Incarnation) for the sake of *Dharma* (righteousness) would be an otiose phenomenon."
  20. See A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus (Enneads)*, Vol. I, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 1:xxv.

## The Influence of Indian Philosophy on Neoplatonism

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In the annals of comparative philosophy there has been a controversy among Orientalists regarding the influence of Indian philosophy on Neoplatonism. Both advocates of Indian influence on Neoplatonism and their opponents have adduced strong arguments to establish their theses. In order to resolve the controversy which, like Hydra, raises its head again and again, we have to answer three questions: (1) whether some doctrines are common to both Indian philosophy and Neoplatonism; (2) whether they are of Indian origin and involve abandonment of the Greek tradition of rational critical thought;<sup>1</sup> and (3) whether chronologically they first appeared in India or in Greece?

### I

As regards the first question a brief sketch of the fundamental doctrines of Neoplatonism with reference to their Indian parallels will be sufficient for our purpose.

*The One.* In the philosophy of Plotinus, the One is another name for God. It is the Absolute Spirit. It is pure being and the absolute causality. It is also the "Good." Everything finite finds its aim in it and flows back into it.<sup>2</sup> It has no attributes at all; it is a being without magnitude, without life, without thought. It excludes all knowledge; Plotinus says, "imagine a well (*pēgē*) without origin; it gives itself to all rivers; but it is not diminished by that; it remains quietly in itself."<sup>3</sup> It reminds us of the Absolute described in the peace chant of the Hindu *pūrṇam*, where plenitude proceeds from plenitude yet it remains plenitude undiminished and undisturbed.<sup>4</sup>

*Emanation (Creation).* The question arises: if there is no good beyond the Absolute why should the One create anything beyond itself? Plotinus answers that since all things, even those without life, impart of themselves what they can, the most perfect cannot remain in itself but must pass over. Hence, the creation is not something different from the Absolute. It is the overflow of the Absolute. He compares the Absolute with an overflowing spirit which by its excess gives rise to that which comes after it,<sup>5</sup> or a central source of light which illumines all things.<sup>6</sup> It may be compared with the Hindu concept of *Līlā*. The production of the lower is not the aim or the motive of the activity of the higher. Creation is not a physical process but emanation. The distinction is similar to that between *vivarta* (appearance) and modification (*pariṇāma*). Both Plotinus and the *Upaniṣads* hold that God does not disperse Himself in individual or natural things. There is a continual process from first to last, but the cause remains itself as it was.<sup>7</sup>

*Noûs.* The first emanation of the original essence is Noûs. It is a complete image of the original essence and archetype of all existing things. Mind knows its objects not like perception of external things, but as one with itself.<sup>8</sup> As this unity involves the duality of thinking and being thought, it is not the highest but the second in order of supermundane causes. It is being and thought at the same time. As image the Noûs is equal to the original essence, as derived it is completely

different from it. It is for Plotinus the highest sphere the human spirit can reach and at the same time pure thought itself. This doctrine of Noûs may be compared with the personal (*Saguna*) *Brahman* of the *Upaniṣads*.

*Soul.* The soul is an immaterial substance like Nous, its image and product. It is related to the Nous, as Nous is related to the primal One. It stands between the Nous and the world of phenomena. It is the principle of life and motion in things. It is of two kinds: the World Soul and the individual soul. The first can be compared with the doctrine of *Hiranyagarbha* of the *Upaniṣads* and the second with the *jīvātman*. Like the *Upaniṣads*, Plotinus maintains that the soul can return to itself through the practice of virtue and ascetic purification.

After release from the body the soul dwells in God which is reality and true being. It is a world which cannot be seen with our physical eyes.<sup>9</sup> Here we are no longer men, we are kings.

*Hyle.* Plotinus has described *ὕλη*, or "matter," in many ways. It is the same as evil, "privation," "a lie," a "phantom."<sup>10</sup> It is a mere abstraction, a name for the bare receptacle of forms. It is indeterminate nothing and yet not nothing. It can be compared with the doctrine of *māyā* which is appearance yet not a mere blank. It is something positive. In the words of Puech, it is magical and illusory. Being the product of matter this sensible world is also a mere illusion.<sup>11</sup>

*Rebirth.* Like the *Upaniṣads* Plotinus believes in the doctrine of rebirth. For him even animals have souls. So long as we do not attain the highest wisdom we are bound to successive rebirths, which are like one dream after another or sleep in different beds.<sup>12</sup>

*Law of Karma.* Plotinus believes in the Law of *Karma*. He says it is a universal principle that each soul after death goes where it longs to be.<sup>13</sup> Those who have exercised their human faculties are born as men; those who have lived a sensuous life are born as lower animals.<sup>14</sup> He also refers to the absorption

of disembodied souls in the Universal soul, and this can be reached through an ascetic and contemplative life.<sup>15</sup>

Like the *Upanisads*, Plotinus believes that through the analytic process of the dialectic,<sup>16</sup> the mind reaches its cherished goal and after reaching it becomes quiescent and unified. Here even thought disappears. It is the stage of supreme unity which is beyond even self-knowledge. Here the soul loses its identity and becomes "One." In the words of Plotinus:

But in the vision that which sees is not reason but something greater than and prior to reason, something presupposed by reason as is the object of vision. He who then sees himself when he sees will see himself as a simple being, will be united to himself as such, will feel himself, become such. We ought not even to say that he will see, but he will be that which he sees, if indeed it is possible any longer to distinguish between seer and seen, and not boldly to affirm that the two are One.<sup>17</sup>

In this theory of vision we have the direct influence of oriental philosophy of the Indian type.<sup>18</sup>

Like the *Upanisadic* philosophy Neoplatonism believes in the technique of entering into spiritual consciousness. Through meditation we can free the soul from its subjection to the body and attain union with the Divine. In order to attain this union we must strip everything of the body until the vision is attained. We must abstract from the body, from the soul, from sense perceptions, appetites and emotions, and from even the intellect with its duality. Then the soul touches and gazes on the supreme light.<sup>19</sup> In this account we may see a replica of the Indian theory of contemplation.<sup>20</sup>

Like the *Upanisads*, Neoplatonism has faith in a higher revelation to man in mystical experiences. Porphyry tells that during the period of five years when he lived with Plotinus, Plotinus was four times in union with God. Likewise he laid more emphasis on *Jñāna* (wisdom and contemplation) than on

*karma* or ritual ceremonies and looked upon *karma* as an enfeebled product of contemplation; and in the true spirit of mystic systems he rose above the political barriers of nations and states.<sup>21</sup>

Porphyry and other Neoplatonic philosophers also followed the path carved by their great teacher—Plotinus.

Porphyry<sup>22</sup> holds the salvation of the soul as the aim of philosophy. According to him the source of evil is not so much in the body as in the desires of the soul.<sup>23</sup> He advocates strict asceticism and abstinence from animal food.<sup>24</sup>

Iamblichus<sup>25</sup> accepted Plotinus's teachings with little variation. He suggests that man can obtain unification with the central source (God) not by his own efforts but by theurgic practices which must be performed correctly.

In the works of Proclus the living experience of Plotinus becomes a fixed tradition.<sup>26</sup> The metaphysics of being is approved by a doctrine of categories. He teaches that beyond all bodies is the soul's essence; beyond the souls is the intellectual principle; and beyond all intellectual substances is the One. The soul is incorporeal and independent of the body and therefore imperishable. To know the self truly is to know it as actually One, as potentially all things and as divine. He accepted the Neoplatonic trinity and explained the existence of the universe along Plotinian lines. He says that everything complete tends to reproduce itself. Every productive cause produces the next and all subsequent principles while itself remaining steadfast. Between the pure unity of the One and the minimal unity of matter, indeterminate sources are recognized.

Like mystics he advocates world citizenship. His saying, "the philosopher ought not to observe the religious customs of one city or country but ought to be the common hierophant of the whole world," reminds us of the *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* of Indian philosophy. Ascetic and contemplative virtue is rated higher than the practical. He gives devotional orientation to the Neoplatonism of Plotinus. Prayer for Plotinus was the turning of the mind to God; to Proclus it was

humble supplication for divine mind. He had superstitious respect for theurgy. He agrees with Iamblichus that individual things are united to the "One" by the mysterious operation of the occult symbols which reside in certain stones, herbs, and animals.<sup>27</sup>

Apart from these doctrines there are some other ones which have striking resemblances with the doctrines of Indian philosophy. For instance, the three hypostases of Plotinus resemble the three bodies of *Buddha*;<sup>28</sup> the Neoplatonic comparison of divine activity to the effortless and unpremeditated radiation of light by the sun reminds us of the description of *Brahman* in the *Upanisads* and of *Buddha* in the Buddhist texts;<sup>29</sup> and the doctrine of *Kenodoxia* (emptiness)<sup>30</sup> is a counterpart of the Upanisadic doctrine of *Avidyā*, or "Ignorance." The Hypocratical treatise "On Winds" resembles the more ancient doctrine of *Prāna* which forms a well-known topic of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.<sup>31</sup> The *Maitrī Upaniṣad* stresses that we have to destroy our *abhimāna* and get rid of the sheaths hiding the self.<sup>32</sup> A medical theory in Plato's *Timaeus* resembles Indian medical theories.<sup>33</sup> The duration of the Heracleitian "Great Year" (10-8) is a decimal fraction which is based on Indian calculations.<sup>34</sup> The doctrine of the infinity of *Brahman* and the world, and the doctrine of identity between God and soul and between knowledge and *Brahman* are well-known topics of the *Upanisads*.

We can trace some elements of Vedic origin in Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.<sup>35</sup> There are references to Avamedha,<sup>36</sup> to Vedic rites, and to Yogic powers.<sup>37</sup> There are certain striking resemblances in the matter of passage to Heaven. In the *Ṛg-Veda*, heaven is the home of the soul to which, after death, it returns purified;<sup>38</sup> before reaching Heaven it has to cross a stream<sup>39</sup> and pass by Yama's watchful dogs, "the spotted dogs of Sarama."<sup>40</sup> Further, the cradle of Neoplatonism was not the quiet university town of Athens, but the great manufacturing city of Alexandria which was at that time not only a great intellectual centre but also the place where East and West rubbed their shoulders, where the

wisdom of Asia was in high repute and where men of wisdom like Philostratus expressed the highest veneration for the learning of the Indians and even went to India to consult the *Brāhmana*s.<sup>41</sup>

The scholars<sup>42</sup> who try to find the hypostases of Plotinus in the "Trinity" of Plato and the simile of One and the sun in the *Republic* and other Platonic dialogues; the doctrine of *Kenodoxia* in Parmenides; the doctrine of infinity of *Brahman* and world in Melissus's "Being," in Anaxagoras' "Noûs,"<sup>43</sup> and in Heracleitus's "Soul"; and then emphatically assert that Neoplatonism is a legitimate development of Greek thought and Plato's own speculations<sup>44</sup>—forget the fact that these philosophers were also influenced by Indian thought through Orphicism and Pythagoreanism.<sup>45</sup>

In fact, the philosophy of Plato and even that of his independent disciple Aristotle was a kind of splendid digression from the main current of Greek speculation.<sup>46</sup> Plato's growing sympathy with Orphic and Pythagorean teachings; the devoutness and solemnity of his later attitude towards religion; the ethical rigorism of his old age, with its strongly marked ascetic tendency; his interest in Oracles and demons and the momentary appearance of an "evil soul" in the *Timaeus*, all point the way the wind was blowing.<sup>47</sup> Iamblichus, the biographer of Pythagoras and one of the greatest philosophers of Neoplatonism, clearly admitted that Plato, Aristotle, and he himself were all Pythagoreans.<sup>48</sup>

From the discussion above we may draw the conclusion that some of the fundamental doctrines of Neoplatonism which have striking similarities with the doctrines of Indian philosophy were well-established in the *Upanisads* at least in the 6th century B.C.—long before the rise of Neoplatonism.

## II

As regards the second question, as to whether certain views of Plotinus are of Indian origin and involve abandonment of

the Greek tradition of rational critical thought, a brief summary is necessary of those systems which represented an opposite stream of thought and through which Indian philosophy had penetrated the minds of Greek thinkers.

Among these systems the Orphic was the most outstanding. In it we find a mystical theology, a code of conduct for moral life, a system of purificatory and expiatory rites,<sup>49</sup> which believes in the universal brotherhood of all beings, in the existence of God (Dionysius), in the immortality<sup>50</sup> and divinity of Soul, and in the state of ecstasy where soul sees the vision of God. If a man leads a moral life and subdues his passions and appetites through ascetic practices such as a life of chastity, abstinence from beans and fish, the wearing of ordained clothes, and avoidance of bloody sacrifices, he can reach divinity within this very lifetime.

Like Orphic religion Eleusinianism<sup>51</sup> also believes in the immortality and the divinity of soul. It says that dark shrouds are wrapped round the soul; man can unwrap them through initiation and can become divine. At the end of the initiation the initiate hears the last words from his teacher, "Go in peace," which remind us of the Upaniṣadic "Om Śāntih, Śāntih, Śāntih."<sup>52</sup>

The Pythagorean school<sup>53</sup> was also influenced by Orphic culture. Likewise it believed in the immortality of soul, in the doctrine of rebirth,<sup>54</sup> and in the purification of soul through ascetic practices like self-control. Pythagoras, like the Upaniṣadic philosophers, believed that all souls are identical by nature. The apparent distinctions between human beings and other beings are not ultimate. A man, through *theoria*, "the contemplation of the divine," can realize his true nature and be free from the wheel of transmigration. It is said that Pythagoras had travelled widely studying the teachings of Egyptians, Assyrians and Brāhmanas, and was greatly influenced by India in his religious, philosophical and mathematical teachings. Even in the formulation of his famous theorem of the quadrature of the hypotenuse he was influenced by India where it was already known in the older Vedic

times, long before Pythagoras.<sup>55</sup> Like the Jains and the Buddhists he refrained from violence and eating meat and regarded certain vegetables as taboos.<sup>56</sup>

Like Pythagoras, Empedocles also believed in the divinity and immortality of soul; in the doctrine of rebirth and its final release from the world of sense; and in the attainment of divine status through asceticism.<sup>57</sup>

Socrates also believed in the same doctrines of meditation, immortality of soul, renunciation of the world and brotherhood of all mankind which are Orphic in nature and are quite different from the ritualistic religion of the Greeks. He believed in an inner voice (*Daemon*) and rational self-discipline.<sup>58</sup>

In Plato the mystic tradition reached its zenith. He believed in the immortality, divinity and transmigration of soul, and the super-sensible (beatific) vision of the philosopher. The simile of the cave reminds us of the doctrine of *māyā*. Like Indian philosophers he held that body is a fetter<sup>59</sup> for the soul which can be broken through the pursuit of wisdom. Like Hindus he believed that God is perfect righteousness and those of us who are most righteous are most like him.<sup>60</sup> His doctrine<sup>61</sup> of "*Logistikon*, *Thumos*, and *Epithumia*" reminds us of the Sāṅkhya doctrine of the *guṇas* (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, respectively). The division of souls into three classes based on the preponderance of these psychical elements answers to the divisions of the Indian caste system.<sup>62</sup> The concept of the Age of Kronos in Plato, which is similar to the Golden Age of Hesiod, seems to be a new version of the four *yugas* of the Hindus.<sup>63</sup>

In the end of the *Republic* Plato advocated the doctrine of *karma*. The disembodied souls are represented as choosing their next incarnation at the hands of Lachesis, daughter of necessity, who is the Law of *Karma* personified; and like Indian philosophers he held that the endeavour of philosophy is to ascend to the first principle of the universe which transcends all definite existence.<sup>64</sup>



We have in Plato as in the *Upanisads* the highest God—the idea of the Good in the *Republic*, the Demiurgus and the soul of the world in the *Timaeus*.

In the mystic cults and the teachings of Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates and the Neoplatonists, we find a decisive break with the Greek tradition of rationalism and humanism. The mystic cults are definitely un-Greek and anti-Hellenic in their character.<sup>65</sup> They are different from the anthropomorphic worship of the Greeks. Their adherents are organized in communities based on voluntary admission and initiation. Their cosmogony and eschatology are foreign to the Greek spirit. Homer is not troubled by the problem of the origin of things. He knows of no world egg which plays a prominent part in many cosmogonies and in Orphism. Those who are familiar with the Vedic hymn of creation will note that the conceptions of night and chaos and the birth of love, as well as the cosmic egg, are accepted by the Orphics.<sup>66</sup>

To seek to become like the gods is to the orthodox Greek the height of insolence, though it is of the essence of the Orphic religion. We have the typical Greek reaction to the Orphic doctrine "God am I, mortal no longer" in the following lines of Pindar:

Seek not to become a god; seek not to become Zeus;... mortal things befit mortals best. Mortal winds must seek what is fitting at the hands of the gods, recognizing what is at our feet, and to what lot we are born. Strive not my soul, for an immortal life, but do the thing which it is within thy power to do.<sup>67</sup>

Hailer says:

Genuine Greek religion knows no mystical striving after a blessed union with God in ecstasy after an abolition of the limits of individuality in a realm beyond the conscious life. Prophetic austerity and mystic indifference are alike foreign to it.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, Orphic religion was a religion of an entirely different kind from the civic worship to which the ordinary Greek professed his allegiance.<sup>69</sup> It did not enjoin the practice of the civic virtues, nor is discipline or transformation of character required by it; the sum total of its morality is to bend one's course towards the deity and turn away not from the moral lapses and aberrations of earthly life, but from earthly existence itself.<sup>70</sup>

In Plato's philosophy, as we have discussed earlier, there is not even a single concept which is in tune with the Greek theology. The essential unity of the human and the divine spirit, the immortality of the human soul, the escape from the restless wheel of the troublesome journey, the phenomenality of the world, the contempt for the body, the distinction between knowledge and opinion, contradict every single idea of Greek popular religion.<sup>71</sup>

In him we find the most eminent representative of the heretics<sup>72</sup> whose minds were heavily charged with an Orphic mysticism mainly derived from Asiatic sources. India, always the home of mystical devotion, probably contributed the major share.<sup>73</sup> In the words of Dr. Inge, "the Platonic or the mystical outlook on life for which religion is at once a philosophy and a discipline" was first felt in Asia, especially in the *Upanisads* and Buddhism,<sup>74</sup> and it influenced the entire Greek culture. In fact, Greek culture rose against an oriental background from which it was never isolated, save in the minds of classical scholars.<sup>75</sup> Tarn is also of the same view. According to him, "Egyptian, Persian and Indian cultural influences were absorbed into the Greek world from very early times."<sup>76</sup> In the words of Prof. Mayer, we may conclude that though alien in origin, alien to the spirit of Hellenism, predominantly Indian in character and content, walking in the shadow without support from the state, the Orphic, the Eleusinian, and the Pythagorean brotherhoods and the Platonic schools prepared the way for later Platonism and for certain elements in Catholic theology.<sup>77</sup>

Some scholars may not agree with our conclusions. They might think it derogatory to the Greeks to assume them to have taken some of the sources of their knowledge and beliefs from older times. But there may be no denying of the fact that these ideas are similar and that they were firmly established in India before the sixth century B.C. and arose in Greece after that period. History does not repeat itself except with variations and there is no dearth of historical evidence which proves the relation between India and Greece from time immemorial. Nor was there any spirit of bigotry in the Greeks not to learn anything which was alien in origin.<sup>78</sup>

### III

As regards the third question, whether chronologically some of the views of Plotinus first appeared in India or in Greece, the picture is clear. Since the Vedic Age—the second millennium B.C.—we find close agreements between the language and the mythology, religious traditions and social institutions of Indians and Iranians, on the one hand, and those of the Greeks, Romans, Celts, Germans, and Slavs, on the other. The gods of Father Heaven (*dyauspiter*, Jupiter), Mother Earth (Aurora, *Usas*), and the Sun (*Sūrya*) are common to Greeks and Indians. The Olympian religion of the Greeks and Vedic beliefs had a common background. There is also a striking similarity between the social life described in the Homeric poems and that of the *Veda*. Both are patriarchal and tribal. These facts indicate that these two cultures had a common origin at some early date. Thus in the *Rg-Veda*, the European will find memorials of his own racial inheritance.<sup>79</sup> In so far as we are Aryan in speech, that is, in thought, so far the *Rg-Veda* is our own oldest book, says Max Müller.<sup>80</sup>

Twice<sup>81</sup> the Vedic god Mitra,<sup>82</sup> who is known as Mithra in the language of Avesta, conquered a great part of the Western world, and became a favourite deity of the emperors. Aurelian won victory in his name in 270 A.D.. Galerius and Licinius

dedicated a temple to his name in 307 A.D. at Carantum on the Danube.

Commerce between the mouth of the Indus and the Persian gulf was unbroken down to Buddhist times. We have evidence of trade by sea between the Phoenicians of the Levant and Western India as early as 975 B.C., when Hiram, king of Tyre, imported ivory, apes and peacocks for decorating the palaces and the temple of Solomon.<sup>83</sup>

Trade between the Indus Valley and the Euphrates also seems to be very ancient. For we find in the cuneiform inscriptions of the Mittite Kings of Mittani in Cappadocia, belonging to the sixteenth or fifteenth century B.C., the names of the Vedic gods—Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, and the Āśvins.<sup>84</sup>

In the sixth century B.C. India and the West became closer when, after the fall of Babylon in 538 B.C., Cyrus founded the Persian Empire and Darius his successor made the Indus Valley and Greece part of his empire (510 B.C.).

The presence of a large body of troops in Darius's expedition against Greece in 480 B.C.; the discovery of the modelled heads of Indians at Memphis about the fifth century B.C.; and the first book about India by Scylax<sup>85</sup> in 510 B.C. show that there was a close connection between India and Greece in political, cultural and economic fields. The rise of philosophical reflection in Greece and the revolt against the traditional Homeric religion belong to this period. There we find Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno and Anaxagoras, who laid down the foundations of Greek metaphysics, which has a great resemblance with the Upaniṣadic doctrine of "Reality."<sup>86</sup> The mystical schools of Greek philosophy—Orphism, Eleusinianism, and Pythagorean cults—also belong to this period which exerted great influence on the formulation of the fundamental doctrines of Greek philosophy. These schools influenced Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and the Bacchies of Euripedes.<sup>87</sup> The tragic poets Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripedes were also interested in their moral philosophy.

We have a reference to Greek inscript in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini.<sup>88</sup> Eudoxus,<sup>89</sup> the astronomer and friend of Plato, was greatly interested in Indian thought. We have also a tradition in Aristoxenus<sup>90</sup> which mentions the visit of Indian thinkers to Athens and their conversation with Socrates. All these factors provide contemporary evidence for the prevalence of Indian thought in Greece in the 4th century B.C.

The invasion of India by Alexander the Great in 327 B.C. was a turning point in the history of Indo-Greek relations. It was not only the march of an army but also the march of thought. Alexander had marched along with Pyrrho and Onesicritus<sup>91</sup> who acquired a great deal of knowledge of Indian thought, and returned with many Indian thinkers including Kalanos, an Indian philosopher. This event changed the entire course of the history of the Academy. The philosophy of Plato was replaced by the philosophy of Pyrrho, and the Greek ideal of "happiness" gave place to imperturbability of soul.

With the advent of Chandra Gupta Maurya on the political horizon of India, the Indo-Greek relationship started on the ambassadorial level. The principal successor of Alexander the Great, Seleucus Nikator (third century B.C.), sent Megasthenes as ambassador to Chandra Gupta Maurya. He has given a very good account of the India of the 3rd century B.C. He says that in many points their teaching agrees with that of the Greeks.<sup>92</sup> After Megasthenes, Diamachus of Plataea was sent to Bindusāra as ambassador by Antiochus I and Dionysius was sent by Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt. He lived in India from 285 to 247 B.C.<sup>93</sup>

During the reign of Aśoka, who ascended the throne of Magadha in 272 B.C., the military expedition started by Alexander the Great was turned into an expedition for peace. He held a Council<sup>94</sup> at Pāṭaliputra where it was decided to send missions to various countries to spread Buddhism. Accordingly, delegates were sent to five sovereigns of the West, namely, Antiochus Theos of Syria, Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonus Gontos of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene, and

Alexander of Epirus.<sup>95</sup> These missions were received favourably.

Again, during 190-180 B.C., the Bactrian empire was extended into India by Demetrius, and Dindha and Kathiawar became its provinces.

During these centuries thousands of Greeks who settled in India became Indianized and accepted Indian religion and philosophy as their own. The erection of the column of Vāsudeva by Heliodorus<sup>96</sup> in 140 B.C., and the conversions of Menander<sup>97</sup> and Kanishka to Buddhism amply demonstrate this fact. We also know from history that Alexander Polyhistor of Asia Minor had a good deal of knowledge of Buddhism; a senior priest of Yona country attended the foundation ceremony of the great tope on the initiation of King Duttahagāminī which was held in 157 B.C., accompanied by thirty thousand priests;<sup>98</sup> the Indian king Poras sent an ambassador to Augustus in 20 B.C., along with an Indian thinker;<sup>99</sup> and Apollonius of Tyana went to India to consult the Brāhmanas.

In the work of Hippolytus which was written in 320 A.D., at least 25 years before Plotinus left Alexandria for Rome, we come across many passages which give a very detailed account of the philosophy of the *Maitrī Upaṇṣad*. This knowledge cannot have resulted from the records of the historians of Alexander the Great, for there is a clear reference to the river Tāgabena (Tūṅgabēnā) of South India.<sup>100</sup> Plotinus,<sup>101</sup> the founder of Neoplatonism, was himself anxious to acquire a first-hand knowledge of Indian philosophy and with this in mind accompanied King Gordian in his expedition against the Sapor of Persia in 242 A.D.. Due to the sudden death of the King at Mesopotamia his dream could not be realized. Porphyry, the illustrious disciple of Plotinus, had a good knowledge of Indian philosophy. In his *De Abstinentia* he has given a good account of some Indian views on the authority of Bardesanes which the latter had acquired from an Indian ambassador to the Imperial Court early in the third century.<sup>102</sup>

In the presence of these historical data we may conclude that Indian thought might have played a great part in the

development of the doctrines of Neoplatonism, and that Neoplatonism might be the result of the religious syncretism which arose from the conquests of Alexander the Great and the undertakings of the Roman Empire.<sup>103</sup> Modern ontologists also support the above conclusion and hold that all the resemblances between the similes used by Greek and Indian writers cannot be explained simply by reflection on earlier Greek ideas.<sup>104</sup> But in order to give the final verdict on this subject we must await future researchers who will uncoil the mysteries with their knowledge of Indian and Greek traditions.<sup>105</sup>

## NOTES

1. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), p. 14.
2. "Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti  
Yat prayanty abhisamviśanti tad vijijñāśasva tad Brahma."  
*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3.1.1.
3. *Enn.* X.5-7.
4. "Oum Pūnamadaḥ Pūrnamidam Pūrṇāt Pūrman Udacyate. Pūrṇasya  
Pūrṇamādaya Pūrṇam eva avaśiṣyate." *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*  
5.1.1.
5. *Enn.* V.2.1.
6. "Tasya Bhāṣā sarvaṃ idam vibhāti." *Kaṭhapaniṣad* 2.2.15.
7. *Enn.* V.2.2.
8. *Enn.* V.5.1.
9. *Enn.* III.4.24.
10. *Enn.* II.5.5.
11. J. F. Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism* (Madras, 1961), p. 192.
12. *Enn.* III.6.6.
13. *Enn.* IV.3.13-15.
14. Porphyry and Iamblichus do not agree with Plotinus. According to them, human souls are never born as beasts and birds.
15. *Enn.* IV.8.4.
16. *Adhyāropāpavāda*.
17. Trans. W. R. Inge, quoted in his *Philosophy of Plotinus*, Vol. II (1918), p. 141.
18. W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1899), p. 98.
19. *Enn.* V.3.13.
20. E. Bréhier, *La Philosophie de Plotin* (Paris, 1938), pp. 107-37, quoted in Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism*, p. 236.
21. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 214.
22. 230-300 A.D.
23. Stutfield, *Mysticism and Catholicism* (1925), p. 34.
24. *De Abstinentia* is a work of Porphyry's where abstinence from eating animal food is prescribed.
25. D. circa 330 A.D.
26. 410-485 A.D. The most original and systematic Neoplatonic thinker after Plotinus.
27. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 218.
28. J. Przyluski, "Les Trois Hypostases dans l'Inde et à Alexandrie," *Mélanges Cumont* II (Brussels, 1936), pp. 925-33, quoted in Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism*, p. 239.
29. For instance, the use of this and other similes to illustrate the unpremeditated nature of the Buddha's activity by the Tibetan writer Gampopa (*Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, trans. Guenther, chap. 21, pp. 271-4), following the Indian Buddhist philosopher Asaṅga (*Uttaratantra* IV.58-60). The Sun simile recurs in the modern Hindu mystic Raman Maharshi (*Collected Works*, p. 46); quoted in Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 15, n. 2.
30. J. Filliozat, "La doctrine des Brâhmanes d'après saint Hippolyte," *Journal Asiatique* 234 (1943-45), quoted in Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism*, p. 243.
31. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.3.1.
32. Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism*, p. 245.
33. Filliozat, "La doctrine des Brâhmanes..." quoted in Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism*, p. 243.
34. Ibid.
35. Bréhier, *La Philosophie de Plotin*, pp. 107-33.
36. R. Goossens, "Un texte grec relatif à l'aśvamedha," *Journal Asiatique* (1930), p. 280, quoted in Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism*, p. 243.
37. P. Meile, "Apollonius de Tyane et les Rites Vediques," *Journal Asiatique* 234 (1943-45), p. 451, quoted in Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism*, p. 243.
38. *Rg-Veda* X.4.8.
39. *Rg-Veda* X.14.8.
40. *Rg-Veda* X.14.3.
41. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IX, ed. James Hastings, s.v. "Neoplatonism," by W. R. Inge, p. 308.
42. J. F. Staal, Cambridge Platonists, Pistorious, and Cudworth hold this view. See Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism*.

43. A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus and India," *Classical Quarterly* (1936), pp. 22-8.
44. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IX, ed. Hastings, s.v. "Neoplatonism," by Inge, p. 308.
45. P. T. Rajie, "The Universal in the Western and the Indian Philosophy," in *Radhakrishnan*, a collection presented in honor of his sixtieth birthday (London: George Allen, 1951), p. 404. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (1930), p. 98.
46. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IX, ed. Hastings, s.v. "Neoplatonism," by Inge, p. 308.
47. Ibid.
48. Paul Edwards, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vol. V, pp. 473-4.
49. Plato, *Phaedrus* 69C.
50. Herodotus 2.81.
51. Eleusis of Attica was the founder of this culture.
52. *Īśāvāsyaopaniṣad*, Mantra 18, peace chant.
53. It was founded by Pythagoras who was born at Cronon in the second half of the sixth century B.C. It was a religious fraternity where admission was gained by initiation.
54. Plato, *Phaedo* 62d.
55. H. G. Rawlinson, *Legacy of India* (1937), p. 5.
56. Ibid.
57. "Whoever exerteth himself, with toil him can we release. The soul at length returns to its divine status and the wise men who practice such holy living eventually become Gods while yet on earth." Empedocles, Fragment 146.
58. Plato, *Apology* 29C.
59. Plato, *Phaedo* 65-7; *Apology* 29C.
60. Plato, *Thaetetus* 176.
61. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 147.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Plato, *Republic*, Book 6.
65. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Vol. I, ed. Oscar Levi (1909), p. 346.
66. Leggie, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, Vol. I (1925), p. 123. See also Aristophanes, *The Birds* (693).
67. W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (1935), pp. 236-7.
68. Hailer, E.T., *Prayer* (1932), p. 76.
69. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 206.
70. Erwin Rodhe, *Psyche*, II, p. 125.
71. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 148.

72. Sir Richard Livingston, *Greek Genius and its Meaning to Us*, II, pp. 197-8.
73. Stutfield, *Mysticism and Catholicism*, p. 74.
74. W. R. Inge, *The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought* (1926), pp. 7, 9.
75. E. R. Dodds, *Humanism and Technique in Greek Studies* (1936), p. 11.
76. W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India* (1938), p. 67.
77. Mayer, *Political Thought* (1939), p. 7.
78. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 150.
79. Ibid., p. 119.
80. Kaegi, *The Rg-Veda* (1898), p. 25.
81. First its march was stopped at Salamis; centuries later under the dynasty of Arsacids he penetrated the Roman world.
82. Mitra and Mithra are identical.
83. *Book of Kings* X.22, quoted in Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 121.
84. They called these gods by the Vedic title "Nāsatyā" and bore Aryan names.
85. Scylax was a Greek sea captain whom Darius commissioned to explore the course of the Indus about 510 B.C. Herodotus IV.441.
86. Szabo, "Indische Elemente in Plotinischen Neuplatonismus," *Scholastic* 13 (1938), pp. 57-96.
87. Leggie, *Forerunners and Rivals*, p. 123.
88. "Yāvanāni lipiḥ." Pāṇini, *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4.1.59. Pāṇini is the greatest authority on Sanskrit grammar.
89. Pliny, *Natural History* XXX.3.
90. Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* XI.3. Aristoxenus (c. 330 B.C.) was a disciple of Aristotle. Eusebius (315 A.D.) records a statement of Aristoxenus according to which Indian thinkers visited Athens and met Socrates. One of them asked Socrates about the scope of his philosophy. An inquiry into human phenomena, was the reply. The Indian laughingly answered, "How can we inquire into human phenomena when we are ignorant of divine Self?" Quoted in Werner Jaeger, "Greeks and Jews," *Journal of Religion* (April, 1938), p. 128.
91. Onesicritus was a disciple of Diogenes. He was sent by Alexander to Taxila to persuade Indian thinkers to accompany him. Consequently, Kolonos agreed to accompany him. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 153.
92. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I (1922), pp. 419-20.
93. Pliny, *Natural History* VI.21.

94. The third Council of Buddhism was held at Pataliputra under the leadership of Tissa Moggaliputta.
95. Thirteenth Rock Edict. Quoted in Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 156.
96. Heliiodorus was a native of Taxila. He was sent by King Antialcidas to King Kāśiputra Dhāgabhadra as ambassador of Greece. He has written his account in Brāhmī script. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 156.
97. Menander embraced Buddhism under the influence of Nāgaseṇa. The *Milinda Pañha* gives a very good account of the dialogue between King Menander and Nāgaseṇa.
98. The number is exaggerated.
99. Strabo has given this account on the authority of Nicolaus of Damascus.
100. Hippolytus, a Christian saint, has written a book under the title *Refutation of All Heresies*. He says that Brāhmaṇas drink the water of the river Tāgabena. This river is nothing but the Tungbepā of the *Mahābhārata*. Śaṅkara had established Śringerimaṭha (which still exists) on the banks of this river.
101. Some historians hold the view that Ammonius Saccas was the founder of Neoplatonism. Plotinus was his disciple.
102. Stutfield, *Mysticism and Catholicism*, p. 418, quoted in Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 215.
103. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 208.
104. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 15.
105. Ibid.

## A Survey of Modern Scholarly Opinion on Plotinus and Indian Thought

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I take it as my task in this paper to give a brief orientation, in broadest outline, in the twentieth century literature surrounding the general theme, "Plotinus and Indian Thought." Please note the restriction to Plotinus; I will touch only incidentally on Neoplatonism in general. Similarly, observe that I shall be concerned chiefly with Plotinus and *Indian* thought in particular, treating only incidentally the much broader question of "oriental influences" upon Plotinus in general.

I should add, furthermore, that I speak as a student of the general history of Western philosophy, who has done some specialized work in Plotinus. This means, for one thing, that my angle of vision is definitely that of the *Western* historiographer of philosophy; Indian philosophy appears in my horizon chiefly as a possible source of influence upon my own field of study, and I claim no expertise whatever in the other area.

Secondly, my position as a student of Western philosophy in general determines my interests in questions of *historiographic methodology* and it is from this point of view that I

wish to survey the literature in question. It is my intention, therefore, to take a glance at twentieth century scholarship on the question of Plotinus and Indian thought with the following methodological focus: can "Indian thought" be properly considered an 'influence', 'source', or 'determinative factor' on Plotinus, and what kinds of criteria are legitimate in deciding such a question?

I adopt this focus not only because it squares with my own interests as historian, but also as justification for giving this paper at all. The fact is that there are already in existence at least two excellent essays on my subject, and I want to do more than merely repeat or supplement them. The two essays in question are the following: the appendix entitled "The problem of Indian influence on Neoplatonism" in J. F. Staal, *Advaita and Neoplatonism, A Critical Study in Comparative Philosophy*, published in Madras in 1961,<sup>1</sup> and the article by H. R. Schlette entitled "Indisches bei Plotin" first published in the Festschrift *Einsicht und Glaube* in 1962,<sup>2</sup> and reprinted, with slight revisions, in his *Aporie und Glaube* in 1970.<sup>3</sup> Both of these essays (neither of which refers to the other, having been written at about the same time) appear to have remained relatively unknown: Staal's probably because it was published in Asia, and Schlette's because it is tucked away in two collections of largely theological essays. Although I am indebted to both Staal and Schlette, my scope is broader than theirs, and I differ from them both in their conclusions and in the methodological focus which I will adopt.

The nineteenth century saw the development of the problem of "oriental influences" on Plotinus. Can Plotinus be understood exclusively as an original development of the Greek tradition, or must we have recourse to extraneous influences from "the East" to account for the distinctive features of his philosophy? It is basically the former position which is taken by such historians of philosophy as Hegel,<sup>4</sup> Kirchner,<sup>5</sup> and Zeller,<sup>6</sup> whereas the presence of "Orientalismus" in Plotinus is defended by such scholars as H. Ritter,<sup>7</sup> Victor Cousin,<sup>8</sup> and E. Vacherot.<sup>9</sup> Especially H. Ritter is of

interest for our purposes, since he for the first time (to my knowledge) looks upon Plotinus and Neoplatonism as heirs to the *Upanisads*. However, Ritter is an exception, in this regard, and his extravagant overstatement of the case of *Indian* influence had the effect of bringing the whole thesis into dispute. After Ritter, the case for "oriental influences" had reference virtually exclusively to Iranian and Egyptian factors.

It is important to note a curious complicating factor at this point. The debate for and against Eastern sources of Plotinus's thought was equated with a debate for and against the "purity" of his philosophy. It was generally assumed that the Greek tradition stood for clarity of thought, rationalism, objectivity and philosophical respectability. Anything coming from "the East" was somehow a contaminating impurity, and had overtones of superstition, mysticism, irrationalism and *Schwärmerei*. To admit "oriental influences" on anyone was tantamount to besmirching his good name. A good example of this pervasive prejudice (which underlies a good deal of the twentieth century discussion as well) is the notorious article on Plotinus by the Austrian philosopher Franz Brentano entitled, "Was für ein Philosoph manchmal Epoche macht" (1876),<sup>10</sup> a virulent diatribe against Plotinus as betrayer of the Greek tradition.

It is against this background that we must see the influential article "Orientalisches bei Plotin?" published by H. F. Müller in 1914.<sup>11</sup> Müller (died approximately 1918) was a Plotinus devotee who had spent a lifetime studying, elucidating, editing and translating the *Enneads* in a time when Neoplatonism in general was considered a manifestation of the decadence of Greek philosophy, and his article passionately defends Plotinus against any suspicion of contamination by "oriental influences." His first two sentences sum up the burden of the argument: "The question whether the thought of Plotinus was subject to oriental influences must be answered with an unqualified 'no' (*muss rundweg verneint werden*). This philosophy is a genuinely Hellenic growth (*ein echt hellenisches Gewächs*)." The body of the article is devoted to

refuting one by one all arguments to the contrary. Plotinus is against the exorcism of demons, he has no truck with theurgy and the mystery cults, he has no use for astrology, he is unjustly accused of *Schwärmeret* and theosophy (p. 78). He was a mystic, to be sure, but then so was Plato (p. 79). When we read the *Enneads* "it is pure Platonic air which surrounds us, not oriental mist and fog."<sup>12</sup> The article concludes therefore: "What Plotinus thought, taught and lived he owes to the Greeks, especially the divine Plato."<sup>13</sup>

Müller's article is important for a number of reasons. One is that it does not occur to him to refute the suggestion that Plotinus was influenced specifically by *Indian* thought. Apparently, this was not considered a serious option at the beginning of our century. Another is the obvious prejudice against any movement, theme or image associated with the East; Müller is clearly concerned to indicate the Hellenic 'purity' of Plotinus. And finally, Müller's article is important because it was enormously influential. It has been widely quoted since in Plotinian scholarship, and to my knowledge always with approval. His phrase "ein echt hellenisches Gewächs" has become something of a winged word, which might stand as a motto over by far the greatest part of what has been written on this subject since.<sup>14</sup>

It is in fact the case that, within the world of Plotinian scholarship since its renaissance after the First World War, there has been an almost overwhelming consensus that Plotinus must be understood strictly in terms of the Greek tradition, and that all influences from "the East" whether they be Iranian, Jewish, Egyptian or Indian, are to be considered at best improbable, marginal, or irrelevant. In the words of A. W. Benn, "there is nothing Oriental about Neoplatonism. All its component elements may be traced back to purely Greek thought."<sup>15</sup> With the one significant exception of Émile Bréhier, about whom we will speak in a moment, every leading Plotinus scholar of the twentieth century downplays any but Greek factors in accounting for the development of Plotinus's thought.

It would be wearisome to list all the testimonies which can be adduced to back up this assertion. Let me do no more than give a brief sampling of statements to this effect by a number of the most eminent students of Plotinus:

1. A. H. Armstrong: "[Plotinus] never in fact established any sort of contact with Eastern thinkers; and there is no good evidence, internal or external, to show that he ever acquired any knowledge of Indian philosophy."<sup>16</sup>

2. H. R. Schwyzer: "A derivation [of the identity of the self and the One in Plotinus] from India is impossible, if only for external reasons. . . . Plotinus's thought can be understood as an organic elaboration of the Platonic philosophy."<sup>17</sup>

3. Vincenzo Cilento: "That is why Plotinus's mysticism has a character all its own, the character of a genuine Hellenic, in fact Platonic, growth, and is not contaminated by oriental influences."<sup>18</sup>

4. Paul Henry: "Thus Plotinus is not only historically but also logically the culmination of Greek philosophy."<sup>19</sup>

5. Jean Trouillard: "Thus we can simultaneously posit both that Plotinus's philosophy is an authentic unfolding of Platonism, and that, on the basis of that starting point, it is a genuine creation."<sup>20</sup>

More telling perhaps than these quotes is the argument from silence which we can derive from those explicit discussions of the 'sources' of Plotinus which fail altogether to mention Indian thought. Most notable among these is of course the volume *Sources de Plotin*, the publication of papers and conversations held at Vandoeuvres in 1957.<sup>21</sup> None of the papers there presented deals with possible oriental sources, let alone specifically Indian influences. The same can be said of the section "Zur Frage der Quellen Plotins" in the recent introduction and bibliographic guide to Plotinian thought and scholarship by Schubert Venanz.<sup>22</sup>

Yet the consensus is not complete on this point. The notable exception among leading Plotinus scholars in this regard is Émile Bréhier, the well-known French translator of



the *Enneads*. In a course on the philosophy of Plotinus which he gave at the Sorbonne in Paris, in the winter of 1921-22, he put forward the thesis that Plotinus must have been influenced by Indian thought. These lectures were published in 1928 as the book *La philosophie de Plotin*.<sup>23</sup> Chapter 7 deals with "L'orientalisme de Plotin," in which he makes his case for Indian influence.

In brief, his argument is as follows. Plotinus's conception of the Intellect (*νοῦς*) is ambivalent; on the one hand it is 'rationalistic', opposing a clearly defined object to a rational subject, but on the other hand it is 'mystical', whereby the subject becomes identified with all objects indiscriminately. It is this second feature, "the identity of the self with universal being," which is unprecedented in Greek philosophy, and must derive from elsewhere. It can not derive from the mysticism of the oriental cults, because these all presuppose cultic ritual and a salvation mediator, both of which Plotinus rejects. "Therefore," Bréhier concludes, "I am led to look for the source of Plotinus's philosophy beyond the Orient close to Greece, and to go as far as the religious speculation of India, which in Plotinus's day had already been fixed for centuries in the *Upanishads* and had kept all its vitality."<sup>24</sup>

Müller's arguments do not count against this hypothesis, since he does not deal with the possibility of specifically Indian influences on Plotinus. The fact is that "in Plotinus we thus grasp the first link of a religious tradition which is ultimately no less powerful in the West than the Christian tradition. . . . In my view this tradition goes back to India."<sup>25</sup> This is not as strange as it may seem, since the Greeks had long been fascinated by the East, including India, and had had dealings with it. We know too that Plotinus was interested in Indian philosophy. Moreover, the similarities between Plotinus and Indian thought had already been pointed out earlier by the German philosophical historians Ritter, Deussen and Oldenberg.

As we have already indicated, Bréhier's thesis was not received with favour by his colleagues in Plotinian studies,

who almost to a man rejected his arguments. Representative of the general negative response to Bréhier was the article "Plotinus and India" by A. H. Armstrong, which appeared in the *Classical Quarterly* in 1936.<sup>26</sup> In it Armstrong did not deny that there *might* have been Indian influence, but argued that there was no definite evidence in favour of it. Nor did he deny that the parallels adduced by Bréhier between Plotinus and the *Upanishads* were striking; his point instead was that it is "unnecessary to go outside the tradition of Greek thought in order to explain Plotinus."<sup>27</sup>

To make his case Armstrong brings forward the following considerations:

1. "There was never a people which in its thinking was less open to any real influence from abroad [than the Greeks]."
2. Plotinus's allusions to oriental culture and his early interest in Eastern philosophy prove nothing with regard to any influence on him.
3. The "subjective idealism" of Plotinus can be accounted for by reference to Greek antecedents. There was a streak of irrationalism in Greek thought which goes back to Heraclitus and Euripides, and is prominent in the *Hermetica*, roughly contemporary with Plotinus. But even Greek rationalism contained the seeds of Plotinian "pantheistic idealism," since the notion of infinity in the intelligible world is prefigured in Anaximander's *ἄπειρον* and the Stoic doctrine of the *ἰδίως ποιόν*, whereas the non-distinctness of the ego has roots in pre-Socratic philosophy and Aristotle's *νοῦς χωριστός*.
4. An overwhelming sense of man's alienation from a Fate-ruled world was prevalent in Plotinus's day, and could well give rise to doctrines such as the ultimate identity of one's innermost self with a transcendent principle.

Since the time of Armstrong's article, research into the Greek antecedents of Plotinus's thought has made great progress, and the arsenal of arguments for explaining Plotinus in exclusively Greek terms has become significantly greater. We need only mention the later work of Armstrong himself,<sup>28</sup>

and of Willy Theiler,<sup>29</sup> Philip Merlan,<sup>30</sup> Cornelia de Vogel,<sup>31</sup> and H. J. Krämer<sup>32</sup> to realize how much ammunition has been gathered to undermine the necessity of Bréhier's thesis of an Indian influence on Plotinus.

An attack on Bréhier's thesis from a different quarter was launched by J. M. Rist in the chapter on "Mysticism" in his book *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (1967).<sup>33</sup> Basing himself on the distinctions made by R. C. Zaehner between different types of mysticism, Rist contends that one of Bréhier's main premises, which had been admitted by Armstrong, is invalid, namely that the mysticism of Plotinus and that of the *Upanisads* is of the same type. Rist argues that Plotinus holds to a 'theistic' mysticism, i.e., one in which the experiencing subject does not lose its individuality in the mystical experience. The mysticism of the *Upanisads*, on the other hand, is of the 'monistic' kind, where this does not appear to be the case. If the doctrines are thus significantly unlike, concludes Rist, "derivation or significant influence can be forgotten."<sup>34</sup>

One might suppose therefore, that Bréhier's proposal found little or no support after it was first launched. Bréhier himself seems to have thought so. In 1948, four years before his death, Bréhier was asked whether he still held to his theory respecting an Indian influence on Plotinus, and he replied:

I raised the question. I was not able to resolve it. I thought at that time that the matter might interest those who concern themselves with India. I found a number of very definite relationships between the Neoplatonists and India. But I found no one who was interested, and the question remains to be studied.<sup>35</sup>

Yet this was not the case. For while it was true that Bréhier's thesis found almost no support within the world of Plotinus scholarship, a number of other scholars, chiefly Indologists, have picked it up and developed it. Moreover, at

least one scholar seems to have reached similar conclusions independently.

First of all there are the three ill-fated articles by J. Przyłuski which appeared in the 1930's.<sup>36</sup> Taking Bréhier's lead, these attempted to show a doctrinal similarity between Buddhist thought and certain trinitarian themes in Gnosticism, Plotinus, and Christianity, and furthermore, to identify Mani as a possible intermediary between India and the West. Przyłuski's work has been subjected to a devastating critique by A. B. Keith,<sup>37</sup> H. Puech,<sup>38</sup> and J. F. Staal.<sup>39</sup> One of the most damaging criticisms was that chronological considerations made the alleged influences impossible. Indian influence is also postulated by P. Marucchi in his article, "Influssi indiani nella filosofia di Plotino?" (1953),<sup>40</sup> and striking similarities are pointed out by Olivier Lacombe in his "Note sur Plotin et la pensée indienne" (1950).<sup>41</sup> This last article, written by an eminent Indologist, is especially significant, because it bears out Bréhier's point about the structural parallels between Plotinus and the *Upanisads*, yet refuses to deduce a historical influence from this fact.

Bréhier's thesis was thus not wholly without support, even though his followers, like himself, had to contend with some very powerful opposition. Moreover, a connection between Plotinus and Indian thought was postulated in another article in 1938, on other grounds than, and apparently without prior knowledge of, Bréhier's work. Arpad Szabó in an article entitled, "Indische Elemente im plotinischen Neuplatonismus"<sup>42</sup> sees an influence of Sāṃkhya philosophy on Plotinus's doctrine of the fall of the soul. According to him, the view that the union of soul and body is an illusion is one of the conflicting sides of Plotinus's tension-ridden anthropology, and cannot be explained in terms of the Greek tradition, since the latter knows only a culpable fall of the soul into the body (the other side of Plotinus's thinking). Accordingly, writes Szabó, "We are forced to look for the analogies and sources of this train of thought in Indian philosophy," and more

specifically in Sāṅkhya philosophy, since a similar view of the soul's embodiment as illusion is found there.<sup>43</sup>

Szabó's thesis, however, has fared even worse than Bréhier's. J. F. Staal,<sup>44</sup> for example, has pointed out that Plotinus does *not* conceive of embodiment as an illusion, even though the embodied soul is sometimes called εἶδωλον. Moreover, the Sāṅkhya texts to which Szabó appeals to make his case are to be dated centuries *after* Plotinus. It is therefore not surprising that Szabó's article appears to have had little influence in subsequent discussions.

To conclude my overview, I would like to draw your attention to the two essays which I mentioned at the beginning of my paper: those by Staal and Schlette. These are both substantial studies which have taken into account most of the literature before 1960, and come to conclusions which are methodologically similar. It seems to me that they probably reflect the general state of the question prior to the present conference.

The basic situation to which both Staal and Schlette react is made up of the following basic components:

1. It is historically *possible* that Plotinus was in contact with and influenced by Indian thought. We know from Porphyry's *Life* that he had some interest in Indian philosophy, we know that there was some knowledge of Indian thought in the West at that time,<sup>45</sup> and Alexandria was a crossroads for cultural contacts between East and West. However, we have no definite evidence that Plotinus ever did in fact become acquainted with Indian thought, and the *Enneads* reflect only a very intense preoccupation with the Greek philosophical tradition. The possibility of actual contact with India remains an unsubstantiated *possibility*.

2. There do appear to be similarities of doctrine, especially with regard to Plotinian mysticism (although there is very little agreement as to how striking these similarities are). The important methodological question therefore is: do possible contact and doctrinal similarity add up to probable *influence*?

Staal and Schlette both answer "no," although their emphasis is different.

Schlette concludes his survey of the literature as follows:

Influences of Indian thought on Plotinus are possible, but have so far not been demonstrated, perhaps they are not demonstrable at all, or only to a very slight degree; the comparative method can not in principle answer the historical question.<sup>46</sup>

However, this does not mean, for Schlette, that it is therefore illegitimate to speak of "Indian elements in Plotinus" (*Indisches bei Plotin*), if there are doctrinal parallels to be observed. He writes,

If it could be shown that such a material (*sachliche*) affinity must in fact be assumed, then it would be perfectly legitimate to speak of Indian elements in Plotinus, even if such a connection would not (now or ever) be demonstrable in historical and literary terms.<sup>47</sup>

He then proceeds to identify five themes of "Indian thought" in general which have, in his opinion, an "inner affinity" with Plotinus's philosophy. These are the following:

1. the identity of *ātman* with *brahman*;
2. the striving toward union with the divine being;
3. the knowledge of the ineffability (*Unnennbarkeit*) and heterogeneity (*Andersartigkeit*) of the divine mystery;
4. the law of *karma* and of reincarnation;
5. the interpretation of this-worldly reality as deceptive, illusory *māyā*.<sup>48</sup>

I am not aware of any critical reaction to Schlette's article, and take this opportunity to voice the following comments of my own about his argument. It seems to me extremely misleading to speak of "Indian elements in Plotinus" in this

sense. By his definition it would be equally valid to speak of "Plotinian elements in Indian thought" which implies something quite different. Moreover, I wonder whether the five themes mentioned are indeed characteristic of *all* Indian thought. Finally, there is an "inner affinity" of some of these themes not only with Plotinus, but also with other Greek thinkers (cf. the fifth point and the whole Platonic tradition).

Finally, a word about the attitude of J. F. Staal, as exemplified in his work on Advaita and Neoplatonism. Staal too denies the probability of historical influence of Indian thought on Plotinus, but unlike Schlette he does not advocate speaking of Indian elements in him all the same. The question of whether or not one considers Indian influence probable is ultimately decided, argues Staal, by one's philosophical convictions. It all depends on one's view of historical causality. In this there are two extremes: the doctrine of the 'preexistence of the effect in the cause' and the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. Staal elucidates this as follows:

Whoever is inclined, perhaps unconsciously, to the last view, will tend to stress points which are common to a certain field and its preceding background, and interpret these as effect and cause respectively; whoever is inclined to the other view will stress the differences and try to show that there are elements of the later phenomenon counterparts of which cannot be found in the earlier phenomenon.<sup>49</sup>

Applied to Plotinus, in other words, the first approach would tend to dissolve him into his sources, going as far afield as India to account for features which Greek sources can not explain. The second approach would stress Plotinus's originality as a creative thinker, and feel no need to adduce literally far-fetched parallels. Staal makes no secret of his own stance in the matter: "It will be seen how far our comparative study depends upon the view which stresses *creatio ex nihilo*, for in

comparisons we will often stress differences."<sup>50</sup> The constant emphasis of Staal's comparative study, accordingly, is to relativize the similarities in favour of the dissimilarities, and to consider "influence" as a category in intellectual historiography which must be viewed with caution, if not downright suspicion.

In my opinion, Staal has put his finger on an important point in all discussions of "influences" and "sources" in the history of philosophy. Our judgments in these matters tend to be biased by fundamental attitudes to the nature of history, and I for one would like to plead for a greater recognition of originality and creativity in the history of philosophy. For that reason, I am predisposed to side with those who reject the probability of Indian influence on Plotinus. However, does this mean that I therefore favour the approach which seeks to "explain" Plotinus in strictly Greek terms, as the majority of interpreters of Plotinus have tended to do? I think this is not necessarily the case. I think there is perhaps good reason to be cautious of the notions of "influence" and "source" also when applied to the Greek antecedents of Plotinus. There is overwhelming evidence that Plotinus lived and moved in the horizon of the Greek philosophical tradition, but there is no evidence that he was a prisoner of it. The greatness of Plotinus as a philosopher is partly measured by the fact that he brought much that was historically *new*, something that cannot be reduced to antecedent factors. It is this which all Plotinian *Quellenforschung* forgets at its peril.

#### NOTES

1. Madras University Philosophical Series, No. 10.
2. J. Ratzinger and H. Fries, eds., *Einsicht und Glaube* (Freiburg, 1962), pp. 171-92.
3. H. R. Schlette, *Aporie und Glaube* (Munich, 1970), pp. 125-51.
4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in his *Werke* (1st ed., Berlin, 1836), XV:37-69.

5. C. H. Kirchner, *Die Philosophie des Plotin* (Halle, 1954).
6. E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, III/2 (4th ed., Leipzig, 1903), pp. 485-9.
7. H. Ritter, *Geschichte der Philosophie* (Hamburg, 1834), IV.542-627.
8. V. Cousin, *Cours de l'histoire de la philosophie*, I (Paris, 1841).
9. E. Vachot, *Histoire critique de l'école d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1846-51), I.103 ff.
10. In Franz Brentano, *Die vier Phasen der Philosophie und ihr augenblicklicher Stand, nebst Abhandlungen über Plotinus, Thomas von Aquin, Schopenhauer und Auguste Comte* (Hamburg, 1968).
11. *Hermes* XLIX (1914), 70-89.
12. "Klare platonische Luft ist es, die uns umfängt, nicht orientalischer Dunst und Nebel." *Ibid.*, p. 81.
13. "Was Plotin gedacht, gelehrt und gelebt hat, verdankt er den Griechen, vornehmlich dem göttlichen Platon." *Ibid.*, p. 89.
14. The phrase is quoted in Schlette, *op. cit.*, p. 126, and is a favourite of Italian Plotinus scholar Vincenzo Cilento, who speaks of "un schietto germoglio ellenico" in a number of different places; see his *Antologia plotiniana* (4th ed., Bari, 1970), pp. 17, 20; "La radice metafisica della libertà nell'antignosi plotiniana," *La Parola del Passato* XVIII (1963), 116; *Paideia antignostica* (Florence, 1971), p. 25.
15. A. W. Bann, *History of Ancient Philosophy* (London, n.d.), p. 139.
16. A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus* (New York, 1962), p. 13.
17. "Eine Herleitung aus Indien ist aber schon aus äusseren Gründen unmöglich... Plotins Denken kann als organische Weiterentwicklung der platonischen Philosophie begriffen werden." H. R. Schwyzer, "Plotin," *RE* XXI (1951), cols. 580-1.
18. "Ecco perché il misticismo plotiniano ha una natura tutta sua, di schietto germoglio ellenico, anzi platonico, e non contaminato da influssi orientali..." V. Cilento, *Antologia plotiniana* (Bari, 1970), p. 17.
19. P. Henry, "Introduction (1962): The Place of Plotinus in the History of Thought," in *Plotinus: The Enneads*, trans. S. MacKenna and B. S. Page (4th ed., London, 1969), p. lxiii.
20. "Aussi peut-on soutenir à la fois que le plotinisme est l'épanouissement authentique du platonisme et qu'il est, à partir de celui-ci, une véritable création." J. Trouillard, "Le neoplatonisme" in *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade. Histoire de la philosophie* I (Paris, 1969), p. 891.
21. *Entretiens Hardt* 5 (Geneva, 1960).

22. S. Venanz, *Plotin. Einführung in sein Philosophieren* (Freiburg/Munich, 1973), p. 87. See also the discussions of Plotinus's "sources" in P. Merlan, "Plotinus," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, VI:352-3, and J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 169-87.
23. See *ibid.*, p. v. The book went through four editions, the second of which was translated by Joseph Thomas as *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (Chicago, 1958).
24. "Je suis ainsi conduit à rechercher la source de la philosophie de Plotin plus loin que l'Orient proche de la Grèce, jusque dans la spéculation religieuse de l'Inde, qui, à l'époque de Plotin, était déjà fixée depuis des siècles dans les *Upanishads*, et avait gardé toute sa vitalité." *Ibid.*, p. 118.
25. "Avec Plotin, nous saisissons donc le premier chaînon d'une tradition religieuse, qui n'est pas moins puissante en fond en Occident que la tradition chrétienne... C'est à l'Inde que j'ai supposé que remontait cette tradition." *Ibid.*, p. 120.
26. *Classical Quarterly* XXX (1936), 22-8.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
28. A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1940).
29. Willy Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus* (Berlin, 1940).
30. Philip Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague, 1953); *idem*, "Greek philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," in A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 14-132.
31. Cornelia de Vogel, "On the Neoplatonic character of Platonism and the Platonic character of Neoplatonism," *Mind* LXII (1953), 43-64.
32. H. J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik* (Amsterdam, 1964).
33. J. M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 213-30.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
35. *Études bergsoniennes* II (1949), 222.
36. J. Przyłuski, "Indian influence on Western thought before and during the third century A. D.," *Journal of the Greater India Society* 1; *idem*, "Mani et Plotin," *Bulletin de la classe des lettres de l'Académie royale de Belgique* XIX (1933), 322-6; *idem*, "Les trois hypostases dans l'Inde et à Alexandrie," *Mélanges Cumont* (Brussels, 1936), II:925-38.
37. A. B. Keith, "Plotinus and Indian Thought," *Indian Culture* II (1935/36), 125-30.
38. H. C. Puech, *Le manichéisme* (Paris, 1949), p. 134, n. 191.

39. J. F. Staal, op. cit., p. 239.
40. *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti*, Roma 1935 (Rome, 1938), pp. 390-4. I have not seen this article, but cf. B. Maričn, *Bibliographia critica degli studi plotiniani* (Bari, 1949), p. 602, and II. R. Schlette, op. cit. p. 131. I am here leaving out of account the improbable thesis of Ernst Benz (*Indische Einflüsse auf die frühchristliche Theologie* (Wiesbaden, 1951), pp. 197-202) that Ammonius Sakkas, Plotinus's teacher, was himself an Indian. See the refutations by H. Dörrie (*Hermes* LXXXIII (1955), 440 ff.) and Schlette, op. cit., p. 135.
41. *Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes Études, section des sciences religieuses* (Paris, 1950), pp. 3-17. Also printed as "A note on Plotinus and Indian Thought," in *Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume of the Indian Philosophical Congress* (Calcutta, 1950), II:45-54; and as "Plotino y el pensamiento hindu," *Notas y Estudios de Filosofía* IV (1953), 109-211. See discussions of this article in M. de Gandillac, *La Sagesse de Plotin* (2nd ed., Paris, 1966), pp. 26-7 (de Gandillac accepts Lacombe's conclusions) and in Staal, op. cit., pp. 245-6. Lacombe is also cited with approval by Rose-Marie Mossé-Bastide, *La pensée philosophique de Plotin* (Paris, 1972), pp. 13-14.
42. *Scholastik* XIII (1938), 87-96.
43. "So sind wir gezwungen, die Analogien und Quellen dieses Gedankenganges in der indischen Philosophie [zu] suchen. . . ." Ibid., pp. 89-90.
44. Op. cit., pp. 241-2.
45. J. Filliozat, "La doctrine des brahmanes d'après saint Hippolyte," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* CXXX (1945), 59-91.
46. "Einflüsse indischen Denkens auf Plotin sind möglich, jedoch bislang nicht nachgewiesen; vielleicht sind sie überhaupt nicht oder nur in ganz geringem Masse nachweisbar; die vergleichende Methode kann die historische Frage grundsätzlich nicht lösen." Schlette, op. cit., p. 136.
47. "Wenn sich zeigen liesse, dass eine solche sachliche Affinität tatsächlich anzunehmen ist, so wäre man in diesem Sinn durchaus berechtigt, von Indischem bei Plotin zu sprechen, auch wenn eine solche Verknüpfung historisch und literarisch nicht nachweisbar wäre und bleiben sollte." Ibid., p. 136.
48. Ibid., p. 137.
49. Staal, op. cit., p. 23.
50. Ibid., p. 23.

## Neoplatonism, Indian Thought, and General Systems Theory

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### I

William James speculated that for the infant who has not yet grown into language the experienced world is probably a booming, buzzing confusion. As language is appropriated the perceived manifold gains some order, some structure. The strangeness and perhaps the wonder transmute into the familiar, the homey, the expected.

If this account of original human experience is more or less plausible, and it seems so to me, then one can conclude that the first and untutored experience of man is one of multiplicity, of a manifold of many dimensions. Not only are there different shapes and colours, but there are sounds and sights and textures; there are things, there are feelings, there are events, there are dreams. Desires, images, moods rise and vanish; situations, surprises irrupt and alter the horizons of awareness, shifting one's focus of attention from this to that.

And for many people it seems that while the content of experience continues to increase, and the structuring vocabulary gains progressive sophistication, the fundamental development of consciousness halts here, and the rest of one's life interests are centered on the accumulation of experience, information and its analysis.

It could be shown, however, that even as the manifold manifests itself in its manyness, there is already in the background an inexplicitly and consciously inaccessible requirement of a contrast—the structure which makes the manifold coherent and orderly, patterned, cyclical, recognizable in the sense of *re-cognizable*.

In all likelihood this background is the source of language, making generic terms apparently appropriate to the concrete particulars, thus initiating the structuring of the many toward the whole.

For some people, under diverse circumstances this hidden background suddenly or gradually becomes foreground; and with this change one's world is changed. A new meaning emerges from the givenness of the manifold. What heretofore signified the mere adjacency of diverse particulars now is seen as the partial manifestation of a single whole, which constantly reveals and conceals itself in the many appearances.

## II

In the Western tradition perhaps the first intellectual response to this experience, of which we have some record, might be that of Thales. Perhaps he expressed himself feebly, and in an unconvincing way when he claimed that all things were made of water. There are several shortcomings of this formulation, if the claim that it is an attempted response to that unitive perception which has in its full-blown forms become formulated as monism is correct. Firstly, the naming of the ultimate as water, while it is intelligible, is a mistake, because to the unreflective listener it somehow suggests the

primacy of the familiar form of water. Only on reflection does one realize that if everything is water, the familiar transparent liquid has no priority over the appearance of water as rock or plant, or human body. Each of these, alike, is but a form and only one form of water. Thus the negative formulation of Anaximander, namely that the underlying unitive source is the boundless, the unspecific, the *ἄπειρον*, is a considerable improvement over Thales.

The second shortcoming of Thales' formulation lies with the implication that the unitive ground is explicitly in the domain of the material, the objective—for after all is said and done, water, in whatever shape or texture it presents itself to us will seem, once again to the unreflective disciple, as an extended entity. And thus the underlying unity of the manifold will be conceptually appropriated as "matter."

Yet, those who have paid closer attention to the experience of the coherency of the manifold recognize that this coherency embraces not only things, objects, entities, and bodies, but integrates with these one's own consciousness with all its modes, and intentionalities as well as its subject-pole.

Here are Plotinus's words:

When the contemplative looks upon himself in the act of contemplation he will see himself to be like its object. He feels himself to be united to himself in the way that the object is united to itself; that is to say, he will experience himself as simple, just as it is simple.

Actually we should not say "He will see." What he sees, in case it is still possible to distinguish here the seer and the seen . . . is not seen, not distinguished, not represented as a thing apart. The man who obtains the vision becomes, as it were, another being. He ceases to be himself, retains nothing of himself. Absorbed in the beyond, he is one with it. . . .

Therefore is it so very difficult to describe this vision, for how can we represent as different from us what seemed while we were contemplating it not other than ourselves, but perfect at-oneness with us?<sup>1</sup>

### III

The individual who has gained this new and less frequent way of being in the world, in which the world and one's own being in it dislign their separateness, finds it his task to formulate, to speak the meaning of his experience. He has available to him only the language gained in the earlier pluralistic mode of experiencing.

Obviously his speaking is to be oriented mainly toward those whose experience is still pluralistic. The aim of speaking is not merely to assert; it is to create, to bring about in the listener that transformation of consciousness which will permit the emergence of the new, holistic mode of apprehension. What is at stake is not merely assertion or description—rather it is the modification of that basic reality principle in the listening perceiver which will permit him to renounce that innocence which takes the presented multiplicity of the world and himself as ultimately real in its manifoldness.

Once the new speaking is formulated, it focuses attention on those unobtrusive but present clues in the manifold whose paradoxical and special character can be made paradigmatic and universalized to provide persuasion for the learner to seek the new perspective. For example, in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Svetaketu is invited by his father to consider dissolved salt as the now invisible yet all-pervasive presence in brine, giving it its characteristic properties; just so the invisible all-pervasive is what the seed conceals to account for its capacity to become the mighty tree—and so—almost as a poetic refrain the father teaches that “that art thou, also, Svetaketu”—*TAZ TWAM ASI*. And so the self-other chasm is bridged—nature

and person, God, world and man are seen to have the same identity.

In the Neoplatonic tradition as well, the unitive experience invites the experiencer to express in speculative metaphysical or theological language, or in poetic metaphor the significance and the persuasive, illuminative character of the new consciousness. Clearly the demand is to use the available conceptual framework, and yet so to modify it as to intimate the drastic novelty of what was formerly the manifold, and is now only a visible token of the One whose unity both contains all distinctions, and is beyond any distinction.

In the Indian tradition this paradox gives rise to the need for a doctrine of two truths (*samvṛtti* and *paramārthas*). The aspect which sees that all distinctions are but distinctions of the One is a correct aspect, and yields a set of true claims—whose truth, however, is logical, perspectival, practical (*samvṛtti*). The other sense, which recognizes the One to be beyond all distinctions is not itself a perspective, but is beyond perspective, including them and transcending them. A different family of knowledge can be gathered here, more akin to wisdom, which sees the One as the unknowable source of all knowledge, to which the only sound relationship is one of reverence rather than intellectual appropriation, but which nonetheless manifests a converse relation to the reverencer—namely, love.<sup>2</sup>

Instances of useful imagery from the world of natural objects recognized as paradigmatic are the sun and the overflowing wellspring.

The effulgence of the sun, as it beams its own substance into the void not only makes the visible world visible; it makes the visible world, in the sense that the sun coaxes the seed into the plant, hatches the fly and the mosquito; creates living rills which flow refreshingly from the frozen mountain tops. Thus the sun is the source, but remains what it is. And yet there is the dread contrast—the sun delights the eye that beholds the visible—yet blinds the eye which would behold the sun. In both Western and Indian thought these aspects of



the experienced world were not only recognized but utilized as archetypal for metaphysics and theology.

Similarly consideration of the overflowing wellspring, which feeds its environs with water, yet remains filled to the brim, was to invite the attention of the listener to a way of conceptualizing the relationship between the One and the many.

In this way doctrines of creation, which are conceptually pluralistic, radically separating the maker from the made were replaced in the unitive traditions by doctrines of emanation, playful self-revelation-cum-self-concealment in the temporal flux of the mutable, which sometimes gained expression as pantheism, but more often, in the more articulate formulations as panentheism.<sup>3</sup>

#### IV

But for the critical inquirer a problem remains. The unitive vision is no doubt an experience, and perhaps, even a self-certifying one. However, while one remains in a critical stance the question arises as to whether the unitive vision is a positive transformation of consciousness, an advance, a growth, a veridical insight, or whether it is a pathology, a decay of the original reality principle, an ailment in whose grips differentiations so useful to and so necessary in what is known as practical life, cease.

A positivist approach to the resolution of this dilemma is in principle impossible. The very criterion in terms of which one would favour the unitive or pluralistic alternative is already based on one or the other of these presupposed—thus being incapable of serving as the basis for decision.

It seems, therefore, preferable to recognize that the unitive experience is, like the more primitive (in a sense of earlier rather than a pejorative sense) pluralistic perception, a potentially useful and important one, which, however, could invite unsound, unbalanced responses from which counterfunctional practical inferences could be drawn.

In order to approach our problem of whether the unitive vision is veridical or deceptive I shall sketch briefly a theory of experience, which I cannot here defend—it will be merely outlined.

All experience has a two-fold nature as experience. There is that aspect to which the experiencer is fundamentally passive, and that aspect, which is the constituting interpretive one, to which language and idea make their positive contribution, and in which the experiencer is actively and responsibly involved. Of course each of these aspects, the passive and the active, are but analytic fictions. Neither has its own independent reality. It is nonetheless interesting to separate the unity of experience into these two aspects.

I would like to propose that that aspect of experience to which man is fundamentally passive, the raw, pre-constituted datum (as stated above, this is an analytic fiction and has no independent existence) is beyond being true or otherwise. It simply makes no sense to give to this component of experience two truth-values—it simply is what it is.

On the other hand, the responsive, interpretive component, which secures the meaning of the raw "datum" is what can be true or false. If this be granted it follows that the given aspect of the unitive vision is beyond the question of truth or falsity, while the interpretive-responsive aspect has potentially or actually flawed constituents.

Our method, then, will be the exploration of the varieties of responses to the unitive perception, along with the rejective arguments of the critics, and the use of our own intuition, which must be reflectively consulted in order to arrive at some tentative resolution of the dilemma of whether the unitive vision is a progression or pathology of consciousness.

Monistic metaphysical speculations have often yielded a kind of indifference to the manifold, and, its critics maintain, a consequent dissociation from involvement with issues of significance to human well-being. The critics contend that the unitive vision is dysfunctional because it promotes callousness and lack of concern. If the world of injustice and suffering is

dismissed as mere illusion and deception by the monist then the critics are sound in their objection, since the experience of moral indignation and duty are based on a categorical, that is, unconditional, imperative.

But while on occasion monism has in fact led to indifference and callousness, it need not do so. There is a subtle but significant contrast between equanimity and indifference. The more persuasive monists have made it clear that although the manifold is not ontologically many, as it is supposed by the pluralist, it needs to be taken seriously, that is, with compassion, concern, joy and zest.

In such a brief account as the present one it is impossible to resolve the question about all monistic philosophies and theologies once and for all. There are too many variations of monism for each to be equally adequate and true. But there is value in the monistic vision, exactly because it provides a thoroughly sustaining basis of meaning, a strong and invulnerable sense of identity which can weather the vicissitudes of fortune and circumstances. And even though occasionally there are instances of extreme withdrawal from the issues of the manifold by the contemplative, there have also been thoroughgoing examples of heroic and invincible creative involvement with them, in which "holy indifference" in the service of the Divine (St. Ignatius) or "bhakti" was the fundamental descriptive of the meaning of the involvement, whose nature coincided in its fullest sense with the most dedicated benefaction.

Thus, devotion to and reverence for the One, even when that One is beyond good and evil<sup>4</sup> has yielded that intense longing for identification with and realization of the good, which overcomes the above objections, leaving the unitive vision coincident with this important touchstone for truth.

The fact that the intellectual problem of how and why separation from the good, or the One (even if it is merely an apparent separation), is possible, and in terms of what principle can the increasing or decreasing distance of separation be measured or felt, is another criticism of the metaphysics of

monism. This has to our knowledge and satisfaction never been resolved adequately by purely intellectual processes; and consequently has been dealt with by those with the monistic perspective as a demonstration of the limits of intelligibility.

In the Aristotelian tradition, as well as the Hegelian one, rational intelligibility has been a condition of being; but that this must be so has not been adequately demonstrated. To the contrary, the monistic tradition claims that intelligibility is a condition of being *limited* and hence evidence not of being, but of lying in the shadow of distance from being;—even if how that is so cannot be understood. This is why for Plotinus *nous* is not identical with the One but already derived from it, involving some sort of necessary duality in intellection in spite of the immediate contemplative grasp of the unity of being.

Thus, while we can't make the reason and process of multiplicity and separation intelligible in the classical or the Indian monistic traditions, a second-order intelligibility is achieved by exposing the dualism, and hence limitation, of intelligibility, denying its being the essence of being. Consequently the problematic character of the multiple or manifold remains.

## V

It is the contention of the present paper that it is possible to respond to the unitive vision not only in terms of metaphysics and theology, but also in terms of a critique of modern science which in turn retains its scientific and meta-scientific character. While in fact the phrases "systems-research" and "systems-science" are far too broadly used to be indicators of the presence of this transformed perspective of the manifold, it is our contention that at the root of the systems approach to the sciences lies the unitive vision, even if, on occasion, it is less explicitly expounded.

We have to examine two fundamentally related yet distinctive notions—namely, the systems approach to the sciences, and general systems theory.

The systems approach to the sciences is the consequence of the discovery that the discrete disciplines, with their respective special analyses of what seem to be causal structures have left out significant aspects in their tendency to reduce explanations to causal chains. Rather, it has been seen that in addition to the primary interactions, often interpreted as causal chains, there are weaker, less perceptible, but nonetheless significant interactions among other aspects of the whole, which for human purposes play determinative, or at least important roles.

Ecosystems, feedbacks, information exchange, cybernetics, and in general, the recognition of the complexity of wholes in their interdependence and interactions with parts has been the consequence.

Thus arose the need for a new science, a new study, which has both mathematical aspects and empirical ones, called general systems theory. This is the science of the study of wholes, or wholeness. It is an attempt to provide abstract models of what it means to be a part, what is differentiation, what is identity, what is the significance and the possibility of independence, of a closed system, and, in contrast, an open system.

Of course such studies can be undertaken and are being undertaken from the pluralistic perspective. Many authors in the field talk about "wholes" in the plural, or are prepared to consider isolated, situational complexes as "a closed system."

But it seems to me that some of the serious studies of wholes can and will go beyond pluralism, and provide a scientific language for responding to and describing the unitive vision. Most importantly, it is recognized and accepted that every system, every whole which can be considered intellectually, is embedded in a matrix with which it is interdependent. Thus the boundary, the differentiation between the whole and its matrix is not an absolute isolating "skin," but,

indeed, much more like the organic skin, a locus of interaction, which nonetheless can serve as a demarcation line because the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the interactions among elements and complexes within the demarcation are distinctive from those which take place across the demarcation. This type of insight enables us to get a better conceptual grasp of how it is possible to have differentiation, distinction, contrast, without being absolutely different, or having an autonomous separateness. Furthermore, if, by definition, we recognize that every system which is deemed "closed" is nonetheless embedded in an environment which does have some influence on the system, then we recognize that the notion of a "closed" system is an idealized structure, which may be considered for practical purposes, but can never *be*.

So far our description of systems science and systems theory is pretty inert, thoroughly comprehensible in merely material and objective terms. This is misleading. The claims made transcend the notion that whatever is, is embedded in a larger chunk of the material and natural universe. Rather, what is involved is the seeing that the natural universe as such is embedded in a system of language, and of judgment, a system of perception, and of evaluation, whose one aspect is measurement. These in turn have cultural contexts, with all the values and history that that entails. Now, these in turn may be deemed to be embedded, bounded by aspects of the natural world. And so we come to the seemingly paradoxical notion of mutual embeddedness. At this stage complementarity and the psychological flip-flop of foreground-background reversions of perception can come to our aid.

But then, these mutually inter-embedded quasi-wholes, the natural world, and the conceptual-mental-linguistic-cultural world, for which the German language has an adequate term—"Geistlich"—are themselves embedded—but in what? Here we come back to the theme of our conference—and a joint insight from general systems theory and Neoplatonism. The ultimately embedding matrix is beyond the knowable.

And yet the knowable interacts with it, and ultimately depends on it.

One must be warned that interaction need not be conceptualized as causation. That is just a tendency of individuals socialized in one particular intellectual tradition. Creation, emanation, inspiration, information are other conceptualizations of interaction. But one needs also to remind oneself that caring, loving, longing, and abandonment are forms of interaction as well. Nor do all of these collectively exhaust either the species or the types of interaction possible. Furthermore, every interaction has a converse; and the converse of an interaction is like its original only if the interaction is symmetrical.

Hartshorne has convincingly demonstrated the primacy of asymmetry.<sup>5</sup> Hence it can be shown that the dependency of the intelligible realm upon its embedding One is not mutual. The embedding One clearly can and needs must have relationships not only with the system "the intelligible domain," but with each of its subsystems, and each of the elements thereof. This is the most abstract, yet most persuasive conclusion from general systems theoretic considerations.

## VI

It thus remains for us to conclude the paper, and review its claims.

In the first section we argued that the originary way of being-in-the-world for all men has a fundamentally pluralistic dimension in the foreground, while, inadvertently, even then an integrative, unifying background introduces language, the initial organizing principle. We have also suggested that in some cases, for reasons not well understood, there seems to come a reversal of focus, centering on the integrated and holistic character of every apparent contrast—especially the self-other, world-man, God-nature ones. This transformation of consciousness through the emergence of a new meaning

perceived in the manifold calls for a phenomenology; it is an invitation to say the meaning of being.

In the second section we considered Thales' notion that all is water, as a first and not quite adequate attempt to respond to the experience of the unitive vision, showing some of the requirements of a more adequate response.

In the third section we discussed the role of archetypal analogies from the realm of ordinary experience, asserting that the function of speaking is not merely to make truth claims, but to mold, transform the consciousness of the listener. Thus, there is a proselytizing character even to the apparently most descriptive of monistic metaphysics or theology. We then raised the critical question as to whether or not the unitive vision is an advancement or a deterioration over the pluralistic way of being in the world, and while we were sympathetic to certain kinds of criticism with respect to some of the interpretations of the significance of the unitive vision, we indicated that such interpretation is not an essential or necessary consequence thereto.

While the problem of apparent separation and a principle of distance from the One has been left plainly unresolved, it has been shown that this conundrum does not invalidate the powerful formative effect of the transformation produced by the unitive vision.

And finally we have shown that response to such an experience can, in contemporary times, take on a new form of expression, emerging as a critique of conventional science. It has also been suggested that the careful study of wholes and boundaries in terms of a systems-approach will reveal a structure of being very close in character to Plotinus's metaphysic, in which the ultimately embedding One is not itself intelligible, but upon it depends each and every aspect and constituent of every embedded whole, or system; whether understood as "closed" or "open."

## NOTES

1. *Enneads* VI.9[9].10.
2. Cf. *Bhagavadgītā* 18.69b.
3. Cf. Hartshorne & Reese, eds., *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago).
4. Cf. William Blake.
5. Charles Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (Illinois: Open Court, 1970), chap. X, pp. 205-26.

## Some Critical Conclusions

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This concluding article aims at clarifying the implied conclusions of the contributors. In order to do justice to the analysis of the ideas presented by all the scholars, it seems necessary to give a very brief nonpartisan view of Indian thought, based on the study of original sources which have not so far been translated into any Western language. Almost all the aspects covered by the participants in the Seminar and published in this volume, refer to those aspects of Indian philosophy which have direct or indirect connection with Vedic thought. I would therefore begin with the exposition of Indian thought, with reference to the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*, which are the perennial sources of the Indian tradition.

In order to throw sufficient light on the epistemological method of the *Vedas*, it is important to state that two types of knowledge have been accepted by the Vedic seers, viz.: (1) *Vijñāna* (scientific knowledge), and (2) *Jñāna* (comprehensive knowledge). The word *Vijñāna* is the combination of *Vi* + *Jñāna*. *Vi* means "plurality, individuality, and changeability."

*Jñāna* literally means "knowledge, awareness and understanding," but in this context, it has to be understood as "innermost knowledge." Hence, the entire metaphysics of the *Vedas*, which later on is elaborated by the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the classical systems, has two aspects. The *Vijñāna* aspect is concerned with the pluralistic nature of particularities and the changeable nature of the universe. The *Jñāna* aspect is connected with the innermost unity behind the diversity. The two trends in the *Vedas* are called *Mantra Vidyā* (science of unity), and *Yajña Vidyā* (science of plurality). The *Mantra Vidyā* is also called *Mūla Vidyā* (science of the root), and *Yajña Vidyā* is called *Tūla Vidyā* (science of explanation). Further, *Mantra Vidyā* is designated as *Brahman Vidyā* (the science of ultimate Being), and *Yajña Vidyā* is called *Brāhmaṇa Vidyā* (science of cosmic processes or forces).

The Vedic metaphysics, therefore, is both monistic and pluralistic, unitive and divisive. The unity concerns the innermost ground and the diversity is associated with the extended pluralistic cosmic reality. The unitive philosophy is a matter of recognition and realization, termed as *Darshana* (seeing). The pluralistic reality is a matter of actual behavior, practice and grappling with the environment, termed as *Varttana*. This thought has been summed up in the statement "*Samadarshna* and *Vishamavarttana*," i.e., "unitive philosophy and differentiative behavior." By differentiation is meant the acceptance of the differences between the subject and object, self and environment. Wherever the word *Drṣṭi* (seeing) has been used in Indian thought, it refers to *Drashtā* (seer, the self). Wherever the word *Varttana* is used, it refers to a concrete situation of reciprocity between the unitive self and pluralistic environment. This ethico-metaphysical characteristic of Vedic thought pervades the history of Indian philosophy from the ancient to the modern times. That is why all the classical systems are unanimous in basing their views on the Vedic authority.

The other concepts which need clarification are those of *Brahman* and *Ātman*. The word *Brahman* cannot be translated exactly. It has been suggested that *Brahman* is that which expands, because the term *Brh* means "to expand." This would be a wrong translation, because the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* refuse to accept *Brahman* as an activity itself, though all activity is due to *Brahman*. All three sources of Indian thought referred to here are unanimous in accepting the fourfold nature of *Brahman*: (1) *Avyaya Brahman* (the eternal infinite ground of all, not even One); (2) *Akṣara Brahman* (the indestructible One, absolute cause); (3) *Ātmakṣara Brahman* (the supreme self, endowed with the potentiality of creation, preservation and destruction, and hence a creator, not yet differentiated in subject and object); and (4) *Viśvasṛṣṭ Brahman* (cosmic form, the pluralistic world of galaxies, super galaxies and individualities as an irradiation of just one spark of the supreme self). It is noteworthy that *Avyaya Brahman* is not even One or a unity. In this sense, the One of Plotinus may be closer to *Avyaya*, though not exactly identical with it. The *Avyaya* is also called *Parātpara* (beyond the beyond). *Akṣara* is the absolute indestructible cause. It is the One unmanifested, potential cause, which at the next stage becomes *Paramapurusa*, *Ātmakṣara* (the supreme self, or literally, the supreme person). It would be erroneous to entertain any anthropomorphic idea of a person here. The literal meaning of *Ātmakṣara* is "self-limitation of indestructible reality." Comparison can be misleading. It cannot be identified with the world soul, nor completely with Nous. It is more Nous than world soul. It is an irradiation from *Akṣara Brahman*, which is both One and the Nous as a potentiality. This explanation would give the reader an idea why many Upaniṣadic passages appear to be contradictory, though they are not so.

The Vedic and the Upaniṣadic *Brahman* are identical on account of this fourfold nature: the ground, the cause, the supreme self, and the cosmic form.

*Ātman* (the self) or *Puruṣa* (man) is exactly a miniature *Brahman*. The fourfold nature of man has been stated to be the sum of *Ātman* (pure being), the *Buddhi* (the causal self), the *Manah* (the creative psyche—mind), and *Śarīra* (the physical body with sense organs and organs of action). The gradation in the case of *Brahman* from *Avyaya* to *Viśvasṛiṣṭ* is from subtle and most fundamental to less subtle and dependent. In the case of man, called *Adhyātma*, the gradation is from the most subtle to the most gross. Based on this fourfold cosmic metaphysics and human nature, are the fourfold social, ethical and philosophic systems in the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. Unlike Plato, the social system in the Vedic tradition is not threefold, but fourfold, because of the spiritual, the intellectual, the mental, and the physical aspects. The fourfold values parallel to Platonic virtues are *Artha* (economic value), depending on temperance; *Kāma* (love), depending on courage and temperance; *Dharma* (ethical duty), depending on justice and courage; and *Mokṣa* (spiritual perfection), depending on wisdom. The *Upaniṣads* also state the fourfold nature of knowledge, based on the four levels of *Jāgrat* (waking consciousness); *Svapana* (dream consciousness); *Suṣupti* (deep sleep consciousness or unconsciousness); and *Turiya* (supra-consciousness, associated with the spiritual self, the causal self, the mental self and the physical self, respectively). The word *Cit* (consciousness) applies both to waking and dream consciousness and the word *Acit* (unconsciousness) as the ground of *Cit* (consciousness), is not to be understood as devoid of consciousness. The word *Turiya* is beyond the concept of *Cit* and *Acit*. Incidentally, Plotinus's gradation of the stages from the physical to the level of the One, so far as soul's journey back to the One is concerned, seems to be parallel to this hierarchy.

The detailed discussion of the fourfold nature of *Puruṣa* in the *Bhagavadgītā* is given in the article "The Plotinian One and The Concept of *Paramapuruṣa* in the *Bhagavadgītā*." However, it seems important to mention that the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* propounds four, not three paths, as it is

commonly believed. These four paths or the methods, the *Yogas*, of attaining enlightenment are: the *Buddhi Yoga*, corresponding to the spiritual aspect of man (the *Buddhi* here may mean *Nous*, which is closer to the One); *Jñāna Yoga*, corresponding to the intellectual or rational aspect (*Jñāna* and *Vijñāna* as explained earlier, are combined in this path); *Bhakti Yoga*, corresponding to the mental aspect; and *Karma Yoga*, corresponding to the physical nature of man. It is pertinent to point out that the first six discourses of the *Bhagavadgītā* are devoted to the *Buddhi Yoga*, the seventh and eighth discourses explicate the *Jñāna Yoga*, the ninth to twelfth discourses explain the *Bhakti Yoga*, and the last six discourses expound the *Karma Yoga*.

On account of want of space and the propriety of not crossing the limits of the universe of discourse, it would be desirable to confine an introduction to Indian thought to the presentation given above. However, any comments and questions would be welcomed for further clarification.

The thought of the *Bhagavadgītā* is closest to that of Plotinus so far as metaphysics, ethics and epistemology are concerned. Both the *Bhagavadgītā* and Plotinus accept contemplation (*Yoga*) as the method of salvation or the union of the individual soul with the One. The *Bhagavadgītā*, as has been stated already, regards the way of intellect (*Buddhi Yoga*) as the highest technique. Plotinus likewise advocates contemplation. Whether Plotinus's meditation precedes his metaphysical system, or the formulation of the metaphysics precedes meditation, is not of academic significance. The truth is that he asserts that meditation does lead to the union of the One. The *Bhagavadgītā* clearly emphasizes that this *Yoga* or union of the individual soul with the indestructible One, ultimate *Brahman*, requires contemplative knowledge of the Truth, including the realization of It in the pluralistic universe as well as constant contemplation of the One. It is also advocated that once perfection or God-realization has been attained, there is no rebirth of the soul. The soul attains its highest abode. It is beyond all limitations of time, space

and causality. In the eighth discourse of the *Bhagavadgītā*, it is stated that all the individual beings become manifest or actualized, because their matrix is unmanifested. The entire host of beings is cyclically manifested and merged back into their source. But higher than the unmanifested source (Plotinus's second hypostasis) is another essence, which is subtler than the subtlest and which is not destroyed even when all manifested beings are destroyed. This unmanifest, indestructible essence is called the ultimate abode.<sup>1</sup> Attainment of that abode means salvation.

The first paper, "Indian Wisdom and Porphyry's Search for a Universal Way," by Dr. O'Meara, is concerned with salvation in the sense of ultimate abode. It highlights many philosophical parallels and historical data with reference to the closeness of the Greek and the Indian culture. The author quotes Saint Augustine to emphasize that Porphyry was aware of Indian thought and culture. It may be recalled here that the quotes from the Greek and Roman sources, including Megasthenes, constantly refer to Gymnosophists. The word Gymnosophists is a variation of the Sanskrit words *Jaina Muni*, i.e., "Jaina monk." It is true that Jainism was popular in India at that time. However, Megasthenes used the term Gymnosophist both for the Vedic philosophers, the Brāhmaṇas, and the Jaina and the Buddhist ascetics, Śramaṇas.

The quote from Megasthenes referring to the similarities between Greek thought and the "first principles operating in the universe" held by the Indians at that time, is most pertinent. It clearly refers to the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads* and that of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Reference to God (*Brahman*) as light, which is discerned by the enlightened sages, again shows the acquaintance of Megasthenes with the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* at least indirectly. The *Mundaka Upaniṣad* says:

There the stainless and invisible *Brahman* shines in the highest golden sheath. It is pure; it is the light of lights; it is that which they know who know the self.<sup>2</sup>

In the *Bhagavadgītā* as well, *Brahman* is designated as "the light of lights", which illumines everything that exists."<sup>3</sup> These facts, combined with the direct or indirect evidence of the mutual exchange between the cultures of Greece and India, are corroborated historically from both sides. Since the philosophies and theories of the then India have been alluded to in Greek sources, it is possible that more evidence in this regard could be collected by the scholars. Professor O'Meara's effort to throw light on the parallels, both philosophical and historical, opens new fields for further investigation.

The next two papers, "Plotinus and the *Upaniṣads*" by Dr. Hatab and "Proclus and the *Tejobindu Upaniṣad*" by Dr. Rosán, are necessary for the proper understanding of Neoplatonism and Indian thought. Dr. Hatab has drawn inspiration from a wider range of *Upaniṣads* with a view to removing some misunderstandings about Plotinus and Hinduism. He has made an attempt to point out that it would be erroneous to hold that the world is an illusion, either according to the *Upaniṣads* or Plotinus. In this connection, our previous observation about the concept of *Brahman* in its four aspects, as depicted in the *Vedas*, further supports Dr. Hatab's viewpoint.

Dr. Rosán's approach is phenomenological. It should, however, be remembered that *Tejobindu Upaniṣad* is just one of the *Upaniṣads*, which are all unanimous in the acceptance of immanence as well as transcendence of *Brahman*. Three *Mahāvākayas* (universal statements, not litanies) are accepted as fundamental truths in all the *Upaniṣads*. These *Mahāvākayas* are: "Sarvam Khalvedam Brahman," i.e., "everything indeed is *Brahman*"; "Brahman Satyam Jaganmithya," i.e., "*Brahman* is the (final) truth and the world (in comparison with pure *Brahman*) is false"; and, "Aham Brahmasmi," i.e., "I am *Brahman*." Keeping in view the immanence of the *Brahman*, those statements in *Tejobindu Upaniṣad* are true, which refer to the identification of the utterer with the spatio-temporal aspect or *Viśvasṛṣṭi* aspect of the *Brahman*. Wherever the self is identified with the transcendental (*Avyaya*) aspect, *Parātiparu*



(beyond the beyond), then by contrast, it is justified to regard everything other than the infinite *Brahman* as false. The *Mahāvākya*s are philosophically arrived at and experientially realized utterances or universal statements. *Tejobindu Upaniṣad* is not an exception. It differs from phenomenology, because the reality expressed therein is not within the parentheses like the subjective experience of the phenomenologist. *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda* stand for "infinite existence," "infinite consciousness," and "infinite bliss."

The word *Tejobindu* literally means "the point" or "drop of light," and even "beyond light." The oscillation between affirmation and denial of the relative reality, the extension (*Tūla*) of *Brahman* is not a contradiction, nor a subjective report. It is a philosophical observation of shifting attention from the immanent to the transcendental aspects of *Brahman* and vice versa. The first three aspects of *Brahman*—the ground, the cause, and the supreme self—have also been designated as *Anantam* (infinite), *Jñānam* (pure knowledge) and *Satyam* (pure truth), respectively. These aspects are transcendental in the sense that they are *Svarūpa Lakṣaṇas* or "the essential characteristics." The immanent aspect, being within the spatio-temporal and causal cosmos, is the irradiation of the first three. In the cosmic immanence those very three transcendental characteristics are self-limited and become *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda* in limited form. The utterance of "I am *Brahman*" is philosophically justified when the utterer identifies himself with *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda* at one time and with the transcendental characteristics at the other. The *Tejobindu*, "the point" or "the drop of light," when merged into the ocean of light (*Brahman*), does not lose its identity. It does not literally merge into the ocean, but becomes the ocean itself. Phenomenology is limited to the state of becoming, the manifest, whereas Upaniṣadic thought explains the relativity of the manifested reality in the context of the unbounded infinitude on both ends, unlike the bracketed phenomenological experience at the empirical level. The *Upaniṣad* of the *Bhagavadgītā* declares:

Unmanifest are the beings in the beginning, unmanifest are they at the end, they are manifest only in the middle; hence the death should not be lamented.<sup>4</sup>

The words "I am" in the context of *Tejobindu Upaniṣad* refer not to the ego, but to the unitive aspect of the self (*Ātman*). "I am" in an empirical sense has to be transcended and made one with the One. This unity again has to be termed not a monistic state, but a state of nondualism. The concept of nondualism is philosophic, and as such points to the consistency and logical validity of the self, which is both finite and infinite, immanent as well as transcendent, and cosmic as well as acosmic. These facts show that *Tejobindu Upaniṣad* cannot be reduced to phenomenology.

The next paper on "*Buddhi* in the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Psyché* in Plotinus," by Professor Armstrong and Dr. Ravindra, is fascinating. It has a very close affinity with my own contribution, entitled "The Plotinian One and the Concept of *Paramapurusa* in the *Bhagavadgītā*." Though these two articles are written independently, yet they may appear to be complementary when read together. Dr. Ravindra's explanation of the word *Buddhi* needs a little elaboration. The term *Buddhi* in the *Buddhi Yoga* of the *Bhagavadgītā* does not stand for discursive intelligence; it is exactly noetic in nature. That is why *Buddhi* is distinguished from *Manas* (mind). When *Buddhi* is mentioned as a product of *Aparā Prakṛti* (lower nature), classed with mind, sense organs and fivefold material elements, it pertains to the diffusion of *Viśvasrit Brahman* (psyche) in the spatio-temporal cosmos and the individuated souls (*psychai*). There is no confusion when *Purusa* is identified sometimes with *Aksara* (the indestructible) and sometimes with *Kṣara* (the destructible) aspects of *Brahman*. After all, *Viśvasrit Brahman* diffused in the cosmic form is the self-limitation of the supreme self.

The destructible aspect of the cosmic form, like that of the lower psyche, has been called *Kṣara Puruṣa*. The indestructible, the inner aspect, the immanent nature of *Brahman* (higher psyche) has been designated as *Akṣara Kūṭastha*. The third aspect, which is beyond *Kṣara* and *Akṣara*, has been called *Paramapurusa* or *Puruṣottama* in the *Bhagavadgītā*. The triad of the destructible, the indestructible and the transcendental aspects within the cosmic form is the replica of the transcendental triad of the ground, the absolute cause and the supreme self outside the spatio-temporal world.

The *Akṣara*, as transcendental, is exactly the *Nous* as the repository of all creation and the source of emanation of the psyche. In man, it is represented by the *Buddhi*, which is next to the *Ātman* (the pure self). The fourfold nature of man from this point of view has been summed up in the third discourse of the *Bhagavadgītā*:

The senses are subtle, subtler than senses is the mind, subtler than the mind is the intelligence and subtler than the intelligence is He (the pure self).<sup>5</sup>

In the *Buddhi Yoga*, intelligence is designated as *Prajñā*, (the irradiation of the *Nous* in man). It is noetic psyche. The concept of *Sthitaprajñā* is exactly the same as that of the "noetic contemplation" and the "ideal state of man... in which his individual psyche behaves as like cosmic psyche as possible," in the words of Professor Armstrong.

The word *Yoga*, therefore, may be translated as "noetic state of the psyche." If this is permitted, the parallel between the *Buddhi* and psyche, as depicted in this paper, is therefore most accurate.

The soul, which is in a unitive state of *Yoga*, which is pure self, which has conquered the lower self and the senses, and which has become (realized) immanent in all beings, is not bound by any kind of actions performed in life.<sup>6</sup> In the words of Plotinus, a man who is in a noetic state of contemplation would not be bound by the limitation of the physical world,

in spite of remaining active in practical life. The Sanskrit equivalents for a person who is in a state of noetic contemplation are: *Yuktah* (united with the One); *Sthitaprajñah* (stabilized in intellect); *Yogin* (practitioner of *Yoga*); *Tatparāh* (one absorbed in the Ultimate); etc.

The next paper is "Phraseology and Imagery in Plotinus and Indian Thought, Especially *Mahāyāna* Buddhism," by Dr. Richard T. Wallis. He agrees that "the resemblances between the accounts given by the mystics the world over" do exist, and yet he holds that a cultural contact is inapplicable to mysticism. The question is whether cultural contact, leading to the exchange of results of experiments in the area of science has any significance. I think it has a great significance, because comparative study of scientific theories and exchange of the results of experiments on the part of the scientists of different countries and cultures, has led to the development of science and technology for the benefit of humankind. Even if we rule out mutual influence of the Greek and Indian cultures, and in spite of the factual and historical evidence, the parallels between the results of mystic experience have no doubt a great philosophical and scientific signification. This significance is heightened by a comparative study of the *Bhagavadgītā* and Plotinian thought, especially in an historical context.

Here we may raise the question why religion, in spite of its universal appeal to love and humanitarianism, has, unlike science, lagged behind in commanding recognition. How is it that science and technology are more highly respected all over the world than religion, irrespective of caste, creed, nationality and race? Why do scientists the world over agree in the objectivity of scientific truth, thereby giving a base of unity to mankind, whereas religion seems to have caused dissensions and disagreements, leading even to bloodshed and wars in the name of God? Scientists are unanimous about the nature of the atom, but religionists have not come to any agreement with regard to the ground of religious experience—God. The

reasons may be a lack of cooperation, an absence of comparative study of religious experience, and a tenacious refusal to accept factual evidence of the mystics of the world as a possible hypothesis of an objective unanimity with regard to the nature of God.

Let us accept that Plotinus was absolutely ignorant of Indian thought. The question arises, what could be the cause of the parallelism between the meditative methods of Plotinus and those of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*? How is it that similar methods have led to the same conceptual formulation in Plotinus of the theory of the One, the Nous, the Psyche and the World, as that of Indian thought? The most modest answer would be that, just as the scientists' experiments on the nature of the atom performed in different laboratories have led to the same conclusions, the Greek and Indian thinkers might have reached identical conclusions in the domain of religion independently of one another.

Comparative study of Neoplatonism and Indian thought seems to imply such an hypothesis. In order that this hypothesis is properly formulated, confirmed and verified, researchers in the East and the West shall have to be open-minded. They shall have to be prepared to sacrifice their narrow tendency of glorifying the individuality and integrity of the authors of philosophical systems in order to arrive at the objective truth. In the absence of such an attitude, explanations of the parallels, with a tendency to overrate one's own culture, are bound to be incomplete and self-contradictory.

This seems to have happened when Dr. Wallis suggests hesitantly that perhaps Plotinian thought influenced Buddhist thought, and even the thought of the *Bhagavadgītā*. There is ample evidence to prove the continuity of Indian thought from the Vedic through the *Upaniṣadic* period and the period of the *Bhagavadgītā* to that of the classical period. In this connection, it may be pointed out that the word *Dharmakāyā* (cosmical body), identified with ultimate reality, is a combination of *Dharma* and *Kāyā*, meaning "the law" and "body," respectively. The word *Dharma* has its origin in the

*Vedas*, where it means "the cosmic law and ground of all existence." Similarly, the observation about the statement of Maharishi Raman is not only anticipated by the *Bhagavadgītā*, but anti-postulated and explained in detail much earlier by the *Mantras*, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*.

The paper "Meditative States in the Abhidharma and in Pseudo-Dionysius" by Dr. Rodier is very interesting. It has been well supported by relevant quotations and is thought-provoking. His analysis of the state of meditation from a comparative point of view further strengthens the hypothesis of a common ground of the experiences of meditative states. This analysis also points out that both the technique of meditation and the experienced states of it are verifiable and even demonstrable. Another important observation in this paper is that the purpose of the technique of meditation is self-purification. This observation has great importance, because a comparative study of Neoplatonism and Indian thought does incline us to this conclusion. This is true not only with reference to Buddhist thought, but also with reference to the Vedic tradition down to *Pātanjala Yoga* and Jainism, which is chronologically prior to Buddhism.

Followed by this analysis is the scholarly paper of Dr. John Borelli, entitled "Matter and Exemplar: Difference-in-Identity in *Vijñānabhikṣu* and Bonaventure." In fact, the approach of *Vijñānabhikṣu* would not appear to be different, as long as evolution of Vedantic thought as the continuity of Vedic thought is not lost sight of. 'Unity and plurality' in God dates back to *Rg Vedic* times, as it has already been stated in connection with the terms *Jñāna* and *Vijñāna*. It may be helpful to explain the meaning of the Vedic word *AUM* in this context. The letter *A* stands for origination, or creation. It is therefore indicative of the pluralistically creative power of God and is symbolized by *Brahmā* in Hinduism and 'The Father in Heaven' in Christianity. The letter *U* signifies evolution or preservation, symbolized by *Viṣṇu* in Hinduism and 'The Son' in Christianity. The letter *M* is associated with destruction of matter back into spirit, the function attributed

to and symbolized by *Shiva* in Hinduism and 'The Holy Spirit' in Christianity. Moreover, *AUM*, a syllable with the potentiality of the threefold function of God, is also the super-sound, called *Shabda Brahman*. It is equivalent to the word *Logos*, translated as "word" in the Gospel of John. It is stated that God was word and word became flesh, the Son. According to Hindu terminology, it could be said that the primal nature of God was word, as sound, *Aum*. It is from the sound that *U*, the Son, the *Viṣṇu*, the light of lights, emanates. It is the *Viṣṇu* aspect or the Son aspect that incarnates Itself in the human body, as an *Avatāra*. A Hindu would not only not object to universal Christ as the way to God, but would even emphasize that it is the only way.

The meaning of the universal Upaniṣadic statement "Aham Brahma Asmi" ("I am *Brahman*") needs little explanation in this context. This is only an hypothesis, a suggestion and an interpretation from a comparative point of view. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, "I am the light of lights and the *Aum* of the *Vedas* and whosoever surrender to Me, comes to the ultimate abode." Jesus Christ says, "I am the way, the truth and the light." Is Christ referring to the "I" as his personal empirical ego, when he particularly jumps to the words "truth" and "light"? Can we not associate Jesus Christ with Moses, who saw the light (burning fire not consuming the bush) and who reported that the God he saw exhorted him to announce that His name is "I am that I am"? Is it not the same universal "I Am" (*Aham*), conveyed by Moses, which Jesus Christ repeats in his declaration of being the way, the truth and the light? The comparison again leads us toward the hypothesis of the sameness of the ground of experience of the Upaniṣadic sages, Moses, and Jesus Christ.

Dr. Paul Hacker's paper "*Cit* and *Notus*" may at first sight appear to be a note of dissent to our thesis. Emphases on conceptual differences between Indian thought, particularly what he calls Vedāntism, and Neoplatonism seem to have upset the author so much that he "was often tempted to renounce writing a paper to be read at the congress." In the

first half of his article he seems to be somewhat dogmatic in his assertion, "East is East and West is West." He also seems to exhibit an ambivalent attitude of praise and condemnation toward the so-called Vedāntism. His polemic in the earlier part of the essay is at times emotive, skeptical and even logically fallacious. He resorts to the fallacies of *Ignoratio Elenchii*, *argumentum et verecundum*, as well as *argumentum et hominem*. He first praises Paul Deussen as "the deepest specialist of Vedāntism in the West," and quotes his words as an authority to show that Śaṅkara is guilty of postulating "a subject without an object," though as already pointed out this is not the case. Later on, he says that Deussen, "the most specialized specialist[,] misunderstood the most central of the subject[s] of his studies." In this connection, it may be pointed out that Śaṅkara's system of Vedānta is *Advaitavāda* (Nondualism) and not *Aikyavāda*. It is so because subject as well as object, the dual aspect of the same *Brahman*, have been recognized. Dr. Hacker repeatedly admits that his polemic is directed only toward Śaṅkara's Vedāntism and not toward Indian thought in general. Even after using such a saving clause in his statement against Śaṅkara, he also says:

Vedāntism, far from being a pedestrian matter-of-fact philosophy, has developed such a pure and sublime concept of Spirit as no other philosophy, be it in India or in the West, has ever succeeded in discovering. I think it was an enormous achievement to abstract Spirit, not only from contents, but also from those elements that seem inseparably linked up with it to form that Ego or the subject of knowledge.

These words of Dr. Hacker, placed side by side with his allegation of "the monstrosity of an absolute perception" against Śaṅkara, show that the author is blowing hot and cold in the same breath.

This, however, does not minimize the importance of this most scholarly paper by Dr. Hacker from the comparative

point of view. Within the paradigm with which he starts, he has tried to demonstrate the logicity of his conclusions. His scholarship and the knowledge of the sources relevant to his paradigm are superb. I wish he could have included the other schools of Nondualism in his purview. Śrī Vallabhāchārya, the founder of Pure Nondualism of the Vedānta, declares that, to say "‘this world is an illusion’ is itself the greatest illusion." Keeping in view the continuity of Indian thought of which Śaṅkara's Vedānta is an integral part, the recognition of 'unity in diversity' cannot be lost sight of.

That Indian thought is not unaware of the unity and interpenetration of the three aspects of *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda* in connection with the fourth aspect of *Brahman*, the cosmic form, does not need any elaboration. Dr. Hacker's contribution is no doubt unique. In spite of pointing out some differences of the interpretations of some metaphysical concepts of Neoplatonism and Vedāntism, he has strongly advocated that the comparative study of Neoplatonism has great value. Talking about the Indian triad of *Sat-Cit-Ānanda*, he observes:

I venture to submit that similarity between this triad, the Christian triad, Trinity, on the one hand as well as Proclus's 'Being-Life-Spirit' triad on the other hand, is no mere chance, but is grounded in reality.

This is a most positive statement, which strongly supports our thesis with regard to the significance of comparative study of mystical experience with reference to the nature of its Ground—*Brahman*, The One.

The next paper, entitled "Matter in Plotinus and Śaṅkara," by Dr. Francisco García Bazán, is being placed after "*Cit* and *Noûs*" so as to maintain the sequence of thought. This is a genuine scholarly attempt to bring out the parallel between Plotinus and Śaṅkara, so far as the nature of matter is concerned. The exposition of Plotinus's view seems to be more precise than that of Śaṅkara, because the author of the paper

admits that his approach is limited mainly to Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma Sūtra*.

It would be pertinent to point out that for the facility of the reader, the word "conscience," used as the translation of *Cit*, should have been substituted by "consciousness," and the word "happiness," as the translation of *Ānanda*, by the word "bliss." Since Śaṅkara's writings are massive, it would not be fully justified to assert that he considered the world or matter as a mere "illusion" in the ordinary sense. He has stated a number of times that the world is not as unreal as "the son of a barren woman" or an imaginary "flower of the sky." The thrust of Śaṅkara's idea of transcendence is positivistic. In other words, when he speaks of *Brahman* as true and the world as false, he does not mean that the transcendence of *Brahman* negates the world. The world as relative reality is apprehended as such in comparison with the highest reality of the *Brahman*.

Śaṅkara has stated that the reality of the dream world is neither absolutely true nor absolutely false. As long as one is in the dream state, there is no doubt about the reality and concreteness of the experiences. It is only when one wakes up that in comparison with the waking experiences, one realizes that the dream was not concrete, but mental imagery. Similarly, the empirical plurality is real, though not absolutely real. When it is compared with the higher experience (*Brahmānubhava*), the world is apprehended to be an illusion. Hence, it is neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal, but relatively real. It has been designated as *Sadasad Vilakṣṇa* (characterized by being and nonbeing). This nature of the world or matter is transcended only at the highest intuitive or contemplative level, according to both Plotinus and Śaṅkara.

Dr. Bazán's conclusive observation in this connection is most relevant:

In regards to the central and supreme intuition of both thinkers, a mystic nature stands out. In relation to their form of predominant discursive and

symbolic exposition and in relation to their mutual logical demands, their psychic, speculative and intellectual temperaments take on emphasis.

It is therefore implied in this paper that explanation of the parallels lies in the similarity of the mystic experience, the comparative study of which can throw light on the nature of its Ground.

Professor Hatton's paper is a comparative study of Śaṅkara and Eriugena on the question whether cause and effect must share any characteristics. The question is seen as a more general statement of the problem whether any term can be univocally applied to both Creator and creature or to both infinite being and finite being. Professor Hatton concludes that both Śaṅkara and Eriugena agree that in general, cause and effect need share no characteristics and thus in particular, that no term can be predicted univocally.

The next paper included in this volume is "Union with God in Plotinus and Bayazid" by Dr. Mohammed Noor Nabi, because it concentrates on the theme of mystic experience. Dr. Nabi has pointed out that ethical discipline as well is a means to the highest goal of union with the One and that in the case of Plotinus, this discipline means intellectual analysis, which is conducive, like ethics, to contemplation on the One. The comparative study of Muslim mysticism with Plotinian mysticism further indicates the universality and objectivity of the ultimate reality.

The next two papers concern the intellectual and philosophical similarities and differences between Neoplatonism and Śaṅkara's Vedānta. These papers are "Advaita Vedānta and Neoplatonism" by Dr. R. K. Tripathi and "The Concept of Human Estrangement in Plotinism and Śaṅkara Vedānta" by Dr. Ramakant Sinari. Dr. Tripathi has followed a typical approach of a closed Śaṅkarite and concluded that "Neoplatonism has to be regarded as an absolutism of [an] Advaitic type." In spite of the fact that this approach overlooks the

general and unbiased interpretation of the Upaniṣadic philosophy, it pretends to represent Indian thought as an absolutism. The tendency of overlooking the differences between the Nondualism of Śaṅkara and Neoplatonism limits the scope of the paper. However, it does point out the parallels which are indicative of the commonness of mystic experiences of Plotinus and Śaṅkara.

Dr. Sinari has adopted a modern comparative approach. He has compared the two philosophies from an existential point of view as well. On account of the existential paradigm, Dr. Sinari observes that the design of the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads*

was to capture the transphenomenal foundation of our being in the world and to map out the entire urge for transcendence we feel while we are still submerged in worldliness.

This may be partially true, even though, in light of what has been stated earlier, this view is not truly representative of Indian thought. To say that "Śaṅkara's transcendentalism is ostensibly 'world-rejecting'" and that "Śaṅkara annuls the very reality of the world" is not correct. However, the comparison in this paper is thought-provoking.

The next paper, by Dr. Priti Bhusan Chatterji, entitled "Plotinus and Śrī Aurobindo: A Comparative Study," is very interesting and academically important. It deals with the Neovedāntic philosophy of Śrī Aurobindo as a counterpart of Plotinian philosophy. Dr. Chatterji contends that just as Greek philosophy is summed up as a confluence in Plotinus, similarly Śrī Aurobindo's philosophy integrates East and West and yet remains original. The comparisons in the paper are striking and significant. The conclusion that the One, the Unique and the Transcendental are known intuitively, is quite in keeping with the general trend of all the viewpoints presented in this volume. In the next paper, "The Influence of Indian Philosophy on Neoplatonism," C. L. Tripathi notes some striking

similarities between certain Neoplatonic views and certain doctrines found much earlier in the *Upaṇṣads*, considers the question of whether some of Plotinus's views are of Indian origin, and finally discusses whether they first appeared in India or Greece. The next paper, "A Survey of Modern Scholarly Opinion on Plotinus and Indian Thought," by Dr. Wolters, is self-explanatory. In light of previous remarks presented in this volume, it needs no further comments.

The concluding paper, by Dr. J. R. A. Mayer, entitled "Neoplatonism, Indian Thought and General Systems Theory," is a beautiful contribution to this volume. That this article seems to sum up the findings of all the scholars who have contributed the foregoing papers is evident from the very title chosen by Dr. Mayer. A careful reading of this essay would incline the reader to conclude that the comparative topic of Neoplatonism and Indian thought is not only informative, but also most valuable for the future of philosophy and science. Dr. Mayer has raised questions about knowledge, metaphysics and mystic experience and has answered them without any ideological bias or philosophical preoccupation of mind. His analysis is logical, and his language chaste and appealing.

Dr. Mayer points out that neither pluralism nor monism can totally be rejected and that the empirical value of the former and the enlightening character of the latter contribute to the wholeness of truth, which science, philosophy and religion, analysis, intellect and intuition seek to investigate.

Though the paper is general—encompassing epistemological, metaphysical, phenomenological, mystical and logical implications of the main theme of this volume—yet it does point out that the intuitive experience of the underlying reality at the base of plurality has "the powerful formative effect" and that "responses to such an experience can in contemporary times take on a new expression, emerging as a critique of conventional science." Professor Mayer's view that monistic metaphysics, in which the ultimate One, though itself unintelligible, is

the ground of every embedded whole or system, is commendable.

A word to sum up the unitive theme and diversified approach of all the contributors to the study of Neoplatonism and Indian thought seems to be a part of my duty. As the reader will notice, the areas chosen by the contributors range from historical to metaphysical, logical, ethical, mystical, epistemological, phenomenological, pragmatic and even comprehensively evaluational aspects of the problem.

A thread of unity, suggested by the hypothesis that the parallelism of expression and the technique of attaining the unitive experience of the One in Plotinus, *Brahman* in Indian thought, and God in the case of all the mystics the world over, seems to run through all the articles. Every author has made a unique contribution. The volume itself presents a "unity in diversity" and "harmony in discord." Its philosophical importance does not need to be elaborated. Professor R. B. Harris must be congratulated as the initiator of the contemporary revival of interest in Neoplatonism, which seems to be the only philosophy that can bridge the artificial gap between the Eastern and the Western traditions of philosophy. I hope that the comparative study of Neoplatonism with other areas of philosophy, science, religion and psychology will perhaps lead to a better understanding of various disciplines. This is a most laudable philosophical venture.

#### NOTES

1. *Bhagavadgītā*, VIII.18-21.
2. Swami Nikhilananda, trans., *The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (New York, 1964), p. 115.
3. *Bhagavadgītā* XIII.17.
4. *Ibid.*, II.28.
5. *Ibid.*, III.42.
6. *Ibid.*, V.7.

**STUDIES IN NEOPLATONISM: ANCIENT AND MODERN  
VOLUME I**

*R. Baine Harris, General editor*

**THE  
SIGNIFICANCE OF NEOPLATONISM**

**edited by  
R. Baine Harris**

*Professor of Philosophy  
Old Dominion University*

**INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR NEOPLATONIC STUDIES  
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## Preface

The essays of this volume provide a sampling of the significance of Neoplatonism in Western philosophy and culture. Some deal with its sources; some with its interpretation, and some with its historical influence.

In his introduction, R. B. Harris defines Neoplatonism, indicates its main documents, and provides a brief introduction to the major Neoplatonists. The remaining papers are divided into three parts:

In Part I, *The Sources of Neoplatonism*, J. N. Findlay's paper concentrates on the close doctrinal affinities between Plato and Plotinus and offers a strong defense of the thesis that Plotinus' philosophical position is an extension and completion of Plato's metaphysics. H. J. Blumenthal's paper then draws attention to certain major Aristotelian ideas in the construction of Plotinus' psychology in order to explore the paradoxical aspect whereby his conception of the soul is akin to Plato's, but his view of its function is closer to Aristotle's despite the criticism Plotinus advanced against his definition. Michael Dunn then discusses the two reading orders of the Platonic dialogues drawn up by Thrasyllus and the Neoplatonist Iamblichus and shows that the canon of Iamblichus was based on an arbitrary distinction between "physical" and "theological," forcing thus an order that suited "the dogmatic and theological Plato of Neoplatonism."

Part II, *The Interpretation of Neoplatonism*, opens with J. P. Anton's paper in which he assesses Plotinus' understanding of the value and relevance of Aristotle's categorical theory for the comprehension of the sensible world to ascertain whether Plotinus gave a viable analysis of the theory in its original setting, and concludes with the observation that Plotinus' radically different ontology of the sensible object led him to

re-cast Aristotle's categories before criticizing them. J. H. Fielder next undertakes an analysis of the problem of *chorismos* in Plotinus in the special context of how the sensible reality is brought about as an image emanating from a higher level, and after narrowing his inquiry to a single pattern of Plotinus' views on this issue, he exhibits the implications they have for *chorismos* as a conception of imaging. R. T. Wallis' basic theme in his paper is the nature of *experience* on which Plotinus' account of the intelligible world rests, and he pursues it by seeking precedents in classical sources and tracing parallel analogues in modern thinkers. He then takes the position that Plotinus' Three Hypostases are from one point of view elevations of psychological experience.

Continuing in the interpretation of Neoplatonism J. Whittaker shows that the ancestry of the Neoplatonic doctrine of the infinity, as stated by Plotinus, is still far from clarified, but that one may, with the aid of philological tools, acquire a better understanding not only of the historical background of the doctrine but also of the doctrine itself. J. P. Atherton explores the difficulties which the Christian defenders of the trinitarian *arche* sought to overcome through their criticisms of the Neoplatonic One, and concludes with an analysis of the relation this issue bears to the identity of the absolute in Schelling and Hegel. A. H. Armstrong opens his paper with an attempt to elucidate the expression "apprehension of divinity in self and cosmos" in order to show how it obtains in the case of Plotinus' philosophy. He then defends the view that the mode of apprehending divinity is actually one, and that when properly understood, the Neoplatonic way of thinking is not without significance and meaning.

In the next paper P. S. Mamo, in opposition to interpreters who find Plotinus' mysticism to be of the theistic type, defends a monistic interpretation which in its proper philosophical context offers a fuller understanding and appreciation of Plotinus' mystical thought. J. M. Rist, taking his cue from certain basic difficulties that confront recent discussions on the concept of moral obligation, then proceeds to explain Plotinus' views and points out that although he has no formal discussion of moral obligation, it can be shown that the issue is carefully

examined in the light of the broader concept of the good life and the theory of virtue as a state of the soul. Continuing, Evangelos Moutsopoulos shows in his paper how enriched the Plotinian theory of the imaginary becomes when interpretation of the pertinent texts makes its starting point not from imagination as a noetic function but from the image, considered as a first datum, irreducible to a product of the imaginative activity and as that which fertilizes the latter. He then takes a view that places the emphasis on the dynamism of the image but without compromising the dynamism of consciousness. Finally, in this section, John Dillon explores the problem of the rules of Neoplatonic allegory through an examination of the possible differences between the two basic and related terms *eikon* and *symbolon*, and shows through a fair sampling of the relevant sources what applications and problems attended the Neoplatonic allegorical exegesis.

Part III, *The Influence of Neoplatonism*, opens with M. T. Clark's paper in which she takes issue with the thesis that Victorinus' views derived directly from Plotinus and adduces evidence to indicate that the differences between their respective metaphysics are traceable in Victorinus' acceptance of the consubstantiality of the Christian Trinity and that Victorinus depends more upon Porphyry than Plotinus. She concludes that Victorinus' own metaphysics was a new departure and influenced medieval metaphysics. M. G. Vater next shows how in the background of Schelling's own eclectic and original thinking there lurks an affinity and preoccupation with Neoplatonic themes. He suggests that evidence for this is found in a number of his writings and is especially reflected in the dialogue *Bruno* written in the year 1802. In the following essay, D. F. T. Rodier shows how the study of Neoplatonism can help elucidate important problems in process philosophy. After focusing on Whitehead's accounts of creativity and non-statistical judgments of probability, he proposes that these areas of philosophic concern have their counterparts in Plotinus' account of matter and *sympatheia* to such an extent that they may be regarded as reinterpretations of a Neoplatonic theme in terms of process metaphysics. Next, J. N. Deck juxtaposes the thought of Plotinus and Sartre in connection with the ontological investiga-

tion of "being-other-than," and after disclaiming traceable influences he arrives at the conclusion that there are striking similarities between the two thinkers, especially with reference to Plotinus' *Nous* and Sartre's *For-Itself*. Finally, K. W. Harrington examines the movement of the New Humanists of the 1920's and 1930's and Paul Elmer More in particular, and shows that although More was critical of some aspects of the metaphysics and mysticism of Plotinus his Christianizing Platonism led him to conflate the ethics of Plato and Plotinus, despite their differences, and thus erred in attributing to Plato certain ethical and psychological doctrines which are in fact more Neoplatonic than he was able to realize.

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## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NEOPLATONISM

# A Brief Description of Neoplatonism

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There are essentially three ways in which Neoplatonism may be considered to be significant. It may be seen as the last flowering of Hellenistic philosophy—as the last major attempt to bring into one complete system the same themes debated by the philosophers for the eight centuries preceeding it, an effort that involved not only the attempt to resolve the conflict between Plato and Aristotle, but also between the philosophic and religious elements in Graeco-Roman culture. It may also be seen as one of the basic intellectual forces, sometimes open, sometimes hidden, in the evolution of philosophy and theology in the Western world, a force that usually occurred in combination with some other interest. In addition, it may still be seen in its own worth as a general philosophy with some relevance to some of the issues in contemporary philosophy and in modern life.

In this introduction, which is intended mainly for the non-Neoplatonic expert, I will present a general overview of the school of thought by indicating the meaning of the term, identifying the major Neoplatonists, and describing its primary documents. I will not treat the origin of the movement or its impact upon other movements and thinkers, except in a most cursory way, even though these form a vital part of its actual significance.<sup>1</sup>

## I. *What is Neoplatonism?*

Neoplatonism was established as a school of thought by the Egyptian Plotinus (205-270) and his teacher Ammonius Saccas (185-250). Plotinus was the student of

Ammonius in Alexandria for eleven years until he joined the expeditionary force of Emperor Gordianus III in his march against Persia in the year 244. When Gordianus was slain the same year, Plotinus fled to Antioch and then went on to Rome where he set up a school and taught for the next twenty-six years.

The chief document of Neoplatonism is the *Enneads* of Plotinus, a series of fifty-four essays arranged into six divisions of nine each, each division being called an "Ennead." The *Enneads* were composed between the years 254 and 267 and were later arranged according to subjects by Porphyry (c. 232-304), Plotinus' most famous student, who also wrote a biography of his master. Although extremely profound and provocative, the *Enneads* probably deserves to be called the world's worst written book since Plotinus seems to presume that the reader already has a complete knowledge of his system when he discusses any topic. The First Ennead presents his moral philosophy; the Second his physics; the Third his cosmology; the Fourth his psychology; the Fifth his philosophy of mind; and the Sixth his doctrine of reality. The direct influence of the book upon the history of philosophy has been minimal, since it was not widely circulated, but its indirect influence through other widely circulated Neoplatonic works inspired by it has been tremendous. Since it was written in Greek, it was not directly available to the Latin West until Ficino made a Latin translation of it in 1492.

Plotinus and Ammonius did not know that they were Neoplatonists. The term "Neoplatonism" has been used only since the mid-nineteenth century when it was invented by German scholars to distinguish the thought of Plotinus and his successors from the more complete form of Platonism that emerges from all of Plato's writings. Ammonius and Plotinus thought of themselves primarily as reformers and not innovators of Platonism; but as a matter of fact they were both. They sought to reestablish the thought of Plato in its original purity, but as reformers six centuries removed from that to which they would return, they did not succeed in freeing themselves from a certain bias in their conception of the fundamentals of Platonism. More than they realized, they were themselves

products of the general tendency toward eclecticism in Second Century thought and they may not be regarded as *pure* Platonists.

Taken as a whole, the *Enneads* affirm the same themes common to the Platonic tradition, namely, (1) belief in the immateriality of reality, (2) the conviction that the visible and sensible refer to a still higher level of being than the level on which they occur, (3) preference for intuition over empirical forms of knowing, (4) the affirmation of the immortality of the soul, (5) belief that the universe in its most real state is good, and can be known as good, and (6) the tendency to identify the beautiful, the good, and the true as one and the same.

Plotinus' main thrust in the *Enneads* is a defense of Plato against Aristotle's criticism, but in defending his ancient idol he makes major concessions to Aristotle. Although he mentions Aristotle by name only four times, he shows great familiarity with his writings and borrows a number of his fundamental notions from him, notably those of power (*δύναμις*) and energy (*ἐνέργεια*). The Platonism of the *Enneads* is actually a hybrid resulting from the blending of Platonism and Aristotelianism, and at times it is difficult to determine which one is dominant. Dean Inge suggested that it could be said that Plotinus knew and understood Aristotle better than he did Plato,<sup>2</sup> and Ernst Hoffman thought that Neoplatonism would better be called "Neo-Aristotelianism," especially in view of the fact that the majority of the Neoplatonic systems after Plotinus have been nearer to the dialectic of Aristotle than to Plato's dialectic.<sup>3</sup> Most of Plotinus' immediate successors believed that he had achieved the unification of Platonism and Aristotelianism.

Plotinus was not satisfied with either Plato's or Aristotle's final conception of the Ultimate and he was bothered by Plato's dichotomies. He accepted Aristotle's criticism of Plato as essentially valid and he accepted Aristotle's dialectical method as superior to that of Plato and basically followed it even though he did specifically reject Aristotle's categories (V.I.1-30) and substituted those of his own, namely, Thought (*νοῦς*) and Thing (*ὄν*); Difference (*ἐτερότης*) and Sameness

(ταυτότης); and Permanence (στάσις) and Change (κίνησις) (V.2.1–V.3.27). (See also V.1.4; VI.2.15,19; and VI.2.8) He rejected Aristotle's logic, and specifically his formal logic (I.3.4) and he developed a Platonic-type logic of his own to devise an Aristotelian-type dialectic of his own. He uses logic the way Aristotle does to set up a dialectical system, but his logic is more akin in type to Plato's logic than it is to Aristotle's.<sup>4</sup> Practically all the Neoplatonists who followed him, however, followed the example of his disciple Porphyry in ignoring his logic and substituting the logic of Aristotle for it, so that for all practical purposes Neoplatonic logic is not Plotinian logic.

Plotinus remained a Platonist in his conception of what the nature of the philosophic enterprise is, but he is a post-Aristotelian Platonist. Basically, what he rejected in Aristotle was his world view, his conception of the range of philosophy, and the adequacy of his logic as a basis for dialectics. He objected to Aristotle with the same high level of precision and the same degree of understanding that Aristotle shows for Plato. Whereas Aristotle did not so much challenge the meaning of the root concepts of Plato as he did the basis upon which he established them, Plotinus does not really challenge the basis of Aristotle's thought as much as he questions the adequacy of his system. He conquers him by absorbing him and retaining him almost intact as the middle section of his own highly refurbished and enlarged Platonic system.

Plotinus' own contribution is, however, much greater than that of a harmonizer of Plato and Aristotle. By his identity of the Pythagorean One with the transcendent Good of Plato, but minus Plato's *ὄν*, his own Ultimate is greater than the Ultimates of either Plato or Aristotle. The Plotinian One should not be conceived of as "sheer unity" in the Parmenidean sense and neither as "barrenness of being," or even "absolute nothingness." *τὸ ἓν* should rather be understood in the Pythagorean sense of **the base unity of all multiplicities**. It is nothing because it is everything. It is no-one-thing, non-existent, and non-being, because any sense of thingness, or existence, or its being would be a prostitution of its genuine nature. It is even much more than "the ground of being." It is the point where all themes

merge, the one "principle" that contains the fundamentals of all principles, the one line into which all lines merge. It is responsible for being in the only level that being can occur, namely in the level in which the One can be differentiated in Aristotle's *νοῦς*. At this second and lower ontic, epistemic, and value level, being is determinate, very much as Aristotle suggests, and it is progressively less determinate and "less principled" in all of the myriads of inner sequential levels within the range of *νοῦς* and on down into the many levels within the level of *ψυχή*, which is in reality *νοῦς* in motion. The One, of course, is not material, and neither is Mind or Soul, since the purely material cannot exist.

That which is taken to be material is in actuality Soul. It is an extension of Soul down below the normal level of Soul, or better, it is Soul in its lowest possible level of being. Just as all of the level of Soul is an extension of Mind down below its normal level, or Mind in its lowest possible level, so Mind is the One in an extension down below its normal level, or the One in its lowest possible level. Thus Plotinus's Ultimate is transcendent in its level as the One from all determinate being, but it is immanent in it as *νοῦς*, namely, as *νοῦς* forms the basis for the various orders and levels of the events of souls. In this way Plotinus sought to establish the spiritual nature of reality, showing the immaterial ground of both spiritual and material things in contrast to the Stoics who sought to establish the material base of spiritual reality.

In his doctrine of emanation, or the procession of all things from the One, Plotinus appears to have taken that which Plato presented as myth and turned it into straight doctrine, namely Plato's analogy of the *ἀγαθόν* with the radiation from the Sun in the *Republic* (509). The Stoics had already used the idea of emanation or irradiation, and he quite likely borrowed the notion from them, but they used it to illustrate a *material* diffusion and depletion, the one that most naturally comes to the Twentieth Century mind when radiation is mentioned. It is important to note that Plotinus is *not* describing a material structure. Instead, he is trying to convey the idea of the permanent structure of *spiritual* essences. The procession is not a procession in time. He is describing the logical, and not the chronological order of being and is being very Greek in doing

so, since he is assuming that the permanent and fixed is more genuine, i.e., more real, than that which is in motion. He is suggesting that that which is in motion, namely, souls, has its reality in its fixed elements, namely, its structure as *νοῦς*. Since he regarded light as an immaterial substance (II. 1.7; IV.5.6-7; I.6.3), his use of it as an illustration of radiation should not be taken to mean radiation in the modern sense.

Plotinus is sometimes labeled a mystic, and this label is correct with certain qualifications. He might be described as a rational mystic or perhaps a "metaphysical mystic," since he believed in the necessity of logic and metaphysical understanding as a means to mystical experience. To him it would be scandalous to think of enlightenment without the prior practice of morality and philosophy. As Erwin Edman puts it, "For Plotinus mysticism is not the evasion but the climax of thought,"<sup>5</sup> Salvation, as Plotinus sees it, is essentially a technique involving three processes: (1) catharsis, or the purification of the soul through morality, (2) dialectics, or the practice of the discipline of philosophy; and (3) illumination, or enlightenment (*νόησις*) -- a state of ecstasy wherein the soul finally comes into direct communion with that part of the One that is already within it. The way of salvation is a journey from soul to mind to the One during which the soul progressively sees itself as an element of the Ultimate. Salvation is not from above, it is from within; and it is not free -- it is very expensive and rarely achieved. By most men it is only relatively achieved, depending upon which level they succeed in attaining.

Plotinus actually placed a higher premium on philosophical activity than did Plato, since he made the practice of dialectics one of the necessary steps of salvation. Salvation begins with self-purification and the practice of ordinary moral life, namely, meeting one's civic responsibilities and the practicing of the Platonic virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice (I.2.2). The first stage is self-purification, namely, the purification of one's motives and actions. But morality is more than not doing evil, it is doing good in a positive way -- it is an expression of the purity of the soul (I.2.4). This leads to the third level, the freeing of the soul from all bodily desires. Only then may the practice of dialectics begin. Essentially it involves

the soul's turning away from itself as an object of concern and fixing its attention upon the *νοῦς*. Dialectics for Plotinus is a science, a form of philosophical analysis in which logic is used as a tool for the analysis of reality, i.e., for the determination of the evidences of *νοῦς* in everything that there is. It is by means of this form of analysis that the soul eventually turns introspectively into itself and sees itself as essentially *νοῦς* (VI.7.34; VI.9.11). In this stage, which might be called the highest level of dialectics, the soul sees itself as mind -- it has a *soul to Mind* identity, but this is not yet illumination. This occurs only when the soul passes beyond dialectics into a direct grasping of reality that transcends logic and analysis -- when the soul passes beyond seeing itself as mind and sees itself as the One in a *soul to One* identity. In this state the soul ceases to know itself as soul or mind and knows itself only as the One (VI.9.9-10).

In some respects Plotinus' way of salvation is reminiscent of Plato's theory of knowledge, since Plato places intuition higher than discursive reason. Plotinus's theory of knowledge, however, goes considerably farther than the limits of Plato's epistemology. Although Plato believes that all universal concepts have objective reference, he did not state very clearly the exact relation between the particular and the universal, a weakness for which he was severely criticized by Aristotle, and a weakness which both Aristotle and Plotinus seek to overcome in very different ways. In Plotinus, as we have just seen, true knowledge passes on beyond general knowledge to a direct knowing of the Ultimate. Although this view is not inconsistent with Plato's epistemology, it is a rather radical development of it in view of the more cautious limits that Plato imposed upon knowing.

Plotinus' view is even more radical than Plato's, since he does not set the knower off from his objects, as do Plato and Aristotle, but rather makes the intelligible universe within the subject as the object for knowledge. Like Aristotle, he makes knowing a form of abstraction, but it is more than the abstraction of common forms out of common sensibles. It is an identity of like kinds when the non-essential elements that confuse the issue have been taken away. It is like perceiving like.



Seen in its boldest profile, then, Neoplatonism is an effort to reconcile Aristotelianism with Platonism through an appeal to a still higher unifying principle than is found in either of the two, namely, an Ultimate First Principle that is *both* transcendent and immanent in all nature, indefinable *and* knowable, self-sufficient *and* creative throughout the universe without an act of will. It is an effort to subsume the major elements of Aristotle's system within a revised but fundamentally *Platonic* framework of thought; an effort that Aristotle himself would have vigorously protested, as most pure Aristotelians down through the centuries have done.<sup>6</sup>

## II. The Early Neoplatonists

The first authentic Neoplatonist was probably *Ammonius Saccas* (175-250 A.D.), the porter who taught in Alexandria during the last part of the first quarter of the third century. Since he left no writings, his claim to fame rests upon the success of his famous pupils: Plotinus, the two Origenes, the philologist Longinus, and Herennius. Although some of them refer to his thought occasionally, it is impossible to determine which of their views were inspired by him. In any case Plotinus (205-270), just discussed, was the first notable Neoplatonist.

*Amelius Gentilianus* (c. 275), a senior professor in the school that Plotinus founded in Rome, also began his studies in Alexandria. He was responsible for the conversion of Porphyry to Neoplatonism, but he made no written contribution to the school of thought. His principle literary activity was his effort to show the differences in the thought of Plotinus and Numenius of Apamea, whom he also greatly admired. He did alter Plotinus' views slightly by distinguishing three hypotheses within the *νοῦς* and by holding that all souls find their unity within the World-Soul instead of in the One. In contrast to Plotinus he practiced public religion, praying to the gods and observing the feasts and sacrifices, a practice for which he received no censure from his colleague.

*Porphyry* (232-c.304). Like Plato, Plotinus also suffered the fate of having his philosophy altered by his disciples. However, if it had not been for Porphyry, who was able to

express his rather abstruse ideas in a more palatable form, his philosophy may not have survived at all. As an expositor of the thought of Plotinus, his writings were very widely distributed both in his own time and in later centuries. He wrote one book in defense of vegetarianism, one extolling "abstemiousness," and another entitled *Against the Christians*. The latter had fifteen chapters in which he opposed the divinity of Christ, set forth contradictions in the Christian scriptures, and denied the divine inspiration of the Old Testament, a line of thought that was continued in the Syrian, Pergamumian, and Athenian schools of Neoplatonism. The book, however, was condemned by Emperor Theodosius in 435 and all existing copies were destroyed. He also wrote a book on the *Categories* of Aristotle that was translated into Latin by Boethius and became one of the most widely read philosophical texts of the Middle Ages. In his writings he gave a certain slant in the interpretation of Neoplatonism that was continued by his followers on down until the Ninth Century. He replaced the logic and categories of Plotinus with those of Aristotle and made the aim of philosophy the salvation of the soul. Claiming that evil came from the nature of the soul and not the body, he sought to purify the soul through various forms of asceticism as well as through knowledge of God. He also had a much higher interest than Plotinus in *daemons*, which Plotinus had defined as spirit-beings without bodies (III. 5.6), not born of souls nor produced by the World-Soul and with bodies of fire (II.1.6) that do not participate in bodily matter (III.5.6). Whereas Plotinus put all of nature within the action of souls and hence related it to *νοῦς* and the Ultimate and thus free from the actions of *daemons*, Porphyry and some of his followers allowed nature to be affected by the capricious actions of *daemons*. He also began, but did not develop, the tendency to express the Plotinian system in a series of triads within triads and his system is generally more monistic than that of Plotinus. He also put more emphasis on practical ethical issues.

*Iamblichus*, (c.250-326) a native of Chalcis in Coele-Syria, studied with Porphyry for some time and then returned to his native country to found the Syrian School of Neoplatonism, which especially emphasized theurgy as a means of salvation.

Although Porphyry retained an interest in theurgic practices after his conversion to Plotinism, he limited it to the very lowest levels of the journey for salvation, while Iamblichus and his followers saw it as a higher way. Iamblichus posited a One above the One of Plotinus, namely, an absolutely ineffable One entirely without attributes. Below this One is the Plotinian One which in turn produces the intelligible world, which has three parts, and which in turn produces the intellectual world, which also has three parts, the latter being the Demiurge, which has seven divisions. Below the level of the intellectual world is the world of souls, which are also divided into a series of triads. Salvation is not *ἐκστασις*, but union with the gods through rites and ceremonies. A student of Iamblichus, Aedesius, founded a school of Neoplatonism at Pergamum. One of its leaders, Maximus of Smyrna was a Neoplatonic priest to the Emperor Julian the Apostate (331-363), a nephew of Constantine the Great who succeeded Constantius as emperor in 361. Another of Iamblichus' students, Plutarch of Athens (c.350-433) was the first Neoplatonist to become the head of the Platonic Academy in Athens in about the year 400. He was succeeded by Syrianus in about 432 and Proclus in 438, both of whom were Neoplatonists.

Proclus (c. 409-c. 487), the next major Neoplatonist after Porphyry, was a Greek native of Constantinople who had studied with Olympiodorus in Alexandria before coming to Athens at the age of nineteen to study with Plutarch and Syrianus. Being both scholarly and "scholastic," he developed the Iamblichean brand of Neoplatonism to its logical extremes, projecting triads within triads seemingly at every opportunity. A man of great energy and enthusiasm, he lectured five times a day, wrote a great deal, and still found time to give his evenings to his students and to take an active part in municipal government. In addition, he was quite zealous in his religious activities, worshipping the sun three times a day, observing all the Egyptian holy days, and spending part of the night in prayer, praise, and the making of sacrifices. Dean Inge says that his religion was an amalgamation of various cults and might be compared to Comte's "Religion of Humanity."<sup>7</sup>

Metaphysically, Proclus reduced Plotinus' rather loose and organic system to an absolutely complete and rigid one by

developing many more triads within triads for Plotinus' three emanations. It was his thesis that all things emanate by triads, and also emanate horizontally by triads as well as vertically. He believed that all things evolve by triads and also need to return, by triads, to the Ultimate. Whereas for Plotinus the procession of the lower stages out of the higher was continuous and equal in degree of emanation, Proclus specified that the lower remains in the higher in its first aspect, leaves it in its second aspect, and returns to it in a third aspect.

Like Plotinus, he taught that man's ultimate goal is union with the Ultimate, but added that theurgy can be an aid higher than the practice of dialectics. He was highly influenced by Plato's *Timaeus*, and once stated that if it were in his power to do so he would withdraw all books from human knowledge except the *Timaeus* and the *Chaldaean Oracles*.

In two of his works, *Elements of Theology* and *Plato's Theology*, he provided elaborate explanations of Neoplatonism. Both were fairly well circulated and had no small influence upon Byzantine, Arabic, and early medieval Latin Christian thought. Indirectly he was the source of many elements of medieval scholastic Christian thought, since the very widely circulated Christian documents, *Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology*, purportedly written by Dionysius the Areopagite, a disciple of St. Paul, but actually written by some unknown monk in the late fifth century, were in actuality adaptations of Proclus' thought.

Proclus' successor was Marinus, a Palestinian Jew. It is possible that he was the source of the Neoplatonism that got into the medieval Jewish tradition, if not of the mysticism of "the Book of Creation," the *Sefer Yezirah*. Athenian Neoplatonism, i.e., the Academy, lasted for about forty years after Proclus, until it was shut down by decree of Justinian I in 529. The last *διδάσκαλος* was Damascius (b. 458) whose main innovation was to make not only the Ultimate but all products of it as ineffable, thus carrying Iamblichean Neoplatonism on out to the extreme of severing the connection God and Nature that Plotinus was so concerned to establish.

Neoplatonism continued to flourish in Rome and Alexandria during the time of the late Academy in Athens, but no

notable ideological changes occurred in it in either location. It continued in Rome until the latter part of the sixth century. Among its products was the Neoplatonic Christian Marius Victorinus (c. 350), whose Latin translations of Neoplatonic literature were read by Augustine and Boethius (c. 470-525). Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy* and his translations and commentaries on Aristotle were widely read and both influenced medieval theology.

The Alexandrian School of Neoplatonism began in the middle of the fourth century and appears to have maintained strong connections with Athenian Neoplatonism at this time, including exchanging professors. Generally, the Alexandrian Neoplatonic professors remained closer to the thought of Plato and the Middle Platonists and did not enter into metaphysical speculations, theology, and theurgy, as did the Athenians, and they displayed a more conciliatory attitude toward Christianity. One of the heads of the school was a female mathematician-philosopher named Hypatia, who in 415 was taken from her carriage by a mob of fanatical Christians and lynched inside a Christian church. The school was shut down with the capture of the city by the Arabs in 642. The last known Alexandrian Neoplatonist was Stephanus (c.600), who later as a Christian went to Constantinople to be the director of the Imperial Academy of Byzantium and was partly responsible for the transmission of Neoplatonism into Byzantine culture.

### III. Later Variations of Neoplatonism

It could probably be said that there has not been a single pure Neoplatonist since the Fifth Century, since most of those who might be labeled as Neoplatonists have actually held Neoplatonic views in combination with other commitments. Even Eriugena, who would surely be the nearest candidate, held tenaciously to certain points of Christian dogma that would prevent him from being a complete Neoplatonist. In the case of all the Neoplatonists after 500 A. D., it can be debated whether or not they are *actually* Neoplatonists, depending upon which criterion is finally appealed to, whether to the origin of their thought, to the actual percentage of Neoplatonic notions found in their writings, or some dogmatic definition of a Neoplatonist.

#### A. Byzantine Neoplatonism

When Justinian ordered the closing of the Athenian School of Neoplatonism in 529, seven of its professors, including Damascius and Simplicius went into Persia to the court of Chosroes I to continue their profession, but by 533 they had returned to Byzantium where they continued their studies. Although little more has been said about them, there is evidence that Neoplatonism did not die out in Byzantine culture. Apart from the actual influence of these seven and their disciples, we must consider the impact of both the Arabic and Christian Neoplatonists upon Byzantine civilization. Greek Christianity has always been more Neoplatonic than Latin Christianity, likely due to the initial impact made upon it by *Origen of Alexandria* (185-254), the early Greek church father who, like Plotinus, was also a student of Ammonius Saccas. Although he could not officially be labeled a Neoplatonist, he had quite similar views which also got into the thought of other important Greek church fathers such as the Cappadocians, Basil, and the two Gregories—all of whom were taken seriously in Byzantine Christianity.

A certain revival of a purer form of Neoplatonism occurred with the advent of *Michael Psellus* (1018-79), who with the help of Constantine IX re-established the teaching of Neoplatonic philosophy in the University of Byzantium. Psellus chose to go back to Proclus for his main source of inspiration and the Proclean brand of Neoplatonism was carried on by his disciples who produced numerous commentaries on the thought of Aristotle. Psellus was also an intellectual influence on the thought of *George Gemistus Pletho* (c.1360-c.1450) who established a school of Neoplatonism at Mistra in the Peloponnese and was also instrumental in the establishment of the Neoplatonic Academy in Florence.

#### B. Islamic Neoplatonism

One of the most important sources of Neoplatonism for early Islamic scholars was an anonymous Neoplatonic work called *Theologia Aristotelis*, which was in fact a paraphrase of the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth *Enneads* of Plotinus. *al-Kindi* (c.866 d.) one of the first Muslim philosophical theologians,

wrote a commentary on it. *al-Farabi* (c.870-950) also revived the study of Neoplatonism through his *Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City*, in which he presented his own essentially Neoplatonic philosophical system. He was especially interested in the thought of Porphyry, having written a commentary of his *Isagoge* and essentially having followed his interpretation of Aristotle. In his *Reconciliation of Plato and Aristotle* he exhibits the same aim of Plotinus in his *Enneads*, an aim shared by Porphyry, Syrianus, Simplicius, and Damascius as well. Generally speaking, it can be said that most of the Arabian Neoplatonists were in the Porphyrian tradition.

A later Neoplatonic Muslim theologian *Avicenna* (980-1037) was influenced by *al-Farabi's* views, but appears to lean more toward Plotinus than Porphyry. His interest in Neoplatonism was mainly in its use as a device in understanding Islam. The most ideal intellectual outlook, according to him, would be the interpretation of Islam in Plotinian concepts. His position was strongly attacked by *al-Ghazzali*. The views of *al-Farabi* were also echoed in the writings of *Averroes*, (1126-1198) a Spanish Arabic philosopher who was very much interested in Aristotle and in Porphyrian Neoplatonism.

#### C. Jewish Neoplatonism

Jewish Neoplatonism appears to have originated primarily with *Isaac ben Solomon Israeli* (850-950), a court physician at Kairwan who had read the writings of *al-Kindi* and also the *Theology of Aristotle*. His pupil Dunash ibn Tamim wrote a Neoplatonic work entitled the Commentary on *Sefer Yesirah* and his views are also seen in the *Olam Katan* of *Joseph ibn Saddik* (d.1149), a later Jewish Neoplatonist.

The Spanish Jewish philosopher *Solomon ibn Gabirol* (1020-1070), also known as *Avencebron*, indicated a heavy Neoplatonic influence on his cosmology as expressed in his chief work *The Fountain of Life* (*Fons vitae*). His works were well known by the Scholastics. The *Sefer Hobot ha-Lebabot* by *Bahya ibn Paquda*, written in the eleventh century also contains elements of Neoplatonic mysticism as does the *Hegyon ha-Nefesh* (*Meditation of the Soul*) by *Abraham bar Hiyya* of Barcelona (c.1130). A pantheistic variety of Jewish Neopla-

tonism was developed by *Abraham ibn Ezra* (c.1092-1167). Generally speaking, it may be said that the whole Jewish Neoplatonic tradition had a major share in the development of the *Kabbalah*.

#### D. Medieval Christian Neoplatonism

Two men, *Augustine* (354-430) and *Boethius* (470-525) were mainly responsible for the transference of Neoplatonic ideas from the early Neoplatonists into Latin Christianity. Although neither made any significant contribution to Neoplatonic thought itself, their influence upon the thought of the Christian world in the ten centuries following them was phenomenal.

Augustine's Neoplatonism came from his reading of Victorinus' translation of certain Neoplatonic writings apparently just before and just after his conversion to Christianity in 386. Although he appears to have known quite well the difference between the Gospels and the *Enneads*, the fact remains that his writings are permeated with Neoplatonic notions. Even though he differs with the Neoplatonists in his view of the nature of God and his relation to the world, he essentially agrees with them in his ontology, in his general theory of value, and in his description of the nature of the life of man on earth. Even though their modes of salvation differ, their meaning of salvation is fairly similar—union with the One is very similar to the beatific vision of God. It is a somewhat academic issue whether Augustine can correctly be labeled a Neoplatonist, but due to the very large number of people who have read his writings down through the centuries it is likely that he has introduced more people to some elements of Neoplatonism than has anyone else in history.

Boethius' Neoplatonism came from his reading of the writings of some of the later Alexandrian Neoplatonists, but he was also familiar with Porphyry's *Isagoge*. He wrote a commentary on it. His influence was particularly strong in the court and cloister schools in the period from the sixth through the twelfth centuries through his translation and interpretations of Porphyry's *Isagoge*, a text on elementary logic, his translations and commentaries of the logical treatises of Aristotle, and through

his own *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Written in prison while awaiting his execution for treason by the Gothic king Theodoric, the *Consolation* may be described as an exercise in Christian Neoplatonic religious philosophy, with major emphasis being upon the latter element. Although he conceived of himself as a follower of Cicero, the work actually represents the Neoplatonism of the late Alexandrian School (Origen, Hierocles, Syrianus, Hermias). It was widely read throughout the Middle Ages and its influence was most extensive. Alfred the Great translated it into Anglo-Saxon. Chaucer and others translated it into English, and it also appeared in German, French, Italian, Spanish and Greek during the Renaissance. Boethius himself has been variously described as the last Roman philosopher and the first Scholastic.

The next important Christian Neoplatonic philosopher in the West was John the Scot, sometimes known by his Latin name *Eriugena* (c.820-870). An Irish Christian monk, he was brought to the court school of John the Bald in Paris about 847 because he knew Greek and was needed to translate a manuscript of pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, kept in the nearby monastery of St. Denis. *The Divine Names* dates back to the late fifth century and is a somewhat Christian adaptation of the thought of Proclus. During his long stay in Paris, until his death in 870, he translated three other Neoplatonic works in the Proclean tradition and wrote at least five books, the most famous being *On the Division of Nature*, a work of a half million words in which he presents his own highly speculative Neoplatonic system. Although this book is ostensibly about the nature of nature, he uses the term in the broadest possible sense to mean everything that there is including God. God, the highest reality, he defines as "the nature which creates and is not created." Man fits into the second level of nature, namely, "nature which creates and is created." The chemical elements would illustrate the third level, namely, "nature which does not create and is created."

Eriugena saw clearly that it is necessary to talk about nature in order to talk seriously about God and that it is necessary to talk about God in order to say anything metaphys-

ically significant about nature, a position not well appreciated by his contemporaries. He was generally regarded as a pantheist, which, indeed, he was not. His works exercised no major influence upon the thought of the later Middle Ages, partly because his writings were condemned as heretical by Pope Honorius III in 1225 and again in 1585 by Pope Gregory XIII, and partly because of the Church's general rejection of Neoplatonic philosophy, and to a lesser degree of all Greek thinkers. They fared somewhat better in later centuries, however, since he is known to have had some influence on the thought of Berengar of Tours, Avicbron, Gilbert de la Porre, Simon of Tournai, the Albigenses and Catharists, Amalric, David of Dinant, Nicholas of Cusa, Giordano Bruno, Eckhart, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, the Kabbalists, and even Hegel. Albert the Great, the teacher of St. Thomas, was quite familiar with the thought of David of Dinant.<sup>8</sup>

Most of the major Christian writers of the late Middle Ages appear to have some knowledge of Neoplatonism. Even St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) has a certain Neoplatonic element in his thought. He wrote a commentary on *The Divine Names* and he was influenced by the Neoplatonic elements in St. Augustine and Boethius. Dean Inge even asserts: "to me, at least, it is clear that St. Thomas is nearer to Plotinus than to the real Aristotle." Dante's *Divine Comedy* is highly Neoplatonic in parts, and *Meister Eckhart* (1260-1327) and his pupils *Tauler* (1300-1361) and *Suso* (c. 1295-1366) show evidence of the thought of Dionysius and Eriugena in their writings. Cardinal *Nicholas of Cusa* (1401-1464) arranged for a translation of Proclus' *Platonic Theology* and his own thought may be seen as a bridge between Medieval and Renaissance Neoplatonism.

#### E. Renaissance Neoplatonism

Renaissance Neoplatonism formally began with the founding of the Florentine Academy in 1462 by Cosimo di' Medici, an action inspired by George Gemistus Pletho in 1438 when he was a delegate to the Council of Florence for the reunion of Eastern and Western Christianity. The affairs of the academy mainly revolved around the work of *Marsilio Ficino* (1433-1499) and his pupil *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*

(1463-1494). Ficino produced an edition of the works of Plato, with commentary, and the first Latin translation (in 1492) of the *Enneads*. His own major work, the *Platonic Theology on the Immortality of the Soul* (1474) and his commentary on the *Symposium* (1469) were also widely read, especially in later centuries. Pico's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* was a basic document of Renaissance humanism. Although the academy dissolved at the death of Ficino, its tradition was carried on at the universities of Florence and Pisa until the seventeenth century.

#### F. The Cambridge Platonists

Some elements of Florentine Neoplatonism were imported into England in the late fourteen nineties by *John Colet* (1466-1519), who was then Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. Colet carried on correspondence with Ficino, wrote a commentary on the writings of pseudo-Dionysius, and paved the way for the seventeenth century Neoplatonists known as the Cambridge Platonists, namely, *Benjamin Whichcote* (1609-1683); *John Smith* (1616-1652); *Ralph Cudworth* (1617-1685); *Nathaniel Culverwel* (1618?-1651); *Henry More* (1614-1687); and *Peter Sterry* (d. 1672). The main objective of their writings was to work out a blending of English Protestant Christianity and Neoplatonic thought, or more specifically, Plotinian thought. Their views were continued in the Broad Church tradition in the Church of England, represented by such men as *F. D. Maurice*, (1805-1872), *B. F. Westcott* (1825-1901), and *W. R. Inge*, (1860-1954).

#### G. German Neoplatonism

German Neoplatonism stems mainly from *Meister Eckhart* (1260-1327), already mentioned. A monk of the Dominican order, he turned to the writings of Eriugena and pseudo-Dionysius for inspiration and reinforcement in his own reaction to Aristotelianism, a policy continued by Tauler and Suso, and a century later by Nicholas of Cusa, Bishop of Brixen. Although there were no major German Neoplatonists, there is a strong

undercurrent of Neoplatonic ideas in the whole German Idealistic tradition. It is seen in Leibniz's monadism, in Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, and in Hegel's doctrine of the Absolute.

#### H. Recent Neoplatonism

Neoplatonism has had considerably less direct influence on contemporary French and British thought than it has on recent German philosophy. In England its main influence has been in the field of literature, with the possible exception of Berkeley's *Siris*, which has strong affinities with Plotinian mysticism. Neoplatonic notions are found in Spencer, in Wordsworth, in Shelly, in William Blake, in Coleridge, and in Yeats. In France, the influence of Plotinus upon Henri Bergson's thought is quite obvious. For two years (1897-98) Bergson lectured at the College de France on the fourth Ennead of Plotinus (Concerning the Soul) and some of his views on memory very likely came from Plotinus' theory of consciousness.

Even though American Philosophy shows little Neoplatonic influence, it would be possible to note an affinity between certain views of Charles S. Peirce and those of Plotinus, as William James once noted. James' own attempt to ground religious meaning on religious experience had already been accomplished by Plotinus. Whitehead, at least in the mind of this writer, gives certain intimations of a knowledge of Neoplatonism and it would be possible to regard the system that he suggests in *Process and Reality*, as a modern example of the *type* of system produced by Plotinus within the level of *νοῦς*.

Interest in Neoplatonism has steadily increased over the past seventy five years. Not only has there been a greater recognition of its role in the formation of Western, and especially European thought, but the writings of the major Neoplatonists, and especially Plotinus, have been seriously read for their own worth. Numerous doctoral dissertations have been written on the divergencies of the views of the various Neoplatonists and also on Plotinus' analyses of psychological and theological concepts.

Although we can expect little modern interest in Plotinus' essentially Ptolemaic scientific views, his teachings on the relation of dialectics, art, science, and religious experience may still be seen to be viable in our scientific age; and they may again serve as a humanizing agent in culture, as they have upon various occasions in the past.

### NOTES

1. An international conference on the sources of Neoplatonism was held near Geneva in August of 1957. Its papers were published in *Les Sources de Plotin* (Tome V, *Entretiens sur L'Antiquité Classique*) (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960). Another congress on Neoplatonism was held in Rome in 1970. Its papers were published as *Atti del Convegno Internazionale sul tema 'Plotino e il Neo-Platonismo'*.
2. William R. Inge, "Neoplatonism," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, IX (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 309.
3. Ernst Hoffman, *Platonism und Christliche Philosophie* (Zurich and Stuttgart: Artemis-Verlag, 1960) p. 306 ff; 163 & 436.
4. For an extensive treatment of Plotinus' logic see A. C. Lloyd's "Neoplatonic and Aristotelian Logic," *Phronesis* I (1955-56): 58-72, 146-59.
5. Erwin Edman, "The Logic of Mysticism in Plotinus," *Studies in the History of Ideas* (New York: Columbia University, 1918-35), II p. 49.
6. The best brief definition of Neoplatonism is found in Philip Merlan's *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 1, n. 1.
7. William R. Inge, *op. cit.*, p. 317.
8. For more complete studies see Henry Bett, *Johannes Scotus Erigena* (New York: Russel and Russell, Inc., 1964).

## PART ONE

### The Sources of Neoplatonism

## The Neoplatonism of Plato

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I shall begin my somewhat controversial paper with a quotation from Plotinus, Ennead V, Tractate I, Paragraph 8. Plotinus says: "And for this reason Plato established a triplicity. All the prime things stand about the King of All, and secondary things are embraced by a Second Principle and third things by a Third Principle. And he says there is a Father of the Cause, meaning by the Cause the Nous or Mind, for the Mind is his Demiurge who manufactures the Soul in that famous cup. By the Father of the Cause, i.e., of the Mind, he means the Good, which is beyond Mind and beyond Being. And often he uses the term 'Idea' to cover Being and Mind. So that what we say represents no novelty, and was said not now, but long ago, though in inexplicit fashion. Our present exposition is merely an exegesis of what was then said, and relies for its proof of antiquity on the writing of Plato himself. Parmenides also took up a like doctrine in his identification of Being and Mind, and in his refusal to locate Being in the sensible world. . . . But the *Parmenides* of Plato achieves greater accuracy in separating from one another the Primal One, which is more preeminently one, a second One which is a One-Many, and third One which is both One and Many. He therefore also agrees with our three natures."

In this passage Plotinus dispersedly quotes and interprets the Second and Sixth Platonic Epistle, the *Timaeus*, the *Republic*, the Dialogues *passim* and the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides*, together with the original poem to which this last distantly harks back. All these, Plotinus says, teach the doctrine of the Three Original Hypostases which are the theme of



Ennead V.1, and which are the foundation of the Plotinian ontology. It will be the argument of this paper that Plotinus is justified in these arguments, and that the basic Neoplatonic doctrines are in fact what can and must be collected from a careful and understanding reading of the main Platonic writings, with some necessary help from Aristotle, who after all heard Plato actually talking in the Academy (though some picture Plato as permanently dumb), and from the statements of the Aristotelian commentators and a few other similar sources. I am not saying that the first Neoplatonists did not carry Plato's doctrine somewhat further at a number of points, and that they did not tinge it with a richer mysticism than is even to be found in Plato. I am also not saying that there are not sides to Plato's thought of which they made practically no sense or use: Plato's interest, e.g., in ingenious and often sophistical argument carried on for its own sake, his deep belief that everything admitted of a mathematical analysis, and his search for Principles of Things which were also Principles of Number, and so on. I am, however, saying that they were right in their interpretation of most of what should be regarded as deeply original and basic in Plato, and that, if many of the Platonic Dialogues do not give us Plato, but Socrates made young and beautiful, so the central Plotinian treatises do not give us Plotinus or Saccas, but rather Plato brought out from hinting incompleteness to expository fullness and coherence, and freed from many of the tiresome stylistic and argumentative reflexes due to a too long impersonation of Socrates.

In my view, then, a very important happening took place in Alexandria at the beginning of the Third Century A.D. when Ammonius Saccas began his exegeses of Plato, basing himself on the important assumption, much more true than false, of a profound *Homodoxy* or agreement in opinion between Plato and Aristotle. His work involved an attempt to see Plato as something more than a brilliant virtuoso of inconclusive, often fallacious, argument—a role only admirable or tolerable in Socrates on account of his existentially revealed conviction as to the impossibility of defining the virtues in any clear-cut manner, or apart from one another, or apart from the critical activity which redefines them unendingly—and as something

more than an ancestor of the Neo-Pythagorean mystagogues who dispense a "way of life" to those doomed to live it under the Roman Empire, and as something more, lastly, than one of those philosophical litterateurs who charm us all the more since there is only an appearance of what is clear and compelling in what they say. It represented an attempt to make serious philosophical sense of Plato, as a thinker desirous of determining what primarily is, and what only is in some secondary or derivative manner, and how the various senses and grades of what is may be accommodated to one another and to the human soul and mind with its profound need to understand and love. Obviously it would be in such Dialogues as the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* and the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, and a suitably interpreted *Parmenides*, and also in the *Platonic Letters*, that the materials for such interpretation would be found, and not at all in such brilliant exercises in self-refutation as the latter part of the *Theaetetus* or some of the earlier Dialogues. And it incorporated strands from the pre-Socratics and from Aristotle and the Stoa because these could be regarded either as leading up to or continuing the serious Platonic effort, which most of the moralizers and argumentative skeptics and mystical Platonizers of the half-millennium between the time of Plato and Plotinus arguably could not. It was not, as some have thought, by borrowings from these transitional people, but by a deep immersion in the writings of Plato and also of Aristotle that Saccas and Plotinus came to create their Neoplatonic philosophy.

I myself am inclined to ascribe the new wave of Platonic *approfondissement* to Saccas rather than Plotinus, basing myself on the fact that it was only when Erennius and Origen, the fellow-pupils of Plotinus, started publishing what they had learnt from Saccas, that Plotinus felt himself freed from any arcane discipline, and began publishing what he must in large measure have derived from Saccas, since he had hesitated to publish it previously. And I also base myself on the fact that I see comparative little development in the treatises of Plotinus. They are the varying expositions of an already established body of doctrine, to which Plotinus may have made some brilliant additions, but whose basic pattern had been previously laid down.

I may say here at the beginning of my paper that no claim for the Neoplatonism of Plato can be sustained if one's conception of what Plato taught and thought is to rest on the assumption that this will be fully explicit in the Dialogues, and that one should not do the least dotting of *i*'s or crossing of *t*'s for which a warrant in the Dialogues is not available. Plato, says Sir David Ross, is nothing if not explicit: to this axiom we may oppose the axiom: "Plato is nothing if not inexplicit". At every point in the Dialogues we meet with assertions regarding which it is far from clear what they mean, or whether Plato agrees with them, or has any clear opinion about them. This is of course the case in the earlier Dialogues where Plato's obvious aim was to recreate the content and atmosphere of the inspired sophistries of his master Socrates. But the Middle Period Dialogues, such as the *Republic*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, are likewise the most hinting of documents: they repeatedly suggest that something is being treated in an extremely cursory manner, that it would have to be dealt with elsewhere in much greater depth, e.g. the nature of the Good in *Republic* 506, or of the objects of various mental faculties in *Republic* 534. Plato repeatedly takes refuge in myth, he is whimsically evasive and so on. And in the later Dialogues the difficulty of interpretation is so profound, that it has not been agreed whether their tendency is to undermine or to buttress Plato's characteristic Middle Period doctrines, and in the case of one of the greatest, the *Parmenides*, opinions range from those of Hegel and Proclus, who see in it the supreme expression of Platonic metaphysic and dialectic, to those who would see in it no more than a somewhat frivolous polemical or logical exercise.

All this is very regrettable when we really know from the testimony of Aristotle, despite all his immense misunderstandings, the basic outlines of what Plato taught in the Academy, doctrines that must have been current when Aristotle first joined the Academy in 367, and not, as has been supposed by those who defer too much to the Dialogues, at a much later date, and which impressed Aristotle so deeply that they became for him the very pattern of Platonism, to whose criticism he devoted two complete treatises, one *On the Ideas* and one *On*

*the Good*, the remnants of which are to be found in the *Metaphysics* and in the comments of Alexander and other commentators. From this material we know that Plato, as far back probably as the time of the *Republic*, had replaced the moralisms of Socrates with a thoroughgoing mathematicization of all the Forms, and had come to see in them complex, many-dimensional patterns of numbers and numerical ratios, and believed in some sort of logical procession of all of them all from a supreme Principle of Unity which was also a Principle of Goodness. This Principle of Unity exercised mastery over another Principle of indefiniteness, continuity and badness, and gave rise to the Forms, and it then operated on a second version of the same indefiniteness, continuity and badness, thus giving rise—by way of the soul or souls, which were themselves pure exemplifications of ratio—to the numberless instances of ideal natures that confront us in the world of change and becoming. How Plato expounded these doctrines, whether by formal lecture or informal seminar or tutorial conversation, we do not know, but that they were the important part of Platonism, to whose understanding and refutation Aristotle devoted great pains, we do indeed know. And nothing that Cherniss has written to suggest how the Dialogues may have been misinterpreted to yield the materials for Aristotle's two tomes of criticism, can hold water against the solid uniformity of the Aristotelian testimony as to basic Platonic doctrine. It is not, however, my task this evening to expound the Inexplicit Doctrines of Plato: that I hope to do in a book that will be published before long. It is not my task, because much of what Aristotle said Plato taught was as unclear to the Neoplatonists as it has been to many among ourselves. They arrived at their view of Plato's teaching by painstakingly dotting the *i*'s and crossing the *t*'s of the Dialogues and Letters, and connecting Plato's doctrines with what were undoubtedly Aristotle's modifications of them, e.g. the Aristotelian notion of Matter. If we are sure, as we should be sure, that Plato *had* an inexplicit doctrine or rather programme of investigation, we can come to be sure that Saccas and Plotinus were not deceived as to much of its main outline.

I shall now go through the several characteristic doctrines of Plotinian Neoplatonism and try to show that they repre-

sented no important deviation from the doctrine of Plato. As you well know, the first of the Divine Hypostases in Neoplatonism is a Principle which is indifferently called the One or the Good. In calling it the One, we are not, however, saying that it *has* Unity as other entities, e.g. an army, an organized body, even a soul, have Unity, a Unity which entails that they hold together as entities, and do not wholly disintegrate and cease to be: it does not even mean that it has Unity as the various features which make up an *Eidos* have Unity, or as the mind which envisages *Eide* and their interrelations has Unity. The Supreme Hypostasis of the system does not *have* Unity, but *is* the Unity which all other things that are, have in varying degree: it is therefore of a wholly different order from the things which merely have Unity. And since having Unity is tantamount to being, the supreme Unity cannot properly be said to be: it is what confers being on its participants but cannot for that reason be one of them or among them (see e.g. VI.1.3). And since it has no definite form or definable nature, Unity itself cannot properly be said to be an object of knowledge, and can neither be written of or spoken of: we can at best gesture in its direction, and by simplifying ourselves and abandoning what is specific or individualizing in us, achieve a presence, coincidence or contact with such Unity (VI. 9. 4. 11). The One is, however, also called the Beautiful (I.1.9), but obviously this is an extrinsic denomination, applicable because, through the forms to which it gives unity and being, it also gives beauty to their instances, and so in the realm of Forms themselves throws beauty before itself like a garment (I.1.9). Plotinus indeed says (V.8.11) that the best way to be in beauty is, not to see it, but to *be* it, but plainly such a being beauty, is supraaesthetic rather than aesthetic. Even the title 'Good' is arguably an extrinsic denomination; the Good is so called because it throws a glow on all it produces and awakens desire in those that see this, and because it is the ultimate object of desire for all beings (VI.7.22,23,27). The Good is not, however, a Good to itself, an object of desire or love to itself, though it may be useful for certain purposes to talk as if it were (VI.8.12,13). Plotinus is further clear that the One involves in itself the *power* of everything (V.4.2), and that it can confer

unity and being on all of which it represents the power, and that it has in fact exercised and is always exercising that power. It is further the case for Plotinus, that, being the Good, it logically *must* confer unity and being on inferior things. It will not be what it is if there is not something which enjoys a secondary life which derives from it (II.9.3). This logical necessity does not, however, involve anything like desire or need (V.5.12), and is of course reconcilable with perfect freedom in the sense of an absence of all compulsion.

How now does all this accord with the assertions of Plotinus's master, Plato? Plato, the pupil of Socrates, obviously had to put the Good at the head of the eidetic and the cosmic order, but at even an early phase it was fast assuming the character of an ontological, cosmological and mathematical principle rather than an ethical one. Perhaps one should rather say that its ethical properties were being absorbed in its mathematical ones. And it was fast taking on the hues of transcendent mystery and ineffability that hung round the Good of the Megarians, with whom Plato we know had close relations, and for whom the Good was an Eleatic Unity, capable of carrying many names (Diogenes Laertius, II.106), without thereby involving any inner plurality. Plato's relation with Parmenides was always, we may say, a relation mediated through his Megarian friend Eucleides. Even in *Phaedo* 98ff, the Good is a mysterious principle of cosmic explanation rather than an ethical one, and is more hopefully approached through the assumed being of its shadows, the Forms, regarding which some specifically arithmetical problems are raised, and which, it is suggested, will lead us up to the self-sufficient Good itself. The Good is not to be used to explain things in the naively teleological manner that Socrates tried in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, though Plato cunningly insinuates that it might, and so has led many commentators up the garden path. The mysterious character of the Good in the *Republic* need hardly be documented in detail. Banal ethical approaches in terms of pleasure and knowledge are repelled, the Good is made responsible for the truth and being of the Forms but transcends this being in dignity and power. If it is called a Form, it is only so called by courtesy, and if we are said to have knowledge of

it, the close connection of knowledge with being is such as to prove that this must be more than an ordinary case of knowledge. And that the whole educational ascent to the dialectic which is to lead on to the Good is through a series of purely mathematical studies, provides plain proof that dialectic is basically a philosophy of mathematics, and that the Good in which it culminates can be nothing but Absolute Unity itself. It is quite inconceivable that Plato's Guardians, having reached the ripe age of fifty, and having studied all the intricacies of mathematics, should be subjected to the ethical argy-pargy practised by Socrates on young men and boys. What Plato *says* may lend itself to such interpretation, but what he *does* with his concept shows that it has quite a different content: if the Good is an ethical concept, it is so in a sense that no mere moralist could comprehend. The Absolute Beauty of *Symposium* 211a,b is in no different case, being "neither words, nor knowledge, nor anything pertaining to anything else," but subsisting itself by itself in eternal unity, no matter how its scattered participants wax and wane. When one remembers Plato's close association of beauty with regular mathematical measure and proportion, it is plain that the Beauty here dealt with is simply Unity itself. There is no harm in finding this aesthetically moving.

If we now demand an actual carrying out of the dialectical programme, arguably we have a somewhat joking execution of it in the second part of the dialogue *Parmenides*, where the transcendental character of Unity itself is shown by the fact that, as in the case of the Megarian Good, it has a being-in-itself in which nothing except itself can be said of it, and that it yet also has a being in and for others in which everything can be said of it, and it said of everything, and which is so necessary to all such others that without it they would resolve themselves into sheer formlessness or into nothing at all. I am not, however, so foolish as to think I can pack a good interpretation of the *Parmenides* into a single sentence. In the *Philebus* finally the Good hides itself in a forest of transcendentals among which notions like Measure, Symmetry, and Proportion are prominent: beneath these the Forms are ranged as specific cases of such transcendentals, and far beneath them such human values

as knowledge and pleasure. I think it arguable that Plato's thought moved towards the same unification of transcendentals as the Megarians, and that in this unification a transformed mathematical principle quite absorbed the principles of ethics and aesthetics. This also is the doctrine of Plotinus. The references to the Father of the Cause in Epistle VI may also be regarded as authentic, and so may the adjuration of Dionysius in Epistle II not to ask too many questions regarding the supreme Unity.

From the Father of the Cause I turn to the Cause. otherwise, in Plotinus, to the Divine Mind or Intelligence, the Second Hypostasis, surrounded by secondary things. As you all know, Plotinus makes the Divine Mind a double-barrelled affair, whose two sides are welded into inseparable unity. It is a subject-object unity consisting on the one side of the *Noeta*, the *Eide*, on the other side of the *Noeses*, and also the *Noes* or *Noi*, the thoughts and the minds directed upon the *Eide*. The *Nous*, Plotinus tells us, is a necessary *Perilampsis* or irradiation of Unity: it in fact is Absolute Unity separated from itself only by Difference, and returning to itself from Difference (V.1.6). The power of the One is seen by the *Nous* as strung out into different forms: this is how the *Nous* must necessarily see the One. The One in a sense feels all the things that lie in its power, and these the *Nous* distinguishes, defines, and stabilizes, and will not allow to float about in indefiniteness (V.1.7). Mind in fact is a necessary outflow of Absolute Unity: Unity requires Mind logically, and is incomplete without its disceptive diligence, though it does not *need* Mind in the desiderative sense, as Mind needs it. Mind and the *Noeta* it contemplates are held to be inseparable: there is in Mind no reaching out to objects beyond itself that is so characteristic of Soul, with its need, also, for the pricks of external sensuous realities. Aristotle, Parmenides and Heraclitus are invoked to attest the close marriage of *Nous* and *Noeta*, but strangely enough not Plato himself. Mind is entirely coeval with the forms it knows (V.9.7), which does not, however, prevent Plotinus from constructing temporalized accounts in one of which would otherwise be indefinite and random, and according to the other of which (VI.7.15) the multiplicity of the *Noeta* is due to the

Mind's inability to envisage the supreme Unity, and to its consequent need to split this up into a number of distinct unities of *Eide*. In the Nous, further, all the *Noeta* are together, but can, when needed (for purposes of the Soul) be held apart from one another (V.9.6). This unity in which each is all, and all is all, and the glory infinite, is given lyrical acclaim in the well-known treatise on Intelligible Beauty, the Western equivalent of the Buddhist *Avatamsaka Sutra*. But the supreme Mind also includes minds (in the plural) in its perfect unity (VI.8.17); these are perhaps the eidetic originals of particular minds. It is in fact clear that since the Nous has no principle of individuation, and since it is out of time, it is not really a Mind at all, but rather the unique, eternal *Eidos* of Mind as Such, in which particular minds, including the mind of the World Soul, merely participate. Some doubt might be cast on this interpretation because Plotinus in V.9.13 seems to question whether there can be *Eide* of Soul and Mind. What the passage really says, however, is that particular souls and minds are less definitely distinct from their eidetic originals than sensible instances are.

How does the Plotinian doctrine of the Second Hypostasis fit in with the teaching of Plato? Does Plato believe in a timeless eidetic Mind which embraces the *Eide* and is one actuality with them, or is this doctrine derived from Aristotle's Active Intelligence, always one with the immaterial *Eide* that it thinks, and perhaps identical with the thinking on thinking we meet with in God, who thinks all things in thinking only Himself? Is the intrusion of an essentially Aristotelian view into Platonism part of the syncretistic homodoxy which Saccas erroneously introduced? Even such a deep modern interpreter of Plato as Kramer thinks that the *Geistesmetaphysik* starts with Plato's successors. I, however, am of the opinion that the *Geistesmetaphysik* was propounded orally by Plato himself and is documented clearly in his writings, the only reason why Plato did not proclaim it from the housetops being that he did not wish his doctrine to be confused with the doctrines which Aristotle was even then excogitating, according to which the supreme Mind is a high-grade instance of mentality and not mentality itself, the doctrine of course which gave comfort to all those in

the Middle Ages who believed that the *Eide* could find safe harbourage in the mind of God. For Plato, however, I should hold, the Mind correlated with the *Eide* was a Thinkingness rather than a Thinker, and provided no anchor for those who demand an ultimate concrete, whether mental or anything else.

What reason have we to hold that Plato believed in an eternal Thinkingness and Livingness which were higher than the thought and life present in souls? If we read the *Phaedo* carefully, we shall see how the soul is never fully identified with the Form of Life, which it none the less imparts to its instances. If souls impart life to bodies, Life Itself imparts life to souls. If we now turn to the first Sun-passage in the *Republic*, we find it said that, as the Sun is responsible both for sight and the seen, so the Good is responsible both for Mind and what it minds, both for knowledge and for truth. It is of course plain that Plato is here explicitly speaking of instantial minds that know the true being of the *Eide*, but can it be doubted, if the parallelism is to be meaningful, and Plato not idiotic, that there must be an *Eidos* of knowledge or Intelligence correlated with the ideal unities, just as there is an instantial organ of vision correlated with instantial colour, and that souls only come to knowledge of the *Eide* through participation in this Absolute Idea of Knowledge? And if we turn to the Line, this conjecture is amply confirmed, for here there are mental powers correlated with all the objects we can know, and Plato cannot have been so blind or so silly as not to perceive that there must be Forms of characteristic mental exercises and powers as well as of their objects. Plato in fact provides us with forms of the mental faculties inferior to knowledge as well as of pure intellection, just as he for similar reasons, in Books VIII and IX of the *Republic*, provides us with Forms of deviant and pathological states. But that Knowledge at least had eidetic representation is plain from the passage in *Phaedrus* 247d,e where the souls in their upper-world journey are said to behold the form of Knowledge Itself, and it is even clearer in the passage in *Parmenides* 134 where Knowledge Itself and Mastery Itself are correlated with other eternal *Eide*, which are argued to be inaccessible to instantial knowers and masters, whereas, God, the non-instantial Knower and Master par excellence, can have

no relation to sensible, instantial things. A careful reading of the *Philebus* will likewise show that while it acknowledges the presence of Mind in the cosmos, responsible for all its regularity, and present in the royal soul of Zeus, there is yet said, in carefully chosen language, to be a "Power of the Cause" which has conferred mind and soul on Zeus and the other divinities, a power, therefore, which though of the nature of Mind, is not an instance of Mind, and can obviously be none other than Mind Itself, in association with Life Itself, the eternal Living-Thinkingness which lies way back of all minds and souls and what they envisage. The *Timaeus* in its carefully managed mythology tells the same story: the Demiurge is not the mind or soul which moves the heavens and thinks all the forms and their actual and possible instances in endless cyclical enjoyment. He is an elder, timeless being, hard to know or declare, the essential cognizer of the Forms of life and all other Forms these may involve, and responsible for the being of the soul and for bodies that the soul moves in time. This Demiurge again is our old friend, Thinkingness as such, eternally trained on all thinkables, and welding them all into one vision. And if one questions whether Plotinus is not borrowing from Aristotle when he makes *Nous* and *Noeta* sides of a single reality, let us remember the possibility that Aristotle may have been plagiarizing from Plato when he taught a similar doctrine. Philoponus at least, a Christian commentator on the *De Anima*, says that the Aristotelian reference to someone who called the Mind the place of Forms was to none other than Plato. Only for Plato this Mind cannot have been a mind, but only Mind Itself.

If we now turn to the third Plotinian Hypostasis, Soul, there is much less discrepancy to adjust between what Plotinus and his master Plato say. The generation of Soul coincides, for Plotinus as for Plato, with the generation of Time. Just as the eternal Mind arises out of the supreme Unity by the holding apart of the *Eide* of which it is the power, so Soul and Time arise for Plotinus out of the eternal Mind by a departure from the completeness of the ideal sphere, which permits of neither addition nor subtraction. This departure from completeness is identical with the life of Soul, an essentially unquiet faculty, like Martha busy over many things (*πολυπράγμων*, III.7.11) and

forced to decode the total message of the *Eide* into a long string of separate messages, each of which it laboriously fits into a growing whole. Plotinus does not, however, regard this declension into temporality as an unfortunate accident: plainly it is as logically necessary for the ultimate Unity to give rise to the mobile, questioning Soul, as excellent in its rule-governed everlastingness as anything temporal can be, as it was necessary for it, at a higher stage, to differentiate itself in the *Eide* and in the Mind which is the thought of them all. Soul, further, involves a less transparent pluralization than exists at the level of Mind and the *Eide*: our souls do not interpenetrate as do the eidetic minds above them, and have something of the separateness of the bodily masses in which they are active (IV.1.11). There is also somewhat of a gulf between them and their Great Sister, the All-Soul. But, though thus separated in their lower being, souls remain linked together at their highest points, much as light divides itself among separate dwellings, while remaining undivided and truly one (IV.3.4), a beautiful image reminiscent of a passage in the Platonic *Parmenides*. And the All-Soul is of course responsible for the unending turning on itself of the heavens, and for the accompanying thought-circuit through the realm of Forms.

If we turn to Plato, most things stay the same, except that some questions are left unexplored, and mathematical exactnesses are added which are foreign to the genius of Plotinus. The Soul is the mediatrix between the eternal, undirempted Forms and the changeable dirempted sensibles: it has appropriate ways of knowing both spheres, and it is also the vehicle through which the Forms, the ultimate true causes of generation and becoming, become sources of motion in the instantial world. All movements which are externally initiated stem from movements that are self-initiated, and these are the movements characteristic of Soul, which is therefore the source, under the Forms, of all movements in the instantial world. And Soul is equally involved in the perpetual inner circlings of thought and perception about their objects. The great distinction of Plato is, however, as I have said, the belief that the proportions and rhythms and numerical relations which the Soul cognizes in things, and imposes on them, are all mirrored in Soul-structure.

The Soul is a complex structure of numbers, like the things it cognizes and manipulates. This, the doctrine of the *Timaeus* and also referred to in well-known passages in the *De Anima*, comes strange to modern thought, as it also doubtless came strange to the less mathematical Neoplatonists. But it is entirely defensible. Cognition and action may not be exhaustively analysable in terms of numbers and ratios, but they are certainly not intelligible without these. Everything that is objective or subjective is a matter of style, whether existence-style or life-style or thought-style, and style is without doubt a matter of proportion and number.

Beneath Soul, for Plotinus, lies Matter (ὕλη) into which Soul pours the *Logoi*, the ratios, which form the essences of the various species of natural being. Regarding Matter Plotinus has a long, interesting treatise (II.4) in which the Aristotelian accounts of *Hyle* are subtly combined with the accounts of the Receptacle in the *Timaeus*, and with the Aristotelian accounts of the Platonic Great and Small. This is a field in which there is genuinely a profound homodoxy between Plato and Aristotle, the Prime *Hyle* of Aristotle being only in name more substantial than the empty receptacle of Plato. Plotinus follows Plato, as also Aristotle, in recognizing an ideal as well as an instantial matter: the indefinite substrate, which is what is common to all the *Eide*, reappears, at another level, in the basic indefiniteness which underlies sensible instances. Sensible matter, we are told (II.4.6), is required to give bulk to the being of sensible things, which cannot consist in pure form, and to explain the continuous transformation of sensible things into one another. To this omnirecipient Prime Matter Plotinus denies not only every sensible quality, but even bulk (ἄγκος) and size, thereby going beyond Plato's treatment of *Chora* in the *Timaeus*. But Prime Matter, though not intrinsically bulky, has none the less an intrinsic *aptitude* for size and distance. How is such matter apprehended? Like the nothingness of space, not so much by a spurious act of thinking, as by the complete failure of such an act, that is by an indefinite unthinkingness *anoia* in which no clear content comes to light (II.4.10).

Why do souls descend from the intensive parcelling involved in temporal process into the extensive parcelling

involved in bodily extension and existence? The Plotinian answer is simply because they are souls, and because, stemming from Absolute Unity, and having in themselves an image of the Unity which abides through flux, they necessarily desire to preside over and impose unity upon a disunity which is further from Absolute Unity than themselves. Necessarily this descent of Soul into the otherness of bodily being entails endless possibilities of defect, miscarriage and corruption—which do not, however, touch our august sister, the World-Soul—and necessarily the Soul must seek to raise itself to the patterns yonder, and to the Unity from which they radiate. But it is only by descending from the supreme Unity that it is possible to return to it, and the descent is in consequence not something misjudged or wanton, even though it may metaphorically be said to involve *Tolma* or audacity. Plotinus, as is well known, magnificently defended the natural world against all those who, like certain Christian Gnostics, would regard it as the evil product of a fallen power. Being an instance, it necessarily falls short of its original, but, for an instance, nothing can exceed its beauty and accuracy (II.9.4). All this is said with less fullness in Plato. It is plain that the Divine lack of *Phthonos* or envy in the *Timaeus* is merely a pictorial way of expressing a logical and ontological relation. The timeless perfection present to eternal Thinkingness must, being what it is, seek to carry itself out in the changeable, dispersed, randomized medium of the instance. Being, as the *Sophist* teaches, entails the possession of power. Instantiation is therefore nothing that can or ought to be dispensed with, but it carries with it mutability, externality and chance interferences of all sorts: all that can be done is to resist these disintegrating forces, to make them as little disruptive as possible. This our cosmos, with its everlasting background regularities, and its recurrent restoration of order whenever things get too bad, magnificently achieves, both for Plato and Plotinus. I myself humbly share their logical optimism.

I shall end this paper by dwelling on a few respects in which I think that Plato was a richer and greater philosopher than his Neoplatonic interpreters, and also a few respects in which I think that they were better philosophers than he was. It

was, I consider, a great misfortune that the Neoplatonists made the eidetic realm a realm of unmixed perfection, thereby according with a drift in the Academy according to which there were not Forms of everything, but only of certain special, privileged things. Quite plainly this Academic restriction does not accord with the *practice* of Plato who speaks of forms of impiety, injustice and other negatives, and who also devotes two whole books of the *Republic* to studying the deviant forms of the state, deviations not due to chance, but to numerical cycles rooted in the nature of things. Plato in the person of *Parmenides* likewise reproves the doctrinaire Socrates, his former self or some right-wing contemporary, for refusing to admit forms of hair, mud, and filth. There is, however, a line of evidence stemming from a long passage of Sextus Empiricus dealing with Pythagorean and Academic doctrine, and from references in the Aristotelian commentators to one Hermodorus, who wrote a contemporary study of Plato's doctrine, which goes some way towards resolving the discrepancy between the Dialogues and the Aristotelian reports on these points. Plato, it would appear, had come to admit *three* categories of forms: one of self-existent, standard types which obviously occupied a prime place in the ideal order, one of opposites or negations having obviously only a secondary place, and one, lastly, of "relatives", by which it is plain that Plato intended deviations from standard types by way of excess or defect. This doctrine, if we are interpreting it rightly, perfectly explains Plato's practice in the Dialogues, and what Aristotle says of his doctrine in the *Metaphysics*. For it would seem that, while Plato only gave prime status in the world of Forms to models of perfection, he gave secondary and tertiary status to partial or total deviations from such models: these were, after a fashion, involved in the sense of the models from which they deviated, and enjoyed a charter of liberty in the realm of instantiation. (For the material see Sextus Empiricus *Adversus Mathematicos* 248-283, and Simplicius on Aristotle *Physics* 192a). Had the Neoplatonists known of these doctrines, they would have spared us some of the overrestatic accounts of life in the intelligible world, where there is not even a breath of what Hegel called "the seriousness, the suffering, the patience and the labour of the negative". In Plato's later writing

transcendentals fade into the background where their illuminative role plainly lies: while there is no evidence whatever that Plato ever lost his faith in his supreme Unity, his attitude towards it became less appallingly light-headed. Lightheadedness, however, is a characteristic of Neoplatonism, and like St. Teresa one has, in studying them, to fight against unwanted levitation. It is also a defect of the Neoplatonists that they failed to make much sense of Plato's attempt to "mathematize" the forms, to reduce them to numbers, proportions and patterns of the same, an attempt in which Platonism went far towards anticipating the temper of modern science. In the *Tractate on Numbers* which occurs in the Sixth Plotinian Ennead, there is much treatment of plurality, but hardly anything that concerns numbers as such.

On the other hand we may regard it as a great merit of the Neoplatonists that they systematically side-stepped the rigid use of the concepts of negation and diversity which is characteristic of what we may call "logic-chopping", which Plato inherited from Socrates, and from which he may never wholly be able to free himself. The soul, e.g., must have three parts because it does three disparate sorts of things, and there must likewise be three sorts of entity in the world, Forms, Sensibles and Space, trichotomies which delight those who like to deduce pluralism from some such principle as that "Everything is what it is and not another thing". Plotinus, however, is clear that his Hypostases are not rigorously distinct, but can slide into, and be transformed into one another, and that everything that is yonder is also here, and vice versa. Difference is for him something like the Hegelian "alienation" which can never be carried to a limit. Everything is indeed what it is and not another thing, i.e. everything is the one and only true Unity.

To sum up. The Neoplatonism of Plotinus was not a distortion of Platonism but a liberation of the main structures in the Platonic ontology from its Socratic carapace, and from the necessary limitations of the literary dialogue. Plotinus offered posterity the essence of Platonism, and as such it became an infinitely precious strand in Christian theology which, even when verbally critical of Plato, remained profoundly indebted to him. This essence has, however, largely



been lost by the modern refusal to go beyond the letter of the Dialogues, or to do so only when the results accord with what we may call the "Here we go round the mulberry bush" of modern analysis. Plato and Plotinus should be studied together: the second provides an essential commentary on the first.

## Plotinus' Adaptation of Aristotle's Psychology: Sensation, Imagination and Memory<sup>1</sup>

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That the *Enneads* contain a great deal of Aristotelian doctrine must be obvious to a fairly casual reader even without the explicit testimony of Porphyry.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless it is not equally obvious in all parts of Plotinus' thought – sometimes, of course, he is in clear disagreement with Aristotle. For various reasons which we shall have to consider the use of Aristotle's ideas in the construction of Plotinus' doctrines of the human soul is pervasive, but does not present us with a simple case of absorption. That, in the nature of the case, would have been impossible, even if we forget Plotinus' capacity for subtle alteration of views, he might at first sight appear to be taking over as they stood, a process which Professor Armstrong has aptly called 'rethinking',<sup>3</sup> but which might well appear as perverse interpretation. Plotinus, as is well known, claimed to be doing no more than expounding views whose antiquity could be vouched for by Plato's own writings (V.1.8.10-14). Many have referred to this claim in connection with Plotinus' relation to Plato. It is perhaps not equally well understood that a man who could think himself so good a Platonist would have been quite capable of thinking that those parts of his psychology which were Aristotelian were roughly the same as those of his source, or more importantly perhaps, that Aristotle's views were the same as his own. His attitude is not unlike that of those Aristotelian commentators who were later to claim that Aristotle's views were like Plato's if only one understood them aright.<sup>4</sup>

I have made these points at this stage because the basis of Plotinus' psychology is a paradox which, I suggest, can only be understood if one thinks in such terms. The paradox lies in the fact that Plotinus' soul was, like Plato's, separate from and, ideally, opposed to the body, but worked like Aristotle's which was by definition the body's essence. And yet Plotinus was well aware of the crucial difference: he did not fail to criticize Aristotle's entelechy theory, and of course attacked both his definition of the soul and its implications (IV.7.8<sup>5</sup>).

That the body: soul relation was Platonic and dualist is stated nowhere more clearly and emphatically than in the first lines of IV. 3.22: 'Should one say then that when soul is present to body it is present as fire is to air? For that too when it is present is not present, and when it is present all through a thing is mixed with none of it: it remains unmoved while the other flows by'.<sup>5</sup> The independence of soul which this text asserts is not always preserved in practice. One might think of Plotinus' warnings about the consequences of the affections (*πάθη*), and, in general, the way he regards the lowest phases of the soul as quite closely linked with the body, and always liable to suffer from the association, an association which is even capable of having undesirable effects on the soul's higher ranges (cf. e.g. IV.8.2.26-30, VI.4.15.18ff.)<sup>6</sup>. This is so in spite of the careful way in which Plotinus will, for example, talk of the desiring faculty as having the basis of its action in a certain part of the body, namely the liver (IV.3.23.35-40) – a point, incidentally, on which Plotinus is in a sense more Platonic than Plato, who puts the equivalent 'part' of the soul in the abdomen as if it were a lump of matter.<sup>7</sup> Here it would seem that Plotinus was more scientific, and thus more in sympathy with Aristotle's approach, than his professedly Platonic position should have allowed.

The fact that Plotinus used Aristotle's account of the soul's operations, and, of course, his general view of the way the soul should be divided, while differing with him over the whole basis of psychology, namely what the soul was and how it related to the body, accounts for a large measure, though certainly not all, of the differences between their views about its functions. There are, of course, others. One is Plotinus' view

of the soul as a reflection of higher being, itself as a whole dependent on what lies above, and with each phase or section depending on that above and less valuable than it. Here ethics and metaphysics invade psychology. Thus soul for Plotinus is viewed from the top downwards, and lower sections are sometimes regarded as dispensable. When soul is functioning as it should and so looking upwards, the lower section is absorbed in the higher: one might think of a kind of hanging collapsible cup.<sup>8</sup> In Aristotle the situation is reversed: the soul is like a pyramid, where each layer, or series of faculties, cannot exist without that below. As a result Plotinus tends to consider any function of the soul at least partly against the background of its possible contribution to man's upward progress, and perhaps to evaluate it in this light.

Aristotle on several occasions records that there is a progress through the lower to the higher forms of cognition and knowledge, not thereby implying that the 'lower' forms are 'worse' than the 'higher'.<sup>9</sup> His aim is to analyze how one acquires knowledge and he makes it clear on numerous occasions that sense-perception is the indispensable foundation of the process. This no Platonist could admit, though Aristotle's own Platonism does re-assert itself in the view that at the end of the process we have knowledge of things inherently more knowable than the sense-data from which it starts. Here we see one example of Aristotle's different approach, which also shows itself in his more scientific attitude to psychology. Put quite simply, he wants to analyze the functions of soul wherever in the world it might operate, and is particularly interested in the demarcations between various forms of life. Plotinus, unlike Plato, does see, and has perhaps learned from Aristotle, that soul extends to all forms of life (cf. I.4.1.18ff.) – and even finds it in things that Aristotle properly regards as inanimate (IV.4.27) – but he is not really interested in those other than man. It should not be forgotten that, whatever others made of it later, the *de Anima* is a biological treatise.

The differences we have outlined are perhaps most interestingly studied in the middle section of the human soul, at the levels of perception, imagination and memory. The top and bottom are less instructive, for the following reasons. At the

top, at the level of *nous*, Aristotle's soul, or at least the active *nous*, is also detached from the body. I shall avoid for now the problems that would be presented if the passive *nous*, whose nature is defined as pure potentiality, were the highest manifestation of the body's actuality, and the no less troublesome matter of the exact level where Plotinus' human *nous* is to be situated. Whether the answer be the hypostasis *Nous* or the hypostasis Soul makes little difference for the present purpose.<sup>10</sup> But in any case this is another area where Aristotle is closer to Plotinus' intentions as well as his practice by virtue of a Platonic feature of his thought. If Aristotle's active *nous* were after all one of the 'intelligences', then Aristotle and Plotinus are here very close.

At the bottom of the scale the two thinkers are again fairly close, but whereas at the upper end of the scale this is explicable in terms of Aristotle's Platonism, at the lower end it is to be seen as a result of Plotinus' apparent Aristotelianism—unintentional though it may have been. Especially at the level of the vegetative soul, which both Aristotle and Plotinus call by a variety of names, what is done by soul in Aristotle is the work of body alone in Plato. Moreover, as soul descends, or reflects itself, further downwards, it becomes more and more closely bound up with body until its function becomes the information of previously formless matter (VI.7.7.8ff.). Here in producing body, the soul is functioning as world-soul: sometimes it is also seen as a manifestation of world-soul at the next level, that of the vegetative soul.<sup>11</sup> Here the gap between body and soul, whether regarded as world-soul or individual soul, is small enough for Aristotle's ideas not to be far removed from Plato's, though of course their professed positions were no less different than elsewhere.

The way both may make the same kind of statements for different reasons is well illustrated when Plotinus, discussing the impassibility of soul when involved with the affections, says that if we say the soul changes in the emotions we are liable to be doing the same sort of thing as if we were to say the soul goes pale or blushes, without taking into account that these things happen through the soul but in some other structure, that is, the body (III.6.3.7-11).<sup>12</sup> Aristotle had compared the notion that the soul is angry with the view that it builds or

weaves, and thought it would be better to say not that the soul feels pity, learns or thinks, but that it is the man with his soul that does these things (408b 11-15).<sup>13</sup> Aristotle is concerned to make it clear that the soul does not act independently of the body whose form it is. Plotinus, on the contrary, wants to show that the soul is independent of the body with which it is merely associated.

This requirement is still operative at the level of sense-perception. It is perhaps what made it possible for Plotinus to arrive at the fairly clear distinction he makes between sensation and perception, equipped as he was with no better linguistic tools than his predecessors.<sup>14</sup> Of these none, as far as we know, made the distinction with any clarity. Plotinus did it simply, though perhaps crudely, by separating sense-perception into an affection (*πάθος*) of the body, and a judgement or act of cognition on the part of the soul. So, for example, at the start of III.6: 'We say that perceptions are not affections, but activities and judgements concerning affections: the affections take place elsewhere, let us say in the body so qualified, but the judgement is in the soul, and the judgement is not an affection — otherwise there would have to be another judgement, regressing to infinity — but we still have a problem here, whether the judgement *qua* judgement takes on anything from its object. If it has a mark from it, then it has undergone an affection.'<sup>15</sup> There are, of course, other places where Plotinus points out that the faculty of sensation is not affected by what happens to its organs, or to the body in general. So at IV.6.2.16-18 he says that in the case of taste and smell there are affections and also perceptions and judgements of these which are a cognition of the affections, but not identical with them.<sup>16</sup> Perception in general is the soul's judgement of the body's affections (IV.4.22.30-32). But the introduction to III.6 is particularly significant when considered in its context. The whole purpose of the first part of this treatise is to show that the soul is not changed by the emotions (cf. esp. III.6.1.12-14); these being functions of the soul below the sensitive faculty are of course more likely than sense-perception to have some effect on the soul itself. What happens in perception is used as a paradigm of the soul's freedom from the affections of the body

and its separation from it. Later in the treatise vision is used to illustrate another point, this time to show how the lower parts of the soul may listen to reason without actually being changed: vision, he says, is simply the actualization of a potency. The act and potency are in essence the same, and so vision entails no essential change: the sense cognizes its objects without undergoing any affection (III.6.2.32ff.). Here we can see clearly what Plotinus is in fact doing: he is discussing sense-perception for the light it can throw on other matters. The two points he wishes to make here are that there may be temporary changes involving parts of the soul either in relation to others, or to the body, and that changes in the body need not, and generally do not, affect the soul. In the area of the affections he does not quite succeed.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere he will use his basically Aristotelian view of vision as a pattern for the relation of various levels of reality.<sup>18</sup> Its usefulness here, rather than just the normal Greek feeling that vision was the most important sense – stated explicitly by Aristotle at *de Anima* 429a 2f. – is the most likely reason for Plotinus' interest in vision. If this explanation is correct it becomes less surprising that for Plotinus sensation is almost synonymous with vision: he says very little more about taste and smell than the remark we have referred to, virtually nothing about touch and gives a short account of hearing, again primarily illustrative.<sup>19</sup> A sound fills the air for anyone who is there to be able to hear it, and the whole sound is in any one part of the air: that is how we are to understand the presence of soul (VI.4.12). This kind of paradigmatic purpose is at least part of the reason why the distribution of Plotinus' discussions of perception is so different from Aristotle's. There is of course more to be said. In his treatise *Problems about the Soul* (IV.3-5), as well as in one or two specialised smaller treatises, like that on why large objects perceived at a distance appear small (II.8), Plotinus does seem to be interested in the workings of the human soul for their own sake. This is perhaps also true of I.1, but only to an extent, for there Plotinus is primarily concerned with making a distinction between those human activities which involve both body and soul and those which are the work of soul alone.

Such then are the reasons for Plotinus' uneven coverage of the questions that present themselves. What of the details? As

far as their general notions of what happens in sense-perception go, Aristotle and Plotinus are not very far apart. Aristotle says that each sense is 'that which is able to receive the sensible forms (i.e. of sense-objects) without their matter',<sup>20</sup> and compares the way wax may receive the imprint of a signet-ring without its material, the metal (424a 17-21). Plotinus' definition is similar, but its intention may be subtly different. For him sense-perception is 'the perception of the soul or the 'living being' (*ζῶον*) of sensible objects, the soul grasping the quality attached to bodies and receiving an imprint of their forms' (IV.4.23.1-3).<sup>21</sup> By inserting 'quality attached to bodies' Plotinus causes one to wonder just what he means by the word which is translated 'forms' but can equally well mean appearances. Are 'forms' no more than appearances? That would be in order for a Platonist, but perhaps not in harmony with Plotinus' fairly positive attitude to the sensible world in this treatise, and the distinction may be over-subtle. Nevertheless the impression that Plotinus does mean to indicate the illusoriness of sensible qualities is strengthened by the fact that the word he uses for receiving an imprint (*ἀπομάρτεω*) occurs in that part of the *Timaeus* where Plato describes the production of sensible objects in the Receptacle.<sup>22</sup> In any case Plotinus is perhaps closer to Aristotle in another passage, III.6.18.24ff., where he talks of soul not being prepared to accept the forms of sensible objects with multiplicity but seeing them *when they have put off their mass*,<sup>23</sup> if by this he means something like Aristotle's 'without matter'.

Where Plotinus certainly differs from Aristotle is in his view that the soul's power of perception is not properly exercised on the sense-objects themselves, but on the impressions which sensation has produced in the 'living being': these have by then become intelligible (I.1.7.9-12). Here we do have a sensation: perception distinction. For Aristotle there was of course no question of a distinction between what is done by body and soul, and so his account was much simpler: the body and soul unit perceived sensible objects by means of the appropriate faculty, the sensitive, acting through, or in, the appropriate organ. In fact, faculty and organ are the same, except in definition (424a 24-6).

The role of the sense organs was in line with the general requirements of the two thinkers' approaches. In Aristotle's psychology it was possible, not to say desirable, for the organs to be independently active. Vision is, after all, inherent in the eye. It is its form and essence: an eye that cannot see is simply not an eye (412b 18-22). For Plotinus, on the other hand, an eye *qua* part of a body can only see when activated by the relevant faculty of its detached soul, and its function, like that of all the sense organs, is to act as an intermediary, a kind of transformation point, between the sensible objects outside and the immaterial soul 'inside' which is only able to perceive what is presented to it in an intelligible form (IV.4.23). In fact the senses are different only because different sense organs perform this role (IV.3.3.12ff.). By itself soul can only think (*νοεῖν*) the objects which it already possesses (IV.4.23.5f.). Through the sense organs it can be assimilated to the sensible objects (*ibid.* 21ff.), just as in Aristotle's theory the organs, or senses, become like the objects from which they were originally different, though potentially the same (cf. 417a 18-21, 422a 6f.). It should not, however, be forgotten, that for Plotinus the organ must already, if there is to be perception, have a degree of similarity to the object, whether this is described in terms of sympathy as in IV.4.23, or, rarely, more Platonically in terms of being light-like, as at I.6.9.30f. Plotinus' concept of an inward transmission from the organs to the soul as such was of course greatly helped by the post-Aristotelian discovery of the nerves.<sup>24</sup>

A further and immediately obvious difference comes over the question of a medium between object and organ. Quite simply Aristotle thought that one was required while Plotinus did not. This is one of the more technical questions which Plotinus discussed at some length, in IV.5, which is an appendix to the treatise on the soul. Here again he disagrees quite openly with Aristotle, though he does not mention him by name. Plotinus wished to explain the contact between subject and object in perception by means of the sympathy (*συμπάθεια*) that existed between all parts of the world in virtue of its status as a living being, a notion he had taken over from certain later Stoics — dare one say Posidonius? This sympathy operated equal-

ly between the parts of the world and the parts of each ensouled individual in it, which allowed Plotinus to explain both internal and external perception in the same way. That had the advantage of greater economy and simplicity than a theory which required a medium for external perception when there could be none in the case of internal perception. That was a problem which would not have been serious for Aristotle, since he did not, in general, consider what role perception might have in respect of the percipient subject himself. There is, of course, one exception, the attribution in the *de Anima* to the several sense themselves of awareness than they are perceiving. But Aristotle merely says that they, rather than some other sense, see or hear that they are seeing or hearing (425b 12ff.). His main reason is a fear of regress, and he is not much concerned with how the process works. By his own theory there should be a medium, and that could have been a serious difficulty even in the *de Sensu* version where the senses acting together, as the common sense, are responsible for this kind of perception (*de Sensu* 455a 12 ff.). Here then we have one manifestation of Plotinus' interest in various kinds of self-awareness and self-consciousness. This was an area in which Aristotle had taken little interest and where Plotinus was in advance of his predecessors and sometimes foreshadowed modern developments in psychology — as also in his brief reference to the importance of unconscious memories (IV.4.4.7-13).

To return to mediums, Plotinus arraigned two classes of offenders, one whose own theories required a medium, and another for whom it was unnecessary to the concept of perception with which they worked. Aristotle falls into the latter and worse class. Plotinus discusses the question mainly, but not exclusively, in terms of vision. His general view is that there is no need for anything between object and eye to be affected so long as the eye itself is (IV.5.1.15ff.). He here ignores Aristotle's argument from the impossibility of seeing objects placed directly on the eye (419a 12f.), an argument he is quite prepared to use elsewhere for another purpose.<sup>25</sup> Against the idea that air must be changed before we can see, he argues that we should then be seeing the adjacent air, and not the object itself, just as if we were being warmed by air rather

than by a fire (IV.5.2 50-55). This is not the best of arguments. A better one is that if vision depended on the air being lit, that would make nonsense of the fact that we can and do see lights in the dark: this means that the darkness is still there when we see. Plotinus rejects any attempt to salvage mediums by arguing that their absence would break the sympathy between subject and object: he does so by anticipating his final conclusion that sense-perception depends on the sympathy which arises from common membership of one living organism (IV.5.3.1ff.). Before he reaches that he stops to consider the view that air might be necessary if one thinks that light can only exist in air. He points out that the air would then be incidental to the process of vision (IV.5.4.2-7). It is interesting to note that Plotinus has here arrived at a correct position for a dubious reason: we do now know that light can be propagated through a vacuum. Unfortunately for Plotinus the same is not true of sound, whose medium Plotinus wishes to abolish by the same argument. One might wonder, incidentally, whether Plotinus' unwillingness to accept any kind of medium, against which he argues mainly in terms of vision, had anything to do with his views on the exalted status of light. Was light too good to be involved so basically in sense-perception?

One further question must be considered. How did Aristotle and Plotinus deal with the assessment of sense-data by the soul, and what did they think about their objective validity? The first half of the question is perhaps badly framed in the case of Aristotle, given his answers to the second. For in the case of at least one kind of perception, that of the relevant quality by the appropriate sense, such as colour by vision, there was no scope, or very little, for error. Error could arise in the perception of something as an attribute, or, more often, in the apprehension of the common sensibles, such as size or shape (428b 17-25). The latter Plotinus attributed to a combination of perception and opinion (VI.9.3.27-32).<sup>26</sup> Aristotle omits to tell us how error is detected, but it would seem that it must be done by reason working with the images which the sensations produce. This is certainly what Plotinus thought. Incoming sense-data were compared with a pre-existing pattern derived from above (VI.7.6.2-7). Reason dealt with images produced by

perception (V.3.2.2ff.): the percept of a man will set off a chain of inference, and reason by using memory can pronounce that it is Socrates (V.3.3.1-5). But here reason performs a function which in Aristotle was a matter of perception: the sense of sight perceives a white object incidentally as the son of Diaries (418a 20f.). As a result of this difference Plotinus does not need reason to confirm what is its own conclusion. What was in Aristotle a case of perception has become for Plotinus a matter of inference. Some form of verification will, for him, have been necessary even at the level of Aristotle's usually infallible perceptions: as far as Plotinus was concerned, sense-perception produced opinion, not truth (V.5.1.62-5). Here Plotinus' Platonism is clearly responsible for his view.

For Plotinus the faculty of imagination is the terminus for perceptions as such (cf. IV.3.29.24f.). They may be passed on to reason for processing, or retained as memories. Imagination is also responsible for other forms of transmission between parts of the soul, or between soul and body. Its duties in connection with memory are particularly complex. It is probably because of this wide variety of functions that Plotinus tended to see imagination as a faculty – or rather two – in its own right. Aristotle, on the other hand, tended to think of it as a subdivision of the sensitive faculty, different by definition rather than in essence (*de Insomn.* 459a 15ff.). He defined it as a 'movement caused by the activity of perception' (428b 13f.).<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless he will sometimes speak of imagination acting independently of sensation, and in particular producing sense-like images, as in dreams, when no sensation is present. This is one of the differences between imagination and perception that he mentions in the course of framing the definition: others are that all animals have sensation but not imagination, and that perceptions are true whereas imaginings (*φαντασίαι*) – for want of a better English word – are usually false (428a 5ff.). We may note in passing that whereas Plotinus regarded perception as unreliable and was less suspicious of imagination, which usually acted as an agent of some other power, Aristotle held perception to be reliable and thought that imagination was usually wrong: he was still influenced by its connection with the verb meaning 'to appear' with its strong connotation of appearing other than is the case (428b 2ff.).

Notwithstanding such differences one can see that Plotinus is working with the same concept as Aristotle, though he adapts it, exploiting a certain vagueness in some of Aristotle's statements, and extends the sphere of its operation. Both clearly and primarily associate imagination with the sense, both use it as a means of presenting material acquired by the senses to the reason, both hold that it is the basis of memory.

In its connection with sense-perception imagination presents the fewest problems. It is the power of soul by which we have available for consideration, or for subsequent use through memory, the information provided by the senses. We have seen that in Plotinus sense-percepts, as processed by imagination, were presented to the reason. Similarly in Aristotle reason deals with images which it has before it in the manner of perceptions (413a 14f.). The contexts are different, but since for both images derive from sensation, and are considered by reason, we may take it that the underlying doctrine is the same. There is, however, an important difference in the use of images. For Aristotle they are probably necessary for thought of any kind (413a 16f.), while for Plotinus the thinking of the true *nous*, the intuitive thinking which is superior to mere reasoning, can and does proceed without them, since *nous* is simply present among its objects. In fact the reason is informed of intuitive thought by means of images, and imagination makes the results of both kinds of thinking known to the rest of the soul (IV.3.30.5-11). When the imaginative faculty is disturbed then thinking proceeds without images (I.4.10.17-19).<sup>28</sup>

At the other end of Plotinus' scale, imagination makes the condition of the lower faculties, and that part of the body for which they are responsible, known to the higher soul (cf. IV.4.17.11ff., 20.17f.). In the case of desire the sensitive faculty perceives an image which conveys to it the condition of the lower soul (IV.4.20.12ff.). Thus we have a kind of sub-sensitive imagination in addition to that which operates between sensation and reason, and on one occasion Plotinus goes so far as to say that the former is imagination in the strict sense (VI.8.3. 10 ff.). Transmission of information about the body was of course a problem for Plotinus in a way that it was not for Aristotle, but it is possible that he constructed this

downward extension of the activities of the imaginative faculty on the basis of Aristotle's remarks in the *de Anima* and elsewhere about the role of imagination in desire – and other emotions – and movement: an animal can move in so far as it is equipped with appetite, and appetite does not exist without imagination (433b 27-30). So appetite and imagination are both involved in the causation of movement (433a 20): at *de Motu Animalium* 702a 17-19 Aristotle says that imagination prepares appetite. Further, Aristotle does, at *de Anima* 433b 31ff., raise the question of how the imperfect animals, that is those which have only the sense of touch, can have imagination, which normally presupposes all five senses, a question presented by the fact that these animals appear to have pleasure and pain. If so, they must have desire, which should imply imagination. Aristotle suggests that they perhaps have it in an indeterminate way (*ἀορίστως*). This last suggestion in particular could be a starting point for Plotinus' lower imagination, which he describes as 'unexamined' (*ἀνεπίκριτος*), in a context where the term may well imply that vagueness makes this kind of imagination unverifiable (III.6.4.18-23).<sup>29</sup>

Plotinus' most radical alteration of Aristotle's scheme of faculties comes when he considers the role of imagination as the basis of memory. Aristotle had little difficulty in coming to the conclusion that memory and imagination belong to the same faculty since all memories, even those of intelligible objects, require mental pictures (*de Mem.* 450a 11-14). Plotinus comes to the conclusion by a more difficult route, by way of considering from various points of view the possibility that each faculty could have those memories relevant to its peculiar activities. His difficulties arise mainly from two requirements, first the need to clarify the relation of memory and its faculty to the 'living being', the compound of body and the lower faculties, and then the apparent impossibility of having the activities of the higher part of the soul remembered by the lower, and *vice-versa*. Here the role of imagination as a transmitter and mediator between the different sections of the soul provides the solution.

But of course there are further difficulties, which I have discussed in detail elsewhere.<sup>30</sup> Before we consider them briefly

for their relevance to the present question, something should be said about the actual functioning of memory. Basically, in both Plotinus and Aristotle, the faculty retains images presented to it either from sensations below or reasonings above. But Plotinus, whose discussion in the treatise *On Sensation and Memory* (IV.6) is clearly based on Aristotle's account in the *de Memoria*, as Bréhier showed,<sup>31</sup> does not simply accept it as it stands.<sup>32</sup> He makes several alterations of detail, mainly with a view to removing materialistic, or at least apparently materialistic, features of Aristotle's account. In the first place he objects to Aristotle's talk of memory being the retention of some sort of imprint (*τύπος*) produced by perception or learning (*de Mem.* 450a 30-32). As Plotinus says at the start of his discussion (IV.6.1.1-5) it would make no sense to talk in these terms if one holds that perception does not involve any imprint, and the rest of the chapter argues once again that it does not. Plotinus was certainly not the first to be worried about the implications of the impression concept: Alexander had already expressed concern and said that the word was used only for lack of an appropriate one.<sup>33</sup> Plotinus says we must think rather of some sort of translation of the impression which affects the body: in an earlier treatise he speaks of 'something like indivisible thoughts' (IV.7.6.23).<sup>34</sup> For similar reasons Plotinus rejects Aristotle's explanation of the decline in old people's memory. Aristotle had accounted for it in terms of bodily changes, which he also took to be the cause of poor memory in the very young (*de Mem.* 450b 5-7). Plotinus substituted the suggestion that the psychic power involved declined, which enabled him to offer the same explanation for the fall-off in both memory and sense-perception (IV.6.3.51-5). As to the young, Plotinus argues, surely rightly, that they in fact remember better because they have as yet less material to remember (*ibid.* 21-4).

Let us return now to the problem of faculties. Here Plotinus innovates by splitting the faculty of imagination. This is the only way he feels able to explain how the higher soul which survives this life can, as it does, retain memories from it without being affected during life by the less elevated forms of memory which a person must have in the ordinary life of this world (IV.3.31-2). He thus requires a lower imaginative faculty to deal

with such lower memories and protect the higher memory, a need arising from his basic position that the soul, and particularly the upper soul, remains unaffected by its administration of the body with which it is, in theory, merely associated. Since, however, the soul as a whole must in this life have certain information available to it, the information stored by the lower soul is available to the higher. Moreover the break may, at least partly, be obscured if we think in terms of Plotinus' view of the lower soul as a product of the upper soul's attention to what lies below. Similarly the lower soul can become reassimilated to the higher—though if this were to happen happen definitively the activities of the lower would disappear. That would remove the very reason for the lower imaginative faculty's existence.

This radical innovation is by far the clearest case of the changes in Aristotelian psychology that arose from the needs of Plotinus' brand of Platonism, and in particular from the need to defend the soul's autonomy. Yet even this change may have been suggested by Aristotle's references, both in the *de Anima* and the *de Motu Animalium*, to two types of imagination, one rational and the other perceptual,<sup>35</sup> and also the hint in the *de Anima* of a lower kind of imagination which we have already mentioned.<sup>36</sup> For the purposes of this paper too much attention may have been focused on the similarities between Aristotle's views and Plotinus'. Perhaps as a corrective it would be as well to remember that there were a number of questions in which Aristotle was interested and to which Plotinus simply paid no attention. Such are the nature of sense objects and the sense organs, and the forms of sense-perception which had little relevance to Plotinus' higher interests. In the workings of the soul at the level of plants and animals Plotinus shows very little interest. At the risk of speaking in clichés one might suggest that the differences are to a large measure due to the fact that Aristotle was a scientist as well as a metaphysician, and simply wanted to know. If one wonders why Plotinus adopted and adapted Aristotle's psychology the answer would seem to be that — apart from certain historical factors — he wished to remain a good Platonist and yet felt obliged to give a more



satisfactory account of the soul's workings than Plato himself had found either possible or desirable.

### NOTES

1. For the purposes of this paper I have deliberately left aside the history of psychology between Aristotle and Plotinus. Much of this is still inadequately treated, and some will remain so for sheer lack of evidence. But it is of interest in considering Plotinus' psychology to see what he chose to use. Note: all unspecified references to Aristotle are to the *de Anima*.
2. *Vita Plotini* 14.4-7.
3. 'The Background of the Doctrine "That the Intelligibles are not Outside the Intellect"' *Les Sources de Plotin*. Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique V. Fondation Hardt (Geneva 1960) 402.
4. Cf. e.g. Simplicius, *de Caelo* 640-27-30. See further my paper 'Some Observations on the Greek Commentaries on Aristotle' in Actes du XIV<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Études Byzantines.
5. Ἄρ' οὖν οὕτω φατέον, ὅταν ψυχὴ σώματι παρῇ, παρεῖναι αὐτὴν ὡς τὸ πῦρ πάρεστι τῷ ἀέρι; καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ καὶ τοῦτο παρὸν οὐ πάρεστι καὶ δι' ὅλου παρὸν οὐδενὶ μίγνυται καὶ ἑσθηκεῖ μὲν αὐτό, τὸ δὲ παραρρεῖ. It is clear from the context here, and also from what he says later when he refines the analogy from light to heat (IV.4.29 *init.*), that Plotinus is here thinking of fire primarily as light. One might wonder if even this Platonist statement is not itself suggested by Aristotle's description of light being the presence of fire in the transparent (418b 13-16).
6. On this see further my *Plotinus' Psychology. His doctrines of the embodied soul* (The Hague, 1971) 64-66.
7. Plotinus may well be deliberately improving on Plato since he offers this statement in IV.3 as an explanation of why the desiring part had been put in the liver.

8. Sometimes Plotinus thinks of these lower phases as belonging to the world-soul in its capacity of informing matter, rather than to the individual soul, cf. e.g. IV.9.3, 11ff. and *Plotinus' Psychology* 27-30.
9. Cf. *Anal. Post* 99b 26ff., *Met.* A 980a 21ff.
10. For discussion of this problem cf. *Plotinus' Psychology* 115ff., and also my paper "Nous and Soul in Plotinus. Some Problems of Demarcation" in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale sul tema Plotino e il Neoplatonismo*. Roma 5-9.10.1970 Problemi attuali di Scienza e di Cultura. Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (Rome 1974) 203-219.
11. Cf. n.6. above.
12. κωδυνεύομεν γὰρ περὶ ψυχὴν ταῦτα λέγοντες ὁμοίων τι ὑπολαμβάνειν, ὥς εἰ τὴν ψυχὴν λέγομεν ἐρυθριᾶν ἢ αὐτὴν ὠχρίασει γίγνεσθαι, μὴ λογιζόμενοι, ὥς διὰ ψυχὴν μὲν ταῦτα τὰ πάθη, περὶ δὲ τὴν ἄλλην σύστασιν ἐστὶ γιγνόμενα.
13. τὸ δὴ λέγεω ὀργίζεσθαι τὴν ψυχὴν ὁμοιον καὶ εἰ τις λέγοι τὴν ψυχὴν ὑψαίνειν ἢ οἰκοδομεῖν· βέλτιον γὰρ ἴσως μὴ λέγειν τὴν ψυχὴν ἐλεεῖν ἢ μανθάνειν ἢ διανοεῖσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῇ ψυχῇ.
14. See further *Plotinus' Psychology* 67f.
15. τὰς αἰσθήσεις οὐ πάθη λέγοντες εἶναι. ἐνεργείας δὲ περὶ παθήματα καὶ κρίσεις, τῶν μὲν παθῶν περὶ ἄλλο γινόμενων, οἷον τὸ σῶμα φέρε τὸ τοιούδε, τῆς δὲ κρίσεως περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν, οὐ τῆς κρίσεως πάθος οὐσης – ἔδει γὰρ αὐτὴν ἄλλην κρίσιν γίνεσθαι καὶ ἐπαναβαίνειν ἀεὶ εἰς ἄπειρον – εἴχομεν οὐδὲν ἥττον καὶ ἐν ταῦτα ἀπορίαν, εἰ ἡ κρίσις ἢ κρίσις οὐδὲν ἔχει τοῦ κρωμένου. ἢ, εἰ τύπον ἔχοι, πέπονθεν (III. 6.1.1-8).
16. γεύσεως δὲ καὶ ὀσφρήσεως τὰ μὲν πάθη, τὰ δ' ὅσα αἰσθήσεις αὐτῶν καὶ κρίσεις, τῶν παθῶν εἰσι γνώσεις ἄλλαι τῶν παθῶν οὐσαι.
17. See above p. 42.
18. E.g. *Nous* formed by the One . . . like vision in act: οἷον ὄψις ἢ κατ' ἐνέργειαν (V.1.5.17f.).
19. All five senses are mentioned together in connection with the provision of appropriate powers to the various organs

by an undivided soul at IV.3.23.1ff.

20. τὸ δεκτικὸν τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰδῶν ἀνευ τῆς ὕλης.
21. τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἐστὶ τῇ ψυχῇ ἢ τῷ ζῳῷ ἀντιλψις τὴν προσοῦσαν τοῖς σώμασι ποιότητα συνεισότης καὶ τὰ εἶδη αὐτῶν ἀποματτομένης.
22. *Tim.* 50E.
23. . . . ὁρῶσα οὐκ ἀνέχεται μετὰ πλήθους δέχεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἀποθέμενα τὸν ὄγκον ὁρᾷ.
24. By Hierophilus and Erasistratus in the third century B. C.: their work was later advanced and refined by Galen.
25. To argue against the impression theory of perception (IV.6.1.32-5).
26. αἰσθήσεως καὶ δόξης ἐπομένης αἰσθήσει.
27. κινήσεις ὑπὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας τῆς αἰσθήσεως.
28. That this is what Plotinus means can be seen by comparing this chapter with IV.3.30.
29. On the relation of the different kinds of imagination cf. *Plotinus' Psychology* 92f.
30. *Ibid.* 83ff.
31. In the Notice to IV.6 in the Budé edition of the *Enneads*.
32. The parallel emerges more clearly in IV.6 than in IV.3-4 because, unlike the latter, the former is not concerned with eschatology.
33. *de Anima* 72.11-13.
34. οἷον ἀμερῇ νοήματα.
35. All imagination is rational or perceptual: φαντασία δὲ πᾶσα ἢ λογιστικὴ ἢ αἰσθητικὴ (433b 29); the imagination is due to thought or perception: ἡ φαντασία. . . γίνεταί ἢ διὰ νοήσεως ἢ δι' αἰσθήσεως (*de Mot. Animal.* 7021 19).
36. See above p. 54.

## Iamblichus, Thrasyllus, and the Reading Order of the Platonic Dialogues

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The details of the well-known selection of twelve Platonic dialogues originally made by Iamblichus and later described by Proclus<sup>1</sup> and by the anonymous sixth-century *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*<sup>2</sup> need not be expounded to modern Platonic scholars. Iamblichus' 'canon' codified certain preferences among the dialogues which were already apparent in Plotinus,<sup>3</sup> and after Iamblichus it became the standard format for the study of the Platonic dialogues in the Neoplatonic schools.<sup>4</sup> It was not, however, merely a random selection of what Iamblichus regarded as the most important Platonic dialogues: it also constituted a systematic and coherent course of reading in Plato. The student was to begin with the *First Alcibiades*, "because in it we come to know ourselves," and then was to ascend gradually through the different levels of virtues 'political' (the *Gorgias*), 'cathartic' (the *Phaedo*), and 'contemplative' (the *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*,<sup>5</sup> *Phaedrus*, and *Symposium*)—ending at the *Philebus*, "because in it he [Plato] discusses the Good." Finally, the student was to approach the "perfect" dialogues, the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*, which summed up all the preceding ten.<sup>6</sup>

I will return to the implications of this reading course a little later in this paper. I would like to remind you first, however, that Iamblichus was by no means the first or even the last Platonist to propose a systematic reading order for the

Platonic dialogues. Proclus, for example, appears to have proposed a more comprehensive grouping which contained 32 dialogues;<sup>7</sup> but well before Iamblichus formed his canon, if we may rely on the evidence from the handbooks of Diogenes Laertius and the so-called Middle Platonists, the question of the order in which the dialogues should be read was often discussed. There is not enough time for me today even to mention all the proposals for a reading course that were made in the first and second centuries; but I would like to draw your attention in this paper to the most important of them all, both historically and as an interpretation of the Platonic dialogues, which has been strangely neglected and misunderstood by modern scholars. This is the division of the Platonic dialogues into nine 'tetralogies' which is associated in our ancient sources particularly<sup>8</sup> with the name of Thrasyllus, a Platonist, mathematician, and astrologer in the service of Tiberius, who died a few months before that emperor in A.D. 36.<sup>9</sup>

The tetralogies had a long history in Platonic studies: in the second century they were known and perhaps adopted by Theon of Smyrna,<sup>10</sup> while at approximately the same time they were being criticized and rejected by Albinus;<sup>11</sup> Diogenes Laertius devotes a lengthy discussion to them.<sup>12</sup> Among the Neoplatonists the tetralogies were superseded by Iamblichus' canon, but it is probable that they contributed to the formation of that canon,<sup>13</sup> and they were still thought worthy of refutation by the author of the sixth-century anonymous *Prolegomena*.<sup>14</sup> As the principle by which the manuscripts of Plato were organized, the tetralogies passed down to the Arabs, to the Renaissance, and to us; and we still find them used for the same purpose in modern editions of Plato.

In the time available today I intend to suggest three theses about the tetralogies:

I. That they constitute a coherent reading course in the Platonic dialogues, and were so regarded by the ancient Platonists.

II. That the main outlines of this reading course can be discovered.

III. That the tetralogies as a reading course are superior in important respects to the Iamblichan canon.

I. Modern scholarship has tended to emphasize the role of the nine tetralogies in the history of the transmission of the Platonic corpus: whether they are held to have originated in the early Academy or in the first century B.C.,<sup>15</sup> their chief significance has been taken to be that they were the framework of a great edition of Plato, and that they remained through the centuries "the great constant in the transmission of Plato."<sup>16</sup> This aspect of the tetralogies is certainly important, but is an historical accident, and one or two citations will, I hope, be sufficient to show that when ancient Platonists referred to the tetralogies they were not thinking of them primarily as editorial tools.

The clearest statement of the function of the tetralogies is made by Albinus in chapter IV of his *Introduction to the Dialogues of Plato*:

Since we have looked at the natural differentiation of the dialogues, and at their "characters", let us say next with what kind of dialogues we should begin reading Plato's philosophy. There have been different opinions. Some begin with the *Letters*, some with the *Theages*; and there are those who divide up the dialogues according to the principle of the tetralogy, and arrange the first tetralogy to contain the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* . . . Of this opinion are Dercyllides and Thrasyllus.<sup>17</sup>

Albinus goes on to criticize the tetralogies and substitutes for them two proposals of his own, but in any case his meaning is plain: there were different opinions as to which dialogues should be read first by the beginning student, and Dercyllides and Thrasyllus were of the opinion that he should begin with the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*. While it does not necessarily follow from Albinus' words that the rest of the tetralogies were also meant to be read in sequence, nothing in the passage excludes this possibility.

A second piece of evidence that the tetralogies were regarded as a reading order is a remark from Theon of Smyrna, a Platonist of the second century, preserved by the tenth-century Arab encyclopedist Ibn al-Nadim:

Theon said: "Plato arranged his writings for reading.

Each group consisting of four books, he called a tetralogy."<sup>18</sup>

Al-Nadim's epitome of Theon is abbreviated and sometimes confused, but if this passage is sound, Theon not only thought of the tetralogies as a reading order, but also believed that the tetralogical principle had the authority of Plato behind it; and since this claim was also made by Thrasyllus himself,<sup>19</sup> it provides some grounds for believing this citation from Theon to be authentic.

II. We must now examine the tetralogies themselves, and the ancient evidence about their contents, to see whether we can discover the principles behind this arrangement of the dialogues.

It will be helpful first to examine comparable organizational schemes which were applied to the works of two other ancient philosophers.

(1) Thrasyllus himself arranged the works of Democritus in tetralogies, probably on the model of the Platonic tetralogies.<sup>20</sup> An interesting thing about these Democritean tetralogies, however, is that Thrasyllus organized them into six larger groupings, under the headings 'ethical' (2 tetralogies), 'physical' (4 tetralogies), 'mathematical' (3 tetralogies), and so forth; in all, four of these six larger groupings are made up of two tetralogies each. In this case, therefore, Thrasyllus did not intend for the single tetralogies to stand by themselves, but that they should combine to form larger groups. We will see in a moment that he or someone else applied the same principle to the Platonic dialogues. It should be added, however, that the Democritean tetralogies do not seem to constitute a reading course.

(2) When Porphyry prepared his edition of the treatises of Plotinus, he selected as his basic group the ennead, or group of nine. Here again, we find the individual enneads combined to form larger groups, of which "the first contains three enneads; the second contains two; and the third contains one."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Porphyry's arrangement is clearly intended to be a reading order, beginning with the "lighter"<sup>22</sup> problems of moral behavior on earth (*Enn.* I), and ascending through Nature (*Enn.* II-III) to Soul (*Enn.* IV), Nous (*Enn.* V), and finally to the categories at the summit of Being, and to the One (*Enn.* VI).

Using the principles which we see to be at work in these other organizational schemes, I would like to suggest for your consideration the following analysis of the nine tetralogies.<sup>23</sup>

(1) There is an introductory group, consisting of the first tetralogy only and containing the four dialogues which deal with Socrates' trial and execution:

- I. *Euthyphro*, or On the Holy, peirastic
- Apology of Socrates*, ethical
- Crito*, or What Must Be Done, ethical
- Phaedo*, or On the Soul, ethical

Our sources,<sup>24</sup> which tell us little more about the tetralogies than their contents, do agree in singling out the first tetralogy from the others. Diogenes Laertius, moreover, preserves a valuable fact about Thrasyllus' attitude toward it:

He [sc. Thrasyllus] establishes a first tetralogy containing the common theme: for he wishes to give a paradigm of what the life of the philosopher would be like.<sup>25</sup>

Diogenes' words, unfortunately, leave it doubtful whether Thrasyllus meant that the theme of the life of the philosopher was confined solely to the first tetralogy, or whether this first tetralogy contained within it the common theme of the whole.<sup>26</sup> I am inclined to think that Thrasyllus meant the latter, and that the common theme of the whole reading course was the life of the philosopher in its different aspects, but I do not wish to affirm it as a fact, in the absence of more explicit evidence.<sup>27</sup> I believe we can say, however, that the first tetralogy stands apart from the rest as an introduction to the whole sequence.

(2) In defining the remaining groups of dialogues we cannot rely on specific evidence from the ancient sources; however, I believe we may make certain plausible conjectures on the basis of the contents of the dialogues themselves, and what is known of the interpretation of them by ancient Platonists.

I suggest, then, that we may see a second main grouping in the second and third tetralogies:

- II. *Cratylus*, or On the Correctness of Names, logical
- Theaetetus*, or On Knowledge, peirastic
- Sophist*, or On Being, logical

*Statesman*, or On Kingship, logical  
*Parmenides*, or On the Ideas, logical  
*Philebus*, or On Pleasure, ethical  
*Symposium*, or On the Good, ethical  
*Phaedrus*, or On Love, ethical

It will be observed, first of all, that all of the dialogues which had been characterized by the Platonic tradition as "logical" are contained within this group. Just as later Platonists would preface the study of Plato with Aristotle's logic, so in Thrasyllus' reading course the student who is fresh from reading about the trial and death of Socrates will begin his study of philosophy with a group of dialogues which deal with knowledge and the dialectical means of arriving at it. He begins with the consideration of language, in the *Cratylus*, then proceeds to the inquiry into knowledge, the *Theaetetus*. Plato himself could then be taken to indicate, by the repetition of characters and by many cross-references, that the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* should follow the *Theaetetus*.

The precise function of the next four dialogues is a little difficult to determine, and the *Parmenides* provides a good illustration of the problem we face. We may fairly safely assume that it was not yet given the characteristically 'theological' interpretation familiar to us from Plotinus and his successors. Yet Proclus knew of at least two other interpretations of the *Parmenides* which were current among the earlier commentators: one along the lines of its secondary title, *On the Ideas*, and one which treated it as a "logical exercise".<sup>28</sup> The latter interpretation may be reflected in the writings of Albinus, who refers to the *Parmenides* as a place where one may find numerous examples of the hypothetical syllogism,<sup>29</sup> or an outline of the ten Aristotelian categories.<sup>30</sup> Galen, similarly, speaks of the "exercise" (*gymnasia*) of the method of diaeresis in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, and finds it "most clearly and most perfectly" demonstrated in the *Philebus* and *Phaedrus*.<sup>31</sup> It is certainly possible that, at the very beginning of a reading course in Plato, the beginner might be encouraged to look for this "gymnastic" element in the dialogues, in order to learn logical or dialectical methods.

On the other hand, this severely pragmatic interpretation of these dialogues as mere exercises in method is not what we would expect from the Pythagorean and astrologer Thrasyllus. Should we not also see in this group of dialogues a gradual ascent from the subject of language in the *Cratylus* to a culminating vision of the Good in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*—a vision, of course, only attainable through dialectic? In this case, the last four dialogues would not only be exercises in logic but also descriptions of the higher kinds of knowledge.

If the dialogues of this group were understood as an ascending order culminating in a vision of the Good, then we probably need look no further for the origins of Iamblichus' canon. A glance at the two lists will show how strikingly similar they are:

*Thrasyllus' tetralogies*

Euthyphro  
 Apology  
 Crito  
 Phaedo

1. Cratylus
2. Theaetetus
3. Sophist
4. Politicus
5. Parmenides
6. Philebus
7. Symposium
8. Phaedrus

*Iamblichus' canon*<sup>32</sup>

Alcibiades I  
 Gorgias  
 Phaedo  
 1. Cratylus

2. Theaetetus
3. Sophist
4. Politicus
8. Phaedrus
7. Symposium
6. Philebus
- Timaeus
5. Parmenides

(3) The third group of dialogues, like the second, contains two tetralogies:

- III. *Alcibiades I*, or On the Nature of Man, maieutic
- Alcibiades II*, or On Prayer, maieutic
- Hipparchus*, or Lover of Profit, ethical
- Anterastae*, or On Philosophy, ethical
- Theages*, or On Philosophy, maieutic
- Charmides*, or On Temperance, peirastic
- Laches*, or On Courage, maieutic
- Lysis*, or On Friendship, maieutic

In the same way that the "logical" dialogues were all contained in the second group, Thrasyllus or the inventor of the tetralogies included all the "maieutic" dialogues within this third group. The term "maieutic", which we might render clumsily as "obstetric", derives from the well-known passage in the *Theaetetus* (149a-151e) in which Socrates compares himself to a midwife, and his characteristic activity to midwifery. In the traditional characterizations of the dialogues,<sup>33</sup> therefore, "maieutic" was the term applied to dialogues in which Socrates is seen in this activity, and it is this "midwifery", rather than any formal philosophical theme, which forms the connecting link between the dialogues of the third group. Another theme, closely related to it, is that of love.<sup>34</sup> Often Socrates pretends to be in love himself, as in the *First Alcibiades*, and the *Charmides*; at other times he converses with lovers, as in the *Anterastae* and *Lysis*; in the *Hipparchus*, in addition to playing on the word "lover of gain", Socrates tells the story of the famous lovers Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The themes of midwifery and love, finally, are seldom separated in these dialogues from the question "who is the best educator of the young?", which is discussed on its own in the *Theages* and *Laches*.

(4) A fourth group is easily recognized in the next two tetralogies:

- IV. *Euthydemus*, or the Lover of Contest, anatreptic
- Protagoras*, or On Rhetoric, anatreptic
- Meno*, or On Virtue, peirastic
- Hippias I*, or On the Beautiful, anatreptic
- Hippias II*, or On Falsehood, anatreptic
- Ion*, or On the Iliad, peirastic
- Menexenus*, or Funeral Oration, ethical

This fourth group, like the preceding two, contains a concentration of dialogues to which tradition had assigned the same philosophical 'character'. That is, in this group are found all of the 'anatreptic' dialogues (dialogues in which the opponent is "overthrown"), together with the single 'endeictic' or 'exhibitory' dialogue; and according to Diogenes Laertius III.49 these two groups together form the class of 'agonistic' dialogues, or dialogues of contest.

Wilamowitz observed how useful the *Euthydemus* is as a means of transition from the third sequence to this one:<sup>35</sup> the question it raises, again, is "who is to educate the youth in virtue?" In this fourth sequence of dialogues, however, particular attention is paid to the philosopher's rivals as educators, the sophists. Ion is not technically a sophist, of course, but is included in this group as a false teacher. And finally, the *Menexenus* seems to have been placed at the end of this group for two reasons: first, Thrasyllus or the author of the tetralogies in all likelihood took the funeral oration seriously, as an example of sound oratory which could be contrasted to the false oratory of the sophists; secondly, the political theme of the oration would have seemed an excellent transition or introduction to the political dialogues of the last two tetralogies.

Before proceeding, however, I would like to point out briefly that, if I have described the third and fourth groups of dialogues correctly, then *concepts* and *doctrines* would seem to have played less important a part in Thrasyllus' reading of these sixteen dialogues than did the *personae*, their relationships, and what they do or experience. It may also be recalled that Albinus rejected at least the first of Dercyllides' and Thrasyllus' tetralogies on the grounds that they intended to apply an ordering to "personae and the circumstances of their lives."<sup>36</sup> A modern reader, however, might well approve of this emphasis on the *personae* in the dialogues of the third and fourth groups. The characters of the *Laches*, for example, learn nothing positive about the abstract concept of courage, but they do find in the person of Socrates an answer to their original question, "who is to educate the young in virtue?" In the *Charmides*, again, every abstract definition of temperance is called into doubt, but the dialogue ends with the young interlocutor placing himself under the tutelage of Socrates, because Charmides has come to realize that he does not know if he is temperate or not. In both cases the modern reader might be inclined to emphasize the confusion or "aporia" of the interlocutor, while Thrasyllus, perhaps, more accustomed to emphasize Socrates' midwifery, would point rather to the saving presence of the philosopher; but both alike would locate the

significance of these dialogues in what happens to the characters.

That I am not merely reading modern preoccupations into these dialogues can be shown from a passage in Albinus' *Eisagoge*, in which he declares that dialogues of an "expository" character aim at *things* or *topics*, while those of an "inquiring" type aim at *personae*.<sup>37</sup> Now, of the sixteen dialogues contained in the third and fourth groups, thirteen are characterized as maieutic, peirastic, endeictic, or anatreptic, which are the four lowest divisions, according to Diogenes Laertius III, 49, of the "inquiring" type of dialogue.

(5) The political theme of the fifth group of dialogues, which is made up of the last two tetralogies, is so evident that it hardly needs comment:

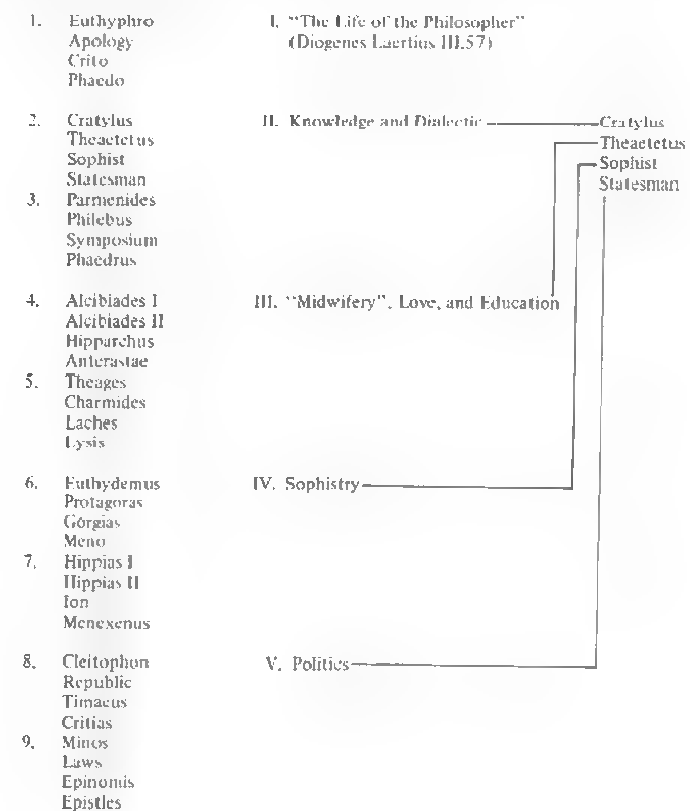
- V. *Cleitophon*, or Protrepticus, ethical
- Republic*, or On the Just, political
- Timaeus*, or On Nature, physical
- Critias*, or Atlanticus, ethical
- Minos*, or On Law, political
- Laws*, or On Legislation, political
- Epinomis*, or Nocturnal Assembly, or Philosopher, political
- Epistles*, ethical

The *Timaeus*, a 'physical' dialogue, is only apparently an anomaly among the political dialogues, since of course Plato himself in the prologue to the *Timaeus* makes it a continuation of the *Republic* and the cosmological background to the history contained in the *Critias*. The *Cleitophon* must have seemed the natural preface to the *Republic*, since Cleitophon represents himself as a pupil both of Socrates and of Thrasymachus, discusses justice with Socrates, and appears briefly as an interlocutor in the *Republic* (1. 328b and 340a-b). The inclusion of the *Minos*, *Laws*, *Epinomis* and *Epistles* among the 'political' dialogues hardly needs any explanation.

From Diogenes Laertius we already know that the "common theme" of the first tetralogy was the life of the philosopher. From the survey we have just made I think we can now take the common theme of the second group of dialogues to be knowledge and dialectic; that of the third to be

midwifery, love, and education; that of the fourth, sophistry; and that of the fifth, politics. In emphasizing these aspects of the Platonic dialogues the author of the tetralogies was certainly suggesting no categories that would not occur to any modern reader: they really are primary elements in Plato's dialogues, perhaps *the* primary elements.

There is a coincidence, however, to which I would like to draw your attention, because it suggests that Thrasyllus or whoever invented the tetralogies may have had a definite model before him for these divisions of the reading sequence. The coincidence is in the apparent correspondence of the four dialogues of the second tetralogy with the last four sequences of the reading order. The correspondence can be illustrated most clearly with a diagram:



In other words, the *Cratylus* ("On the Rightness of Names", "Logical"), might be compared to the whole group of dialogues in which knowledge and dialectic are the main themes. The *Theaetetus*, which follows it, contains Socrates' comparison of his conversations with the young to midwifery, or *maieutike*, the comparison which gave the name "maieutic" to more than half of the dialogues of the second main group. The third dialogue of the second tetralogy, the *Sophist*, defines the character to which the philosopher is opposed in the dialogues of the fourth main group. Finally, the definition of the noble statesman in the *Statesman* corresponds to the concern with the philosopher and politics in the last main group. It may well be that, after establishing the first tetralogy as the introduction to Plato's philosophy, Thrasyllus or the inventor of the tetralogies then deliberately employed the second tetralogy as the Platonic model and authority for the four main divisions of the reading order.

III. I said at the beginning of this paper that I would suggest the thesis that the nine tetralogies are in several respects superior to Iamblichus' canon as a reading course in Plato's dialogues. I hope that the reasons for this claim have become a little clearer as I have tried to bring to light what I believe to be the principle themes around which the tetralogies are organized.

I acknowledge at the outset that the tetralogies fail in several fundamental ways as a tool for the understanding of Plato. These failures derive from an important error, which is the impulse to synthesize the different dialogues without also keeping in mind their specific differences. Plato never intended that all the dialogues should form a coherent sequence, much less a complete philosophical education; consequently, any attempt to establish such a sequence necessarily has something fraudulent about it, and is obtained at the cost of emphasizing similarities between dialogues while sacrificing what is unique and different in every dialogue: the *Symposium*, for example, becomes a few paragraphs of Diotima's speech, in order to be the culmination of the "dialectical" dialogues.

This impulse to synthesize, however, was the very spirit of the age, and no commentator on Plato living at the time could expect to escape it. Once we grant Thrasyllus, or the inventor of

the tetralogies, this impulse, it becomes possible to argue that he produced a relatively successful reading course, one certainly superior to Iamblichus' canon. In Iamblichus the synthesizing went too far: not only did he "reduce"<sup>38</sup> all the Platonic dialogues to his twelve selected ones, but he also "reduced" these twelve to the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*. When Professor Hathaway says of the Neoplatonists that "we cannot suppress the suspicion that they believed that every dialogue was about the same thing,"<sup>39</sup> he is pointing out a very real tendency in their exegesis. A continuous movement in this direction can be traced in the history of the philosophical "characters" or "types" of the dialogues. There were originally eight of them; in Thrasyllus' tetralogies only four are significant, the logical, maieutic, agonistic (combining the anatreptic and endeictic), and political; eventually Iamblichus had only two, the physical and the theological.<sup>40</sup>

The difference between Thrasyllus' four dialogue-types and those of Iamblichus, however, goes beyond the difference in number. Thrasyllus' groups of dialogues express what really are pervasive themes in Plato's dialogues: knowledge and dialectic; midwifery, love, and education; sophistry; and politics. In other words, Thrasyllus' categories come out of the dialogues themselves. Iamblichus' categories of "physical" and "theological", on the contrary, and his association of the dialogues with different levels of virtues, are arbitrary categories forced on the dialogues to make them conform to the dogmatic and theological Plato of Neoplatonism.

If I am right that the dialogues of Thrasyllus' second group describe an ascent to the Good, then Thrasyllus' Plato, too, is theological, but unlike Iamblichus' Plato, he is not only that. In Thrasyllus' tetralogies the ascent to the Good occurs early in the reading course, and it is not the culminating event it seems to be for Iamblichus, who borrowed this part of the tetralogies and threw away the rest. The reader of the tetralogies, after ascending out of the Cave with Plato the theologian in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, descends back into the Cave again immediately with Socrates the midwife. Prof. Hathaway has summed up Iamblichus' interpretation of the Platonic dialogues by saying it leaves out both Socrates himself and the



characteristically Socratic sense of *aporia*.<sup>41</sup> Thrasyllus' tetralogies do at least give us Socrates—not, I think, a genuinely aporetic one, wise only in the knowledge that he knows nothing, but a Socrates nevertheless, one who has already achieved wisdom, but who will be midwife, lover, and teacher to other human beings.

Finally, it can be said that the tetralogies leave us with a truer picture of the importance of political virtue in Plato's thought. In Iamblichus' canon political virtue is the least of the virtues to be learned from the study of Plato. The reader concerns himself with it just after reading the introductory *Alcibiades I*, and then moves on to higher virtues. In the tetralogies, on the contrary, the political dialogues have equal standing with the logical or maieutic or agonistic groups; they are in no way subordinated to the ascent to the Good contained within the logical group. In fact, the reader comes to Plato's political treatises last of all, after much experience of Plato; far from being simply an intermediate stage, the political dialogues in Thrasyllus' reading order actually conclude and perfect the reader's philosophical education.<sup>42</sup>

## NOTES

1. Proclus, *Commentary on Alcibiades I*, ed. Westerink, 11, 11-17.
2. *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, ed. Westerink, 29, 12-34.
3. R. F. Hathaway, "The Neoplatonic Interpretation of Plato: Remarks on its Decisive Characteristics", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7 (1969) 20-22.
4. *Anon. Prol.* 26, 17-18. *τούτων* [sc. *τῶν διαλόγων*] δὲ ἄξιον ἔστω τὴν τάξιν ζητῆσαι, διότι καὶ τούτου, ἡξίωσαν πάντες πράττεσθαι.
5. The text of the anonymous *Prolegomena* appears to have a gap at 26, 31-32, *εἴτα ἐρχόμεθα μετὰ τούτους εἰς τὸν (. . .) περὶ φυσικῶν διδάσκοντα* and mentions only ten dialogues in all, including the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*. Proclus,

however, definitely states that there were twelve in the canon (*Comm. on Alec. I*, 11, 15-17). Westerink, xxxvii-xxxix, suggest excellent reasons for inserting the *Sophist* and *Statesman* in the supposed gap, and this has been accepted by A. J. Festugière, "L'ordre de lecture des dialogues de Platon aux Ve/VIe siècles", *Mus. Helv.* 26 (1969) 284-85; but Hathaway, p. 23, n. 23, still expresses doubt.

6. *Anon. Prol.* 26, 14-16 and 18-34. The anonymous goes on to add that "some think that one should 'do' the *Laws* and the *Republic* also, καὶ τοὺς Νόμους καὶ τὰς πολιτείας πράττειν ἁξιοῦσί τινες."
7. *Anon. Prol.* 26, 5-13 mentions this grouping, but passes it over as for brevity's sake and because it was "not particularly useful" (*μὴ πᾶν τι χρησιμεύουσαν*).
8. Only Thrasyllus is mentioned by Diogenes Laertius (III, 56-62), who cites him directly. But Albinus (*Eisagoge* IV, 12-13, ed. Hermann) also speaks of Dercyllides (*ταύτης τῆς δόξης εἰσὶ Δερκυλλίδης καὶ Θράβυλλος*.) Dercyllides is otherwise known from a few citations in Theon, Proclus, and Simplicius, but nothing in these citations adds to our knowledge of his use of the tetralogies, or even enables us to declare with any confidence when he lived. The common assertion that he preceded Thrasyllus in framing the tetralogies depends for evidence, apart from the inconclusive order of the names as Albinus gives them, upon a sentence in Varro's *De Lingua Latina* (VII.37), in which Varro apparently refers to the myth of the *Phaedo* with the words, "Plato in IIII", which seems to mean "in the fourth (dialogue)". Between 47-45 B.C., then, Varro may have known of some listing or edition of the dialogues in which the *Phaedo* was fourth, as it is in the tetralogies; but Thrasyllus lived until A.D. 36, and cannot have been Varro's authority. Since Dercyllides is the only other name to which we can definitely attach such an arrangement in this period, it is plausible to think that Varro was referring to the tetralogies of Dercyllides.
9. *Schol. Vet. in Juvenalem Sat.* VI, 576: "Thrasylus [sic] multarum artium scientiam professus postremo se dedit

Platonicae sectae ac deinde mathesi, in qua praecipue viguit apud Tiberium, cum quo sub honore eiusdem artis (in) familiaritate vixit..." By the time of Tacitus there were legends about his skill in predicting the future (*Ann.* VI, 21); according to Dio Cassius (*Hist. Rom.* LVIII, 27.1) Thrasyllus accurately foretold the day and hour of his own death. But he seems also to have had a reputation for less arcane knowledge: in the third century Longinus mentions his interpretations of the "Pythagorean and Platonist first principles" together with those of Moderatus, Cronius, and Numenius (Longinus *apud* Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 20, 71-76).

Friedrich Nietzsche conceived a remarkable fascination with "die düstre faustische Persönlichkeit Thrasylls" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke*, 3. Band, ed. H. J. Mette and K. Schlechta, München 1935, p. 349). Inquiring how the practitioner of so feeble a science as astrology could escape the suspicions of a Tiberius, Nietzsche concluded: "Es müssen da persönliche Eigenschaften gewesen sein, etwa eine strenge asketische Haltung, ein Auge voller Trauer, eine würdevolle Gestalt, tiefe Stimme und dergl. was Tiberius in dem Glauben bestärkte, er habe es mit einem ungewöhnlichen überlegen(en) Menschenkind zu thun" (*Werke*, 3. Band, p. 366).

10. Theon's work has perished in the original, but was known to the Arabs. The tenth-century encyclopedist Ibn al-Nadīm says under the heading "Theon": "He was a zealous partisan of Plato. Among his books there was *Sequence of Reading Plato's Books and the Titles of his Compositions*" (Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, tr. Bayard Dodge, N. Y. 1970, p. 614). Al-Nadīm ascribes brief and unfortunately confused statements to Theon which probably derive from this work (in which we may recognize a standard introduction to the Platonic dialogues, comparable to Albinus' *Eisagoge*, Diogenes Laertius III. 48-51 and 56-66, and the *Anon. Prol.* 13-27). One such statement shows that Theon discussed the tetralogies: "Theon said: 'Plato arranged his writings for reading. Each group, consisting of four books, he [Plato] called a tetralogy'" (*Fihrist*, pp. 593-4, Dodge).

Al-Nadīm also gives a list of dialogues on the authority of Theon which do not reproduce the tetralogies, and which I believe to be based on the traditional philosophical characters, or 'types' of the Platonic dialogues; but J. Lippert and K. von Fritz are probably correct to assume that Theon did not intend this second order as a substitution for the tetralogies (see von Fritz, "Theon" *RE* A10, col 2069). Another Arab author, Ibn Abi Usaybiyah, reproduces a recognizable version of the tetralogical ordering which may also derive from Theon; however, he does not mention Theon by name (*Uyun al-Anba*, ed. A. Müller, Königsberg 1884, pp. 53-54). Miss Tamar Frank of Yale University has very kindly supplied me with English translations of the relevant Arabic texts.

11. Albinus, *Eisagoge* IV (p. 149, 1-17 Hermann).
12. Diogenes Laertius III. 56-61.
13. See below, p. 65.
14. *Anon. Prol.* 24, 20; 25, 29. Since so much of the material treated by the anonymous author under this rubric had also been dealt with by Proclus (Westerink, xxxii-xxxiii), and since the anonymous introduces certain objections made by Proclus into his discussion of the tetralogies, it is likely that Proclus, too, discussed the tetralogical ordering. It is entirely possible, in fact, that the grouping of 32 dialogues which the anonymous ascribes to Proclus may simply have been the traditional nine tetralogies, less the four dialogues which Proclus omitted for reasons of his own.
15. Two theories are held about the date of origin of the tetralogies: (1) that they were drawn up by Plato's successors in the Academy at a very early date, or at least the earliest date consistent with the presence of the spurious dialogues in the corpus. The supporters of this theory have included Wilamowitz, *Platon* II (Berlin 1920), p. 324; Bickel, *Rhein. Mus.* 92 (1943-44), pp. 94-96 and 97-159; Erbse, *Geschichte der Textüberlieferung* I (Zürich 1961), pp. 219-221; and recently Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968), pp. 196-197.

(2) that they were drawn up in the first century B.C., either by Dercyllides or by some near contemporary of his and of Varro's (see note 8, above). This view was first proposed by K. F. Hermann, *De Thrasyllō grammatico et mathematico* (Göttingen 1853, p. 13, who believed, however, that Dercyllides was responsible only for the first tetralogy, Thrasyllus for the rest. The case for the date in the first century was stated in its most cogent form by Usener, *Gött. Nachr.* 1892, Nr. 2, pp. 25-50; Nr. 6, pp. 181-215 (= *Kleine Schriften* III, pp. 104-162). See also Alline, *Histoire du texte de Platon* (Paris, 1915), p. 113; Susemihl, *Philologus* 54 (1895), p. 573; and Chroust *Hermes* 93 (1965), pp. 34-46.

For reasons too complicated to discuss here, I think (2) the more likely explanation.

16. "Die grosse Konstante der Platonüberlieferung," E. Bickel, *Rhein. Mus.* 92 (1943-44), pp. 100-101.
17. Albinus, *Eisagoge* IV (P. 149, 1-13 Hermann): ἐπεὶ οὖν θεωρήκαμεν τὴν διαφορὰν αὐτῶν ὡς πέφυκε γίγνεσθαι καὶ τοὺς χαρακτήρας, ἐπὶ τούτοις λέγωμεν, ἀπὸ ποίων διαλόγων δεῖ ἀρχομένους ἐντυγχάνειν τῷ Πλάτωνος λόγῳ. διάφοροι γὰρ δόξαι γεγόνασιν· οἱ μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν Ἐπιστολῶν ἀρχονται, οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεάγου· εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ κατὰ τετραλογίαν διελόντες αὐτοὺς καὶ τάττουσι πρῶτην τετραλογίαν περιέχουσαν τὸν Εὐθύφρονα καὶ τὴν Ἀπολογίαν καὶ τὸν Κρίτωνα καὶ τὸν Φαῖδωνα . . . ταύτης τῆς δόξης εἰσὶ Δερκυλλίδης καὶ Θράσυλλος.
18. Al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, pp. 593-594 Dodge. Ibn al-Qifti (A.D. 1172-1248) reproduces the same statement, but appears simply to be copying Nadīm Ta'rikh al-Hukama', ed. J. Lippert, Leipzig 1903, pp. 17-18).
19. Diogenes Laertius III.36, 20-25: Θράσυλλος δὲ φησι καὶ κατὰ τὴν τραγικὴν τετραλογίαν ἐκδοῦναι αὐτὸν [sc. Plato] τοὺς διαλόγους (cf. *Anon. Prol.* 24, 20). This statement does not necessarily mean that Thrasyllus thought his own tetralogies were anything more than an approximation of the original ones.

Theon's extant work *Mathematics Useful for the Reading of Plato* cites Thrasyllus frequently, which sug-

gests the possibility that Theon's lost work on the dialogues, called by Nadīm *The Sequence of Reading Plato's Books and the Titles of his Compositions*, may also go back to Thrasyllus.

20. Diogenes Laertius IX. 45-49.
21. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 26.
22. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 24: ἐκάστη δὲ ἐννεάδι τὰ οἰκεία φέρων συναφόρησα δούς καὶ τάξω πρῶτην τοῖς ἐλαφροτέροις προβλήμασιν.
23. Although modern scholars have not noticed the significance of the tetralogies as a reading course, the attempt to find an explanation for the order of the dialogues within the tetralogies is by no means a new one: see H. Alline, *Histoire du texte de Platon* (Paris 1915), pp. 115-117; and U. von Wilamowitz, *Platon* II (Berlin 1920), pp. 324-325. Both of these discussions, which are too long to summarize here, contain many valuable observations; but both men were concerned primarily with the mechanical process of getting from Plato's own "trilogies" to the tetralogies, and so tend to explain the placing of individual dialogues in terms of filling "gaps". I wish to claim, on the contrary, that the dialogues were deliberately arranged to form a systematic and coherent progression from beginning to end.
24. Primarily Diogenes Laertius III. 56-61; Albinus *Eisagoge* IV, 1-14; and the *Anonymous Prolegomena* 24.20-25.24.
25. Diogenes Laertius III. 57, 5-6: πρῶτην μὲν οὖν τετραλογίαν τίθῃσι τὴν κοινὴν ὑπόθεσιν ἔχουσαν· παραδείξει γὰρ βούλεται ὁποῖος ἂν εἴη ὁ τοῦ φιλοσόφου βίος.
26. There are at least two ways of construing the word τὴν in the first sentence:  
(1) τὴν goes with ἔχουσαν, both referring back to τετραλογίαν. It might be inferred from this, however, that the first tetralogy is the only one which has a common subject, and that the rest do not, while in fact Thrasyllus and the inventor of the tetralogies must certainly have ascribed common subjects to at least the second and the eighth tetralogies, which are at least partially suggested by Plato himself.

(2) τὴν goes with κωμὴν ὑπόθεσιν, i.e., "he establishes a first tetralogy having the common subject; for he wishes to give a paradigm of what the philosopher's life is like." To speak of the first tetralogy containing the common subject would appear to refer this common subject not only to the first tetralogy, but to the entire series, so that we might paraphrase it, "Thrasyllos establishes a first tetralogy having (within itself) the common subject (of the whole reading sequence)". This would be a very significant addition to our knowledge of the tetralogies if it is what Diogenes meant. It should be noted that this way of taking the sentence derives some support from a similar turn of phrase in Albinus' description of the same tetralogy (*Eis.* IV, p. 149, 6-7 Hermann): τὰττουσι πρῶτην τετραλογία περιέχουσιν τὸν Εὐθύφρονα κτλ. If τὴν went with ἔχουσιν in Diogenes, we might expect a similar τὴν before περιέχουσιν in Albinus; instead, we find τὸν Εὐθύφρονα used in the same way as τὴν κωμὴν ὑπόθεσιν.

27. Albinus' account of the first tetralogy is no help, since although it roughly corresponds to that found in Diogenes, it diverges in a significant detail. After mentioning that the first tetralogy contains the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*, Albinus goes on to give the reasons for their inclusion together:

... the *Euthyphro*, since in it the trial is announced to Socrates; the *Apology*, since it was necessary for him to give a defence; next the *Crito*, because of the homily in the prison; then the *Phaedo*, since in it Socrates reaches the end of his life. Of this opinion are Dercyllides and Thrasyllos; but they seem to me to have intended to apply an order to personae and to circumstances of lives, which is perhaps useful for other purposes, but not for what we want now. . . .

Albinus refers the first tetralogy to specific personae and what happen to them, that is, to Socrates and his trial. Diogenes, on the other hand, speaks of these personae and events as paradigmatic, referring not to Socrates but to "the philosopher" in general. Since Albinus clearly states

his interpretation of the first tetralogy as a personal opinion (δοκοῦσι μοι) "they seem to me . . ." it is likely that if either of these two sources preserves Thrasyllos' own explanation, it is Diogenes rather than Albinus.

28. Proclus, *Commentary on the Parmenides*, p. 630, 37ff. Cousin: εἰσὶ δέ τινες καὶ γεγονόσιν τῶν ἔμπροσθεν, οἳ τὸν τοῦ διαλόγου τοῦδε σκοπὸν εἰς λογικὴν ἀνέπεμψαν γυμνασίαν, τὴν μὲν ἐπιγραφὴν καίτοι παμπάλαιον οὔσαν τὴν Περί τῶν ἰδεῶν ἀτιμάντες . . .
29. Albinus, *Didaskalikos* VI. (p. 159, 4-7): τοὺς δὲ ὑποθετικούς ἐν πολλοῖς βιβλίοις εὐρήσομεν ἐρωτωμένους ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, μάλιστα δ' ἐν τῷ Παρμενίδῃ τοιούτους εὐροίμεν ἀν λόγους.
30. *Did.* VI. (p. 159, 34-35): καὶ μὴν τὰς δέκα κατηγορίας ἐν τε τῷ Παρμενίδῃ καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις ὑπέδειξε . . . . Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, p. 767, 10ff. Müller speaking of ἡ διαιρετικὴ μέθοδος: ἥς τὴν μὲν γυμνασίαν ὁ Πλάτων ἐν Σοφιστῇ καὶ Πολιτικῷ πεποιήται, τὴν δὲ ἐξ αὐτῆς χρεῖαν ἐπέδειξεν οὐκ ἐν τούτοις μόνον, ἀλλὰ σαφέστατα μὲν ἅμα καὶ τελεώτατα κατὰ τε Φίληβον καὶ Φαῖδρον.
31. Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, p. 767, 10ff. Müller speaking of ἡ διαιρετικὴ μέθοδος: ἥς τὴν μὲν γυμνασίαν ὁ Πλάτων ἐν Σοφιστῇ καὶ Πολιτικῷ πεποιήται, τὴν δὲ ἐξ αὐτῆς χρεῖαν ἐπέδειξεν οὐκ ἐν τούτοις μόνον, ἀλλὰ σαφέστατα μὲν ἅμα καὶ τελεώτατα κατὰ τε Φίληβον καὶ Φαῖδρον.
32. As reconstructed by Westerink, xl. — It is interesting to compare the recent study by E. Wyller, *Der späte Platon* (Hamburg 1970), in which it is argued that Plato describes an ascent from the Cave in the *Cratylus* and the *Theaetetus*; then describes the synthesis achieved once outside the Cave, in the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Parmenides*; and finally describes the descent back, in the *Philebus*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, *Laws*, *Epinomis*.
33. See Diogenes Laertius III.49.
34. H. Alline, *Histoire du texte de Platon*, p. 116, emphasizes the theme of love in these dialogues. Counting the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* among them (mistakenly, I

believe), he speaks of them as "un groupe de dix dialogues érotiques où Socrate converse avec des jeunes gens ou à propos de jeunes gens que généralement il est censé d'aimer."

35. Wilamowitz, *Platon* II, p. 325: "Von der Sechsten [Tetralogie], die die grossen Kämpfe mit den Sophisten enthält, wies der Euthydem durch dem Protreptikos des Kleinias auf die Fünfte zurück. — Both Alline and Wilamowitz recognized a grouping of dialogues on the sophists, but Wilamowitz excluded the *Menexenus* from it, and Alline the *Ion* and the *Menexenus*.
36. Albinus, *Eisagoge* IV (p. 149, 12-14 Hermann): ταύτης τῆς δόξης εἰσὶ Δερκυλλίδης καὶ Θράσυλλος, δοκοῦσι δέ μοι προσώποις καὶ βίων περιστάσεων ἡθεληκέναι τάξιν ἐπιθεῖναι.
37. Albinus, *Eisagoge* III (p. 148, 28-29 Hermann): . . . ὁ μὲν ὑφηγητικός τῶν πραγμάτων στοχάζεται, ὁ δὲ ζητητικός τῶν προσώπων.
38. *Anon. Prol.* 26, 12-16: λέγομεν δὲ ὁ ὁ θεῖος Ἰάμβλιχος ἐποίησεν. αὐτὸς τοῦν πάντας εἰς ἑξήκοντα διαλόγους, καὶ τούτων τοὺς μὲν φυσικοὺς ἔλεγεν, τοὺς δὲ Θεολογικοὺς· πάλιν δὲ τοὺς δώδεκα συνήρει εἰς δύο, εἰς τε τὸν Τίμαιον καὶ τὸν Παρμενίδην, ὧν τὸν μὲν Τίμαιον ἐπὶ πᾶσι τοῖς φυσικοῖς, τὸν δὲ παρμενίδην τοῖς Θεολογικοῖς. Westerink translates διήρει and συνήρει as "reduced". Hathaway, p. 23 n. 24, suggests "abridged".
39. Hathaway, p. 25.
40. *Anon. Prol.* 26, 14.
41. Hathaway, p. 26.
42. This paper, written in 1973, was based upon an unfinished chapter of my doctoral dissertation, and the argument of the first two sections of this paper was subsequently enlarged and improved by a number of revisions. The changes, however, have been changes of detail, and my interpretation of the tetralogies remains essentially the same as that proposed here. The final version may now be seen in Ch. 3 of "The Organization of the Platonic Corpus Between the First Century B.C. and the Second Century A.D.", unpublished dissertation (on microfilm), Yale University 1974.

## PART TWO

### The Interpretation of Neoplatonism

# Plotinus' Approach to Categorical Theory

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## I

Contemporary writers on Plotinus and his Neoplatonism have found it difficult to agree on his definitive position concerning the value and relevance of Aristotle's categories for understanding the nature of the sensible world. W. R. Inge, a generation ago, stated that "the long discussion of the categories in the Sixth Ennead seems to me . . . the least interesting part of the whole book."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, we have such interpreters as P. V. Pistorius who find this part of Plotinus' philosophy not only theoretically significant but also a definite advancement in the history of the subject. Pistorius has gone as far as to say that "the categories of Plotinus are the expression of his superiority over Greek thinkers before his time."<sup>2</sup> The evaluative aspect of this view need not concern us for the moment. The issue which deserves close examination as being directly related to our theme is whether Plotinus retained the Aristotelian categories in their original meaning as giving a fundamentally correct analysis of the most general properties of sensible objects. Opinion is divided on this crucial issue between (a) those who say that Plotinus subordinated the Aristotelian categories of the sensible to the Platonic Forms of the intelligible world, and (b) those who take the position that Plotinus accepted Aristotle's categories as proposed but limited their usefulness exclusively to the domain of the sensible.

The position I take in this paper is closer to (a) but for a number of reasons I have found it necessary to go beyond its mild claims. Thus I wish to argue here that certain profound

differences in the world-views of Plotinus and the philosophers of the Hellenic period, Plato and Aristotle in particular, led Plotinus to a radical transformation of the metaphysical concepts he borrowed from both Plato and Aristotle. On the theoretical side, it should be noted that whenever Plotinus discusses categorical concepts, he is always viewing Aristotle as an enemy of Platonism;<sup>3</sup> again, it is he, not Plato, who is regarding the highest genera of the *Sophist* as rival categorical principles. On the cultural side, Plotinus' Oriental and strong religious concerns, important as these are to his conception of the One and Good, union with which is the goal of life, as beyond Being, necessarily molded his theoretical orientation and called for a reworking of the significance of (i) the five highest genera of the intelligible world and (ii) the highest types of predication of the sensible world. Hence, when discussing Plotinus' indebtedness to the terminology of his predecessors it is misleading to assume that he puts their conceptual apparatus to the same use. It is the purpose of this paper to exhibit in general outline the basic considerations that define the Plotinian approach to categorical theory and also expose the grounds on which he builds his case for recasting the meanings of categorical concepts.

Two basic considerations appear fundamental to Plotinus' critique and recasting of the classical categorical theories but only one of these pertains to his approach to Plato's highest genera, whereas both are needed in the case of Aristotle's concepts.

1. The One is the source of the Intellectual Principle and hence above predication.<sup>4</sup> Being ultimate, it is beyond the predicative relevance of the highest genera. Furthermore, since the realm to which Plato's highest genera pertain is not ultimate but derivative, their ontological significance cannot possibly be that which Plato assigned to them when he understood them as having ontological primacy.

2. The sensible world for Plotinus is neither ultimate in the Aristotelian sense, nor the work of the Demiurge as depicted in Plato's *Timaeus*. Hence the Aristotelian categories are not the appropriate concepts the sensible realm requires for its intelligibility precisely because its ontological structure and

significance are to be understood in ways that cannot be fully illumined even on Platonic grounds. If so, the referential adequacy of Aristotle's categories must be adjudicated at the level of the Intellectual Principle and only after the logical and ontological significations of the Platonic highest genera have been properly worked out on exclusively Plotinian criteria.

Thus, by way of ordering these tasks we have: (a) the recasting of Plato's highest genera in the light of Plotinus' own view of *Nous* as the first emanation from the One; (b) the recasting of the Aristotelian categorical concepts in the light of the redefined functions of the highest genera designed now to refer to and explore conceptually the Intelligible Realm; (c) the recasting of the Aristotelian categories in the light of (a) and (b) to refer correctly to Plotinus' own view of the nature of the sensible object. Given this program, it should not be too difficult to understand why Plotinus insists on saying that if the same predicates are said of both sensibles and intelligibles, the particular sensibles admit such predicates only equivocally. Thus no problem in the methodology of categorical signification can be solved apart from the fundamentals of Plotinus' ontology.

## II

Philip Merlan adopted the view that Plotinus accepted the Aristotelian categories but limited them to the sensible world:

Plotinus refused to accept any doctrine of categories which would apply the same concepts to the world of the intelligence and that of the sensible. When he developed his own doctrine of categories . . . he applied Aristotelian categories only to the realm of the sensible. As categories of the world of the intellect, he applied the five genera of the *Sophist*. Prophyry did not follow Plotinus; nor did other Platonists.<sup>5</sup>

Professor John M. Rist defended the position of the subordination of Aristotelian (and Stoic) categories to "thoroughly Platonic principles":

Although no one can deny the difficulty and sometimes the tedium of this section of the *Enneads* it has considerable philosophical value. It appears to be the opinion of certain polemical interpreters that Plotinus' whole discus-

sion is misguided—and so it is if looked at solely from an Aristotelian point of view. For the fact is that Plotinus' critique of both the Aristotelian and Stoic categories depends upon certain of his own thoroughly Platonic principles. And these principles need clarification not merely to show the presuppositions with which Plotinus approaches the Aristotelian categories but for their own sake, since in the section of the *Enneads* devoted to the categories we find almost the only passages where Plotinus deals with the metaphysical status of the sensible object.<sup>6</sup>

It would not be necessary to treat these two positions separately since any remarks on the claims of the "subordination" position pertain *a fortiori* to the other. One must readily concede that the immediate impression the reader has from a first reading of *Ennead* VI is that Plotinus, reacting strongly against the Aristotelian principles needed to render intelligible the particularized sensible *ousia*, proceeded to establish a modified version of Plato's highest genera to replace Aristotle's categories. It is a correct impression but it does not take us very far.

Professor Rist is correct in suggesting that we concentrate on understanding the Plotinian position on the status of the sensible object, but to say that the principles upon which Plotinus depends for his critique are "thoroughly Platonic" is misleading. As we hope to show, the context of Plotinus' theory of categories is defined by considerations that are far more Hellenistic than they are Hellenic, and this applies equally to the so-called Platonism of Plotinus. The consequence of the position I take in this paper is that Plotinus may emerge as more original than he is usually taken to be, but also that he departs so far from the classical outlook of Plato and Aristotle as to raise doubts about calling him "the last of the Greeks." In fact, he is closer to the Middle Ages and Renaissance thought, and in a great many cases to modern philosophy than many a historian of philosophy has been prepared to recognize. To this topic we will return later in the paper.

The basic question that awaits an answer is: if we assume that Plotinus has a theory of categories comparable in interest, say, to that of Aristotle and the Stoics, to what entities does his

set of categorical principles pertain and what is their status? In this connection we need to understand what Plotinus had in mind when he discussed the sensible object. Three things must be remembered here: (a) Aristotle and Plotinus differ significantly in their approaches to the sensible realm and hold profoundly diverging interpretations on the nature of the sensible object. (b) Plotinus places the sensible object in a light very different from the way Aristotle does, to the point that his way of understanding the Aristotelian categories of sensible *ousia* is controlled by his determination to relegate the sensible *ousia* to the status of pseudo-substance. Thus, according to Plotinus, the Aristotelian *tode ti*, the *ousia prote* of the *Categories*, is not really *ousia* in the highest meaning of the word; this being the case, the Aristotelian way of understanding the relationship between *ousia* and quality in the sensible object must be rejected. (c) Plotinus deliberately alters the meanings of Aristotle's concepts for the analysis of *ousia* through his own position on the nature of the sensible, to wit, that the sensible is something analysable into a finite number of immanent qualities each of which is dependent on its corresponding form. If I am correct in these observations, it would follow that Plotinus' critique of Aristotle is more devastating in intent than has hitherto been suspected. For it would appear that the Aristotelian categories are not simply inapplicable to the realm of the intelligible; they are inadequate even for the task of understanding the nature and properties of the sensible object. Recognition of this radical aspect of Plotinus' criticism makes him the theoretical forerunner of all modern thinkers who rejected Aristotle's conception of physical substance and the categories as the ultimate types of attribution and property analysis.

### III

Let us assume that Plotinus' uttermost purpose was to delineate the role of reason as paving the path for the soul's union with the One—there is good ground for this position since Plotinus' concern extends beyond that of the knower. In *Ennead* IV. 8. 1, Plotinus speaks unmistakably about his *union with the One*:



Many times it has happened; lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and self-centered; beholding a marvellous beauty; then, more than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine; stationing within It by having attained that activity; poised above whatsoever within the Intellectual is less than the Supreme: yet, there comes the moment of descent from intellection to reasoning, and after that sojourn in the divine, I ask myself how it happens that I can now be descending, and how did the Soul ever enter into my body, the Soul which, even within the body, is the high thing it has shown itself to be.<sup>7</sup>

It is this ontological union with the source of *being* that determines the place to be assigned to categorical theory and how the highest genera as concepts must be employed for the attainment of the goals of knowledge.<sup>8</sup> It would seem then that if categorical thinking in Aristotle's sense has a role to play in the return or *nostos* of the soul, this is limited to understanding the sensible world, and hence it is only propaedeutic to the higher dialectic employed in the exploration of the intelligible realm. Small wonder, then, that the application of the Aristotelian categories to the ethical, above and beyond the sensible, is abhorrent to Plotinus. To talk of *being* as having many meanings (*pollachōs legomenon*) in the realm of the sensible is one thing, but to do the same in the intelligible realm is quite another.

Be that as it may, Plotinus is unable to accept Aristotle's views on the relevance of categorical theory even to the sensible realm unless the categories are decidedly recast in the light of the Neoplatonic views on ontology so that they may be assigned new functions deriving from a higher authority. It appears, then that Plotinus' position is not just a case of outright or uncritical rejection of Aristotelianism in the field of categorical thought; the issue is further complicated by the complex case of his half-hearted Platonism. If we may speak of his goal in this connection, it seems to involve more than the restoring of the highest genera at the heart of the conceptual analysis of the intelligible realm. More fundamentally, he is concerned with

assigning to these genera new axiological functions above and beyond anything suggested in Plato's *Sophist*.

We must ask: what sort of Platonist is Plotinus? One thing shines clearly throughout the *Enneads*: Plotinus is bent on including into Plato's universe a kind of world which was hardly familiar or even of immediate interest to Plato, but it was a universe Plotinus could not do philosophy without. That Plato's Dialogues lend themselves to a broadening of their conceptual and mythological boundaries is a most relevant fact, but too vast to be treated in this paper. Suffice it to say that Plotinus was neither the first nor the last to inflate and expand the dramatic universe found in Plato's works. The Neoplatonism Plotinus ushered in was one he found in the making and to which he gave a most powerful and decisive direction by intensifying the concern for the intelligible, to be more precise, the *superlunary* or, if one prefers, the trans-physical universe. The outlook was sustained by a religious fervor that found in Plotinus a willing and dedicated advocate. By seeking to complete and round off this outlook, Plotinus shifted also the center of gravity of the ancient world from the naturalistic ethic of the Greeks with its emphasis on the excellences of the *politēs* to the trans-physical quest of philosophical salvation with its unrequited desire for the flight or rather the return to, and union of the soul with, the source of all *Being*. The sensible world, its processes, its principles, kinds of being, its conditions and ends, the environment it provides for human beings, natural and political, the excellences it demands for the understanding and the completion of human happiness, all these and more became secondary concerns and only preliminaries to the new Platonists. They created the trend of reading the *Timaeus* with religious zeal but hardly any concern for Plato's humor, irony, least of all his authentic Athenian passion for the fate and fortune of the Greek *polis*.

What the Neoplatonists on the whole ushered in during the critical times of the late Hellenistic period was a kind of intense awareness of a realm of cosmic existence that could make life worth living and the soul worth having. They cultivated this realm with the dedication of a single-minded lover, bent on inventing even the form of the beloved if he had to do it. It was

the probing into the imaginatively expanded superlunary region of the universe and the tracing of its origins back to the source, its goodness, so to speak, that fired their intellectual imaginations. In the process, they found in this region things Plato never dreamt of, things far beyond the limits of Aristotle's ontology, and in general, things no Hellenic thinker was prepared to acknowledge without serious reservations. Yet it was a realm, in principle at least, familiar to the Greeks, the understanding of which some of the best minds had made it their highest goal. But Plato was not a Neoplatonist; nor was Aristotle. That both had contributed to the logical exploration of a universe far exceeding the boundaries of the sensible domain does not make them Plotinus' intended forefathers, for the Neoplatonic universe, in its ethical and metaphysical aspects, had in a serious way turned its back on the classical outlook.

The Hellenistic mode of philosophizing found in Neoplatonism an effective medium to transpose the levels of value familiar to classical Platonism as levels of supersensible reality. To this spiritual world the Aristotelian categories of being were their sensuous design. Although Plotinus assigned new functions and tasks to the revitalized highest genera of Plato's *Sophist*, he recognized that even the recharging of these principles could not carry the philosopher beyond the level of *Nous*. Even the higher dialectic fell short of what was needed for "the flight of the alone to the alone." This last step toward the final ecstasy Plotinus must take alone. Here he is no longer Plato's disciple. Being neither master nor disciple, he is all by himself, except for Porphyry's witness. In hope of losing the self, he concludes a *nostos* of the soul to the realm where the categories do not obtain and even above that which the higher dialectic illumines. It is a *nostos* that makes Plotinus the first of the non-Greeks.<sup>9</sup>

#### IV

The Neoplatonic conception of the intelligible world to which Plotinus subscribes involves more than a difference in content from what Plato believed it to be. It called for a new approach to the intelligible beings (*noēta ontā*), and hence a

categorical theory appropriate to them. The human act of intellection or *noesis* must be suitable to the object of intellection. To meet his task he needed two things in order to develop an adequate set of categorical concepts: (1) examine the possibilities the Aristotelian concepts have for being redefined so as to serve the Neoplatonic intelligible beings; (2) return to Plato's highest genera of the *Sophist*. Thus, in *Ennead* V. 1. 4, where he discusses "The Three Initial Hypostases," he states:

... the Intellectual Principle is all and therefore its entire content is simultaneously present in that identity: this is pure being in eternal actuality: ... and everything, in that entire content, is Intellectual-Principle and Authentic-Existence; and the total of all in Intellectual-Principle active and Being entire. (MacKenna)

Further in the same chapter he adds the following statement:

Thus the Primals (the first 'Categories,' *ta prōta*) are seen to be: Intellectual-Principle (*nous*); Existence (*on*); Difference (*heterotēs*); Identity (*tautotēs*); we must include also Motion (*kinēsis*) and Rest (*stasis*): Motion provides for the intellectual act. Rest preserves identity as Difference gives at once a knower and a known, for, failing this, all is one, and silent. (MacKenna)

The chapter concludes: "The Intellectual Cosmos thus a manifold, number and Quantity arise: Quality is the specific character of Ideas which stand as the principles for which all else derives" (MacKenna). The variations of this list of *noēta* which we find in VI, 2, 15 and VI, 2, 8 need not concern us here since they do not raise relevant fundamental problems. What is important, however, is to note that Plotinus (a) is not strictly adopting Plato's highest genera, and (b) is using them in novel ways to develop a theory of his own and to criticize Aristotle. Plotinus' understanding of the meaning of the Aristotelian categories, and why they do not apply to his supersensible reality, is clearly stated in *Ennead* VI, 2, 4:

If we had to ascertain the nature of body (*sōmatos physin*) and the place it holds in the universe, surely we should take some sample of body, say stone, and examine into what constituents it may be divided. There would be what

we think of as the substrate of stone; its quantity—in this case, a magnitude; its quality—for example, the colour of stone. As with stone, so with every other body: we should see that in this thing, body, there are three distinguishable characteristics—the pseudo-substance (*hoion ousia*), the quantity (*poson*), the quality (*poion*)—though they all make one and are only logically trisected, the three being found to constitute the unit thing, body. If motion were equally inherent in its constitution, we should include this as well, and the four would form a unity, the single body depending upon them all for its unity and characteristic nature.

The same method must be applied in examining the Intellectual Substance (*ousia noētē*) and the genera and first principles of the Intellectual sphere. (MacKenna)

The important thing to remember here is that what Plotinus is looking for is nothing less than a set of concepts that are neither abstractions nor generic properties of sensible things. All characteristics of sensible reality must be dropped when thought proceeds to comprehend the nature of the Intellectual Principle. Thus, whenever he seems to employ Aristotelian concepts originally designed to apply to the sensible world, he is actually stripping such concepts of all their sensible referential efficacy in order to have them take on a radically new meaning applicable exclusively to the intelligibles; and when they pertain to the sensible entities they do so only homonymously. That is why he says at VI, 2, 4: "It is an Intellectual Being we have to consider, an Authentic Existent, possessed of a unity surpassing that of any sensible thing" (MacKenna). Now this topic brings us to Plotinus' similarities with Plato and his use of the highest genera.

1. Plotinus postulates (when all passages are taken together) the following categories: *Being*, *Motion*, *Rest*, *Identity*, *Difference* and *Nous* or *Thought*, the last one as correlative to *Being*; Plato's highest genera are: *Being*, *Non-Being*, *Identity*, *Difference*, *Motion* and *Rest*.<sup>10</sup>

2. With Plotinus, the Ultimate One is beyond all plurality but includes the One-in-Many (*plethos hen*) of the Intellectual Principle. There is no such principle in Plato, and it

would take quite a bit of straining to interpret the Form of the Good as being the equivalent of the One.

3. The world of the Platonic Forms is a plural world and there is no definitive doctrine in the Dialogues in favor of a unifying principle comparable to that found in Plotinus' system.

4. There is no movement in Plato's world of the Forms. Plotinus interprets motion to be real but supersensible. *Nous* is also movement; its *dynamis* is the efficient cause.

The detailed treatment of any single one of the Plotinian intelligibles and how each differs from its original Platonic correspondent, will require the length of a monograph. Our purpose is not to undertake to demonstrate the actual differences between Plato and Plotinus on any particular doctrinal point, but to indicate the deeper issues that underlie Plotinus' recasting of the metaphysical significance of each of the highest genera. Hence the Plotinian innovations in ontological theory, for instance, the placing of the intelligibles in the Divine *Nous* or the attribution of infinity to *Nous*, and other related doctrines, are sufficient to suggest some of the grounds for Plotinus' transformation of the meaning of certain Platonic concepts which his brand of Neoplatonism mistakenly associated with categorical principles. Be that as it may, without this revision of the Platonism he inherited it is next to the impossible to capture the full effect of his approach to Aristotle's categories.

## V

What remains to be explored in general outline is Plotinus' criticism of the Aristotelian theory of categories. What is relevant to our theme is not the details of the argument or the subtle points in Plotinus' refutations, but rather the broader vision of the Neoplatonic tradition on which he bases his effort to identify and evaluate the usefulness of the Aristotelian view.

Plotinus, because of the fact that he bases his critique on an idealistic, superlunary expansion of the cosmos, a view developing out of a radical shifting from the classical orientation of metaphysical concerns, next to the Stoics, is the first major critic of Aristotle's *ousia*. In other words, he sets the pattern of criticism the purpose of which is to expose the

inadequacy of Aristotle's ultimate types of predicates of beings for a complete account of reality. The basic idea here is that Plotinus shows how a conceptualization of *ousia* and *on*, different from that of classical Aristotelianism, requires a critique and reconstruction of categorical theory. In this sense, Plotinus is more than the leading Neoplatonist who comes to grips with the problem of the categories of being in the late Hellenistic period. He is in a definite sense the precursor of the medieval Arabic, Jewish, and Christian efforts to replace Aristotle's categories with more "adequate" theories; also he sets the tradition for the Renaissance and modern developments in continental philosophy, from Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant to Hegel and the German, British and American neo-Hegelians, that sought to reveal the categories of ultimate reality as process and dialectical movement.

However, the crucial problem in understanding Plotinus' attack rests with the correctness of his interpretation of Aristotle. A careful reading of the text will convince even the most sympathetic of his readers that Plotinus utilizes Plato in order to criticize Aristotle, often with such severity as to cause Porphyry's systematic protestation.<sup>11</sup> The fact remains that Plotinus appears unwilling to accept the full range of Aristotle's meaning of sensible *ousia*. He is equally if not more reluctant to appreciate the relevance of Aristotle's categorical theory to the dialectical clarification of the various theories of soul or the aid it offers toward solving problems of definition as well as fact in the study of living beings. In any event, the Aristotelian model of categorical analysis remains on the whole outside the Plotinian philosophy of method. With Plotinus, the primacy of the sensible object, which characterized much of the classical ontology, steadily vanishes. Thus the categories associated with this sort of ontology recede into the background as concepts of lesser significance. It is no accident that the only place where Plotinus deals extensively with the sensible object is the section where he discusses and criticizes the Aristotelian and Stoic categories. His own view of the sensible objects appears quite close to Plato's but with a heavier accent on the low place it assigns to them in the scale of ontic levels. The sensibles belong to the world of becoming; they are subjects of meaningful

statements, either true or false; they are analyzable into a finite number of qualities—immanent, to be sure—each of which is dependent on its corresponding Form; they admit the same predicates as the Forms but only equivocally; even if called "wholes" they are not true substances but imitations of reality; their essences are not part of their being but to be found only by looking at the Intellectual Principle.

Given this "ontology" of the sensible objects it is small wonder that Plotinus assigns to the categorical theories dealing with their nature a low place in the hierarchy of intellectual tools and rational order. At best, such theories can be regarded as propaedeutic only to yield to the higher dialectic. Equally limited is their usefulness to ethics, for if man is a dweller in two realms, the sensible and the intelligible, it is only the latter which gives knowledge and value. Given the division of realms, categorical thinking about the sensible object receives the significance of its quest from a higher authority. This applies more so to the signification of its constituent concepts. To illustrate this important point, one need only recall here *Ennead* II, Tractate 6, which deals with "quality." It affords a clear-cut case of the recasting of a key concept used by both Plato, Aristotle, and also the Stoics, with reference to understanding certain properties of the sensible object.

Plotinus' way of handling the signification of quality is quite ingenious; it makes the reader suspect that Plotinus is most eager to isolate this concept for special treatment since its troublesome character could prove a source of embarrassment for his system. In addition, Plotinus comes to grips with the category of quality because he is anxious to settle the difficulties he has with explaining the presence of qualities in the sensible objects. The result is that he offers his solution with the aid of subtle distinctions not required by Plato's or Aristotle's ontologies. In other words, we have in this case a clear example of his recasting of a classical concept to suit the demands of a radically different metaphysical outlook.

In effect, Plotinus' position leads to the condemnation of Aristotle's emphasis on inquiry into sensible or natural subject-matters and also a return to an alleged Platonic view which more than heralds the recession of sensible *ousiai* to the

background of ontological investigations. It quite strongly advocates the demise of the Aristotelian model and its replacement by the dialectic of intercategory concepts in the form of reconstituted highest genera. With Plotinus, these concepts were elevated to a higher ontological and axiological place than either Plato or Aristotle were prepared to grant. This is one of the major legacies of Neoplatonism to modern metaphysics. It contributed in no small measure toward giving *Logos* its supremacy over *Being*.

## VI

Plotinus' views in the area of categorical thought came at a time when the transition from the ancient world to another period was gaining momentum and the transformation of concepts and ideas had become indispensable to the needs for intellectual adjustments. What Plotinus did for categorical theory far exceeded his designs for a critique and reconstruction of basic views in metaphysical analysis. He provided a model and a direction which proved influential for many centuries to come. Every extant commentary of the late and post-Hellenistic periods on Aristotle's *Categories* was written by Neoplatonists who interestingly enough in their tone and style followed Porphyry's conciliatory approach rather than Plotinus. Somehow, the realm to which metaphysical reflection turned to satisfy its quest had been substantially delineated by the Neoplatonic vision of the intelligible universe. In the light of these considerations, the present paper was so designed as to consider Plotinus' views on the question of the categories for the purpose of (a) understanding the intent and scope of his theory and (b) placing in proper perspective the critical side of Plotinus' approach to Plato's genera and Aristotle's categories.

The familiar Plotinian commonplace that the ideal world is the archetype of the sensible world is as correct as it is misleading. The difficulty with it is that if taken literally it tends to obscure Plotinus' significant differences with Plato's cardinal doctrines just as it exaggerates those between Plato and Aristotle. Part of the thesis of this paper is the claim that Plotinus is no closer to Plato than he is to Aristotle. His alleged affinity to Plato owes more to the clichés perpetuated by the phrasology of the

Neoplatonic tradition than to the innovations the Neoplatonists introduced in ontology and cosmology in the name of Plato. It is these new winds of doctrine that should count heavily in the comparative analyses of the theoretical affinities between Plotinus, Plato and Aristotle. With Plotinus, we have the appearance of a radically different ontology of the sensible object. If anything, it is non-Hellenic in character. To be more precise, it lies at the heart of an effort to hellenize an already conceptualized Oriental heritage and render it intelligible with the aid of established philosophical concepts to which new meanings had been assigned in order to perform novel cultural tasks. Plotinus proved to be a major force in the transformation of the classical heritage to intellectualize the emerging demands of a new religious ethos. Seen in this light Plotinus should be regarded not as "the last of the Greeks" but the first of the post-classical metaphysicians.<sup>12</sup> In any event, he appears to be the key transitional figure between the ancient and the post-classical modes of ontological thinking.

## NOTES

1. W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (London, 1929, 3rd edition) I, p. 58.
2. P. V. Pistorius, *Plotinus and Neoplatonism* (Cambridge, 1952), p. 39.
3. E. Brehier, in his "notice" to the *Enneads* VI, Part 1 (Paris, 1936), p. 8.
4. He states in *Ennead* VI. 9. 3: "Strictly speaking, we ought not to apply any terms at all to It; but we should, so to speak, run around the outside of It trying to interpret our own feelings about It, sometimes drawing near and sometimes falling away in our perplexities about It." Translation by H. Armstrong, in the Preface to the Loeb edition of Plotinus' *Enneads*, I, p. xv.
5. See Merlan's essay, "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," Part 1 in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, edited by A. H. Armstrong

- (Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 37-38. Even the return to the five highest genera of the *Sophist* may be questioned on technical grounds, but this is a separate issue and deserves special analysis. Comp. P. V. Pistorius, *Plotinus and Neoplatonism* (Cambridge, 1952) pp. 35 ff.
6. J. M. Rist. *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 103.
  7. MacKenna's translation . . . ζωὴν τε ἀρίστην ἐνεργήσας καὶ τῷ θεῷ εἰς ταῦτόν γεγενημένος καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἰδρυθεὶς εἰς ἐνέργειαν ἐλθὼν ἐκείνην ὑπὲρ πᾶν τε ἄλλο νοητὸν ἐμαυτὸν δρύσας...
  8. I find it difficult to accept John H. Randall Jr's interpretation of Plotinus. In his article, "The Intelligible Universe of Plotinus," in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* III (1965), 3-16, he states: "In his analysis of the intelligible universe in which we find ourselves, Plotinus starts from the cardinal fact of Greek experience: man is a dweller in two realms, that of the senses and that of thought; and the latter is the 'real' realm in which we alone find genuine knowledge. Plotinus proceeds to elaborate the necessary distinctions within the realm of thought" (9). Randall's position makes Plotinus a "knower," and plays down those aspects that enable Plotinus to seek and claim union with the One. It is the latter side of Plotinus that explains his "Neoplatonism," namely, his radical departure from the classical view of ethics and ontology, and also throws the needed light on his criticism of Aristotle's categories.
  9. Plotinus speaks of the return of the soul to the source of all as an "odyssey," a going back to the fatherland: I. 6. 8. 16; VI. 9. 7. 3 and 9. 9.
  10. Dean Inge adopts the peculiar position that the Platonic categories tend to supercede the Forms in the later Dialogues (II, p. 58). This is questionable doctrine not only because of the problems involved in the comparison between the Forms and the highest genera but also because of the misleading identification of the latter with categorical concepts. There is no evidence in the Platonic Dialogues that Plato meant the highest genera to have this use.

11. See Elias, *In Isagogen*, 39. 6 ff. Simplicius refers explicitly to Porphyry's defence of Aristotle's categories against his teacher's criticisms (*In Categ.* 2. 5 ff); in so doing Porphyry prepared the way for the softer interpretations of this doctrine by later Neoplatonist commentators.
12. Compare, for instance, the view of Clifford H. Moore: "It is evident that Neoplatonism, the last stage of Greek philosophy, is no isolated or strange phenomenon. On its metaphysical side it is the consummation and final synthesis of the whole course of Greek thought from the sixth century to its own day; likewise in ethics it combined the views of its chief predecessors as its leaders understood them; and finally in the doctrine of the soul's union with God it only carried the mystical tendencies of previous centuries to their natural conclusion." *The Religious Thought of the Greeks: From Homer to the Triumph of Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), p. 220.

## *Chorismos* and Emanation in the Philosophy of Plotinus

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### I. Introduction

For Plotinus, and for Platonists generally, the sensible world is not the only reality. A philosophical examination of this world reveals higher realities of which this world is said to be an 'image'. Thus the problem of *chorismos* is not simply that the higher realities are ontologically 'separate' from the sensible world, but that this separation must be consistent with a very close connection between them. Whatever unity, structure, and value sensibles have is provided by the higher realities despite their ontological separation. The philosophical account of this relationship must, as it were, bring the higher realities into the world without sacrificing their ontologically distinct status. Too sharp a separation tends to preclude any influence, while too close an association tends to eliminate the separation.

One major difficulty is already present in the presentation of the problem, and that is the metaphorical language in which it is stated. To say that the sensible world is an image of a higher reality is to pose the first problem of giving some philosophical meaning to this metaphysical claim.

In Plotinus' metaphysics both of these issues are complicated by another ingredient in his account of the relationship between the sensible world and the higher realities, the doctrine of emanation. Although this doctrine has several functions in Plotinus' philosophy, one of them is to contribute to the account of the relationship between sensible reality and the higher reality of which it is an image. The problem of *chorismos* cannot be fully understood in Plotinus' metaphysics apart from

some view of how sensible reality is brought about as an image emanated from a higher level of existence. We can say that the problems posed by the world as an image must be seen as problems concerning the world as *imaged*.

It is this understanding of the sensible world as something imaged by higher reality that I propose to investigate in this paper. Since this is a very large topic, I have narrowed my inquiry to a single pattern of Plotinus' thought on this issue. Rather than exhibiting all of the many facets of Plotinus' thinking on emanation and *chorismos*, I have chosen to single out one line of his thought and follow up some of its implications.

In order to bring out this pattern of thought with some clarity and in a short space, I have had to ignore many other important issues that are related to this problem as well as overlook many complications and confusions in Plotinus' views. Although the issues I discuss are, in Plotinus' writings, more complex than they are presented here, this approach seems well suited to Plotinus' philosophy. His thought embraces many different philosophical conceptions from diverse sources that are brought together in a frequently uneasy coexistence. Understanding Plotinus' philosophy will in part be achieved by sorting out how particular conceptions and patterns of thought are applied to particular problems. Having clarified particular lines of thinking we will be in a position to more accurately determine where and why Plotinus deviates from it or adopts others. Then we will be able to see more clearly how those patterns of thought work - or fail to work - together. My contribution to this task will be to exhibit one of Plotinus' responses to the problem of *chorismos*, a conception of imaging.

## II. Levels of Reality

For Plotinus the sensible world is incomplete, pointing beyond itself to higher realities. His writings are full of philosophical analyses of sensible phenomena which lead to the conclusion that such phenomena can only be understood in terms of their relationships to non-sensible realities. An examination of beauty reveals the existence of the Form of Beauty and of the soul that grasps it.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge is possible because of

our use of the objects of knowledge, the Forms in Nous.<sup>2</sup> Pain, and sentience in general, requires a non-physical soul to account for the pain in my finger being my pain and not the finger's pain.<sup>3</sup> Natural science points to the role of Nous in the sensible world.<sup>4</sup>

It is not germane to this inquiry to respond to the difficulties involved in determining how many and what kinds of higher realities Plotinus acknowledges as a result of these analyses. What is important here is that these realities form a hierarchy in which each lower reality points beyond itself to something higher. Thus Nous is said to be the image of the One,<sup>5</sup> Soul is likewise the image of Nous;<sup>6</sup> and in general each lower level is the image of its higher, generating reality.<sup>7</sup> The organization of these Platonic entities into a hierarchy is effected by regarding them as a series of images of something higher. Hence the problem of *chorismos* occurs at every junction of higher and lower realities, for at each of these there is ontological separation and the relationship of archetype and image.

The force of this notion of image can be expressed in four characteristics. First, being an image entails being distinguished from that which is the archetype or original. An image is an image *of* something, so that the two are in some sense different things. This alone does not commit one to a view of how that distinction of archetype and image is to be understood, for that requires a further inquiry into what Plotinus understood this distinction to mean in his metaphysical system. At this point only the necessity for the distinction is claimed. Plotinus' view that a lower level of reality is an image of a higher entails that some kind of metaphysical distinction must be drawn between the two or the meaning of "image" is lost.

Second, the notion of image contains the important idea of likeness or similarity. To say that this is an image of that means that some kind of likeness is being claimed. It would not make sense to speak of something as an image unless we can point out that it is an image of *this* rather than something else. Of course, an image - say a painting - can be mistakenly thought to be an image of something or someone other than what it does represent. The portrait of the father may be mistaken for the



son. But it could hardly be mistaken for the family dog, except perhaps in unusual families or circumstances, but even there we could find other things of which it would be impossible for one to think that the portrait was an image of them. Without some kind of likeness we cannot associate the image with that of which it is an image or contrast it with other things of which it is not an image.

Plotinus has this feature of "image" in mind when he speaks of the sensible world as an image of an eternal archetype<sup>8</sup> or eternal model.<sup>9</sup> Plotinus emphasizes that this universe is "a representation carrying down the features of the Intellectual Realm."<sup>10</sup> Plotinus frequently speaks of *Nous* as containing in archetype all of the kinds of things found here.<sup>11</sup> *Nous* is also described as being brought to likeness of the One-Good.<sup>12</sup> Again, this is not to specify the content of this idea of likeness. We cannot assume, for example, that this talk of likeness commits Plotinus to univocal self-predication of Forms, but only that some non-metaphorical account of the similitude of image and archetype must be given if the notion of "image" is used to describe the relationship between levels of reality.

Third, the image is in some way inferior to the archetype. The Platonic use of "image" includes a judgment of the deficiency of the image in comparison to the archetype. This, too, is clear from Plotinus' writings, but the sense of the deficiency is not. Thus Plotinus, in a discussion of emanation, states that "the engendered offspring is always minor".<sup>13</sup> And in V.1.1 the beauty in a statue is said to be "derivative and a minor" in comparison to the Form of Beauty.

In arguing against the Gnostics Plotinus points out that although this world is imperfect in comparison to its archetype, it is the best sensible world possible. "No doubt it [the sensible world] is a copy, not original . . . but to say that it is an inadequate copy is false: nothing has been left out which a beautiful representation within the physical order could include."<sup>14</sup> This world is an image, and therefore deficient, but it is the best image that could be obtained.

When Plotinus speaks of Matter in the sensible world he emphasizes the inferiority of sensibles compared to Soul or

*Nous*,<sup>15</sup> whereas in combating the Gnostics he points out the similarity of image to archetype. There is no inconsistency here, for both likeness and deficiency are contained in the notion of image. It is the relative perfection of the archetype in comparison to its diminished image that results in Plotinus' hierarchy having at its extremes the perfection of the One-Good and the absolute deficiency of Matter. As one proceeds from the One the levels of reality are more and more deficient as a result of the process of each being less than its predecessor, so that the end of the process, Matter, is characterized solely by its deficiency. It is the last, and therefore "pure lack" and "privation."<sup>17</sup> Thus the process of emanation of increasingly deficient realities is used as a proof that there must be a last product of emanation which is the principle of evil.<sup>18</sup>

Fourth, the image is dependent on its archetype. The existence of the image requires the existence of the archetype. Without the archetype the image could not exist. This is clear from the idea of emanation, in which the image must be generated in order to exist. Thus "the offspring is attached [to the generator] by a bond of sheer necessity."<sup>19</sup> Plotinus also speaks of the image as "continuously attached"<sup>20</sup> to the generating reality, meaning that the generating hypostasis sustains the image in its existence, just as the mirror image lasts as long as the object remains in front of the mirror. Just as the idea of image presupposes that of which it is an image, so for Plotinus the existing image is ontologically dependent upon its archetype for its existence.

There is an important complication here that needs to be mentioned. Plotinus sees this dependence as operating in one direction only, so that the lower depends upon the higher but not the other way around. "Not that God the One has any need of His derivatives: He ignores all that produced realm, never necessary to him . . ."<sup>21</sup> But there is a kind of dependence of the higher on the lower in that the creation of an image is a necessary process. The higher hypostasis must create its image as part of its nature. We can extend Plotinus' metaphor and say that one cannot walk away from the mirror.

Given these four characteristics of "image" it is necessary to further specify their philosophical meaning. We need to

explicate each of these aspects of the notion of image. How are the image and its archetype different from each other? In what sense are they similar? What kind of likeness is appropriate here? What does it mean to say that one level of reality is inferior to another? How, exactly, is the image dependent upon the archetype? In general, we need to know how these four characteristics are metaphysical characteristics of Plotinus' system of reality.

One way of putting philosophical content into these four terms - the image as different, inferior, dependent and similar to its archetype - is to determine how they are used in another context where their metaphysical meaning is clearer. The process by which images are generated reveals a philosophical conception of imaging that will provide us with an interpretation of these four characteristics of being an image.

### III. Emanation

As we move from the idea of image to that of imaging, we find that Plotinus employs a variety of metaphorical terms to describe this doctrine. The most common are the sun and its light, heat, cold, perfumes, the growth of a seed, a spring and its waters, a mirror.<sup>22</sup> Each of these metaphors suggests a different sense of generation. The mature plant comes to be only through the destruction of the seed, whereas the sun continues to exist despite its production of light. A spring does not create its waters in the way that an image is created in a mirror, for it makes no sense to ask if the image were existent before the object was in front of the mirror, whereas the water was already in the ground. In a similar way the light does not preexist in the sun before its radiation.

These differences in the logic of the generation metaphors result in differences in the meanings of the four criteria for being an image. Thus the dependence of the mirror image is unlike that of the dependence of the mature plant on the seed. Once the plant is grown its existence does not require the existence of the seed, a situation that it reversed in the case of the image and the mirror. Another obvious example is the senses in which we speak of the image being diminished. Perfumes are weakened or diluted by the air as they are

diffused, but the mature plant, the mirror image, a portrait, are not diminished copies in this way. The spring waters spread out but are not thereby weakened in the sense that heat or odors are weakened by diffusion and dilution.

Obviously we have to settle on one of these metaphors and then determine how it gives meaning to the four characteristics of image that are central to the problem of *chorismos*. Fortunately there is a discussion in the *Enneads* that enables us to do this. In VI.4 Plotinus analyzes the metaphor of light and its source, indicating how that metaphor is to be explicated. The metaphor of light emanating from the sun was especially in need of clarification because of its materialistic origins in Stoicism. Plotinus is always on guard against a materialist conception of reality, and this metaphor had to be carefully dematerialized.

There is a great deal that can be said concerning Plotinus' understanding of light and about the history of that concept in Neoplatonism. But our concern here is only with the philosophical use that Plotinus made of that metaphor in explicating his concept of image and emanation. The passage in which Plotinus is most explicit in such an explication is a famous one and worth quoting at length.

Or imagine a small luminous mass serving as center to a transparent sphere, so that the light from within shows upon the entire outer surface, otherwise unlit: we can surely agree that the inner core of light, intact and immobile, reaches over the entire outer extension; the single light of that small center illuminates the whole field. The diffused light is not due to any bodily magnitude of that central point which illuminates not as body but as body lit, that is by another kind of power than corporeal quality: let us then abstract the corporeal mass, retaining the light as power: we can no longer speak of the light in any particular spot; it is equally diffused within and throughout the whole sphere. We can no longer even name the spot it occupied so as to say whence it came or how it is present; we can but seek, and wonder as the search shows us the light simultaneously present at each and every point of the sphere. So with the sunlight: looking to

the corporeal mass you are able to name the source of the light shining through all of the air, but what you see is one identical light in integral omnipresence. (VI.4.7) (MacKenna translation)

In this passage Plotinus indicates how we are to give a more philosophically precise meaning to the way we speak of emanation and image. In the corrected metaphor the light no longer springs from a center but is simply present throughout the sphere. The material source is eliminated and only the power to illuminate is left to light the sphere. Armstrong<sup>23</sup> claims that this analysis destroys the idea of emanation, but this would be true only if we continued to understand radiation in a spatial sense. The notion of light radiating from one spatial location to a different set of spatial locations is replaced by the conception of one kind of reality giving its power to another, different kind of reality. The reference to a power different from corporeal quality indicates that this incorporeal power is now the source of the sphere's illumination. Instead of A being spatially separate from B and radiating its influence to B, Plotinus proposes that A influences B by its immaterial presence through B. The light in the sphere comes from ('radiates' from) a source but the source is not concentrated in one spatial location. Its 'concentration' is its being a different kind of reality, a principle of illuminating power that is omnipresent in the sphere.

A similar analogy is used at VI.4.12 with regard to sound. The one sound is present to each listener from its source. If we remove the physical source of the sound and leave the power of sound to permeate space, then the analogy with light is the same. Plotinus' shift from the corporeal source to the power of light or sound is a shift from one kind of reality to another. The power to illuminate is ontologically different from a corporeal mass, for the illuminating power can be identically present to many different spatial locations without suffering any kind of partitioning. The discussion recalls Socrates' conversation with the Platonic Parmenides over how sensibles could participate in Forms. At one point Socrates suggested the analogy of the day, which is present without division everywhere, unlike the other

example of the sail, which could cover many individuals only on the basis of a part of the sail for each thing covered.

All of the diffusion metaphors suggest this kind of presence. The perfume that we smell is the perfume itself, dispersed through the air from the source. But the difference between the perfume metaphor and the light is crucial for Plotinus. The particles of perfume that I inhale are not the same individual particles that you inhale. They may be identical in the sense of being the same kind of particles, but they are not the same individuals.<sup>24</sup> For Plotinus, light is immaterial<sup>25</sup> so that it could be identically present to many locations. The light illuminating the sphere, in other words, is one and the same power of light present throughout. Light, because of its immateriality, was exempt from the spatial limitations of corporeal beings who can be present in a variety of locations like the sail, by division into parts. Light was also thought to be indestructible as long as the source continued to exist, an obvious parallel to the eternal generation of the levels of reality in emanation.<sup>26</sup>

In his analysis of the light metaphor Plotinus made it clear that he did not introduce a new kind of separation between the source and its power. He specifically argued against a doctrine of 'presence by powers' in which the higher reality is distinct from its powers which go out from it. The power would be present but the source would not. Plotinus held that "where these powers appear, their source must be with them."<sup>27</sup> and further, "thus, once more, that source itself must be omnipresent as an undivided whole."<sup>28</sup> The distinction between source and power is, for Plotinus, a spurious one, for the powers immanent in sensible reality are the Plotinian *logoi*. Soul contains *logoi* as indwelling powers which enter the sensible world and account for the qualities that sensibles exhibit.<sup>30</sup> Thus the omnipresence of the Soul, which is the subject of VI, 4 & 5, is the immanent presence of the powers of Soul in the sensible world, so that there is no distinction between the *logos* and the power to illuminate, for that power *is* the *logos* present in the sphere.

This conception of immanent omnipresence is found in many places in Plotinus' philosophy, wherever a unity must be

found in plurality. In his view of universals he speaks of the white in two bowls of milk being one and the same whiteness.<sup>31</sup> Soul gives the body unity by being numerically one throughout the plurality of bodily parts and locations.<sup>32</sup> The doctrine of 'sympathy' and the governance of the sensible world by the world soul are further examples of Plotinus' use of this conception.<sup>33</sup>

The conception of imaging as the immanent presence of the generating reality in its image is also found in the One's emanation of Nous. The metaphor of light is again used,<sup>34</sup> and ~~Nous is described as holding the One's light within itself.~~<sup>35</sup> A similar description occurs at V.5.7 where Plotinus speaks of Nous as finding the light from the One within itself. Nous receives power to produce its multiplicity of Forms from the radiation from the One-Good. The One's light is broken into fragments by Nous, resulting in the multiple unities which are the Forms.<sup>35</sup> Rist notes that Plotinus speaks of the One as present with its effects,<sup>36</sup> and this is, for Plotinus, a closer presence in the case of Nous, for Nous is separated from the One only by its being distinct from it.<sup>37</sup>

Plotinus is clearly using the same metaphor of light and of presence associated with it that he explicitly developed in his analysis of the sphere and the light. He has simply transferred the same explanatory terms to the connection between One and Nous that he explained in VI.4 for the relationship of Soul to the sensible world. The plurality of Nous that is filled by the One's power obviously parallels the spatial plurality of the sphere that is illuminated by the omnipresent power of light. And where the One's power is found the One is there also, present in its effects. Hence the One's generation of Nous as its image is quite similar to the Soul's generation of the sensible world for in both instances sees that imaging in terms of the light metaphor and of the immanent presence of the higher reality in the lower.

The relationship between Nous and Soul does not seem to fit this pattern. Although Plotinus does speak of Nous being in Soul, he does not seem to have in mind the kind of immanence characteristic of the light and the sphere. Soul is dependent upon Nous, as its image, and is sometimes described using the

vocabulary of light, but the Soul's function requires a different kind of relationship to its generator. Soul is frequently viewed as a being in the realm of Being, Nous, rather than as a separate hypostasis.<sup>38</sup> Again, Soul is sometimes spoken of as having parts, the uppermost being in Nous, the lower in the sensible world.<sup>39</sup> Both of these roles conflict with the conception of a reality that carries Nous immanently within it. In the latter role Nous is only in one part of Soul rather than omnipresent. Soul also is said to be an emissary from Nous,<sup>40</sup> so that Nous is seemingly separate from Soul which is its messenger.

This is an intriguing problem which is unfortunately beyond the scope of this inquiry. However some further elements will be added to our understanding of the anomalous status of Soul from a consideration of the role of matter in the concept of imaging developed from Plotinus' critique of the light metaphor in VI.4.

We can say, then, that this conception of imaging, though it does not apply to the relationship of Nous to Soul, views the higher reality as generating its image by immanent omnipresence within it. Although this is still not entirely clear, we can at least specify more determinate meaning for two of the four requirements for being an image. We now have a better understanding of how dependence is to be understood. For the image to be dependent on its archetype means that the significant characteristics of the image - its unity, structure, value - are dependent upon the existence of a higher reality that is immanently present throughout the plurality of the image. Without the presence of the generator the image would not be in existence: its very being depends upon the inner presence of a higher reality that fills it and makes it what it is.

The characteristic of likeness is also explicated by this conception of imaging. The resemblance of archetype and image is found in the likeness of the higher reality to the same reality present within the conditions of the lower level of reality. Thus the comparison is between the light principle and the light principle as illuminating the sphere. Such a comparison requires that we be able to separate the light principle from its presence in the sphere so that the immanent reality can be related to the illuminated sphere which is its image. For Plotinus this means

that we must undertake philosophical dialectic in order to be guided to a direct experience of the higher realities. Thus one of the functions of the *Enneads* is to be a spiritual guide to this transcendence of the physical world. Plotinus wants us, through philosophical reflection, to rise to those higher levels of reality and grasp the principles of this world in their purity, apart from their presence in something else. In his discussion of beauty in V.1.1-2 Plotinus distinguishes the beauty that is above the sensible world of art. It exists "in a far higher state than in the art" where the beauty "does not come over integrally into the work." Hence "In the degree in which the beauty is diffused by entering into Matter, it is so much the weaker than that concentrated in unity . . ." The task is to become men who "in the keenness of their sight, have a clear vision of the splendor above." And, as he states in that same discussion, the clue to this transcendence is the realization that "the beauty perceived on material things is borrowed."<sup>41</sup>

It is difficult to talk about this kind of likeness without invoking vision and visual analogies. Light alone in comparison with the light diffused in air is a better parallel than one might at first realize, for Plotinus believed that the air was dark and that light had to overcome this darkness in its diffusion into space.<sup>42</sup> And in the passage where Plotinus speaks of the splendor of the higher realm, he contrasts it with the 'fog and cloud' of earth, again invoking the visual metaphor of something obscured by the surrounding atmosphere. The task of the philosopher is to pierce through the fog rather than ascend from the cave.

Thus the ontological basis for the likeness of archetype and image has been established, although one must rise above one's physical existence in order to actually grasp the likeness.

Two other criteria for image remain and must be explained by extending the inquiry into another area. The concept of matter is used by Plotinus to explicate the ontological distinction between image and archetype, and the deficiency of the image.

#### IV. Matter

The conception of image that is derived from Plotinus' analysis of the light metaphor is completed by the concept of

Matter. Matter explains the ontological distinction between archetype and image, and the diminished nature of the image. Thus it completes the philosophical explication of the four characteristics of image.

There are many passages where Plotinus has this function of Matter in mind. Perhaps the clearest are those in which the light metaphors are extended to these situations. The Soul's relation to Matter is described in terms of the Matter darkening the Soul's seeing.<sup>43</sup> In I.8.14 Plotinus says that "the illumination, the light streaming from the Soul, is dulled, is weakened, as it mixes with Matter which offers birth to the Soul, providing the means by which it enters into generation, impossible if no recipient were at hand." Besides the familiar theme of diffusion (mixing), there is also the explicit statement that Matter is providing the principle by which a different level of reality – the sensible world of generation – can exist. This world is Soul present in Matter.

The same point is made in other passages where Plotinus speaks of Matter as the substratum or base for form.<sup>44</sup> And in II.4.12 he states "No doubt there must be a container, as it were, a place and space; the primary necessity in order for the existence of body, is Matter." Obviously the metaphor of the container is continuous with the language of immanence, as the light is contained within the sphere.

The mixing of Soul with Matter is not to be understood materialistically. It is clear that their relationship is conceived in a way similar to the immanent presence of the light-principle in the sphere: "Matter exists; Soul exists; they occupy so to speak, one place . . . the Soul's separation is simply its not being in Matter; that is, its not being united with it . . ."<sup>45</sup> Like the light in the sphere, Soul is not combined with Matter but is immanently present in the Matter. Or, to use another Plotinian metaphor, the light permeates or pervades the Matter but does not combine with it. This is aptly expressed in this passage dealing with the generation of the Sensible world by Soul: the Soul must pervade all things, and make all, but not be the universe it makes."<sup>46</sup>

A similar situation holds with regard to the role of Intelligible Matter in Nous. The Matter of the intelligible world

is also a substratum, for the Forms in Nous.<sup>47</sup> Plotinus argues that the existence of Form compels the existence of Matter, for we cannot conceive of form without a substrate in which form is lodged. Division and differentiation of a plurality of Forms is possible only with a material principle, just as the sensible world requires its material principle as a container for the powers of Soul. And just as sensible Matter is filled by the immanent presence of a higher reality, so also Plotinus speaks of Intelligible Matter as the 'dark' element in the Intelligible, taking light from outside itself, i.e. the One.<sup>48</sup> Despite the differences of the two realms, Nous is also described in the same terms of generation as the sensible world, the illumination of (Intelligible) Matter by the One. Both material principles provide the matrix in which a higher level of reality is immanently present.

Thus both material principles function as preconditions for the generation of a different level of reality. In passages describing the generation of Nous and the sensible world<sup>49</sup> Plotinus introduces Matter as necessary for a level of reality different from the One or Soul to be generated. Hence Deck states that if Intelligible Matter were removed Nous would be the One.<sup>50</sup> The case of sensible Matter is more complicated because of the difficulty in locating the proper role for Soul, but if we strip away sensible Matter the remainder is the higher level of reality immanent in it.

We can now bring the anomalous position of Soul into sharper focus. If Soul is an hypostasis between Nous and the sensible world, an image of Nous, then the generation of Soul by this model of reasoning so far developed would require a material principle for Soul. But such a principle is conspicuously absent, Plotinus speaking only of the "two orders of Matter."<sup>51</sup> As we noted before and now see more clearly, Plotinus does not use this pattern of thought in explicating the relation of Soul as the image of Nous.

In connection with this anomaly Deck cites a "line of reasoning" in Plotinus in which the intermediation of Soul between Nous and the sensible world is unnecessary because of the sensible world's direct participation in Nous.<sup>52</sup> Wallis also claims that the distinction between Nous and Soul tends to

dissolve, which would leave open the direct participation of the sensible world in Nous.<sup>53</sup> The analysis of this issue is another topic, but whatever explanation we give for Soul's anomalous status must also include an explanation of why Plotinus did not extend this concept of imaging to Soul by providing it with a material principle. It is certainly possible that the tendency of Soul to be assimilated to Nous is the result of the hold that this conception of imaging had on Plotinus' thinking.

Matter also serves to account for the diminution of the lower level of reality that results from the higher level being immanent within it. Again, the light metaphors are adapted to this purpose. The Soul's light being dulled and weakened by the darkness of Matter is an obvious use of the metaphor. We find more explicit passages that make clear that the light metaphor is to be understood in terms of immanence in a principle that differentiates and diminishes: "Forms lodged in Matter are not the same as they would be if they remained in themselves; they are Reason-principles materialized, they are corrupted in Matter, they have absorbed its nature . . . Matter becomes mistress of what is manifested through it . . ."<sup>54</sup> The form in itself is contrasted with the form in Matter, the latter being the cause of the imperfection of the image. The role of Matter in the production of a diminished image is explained a few lines further. "Matter substitutes its own opposite character and kind, not in the sense of opposing, for example, concrete cold to concrete warmth, but by setting its own shaplessness to shape, formlessness to the Form of heat . . ."<sup>55</sup> The reference to heat recalls the diffusion metaphors in which the diffusion of heat through the air results in its being weaker (cooler) than at the source. Similarly Form must bring the formless Matter to form, and in so doing must lose its concentration in permeating Matter. Just as light is weakened through its dispersion in the air so also is form weakened when dispersed into Matter. The principle itself is not so much opposed as diluted. Opposition would require a contrary form — i.e. concrete cold to concrete heat — whereas the kind of process that results in a deficient image is the opposition of formlessness to form, so that the immanent reality generates a diminished image by a kind of dispersal of its energy through Matter.

This conception of Matter appears to identify Matter with a principle of plurality. The unified reality that enters Matter is pluralized by its entry into Matter. The incoming reality is not partitioned by rather dispersed throughout a plurality that results in sensible reality.<sup>56</sup> The higher reality is capable of being identically present throughout that plurality but the resulting immattered reality is thereby diminished, just as the light is diminished through diffusion into space. Hence we can say that plurality is the principle of imperfection for Plotinus, for it is the principle of plurality that results in the generated reality being inferior to its generator. In VI.6.1 Plotinus is quite explicit in identifying this pluralization with diminution. Again using the example of beauty, Plotinus states that "in the degree of the sensible world's extension it was void of beauty and to that degree ugly. Thus extension serves as Matter to Beauty since what calls for its ordering is a multiplicity. The greater the expansion the greater the disorder and ugliness." Beauty, like all form, unifies, and to the extent that multiplicity is present to dilute that unity there will necessarily be imperfection. We can therefore see the truth of Wallis' claim that Plotinus' levels of reality are levels of decreasing unity.<sup>57</sup> The fundamental features of his metaphysical system increasingly seem to be the One as the source of unity and Matter as plurality, with those terms being further identified with Good and Evil.

Intelligible Matter is also a source of plurality. As we saw above, Nous fragments the light from the One with the resulting plurality of unities – Forms – in Nous. The One is present in Intelligible Matter resulting in the first level of multiple reality, Nous. Although Intelligible Matter provides the plurality for the generation of Nous, Plotinus is reluctant to view this as also a principle of diminution. Nous is the image of the One and therefore inferior to it, but Plotinus does not explain that in terms of the plurality provided by Intelligible Matter. Plotinus is always very much concerned to safeguard the Intelligible realm from any kind of disvalue. In the discussion of Intelligible Matter he is careful to point out that, unlike sensible Matter, Intelligible Matter belongs to Being, and has a "life defined and intellectual."<sup>58</sup> But Plotinus seems to be trapped here, for the concept of image requires that the image be inferior to the archetype. And some metaphysical principle is necessary to

account for that inferiority.<sup>59</sup> This is especially true for this conception of imaging in which the One is immanent in Nous. If the unity in Nous is the One, then whatever else is constituent of Nous must account for its deficiency.

Plotinus' refusal to allow Intelligible Matter to be the source of Nous' deficiency contradicts the identification of plurality with deficiency. Intelligible Matter does provide plurality but that plurality is not acknowledged as the source of Nous' being a diminished image of the One. Here, too, this aspect of imaging is not applied or followed through in order to exclude any principle of disvalue in the Intelligible realm.

This analysis supports the claims by Wallis and Deck that the second and third hypostases might be regarded as defective ways of viewing the One,<sup>60</sup> especially since both of them also assert that the distinction between Soul and Nous tends to disappear. For if Nous is the One viewed through Intelligible Matter – i.e. as pluralized into Forms – then Nous is a way of viewing the One since the fragmented unity we see in Nous is the One, grasped through the plurality of Intelligible Matter.<sup>61</sup> Similarly the sensible world can be regarded as a way of viewing Soul (or Nous) through Matter. However, the fact that Soul does not have a material principle means that this explanation will not work for it. If Soul is to be regarded as a defective way of viewing the One, then some other account of how this is to be understood will have to be established.

## V. Conclusion

This conception of imaging answers important philosophical questions concerning emanation and *chorismos*. It gives an account of the generation of lower levels of reality as well as an explication of what is meant by the lower level of reality being an image of the higher. It also brings out the anomalous status of Soul and problems concerning the role of Intelligible Matter in accounting for the image-quality of Nous.

There is a final problem for Plotinus that grows out of this concept of imaging, and that is the attempt to account for the existence of Matter through emanation. Can the material principles themselves be generated or must they be independent

of that process? It is clear that on the model of imaging developed here that Matter cannot be generated. If generation is the immanent presence of a higher reality in a lower by means of a material principle, then the material principle itself cannot be generated without presupposing another material principle. Hence the attempt to generate the material principle on this conception of imaging always results in the positing of another, ungenerated material principle. This is a more philosophically specific way of expressing a long-standing problem in Plotinus' philosophy, his attempt to generate plurality from the pure unity of the One.

Plotinus attempts to view sensible Matter as the image of Intelligible Matter in II.4.5 but it is clear that this attempt must fail if the conception of imaging remains the same as above. Matter's role places it outside the process of unity.

Since the two roles of Matter are similar in providing the plurality necessary for immanence, and the plurality of Nous is superior to that of sensible existence, it is natural that Plotinus would consider the possibility of relating these two similar principles as archetype and image. However these principles are necessarily independent of the One, generated not by emanation but by the kind of explanation Plotinus gives of emanation and *chorismos*

### NOTES

1. V.1.1 f. and V.9.2 f.
2. V.9.7
3. IV.7.7.
4. IV.4.37.
5. Plotinus speaks of the dependent hypostasis as *eikon*, *mimema*, and *eidolon*. I have taken the references in this and the following two notes from John Deck, *Nature, Contemplation, and The One*, (Toronto, Univ. of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 15. Cf. V.1.7 and V.4.2 for Nous as image.
6. V.8.12; V.1.7.
7. III.8.7.
8. V.9.5.

9. III.7.1.
10. II.9.8
11. VI.7.12.
12. III.8.11; V.1.7.
13. V.1.6.
14. II.9.8.
15. I.8.8 & 14.
16. II.4.13
17. II.4.16.
18. I.8.7.
19. V.1.6.
20. V.1.6.
21. V.5.12.
22. V.1.6.
23. A.H. Armstrong, " 'Emanation' in Plotinus," *Mind*, XLVI, N.S., no. 181, p. 62.
24. The same point is made by Augustine in *On The Freedom of the Will*, (New York, Bobbs Merrill), p. 51. The example of sound is specifically contrasted with odors and tastes.
25. IV.3.10. Cf. Deck, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
26. IV.8.4; III.5.2; V.1.6.
27. VI.4.9.
28. VI.4.9.
30. R.E. Witt, "The Plotinian Logos and Its Stoic Basis," *Classical Quarterly*, XXV, (April 1931), p. 106. Cf. IV.7.9.
31. Cf. A.C. Lloyd, "Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic," *Phronesis* I (1955-6), p. 62.
32. IV.7.7.
33. II.3.7; IV.4.32 for sympathy; IV.4.11 for the World Soul.
34. VI.7.16; V.1.6; V.1.7.
35. VI.7.16.
36. J.M. Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1964), p.81.
37. V.1.6
38. Deck, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
39. II.1.5; IV.3.24; II.9.2.
40. VI.4.15.
41. V.9.2.



42. R. E. Witt. "Plotinus and Posidonius", *Classical Quarterly*, XXIV, (July 1930), p. 205. Cf. IV, 5, 2.
43. I.8.4.
44. II.4.6.
45. I.8.14.
46. III.9.3.
47. II.4.4.
48. II.4.4.
49. II.4.5 and III.9.3-4, respectively.
50. Deck, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
51. II.4.3.
52. Deck, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
53. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, (London, Duckworth, 1972) p. 93.
54. I.8.8.
55. I.8.9.
56. Wallis, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
58. II.4.5.
59. L.J. Eslick, "The Material Substrate in Plato," in *The Concept of Matter in Greek and Medieval Philosophy*, (Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame Indiana, 1965), p. 40-1.
60. Deck, *op. cit.*, p. 115; Wallis, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
61. Cf. Deck, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

## NOΥΣ as Experience

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As its title implies, this paper is an attempt to clarify the nature of the experience on which Plotinus' account of the Intelligible world is based by determining, first, what anticipations of it, complete or partial, can be found in Plotinus' classical sources and, secondly, what parallels exist in more modern writers or in non-Western religious traditions. That this is a bold undertaking needs no stressing; it is also, as I should admit at the outset, one severely limited both by my own knowledge and by the restrictions of space imposed on a paper like the present one. That I have had to confine myself to accounts known to me is obvious; I hope very much that some of the other participants will be able to supply further parallels. Limitations of space, on the other hand, have forced me to confine myself, first, to accounts obviously based on experience and not mere theory and, secondly, to experiences whose relevance to Plotinus is obvious; hence the omission of many fascinating passages from authors both classical and modern. Finally, I had had in most cases to restrict my own interpretative comments to a minimum, especially since much of the paper had to be taken up with quotations from the relevant sources, particularly those unlikely to be familiar to classicists. Where the parallels to Plotinus are clear, as is happily often the case, the resulting harm is comparatively small, but readers will see that in dealing with Plato and Aristotle I have had to state dogmatically views on disputed questions of classical scholarship and textual interpretation which require argument at much greater length than is possible here. I have, however, tried to phrase my account in such a way as to secure maximum assent

to what I say, with as little as possible dependent on whether my views on such points are accepted. For all these reasons, therefore, this paper can be only a preliminary clearing of the ground and one whose main aim is to inspire others to seek further.

That the most original feature of Plotinus' doctrine of the Three Hypostases is its elevation of psychological experiences into metaphysical realities is now commonplace.<sup>1</sup> And there is no great difficulty in identifying the experiences corresponding to his First and Third Hypostases. The latter is evidently the sphere of discursive thought (*διάνοια*), the process familiar in our everyday lives, discursive (at least as far as the human soul is concerned) in the sense of involving both reasoning from premises to conclusion<sup>2</sup> and simple transition from one object of thought to another.<sup>3</sup> For both these reasons it necessarily involves time; hence Plotinus' famous "psychological" definition of the latter presented at III. 7. 43-5.<sup>4</sup> The First Hypostasis, by contrast, corresponds to the mystics' "undifferentiated unity",<sup>5</sup> "a state in which sensuous imagery and conceptual thought are transcended, the mind becomes perfectly unified and individual limitations are felt to be abolished".<sup>6</sup> Whether Plotinus' mysticism is "theistic", "monistic" or something between the two is the subject of another paper;<sup>7</sup> all that matters here is to emphasize that the "undifferentiated unity" occurs in mystics of *both* types and that the distinction between the One and the Second Hypostasis (*Noûs*) cannot therefore correspond in any form to that between theistic and monistic mysticism (or vice versa).<sup>8</sup> Nor can we identify the experience of *Noûs* with what has been called "extrovertive mysticism", that is, with the vision of a unity running through the external world (as opposed to the introvertive mysticism of which union with the One is clearly an example.)<sup>9</sup> This identification, which has misled some excellent students of mysticism, appears to have originated with Rudolf Otto,<sup>10</sup> whose analysis of Enn. I. 8. 2 certainly shows, as do some passages to be considered later, how much Plotinus' account of *Noûs* has in common with mysticism of this type. But whereas extrovertive mysticism, as Otto rightly states, "knows nothing of inwardness",<sup>11</sup> Plotinus, by contrast, as a good Platonist, is

emphatic that *Noûs* is attained by turning within and leaving sense-perception behind.<sup>12</sup> But what then *is* the experience on which his Second Hypostasis is based? Or, in order not to beg the question, what evidence is there that Plotinus' *Noûs* is experientially based at all, and not a mere theoretical construction out of Aristotelian and Middle Platonic tradition?

That Plotinus' account indeed incorporates a vast amount from these traditions modern studies have proved.<sup>13</sup> Yet scholars, sometimes the same ones, have equally felt that Plotinus' descriptions of *Noûs* suggested an empirical basis. Professor Dodds thus states that "for Plotinus the world of Platonic Forms is already the object of a kind of mystical experience".<sup>14</sup> And in his admirable account in the "Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy" Professor Armstrong has gone further and quoted some specific passages from the treatise V. 8, "On Intelligible Beauty," and the first part of VI.7, "On the Ideas and the One," that lend strong support to this view. Attention may especially be drawn to two passages from the latter treatise; as we shall later see, their exact formulation is sufficiently important to require quotation in full. The first is VI. 7. 12. 23-30. "All flows, so to speak, from one fount not to be thought of as some one breath or warmth, but rather as one quality englobing and safeguarding all qualities – sweetness with fragrance, wine-quality, and the savours of everything that may be tasted, all colours seen, everything known to touch, all that ear may hear, all melodies, every rhythm".<sup>15</sup>

The other is VI. 7. 15. 24-30: – "It might be likened to a living sphere teeming with variety, to a globe of faces radiant with faces all living, to a unity of souls, all the pure souls, not the faulty but the perfect, with Intellect enthroned over all so that the place entire glows with intellectual splendour".<sup>16</sup>

These passages and others, especially those, like the one just quoted, describing the radiant luminosity of the Intelligible world, are one type of evidence that Plotinus has an actual experience in mind. Another is provided by his exhortations to the reader to attain the experience for himself. Thus the passage just quoted continues – (again, we shall see, the exact wording is important): – "But this would be to see it from without, one

thing seeing another; the true way is to become Intellectual-principle and be, our very selves, what we are to see".<sup>17</sup> In similar vein, Plotinus states elsewhere, at the end of a chapter (V. 8. 10) containing a particularly vivid description of Intellectual vision and of the radiance of the world "yonder": — "To those that do not see entire, the immediate impression is alone taken into account; but those drunken with this wine, filled with the nectar, all their soul penetrated by this beauty, cannot remain mere gazers; no longer is there a spectator outside gazing on an outside spectacle; the clear-eyed hold the vision within themselves, though, for the most part, they have no idea that it is within but look towards it as to something beyond them, and see it as an object of vision caught by a direction of the will.

All that one sees as a spectacle is still external; one must bring the vision within and see no longer in that mode of separation but as we know ourselves; thus a man filled with a god — possessed by Apollo or by one of the Muses — need no longer look outside for his vision of the divine beings; it is but finding the strength to see divinity within".<sup>18</sup>

In these passages, as can be seen, a brief hint is given of the way to attain the experience described; we must bring the vision within and no longer see it as a distinct object, but become wholly identified with it. The process is elaborated at greater length in the relatively few passages in which scholars have detected references to the "spiritual exercises" of the Plotinian school, the best known being V. 8. 9. 1. ff.<sup>19</sup> We must first, we are told there, visualise a complete and accurate image of the physical universe; then we must utterly remove from it (and not merely attenuate) its spatial and material limitations, at the same time praying God and the gods of the Intelligible world to enter it. The parallel noted by scholars to the exercises of other religious traditions suggests that such passages are no mere poetic imagery, and thus constitutes a third type of evidence that a definite experience is involved.

If then, we accept this and, leaving such poetically-tinged passages, seek a more cold-bloodedly analytic account of the differences between *Noûs* and our everyday consciousness, it is to such chapters as I. 8. 2 and V. 1. 4 that we must turn. The

main differences, we there learn, are two. First, since *Noûs* contains the totality of True Being and hence has nothing further to seek, its thought is free from change and therefore transcends time; (since Professor Armstrong has cast some doubt on the accuracy of this description, it might be safer to say "transcends time as we know it").<sup>20</sup> Secondly, while discursive thought contemplates its object, as it were, "at a distance," since it cannot attain perfect unity therewith, on the level of *Noûs* there is perfect identity between subject and object and hence complete self-awareness.<sup>21</sup> Some doubt may, however, be felt whether these two points have an empirical basis, since both of them demonstrably derive from reflection on Aristotle's conception of *Noûs*.<sup>22</sup> The former point, *Noûs*'s alleged timelessness, has been fully considered, as stated, by Professor Armstrong, and I do not propose to discuss it further here. The latter point, however, that *Noûs* enjoys perfect unity with its objects, was clearly alluded to in the "empirical" passages already quoted, and we may therefore provisionally take it to be part of the experience. Confirmation of this will be provided by the parallel experiences to be examined later though, as we shall also see, Plotinus' account is by no means free from difficulty). We may finally note two corollaries of the latter point. First, the objects of *Noûs* are Pure Forms, whereas discursive thought, contemplating the Forms at a distance, must be content with images of them, which represent them to her consciousness "as in a mirror".<sup>23</sup> In other words *Noûs* transcends mental images and the faculty contemplating them (*φαντασία*), on which our normal consciousness relies and, for similar reasons, it transcends abstract verbal formulæ; the gods' knowledge is not composed of "premisses, axioms or predicates".<sup>24</sup> The secondary corollary of Plotinus' view of *Noûs* is that each member of the Intelligible world, contemplating as it does the whole of that world, is identical with the whole of that world and with each individual member thereof. "The sun, There, is all the stars; and every star, again is all the stars and sun. While some one manner of being is dominant in each, all are mirrored in every other".<sup>25</sup>

Such then is Plotinus' account of Intellectual vision. But what exactly is he talking about and what anticipations or

parallels exist either in classical Greek thought or elsewhere? The question, it should be emphasised, is not what are the classical Greek antecedents of *Noûs* as a metaphysical hypostasis; this has been exhaustively treated elsewhere. Our search here is rather for antecedents of and parallels to the *experience* described. And here two difficulties arise. First, as even a little investigation shows, the territory between discursive thought and *unio mystica* is filled not by a single experience, but by a whole family of experiences, often with only the barest "family resemblances" between them. Secondly, as is well known, in Classical writers the term *Noûs* is not confined even to experiences within this already large family, but sometimes applied to reason as a whole, while in Hermetic and Middle Platonic texts it is frequently applied to an entity little, if at all, less transcendent than the Plotinian One.<sup>26</sup> I must therefore stress once again that my concern is with experiences which anticipate or otherwise illuminate the nature of Plotinus' Intellectual vision, whether or not the term *Noûs* is specifically applied to them. It will, however, be useful to begin by considering Von Fritz's far too little known elucidation of the original meaning of the term, as revealed by Homer and the Presocratics.<sup>27</sup>

According to Von Fritz "originally and in Homer, *voûs* never means 'reason' and *voeîn* never 'to reason,' whether deductively or inductively";<sup>28</sup> indeed it is not until Parmenides that logical reasoning is consciously included in the term's meaning.<sup>29</sup> In Homer, by contrast, *voûs* is associated with sensation rather than with intellectual thought, but differs from external perception in constituting "a kind of sixth sense which penetrates deeper into the nature of the objects perceived than the other senses".<sup>30</sup> Hence its fundamental meaning "may be defined as the realisation of a situation";<sup>31</sup> for instance, at *Iliad* III. 30 ff., when Paris sees Menelaus, "it is not the sight of Menelaus as such that strikes him, but the realisation that Menelaus has no more ardent desire than to take revenge by killing him on the battlefield".<sup>32</sup> As we shall see, the relation of such insight to the senses is a major point of controversy among the authors we shall consider; the other features of the Homeric conception, by contrast, are more consistently present among them.

First, insight of this type, though often preceded by logical reasoning, is not experienced as the abstract conclusion of such reasoning, but rather as a sudden and immediate realisation. "The process through which we arrive at this conclusion may require considerable time, but the realisation itself . . . usually comes like a flash . . . We are then much more conscious of this sudden realisation which has the appearance of a perception than of mental process which has led to it".<sup>33</sup> Secondly, the function of such insight is not usually conceived as being to provide wholly new knowledge. In Homer, we saw it to denote realisation of a situation's true meaning, whereas in Plato we shall find it affording a direct and more complete insight into truths previously grasped only in the abstract. In Plotinus it was seen to provide a vision of the true archetypal Reality of which this world constitutes a partial image, while yet other writers regard it as bringing out fresh and hitherto unrealised aspects of long familiar facts. It is intuition of this last type that has played so important a part in scientific, and especially in mathematical, discovery.

The role of intuition in scientific discovery has been especially popularized in Koestler's "Act of Creation".<sup>34</sup> Here I am not concerned with the merits or demerits of Koestler's theories, but merely with the fact, already well known to mathematicians, that experiences of this type are by no means rare in the history or thought. A comparison of Greek accounts of *voûs* with those quoted by Koestler, or in the earlier essay of Hadamard,<sup>35</sup> will prove extremely illuminating. Most striking, perhaps, are the accounts of eminent mathematicians quoted by Hadamard and conveniently summarised on p. 115 of Koestler's book. We there find Poincaré referring to the "appearance of sudden illumination, a manifest sign of long unconscious prior work," Hadamard to "the sudden and immediate appearance of a solution . . . without the slightest instant of reflection on my part" and Gauss to solving an enigma "as a sudden flash of light" which comes "not by dint of painful effort, but so to speak by the grace of God." Classical instances quoted by Koestler are Pythagoras' intuition of the world's underlying mathematical harmony and Archimedes' discovery of the principle which bears his name.<sup>36</sup> A parallel from the field of artistic creation is provided by the poet John Masefield.<sup>37</sup> In

his words "instantly the poem appeared to me in its complete form, with every detail distinct . . . This illumination is an intense experience so wonderful that it cannot be described. While it lasts the momentary problem is merged into a dazzlingly clear perception of the entire work in all its detail. In a moment of mental ecstasy the writer . . . perceives what seems to be an unchangeable way of statement." In such cases, it would appear, the data relevant to the problem in hand had been previously amassed, but after a period in which the discursive intellect had considered them without apparent success, had been laid aside until an appropriate stimulus suddenly precipitated their emergence into consciousness in an instantaneous blaze of light. The same schema of four stages — (1) amassing data, (2) logical reasoning, (3) unconscious incubation and (4) sudden vision — would appear to be present in those cases where there is neither problem nor solution, but simply a vivid and direct insight into truths previously known only as abstract propositions. A case of the latter type would appear to be what is described in the Seventh Platonic letter.

I do not propose to consider here, nor have I space to do so, whether the Letter is a work of Plato's old age or one composed by a close disciple shortly after his death — a question on which I personally have an open mind. Nor, more regrettably, have I the space to argue, what I would maintain emphatically, that in either case its philosophy is on all essential points Platonic.<sup>38</sup> Here I must limit myself to the experience of which the Letter's philosophical digression provides an account.

At 341 C in the Letter occurs the famous denial that the science of ultimate truth is expressible in words like other sciences. It arises, we are told, only after long philosophical communion concerning the subject, when a light suddenly springs up in the soul and thereafter nourishes itself.<sup>39</sup> The reason, we subsequently learn, is the inadequacy of "the four," names (*ὀνόματα*), definitions (*λόγοι*), sensible images (*εἰδωλα*) and human knowledge based on these,<sup>40</sup> to express the nature of "the Fifth," i.e. the Pure Form (342 A ff.).<sup>41</sup> It is, of course, fundamental to Platonism that sensible images are only inferior imitations of the Forms. Similarly names are not fixed to objects by nature and nor are definitions, since they are

composed of nouns (*ὀνόματα*) and verbs (*ῥήματα*). Hence all four are defective in that they express only a thing's quality (*τὸ ποῖον τι*) instead of its essence (*τὸ τί*) (342 E - 343 C). But it is only by first grasping these four that one can subsequently attain knowledge of the Fifth.<sup>42</sup> It is by passing through the four, "ascending and descending to each in turn," that true knowledge can be generated with difficulty in the souls of intellectually and morally suitable pupils.<sup>43</sup> After "rubbing them against one another" wisdom can finally be made to shine forth within such disciples.<sup>44</sup>

The Letter's philosophical digression, of which the above was a necessarily short and inadequate summary, thus forms the most detailed description of the psychology of the philosopher's supreme vision to be found in the Platonic Corpus. The echoes of the accounts of intuition quoted earlier are no less evident. As I have stated, I cannot argue here, what I think can be proved, that its teaching is on all major points consistent with that of the dialogues; nor can I discuss the problems posed by the Letter's technical terminology, problems by no means unparalleled in Plato's certainly genuine writings.<sup>45</sup> It is, however, clear that the Letter describes two ways of knowing the Forms, an imperfect way based on words and on the Forms' sensible images, and one that is at least more nearly adequate and which transcends these. Similarly, it will be recalled, one of the two points in which *νόησις* in the Republic was claimed to be superior to *διάνοια* was in dealing with the Forms themselves and making no use of their sensible images (*εἰκόνες*) (the other, of course, being its ability to rise above hypotheses to the unhypothetical First Principle of the Good) (510 B, 511 A ff.). What is unfortunately less clear in the Republic is whether both faculties are concerned with Forms, or at any rate with the same type of Form.<sup>46</sup> It is sufficient for our purposes, however, to observe, first, that no one doubts, and Plato explicitly states, that the objects of *νόησις* are the Forms themselves (510 B, 511 C) and, secondly, that he further states that the objects of *διάνοια* become objects of *νόησις* "in conjunction with a First Principle".<sup>47</sup> We may therefore take it that *νόησις* affords a more perfect knowledge of the objects initially known through *διάνοια* and that these include some, if not certainly all, the

Forms.<sup>48</sup> Similarly the *Cratylus*, a dialogue in which the role of words (or more especially of names)<sup>49</sup> as images of Realities is examined at length, refers to the need for a faculty that will grasp Realities by themselves (*αὐτὰ δι' αὐτῶν*) and independently of names (*ἄνευ ὀνομάτων*), since only so can we be sure that our application of names is correct (438 D-E). Here again, however, it is far from clear at first sight that the Realities mentioned are the Forms. The view that they are can be supported, first, by the mention of the Forms towards the end of the dialogue<sup>50</sup> and, secondly, by the fact that only so can we suppose the procedures described in the *Cratylus* to have serious philosophical significance.<sup>51</sup> Finally we may compare the terms in which Socrates describes the nature of the faculty in question as too hard for him or Cratylus to determine<sup>52</sup> with *Republic* 506 D-E, where Socrates disclaims ability to give an account of the Good, and 533 A, where he declares that Glaucon will be unable to follow an account of Truth itself as opposed to an image thereof.<sup>53</sup> It is thus natural to infer that the faculty alluded to in the *Cratylus* is *νόησις* and that its objects, as in the *Republic*, are the Forms. In this case the doctrine of the two works, and of the Letter, would, thus far at least, be substantially identical.

Unfortunately, as has been objected, it is hard to see what a form of knowledge entirely independent either of words or of sensible images would be like.<sup>54</sup> That the passages just considered speak of the possibility of such a knowledge is clear enough. But it is certainly possible that Plato has been led to exaggerate in the sense that all he would seriously wish to maintain is that such knowledge is *no longer dependent* on words or images, not that it does without them altogether.<sup>55</sup> This, however, is not necessarily so, since we found Plotinus likewise maintaining that *his* Intellectual vision does without words or images. But of course, to note that the two philosophers agree, at least verbally, on the point mentioned neither makes the nature of such knowledge any clearer nor even establishes that it can exist at all. For the present we need merely note the difficulty; we shall have occasion later to return to it.

In general, moreover, despite the two philosophers' agreement on the above-mentioned point, the Seventh Letter's account of the supreme vision seems decidedly less intense (to use a convenient term), that is to say, less mystically-tinged and closer to the world of our everyday experience than that given by the *Enneads*. In particular it seems much closer to the mathematical intuition described by us earlier. There is, of course, a more mystical tone to the visions described in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* (not to mention the enigmatic allusion to the Form of the Good in the *Republic*). The *Symposium* vision, however, is concerned solely with the Form of the Beautiful, not with the whole world of Forms. And even in the *Phaedrus*, which of all the dialogues comes closest to the Plotinian vision, it is noteworthy how many features of that vision are lacking. The timelessness of Plotinus' *Noûs* is indeed partially anticipated by the instantaneousness of the visions of the *Symposium* and the Seventh Letter.<sup>56</sup> But there is no suggestion in Plato of the Soul's identity with the Intelligible world or of the mutual identity existing between that world's members. The union of subject and object in Intellectual vision may be partially anticipated in the metaphors of sexual union applied by Plato to the Soul's contemplation of the Forms, but their significance is greatly lessened when we recall that he applies them no less to the soul's contact with the objects of sense-perception.<sup>57</sup> It seems therefore that we must look elsewhere for the closest parallel to Plotinus' Intellectual vision.

Nor will Aristotle advance our search very far. This statement may seem astounding in the light of the very large Aristotelian component in Plotinus' conception of *Noûs*, which I certainly do not wish to contest.<sup>58</sup> Here, however, we are seeking anticipations of the experiential rather than the metaphysical side of *Noûs*, whereas it would appear from such points as Aristotle's arguments for the self-awareness of *Noûs*,<sup>59</sup> that his position rests on theoretical rather than experiential grounds. It is especially noteworthy that his argument in the *De Anima* is paralleled by, perhaps even based on, his argument for the self-awareness of sense-perception,<sup>60</sup> and that it depends on the "informing" of the soul by a mental image,<sup>61</sup> whereas in Plotinus *φαντασία*, like sense-perception,

precludes the possibility of pure self-awareness.<sup>62</sup> This conclusion might have to be modified if more of Aristotle's early works survived – in particular if it could be proved that in them he had allowed the possibility that the soul may attain a direct vision of her own nature,<sup>63</sup> an idea of which the later passages would then be relics. This, however, must remain speculative. It is clearly true that the fragments of Aristotle's early works show decided echoes of the Platonic view of intuition.<sup>64</sup> But if we turn to the accounts of *νοῦς* in the *Analytics* and *Ethics*,<sup>65</sup> we find that, so far from going beyond Plato, Aristotle significantly restricts the capacity of *νοῦς* in comparison with his master.

The most obvious difference between the two is that whereas for Plato, at least in some and perhaps in all cases, *νοῦς* and *ἐπιστήμη* had been concerned with the same objects, for Aristotle this is no longer true. Or perhaps we should rather say (to keep our account consistent with our earlier observations) that the two faculties deal with different *aspects* of our knowledge, scientific knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) having as its object truth reached by discursive syllogistic reasoning, whereas the function of *νοῦς* is to apprehend the first principles (*ἀρχαί*) implicit in all our reasoning and on which that reasoning depends, but which cannot themselves be reached by syllogistic reasoning.<sup>66</sup> Aristotle indeed makes two concessions to the Platonists, first that perfect knowledge is impossible without grasping the first principles on which that knowledge rests (*N. E.* 1139b 31 ff.), and secondly that intuition is more accurate than knowledge reached by discursive reasoning (*Post. An.* II. 19. 100b 8-9). But he maintains against Plato that there is no more perfect means than demonstration of knowing demonstrative truth (*Post. An.* 83b 34 ff.). And the superior accuracy of *νοῦς* depends on a further difference between the two faculties, that, whereas discursive thought involves the combination of concepts, *νοῦς* has as its province the apprehension of simple concepts and is therefore infallible.<sup>67</sup> We may further note that the gulf between *νοῦς* and sense-perception appears less wide in Aristotle than it had been for Plato. Thus *Posterior Analytics* II. 19 appears to conceive of a continuous process from the intuitive apprehension of the simplest universal concepts out of the data of sense-perception to the apprehension by *νοῦς* of the

ultimate principles of all such reasoning. And while *Nicomachean Ethics* VI declares *νοῦς* and the practical man's common sense to be opposed in the status and dignity of their objects (1142 a 25 ff.), Aristotle's subsequent discussion reveals strong analogies between the operations of the two faculties and thus associates them in a way with which Plato would have had little sympathy.<sup>68</sup> A more detailed comparison of the two thinkers' views both with one another and with modern accounts of intuition would be a fascinating and illuminating exercise. It would not, however, bring us any closer to an understanding of Plotinus, and cannot therefore be pursued further here.

The difficulty posed by writers of the Hellenistic-Roman period is a different one. It is not that there is any lack in their writings of experiences going beyond normal consciousness. As writers such as Dodds and Festugiere have shown,<sup>69</sup> writings such as the *Hermetica* and those of Philo, the Gnostics and the Middle Platonists reveal a profusion of such experiences, experiences recalling Platonic – Aristotelian intuition,<sup>70</sup> mystical or quasi-mystical experiences foreshadowing Plotinus' Union with the One,<sup>71</sup> prophetic experiences, experiences of divinisation, extrovertive mystical experiences,<sup>72</sup> as well as not a few experiences whose interpretation is thoroughly ambiguous. What we do not find, as far as I am aware, is a detailed account clearly anticipating Plotinus' description of Intellectual contemplation,<sup>73</sup> and, even if we are looking for detailed accounts bridging the gulf between that experience and those considered earlier, our harvest will be disappointingly small. The danger, in short, is that, so far from advancing our understanding of Plotinus, the Hellenistic-Roman texts will merely complicate our problem by adding a vast number of further experiences themselves needing elucidation and classification. At all events, such an inquiry cannot be undertaken in a paper like the present one. I shall therefore confine myself to a single account, which goes some way towards bridging the gulf referred to and which has significant links both with Plotinus and with some parallel experiences which we shall consider.

The text in question is Philo's well-known description at *Migr. Abr.* 31-35 of his own literary inspiration. Sometimes he

relates, despite having in his mind a clear conception of the subject on which he intends to write, he has been unable to produce any work, whereas at other times, "coming to work empty," he has suddenly (*ἐξαίφνης*) become full of ideas "invisibly showered upon him"<sup>74</sup> and thereby attained a vivid and direct vision of what to say. In his own words he attains "language, ideas, an enjoyment of light, keenest vision, pellucid distinctness of objects, such as might be received through the eyes as the result of keenest shewing".<sup>75</sup> Under the influence of divine possession he further becomes unconscious of his surroundings, of those present and even of himself and of what he is saying and writing.<sup>76</sup> At such moments of "release," he writes, the mind gives up its own activities and abandons its will to a higher inspiration.<sup>77</sup> Finally we may note Philo's contrast between such inspiration and the laborious processes that normally occupy the mind<sup>78</sup> and his consequent stress on the superior excellence of the products of inspiration.<sup>79</sup>

The resemblances between Philo's account and those considered earlier are obvious, in its stress on the suddenness and clarity of intuitive insight and its contrast between the effortlessness of intuition and the laboriousness of the mind's usual processes, as also between periods of sterility and of inspiration. Only three further features require special comment. The first is the Jewish contemplative's description of his experience in terms of prophetic inspiration and his consequent ascription of it to divine power. The "grace of God," which for Gauss was a mere metaphor,<sup>80</sup> is meant by Philo in real earnest. The second is Philo's reference to surrendering his individual will, a point to which we shall return. Finally there is his statement that the vision brings oblivion of one's surroundings and even of oneself. In this respect it appears somewhat more intense and further from our normal consciousness than those described earlier and to mark an intermediate stage between them and Plotinus' account of the Intelligible world. It may also be regarded as intermediate between the latter and the experiences to which Plotinus appeals in support of his claim that consciousness (of the type familiar to us)<sup>81</sup> has a blunting effect on our activities. When we are absorbed in reading or an act of bravery, he states, we have no awareness that we are

performing those actions; such awareness arises in proportion as our absorption in them grows less (I. 4. 10. 21-33). Philo's experience resembles such cases in involving action (in this case writing) in the sensible world, but his references to inspiration give it a deeper, more mystical tone.

An experience which comes even closer to bridging the gulf between Plotinus and the writers so far considered is the aesthetic contemplation described by Schopenhauer, from whom it will therefore be desirable to quote a fairly lengthy passage. A further reason for doing so is furnished by Friedlander's observation that while by "confining the intuitive to the aesthetic," Schopenhauer made his account of the Platonic Idea unduly restrictive," apart from this, however, Schopenhauer had a more profound understanding of the intuitive element in the Idea than anyone else in recent times, no doubt because what he found in reading Plato coincided with his most personal experience".<sup>82</sup> After declaring, like our previous sources, that the vision comes "suddenly," the relevant passage continues as follows:<sup>83</sup>

"If, raised by the power of the mind, a man relinquishes the common way of looking at things, gives up tracing, under the guidance of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, their relations to each other, the final goal of which is always a relation to his own will; if he thus ceases to consider the where, the when, the why and the whither of things, and looks simply and solely at the what; if, further, he does not allow abstract thought, the concepts of the reason, to take possession of his consciousness, but instead of all this, gives the whole power of his mind to perception, sinks himself entirely in this, and lets his whole consciousness be filled with the quiet contemplation of the natural object actually present, whether a landscape, a tree, a mountain, a building, or whatever it may be: inasmuch as he *loses* himself in this object . . . i.e., forgets even his individuality, his will, and only continues to exist as the pure subject, the clear mirror of the object, so that it is as if the object alone were there, without any one to perceive it, and he can no longer separate the perceiver from the perception, but both have become one, because the whole consciousness is filled and occupied with one single sensuous picture, if thus the



object has to such an extent passed out of all relation to something outside it, and the subject out of all relation to the will, then that which is so known is no longer the particular thing as such; but it is the *Idea*, the eternal form, the immediate objectivity of the will at this grade; and, therefore, he who is sunk in this perception is no longer individual, for in such perception the individual has lost himself; but he is *pure* will-less, painless, timeless *subject of knowledge*".

The resemblances between the above passage and Plotinus are clear. Both describe a vision transcending spatio-temporal restrictions and abolishing the subject-object distinction.<sup>84</sup> The Schopenhauer passage, furthermore, agrees with Philo that the vision involves abandonment of one's individual will, just as for Plotinus it is the "will to belong to oneself" that leads the soul to leave the Intelligible world and forget her true identity.<sup>85</sup> Hence return to that world for him as for Plato, involves a moral as well as an intellectual purification;<sup>86</sup> indeed, since what we contemplate depends on what interests us, the two are linked and the soul's return "yonder" abolishes not merely all interest in the sensible world and one's separate existence therein, but all consciousness and memory of these.<sup>87</sup> Finally, Plotinus' account of *Noûs* as the Totality of Being is echoed in Schopenhauer's vision of the World as *Idea*, in which individual limitations are transcended and the whole world is felt to depend on one's own consciousness. This point Schopenhauer summarises in the Upanishadic dictum "*haec omnes creaturae in totum ego sum, et praeter me aliud ens non est*".<sup>88</sup> Yet, despite these resemblances, there is the contrast that for Schopenhauer the way to attain the vision is to lose oneself in an external object of perception, "a landscape, a tree, a mountain, a building," etc., so that "the whole consciousness is filled and occupied with one single sensuous picture." This experience is therefore clearly of the *extrovertive* type and thus, as we have seen, to be contrasted with Plotinian contemplation. The closest parallels to that contemplation must therefore be sought elsewhere.

There are to be found in Indian mysticism. Both Hindu and Buddhist mysticism distinguish between contemplation of the Realm of Pure Form (Buddhist *rūpa* jhana, Hindu *savikalpa*

*samadhi*) and contemplation of the Formless realm (Buddhist *arūpa* jhana, Hindu *nirvikalpa* *samadhi*), and the traditional accounts leave no doubt that these are both levels of *introvertive* contemplation. The obvious reflection that we have here a parallel distinction to that in Plotinus between *Noûs* and the One receives powerful support from a modern description of the Buddhist scheme, that of Lama Anagarika Govinda, which it will therefore be desirable to quote in full. I say "powerful support," however, and not "confirmation," since it is to be feared that the German-born author may have been influenced by Plotinus and by Plotinian-influenced German idealists in writing it. But though caution must obviously be used in evaluating what he says, I have found that most of his substantial points can be verified from other Buddhist writers. Before attempting a detailed analysis, however, it is best to set out what he has to say.<sup>89</sup>

"Between the two extremes, the domain of the sensuously bounded, or of form bound by craving (*kāmadhātu*) and the domain for [sic.] the formless (*arūpadhātu*), the unlimited that is free from craving, there comes in intermediately a group of objects which are not perceptible indeed to the lower senses, namely those (of contact, of the non-spatial) of smell, of taste and of touch, but certainly to the higher senses, in so far as these are free from all entanglement with the ego, that is, free from discordance (craving), and therefore able to merge completely into the object, to become one with it, to experience it from within. These objects are designated as pure forms, untarnished by any kind of entanglement with the 'I' or as absolute form (*rūpa*), since they belong neither to the domain of the formless (they possess shape), nor yet correspond to the sensuous form bound by craving. The realm of Pure Form (*rūpadhātu*) is thus not a domain of intellectual abstractions but of intuitive (because 'I' — freed) contemplation of form. Corresponding to these three groups of objects, we get three basic planes of consciousness; the consciousness which dwells in the domain of the sensuous, of forms of craving (*kāmāvacara-citta*); the consciousness which dwells in the domain of Pure Form (*rūpāvacara-citta*); and the consciousness which dwells in the domain of the Formless, of Non-Form (*arūpāvacara-citta*).

The Realm of Pure Form is intermediary between the other two realms inasmuch as it has something in common with each of the two – with the sense-domain, the property of form-ness; with the formless domain, the property of abstraction, namely from the egocentricity of the lower domain of the senses filled with desires. That this is no mere artificial, intellectual abstraction, follows from the intuitive character of these two domains. The properties of each domain are not something added to their particular character, but only modifications of the same. Thus the sense-world is designated as partly the domain of sensuous desires, since its objects are bounded, 'I' – conditioned, in their individualness set in contrast with the subject, incapable of union with the subject, and hence beget the state of tension (dualism) which we call craving. The objects belonging to the realm of Non-Form possess no limiting boundaries, are beyond all multiplicity and every kind of isolation or 'I'-entanglement. With this is excluded all possibility of tension, of craving. It is the same with pure forms, for their boundaries are only of an ideal, a formal sort, they are not essential to them and can therefore be filled by the experiencing subject."

For those who know the Enneads the above passage will have a very familiar sound. How close the resemblances really are and how far they are due simply to Neoplatonic reminiscences in the mind of its author may best be ascertained by an analysis of its contexts. Six points may be singled out: –

1. The World of Pure Form is intermediate between the realm of discursive thought and the purely formless domain, with both of which it has something in common.
2. It is thus characterised by a purely intuitive contemplation, to be contrasted with discursive thought.
3. It breaks down the barrier between subject and object found in normal thought and perception.
4. It involves relinquishment of the ego and of sensual craving.
5. Its objects are Pure Forms.
6. These are perceptible only to the higher senses (sight and hearing) in so far as they are able to merge with their object and experience it from within.

The resemblances between the first five of the above points and Plotinus' account of *Noûs* are evident enough; indeed the first three of them are so basic to it that no more need be said. With point four, that intuitive contemplation involves abandonment of sensual craving and one's own will we have dealt sufficiently in connection with Schopenhauer; it is equally fundamental for Buddhist contemplatives that meditative absorption requires relinquishment both of sensual desire and of discursive thought,<sup>90</sup> while the statement that it abolishes the subject-object distinction is also found in sources not open to the suspicion of Neoplatonic influence.<sup>91</sup> Hence when both Plotinus and the Buddhists describe the objects of intuitive contemplation as Pure Forms we may conclude a priori that here too they are likely to be talking about the same thing, despite the obscurities of their accounts. (Thus on the one hand we read that Pure Forms "have shape," on the other that "their boundaries are only of an ideal, a formal sort, they are not essential to them.") The only major divergence between the two accounts concerns point six; for, as we have seen, for Plotinus *Noûs* involves complete abandonment of sense-perception and mental images, whereas for the Buddhists, as for Schopenhauer, it involves merging the senses with their objects. Not only, however, will it be recalled that we found Plato and Plotinus extremely obscure as to what contemplation without mental images would be like; if we refer back to Plotinus' accounts of *Noûs*, with their rich sensuous imagery, and especially to VI. 7. 12. 23-30's comparison of it to "one quality englobing and safeguarding all qualities," we may wonder whether his experience may not in fact be closer to that of the Buddhists than his formal theory allows. Is he not, in fact, attaining it by merging his (inner) senses with their objects? At least we may ask him and Plato how, if the Intelligible world is as removed from sense-experience as they claim, it is legitimate to use sensuous imagery of that world at all. Even so the resemblance to the Buddhist position would still be incomplete, since the Plotinus passage refers to scent, taste and touch, whereas for the Buddhists only sight and hearing have a place in the Form World.<sup>92</sup> And it may also be felt that the nature of the experience in question remains obscure, whichever formulation is correct. But such obscurity is evidently inherent in any

experience going beyond our normal consciousness, and the only remedy, as all the authors in question assure us, is to undertake the arduous course of training necessary to attain such experience for ourselves.<sup>93</sup>

Recent years, however, have brought us what in many quarters is regarded as a short cut to such experiences, by means of psychedelic drugs. That I have left dealing with these until now is due once again to the tremendous *variety* of experiences involved and the danger, as before, that so far from finding illumination for our problem we shall find ourselves faced with a vast new family of experiences, themselves needing clarification. Nor do I propose to deal with the vexed question whether psychedelic drugs can produce mystical experience and, if so, what kinds of mystical experience. All I propose is to quote two accounts of such experiences which on significant points recall Plotinus' description of *Noûs* and thus provide final confirmation that his description is indeed experientially based. I shall add as little explanatory comment of my own as possible since most of the resemblances, and their implications, should be clear from our previous discussion.

The first passage is the account by a modern American journalist of his experience under mescaline.<sup>94</sup> This experience appears to differ from that of Plotinus in being of the extrovertive type, but, as in other extrovertive experiences, the echoes of Plotinus (in the words italicised), are clear enough. What is unfortunately unclear is how far they result from reminiscences of the *Enneads* on the author's part; all that can be said is that his references to Plotinus elsewhere do not suggest profound or detailed acquaintance.<sup>95</sup> A second significant difference is that the passage to be quoted is an account of a "bad trip." Thus, while Plotinus stresses the "ease" and "gentleness" of the Intelligible world,<sup>96</sup> the American journalist feels only meaninglessness and horror. Hence, presumably, his insistence that "we were not God." Once again, I refrain from discussing whether this is a correct interpretation of the experience; here it is only the experience and the resemblances to Plotinus that concern us.

"Finally it all fell together, and I remembered who I was. And it was all so simply, really, *I was life, I was being, I was the vibrant force* that filled the room, and was the room. *I was the*

*world, the universe, I was everything. I was that which always was and always would be. I was Jim, and Jim was me, and we were everybody else; and everybody else was us, and all of us put together were the same thing, and that same thing was the only thing there was and all that there was wasn't God. It was us, alone. And we were each other, and nowhere anywhere was there anything else but us and we were always the same, the one and only truth"* (my underlinings).

The second passage is the account by the modern Buddhist writer John Blofeld of a 'high Yogic' experience also achieved through mescaline.<sup>97</sup>

"Suddenly there dawned full awareness of three great truths which I had long accepted intellectually but never, until that moment, experienced as being fully self-evident. (I quote only the first of these, R. T. W.) Now they had burst upon me, not just as intellectual convictions, but as experiences no less vivid and tangible than are heat and light to a man closely surrounded by a forest fire.

There was awareness of undifferentiated unity<sup>98</sup> embracing the perfect identity of subject and object, of singleness and plurality, of the One and the Many. Thus I found myself (if indeed the words 'I' and 'myself' have any meaning in such a context) at once the audience, the actors and the play. Logically the One can give birth to the many and the Many can merge into the One or be fundamentally but not apparently identical with it; they cannot be in all respects one and many simultaneously. But now logic was transcended. I beheld (and myself was) a whirling mass of brilliant colours and forms which, being several colours and several forms, were different from one another — and yet altogether the *same* at the very moment of being different! I doubt if this statement can be made to seem meaningful at the ordinary level of consciousness. No wonder the mystics of all faiths teach that understanding comes only when logic and intellect are transcended! In any case, this truth, even if at an ordinary level of consciousness it cannot be *understood*, can, in a higher state of consciousness, be directly *experienced* as self-evident. Logic also boggles at trying to explain how I could at once *perceive* and yet *be* those colours and those forms, how the *seer*, the *seeing* and the *seen*,

the *feeler*, the *feeling* and the *felt* could all be one; but, to me, all this was so clearly self-evident as to suggest the words "childishly simple."

In quoting this passage a modern psychologist notes significant points on which it recalls the accounts of intuition given by such philosophers as Spinoza and Bergson:<sup>99</sup> the resemblance between the sudden illumination of Blofeld's first paragraph and that described in the Seventh Platonic Letter is equally striking. No less remarkable is the resemblance between the second paragraph and Plotinus' account of the unity-in-diversity of the Intelligible world, the mutual identity of its members and the unity between subject and object on which this depends. This last point, of course, was equally noticeable in the first psychedelic experience we considered, but, since Blofeld makes no reference to a transfiguration of the external world, his account would seem more clearly an experience of the introvertive type and therefore closer to Plotinus. On the other hand his reference to "a whirling mass of brilliant colours and forms" ("forms" here clearly meaning no more than "shapes") suggests an experience which, though paradoxical, is decidedly less intense and less mysterious than Plotinus' intellectual vision, and experience in fact intermediate between Plotinus' *φαντασία* and his *Noûs*, resembling the latter in involving union of subject and object, but the former in not having passed entirely beyond sensuous imagery. It is true that we saw reason to believe that Plotinus' analysis of *Noûs* was not wholly in accordance with his experience on the latter point, but even so it is surely hard to accept that his language implies nothing more mysterious than what Blofeld is talking about. What is less clear is where the Buddhists stand on the question, with their enigmatic reference to "Pure Forms." Fortunately the Buddhist scheme itself provides an easy answer for, since that scheme recognizes four (or sometimes five) divisions of the Form World,<sup>100</sup> it is a natural inference that Blofeld is describing one of the lower levels and Plotinus one of the higher ones.

Once again, however, it becomes clear that only by having the experience for ourselves will we achieve full certainty on the point. I hope, however, that the above account has, first of all,

demonstrated that Plotinus' Intelligible world is beyond doubt empirically based (at least in part) and, secondly, done something, by assembling a deliberately restricted number of parallel passages, towards clarifying that experience. Once again I must stress that this paper is only a preliminary attempt to illuminate some of the territory lying between our normal consciousness and full mystical experience. If it prompts others to seek further and more fully, it will have achieved its purpose.

## NOTES

1. Cf. especially E. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, pp. 182 ff. and his notices to his Budé edition (especially that to Enn. V. 1); also P. O. Kristeller, *Der Begriff der Seele in der Ethik des Plotin* (Tübingen 1929), H.-R. Schwyzer *Die Zweifache Sicht in der Philosophie Plotins* (Museum Helveticum I. 1944, pp. 87-99) and the first chapter of my *Neoplatonism* (London 1972). While recent studies have shown that Plotinus' "metaphysical" and "experiential" sides should not be separated too sharply, it is still helpful to distinguish these two aspects of his thought.
2. Termed by Aquinas discursiveness "secundum causalitatem" (*Summa Theol.* Ia. 14.7). Discursiveness of this type is denied to divine souls in e.g. Enn. IV. 3. 18, IV. 4. 12, etc.
3. Termed by Aquinas (*Summa Theol.* *ibid.*) discursiveness "per successionem tantum"; affirmed (apparently) of all souls in III. 7. 11, V. 1. 4. 10-25, denied of divine souls in IV. 4. 15-16.
4. III. 7. 11. 44: *ψυχῆς ἐν κινήσει μεταβατικῇ ἐξ ἄλλου εἰς ἄλλον βίον ζώην*.
5. Cf. W. T. Stace *The Teachings of the Mystics* (New York 1960) and *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London 1961) *passim*.
6. *Neoplatonism* p. 3.
7. For the terms cf. R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (Oxford 1957). That only a difference of interpre-

- tation, not of actual experience, is involved is argued against Zaehner by Stace, whose view is endorsed by Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* p. 90. That Plotinus' mysticism is theistic is argued by Rist, *Plotinus, the Road to Reality*, ch. 16, pp. 213-30 and by Armstrong, *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* p. 263. On the other side, see the paper of Prof. Mamo in the present volume; also my remarks in *Neoplatonism* pp. 89-90 and the (apparently conflicting) statements of Dodds at *Les Sources de Plotin* (Vandoeuvres - Geneva 1957) p. 22n. 2 and *Pagan and Christian* pp. 88-90.
8. Obvious examples from theistic mystics include Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius and St. John of the Cross; from non-theistic mysticism cf. e.g. the Buddhist experiences described below pp. 136-37.
  9. On extrovertive mysticism cf. Stace, *Teachings of the Mystics* pp. 62 ff. The experience is termed "the Mysticism of Unifying Vision" by Otto, *Mysticism East and West* pp. 38 ff.; Zaehner's term (*Mysticism Sacred and Profane* p. 28) is "panenhenic."
  10. *Op. cit.* pp. 41-7, followed by Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* p. 77. For the correct view cf. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian* pp. 83-4; Rist, *Plotinus, the Road to Reality* pp. 215-16.
  11. *Op. cit.* p. 42.
  12. Cf. V. 8. 11. 10-12: δραμῶν δὲ εἰς τὸ εἶσω ἔχει πᾶν, καὶ ἀφ' αὐτοῦ τὴν αἰσθησιν εἰς τοῦπίσω τοῦ ἑτεροῦ εἶναι φόβῳ εἰς ἑστὶν ἐκεῖ.
  13. The best account is that of Armstrong, *Sources de Plotin* pp. 393-413, with the subsequent discussion; cf. also recently the relevant sections of P. Merlan's account of Plotinus' background in the *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* pp. 13-132, with the references given there.
  14. *Pagan and Christian* p. 84 n. 1.
  15. MacKenna's translation (as is also the case with the following passages). The passage is quoted by Armstrong, *Cambridge History* pp. 245-46.

16. Quoted by Armstrong *ibid.* p. 221.
17. VI. 7. 15. 30-2.
18. V. 8. 10. 31-43.
19. Cf. the discussion at *Sources de Plotin* p. 338 of this passage and VI. 4. 7. 23-40; also Dodds, *Pagan and Christian* pp. 86-7 and my *Neoplatonism* p. 42.
20. Cf. e.g. V. 1. 4. 1-25 and the other passages listed at *Neoplatonism* p. 53n. 2. For the difficulties in Noûs's alleged "timelessness" cf. Armstrong, *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris 1971) pp. 67-76.
21. Cf. e.g. I. 8. 2. 7-21, III. 8. 8. 1-30, V. 3. 1-9, V. 5. 1-2.
22. That the divine Noûs transcends change is argued at Met. Λ. 9. 1074b 26-7; for the interdependence of change and time cf. the definition of time at Phys. IV. 11. 220a 24-5 (Cf. also *ibid.* IV. 12. 221b 3-7 and the puzzling chapter De Caelo I. 9.). On the identity between subject and object in Noûs cf. Met. *ibid.* 1074b 33-1075a 5, De An. III. 4. 429b 22-430a 9.
23. That Noûs cannot contemplate mere images is argued in V. 5. 1-2. For the comparison of φαντασία, on which our soul's consciousness rests, to a mirror cf. I. 4. 10. 6 ff., IV. 3. 30. 7 ff. The contrast between the two Hypostases is most concisely summarized at VI. 5. 7. 3-4: νοοῦμεν ἐκεῖνα οὐκ εἰδῶλα αὐτῶν οὐδὲ τύπους ἔχοντες. εἰ δὲ μὴ τοῦτο, ὄντες ἐκεῖνα.
24. For verbal formulae as the objects of φαντασία cf. IV. 3. 30. 5 ff. That Noûs does not contemplate προτάσεις, ἀξιιώματα or λεκτά is argued at V. 5. 1. 38-9.
25. V. 8. 4. 9-11, on which cf. Armstrong, *Cambridge History* p. 245.
26. Cf. especially Festugière's discussion in *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, Vol. IV, *Le Dieu Inconnu et la Gnose* pp. 92-140. On the absurdities resulting from this linguistic confusion cf. p. 139 of Festugière's work.
27. "Noûs, νοεῖν and their derivatives in Homer" (*Classical Philology* 38 (1943) pp. 79-83; "Noûs, νοεῖν and their derivatives in Presocratic Philosophy" (*ibid.* 40 (1945) pp. 223-242, 41 (1946) pp. 12-34). Cf. also the summary in W. K. C. Guthrie *A History of Greek Philosophy* Vol. II pp. 17-19.

28. CP 1943 p. 90.
29. CP 1945 p. 242.
30. CP 1943 p. 90.
31. *Ibid.* p. 91, quoted by Guthrie *op. cit.* p. 18n. 1.
32. CP 1943 p. 85.
33. *Ibid.* p. 89.
34. London 1964.
35. J. Hadamard, *An Essay on the psychology of invention in the mathematical field* (Princeton 1945).
36. On Pythagoras cf. *op. cit.* pp. 111-12, on Archimedes *ibid.* pp. 105-8.
37. Quoted by Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* p. 82.
38. The most serious detailed attack on the Letter's authenticity in recent times is that of L. Edelstein, *Plato's Seventh Letter* (Leiden 1966); cf. also G. Ryle, *Plato's Progress* (Cambridge 1966). That the Letter's philosophy is substantially Platonic is argued by Von Fritz in *Phronesis* XI, 2(1966), pp. 117-153, with whose conclusions I am in substantial agreement, though they need supplementing on certain points. Von Fritz's remarks on pp. 134-5 of the article in question are for me the strongest argument in favour of the view that the Letter is in fact Plato's. On the historical side cf. now Von Fritz's *Platon in Sizilien* (Berlin 1968) ch. I (pp. 5-62).
39. ῥητὸν γὰρ οὐδαμῶς ἐστὶν ὡς ἄλλα μαθήματα, ἀλλ' ἐκ πολλῆς συνουσίας γιγνομένης περὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ καὶ τοῦ συζῆν ἐξαίφνης, οἷον ἀπὸ πυρὸς πηδῆσαντος ἐξαερθὲν φῶς, ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γενόμενον αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ ἤδη τρέφει.
40. More strictly the terminology at 342 D (τούτων δὲ ἐγγύτατα μὲν συγγενεία καὶ ὁμοιότητι τοῦ πέμπτου νοῦς πεπλησίακεν) would suggest that *all* human knowledge is there condemned as inadequate, whereas a distinction is subsequently made between two forms of knowledge, of which the higher (at 344B termed φρόνησις . . . καὶ νοῦς) is at least more adequate than the lower. It is also unclear whether the statement of 342 D means (a) that knowledge in general approaches closer to the nature of the Forms than the first "three" or (b) that νοῦς is closer to the Forms than other kinds of knowledge; the latter is the view of Morrow (*Plato: Epistles* p. 73.).

41. The terms εἶδος and ἰδέα are not used in the Letter, but it is clear that this is what is meant by such phrases as ὁ δὴ γνωστόν τε καὶ ἀληθῶς ἐστὶν ὄν (342B).
42. 342E: οὐ γὰρ ἂν τούτων μὴ τις τὰ τέτταρα λάβῃ ἁμῶς γέ πως, οὐποτε τελέως ἐπιστήμης τοῦ πέμπτου μέτοχος ἐσται.
43. 343E: ἡ δὲ διὰ πάντων αὐτῶν διαγωγὴ, ἄνω καὶ κάτω μεταβαίνουσα ἐφ' ἑκάστον, μόγις ἐπιστήμην ἐνέτεκεν εὖ πεφυκότες εὖ πεφυκότες.
44. 344B: μόγις δὲ τριβόμενα πρὸς ἄλληλα αὐτῶν ἕκαστα, ὀνόματα καὶ λόγοι ὅψεις τε καὶ αἰσθήσεις . . . ἐξέλαμψε φρόνησις περὶ ἑκάστον καὶ νοῦς.
45. For the parallel fluctuations in Plato's technical terminology cf. Rep. 533E-534A, where νόησις (which at 511D-E had denoted the higher form of knowledge) becomes the term for knowledge as a whole, while ἐπιστήμη (formerly the more general term) is now applied to what had previously been called νόησις. For 342C's failure to distinguish knowledge and true opinion cf. Phil. 60D and 66B-C.
46. While Adam's view, in his edition of the Republic, that the objects of διάνοια are the intermediate "mathematics" has not found general acceptance, other scholars have been sufficiently impressed by Rep. 477C-D's claim that different faculties have different objects to incline to see them as concerned with different kinds of Forms; cf. e.g. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* pp. 64-5. On the other side cf. Cross and Woodley, *Plato's Republic: a Philosophical Commentary* pp. 237-8, with whose conclusions I am in general agreement.
47. 511D: καίτοι νοητῶν ὄντων μετὰ ἀρχῆς.
48. Reference should also be made to 510D's mention of the "square itself" and "the diagonal itself", which strongly suggest that it is the mathematical Forms (and perhaps other Forms as well), rather than the "intermediates", that are the objects of διάνοια.
49. Reference is also made, however, at 431B-C, to the combination of words in propositions (λόγοι) as fulfilling a similar function. For the doctrine of the "verbal image" cf. also Phaedo 99D-100A. Among later Platonists cf. esp.

Plutarch Gen. Socr. 589B, Proclus Th. Pl. I. 10, (p. 46,2-5 Saffrey – Westerink), I. 29 (p. 124. 7-22 *ibid.*) and many passages of his *Cratylus* commentary. The doctrine is a clear anticipation of Wittgenstein's early "picture" theory of language.

50. 439C ff.; cf. N. Gulley, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 68-9.
51. This conclusion would not, of course, hold for anyone who regards the *Cratylus* as dating either (a) from a time before the Forms had achieved full transcendence for Plato or (b), with Owen, from a time when he was preparing to abandon the theory. Against the former view cf. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedo* p. 9; against the latter cf. most recently N. H. Reed, "Plato on Flux, Perception and Language" (*Proc. Cambridge Philol. Soc.* 198 (n.s. 18), 1972, pp. 65-77).
52. 439B: ὄντως μὲν τοῖνυν τρόπον δεῖ μανθάνειν ἢ εὐρίσκειν τὰ ὄντα μεῖζον ἴσως ἐστὶν ἐγνωκέναι ἢ κατ' ἐμὲ καὶ σέ.
53. Cf. especially the language of the latter passage: οὐκέτ' . . . οἷος τ' ἔσει ἀκολουθεῖν · ἐπεὶ τὸ γ' ἐμὸν οὐδὲν ἂν προθυμίας ἀπολίποι οὐδ' εἰκόνα ἂν ἔτι οὐ λέγομεν ἴδοις, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἀληθές, δ' γε δὴ μοι φαίνεται — εἰ δ' ὄντως ἢ μὴ οὐκετ' ἀξιον τοῦτο διῃσχυρίζεσθαι · ἀλλ' ὅτι μὲν δὴ τοιοῦτον τι ἰδεῖν ἰσχυριστέον.
54. Cf. Ross, *op. cit.* pp. 54-5. Cross and Woosley, *op. cit.* pp. 241-2, Gulley, *op. cit.* p. 69.
55. Gulley's view (*op. cit.* p. 69) that the *Cratylus* is merely protesting against inadequacies in *existing* language (a view which Edelstein actually uses to distinguish its doctrine from that of the Letter and thus argue that the latter cannot be Plato's — cf. *op. cit.* p. 104 n. 76) ignores the fact that for Plato an image can *never* fully reproduce the nature of its original and that verbal images must thus always remain to some extent inadequate: cf. *Crat.* 432B: τοῦ δὲ ποιῶντος καὶ ξυμπάσης εἰκόνης μὴ οὐχ αὐτῇ ἢ ἡ ὁρθότης, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐναντίον οὐδὲ τὸ παράπαν δέη πάντα ἀποδοῦναι οἷον ἐστὼ ὧς εἰκάζει, εἰ μέλλει εἰκὼν εἶναι.
56. Symp. 210E, Ep. VII. 341C-D.
57. For the metaphor applied to union with ultimate Truth,

cf. Rep. 490A, Symp. 212A; to sense-perception Theaet. 156A ff., etc., Soph. 248A; Cf. further Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* pp. 239n. 1, 246.

58. Cf. above n. (13).
59. Cf. the passages listed above n. (22).
60. De An. III. 2. 425b 12 ff.
61. On this point cf. esp. the discussion in De An. III. 8.
62. Cf. above p. 125 and the passages quoted in n. (23).
63. Cf. Psellus Schol. in Joh. Clim. (=CMAG. VI. 171. 10-18, a continuation of *περὶ Φιλ.* fr. 15 Ross) and Cicero Tusc. I. 27. 66 (which inclines, however, to set limits to the soul's self-awareness). If these passages are in fact based on Aristotle's early teaching, the implications for the origin of the νοήσεως νόησις doctrine would be far-reaching; for scholars' views on the question cf. the discussion in Untersteiner's edition of the *περὶ Φιλοσοφίας*.
64. This is proved by *περὶ Φιλ.* fr. 15 Ross and Eud. fr. 10 Ross (= Plutarch De. Is. 382D-E); cf. especially the claim in the former passage that intuition occurs αὐτοῦ παθόντος τοῦ νοῦ τὴν ἑλλαμψω and is thus comparable to illumination in the Mysteries; (I therefore dissent from Dörrie's interpretation of the passage as abandoning Plato's analogy between philosophy and the Mysteries, a view presented in *Akad. des Wissensch. und der Liter., Abhandl. der Geistes- und sozialwiss. Kl.*, Wiesbaden 1956, 5 pp. 32-4).
65. Cf. esp. Post. An. II. 19, E. N. VI. 6-11.
66. E. N. VI. 6. 1140b 30 ff., Post. An. II. 19. 100b 5-17. On the nature of the ἀρχαί in question cf. Post. An. I. 10, Ross, *Aristotle* p. 55, *Prior and Posterior Analytics* pp. 55-9.
67. De An. III. 6. 430a 26 ff., Met. θ. 10. 1051b 17 ff. We may note that, whereas for Koestler scientific discovery depends on "bisociative thinking," for Aristotle such thinking, involving as it does a combination of concepts, is always the work of διάνοια. It seems evident that a satisfactory theory of intuition must find some way of mediating between the two views.

68. Cf. E. N. VI. 11. 1143a-b, a doctrine which appears in a different light, however, when we recall the Eudemian Ethics' claim that the practical man's success depends on divine inspiration (E. E. VIII. 2. 1248a 29 ff.).
69. For Festugière cf. the discussion referred to above n. (26); for Dodds cf. *Pagan and Christian* chs. 2 and 3.
70. Cf. e.g. Albinus' claim that intuition works *περιλήψει τινα καὶ οὐ διεξόδω* (Epit. IV. 6) From an earlier period we should probably place the claim of Theophrastus' metaphysical fragment (VIII. 25) that the radiance of τὰ ἄκρα καὶ πρῶτα permits them to be apprehended only by an intuitive contact (αὐτῷ τῷ νῷ . . . . . θίγοντι καὶ οἶον ἀψαμένῳ) in this class; (on the fragment cf. Merlan, *Cambridge History* p. 108).
71. Cf. esp. C. H. X. 5-6 and (more doubtfully) Numenius fr. 11 (on which cf. Dodds, *Sources de Plotin* pp. 16-17, 22-23, with the earlier discussions mentioned there), *Pagan and Christian* pp. 93-4.
72. For experiences of these types cf. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian* pp. 70-83.
73. We may note, however, from the post-Plotinian period, Marinus' claim that Proclus αὐτόπτης ἐγένετο τῶν ἐκεῖ μακαρίων ὄντως θεαμάτων, οὐκ ἔτι μὲν διεξοδικῶς καὶ ἀποδεικτικῶς συλλογιζόμενος αὐτῶν τὴν ἐπιστήμην, ὥσπερ δὲ ὄψει, ἀπλαῖς ἐπιβολαῖς τῆς νοερᾶς ἐνεργείας θεώμενος, τὰ ἐν τῷ θεῷ νῷ παραδείγματα (V. Pr. 22).
74. *Op. cit.* 35: ἐπιφομένων καὶ σπειρομένων ἄνωθεν ἀφανῶς τῶν ἐνθυμημάτων.
75. *Ibid.*: ἐρμηνείαν, εὐρεσίαν, φωτὸς ἀπόλαυσιν, ὀξυδερκεστάτην ὄψιν, ἐνέργειαν τῶν πραγμάτων ἁριδηλοτάτην, οἷα γένοιτ' ἂν δι' ὀφθαλμῶν ἐκ σαφεινότητος δείξεως. Text and translation are those of the Loeb edition.
76. *Ibid.*: ὡς ὑπὸ κατοχῆς ἐνθέου κορυβαντιᾶν καὶ πάντα ἀγνοεῖν, τὸν τόπον, τοὺς παρόντας, ἑμαυτὸν, τὰ λεγόμενα, τὰ γραφόμενα.
77. *Ibid.* 32: καλεῖται δ' ἡ φορὰ τῶν αὐτοματιζομένων ἀγαθῶν ἀφροσύνη, ἐπειδήπερ ὁ νοῦς ἀφρεῖται τῶν κατὰ τὰς ιδίας ἐπιβολὰς ἐνεργειῶν καὶ ὥσπερ τῶν ἐκουσίων

- ἡλευθέρωται διὰ τὴν πληθύν τῶν ὑομένων καὶ ἀδιαστάτως ἐπομβρούντων.
78. *Ibid.* 31: τότε μελέται μὲν καὶ πόνοι καὶ ἀσκήσεις ἡσυχάζουσιν, ἀναδίδονται δὲ ἄνευ τέχνης φύσεως προμηθεῖα πάντα ἀνθρώδῃ παῶν ὠφέλιμα.
79. *Ibid.* 33: ἔστι δὲ ταῦτα θαυμασιώτατα φύσει καὶ περικαλλέστατα· ὧν μὲν γὰρ ἂν ὠδίνῃ δι' ἑαυτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ, τὰ πολλὰ ἀμβλωθρίδια, ἡλιτόμηνα. ὅσα δὲ ἂν ἐπιφύων ὁ θεὸς ἄρδῃ, τέλεια καὶ ὁλόκληρα καὶ πάντων ἄριστα γεινῶνται.
80. Cf. above p. 127.
81. On the passage cf. especially H.-R. Schwyzer, *Sources de Plotin* pp. 370-1 and my *Neoplatonism* p. 81.
82. *Plato* I. p. 219.
83. *World as Will and Idea* (tr. Haldane and Kemp) I. p. 231.
84. On the latter point cf. especially the passage just quoted with Enn. IV. 4.2. 3-8. πρὸς δὲ ταῦτά τις ἀναμνησθήτα ὡς ὅταν καὶ ἐνταῦθα θεωρῇ καὶ μάλιστα ἐναργῶς, οὐκ ἐπιτρέφει πρὸς ἑαυτὸν τότε τῇ νοήσει, ἀλλ' ἔχει μὲν ἑαυτὸν, ἡ δὲ ἐνέργεια πρὸς ἐκεῖνο, κάκεῖνο γίνεται οἶον ὕλην ἑαυτὸν παρασχών. εἰδοποιούμενος δὲ κατὰ τὸ ὁρώμενον καὶ δυνάμει ὧν τότε αὐτός.
85. III. 7. 11. 15-16, IV. 4. 3. 1-2, V. 1. 1. 1-5.
86. For Plotinus cf. esp. I. 3. 6. 16-17, VI. 7. 36. 6-10; for Plato Rep. 518-9, Ep. VII. 344A.
87. On the need to abandon memory cf. IV. 3. 32 - IV. 4.2; on the interdependence of awareness and interest IV. 4.3. 6-8, 25. 1-11.
88. *World as Will and Idea* I. p. 234.
89. *The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy* pp. 81-2.
90. More strictly, the Form world is divided into four (or sometimes five) levels, of which only the upper three have fully transcended discursive thought; cf. Govinda *op. cit.* pp. 84-5.
91. Cf. e.g. Paravahera Vajirañāna Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice* (Colombo 1962) p. 46: "In this stage of Samadhi the mind and its object of concentration are identical." I have not, unfortunately,



been able to trace the authority for such statements in the original Buddhist texts.

92. There is, of course, an obvious parallel here to Aristotle's early view (*περὶ Φιλ.* fr. 24) that the celestial gods have only the two higher senses (on which cf. R. Walzer in I. Düring and G. E. L. Owen, *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-fourth Century*, pp. 105-12). Once again, one would like to know more about Aristotle's views, and their sources, during this period.
93. Another obvious parallel to the Plotinian Hypostases, which, for lack of detailed evidence, I have not pursued further here, is the Mahayana Buddhist doctrine of the Three Bodies of the Buddha; for a preliminary comparison cf. J. Przyluski, *Les Trois Hypostases dans l'Inde et à Alexandrie* (Ann. de l'Inst. de Philol. Orientale (Brussels) 4 (1936) ("Mélanges Cumont") pp. 925-33. Plotinus' account of the Intelligible world has also a strong resemblance, at least superficially, to the doctrine of the Mahayana Buddhist Gandavyuha Sutra, notably in its stress on the radiance of the Ideal world and the mutual interpenetration of its members. How close the resemblance really is, however, can hardly be determined without a complete translation of the Sutra; cf. in the meantime D. T. Suzuki's discussion in his *Essays in Zen Buddhism: Third Series*, reprinted in *On Indian Mahayana Buddhism* ed. E. Conze (London and New York 1968) pp. 147-226. It must also remain undecided, in the light of our present evidence, how far such resemblances are due to similarity of experience and how far to borrowing by one system from another. The former seems to me certainly the explanation of the resemblances noted in the text; but with regard to those mentioned in the present footnote, borrowing by one side or the other seems to me by no means impossible.
94. W. Braden, *The Private Sea: LSD and the Search for God* (Chicago 1967) pp. 238-9.
95. Cf. the reference to Plotinus at op. cit. p. 76.
96. Cf. V. 8.4.1, III. 2.1. 30 ff., II. 9. 13. 8 (the last passage actually referring to the celestial gods) and the passages

quoted by Hadot, *Plotin ou la Simplicité du Regard* pp. 132-5.

97. *Psychedelie Review* 7(1966) pp. 29-30.
98. Clearly not "undifferentiated" in Stace's sense; cf. above p. 122 and no. (5).
99. M. R. Westcott, *Towards a Contemporary Psychology of Intuition* (New York 1968) pp. 76-7.
100. Cf. above n. (90).

## Philological Comments on the Neoplatonic Notion of Infinity

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As F. R. Dodds has shown,<sup>1</sup> Plotinus' conception of the One as *ἄπειρον* derives, terminologically at least, from the First Hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*. But in regard to content Plotinus' claim that the One is *ἄπειρον* . . . οὐ τῷ ἀδιεξίτητῳ ἢ τοῦ μεγέθους ἢ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀπεριλήπτῳ τῆς δυνάμεως<sup>2</sup> seems to find no support in the *Parmenides* where the conclusion that the One is *ἄπειρον* is based solely on the claim that, in order to be One, it must have no parts and therefore neither a beginning nor an end: the One is *ἄπειρον* because it has no *πέρατα*, i.e. no *ἀρχή* and no *τελευτή* (*Parm.* 137 D 4 ff.) In a valuable discussion of the matter H. J. Krämer has attempted<sup>3</sup> to trace the doctrine of the dynamic infinity of the One back to the Old Academy. But although Krämer is able to point to *Republic* 509 B where the "*ἀγαθόν* = *ἐν*" is defined as *ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχον*,<sup>4</sup> he is forced to conclude with regard to the Old Academic background of the doctrine that "Bei der Dürftigkeit und der mangelhaften Präzision der Belege empfiehlt es sich indessen, die Entscheidung vorläufig offenzuhalten."<sup>5</sup> In spite of much patient research the ancestry of the Neoplatonic doctrine, not merely in its dynamic aspect but in general, is still far from clarified.

One aspect of the problem which has not, I think, been hitherto noticed concerns the meaning of the term *ἄπειρος*. The usual connotation is that to which Plotinus referred first in the passage quoted at the outset, i.e. that of being *ἀδιεξίτητος* in

one respect or another. There is, however, a further and precisely opposite meaning of the term which finds no mention in Liddel and Scott nor in Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, but which is especially relevant to any qualification of the One as *ἄπειρον*. In the course of a passage fraught with significance for the history of ideas Clement of Alexandria writes (*Strom.* V. 12. 81. 5 f.) *πῶς γὰρ ἂν εἴη ῥητὸν [sc. Θεός] ὃ μήτε γένος ἐστὶ μήτε διαφορὰ μήτε εἶδος μήτε ἄτομον μήτε ἀριθμός, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ συμβεβηκός τι μηδὲ ὧ συμβέβηκέν τι. οὐκ ἂν δὲ ὅλον εἴποι τις αὐτὸν ὀρθῶς· ἐπὶ μεγέθει γὰρ τάττεται τὸ ὅλον καὶ ἔστι τῶν ὅλων πατήρ. οὐδὲ μὴν μέρη τινὰ αὐτοῦ λεκτέον· ἀδιαίρετον γὰρ τὸ ἔν, διὰ τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ἄπειρον, οὐ κατὰ τὸ ἀδιεξίτητον νοούμενον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ ἀδιάστατον καὶ μὴ ἔχον πέρας, καὶ τοίνυν ἀσχημάτιστον καὶ ἄνωμόμαστον.* The term *ἄπειρος*, says Clement in effect, is applicable not only to that which is infinite in extent (*ἀδιεξίτητον*), but also to that which is infinitely small (*ἀδιάστατον*).<sup>6</sup> That this conception of the infinite is not simply a product of Clement's own cogitations and therefore peculiar to himself is evident from a consideration of a passage in Plutarch's *Cons. ad Ap.*, in which, commenting upon the indifference of whether a human life be long or short, Plutarch writes (111 C): *τό τε πολὺ δῆπουθεν ἢ μικρὸν οὐδὲν διαφέρειν δοκεῖ πρὸς τὸν ἄπειρον ἀφορώσω αἰῶνα. τὰ γὰρ χίλια καὶ τὰ μύρια κατὰ Σιμωνίδην (fr. 648 Page) ἔτη στιγμή τις ἐστὶν ἀόριστος, μᾶλλον δὲ μόριόν τι βραχύτατον στιγμῆς.*<sup>7</sup> Thus, like *ἄπειρος*, the term *ἀόριστος* can be applied not only to that which is too large to admit of definition but also to that which is too small. Once again there is no reference in Liddel and Scott nor in the *Patristic Greek Lexicon* under *ἀόριστος* or its cognates to this somewhat unusual conception of the indefinite.<sup>8</sup>

But though unusual, there is nothing "non-Greek" about the conception: already Anaxagoras was familiar with the notion of the infinitely small (fr. 1 Diels-Kranz): *δομοῦ πάντα χρήματα ἦν, ἄπειρα καὶ πλῆθος καὶ σμικρότητα· καὶ γὰρ τὸ σμικρὸν ἄπειρον ἦν.* Moreover, Clement's characterization of the One as *ἄπειρον* seems to coincide precisely with that of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. According to Plato, as we have seen, the One is *ἄπειρον* because it has no parts and in

consequence no *πέρατα*. Similarly Clement claims that, since it is indivisible and has no parts, the One is *ἄπειρον*, not indeed in extent but *κατὰ τὸ ἀδιάστατον καὶ μὴ ἔχον πέρας*. However, the similarity between Clement's argumentation and that of the First Hypothesis does not end here. Both Clement in the passage quoted above and Plato (*Parm.* 137 C 4 - D 8) argue (1) that the One is not a whole (*ὅλον*), (2) that the One cannot be spoken of as having parts (*μέρη*), (3) that the One is infinite (*ἄπειρον*), and (4) that the One has no form (*ἄνευ σχήματος* Plato; *ἀσχημάτιστον* Clement). At this point Plato goes on to list further limitations (the One is neither round nor straight, etc.) which Clement (or perhaps his source) has omitted, presumably because they were not considered theologically relevant. But the next characteristic which Clement assigns to the One - that of being nameless (*ἄνωμόμαστον*) - appears at the close of the First Hypothesis (142 A 3): *Οὐδ' ἄρα ὄνομα ἔστω αὐτῷ . . .* Though this is noted neither in Stählin's *Index fontium* nor in L. Früchtel's *Nachträge*, there can be no question but that Clement's presentation is dependent ultimately upon the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. However, one may go further than this. That Clement's negative theological utilization of the First Hypothesis derives from, or is at least influenced by, a Middle Platonic commentary or adaptation is evident from a consideration of a parallel passage in the *Didaskalikos*, to which Früchtel drew attention, but without noting that both authors were dependent, through an intermediate source, upon the *Parmenides*.<sup>9</sup>

*ἄρρητος δ' ἔστι καὶ νῶ*

- 5 *μόνῳ ληπτὸς, ὡς εἴρηται. ἐπεὶ οὔτε γένος ἐστὶν οὔτε εἶδος οὔτε διαφορὰ, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ συμβέβηκε τι αὐτῷ, οὔτε κακόν· οὐ γὰρ θέμις τοῦτο εἰπεῖν· οὔτε ἀγαθόν· κατὰ μετοχὴν γὰρ τινος ἔσται οὕτως καὶ μάλιστα ἀγαθότητος· οὔτε ἀδιαφορον· οὐδὲ γὰρ τοῦτο κατὰ τὴν ἐννοίαν αὐτοῦ· οὔτε ποιόν· οὐ γὰρ ποιωθέν ἐστι καὶ*  
 10 *ὑπὸ ποιότητος τοιοῦτον ἀποτελεσμένον· οὔτε ἄποιον· οὐ γὰρ ἐστέρηται τινος ἐπιβάλλοντος αὐτῷ ποιού· οὔτε μέρος τινός, οὔτε ὡς ὅλον ἔχον τινὰ μέρη, οὔτε ὥστε ταῦτόν τι εἶναι ἢ ἕτερον· οὐδὲν γὰρ αὐτῷ συμβέβηκε καθ' ὃ δύναται τῶν ἄλλων χωρισθῆναι· οὔτε κινεῖ οὔτε κινεῖται.*

*Didask.* p. 165.4 ff. Hermann (In line 8 H, οὕτως is my suggestion for the οὗτος of the mss., whilst ἀδιάφορον is Festugière's conjecture in place of the impossible mss. reading διαφορά. The phrase οὔτε διαφορά is omitted at this point, perhaps intentionally, in *Marcianus gr.* 513 and *Laurentianus* 71. 33. In line 12 ταῦτόν τι is the correct reading not only because it conforms with *Parm.* 139 B 4 ff., but also because it is attested by *Parisinus gr.* 1962, *Vindobonensis phil. gr.* 314 and the mainstream of the mss. tradition. Hermann had been misled by *Parisinus gr.* 1309 into reading ταῦτόν τι (though in fact this latter aberrant reading also occurs in five further mss. which Hermann did not consult). In the final line the phrase οὔτε κινεῖται οὔτε κινεῖται constitutes, since the immobility of the supreme deity was one of the presuppositions of Middle Platonic speculation, a not unimportant revision of the argument of *Parm.* 139 B 3 that οὔτε ἔστηκεν οὔτε κινεῖται. Numenius (fr. 24 Leemans) declares, perhaps with the *Parmenides* in mind, that though the First God is ἑστώς he may be said to have a κίνησις σύμφυτος, namely στάσις. Plotinus does not hesitate to follow the *Parmenides* the whole way in arguing that the One is (*Enn.* VI. 9. 3. 42 f.) οὐδὲ κινούμενον οὐδ' αὖ ἑστώς).

Since the resemblances between the above passage of the *Didaskalikos* and that of Clement extend beyond their mutual dependence upon the *Parmenides* we are forced to conclude either that both are dependent upon the same intermediate source, or that Clement was drawing upon the *Didaskalikos*. This latter possibility is, however, excluded by the fact that Clement's presentation reveals features of the First Hypothesis which are lacking from the *Didaskalikos*: i.e., the introduction of the term τὸ ἓν and the qualification of this first principle as ἄπειρον, ἀσχημάτιστον and ἀνωνόμαστον. We must therefore conclude that independently of each other Clement and the author of the *Didaskalikos* have drawn from a theologically inclined Middle Platonic Commentary upon the *Parmenides*, or at least from a Middle Platonic theologico-metaphysical adaptation of the First Hypothesis. Thus, the Middle Platonists did not, as has been frequently supposed, regard the *Parmenides* solely as a "logical exercise-book"<sup>10</sup> without metaphysical relevance. The above passages from Clement and the *Didask-*

*alikos* provide incontestable proof of a pre-Plotinian theological interpretation of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, and they must be taken seriously into account when one weighs the value of Simplicius' report (drawn from Porphyry) of a metaphysical interpretation on Neoplatonic lines of the first three Hypotheses by the Platonist Moderatus in the first century after Christ.<sup>11</sup>

The ambiguity of the term ἄπειρος, which may be employed legitimately not only κατὰ τὸ ἀδιεξίτητον to indicate the interminable but also κατὰ τὸ ἀδιάστατον to indicate the infinitesimal, is well brought out, as we have seen, by Clement. It must be mentioned that such terminological ambivalence is not necessarily a deficiency, and in the case of ἄπειρος can well be turned to account in the service of mystical theology. The Neoplatonic conception of αἰών is a good case in point. Plotinus (*Enn.* III. 7. 11. 2 ff.) speaks of this as τὴν ἀτρεμὴν ἐκείνην καὶ ὁμοῦ πᾶσαν καὶ ἄπειρον ἥδη ζωὴν καὶ ἀκλιωτὴν πάντη καὶ ἐν ἐνὶ καὶ πρὸς ἓν ἑστῶσαν. Clearly the juxtaposition of ὁμοῦ πᾶσαν (which implies that αἰών is ἀδιάστατος, a *totum simul*)<sup>12</sup> and ἄπειρον is eased by the latent ambivalence of this latter term, in that each of the two meanings of ἄπειρον specified by Clement may be considered relevant to the doctrine in hand. For Plotinus is at pains to point out not only that αἰών is a ζωὴ ὁμοῦ πᾶσα (= ἀδιάστατος)<sup>13</sup> but also, as a long established etymology dictated,<sup>14</sup> that the term αἰών derived ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰεῖ ὄντος (*Enn.* III. 7. 4. 42 f.). We must of course beware in this and similar contexts of understanding αἰεῖ in a too literally temporal sense,<sup>15</sup> but nonetheless there remains an unavoidable and insoluble contradiction in the paradoxical identification of νῦν and αἰεῖ which is the essence of the doctrine and a principal source of its fascination. Consider, for example, Plutarch, *De E apud Delphos* 393 A εἰς ὧν ἐνὶ τῷ νῦν τὸ αἰεῖ πεπλήρωκε [sc. ὁ θεός]. Or Porphyry, *Sententiae*. p. 44. 13 ff. Mommert εἰ δὲ μὴ τότε μετὰ τότε ἐπ' αὐτοῦ γίνεται, ἅμα πάντα νοεῖ [sc. νοῦς]. ἐπεὶ οὖν πάντα ἅμα καὶ οὐ τὸ μὲν νῦν τὸ δὲ αὖτις, πάντα ἅμα νῦν καὶ αἰεῖ. εἰ οὖν ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ νῦν, ἀνήρηται δὲ τὸ παρελθὺς καὶ τὸ μέλλον, ἐν ἀδιαστάτῳ τὸ νῦν (καὶ) ἀχρόνῳ παραστήματι. ὥστε τὸ ὁμοῦ κατὰ τε τὸ πλῆθος κατὰ τε τὸ χρονικὸν διάστημα ἐπ' αὐτοῦ. διὸ καθ' ἓν πάντα καὶ (ἐν) ἐνὶ καὶ ἀδιαστάτῳ καὶ ἀχρόνῳ.<sup>16</sup>

Particularly instructive with regard to the ambivalence of the term *ἄπειρος* is Boethius' account in *Cons.* V. 6 of the nature of *aeternitas*, since the discussion maintains a rigid distinction between *interminabilis* (= *ἄπειρος/ἀδιάστατος*, applicable to the eternal) and *infinitus* (= *ἄπειρος/ἀδιεξίτητος*, applicable to the temporally everlasting). Thus, after offering his familiar definition (*Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*) Boethius underlines the distinction between the eternal and the merely temporally everlasting as follows:

Quod igitur temporis patitur condicionem, licet illud, sicuti de mundo censuit Aristoteles, nec coeperit umquam esse nec desinat vitaeque eius cum temporis *infinitate* tendatur, nondum tamen tale est ut aeternum esse iure credatur. Non enim totum simul *infinitae* licet vitae spatium comprehendit atque complectitur, sed futura nondum transacta iam non habet. Quod igitur *interminabilis* vitae plenitudinem totam pariter comprehendit ac possidet, cui neque futuri quidquam absit nec praeteriti fluxerit, id aeternum esse iure perhibetur, idque necesse est et sui compos praesens sibi semper adistere et *infinitatem* mobilis temporis habere praesentem.

Only on one occasion in the course of his discussion and in order to achieve a special emphasis does Boethius permit himself to use the one term in both senses (*loc. cit.*): Aliud est enim per *interminabilem* duci vitam, quod mundo Plato tribuit, aliud *interminabilis* vitae totam pariter complexum esse praesentiam, quod divinae mentis proprium esse manifestum est. The very fact that Boethius has bothered to create and maintain this distinction between *interminabilis* and *infinitus* suggests that the ambiguity of the notion of the infinite caused him some embarrassment. As Proclus puts it (*In Tim.* I. 278. 10 f. Diehl) οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ αὐτὴ ἀπειρία χρόνον καὶ αἰῶνος· οὐδὲ γὰρ ταῦτόν αἰὼν καὶ χρόνος. But Proclus makes no terminological distinction between the various types of *ἀπειρία*.<sup>17</sup>

More direct influence of the argument of the First Hypothesis that indivisibility into parts implies infinity is evident in Proclus' claim that unity and infinity must be regarded as correlates (*El. theol.* prop. 86, p. 78. 29 f. Dodds καὶ ὅσα δὴ μᾶλλον ἐν καὶ μᾶλλον ἡμέρες, τοσοῦτω καὶ ἄπειρον

μᾶλλον. Cf. also prop. 95 Πᾶσα δύναμις ἐνικωτέρα οὐσα τῆς πληθυνομένης ἀπειροτέρα.). Proclus is, however, not entirely consistent in the matter of the infinity of the One. *Contra Dodds*<sup>18</sup> he does not argue at *In Parm.* 1124 with regard to *αὐτοαπειρία* and *αὐτόπερας* that "τὸ αὐτόπερας is the 'higher' of the pair, as being more akin to the One." In fact in the passage in question Proclus is at pains to explain how τὸ ἄπειρον (since this is the term with which Plato qualifies the One in the First Hypothesis) is superior to τὸ πέρας; cf. *In Parm.* 1123. 30 ff. καὶ γὰρ τῷ πάντων ἀρίστῳ χρή προσφέρειν τὸ ἀόριστον, ἀλλ' οὐ τὸ ὁπωσοῦν καταδεέστερον. On this point there is nonetheless an ill-concealed ambivalence in Proclus' thought, in that he finds the terminology of the First Hypothesis in conflict with his natural preference for the finite. Thus at *Theol. Plat.* p. 133 he writes ἀπάσης τῆς ἐν τοῖς θεοῖς γένεσιν ἀντιθέσεως τὸ μὲν κρεῖττον ἐπὶ τὸ πέρας τὸ δὲ καταδεέστερον ἐπὶ τὴν ἀπειρίαν ἀνοίσομεν. However, already Plotinus (cf. *Enn.* VI. 8. 9. 42) qualifies the One as ἀόριστος. St. Basil (*Adv. Eunomium* I. 7, PG 29, 525) finds it natural to speak of God as τὸν ἀόριστον καὶ ἄπειρον, and both these terms are applied to the supreme divinity by both Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>19</sup> Marius Victorinus emphasizes the ἀοριστία of the First Principle at *Adv. Arium* IV. 23. 12 ff. Henry-Hadot: Sed cum in uno omnia vel *unum omnia* aut cum *unum omnia* vel *nec unum nec omnia*, sit infinitum, sit incognitum, indiscernibile, incognoscibile, et quod vere dicitur ἀοριστία, id est infinitas et indeterminatio. And Ps.-Dionysius makes an interesting identification of ἀοριστία and ἐνότης (*De div. nom.* I. 1, PG 3. 588) ὑπέρκειται τῶν οὐσιῶν ἢ ὑπερούσιος ἀοριστία· καὶ τῶν νοῶν, ἢ ὑπὲρ νοῶν ἐνότης.<sup>20</sup>

Nicholas of Cusa took careful note of Proclus' vacillation regarding the priority of the infinite. On the guard-sheets of *Strasbourg. Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, cod. 84 (lat. 81)* he has copied an excerpt from William of Moerbeke's rendering of Proclus, *In Parm.* corresponding to cols. 1123 f. in Cousin's edition of the Greek text, i.e. the passage to which we have just made reference.<sup>21</sup> To this Nicholas has added *inter alia* the following comment:<sup>22</sup> Arguit, quod deo non conveniat infinitum, quia *finis melior*, sed concludit, quod merito con-

venit infinitum. Quod nota! On another occasion Nicholas comments as follows in the margin of Moerbeke's version of the *In Parm.*:<sup>23</sup>

Nota et considera quomodo 'in' dicitur ut 'non' et 'valde'. Illa si simul consideras, ut unum et idem sit 'non' et 'valde', tunc subintrare poteris intellectum huius, scilicet quomodo negatio est plus quam affirmatio, ut cum deus dicitur infinitus, id est non et valde finitus. Nota: 'in' est copulatio sive unio affirmationis et negationis; sicut enim prima elementa de 'ita' et 'non', scilicet i et n in se unit, ita et utriusque significatum, et est equalitas 'non' et 'valde'. Et resolvitur sic: 'non', quod 'valde', ut infinitum dicatur sic non finitum, quod valde finitum. Sed melius sic resolvitur: non solum non finitum, sed simul et valde finitum.

Apart from the fanciful etymology of the prefix in-, the version of the *coincidentia oppositorum*<sup>24</sup> which Nicholas here offers conforms with the legitimate meanings of ἀπειρος and is not entirely out of keeping with the argument of Proclus that (*El. Theol.* prop. 93) Πᾶν τὸ ἀπειρον ἐν τοῖς οὐσιν οὔτε τοῖς ὑπερκειμένοις ἀπειρόν ἐστιν οὔτε ἑαυτῷ. Cf. also the interpretation of the ἀπειρον of the First Hypothesis which Proclus quotes with approval at *In Parm.* 1118. 10 ff. Cousin:

καὶ οἱ μὲν οὕτω φαίνειν ἀπειρον προσειρησθαι τὸ ἐν, ὡς ἀδιεξίτητον καὶ ὡς πέρας τῶν ὅλων (διχῶς γὰρ λέγεται τὸ ἀπειρον, τὸ μὲν οἶον τὸ ἀληπτον καὶ ἀδιεξίτητον, τὸ δὲ οἶον ὁ πέρας ἐστὶ τὸ μὴ ἔχον ἄλλο πέρας· καὶ τὸ ἐν οὖν ἀμφοτέρως εἶναι ἀπειρον, ὡς ἀληπτόν τε καὶ ἀπεριήγητον πᾶσι τοῖς δευτέροις, καὶ ὡς πέρας τῶν ὅλων καὶ μὴ δεόμενον αὐτὸ πέρατος ἄλλου μηδενός).

The doctrine that the Infinite is infinite not to itself but only to its inferiors lies at the close of a long development. Origen (*De princip.* II 9. 1, PG 11, 225) had argued that one must admit that God's power is limited for the following reason: ἔαν γὰρ ἡ ἀπειρος ἡ θεῖα δύναμις, ἀνάγκη αὐτὴν μηδὲ ἑαυτὴν νοεῖν· τῇ γὰρ φύσει τὸ ἀπειρον ἀπερίληπτον. πεποίηκε τοίνυν τοσαῦτα ὧν ἐδύνατο περιδράσασθαι, καὶ ἔχειν αὐτὰ ὑπὸ χειρὸς, καὶ συγκροτεῖν ὑπὸ τὴν αὐτοῦ πρόνοιαν. Whilst Alexander of Aphrodisias (cf. *De fato* 200, 12 ff. Bruns and *In Metaph.* fr. 36 Freudenthal)<sup>25</sup> claimed that since the infinite is essentially incomprehensible, God cannot possess knowledge of the infinite

details of the events of this world.<sup>26</sup> St. Augustine (*De civ. Dei* XII. 18, PG 41, col. 367 f.) attacks the views of those who hold that *nec Dei scientia quae infinita sunt posse comprehendi* in the following terms:

Infinitas itaque numeri, quamvis infinitorum numerorum nullus sit numerus, non est tamen incomprehensibilis ei cuius intellegentiae non est numerus. Quapropter si, quidquid scientia comprehenditur, scientis comprehensione finitur: profecto et omnis infinitas quodam ineffabili modo Deo finita est, quia scientiae ipsius incomprehensibilis non est. Quare si infinitas numerorum scientiae Dei, qua comprehenditur, esse non potest infinita; qui tandem nos sumus homunculi, qui eius scientiae limites figere praesumamus, dicentes quod, nisi eisdem circuitibus temporum eadem temporalia repetantur, non potest Deus cuncta quae facit vel praescire ut faciat, vel scire cum fecerit? Cuius sapientia simpliciter multiplex et uniformiter multiformis, tam incomprehensibili comprehensione omnia incomprehensibilia comprehendit, ut quaecumque nova et dissimilia consequentia praecedentibus si semper facere vellet, inordinata et improvisa habere non posset; nec ea praevideret ex proximo tempore, sed aeterna praescientia contineret.

This theme of the infinite but nonetheless unitary and indivisible nature of divine πρόνοια is pursued in almost identical terms by Proclus at, e.g., *De decem. dub.* 5. 30 ff. Boese: . . . καὶ ἡ τῆς προνοίας ἐνιαία γνώσις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἀμερεῖ πάντων ἐστὶ τῶν μεριζομένων γνώσις καὶ τῶν ἀτομωτάτων ἐκάστου καὶ τῶν ὀλικωτάτων· καὶ ὡς ὑπέστησεν ἕκαστον κατὰ τὸ ἐν, οὕτως καὶ γινώσκει ἕκαστον κατὰ τὸ ἐν. καὶ οὔτε ἡ γνώσις διήρθε τοῖς γινωσκομένοις, οὔτε τὰ γινωσκόμενα συγκέχεται διὰ τὴν μίαν τῆς γνώσεως ἐνώσω· μία δὲ οὐσα, πᾶσαν μὲν ἀπειρίαν τῶν γνωστῶν περιέχει, πάσης δὲ τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐνώσεως ὑπερήνωται. Thus, the quandary that lies behind Origen's claim regarding divine providence and the incomprehensibility of the infinite, finds its solution in Proclus' considered doctrine of the identity of the infinite and the unitary: as Cusanus put it, "infinite" means *non solum non finitum, sed simul et valde finitum*.<sup>27</sup>

It is not surprising that the latent ambiguity of *ἄπειρος* appears to be utilized also in discussions of the immanence-transcendence antinomy - God is not only *πανταχοῦ* but also *οὐδαμοῦ*.<sup>28</sup> Plotinus puts the problem succinctly thus (*Enn.* VI. 4. 1. 11 ff.) *Τὸ τε ἀμερῇ λεγομένην καὶ ἀμεγέθη εἶναι πανταχοῦ εἶναι μέγεθος οὐκ ἔχουσιν πῶς ἂν τις παραδέξαιτο;* and goes on to discuss it at considerable length (*Enn.* VI. 4 and 5), emphasizing that the doctrine in question is not simply a philosopher's fancy but conforms to common opinion (*Enn.* VI. 5. 1. 1 ff.): *Τὸ ἐν καὶ ταῦτόν ἀριθμῶ πανταχοῦ ἅμα ὅλον εἶναι κοινὴ μὲν τις ἐννοιά φησιν [εἶναι], ὅταν πάντες κινοῦμενοι αὐτοφυσῶς λέγωσι τὸν ἐν ἐκάστῳ ἡμῶν θεὸν ὡς ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτόν.*<sup>29</sup> In the course of the discussion Plotinus dwells upon the potential identity of unity and infinity in the following terms (*Enn.* VI. 4. 14. 3 ff.): *καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐστὶ καὶ ἄπειρον αὐ καὶ πάντα ὁμοῦ καὶ ἕκαστον ἔχει διακεκριμένον καὶ αὐτὸ οὐ διακριθὲν χωρὶς· πῶς γὰρ ἂν καὶ ἄπειρον ἢ οὕτω λέγοιτο, ὅτι ὁμοῦ πάντα ἔχει, πᾶσαν ζωὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ψυχὴν καὶ νοῦν ἅπαντα; ἕκαστον δὲ αὐτῶν οὐ πέρασιν ἀφώρισται· διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὸ καὶ ἐν. οὐ γὰρ δὴ μίαν ζωὴν ἔδει αὐτὸ ἔχειν, ἀλλ' ἄπειρον, καὶ αὐτὴ μίαν· καὶ τὴν μίαν οὕτω μίαν, ὅτι πᾶσας ὁμοῦ οὐ συμφορηθείσας εἰς ἐν. ἀλλ' ἀφ' ἐνὸς ἀρξαμένας καὶ μενούσας ὁθεν ἤρξαντο, μᾶλλον δὲ οὐδὲ ἤρξαντο, ἀλλ' οὕτως εἶχεν ἀεί.* Within the same Neoplatonic framework and probably in dependence upon Proclus, Meister Eckhart in a sermon upon the theme *Deus unus est* attempts a solution of the problem of the omnipresence of the transcendent One:<sup>30</sup> *Deus simplicitate est infinitus et infinitate sua est simplex. Ideo ei ubique est et ubique totus est. Ubique infinitate, sed totus ubique simplicitate. Deus solus illabitur omnibus entibus, ipsorum essentiis. Nihil autem aliorum illabitur alteri. Deus est in intimis cuiuslibet et solum in intimis, et ipse solus unus est.* Even though the links may be both many and tenuous, Meister Eckhart's explanation builds upon the equation of the infinite and the indivisible which Plato had made in the First Hypothesis, but which in turn possessed (as Plutarch's *στιγμὴ ἀόριστος* shows)<sup>31</sup> a basis in popular usage. We cannot suppose that Meister Eckhart himself was aware that any such basis in popular usage had ever existed. Indicative of this is the fact that in discussing the problem of God's *ubiquitas* Thomas Aquinas (*Summa*. I a. 8, 2) dwells not

upon the ambivalence of the infinite but upon a supposed ambiguity of the term *indivisible*. To the objection that God who is indivisible cannot be in all places at the same time he makes the following rejoinder:

...dicendum quod indivisibile est duplex. Unum quod est terminus continui ut punctus in permanentibus et momentum in successivis. Et huiusmodi indivisibile in permanentibus, quia habet determinatum situm, non potest esse in pluribus partibus loci vel in pluribus locis; et similiter indivisibile actionis vel motus, quia habet determinatum ordinem in motu vel actione, non potest esse in pluribus partibus temporis. Aliud autem indivisibile est quod est extra totum genus continui, et hoc modo substantiae incorporeae ut Deus et anima et substantiae separatae dicuntur esse indivisibiles. Tale igitur indivisibile non applicatur ad continuum sicut aliquid ejus sed inquantum contingit illud sua virtute. Unde secundum quod virtus sua se potest extendere ad unum vel multa, ad parvum vel magnum, secundum hoc est in uno vel pluribus locis, et in loco parvo vel magno.

Though the infinite has here been supplanted by the indivisible, it may be noted that the second of the two senses which Thomas assigns to *indivisible* conforms closely to the doctrine of Proclus (to which we have already had occasion to refer)<sup>32</sup> that *ὅσω δὴ μᾶλλον ἐν καὶ μᾶλλον ἀμερές, τοσοῦτω καὶ ἄπειρον μᾶλλον*.

We have noted that the contradictory meanings which *ἄπειρος* is capable of bearing give to the term, particularly in the instances when it is not apparent that a writer had in mind the one meaning rather than the other, a certain affinity to Cusanus' *coincidentia oppositorum*. The resemblance is hardly more than superficial, for the whole philosophy of the *coincidentia* is foreign to the negative theological tendencies of later antiquity. Thus, Martin Luther, perhaps under the influence of Cusanus, could write as follows:<sup>33</sup>

Nichts ist so klein, Gott ist noch kleiner, Nichts ist so gros, Gott ist noch grösser, Nichts ist so kurtz, Gott ist noch kürztzer, Nichts ist so lang, Gott ist noch lenger, Nichts ist so breit, Gott ist noch breiter, Nichts ist so schmal, Gott ist noch schmeler und so fort an, Ists ein unausprechlich wesen

uber und ausser allem, das man nennen odder dencken kan. But to Luther's litany the following Middle-Platonic inspired negative theology from the Gnostic *Apocryphon of John* presents a remarkable contrast:<sup>34</sup>

It is not perfection or beatitude or deity, but something far more excellent. It is not boundless nor are limits set to it; it is something far more excellent. It is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, not great, not small, not a quantity, not a creature; no one can think it. It is not anything existent, but something prior - not as if in itself it were prior, but because it is its own.

As the *Apocryphon* indicates, the Platonists of later antiquity were concerned not to assert the applicability to the first principle of both opposites, but rather to deny the applicability of both. Consider, for example, Plotinus, *Enn.* V. 3. 14. 3 ff. Πῶς οὖν λέγομεν περὶ αὐτοῦ, εἰ μὴ αὐτὸ ἔχομεν; "Ἡ, εἰ μὴ ἔχομεν τῇ γνώσει, καὶ παντελῶς οὐκ ἔχομεν; 'Ἄλλ' οὕτως ἔχομεν, ὥστε περὶ αὐτοῦ μὲν λέγειν, αὐτὸ δὲ μὴ λέγειν. Καὶ γὰρ λέγομεν, ὃ μὴ ἔστιν· ὃ δὲ ἔστιν, οὐ λέγομεν. That Plotinus is simply echoing a theological commonplace of the period is evident from, e.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* V. 11. 71. 3 εἰ τοίνυν, ἀφελόντες πάντα ὅσα πρόσεστι τοῖς σώμασιν καὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις ἁσώματοις, ἐπιρρίψαμεν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ Χριστοῦ καθεῖθεν εἰς τὸ ἀχανές ἀγιότητι προίκομεν, τῇ νοήσει τοῦ παντοκράτορος ἀμὴ γέ πη προσάγομεν (ἄν), οὐχ ὃ ἔστιν, ὃ δὲ μὴ ἔστι γνωρίσαντες.<sup>35</sup> But as a purely philological explanation of the meanings of the term ἄπειρος Cusanus' postulate (*non solum non finitum, sed simul et valde finitum*) would have won the approval of Clement of Alexandria.

## FOOTNOTES

1. In his "The Parmenides of Plato and the origin of the Neoplatonic 'One'," *The Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928) 129 ff.
2. *Enn.* VI. 9. 6. 10 ff. Cf. further, e.g., *Enn.* VI. 7. 32. 14 ff. (πάντα δὲ ποιεῖν δυνάμενον τί ἂν μέγεθος ἔχοι; ἢ ἄπειρον

ἂν εἴη, ἀλλ' εἰ ἄπειρον, μέγεθος ἂν ἔχοι οὐδέν· καὶ γὰρ μέγεθος ἐν τοῖς ὑστάτοις· κτλ.); *Enn.* VI. 6. 17. 13 f.; *Enn.* V. 5. 10. 19 ff.

3. *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik* (Amsterdam 1964) 363 f.
4. More pertinent to the Neoplatonic doctrine is Aristotle, *Phys.* 8. 10, where it is shown that the Unmoved Mover, though neither πεπερασμένον nor ἄπειρον (i.e., in extent) does possess δύναμις ἄπειρος and ἀδιαίρετον ἐστι καὶ ἀμερές καὶ οὐδὲν ἔχον μέγεθος (i.e., immaterial); cf. *Metaph.* 1073 a 5 ff.
5. Cf. R. Mondolfo, *L'infinito nel pensiero dell' antichità classica* (Florence 1956); A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus's doctrine of the infinite and its significance for Christian thought," *The Downside Review* 73 (1955) 47 ff.; L. Sweeney, "Infinity in Plotinus," *Gregorianum* 38 (1957) 513 ff. and 713 ff.; W.N. Clarke, "Infinity in Plotinus: a reply," *Gregorianum* 40 (1959) 75 ff.; A. H. Armstrong and R. A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy* (London 1960) Chapter 2: God's transcendence and infinity; E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa: Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik* (Göttingen 1966); W. Theiler, "Das Unbestimmte, Unbegrenzte bei Plotin," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 92 (1970) 290 ff. There is a valuable account of the persistence and development in the medieval Cabbala of the Neoplatonic conception of infinity in G. Scholem, "Das Ringen zwischen dem biblischen Gott und dem Gott Plotins in der alten Kabbala," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 33 (1964) 9 ff. (reprinted in Scholem's *Über einige Grundbegriffe des Judentums* (Frankfurt 1970) 9 ff.). Scholem's essay provides a necessary corrective to the brief account of infinity in the Cabbala given by E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven 1935; rp. Amsterdam 1969) 359 ff.
6. Mühlenberg, *op. cit.* 75 ff. rightly criticizes the interpretation of this text of Clement offered by E. F. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge 1957)



42. However, Mühlenberg himself is forced to underestimate the significance of Clement's words (not to mention the importance of Plotinus' contribution) in order to support his own thesis that (*op. cit.* 26): "Die negative Theologie, die Platon begründet hat, hat ein Gottesprädikat niemals aufgenommen: das Unendliche. Bei Gregor von Nyssa findet sich dieses Gottesprädikat zum ersten Male in der Geschichte des philosophischen und christlichen Denkens."
7. The conception of human life as a *στιγμή χρόνου* was a Stoic commonplace; cf. Marcus Aurelius II. 17, and the parallels thereto cited by Farquharson in his edition of the *Meditations* II (Oxford 1944) 537.
  8. *ἀπέραντος* is no doubt similarly ambiguous. Following *Laurentianus* 5. 3 it should be retained in the text of Clement at *Strom.* V. 12. 81. 3 *βυθὸν* (δ') αὐτὸν [sc. Θεὸν] *κεκλήκασιν ἐντεῦθεν τινὲς ὡς ἂν περιειληφότα καὶ ἐγκολπισάμενον τὰ πάντα ἀνέφικτόν τε καὶ ἀπέραντον*. Früchtel (*Nachträge* p. 535) proposes that one should prefer *ἀπεριωρόντων*, the reading of the pertinent extract of Clement in *Lavra* B. 113. *ἀπέραντων* is not only in keeping with *ἄπειρον* in *Strom.* V. 12. 81. 6, but also appears as a divine epithet in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (IV. 8 [I. 52. 11 f. Nock-Festugière] *ἀδιάβατον γὰρ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἀπέραντον καὶ ἀτελές*), in the Ps.-Clementine *Homilies* (cf. Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon* s.v.), and e.g. in the *Anonymous Gnostic Writing* in the *Codex Brucianus* (cf. the *Index* s.v. in GCS, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften* I). Irenaeus at *Haer.* I. 17. 2, PG 7, 641 writes of the Marcosians that *Πρὸς δὲ τούτοις θελήσαντά φασιν τὸν Δημιουργὸν τῆς ἄνω ὁγδοάδος τὸ ἀπέραντον καὶ αἰώνιον καὶ ἄοριστον καὶ ἄχρονον μιμήσασθαι, καὶ μὴ δυνηθέντα τὸ μόνιμον αὐτῆς καὶ αἰδίων ἐκτυπῶσαι, διὰ τὸ καρπὸν εἶναι ὑστερήματος, εἰς χρόνους καὶ καιροὺς, ἀριθμούς τε πολυετεῖς τὸ αἰώνιον αὐτῆς κατατεθεῖσθαι, οἰόμενον ἐν τῷ πλήθει τῶν χρόνων μιμήσασθαι αὐτῆς τὸ ἀπέραντον*. This text suggests that the Marcosians, like the Neoplatonists, distinguished between an instantaneous indivisible Eternal Now (characterized as *τὸ ἀπέραντον καὶ αἰώνιον καὶ*

*ἄοριστον καὶ ἄχρονον*) and the divided nature of created time. On the Neoplatonic notion of Eternity cf. further below. *Contra* J. Daniélou, *Message évangélique et culture hellénistique* (Tournai 1961) 301, *ἀπέραντος* is not employed in a transcendent sense by St. Paul at Romans 11. 33 or elsewhere. Except at I Timothy 1. 4 (*γενεαλογίας ἀπεράντοις*) the term is entirely absent from the New Testament.

9. Cf. Früchtel's "Clemens Alexandrinus und Albinus," *Philologische Wochenschrift* 57 (1937) 591 f.
10. Cf. R. E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism* (Cambridge 1937; rp. Amsterdam 1971) 4, and, e.g., R. Klibansky, "Ein Proklos-Fund und seine Bedeutung," *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Klasse 1928/29 No. 5, p. 7. That the author of the *Didaskalikos* was in the relevant passage influenced by the First Hypothesis has been emphasized by A. H. Armstrong. *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge 1940) 10. Professor Armstrong went on to argue (*op. cit.* 16, n. 3) as follows: "It must be remembered, however, that Albinus regards the *Parmenides* simply as a logical exercise, not as containing any profound metaphysical teaching (*Didaskalikos* 6). He must, therefore, be held to be unconscious of the source of his "negative theology"." I have expressed reservation regarding this latter conclusion in my "ΕΠΕΚΕΙΝΑ ΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΟΥΣΙΑΣ," *Vigiliae Christianae* 23 (1969) 99 f. Any assessment ancient or modern of Plato's intentions in the second half of the *Parmenides* must of course take into account that Plato himself had employed the terms *γυμνασία* (*Parm.* 135 D 7) and *πραγματειώδη παιδιὰν παίζειν* (*Parm.* 137 B 2) in reference to this portion of the dialogue.
11. Cf. Simplicius, *In Phys.* 230. 34 ff. Diels. On the interpretation of this important passage cf. E. R. Dodds, *op. cit.* 136 ff.; A. H. Armstrong, *op. cit.* 16 ff.; A. J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès-Trismégiste* IV, *Le Dieu inconnu et la Gnose* (Paris 1954) 22 f.; P. Merlan in *The*

- Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy, ed. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge 1967) 90ff.; my *op. cit.* 95 ff., where I have drawn attention to further instances of the pre-Plotinian "Neoplatonic" interpretation of the Hypotheses of the Parmenides; on this topic cf. also my "Neopythagoreanism and the Transcendent Absolute," *Symbolae Osloenses* 48 (1973) 75 ff.
12. Cf. *Enn.* III. 7. 3. 37 f. ζωή ὁμοῦ πᾶσα καὶ πλήρης ἀδιάστατος πανταχῇ. On the development of the doctrine of non-durational eternity cf. *Plotin: Über Ewigkeit und Zeit (Enneade III. 7)*, übersetzt, eingeleitet und kommentiert von W. Beierwaltes (Frankfurt 1967); my "The 'Eternity' of the Platonic Forms," *Phronesis* 13 (1968) 131 ff.; my "Ammonius on the Delphic E," *Classical Quarterly* 19 (1969) 185 ff.; my *GOD TIME BEING: Two studies in the transcendental tradition in Greek philosophy (Symbolae Osloenses Fasc. supplet. XXIII, Oslo 1971)*; A. H. Armstrong, "Eternity, Life and Movement in Plotinus' Account of Νοῦς" in *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris 1971) 67 ff.
  13. Cf. *Enn.* III. 7. 3. 19 f. οἷον ἐν σημείῳ ὁμοῦ πάντων ὄντων.
  14. Cf. Aristotle, *De caelo* 279 a 28f. For the history of the term αἰών see C. Lackeit, *Aion. Zeit und Ewigkeit in Sprache und Religion der Griechen. I. Teil: Sprache* (Königsberg 1916); and (with useful bibliography) E. Degani, *AION da Omero ad Aristotele* (Padua 1961).
  15. Proclus warns, not entirely convincingly, against this at *In Tim.* I. 239. 2 ff. Διὲς ἄλλο γὰρ τὸ αἰὲ τὸ χρονικὸν καὶ ἄλλο τὸ αἰώνιον· τὸ μὲν ἀθρώως πᾶν ὄν, τὸ δὲ τῇ ὅλῃ συνεχείᾳ τοῦ χρόνου συνεκτεινόμενον καὶ ἀπειρον, τὸ μὲν ἐν τῷ νῦν, τὸ δὲ ἐν διαστάσει, τῆς διαστάσεως ἀκαταλήκτου τυγχανούσης καὶ αἰεὶ γιγνομένης. Cf. also Simplicius, *In Phys.* 777. 13 ff. Diels.
  16. On the history of the term ἄχρονος cf. my *GOD TIME BEING* (cf. note 12 above) 40 ff.
  17. Pointing out the distinction between the two conceptions of ἀπειρος was almost a Neoplatonic commonplace; cf., e.g., Gregory Nazianzen, *Orat.* 38. 8, PG 36, 320.

18. *Proclus: The Elements of Theology* (Oxford 1933; rp. 1963) 247.
19. Cf. Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon* s.vv.
20. Cf. also *De cael. hierarch.* II. 3, PG 3, 141 ἀγνοοῦμεν δὲ τὴν ὑπερούσιον αὐτῆς καὶ ἀνόητον καὶ ἄρρητον ἀοριστίαν.
21. Cf. R. Haubst, "Die Thomas- und Proklos-Exzerpte des 'Nicolaus Treverensis' in Codicillus Strassburg 84," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 1 (1961) 17 ff., in particular 26 ff.
22. *Op. cit.* 31.
23. Cf. Nicolaus de Cusa, *De principio*, ed. J. Koch (Heidelberg 1948) 102 (Adnotationes); and G. von Bredow, "Die Bedeutung des Minimum in der *Coincidentia oppositorum*," in *Nicolò Cusano agli Inizi del Mondo Moderno* [Atti del Congresso internazionale in occasione del V centenario della morte di Nicolò Cusano: Bressanone, 6-10 settembre 1964] (Florence 1970) 364 f.
24. On which see G. von Bredow, *op. cit.* 357 ff., and P. Wilpert, "Das Problem der *Coincidentia oppositorum* in der Philosophie des Nikolaus von Cues," in *Humanismus, Mystik und Kunst in der Welt des Mittelalters*, hrsg. v. J. Koch (Leiden-Cologne 1953) 39 ff.
25. Cf. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London 1972) 29 f.
26. The same view seems to lie behind *Didask.* 179. 2 ff. H. πάντα μὲν φησω [sc. Πλάτων] ἐν εἰμαρμένη εἶναι, οὐ μὴν πάντα καθεμάρθαι. ἡ γὰρ εἰμαρμένη νόμου τάξῃ ἐπέχουσα οὐχ οἷον λέγει, διότι ὁ μὲν τάδε ποιήσει, ὁ δὲ τάδε πείσεται· εἰς ἀπειρον γὰρ τοῦτο, ἀπείρων μὲν ὄντων τῶν γεννωμένων, ἀπείρων δὲ τῶν περὶ αὐτοὺς συμβαυόντων.
27. Proclus' view that (*El. Theol.* prop. 93) Πᾶν τὸ ἀπειρον ἐν τοῖς οὐσῶν οὔτε τοῖς ὑπερκειμένοις ἀπείρον ἐστὶν οὔτε ἑαυτῷ is nonetheless firmly anchored in the Greek theological tradition. Cf., e.g., Tertullian, *Ap.* 17. 2 quod vero immensum est [sc. Deus], soli sibi notum est. And Minucius Felix, *Octav.* 18. 8 sensibus maior est [sc. Deus], infinitus, immensus et soli sibi tantus, quantus est, notus. For the Hellenistic background of these statements cf. my "A Hellenistic context for John 10. 29," *Vigiliae Christianae* 24 (1970) 241 ff.

28. The doctrine can be traced back in clearly enuntiated form as far as Philo of Alexandria at least. Cf. E. R. Dodds, *op. cit.* 251 ff.
29. Cf. also *Enn.* VI. 5. 4. 2 ff. ἔστι γὰρ ἀξιούμενόν τε παρὰ πᾶσι τοῖς ἐννοιαῖν ἔχουσι θεῶν οὐ μόνον περὶ ἐκείνου, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ πάντων λέγειν θεῶν, ὡς πανταχοῦ πάρεσι, καὶ ὁ λόγος δέ φησι δεῖν οὕτω τίθεσθαι.
30. Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke*, Bd. IV *Sermones* edd. Benz/Decker/ Koch (Stuttgart 1956) 263 ff. I owe this reference to Professor Egil A. Wyller.
31. Cf. pp. 156 ff. above.
32. Cf. p. 160 above.
33. *Werke* Bd. 26 (Weimar 1909; rp. Graz 1964) 339 f. On the possible influence of Cusanus cf. F.E. Cranz, "The Transmutation of Platonism in the Development of Nicolaus Cusanus and of Martin Luther," in *Nicolò Cusano agli Inizi del Mondo Moderno* (cf. note 23 above) 73 ff. and in particular 101.
34. Cf. *Gnosticism: An Anthology*, ed. R. M. Grant (London 1961) 71.
35. On the *Via negationis* cf. H.A. Wolfson, "Albinus and Plotinus on divine attributes," *Harvard Theological Review* 45 (1952) 115 ff; Wolfson, "Negative attributes in the Church Fathers and the Gnostic Basilides," *Harvard Theological Review* 50 (1957) 145 ff.; my "Basilides on the ineffability of God," *Harvard Theological Review* 62 (1969) 367 ff.; my "Neopythagoreanism and negative theology," *Symbolae Osloenses* 44 (1969) 109 ff.; my "Neopythagoreanism and the transcendent absolute," *Symbolae Osloenses* 48 (1973) 75 ff.

## The Neoplatonic 'One' and the Trinitarian 'APXH'

the conflict over the unity of the principle and  
its relation to the 'identity' of the absolute  
in Schelling and Hegel.

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In his book, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, E. R. Dodds, after discussing many of the subordinate aspects of the conflict between the Christian and the Hellenic tradition, turns finally to the intellectual side of the issue and raises the question: "what was the debate about?"<sup>1</sup> If an answer were to be attempted in a language appropriate to the time, it could be said to be "a dispute about the ἀρχή, or more particularly about the precise nature of the 'unity' to be ascribed to the principle." All the secondary conflicts, whether of thought or of practice, - the origin of evil, the status of matter, the authority of the imperial order - can be clarified only so far as they are understood in relation to their source or principle and recognised as consequences of the demands upon men as they moved at all levels towards a re-definition of the ἀρχή.

The recognition of the predicateless unity or pure self-identity of the ἀρχή lay at the root of the entire Neoplatonic tradition: in its utter simplicity, raised above all duality - even the primary differentiation of the intelligence from the intelligible world - the ἀρχή retreated into inaccessibility and unknowability. On this point the later elaborators of the position found the Plotinian doctrine insufficiently precise: Iamblichus and Damascius exhausted the resources of language

and intellectual virtuosity to ensure the simplicity and transcendence of the One. Besides the unknowability of the principle – a result of its pure indeterminateness or simplicity – a further consequence of the of the purely self-identical ἀρχή of the Neoplatonists was the ἀπορία encountered in explaining satisfactorily the relation of the principle to its derivatives, that is, of principium to principia: if the ἀρχή was complete *in itself*, prior to its diremption into the world of which it was nevertheless the source, how could these two aspects of the principle – as self-sufficient in its abstract unity or *causa sui*, yet also *causa omnium rerum* – be intelligibly related to each other? As M. Trouillard says: Neoplatonism “pose a priori qu’entre le Principe et ses dérivations aucune déduction, aucun processus logique n’est concevable, parce que le Bien n’est plus Idée.”<sup>2</sup>

The trinitarian ἀρχή, by contrast, appears as an attempt to reconcile the requirement of unity with that of difference within the principle itself: ἐτερότης is now recognised as a moment within the unity, as belonging to the principle *as unity*. Such a position requires a very different interpretation of the relation between the principle and its derivatives than that found in Neoplatonism: the manifestation of the ἀρχή in the sensible and intelligible orders belongs to its essential nature as principle – the principle is essentially self-revealing. According, the procession of all things from the ἀρχή as their source and their return to it as their end have to be understood as constituting its very identity: the ‘process’ is one of *self-determination*, that through which the principle attains its unity with itself. The primary opposition, then, between the two positions can be characterised as follows: for the Neoplatonists the unity of the ἀρχή is a *unity of indeterminateness* – just because it is the source of all the differences between things, prior even to the difference between subject and object, the principle excludes distinction from itself and is, in this way, ‘one’; on the trinitarian position however, the principle is a *self-determining unity* – determinateness does not fall *outside* the unity of the principle: rather, in the completest differentiation the principle returns upon itself, is one with itself.

It is this distinction – between the ἀρχή as the purely indeterminate and as self-determining unity – that this paper

will examine as its primary concern; it is hardly necessary to add that the question on the Christian side is discussed in a language suitable to the religious consciousness, that is, with the admixture of an unavoidable representational element; the inadequacy of the language to the doctrine it expressed became apparent only with the later development of philosophy; in our period it was entirely appropriate to the intellectual culture of the times. Secondly, however, since in this conference we are concerned with the relation between Neoplatonism and modern culture, it may be permitted to relate the discussion to that moment in the history of modern thought when the intellectual content of the ancient dispute was recognised with something like its original profundity: in the conflict between Schelling and Hegel over the nature of the absolute, Hegel was able to find in the trinitarian position a principle which, when developed into its proper philosophical form, would permit him to emancipate himself from Schelling’s ‘Philosophy of Identity’. In recognising that the absolute had to be conceived not as “substance but as subject”, or, in the precise sense of his later philosophy as “Geist”, Hegel separated himself decisively from Schelling’s principle of “Absolute Indifference”.

# I

Why does Plotinus regard it as necessary to go beyond the level of νοῦς to find the ἀρχή? The argument is found in many texts but the expression of it at *Enneads V, 3, 13* will be most suitable for our purposes: there it is claimed that the principle is in truth unspeakable because “if you say anything of it, you make it a particular thing.” But that which is beyond all things, beyond even the “most venerable of all things, the intelligence” cannot be regarded as one of them; if we speak of it as knowable and as knowing, we are making it manifold. If we attribute thought to it, we are treating it as in need of thinking. If, indeed, in any way we suppose thinking to be associated with the One, we must regard such thinking as unessential to it. What thought does is to gather many elements to a unity and so become conscious of a whole. This is true even when the mind does not regard the object as external to itself as it does in discursive thinking; even in self-consciousness the attempt to

turn upon itself introduces division. When, in the very act of apprehending its own simple nature, it says 'I am in being' (*ὅν εἰμί*), it fails to grasp either being or itself . . . therefore, if there is something which possesses absolute simplicity, it cannot think itself.

The intent of the argument is perfectly clear: the unity of the intellect with itself in self-consciousness — of *νοῦς* with *νοητόν* in *νόησις* — is imperfectly 'one', therefore the *ἀρχή*, which must be independent of all 'otherness', be purely self-referred, in order to *be* a principle, must be sought 'beyond'. If, as is commonly supposed, the Plotinian doctrine on the *νοῦς* hypostasis incorporates Aristotelian teaching on the point, it is worth while considering briefly the Aristotelian sources and Plotinus' treatment of them. The main sources are doubtless the treatment of the divine thinking in Book Lambda of the *Metaphysics* and the relevant passages on *νοῦς* in the *De Anima*; the doctrine Plotinus finds there is considerably fuller than that usually allowed by modern interpreters. Nothing in these passages has perplexed modern exegesis more than the question of the relation of the divine thinking to its object.<sup>3</sup> It is in the divine thinking that Aristotle finds the primary substance, pure *ἐνέργεια*, that in which there is no potentiality: what does this pure thinking think of? Evidently of itself, for if it thought of anything external to itself "there would evidently be something more precious than thought, viz. that which is thought of" (1074b 29-30). The divine thinking must then be self-thinking: does it follow that the divine thinking has no knowledge of the world? Many in recent times have concluded that it did<sup>4</sup>; however, the tradition of comment in ancient times (Alexander, Themistius, Plotinus) was rather that the divine self-thinking is a knowledge of 'things' in their forms or definitions, their *εἶδη*, for which its (i.e. pure intelligence) apprehension of the indivisible unity of elements in the object (as *ἀπλᾶ*), is, at the same time, a grasping of the unity of the object itself. In *νόησις* there is no piecing together of the elements of the form in the syllogistic manner of 'scientific' knowing or *ἐπιστήμη*; the mind is not externally related to its objects at all — the objects are either possessed or not possessed,

and the only alternatives are knowledge or ignorance; as Aristotle puts it, in *νόησις* we are either in contact or touch (*τιγέῃ*) with the things or we are not. The mind cannot be mistaken about what constitutes an element in its consciousness of itself; at 1072b 20 Aristotle explicitly asserts that the mind thinks itself by participation in the intelligible object; for, "it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same" (*ταυτόν νοῦς καὶ νοητόν*). The divine life is precisely this actual identity of thinking with its object (1072b 21-25).

What the ancient interpreters found in these texts was a doctrine of *νοῦς* in its completeness (that is, as divine or completely 'actual') including the world (or more precisely, the *εἶδη* of things) as its object. How this divine principle is present in nature; how this pure self-consciousness, which in its perfection includes the forms of things as one with itself, is present in human cognition, which only attains its objects gradually by laboriously connecting together the data of the senses (that is, is only 'potentially one with the intelligible object' *δυνάμει τὰ νοητά*) are questions of the greatest importance for later philosophy; we must leave these aside to look more closely at the unity of the intelligence with its object suggested by these texts, because it is this conception of the unity of the *ἀρχή* that Plotinus finds inadequate and which moves him to posit a principle beyond *νοῦς*.

The *ἀρχή* (according to these Aristotelian texts) is not *νοῦς*; it is *νόησις νοήσεως*, the actuality of mind thinking its objects and thinking *itself* in its objects. Therein lies the unity of the principle: subject and object are one in *νόησις* — a unity which is, in a sense, *prior* to the distinction between them, in that, separated from the unity which is their truth, they are subordinate and incomplete elements in the *ἀρχή*. The unity of the principle is a unity of these essentially correlative elements: it is not abstract self-consciousness which is the Aristotelian principle but the concreter unity of thought with itself in its object.

The Plotinian doctrine of *νοῦς*, however, fastens upon the moment of distinction within self-consciousness and regards the unity of the two sides as something secondary, so that the

intelligence and the intelligible world have a certain completeness in their independence of each other — outside their unity with each other. Since they are not seen as forming a perfect unity in their inseparable opposition to each other, a principle that is properly one must be sought beyond them.<sup>5</sup> The question then arises: what is the character of this unity, and how, in its isolation, does it generate a world?

The primary unity can, according to this position, have no character, no determinateness; all the differences between things, the distinction between mind and its object, presuppose and point towards it, but none are applicable to it. We can only indicate its nature negatively — by saying what it is not. The 'negative theology' is not, however, as reliable an approach as has sometimes been supposed; a negative relation remains a relation and compromises the utter transcendence of the One; it seems we cannot attach *any* name to the principle, even the 'One' or the 'Good' without bringing it down into a relation with something other than itself. It is, nevertheless, this very dependence of all other things on something beyond themselves that has necessitated our affirmation of its transcendence: we are required to think of it in relation to them in order to know it as absolute or primary. We must accordingly understand the terms we use as expressing its proper nature: it is really One — if it is to be the source from which all things derive; it is really the Good — if it is to be the final cause to which all things move. It is this consideration that drives (probably) Iamblichus and (certainly) Damascius to double the first principle or posit a One beyond the One: Damascius will not even allow 'transcendent' ἐξηρημένον to be used since that presupposes a relation to other things; we cannot know it even negatively — we must simply experience its presence in a prophetic way (μαντεύεσθαι) — οὐδὲ ἄρα ἀρχήν, οὐδὲ αἰτίων ἐκείνην κλητέου, οὐδὲ πρῶτον, οὐδὲ γε πρὸ πάντων, οὐδ' ἐπέκεινα πάντων. At the end of its development Neoplatonism cannot reach the principle either by affirmation or negation: indeed not even negation of the negation can avoid positive reference, and the inadequacy of language presses heavily upon Damascius. This, doubtless, is why commentators have discerned an 'inclination to irrationalism'<sup>6</sup> as the tradition drew to its conclusion; the

whole philosophical enterprise is called in question, for, as Professor Wallis has remarked "the consequences [of Damascius' position] were little less than the annihilation of the whole Neoplatonic hierarchy."<sup>7</sup>

Another consequence of the transcendence of the One is the difficulty involved in understanding its relation to its derivatives. We ascend the scale of being because each lower level is defective or incomplete and has need of a higher to explain it; but, though the lower has need of the higher, the higher does not in turn seem to require the lower or bear any essential relation to it. When, therefore, we reach the highest, this is regarded as having need of nothing but itself. The One, as complete in itself, has no need to produce a world; the *principium* need not disclose itself in *principiata*; since in fact there are *principiata*, some way of connecting the derivatives with their principle must be found. The connection is made, of course, through 'emanation': the Good can look to nothing but itself, without any activity directed towards them. The process is compared to 'irradiation' or 'overflowing'; Plotinus is quite aware of the deficiency of these metaphorical analogies as he shows in his critique of Gnostic theories of emanation. But even when expressed more adequately as an essential characteristic of perfection that it should generate something other than itself, it hardly elucidates the division between what a thing is and does in relation to itself, and what it is and does in relation to other things: the metaphors merely indicate the difficulty in trying to separate a thing's inner nature from its outward activity — a self-involved activity, which only accidentally discloses itself outwardly, is an incoherent conception. In the case of the One, it would require that the principle should have an external effect which is not necessarily involved in its own nature. The difficulty points in truth to a very different conception of the principle as essentially self-manifesting: to such a principle we now turn.

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The trinitarian position appears as a different solution to the problem of the relation between the moments within the

ἀρχή. No less than the Neoplatonic tradition did it hold to the strictest unity and transcendence of the principle; but it conceived of this transcendent ἀρχή as in some way having 'revealed' itself. The unknown god had made himself known; and this 'making himself known' was not considered an inessential aspect of the divine nature, but a constituent moment of his very identity – the moment of manifestation was god himself, and not some 'intermediate' entity. The effort to hold together in a unity the two essential aspects of the ἀρχή as this tradition understood it – as *causa sui* and *causa omnium rerum* – resulted in the triadic formula agreed upon as orthodox in the fourth century. This defined a principle which was a perfect unity, although differentiated into three 'persons'. In the language of philosophy, the ἀρχή was both one and many: *μόνος ὢν πολὺς ἦν* (Hippolytus, *Contra Noetum*, 10). This came to be regarded as the *sine qua non* of orthodoxy, through which the new religion distinguished its belief from all previous formulations of the ἀρχή, both philosophical and those of its own heretical variants: all the resources of the Greek language were exploited in the attempt to fix the new ἀρχή in an unambiguous definition. The trinitarian formula was understood as reconciling unity with difference in the most satisfactory way. The difficulty facing the framers of the doctrine was to avoid sacrificing the unity of the ἀρχή in the attempt to explain its self-differentiation – and self-differentiation was essential, if it was to be held that the ἀρχή had fully revealed himself and disclosed his real nature. On the other hand, this manifestation of the ἀρχή had to be regarded as a 'substantial' or necessary moment in its identity: the process of self-differentiation constituted the very being of god and was not merely a camouflage behind which the true deity subsisted as an abstract unity. To insist upon the two aspects with equal firmness was a more difficult and ambitious position than that of the opponents of the orthodox formula: at bottom, all the rival positions were variations of the more easily comprehensible doctrine that the divine unity necessarily excluded multiplicity; on such a view the full trinitarian formula was merely a cover for tritheism.

It is impossible to trace here the process by which the new ἀρχή acquired an adequate terminology and formulation; it is

sufficient to indicate it was accomplished through a re-shaping of the Logos doctrine. The intellectual effort of the earlier centuries was to overcome all suggestion of inferiority in the status of the Logos or the Son – an effort which went against the grain of all emanation theories of derivation from the principle: this expressed the insight that the object of pure or divine knowing was not to be regarded as an inessential element in, or something external to, the nature of the primary ἀρχή (and, therefore, something which would compromise its simplicity or unity) but was rather that without which there would be no divine knowledge at all; the object becomes a constituent moment of the principle and is compatible with, and, indeed, required by, its unity: the ἀρχή is a pure knowing in which the knower, in knowing the object, knows only himself – the deity is himself only in that return-to-himself, which is 'spirit'.

What the principal consequences of this view of the ἀρχή were can only be tentatively suggested here. The principle is both subject and object without any infringement of its unity. For the Neoplatonists the subject-object relationship did not become a perfect identity in νοῦς and the perfectly unified ἀρχή had to be sought beyond this duality. Such a view of the principle led to the difficulty that the first derivation could not be logically deduced from it: there seemed to be no logical reason why such an abstractly self-identical unity should divide itself into the subject-object relation of νοῦς. The trinitarian ἀρχή sought to avoid this objection: it was not a unity complete in itself prior to its diremption into subject and object, but a unity whose identity consisted in this very act of self-diremption and which was just as much subject as it was object. By insisting on the moment of 'procession' as belonging to the very nature of the ἀρχή the creation of the finite cosmos in space and time assumed a new significance: the sensible world was no cosmic error, incompatible with the divine perfection but was involved in the nature of divine self-consciousness (the Father's consciousness of himself in the Son involves him as the *locus* of the κόσμος νοητός). Further, and most importantly, the divine knowing (the very essence of the ἀρχή) was an unlimited or infinite one; for it was a knowing in which all otherness or externality which could limit it was overcome.

God's knowledge of the things of the sensible world was not of them as 'other' but was involved in his own self-knowledge. This meant that there was no need to look for an intermediary link between the infinite and the finite world, which would yoke them uneasily together: they did not need to be brought together because they had no independent existence apart from each other. The infinite included the finite within itself as a moment in its own identity: the infinite was only infinite when understood as producing a world external to itself, which nevertheless remained one with itself in its own self-knowledge. Nor is the infinity of the ἀρχή one of pure indeterminateness, that is, mere absence of all determinateness. As the ἀρχή produces the intelligible world out of itself, all the categories of the intelligible world (i.e. the categories by which the world is made an object for intelligence) become modes of the divine self-consciousness: the principle is not in-finite in the sense of being beyond all limitation but in the sense of being the source of all determination through which he comprehends only himself. As a self-determining unity the principle can be *known*; it is open to intellectual apprehension as never before; this radical intelligibility of the principle is confined initially to the religious consciousness, and it lay in the remote future of philosophy to remove this limitation and attempt to understand all aspects of nature and spirit in the light of this.

## II

It remains to attempt to relate this discussion of the unity of the principle of the debate over the nature of the Absolute in idealism. The position grew out of the Kantian critique of experience; after Kant it was impossible to accept the ordinary view of experience as something immediately given for thought and not constituted by it. The possibility of knowledge was the unity of the ego and non-ego: how was this unity to be understood?

The Kantian philosophy left the unity quite inexplicable: the objects of knowledge were indeed essentially related to the unity of self-consciousness, but these objects were 'phenomenal' only — that is, they were not the 'real' objects, which were regarded as 'things-in-themselves' or things *not* essentially

related to, or knowable by, the subject. Fichte denied the independent existence of things in themselves, external to subjectivity; the non-ego was reduced to a negative condition through which the ego realised its own life of self-determination; but this negative condition was essential to self-consciousness and had to be produced in some inexplicable way out of the ego itself. It appeared as an incomprehensible moment of opposition of the mind to itself. Schelling, however, did not accept this merely negative view of the relation of spirit to nature; the two sides are one in the absolute — that is, the unity of ego and non-ego is a unity of indifference. All objects, whether mind or matter, are simply forms of this identity of subject and object, and, from the point of view of the absolute all these identities are one. Nature is not merely the negative of thought, but has revealed in it the same principle that constitutes the ego in man. Schelling's way of putting it is: there are no qualitative, but only quantitative, differences in things — from the point of view, or within, the absolute.

At first, when Hegel appeared as a colleague of Schelling and they were joint editors of the 'Critical Journal', it seems that he did not object to Schelling's formulation of the identity of the absolute: it was common to both their positions that there is a 'unity' beyond all differences, which realises itself through all distinctions, and in relation to which all differences must be explained: they further agreed on describing this unity as 'spiritual'. Hegel, however, very soon began to distinguish himself from his colleague precisely on the notion of 'spirit' and more particularly about how the absolute was apprehended. Already in the early treatise, "On the Difference between the Fichtean and Schellingian Systems", he is found asserting that the identity of philosophy is not an abstract identity simply opposed to difference but a spiritual unity which differentiates itself in order that, through a process of division and reconciliation, it can achieve a higher unity with itself. Further, the mode of cognition of the absolute, the 'intellectual intuition' of Schelling, is not regarded as exclusive of the process of reflection but as containing it; though at this stage, Hegel still considered thinking within philosophy as quite distinct from that outside it. By the time of the *phenomenology* Hegel's hold



upon his own position had strengthened to the point that he had to separate himself clearly from Schelling: hence the critique in the Preface of Schelling's *Absolute* as the "night in which all cows are black" (Bailey, (trans.) p. 79) and "intellectual intuition" as a "sort of ecstatic enthusiasm which starts straight off with absolute knowledge, as if shot out of a pistol" (ibid. p. 88).

A more adequate view of the absolute is attained only when it is understood as subject: "in my view, everything depends upon grasping and expressing the ultimate truth not as Substance but as Subject as well." (p. 80). He goes on to explain that a being which is truly subject is one which is properly actual (*wirklich*) only in the process of positing itself, that is, of splitting up what is simple and undifferentiated, of duplicating and setting factors in opposition. "True reality is merely this process of reinstating self-identity, of reflecting into its own self in and from its others, and is not an original and primal unity as such, not an immediate unity as such." The divine life, though no doubt an undisturbed identity, consists in its being objective to itself, conscious of itself on its own account (*für sich zu sein*).

The echo here of the trinitarian debate, and the many points in the dispute with Schelling that recall the Neoplatonic discussions of the One, are not accidental: it is possible here only to indicate them and to suggest that fuller and more serious study could only confirm the importance to be attributed to the issues with which the intellectual life of the later ancient world was concerned; the obvious increase of interest in these studies, as well as the reviving interest in the Hegelian philosophy, make it a reasonable expectation that this will be so. Hegel saw in the attainment of the trinitarian position the expression in an undeveloped and representational form of distinctively 'Western' culture; the principle needed to be liberated from its theological form and shown to be adequate to the task of comprehending the concrete freedom to which the West aspired. To the end of his life Hegel regarded himself as an orthodox trinitarian — a position which the theologians have not usually been very ready to accord him. But what the trinitarian doctrine in truth is, and what form it takes in later

thought, cannot be understood until the content of the ancient disputes is once again comprehended philosophically.

## NOTES

1. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, (Cambridge, 1965), p. 116.
2. J. Trouillard et al, *Histoire de la philosophie*, (Encyclopédie de la pléiade, 1969), p. 896.
3. For a recent discussion of the question, v. Hans Joachim Krämer, *Grundfragen der aristotelischen Theologie*, *Theologie und Philosophie*, (44 Heft 3, (1969) ) p. 363-382.
4. Perhaps most conspicuously Ross in *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, vol. I., Introduction, p. cxlii, (Oxford, 1924)
5. *Enneads*, VI, 9.2, 11. 32 ff.
6. The comment of C. de Vogel in *Greek Philosophy: Vol. 3*, No. 1478, p. 589, (2nd edition, Leiden, 1964).
7. R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, (London, 1972), p. 158.

# The Apprehension of Divinity in the Self and Cosmos in Plotinus

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This may seem an odd title for a paper which is intended to commend the philosophy of Plotinus as one which, as I believe, has some contemporary relevance. The words "apprehension of divinity in self and cosmos" are likely to displease irremediably two considerable bodies of contemporary opinion. They will of course displease that very large number of contemporary philosophers to whom a phrase like "apprehension of divinity", or any talk about "God" or "the divine" is meaningless: and those who adhere to some older traditions of Western theistic philosophy will find the language offensively "pantheistic", and, if they can be persuaded to explain this large, vague term of theological abuse further, will say that anyone who talks like this is looking for divinity in the wrong place. He has forgotten that God is the Wholly Other and that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the Creator and his creation. I have some respect for both these groups, and do not think that the arguments which they can bring against the Neoplatonic, or any similar position ought to be neglected. But I do not think that I have either the charismatic or the eristic competence to deal with them. I have not the sort of faith which would enable me, in the proper manner of prophetic theism, to shout religious opponents down with yet another version of what professes to be the Word of God: nor do I think that I am able to argue people out of what is now, especially in the case of the unbelieving philosophers, a settled traditional belief supported by revered authorities. I propose, therefore to address myself to those of our contemporaries, a large and, probably, increasing number, who do not belong to either of these groups and are not likely to find the phrase "apprehension of divinity in self and cosmos" too preposterous to be worth considering further. I have the rather faint hope that by

confining myself to positive elucidation for people assumed to be sympathetic I may be able, here and there, to say something which will make the position I am trying to explain seem less ridiculous or shocking to others.

What I propose is that in the thought of Plotinus we do not, to begin with, apprehend divinity in two separate ways, one in our selves and one in the cosmos, but we have a single apprehension or awareness of divinity in self and cosmos taken together, and that we do not in fact leave the cosmos altogether behind until our awareness of divinity becomes so intense that we go "alone to the alone". In explaining this I hope to be able to show that the Neoplatonic way of thinking may still have some life and meaning. We cannot of course expect Plotinus, or anybody else, to do our own thinking for us, and some aspects of his thought which will be discussed in this paper will inevitably seem odd, antiquated and irrelevant to present concerns. But I believe that if we start our own reflections with a study of that thought which is sympathetic as well as critical, Plotinus may give us a lead to a better understanding of the world and may help us to adjust our attitudes and valuations in a way which may help us to deal with some of the most pressing problems of our time, and especially to do something towards closing the gap between man and non-human nature which has been steadily widening through the Christian and rationalist centuries with, as we are now beginning to see, disastrous results.

It is now high time to say something about my use of the words "apprehension" and "divinity". On "apprehension" there is nothing very helpful to be said, because I agree with Plato and many modern religious philosophers in supposing that what it means can only be learnt in practice, and by each in their own way. One can neither explain what is meant by the apprehension of God nor tell anyone else an infallible method for apprehending him. One can only recommend a serious attention to and enjoyment of the world in the hope that those who apply themselves to it, holding in check for a time the desire of power or satisfaction, may become aware of the divine presence. As for my use of "divinity", the Neoplatonic tradition which I am trying to explain, and with which on this point I

agree, makes things rather difficult for its interpreters by insisting that the first principle, the One or Good, which corresponds to what most of us who still use the word mean by "God", is absolutely unknowable and ineffable. There is of course nothing scandalous to a modern religious thinker in this insistence. At any meeting of theologians or religious philosophers in the West the unknowability of God is sure to be asserted by a variety of speakers from a variety of different points of view, and it is a commonplace of religious thought in the East. But all too many of those who make this assertion, fail to apply it sufficiently in their practice. They seem to fail to realise that if God is ineffable you can't talk about him: you can only use language which will prepare people's minds to attend to such indications as he may give of his presence. The pagan Neoplatonists, from Plotinus to Damascius, of course knew this very well and stated it with increasing clarity (even if they quite often seem to go rather too far, on their own premises, towards forming concepts or enunciating propositions about the One or making him the premise or conclusion of a discursive argument). The great masters of the Athenian School, Proclus and Damascius, do a good deal at this point to develop what is not always clear in Plotinus (thought I do not myself think that they do more than bring out what is, sometimes at least, implicit in his thought). Both of them emphasise strongly that it is necessary in the end to negate one's negations (which does not mean simply restoring the original positive statements which are negated, with a decorative label, a *hyper* — or *eminenter*, attached), otherwise one would be left with a sort of pseudo definition of One as a something which was not anything, instead of a profoundly fruitful and illuminating silence. And Damascius, following a view of Iamblichus<sup>1</sup> which was not adopted by Proclus, insists that we must go even beyond the One to find the unknowable First. In the first pages of his great critical, and at many points liberatingly destructive, re-thinking of the vast metaphysical system which he had inherited<sup>2</sup>, in strong opposition on many points to the too smooth, over-clarified, misleadingly coherent-looking scholastic version of it produced by Proclus, he insists that the One from which all things proceed can not only, in a way, be defined and understood in relation to the all but must in some sense be all

things which proceed from it, in however super-simplified a way<sup>3</sup>: and, with an agonized sense of the inadequacy of human thought and language which is impressive and refreshing to those who sometimes feel that Proclus knows much too much about the unknowable, points his readers on to that for which he has no proper name. The most important result of this extreme apophatism for our present purposes is that this unnameable and unknowable divinity is not in a relationship to everything else which can simply be defined as "transcendence"<sup>4</sup>. Its relationship to the world, as we should expect, cannot be defined at all (even by saying that it has no relationship). Once it is clear that God for the Neoplatonists stands in this unknowable relationship to all else, anyone who is religious in a Neoplatonist way is free to see him in mind and world wherever his presence seems to be indicated. And though another side of their thought led the Neoplatonists to think (in one way or another) of his presence as mediated through a hierarchy of lesser divinities, this idea of divine hierarchy is probably incompatible with their ultimate conclusions about divinity (and leads them into many other difficulties) and can, I think, be neglected by a modern who wishes to make Neoplatonism the starting-point for his own religious thinking. The hierarchy of hypostases should, of course, be given its proper place in any historical account of Neoplatonism, and will not be ignored in what follows.

The first apprehensions which we have of divinity according to Plotinus are on the level of his third hypostasis, Soul. In the great exhortation to return from self-forgetfulness and self-alienation and remember our true selves and our Father which begins the treatise *On the Three Primary Hypostases* every soul is told to remember that it made all living things and the whole world and gave life to everything<sup>5</sup> (in the Plotinian universe everything is alive and is in some sense thought<sup>6</sup>). In the further development of this in the rest of the chapter, and still more in the careful discussion of the relationship of our souls to the Soul of the All which begins the great treatise *On Difficulties About the Soul*<sup>7</sup>, Plotinus makes clear that this does not mean that our souls are parts of or simply identical with the cosmic soul which makes the physical universe real, alive and

divinely excellent. We are of one kind with it<sup>8</sup> and in that sense just because we are soul can claim its divine creativity as our own. But the living unity of the Plotinian hypostasis, in which every part is the whole in so far as it thinks universally, but each in its own way, admits of considerable differences of character and rank. Plotinus never abandons his conviction, stated in the early treatise *If All Souls are One*<sup>9</sup>, of the fundamental unity of soul: but he modifies it in the direction of acknowledging a greater diversity and degree of independence to the individuals within that unity. The World-Soul is our elder sister<sup>10</sup>, and our attitude towards her, it seems, should combine a sense of intimate kinship with an affectionate and respectful independence and assertion of fundamental equality. We can aspire to "walk on high"<sup>11</sup> like her, sharing in her formation and vivifying of the whole and enjoying that ideal relationship to body which belongs to her and to the souls of the great parts of the universe, sun, moon, earth and stars. Our awareness of any sort of divinity in ourselves is an awareness of a divinity which, without abolition of differences or loss of personal identity, we share with the living thought which is all the reality of the cosmos, in whose everlasting perfection we can rediscover our own forgotten natures.

This leads Plotinus into some very curious excursions into cosmic psychology in his great treatise on the soul, the second part of which contains extensive discussions about whether the World-Soul, the heavenly bodies, and the earth have memory or perception or need them to perform their functions in the universe.<sup>12</sup> The details of these are not relevant here, but it is important to realise that for Plotinus, as for any ancient Stoic or Platonist, any philosophical psychology which concerned itself exclusively with the nature of the human soul would be hopelessly unsatisfactory and inadequate. (Mediaeval Christians here to some extent follow the ancients; they are interested in angelic psychology, and angels for them at least sometimes have cosmic functions, though these do not seem to occupy a very important place in angelology). Plotinus cannot consider man, as a being who perceives, remembers, thinks and acts intelligently, in isolation from the greater embodied souls which, though they do not need memory or deliberation (any more

than man does at his highest), do act intelligently and have all the awareness of the world whose reality depends on them which is necessary to them. This may seem a mere curiosity of the antique way of thinking, hopelessly out-of-date and incompatible with our vastly extended knowledge of the universe, and particularly of the celestial regions. It would be difficult for us, imaginatively as well as intellectually, to recognise and venerate the goddess Selene in the dreary, dusty receptacle for excessively expensive junk with which we have all become so boringly familiar of late years. But if we study the treatise *On the Soul* and other documents of the ancient faith in the living organic unity of the universe of which we men are not very important parts, and study them sympathetically as well as critically, we may at least begin to feel again the need for some sense of unity with our world and not be content to stand apart from it as isolated, superior thinking beings over against a mass of brute matter in which there is no living thought originatively present, so that we can exploit it as we please in our own supposed interests without worrying about any non-existent cosmic holiness or intelligence, and even imagine that we are necessarily improving it by "humanizing" it. Even if we cannot entirely or uncritically accept Plotinus' way of asserting the unity-in-distinction of reason and nature, we may come to desire to find some satisfactory way of establishing it for and in ourselves.

As our apprehension of divinity, according to Plotinus, progresses we find that we are not only one with other and greater souls in the unity of the Third Hypostasis, but belong, with all Soul, to the greater community of the Second. We are rightful members of the intelligible cosmos which is the Divine Intellect, at once the inner reality and the transcendent exemplar of our perceptible world. A great deal has been written about Plotinus' astonishing accounts of his intelligible world, in which Platonism, Aristotelianism and Stoicism unite with his own immediate experience to give a richly imaginative and philosophically strange picture of a cosmos at once furiously active and timelessly at rest, in which an extreme and delightful variety is held together in the most perfect unity possible below the One. It is an account which brings out very

clearly two problems which are implicit in a great deal of ancient and mediaeval thought. One is the paradox involved in the phrase "eternal life". Can we eliminate all ideas of real duration, process and even change from our thought about any eternal reality as completely as the traditional theologies require if we represent that eternal reality as genuinely alive, and living a life of the utmost imaginable fullness and intensity?<sup>13</sup> The other is a question about a complex intuition which is completely non-discursive.<sup>14</sup> Can we at our highest, or even the Divine Intellect, with which we are then one, have an awareness of a reality (even if we are it) which is not only one, but discrete and diversified, with very complex internal relationships, without that awareness being in some way discursive? Is not the clear distinguishing of parts (even Plotinian parts) and the accurate observance of relationships essentially and inescapably discursive? I mention these problems not in order to solve them, which is beyond my capacity, or to suggest that the ideas of eternal life and complex non-discursive thought should be dismissed from further consideration as absurd, which is far from my intention, but to point out that they arise in this context from Plotinus' determination to get everything in the sense-world into his intelligible world. It must for him possess in a far higher degree all the values and beauties of which we are aware here below in all their splendid variety, even if they are values and beauties which seem to us, on careful reflection, to be bound up with transitoriness and passage and dispersion in space and time. This means that the relationship of the two worlds is inevitably a very intimate one, and Plotinus (though his emphasis varies) is sometimes anxious to stress this intimacy and immediacy<sup>15</sup>. And our own relationship with this higher or inner world is so intimate that Plotinus sometimes says that we are it.<sup>16</sup>

When, therefore, we reach the highest apprehension of divinity of which we are capable before the final union and have transcended our limiting particularities, we still find ourselves one with a world or community of living minds, including greater beings than ourselves<sup>17</sup>, which is the archetype and inner reality of the world of sense-experience and lower soul-activity. We are by no means alone or isolated and

separated from the whole. At this point it will be as well to distinguish two questions which are sometimes confused: First, is the process or ascent, of discovering our true natures and strengthening our apprehension of divinity till we are ready for the final union, best carried out in isolation or co-operatively? The answer to this is not altogether simple. It has often been noticed that the theory of Plotinus differs here very considerably from that of Plato. For Plato<sup>2</sup> progress in philosophy required affectionate co-operation and continual dialogue. A philosophical community like the Academy was absolutely necessary, and the ideal environment for the philosopher would be a larger and more closely integrated community, the philosophical city-state. Plotinus probably did not presume to disagree with Plato on this last point, as the curious episode of Platonopolis shows<sup>18</sup>. But his general conception of the philosophic life is one of withdrawn solitary concentration, as the *Enneads* repeatedly make clear. Contemplation is primary, and is best pursued alone. Communication is secondary, and hinders rather than helps contemplation, though it is the philosopher's duty to impart what he has seen to others and help them to see it for themselves. His position is finely stated in a passage which sums up the teaching of the first six chapters of the treatise on contemplation: "The truly good and wise man therefore has already finished reasoning when he declares what he has in himself to another: but in relation to himself he is vision. For he is already turned to what is one, and to the quiet which is not only of things outside but in relation to himself, and all is within him"<sup>19</sup>. In practice, however, he by no means withdrew from the world or shunned society, till he was compelled to do so in his last illness, and his teaching at Rome was not just a matter of handing down the results of his contemplation to his disciples: there was plenty of vigorous discussion and dialogue<sup>20</sup> (as there must have been earlier in the group around Ammonius) and it is doubtful whether he could have done without it; there is much in the *Enneads* which suggests the stimulus of discussions within his circle. However different his theory was, in practice philosophy seems to have been for him almost as much of a social activity as it was for Plato.

The second, quite different question is: does one discover oneself in the course of the philosophic ascent as an isolated individual, progressing towards a solitary perfection, or as part of a larger whole? The answer to this has already been given. One discovers oneself as part of the largest possible whole, and a part which in a sense is that whole. The boundaries of the self are those of the intelligible cosmos. (This is of course one reason why Plotinus in theory felt less need for a philosophic community; it could add nothing to the All within him). One might almost say that for Plotinus the *corpus mysticum* is the universe and the company of heaven includes the whole inner reality of the world. And no genuine Neoplatonist philosopher can be satisfied to think of himself as a member of any smaller or more exclusive community. Here the thought of Plotinus is in accord with, and the study of his writings may reinforce, some of the best tendencies in the religious thought of our time which are leading more and more to the rejection of the exclusive ways of thinking of the past which separated man from man or man from nature. I am inclined to think that Neoplatonic Paganism and its derivatives have always in our intellectual history been working against the tendencies derived from other sources which have led to the drawing of sharp lines and the making of exclusive divisions between man and non-human life, or Church and world, and so on: in our own time this Neoplatonic pressure against exclusiveness is being powerfully reinforced in various ways, notably by influences coming from India. It is in this inner, intelligible, totality of being that the soul must ascend to its solitary union with the One, and it must make every effort to dwell in it consciously until the moment of union comes. In all the great mystical passages of the *Enneads* it is from the world of Intellect that the ascent is made. We are drawn to enter and unite ourselves with that world by the impulse to union with the Good which comes from the Good, and Intellect only attracts us by the light playing upon it from the Good, without which it is altogether uninteresting<sup>21</sup> (though elsewhere Plotinus seems to think that the beauty of Intellect desired by itself can distract us from the Good<sup>22</sup>). It is for the sake of the Good, and under the impulse of the Good, that the whole enterprise of intellectual ascent and

expansion is undertaken. But it is characteristic of the mysticism of Plotinus that there is no short cut, no way in which the isolated individual soul can jump straight into the divine embrace. We must become the All in order to be one with the One. And it is important to notice how we leave the intelligible world for the final union and what happens when we do. In the long passage near the end of his treatise *How the Multitude of the Forms came into Being and on the Good* in which he makes his greatest effort to relate his experience<sup>23</sup>, he explains that our union is a perfect assimilation to the eternal union which the Intellect which is the intelligible world enjoys with the Good in the "loving", "mad", "drunken" state which timelessly co-exists with its "thinking" state. We are "carried out of ourselves by the very surge of the wave of Intellect"<sup>24</sup>. If we are to speak of "ecstasy", a term of which Plotinus is not fond, it is an ecstasy of the whole intelligible cosmos by which we are carried out of ourselves who have become the cosmos. It is only when we forget our selves and are no longer aware of our own existence that we forget the Intelligible All: this is obvious when we realise that for Plotinus the self which can rise to the union in which it forgets itself has already become the All. The over-quoted "flight of the alone to the alone" which ends the last treatise of the last *Ennead*<sup>25</sup> (perhaps over-quoted because it is so very easy to find) is misleading if it induces us to think that there is any stage in the ascent of the soul according to Plotinus when it stands isolated, apart from the whole, aware only of itself and God. The "Cut away everything"<sup>26</sup> which ends another great mystical passage gives a more accurate impression: everything must be discarded, including any sort of self-awareness, all at once at that last moment, but only at that last moment. It has often been remarked that the mysticism of Plotinus is totally non-ecclesiastical and non-sacramental, and in that sense non-communitarian. But it is not the mysticism of a solitary saint who seeks God in conscious separation from the worlds of sense and intellect and finds him, apparently, without any participation in an universal movement of return. According to Plotinus we seek God by enlarging ourselves to unity with all that he brings into being and find him and leave all else for him only after and because of that enlargement. We are unlikely

to be able to follow him altogether uncritically at this, any more than at any other, point in his thought. But if we study what he says about the way to the Good which he followed to the end, those of us who are religiously inclined, and perhaps some who are not so, may find that he has a good deal to teach us.

## NOTES

1. See Damascius, *Dubitaciones et Solutiones* I. 86, 3 ff. Ruelle.
2. *Dubitaciones et Solutiones de Primis Principiis*, in *Platonis Parmenidem* (sometimes cited as *De Principiis*) only available at present in the unsatisfactory edition of Ruelle (Paris 1889 repr. Amsterdam 1966).
3. Cp. *Enneads* V 2 (11) 1. 1 τὸ ἐν πάντα καὶ οὐδὲ ἐν cp. ch. 2. 24 πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐκεῖνος καὶ οὐκ ἐκεῖνος in both places what immediately follows should be taken into account, but neither here nor elsewhere in the *Enneads* does Plotinus really resolve this paradox.
4. *Dubitaciones et Solutiones* P. 15, 13-19 Ruelle.
5. V 1 (10) 2.
6. Cp. III 8 (30) 7.
7. IV 3 (27) 1-8.
8. ὁμοειδὴς δὲ καὶ ἡμέτερα V 1, 2, 44.
9. IV 9 (8).
10. IV 3 (27) 6, 13; II 9 (33) 18, 16.
11. IV 8 (6) 2, 21; IV 3 (27) 7, 17; V 8 (31) 7, 34: cp. Plato *Phaedrus* 246c 1-2.
12. IV 4 (28) 6-11 (memory); 22-27 (perceptions): ch. 22, on the psychology of the earth, is particularly remarkable.
13. Cp. My *Eternity, Life and Movement in Plotinus' Accounts of Nous* (with the discussion) in *Le Néoplatonisme*, Éditions du Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique Paris 1971 pp. 67-76.
14. A good account of what the ancients meant by non-discursive thinking is to be found in A. C. Lloyd's

*Non-Discursive Thought - An Enigma of Greek Philosophy*  
in *Proc. of the Aristotelian Society* 1970, pp. 261-274.

15. See especially IV 8 (6) 6, 23-28 and V 8 (31) 7, 12-16.
16. III 4 (15) 3, 22: cp. IV 7 (2) 10, 34-36.
17. cp. VI 4 (22) 14, 16ff. VI 5 (23) 12.
18. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* ch. 12.
19. III 8 (30) 6, 37-40: my own translation from *Plotinus* III (Loeb Classical Library) p. 381.
20. *Life* chs. 3, 13.
21. VI 7 (38) 22.
22. V 5 (32) 12.
23. VI 7 (38) 34-36.
24. l.c. 35, 24-27 and 36, 17-18.
25. VI 9 (9) 11, 50-51.
26. Ἀφ' ἑλε πάντα V 3 (49) 17, 38.

## Is Plotinian Mysticism Monistic?

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Many commentators of Plotinus have been concerned to show that his mysticism is not of the Oriental "monistic" type. The latest is Professor Rist in his book *Plotinus*.<sup>1</sup> Rist adopts the distinction between monistic and theistic mysticism that he found in Zaehner<sup>2</sup> and, one may add, in a number of other writers as well. He then concludes that Plotinian mysticism is of the theistic type and not monistic or pantheistic.

In this paper I wish to defend a monistic interpretation of Plotinus. I shall begin by a very brief attempt to clarify the issue. I shall then offer an interpretation of the mystical passages and a consideration of some of the arguments advanced by opponents of this interpretation, mainly Arnou and Rist. Finally, I shall briefly consider one of the difficulties generated by the monistic interpretation.

Mysticism refers primarily to a kind of experience the chief characteristics of which can be stated, though the experience itself cannot be described adequately. These characteristics are: a) a fusion of cognition and feeling—the subject both knows and is in a state of bliss; b) what he knows is not a determinate entity but rather the "ground", the transcendent source, the formless; c) the mystic knows in no ordinary way but by being united with, assimilated to the object of his vision. He claims that he ceases to be a separate individual and becomes united, "oned", etc. This is the so-called *unio mystica*.

But mysticism may also refer to an attempt at philosophical interpretation of the experience, an attempt to render the strange claims of those who have had it intelligible within a larger metaphysical framework.<sup>3</sup> It is this philosophical mysti-



cism that characterizes Plotinus' work and sets him apart from countless other mystics both eastern and western. It is in this sense that we may ask the question whether his mysticism was monistic or theistic. And clearly the answer to that question will have important implications for the rest of his metaphysics.

Next it might be necessary to say something about the terms monism, theism and pantheism. If the pantheist wishes to claim that the divine is identical with the material world, that "the One and matter are identical and that there is a reconciliation of good and evil",<sup>4</sup> then clearly Plotinus is no pantheist and Rist is right in dismissing that interpretation. Whether it is necessary to understand pantheism in this narrow sense is, of course, another matter. However, let us dismiss pantheism in order to concentrate on monism and theism.

Rist supposes that monism means the absolute identity of the soul with its source, i.e. the One. He supposes that for the monist the separate self is nothing but illusion and that the typical monistic mystic's utterance is "I am God". Following Zaehner, Rist takes the Vedanta as the paradigm of monistic mysticism and then claims that Plotinus, who, as a rule, is very cautious even in the most intensely mystical passages, is no Vedantic mystic and, therefore, he must be a theistic one. There is, presumably, no need to define "theistic mystic". Most Christians and many Christian commentators of Plotinus begin from a premise which is, *prima facie*, opposed to the mystical claims. For them there is always the gap between creator and creature; any talk of the creature becoming the creator is, of necessity, nonsense or heresy. Hence when the mystic claims to be 'oned' with God this must be understood dualistically, i.e. in a way that preserves the integrity of the two spiritual substances: God and the soul. The union then becomes one of contemplation, similarity, love, anything short of absorption. The mystic who, in his interpretation of the experience, follows this Christian metaphysical principle is a theistic mystic. The mystic who talks, seriously, of absorption and loss of the self is a monist. But Plotinus, we are told, is no monist because he does not stress the *absolute* identity of God and soul; *ergo* he is a theist.

It seems to me that placing Plotinus under one or the other of these categories may have some alleged advantages, e.g. it may enable someone to proclaim Plotinus free of the error of monism, but that on the whole it is both pointless and misleading. Indeed, it may be a serious obstacle to the full understanding and appreciation of Plotinus' mystical thought. If, after the latter has been investigated and understood, we need a label then, I submit, monism is more appropriate and less misleading. But to attempt to gain an insight *via* the label seems foolish.

What then is the correct account of Plotinian mysticism? Two basic principles must be recognized. In the first place, everyone who has read Plotinus realizes that his supreme principle is both immanent *and* transcendent. Hence Plotinus cannot be a rigid monist in the sense in which Zaehner speaks of, e.g. Vedantic monism. The transcendent One is the source and origin of all things; it is not identical with them. Nor is there any suggestion that the multiplicity of forms, in all their marvellous diversity, is nothing but illusion.

Secondly, if the supreme is immanent, it cannot be a creator or even a cause in any ordinary sense. This is why Plotinus uses his well-known metaphors: the sun, the root, the spring. Further, the human soul appears to be endowed with extraordinary mobility, as commentators have noted.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the whole system of the hypostases seems to be a projection of subjective experience and so Plotinus is accused of erecting metaphysics upon psychology.<sup>6</sup> And, as if even this mobility of the soul were not enough to guarantee the essential fluidity and continuity of Plotinian reality, he is the first to distinguish between soul and the *ego* (*ἡμεῖς*)<sup>7</sup> and the first to be wholly concerned with the conscious individual.<sup>8</sup> And this ego is clearly not tied to the physical entity, the person. It is, as it was recognized long ago,<sup>9</sup> a focus of consciousness. A study of the doctrine of the ego in the *Enneads* will reveal several distinct stages or foci running through the chain of realities up to the transcendent One. It is as if Plotinus, having given an account of the emergence of forms from the "beyond" (*ἐπέκτω*) and the emergence of the cosmos from the forms, essentially a Platonic, formalist account, now wishes to supplement it with a

postulate that would do justice to his own experience as a mystic. This postulate, the ego, contains all the dynamism, the continuity, the "boiling life" that is so characteristic of Plotinian reality, and enables Plotinus to maintain the ultimate identity of the self with its ground; while his more formal system of hypostases enables him to assert the permanence and reality of individual men.

Thus the proper way to appreciate Plotinus' monism is not to deny the transcendence of the One (indeed no mystic can do that, in spite of Zaehner's unsympathetic comments) but to understand it in a *mystical* sense; in a way that is compatible with its immanence. True, the source is beyond the world and there is, in a sense, "otherness" between it and all other things.<sup>10</sup> But Plotinus often says that nothing is cut off and we certainly are not cut off from the One.<sup>11</sup> It is this continuity of the tree with the root which makes possible the mystical "leading up," (*ἀνεγωγή*) provided one's consciousness becomes wholly purified and simplified and all form, including otherness, is put away.

This *ἀναγωγή* is, I think, a very important notion which has not received the attention it deserves. It is a thoroughly mystical notion based on the experience of the ascent and the fluid character of the self. It is opposed to a descriptive, formalist metaphysics where "everything", to use Butler's phrase, "is what it is and not another thing". It contains an echo of Heraklitus' unsuccessful search for the limits of the soul. Neglecting this notion, and the mystical continuity it presupposes, has led some people to assert that the higher self reaches only as far as the higher reaches of the Soul and does not extend to the *Nous*.<sup>12</sup> though Plotinus says, "if I and everyone else go back to the intelligible the principle of each will be there." (*εἰ ἐγὼ καὶ ἕκαστος τὴν ἀναγωγὴν ἐπὶ τὸ ὀνητὸν ἔχει, καὶ ἐκάστου ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐκεῖ*).<sup>13</sup> It may be said that in this passage the "There" (*ἐκεῖ*) is the *Nous* and, therefore, this *ἀναγωγή* is irrelevant to our question. But it is not possible that when Plotinus speaks of simplification (*ἀπλῶσις*) and ecstasy (*ἔκστασις*) and becoming another (*ἄλλος γενόμενος*) he is not thinking of the same *ἀναγωγή* which has finally reached beyond the realm of being and where there is coincidence, i.e.

identity of centers. On this level too, neglecting the notion of *ἀναγωγή* causes a curious distortion analogous to Armstrong's demotion of the ego. It is the conception we find in Arnou and repeated by Rist that the soul and the One are "two spiritual substances" and that the mystical union is a contact between two such substances.<sup>14</sup> If one begins with this view of the matter, natural as this is for a Christian, the mystical oneness will become an insuperable difficulty. How can two substances, each ontologically self-sufficient, possessing its own limits, *unite* without blending or without the annihilation of the self which the theist fears? But in Plotinus' view the One is no "spiritual substance"<sup>15</sup> and the soul of the mystic is hardly that: we are here speaking of the going back to one's origin, we have reached the intelligible archetype, we *are* forms (*ἄτοσσωκράτης*). It is this noetic self that has the access to the ultimate principle (*ἀρχή*): not the limited, ordinary substance that is Socrates here.

Indeed the image which most aptly expresses the mystical union is not the sexual contact but the one occurring in the *Tao Te Ching*: "A retreat to one's roots" and the fine Plotinian verse by Yeats "Now I may wither into the Truth."<sup>16</sup> The great monistic image is, of course, the river losing name and shape in the sea.<sup>17</sup> Though Plotinus does not use it, it would be appropriate, as the sea is the source of the river to which the river returns. Better still would be the image of the stream being gathered back into the spring. Clearly this situation could not be described as the union of two substances, and much less as a contact between two substances. It would be a return to our fatherland or to the father.<sup>18</sup>

It is these images of being gathered and being scattered,<sup>19</sup> which are so strangely apt when applied to our conscious life, that best characterize Plotinian reality. And it is the notion of the self operating in this dynamic reality that enables Plotinus to tackle the mystical problem *par excellence*: how the finite, limited self can become the transcendent One. Among the commentators, Trouillard has best appreciated this mobility and "poly-valence" of the ego. "It would be easier to enclose the subject in a situation, a nature or a perspective. But this would be making spirit into a thing... Thus the ego oscillates endlessly."<sup>20</sup>

There is then no question of the identity of what seemed to be two substances so that only the One truly exists. Nor is it a question of a magical transformation of the finite into the infinite. The ordinary ego can be surpassed in noetic activity without the cessation of the lower psychic activities. So too the noetic ego can be transcended in the mystical ecstasy without the destruction of its formal counterpart, the Socrates-himself, (*Ἀποσωκράτης*). At the moment of "union" there is no consciousness of any form, not even the otherness that normally distinguishes the One from the *Nous*. *Qua* self the spiritual reality has become identical with the One. *Qua* a certain formal personality principle it is eternally emanating from the One and is, therefore, distinct.

But although the question of Plotinian monism can best be discussed within these two approaches, the static and the dynamic, we should not try to press this distinction.<sup>21</sup> For it is then too tempting to say that Plotinus' monism appears in the dynamic, "religious" account, while his usual metaphysical account is dualistic. Indeed there is the opinion that what saves Plotinian ecstasy from being monistic is just this distinction between noetic and ontic identity. The soul of the mystic cannot become identical with the One by "nature"; though noetically the One fills it and the mystic is no longer conscious of himself.<sup>22</sup> But I cannot believe that this is a Plotinian view. Those who accuse him of doing psychology under the guise of metaphysics are more nearly right. In Plotinus it is very difficult, as Trouillard remarks<sup>23</sup>, to distinguish the noetic from the ontic and especially so at this level.

The reason for this is that the true background of Plotinus' mystical idealism is, as is recognized now,<sup>24</sup> the Aristotelian doctrine that the mind becomes the object of cognition. This doctrine of "the soul becoming all things" is a typically mystical conception and leads directly to deification and to a monopsychism of the Plotinian kind.<sup>25</sup> Plotinus adopts it and combines it with his own psychological notion of attention, turning, looking at, so that he is able to say, "we are what we desire and what we look at"<sup>26</sup> and there is no indication that the "being and becoming" (*εἶναι καὶ γίγνεσθαι*) is meant only noetically. The distinction between the nature and the noetic level of the

subject is misapplied here. The soul is not an individual thing having a stable nature. "Soul" is a label for a variety of psychic and intellectual activities characterized by a 'scattering' in time. When consciousness returns to the stage of pure *noesis* it is no longer soul, it has become *Nous*.<sup>27</sup> The nature of the subject is precisely determined by the noetic stage. Having been established in the divine *Nous* we are no longer men.<sup>28</sup>

If there is a distinction between the oscillating, noetic self, and some stable nature, it must be between the ego (*ἡμεῖς*) and the only permanent *being* corresponding to the individual man, *viz.* his form in the *Nous*. I have argued elsewhere that we must continue to read Plotinus as indeed positing forms of individual men.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, such forms, like all residents of the *Nous*, must be minds themselves<sup>30</sup> and hence potential egos. Yet even here it seems unplotinian to say that by nature Socrates persists though his mind is totally filled with the One. A nature which is not also a phase of consciousness is contrary to the basic premises of Neoplatonism. Perhaps the answer does lie in the way this superhuman mind of Socrates-himself is conceived. Without pressing the distinction between real and mental reality we can speak of this mind *qua* a certain ideal personality type, the form Socrateity; and also *qua* ego, the fluctuating focus which can sink below the level of *Nous* and even become an individual soul without, however, destroying the eternal form, nor this higher ego which is "ours" whenever we choose to recover it. In the same way, *qua* focus of consciousness, the ego can surpass the ideal Socrateity without destroying or obliterating it. But while the form persists, Socrates does not survive. His experience defines the level of his existence and now, when he sees the formless, he becomes another and not himself (*ἄλλος γινόμενος καὶ οὐκ αὐτός*). The self is obliterated, as all mystics report, though the form is always there to receive it at its first turning away from total unity.

If this is so, then we cannot say, as Zaehner does, that since the soul of the mystic has survived the encounter, the experience of absorption was an illusion, nor that the self survives by nature, nor that some existential otherness remains at the very moment of union. It is not the soul or the ordinary ego that survives. The ego, even the ego established in the *Nous*, is

lost; since the idea of an ego remaining in the absence of all multiplicity and differentiation is unintelligible. What remains is the admittedly strange notion of a mind whose formal and intelligible structure is still intact (and still known by all other form-minds) but whose normal self-awareness is lacking because it is now "a mind senseless and in love" (*νοῦς ἄφρων καὶ ἐρῶν*). In this qualified sense Socrates has ceased to be himself and has become one with his transcendent source. And if this is a possible account then it would not seem inappropriate to call Plotinus a monist while it would be at least misleading to call him a dualist or theist. The latter would imply a radical otherness between the individual substance and the One.

An interesting indication that this kind of qualified monism is not alien to Plotinus' thought is the fact that when Plotinus asks himself: "How is it that I descend again after the vision?"<sup>31</sup> he does not give the answer that would occur immediately to a theist: *viz.* "God filled my soul but I was the same me all along"; or, "I was there noetically though existentially and really I was still a man." Instead he goes on to talk about the descent of all souls in terms of change of attention, desire to be independent, etc. The psychological question coincides with the metaphysical question of the descent of souls. And what this whole account of the "emancipation" of souls comes to, is just the principle that existential otherness depends on noetic otherness. Ecstasy, far from being an illusion, is a cosmic event. The return is not a temporal event in the history of this person. It is an instance of cosmic emanation, the self-differentiation of the ground. The unfolding history of this person is, as it were, the event of his separation. And the return? "Put away everything" (*Ἀφελε πάντα*).

It would also seem that the majority of the texts where Plotinus mentions the mystical experience, give the impression, at least *prima facie*, that the union involves a coincidence and a coalescence. "In his interpretation of the experience Plotinus is nearer to some Indian mystics than he is to the orthodox Christian view."<sup>32</sup> These texts are well known and there is no need to quote them here. Time after time, the Platonic vision (*θεωρία*, *θέα*) locutions are corrected by the images of contact, touch, and often enough by term like, "union" (*ἔνωσις*) "simplification" (*ἀπλῶσις*), "the two become one" (*τὰ δύο ἐν γίγνεται*).

Nevertheless, Arnou, Rist and others have detected a certain dualism in the language used to describe the union. Plotinus, it is said, uses words like "being with" (*συνουσία*), "presence" (*παρουσία*) which imply two things and not one, or says clearly that two things become one. For a strict monist, however, the only permissible locution is "I am God." Since Plotinus allows that two beings become united they must persist in their duality. I do not think this is a strong argument. The conclusion clearly does not follow. Even if Plotinus begins by asserting the existence of two things, in view of his own images of being mixed and blended,<sup>34</sup> we cannot conclude that after the union they remain two. The only thing that concepts like "union" and "blending" entail is that there are two things that become blended; not that the blending is, so to speak, ineffective. Similar remarks would apply to Rist's picking the phrase from V.5.8 "Being one *with that* (*ἐκείνῳ*) and not two" and claiming that other monistic phrases should be explained in terms of this. Being one with that and not two only means that there are two things that are being oned; not the contradictory view that they are *still two* but not two. As far as the more general claim that one finds in Zaehner, *viz.* that in monistic mysticism there is no love, or its variant that one finds in Rist, *viz.* that because Plotinus says that one surrenders, or that the soul is filled with God he cannot be a monist, this claim seems to be a mistake. Indeed one loves the absolute; indeed one surrenders to it and not to oneself.<sup>35</sup> But this only means that initially, and for reasons Plotinus never tires of giving, there is a distance between the self and its ground. It does not mean that after the surrender he who surrenders is still the same self, or that he whose soul is filled with God is still the same individual being.

Rist further asserts that the sudden character of the vision "hardly fits the notion of the monistic isolation of the soul"<sup>36</sup> though he does not tell us why. And finally, as if to clinch the case against the monist, he cites the metaphor of the converging centers in VI.9.10 "perhaps the most apt description of all" and curiously claims that, in spite of the coincidence of centers, the metaphor preserves the dualism of otherness. But Plotinus' image, though certainly apt, hardly leaves room for such

dualistic interpretation. The whole chapter is strongly monistic and, he says, "even here when the centers come together they are one" (καὶ γὰρ ἐνταῦθα συνελθόντα ἓν ἐστὶ). And indeed if the centers are points they *must* be one, if they coincide. Rist chooses to talk of dots drawn on paper at different times and implies that though they *seem* one they would still in some sense be *two*.<sup>37</sup> It is not clear in what sense they could be said to be two. Some strange criteria of individuation must be involved here. At any rate Plotinus is speaking of centers not dots and the coincidence of centers, as well as "his center of centers"<sup>38</sup> are powerful images of the final stage in the expansion and simplification of the self: it has become the One.

There are, however, two other linguistic arguments, used by Arnou, and I now turn to them. Arnou is struck by the frequent occurrence of terms meaning generally "as it were" (ὥσπερ, οἶον) and hesitation-expressing phrases, "if we must say this" (εἰ δεῖ καὶ τοῦτο λέγειν) to be found specifically in VI.9.11 and 10 and concludes that the caution is precisely meant by Plotinus to warn us that the union is no fusion but contact.<sup>39</sup> To this it must be replied that: a) There are many monistic passages not qualified by the οἶον, or any other caution term, notably the center-coincidence image of VI.9.10.<sup>40</sup> b) That the οἶον occurs not only when the threat of monism appears but in many other places; whenever, in fact, we try to speak of the ineffable and of our relation to it. This introduces another large problem for any mystical philosophy, and one which Plotinus has constantly in mind: How shall we speak about the ineffable? At least once Plotinus agrees with Wittgenstein that we must be silent.<sup>41</sup> More often he agrees with Heraklitus that we must *indicate*, must use language for the sake of showing (ἐνδείξεως ἕνεκα). Language is necessary though not exact.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, Plotinus says in the same passage, let us take the "as it were" in each case (λαμβάνετω δὲ καὶ τὸ οἶον ἐφ' ἐκάστου). There are very many passages where he follows this advice<sup>43</sup> and very few of them are meant to be qualifications of the monistic character of the union. c) The audacious saying (τολμηρὸς λόγος) can be justified by the paradoxical nature of the phrases used. To say of the man in ecstasy that he is no longer a self is true. But to say he has

become another, is not at all himself, (ἄλλος γινόμενος and οὐδ' ὅλως αὐτός)<sup>44</sup> is something of an exaggeration for it suggests a magical transformation or a sudden disappearance of the self. And that is not strictly correct. For Socrates is not lost just when he becomes established in the supreme. On the contrary, as many mystics say, he has found the true self. Only the limits of being Socrates are lost. So the "not at all himself" does, still, indicate. But then the "if we must say this" (εἰ δεῖ καὶ τοῦτο λέγειν) becomes understandable. And the "audacious saying" goes with "hard-to-express vision" (δύσφραστον τὸ θέαμα). Who would deny that the mystical claims are strange? But, as a little polemical aside, are the theistic claims less strange?

Arnou's second linguistic argument is the fact that Plotinus uses limiting phrases, like "as far as it can" (καθ' ὅσον δύναται). This shows, Arnou claims, that the mystical union does not imply the identity of man and God.<sup>45</sup> And it must be admitted that such phrases are incompatible with the "coincidence" (rather than "identity") view. But the first five passages quoted by Arnou do not refer to the mystical union as such. Of the ones that do, two contain the vision terms<sup>46</sup> and the hesitation may be due to Plotinus' belief that the vision language, Platonic and traditional though it may be, cannot fully express the mystical contact. The third is even less conclusive since it concerns the capacity of *soul* to possess the divine.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the formula as far as possible (κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν) is another traditional phrase<sup>48</sup> which may have been a serious qualification for Plato but seems to be a mere echo in the few places where Plotinus uses it. Indeed terms like union, simplification, the coincidence of centers, can hardly be subject to the "as far as possible" qualification. The latter seems most appropriate to the vision image since one can see clearly or dimly; but one cannot *coincide* more or less.<sup>49</sup>

I conclude, therefore, that those who point to the text of Plotinus in support of their view that his mysticism is of the theistic variety are unable to find their proof there. The texts themselves create a strong monistic impression; although it is true, of course that the extreme identity phrases, e.g. "I am God" are lacking. But the reason for this is not that Plotinus was a theist; rather, these phrases would strike him as too crude

and inaccurate in view of his own sophisticated notion of the self that can *become* the One only after the most arduous purification and only at the last moment, as it were, of the expansion and simplification of the soul. The phrase "I am God" is apt to be mistaken (and was mistaken, in fact) as the claim that this ordinary man, this pitiful fragment of the cosmos, is the One. But that is madness and megalomania and not what the mystic claims.

Moreover, although Plotinus did not easily dismiss personality<sup>50</sup> to the point of elevating its ideal principle to the *Nous*, he often thinks of individuality (probably a lower manifestation of the formal principle of personality) in terms not unlike those of classical Oriental monism. It was no accident that Bréhier began his 'Orientalism' thesis by quoting VI.5.12. "It is through non-being that you have become someone." And, "you no longer say concerning yourself: this is what I am. Leaving behind the limit you become all. Yet you were the all from the beginning. But as you were something besides, this addition reduced you."<sup>51</sup> This passage can be, I think, reconciled with the doctrine of individual forms. Nevertheless, it is in direct opposition to the theistic requirement that the individual soul, as a spiritual substance, persists and survives the encounter with the One. Here the individuality of the soul comes close to being an illusion, an addition of non-being, clearly something to be overcome before a higher stage in the expansion towards totality (*πᾶς*) can be reached.

It is sometimes said, however, that though Plotinus often speaks as if he were a monist of sorts, he *could not have meant* what he seems to mean because this would create some very serious difficulties within his system. And indeed the position is not free from difficulties even after we make allowances for the fact that it is based on an experience which is beyond our ordinary rational comprehension. If this is to be an argument against the monistic interpretation, one must assume that the theistic interpretation is free from such difficulties. But is there a reason to think that? Let us look at the correct theistic picture as we find it in Rist: "While the soul as a spiritual substance can be enveloped by the One, enraptured, surrendered, wholly characterized so as to become infinite and not

finite (5.8.4.33) it is neither obliterated nor revealed as the One itself, nor as the *only* spiritual substance."<sup>52</sup> I confess that I do not understand the picture. If we are willing to say that the soul *becomes infinite* how can its former identity still remain while enveloped by the infinity of the One? Are there two, or any number of, infinite substances? Wouldn't that which distinguishes them be a limit?

The chief difficulty with the monistic interpretation, on the other hand, is that it seems to place a temporal event (suddenly) at the heart of reality emanating in a non-temporal process. Plotinus says that time begins at the level of soul. If the mystical union is an event in the life of some individual then it cannot reach the higher levels of eternal reality. Plotinus does not deal with this difficulty. Perhaps the mystic cannot fully explain this sudden conversion that lifts him out of the body and the ordinary temporal consciousness. Perhaps it may be said that the static system of hypostases is based on the psychological experience and is secondary to it. Hence the experience of liberation from time is not a shortcut to the One but contains the evidence for the metaphysical schema. Secondly, it may be said that the sudden passing away of multiplicity and temporal succession is not a contradiction but a corroboration of the Plotinian view that time is born with the lower stages of psychic activity. The "suddenly" is not itself a temporal event; it marks, rather, the passage from time to the timelessness of true being. Plotinus, following Plato, does not consider the life of the spirit as static. There is activity, boiling life, *energeia*. Time and change, however, are excluded because they involve a scattering, a weakening of this activity. Hence the recovery of the original view-point, though an "activity", is not a temporal process. Indeed it is the opposite: time has been reduced to its root. A similar account can be given (and is given by Plotinus in IV.8) about the descent. That too is not a temporal event. It is a tendency of the active spirit towards separation that generates time. After the wondrous vision we are puzzled. But the explanation, for the mystic, must lie within the experience itself and not with the demands of a dogma or a metaphysical system—even one of one's own making.

## NOTES

1. J. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge, 1967).
2. R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (Oxford, 1961).
3. See W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London, 1961) and N. Smart, "Interpretation and Mystical Experience," *Religious Studies*, 1, 1965.
4. Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 216.
5. "The soul is the great wanderer of the metaphysical world." R. W. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (London, 1927), Vol. 1, p. 203.
6. E. O'Brien, *The Essential Plotinus*, pp. 30-31.
7. As F. R. Dodds remarked in *Les Sources de Plotin* (Geneva, 1960), p. 385 and later in *Pagan and Christian*, p. 77, note 3.
8. E. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* (Chiacgo, 1958), p. 111. The distinction between soul and ego is mentioned on p. 73.
9. Inge, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-52.
10. τῇ ἑτερότητι μόνον κεχωρίσθαι V.1.6. 52-53.
11. 6.9.9.7., 2.9.16. 12-13, 4.3.9. 6.4.14. 20-23. These passages are referred to by Arnou and again by Rist.
12. A. H. Armstrong, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy* (London, 1960), p. 57 and "Salvation, Plotinian and Christian," *Downside Review*, n.s. 75, (1957) p. 132 ff. H. J. Blumenthal in "Did Plotinus Believe in Ideas of Individuals?" *Phronesis*, XI No. 1. 1966, fully accepted Armstrong's "demotion."
13. V.7.
14. "Cette unité n'est pas un mélange . . . ni une fusion, ni une composition, mais le contact de deux substances spirituelles . . . unies comme peuvent l'être de substances spirituelles . . . Arnou, *Le Désir de Dieu dans la Philosophie de Plotin*, (Paris, 1921), p. 246, quoted by Rist, p. 222. Rist's own comments: "While the soul as a spiritual substance can be enveloped by the One . . . it is neither obliterated nor revealed as the One itself, nor as the *only* spiritual substance." Rist, *Plotinus*, p. 227.

15. Many people consider Plotinus' view that the One is beyond Being as a quaint echo of *Republic*, IV 509 and nothing else. In fact it is a cardinal tenet of mysticism. The mystical is "Beyond the world" but it makes itself manifest. cf. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, "The World is everything that is the case." "The sense of the world must lie outside the world . . .", "in it no value exists." 6.41, see also 6.522.
16. W. B. Yeats, "The Coming of Wisdom With Time," *Collected Poems*.
17. Mundaka Upanishad, Chandogya Upanishad.
18. VI.9.9.39. Rist, p. 228 comments on the non-sexual eros of the soul for the father. Also I.6.8.
19. οὐ κεχυμένον εἰς αἰσθησιν, ἀλλ' . . . ἐν ἑαυτῷ συνηγμένον. I.4.10. 33-34. Also VI.6.1. 4-5.
20. "Ainsi le moi oscille-t-il sans cesse . . . Il serait plus facile d'enfermer tout simplement le sujet dans une situation, une nature ou une perspective. On se garderait ainsi, semble-t-il, plus aisément de tout monisme. Mais ce serait faire de l'esprit une chose et manquer le problème en éliminant une de ses données . . ." J. Trouillard, *La Purification Plotinienne* (Paris, 1955), pp. 150.
21. Many writers have noticed the two "pictures" and the need to regard them as at least compatible. H. J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology* (The Hague, 1971), pp. 2-3.
22. Zaehner, *op. cit.*, p. 160. Also J. Maréchal, *Etudes sur la Psychologie des Mystiques* (Bruxelles, p. 37-38). "Mais alors, le 'nous' dans ce dnuement interieur qui le rend indiscernable de l'Un present, ne devient-il pas Dieu? Par nature, non; par coincidence, 'objective', oui." pp. 69-70. We are also told that P. Agaesse "Distingue deux sens de l'altérité: l'altérité limite ontologique . . . et l'altérité volonté de rupture ou d'isolement . . . La seconde seulement est annulée . . . La première subsiste . . . pour empêcher l'absorption." quoted by Trouillard, *op. cit.*, p. 150, n.1.
23. "Il nous semble difficile de diviser ainsi l'ontologique et le

- noétique dans le neoplatonisme." Trouillard, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
24. A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible World in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1940) was one of the first to point this out.
  25. See P. Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism and Metaconsciousness* (Hague, 1963). Merlan's *Aristoteles Mysticus* has not received the attention it deserves from Plotinian scholars.
  26. IV.3.8. 15-16; IV.4.3. cf. I.6.9.7, 24.
  27. Γίνεται δὲ ἡ ψυχὴ καθαρθεῖσα εἶδος καὶ λόγος καὶ πάντῃ ἀσώματος καὶ νοερά καὶ ὅλη τοῦ θεοῦ I.6.6.13-15.
  28. Πανσάμενος δὲ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι μετεωροπορεῖ... γινόμενος γὰρ τοῦ ὅλου V.8.7. 33-35.
  29. In "Forms of Individuals in the *Enneads*," *Phronesis*, XIV, 2, 1969.
  30. V.9.8. 1-4, . . . ἐσμὲν ἕκαστος κόσμος νοητός. III.4.3.21-24.
  31. IV.8.
  32. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 88.
  33. Arnou, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-49. Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 226. Rist does not actually mention the *συν* words. Rather he follows Zaehner in supposing that any dualistic talk, e.g. οὐδ' ἔτι δύο ἀλλ' ἐν ἄμφω, *ipso facto* excludes monism. W. Eborowicz, *La Contemplation selon Plotin* (Torino, 1958), also singles out dualist terms like *συναφή*, *συννοσία*, *παρουσία* "ainsi que les mots composé de *σύν* et *παρά* prouvent clairement qu'il s'agit de l'union de deux *ē tres*" p. 74. From this he moves to an unintelligible conclusion: "il n'ya pas de confusion entre les deux êtres mais il est impossible de trouver dans cette simplicité parfaite . . . une différence quelconque . . ." p. 75. Rist reaches a similar conclusion on p. 227 of his book.
  34. I.6.7.13, VI.7.34, 15.
  35. "Does Plotinus mean that one surrenders to oneself?" Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 224.
  36. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
  37. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
  38. VI.9.8. 11-12.

39. "Quelle réserve! Quelle prudence! οἶον. . . ὥσπερ. . . εἰ δεῖ καὶ τοῦτο λέγειν ces expressions répétées avec une insistance qui trahit une intention, montrent à l'évidence qu'il ne faut pas serrer de trop près ni ces textes, ni d'autres, et que s'il y a unité τὰ δύο ἐν γίνεται VI.7.35) cette unite n'est pas un mélange (bien que les mots le fassent entendre parfois VI.9.11; I.6.7 *συγκερασθῆναι*) ni une fusion, ni une composition, mais le contact de deux substances spirituelles que ne sépare aucune différence." Arnou, *op. cit.*, p. 246.
40. VI.7.35, 23, 35-36; VI.9.9. 52-53, 59; VI.9.11.6; I.6.7.13; VI.8.15.22; VI.7.34. 13-15. And in the most detailed and bold description of the experience in VI.9.11 where ἔκστασις and ἀπλωσις occur there is no οἶον.
41. "What we cannot speak about we must confine to silence." Wittgenstein, *op. cit.*, 6.53, 7. Σιωπήσαντες δεῖ ἀπελθεῖν. . . VI.8.11. 1-3.
42. VI.8.13. 47-50, VI.8.11. 25-26.
43. The *locus classicus* of the οἶον is, naturally enough, the whole of VI.8. Especially VI.8.7. 51-53. VI.8.16. 19-21, VI.8.15. 5-7.
44. VI.9.10.15 and VI.9.11. 11-12.
45. "L'expression [καθ' ὅσον δύναται] apporte une preuve que l'union mystique, dans la pensée de Plotin, n'implique, pas l'identité de l'homme et de Dieu." Arnou, *op. cit.*, p. 246. Also p. 248.
46. . . . ὥς πέφυκεν ἐκεῖνος θεατὸς εἶναι VI.9.4. 29-30 and ὥς ὁρᾶν θέμις VI.9.9.57.
47. τῶν θείων ὅσα δύναται ψυχὴ ἔχει VI.9.11. 32-33.
48. Φυγὴ ὁμοιώσις θεῶν κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν. *Theaetetus* 176B.
49. "It is significant that in later quotations of Plato's phrase, e.g. in Plotinus, the qualifying words κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν are often omitted." E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, p. 75, note 3.
50. Δεῖ ἕκαστον ἕκαστον εἶναι quoted and rightly emphasized by Inge, *op. cit.*, p. 246.
51. . . . Ἀφείς δὲ τὸ τοσοῦτον γέγονας πᾶς, καίτοι καὶ πρότερον ἦσθα πᾶς. . . Γινόμενος δὲ τις καὶ ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἐστὶν οὐ πᾶς. . . VI.5.12. 16-28.
52. Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 227.



## Plotinus and Moral Obligation

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In contemporary ethical or meta-ethical discussions the concept of moral obligation looms large. People have even come to talk about the ethics of obligation and to contrast this with the older (frequently Aristotelian or sub-Aristotelian) ethics of virtue. Much is now written about the necessity to disassociate statements of fact from statements of value, or about the impropriety of deducing "ought" from "is". "Ought"—statements are often claimed to be ultimately arbitrary, in that it is in the last resort merely a matter of arbitrary choice what kind of moral code an individual may accept. Thus the only test for the superiority of one set of principles to another would be the consistency or lack of consistency each code could exhibit. Attempts are made, of course, to evade this apparently unpopular conclusion by distinguishing hypothetical and categorical imperatives. Thus "If you want to catch the train, you ought to run faster" is separated from "You ought not to kill". But to the objection "Why ought I not to kill?", the only answers seem to be either "You just ought not" — which does not get us very far philosophically — or "You ought not to because killing is a bad thing" — which makes us wonder how we know what bad things are — not to speak of the logical relations between "x is bad" and "I ought not to do x", or the logical grammar of "If you want to do x or be F, you ought not to kill" (If you want to be safe from the police, have a good conscience, be allowed to get on with your work, not spend five years in jail. . .etc.). Though I obviously cannot argue it here, the point I would want to make is that the so-called categorical imperative, if it is to be categorical and not a disguised hypothetical, is arbitrary. It is the realization of this that has made many post-Kantian ethical writers admit that their concern is with the form, not the content of ethical systems. If someone advocates what is commonly regarded as an immoral doctrine, we may hear it said that it is not worth talking to him;

just make sure you don't go near him when you want to buy a second-hand car.

In contrast to philosophers of the type we have mentioned Plotinus is not particularly concerned to tell us directly what we ought to do, still less what it means to use the word "ought". The moral "ought" seems to be rather uncommon in the *Enneads*. Of course, there are examples. If a man is in great pain, he will consider what he ought to do, i.e. whether he ought to commit suicide (I.4.8.8). Suicide is the subject again in another example (I.9.19); a man ought not to take himself out of life so long as there is any possibility of moral improvement.<sup>1</sup> Another example occurs at the end of *Ennead* VI.6.1. Plotinus is concerned first with the question whether one ought not to commit murder, then with whether one ought to know that one ought not to commit murder (VI.8.1.42-44). A final example of a more general kind is for that reason perhaps more generally informative (VI.8.6.16). In this passage the word "ought" does not occur. Instead we have the form of an indirect command: virtue (sometimes) commands a man to lay down his life, and to give up possessions, children and country. Plotinus is saying that according to the dictates of virtue this is the path which should be followed; these are the things which ought to be done. But these examples are not typical material from the *Enneads*. Plotinus has remarkably little to say about what we ought to do.

Of course, it does not follow that he is unconcerned with what ought to be done or thinks it of little importance. Because he has no formal discussion of moral obligation, we should not assume that the concept does not appear in another guise – and even widely – in the *Enneads*. What we must assume is that the whole question is approached in different ways, and we may wonder whether he would judge our use of the term "moral obligation" and our frequent identification of the nature of the moral "ought" misleading. For Plotinus, as for Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, the good life is a life of virtue and virtue is a state of the soul. Without such a virtuous condition all hope of progress towards God is vain. Objecting strongly to Gnostic antinomianism Plotinus comments that without virtue God is just a name (II.9.15.40); those who use it without virtue are misguided if not hypocritical.

An *Ennead* I.2 makes clear, the Neoplatonic manner of handling the question of the virtues is to see them as a progression. Plotinus is less systematic about this than some of his successors,<sup>2</sup> but he proposes a distinction between the so-called civic virtues – those treated by Plato in the *Republic* (427E-434D) – and the virtues of purification, i.e. those virtues which exist in the soul when it is purified (I.2.7.9). Purification is viewed as a means of freeing the soul from the passions and desires of the body and indeed a separation (*χωρίζειν*) of the soul from the body as far as possible (I.2.4.5-6). The opening sentences of *Ennead* I.2 draw our attention to the text of the *Theaetetus* (176AB) where Plato speaks of escaping the evil "of this place" and becoming godlike. In practice, this works out to be the process of separating the soul from bodily concerns, and its ultimate identification with *Nous* and conversion to the One.<sup>3</sup> It is, as Plotinus will emphasize again and again throughout the whole of the *Enneads*, a process of freeing the soul, of enabling it to engage in its natural and proper activity. Before looking at the question of how virtue and the free condition of the soul must be related to questions of moral obligation, it will be necessary to pause briefly over some of the material, in *Ennead* VI.8 in particular, on the freedom of the soul itself.

Plotinus begins in VI.8.1 by taking up the traditional question of what is in our power (*τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν*). He quickly identifies a voluntary act (*ἐκούσιον*) as an act which we perform under no external compulsion and on an occasion when we know what we are doing. In contrast to this, perhaps, what we are in control of doing (*κύριοι πράξει*) need not involve knowledge of what we are doing. A man who kills his father without realizing whom he is killing is in control of the action of killing his father, but his action is not voluntary. But what about a man who does not know that murder is wrong? Can he legitimately claim that his killing someone is not a voluntary action? Ought he to have known about the morality of homicide? At any rate the problem of being able to perform a voluntary act is already associated in Plotinus' mind with a variety of knowledge.

VI.8.2 introduces us to so-called "internal" constraints. How can we be said to be really in control of our acts (*κύριοι*)

when we act under the impulse of fury or lust. It won't do, after all, to say that we are in control of everything we do, and *thus* that all our actions are in our power. If we say that, then not only is there no such thing as *human* action, but even "soulless" substances like fire can be said to be free (If fire burns, it burns freely — a paradoxical conclusion which Plotinus will not toy with). Nor is the mere awareness (*αἰσθησις*) of an act a test of whether it is an act under our control. To be aware of doing something does not imply to be in control of that action. There must be occasions when reason or knowledge (*λόγος, γνῶσις*) is in command (*κράτει*) and independent of desire (*ὀρεξις*). So there is a knowledge implying action which combats a *desire* to act otherwise; and when we are "in control", such knowledge must be in control. Knowledge is thus distinguished from awareness; it is an *élan*, a drive to *act* rationally. Plotinus' distinction between awareness and knowledge has some resemblances to Newman's distinction between notional and real assent.<sup>4</sup>

VI.8.3 sums up progress thus far, but there are confusing changes of terminology. If we want to know what is in our power (*τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν*), we must consider our will (*βούλησις*) — and willing must be understood in terms of reasoning and knowledge. If knowledge is not there, we may be drawn to the right course, to doing what we ought (*πρὸς τὸ δεῖον ἀχθεῖς*) by chance or through a set of reflections deriving entirely from bodily conditions such as hunger, thirst, or too much semen. People who are impelled to act by these motivating factors cannot properly be said to be performing free acts (*τὸ αὐτεξούσιον*). Free action then is not simply what one does, once again, but what one knows is the proper action. Proposals emanating from *Nous* are free, and action in accordance with them is "in our power" in the strict sense. We come thus close to a definition of free action. It is the action of *Nous* — and therefore the only possible action for the gods. It follows that in so far as our action is in accordance with what is true and known to be true, it is free action. So no one is free when he acts badly. When he is unable to do what is good, we may assume, he is incapable of free action; when he is able to do what is good, he is free.

So far Plotinus has argued that free action cannot be governed by external pressures or by bodily appetites, and that it must be the result of well-grounded reasoning. He now turns to a further question, a question of importance philosophically, but unfortunately rarely discussed by ancient philosophers (VI.8.4). We admit that action uninfluenced by external forces is motivated by desire for the good,<sup>5</sup> but there is still a desire, and, surely, if a desire, then also a need. That would mean, the objection runs, that the resulting action cannot be regarded as free (*αὐτεξούσιον*). The objection, if it could be sustained, would be serious for Plotinus, for, as he says, it would affect not merely the activity of the soul, but also that of the intellect (*Nous*). The activity of *Nous* could not be free if its acts were governed by its nature. Can an act be called free, Plotinus wonders, if it is impossible not to perform it? He then adds a second, less important query: we must distinguish activity, which is the achievement of all beings, from action (*πράξις*), which seems necessarily to involve lower "substances" than the intellect. Perhaps it is *only* to the activities of such substances that the word "free" should be applied.

Plotinus meets these objections head on. All compulsion, he argues, must involve a compelling factor from "outside". What he seems to mean is that if someone gives way to his desire for a fourth helping of cassata, he is not simply giving away to an *internal* constraint; internal constraints are only operative because of the presence of external constraints. The presence of the cassata is *necessary* to activate the vicious desire. (This may seem unsatisfactory. Perhaps Plotinus is thinking of the presence or the imagined presence of an external agent — but why *should* it be imagined?) But how does all this affect the question of a desire for the good? The good, Plotinus seems to be saying, is in no sense an external. Desire for the good is not desire for something outside the subject, but the activity of a subject in so far as it exists. Thus any impulse towards the real and fully recognized good has to result in free action. Free action, natural action and good action thus coincide.

Plotinus takes the opportunity now presented to him to offer a further analysis of the concept of "being a slave of one's

own nature" (VI.8.4.22-23). Where we can make a distinction between potentiality and actuality, he observes, we can distinguish between that which obeys and that which is obeyed. But where there is no potentiality the distinction is merely verbal. Thus, apparently, in the case of a being in simple act, (e.g. *Nous*), to say that it obeys its own nature is to say that its nature and the activity it achieves are one. Here again we see the dynamic Plotinian conception of knowledge, the view of *Nous* as an élan and as a drive to act rationally, not as a relation between a mind and a (Platonic?) object of knowledge. As Plotinus puts it, being and act are identical (VI.8.4.28). Perhaps reference to what is in one's power (τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν) is inappropriate to this stage, he adds, though he has not rejected the word "free" (ἐλευθέρᾳ), for to say that something is in one's power is to speak negatively; it is to refer to being free from compulsion where compulsion properly indicates an external pressure. So he concludes the chapter by repeating himself once: gain – necessarily, for the point does not seem to be readily grasped: freedom is the ability to operate for the sake of the good (τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ χάριν).

It will obviously follow from our argument up to this point that to ask "Ought *Nous* to act in such and such a way?", would be misleading. *Nous* will do what it ought to do because it is able to do what it ought to do. But should we say "*Nous* will do what it ought to do" rather than "*Nous* will do what is good?" Perhaps the latter is the more appropriate if we are to say that an "ought" only arises where there is the possibility of a subject *not* doing what is good. Thus "ought" would imply "can but will not necessarily". The term, if that is the usage, would therefore only be applicable at the level of human behaviour, not to any activity higher in the scale of reality. To put it succinctly, though somewhat paradoxically: where there is freedom, there is no need for a sense of moral obligation. A sense of moral obligation is necessary and exists where the possibility of vicious action exists.

*Ennead* VI.8.5 brings us back to such possibilities. The chapter opens, as frequently enough, by posing a further question. We have now defined freedom (τὸ ἀντρεξούσιον) as a feature of *Nous* qua *Nous*. Does that mean that the term is

inapplicable at any other level? If it has wider application, does it apply to the soul when it acts "in accordance with *Nous*" and when it behaves "in accordance with virtue"? Obviously "virtue" here refers to the best action possible for the soul. Such action is "in accordance with *Nous*" and thus, as we have suggested, will be free action where the notion of moral obligation is inapplicable. If our approach is correct, we should find that the notion of a choice between good and evil will disappear from the virtuous soul. And if moral obligation is supposed to imply an awareness of what we ought to do coupled with the possibility of not being able to do it, such a sense of obligation will disappear from the soul in so far as it becomes more perfectly virtuous.

Clearly in one sense the soul is constrained, and thus "we" are constrained, by external circumstances in a way in which *Nous* is not – and in so far as we are constrained, we are not "free" to act. What we are able to *achieve* does not depend solely on ourselves, for although we may make choices and decisions, and though we may act accordingly, we are not in full control (κύριοι) of events. When we act bravely in battle, the performance of our act depends on the existence of the circumstances which call it forth.<sup>6</sup> All specific moral acts are restricted in this way. So if virtue requires such opportunities (and Aristotle certainly thinks that some – if not all – the moral virtues do), then such virtue is not "free" in the sense with which Plotinus has been concerned in *Ennead* VI.8. And Plotinus will grant that "freedom" must apply to activity, not merely to wanting and reasoning that is designed to lead to activity. Freedom, it seems, cannot be merely a matter of intention and purity of motive. Many actions, even when performed morally and well, can never be free. In fact, all everyday moral behaviour falls into this class; at its best it is "semi-free". All of it exhibits the feature of being constrained by some kind of external pressure. Thus in every case the possibility of the good not being accomplished is real and, it presumably follows, in all such cases it will be appropriate for a man to tell himself, and to tell other people, what he ought to do. When we are in the realm of moral obligation, we are not yet in the realm of virtue. Virtue is "another *Nous*" and, strictly

speaking, as the last lines of VI.8.5 indicate, it is outside physical acts and events in time.

The consequences of the arguments we have outlined are drawn in VI.8.6. In so far as a man is living the good life, the life of *Nous* and the life of virtue, his moral acts will be dictated by his virtue, by his *Nous*. Virtue will tell him if he is to sacrifice his goods or his life. A sense of moral obligation may be viewed as a sense of what is right; it is possessed by anyone trying to live in obedience to that element in him or over him which is already living the life of virtue. The claims of a moral obligation, e.g. the need for self sacrifice, will be respected and obeyed in so far as a man has elevated himself to the level of *Nous*. Presumably in the man who has made the most moral progress the sense of obligation will be called upon the least, in that his disposition will be the most free, and he will be the most likely to do what is good as a matter of course, or, in Plotinian language, as a matter of nature. One may suppose, as we have seen, that as virtue becomes more and more identified with a man's character, so his sense of obligation, hitherto necessary, will wither away and be no longer needed.

It is clear then why we hear so little in the *Enneads* about a sense of obligation. The possession of such a state, in the Plotinian scheme, is to be associated with that stage of development at which a man is choosing between right and wrong. It is a stage at which he is still no longer free; his nature, distorted by bodily desires and impulses, cannot follow its natural bent. His "will" to good is thwarted and he still has to struggle to keep himself on the right path. By implication criticising the Stoics and their doctrine of the right act done from pure motives, Plotinus observes in 1.2.5.28-6.2 that one stage of the elevation of the soul is attained when the passions are obedient to reason, when *acrasia*, that is, the overcoming of the reason by desires and impulses of a non-rational character, is out of the question. At this stage, says Plotinus, we do not sin, all our action is right action (*καθόρθωσις*). Nevertheless, *pace* the Stoics, our aim is higher than that: our aim is not merely to be "outside sin"; it is of a positive kind, or, as Plotinus puts it, "to be god" (*θεὸν εἶναι*). To consider exactly what this means would be to digress, but Plotinus certainly wants to point out

that his view of right action involves not the *avoidance* (presumably by a correct and rightly motivated choice among alternatives) of wrong-doing, but a state of soul which will be unchanging and fixed. For if *θεός* means anything precise, it means something unchanging and eternally the same. It is apparently often used to indicate the unchanging *quality* of a subject rather than as the name of a subject itself.

The approach we have adopted runs into certain other problems of vocabulary which should be removed from the path if possible. At 1.2.6.14 (1.2 is 19 in Porphyry's chronological list) it is said that virtue does not exist at the level of *Nous*, whereas the opposite view is taken at VI.8.6.5 (chronologically 39). But different uses of the term "virtue" may be seen in different contexts. Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, denies virtuous conduct (acting bravely, liberally, etc.) to the gods,<sup>7</sup> and the moral virtue of the *Nicomachean Ethics* forms one of the bases of *Ennead* 1.2. On the other hand, although Aristotle's thought about free will is one of the sources of Plotinus' discussion of the topic in the early chapters of 6.8, the use of terms in VI.8 must not be assumed to be identical with that of 1.2 simply because both have an Aristotelian base. Plotinus wrote the two treatises several years apart; it is unhelpful to attempt to identify differences of philosophical position or a development of the theory of virtue on the basis of Plotinus' somewhat slap-happy employment of terms which we vainly wish were technical.

Let us pull some threads together. For Plotinus we may assume that a thing exists insofar as it is good -- and I am using "exists" in the strong Platonic sense of existing in an unchanging and imperishable form. In so far as things are not good, i.e. are not characterized by the presence, direct or indirect, of the One or Good, they do not exist in this Plotinian sense. Hence Plotinus will say that unless distracting influences or negative forces are at work, each being will act "for the sake of the good or of its good".<sup>8</sup> Such action for the sake of the good is the free (i.e. unimpeded) action of a substance. "Unfree" action will therefore be action tending to the destruction of the substance, animate or inanimate, which performs it. In fact, as we have

already noticed, Plotinus normally limits the concept of the unfree to the activities of animate substances.

We have observed already that statements in the form "You ought not to do x" must often be filled out either as "You ought not to do x because of y", or, "You ought not to do x if you want to achieve z". When dealing with statements about so-called moral obligations Plotinus would undoubtedly wish to follow a procedure of this sort. How does it work out in practice? The implication is that "You ought (morally) to do x" must be rephrased as "If you want to become better, freer, closer to the good, etc., you should do x". In one sense, therefore, there is no notion of obligation at all. It is up to each man to choose what he wants to do. If he wants to act viciously, let him do so, but it is the job of the moralist (and of the philosopher) to point out exactly what he is doing. Hence a so-called moral obligation and perhaps even a sense of moral obligation, will arise if he chooses to try to act freely in the Plotinian sense. When he has succeeded in accomplishing such an action, i.e. when he has raised himself to the level of *Nous*, moral obligation will no longer present itself to him as obligation. He will simply act "rightly".

If the Aristotelian commentator Elias does not misrepresent Plotinus' thought, we can check up on an interesting example of the way Plotinian language about right action works; we can look at the end of *Ennead* I.9 and compare it with Elias' quotation of Plotinus' writing on "rational departure", i.e. suicide.<sup>9</sup> *Ennead* I.9 ends as follows: If each man's soul in the other world depends on its condition when he leaves this one, we ought not to commit suicide when there is any chance of improvement. Elias' quotation closes as follows: It is disordered (*ἀτοπον*) to take oneself out of life before the right moment when he who has bound the body to the soul looses them again. We notice the approach I have already pointed out in the first passage: if such and such is the case (and if by implication we are interested in benefitting ourselves in the next world), then we ought to do x. It is assumed that we want to benefit ourselves in the next world, and the "ought" is used with reference to how such benefits can be achieved. The point is that it is held to be absurd and irrational not to wish for such

a result. This is brought out in the passage from Elias. Here, instead of saying, "We *ought* not to commit suicide and anticipate God in separating soul from body", Plotinus claims that to do so would be disordered or untoward (*ἀτοπον*). The juxtaposition of the two passages gives us a clear example of the way the implications of the concept of freedom are worked out: what we ought to do (in Plotinus' opinion) is simply what it is rational to do. Thus it follows that the best sort of moral obligation can be understood only as a call to act rationally. If anyone asks why we should do what we ought, he can be told that, since his question implies that good reasons for action should be accepted, he should not cavil at acting in accordance with Plotinus' moral "ought", since it is translatable into a call for rationality.

Plotinus would be gratified to hear that much of the theory we have attributed to him is implicit in Plato's *Republic*. No one would deny that in that dialogue Plato is advocating a particular way of life, a particular tending of the soul, a particular kind of behaviour. The philosopher-king is a pattern we should all strive to resemble. But there are few places in the *Republic* where Plato tells us what we ought to do; he tells us rather what the philosopher-king would do. One example is particularly instructive: the philosopher must return to the Cave (*Republic* 520C1) because it is just for him to do so. Since he is just, he will do what is just. It is Glaucon, who is certainly not a philosopher-king, who imagines that there will be some conflict in the philosopher's mind and that he will, if he returns to the Cave, have to live a worse life instead of a better. According to Socrates, however, the philosopher-king will simply do what is right. His actions and his obligations will always coincide, because he is that sort of man.

But when addressing his readers, Plato does not give them a series of moral commands, nor point to a set of categorical imperatives. Let us consider again the methodology of the *Republic*: to the irritation of those who expect it to take the form of deduction and refutation, it is an exercise in portraiture. Although Socrates goes through a form of refutation of Thrasymachus in Book I, he does not treat the objections of Glaucon and Adeimantus in the same way; instead he offers two

portraits, one of the philosopher-king, and the other of the tyrant. He supposes that these pictures represent what we may call the good and the bad life in their starkest form. He invites us to choose which we would prefer for ourselves; he does not bring in the question of rewards and punishments in another life until we have made our choice on the basis of what we would prefer and find expedient in this world alone. He does not tell us we ought not to behave tyrannically, but that if we behave tyrannically we shall be people of particular (in his view unpleasant) dispositions. So we are invited to check empirically whether his characterizations of the virtuous and vicious answer to the facts as we can see them if we look at the world realistically and honestly.

All this is implicitly taken over by Plotinus. As in Plato, so in Plotinus we are not told what is morally good and what we therefore must (or ought to) choose. All kinds of codes of behavior are possible, and there is a sense in which it is a matter for free (even arbitrary) choice which code one selects or which code one lives by. There is no word in Plotinian Greek which exactly translates the English "morality" — though *σπουδαῖος* or *ἐπιεικής* are both something like our "morally good" — but there is no reason why Plotinus could not accept that morality is simply a formal term, i.e. that it refers to any (hopefully consistent) code of behaviour freely adopted by an individual man. That is not, of course, to assert that Plotinus would agree that any morality is as good as any other; he thinks that codes of behaviour must be judged in terms of their usefulness and expediency for each of us. We do not fix on a code as intrinsically good and then ask ourselves how it can be expedient, or whether and in what sense it is expedient; we allow a rational judgement of expediency to lead us to the discovery of the Good, and therefore of the good for man.

Plotinus' morality, like that of Plato and Aristotle, is eudaimonistic in the sense that the aim is to secure well being or "happiness". And this well being is best secured by a particular kind of life, aimed at a freedom and rationality of the kind we have discussed. If a man is virtuous (*σπουδαῖος*), he has all the requirements for happiness and for acquiring what is good (1.4.4.25). These requirements, as we have seen, are basically

the ability to perform certain kinds of actions which themselves arise from certain dispositions and states of mind. But a eudaimonistic morality can easily be misunderstood. It might appear as though Plotinus were advocating that, if happiness is the good, we therefore have duties or obligations to ourselves, but none to anyone else. That is not the way it turns out. Although Plotinus certainly believes that we have duties to ourselves — and there is no reason why he should not think so if we have duties to other people — he also believes that a search for happiness — and the consequent duties to ourselves which we shall fulfill in so far as we are successful — entails duties and responsibilities to other people. To explain why this should be so would require a full-scale discussion of Plotinus' metaphysics, for which there is obviously no place here. We must content ourselves with noticing that the world is an interconnected whole, and it is impossible to be concerned with the source of happiness, the Good, without being concerned with, and for, the other items, particularly other souls, which are the products of the Good. The theory is summed up at 11.9.16.7ff: "The man who feels affection for something values whatever is akin to the object of his affection; if he loves the father, he loves the children." The theme is necessary and important for Plotinus — and anyone else. Plotinus wants to reject a plea that preoccupation with the divine is inconsistent with a concern for human beings. Concern for human beings implies "virtue" in the normally accepted sense; hence, as we have already observed, Plotinus says elsewhere that virtue (understood here as common decency and ordinary morality) is the first step towards God; without it "God" is a name people mouth (11.9.15.40).

What sort of obligations to others will the philosopher thus wish to carry out? Whatever they are, they will not be carried out grudgingly (*φρόνως ἔξω θεῖου χοροῦ ἴσονται*, *Phaedrus* 247A). There is for Plotinus only a limited amount that we can do for other people. Ultimately each man must face reality for himself (*μόνος πρὸς μόνον*); he cannot find a substitute, anymore than he can find someone to die for him. And what should be done for other people must depend on the possibilities open to them and the choices they have made for themselves about their own lives. Porphyry tells us that Plotinus

devoted a good deal of attention to looking after the property of children whose parents had died and for whom he had been made responsible;<sup>10</sup> they needed the money, he held, unless they should turn to a life of philosophy. But necessary as a fulfillment of such obligations is, for Plotinus the real obligation of a philosopher is to teach. In so far as it is possible, the philosopher must announce (*ἀγγέλλοντα*, VI.9.7.22) the nature of the true relation with the divine.

According to Porphyry Plotinus was a kind man, and there is no reason to reject this testimony. That being so, there are a number of rather harsh sounding passages in the *Enneads* which may be the more informative in so far as they tend to jar liberal sensibilities. Plotinus, like a modern social-worker, is aware that too great an emotional involvement in the misfortunes of those he would like to help will only inhibit his ability to do so. But to say that is not entirely to explain such sections as *Ennead* III.2.8. Let us note a few ideas from this passage: in the gymnasium boys who have kept themselves fit may throw those who have not, and make off with their food and clothes. "Serve them right" is the appropriate reaction — accompanied by a laugh at the expense of the vanquished. The world outside presents a similar scenario: if you don't behave bravely, and in general virtuously, you will be victimized, and deservedly so. "The wicked rule through the cowardice of their subjects; and this is just". It is grotesque to sit around and pray for a good harvest rather than look after the land. The theme is generalized in the next chapter: "It is not right (*θεμιτόν*) that those who have become wicked should expect others to be their saviours and to sacrifice themselves in answer to their prayers" (III. 2.9.10-12). The message of all this is clear: no one should be expected to look after someone else if that person is able but unwilling to look after himself (and he probably would not be able to look after such a person anyway.) Here we see where the limits of obligation are set: Plotinus seems to be concerned to find a way to balance the concept of obligation to others (which is a part of virtue) with the necessity and possibility of people helping themselves. Those who will not swim should be allowed to sink. And this brings us to the final point I want to make.

Plotinus agrees with Aristotle in holding that there are some things which the good man simply will not do. With reference to such cases to say that A ought to do x is to imply that A can do x. (This of course has nothing to do with the wider question whether Plotinus would hold that in *all* uses of the word "ought", "ought" implies "can" — a dogma of much contemporary ethical theory whose weaknesses and difficulties need not be elaborated here.) But why should Plotinus think that there are any cases in morality in which "ought" implies "can"? On what theory of the psyche does such a view depend? For we must remember the way in which the "ought" is to be understood. Plotinus' view, as we have argued, is that "You ought to do x" (which is a morally good act) must be read as "If you want to be a good man, you ought to do x, and it is expedient to be a good man". So we are saying that he also holds that there are some actions for which it will be true to say "If you want (as you do) to be a good man, you are *able* to do x". But one might object, are we *able* to want to be a good man? Or are all our "wants" in this area fixed, innate, determined by social conditions, etc. Plotinus' view is that not only are we able to want to be a good man, but we do in fact want to be a good man — or at least that there is such a "want" in us, this want being the characteristic "movement" and disposition of the pure and unfallen part of the soul, the so-called "upper" soul.<sup>11</sup> But although this theory explains why "we", as distinct from our upper soul, will want to be good, how does it explain that we are able to be good? The fact is that it does not. Plotinus' problem is as follows: he thinks that it is a matter of observation that some men simply will not do certain acts which may be designated as vicious. He assumes that since all men must have in common that which is the highest element in them — an adaptation of Aristotelian doctrines about *Nous* — they must therefore possess this "higher" faculty. Thus all men possess a higher and purer part of the soul. But surely all this shows is that it is *possible* for all men to avoid certain viciousnesses; it has not explained why in some cases possible behaviour becomes actual behaviour, whereas in others it does not. In the case of the man who thus can do what he ought, but does not do so, we are still faced



with the question why Jones does not want to be a good man strongly enough actually to set himself on the way to becoming one. Clearly Plotinus' answer that he is misled by matter, by the body, etc., needs qualification, because we wonder why some people are misled more than others if their "upper souls" are in the same state.

Let us go back to our formulation of the problem in terms of what the good man will not do. For Plotinus no man is good except in so far as he has knowledge and acts in certain ways; and if he knows and acts in these ways, he cannot, by definition, act in a contrary sense. Plotinus' view therefore must be that if a man does not do what he ought to do if he is to be a good man, it can only be because he does not *understand* how beneficial it is to be a good man, and therefore has not chosen to be. In *Freedom and Reason* R. M. Hare put forward the suggestion that people bait bears because they lack the imagination to put themselves in the bear's place. But imagination is not the root of the problem.<sup>12</sup> Imagining what it is to be a bear is not being a bear, and a good imagination may only encourage the bear-baiter to persist. But to *understand* the impact of cruelty on the self – and to see that it is not beneficial – may be an adequate motive for leaving the bear in peace. Plotinus would not put an objection to Hare in quite this form, but I should like to argue that what he says about the nature of obligation to others and to the self is sufficient justification for developing his thought along lines of this sort. If this is co-operation with Plotinus, so be it; others would say that it is part of the critical history of philosophy.

#### NOTES

1. Or "must not", but there is still the suggestion of moral obligation.
2. See L. G. Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (Amsterdam, 1962).

3. See J. M. Rist, "Integration and the Undescended Soul in Plotinus", *American Journal of Philology* (1967), Vol 88, pp. 415-422.
4. J. H. Newman, *A Grammar of Assent* (Doubleday edition, New York, 1955), pp. 86-92.
5. Cf. III.8.6.7.
6. See further J. M. Rist, *Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 134.
7. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1178B12ff.
8. III.8.6.7; VI.8.4.36, etc.
9. The immediate origin of the passage of Elias is probably Proclus: either from a commentary on the *Enneads* or a commentary on the *Phaedo*. See L. G. Westerink, "Elias und Plotin", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (1964), Volume 57, pp. 26-32.
10. Porphyry, *Vita Porphyry*, ch. 9.
11. II.9.2.9; IV.8.4.31; IV.8.8.2, etc.
12. R. M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 223-224.

## Dynamic Structuralism in the Plotinian Theory of the Imaginary

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In 1960, a contemporary French thinker, Gilbert Durand, published a thesis under the suggestive title "*The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary: An Introduction to General Archetypology*." I wish to adopt Durand's terminology in order to speak of the *imaginary structures in human reality* in the philosophy of Plotinus.

A certain methodological reversal is possible, I believe, when speaking of the imaginary in the work of Plotinus. One may proceed to an inquiry on the meaning of the imaginary by starting not from imagination considered as a noetical function, but rather from the image, which is the structural reality of imagination in consciousness. In other terms, one may think of the image as the first datum, and not as a product of the imaginative activity.

By operating on such a reversal one may depart from the tradition of Aristotelian and Scholastic views on imagination by considering to what extent, according to Plotinus, it is not the imagination that offers images to the consciousness, but rather the images that fertilize the imaginative activity.

This reversal reveals a whole new perspective in the investigation of Plotinus' thought. However, it should not be considered a revolutionary one. It does not deny the dynamism of consciousness, but simply places emphasis upon the dynamism of the image.

In the fourth volume of his *History of the Psychology of the Greeks*, A. E. Chaignet<sup>1</sup> has perhaps foreseen this aspect of the problem. Although he failed to draw out the full implications of this approach, some of his interpretations show that he has been able to grasp the meaning of certain Plotinian texts, dealing with the problem of the imaginary.

I do not think that Chaignet has discovered any new meanings which were hidden up to his time. What he has done is to point out some extensions of interpretations which had already been accepted, and that he has extended them beyond their traditionally accepted meanings.

In examining two Plotinian texts concerning the relations between being and consciousness, on one hand, and memory and imagination, on the other, Chaignet does not hesitate to refer the activity of recollection, as well as the consciousness of structural forms of existence, to the dynamism of the image, independently from the way it is considered, i.e., either as figurative or not.

The first text is from the *Problems of the Soul*, part one, IV. 3.29: "memory and recollection are functions of the imaginary." The other text is from part two of the same treatise, IV. 4. 3: "the soul is and becomes whatever it recalls." By correlating the two texts we come to the conclusion that the soul changes on the ground of its imaginary activities.

P. V. Pistorius, in his book on *Plotinus and Neoplatonism*, has tried to show that, if the soul really changes (as it is stated in the second of the above texts), according to the object of its recollection, it is due to the fact that recollection carries the soul away from the intelligible world. I quote: "The essential function of the soul when it is freed from the body is intellection or contemplation. Such intellection is timeless. Because there is no past or future in the ideal world, there is no room for memory . . . it is not as if death simply terminated any memory of human life and a new memory era was born. Any memory is annulled, and because there is no time in the ideal world and everything is an eternal moment, there is no possibility of recalling things that happened there."<sup>2</sup> If the soul is capable of recollection, this is due to the fact that it still remains within the limits of time.

In commenting on the same text, Chaignet throws some light on a very different aspect of it. In effect, he states that "to imagine does not mean to possess, but to contemplate, and to become what one contemplates" (*op. cit.*, p. 198). It is not, then, consciousness that grasps an imaginary datum but, on the contrary, it is precisely such a datum that renders the consciousness capable of grasping it in its formal totality.

One should not, of course, attribute to the consciousness a passive structure making of it a completely malleable aspect of the soul. Such a type of consciousness would only have the possibility of formal impressions (IV.3.26), of the kind mentioned by the Stoic tradition which considers the soul as a *tabula rasa*. Against this rather sensualistic stoic empiricism, Plotinus makes clear that, in reality, such impressions take place within the soul, just as in thinking (IV.3.26).

One must take into consideration that the texts of Plotinus mentioned here also refer to the notion of recollection. However, for Plotinus the memory is finally reduced to the imagination (IV. 3. 29). Hence the dynamism of imagination can be established through the memory which is capable of grasping the particular objects of the soul, and through the general capacity of the soul to grasp itself in the reality of its existence; for, as Chaignet writes, "The proper states of the soul are the only objects grasped by imagination" (IV. 3. 29). This assertion is somehow exaggerated, since Plotinus does not deny the reality of the sensible objects, but only the equality of their degree of reality, in comparison with the intelligible objects. In any case, there is no need to make any rapprochement between Plotinus' views, as they are interpreted here, and, for instance, Bergson's own intuitionistic views. One has, however, to point out the similarity of the respective expressions.

Imagination is not confined to represent only sensible objects. Its activity also extends to the reinforcement of formal structures which help make conceivable some states proper to the essence, which are the means through which the soul is aware of itself, without any interference of reason.

Under such conditions, it is possible to say that the soul becomes whatever it represents to itself at an imaginary level, since in reality, what the soul is capable of representing to itself

is its own state. Imagination may then be considered as open to images that come from the world of the senses, and also from the depth of existence. Its role consists in structuring the formal data, i.e., the images, in order to enable them to impose themselves upon consciousness.

Yet, the soul does not become "whatever it recalls" in an absolute manner. For, being dependent at this level on the formal data of imagination (which, in turn, is oriented towards the sensible as well as towards the activity of existence) the soul never adopts attitudes which correspond in every respect to its inner reality.

Imagination displays impressive adaptability and dynamism. Imagination, Plotinus says, does not possess its object. However, as it possesses its vision, it makes itself available according to it; as he says at IV. 4. 3:

In this self-memory a distinction is to be made: the memory dealing with the Intellectual Realm upbears the Soul, not to fall; the memory of things here bears it downwards to this universe; the intermediate memory dealing with the heavenly sphere holds it there too; and, in all its memory, the thing it has in mind it is and grows to; for this bearing-in-mind must be either intuition (i.e. knowledge with identity) or representation by image: and the imaging in the case of the Soul is not a taking in of something (as of an impression) but is vision and condition—so much so, that in its very sense-sight, it is the lower in the degree in which it penetrates the object. Since its possession of the total of things is not primal but secondary, it does not become all things perfectly (in becoming identical with the All in the Intellectual); it is of the boundary order, situated between two regions, and has tendency to both.

In this way, the soul possesses various objects, but possesses them in a secondary way, for it does not entirely become all of them. The soul is something intermediate between the sensible and the intelligible; and, being such, it is oriented towards both of them (IV. 4. 3). It should be understood here that the intermediate character that Plotinus attributes to the soul is analogous to the intermediate character attributed to imagination.

Far from behaving passively, the entire soul is adapted to the image that imposes itself upon the imagination. The soul, then, becomes conscious of that image, since it is aware of itself having already adopted the form of the image in question. This conception will be widened by Proclus in whose work imagination will be considered as having even stronger structuring powers.<sup>3</sup>

Chaignet (*op. cit.*, p. 198) admits that, in this way, an image might be "empty of any real content", and thus become related to error. However, he takes care to add to the above expression the terms "real" and "immediate": "empty of any immediate real content." Thus, this expression completely changes the orientation of an eventual empirical interpretation of his text. The image may, indeed, not be a representation which is completely adequate to the object it represents or to the state of the soul of which it makes consciousness aware. This fact does not, however, render less real the image in question, at least to the extent to which this image impresses itself on the consciousness. Its reality is not an immediate and direct one in relation to the object or the state represented. Yet this same reality becomes immediate and direct in relation to its presence within the consciousness upon which it is imposed. Speaking of the image as well as of the imagination, Chaignet writes that both of them have a magic power that enables them to operate within the whole domain of understanding; and that one of the causes of this magic power resides in the reality of the presence of the image.

According to the above "dynamistic" considerations, Plotinus asserts at III. 7. 8 that the sensitive soul has, through an indefinite image, a sort of premonition of what the being is. Such an indefinite image is not deprived of any form or shape, but simply of the clearness of the data of perception.

Due to its dynamism, imagination permits the passage from one level of the consciousness to another of data corresponding to each one of these levels. It offers to the understanding the contents of the sensible world, as well as offering to the entire soul a certain aspect of its being, even if this aspect is a confused one.

One may understand this coexistence of confusedness and form through a curious and suggestive text of Proclus: "The infinite is left to exist alone in the imagination; for imagination does not conceive the infinite. Indeed, when conceiving something, imagination attributes to it a form and a limit . . . . But the infinite is not subject to any conception by the imagination which refers to it in an indefinite way . . . rather than conceives it. Imagination has a knowledge of the infinite by not conceiving it, just as the sight has a knowledge of the infinite by not conceiving it, just as the sight has a knowledge of the darkness by not seeing it."<sup>4</sup> The meanings of the expression "refers to it in an indefinite way" and of the term "infinite," remind us of the meanings of the above mentioned terms: "indefinite" and infinite image" in Plotinus. The meaning of this text of Proclus, which is really astonishing, may be completed by another text of the *Comment. in Crat.*, 76. 26 (Pasquali): "Imagination is a formative and impure thought."<sup>5</sup>

The only concession of the formative imagination to informative understanding is due to the presence of objects of consciousness deprived of any form, or possessing a form that we discern with difficulty.

The image is the means through which the soul represents to itself whatever exists beyond the senses and beyond understanding. Being more than a simple form, the image exercises its power upon the understanding, of which it shapes, so to speak, the contours in such a way as to subjugate them to the exigencies of existence. In the framework of consciousness, the perceptible image and the intelligible being (called particular concept) coexist within the image. It is in this way that one should understand the role of articulated language in fixing the meaning of concepts. As Th. Whittaker states, "Thought is apprehended by imagination as in a mirror (I.4.10), the notion (*nōema*) at first indivisible and implicit being conveyed to it by an explicit discourse (*logos*)."<sup>6</sup> Only when duplicated through reflection may consciousness grasp itself.

Images of noetic nature are, of course, also present in consciousness. They not only determine, but also fertilize its activity (IV. 4. 11). An image is not only able of representing,

but also of provoking a psychical fact with reference to some sensible object. However, it is a psychical fact itself. It is not only a reflection of some higher truth, but also a reality, an activity. It is motion in itself as well as motion of the soul towards what is represented by the image.

The degree of reality of the image does not depend only upon the degree of its similarity to some real model of which it may be an imitation (I. 2. 2; I. 2. 7; VI. 2. 8), but also upon the fact that the image makes consciousness capable of grasping the intelligence, and of representing it to itself, in order to direct itself towards it (in a movement that reminds us of the movement through which the soul is directed towards the Good: V. 6. 5). The image thus becomes the principle as well as the means of the participation of the soul in intelligible realities, although it is not necessarily one of them (III. 6. 14).

The irrational character of the image does not prevent it from having a proper structure, a structure which is due to its coming from inner existence. Furthermore, the image impresses that particular structure of itself on consciousness. However, this very irrational character of the image is illustrated by the fact that the image itself is imposed upon the thought without waiting for the judgment of reason (I. 1. 9). Thought is therefore, for Plotinus, an element of false reasoning and it even leads to false considerations, in spite of the fact that in reality thought and imagination are essentially different from each other (I. 4. 10). However, both thought and imagination are subject to error since the image is connected to opinion, which is thought without reasoning. But rectitude is not necessarily the only truth, and the truth of the image is its reality which is directly related to the reality of existence.

Besides, the image is a reality of the soul, and as such it is opposed to reason conceived as a rational principle, since the image itself is related to the irrational (but not to any unreality) of the soul. Plotinus makes clear the fact that the image is a "stroke of something irrational coming from outside" (I. 8. 15).<sup>7</sup>

It seems that these various expressions referring to a certain shock are due to a common source. However, although Plotinus admits that the image is "a stroke of something

irrational coming from outside," he refuses to comment on the nature of this shock which we would then suppose to be something like an impression. But, in that case, the image would not differ from any sensation. The term "*exothēn*" (from outside) seems, of course, to suggest such an interpretation and it would be possible to think that the passage in question refers only to images of external provenance, due to sensational operations.

In other words, Plotinus could have given to the various terms denoting the image (*eikon*, *phantasma*, *eidolon*), a more restricted meaning compared to that given to them in other Plotinian texts. Such a fluctuation, however, of which many parallel cases are to be found in Plotinus should not surprise us; for, as Emile Bréhier states in the *Introduction* to his edition of the *Enneades*: "by virtue of the law of the 'genre' he has chosen, Plotinus ignores the art of systematically developing a doctrine".<sup>8</sup> In any case, one should admit that in numerous passages (as in I. 1. 4; III. 7. 8; IV. 3. 30) Plotinus seems to consider the notion of image as denoting something more than a simple sensible impression.

The second part of the sentence, where it is said that the soul "receives the stroke through its compound nature" (I. 8. 15), raises the problem of the relationship between the parts of the soul and the receptivity of the soul concerning external impressions. But, as E. Barbotin remarks in the *Introduction* to his edition of Octave Hamelin's text, in French, on "*The Theory of Intellect according to Aristotle and his Commentators*",<sup>9</sup> the term "*exothēn*" (from outside) seems to have a certain technical significance but without any precise meaning, so that it is not necessary that in this case this same term be taken as denoting any intrusion of the external world into consciousness through the image.

Thus, the image, itself, remains irrational, because it is independent from any control of the reason, and it is present at all the levels of human activity, except the purely physical and physiological one (III. 6. 4). Plotinus even indirectly supposes that the image is radically different from sensation, since he distinguishes two respective functions of the soul to which each of these two kinds of data refer to: the sensitive function and

the imaginative function. He even suggests that (at least at a certain level) the activity of the soul is reduced only to these two functions (IV. 3. 23). Plotinus then goes on to state what he has already suggested, i.e., that the irrational character of the image impresses its seal upon the thought, independently of reason, to the judgment of which it is not submitted (I. 4. 10). He now asserts that sensation as well as imagination are subordinated to reason which, through its lower aspects, is akin to the higher aspects of these two functions of the soul (IV. 4. 3).

In the same context, Plotinus thinks that sensation and imagination should also concern the body, namely the part which is most able to receive their activity. Through them, reason, which is completely independent of the body, is indirectly connected to it. What seems to be important in this way of considering the facts is that the various functions of the soul, seen from the viewpoint of the image, seem no longer to be mechanisms consisting of distinct parts. The activity of the soul, therefore, seems to be an organic whole whose particular functions are so closely related that they are confused, in a way, with each other (IV. 4. 1).

The image thus becomes an organized representative structure formed out of initial data which it validates by referring them to the activity of reason (IV. 3. 23). Through a temporary submission of the imagination to reason, the image, which is a form that activates imagination, seems to impose itself in return upon the dynamism of existence in general, from which it comes.

However, no dynamism of the imagination leads to awareness independently of the presence of the image considered as being the image of an object. Such an "objectified image" is all but irrational. Thus, unless one accepts, together with Chaignet,<sup>10</sup> through an excessively analytic and "scholastic" procedure, the fact that the distinctions made between the various forms of imagination may be preserved, and even applied at the level of the image itself (I. 4. 10 and III. 6. 10), it will be necessary to accept the fact that the image is a structure which is originally present at all the levels of the activity of

consciousness, and that only later is it submitted to the influence of reason.

The process that such a conception of the image presupposes, in this case, is not at all clear. For the image is considered first as the main vehicle of the tendencies of the inferior soul, and then as imposing on these tendencies a regulative order whose principle must be sought within the region of the logos. Be it as it may, it seems that in Plotinus, this whole theory is based upon the intention that various effects be referred to a unique principle.

This is not incompatible with the synthetic spirit of the philosophy of Plotinus, in spite of certain exceptions which one may easily point out. One has to deal here with the agreement of two different and even opposed facts.<sup>11</sup>

The image has a part to play, according to Plotinus, not only at the level of *theoria*, but also at the level of *praxis*, in other words, at the level of human ethical behavior. Referring to the causes of such a behavior, Plotinus, according to E. Bréhier, makes an allusion to the efforts of Chrysippus to reconcile destiny (conceived as a connection of causes) with liberty.<sup>12</sup> Within such a general theoretical framework, Plotinus asserts that the provenance of the causes of human behavior is to be found in a principle which is unique; and that they only enable us to proceed towards the direction in which they are pushing us. Representations will then be the effects of former causes, and the tendencies will be in accordance to these representations (III, 1. 7). This is not, however, always the case, for it is possible that images may be opposed to the tendencies of the body, which means that one frequently has to deal with conflicts of images (V, 10. 26).

Representative images are related to irrational manifestations of the soul, and they translate the activity of such manifestations through forms which admit of a certain structural revision. The image thus becomes an epistemological and, at the same time, an existential principle that connects the irrational to the logos. This seems to be due to the fact that, on the one hand, the image is, potentially, a formal structure of behavior as well as a structured form; and that, on the other

hand, it is capable of extending its possibilities to the whole existence.

It is possible to admit that, in this context, the connection of the constitutive aspects of man takes place at the level of the image. One may conceive of an ascending and of a descending dialectic of the imaginary in Plotinus, in spite of the fact that their respective articulations are not clearly distinguished. It should only be asserted that, independently of its unconscious antecedents, the image remains a first datum in relation to the imagination considered as a concrete aspect of the consciousness, and that, through the image, the rational consciousness manifests itself as oral speech and as a model of behavior.

In any case, the force of images is equalled by the correspondence of consciousness to them. Being forms either of sensible or of any other provenance, images provoke the apparition of other forms which have previously existed as potential forms in the consciousness. This is why the image and the imagination are not considered separately from each other, but only with reference to the functional relation existing between them. One does not have to consider the imaginative activity, but only the world of the imaginary itself. In effect, the active character of the imaginary seems to be located in the way the dynamism of consciousness is confirmed during its contact with the image.

What is fluid and uncertain does not become an object of consciousness unless it takes a form, provided the form does not have a static character. But as soon as the discursive reason tries to determine this form (and, through it, the object itself by identifying and by consolidating it), the formative image which emerged from former fluidity of the object now vanishes and is replaced by an abstraction.

This does not mean, of course, that the image is reality itself. Plotinus considers the image as a shadow of reality. What renders the image real, at least to a certain extent, is its aptitude to substitute the objective reality by introducing itself into consciousness, and by imposing itself upon it.

This structural aspect of the status of the image and of imagination in relation to the activity of consciousness is such that one may observe in Plotinus the first outline of a dynamic

structuralistic consideration of imagination and of the imaginary which is the direct consequence of the reversion of the classical Aristotelian conception of imagination as being a noetical function. By conceiving the image as a first datum, Plotinus becomes the distant forerunner of contemporary psychological structuralism.

### NOTES

1. A. E. Chaignet. *Histoire de la Psychologie des Grecs*, Paris 1890, Vol. IV pp. 196 ff.
2. P. V. Pistorius. *Plotinus and Neoplatonism*, p. 95.
3. Cf. *Commentaries to the First book of Euclides' Elements*, 94. 24-25 (ed. E. Diehl): "Imagination suggests forms for objects deprived of any form, and shapes for objects deprived of any shape." One will find similar conceptions in Psellos' work.
4. Proclus. *Eucl.* I. 285. 5-15, ed. Friedlein.
5. Cf. also *Eucl.* I. 94. 24-25 (Diehl).
6. Th. Whittaker. *The Neo-Platonists—A Study in the History of Hellenism* (Cambridge, 1928), p. 51.
7. Damascius [*In Philebum*, 148. 3 (Westerink)] will use a parallel expression: "Imagination proposes the desirable to the irrational desire" in connection with the idea that "whenever there is a recollection of the opinion concerning something sensible, it is as if, on this occasion, a sort of a shake takes place within the whole body". Plato has already used similar expressions in the *Timaeus*, 69 b-c.
8. Emile Bréhier, ed. *Enneades*, vol. I, p. XXX.
9. Paris, Vrin, 1953, pp. 187-190 and 240. "La Théorie de l'Intellect d'après Aristote et ses Commentateurs"
10. Chaignet, pp. 199-201.
11. Th. Whittaker, in p. 52 of his book, has underlined this problem.
12. Bréhier, vol. 3, p. 14, note 4.

## Image, Symbol and Analogy: Three Basic Concepts of Neoplatonic Allegorical Exegesis

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### I

The contemporary relevance of this subject is, perhaps, not great. Allegory, as such, is rather out of fashion. But for much of European history allegory has been indulged in freely, in all forms of art, and any discussion of the rules of allegory in any age or culture should be of general interest. Even today, the search for Freudian motifs and Jungian archetypes must have its rules – that is to say, ways of judging when a false analogy has been made.

This paper is simply an attempt to sort out, through an examination of some individual contexts, the possible difference of meaning between two basic terms of Neoplatonic allegory, *eikon* and *symbolon*, and in this connexion the use of the term *analogia*/*analogon*. In such company as this, I do not come so much to instruct as in the hope of learning more. There are, after all, many nooks and crannies of Neoplatonism into which I have not yet penetrated. What chiefly concerns me is the question of the *rules* of Neoplatonic allegory. By what system does one recognise in a given text an image or symbol of metaphysical reality? How can one learn to recognise the correct '*analogia*'? I do not find these rules stated anywhere in the writings of the Neoplatonist commentators. That is not to say that they are not there, however, and I would be glad to have pointed out to me some passage which I have overlooked.



It is possible, on the other hand, that the rules of Allegory cannot be stated precisely, but must simply be derived from experience – sitting at the feet of one's master – and from personal inspiration. I myself, after all, feel that I can now recognise a symbol in a given text and observe the correct analogy, but I would be somewhat at a loss to say on what precise principles I was proceeding, except the simple discernment of points of similarity. This may well seem to be an intolerably vague conclusion, and I would be glad to have the whole question made more definite.

## II

That said, let us turn to a few texts. Near the beginning of his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, in connexion with the exegesis of the lemma *Tim.* 17BC (where Socrates declares his intention of giving a recapitulation of his discourse of the previous day on the Ideal State). Proclus makes the following comment (*In Tim.* I 29, 31 ff. Diehl):

"Some (sc. Porphyry), taking the recapitulation of the *Republic* in an ethical sense (*ἠθικώτερον*), say that it reveals to us that we must enter upon the contemplation of the Universe in an ethically ordered frame of mind; others (sc. Iamblichus) consider that it has been placed before the whole enquiry into Nature (*φυσιολογία*) as an image (*εἰκὼν*) of the organisation of the Universe; for the Pythagoreans had the habit of placing before their scientific instruction the revelation of the subjects under enquiry through similitudes (*ὅμοια*) and images (*εἰκόνες*), and after this of introducing the secret revelation of the same subjects through symbols (*σύμβολα*), and then in this way, after the reactivation of the soul's ability to comprehend the intelligible realm and the purging of its vision, to bring on the complete knowledge of the subjects laid down for investigation. And here too the relating in summary of the *Republic* before the enquiry into Nature prepares us to understand the orderly creation of the Universe *through the medium of an image* (*εἰκονικῶς*), while the story of the Atlantids *acts as a symbol* (*συμβολικῶς*); for indeed myths in general tend to reveal

the principles of reality (*τὰ πράγματα*) through symbols. So the discussion of Nature in fact runs through the whole dialogue, but appears in different forms according to the different methods of revelation."

This, I think, is a good passage from which to start, as it sets out – or seems to set out – a clear distinction between an *eikon* and a *symbolon*, and, further, links the whole theory of allegory firmly with Pythagoreanism. I believe Iamblichus to be responsible for introducing this theory in its developed form into Neoplatonism, and he will have derived it from his Neopythagorean sources of inspiration, Numenius, Nicomachus of Gerasa, or even Apollonius of Tyana. I am not, however, concerned here with the origins of the theory, but rather with the nature of it.

We see, then, a three-level system of exegesis set out. The Pythagoreans, it seems, before revealing directly the truths of their doctrine, would take the disciple through two preliminary stages. First, they would present to him *homoia* and *eikones* of reality. Obviously these were not their famous 'symbols' (of which Iamblichus gives an extended account at the end of his *Protrepticus*); the very word used for them precludes that. An *eikon* must be something simpler and more straight-forward. The only clue we have from this passage is that, in relation to the doctrine presented in the *Timaeus*, the recapitulation of the *Republic* is an *eikon*, while the Atlantis Myth is a *symbolon* (it is also suggested here that *all* myths are *symbola*). But it is just here that the difficulties begin. It is not clear, to me at any rate, nor is it made clear by Proclus, how the recapitulation of the *Republic*, or the description of the Ideal State in general, differs generically, as a representation of cosmic truths, from the Atlantis myth, or from myths in general. Indeed, a little earlier in the work (p. 4, 7ff.), Proclus speaks of both the recapitulation of the *Republic* and the Atlantis myth as representing the order of the universe *δι' εἰκόνων*, the *Republic* being an *eikon* of its unity (*ἑνῶσις*), the Atlantis myth of its division (*διαίρεσις*) and of the opposition of the two basic orders (*συστοιχίαι*) within it – or, alternatively, the *Republic* can be seen as being like to (*ὁμοιωσθαι*) the heavenly realm, the Atlantis myth to the realm of *genesis* below the Moon. Not only are both here *eikones*, but they may be seen as images of rather

different things, in one case of unity and diversity extending all through the Universe (a vertical distinction, one might say), or, alternatively, or the superlunary and sublunary realms (a horizontal distinction).

Let us for the moment confine ourselves to *eikones*, and consider in what respect they might reflect reality. For an *eikon*, in fact, 'reflecting' should be the key word. An *eikon* is, after all, properly a mirror-image, or a direct representation, of an original, its *paradeigma*, whereas a *symbolon* merely 'fits together' with some corresponding reality in a higher realm. One might use the comparison of a statue of Winston Churchill, say, on the one hand, with Churchill's cigar – or perhaps, a picture of Cinderella with Cinderella's slipper. The statue and the picture are plainly *eikones*, the cigar and the slipper *symbola* – particularly the slipper. These examples are certainly crude, but perhaps they will do as preliminaries.

If we return for the moment to the statue of Churchill, we can immediately see the difficulties. The statue, if it is a good one, will have a one-to-one correspondence with the various (external) features of its model. But at least the model, the *paradeigma*, is a physical object; we can compare image and archetype with the same faculty. If one takes the most obvious Platonic example, the comparison of the Sun as *eikon* with the Good as *paradeigma*, we have arrived at the point of difficulty. Why is the Sun an *eikon* (*Rep.* 509a9), and not a *symbolon*? Following Plato, we maintain that there is a one-to-one correspondence between Sun and Good. Both are a source of visibility, and even of existence, to the entities subordinate to them, the world of sensible objects and the world of intelligible objects. In the case of the Ideal State of the *Republic*, the three classes therein described must correspond exactly to the triple division of Gods, Daemons and Men in the Universe, and their mutual relations and activities must also correspond. But then, we say, the battle of the Athenians with the Atlantids seems to correspond well enough to the constant struggle in the Universe between the forces of order and disorder, unity and diversity, represented at the highest level by the archetypal opposition of Monad and Indefinite Dyad. What, if anything, makes the one an *eikon* and the other a *symbolon*?

### III

For further elucidation of this, I would like to turn from Proclus' *Timaeus Commentary* to his *Commentary on the Republic*, and specifically to the essay in which he discusses the theory behind Homer's mythologising (*In Remp.* I pp. 71-96 Kroll). Here Proclus is seeking both to defend Homer from the charges made against him in the *Republic* and to defend Plato against the charge of inconsistency in his attitude to Homer. This essay makes an important distinction between *eikon* and *symbolon*,<sup>2</sup> and it is a rather unexpected one. How, asks Proclus (72, 9ff), can such stories about the Gods as Homer, Hesiod and even Orpheus tell – rapes, thefts, bindings, castrations and so on – bear any relation at all to divine realities? Must not stories that are to represent (*ἀπεικάζεσθαι*) things divine imitate the order and unspeakable transcendence of these entities? Here, I think, we have a clue. An Homeric tale, such as, say, the story of Ares and Aphrodite, does not precisely mirror the intellectual calm and unanimity in which the Gods must live. If it in fact resembles that reality in any way, it must do it indirectly. In the course of presenting the common criticism of Homeric myth, Proclus says the following (73, 11ff):

"... for these *symbola* have obviously no resemblance (*οὐ ... ὁμοκότα*) to the essential natures of the Gods. But myths must surely, if they are not to fall short utterly of representing the truth, have *some* resemblance to the nature of things (*ἀπεικάζεσθαι πῶς τοῖς πράγμασιν*), the contemplation of which they are attempting to conceal by means of the screens of appearance (*τοῖς φαινομένοις παραπετάσμασιν*)."

On the other hand, he continues, Plato in many places instructs us mystically about divine matters through *eikones*, bringing in nothing shameful or disorderly or materialistic into his myths, but, while concealing his transcendent intuitions about the Gods, yet presenting by way of concealment visible images (*ἀγάλματα*) which accurately represent the realities of the secret theory hidden within them.

Now what is the distinction being made here? Surely it is simply that Plato's myths, and indeed the purified myths which

Socrates would propose for the poets, have in them no feature that is *prima facie* discordant with our conception of divine nature. That is to say, they bear on their face the signs of being representations of *some* divine reality – though without authorised exegesis the layman cannot say precisely what. A poetic myth, on the other hand, with its rapes and conflicts, does not mirror the divine nature in this direct way. Nevertheless, it does represent truths about the universe in an indirect way, as Proclus explains further on (81, 28ff). The binding of Kronos, for instance, represents the uniting (ἔνωσις) of the whole creation to the intellectual and paternal transcendence (ὕπεροχὴ) of Kronos (82, 14ff). These myths, we learn at 83, 9, are *symbola*. The Gods, Proclus asserts, actually enjoy hearing these stories about themselves; that is why such tales are a feature of mystical rites and ceremonies (83, 18ff).

#### IV

But let us halt at this example of the binding of Kronos. Why, one asks, is this a *symbolon* and not an *eikon*? As far as I can see, the actual distinction centres round the subject matter. It is not so much a question, I think, of whether or not the story is discreditable or obscene on the surface – though the myths in question normally are – as whether or not the story seems to have a self-contained meaning, not directly pointing to any truth beyond itself, in the way that a conscious allegory should. A Platonic myth, or some purified (and thus allegorised) poetic myth, we would have to maintain, is plainly representative of something else, even as a statue is plainly a statue of someone or something, whereas an unreformed poetic myth appears just to be a good story in its own right, as for instance the Tale of Ares and Aphrodite.

This distinction may or may not seem cogent to us, but it is at least, I think recognisable. The issue of immorality in the non-iconic myths seems to me to be secondary, although in fact both Plato and Proclus dwell on it a good deal, and of course this 'scandal' of immoral stories had been used ever since the beginnings of allegory as a compelling reason why these stories *must* be allegorised. If we return to our original text in the *Timaeus* Commentary, we may now say that the Atlantis Myth,

if it is a *symbolon* and not an *eikon*, must be taken as being a story which does not directly point to any meaning beyond itself—it is a tale of a great war of long ago, and can be regarded as simply history—whereas the recapitulation of the *Republic* has an obvious allegorical signification. We *should* also be able to add that the Atlantis story portrays divine truths in a *prima facie* discordant way. This would imply that the elements of the universe do not fight each other in the same way as the Athenians fought the Atlantids. The problem here is that in fact the elements—or rather the conflicting forces of Form and Matter—are fighting each other in very much this way. Why is the portrayal of their mutual relations in the *Republic* iconic, while this is symbolic?

#### V

But I do not wish to raise difficulties at this stage. If we are to try and confirm the distinction, the *symbolon*, in the Pythagorean system, must be seen as a higher stage of allegory than the *eikon*, first of all, perhaps, because it is more difficult to discern as being allegorical at all, but secondly, I assume, because it tends to represent more ineffable truths, truths which are not susceptible of full representation through *eikones*.

If Proclus himself observed these distinctions in an entirely consistent manner, our task would be much easier, but he does not. In an attempt to shed some further light on the question, I would like to turn now to the consideration of the allegorisation of the characters in the two dialogues *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*, together with the allegorisation of the whole introductory situation in the *Parmenides*, to see if any consistent pattern emerges.

First let us ask ourselves whether we expect the characters (πρόσωπα) of the dialogues to be *eikones* or *symbola*? In the sense that they do not *prima facie* suggest – to the normal reader – that they are representations of any 'higher' truth, one might take them to be *symbola*; on the other hand, they themselves, and their mutual relationships, might be thought to mirror Reality in the same way that the various classes in the Ideal State of the *Republic* do, and thus qualify as *eikones*. We

must now see how the case actually stands. When the identifications of the characters are first made in the *Timaeus* Commentary (I 9, 13ff), the arrangement of the characters – that is, a trio of auditors listening to a single speaker – is described as an *eikon* of the organisation of the Universe:

“The father of the discourse should correspond (ἀνάλογον ἔσταναι) to the father of Creation (for the creation of the cosmos in discourse is an *eikon* of the creation of the cosmos by the (demiurgic) intellect); while to the demiurgic triad which receives the unitary and generic creation of the Father, there should correspond the triad of those who receive the discourse, of whom the summit is Socrates, joining himself directly to Timaeus by reason of contiguity of life-force, even as in the paradeigmatic realm the first principle is united to that which is prior to the triad.”

On the other hand, when the matter is taken up again later (I 198, 25ff, *ad Tim.* 27AB), the arrangement of speeches among the characters is described as a *symbolon* of the creation of the Universe, and the passage ends (200, 2-3) with the sentence: “These things then one may understand in some such symbolic sense as this (οὐτως αἰ συμβόλων), without, perhaps, reading too much into them.”

The sad fact is that, if one checks assiduously through Diehl's index under *eikon* and *symbolon* right through Book I of the commentary one will find the two terms used indiscriminately for characters, events, and even words and phrases. In one passage at least (94, 27f) we find both delightfully combined. The causal principles of creation are said to be represented in the Atlantis Myth ‘in images through symbols’ (ἐν εἰκόσι διὰ τινων συμβόλων). Plainly it is only when he is on his very best behaviour that Proclus maintains any strict distinction between the two terms.

In the *Parmenides* Commentary the situation is much the same. At 660, 26ff *Cousin*, the allegorical significance of the places of origin of the various characters is set out:

“Ionia is a *symbolon* of Nature, Italy of intelligible being; Athens is symbolic of the median position between these, through which an ascent can be made from the realm of

Nature to that of Intellect for souls who are stimulated to such an ascent.”

However, after a good deal more of such identifications, during which neither of our key terms is in fact used, we have the phrase ‘presents an *eikon* (εἰκόνα φέρει)’, employed in two successive sentences of summing up: “The above-mentioned presents an *eikon* of these realities to those not entirely incapable of observing such things.” (661, 21), and, a little further down (662, 10), “All these (situations and characters) present an *eikon* of the Gods themselves, and would provide no problems to those who are willing to follow out the *analogia*.”

## VI

The third basic term in our investigation has now presented itself forcefully, and we may profitably turn to an examination of it, especially as the allegorisation of the characters in the *Parmenides* Commentary makes use of it more than of either of the other terms. *Analogia* in Neoplatonic terminology always retains something of its mathematical sense of ‘geometrical proportion’, and is frequently so used in the course of Proclus' commentaries, but in the context of allegorical exegesis proper it signifies the correspondence between the surface meaning of the text (or of the characters, things and actions mentioned in the text) and the metaphysical truths of which it, or they, are the expression. This must have been seen as a sort of fixed mathematical relation, but it is not the sort of relation that could be stated in any kind of formula.

We may at this point suitably reintroduce the Pythagoreans. They are reported by Proclus (*In Tim.* I 33, 4ff), again in connexion with the recapitulation of the *Republic* (*ad Tim.* 17c), as follows:

“The account of the Ideal State and the condensed and succinct summary of the classes within it contributed to the general presentation of these descriptions, taken as *eikones*, to (the appreciation of) general truths. And indeed this is precisely how the Pythagoreans used to go about things, tracking down the points of similarity (ὁμοιότητες) in the world on the basis of *analogiai*, and passing from *eikones* to their respective *paradeigmata*.”

The Pythagoreans, then, as we might expect of such mathematically-minded folk, employed *analogiai* to discern what the surface phenomena they dealt with were *eikones* (and presumably *symbola*) of. Once again, however, there is no clue as to what precise rules are to be followed in fixing the *analogiai*, and I would suggest that there were in fact none that could be formulated. That is not to say that the resulting allegory is arbitrary, as Fr. Amandus Bielmeier would suggest ("Die *Wilktir hat hier im einzelnen freies Feld*", op. cit. p. 76); it is surely plain that it does in fact follow a fairly strict system. All I would suggest is that the discerning of the correct 'analogies' had to be learned by experience.

That there was a distinct sense of correctness and incorrectness in this area is made plain by a number of passages. At *In Tim.* I 165, 16ff, for instance, Porphyry is reported as being criticised by Iamblichus, *à propos Tim.* 24D, for situating Athena, as described in the passage, in the Moon. Iamblichus' criticism is that Athena must be ranked higher than the Moon, which is simply one of her emanations. Porphyry 'has not correctly preserved the *analogia* (οὐ καλῶς τὴν ἀναλογίαν διασώζεσθαι). In the context this seems to mean something like: 'the correct *analogia* is 1:100; Porphyry has made it 1:10'. At another point, Proclus himself, once again *à propos* the recapitulation of the *Republic*, makes a remarkable statement. It is possible, it seems, to have various correct *analogiai* to a given surface phenomenon (*In Tim.* I 57, 22ff):

"And if we formerly took the *πόλις* (of the *Republic*) here below as representing the realm of generation, and now take it as representing the cosmic conflict, that should be no cause for astonishment. For it is safe to understand the same thing according to various *analogiai* in relation to different contexts."

— since, that is, the same thing by virtue of different aspects of itself can show an *analogia* to different elements of reality. It is possible, then, to postulate a multiplicity of correct 'analogies', as well, of course, as a multiplicity of wrong ones.

When we turn to the allegorisation of the *personae* of the *Parmenides* (*In Parm.* 628. 1ff), we find in fact that the terms *analogon* and *analogia* are those chiefly used (628, 2, 21, 31,

40), though *eikon* is used once (in the phrase *εἰκόνα φέρει*). Parmenides is to be taken as *analogon* to the unparticipated and divine *Nous*, the summit of the noetic world; Zeno is analogous to that *nous* which is participated by the divine Soul, and Socrates represents (here *ἔοικε* is used, which may be taken as a verbal form of *εἰκῶν*) the individual *nous*, capable of receiving the divine forms. Parallel with this scheme, however, Proclus declares that these three figures seem to him to 'preserve' (*διασώξω*) another *analogia*, according to which they represent respectively the three moments Being, Life and Mind within the hypostasis of *Nous*. Either of these *analogiai* are acceptable, it seems. They both represent great metaphysical truths.

*Analogia* then, is the principle on which allegorical exegesis is based, but when one has said that one has still not fathomed the principles on which it is applied. If one had the rules according to which one preserved the *analogia*, one would have the rules of allegorical exegesis set out before one. As I say, I do not see these rules stated anywhere in the Neoplatonic corpus, and I do not believe that they can be stated, even though they can plainly be learned. In the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, ch. IX, we find an elaborate set of ten rules for recognising the subject, or *skopos*, of a dialogue; if there had been set rules for allegorising, it would be in such a work as this that one would expect them to be set out.

## VII

This survey has not been particularly comprehensive, I fear, but I hope that it is at least representative enough to give a fair picture of the complexities of the situation. It seems to me to be the case that we have, on the one hand, evidence of a three-tiered system of Neopythagorean allegorical interpretation, perhaps first connected with the exegesis of Plato's dialogues by Iamblichus, which Proclus reports but does not himself follow very strictly — and which, indeed, could not be followed very strictly in the exegesis of a Platonic dialogue — and on the other hand, more normal Greek usage, in which the terms *eikon* and *symbolon*, together with *analogia*, could be used interchangeably with each other and in combination with a

good many other terms (e.g. ἐκφαίνεω, μπεῖσθαι, ἀπεικάζειν) to express the relation between the surface meaning of the text and the truths it allegedly represented. I am concerned with trying to distinguish the essence of the Pythagorean system from the looser usage that obscures it.

It seems fairly plain that some authority on Pythagoreanism did describe the school as educating its neophytes first through images, then through symbols, and then by the direct revelation of (mystical) truth. The symbols are plainly the well-known Pythagorean Symbols, of which, as I have mentioned already, we have a comprehensive survey at the end of Iamblichus' *Protrepticus* (ch. XXI). What might the *eikones* have been? Iamblichus' *Vita Pythagorica* might reasonably be expected to throw some light on this question, especially if, as I have suggested, he is the source of the application of this theory to Platonic exegesis, but in fact this work proves disappointing. There is indeed a good exposition of the Pythagorean theory of *symbola* in cc. 103-105, in which it is explained how the Pythagoreans veiled the truths of their doctrine with the deceptive appearance of the apparently foolish *symbola*, but there is no mention of *eikones* in this connexion, nor any suggestion of a three-tiered system, as opposed to a simple contrast of symbolic and direct instruction. Elsewhere, however, in cc. 64-67, there is a discussion of the use of music in philosophic training, in the course of which music is twice (in c. 66) spoken of as an *eikon* of reality, in this case of the harmony of the universe. This may give us some idea as to what might have been regarded as an *eikon* in a three-tiered system of Pythagorean instruction, but the fact remains that there is no explicit statement of such a system in the *Vita Pythagorica*. The exact provenance of the system, as well as its proper contents, remain, as far as I am concerned, something of a mystery, on which I would welcome enlightenment from this gathering. As regards the application of it to the allegorical exegesis of the Platonic dialogues, this is all that I can find to say at present.

## APPENDIX

## C. S. Peirce on Icon and Symbol

While not wishing to embark on a full historical survey of the meanings of these terms in Western Literature and philosophy, I think it not unsuitable to make a brief reference to one modern authority who makes notable use of the terms 'icon' and 'symbol', the American philosopher C. S. Peirce.

In an essay entitled *Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs*,<sup>3</sup> Peirce produces an elaborate set of technical terms for the various possible types of sign. The only aspect of this with which I will concern myself is his definition of Icon, Index and Symbol (I include Index because it is linked closely by him with the other two, and shares in the distribution of characteristics which I find relevant to the understanding of the Neoplatonic distinction):

"A sign either an *icon*, an *index*, or a *symbol*. An *icon* is a sign which would possess the character which renders it significant, even though its object had no existence; such as a lead-pencil streak as representing a geometrical line. An *index* is a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign if its object were removed, but would not lose that character if there were no interpretant. Such, for instance, is a piece of mould with a bullet-hole in it as sign of a shot; for without the shot there would have been no hole; but there is a hole there, whether anybody has the sense to attribute it to a shot or not. A *symbol* is a sign which would lose the character which renders it a sign if there were no interpretant. Such is any utterance of speech which signifies what it does only by virtue of its being understood to have that signification." (*op. cit.* p. 104)

Before entering upon a discussion of these definitions, I will append some further basic definitions, for those (like myself) who may be unfamiliar with Peirce's terminology:

"A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that

person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*." (p. 99).

First, let me reformulate what I take to be the Neoplatonic, or Neopythagorean, definitions of *εικῶν* and *σύμβολον* in terms analogous to those of Peirce. It seems to me that an *εικῶν* in the three-tiered Pythagorean system is a sign which would lose the character that makes it a sign if its object were removed, or if there were no interpretant. It seems to me, in fact, that, rather than answering to Peirce's *icon*, it combines the characteristics of his *index* and *symbol*. An *eikon* clearly points outside itself to some other thing – in Neoplatonic metaphysics, to some noetic reality. Churchill's portrait loses its specific character if *either* there is no such person as Churchill or if no one any longer recognises Churchill. It is still a painting, but it is not, properly, a portrait of anyone. If we take the Pythagorean use of music as an example, a certain sequence of notes is only a soothing or mind-clearing sound if (as they thought) it accords with the harmony of the spheres and/or there is a mind such as to be soothed or cleared by it. Whether or not the examples from the Platonic dialogues that we have examined fit it uncomfortably, if at all. But perhaps Iamblichus (rather than Proclus) may have seen the ordering of the characters in the *Timaeus*, for instance, as having no significance at all apart from the metaphysical realities they are representing, whereas the Atlantis Myth has a clear and self-contained (historical) meaning, apart from its allegorical use.

What Peirce would call an *icon*, on the other hand, I would want to call a *σύμβολον*, that is, a sign which would possess the character which renders it significant, even though its object had no existence. A cigar, for instance, which could in certain circumstances stand as a symbol of Churchill, is still a cigar, even if there were no such person as Churchill. I am somewhat bothered by the distinction that Peirce makes here between an icon and an index. The mark of the pencil on the paper is a pencil mark even if there were no such thing as a geometrical straight line. It does, however, imply the previous presence of a pencil. The bullet-hole (*qua* bullet-hole) implies the previous

passage of a bullet. If, however, there appears someone (a child, say) who does not understand about bullets, the hole is for him just a hole. But for a person who does not understand about pencils, there is still a mark on the paper.

I do not want to get into an argument with Peirce, however his purposes in definition are somewhat different from mine. What I find useful is his basic distinction between a sign which has no basic meaning apart from its object or interpretant, and one which has. A Pythagorean symbol, it seems to me, has an independent meaning, such a meaning as would conceal from the ordinary public that it is a sign at all. Exhortations to make one's bed when one gets up in the morning, or to avoid main roads, seem perfectly straightforward. Even pieces of advice which might seem eccentric, such as not to let swallows into the house, or not to stir the fire with a fork, do not point in any particular direction to a meaning beyond their surface one. They have a more devious, or more hidden, relation to reality than does an *eikon*, and are thus properly introduced to the neophyte at a later stage.

In conclusion, I must confess to being by no means convinced myself that there is, normally, any clear distinction between *εικῶν* and *σύμβολον* in Proclus' system of allegory, but I hope that this investigation, together with the brief survey of Peirce's terminology, has made some contribution to the elucidation of the problem of those passages where such a distinction *is* being made.

## NOTES

1. The only secondary sources which I have been unable to uncover that are of immediate relevance to the subject under discussion (and even these are of limited usefulness) are: A. Bielmeier, *Die Neuplatonische Phaidrosinterpretation*, Paderborn 1930; and A. R. Sodano, 'Porfirio Commentatore di Platone', in *Entretiens Hardt XII, Porphyre*, 1965. Works on allegory in general have not proved helpful in this particular enquiry.

2. There is an interesting discussion of myths in chapters III and IV of Sallustius *On the God and the World*, as Professor John Whittaker reminds me. but, although Sallustius makes a division of myths into various types, theological, physical, ethical and so on, he nowhere makes a distinction between eikon and symbolon.
3. Printed in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, sel. and ed. J. Buchler. Dover Publications, 1944.  
Since writing this paper, I have come across an article by R. A. Marcus 'St. Augustine on Signs' (*Phronesis* 2:1, 1957), which contains much of interest on general questions of terminology, and which also, in an appendix (pp. 82-3), makes use of Peirce.

## PART THREE

### The Influence of Neoplatonism



## Marius Victorinus Afer, Porphyry, and the History of Philosophy

by Mary T. Clark

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For a long time and until quite recently Victorinus (4th century African Rhetor who wrote in Latin) was judged to be in the direct line of the descent of Neoplatonism from Plotinus to Augustine. This opinion prevailed not only among those who considered Victorinus' work too obscure to analyze but it was an opinion even held by Paul Henry who in this decade has produced the critical edition of Victorinus' theological treatises. But it is precisely this critical edition<sup>1</sup> which has brought about a growing appreciation of the differences between the metaphysics of Plotinus and that utilized by Marius Victorinus the African.

In the Plotinian triad - the One, the *Nous* and All-Soul - there is subordination of one to the other; true transcendence is present only with the One, said to be utterly incommensurable with the other two Hypostases. Simplicity both characterizes the One and differentiates it from the other two. On the other hand, Victorinus has a perfectly clear metaphysics which supports the "consubstantiality" of the three persons of the Christian Trinity. The Father is *Esse*; the Son is movement or the act which defines this "*Esse*." This movement is a double one: a movement of "life" and a movement of "knowledge". Life is that movement by which *Esse* or "to-be" communicates itself; knowledge is that movement by which it returns to itself. Father, Son and Spirit are consubstantial because as *esse*, life,

and knowledge they are mutually implied. In virtue of this mutual implication, life and knowledge are originally confused with *esse* (to-be) or substance; each one of these is the other three; on this position Victorinus bases consubstantiality. The distinction between Father, Son and Spirit proceeds from "predominance." Each one is all three but gets its name from that which predominates. Thus, the Father is more characteristically "to-be" (*esse*); the Son is "to live" (*vivere*); the Spirit is "to know" (*intelligere*). This predominance has to be understood as "dynamic"; in each case it is an action which predominates: the Father exists; the Son reveals the Father: the Spirit returns all to the Father.

This philosophical trinity of Victorinus with its care for equality and consubstantiality is not to be found in the *Enneads* of Plotinus although it is present in the Hymns of Synesius.<sup>2</sup> The Neoplatonic source seems to be Porphyry, for apparently a similar triadism was present in Porphyry's *Philosophy of Oracles*<sup>3</sup> referred to by Augustine in the *City of God* as *de regressu animae*; (The Soul's Return). It has been suggested by Professor O'Meara of Dublin that the latter name was given it by Victorinus when he translated it from the Greek into Latin. Furthermore, it may possibly have been among the books of the Platonists read by Augustine in the Latin version of Victorinus just prior to Augustine's intellectual conversion. Theiler thinks so.<sup>4</sup> This work has as its main point the soul's return to the intelligible world. It contains, moreover, an extended exegesis of the Chaldean Oracles.<sup>5</sup> This was probably because Porphyry was stressing that the sacraments prepared by the Chaldean Oracles were not capable of assuring a perfect purification of soul, that only a flight from the body, advocated as it was by Plato and Plotinus, could assure definite salvation to the soul. The deep epistemological reason for this was to be found in the Platonic doctrine of "knowledge by likeness"; a progressive de-materialization was needed for men to be able to approach the Principles which are purely incorporeal - the Triad of Father, Will and Intellect. In the tenth book of the *City of God* (ch. 23) we find this Porphyrian exegesis of the Oracles: the Father and the Begotten of the Father: Paternal Will and Mind. Augustine speaks of this triadism as obscure and incomprehen-

sible. He knows it but does not follow it in his own *De Trinitate*. He is, in addition, quite aware that this is not the triadism of Plotinus. From Augustine we learn that Porphyry

... says, too, in the same place that "principles" can purify, lest it should be supposed, from his saying that sacrificing to the sun and moon cannot purify, that sacrificing to some other of the host of gods might not do so. And what he as a Platonist means by "principles" we know. For he speaks of God the Father and God the Son whom he calls the intellect or mind of the Father; but of the Holy Spirit he says either nothing, or nothing plainly, for I do not understand what other he speaks of as holding the middle place between these two. For if like Plotinus in his discussion regarding the three principal substances (*Ennead* V, 1), he wished us to understand by this "third" the soul of nature, he would certainly not have given it the middle place between these two, that is, between the Father and the Son. For Plotinus places the soul of nature after the intellect of the Father, while Porphyry making it the mean, does not place it after, but between the others. No doubt he spoke according to his light, or as he thought expedient; but we assert that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit not of the Father only, nor of the Son only, but of both.

Porphyry's problem, after he decided to accept the authority of the Oracles, was to explain how "life" and "intelligence" could pre-exist in the First God when Plotinus had denied any duality or plurality within the One. He found in the Plotinian *Nous* (influenced by Numenius)<sup>6</sup> the paradigm for a unity of being, life and thought. He then used Stoic physics<sup>7</sup> with its outgo and return to unity by transforming it into a metaphysics of Intelligible Reality. He preserved both Plotinian unity and Stoic expansion in distinguishing two states or rather, moments of Intelligence: repose or interiority and movement or exteriority. This reciprocal interiority of the parts of the intelligible world was able to save Plotinian unity while it would also help Victorinus in his defence of the cause of consubstantiality as defined in the Nicene Creed.

This metaphysics of Porphyry was apparently formed by the confronting of certain expressions of the Platonic *Parmen-*

ides with certain formulas of the Chaldean Oracles.<sup>8</sup> This re-interpretation of Plato through the authority of the Oracles led Porphyry to transform the triadism he received from Plotinus. This was a momentous decision in the history of philosophy. The distinction between "esse" and the existent which Porphyry seems to have been the first to propose in a fairly explicit fashion does indeed depart from the metaphysical past. It makes Porphyry the predecessor of the Pseudo-Dionysius, of Boethius, of John Scotus Erigena, of that emphasis upon the primacy of *esse* which is found in medieval metaphysics. Not only medieval thought, however, but surely modern philosophy shows by a study of Nicholas of Cusa, of Schelling, of Hegel the Neoplatonic influence here analyzed.

The opinion is now strongly advanced that it was under the influence of Porphyry rather than of Plotinus that Victorinus became the author of the first metaphysical treatise in all Latin literature. He (Victorinus) may indeed be the key which assists us to unlock the full metaphysical significance of Porphyry's contribution, but he is far from being the sole channel of Porphyrian thought. Chalcidius in writing his 4th century *Commentary on the Timaeus* used Porphyry's own commentary on that dialogue. Porphyry also survived in the *Isagoge* which Victorinus translated into Latin in 360 A.D. and which was used at first by Boethius. Macrobius in his *Dream of Scipio* shows the influence of Porphyry's *Commentary on the Republic*, on the *Timaeus*, *On the Return of the Soul*, *In the Sun*. It certainly seems that it was Porphyry rather than Plotinus who was the point of contact between Latin philosophers and Neoplatonism.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the proper interpretation of Porphyrian metaphysics was interfered with by being channeled to the Middle Ages largely within the Aristotelian framework operating in the works of Boethius.

If Porphyry was trying, as Pierre Hadot thinks he was, to interpret in Plotinian terms the "revelation" of the Chaldean Oracles which, written in the second century, contained Platonism strongly touched with Stoicism (Middle Platonism), he could not really end up on the side of Plotinus whose First Principle was said to be without life, without thought and whose "One" gave what-it-had-not inasmuch as the Oracles

affirmed a First God with life and thought, giving all it had. But perhaps Porphyry provided the metaphysics which allowed room for both the negative and the positive theology of Plotinus in the Fifth and Sixth Enneads. The negative theology is well-known. We may remind ourselves of the affirmative by reviewing those Plotinian passages where Plotinus seems carried away by the truth:

Our inquiry obliges us to use terms not strictly applicable: we insist, once more, that not even for the purpose of forming the concept of the Supreme may we make it a duality; if now we do, it is merely for the sake of conveying conviction, at the cost of verbal accuracy.

If, then, we are to allow Activities in the Supreme and make them depend upon will - and certainly Act cannot There be will-less-and those Activities are to be the very essence, then will and essence in the Supreme must be identical. This admitted, as He willed to be so He is; it is no more true to say that He wills and acts as his nature determines than that his essence is as He wills and acts. Thus he is wholly Master of Himself and holds his very being at his will. *Ennead VI, 8, 13.*

And also:

Lovable, very love, the Supreme is also self-love in that He is lovely no otherwise than from Himself and in Himself. Self-presence can hold only in the identity of associated with associating; since, in the Supreme, associated and associating are one, seeker and sought one - the sought serving as Hypostasis and substrate of the seeker - once more God's being and his seeking are identical; once more, then, the Supreme is the self-producing, sovrän of Himself, not coming to be as some extern willed but existing as He wills it. *Ennead VI, 8, 15.*

By a more fundamental metaphysics, a metaphysics of being rather than of unity, Porphyry provided that identification of being with activity which enabled the First Principle to be by its infinity without possibility of predication and yet self-productive by its activity. The fidelity to this deep insight of Neoplatonism that the maximum of universality as indetermination is a maximum of activity and force enabled Porphyry

to justify much of what Plotinus says informally of the One in *Ennead* VI, 8, 13 and 15.

Victorinus followed Porphyry in placing act before substance. This was originally accomplished through that union of Stoicism with Platonism referred to above. Stoic substance, endowed with tonic movement, placed itself into motion. "Being" (*esse*) rendered as an infinitive is seen to be self-moving: it lives and it knows. That which differentiates the Neoplatonic Intelligible World from the Platonic or Aristotelian one is this dynamism of mind (found later in Hegel). Action which for the Stoics was the accident of bodies became with Porphyry a Subsistent Principle. The Mind transcends its determinations. Husserl's Transcendental Consciousness is incipient here. Transcendence of mind is seen as a law of being, not merely of thought: this is a metaphysics, not an idealism.

In Porphyrian metaphysics the first moment of the Intelligence coincides with the One;<sup>10</sup> this signifies that in its origin, in its principle, the Intelligence, or Mind is One itself. The second moment is a self-generation, a self-movement, a self-manifestation by which the mind is exteriorized in life and thought, in living thought. The One also has this double aspect; as the Absolute it is alone and incommensurable with the triadic Intelligence, but it is also the Intelligence reduced to its first moment. *Being* in repose and action explains both transcendence or unity and productivity or trinity.

Now, Pierre Hadot has well shown that the doctrinal incoherences in the plan of Victorinus' theological treatises point to the presence of purely philosophic developments placed here and there throughout the books and poorly connected with the whole work.<sup>11</sup> These doctrinal and philosophical "constants" as well as the Greek vocabulary<sup>12</sup> come from Porphyry. This particular set of doctrines found loosely situated in the writings of Victorinus is to be found also within the *anonymous commentary on the Parmenides* discovered in the late 19th century at Turin and recently attributed by Hadot to Porphyry.<sup>13</sup> The structure of the trinity in Victorinus and of the triad in this Commentary is identical: an initial state of immobility which is pure "to-be" (the Father), an Outgoing movement which is life, otherness, infinity; and finally a

movement of self-knowledge, of return which is thought. Each of these terms implies the others: the self-generation of Intelligence is triadic; life is triadic. This Porphyrian triad is an ennead. Since they are three times three, they are One. Life was placed between the Father and the Son. When Victorinus takes up this triad, he makes the Spirit a feminine entity between the Father and Intelligence or Son. (*Adv. Ar.* I, 51, 19).

The use of the Porphyrian triad - *esse, vivere, intelligere* - by Victorinus was able to safeguard intellectually the unity of God, i.e. the consubstantiality of Father and Son and Spirit challenged as it was by Arius, but was it really an analogy that could be faithful to the relations within the Trinity?

Apparently Augustine was not satisfied with this first metaphysical treatise on the Trinity in the West. He opened his mind to the thinking on the Trinity done by the Greek Fathers and when in 415 he began his own fifteen books *On the Trinity* he sought within the human soul for analogy after analogy which could better reveal the relations between Father, Son and Holy Spirit as these were revealed in the Sacred Scriptures. Because Porphyry never cited the text of the Chaldean Oracles we cannot be sure whether he was guided by the Oracles in working out his philosophy or whether he interpreted the Oracles as he did in agreement with his own systematic interpretation of the Parmenides dialogue.

Augustine had other major disagreements with Porphyry, to such a degree that Pierre Courcelle can say:

The apologetics of the *De Civitate Dei* were addressed to Porphyry's disciples, who were so numerous in the cultured circles of Africa. Entrenched in his own experience he [Augustine] showed them the harmony that impressed him, at his conversion, between Neoplatonic doctrine and Christian dogma. St. John's prologue and the *Enneads* preached the Word of God. The dogma of the Trinity recalled the doctrine of the three hypostases, which Plotinus and Porphyry supported each in his own way. The dogma of Grace was clearly taught by Porphyry. Is it necessary to go further, like those Christian who were to find in Plato the dogma of the resurrection of the dead? Augustine did not think so (*De Civ. Dei.* XXII, 28;

Eusebius *Praep.* XI, 33), for after long years in the episcopate he perceived the irreducible oppositions that distinguished Porphyrian philosophy from Christian dogma. The incarnation of the Word, the resurrection of the flesh - these problems were a scandal to the Hellenes, so profoundly did they scorn the body in pride of spirit.<sup>14</sup>

But while we note the theological contradictions we must note the metaphysical originality of Porphyry. Even if Augustine's efforts were rewarded to the extent that his *De Trinitate* has become the standard work on the Trinity in the Christian West so that Aquinas added little to it, this should not obscure the greatness of the first step taken by Marius Victorinus the African when from Porphyry he accepted and worked with the First Principle as *Esse* and for the first time designated Being as activity, simple and infinite, a Principle from which substance is constituted. This Porphyrian analysis, even if it did remain literally faithful to the Chaldean Oracles and unfaithful to the declared teaching of Plotinus, yet rendered philosophic justice to that Plotinian Intelligible World where all is Life! But what Porphyry explicitly added was the insight into being as fundamental. In this respect he became the originator of a new metaphysics. After him Boethius will indeed say that the "to be" of things is derived from the divine to-be. Because the philosophical world has only recently become aware of all this, it can be truly said that many histories will need to be revised.

#### NOTES

1. Marius Victorinus, *Candidi Arriani ad Marium Victorinum Rhetorem de generatione Divina. Adversus Arium. De Homousio Recipiendo. Hymnus I, II, III.* Sources Chrétiennes, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 1960.
2. Synesius, *Hymni et opuscula*, ed. N. Terzaghi, I-II, Roma, Regia officina polygraphica, 1939-1944.
3. John J. O'Meara, *Porphyry's Philosophy from Oracles in Augustine*, Paris, Etudes Augustiniennes, 1959.

4. Willy Theiler, *Porphyrios und Augustin*, Halle. Schriften der Königsberger gelehrten Gesellschaft, vol. 10, 1, 1933. Paul Henry, *Plotin et L'Occident*, Louvain, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1934, pp. 46-47.
5. W. Kroll, *De oraculis Chaldaicis*, Breslau, Breslauer philologische Abhandlungen, vol. 7, 1, 1894. Psellus, *Expos. oraculis Chaldaicis*, P.G. 122, 1136-
6. Numenius, *Testimonia et fragmenta*, (ed) E. A. Leemans, Bruxelles, Acad. royale de Belgique, Classe de Lettres, Memoires, t. 37, 2, 1937.
7. Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, Vol. I, Paris, Etudes Augustiniennes, 1968, p. 489.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-146.
9. Pierre Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and their Greek Sources*, Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1969, pp. 415-418: "The dissemination of Porphyry's principal works throughout the entire civilized West, from the end of the fourth century to the beginning of the sixth, is significant."
10. Porphyry, *On the Parmenides*, 143a. cf. Marius Victorinus, *Adv. Ar.* IV, 241, *Adv. Ar.* I, 57, 7.
11. Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, II, *Textes*, Paris, Etudes Augustiniennes 1968.
12. *Ibid.* In this volume P. Hadot provides an Index of the Greek philosophic words used by Victorinus and an Index of the vocabulary of the Fragments of the *Commentary on the Parmenides* of Porphyry.
13. W. Kroll, *Ein neuplatonischer Parmenidescommentar in einem Turiner Palimpsest*, in *Rheinisches Museum*, t. XLVII, 1892, pp. 599-627.
14. Pierre Courcelle, *op. cit.* p. 419.

# Schelling's Neoplatonic System-Notion: *'Ineinsbildung'* and Temporal Unfolding

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## I

It is difficult to document the full influence of Neoplatonism upon the development of Schelling's thought, for he is a philosopher at once original and eclectic, situated in his own time and yet able to think within the inherited traditions. His 'Neoplatonism' is more a matter of affinities holding between his thought and the themes and preoccupations of the Neoplatonists than one of bookish or directly textual inheritance.<sup>1</sup> Early in his speculative career his contact with Neoplatonism comes through Spinoza and Leibniz, particularly the former. He is in contact with the 'tradition' from the start, but it hardly need be said that the 'tradition' has very little of the text and spirit of Neoplatonism about it after it has passed from Proclus to the Areopagite, from Dionysius into all of scholastic thought and finally come to light again in Spinoza. Schelling did not read Plotinus, not seriously at any rate, until 1804<sup>2</sup> and he did not begin to make contact with the text of Proclus until 1820.<sup>3</sup> Even then his acquaintance with Neoplatonism is fragmentary, more speculative than scholarly. This indeed is Schelling's typical style of thought. Most of his positions and the dynamic of their growth spring from the contemporary philosophical arena. In his younger days, prior to 1801, his wrestling with Kant and then Fichte about the limitations of a "*Reflexionsphilosophie*" shapes his thought. Later in life, after 1820, the

conflict with Hegel (and with his younger self that authored the System of Identity) over the limitations of reason itself is determinative. Typically Schelling will range historical precedents and justifications around these contemporary conflicts, and treat them with quite a free hand. Usually the Platonic traditions are assimilated to Schelling's own positions, and not just in one period but throughout the whole course of development of his central and all-determinative problematic—the confrontation of reason as philosophical system with intractable individuality, with facticity.<sup>4</sup> Platonism alone seems to have a philosophical language, a way of getting beyond the fragmentary and expressing the eternal, or rather, it is a model of thought guided by intellectual intuition bending the “patch-work of our language” to philosophical employment.<sup>5</sup> Platonism alone stands outside of the snarl of discordant but equally erring positions which makes up modern philosophy; it alone escapes ‘Reflexion’ and stands inside the truth.<sup>6</sup>

Schelling's respect for the Platonic and Neoplatonic traditions is not abstract; he sees himself living within the tradition, thinking its thought. It is no accident, then, that at the most crucial stage of his philosophical formation, the point where he feels he has achieved a satisfactory grasp upon ‘system’ and elevated philosophy above Fichtean subjectivity and reflexion, he announces the claim in Neoplatonic guise. The dialogue *Bruno* of 1802 represents historical Neoplatonism in the person of Anselm as the philosophical synthesis of all the conflicting traditions of ancient thought, the radical pluralism of materialism and the radical monism of Eleatic thought; Neoplatonism alone is conceptually inside the mystery which beauty shows and demonstrates, the unity of the divine and the natural, the intertwining of the eternal and the insubstantial individual through the mediation of ideas in their productive or ‘psychic’ function.<sup>7</sup> In the same way, the dialogue represents in the person of Bruno the philosophical synthesis of the modern world, the reconciliation of idealism (Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*) and realism (Schelling's philosophy of nature). Schelling repeatedly stresses the cognate nature, even the continuity, of the two syntheses; just as Neoplatonism bound the disparate worlds of sense and spirit together through the notion of ideas

and the illusory or autolimited character of the finite, so the System of Identity combines realism and idealism, at one and the same time saves the concreteness of philosophy and guarantees the comprehensiveness of its systematic grasp.<sup>8</sup> Schelling perceives himself as taking up and continuing in *pertinent terms*, the questions namely of philosophical *Wissenschaft*, the Neoplatonic problematic of system and structure—the question of the reconciliation of opposites, of the ingathering of the fragmentary and (on its own terms) inexplicable into a world, of the restoration of psyche to its appropriate level of functioning.

Schelling puts on the person of Giordano Bruno, then, and represents himself as the modern Neoplatonist, even though his knowledge of Bruno was scant and entirely second-hand.<sup>9</sup> Neoplatonism means for him above all *systematic* thought, speculation which reconciles, integrates, harmonizes and achieves a point of view transcending conflict and opposition. In this sense all systematic philosophy is ‘Neoplatonism,’ the conceptual ascent to the vision of the eternal or the Absolute within the dialectic of the finite and the infinite, the isolated thing and the conceptual order.<sup>10</sup> The sole object of all philosophy is “the Idea of ideas”—the union of the universal and the particular, of species and individual, the Idea which is in itself “the undividedness of the already differentiated from the One.”<sup>11</sup>

The *Bruno* is not an isolated instance. Since his earliest speculative days as a disciple of Kant and Fichte, Schelling had thought along the lines of the Neoplatonic problematic of the unity of being. The task was to bring Criticism to the status of system, to make it science or the mutual interpenetration and reciprocal determination of form and content.<sup>12</sup> In 1801, with the first announcement of the ‘System of Identity,’ Schelling lays claim to a comprehensive structural grasp of the totality of phenomena, to a system grounded in the ultimate non-difference or togetherness of a substantial unity like the Neoplatonic One and the structures of subjectivity-objectivity which scientific analysis of phenomena reveals.<sup>13</sup> The *Presentation of My System* is deeply stamped with both the methodological and structural rigor of Spinoza,<sup>14</sup> and the notion of

togetherness of being through structure, of identical articulation in the real and in the ideal working a total congruence of philosophical knowledge and reality, continues the tradition of Neoplatonism as transmitted from Proclus to Pseudo-Dionysius to Aquinas and come to flower again in Spinoza and Leibniz among the moderns.

Schelling is not a 'modern Neoplatonist' in that he adopts a classic notion of system. Rather he attempts to think the notion of system, and to be guided by reason's *demand* for system. It is not any achieved system that draws his speculative attention, but its *possibility* in a unified and intelligible world and its *necessity* for the shaping of such a world in concepts.<sup>15</sup> Thus in the System of Identity we identify the Neoplatonic influence not so much with any imitation of a type-ektype metaphysics or any mirroring of orders of procession and reversion as with the concern for apprehending being as structured, thus ultimately graspable as a whole. It is because his guiding problematic is the Neoplatonic search for the inner order and coherence of being that Schelling's system takes on typically Neoplatonic forms in its unfolding. For it is the demand of systematizing reason that isolated particularity give way to integral totality which raises the Platonic question of the legitimacy of the finite, which suggests that the only individuals containable within the system are purely formal or structural instances of the system-principle (identity)—these are the "Potencies" or groupings of beings akin to Neoplatonic hypostases, later the "ideas" or universal individuals—and which finally sees individuation or the multiplication of the finite as an ultimate surd, a "fall" from the rationality of system.<sup>16</sup> And it is the system-demand which pushes Schelling beyond the formal System of Identity, its confrontation with the ultimacy and permanence of individuation that forces his turn to the philosophy of spirit developed 1809 and thereafter.

## II

It would generally be more useful in establishing the Neoplatonic trend in his thought to contrast Schelling's precise system-notion with its historical Neoplatonic counterparts

rather than merely indicate affinities.<sup>17</sup> The Neoplatonic system grew out of a definite world and in response to definite problems and it is obvious that any use of Neoplatonism, even any attempt to rethink its fundamental problematic along with it, must leave this determining context behind. We shall understand more of Schelling's Neoplatonism, especially his concern for system, if we make quite clear how it differs from the historical models Plotinus and Proclus provide.

The basic impulse to system is a will to wholeness, to totality of grasp, to a conceptual outworking of a unity of being. For the historical Neoplatonists the possibility of this unified grasp of being lies in being itself, on the side of the objective. A basic sense of the term *τὸ ἐναι* for Plotinus, for instance, is that kind of order, coherence and organic unity necessary for there to be a world. Being is the possibility of *cosmos*.<sup>18</sup> For something to be, in a pertinent sense, is for it to be capable of taking its place in a world (or system), to be "in the intelligible" or to be in that which is a cosmos in virtue of its dependence upon the intelligible. Being also signifies, or is at least synonymous with, organism or living totality; at the appropriate level of being, as Plotinus sees it, intellection and life and existence all coincide, viz. in *noûs*.<sup>19</sup> Being is a living whole, and the task of system is to apprehend it as such, through the discovery of the lines of outpouring unity and epistemic-psychic reunification, through the discovery of structure.

Proclus, though insisting upon linearity of structure more than Plotinus, is no less intent upon thinking the Whole as organically united. With his emphasis on causality and participation he brings to light more forcefully than Plotinus the ancient world's demand for unity and finitude as the defining parameters of system.<sup>20</sup> For Proclus system is or reflects the work of causality; all that exists is gathered into a Whole through structures of asymmetrical relation or subordination. Sequence is subordination, and all our logic, consequently all our knowledge, is grounded in that differentiation-in-continuity which sequence bring about, namely causality.<sup>21</sup> Causality unifies; sequence leads back to an origin, a first. The system, a reflection of the work of causality, leads the totality back to unity.



For the Neoplatonists, then, the chief category behind the system-notion is unity. Now Schelling indeed shares this taste for the organic integrity of being, but thinks it not through unity alone, but through a dialectic of *unity and totality* in which ultimately abstract original unity proves to be a vanishing moment.

The category of totality is the key to Schelling's system-notion. He is a philosopher in the transcendental tradition and conducts his metaphysical inquiries from the vantage-point of the question: How is a world possible for me? For him system is not merely a unified accounting of a pre-articulated whole of being, not ■ total enumeration of the given, but the totalization of being as it is articulated inside *Wissenschaft*. It must be imagined as in some sense active and processive, through not in any discursive way, since it is not a matter of dividing off item from item but of moving within the whole. "One cannot describe reason; it must describe itself in everything and through everything."<sup>22</sup> Only for systematic reason is there a universe. The totality is unified only in being brought to the unity of the Absolute in reason, and yet that unity or Absolute Identity *is* and *is real* only as totality. "Absolute Identity is not cause of the universe, but the universe itself."<sup>23</sup>

Schelling's system-notion is generally distinguished from that of the Neoplatonists in three ways: (1) Schelling's system is committed to *unity and totality*, and he will in no way allow the Whole to be thought away for the sake of the One; (2) he refuses to think the unity-totality relation through any thing-oriented or thing-modelled schema such as part-and-whole; (3) he denigrates causality to a merely phenomenal linkage, a bridge between appearances and itself an expression of an unbridgeable gulf between actuality and possibility.<sup>24</sup> Structure, the backbone of system, is not unidirectional asymmetrical relation (like subordination and causality) but is reciprocity, coordination, the commutation of opposites. The stamp of Fichte's influence upon Schelling is evident here: Causality links appearances, but reciprocity links, or strives to link, the opposed metaphysical orders of subjectivity and objectivity.

Schelling's system-notion is further distinguished from the Neoplatonic sources in its fundamental direction. For Schelling,

unlike the historical Neoplatonists, theory overtakes and comprehends praxis. There is no goal or purpose for system extrinsic to itself, no life-goal for whose sake system is pursued. The will to system is first and foremost an affair of knowledge, or to put it somewhat differently, *knowing* is the decisive act of spirit, the act in which spirit is most 'about itself,' and it is not in any way for the sake of any finite thing, act, or even self. Schelling insists, therefore, that systematizing knowledge, philosophy constructed in "intellectual intuition," as he calls it, is not characterized by subjectivity or centration upon a 'self,' but rather by an abstraction from subjectivity, an 'ecstasy' or abandonment of self.<sup>25</sup> "That I say, 'I know, I am the knower,' this is the *πρῶτον ψεῦδος*."<sup>26</sup>

The knowing which Schelling considers constitutive of system is indeed act; it is the work of will—but not of will centered and particularized (*Eigenwille*); rather it is general will, *Verstand*.<sup>27</sup> It is this type of comprehending activity of man as spirit, at once both a knowing and a founding, which Schelling termed *intellectual intuition*. It is the organ of *Wissenschaft* or systematic philosophy and it defines system's stance as primarily theoretical. Later in the *Philosophy of Freedom* Schelling redefines intellectual intuition and maintains that the activity constitutive of system (the temporal division and reconciliation of the opposed principles, Ground and Existence) delivers man back to his primal status as the Word, the expression of the Absolute, at once the medium of and the witness to Creation. Since he is at the center of being and like to that center, man as spirit carries a con-science (*Mitwissenschaft*) of the Creation; all things are contained in that knowledge and man does not so much know them in it as he is *himself that science*.<sup>28</sup>

In Schelling's eyes, then, system is a self-enclosed, self-founding theoretical whole. System is self-bearing, self-containing, and even of the static System of Identity it is not inaccurate to suggest that in some sense system is subject, the self-enactor.<sup>29</sup>

In the System of Identity Schelling sees system, or the Absolute which system in ■ sense creates and in a sense reflects, as a theoretical or conceptual enterprise which consists in the

equilibration or indifferencing of the subjective and objective aspects in all real beings. The primal or substantial being is Identity. Its formal or cognitive character is subjectivity-objectivity. And the work of system is to identify or balance out knower and known in things, to reduce them to a structure of subject-objectivity and incorporate them within identity. System takes its origin in intellectual intuition, the indifference of knower and known, and *proves* out that indifference in the totality of phenomena. It is the establishment of intellectual intuition, its concretion, the revelation that the structure it represents at first abstractly as the 'identity of the differentiated' actually structures the world and brings it to 'system' or togetherness in the conceptual.<sup>30</sup>

In the course of Schelling's development there is a crucial change in the way he conceives system, a change coincident with the shift of his intense interest from philosophy of nature to philosophy of spirit between 1806 and 1809. While in the perspective of the Identity-System spirit and subjectivity were seen to *dwell within* system's comprehension and to be innate in system's self-movement, with the *Essay on Human Freedom* the perspective is reversed and system becomes the decisive act of spirit, the product of freedom's conquering over the facticity of the Ground, the effect and the instrument of Ego's ultimate conquering of Non-Ego in the historical and world-creating division and reconciliation of being.<sup>31</sup> Spirit's life is now seen to be the production of system and structure, the subjugation of nature to history, the rescuing of intelligibility or "world" from facticity. As different as this notion of spirit's activity is from the stasis of intellectual intuition in the System of Identity, the fundamental system-notion has not altered. 'Spirit' which decides the structure of being in its activity is not subjective, centered upon a self, but is the original subject, the locus of *θεωρία* or the conscience of Creation, the agent active in intellectual intuition.

The basic impulse and direction of the Neoplatonic system-notion, in contrast, is toward praxis, toward the definitive establishment of the subjective as the core of being. In both its Plotinian and Procline forms it bears the stamp of Socratic-Platonic interiority; system is not for disinterested

contemplation, but for actuation of the self. While the conceptual or theoretical burden of Neoplatonic system is the founding of the togetherness of *μέθεξις* and *ἔρως*, the equilibration of the ontological and the psychic order or the orders of procession and reversion, ultimate philosophical interest is centered upon psyche and its reintegration into the true order of being.

For the Neoplatonists being has already unfolded itself into a structured Whole, a Whole, however, which is less than its origin. In some sense the process of production is falsity, the establishment of being upon the basis of non-being, and the only *use* of the articulated structure into which being has unfolded in its going-forth is to undo the complexity, to reascend to simplicity and unity. In Plotinus, for instance, the chief interest is psychic rather than metaphysical; his concern is for elevation, transcendence, conversion, union with a substantial Absolute, and *not* the further discernment and expression of structure in the world which is Schelling's concern. Even for Proclus, seemingly obsessed with the outworking of a mechanical causality in the cosmos, the whole point of structure is the possibility of psychic return. The meaning and importance of procession is reversion, and it is only this possibility of inwardness and self-concentration at every level of being which rescues any multiplicity from utter dispersal.<sup>32</sup> For both Plotinus and Proclus the goal of philosophy is practical and religious, the actuation of self—or rather the de-activation of that dependent and outward self which moves among imperfectly unified multiplicities.

For Schelling system is creative of world; for the Neoplatonists it holds out the possibility of transcending the world. As Schelling's thought evolves from 1794 to 1821 (the beginning of the Late Philosophy) the notions of expression, bringing into the light, the issuance of godhead into creative divinity more and more dominate his system-notion. Intellectual intuition becomes more outgoing, manifestive, productive. It recovers its original Kantian sense of a creative or constitutive act of knowing.<sup>33</sup> System becomes ex-expression, the mirror of divine Creation. In Plotinus, by way of contrast, knowledge is always introverted, secretive and restorative, a struggle back through externality to unity—ultimately to the One, to the Unmanifest.

## III

An examination of the exact meaning of 'structure' within the system-notions of Schelling and the Neoplatonists and an analysis of their respective models of structure (*Ineinsbildung* and hypostasis) strengthens the impression that Schelling pursues the Neoplatonic system-problematic in a way markedly different from his historical predecessors.

For Schelling structure is the work of intellectual intuition, a knowing in which the subjective and objective are balanced-out, brought into equipollence, but not abolished as opposite.<sup>34</sup> Structure originates in reason's activity, then, or grows out of the root presupposition of any knowing that there must be a convergence of knower and known,<sup>35</sup> and it proves itself out or legitimates its function of articulating being by making system possible, by facilitating the philosophical 'construction' of the world. Through the indifference of subjectivity and objectivity in intellectual intuition a *world* is first made possible, a grasp of the differentiated finite particulars in all the orders both of nature and spirit such that their *community*, *interdependence* and radical *ontological* sameness are made to appear. Each particular is revealed to be, at bottom, not an independent substance but an *instance* of substantial Identity (which as expressed or manifest in 'form' is subject-objectivity). The opposition of nature and spirit is shown to be only relative, as is that of object and subject; they are indifferential structures differently indexed or overbalanced, only directionally opposed then, equally grounded in the indifferential relationality which is at once the standpoint, agent, and presupposition of intellectual intuition.<sup>36</sup>

System is all a matter of like knowing the like, i.e. of spirit moving in intellectual intuition, or abstraction from subjectivity, recognizing the same structural equipollence of opposites which is its life in knowledge as the founding structure of all things transparent to knowledge and able to be brought to system. This indifference in knowledge—the non-ultimacy of the subject-object distinction—coincides with and mirrors the substantial Identity at the basis of things. Indifference means the non-difference of knower and known, that, without any abrogation of their opposition, what the one is, the other is also.<sup>37</sup>

As Schelling conceives it, indifference characterizes not only the differentiated unity of subject and object *inside* knowledge, it determines the convergence of knowing and being as such. The 'form' of the Absolute—that is, its infinite position as differentiated subjects and objects in a world—is indifferent with its substantial or in-itself aspect, absolute Identity, and thus it is that system is possible.<sup>38</sup> Structure is discoverable *in the world* because, on one side, knowing is articulation or the imposition of structure, and because, on the other, being is already articulated, because at its most substantial level, it is a knot of identity and difference open to the glance of reason. Thus every being is an instance of indifference, fundamentally alike, or comparable with, every other being; structure recurs throughout the whole and makes possible groupings, totalities; every being recapitulates all others.<sup>39</sup> This way in which the articulation of thought and the articulability of being as structure dovetail into one another makes it apparent why Schelling's dominant image of the work of system-building reason is speaking, expression. *System is language*; spirit speaks in the world; reason discovers the intelligibility of the given and makes it into a world. In its active aspect as expression, as spirit, it is self-affirmation, the expressed bond between all things, a stamp which imprints its own character on all it comes into contact with, the "All-Copula." In its objective aspect, it is system.

Whereas Schelling's notion of system-structure derives from the subject-object polarity discoverable in knowing, for the Neoplatonists structure is basically a matter of the interrelation or derivation of beings, objective entities not wholly dependent upon structural relationships for their being, in some sense substantial in their own right. Structure, the possibility of system, is conceived ontologically. It is not an affair of the psyche and its realms of experience, but of the relations which obtain between beings on account of *production* and *derivation*. There is a general and comprehensive order of relations which beings have as beings or as hypostases come-to-stand in virtue of transcendent Unity, and this objective order of relations determines and circumscribes the place of subjectivity, even of that intellectual act above psyche which is

like what Schelling called subjectless intellection or intellectual intuition.

Determinative of the Neoplatonic cosmos, then, are not the ways of thought but certain abstract and objective principles—we might call them principles of integrity, sufficiency and power. Every integral being is productive, and every kind is linked to lesser kinds through production, maintains Plotinus, and this kind of linkage through production is virtually the only generalized and non-metaphorical attempt at explaining the process of hypostasis he makes.<sup>40</sup> Proclus takes over the same explanation as the chief principle of procession, holding that a being which has power necessarily acts to the utmost of its power and *produces*, or else it is sterile and imperfect.<sup>41</sup>

Production is not simply the communication of being and unity, though. The responsibility for there being further hypostasis beyond any given level of production involves a possibility of return, a possibility of re-centration. The full system-notion is production *and* return, procession and reversion, i.e. there is a gatheredness of being because all beings have a common origin and derive from one another in sequence *and* can return to that unity and in fact do strive toward that unity as their end.

As the Neoplatonists conceive it, there must be something of a lack in production, at least on the side of the produced or derivative hypostasis. For it is only such a lack, such a dependence on the prior whence a being derives its (relative) independence, which can compel an eventual turning about, a turning inward. Reversion is in some sense an undoing of production, a reflection on the Neoplatonists' part of the primitive Platonic feeling that spirit is somehow lost in the world, even a world gathered into an ordered and graded totality of perfection. We might say that there is at least one aspect of production which is a lessening of perfection and integrity, so that, at best, it is neutral or accidental that being has gone forth from unity, that differentiation has occurred.<sup>42</sup>

When contrasted with Schelling's notion of system as expression, as world-creating, there appears to be a kind of introversion in the Neoplatonic system-idea of production. The

actualization of the further possibility for being which production represents is in fact a perfection only inasmuch as it is a perfection of the origin and producer. The Whole is perfected not by some further addition, some further expression and stabilization of the primal power, but by that power's self-containment as superior when being goes forth to further hypostasis. The concept of hypostasis means mutual externality in the outflow of productive power; it means that beings produce beings without the prior being touched, altered or in any way affected. There is a communication of being and integrity, and yet at the same time a distancing.<sup>43</sup> There is gatheredness of dispersed being or *κωκυλία* only through causal ranking and hierarchy.<sup>44</sup>

#### IV

We can proceed from this point to isolate the system-logic and determine the model of structure at work in Schelling's philosophy as contrasted with that of the historical Neoplatonists. The whole difference in their respective approaches to system will be formulable through a contrast between reason as commutation of opposites (*Ineinsbildung*) and the Plotinian idea of hypostasis as double-act.

We might analyze the differing system-logics in terms of a fundamental relation and the rule or operation of its application. For Schelling the relation is identity in intellectual intuition, the organic indifference of subjectivity and objectivity. The operation whereby it is applied is equilibration, commutation of opposites, the mutual in-and uni-forming of subjectivity and objectivity into one another. In reason's intuition the isolated particular is reduced to a formula, to an instance of differently indexed indifference. The overbalanced indifference of the isolated individual is balanced-out in relative totalities (the potencies) in both nature and spirit, and the cycles of recurring structure converge into an organic unity. Behind this whole activity of intellectual intuition is *Ineinsbildung*, commutation of opposites; it is only because of reason's ability to see one objective phenomenon, e.g. electrochemical reactions, as more subjective than another, say

magnetic attraction, that the whole structural viewpoint which is the basis of system can be introduced.

This *Ineinsbildung* is an intermediation of strict identity and the instanced identity of the universe, totality. Through this commutation the absolute Identity which is reason's postulate and fundamental law, hence the one *substantial* moment which must be conceived to underlie system, is reflected into and revealed in the totalized relative identities or points of indifferential structure which are the world.<sup>45</sup> As Schelling sees it, the One and the Totality not only coexist, but are of equal rank and priority, built into one another, ultimately differentiable not as substances but only as aspects.<sup>46</sup>

In the Neoplatonic system-logic the basic relation is the identity of self-relation or self-centration, which when instanced in pure form is sufficiency. This relation is imposed upon a kind of quantified, or better, geographical grid which combines the gradations from inner to outer, from one to many, and from more down to less one upon the other. The result is hierarchy, asymmetrical interdependence of beings—*cosmos* as a simple function of series and subordination. As Proclus especially makes clear, the structure of being is wholly vertical, simply transcendence-and-subordination. Hierarchy is established not organically and through replicative structure, but in terms of a single scale whose defining terms are either simplicity or dispersal of ideally self-centrating activity.<sup>47</sup>

The Neoplatonic system-notion has built into it an irrevocable commitment to particulars and to substantiality, however much its basic impulse, working toward a community of being, demands the sublimation of the externality of objective being into that inwardness in which psyche at its fullest powers moves. Schelling's notion of the systematizing power of reason involves, on the other hand, a commitment to overcoming particularity, to abolishing the substantiality of the individual and to the redefinition of 'the substantial' in systematic terms, i.e. as a function of totality and structure.

The two system-notions are indeed similar, for system is, after all, a thorough-going interconnection and interrelation of particulars, no matter how accomplished. They are similar, but

do not coincide. And a final comparison of the ideas of *Ineinsbildung* and hypostasis will show that for Schelling, system is dependent upon overcoming individuality as such, while for the Neoplatonists it is dependent upon the maintenance of differentiation through order and hierarchy.

Both Plotinus and Proclus, when they speak technically of hypostasis, talk not only of production or *περιλαμψις* or participation but of a certain double-functioning or double-power constitutive of each being on each level of being which guarantees both production and differentiation of levels. Proclus states the idea rather baldly at first: "Every productive cause produces the next and all subsequent principles while remaining steadfast within itself,"<sup>48</sup> glossing over the question of power, act, and communication of actuality with his as yet uninterpreted notion of causality. Later he remarks that causality is possible only because the nature of power (*δύναμις*) is twofold. There is an active and a passive sort of power, and the two are interlocked so that all coming to be is an interfunctioning of the two, the one power active and so 'causative,' the other an imperfect power and so merely potential or dependent upon the former for perfection.<sup>49</sup>

This double-power schema is a translation of Plotinus more unwieldy (and infrequently employed) notion of hypostasis as a double-*ἐνέργεια* into Proclus' typical language of causality. The clearest instance of the Plotinian notion occurs in *Ennead* V. 4. 2: 26-37:

...But how can an act of intellection come to be if this primary intelligible remains in itself? We must distinguish two kinds of act, one of which is *of* each substance itself, the other of which is *out of* that same being. The first activity of the being is identical with the being itself; the one from it and out of it, necessarily following upon it, is something different from it ... From the one act remaining in its native place and element and reaching its fulfillment there, comes a begotten activity, intellection, which takes hypostasis. Since it comes from the greatest of all powers it attains to full being and substantiality.<sup>50</sup>

This notion of double-functioning is Plotinus' device for translating the *ὄντα-εἰδωλα* structure of Platonic ontology into

metaphysical categories incorporating the dynamism and stress on organic coherence of Aristotle's ontology. The quality of life, which Plotinus so characteristically associates with substance or being, expresses the basic capacity of anything real to produce an image that is living, an offshoot that attains to hypostasis in its own right.

And yet hypostasis remains a process of individuation more than one of communication; it is centration, concretion of activity to hard particularity. Hypostasis is defined from the point of view of production, a category of objectivity, and so can have that life and intermediation which Schelling suggests in the idea of commutation or *Ineinsbildung* only derivatively. All the relations which define hypostasis are vertical, whereas the dominant idea in Schelling's distinguishing a 'substantial' and 'formal' aspect of the Absolute, in his making its life their inbuilding, is that of *reciprocity* or a *play* inside systematic knowledge (and inside its point of origin, intellectual intuition), a movement at once vertical and horizontal, a movement that defines a structure for the phenomenal world, but does not abolish its concreteness in doing so. The activity of systematic reason in its inbuilding, in its play, encompasses and comprehends all isolated factors, brings them together for the first time into a cosmos.<sup>51</sup>

This play of inbuilding opposite aspects into one another is what Schelling calls the 'formal' aspect of the Absolute, that element responsible, as it were, for its self-knowledge. This 'form,' already a process of inbuilding subjective and objective tural basis for all, builds itself into the Absolute's substance—pure Identity—and in turn reflects that identity in its processes of integration.<sup>52</sup> Form or *Ineinsbildung* conquers over substantial identity inside systematic knowledge, over the unmanifest and unarticulated Neoplatonic One. *Ineinsbildung* thus is in one sense the destruction of what is ontologically prior, pure unity, and in another sense the reconstruction or 'saving' of that unity on the level of spirit's own identity—its own bridging life of knowledge which bring isolated particulars into a world, which is not content with externality and sequence, but demands organic unification.<sup>53</sup> It is a movement from being to being's construction in thought, and in that respect it is similar to

historical Neoplatonism's turn away from objective externality toward the inwardness of psyche. And yet, if it is a turn toward the inner it is *also* a redirection outward, an expression, a reconstruction of the universe as given as a universe adequate to spirit's way of being. It is not an ascent to a higher cosmos, a *τόπος νοητός*, but the first formation of cosmos.

More and more as Schelling moves toward the Philosophy of Freedom and *Ineinsbildung* becomes not the already-accomplished work of the Absolute standing behind and constitutive of system but the timely task of the human spirit living in history, thus an active process, does he approach endorsing a fully dualistic notion of system. The ontological polarity of Ground and Existence, the philosophical polarity of factual individuality and conceptual systematic grasp, and the temporal process of division and revelation in spirit's life which these polarities occasion all indicate a definitive turn away from Greek ways of thought on Schelling's part, an abandonment of the Neoplatonic system-problematic with its demand for unity, hierarchy, integrity as oneness and completeness as *stasis*. Indeed in following out the problem of individuality which developed in the System of Identity and in the recognition of facticity in the Philosophy of Freedom, Schelling comes close to endorsing an eternal matter<sup>54</sup>—or a permanent Non-Ego—over and against which the spiritual (God and man, together in the Creation) must progressively define itself, not only inwardly in knowledge, but outwardly in time and in history.

## NOTES

1. Werner Beierwaltes has carefully enumerated most of the pertinent affinities in *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt a.M., 1972) pp. 100-144. More to our interest and more central to the concerns of this paper is his suggestion that these affinities grow from one central point, from a shared problematic—a concern for 'the One as the principle of philosophy, a principle discoverable only in and through spirit's work of freedom (p. 144).
2. 1804 was a year of critical Platonic and Neoplatonic influence upon Schelling. In February he thanks Windisch-

mann for his German translation of the *Timaeus*, remarking that he is tempted to read it as a late or Christian document, not a product of antiquity. *Aus Schellings Leben in Briefen*, ed. G. L. Plitt (Leipzig, 1869) vol. II, pp. 8-9. Later the same month he thanks Windischmann for the edition of Jacob Boehme he has sent. Plitt, II, p. 10. In April he requests the works of Bruno and the Ficini edition of Plotinus. Plitt, II, p. 16.

In September of 1805 he requests Windischmann to send other Plotinian texts on the nature of matter, time, space, death and finitude. Curiously enough, in the same letter he admits that the Platonic-sounding term *Abfall* whereby he had been trying to indicate the adventitious character of the finite considered in itself was only metaphorical and unsuited for conducting exact analysis. Plitt, II, pp. 72-73.

3. Beierwaltes, *op. cit.*, p. 104n.

4. There is a kind of achieved consensus in recent Schelling scholarship that the variegated sixty-year career of speculation, for all of its apparent changes, pursues one central problematic and has one metaphysical preoccupation alone, viz, the testing of systematic speculation against 'the real.' Schelling's ultimate contribution is seen to be the limitation of the notion of system, the discovery of intractable individuality and the facticity of even spirit. Cf. W. Schulz, *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* (Stuttgart & Cologne, 1954), J. Habermas, *Das Absolute und die Geschichte* (Bonn, 1954), Martin Heidegger's 1936 lectures *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (Tübingen, 1971), and F. W. Schmidt, *Zum Begriff der Negativität bei Schelling und Hegel* (Stuttgart, 1971). For the limited purpose of this discussion we find it useful to make these relative distinctions in Schelling's development. The young Schelling's work is diverse but most original in its concern with nature, so we shall call the years 1794-1800 the 'Philosophy of Nature.' The years 1801-1806 are the System of Identity. The works of 1809 - 1815 are appropriately called the System of Freedom, and the writings of 1821-1854 the Late Philosophy or the Positive Philosophy.

5. Vom Ich. *Schellings Werke* (nach der Originalausgabe in neuer Anordnung, ed. M. Schröter) Munich, variously 1959-1968, 1:216.
6. Würzburg Introduction to Philosophy, *Werke* 6:79.
7. Bruno, *Werke*, 4:231 and 4:229.
8. *Ibid.*, 4:235-236 and 4:320-321.
9. X. Tilliette, *Schelling: une philosophie en devenir*, Vol. I, (Paris, 1970), p. 337.
10. Bruno, *Werke*, 4:301.
11. *Ibid.*, 4:243.
12. The Possibility of a General Form for Philosophy, *Werke*, 1:91 and 1:93.
13. The earliest expression of the system-idea is this:  
The absolute Identity exists in the individual under the same form in which it exists in the Whole, and conversely, it is in the Whole in no other form than in that under which it is in the individual (*Werke*, 4:132).  
The following text from the *Lectures on Academic Studies* provides the clearest and most representative statement of the whole system-notion:  
The Absolute simply for itself is necessarily pure Identity, yet the absolute form of this identity is to be in an eternal manner subject and object. . . Neither the subjective nor objective element in this eternal act of cognition is the Absolute, but that which is equally the substantial core of both, which accordingly is disturbed by no difference. The same identical essentiality is in the objective side of this absolute production a forming of ideality into reality and in the subjective side a shaping of reality into ideality. The same subject-objectivity is in both of these and [thus] the whole substantial core of the Absolute is posited in the absolute form. (*Werke*, 5:281)
14. In a letter of 25 May, 1801 Schelling apologizes to Goethe for retaining his edition of Spinoza while he works upon the expansion of his *Presentation*. *Schriften der Goethe-Gesellschaft*, Vol. 13, (Weimar, 1898), pp. 217-218.
15. Kant's mention of a systematic use of pure reason—or reason operating under a principle of thorough-going determination and providing a total field of all possible

predicates or determinations as a background for the specification of the possibility of any one particular—may have attracted Schelling's attention in this direction. Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A571-73, B599-601.

16. The development of the problem of individuality and individuation in Schelling's thought can be briefly indicated here. The System of Identity basically reduces particularity to differently indexed or articulated universal structures, structures of indifference or subject-objectivity. Individuality for the system is a function of structure and each individual is able to recapitulate all others. The "Bruno" of 1802 indicates Schelling's awareness of a new problem: Individuality on systematic terms in no way accounts for phenomenal plurality "or" for the spatial, temporal and causal textures of the interconnection or disconnection of phenomenal individuals. Individuation is seen to be explicable only as a sort of self-exclusion from the organic particularity of systematic individuality ("ideas").

*Philosophy and Religion*, 1804, proposes an account of particularity reminiscent of Erigena's Christianized and historicized Neoplatonism—the "fall" of the ideas away from the Absolute (pure ideality) and their return, enriched by reality.

*Aphorisms Introductory to the Philosophy of Nature*, 1805, explains finite particularity as the perfect particularity of ideas (or systematic individuals) intuited through distorting complexes of external relations. This is the most sophisticated explanation of individuality the System of Identity offers, and the most rigorously Neoplatonic.

In the *Essay on Freedom* of 1809 Schelling gives up the attempt to think finitude as an aberration of the organic particularity congenial with system and finds himself forced to adopt a primitive ontological principle of individuation, the *Grund*. Henceforth he thematizes the confrontation of system and intractable individuality as the overriding philosophical question.

17. It is easy to locate texts which state the Identity-System in a strikingly Neoplatonic guise, i.e. as a three-levelled

hierarchy of being. Though they do indicate the influence of Plotinus after 1804, they somewhat conceal Schelling's precise systematic interest, which we maintain, is Neoplatonic and which antedates any casting of the system into a three-orders-of-being form. For example,

From eternity and in eternal ways this *unity* creates images of itself in the infinite, From this eternal in-forming of unity into infinity, however, sensible nature wrenches itself free and is the mere *appearance* thereof or the eternal inbuilding subsisting under mere relations.

Aphorisms Introductory to the Philosophy of Nature, *Werke*, 7:176.

18. Cf. *Ennead* IV.7.8<sup>5</sup>:46-9:2 and *Ennead* V.9.9:3-8. Both texts derive from Plotinus' meditation upon the *Timaeus*. Cp. also IV.8.6:18-28.

19. *Ennead* I.6.7:8-12; *Ennead* V.6.6: 20-21.

20. Proclus insists that thought must come to rest in one principle or lose itself in the infinite. It must come to a stand, fall into an order, proceed by determinate method, and accomplish its work in a finite set of operations. Cf. *Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed., tr. E. R. Dodds (Oxford, 1963), Props. 4, 11.

21. *Element of Theology*, Props. 6, 7, 11. Note the argument for Proposition 11:

... But if all things were uncaused, there would be no sequence of primary and secondary, perfecting and perfected, regulative and regulated, generative and generated, active and passive; and all things would be unknowable. For the task of science is the recognition of causes. (Dodds, *op. cit.*, p. 13.)

22. Aphorisms Introductory to the Phil. of Nature, *Werke*, 7:146.

23. Presentation of My System, *Werke*, 4:129-130.

24. Bruno, *Werke*, 4:250-251.

25. Presentation of My System, *Werke* 4:114-115. Compare the Erlangen Lectures of 1820-1821, published under the title *Initia Philosophiae Universae*, ed. H. Fuhrmans (Bonn, 1969), pp. 38-41.

26. Würzburg System of 1804, *Werke* 6:140.



27. The Private-Course at Stuttgart of 1810, *Werke* 7:467.
28. Ages of the World, draft of 1811, *Werke Nachlassband*, (Munich, 1946), p. 5.
29. Cf. the early Schelling's definition of system, Commentary on the Idealism of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, *Werke*, 1:400.
30. It is this self-concretizing and self-establishing character of intellectual intuition which moves Schelling to speak of systematic philosophy as "revelation" or "self-affirmation of the Absolute" — or more generally as "expression" — long before any theistic or indeed substantial connotations are attached to the term *Absolute*. Cf. *Werke*, 7:53, 7:59, 2:362.
31. Consult M. Heidegger, *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (Tübingen, 1971). For the interesting suggestion that the *Grund/Existenz* dichotomy reflects the Fichtean polarity of Ego and Non-ego see M. Vetö, "Le fondement selon Schelling," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 70 (Aug., 1972), pp. 393-403.
32. *Element of Theology*, Props. 15, 16, and especially 17.
33. Consult *De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis* (1770), section 10, for Kant's first definition of intellectual intuition as a divine or 'principiating knowing' or perhaps a 'cognitio symbolica.'
34. *Werke*, 4:322-23, 6:143.
35. Würzburg System of 1804, *Werke* 6:137.
36. Deduction of Dynamic Processes (1801), *Werke* 4:77-78 and Presentation of My System, 4:123.
37. This definition of indifference seems to have been relatively enduring and of final validity for Schelling. Cf. *Werke*, 5:216, 7:205, and 'Ages of the World,' *Nachlassband*, p. 50. In "Philosophy and Religion," a work influenced by Schelling's actual reading of Plotinus, Schelling dismisses all other ways of defining indifference and makes the Absolute pure identity. Cf. *Werke*, 6:24-25.
38. For the first statement of this position, see Presentation of My System, Props. 19, 21, 22, 23, *Werke*, 4:122-123.
39. On the recapitulative nature of the recurring relative totalities or 'potencies' see 4:290-291, 4:419, 4:426, and

- 5:367. On the recapitulative nature of the perfect individuals or 'ideas,' whose function in the system is the same as that of the potencies, see 5:389-390, 7:163, and 7:203.
  40. *Ennead* IV.8.6:7-11 is typical of this line of thought which receives more technical formulation elsewhere as a principle of double-power or double-functioning.
  41. *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 25.
  42. Schelling clearly mirrors the hesitation of the Neoplatonic tradition, mediated as it is to him through Spinoza, when he declares that no system can solve the problem posed by the first synthesis or derivation, the passage from the infinite to the finite. *Werke* 1:34.
- The centrality of the Neoplatonic system-problematic to the process of his thought is attested by the reappearance of the same quandary in the latest formulation of the system-question:
- It is as if the whole world lies within the nets of the understanding or of reason, but the question is precisely this: How has it come into these nets? Manifestly there is something other and something more in the world than mere reason, and what is more, something which struggles to transcend these boundaries.
- Munich Lectures on the History of Philosophy, *Werke*, 10:143-144.
43. Proclus expresses all the contradictory nuances well:  
 ... In so far, then, as it has an element of identity with the producer, the product remains in it; in so far as it differs, it proceeds from it. But being like it, it is at once identical with it in some respect and different from it: accordingly it both remains and proceeds, and the two relations are inseparable.  
*Element of Theology*, Dodds translation, Prop. 30 argument, p. 35.
  44. *Ibid.*, Prop. 28 argument.
  45. Typical of Schelling's expression of this intricate notion is this passage, heavy with Spinozistic connotations:  
 This eternal—eternal by the very concept—reflexion into one another of form and substance is the realm

of nature or the eternal birth of God in things and the equally eternal reassimilation of these things into God, in such fashion that . . . nature itself is the full divine existence, God seen in the actuality of his life and self-revelation. *Werke*, 7:59.

46. Proclus himself entertains the notion of a coordinate unity and manifold as principles of being, but finds himself forced to reject the suggestion as leading to an infinite regress in search for an actual one. *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 5, argument.

The closest that Neoplatonism actually comes to Schelling's systematizing operation of *Ineinsbildung* is suggested by Proclus' assertion of the equivalence of immanence, procession, and reversion: "Every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it, and reverts upon it." *Elements*, Prop. 35. Note that Proclus asserts this equivalence to obtain only within the overarching relation of causality, within its implied demand for subordination.

47. Cf. *Elements*, Prop. 20. Proclus indeed mentions a replicative function of systematic ordering— "All things are in all things"—but fails to integrate this into the predominant scheme of causal ordering. *Elements*, Prop. 103.
48. *Elements*, Prop. 26.
49. *Ibid.*, Props. 78 and 79.
50. Other significant instances of the double-act explanation of hypostasis are: *Enn.* V.1.6:28-34; *Enn.* V.2.1:12-18; *Enn.* IV.8.6:7-10. In *Enn.* II.6 the double-function schema is generalized into a solution to the problem of the nature of qualities in *nous* and in the sensible.
51. Aphorisms Introductory to the Philosophy of Nature: "The spirit of true philosophy is the inbuilding and uni-forming of the general and the particular in infinite ways", *Werke*, 7:142. Cf. Further Expositions of My System, *Werke*, 4:394, 4:415.
52. Bruno, *Werke*, 4:327, Further Expositions, *Werke* 4:380.
53. Thus Schelling's insistence, throughout the System of Identity, that the appropriate method of systematic philosophy is not dialectic, which is just a dynamic form of exclusion, and thus confined within the sphere of

'Reflexion,' but an *Eins-und ineinandersetzen*. *Werke*, 4:399.

54. Cf. Essay on Human Freedom, *Werke*, 7:357-359. Compare Plotinus' definition of matter as the "darkness of the individual thing," *Ennead* II.4.5:6-8.

## The Problem of Ordered Chaos in Whitehead and Plotinus

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In this paper I shall attempt to show how the study of neoplatonism might help elucidate certain problems in process philosophy. I shall do this by directing attention to Whitehead's puzzling accounts of creativity and of non-statistical judgments of probability in *Process and Reality* and show how certain difficulties in his accounts might be clarified by considering them as reflecting certain central and familiar problems in the philosophy of Plotinus. I shall begin by analyzing the problems of Whitehead's account and attempt to state what I feel are his important underlying presuppositions. I shall then turn to a discussion of "sympathy" (*sympatheia*) and matter in Plotinus' philosophy. Finally I shall attempt to show that Whitehead's category of creativity and his non-statistical probability are expressions of the same philosophic concerns as Plotinus' account of matter and *sympatheia*, and perhaps they may be only the reinterpretation of a neoplatonic theme in terms of process metaphysics.

### I

Even as sympathetic an interpreter as Donald W. Sherburne has characterized Whitehead's account of the category of creativity in *Process and Reality* as "elusive"<sup>1</sup> and "terse to the point of obscurity."<sup>2</sup> Certainly, Whitehead's formal definitions are formidably technical:

'Creativity' is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact. It is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively.<sup>3</sup>

'Creativity' is the principle of *novelty*. An actual occasion is a novel entity diverse from any entity in the 'many' which it unifies. Thus 'creativity' introduces novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively.<sup>4</sup>

However, Whitehead's explicit analogy between his category and Aristotle's matter helps to clarify these definitions:

'Creativity' is another rendering of the Aristotelian 'matter,' and of the modern 'neutral stuff.' But it is divested of the notion of passive receptivity, either of 'form,' or of external relations; it is the pure notion of the activity conditioned by the objective immortality of the actual world – a world which is never the same twice, though always with the stable element of divine ordering. Creativity is without a character of its own in exactly the same sense in which the Aristotelian 'matter' is without a character of its own. It is that ultimate notion of the highest generality at the base of actuality. It cannot be characterized, because all characters are more special than itself. But creativity is always found under conditions, and described as conditioned. The non-temporal act of all-inclusive unfettered valuation is at once a creature of creativity and a condition for creativity.<sup>5</sup>

From these passages two things become clear: (1) creativity is the dynamic element in Whitehead's process philosophy; (2) creativity is not to be understood as change merely in the sense of a universal flux, but as a principle of novelty. The first point, *i.e.* the dynamic nature of creativity, underscores Whitehead's overt divergence from Aristotle. This divergence is clear even in Whitehead's analogy between creativity and Aristotelian matter, since in the Aristotelian system matter is the potentiality for change while in Whiteheadian metaphysics

creativity is the necessity for change. The universe of the process philosopher not only is ever changing but it must of necessity ever be changing. For Whitehead, at least, "The elucidation of meaning involved in the phrase 'all things flow,' is one chief task of metaphysics."<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, this change which characterizes the universe is not a mere Cratylean flux. It is an ordered, directed change: the change of a universe which is always "a creative advance into novelty."<sup>7</sup> That the flux of the universe is always in the direction of novelty is not the result of constraint placed on unsystematic and random change by some divine Demiurge. Rather in Whitehead's scheme God, who is the "creature of creativity,"<sup>8</sup> acts to direct and guide the operation of creativity by the valuation of possibilities in his primordial nature.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, God's activity is one of heightening the novelty of the creative advance. It does not as such bring novelty into being. In and of itself creativity is, as we have seen, always a movement towards novelty, apart from any specific divine intervention.<sup>10</sup> At this point one wonders whether Whitehead's category of creativity might not have more in common with Aristotle's matter than he noticed. Not, it is true, with matter characterized as passive but with matter characterized as "yearning for form as the female yearns for the male."<sup>11</sup> Certainly, Whitehead seems almost to say that in and of itself creativity requires not only the creation of another entity but of an entity which is novel in a non-trivial sense, *i.e.* has more than a numerical difference between itself and all other entities. Precisely this same conceptual tension between change in the sense of something different and change in the sense of something interesting occurs in Whitehead's discussion of probability and the justification of induction. And so it is to his account of "non-statistical judgments of probability" that we must turn.

## II

Whitehead's account of "non-statistical judgments of probability" occurs in section eight of part two of *Process and Reality*. In contrast to his category of creativity, his account of these non-statistical judgments has been little noticed.

Whitehead begins by summarizing the four lines of argument by which he defends induction on the basis of his metaphysical system. These are:

... (i) that each actual occasion has at the base of its own constitution the environment from which it springs; (ii) that in this function of the environment abstraction has been made from its indefinite multiplicity of forms of definiteness, so as to obtain a concordant experience of the elements retained; (iii) that any actual occasion belonging to an assigned species requires an environment adapted to that species so that the presupposition of a species involves a presupposition concerning the environment; (iv) that in every inductive judgment, and in every judgment of probability, there is a presupposition, implicit or explicit, of one, or more, species of actual occasions implicated in the situation considered, so that [by (iii)] there is a presupposition of some general type of environment.<sup>12</sup>

To understand this account we must remember that for Whitehead each actual occasion (and these actual occasions are, among other things, the ultimate thing in the physical world) creates itself. However, this self-creation is not *creatio ex nihilo*, rather each actual occasion uses as the material for its self-creation both the world as available to it and its subjective aim, which is, as it were, the directionality given by God for its self-creative process. The first two of Whitehead's propositions state the limitation which the given world imposes on the freedom of each actual occasion to make itself. Any new actual occasion can come into being only in relation to the world as it is when the actual occasion arises. However great the novelty of a new actual occasion, it arises on the basis of its past which provides the initial data for its self-constitution. Whitehead insists that he can avoid strict determinism here, however, since, although the past is always given, there always are many different ways in which the past may be apprehended (this is Whitehead's abstraction "...from its indefinite multiplicity of forms of definiteness").<sup>13</sup> But just as the necessity of an actual occasion's arising from a definite, given past means that any actual occasion must in some sense of the words reflect and

embody its past so this same necessity entails that, given an actual occasion, its past must have been of a certain kind ("any actual occasion belonging to an assigned species requires an environment adapted to that species").<sup>14</sup> Whitehead summarizes both these lines of argument in a single sentence: "Thus the basis of all probability and induction is the fact of analogy between an environment presupposed and an environment directly experience."<sup>15</sup>

Before further developing Whitehead's account, it might be well to emphasize just how radical is his break with his British Empiricist tradition. For Hume, and for many contemporary writers, matters of fact are atomic and have no relationships or infinitely many relationships. For Whitehead not only are there real internal relationships among things, but any given thing presupposes a determinate set of possible environments out of which it could have arisen. The relationship between an actual occasion and its environment is not so strong as to allow the environment completely to determine the actual occasion but neither is it so loose as to allow just anything to arise from anything. In this reasserting of the principle of "like gives rise to like," Whitehead remains closer to the classical tradition than many modern philosophers.

Whitehead continues his discussion by noting that there is another principle which is relevant to the discussion of induction. This principle is "The principle of the graduated 'intensive relevance' of eternal objects to the primary physical data of experience" which "expresses a real fact as to the preferential adaptation of selected external objects to novel occasions originating from an assigned environment."<sup>16</sup> This principle is the statement in the context of the theory of induction of Whitehead's doctrine of "subjective aim." As was stated above the absolute freedom of the self-creation of any actual entity is limited both by its past which provides it with the data from which it is to work and by its subjective aim. This subjective aim is defined, somewhat obscurely, by Whitehead as the "endowment which the subject inherits from the inevitable ordering of things conceptually realized in the nature of God."<sup>17</sup> Whitehead goes on to explain that God:

...is that actual entity from which each temporal concrescence receives that initial aim from which its self-causation starts. That aim determines the initial gradations of relevance of eternal objects for conceptual feeling; and constitutes the autonomous subject in its primary phase of feelings with its initial conceptual valuations, and with its initial physical purposes. Thus the transition of the creativity from an actual world to the correlate novel is conditioned by the relevance of God's all-embracing conceptual valuations to the particular possibilities of transmission from the actual world, and by its relevance to the various possibilities of initial subjective form available for the initial feelings.<sup>18</sup>

Since, then each actual occasion has this intuition (or in Whitehead's terminology "prehension") of "the graduated order of appetitions constituting the primordial nature of God,"<sup>19</sup> and since this vision, present as the subjective aim, is the most intense vision of what the actual occasion could become, there is the overwhelming tendency for most actual occasions to tend to fulfil this divinely given vision. But if the self-creation of every actual entity tends usually to conform to the order given in the primordial nature of God then the future will tend always to produce novelty, since, in the Whiteheadian metaphysics, "God is the organ of novelty, aiming at intensification."<sup>20</sup> Thus, Whitehead arrives at "an intuition of probability respecting the origination of some novelty."<sup>21</sup> This is "an intuition of an intrinsic suitability of some definite outcome from a presupposed situation," which "depends upon the fundamental graduation of appetitions which lies at the base of things, and which solves all indeterminations of transition."<sup>22</sup> These judgments neither are statistical in nature nor are they justified by appeal to any statistical theory of the nature of physical reality. But equally they are not religious in nature although any judgment of non-statistical probability is ultimately based upon a vision of the way the primordial nature of God is grasped by the particular actual occasions. But such non-statistical judgments "lie at a far lower level of experience than do the religious emotions,"<sup>23</sup> for "the concept of religious feeling is not an essential element in the concept of God's function in the universe."<sup>24</sup>

In Whitehead's account of creativity and of non-statistical judgments of probability we see a common, underlying theme: that of a dynamic tendency in the universe which is in some sense limited so that the dynamism of things does not become a dissolution into chaos but remains ordered. However, this ordered nature of change must never be thought of as imposed on the dynamism from without. The nature of creativity itself is directed towards novelty and the directionality of each actual occasion towards novelty of the highest intensity, although derived from the primordial nature of God, is part of the internal concrescing nature of each actual occasion. It is precisely this peculiar structure of dynamic, but self-ordered, principles of change which I think might be illuminating and illuminated by comparison with Plotinus. I am not intending to assert that there is any direct influence of Plotinus on Whitehead. Indeed Plotinus' name is never mentioned in *Process and Reality*. What I do intend to show is that the same set of problems occurs in Plotinus' philosophy and that perhaps a juxtaposition of the two philosophers' accounts may illuminate each. The Plotinian equivalent of Whitehead's creativity seems to be matter; that of non-statistical judgments of probability seems to be *sympatheia*. I shall discuss these two in reverse order.

### III

In Plotinus' philosophy *sympatheia* is not only a principle of causal explanation but also a quasi-dynamic aspect of nature. The early history of the doctrine of *sympatheia* is obscure. The idea may have derived from primitive ideas of sympathetic magic.<sup>25</sup> It is still unclear just when the idea moved from the sphere of magic to that of philosophy.<sup>26</sup> The proximate source of Plotinus, use of the term seems to be stoic.<sup>27</sup> For the Stoics the term *sympatheia* was not quite free from magical connotations since it was frequently used to explain the validity of the various types of divination commonly used.<sup>28</sup> For Plotinus also *sympatheia* is used to explain why the predictions of astrologers were occasionally correct and why charms might be effective.<sup>29</sup> In an early passage<sup>30</sup> Plotinus lists a number of effects of *sympatheia* which do not seem to be too far removed from the

realm of homeopathic magic: the growth of animals and plants is affected by their *sympatheia* with sidereal configurations;<sup>31</sup> the kinds of things which are characteristic of various countries are determined by *sympatheia*; and human differences both physical and mental are affected by *sympatheia*. However, it is not clear whether this passage gives Plotinus' own theory or is rather a polemical statement of an opponent's position. The most extensive discussion of *sympatheia* by Plotinus occurs in the group of treatises devoted to "The Aporia concerning Soul"<sup>32</sup> which seem to come from near the middle of his writing. In this discussion Plotinus implicitly distinguishes between two kinds of *sympatheia* by sharply distinguishing between states of affairs which are signs of other states of affairs (the *sympatheia* presupposed by divination) and states of affairs operative upon other states of affairs (the *sympatheia* presupposed by magic). For convenience a terminological distinction not used by Plotinus will here be introduced: the *sympatheia* presupposed by divination will be termed predictive *sympatheia* while that presupposed by magic will be called operative *sympatheia*. Predictive *sympatheia* is a universal condition which exists because the universe is an organic whole and thus each part of the universe in some way mirrors the action of every other part. Since predictive *sympatheia* is grounded in the nature of the cosmos, Plotinus discusses it in terms of the relations holding between Soul and the phenomenal world. Operative *sympatheia* on the other hand is a local rather than a universal condition. Magic is effective because one part of the universe is in a condition of *sympatheia* with certain other specified parts of the universe. Operative *sympatheia* is also discussed by Plotinus in terms of perception, which is one of the most accessible phenomena involving interaction between two limited regions of the universe. A discussion of each kind of *sympatheia* will allow us to see their common dynamic aspect.

#### Predictive *Sympatheia*

As has been said, predictive *sympatheia* exists because the universe is an organic whole. The fact that Plotinus chooses to interpret the phenomenal universe in terms of an organic model

means that causality in terms of external relations will not be a sufficient explanation of phenomenal change. Instead the ultimate explanation of the physical world will be in terms of internal relations. The distinction between internal and external relations is made by Plotinus in the following way:

For just as the directing of a single animal is either from without and from the parts or from within, from the ruling principle; so medicine starts without and goes various ways from part to part and plans each act, but nature works from within, not needing to plan. The directing of the universe... is not according to the model of medicine but of nature.<sup>33</sup>

Plotinus' position here must be distinguished from a model of reality in terms of coherence. He is not saying here that the nature of each event is determined by the total context of all the events with which it is connected, although he might wish to assert a variant of the coherence position also, as will be seen in discussing operative *sympatheia*. But such a coherence theory would still be in terms of part influencing part and so be in terms of the model of medicine, that is, in terms of external relations. Here, however, Plotinus is asserting that each part of the universe is related to each other part in terms of its own internal structure. Each thing in the Plotinian universe contains the seminal reasons of all<sup>34</sup> and so could develop in different ways. This is rather like the empiricist assertion that any state of affairs can logically follow any other. And as with the empiricist account, Plotinus' "seminal reasons" are not sufficient to account for physical objects and the general tendency of things to develop in an orderly manner. But predictive *sympatheia* implies that each thing in the physical world presupposes Soul existentially as a principle of the unity of the phenomenal world in its development. The souls of individual things in the physical world are united in their grounding in Soul.<sup>35</sup> This unity is more than a union of souls derived from the prior identification of each with a common object of knowledge. Although the unity of individual souls does not imply an identity of passions and desires, since these result from the interaction of soul and material complexes, it is the kind of unity which various parts of an organism possess by virtue of

being members of a single living being.<sup>36</sup> This unity is an ontological unity both of origin (since the souls are all derived from Soul) and of activity (since the souls are acts of Soul). United in this manner the souls will be modified by any changes in Soul and will be altered by Soul as its activity in the souls is affected by the changing conditions of physical existence. This modification of the souls affects physical objects and so inhibits the activities of the seminal reasons constituting the various objects. Since the modification of physical objects is conditioned by the total state of all souls, the alteration in any one object will be a sign of the total state of affairs in the universe. This kind of modification may then be used predictively. Predictive *sympatheia*, then, expresses the universal tendency to change and randomness. It is the activity of the non-rational aspects of physical existence upon the rational structures of the seminal reasons.

#### Operative *Sympatheia*

Although a firm opponent of Ptolemy and other hellenistic astrologers,<sup>37</sup> Plotinus admits a form of sidereal efficacy, and thus a form of operative *sympatheia*, which seems superficially quite similar.<sup>38</sup> However he insists that any sidereal influence is neither the result of the elemental nature of the stars<sup>39</sup> nor of their volitions.<sup>40</sup> Operative *sympatheia* as Plotinus develops the concept is quite different from external constraint, for the magician, "operates from no outside standground."<sup>41</sup> And, of course, operative *sympatheia* exists apart from human employment and desire.<sup>42</sup> The basic model which he uses to interpret operative *sympatheia* is that of resonance:

The prayer is answered by the mere fact that part and other part are wrought to one tone like a musical string which, plucked at one end, vibrates at the other also. Often, too, the sounding of one string awakens what might pass for a perception in another, the result of their being in harmony, and tuned to one musical scale; now, if the vibration in a lyre affects another by virtue of the sympathy existing between them, then certainly in the All—even though it is constituted in contraries—there must be one melodic system; for it contains its unisons as well,

and its entire content, even to those contraries, is a kinship.<sup>43</sup>

This passage clearly shows that operative *sympatheia* is grounded in Logos, i.e. that harmonizing effect of Soul present in the physical world, since operative *sympatheia* exists as a result of the universe's being "a single harmony."<sup>44</sup> But operative *sympatheia* is not Logos. It is a result of Logos. Since the phenomenal world forms a single system it is possible for one part to affect another. This would be impossible in a world of discontinuous atoms. However, since the phenomenal world is not only a single system but a single system resultant from a logically prior unifying structure, there exists not only physical impacts between things, mechanical causality, but there is also action at a distance between similar things which does not affect intervening objects,<sup>45</sup> *sympatheia*.

Although unlike mechanical causation in that it acts at a distance, the action of operative *sympatheia* is similar to that of mechanical causation in that it is capable of precise formulation. The seminal reason of any particular thing in the phenomenal world comprises a carefully balanced harmony of attributes. However, the action of the seminal reason is affected by the state of affairs in the universe at the moment in which it acts. If there is simultaneous with a particular thing other things having structures similar to that thing but differing from it in that certain attributes of the first are more pronounced in the others, then those attributes in the first will also tend to become predominant in it. Thus operative *sympatheia* is a modification of the activity of seminal reasons<sup>46</sup> but its action is not random since it is both the result of the underlying pattern of the cosmos and is capable of being described in terms of probabilities. Operative *sympatheia* is also properly termed *sympatheia* (although it is quite different from non-causative, predictive *sympatheia*) since operative *sympatheia*, like predictive *sympatheia*, is grounded in the organic nature of the universe.

#### IV

Plotinus' discussion of matter is, as is well-known, notorious for its supposed confusion of moral and ontological



categories. However, I feel that that charge is merely the result of a verbal confusion, and that Plotinus simply uses the term "evil" in a very odd sense, one which is divergent from the earlier Platonic tradition. Plotinian evil is a state or mode of things rather than a class of events and so it is not the same as physical evils. It is not that Plotinus denies the existence of physical evils. He recognizes their existence and even that they are in a proper sense evil. But when he speaks of evil he means the quality of existence which is prior to the evil events and in which they participate. Plotinus' theory thus is the reverse of the Christian neoplatonist, Augustine. In Augustine while there are morally evil acts the emphasis is upon the mode of existence which is the ground of moral evil, *i.e.*, sin. While physical evils become, for Augustine, almost accidents of physical things, in Plotinus moral evils are acts of the souls and do not pertain to the proper nature of Soul. But for Plotinus evil is a fundamental condition of physical things. It should also be noted that for Plotinus evil as a condition of existence contains no moral disapprobation. That a thing participates in evil does not mean that the thing in question is (morally) bad. It is the case that evil provides the occasion for morally wrong acts on the part of individuals, but evil, as such, is not, in the Plotinian system, wicked. Evil is quite clearly limited by Plotinus to the principle of instability in the physical world.<sup>47</sup> Given this definition of evil, Plotinus believes that he can demonstrate that its existence is necessary. Wickedness could only be necessary if that which gave rise to it were also morally evil, but that the Divine Triad, which is the cause of beings, is morally evil Plotinus denies. Moral evil remains, for Plotinus, a fact of experience, but for him, unlike both the middle-platonists and the gnostics, the fact of moral evil is relevant to a description of the *psychical* but not the *physical* world.

It may be questioned whether the choice of the term "evil" is a particularly fortunate one and it may be argued that this special usage is at least partially responsible for his meaning being misinterpreted as a gnostic theory of Matter.<sup>48</sup> It certainly can not be denied that the differences between the Plotinian and the gnostic theories of Matter would have been much more evident if Plotinus had used some term such as

"creativity" or "pure potentiality" instead of the term "evil" to describe Matter. However, in defense of Plotinus' usage it must be admitted that he had already extended the use of "potential" to include both the Aristotelian "potency" and the Plotinian "possibility" and any further extension of terms related to potentiality would only have increased the possibility of misinterpretation. Further, in the Platonic tradition "The Good" and "The One" were used interchangeably. When applied to The One the term "good" was understood to be used without any particular moral connotations. Therefore, Plotinus had at least a precedent for terming that which was completely contrary to The One, "evil" and for expecting his interpreters to realize that "evil" was, like "good", being used without any moral implications. Once we see that Plotinus does not confuse axiological and ontological matters and that he uses the term "evil" to mean unlimitedness or complete instability rather than moral wickedness, the metaphysical function of Plotinian Matter is seen strikingly to resemble that of Whiteheadian creativity. Since Matter is pure limitlessness, pure lack, it receives Form. Unlike Aristotelian Matter, Plotinian Matter has no inherent tendency towards Form. Rather it is complete randomness or pure indeterminancy.

"Matter becomes mistress of what is manifested through it: it corrupts and destroys the incomer, it substitutes its own opposite character and kind, not in the sense of opposing, for example, concrete cold to concrete warmth, but by setting its own formlessness against the Form of heat, shapelessness to shape, excess and defect to the duly ordered."<sup>49</sup>

As a condition of the manifestation of Form, Matter is unstable. Matter is able to assume any Form and there is no more reason for its assuming one Form than another. Therefore, the manifestation of any Form in Matter has the instability of Matter and will not possess even momentary stability. A partial exception to this universal instability exists in the heavenly bodies, but their stability is due to the fact that the fire which composes them cannot mutate into another element because of its spatial position, not to any inherent stability of Matter. Apart from the heavenly bodies there is only generic endurance

in the physical world. Matter, for Plotinus, does not individuate<sup>50</sup> but its instability is such that Forms in it are not perfect.<sup>51</sup> In this there is no actual assigning of a positive activity to Matter. The inhibition of the Forms is a negative act. It takes place not by a positive opposition of some other Form but by a simple tendency to any other Form.<sup>52</sup>

## V

By now certain obvious parallels between Whitehead's non-statistical judgments of probability and category of creativity on the one hand and Plotinus' use of *sympatheia* and category of Matter on the other will have become evident. It only remains to state, in conclusion, these similarities more sharply.

Both the Whiteheadian non-statistical judgments of probability and the Plotinian *sympatheia* were attempts to introduce a special factor into the causal analysis of physical phenomena. Both were attempts to see the occurrence of changes in the physical world as determined by more than the simple operation of past events. Both were attempts to add as it were a verticle causal dimension to the horizontal determination of the past. Although Plotinian *sympatheia* viewed as a kind of synchronic causation may seem more familiar to us than Whitehead's vision of novelty as always the more probable event, there appears to be no reason why Whitehead's account of non-statistical probabilities might not also be interpreted as a kind of synchronic causative factor. If this possibility is allowed, then although the judgments of probability would remain non-statistical, they might well be capable of being analyzed mathematically.

The analogies between Plotinian Matter and Whiteheadian creativity seem, at first glance, to be more remote than those between *sympatheia* and non-statistical judgments of probability. Yet, if my argument that Plotinus' use of the term "evil" is not primarily axiological, then more similarities emerge. Both Matter and creativity are the fundamental dynamic principles responsible for the ongoingness of the universe. Both are attempts to take randomness and chaos seriously in construct-

ing a metaphysical system. Both are attempts to give a consistent philosophic account of Plato's myth of The Receptacle. The feeling may remain that nevertheless the connotation of the two terms is radically different — that somehow creativity is a more "positive" concept than Matter. It should be remembered, however, that even for Whitehead the processes of change in the cosmos may assume the apparent evil aspect of "the remorseless working of things," and that, "...if the best be bad, then the ruthlessness of God can be personified as *Ate*, the goddess of mischief. The chaff is burnt."<sup>53</sup> I think that the real difference between Matter and creativity is not one of positive as opposed to negative connotations. It rather depends upon the relation of each term to the other basic categories of the metaphysical system. For Plotinus when all is said and done, and despite the extreme qualifications necessary to state it correctly, Matter is in some sense ontologically dependent on The One. In Whitehead, however, God and creativity are, at best, interdependent. Thus the real contrast is between two dynamic accounts of the physical world, one of which sees all things as all unified in terms of an ultimate transcendent principle; the other of which sees everything as involving at least two ultimate principles, not engaged in a gnostic battle of good and evil, but still irreducibly distinct. Perhaps the real contrast is Whitehead's Platonism versus Plotinus' neoplatonism. If this is the case, then surely the juxtaposition of the two is mutually illuminating.

## NOTES

1. Sherburne, Donald W., *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality* (New York: 1966) p. 32.
2. Sherburne, *op. cit.* p. 33.
3. Whitehead, A. N., *Process and Reality* (New York: 1929) p. 31.
4. Whitehead, *op. cit.* pp. 31-32.
5. Whitehead, *op. cit.* pp. 46-47.
6. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 317.

7. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 340.
8. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 47.
9. *ibid.*
10. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 31.
11. Aristotle, *Physics* 192a 20-24.
12. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 314.
13. *loc. cit.*
14. *loc. cit.*
15. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 314.
16. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 315.
17. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 373.
18. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 374.
19. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 315.
20. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 104.
21. Whitehead, *op. cit.* p. 315.
22. *ibid.*
23. *ibid.*
24. Whitehead, *op. cit.* pp. 315-316.
25. cf. Thorndike, Lynn, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York: 1923), Vol. I, p. 84-86.
26. Thorndike is almost certainly incorrect when he states, without documentation, that, "Heracleitus was perhaps the first philosopher to insist upon [the principle of sympathy] (*op. cit.* p. 84)." He appears to have in mind Heracleitus fragments 51 and 54 (Diels); however, in those fragments Heracleitus is asserting the existence of universal harmony, a concept related to, but quite different from, universal sympathy.
27. Sambursky, S., *Physics of the Stoics* (New York: 1959), p. 42.
28. Lebreton, J., *Histoire du Dogme de la Trinité* 8th ed. (Paris: 1927) Vol. I. p. 93. However, not all stoic defenses of divination appeal to *sympatheia*. Cicero (*De Div.* I. 56) gives a stoic defense based upon the closed causal structure of the world.
29. IV. 4.39, 40.
30. III.1. [3]. 5.
31. I find I must disagree with Bréhier, MacKenna-Page, and Armstrong in interpreting the Antecedents of "ἀπὸ τῆς

τῶν συμπάθειας" in III.1.5.8 as referring to the various motions enumerated in lines 2 to 4 rather than the stars of line 2, although Plotinus does not elsewhere seem clearly to distinguish *συμπάθεια* between living things and sidereal bodies from *συμπάθεια* between living things and sidereal configurations.

32. IV.3 [27]; IV.4 [28]; IV.5 [29].
33. IV.5.11.1-7.
34. V.7.2.
35. IV.9.1.
36. IV.9.2.
37. II.3 and Bréhier's notice *ad loc. cit.*
38. IV.4.30.
39. Plotinus went so far as to attack Ptolemy's inconsistency in attributing more than the heating-cooling nature that his stated Aristotelianism would entail.
40. IV.4.32.1-2.
41. IV.4.40.
42. IV.4.41.
43. *ibid* (MacKenna-Page translation).
44. IV.4.41.7.
45. IV.4.32. It should also be noted that Plotinus' account of vision in IV.5.1-3 depends upon operative *sympatheia*.
46. contra Gelpi, Donald, "The Plotinian Logos Doctrine," *The Modern Schoolman* (1960) p. 304 footnote 23.
47. cf., I.8.5, where evil is explicitly distinguished from any particular bad things—including injustice.
48. I.8.3; II.4.16.
49. I.8.8.
50. V.7.
51. I.8.8.
52. *loc. cit.*
53. Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 373.

## Plotinus and Sartre, An Ontological Investigation of Being-Other-Than

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This morning, then, having freed our minds from all cares and being assured of untroubled liesure in a peaceful exurban retreat, we will undertake nothing less than a meditation on otherness.

This Meditation will be philosophic rather than what is usually called historical. I am talking about otherness, and I am concerned with Plotinus and Sartre only insofar as they can furnish hints, leads, corroborations. I am not attempting to display the influence, if any, of Plotinus upon Sartre (or of Sartre upon Plotinus) or to trace their common source in Parmenides and Plato. I am not, except when and insofar as it furthers the development of the theme, comparing and/or contrasting Plotinus and Sartre.

In the course of this account of otherness we will observe that we are saying things that are strikingly similar on the one hand to the words of Plotinus in the third century and on the other to those of Sartre sixteen hundred years later. The suggestion I wish to make is that a significant, I should say *the* significant, account of otherness is bound to reproduce what we shall honour Plotinus by calling Plotinian themes, since Plotinus came first.

So I mean this to be historical in another sense. That contemporary philosophic enterprises, whether wittingly or unwittingly, find themselves in living contact with Plotinian

notions is the most proper testimony to the continuing vitality of Plotinus. The best commentary on a philosopher is to philosophize.

For reasons which will emerge soon, it is appropriate to approach otherness *via* the otherness revealed in an analysis of knowledge, mind, the knower. I am using these terms *in propria persona*; I will indicate, when opportune, certain similarities among mind, Plotinus's *Nous*, and Sartre's For-Itself.

Knowledge is knowledge *of*. It is knowledge of (about) tree, horse, table, etc. More generally it is knowledge of being. Here at once appears *otherness*. Being is other than knowledge.

At first this otherness shows itself as an externality of being to knowledge. Knowledge is being represented as one "thing", the object of knowledge as another. But this cannot stand. The object of knowledge is the *known*. The known *qua* known is related to knowledge. There is no known without a knowing. And conversely, there is no knowing without a known. The otherness can no longer be represented as thing barging against thing, but as relative opposition. And the otherness is internal to both the knower and the known. The knower needs the known; this need is internal to the knower (this need *is* the knower) and so the known is "in" the knower. The known needs the knower to be a known; this need is internal to the known and so the knower is "in" the known. So the knower and known are one, but are not *the* One. The knower-known is not only a dyad, but is through-and-through dyadic — dyadic on both sides.

Thus knowledge is what it is not, and is not what it is.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge is the object, is lost in the object, has as its content the object, is "identical" with the object — except that it is not the object, it is other than the object, it is the negation of the object.

As Sartre has it:

The first procedure of a philosophy ought to be to expel *things* from consciousness and to reestablish its true connection with the world, to know that consciousness is a positional consciousness *of* the world. All consciousness is positional in that it transcends itself in order to reach an object, and it exhausts itself in this same positioning. All

that there is of *intention* in my actual consciousness is directed toward the outside, toward the table... all knowing consciousness can be knowledge only of its object. (BN lxi)

The dialectic through which we have been passing began, apparently, with the mind's having a transcendent object — "knowledge is knowledge *of*." All too soon, the transcendent object became "the known," which emerged as strictly coordinate with "the knower." At the same time knowledge was seen as dyadic, indeed it seemed to have no other discernible "feature" than to be a dyad. But then the transcendent object could not be kept out of play. Knowledge is seen ultimately *as other than itself because it is other than the transcendent object*.

(Self-knowledge (a) depends on a transcendent object on pain of being contentless and (b) is still dyadic, still a "relative opposition" of knower and known.)

Plotinus's *Nous*, in being other than the One (the transcendent object) is other than itself: a through-and-through knower-known, a through-and-through one-many, a through-and-through dyad. (Cf. V, 6, 1; VI, 4, 11, 15-20 etc.)

Similarly Sartre's For-Itself (roughly, consciousness), in being other than the In-Itself (the transcendent object) is other than itself. It is not "self-identical" (in *his* terms: in Plotinus's language *it is not the One*.) It is "its own nothingness" (BN 28) — or in Plotinus's language, it is primitively an 'intelligible' matter; in short, it is otherness.

Is the self-othering of Mind the paradigm of otherness; And is it the source of all otherness?

To philosophize a bit: To the extent that there are things which are utterly separate from, and out-of-relation to, one-another they are not properly *other* from one another. (It is significant that they cannot be spoken of without these manifest contradictions "not other from one another"! — their lack-of-relation can be 'meant' but cannot be said.) If one looks at an ascending scale of being, it is only as things enter into causal reciprocities which are more and more intimate that otherness ceases to have a merely abstract logical nature and becomes concrete opposition. Thus the otherness of a living

thing from itself, the opposition of its present state (in the course of its development) to its essence, which otherness is the principle of its growth, is a more concrete and therefore a more intense otherness than the relatively external otherness of one living thing from another. The otherness within life (Plotinians read: soul) is a weak adumbration of the otherness within knowledge. The Other achieves its truest nature only in dynamic tension with the Same.

Plotinus's matter (matter-matter, not intelligible matter) represents the level of absolute dispersion of which we have just been speaking, just as do the out-of-relation "in-itselfs" of which Sartre sometimes speaks. For both, the otherness that deploys itself in order, in potency-act progression, in movement which is not mere dispersion, is basically the otherness of mind.

A subsidiary point: Sartre, perhaps because of a Cartesian bias, has little to say about conscious beings below man (brute animals) or about living beings below consciousness (trees). Now if one forgets about these, one can present a plausible case for the For-Itself (in plain language, man or the human mind) as the origin of all negation, and so of all otherness, of all potency, and, we might add, of all movement that can count as movement and of all life that can count as life — indeed, not only the origin of these, but even their sole locus. Whatever is not human mind can be made to seem an in-itself beyond the same and the other.

This, of course, cannot be the truth even with respect to the sub-organic, because the sub-organic is not in point of fact a region of absolute dispersion and externality. The obvious external relations in this region exist only as coordinate with internal relations. Thus Plotinus is much more sound in taking nature to extend to the earth as well and in recognizing nature as logos and life.

Still less can Sartre be considered correct when plants and animals are once taken account of. Here much more one must recognize internal self-otherness and self-othering which Plotinus represents, with suitable qualifications, as life, logos, even contemplation.

To return to the main theme: There is something fundamentally sound in Sartre's intuition. To put it in Plotinian

terms: life, logos, contemplation, attain their essential reality, their highest truth, in mind, in Nous. Nous is, in an Hegelian sense, "the truth of" what is below Nous. Nous is the real reality of what is below it.

By taking "knowledge is knowledge of" as our starting-point we were able to display the otherness from itself lying at the heart of knowledge, an otherness, it will be recalled, which does not disappear in the case of "self-knowledge." It has been seen also that the self-othering of knowledge is the highest level of othering, it is "the truth" of the other otherings.

As the highest othering, the highest level of being-involved-with-non-being, is mind causeless, independent?

The notion of the causeless must be distinguished carefully from that of the self-caused, although often this is not done. Causeless means what it says — it refers to that which has no cause, either itself or anything else. The original logical division appropriate here is not between self-caused and caused-by-another, but between *caused* and *causeless*. Self-caused and caused-by-another are species, so to speak, of *caused*. (Hume was well aware of this point.) Plato's Good is causeless, Aristotle's unmoved movents are probably meant to be causeless, although this is compromised by the *καθ' αὐτὴν* of *Metaphysics* A, 7 (often translated "self-dependent") and the ambiguity (at least) of "self-knowing knower". St. Thomas's God is causeless. Plotinus's One is causeless (according to the "incorrect" mode of speaking, however, it "makes itself": VI, 8, 13; cf. VI, 8, 7). Descartes, on the other hand, as is well known, refers to God as the *causa sui*.

Is mind causeless? As the causeless, the independent, mind would spin all reality out of itself. But this is not the case. The internal relation which is the self-othering is here the internalization of an external relation. Mind — to be mind — needs, as we have seen, an object transcending mind.

We know very well that Plotinus sees this. The Nous needs the One. The relation to the One is the basis of the Nous's self-relation — this Plotinus expresses by saying that the Nous turns to the One to become a knower (V, 2, 1). Its "intuitive reception", its "looking at" the One is the continuing condition for its dyadic knowing on its own level (VI, 7, 35). Also we

must give weight to the passages in which he refers to the One as the intelligible (e.g. V, 4, 2; V, 6, 2) – the One is the “external” “intelligible” by reference to which alone the Nous becomes intelligible to itself.

For Plotinus, then, the Nous is not causeless. It is caused by the transcendent object, the One. The One is causeless.

Sartre, too understands the need for the transcendent object. He toys with the notion of consciousness as self-cause, “the existence of consciousness comes from consciousness” (BN lxvi). But what consciousness causes is its own nothingness, in his expressive phrase it “*nihilates*” – in an active sense of ‘making nothing’ – its own nothingness. Its nothingness, however, must be the nothingness of *something*, that is, its nothingness must depend after all on the transcendent object, which he calls the *In-Itself*. So it is not, ultimately, self-cause.

Is Sartre’s transcendent object, the *In-Itself*, causeless?

When Sartre describes the *In-Itself*, his language is close to Plotinus’s “descriptions” of the One. What does *this* remind you of?

Being is uncreated. But we need not conclude that being created itself, which would suppose that it is prior to itself . . . Being is *itself*. This means that it is neither passivity nor activity. There is activity when a conscious being uses means with an end in view . . . the self-consistency of being is beyond the active as it is beyond the passive, . . . [it is] inherence in itself without the least distance. From this point of view we should not call it “immanence”, for immanence in spite of all *connection* with self is still that very slight withdrawal which can be realized – away from the self. But being is not a connection with itself. It is *itself*. It is an immanence which cannot realize itself . . . an activity which cannot act (cp. Plotinus V, 6, 6, 3-5) because it is glued to itself.

But if being is in itself, this means that it does not refer to itself as self-consciousness does . . . It is itself so completely that the perpetual reflection which constitutes the self is dissolved in an identity. That is why being is at bottom beyond the *self*, and our first formula can be only an approximation due to the requirements of lan-

guage . . . Being in itself has no *within* which is opposed to a *without* and which is analogous to a consciousness of itself.

. . . being is isolated in its being and . . . does not enter into any connection with what is not itself.<sup>2</sup> Transition, becoming . . . – all that is forbidden on principle. [It] can encompass no negation. It is full positivity. (BN lxxvii ff.)

Is this “uncreated” causeless? Sartre, I suppose, has said that it is. “Uncreated.”

But at this point Sartre labours under a twofold difficulty. One side of this appears to be merely logical and easily dealt with, the other is more profound. Ultimately, however, they can be seen to fit together.

On the “logical” side, Sartre is haunted by the phrase “*causa sui*”. He sees more-or-less that *causa sui* is “an impossibility” – either because there is something basically wrong with the notion itself or because neither of the “candidates,” the For-Itself or the In-Itself, qualifies as *causa sui* and their “merger” is impossible. (BN lxvi; lxxvii; 758-9; 762) But, paradoxically, the impossible “*causa sui*” would be the only phrase which could represent for him what we have called the independent. And thus, for all his calling the In-Itself the uncreated, he does not see it as *above* the impossible self-caused, but below it:

Being is without reason, without cause, and without necessity; the very definition of being releases to us its original contingency. (BN 758; cp. BN lxxix)

It is only by making itself for-itself that being can *aspire to be* cause of itself. (BN 758, italics mine.)

Although the use Sartre makes of the word “contingent” here is common enough, it is perhaps well to point out that he does not mean that the In-Itself is contingent on, or dependent on, anything, but rather that it is simply “not necessary,” that it is a pure happening (if that word can be purged of all connotation of activity and/or passivity), as he says, a “venture” (BN 760). The notion would be conveyed better by the Greek conception “by chance.”

Sartre has not "happened upon" the Plotinian notion of "above chance and necessity." (Cf. VI, 8, 9) Along the lines we have been developing, we could regard this as a simple logical failure. For him the necessary would be the impossible *ens causa sui*. He has available to oppose it only the "by chance." (And so the For-Itself is similarly "by chance", the "absolute event")

But other motives are in play here. One I may mention briefly; it does little credit to Sartre. Would any one have suspected from the description of the In-Itself which I just quoted that Sartre tries to make this notion do duty for individual existents? But this is the case. The "above chance and necessity" of what he *seems* to be describing cannot be let to emerge when the "In-Itself" is confused with "individual" beings which are (rather primitively) conceived as coming and going "contingently", i.e., by chance.

The *For-Itself* is not the independent either — as we have seen. But in the place of saying that it leans on the independent or strives for the independent, Sartre will say (characteristically) that it is ■ continuous and unsuccessful attempt to found itself, to be an *ens causa sui*. It is unfounded, but it tries to found itself. It tries to become a For-Itself In-Itself, but of course it cannot succeed. And yet its whole dynamism, (at least as this is portrayed at the very end of *Being and Nothingness*) is derived from its efforts to achieve in-itselfness.

And so the Nous strives towards the One, but can never be the One. It is "founded" only in and through its striving for the One.

But why does Sartre not follow this through and say similarly and without qualification that the For-Itself does not found itself, but is founded on the In-Itself? Because the For-Itself is striving not simply to be an In-Itself, but to be an In-Itself without relinquishing its for-itselfness.

Why "without relinquishing its for-itselfness"? At first glance, the answer is simple, and indeed Sartre gives it: because only as a For-Itself could it be an *ens causa sui*. The "ideal being" would be "the In-Itself founded by the For-Itself and identical with the For-Itself that founds it." (BN 762)

But if the *ens causa sui* is, as he reiterates, impossible, why does he not seek beyond it for the causeless, the independent, or rather, why when he half-discovers the causeless does it appear as a by-chance that itself "would" need the completion of self-causing? Why does "*everything take place as if the In-Itself in a project to found itself gave itself the modification of the For-Itself*"? (BN 759-760)

To be in-itself for-itself. To be in-itself without being monolithic, dead, "just there." To be the One, but the One which *knows*. What Sartre does not clearly see here, but what is really operative, is that the knowledge, consciousness, aspect of what has been called the For-Itself is struggling to get free of the for-itselfness, the duality, while retaining the advantages it had with the duality — the advantage of being conscious. "Consciousness does not surpass itself toward its annihilation: it does not want to lose itself in the In-Itself of identity." (BN 110) "It would be its own foundation not as nothingness but as being and would preserve within it the necessary *translucency* of consciousness" (ibid., italics mine).

Consciousness is consciousness *of*. Knowledge is knowledge *of*. These were the uncriticized propositions with which we began. They brought us far in our meditation upon knowledge, but they did not, after all, present the innermost nature of knowledge. There is something about knowledge which is not expressed by "the one-many", "the dialectic of the same and the different," "that which is itself and not itself", "that which is what it is not, and is not what it is" and similar expressions, no matter how adequately transformed.

Here I shall use a Plotinian term, but I must caution you at the outset that I am not using it, at least immediately or obviously, as Plotinus most significantly used it. When I say *ἐγρηγόρως*, wakefulness or awakeness, you think naturally of the place in VI, 8, 16 where he speaks of the super-knowledge of the One as an eternal awakeness. To make matters more complicated, I shall bring this doctrine into the discussion a bit further on. But as I use *awakeness* now I am thinking of a "feature," admittedly sufficiently obscure or rather philosophically obscurable, in human knowledge, in our own knowledge.



Awakeness. An indirect approach to it can be made by "sensing" the unsatisfactoriness of accounts of knowledge as dual. "To know is to become the other." Even when this is transformed to "to know is to become the known" or "to know is to become the known, not in representation but in entity and truth," we get the sense that knowledge is, strangely, being left out. "The knower is, and is not, the known." Even when the initial contradiction (for common sense) has been surmounted, when the full internality of the knower-known interrelation has been grasped, have we as yet expressed knowledge? Or have we grasped only a duality, which, however much it may be a dynamic internal tension, however much it may exceed the sensible, however much it may exceed the "material", still seems after all from a higher point of view wooden, unalive, unawake? With respect to Plotinus: Does not his ready identification of being with knowledge, of order with knowledge – at the *Nous* level – indicate that here he is not really expressing knowledge?

The term "awakeness" seems best, but it is not without its dangers. The effort must be made to catch a glimpse, in "awakeness", of something which is beyond or underlying being-awake-to (for even here the duality may creep in), and beyond or underlying awakeness as the negation of that to which it is awake.

Other possible terms are even more quickly and immediately involved in duality. Even if "consciousness" had not been spoiled for us by the iteration of "consciousness is consciousness *of*", the word "consciousness" is in itself already dual. "Awareness" summons the "*of*." "Intellectually alive" – "Intellectually alive *to*." And life, we have been saying, is through-and-through dual.

"Subjectivity" can convey a strong intimation of awakeness (I have heard it said, with becoming carelessness, that modern philosophy – Descartes – "discovered subjectivity"), but "subjectivity" can submerge itself in the *dyad* subjectivity-objectivity. Nevertheless, Descartes' *cogito* carries something of the notion. Sartre seems to approach it most closely in his notion of the "pre-reflective *cogito*."

Sartre recognizes that there is not, for every act of consciousness, a full-blown self-reflection. But neither can there

be an "unconscious consciousness". So he develops the notion consciousness (of) – with the "of" in parentheses – and says that every consciousness of an object is consciousness (of) consciousness. Consciousness (of) consciousness is the pre-reflective *cogito*, it is "what can properly be called subjectivity" (BN lxxiii).

His reasoning here is open to serious preliminary objections. There cannot be an unconscious consciousness, but this means only that there cannot be a consciousness which is not conscious of an object – not that there cannot be a consciousness which is not conscious of – or (of) itself. If consciousness is thought of after the model of a mirror, it is obvious that a mirror can mirror objects without in any way mirroring itself. Or if consciousness is thought of as an affecter or as an affected, there can, seemingly, be an affecter which does not affect itself, and an affected which is not affected by itself.

These objections can be answered by engaging once more in the dialectic of the dual, which is, at bottom, what Sartre himself does. The "of" in parentheses becomes a weakened – and for that reason a more intense – version of the "of" without the parentheses. It comes to express the original through-and-through duality of consciousness, its non-identity, its lack of coincidence with itself, its failure to be an In-Itself, its failure to be a "thing."

(I would suggest, in this restricted vein, that Sartre is reversing matters here – that the non-thingishness of human consciousness is not present from the outset, but is something to be achieved. Human consciousness emerges *eventually* as reflectively self-knowing, and from this vantage-point it can be seen that it is in germ or potency originally self-knowing. But to be in germ or in potency self-knowing is to be below self-knowing. And even Plotinus's pseudo-history of the *Nous* is better in that it speaks of phases in which the *Nous* is not yet *Nous* i.e., in Sartre's language, more like a *thing*. The pre-reflective *cogito* would, on this showing, be rather more than less thingy – it would not yet have undergone actual self-othering.)

But by this time it is plain that Sartre's critic and Sartre himself have left behind whatever hint of *awakeness* may have

been conveyed by the expressions "pre-reflective *cogito*" and "no unconscious consciousness." We are back with the dyad, and it is amusing that Sartre, who is acute enough to see the duality of reflection, indeed the duality of "knowledge" (as he distinguishes knowledge from "consciousness") and call this duality by its proper name, the dyad, does not formally recognize that he has made the pre-reflective *cogito* itself nothing else but a dyad. An unpleasant critic might say that the modern has allowed himself to drift down Greek bypaths.

Now let us explore if and how the "awakeness" which I am proposing as the innermost essence of human knowledge can be tied to Plotinus's specific use of *awakeness*.

I need not do more than remind this audience of Plotinus's thoroughgoing treatment of the duality-within-unity, the unity-within-duality of knowledge, nor how this consideration leads him in numerous places, preeminently in *Ennead* V, 6, to state that the One has no knowledge. Nor that he is not satisfied with this doctrine, so that he returns to the question in V, 4 and VI, 8 to find ways of saying that the One knows. He is plagued with dualistic expressions, he must speak "improperly", but he labours to purge the dualistic expressions of their dualism and to say:

If, now, the One's act does not become but is always, and is a kind of wakefulness which is not other than the one who is awake, being a wakefulness and an eternal super-knowledge, it will *be* in the way it is awake. The wakefulness is beyond being and Nous and intelligent life; the wakefulness is itself. (VI, 8, 16. 31-36)

Here is an eternal super-knowledge which is not dual.<sup>3</sup> According to VI, 8, 18 it is the source of the dyadic knowledge that is the Nous. There is in the One a sort of intelligence which is not the Nous. The One is the centre; from it radiate being and Nous. Being and Nous are poured forth from the One and depend on its "intellectual" nature.

A modest development of Plotinus's philosophy here would start from seeing explicitly the trace of the awakeness of the One in the knowledge of the Nous, just as the unity of the Nous is the trace of the One. Thus it would emerge that not only is there a knowledge which is above duality, above

othering and self-othering, but that even in human knowledge, which is shot through with duality, the essence of the knowledge is not the duality but rather its imitation and intimation of the knowledge which is above duality. In short, the wakefulness which is human knowledge would be displayed as an imitation of the wakefulness which is the One.

Let us go way back. We had asked whether the self-otherer could be independent and had suggested that the self-otherer needs the external other. Now we have traced intimations of our own, corroborated by notions found in Sartre and Plotinus, that the highest concrete self-otherer, the knower, is not at base a self-otherer so much as a wakefulness. A wakefulness which imitates the external wakefulness. The latter is not a For-Itself In-Itself within the limits of that vocabularily. But it is what For-Itself In-Itself was trying to express: A knowing, independent reality above chance and necessity.

## NOTES

1. This phrase is adapted from Sartre's description of the For-Itself (BN ix xviii). (Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant* (1943) is referred to in the English translation of Hazel E. Barnes, *Being and Nothingness*, New York, Washington Square Press, 1966).
2. Here, as also on BN 763, Sartre shows that he appreciates *the one-way relation*. The For-Itself is related to the In-Itself; the converse is not true. Similarly the Nous (and all things) are related on the One (VI, 9, 3, 49-51; cf. VI, 8, 7, 44-46), but the One is not related to them.
3. How tenuous this may be in Plotinus himself, however, is indicated by the fact that only a few lines before he could say "The One, as it were, made itself by an act of looking at itself. The act of looking at itself is, in a way, its to-be." The qualifications are there, but the formula greatly resembles that of the conscious self-cause that Sartre toys with and criticizes.

## Paul Elmer More and Neoplatonism

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### I *Introduction*

In the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the present one, the theological-idealistic orientation of American university education and philosophy gradually found itself unable to withstand the onslaughts of the rising philosophies of pragmatism and naturalism. These new movements wrought fundamental transformations in social and educational theories and practices as well as in philosophy. In education, pragmatism and naturalism succeeded by 1910 in replacing the old prescribed curriculum, with its emphasis upon the classics and mathematics, with a variety of elective courses of study which took the inclinations and abilities of the individual student into consideration and offered him the alternative of concentrating upon more "practical" studies such as the physical sciences and modern languages. Methodologically, both movements were characterized by a strong commitment to science, with science being understood as a method of inquiry rather than a definite body of knowledge. In the investigation of its subject-matter—nature, which the naturalists treated as an all-inclusive and non-defined category—science as a method excludes radical dualisms of any kind. Man's mind is not separate from nature, and his values, instead of existing in some separate realm find both their origin and their fulfillment in nature.

The multifarious influences of pragmatism and naturalism were opposed by a group of intellectuals loosely united under

the name Humanists. Two of the early Humanists, Paul Elmer More (1864-1937) and Paul Shorey (1857-1934), were also leading American Platonic scholars of the first part of the twentieth century. As professors of the classics, these scholars were distressed at the replacement of the prescribed curriculum with the elective system, as this meant that students were no longer required to take Latin and Greek. More and Shorey were among the first to challenge the assumption that attention to the present and practical is more essential to education than an emphasis on the Great Tradition of the past.

In the 1920's and 30's, the older Humanists merged with a group known as the New Humanists. This group began as a literary movement designed to combat the influence of naturalistic tendencies in the writings of such men as Dreiser, Sinclair, Anderson, Dos Passos, and Hemingway. Originally, the New Humanists were interested primarily in restoring interest in the classics and in denying the natural and spontaneous. The movement gradually broadened its interests to include those of the older Humanists, namely the opposition to all forms of naturalism and an attempt to return American college education to the old prescribed curriculum with its emphasis on the classics. The leaders of the New Humanists were Irving Babbitt of Harvard, Paul Elmer More of Princeton, and Norman Foerster of the University of Iowa.

The most fundamental belief of the New Humanists and the older Humanists was an absolute dualism between man's "lower" nature, which he shared with other animals, and his "higher" nature, which was not a part of physical nature and was characterized by will, conscience, morality, and religion. This conception of human nature the New Humanists believed to be a fundamental postulate of the philosophy of Plato and to have found additional support in early Christian and medieval thought, and, indeed, to be the central conviction of all genuinely "humanistic" thought. Other beliefs which the New Humanists thought they had derived from Plato and others in the Great Tradition were an ethic of restraint and denial of bodily pleasures; a strong social conservatism and a belief in the unchanging nature of truth, values, and human nature.

Of the leaders of the New Humanists, Paul Elmer More was especially influenced by the Platonic tradition, and indeed considered himself to be a Platonist. This paper explores certain features of More's interpretations of Plato and Plotinus. I will argue that although More considered himself to be a Platonist, he ascribed to Plato certain ethical and psychological doctrines which are in fact much closer to the philosophy of Plotinus than to that of Plato. Indeed, More considered the ethics of the two philosophers to be in essential agreement. However, More was sharply critical of some aspects of the metaphysics and mysticism of Plotinus, which he regarded as running counter to genuine Platonism. The respective sections of this paper attempt to do the following: 1) place More's treatment of the Platonic tradition in the context of the major strands in his intellectual make-up, so that one may understand his approach to Plato and Plotinus; 2) consider his treatment of that aspect of Plotinus' philosophy which he considers to differ markedly from that of Plato—viz. what More terms Plotinus' metaphysical "monism" and its attendant mysticism—and his criticism of its influence upon Christianity; and 3) finally, argue that More's fundamental belief in dualism and his desire to make Plato compatible with Christianity led him to regard the ethics of Plato and Plotinus as being quite similar to one another, whereas there are in fact important differences between the two. The significance of this for More's thought is that his own ethical beliefs are seen to be in much closer agreement with Plotinus than with Plato, so that his philosophy is in some respects more Neoplatonic than Platonic in character.

## II. *More's intellectual background*

The understanding of Paul Elmer More's interpretation of the Platonic tradition is enhanced considerably by viewing it within the framework of the major stages of his philosophical development and the predominant strands in his intellectual make-up. More abandoned an early Presbyterian religious affiliation while still in his teens, and was not to return formally to Christianity until 1925. But despite his early rejection of Christianity, he acknowledged that he was always obsessed by an awareness "of a mystery beyond the sense, out of which my

dualist philosophy was to spring, those intimations of a whole ghostly world corresponding to something latent in the soul itself,"<sup>1</sup> and he retained throughout his life a certain evangelistic fervor. In his biography of More, Arthur Hazard Dakin remarks of More's teaching at Princeton: "He did not analyze ideas for their own sake . . . In the end he saw only a right direction or a wrong direction, truth or falsehood, order or chaos, health or disease, life or death."<sup>2</sup>

An early enthusiasm for the literature of German romanticism was gradually superseded by a deep devotion to the Greek and Latin classics. Probably the single most decisive turning-point in More's intellectual life was occasioned by his discovery of an exposition of the thought of the Manicheans. In a letter to Robert Shafer, dated October 22, 1931, he describes this event and its significance as follows:

Then, in 1891, I chanced upon Baur's *Das Manichäische Religionssystem* . . . Such mental excitement as that book gave me I had never known before and have never felt since. It was as if the religious sense, like a drowning man, had laid hold of something to which it could cling . . .

This was the principle of dualism,—a crude mechanical sort of philosophy as taught by the Manicheans, but through the really magnificent allegory in which their mythology flowered hinting at a deeper and subtler truth.<sup>3</sup>

The principle of dualism first discovered in Manicheanism was to become fixed firmly in More as his single most important intellectual conviction, one which he was to retain until the end of his life and which was to appear and reappear as the most persistent theme in virtually all of his writings. Introduced to Oriental philosophy by his study of the Manicheans, More turned to the religion and philosophy of India and went to Harvard in 1892 to study Sanskrit and Pali. In 1894 he published a fictionalized account of his embracing of Eastern philosophy, *The Great Refusal*, which preaches the detachment of Hindu philosophy and the illusoriness of earthly romantic love.

There was a gradual transition in More from Hindiusm to Platonism to which it is impossible to assign a precise date. His essays "Plato" (1909) and "Definitions of Dualism" (1913)

show the increasing hold of Platonism on his thought. It is in the essay "Plato", published in the sixth series of the *Shelburne Essays*, that More outlined for the first time the conviction which he was to maintain throughout his life as the basic teaching of Plato's writings. Here he defined the "religious instinct" which he finds basic to all religions and religious philosophies, among which he includes Plato's, as:

the bare consciousness of a dual tendency in human nature . . . As the goal of this tendency we speak of an eternal changelessness, of a self-sufficient joy, and of infinite life—in the other direction lies the sense of our personality as concerned with variety and change and that world of phenomena, which is a reflection, it may be . . . of a dissipation within ourselves. In this way we come to distractions and restlessness, to self-seeking, competition, envy, jealousy, and strifes; to misery, devouring egotism, lust, and violence. Its end is despair and the irreparable decomposition of death.<sup>4</sup>

Although More shifted his attention more and more exclusively to Greek philosophy, particularly Plato, the Eastern influence was still strong enough in 1917 for him to anticipate the accusation that his Vendantic dualism had acted as a kind of Procrustean bed upon which he had forced his book *Platonism*, published in that year. An examination of *Platonism* does indeed reveal the influence of his early absorption in the world-renouncing Eastern religions with their emphasis upon the detachment of the individual from social concerns in favor of a solitary quest for spiritual fulfillment. This influence encouraged him to read into Plato's ethics and psychology certain features which are in fact much more characteristic of the fundamentally Oriental and religious philosophy of Plotinus, with its intense desire for flight from the world of physical nature, than of the philosophy of Plato with its devotion to the social life of the *polis* and its emphasis upon the inseparability of personal excellence and social cooperation.

More's own personal predilections and convictions led him to read into Plato's philosophy an extreme moral, psychological, and metaphysical dualism, and to say of the ethics of Plato and Plotinus that they are almost identical.<sup>5</sup> He also came to

regard Christianity as the fulfillment of the philosophy of Plato. The development of the Greek tradition and its culmination in Christianity is set forth in his major philosophical work, *The Greek Tradition*, a six-volume series into which he incorporated *Platonism* as the introduction. The central thesis of this work, which traces Greek thought from the death of Socrates in 399 B.C. to the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., is that Greek literature, pagan and Christian, from Plato to St. John Chrysostom and beyond that to the Council of Chalcedon, is essentially a unity. "The initial impulse to the movement was given by a peculiar form of dualism developed by Plato from the teaching of his master Socrates."<sup>6</sup> Christianity was the true heir and developer of Platonism. "It is this tradition, Platonic and Christian at the center, this realization of an immaterial life, . . . that lies behind all our western philosophy and religion."<sup>7</sup> The volumes in the series are: *Platonism* (1917); *The Religion of Plato* (1921); *Hellenistic Philosophy* (1923); *The Christ of the New Testament* (1924); *Christ the Word* (1927); and *The Catholic Faith* (1931). During the writing of *The Christ of the New Testament* More became convinced of the need for a connecting link between the two worlds of permanence and change and was converted to Anglo-Catholic Christianity. The purpose of *The Christ of the New Testament* is to show that "Christ was a person who embraced within himself the full nature of divinity and the full nature of humanity."<sup>8</sup> Of the Incarnation More says that it is "the one essential dogma of Christianity, . . . that it is the mythological expression . . . of the Platonic dualism, and thus forms a proper consummation of the Greek Tradition."<sup>9</sup> His decision to reembrace Christianity resulted from the conviction that: "The Ideal philosophy of Plato waits for its verification upon no belief in anything outside of what we can test and know in our immediate experience . . . But the full scope of religion requires a theology and a mythology as well as a philosophy, and if the crowning element of religion is to be more than a reasonable conjecture, . . . then I see not whither we are to turn save to Christianity."<sup>10</sup>

The significance of this brief intellectual biography is that More's attitude toward the Platonic tradition was strongly

influenced by his fundamental belief in dualism and after his conversion to Anglo-Catholic Christianity by his religious beliefs as well. He interpreted Plato in the light of these beliefs, and approved of just those features in the philosophy of Plotinus that agreed with his sifted Platonism. His basic criticisms of Plotinus, to which I will now turn, were based upon his conviction that certain parts of Plotinus' philosophy are unacceptable to the Christian.

### III. More's criticism of Plotinian metaphysics and mysticism

We have seen that More considered the ethics of Plato and Plotinus to be in essential agreement. He did, however, distinguish sharply between the metaphysics of the two philosophers.

There are, as I see it, two modes of thought running through the *Enneads* . . . One of these is a simple but profound philosophy, expressing a genuine psychological experience and closely related to Platonism; the other is a metaphysic, of Aristotelian and Stoic stamp.<sup>11</sup>

Plotinus' most significant metaphysical departures from authentic Platonism are, according to More, his placing of the Ideas in the Divine Mind rather than granting them an independent status as did Plato, and the Plotinian conception of the One with its attendant mystical "monism" (by which More simply means that the various levels of being emanate from the Being of God), which contrasts sharply with Plato's conception of the Demiurge and his account of creation. This substitution of a metaphysical monism for the dualism of Plato More believes to be due primarily to the influence of Aristotle. Against Plato's dualism of forms and changing world Aristotle sets a dualism between an inseparable union of form and matter in individual objects, and a God Who stands in complete isolation from conscious and voluntary contact with the world.<sup>12</sup>

Hence in place of the living concrete dualism of Plato's divine energy working upon the slowly yielding potentiality of the world, we have in his successor a

metaphysical dualism which partitions the universe into two incommunicable realms: on the one side a congeries of individual things and persons, each with its own energy and potentiality and its own end, and on the other side, set in absolute goodness utterly unattainable by any individual of this world; as absolute wisdom which yet has no knowledge of or concern with the concrete sum of existences; as absolute energy exercised in contemplation, not even of itself for that would imply a distinction between knower and known, but in pure eternal contemplation of contemplation; and as an absolute cause which yet of itself effects nothing.<sup>13</sup>

More claims this Aristotelian concept of a transcendent God to have merged at an early date with Neopythagoreanism and various Oriental streams of thought, which commonly regarded themselves as being Platonic rather than Aristotelian and which culminated in the metaphysics of Plotinus.<sup>14</sup> Plotinus reduces the Aristotelian dualism to a monism, thus disavowing the isolation of the world from God, and completes their reconciliation by viewing God as the efficient cause from which the world evolves as well as the final cause towards which man's ethical nature strives.

Plotinus' metaphysical monism and its concomitant mysticism come under attack in More's chapter on "Christian Mysticism" in *The Catholic Faith*. Here More distinguishes among several kinds of mysticism: 1) The conviction of supernatural realities accompanied by a sense of the illusory nature of the phenomenal world. To this type of mysticism, which More associates with Plato, and, in the Christian tradition, with Gregory of Nazianzen, he attaches the rather clumsy appellation "mystihood". 2) An immediate contact with supernatural reality, whether given a) through sensuous sights and sounds or b) by spiritual communication. More's chief exemplar of this "quasi-mysticism" in St. Augustine. 3) Absorption of the soul in this reality, whether conceived as a pancosmic or a transcendental Absolute. Such an absolute mysticism is best represented by Plotinus. Finally, in Christianity such figures as pseudo-Dionysius and St. John of the Cross fall into a category of "mixed mysticism" which falls

between 2) and 3).<sup>15</sup> Although closely approaching the position of Plotinus, this kind of mysticism necessarily guards itself against the heresy of teaching a complete union of the soul and God.

The only kind of mysticism to which More gives his approval and which he considers to be compatible with Christianity is the first. Gregory of Nazianzen is praised for his humility in asserting that God, Who is infinite and incomprehensible to the intellect of man, can be known to mortals only as He is revealed through His works. It is impossible for man to know or to see God Himself.<sup>16</sup> Any claim beyond this More considers to be presumptuous and inimical to Christianity. Even St. Augustine, whose relatively mild descriptions of contact with the Deity hover between actual and desired vision, comes under criticism by More for laying claim "to a kind of intimacy with the divine nature which would have repelled the spiritual humility of a Gregory Nazianzen and the earlier Christians."<sup>17</sup> But it took a Greek Christian to assimilate the "full virus"<sup>18</sup> of Plotinian mysticism into Christianity. This was accomplished by the pseudo-Dionysius, "who carried the thought of Plotinus and Proclus to its logical conclusion in the *via negativa* and at the same time gave it a thin veneer of Christian respectability."<sup>19</sup> The treatises of the pseudo-Dionysius were a major influence in the wave of mysticism which invaled theology in the course of the twelfth century.

More's major objections to mysticism are clearly revealed in his discussion of St. John of the Cross, where the charges of arrogance and presumption on the part of the mystic recur.<sup>20</sup> More's second major criticism is that the extreme asceticism advocated by many mystics is incompatible with the doctrine of the Incarnation. If the flesh were as contemptible as St. John of the Cross believes it to be, then God would not have assumed the human form. The Incarnation is also rejected in that the direct contact of the soul with God eliminates the necessity of Christ as the Mediator. And as the asceticism of St. John involves not only the purgation of the pleasures and faculties of the body, but extends itself to all revelations and manifestations of supernatural things that come to the soul in sensuous form, it destroys, in effect, the sacramental use of natural things.<sup>21</sup>

More in no way impugns the integrity or the sincerity of the mystic. But he denies that the experience which the mystic has is in fact a direct contact with God. His final objections to mysticism are: "1) that an actual experience connected with a common trait of human nature is accepted naively as having a spiritual value which does not belong to it; 2) that this experience is variously interpreted in accordance with the particular religious belief of the time and place, and 3) that this arbitrary interpretation reacts to colour the naive experience."<sup>22</sup>

The actual experience which, according to More, the mystic confuses with contact or union with God can be accounted for rather easily. The mind experiences a diversity of sensations and other kinds of awarenesses. When it makes a judgment that a thing is of such and such a kind or unifies diverse experiences in some kind of way, it also exercises the ability to experience or have knowledge of unity as well as diversity. Either of these two modes of experiencing—diversifying and unifying—can be carried to extremes. An extreme awareness of diversity is a form of insanity, a condition in which there is no continuity or unity in experience. At the other extreme there is a definite and probably not uncommon experience of having all variety and diversity swallowed up in a feeling of absolute unity. And it is this feeling which More claims the mystic mistakes for union or contact with God.

More is unquestionably correct in supposing Plotinus' metaphysics and mysticism to be incompatible with genuine Platonism. Let us consider the following passage in which Plotinus describes the experience of union with the One:

Sometimes I wake from the slumber of the body to return to myself; and turning my attention from external things to what is within me, I behold the most marvelous beauty. I then fully believe that I have a superior destiny. I live the highest life and am at one with the divinity. Established there, my activity raises me above all the other intelligible beings. But if, after this rest in the divine, I descend from Intelligence to discursive reasoning, I do not understand the manner of and reason for my descent, how my soul ever could have entered into a body, being what I

have seen her to be herself, even when she still is associated with a body.<sup>24</sup>

Compare this Plotinian passage with that in Plato's *Symposium* at 209d-210a, where Diotima tells Socrates the following:

Well, now, my dear Socrates, I have no doubt that even you might be initiated into these, more elementary mysteries of Love. But I don't know whether you could apprehend the final revelation, for so far, you know, we are only at the bottom of the true scale of perfection.<sup>25</sup>

And after Diotima has ended her instruction and initiation of Socrates, we find Socrates, adding to his recollection of the fictional event which he made the core of his praise to love, the following:

This Phaedrus—this, gentlemen—was the doctrine of Diotima I was convinced, and in that conviction I try to bring others to the same creed, and to convince them that, if we are to make this gift our own, Love will help our mortal nature more than all the world. And this is why I say that every man of us should worship the god of love, and this is why I cultivate and worship all the elements of Love myself, and bid others do the same. And all my life I shall pay the power and the might of Love such homage as I can. So you may call this my eulogy of Love, Phaedrus, if you choose; if not, well, call it what you like.<sup>26</sup>

Plato's Socrates could never claim to have acquired identity with the divine. The claim would be hubristic. Plotinus attained the union with the Divine Mind and appeals to his personal experience to confirm the authenticity of the vision and the union. Socrates does nothing of the sort.

However, although More did correctly identify certain significant differences in Plato and Plotinus, he overlooked others that are equally important. In the final section of this paper I will argue that More's religious faith and fundamental belief in dualism led him to read into Plato's philosophy several positions which are in fact much more characteristic of the thought of Plotinus, and that More's conviction that the ethical doctrines of the two philosophers are quite similar is mistaken.



#### IV. *Criticism of the essential agreement More sees between Plato and Plotinus*

We have already seen that in spite of his criticisms of Plotinus' metaphysics and mysticism, More spoke with favor of what he conceived to be most essential features of Plotinus' ethics because he regarded Plotinus as espousing the same kind of ethical dualism which More ascribed to Plato. He goes so far as to say of Plotinus' account of the various stages of the soul's ethical ascent that: "It is almost pure Platonism, with however two important exceptions. Plato nowhere gives a hint of that mystical vision wherein at last the seer and the seen merge together in one indistinguishable act of objectless contemplation."<sup>27</sup> The second difference in the ethics of Plato and Plotinus More considers to be the value and importance which the latter attached to art.

A complete critical evaluation of the areas of agreement which More finds in the philosophies of Plato and Plotinus is of course far beyond the scope of this paper. I will confine myself to a brief discussion of More's treatment of the following subjects in the two philosophers: 1) the basic dualism of their ethics and psychologies; 2) physical pleasure, and sex as an illustration of it; and 3) the importance of the social life in ethics, including the nature and significance of *eros* and dialectic.

1. Dualism in ethics and psychology—In *Platonism and The Religion of Plato*, More develops the thesis that a moral dualism is at the heart of Plato's philosophy, and that upon this foundation other dualisms—psychological, metaphysical, and epistemological—arise. A particularly intimate relationship exists between Plato's moral and psychological dualisms. More goes to some lengths to establish that Plato's apparently tri-partite soul is in fact a dualism of higher and lower parts, the higher part being composed of that part of *nous* which concerns itself with knowledge of the forms, and the lower part of the soul comprising the part of *nous* which concerns itself with *doxa* as well as to *thymoeides* and to *epithymetikon*, which More translates as "concupiscence."<sup>28</sup> And so: "Philosophy then may be defined to be the [higher] soul's discovery of

itself, as an entity having a law and interests of its own apart from and above all this mixed and incomprehensible life of the body. That I take it . . . is the beginning of the Platonic religion and, if not the beginning, certainly the consummation of Christianity."<sup>29</sup> Morality involves, for More, a complete suppression of the demands of the lower part of the soul. The only command which the higher part of the soul issues to the lower part is "Thou shalt not." "Men are loath to accept this purely negative view of what is highest of their being; every instinct of the concupiscent soul cries out against this complete severance between the law of the spirit and the law of nature."<sup>30</sup>

In this respect More regards Plato and Plotinus to be in complete agreement. He even goes so far as to say of Plotinus' mood of "dismay at the subservience of the soul to its own mean and impure desires, and at the unceasing change and instability of its mundane interests" that "such a feeling . . . lies close to the origin of all philosophy."<sup>31</sup>

That such a position is to be found in Plotinus can hardly be challenged. Although Plotinus speaks of the soul both as a unity and a plurality, he also frequently refers to it in terms of a dualism of the higher part which belongs to the sphere of *Nous*, and the lower part which is directly connected with the body.

Everyone is double, one part the composite, one the Man Himself; and the whole universe is likewise double, one part being that compounded of body and a soul bound to body, and the other the Soul of the All which is not in body, but enlightens the traces of itself which is its body.<sup>32</sup>

The higher part of the soul is uncontaminated by matter and remains grounded in the intelligible world, but the lower part is contaminated by its association with matter and must be purified by means of an ethical ascent. In numerous passages Plotinus makes it quite explicit that the first stage of the ascent of the soul, which culminates in the acquisition of the civic virtues, begins with a complete renunciation of the flesh and its desires.

One certain way to this knowledge [of God] is to separate first the man from the body—yourself, that is, from your body—next, to put aside that soul which moulded the

body, and very earnestly, the system of sense with desires and impulses and every such futility, all setting definitely towards the mortal: what is left is the phase of the soul which we have declared to be an image of the Divine Intellect.<sup>33</sup>

But contrary to More's interpretation, Plato's most frequently expressed position is to see a harmony and cooperation among the three parts of the soul, with man's reasoning faculty guiding and controlling rather than suppressing and denying the other two parts. This is clear from the psychology in Book Four of the *Republic* and the myth of the charioteer in the *Phaedrus*. The charioteer is concerned to guide and control his two horses, not to beat either of them to death. And while Plato assigns physical pleasures to the bottom of his scale of goods to be sought, he seldom rejects them entirely. In the *Phaedo*, the dialogue in which Plato most clearly seems to renounce the body, it is not all clear that Socrates himself believes in the immortality of the soul or the futility of the body's concerns.<sup>34</sup> And one must not lose sight of the dramatic context of this dialogue—an old man facing imminent death can hardly be expected to be excessively preoccupied with reflections on the pleasures of the flesh.

2. *Sex as an illustration of physical pleasure*—A good case can be made for the claim that in the case of sex, which because of its complex emotional and intellectual overtones, is never merely a physical pleasure, Plato only disapproves of those relationships which are exploitive and unproductive, although Plotinus clearly regards sex as inimical to the ethical quest.

It is quite easy to distort a writer's meaning by removing his thought from the cultural climate in which he lived, particularly if he is addressing himself to ethical issues. Plato's so-called renunciation of the body and its pleasures, including sex, is a case in point. Like his criticisms of art, his criticisms of sex must not be taken out of the context in which they were written. Since Plato's fellow Athenians of the fifth and fourth centuries placed a high value upon artistic expression and were frank sensualists, Plato can afford to set very high standards for both art and sexual relationships without totally rejecting either. Good art is that which copies the forms instead of

imitations of the forms in the changing world;<sup>35</sup> a good erotic relationship is one which leads to procreation in the beautiful. The ascent of the ladder of love in the *Symposium* does not necessarily involve the rejection of physical love as one reaches the higher rungs. True philosophical *eros*, which culminates in the vision of beauty, begins with the love of bodies, and Socrates says at the conclusion of his speech: "I cultivate and worship all the elements of love myself, and bid others to do the same."<sup>36</sup> The *Phaedrus* distinguishes between exploitive sexual relationships, which are bad, and good sexual relationships, in which the two parties are concerned for the growth and development of their partners. Plato's only explicit renunciations of homosexual love are in the *Laws*,<sup>37</sup> a work of his old age which is quite difficult to reconcile with many of his other dialogues, and the *Republic*,<sup>38</sup> which seems to exclude all forms of *eros* and is probably not to be taken literally as Plato's conception of an ideal society.

More himself is rather embarrassed by the extreme sensuousness of Plato's language:

There are passages of the *Symposium*, and more particularly of the *Phaedrus*, in which the passionate colour of his language so envelops the allurements of particular objects that some effort of the mind is required to remember the ideal beauty of which they are supposed to be manifestations. The danger is heightened when he speaks with curious lack of indignation of pleasures which the world has agreed to hold unnatural and to reject the instinctive abomination. Yet in these few isolated passages where the attraction of sensuous beauty seems for the moment to have veiled the purer ethical vision, we do him a great wrong if we fail to remember that it is a passing cloud before the sun of the soul, not an eclipse. We need then to turn to the strange confession of Alcibiades at the close of the *Symposium*, and to learn again how rigidly beauty and all the seductions of pleasure were held in subjection to the refraining will. The Socrates of Plato may have portrayed himself playfully as a slave to any beautiful body and as wise only in erotic lore; when it came to the test of action he could master the lawless impulses of the

flesh unflinchingly and, as it seems, without a pang of regret.<sup>40</sup>

It is true that Plato constantly urges moderation in erotic conduct and self-control in the case of erotic relationships which would not be productive. Socrates refuses to submit to the advances of Alcibiades because Alcibiades is corrupt; although the better elements in his nature desire to possess Socrates' wisdom, his motive for wanting a physical relationship is that he wishes to make a conquest of this extraordinary man, to exercise power over him. Alcibiades admits extreme frustration over his inability to find a way to bend Socrates to his will.<sup>39</sup> For Socrates to succumb to his desire for Alcibiades would destroy any effectiveness that he might have as a teacher, and would only serve to nourish Alcibiades' vanity and conceit. But moderation and self-control are one thing; total denial is another.

3. *The importance of the social life in ethics*—One of the fundamental differences between Plato and Plotinus which More overlooks completely is Plato's strong emphasis upon the *social* nature of the quest for the good life. Plotinus constantly urges self-sufficiency; Plato denies that self-sufficiency is within the range of human possibilities. For Plotinus the ascent of the soul is a solitary affair, repeatedly spoken of as "the flight of the Alone to the Alone;"<sup>41</sup> for Plato, one reaches knowledge of the forms through *procreation* in the beautiful. Regardless of whether one is producing physical offspring or beautiful discourses, procreation inevitably involves more than one person. Although More consistently speaks of Plato's philosophy as being "otherworldly,"<sup>42</sup> the picture of life that Plato presents in the dialogues is the public life with all of its hustle and clamor, hurrying businessmen, rough jests, and noisy laughter. And the protagonist of most of Plato's philosophical dramas, Socrates, withdraws only at rare intervals from his constant involvement with his fellow men to the solitude of contemplation.

For Plotinus, the attainment of the four civic virtues, Justice, Courage, Temperance, and Wisdom, belongs to the lowest stage of the ethical ascent. These virtues do not belong to God.

But, at the beginning, we are met by the doubt whether even in this Divine-Being all the virtues find place—Moral-Balance (Sophrosyny), for example; or Fortitude where there can be nothing alluring whose lack could induce the desire of possession . . .

We cannot expect to find There what are called the Civic Virtues, the Prudence which belongs to the reasoning faculty; the Fortitude which conducts the emotional and passionate nature; the Sophrosyny which consists in a certain pact, in a concord between the passionate faculty and the reason; or Rectitude which is the due application of all the other virtues as each in turn should command or obey.<sup>43</sup>

Since the ultimate quest is to first to become God-like and finally to be united with the One, these virtues which are not possessed by the One are of limited usefulness. But there is no suggestion in Plato that there are any higher excellences that the Civic Virtues which govern the living of men together as well as the operations of the individual soul.

It is quite significant that More refers to Plato's dialectic as "the philosophy of the soul discoursing with herself, . . . and so passing ever upwards to larger and more comprehensive truth."<sup>44</sup> Although Plato does refer to dialectic as an internalized dialogue with oneself at *Sophist* 440 and *Theaetetus* 178, his many other references to it insist that dialectic is a kind of discourse of two or more persons with each other. Dialectic is spoken of as "the power of conversation,"<sup>45</sup> "the art concerning discussion,"<sup>46</sup> or "the art of asking and answering questions."<sup>47</sup> The necessity for the social nature of dialectic is closely related to Plato's view of *eros* as procreation in the beautiful. As dialectic is the only method for gaining knowledge of the forms, and as dialectic necessarily involves a conversation or discussion, Plato quite clearly means to say that the attainment of wisdom and excellence are not solitary guests. To attempt self-sufficiency is hubristic.

In conclusion, this paper has explored certain features of Paul Elmer More's interpretations of Plato and Plotinus. Although More correctly identified some of the major differences in the two philosophers, he found a fundamental

agreement between their ethics which does not in fact pertain. He was motivated in this regard by his desire to regard the philosophy of Plato as being compatible with Christianity and with the belief in dualism which More shared with the other New Humanists. Although More considered himself to be a Platonist, his ethics was in fact closer to that of the Neoplatonists than to that of Plato.

### NOTES

1. Paul Elmer More, "Marginalia, Part I," *American Review* VIII (November 1936), pp. 25-26.
2. Arthur Hazard Dakin, *Paul Elmer More* (Princeton U. Press, 1960), p. 212.
3. P. E. M. to Robert Shafer, October 22, 1931. Quoted in Francis X. Duggan, *Paul Elmer More* (Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1966), p. 20.
4. P. E. M. "Plato," *Shelburne Essays*, vol. VI (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909), pp. 321-322.
5. P. E. M., *Hellenistic Philosophies* (Greenwood Press, 1923), p. 184.
6. P. E. M., *The Religion of Plato* (Princeton U. Press, 1921), p. vi.
7. *Ibid.*, p. vii.
8. P. E. M., *The Christ of the New Testament* (Princeton U. Press, 1924), p. 1.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 291-292.
11. *Hellenistic Philosophies*, p. 178.
12. An assessment of the correctness of More's interpretation of Aristotle is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it seems to me that More, like many other thinkers of a religious temper, has exaggerated the importance of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. This hypostatization of a perfect knower who acts as a final cause for creatures motivated by a desire to know does not occupy a position in Aristotle's philosophy significant enough to consider it

as the sole occupant of one side of a metaphysical dualism. Nor is the Unmoved Mover an essentially religious concept.

13. P. E. M., *The Catholic Faith*, p. 226.
14. *Hellenistic Philosophies*, p. 215.
15. *The Catholic Faith*, pp. 207-209.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232. In this connection More also regards Plato to have taught that "our knowledge of Ideas in this life is not to be immediate vision or contact, but by inference." (p. 216). This is a curious claim in the light of the *Symposium*.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 238. In this same passage More criticizes St. Augustine for surrendering to the "monistic seductions" of Plotinus by placing the Ideas in the Divine Mind. Since More apparently retained the independent existence of the Ideas, one can question whether he was in fact a Christian.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
19. *Idem*.
20. More points out that there is a very fine line dividing the complete union of the soul with God in Plotinus, which is rejected by the Christian, from the kind of experience described in such passages as the following from the pen of St. John of the Cross, quoted in *The Catholic Faith*, p. 255:  

The thread of love binds so closely God and the soul, and so unites them, that it transforms them and makes them one by love; so that, though in essence different, yet in glory and appearance the soul seems God and God the soul. Such is this marvellous union. God Himself is here the suitor who . . . absorbs the soul with greater violence and efficacy than a torrent of fire a single drop of the morning dew.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 287. More fails to indicate that objections 2) and 3) would not apply to Plotinus.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 287-290.
24. *Ennead* IV. 8. 1. Translated by J. Katz. in *The Philosophy of Plotinus, Representative Books from the Enneads*.
25. *Symposium* 209d-210a, translated by Michael Joyce, in *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, edited by E. Hamilton and

- H. Cairns (Pantheon Books, 1966). All quotes from Plato are from this edition of the dialogues.
26. *Symposium* 212b-c.
  27. *Hellenistic Philosophies*, p. 184.
  28. P. E. M., *Platonism* (Princeton U. Press, 1917), chp. 5, "Psychology," *passim*, and *The Religion of Plato*, pp. 220-222.
  29. *The Religion of Plato*, p. 48.
  30. *Platonism*, p. 146.
  31. *Hellenistic Philosophies*, p. 179.
  32. *Ennead* II. 3. 9. See also II. 1. 5; III. 4. 3; IV. 8. 7; V. 2. 1. This and all following quotes from the *Enneads* are from the McKenna translation.
  33. *Enn.*, V. 3. 9. See also I. 1. 5; I. 2. 3; II. 3. 9. It is interesting that More occasionally remarks that Plotinus is a thorough-going ascetic (e.g., *The Religion of Plato*, p. 266; p. 228) but that Plato is not (*The Catholic Faith*, p. 221; *Platonism*, p. 82). One wonders in what sense More regarded Plato's asceticism to be mitigated, since he is supposed to have advocated "a complete severance between the law of the spirit and the law of nature." (*Platonism*, p. 146).
  34. "It is not sufficiently recognized that Plato does not, in the strict sense of the word, 'teach' anything at all about the fate of the human soul. Socrates speaks about it in myths, which are part of the dramatic structure in Plato's works. Plato's references to the authority of the priests and theologians of the mystery religions are undoubtedly an indication of the origin of these mythological symbols, but are in no way an indication of what they meant to Plato himself. For him they contained a profound symbolic reality; they were venerable allegories, images, and phrases for something that he preferred not to express in his own language. It is a mistake to use them as evidence for a Platonic theory or history of the soul." Paul Friedlander, *Plato* (Pantheon Books, 1958), vol. I, p. 29.
  35. *Republic* 500e.
  36. *Symposium* 212b. The famous passage at 211d at which Socrates says that one who has attained the vision of

Beauty will "never be seduced again by the charm of gold, of dress, of comely boys . . ." can easily be interpreted to mean that once one has reached the ultimate goal of *eros*, mere beauty and superficial display will no longer be enough to hold one.

37. *Laws* 836b-842a.
38. *Republic* 403b.
39. *Symposium* 219d.
40. *Platonism*, pp. 194-195.
41. *Enn.*, I. 6. 7; V. 1. 6; VI. 7. 3.
42. "In Platonism the emphasis lies heavily on the union of other-worldliness and morality in the philosophy of Ideas." *The Christ of the New Testament* (Princeton U. Press, 1934), p. 23. See also p. 5, p. 14, and p. 17. One may also challenge in this connection More's references to Plato as a "religious" philosopher.
43. *Enn.*, I. 2. 1.
44. *Platonism*, pp. 195-196.
45. *Republic* 511b.
46. *Sophist* 237a.
47. *Republic* 534d.

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